

# 2024

## ANNUAL REPORT

Celebrating **Strong Starts** and **Promising Futures**



# LETTER FROM OUR LEADERS

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As we reflect on 2024, we are proud of the strides EPIC has made in creating Strong Starts and Promising Futures for children and families in our community. Thanks to ongoing commitment from partners like you, we continued our mission of strengthening families and building community to raise children who make a positive impact in the world. This year, we achieved much success including:

Launched the year with a 3 day All-Staff Retreat to plan for a year to remember

Presented the popular Family Engagement Conference for 250 professionals alongside our partners, Parent Network of WNY, Mental Health Advocates and the Care Management Coalition  
Engaged with Harmac Medical Products and the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County's Day of Caring to prepare Storytime packs for hundreds of families

Inspired by our Parent Advisory Committee in Niagara County, we held our 1st Annual Holiday Toy Swap in December – 59 families received gifts for 121 children, saving money and recycling toys for the holidays

We are deeply grateful for the continued support of our Board, staff, partners, donors, and volunteers – your commitment fuels our success. As we prepare for our 45th anniversary in 2025, we look forward to deepening our work, inspiring more families, and building on our legacy of change. Together, we are shaping a future where every child has the opportunity for a strong start and a promising future.

With gratitude,

*Tara N. Burgess* *Samuel Costa*



**Tara N. Burgess**  
Executive Director



**Samuel Costa**  
Board Chair



# OUR MISSION AND LEGACY

## Honoring Our Legacy, Building the Future: EPIC in 2024

In 1980, Robert Wilson founded EPIC – Every Person Influences Children – with a powerful vision born from personal tragedy: to strengthen families and build community so that every child can thrive. What began with two desks at the United Way has grown into a trusted nonprofit that has touched hundreds of thousands of lives across generations.

### 44 Years of Strengthening Families and Building Community

EPIC's vision remains our compass: "A world where every child has a strong start and a promising future." For over four decades, EPIC has supported families – empowering caregivers, uplifting youth, and partnering with communities to create brighter futures – one family at a time.

### Our Enduring Impact in 2024

This year, EPIC continued to build on its legacy by delivering programs that reflect the heart of our mission:

- **Parenting Education:** Through trusted programs like families in Transition and Triple P – Positive Parenting Program, we helped caregivers gain confidence, strengthen relationships, and navigate challenges with compassion.
- **Family Engagement:** Our literacy – based programs, including Storytime and Ready Set, Read!, remained core to our work – supporting early childhood development for over 900 children across four counties.
- **Youth Services and Professional Development:** EPIC continued to support youth and train professionals in trauma – informed practices.

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**"I learned to evaluate our daily interaction to see how I can sneak more learning into what we do"**

– Ready, Set, Read! participant

**"Thanks to FIT, I have a better relationship with my children and a more structured and peaceful home environment"**

– Families in Transition participant

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### Legacy in Action

Whether at Storytime, a workshop for new parents, or a series supporting teens, EPIC's legacy lives on through the connections we build and the confidence we nurture. Our past informs our present—and fuels our vision for a future where every child has a strong start and a promising future.

# PROGRAM IMPACT: PARENTING PROGRAMS

## Empowering Parents with Tools, Confidence & Community

In 2024, EPIC's Parenting programs with generous support from key funders OMH, United Way of Buffalo & Erie County, OASAS, State Farm, and Erie County Department of Health, continued to provide guidance, education, and tangible support for families across Western New York. From skill-building workshops to infant safety initiatives, our programs met parents where they were - whether navigating court systems, welcoming a newborn, or managing toddler behavior.

## What Made 2024 Monumental

### Families in Transition (FIT)

- Full enhancement of EPIC's Young Child curriculum to reflect up-to-date research and community needs.
- Ongoing delivery of trauma-informed, skill-based parenting education.

### Car Seat Safety

- Continued to bridge education and access, reaching vulnerable families, including those without personal vehicles.
- Parents referred from car seat events to other EPIC programs, including Ready, Set, Parent!

### Ready, Set, Parent!

- Support for new and expecting parents, including those with children in the NICU or navigating parenting after a gap.
- Created a supportive online community - parents formed a Facebook group to stay connected after the program ended.

