

Embracing the Present, Eyes on the Future.



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Despite a year of unprecedented challenges, the individuals and families we serve persevered.

They **GREW**. They **LEARNED**. And they **THRIVED**.

Birch Family Services and the people we support share a history. We share goals, hopes, and dreams. We embrace where we are today, and we look to the future for even more opportunities. Our goal is to continue to grow as an organization and to expand our capabilities to better serve the individuals, families, and communities that rely on us.

By meeting and overcoming the challenges of today, the people we support and our staff give us even more hope for tomorrow. The future has never looked brighter.



2,000

children, adolescents, and adults with autism and developmental disabilities, and their families, supported each year



1,200

students in early education and school-age programs



140

individuals in 19 supervised residences and supported living for those who are more independent



50

individuals receiving life skills training at home/ in the community



100

New Frontier members benefiting from supportive employment, socialization, life skills, and more



39%

of pre-school graduates enrolled in either general education or integrated kindergarten programs



Letter from our **CEO**

Dear Friends,

Every time I visit one of Birch Family Services’ programs across New York City, I am impressed by the commitment our staff demonstrates in their work with our students, individuals, and supporting our daily operations. But this year took it to the next level.

No year is ordinary in our field, but this past milestone year has been filled with challenges and opportunities none of us could have imagined. Yes, COVID-19 and its effects have been unprecedented. But what has truly made this year remarkable is both how we have risen to the challenges and all that we have accomplished despite them. In short, we bounced back quickly on the strength of a resilience built over 45 years. And we accomplished a lot.

We expanded our Board of Directors with four new members joining our community and a new leader at the helm. Robin Keller, who served as Board Chair since 2005, stepped down. During her tenure, she oversaw the organization’s transformative growth to meet the changing needs of individuals with autism and developmental disabilities and their families. We recognize all that she has done and look forward to her continued participation on the Board. We welcomed Sameer Gadre’s appointment to Board Chair effective January 1, 2021. He brings strategic and financial acumen along with a personal passion for our mission. We appreciate his commitment and remain excited about Birch’s potential to grow and excel under his leadership as we continue to expand and diversify our educational, residential, employment and community support services.

While distressing and heartbreaking for our community, COVID-19 also managed to bring out the best in our organization. Our frontline direct support professionals, clinicians, managers and support staff continued to demonstrate extraordinary grace, dedication, and passion under fire and are our true heroes of the year. Our frontline staff put the needs of the people we support ahead of their own, working tirelessly during this extremely difficult time. Thank you. We are honored by your service.

In addition, our commitment to supporting people in the community in a quality manner has led to capital improvements in our residences. Construction was recently

completed on two new homes for 14 people in Ozone Park, Queens. To support their transition to adulthood, six recent graduates from our Children’s Residence Program moved in to one earlier this year and eight individuals with ambulation and health needs began moving into our new barrier-free residence in June.

Thanks to the exceptional efforts of our Education staff, students saw their teachers and therapists each morning. Initially through remote learning, and then through a hybrid model of instruction, students received individual support from teachers and related service providers. As infection rates diminished and vaccination rates increased across the city, we expanded in-school instruction to four-days per week and started the September session with students in their classrooms five days per week. Our New Frontier staff also met the needs of our program participants as many struggled in the wake of pandemic-related layoffs.

We celebrated our 45th anniversary of service to the community in October by combining our annual 5K race and gala into a week-long virtual celebration that helped to raise much needed private revenue, grow our community of supporters, and heighten the organization’s visibility. In May, we hosted a second 5K race. The new event, 5K Forward: Fast Track to Empowerment, was the most successful to date and engaged all of our stakeholders in-person and virtually.

The pandemic has had a profound impact on all members of the Birch community and beyond. But rather than breaking us, it tapped into our extraordinary reserve of resilience to overcome a year of unprecedented challenges and to stand ready for what lies ahead. This is why I remain hopeful and optimistic about the future of Birch Family Services and the people we support as we expand our reach to meet the rising need for our services. As always, we will meet this challenge together, as partners and as a community.

Warm regards,

Matt Sturiale
President & CEO, LCSW



Letter from our **BOARD CHAIR**

Dear Friends,

In 2018, my wife and I learned our son was on the autism spectrum. We began a journey to learn as much as we could about autism so we could be the best parents and effective advocates for our son. Digesting the available information was a nearly overwhelming but necessary step in identifying the critical support services our son would need for success, and key to our evolution as a family.

I started looking for ways to leverage my professional skills in business and finance to contribute to the field of autism and developmental disabilities, which led me to join the Board of Directors at Birch Family Services in 2019. As a recognized leader in early childhood education and as a provider that supports individuals across their lifetimes, Birch is making a strong impact in New York City, thanks to its experienced leadership team, committed Board of Directors, and dedicated and expert staff. But what attracted me most was the emphasis on person-centered supports: meeting people where they are and empowering them to fulfill their personal goals. I also appreciated the support Birch provides as families navigate significant milestones with their loved ones. As a parent who had to sort through all the often-overwhelming information about autism, this philosophy struck a chord with me.

I am also humbled to succeed Robin E. Keller, who served as Chair since 2005. Birch Family Services has benefited from Robin’s stewardship and expertise during these transformative times. During her tenure, the organization expanded residential and day services for adults with developmental disabilities; established a Children’s Residential Program to support adolescents ages 10-21; and launched the New Frontier program to help young adults with autism achieve personal and career goals following graduation. She is a passionate advocate for those we support, and I am grateful for her continued leadership on the Board.

Since joining Birch, I have been impressed by the dedication of our workforce. On March 20, 2020, when everyone else was told to stay at home and keep safe from COVID-19, our DSPs and frontline staff selflessly came to work to support individuals living in our group homes, in the community, and with their families. In addition to providing the same

high-quality level of service that our community expects, our committed DSPs returned to work each day to provide solace and safety.

Similarly, as the pandemic struck, our Education staff were gathering resources to support families at home and drawing up virtual learning plans for our pre-school and school-age students to get back to “normal” as quickly as possible. Birch teachers, teaching assistants, and related services staff made this difficult time as seamless as possible and minimized disruption to our students’ education and routine.

I would like to say to our staff: No matter the role you play within the organization, you are the heart of Birch Family Services. Thank you for your extraordinary efforts in supporting our individuals and families. Your resilience and commitment continue to motivate and inspire me and the entire Board of Directors.

