

EXPANDING HORIZONS

EMBRACING OPPORTUNITIES



EMBRACING EVERY OPPORTUNITY

Our mission of empowering individuals with autism and developmental disabilities lies in the profound connections we forge, the compassionate support we provide, and through our unwavering belief in the potential of every person we serve. Our commitment to those we support empowers individuals with autism and developmental disabilities to embrace and expand their life's opportunities.

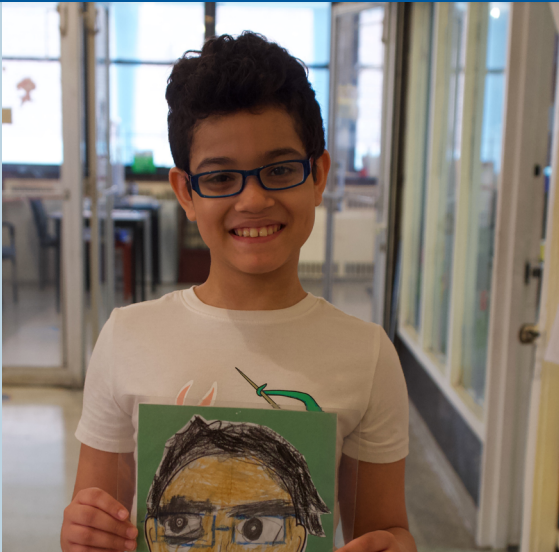
At Birch Family Services, individuals and their families place their trust in us when they seek our support through education, employment, community supports, and guidance to lead full and independent lives.

Education



1,100+

Students supported in Birch schools.



11

Education programs for students ages 3-21 across New York City.

Birch Locations



Education Program



Residential Program



Habilitation Program



Administrative Office

Manhattan



Bronx



Brooklyn



Queens



Community Services



50%

of New Frontier participants
hold employment or are
actively seeking employment.



140+

Individuals supported in
Residential Services.



Matt Sturiale
President & CEO

Dear Friends,

As we approach the conclusion of another year, we pause to reflect on our journey. Birch Family Services' mission is to empower individuals with autism and developmental disabilities to lead fulfilling lives. This has guided us through another year of having an impact on the more than 2,000 children, adolescents, adults, and families who seek our assistance. We have made meaningful strides this past year, ensuring that the voices of our individuals, families, and staff were heard within our organization, our communities, our corporate and government partners and beyond with the sole purpose of creating opportunities for people to reach their fullest potential.

Our Education team provided quality learning experiences at our schools, fostering tailored learning environments according to students' abilities and promoting inclusion for children and adolescents with delays. With increased family engagement, our students and their families have learned and grown, ensuring our students' education thrived in and out of our classrooms.

Our Community Services team delivered quality person-centric initiatives to support individuals in becoming more independent at home, at work, and in their communities. Amidst expanding our programs, we continued to help fulfill the dreams and desires of the individuals we support and encouraged them to embrace new opportunities.

Our New Frontier team worked to enhance individualized employment services for participants according to their distinct ambitions and career choices. Through increased in-person workshops and activities, young adults with autism and developmental disabilities have been able to develop their strengths and have been supported on their path toward attaining meaningful employment.

Through an ever-changing political and policy landscape, we remained devoted to furthering our work as part of a movement focused on creating access to services and equity of opportunities. Partnering with families, staff, stakeholders, and self-advocates, we championed the right of people with disabilities to have a quality education, community inclusion, and equitable access to healthcare, housing, community, and employment. Our partnerships with elected officials on the local, state, and federal levels, have enabled us to continue to ensure people with autism and developmental disabilities have their voices heard.

Our accomplishments are owed to the devotion and dedication of our Board of Directors, resolute staff, individuals, families, corporate and government partners, donors, and volunteers who support us to advance our collective mission. Because of the engagement of all our stakeholders, we have transformed thousands of lives of the people we support, and we look ahead with hope knowing our collaboration will continue to influence positive change. Together, we stand united by our shared mission - expanding the horizons of individuals with autism and developmental disabilities and encouraging them to embrace new opportunities.