### Triple P (Positive Parenting Program)

- In partnership with Amherst Family Support Center, delivered practical tools for managing behaviors and strengthening relationships.
- Survey showed decreases in child behavioral problems, emotional maladjustments, and intensity of behaviors.

## BY THE NUMBERS

**203** participants completed the Families in Transition (FIT) program

**122** safe car seats distributed through Car Seat Safety





# PROGRAM IMPACT: PARENTING PROGRAMS

## Parent Testimonials

*"I originally thought I didn't need a parenting course - I already had a child. But with my newborn in the NICU, I felt lost. RSP! helped me feel supported and reminded me I wasn't alone. I built confidence, reconnected with others at church, and learned it's okay to ask for help - and to cry when I need to. Now I'm building a better support system and taking care of myself so I can be my best for my kids."*

— Ready, Set, Parent! Participant

*"I want to thank EPIC for the program. It was very informative and gave me a lot of new things to think about and be mindful of for me to implement as a new parent in the future."*

— Ready, Set, Parent! Participant

*"I was in a legal battle trying to regain custody of my children after their father took them during a visit. I felt powerless - until I found the Families in Transition program at EPIC. I gained communication and conflict resolution skills that helped me speak for myself in court and reconnect with my kids. Today, our home is more peaceful and structured than ever before."*

— Families in Transition Participant

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## Looking Ahead: 2025 and Beyond

**Families in Transition** will integrate the updated EPIC curriculum for even stronger outcomes.

**Ready, Set, Parent!** will expand with support from a Fidelis Maternal Health Grant, offering three series in 2025.

**Car Seat Safety** distributions and events will continue throughout the year to promote family wellbeing and infant safety.



# PROGRAM IMPACT: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

## Ready, Set, Read!

Building bonds and literacy – together.

The Ready, Set, Read! program, supported by the Cullen Foundation and Rich Products, completed a 6-series, 30-session run at Tapestry Charter School and REACH Academy, in 2024. With a focus on fostering literacy and strengthening family bonds, the program empowered parents with practical tools and confidence to support their children's academic growth at home.

The heart of the program lay in shared literacy experiences – parents and children growing together, discovering a love for learning, and finding new ways to make reading fun and meaningful. Parents reported stronger confidence in helping their children learn, and children showed improvements in both academic and social development.

## Participant Takeaways from Post-Survey:

"Children learn through play and everyday experiences."

"Evaluating our daily interaction to see how I can sneak more learning into what we do."

"That I am not alone. How babies love to read and it helps with learning to talk."

"Confidence – I learned a lot of things to build skills with and for my child!"





# PROGRAM IMPACT: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

## Storytime at Canalside

Ten weeks of literacy, fun, and family connection.

In the 2024 season, Storytime at Canalside was generously supported by funding from The Children's Foundation of Erie County, M&T Bank, Employer Services Corporation, and Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield. Community partners like the Buffalo Museum of Science, YMCA, Explore & More, and Buffalo & Erie County Library led interactive activity stations, where families engaged in hands-on STEM, movement, art, and storytelling experiences.

Thanks to our sponsors, EPIC was able to provide free Storytime Activity Packs to the first 50 children each week, and a free book to the first 15 families - helping reinforce literacy at home. The program was met with overwhelmingly positive feedback and demonstrated the power of accessible, family-friendly educational programming.

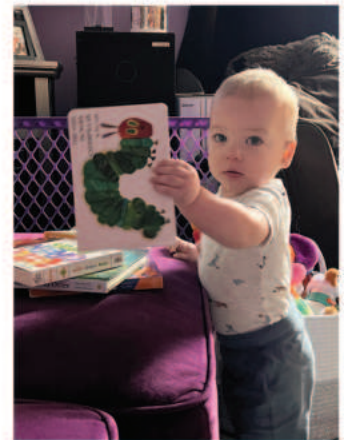
This summer wasn't just about stories - it was about strengthening community ties and building a foundation of early literacy for families across Buffalo.

## Family Engagement Practices in Education

Family engagement is a critical factor in a child's development - boosting academic success, social-emotional growth, and long-term well-being. EPIC actively supports family engagement across educational settings to strengthen partnerships and improve outcomes for children and families through a variety of workshops, trainings, and services.

In the **Salamanca City Central School District (SCCSD)**, EPIC supports the newly formed Family Engagement Advisory Committee. In the fall of 2024, the committee shared recommendations with the Board of Education and welcomed six new parent members to further deepen school - family collaboration.