To the parents and families we support, I would like to say that we are humbled by the faith and trust you have placed in our organization to provide the services your loved ones require. In partnership with you, Birch Family Services is committed to supporting individuals and their families at every stage of their lives.

To say that the last year and a half has been challenging is an understatement. Even now, we continue to see so many new COVID cases being reported in NYC. Thank you to all in the Birch community for your support and partnership as we continue to navigate this pandemic and beyond. I look forward to working with my fellow Board members, our President and CEO Matt Sturiale, and the entire leadership to expand and diversify our educational, residential, employment, and community support services.

Sincerely,

Sameer Gadre
Board Chair

Fighting For A More **INCLUSIVE** **TOMORROW**

We are unceasing advocates not just for the people we support and their families, but also for everyone living with autism and developmental disabilities. Our city, our state, and our country have made progress, but we still have a long way to go. We contribute to that progress by going well beyond our own programs and facilities to work towards a world where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential—at home, in school, and at work—and lead fulfilling lives.



4 Birch Family Services



OUR ADVOCACY

Birch Family Services has fought for the civil rights of the people we support and their families for over 45 years. That fight will always be an integral part of our mission.

Many of our staff, as well as the individuals and families we support, are active partners in our advocacy efforts. This advocacy goes well beyond the people we serve to help everyone with developmental disabilities get the care, support, and opportunities they deserve.

Partnering with Elected Officials

With sector partners and trade organizations—including ANCOR, Inter-Agency Council (IAC), NY Alliance, NY Disability Advocates (NYDA), and Caring Parents, among others—we demanded that federal, state, and city officials keep their promises and continue to support our programs with increased funding, not the proposed cuts we've seen.

In addition, we joined ANCOR, our national trade association, along with other advocacy organizations, self-advocates with autism and developmental disabilities, and families in a day of action to support a provision in the American Rescue Plan. The provision grants a temporary increase in Medicaid funding for Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) during the pandemic. The Medicaid HCBS program empowers the elderly and people with disabilities to be integral members of their communities.

We again joined ANCOR and other partners to urge elected officials to support the federal Better Care Better Jobs Act (BCBJA) (H.R. 4131/S.2210) and to ensure that \$400 billion for HCBS remains in the package. Passage of BCBJA would correct the long-

standing issue of underfunding Medicaid HCBS, which has caused the wages of Direct Support Professionals to fall as low as minimum wage.

Fighting for Fairness

There is no question that future funding for students with disabilities must go well beyond present levels.

In the most recent budget cycle, New York State public school districts received more than \$14 billion in federal funding, an 11.3% overall increase and a 7.6% foundation aid increase. Nonprofit, special education schools that serve students with disabilities only received a 4% increase.

Rallying around the message that “4% does not equal 7%,” we joined IAC and groups across the state to insist that our children deserve the same financial support as those in public schools. We will continue to press our elected officials for this funding.

We also worked tirelessly and successfully to persuade NYDA to delay proposed cuts to our residential programs and shone a much-needed spotlight on recruitment challenges in our field.

Thanks to these efforts, we're seeing elected officials:

- Support our causes in education
- Seriously address issues such as tuition revenue, access, and parity
- Recognize that our workforce is essential
- Hear and understand concerns from families in need
- Begin developing plans for the future of the people we serve

Embracing Our **EVERYDAY HEROES**

In 2021, the professionals who help the people we support and their families lead active, rewarding lives selflessly overcame the enormous challenges posed by the pandemic. They proved, as always, that they are the heart and soul of Birch Family Services, an integral part of our rich history and hopeful future. We support them, just as they support the people we empower every day.



OUR FRONTLINE WORKFORCE

The frontline staff who provide day-to-day support to children, adolescents, and adults are some of the strongest supporters of people with autism and developmental disabilities and their families. Whether in our schools and residences or out in the community, Birch staff has continually supported our ever-growing array of services.

These compassionate caregivers, teachers, advocates, and friends help the people we serve and their families in four vitally important areas: relationship building; promoting physical and emotional well-being; building life skills, independence, and inclusion; and crisis intervention.

The individuals and families we support put their trust in our frontline workers, and our staff works hard every day to maintain that trust. Their commitment to the mission and people of Birch Family Services are the heart and soul of the work we do, both now and in the future.



Our Teachers

What our teachers do has always been critically important and complex. The pandemic made it even more so. Birch Family Services educators teach children how to learn, express their emotions, solve problems, engage with others, and persist in the face of challenges. They build relationships with children and families from a variety of backgrounds and with a diverse array of needs. During the pandemic, our teaching staff had to rapidly learn new ways of teaching, while making families feel connected—even as they struggled to find their own balance at home. They worked tirelessly to treat every student with care, empathy, and understanding. Most importantly, our teachers continued to provide quality educational experiences for our students and helped our children reach their academic goals.

Our Direct Support Professionals

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) tirelessly provide assistance and training to the people we support to help them achieve their goals, their dreams, and their fullest potential. Through the lockdowns of COVID-19 and in the face of uncertainty, our DSPs and frontline staff selflessly demonstrated what it means to be an essential worker. In addition to providing the same high-quality level of service that our community expects, our committed DSPs showed up each day to provide solace and safety for the individuals they support, even as some became ill. They do this each day with patience, sensitivity, and careful judgment.

Our Clinicians

Throughout the pandemic, our clinical staff, including nurses, behavior intervention specialists, quality assurance team, and related services professionals, have been a source of strength for the entire Birch community. Many have worked around-the-clock to provide vital work to keep the people we support safe and manage their health needs. Our clinicians also helped to promote COVID-19 education among staff and families through workshops and training, care management, safety guidelines, use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and vaccination awareness.

Envisioning EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY



Today, more than ever, education is the pathway to a fulfilling life and successful future. For the people we support and their families, we provide more than just an education. We strive to provide opportunity, both now and later in life. We ensure that they have equal opportunities to reach their full potential.

OUR PROGRAMS EDUCATION

Despite the challenges that COVID-19 posed for every school, Birch Family Services never wavered in the commitment to provide a free, high-quality education to students with autism and developmental disabilities at all 11 of our school programs.



This school year we provided hybrid (in-person and remote) and remote-only models of instruction at all of our schools. In addition, we continued ongoing collaboration with families to ensure that we offered equitable educational opportunities for all students, while remaining sensitive to families’ needs and limitations. Throughout the year, we progressively provided opportunities for increased in-person instruction.