Warm regards,

Matt Sturiale



Kimberly Hernas
Board Chair

Dear Friends,

When I joined the Board of Directors for Birch Family Services in 2020, I was proud and honored to leverage my professional skills in business and finance to contribute to Birch's mission. As a recognized leading provider of supports for children, adolescents, and adults with autism and developmental disabilities throughout their lifetimes, Birch makes a profound impact on thousands of people and their families in New York City each year. With an experienced leadership team, committed Board of Directors, and dedicated and expert staff, Birch stands as a pillar of support, community, and education that has expanded to meet the rising demand for these services.

Since joining Birch's Board of Directors, I have had the opportunity to see the organization's mission in action. The high-quality person-centered support services that Birch provides individuals and their families each day is commendable, and the dedication of Birch's staff has amazed me. To be the Board Chair of an organization like Birch is truly an honor, and I was thrilled to accept the appointment this year. I am also deeply grateful to have succeeded Robin E. Keller, longtime member of the Board of Directors since 2004, who served as Board Chair from 2006 to 2020 and interim Board Chair from June 2022 to January 2023. Birch has benefited from Robin's stewardship and expertise, and as a passionate advocate for those we support, I am grateful for her continued leadership on the Board.

I would like to thank Birch' staff, the heart of the organization, for their extraordinary efforts in supporting our individuals and families. The commitment to Birch's mission is both an inspiration and motivation for me and the entire Board of Directors. I would also like to thank our individuals, self-advocates, and their families, for being a part of our organization and community.

Birch is a remarkable organization, and I am honored to offer my professional expertise and personal dedication to furthering its growth and evolution in the years ahead. Being a part of this extraordinary community is not just a privilege, but a source of inspiration.

I look forward to a continued and thriving partnership with Birch's dedicated leadership team, and my peers on the Board of Directors as we work to expand and extend the impact of Birch's services and ensure that the people we support are empowered.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kim'.

Kim Hernas

EMPOWERING EVERY VOICE

Since 1975, Birch Family Services has been dedicated to ensuring that the voices of those with autism and developmental disabilities are heard loud and clear. We stand at the forefront, breaking down barriers and forging pathways to unlock a world of opportunities and possibilities. We believe in the potential of everyone, valuing their unique abilities, talents, and aspirations. Through our steady advocacy and care, we strive to provide comprehensive resources and support that allows our community to embrace life to the fullest.

OUR ADVOCACY

Amplifying Our Voices: Uniting for Lasting Change

More than just advocates, we are catalysts for change. We raise our collective voices to ignite social justice and accessibility initiatives that positively impact the lives of people with disabilities and their families. Supporting individuals in diverse communities throughout New York City, we work with them directly and join with them to champion their cause - an accessible, equitable, and more inclusive future.

Our advocacy efforts have focused on access and opportunity for our individuals and the workforce that supports them. Our frontline workers in our schools and community programs need to be recognized for their compassion and the complexity of their work in helping individuals and families thrive. We are experiencing some of the greatest workforce challenges of our time and we must ensure that individuals in need of an appropriate education, access to employment, housing, health care, and community assistance will be able to get it. This past year included several trips to Albany with individuals, staff, and families advocating to the Governor and Legislature to invest in our services and workforce. While some progress has been made, more needs to happen on the state, federal, and local levels of government to ensure that individuals with disabilities and those who support them can have a better quality of life.

LOOKING FORWARD

Expanding Our Impact

Looking forward to the future, Birch Family Services is committed to ensuring the individuals we support have the right to a free and appropriate education, the right to be a part of their community, and the rights to access and equity in health, housing, and employment. Birch is a member of various trade associations like the Inter-Agency Council, New York Alliance for Inclusion & Innovation, New York Disability Advocates, New York City Coalition for Children with Special Needs, and ANCOR and our leadership actively participates to help influence related sectors while engaging Birch constituents to lend their voice, including in person, with self-advocates and families on the local and state levels.





BUILDING BRIGHT FUTURES



We believe that education is the beginning of endless possibilities and paves the way for a bright future. While providing a dynamic and high-quality education, Birch makes certain every student has an equitable chance to thrive and access every opportunity.