At **CAO's Early Head Start**, EPIC equipped centers with tools and strategies to create sensory-rich environments that promote exploration, focus, and self-regulation - supporting meaningful early childhood development.



# FAMILY OPPORTUNITY CENTERS

Funded by the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS), Family Opportunity Centers (FOCs) are designed to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect. EPIC operates three FOCs in WNY.

## Niagara County Family Opportunity Center

### By the Numbers

**2,359** total visits  
**66** children participated in Early Intervention playgroups (with Niagara County Health Department)  
**91** caregivers completed a parenting program

### Key Funders & Partners

**Grigg Lewis Foundation:** Supported a summer paid intern, allowing the center to open on Saturdays

**Arts for Learning** delivered monthly experiences, including watercolor painting, African drumming, and a “Reading is Magic” performance in a local park

**Community Voice:** “The Niagara FOC is such an awesome resource for all in our community.” — Parent

## Cattaraugus County Family Opportunity Center

### By the Numbers

**121** families served  
**555** individual services provided

### Impact Highlight

Helped a family secure a new septic tank – a complex effort with multiple partners – including Person Centered Services, Environmental Services, the Health Department, CPS, and the family—this highlights the power of collaboration in addressing barriers to stability and health.

### Community Voice

“They have all sorts of information and can be very helpful when there are questions to be met, they will have the answers. If you are looking for information they will get it for you.”

— Parent

## Buffalo Family Opportunity Center

Operated under a Buffalo Public Schools partnership, basic needs distributions connected families with programs like SAAF and Triple P, offering long-term engagement. EPIC served 142 households in 2024.

One mother said the program helped her grow closer with her son, improving their communication and trust that he’ll make the right decisions in life. The young man also felt he better understood himself as a Black person, and why making the right choice is important.





# PROGRAM IMPACT: Tiny Town at Monticello

## A Growing Community of Early Learning Through Play

Monticello Central School District's (MCSD) Tiny Town Infant & Toddler Program, operated by EPIC opened in 2023, quickly captured the hearts of local families. By the end of 2024, 57 participants were regularly attending programs.

## What Makes Tiny Town Special

- This nurturing environment fosters **parent-child bonding, early intervention, and school readiness** through engaging activities like **Cooking in the Classroom, sensory exploration, and imaginative play.**
- Built trust and deep relationships with families
- Seamless connection to **MCSD's Pupil Personnel Services Department** for evaluations, IEPs, 504 plans, and on-site therapies



## Parent Voices

"My boys developed their motor skills and had an easier transition into Pre-K. As a mom, I also built friendships that carried outside the classroom."

— Parent

"Gracias al apoyo de Marta, llegué a los talleres en español de EPIC, y han sido una gran bendición para mí y mi familia. Nos han ayudado emocionalmente y nos han enseñado mucho. Compartimos experiencias, nos damos apoyo, y ahora nos sentimos como una familia. Espero que estos talleres sigan ayudando a más familias como la mía. Gracias a Marta y a Jane por hacerlo posible."

— Madre

# PROGRAM IMPACT: Youth Services Department

## Just For Me

Funded by Summer Primetime (ECDSS) and United Way, in partnership with Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority, the Just For Me teen empowerment program provided a supportive, inclusive space for 42 teens to engage in sessions centered around identity, communication, goal setting, and personal development.

The diversity of the group fostered dynamic conversations, while the program's flexible structure allowed youth to bring friends and family, enhancing community connection. Final projects showcased the teens' creativity, self-expression, and pride in their growth.

## Youth Reflections:

"I learned some things like trusting yourself, believing in yourself, and don't let people tell you what you can and can't do."

"The difference between needs and wants."

"How to budget, and know what I'm going to do in life."

"To never give up and how to support people by helping them with their struggles."