Programs that Give Every Student an Equal Opportunity to Succeed

Birch Family Services supports students who are referred by the New York City Department of Education (DOE) when public school districts and District 75 special education schools cannot meet their needs. In fiscal year 2020-21, we offered 11 education programs for students ages 3-21 across New York City. Eight of those were early childhood programs for children ages 3-5, including:

- Pre-School Special Education (4410)
- Early Learn Services
- Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK)

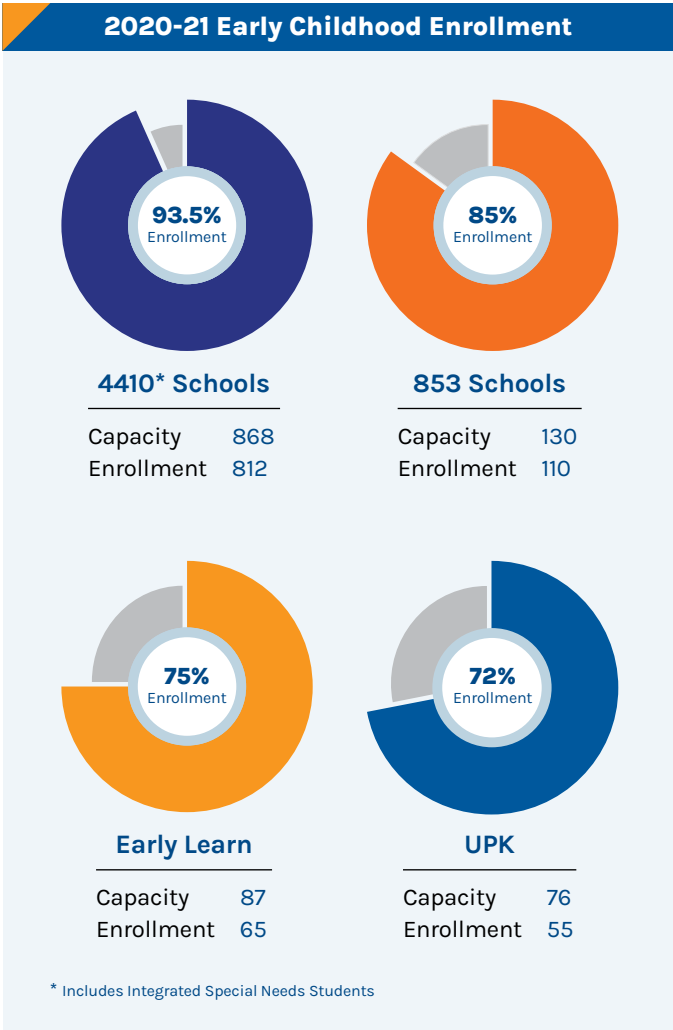
We also operated three School-Age Special Education programs at 853-designated schools. We met students where they were academically, tailoring instruction to each child’s needs, capabilities, and potential.

Early Childhood Education

Our schools in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx are unique environments for children ages 3-5, with programs that combine education with therapeutic intervention to help them advance their current skills and develop new ones.

Their achievements were impressive:

- 39% of pre-school graduates enrolled in either general education or integrated kindergarten programs in district schools.
- 38% of pre-school graduates progressed enough to move to a less restrictive environment.





School-Age Special Education

Our 853-designated School-Age programs help students develop independence, meet future educational goals, and advocate for themselves. We use research-based assessments and specialized curriculums to provide individualized instruction for each child.

Birch offers 12-month school-age programs at three New York State-approved non-public schools in Manhattan and Queens. The programs, which serve students ages 5-8, 5-11, and 10-21, are funded by students' local school districts. Birch education services are provided at no cost to families.

To help our students every day, we partner with parents as an integral part of their children's education. That partnership and collaboration helps students learn and grow today and transition to new programs tomorrow. By giving families critical tools and strategies, we help them become strong advocates for their children as they transition through school and into adult life.

Family Engagement

This year, we provided additional assistance, as well as emotional and technical support, to help parents and caregivers meet the challenges they and their students faced.

Because a parent is their child's best advocate, Birch's Education Department held its first Parent Advisory Committee meeting in April 2021. The committee provides a forum for parents, Education Department leadership, and staff to discuss challenges, opportunities, and ways to further their child's education. While principals and teachers are always available to speak with parents, the Parent Advisory Committee brings more voices from across the Birch community to a larger table and enriches the discussion of what is happening in our schools today and how we can be even better in the future.



SUCCESS STORY Jordan's Journey to High School Graduation

Like most students across the city, Jordan Berry, 21, had a tough year transitioning from full, classroom instruction with his teachers and peers to remote learning from home. This was especially tough for Jordan since this was his last year at the Phyllis L. Susser School for Exceptional Children. After 10 years with Birch, Jordan was ready to graduate.

The Susser School, for students ages 10-21, pivoted to at-home instruction when all school buildings closed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The sudden changes in routines created challenges for students, families, and school officials who worked tirelessly to balance student health and safety

with a quality education. "Many kids had a rough time with this learning approach, especially our kids with special needs," said Espa Sergiou, Birch Director of Education. "The key was to work closely with families to better understand the needs and provide what was necessary."

Nonetheless, Jordan's mother said that he took it all in stride. "Although this was a tough year, the outcome was very positive," said Ms. Berry. "The teachers worked very well with the children. It was a very productive year for him."

Ms. Berry said that Birch Family Services was the best thing for her



son and his growth. "The longer he attended the school, the more I saw his maturity level improve," she said. In fact, Jordan's whole family was dancing and singing as they watched him graduate at the school's outdoor ceremony in June.

"It was a big day for him," Berry said. "It was a big moment for him and my family. We're very proud of Jordan. He has come a long way."

Glossary of Education Terms

853 Schools: Under section 853 of the NYS Education Law, 853-designated schools are nonprofit school-age special education programs that serve students ages 5 to 21 with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and disabilities. Students are referred by the New York City Department of Education (DOE) when public school districts and District 75 special education schools cannot meet the student's needs.

4410 Schools: Under section 4410 of the NYS Education Law, 4410-designated schools are nonprofit pre-school special education programs that serve students ages 3 to 5 with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and disabilities. Students are referred by the New York City Department of Education (DOE) through the Committee on Pre School Special Education (CPSE).

