

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:
\$8.17 Million

Estimated Reduction
in Government
Subsidies:
\$3.27 Million

Job Placements
since 1994:
1,554

Job Placements Year
End 2024: **69**

WOI Supports Community During Helene Recovery!



Wendy Richardson- Pre-ETS at Enka HS passing out MREs to a local community member at a resource hub

In September 2024, Western North Carolina was devastated by Hurricane Helene which caused unprecedented flood and wind damage in the area. During these difficult times, WOI cancelled our 50th Anniversary celebration and instead the staff of Watauga Opportunities helped our community in recovery efforts. WOI closed the week after Helene for recovery. All staff were paid during this week and if possible, staff were asked to volunteer in community recovery efforts. WOI staff provided approximately 2,500 volunteer hours of community flood recovery efforts during October and November. Most of the November hours were from Pre-ETS staff whose schools were still closed. Staff members rolled up their sleeves and put in hard work with places like Samaritan's Purse and local distribution centers in Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, and Watauga Counties lending a hand wherever they could to support our community.

After Helene WOI participants were also eager and ready to support their community however they could. Many participants spent hours at local resource centers, including Foscoe Grandfather Community Center and Brushy Fork Baptist Church. Most of their volunteer hours were spent helping with food and clothing donations to those in need. It was amazing to see how the WNC community can band together in such a serious time of need and remain hopeful for our future!



Avee Huffman, Courtney Bell, and Brent Lawrence sorting clothes at Brushy Fork.

WOI Awarded The Spirit of Philanthropy Award



In February The Watauga County Community Foundation honored Watauga Opportunities with The Spirit of Philanthropy Award. WCCF has honored individuals or groups over the past 17 years that work hard to make the county a better community. In 2024 WCCF chose WOI for this award for our 50-years of commitment to pre-vocational, employment, and community opportunities in Watauga and 17 other counties. WCCF thanked WOI for representing the Spirit of Philanthropy with our mission and services to help people with developmental disabilities helping make our community a better place.

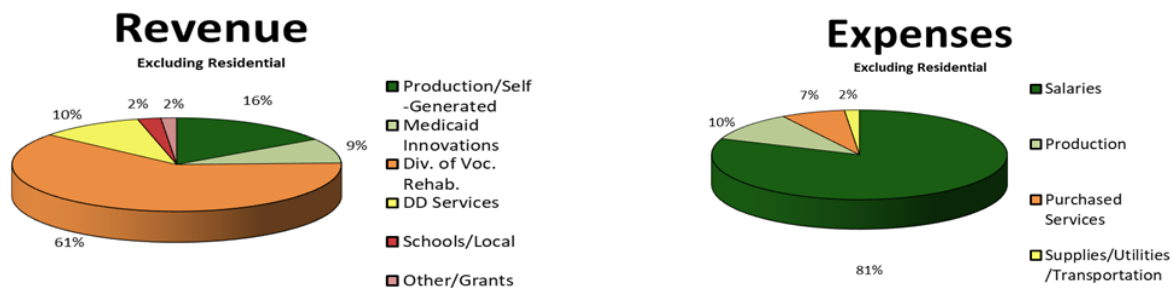
A Letter From the President: Annual Report Financial Year 2023-2024**ANNUAL REPORT FY 2023-2024**

Dear Friends of Watauga Opportunities,

During FY 2024-2025 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 our school-based 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 2023-2024 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 2023-24, we added new Pre-ETS services in Yadkin county. Through VAYA Health we continued Long Term Community Support (LTCS) and Medicaid services. In the past 17 years our community immersion services have grown over 900% with participant community civic hours increasing from 476 in 2007 to 4,274 hours in FYE 2024. Expansion of employment services also continued in Catawba and Alexander counties. Our controlled environment medical manufacturing and food grade plastic thermoforming continues to producer quality products, while our Quality Management System was recertified in medical manufacturing ISO 13485-2016 and is scheduled to be certified in Safe Quality Food production in the fall of 2024.

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 2023-2024, Watauga Opportunities services grew by 5% totaling 1,718 individuals served. Our employment programs saw 69 individuals attain self-reliance through employment; Work Adjustment placed 30 individuals while Supported Employment accounted for 39 community job placements. Evaluation, Work Adjustment, and CBA served 37



individuals, Supported Employment served 54 individuals in job development/training and 57 in Follow-Along, LTCS served 44 individuals, Innovations served 17 individuals, School programs served 1,486 students, our group homes served 12 individuals. WOI served Watauga, Ashe, Avery, Alleghany, Buncombe, Mitchell, Yancey, Madison, Caldwell, Catawba, Alexander, Wilkes, Surry, Stokes and Yadkin 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 2024 16 % 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 1,554. WOI truly is **enabling self-reliance and enhancing independence**. The above charts show the source of our revenue and its expenditure.