## SAAF (Strengthening African American Families)

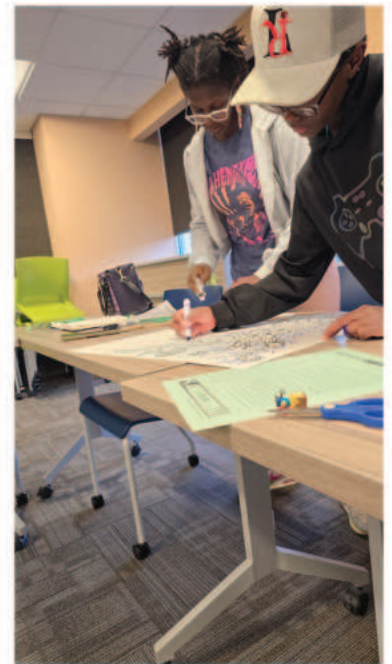
The SAAF program, funded by OASAS, provided a powerful experience for 15 caregivers and youth in 2024. This year's success was driven by meaningful relationship-building and deep conversations around family dynamics, goals, and communication. A standout moment came when youth participated in a Q&A panel with older teens, gaining insight into the challenges and possibilities of their future paths. Caregivers consistently shared their gratitude and interest in participating again in future sessions, underscoring the impact of this program.

## Caregiver Testimonials:

"One thing I learned from SAAF is..."

"Be patient, understanding, listen to your children, teach goals & qualities."

"How important family life at home is."



## Professional Development

EPIC offered professional development opportunities to hundreds of professionals throughout 2024 across NY state including St. Bonaventure, Aspire of WNY, Service Collaborative of WNY, Transitional Services, Inc., Rockland County Head Start, Community Missions of NF, Center for Schools & Communities, Williamsville CSD, CAO and Salamanca, and through conferences like the National Family Engagement Summit.

## Community Voice

"The amount of physical stress that is placed on an individual who is living in poverty, makes it difficult to move out of poverty. This was excellent and wish this training program was more widely available."

- Understanding Poverty Mindset participant



# PROGRAM IMPACT: COMMUNITY & COLLABORATION

## Collaborating for Stronger Families and Communities

At EPIC – Every Person Influences Children, collaboration drives our mission to strengthen families and build resilient communities. Across Western New York, we partner with organizations like the Care Management Coalition, Mental Health Advocates of WNY, and Parent Network of WNY to deliver coordinated support that empowers families and promotes child development.



### Celebrating Collaboration: From Shared Spaces to Shared Strategies

Our shared space at **1021 Broadway in Buffalo** serves as a central hub where nine nonprofits provide parenting resources, mental health services, and special needs support – all under one roof. This model streamlines access and fosters a strong sense of community.

We extend this collaborative spirit through our **annual Family Engagement Conference**, where families, educators, and community leaders come together to exchange strategies and strengthen partnerships.

## Empowering Families Through Engagement and Opportunity

EPIC's **Family Opportunity Centers** in Lockport and Salamanca offer free parenting workshops, play-based learning, and connections to local services. In **Niagara County**, we collaborate with partners like the Kenan Center and Lockport Public Library to offer diverse programs including cooking and wellness classes.

In **Cattaraugus County**, partnerships with the Department of Social Services and Connecting Communities in Action help us meet families' unique needs more effectively.

In **Monticello**, our partnership with the school district brought **Tiny Town** to life – a program offering themed play sessions and family events that support early childhood development through community involvement.



## Join Our Collaborative Efforts

EPIC's collaborative initiatives demonstrate the profound impact of unified community support. By working together, we create a network of resources that empower families, reduce isolation, and promote resilience. For more information on partnering with EPIC, call (716) 332-4100 or visit our website at [www.epicforchildren.org](http://www.epicforchildren.org).

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40 Thieves Kitchen & Bar	Dr. Valerie Cooley	Oliver's Restaurant
800 Maple	Creekview Restaurant	Olympic Family Restaurant
Adam's Rib	Ms. Breana Crumpler	Original Pancake House
Allen Burger Venture	Dash's Markets	Park Meadow
Anderson's Frozen Custard	Delaware North Companies, Inc.	Pasquale's Italian Restaurant
Angeline	Diamond Hawk Golf Course	Patina 250
Anonymous	Duff's Famous Wings	Antoinette Peters
Aroma on Bryant	Julanne Durkin	Power Yoga Buffalo
Baillie Lumber Co	Explore & More - The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr.	William Quinn
Batavia Downs Gaming & Hotel	Children's Museum	Rebel Ride
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Bishop Timon - St. Jude High School	Fat Bob's Smokehouse	Revolver Records
Black&Blue Steak and Crab	Carol Flaherty	Rick Cycle Shop
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Buffalo AKG Art Museum	Hodges Wine and Liquore	Southern Tier Brewery Buffalo
Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens	Hutch's Restaurant	St. Francis High School
Buffalo Bandits	Irish Classical Theatre Company	St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute
Buffalo Bills	J.Crew Inc.	St. Mary's High School
Buffalo Fire Department	JTs Restaurant	Brian Sterner
Buffalo Harbor Cruises	Kavinoky Professional Theater	Tacos, Community & Beer (TCB)
Buffalo Museum of Science	Sean and Liza Keenan	Target #1010
Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra	Left Bank	Target #1012
Buffalo Sabres	Lowe's	TBC Photo
Buffalo Sports Garden	MacSolutions	Th Irishman Pub and Eatery
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Strong Starts Erie County Initiative  
WNY Muslim & Immigrant Community Collaborative  
WNYICC 1115 Waiver Program Committee  
WNYICC 1115 Waiver Governance Committee  
WNYICC Finance Committee