Early Childhood Education: Early childhood education refers to educational programs that support the cognitive and social development of children in their pre-school years (3-5), before they are old enough to enter kindergarten.

Individualized Education Plans (IEP): The Individualized Education Plan is a legal document that is developed for each public school child in the U.S. who needs special education. It is created through a team of the child's parents and district personnel who are knowledgeable about the child's needs. IEPs often include mandates for various therapeutic services to be received during school hours, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech/language therapy, and counseling.

New York EarlyLearn: EarlyLearn is New York City's contracted early care and education program managed by the New York City Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE). The program offers free or low-cost childcare and educational options for children 0-4 years from eligible families.

School-Age: School-Age education refers to educational programs that support the education of children from kindergarten until graduation from high school (5-21).

Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK): Universal Pre-Kindergarten provides children ages 3-4 with early childhood education before they begin kindergarten. In this setting, they learn to problem-solve, ask questions, and explore the world around them.

Cultivating GREATER INDEPENDENCE

Birch Family Services Community Services division helps individuals manage their own lives as much as possible at home, at work, and in the community. Our services include:

- Residential Services
- Day and Community Habilitation
- Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) options
- New Frontier employment program

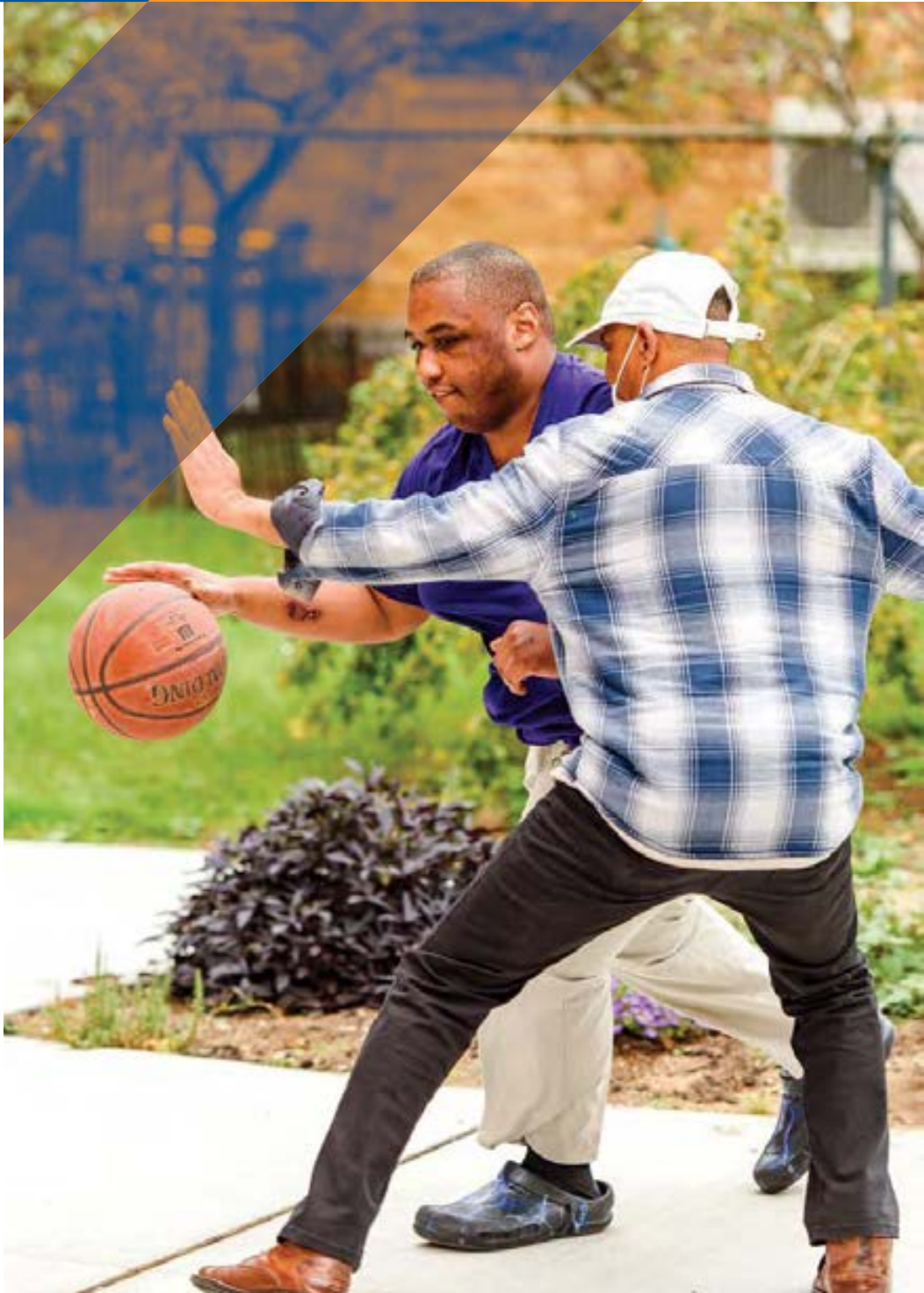
Residential: Supporting the Responsibilities of Daily Living

We give children, adolescents, and adults the opportunity to live independently in Birch residences, starting at age 10. There, they receive 24-hour supervision in either Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs) or Individual Residential Alternatives (IRAs). Each of the 140 individuals living in our residences has a personalized plan to help them live rewarding, fulfilling lives. We help every resident:

- Develop independent living skills
- Become an active member of the community
- Stay healthy
- Pursue their life goals

Many of our residences were opened because of requests from families. We are honored that families whose children attend one of our schools have asked us to continue supporting them and their children once schooling ends.

To respond to ever-growing needs, we developed two new IRAs in Queens. Six young men who aged out of our Children's Residential Program (CRP) were able to continue receiving



residential services from Birch. In addition, eight people will have the opportunity to live in a barrier-free environment that meets their physical and medical needs.

- In the coming year, we plan to open an additional two residences, including:
- A six-person residence for students who will graduate from our CRP in 2022
 - A four-person IRA for individuals living with aging caregivers who are no longer able to support them

Children's Residential Program

To help families meet the challenges they face every day in caring for children with complex needs, we created the dual-support Children's Residential Program. The program combines education and residential services and provides service recipients with 24/7 support. Several students from the Phyllis L. Susser School for Exceptional Children also live in our Children's Residential Program residences in Brooklyn. Students ages 10-21 develop life skills in a highly structured, integrated educational and home environment.