50%

of Birch preschoolers moved to general education and integrated kindergarten classrooms.

55%

of teenaged students engaged in mentorship, self-advocacy activities, and social awareness groups.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Birch Family Services has always believed that education holds the key to unlocking growth and a successful future. We provide a high-quality, dynamic education to ensure our students have opportunities to grow and reach their full potential. We also recognize that students with autism and developmental disabilities require learning strategies that are unique to them, so we prepare personalized education plans based on a comprehensive assessment of each student’s abilities.

Our schools include Snoezelen (multisensory) rooms, relaxing spaces that reduce agitation and stress, which can also engage and refocus students. The rooms support students in managing their response to stimulation and recentering their focus so they can return to class ready to learn.

- Pre-School Special Education (4410)
- Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) for 3- and 4-year-olds



4410 Enhancement

The 4410 enhancement has provided preschool students with:

- An extended day, increasing instructions to 6 hours and 20 minutes daily, in line with the offering for UPK students.
- Increased professional development opportunities for our staff as well as allotted additional time for staff and team meetings.
- Opportunities to hire additional support staff.

SCHOOL-AGE SPECIAL EDUCATION (853)

Our 853-designated School-Age programs operate at three New York State-approved, non-public schools in Manhattan and Queens, dedicated to serving students with special needs and providing them with a nurturing and enriching educational experience. Each child receives individualized instruction in a year-round supportive and rewarding environment. The program integrates literacy, mathematics, communication, and life skills into each student’s education plan, along with music, art, and technology.

The program prepares our students for a successful future, equipping them with the necessary tools for self-advocacy as they transition into adulthood. Providing consistent assistance and support through Birch Family Services, our goal is to ensure that our students and their families never face the challenges that lie ahead alone. With our guidance, we help them navigate their journey with confidence, resilience, and the skills needed to advocate for themselves.

Birch School-Age programs use the Unique Learning System Curriculum, a standards-based set of tools that allow students with special needs to access the general education curriculum. This year, we celebrated the remarkable achievements of nine graduates from our special education program at the Phyllis L. Susser School for Exceptional Children.



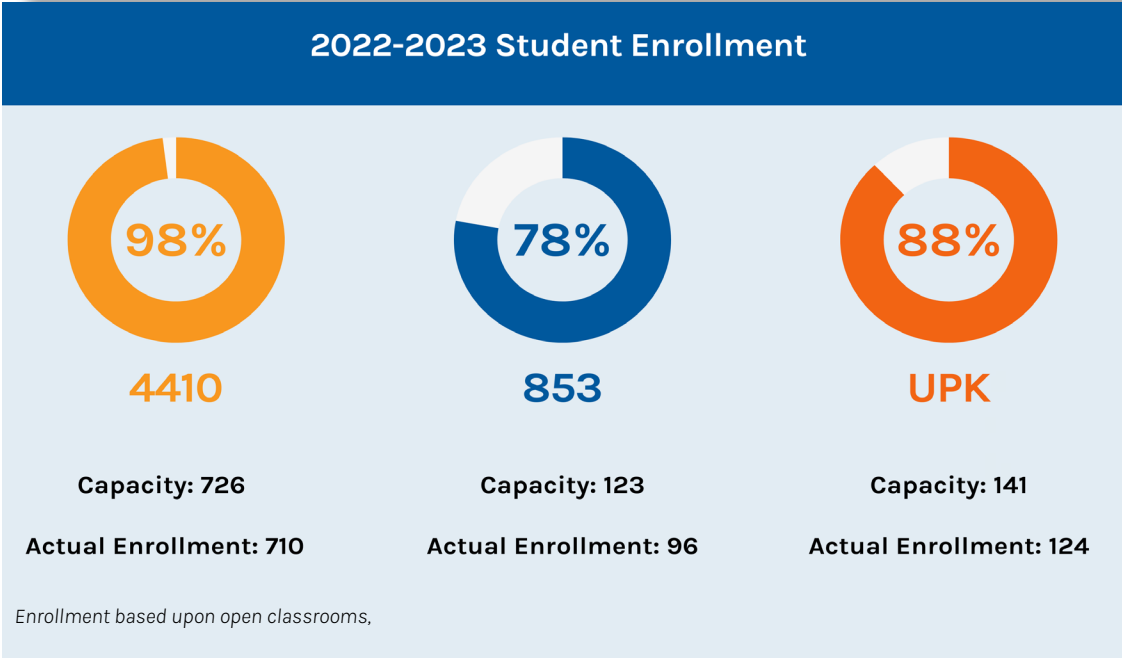
“I can’t thank Birch enough for the experience that it has given my daughter, and she has developed in ways that I never imagined. Everyone knows Avery and everyone makes an effort to get to know their students. I feel like it is a family.”