## Father's Day Event





# EVENTS: Building Community, Raising Support

In 2024, **EPIC – Every Person Influences Children** – hosted four signature events that brought together our community in celebration, connection, and support of strengthening families.

## 9th Annual St. Patrick's Day Celebration

On March 17th, guests gathered at the beautiful Mansion on Delaware Avenue to celebrate one of Buffalo's most beloved traditions. Our St. Patrick's Day Celebration featured basket raffles, silent auctions, and delicious food and drinks provided by the Mansion. The spirited atmosphere was enhanced by the incredible performances of the Harris Greico Irish Dancers and Danne Farrell, bagpiper. Generous support provided by Orchard Park Pediatrics, Wegmans and the Myszka Family Foundation.



## Happy Hour Series: Patrick's Rooftop and Wanakah Country Club

In 2024, EPIC expanded its reach through two successful Happy Hour events. In July, supporters joined us at Patrick's Rooftop and W XYZ Bar at 500 Pearl for an unforgettable evening of connection, raffles, prizes, and a celebration of community spirit. Guests enjoyed panoramic city views while raising vital funds for EPIC's mission.

In August, EPIC hosted a second Happy Hour at Wanakah Country Club, offering another opportunity for friends and supporters to gather in a relaxed and beautiful setting. Special thanks to the Enterprise Mobility Foundation as a major sponsor of this event, ensuring that every dollar raised made an impact on children and families.

## 7th Annual Baby & Toddler Expo

On September 28th, EPIC's commitment to families was on full display at the Buffalo Museum of Science. The 7th Annual Baby & Toddler Expo welcomed parents, caregivers, and young children to a day packed with resources, activities, and fun. Highlights included the ever-popular Touch-A-Truck event sponsored by the Buffalo Fire Department, where little ones explored emergency vehicles up close. Throughout the day, families received valuable information on child safety, health, and development, while enjoying raffles and free giveaways. This event was generously sponsored by Rich Products.



## Our Gratitude

Each of these events was made possible by our incredible sponsors, volunteers, and participants. Additional sponsors include: Arete, Astreca, Delaware North, Five Star Bank, Freed Maxick, Guidepoint, Joe Basil, Lawley Insurance, The Mansion on Delaware Avenue, Medical Health Associates, Note Advisors, Sheila Radwan – State Farm, Spectrum Health and Human Services, Syntax, Vector Vue, and Walsh Duffield. Their enthusiasm and generosity help ensure that every child has a strong start and a promising future. Thank you for making 2024 a year to remember!

# WAYS TO GIVE: Support EPIC'S Mission

For more than 40 years, EPIC has walked alongside families – providing information, support, and hope across Erie, Cattaraugus, Niagara, and Sullivan Counties. Your generosity ensures we can continue this work and grow stronger every day.

## Give in a way that's meaningful to you:

### Cash Donations

Make a one-time or multi-year gift to support EPIC's greatest needs and advance our mission.

### Blended Gifts

Combine an immediate gift with a future planned gift to create a lasting impact while meeting your financial goals.

### Charitable IRA Rollover

If you're 71½ or older, you can donate up to \$108,000 annually from your IRA directly to EPIC – tax-free.

### Gifts of Stock

Donating securities is a powerful way to give. Ask your broker to transfer shares directly to EPIC.