SUCCESS STORY Room to Grow: A New Residence for Graduates in Queens

We strive to provide the individuals and families who turn to us with uninterrupted support across their lifetimes. When six young men preparing to graduate from our Children's Residential Program (CRP) and their families expressed the desire for additional residential services from Birch, we were honored to accommodate them. Some of these men had lived at the CRP in Brooklyn and attended the Phyllis L. Susser School for Exceptional Children since they were 10 years old. We know them and their families well, and their trust means everything to us.



After receiving approval from the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) to develop a new residential program tailored to assist in the young men's transition from school to adulthood, Birch was pleased to open a new home in Ozone Park, Queens. The sunny and spacious residence provides plenty of room for the six young men to stretch their wings in an adult setting. Now that everyone is moved in and getting to know their new, diverse community, we can't wait to see what the future holds for them.

As Director of Community Services and New Frontier, Lisa Sterrantino said, "They're men now, and their possibilities are limitless."

"Birch has provided our family with so much support over the years, first at the Phyllis L. Susser School and now with the new residences," said James Peebles, father of Joshua, who moved into the Ozone Park residence in June. "We feel like there's nothing Birch wouldn't do for us and nothing we wouldn't do for Birch."



Habilitation: Teaching and Supporting Life Skills

One of our core values is to empower individuals to thrive and families to remain together.

We offer a wide variety of life skills and family support programs for adolescents and adults to help them live more independently. Funded by the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), our homes and community-based programs support individuals and families as they work on non-vocational personal skills, develop desired community relationships, become powerful self-advocates, and make informed choices.

Our Day Habilitation program provides on-site and community-based support. Individuals enrolled in the program receive life skills training to increase independence and to learn to advocate for themselves. The program also provides participants with volunteer opportunities at many not-for-profit community locations.

Through our Community Habilitation program, individuals who do not live in a residence certified by OPWDD are empowered to live as independently as possible. Individuals enrolled in this program learn life skills and pursue social and leisure interests in their community. They also engage in travel/transportation training activities and develop self-advocacy skills.

During the pandemic, Day Habilitation programs were closed from March to early September 2020. Birch staff continued to support individuals and their families. We provided face-to-face visits, engaged with individuals virtually, and offered other non-face-to-face supports like delivering groceries and assisting with outdoor chores.



New Frontier: Training for the Working World

We help the people we support achieve what most of us want: to be productive, to make strong social connections, to take part in their community, and to be more responsible for their own lives and welfare. We assist with vocational preparation, job acquisition, customized employment, and ongoing support to help participants find and maintain employment.

New Frontier helps young adults on the autism spectrum achieve those goals and prepare for the adult world through four types of programs:

- Employment Services
- Health & Wellness
- Community Living
- Social & Recreation

Due to the pandemic, several participants in the New Frontier

programs were either laid off or furloughed from their positions. During this period, staff provided encouragement and support as participants either went back to work or found new positions. To date, seven New Frontier participants have returned to work or found new employment.

Autism Awareness Initiative

Through the New York City Council's Autism Awareness Initiative, New Frontier offered support groups and recreational and educational workshops for young adults with autism throughout the year.

Because adulthood is more than just work, we also offered workshops on yoga and mindfulness, friendships and dating, nutrition and social skills, and organized the Social Leisure Club. This year, we added a new series dedicated to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Keeping People Safe with Telehealth

In the summer of 2020, Birch Family Services implemented a telehealth program in all 20 of our community residences across Manhattan. In partnership with the Cerebral Palsy Association of New York State, with additional funding from the TD Charitable Foundation, telemedicine is now an essential component of our plan to keep the individuals living in Birch group homes safe during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Before telemedicine, anyone needing more advanced medical services than Birch staff could provide had to be transported to an emergency room or urgent care facility. This exposed individuals and staff to the risk of infection with COVID-19. To address this concern, we outfitted each of

our residences with the capacity to consult with a qualified physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant at any time of day or night, 365 days a year.

Today, each residence is equipped with a telemedicine cart that includes state-of-the-art technology, including a camera; Microsoft Surface tablet; and a Bluetooth keyboard, which is connected to diagnostic equipment, such as a stethoscope, EKG, pulse oximeter, and other tools. With the assistance of trained staff, the units allow individuals to speak with a doctor to obtain a diagnosis, attain a prescription, and receive other essential health services without risking their health and the health of others.



"Emergency room visits cause anxiety in the people we support and potentially expose them to other illnesses," said our Nurse Administrator, Lucille Golembiewski. "These units save numerous trips to the emergency room and provide timely assessments in the comfort of their own home."

Navigating services and technology at home and in-office did pose some challenges. For instance, many program members lacked the appropriate technology and skills to participate from home. To alleviate some difficulties, Birch provided Chromebooks to members who needed technological support. These laptops enabled New Frontier members to participate in services remotely throughout the pandemic.

With public and private support, we:

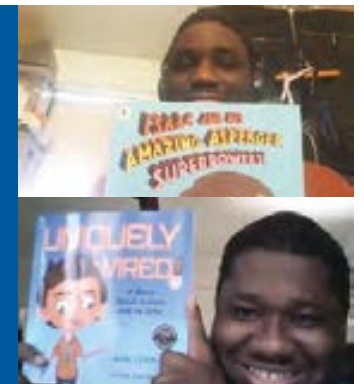
- Increased the number of people we support in employment
- Helped staff build their professional skills, through corporate mentoring and the development of updated marketing material
- Conducted seminars/workshops for young adults on school-to-workplace transitions and neurodiversity in the workplace

SUCCESS STORY Alexander and Ajuwon Share Their Stories

For National Autism Acceptance & Awareness Month in April, two members of Birch's New Frontier program were invited to read to pre-schoolers at the Pelham Bay Early Childhood Center in the Bronx. Alex and Ajuwon jumped at the chance. As members of New Frontier, the two young men have become proficient self-advocates and speak about their autism whenever they can.

In April, Alexander read Elizabeth Ryan Peete's and Holly Robinson Peete's *My Brother Charlie*, a story about a boy with autism. In the book, Charlie's brain works in a special way, making it more difficult for him to make friends or to show his true feelings. Alexander told students that he found a lot of similarities between himself and Charlie. "I love reading to little kids!" he said. "I like talking to them about autism and sharing my own experience."