BRITTANY SETGN, PARENT



Student Enrollment

Enrolling students in our preschool and school-age programs has presented ongoing challenges, influenced by various factors. Despite obstacles, our students have demonstrated growth both academically and socially which reflects the quality and care of our dynamic and supportive learning environments.



Providing Support and Guidance

We believe that family partnership is integral to our mission. We are dedicated to supporting them to become strong advocates for their children and active contributors to their communities. We value their perspectives and strive to ensure that their voices are not only heard but also embraced in every aspect of our work, that is why Birch provides constant support and training to our families. Additional assistance, not only in the educational area, but in mental health support is available to parents and families so that parents are better equipped to meet and navigate the needs of their children.

Parents like Vanessa who has seen the progress of two of her children at the Pelham Bay Early Childhood Center. Her son, Peyton, has shown great improvements inside the classroom and at home. Her daughter, Harper, has just started at the school and is enjoying her first experience in an educational setting.

While her children continue to develop in Birch’s education program, Vanessa is thankful that she can educate herself as well. Vanessa has been assisted by Birch While her children continue to develop in Birch’s education program, Vanessa is thankful that she can educate herself as well. Vanessa has been assisted by Birch staff every step of the way with parent training initiatives and support from the education staff at her children’s school including family training sessions and support groups.



“Birch understands children with developmental delays, and they help me to understand,” said Vanessa. “Birch helps me to be a part of these things which helps me at home.”

Collaborating With Community

Preserving the well-being of families and students, nurturing parent-child relationships, and equipping families with the essential tools to support and engage learners in and out of the classrooms is at the heart of what we do. We do this through our unique approach built upon three core pillars:

- **Relational trust:** We cultivate strong bonds of trust, fostering open communication and collaboration between families, students, and educators.
- **Mutual respect:** We recognize and value the unique perspectives and experiences of each individual, fostering an environment of respect and dignity for all.
- **Cultural responsiveness:** We embrace cultural diversity and promote inclusivity, tailoring our support to honor and respect the diverse backgrounds and identities of our families and students.

Engaging With Families

Through the Parent Advisory Committee, we ensure that parents have a voice in their children's educational development. Parents obtain and share critical information, learn advocacy strategies, and participate in school events and activities, such as science fairs, bake sales, movie nights, and more. In addition to school-specific events, parents are involved in various agency-wide initiatives, parent training seminars facilitated by education staff or the Training Department, and agency-wide events, including:

- 100 Days of School celebration
- Autism Awareness Month activities and celebrations
- Bring Your Parent to School Day
- Birch's Day of Play
- Read Across America
- Read for the Record



FACILITATING GROWTH LEADING FULL LIVES



The goal of our Community Services Division is to enable every person to take charge of their own life, fostering independence and self-determination in every aspect, be it at home, work, or within their community.



54%

of Day Habilitation
program participants
are volunteering in
their communities.

54%

of individuals
supported in
Community Services
working towards
becoming more self-
independent.

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

Birch facilitates independent living for children, adolescents, and adults who receive comprehensive 24-hour care in our Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs) or Individual Residential Alternatives (IRAs). Through a personalized approach, we support our 140 residents in cultivating essential skills for independent living, maintaining their well-being, and pursuing their life goals and aspirations while on their journey towards self-sufficiency. We work with families and individuals to identify their unique goals and aspirations, developing personalized plans that enable them to live as independently as possible.

