



Watauga Opportunities, Inc.

Fall-Winter 23/24

OUR MISSION – Watauga Opportunities, Inc. will enable self-reliance and enhance independence through the provision of vocational, residential, and community opportunities to individuals with barriers to employment and community involvement.

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Enabling Self-Reliance

Estimated
Community Wages
Earned Since 1994:
\$8.01 Million

Estimated Reduction
in Government
Subsidies:
\$3.23 Million

Job Placements
since 1994:
1485

Job Placements Year
End 2023: **64**

Community Employment Milestones

20 Years!

Matthew Mast

Congratulations to **Matthew Mast**, who celebrated his **20-year work anniversary** at Watauga Medical Center in July! Since 2003, Matthew has been employed as a Labeler in Materials Management. He works extremely hard at the Medical Center and has found many friendships through his colleagues. Matthew loves what he does, and everyone at Watauga Opportunities is so proud of him! Here's to 20 more years!



10 Years!

Stephanie Silver



Stephanie Silver celebrated **10 years** in May at Little Caesars. Stephanie is a hard, dedicated worker that always wears a smile. On the job, she wears many hats from pizza prep to making windows spotless. Stephanie said her favorite part about her job is the people that she works with and the friends she has made. Congratulations Stephanie on this amazing accomplishment.

Community Employment Services not only have benefits for individuals but employers too! Individuals gain a higher self-esteem and new interdependence in life while employers gain a motivated and dependable employee while establishing a great relationship within the community.

A Letter From the President: Annual Report Financial Year 2022-2023

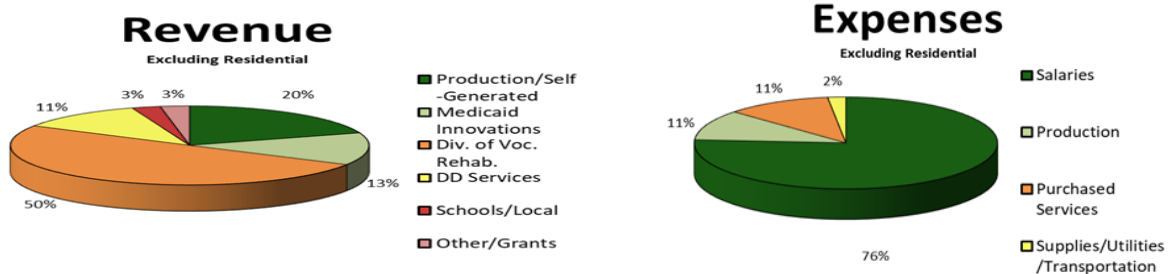


Dear Friends of Watauga Opportunities,

During FY 2023-2024 Watauga Opportunities will celebrate its 50th Anniversary year. Since 1974 it has been WOI's mission to enable self-reliance and enhance independence by offering employment, pre-vocational, and community opportunities to the people of Western North Carolina. During the past fifty years much has changed in terms of services, systems and expectations; however, the one constant has always been the stability of our mission-driven, high-quality, leading-edge services. We now proudly report our WOI Mission continues to be enhanced through ongoing growth in WOI's service area with the expansion of both our community employment and Pre-Employment Transitional Services (Pre-ETS). Pre-ETS services are now provided in 19 school systems, across 15 counties, to EC students in over 60 high schools across western North Carolina. The ability of Watauga Opportunities to continue this service evolution and expansion through continuous change is credited to the efforts of a knowledgeable, dedicated, and visionary Staff and Board. It is due to this vision, knowledge, and dedication we look optimistically toward a future which continues our WOI tradition of excellence.

Highlighting 2022-2023 was WOI's continued pursuit of service enhancement and growth targets. Through NCDVR, we further enhanced our Pre-ETS program while expanding to over 60 high schools in 15 counties. In 2022-23, we added new Pre-ETS and Community Employment services in Stokes County with services starting in Yadkin in 2024. Through VAYA Health we continued Long Term Community Support (LTCS) and Medicaid services. In the past 16 years our community immersion services have grown over 1,200% with participant community civic hours increasing from 476 in 2007 to 5,722 hours in FYE 2023. Expansion of employment services also continued in Catawba and Alexander counties. Our controlled environment medical manufacturing and plastic thermoforming produced our third highest manufacturing revenue ever, while our Quality Management System was recertified in medical manufacturing ISO 13485-2016.

We continue to partner with NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, VAYA Health, numerous County Boards of Education, and others in the provision of vocational, community, and residential services. During FY 2022-2023, Watauga Opportunities services grew by 29% totaling 1,644 individuals served. Our employment programs saw 64 individuals attain self-reliance through employment; Work Adjustment placed 29 individuals while Supported Employment accounted for 35 community job placements. Evaluation, Work Adjustment, and CBA served 54 individuals, Supported Employment served 51 individuals in job development/training and 58 in Follow-Along, LTCS served 41 individuals, Innovations served 16 individuals, School programs served 1,424 students, our group homes served 12 individuals. WOI served individuals from Watauga, Ashe, Avery, Alleghany, Buncombe, Mitchell, Yancey, Madison, Caldwell, Catawba, Alexander, Wilkes, Surry, and Stokes Counties.