Ajuwon read Julia Cook's *Uniquely Wired: A Story About Autism and Its Gifts*, the story of Zak, an autistic boy who wants people to understand how he experiences the world. "I'm a lot like Zak," said Ajuwon. "I do what I have to do, and I don't let anything keep me down. I hope that hearing me read this story made the kids feel that way, too!"



Creating FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Our partners are critical to our mission. Thanks to many donors, families, corporate and government partners, we have been able to continually expand our services and build for the future.



Birch Family Services was built on partnerships: partnerships with the people we support and their families, as well as organizations and corporate partners that share our mission. We could not do the critically important work we do without them.

Our partners have become increasingly important as we work together to expand our programs, our services, and our community. They are an integral part of both our present and our future.

Partnerships that Drive Our Mission

For over 45 years, we have partnered with our families, advocated for those with disabilities, and worked with other organizations to further our missions. The support of our partners, partners like you, empowers us to make lasting and positive impacts every single day.

In partnership with the Gladys Brooks Foundation, Birch is constructing five “Snoezelen” Multi-Sensory Rooms designed to benefit individuals on the spectrum and with sensory disorders in our schools and residences. We believe this treatment milieu has tremendous potential to support individuals in integrated environments, meets a newly addressed healthcare need, and will improve the outcomes

for the people we serve. These rooms are specially designed to deliver stimuli to various senses, using lighting effects, color, sounds, music, scents, etc. We look forward to sharing our progress once construction is completed.

Families Are Our Future

The families who count on us are key to our mutual success as we work together to support and learn from each other. Birch Family Services empowers and educates families by providing the resources they need to advocate, navigate, and access important support services for their loved ones. We help them find and use the resources they need today and may require tomorrow.

- We help people and families plan for their future in five critical ways:
- We embrace a philosophy of partnership with every family we serve.
 - We encourage and help families to be fierce advocates for their loved ones.
 - We help every family and individual we support make well-informed choices that best serve them and help ensure brighter futures.
 - We support families as they develop and manage their life plans.
 - We empower families by providing workshops and tools they need to support their loved ones.

Building a Future with Corporate Partners

In 2018, Birch Family Services began to bring like-minded corporate supporters together with the launch of the Corporate Advisory Network (CAN), which serves as both an advisory body and a strategic partner. Those first members began a tradition of sharing best practices, expertise, and opportunities to help boost employment and internship opportunities for the people we support.

In three brief years, CAN has grown from 14 to 75 committed members. The group regularly organizes meetings with partners from across the business community that share our commitment to the principles of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

This year, many exciting opportunities developed because of partnerships fortified through CAN. With the addition of so many new members, Birch offered a workshop for corporate partners to learn more about supporting people with autism and developmental disabilities in the workplace.

OUR PARTNERSHIPS

JPMorgan Chase Gives Smiles over the Holidays



We rely on the generosity of our corporate partners who are committed to our mission of empowerment, and during this trying year, our corporate partners rallied to the cause.

As part of our Year-End Holiday Campaign, junior analysts at JPMorgan Chase secured \$9,000 for Birch Family Services to support people living in our 18 residences during the holidays. Along with the truly impressive contribution, the analysts took time from

their hectic days to send holiday cards to each person in our residential programs—a total of 126 cards. The funds were used to provide gift cards for residents to purchase something special for themselves.

Thank you, JPMorgan Chase!

In honor of Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, participants of our New Frontier program were invited by CAN founding member Virtu Financial for a job interview workshop with the financial technology company’s staff, where they received valuable advice and feedback to aid in their job search. On World Autism Day, Redesign Health, a new corporate partner, hosted an Employee Readiness Program that paired New Frontier participants with the company’s staff to review resumes and conduct mock interviews. Throughout the year, CAN members from PwC, JPMorgan Chase, and Amazon participated in volunteer reading opportunities, promoting literacy among students. CAN’s work is ongoing, and we look forward to fostering new partnerships in the coming years.

Advancing Advocacy Today and Tomorrow

Many of the services for individuals with autism and developmental

disabilities that now exist resulted from our advocacy and strategic alliances.

Our leadership works with all internal and external stakeholders—including families, self-advocates, government, and other providers—to help shape advocacy and program priorities for the agency. Birch leadership are active members of major trade associations and advisory groups working on critical topics in the developmental disabilities field, including:

- Care coordination
- Managed care readiness
- Public policy
- Long-term care services
- Early childhood education

Birch executives also serve in active leadership roles on the Boards of Directors for other organizations that help people with disabilities, as well as the educators and professionals who support them.

Strengthening Our Connections For A **BRIGHTER TOMORROW**

SPECIAL EVENTS



The pandemic may have canceled many in-person events, but it didn't slow us down. Our supporters never wavered when in-person events became virtual. We salute all of our patrons who stayed with us as we virtually gathered to raise funds to benefit the people we support.

Our two signature events have become increasingly popular among our supporters and stakeholders. They made it clear that even a pandemic wouldn't dampen their enthusiasm.

When celebrating in-person was not possible, we combined our signature events to create a new, virtual event: a celebration of our 45 years of service, Birch@45. The anniversary event was our most ambitious, and one of our most popular, events of all time.

A Year of Virtual Events and Celebrations

In typical years, we celebrated our accomplishments, connected with supporters, and raised funds through two events: a 5K race and a gala. This year was anything but typical.



BIRCH@45 Virtual Event

When New York and much of the country shut down at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, our annual Gala, previously held in May, was no longer possible. To make up for the loss of revenue, we immediately began planning an alternative fundraising event in the fall.

The new BIRCH@45 event kicked off 45 days of activities to celebrate our 45th anniversary of providing services to the community. The activities, which largely took place at our various sites, included interactive healthy cooking classes; yoga, stretching, and exercises; and art projects honoring our milestone anniversary. On October 26, we concluded the festivities with a virtual event, Celebrating Today, Building Tomorrow: HONORING BIRCH@45.

Hundreds of supporters across the country joined us online as we honored Scott Simon, host of NPR's Weekend Edition and author of Sunnyside Plaza, with our Voices of Hope Award.