Employment Milestones



AJ Reed

Celebrating 15 Years!

This year, AJ will be celebrating working at Alray Tire and Auto for **15 years!** If you know AJ, you know he is so proud to be a member of the Alray Team. He loves helping the mechanics maintain the shop by keeping it clean. AJ is a dedicated, hard worker who is always ready to lend a helping hand. When not working, AJ loves to volunteer. His favorite place to volunteer is Farm Café, helping the Chefs cook and making a tasty meal for all to enjoy! AJ loves to go for walks at local parks such as the Greenway and Brookshire Park with his friends. He is also a great bowler and bocce player!

Celebrating 10 Years!

This April, **Elizabeth** will have been working at the Watauga Humane Society for **10 years!** She started this job after graduating high school and has loved every minute of working there. Elizabeth is great with animals and enjoys caring for the cats at the shelter. She is passionate about her work and has made great friendships with her coworkers. Here's to another 10 years! Elizabeth is currently volunteering at Valle Crucis School. She loves interacting with the kids and hearing all the stories they share with her. She is also very active in Special Olympics. She loves to compete in volleyball, basketball, pickleball, tennis and skiing. Recently Elizabeth won gold in Alpine Skiing during the Special Olympics Southeast U.S. Winter Games here at Appalachian Ski Mountain.



Elizabeth Presnell



Courtney Bell

Celebrating 5 Years!

Courtney Bell celebrated her **5-year** work anniversary with Heavenly Touch in February of this year. Heavenly Touch is a local salon and spa where Courtney works to keep the building sanitary. This year, Courtney began riding the Appalcart bus to and from work, and is very proud of her accomplishment. You may also know Courtney from her second job at Peppers Restaurant on the weekends! Courtney loves both of her jobs and hopes to stay for many years to come! When not working, Courtney is a member of the ASU gospel choir, and volunteers with the Racquet ball team on campus. She is a star in the weight room of parks and recreation, and has been powerlifting there for several years!

2023-24 Program Evaluation

WOI served a total of 1,718 individuals as follows:

LTCS	44	Evaluation, Work Adjustment, CBA	53
Innovations	17	Supported Employment	54
SE Follow-Along	64	School and Pre-ETS	1,486



A total of **69** individuals were placed in community jobs. Participants provided 4,274 hours of civic volunteer hours. Satisfaction surveys yielded 98% positive responses rate.

Quality Update

In December we had our controlled environment rooms certified for continued use. Our controlled environment rooms are tested to maintain a maximum of 100,000 particles per cubic foot (a class 100,000 environment) for the manufacture of medical products.

March 26th-28th, our Administrative Assistant, Olivia Dickens-Bowman, attended MARC sponsored training on ISO 13485: 2016 requirements and internal auditing of a QMS per ISO 19011:2018. To help assess the effectiveness of our quality management system, we have regular, planned internal audits performed by specially trained staff members.

Delivering Holiday Cheer!



This holiday season WOI participants and staff were able to give gifts to over 30 children supported through High Country Caregivers! High Country Caregivers is a not for profit organization dedicated to relatives, respite, and resources for kinship caregivers. Watauga Opportunities was able to donate several gift packages for children ages 0-17, as well as adopting two of their "angel tree" children so they would have piles of gifts to open on Christmas morning. WOI was also able to donate food to a family of 5 children for their Christmas dinner.

Highlight: Ashe Opportunities

In the aftermath of Helene, Ashe Opportunities' sprung to action to help their community in their time of need. In the first weeks following the hurricane, Ashe Opportunities worked with local distribution sites to coordinate and deliver donations. In the Christmas season, Ashe Opportunities' worked with other agencies and individuals to help a young family whom had lost their house and belongings during the hurricane. With aid from the community, Ashe Opportunities' was able to assist the coordinating donations of furniture, household items, clothes, and electronics to the family in need. As spring arrives, Ashe Opportunities is working alongside, a local nonprofit, Keep Ashe Beautiful, to assist in collecting debris and waste from local parks, walking trails and along the New River.

2025 WOI Calendar of Events

Closed:

January 20th for MLK Jr Day

April 18th for Good Friday

May 26th for Memorial Day

Events:

January 30th BOD Meeting

March 27th BOD Meeting

April 24-25th CARF Survey



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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(828) 264-5009 • www.woiworks.org

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