Watauga Opportunities continues in our quest to **enable our own self-reliance** through reduction in the use of tax dollars in provision of our services. In FYE 2023 20% of non-residential operating revenues were self-generated. While the economic impact of Watauga Opportunities is important, the true human impact of our service is best seen in the growth of our participants' own **self-reliance**; since 1994 participant community wages earned are estimated at \$8.01 million, while their government subsidies have reduced by an estimated \$3.23 million. Community job placements now total 1,485. WOI truly is **enabling self-reliance and enhancing independence**. The above charts show the source of our revenue and its expenditure.

Thank you for your partnership,

Michael Maybee
President/CEO

Pre-ETS: Dress for Success!

Dress for Success is an annual event that took place in December 2023 in Caldwell County, where the WOI's Pre-Employment Transition Services Program, Caldwell County Schools, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Family Support Network/HOPE came together to support students' growth in career development. This year's community businesses were Food Lion, McDonald's, Caldwell Chamber of Commerce, Bo's Family Entertainment, and Fleet Genius. During the Dress for Success event, students participated in a series of interactive workshops covering workplace attire, effective communication, self-advocacy, job interview skills, and professionalism. Students also got the unique opportunity to hear from a former student who discussed their career journey and provided insight into transitioning from high school to adulthood. In the fall of 2023, Catawba and Alexander County Pre-ETS students participated in a monthly hands-on learning day, in partnership with Hart Square Village. Hart Square Village is an open-air history museum made up of over 100 log cabins located in Vale, NC. Pre-ETS students met with skilled preservationists to learn various conservation techniques used by Hart Square to ensure the cabins can be explored and enjoyed for many years to come. Students participated in various hands-on tasks including chinking and daubing to fill in gaps between the wood on cabin structures, restoration of antique windows, and whitewashing the Village's historic gristmill.

Highlight: Ashe Opportunities

Production Update

As we closed another fiscal year, Watauga Opportunities had the 3rd best year in Manufacturing. We are slowly but optimistically receiving orders similar to pre-pandemic from our ongoing and continuing collaboration with Barry Callebaut, Sarstedt and other long-standing customers. We also recently started assembling Holiday items for a new customer, Fraser Knoll, and look forward to growing this relationship in the future.



Ashe Opportunities' participants are proud to be members of varying volunteer, social, health, and wellness clubs in the community. When a local flower farmer approached the organization, with offerings of her late summer crop, participants brainstormed, and, "Flowers for Friends", was born. Using a variety of freshly picked flowers participants arranged then delivered vases of fresh

flowers to members of the community whom they worked, volunteered, and socialized with. The flowers were well received with comments of admiration and appreciation by all who received an arrangement. The venture was so successful, that a partnership with the farmer was established, and everyone is preparing for the next harvest! Flowers for Friends has allowed Ashe Opportunities the ability to expand relationships, build confidence in their abilities and continue to give back to the community.



2022-23 Program Evaluation

WOI served a total of 1,644 individuals as follows:

LTCS	41	Evaluation, Work Adjustment, CBA	54
Innovations	16	Supported Employment	51
SE Follow-Along	58	School and Pre-ETS	1,424



A total of 64 individuals were placed in community jobs. Participants provided 5,722 hours of community/civic time. Satisfaction surveys yielded 98% positive responses rate.



Congresswoman Dr. Virginia Foxx Visits

Our major discussion with Dr. Foxx, Chairwoman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, was related to the Section 511 Rule of the Rehabilitation Act, WIOA. We discussed the very positive implementation of the Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) being offered in her District and throughout Western North Carolina. After a meeting and lengthy discussion in the conference room, Dr. Foxx was taken on a tour where she was able to see several work areas including plastic thermoforming for a specialty chocolate manufacture and a medical assembly area. The workforce on site is integrated, consisting of a blend of people with and without known disabilities.

WOI Calendar of Events

Closed:

September 4

Labor Day

November 10

Veterans Day

November 23-24

Thanksgiving

December 25-Jan 1

Events:

October 26

Board of Directors

Meeting

December 4

Staff & BOD Holiday

Party

December 15



OUR QUALITY POLICY

Watauga Opportunities, Inc. is mission driven, quality focused, committed to meeting all regulatory requirements and exceeding all customer expectations.

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Enabling Self-Reliance Through Employment



FM560456



Accredited by CARF in Community Employment Services:
Job Development & Employment Supports; Community
Integration; Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation; and
Community Housing Services.

An Equal Employment/Affirmative Action Employer and Service Provider