Scott shared how his experience working at a group home when he was a teenager changed his life. We also honored our dear friends, Dr. Ronald and Jean Rawitt, with our Legacy Award for their many years of service and support for Birch Family Services, including Jean's nearly 15 years on our Board of Directors.

Through the generosity of our supporters, the event raised over \$360,000.

5K Forward: Fast Track to Empowerment

We hosted our ninth annual race, 5K Forward: Fast Track to Empowerment, over a week in May, and it was a tremendous success. Hundreds of families, students, and corporate partners joined the virtual race by running and walking in their own neighborhoods, raising an unprecedented \$149,000 for critical services.

In addition to over 200 registrants, more than 850 children, adolescents, and adults we support participated in our schools, residences, and other programs across New York City with inclusive events promoting health and wellness.



Building Our FUTURE TOGETHER

WAYS YOU CAN GIVE



The need for your support has never been greater. The generosity of our donors is critical to helping us provide services and support to people with autism and developmental disabilities, as well as their families.

Your support is invaluable to Birch Family Services, whether through financial gifts or gifts of time as a volunteer. There are many ways to support us, and we thank you in advance.

Our Future Is in Your Hands

Birch Family Services relies on dedicated donors like you. Please help us empower and support individuals with autism and developmental disabilities and their families.

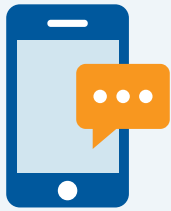
Three Ways To Give



Online*

Make an online donation at birchfamilyservices.org/donate. Your contribution will be 100% tax-deductible.

*Please consider a monthly gift. To make a recurring donation, select "Monthly" as your gift frequency.



Text-to-Give

Text "BIRCH" to **414-44** to donate quickly and easily.



Check

Please make check payable to "Birch Family Services, Inc.", and mail it to the following address:
Birch Family Services
104 West 29th Street, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10001

Volunteer with Birch

We need dedicated volunteers like you to help manage events and support our programs throughout the year. If you would like to donate your time, we welcome your participation. Read at one of our eight pre-schools and three school-age programs that support more than 1,000 Birch students. Come help organize or staff our annual 5K race. Host a mock interview session for Birch New Frontier members. There are many possibilities!

More than a Donation

PLANNED GIVING

Planned gifts provide an opportunity to support Birch Family Services in a meaningful way without giving a large outright gift. Planned gifts can offer substantial tax savings to donors, especially on appreciated properties

and securities. Your gift can reduce your income tax and avoid capital gains tax.

STOCK DONATIONS

Donating stock is a great way to contribute to Birch Family Services and receive charitable donation credit for tax purposes for the full face-value of the stock. Securities can be gifted to Birch Family Services by electronic transfer. Please contact your broker to begin this process.

SUPPORT BIRCH WHILE YOU SHOP

Amazon Smile

Visit smile.amazon.com and designate Birch Family Services as your charity of choice, or visit smile.amazon.com/ch/11-2503193 and start shopping. Support Birch Family Services every time you shop on Amazon!

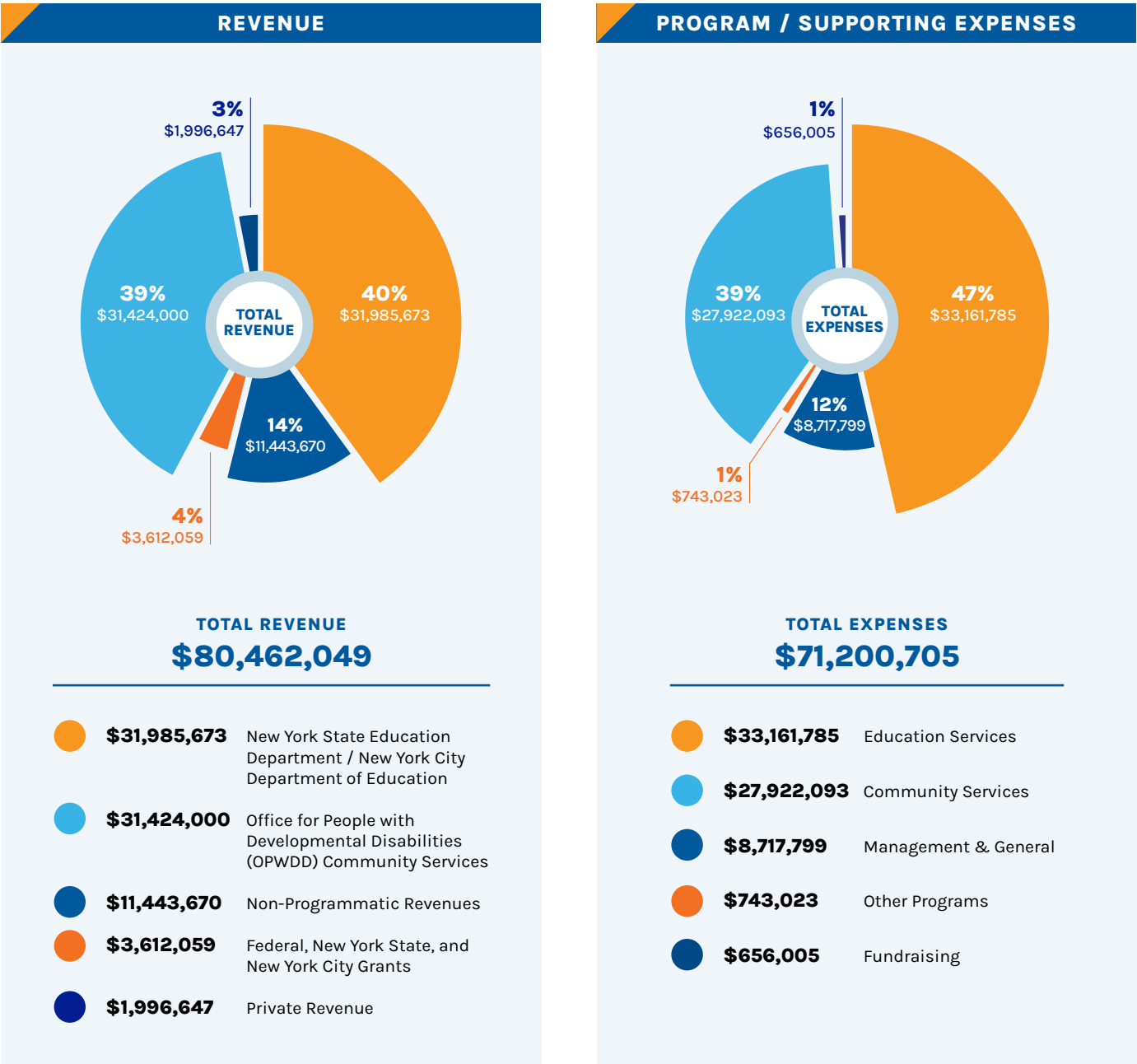
PayPal Giving Fund

Designate Birch Family Services as your charity of choice on PayPal. Visit paypal.com/us/fundraiser/hub and search Birch Family Services to choose the organization as your favorite charity, or just visit bit.ly/3ATFXcr for quick and convenient opportunities to support Birch Family Services when you shop online!