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## Leave a Legacy of Love

### The Robert and Linda Wilson Heritage Society

After the tragic loss of his wife Linda, Robert Wilson turned heartbreak into hope – establishing a legacy that helps prevent tragedy in the lives of others. The Robert and Linda Wilson Heritage Society honors their story and supports EPIC's future through bequests, charitable trusts, and gifts of stock or insurance.

### To learn more about planned giving options, contact:

Tara N. Burgess

(716) 332-4114

Burgessst@epicforchildren.org





# FINANCIAL REPORT

## FINANCIAL REPORT

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Dec 31, 2024

#### Assets:

##### Current Assets

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$435,716
Accounts Receivable	\$321,670
Investment in Marketable Securities	\$43,282
Prepaid Expenses/Current Assets	\$14,656

**Total Current Assets** **\$815,324**

##### Long-Term Assets

Property and Equipment	\$10,240
Investments	\$600,000
Operating Lease	\$220,788

**Total Long Term Assets** **\$831,028**

**Total Assets** **\$1,646,352**

#### Liabilities and Net Assets:

##### Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$38,662
Short Term Borrowings	\$0
Accrued Expenses and Refundable Advances	\$141,021
Current Portion of Operating Lease	\$41,291

**Total Current Liabilities** **\$220,974**

**Long Term Debt - Operating Lease Liability** **\$175,134**

**Total Liabilities** **\$396,108**

##### Net Assets

Unrestricted	\$551,859
Temporarily Restricted	\$98,385
Permanently Restricted	\$600,000

**Total Net Assets** **\$1,250,244**

**Total Liabilities and Net Assets** **\$1,646,352**

### STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Jan 1, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024

#### Change in Unrestricted Net Assets:

##### Revenue and Other Support

Grant and Contract Revenue	\$1,847,089
Contributions and Foundation Grants	\$226,503
Other	\$136,787

**SubTotal Revenue and Other Support** **\$2,210,379**

Net Assets Released From Restriction \$54,667

**Total Revenue and Other Support** **\$2,265,046**

##### Expenses

Program Services	\$1,961,086
Management and General	\$291,846
Fundraising	\$61,844

**Total Expenses** **\$2,314,776**

**Total Change in Unrestricted Net Assets** **-\$49,730**

#### Change in Temporarily Restricted Net Assets:

Contributions and Foundation Grants	\$76,377
Investment Income	\$0
Net Assets Release from Restriction	<u>(\$54,667)</u>

**Total Change in Temporarily Restricted Net Assets** **\$21,710**

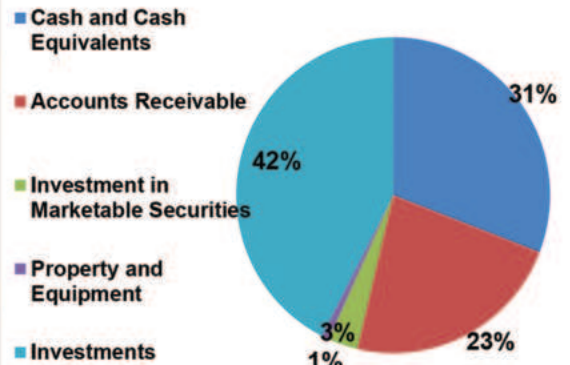
**Total Change in Net Assets** **-\$28,020**

#### Net Assets:

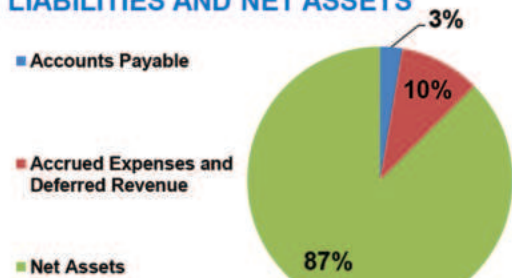
Beginning of Year	\$1,278,264
End of Year	<u>\$1,250,244</u>

## FINANCE AT A GLANCE

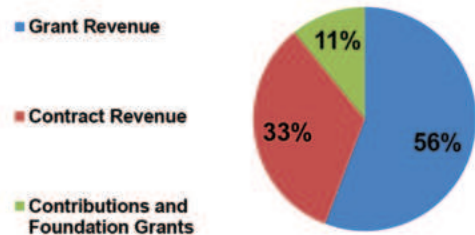
### ASSETS



### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS



### REVENUE SOURCES



### EXPENDITURES