Birch Family Services empowers individuals with autism and developmental disabilities to lead fulfilling lives. Birch’s leadership remains committed to responsible financial stewardship and strives to ensure fiscal sustainability and quality in the services we provide.

This past year saw an increase in our residential and community services programs, while enrollment in our education programs decreased due to the pandemic.



Birch Family Services Gratefully
Thanks Our **GENEROUS DONORS**

<div>DIAMOND</div> <div>\$75,000 +</div> <div>Gladys Brooks Foundation NYC City Council Autism Awareness Initiative</div>	<div>PLATINUM</div> <div>\$25,000-\$74,999</div> <div>The Edith Glick Shoolman Children's Foundation Judith Kauffman Fullmer and Robert James Fullmer TD Charitable Foundation</div>	<div>GOLD</div> <div>\$15,000-\$24,999</div> <div>Alliant Employee Benefits Judge Brian Cogan and Ms. Robin Keller Lamb Insurance Services Jonathan L Mann The May Ellen and Gerald Ritter Foundation The Omer Foundation Imran Siddiqui George and Anitha Varughese</div>
<div>SILVER</div> <div>\$5,000-\$14,999</div> <div>Capalino Michelle Clayman G. Fazio Construction Co., Inc. Himani Ghoge and Sameer Gadre G-Net Construction Corp. Jackie and Alan Goldberg Kimberly and Carl Hernas Jackson Lewis P.C. JPMorgan Chase & Co. JPMorgan Chase Foundation Susan Miller Moritt Hock & Hamroff LLP Province Dr. and Mrs. Ronald R Rawitt Signature Bank Stephen Freeman Group LLC Matthew Sturiale Sewit Teckie and Beeneet Kothari TGI Office Automation United HealthCare Oxford The Weeks Lerman Group, LLC</div>	<div>BRONZE</div> <div>\$500-\$4,999</div> <div>A&G Real Estate Partners Vandell Alejandro Charles Antell Armstrong Communication Systems, Inc Baker Tilly Virchow and Krause Bartel Construction Company Bermuda Realty LLC Stephen Blum Jill Bragg Dan Brecher Chad Cardillo Brian Celardo Chem Rx Pharmacy Margaret Chiara Jan C Childress Dr. Andrea Clair and Davis Iszard Deborah and Michael Cogan Jared Cohen Cooley LLP Jim Costello Cushman & Wakefield Gene Dennis Alicia DiCalogero Diet Delights The Difference Card Driscoll Foods Enterprise Rent-A-Car Ramona Espinosa Clara Ferraro Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund FPS Contracting Lourdes Fuentes Slater Shirish Ghoge</div> <div>John and Lisa Gilday Ashley Giordano Frady Goldberger Goldin Solutions Juno Greaves Greenberg Traurig, LLP Huntington Village Animal Hospital Jay and Andrea Indyke Robin Jacobsohn Bernadette Jardine-Small JD Masters Plumbing and Heating, Inc. Nicholas X. Jerez Jewish Communal Fund Shari and Stuart Kaplan Larry Kessler David Lee Ting Ha Lee Wendy and Benjamin Lehmann Loeb & Loeb LLP Margaret Madden Evelyn Magdaleno Christiane Masiello Rene Mason Dennis M Mayer Beth McLeod Margaret McNally Denise Messemer Susan Miller Modern Sprinkler Corporation New York Life Samantha and Ben Nottingham Charles and Hilary Parkhurst James Pastore Jr.</div> <div>Paycom Probuild Contracting, Inc. Michael Pruzan Redesign Health Related Kenneth Roman Faheema Rostom Charles Salfeld The Sam & Sarah Grossinger Foundation Lawrence Sarf Josh Scher David Schlamm Espa Sergiou Patricia and John Sheehy Peter Skerry Susan Sobolewski and Prajit Dutta Jane Steinberg Keith Tamayo and Denise Zeichner-Tamayo Neil Tipograph UB Green Supplies, Inc. Bruce Valente Thalia Valerio Lori Vallejo Vassalotti Associates Architects, LLP Waldrep Wall Babcock & Bailey PLLC Bridget Waldron Susan L West Whiterock Ventures 90th Road LLC Laura Whitney-Thomas Windstream Kerry Wright</div>	

OUR LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIR

Sameer Gadre

FIRST VICE CHAIR

Robin E. Keller, Esq.

SECOND VICE CHAIR

Alan L. Goldberg, CPA

TREASURER

Justin Bachman

SECRETARY

Dan Brecher, Esq.

MEMBERS

Andrea Belcher

Georgiana A. Casimir-Magloire

Judith Kauffman Fullmer

Kimberly R. Hernas

Jay R. Indyke, Esq.

Jean Rawitt

Faheema T. Rostom

Lourdes Slater, Esq.

Keith Tamayo

George Varughese

EXECUTIVE STAFF

Matthew Sturiale

President & CEO

Brian Celardo

CIO/Security Officer

Lisa Gilday

Chief Operating Officer

Samantha Nottingham

Chief Development Officer

Josh Scher

Chief Financial Officer

Bridget Waldron

Executive Vice President

Eileen Berg

Compliance Officer

Margaret Chiara

Training, Director

Espa Sergiou

Education, Director

Lisa Sterrantino

Community Services &
New Frontier, Director

Charmane Wong

Human Resources, Director



Birch Family Services

104 West 29th Street
3rd Floor
New York, NY 10001

T (212) 616-1800

F (212) 741-6896

E info@birchfamilyservices.org

W birchfamilyservices.org



Make Your Holiday
Gift Today!



Empowering People. Building Futures.