CHILDREN’S RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

Our dual-support Children’s Residential Program (CRP) integrates education with residential services with residents ages 10-21 receiving caring, comprehensive, 24/7 support. Staff collaborate closely with the Phyllis L. Susser School for Exceptional Children, ensuring seamless integrated services across both environments, while coordinating with families every step of the way. Together, we work hand in hand to shape the best possible experience for each person.

SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT LIVING

Our Community Services staff are committed to supporting individuals at home and in the community to learn skills that help them reach their fullest potential. James worked with staff members at his home to find the best solution to support his quest for further independence and developed a travel learning plan with him.

“James said he wanted to work on this himself,” said Psychology Administrator Deniz Altan. “We met with him to talk about how to support him, and one of the least restrictive ways is to use his location on his phone.”

Using his phone, staff can track James’ precise location and ensure he is being supported during his travels. However, to approve sharing James’s location with anyone, he needed to provide consent and receive approval from the Human Rights Committee. James advocated for himself, consenting to his location being shared and presented his travel learning plan to the committee himself. Now, after being approved and practicing with the technology, James can get to his day habilitation program on his own, fulfilling his wish to be more independent.

Staff assist James on his travels each day and are always aware of any changes that may occur to his schedule while traveling in the city.

“If I need help, it is there when I need it,” said James.

“James is being supported out in the community without staff being physically with him,” added Deniz.

“He’s really independent.”



“I feel really brave when I am travelling on my own. I feel great, like a brand new me.”

JAMES M., PROGRAM PARTICIPANT



Personalized and Therapeutic Living Spaces

In spring 2023, Birch opened its newest residence for six individuals in Briarwood, Queens. Our Coolidge Avenue residence supports 3 men and 3 women with autism and other developmental needs in a person-centered environment. The individuals and families were actively involved in the decorating and furnishing of their new home. Staff were exceptional in ensuring the individuals successfully acclimated to their new home and community. Thanks to the generosity of Amazin’ Mets Foundation, our Gipson Street residence was awarded a grant to design a Snoezelen Mutli-Sensory room at the residence. This room is designed to create a relaxation space that can help with engagement, stimulation, communication, and help support a person when anxious or agitated.

HABILITATION PROGRAMS

We strive to create an environment where individuals can learn and cultivate greater independence, growth, and connection within their communities. Through our home-and community-based programs – specifically day and community habilitation, we facilitate the development of essential life skills, such as communication, socialization, self-care, and independent living skills, alongside establishing meaningful community relationships. Using individualized plans, tailored support, and targeted training to meet the unique needs and aspirations of each person we serve allows our Birch Family Services community members to thrive.

FURTHERING OUR OPPORTUNITIES

Priorities for the year ahead include the following:

- Opening two eight-person IRA’s at a new residence in the Cambria Heights neighborhood of Queens. One residence will support three individuals aging out of our CRP.
- The opening of two residences in the Bronx on Marion and Creston Avenues, the Marion Creston apartments are scheduled to open next fiscal year. This enables 10 individuals with developmental disabilities, who are capable of living without 24/7 on-site supervision, to reside in a non-certified, integrated, affordable apartment in the Bronx.
- Purchase of a residence to support four individuals in Glen Oaks in late 2023 to early 2024. This home will support an individual on the aging caregiver priority waitlist as well as three individuals who are suitable for a home that will promote further independence.



BUILDING SKILLS FOR THE WORKPLACE



There is a profound impact that success in the workplace can have on individuals—it goes beyond school and home, promoting a sense of worth, self-esteem, and self-confidence that resonates deep within. Thanks to our strong partnerships with corporate allies, we have been able to help individuals with autism and developmental disabilities achieve a remarkable milestone: securing employment where they can make valuable contributions.



NEW FRONTIER

Everyone deserves the opportunity to flourish in their chosen careers and showcase their unique talents and abilities. Through our New Frontier program, we unlock a world of possibilities, guiding young adults on a journey of personal growth and fulfillment. From employment services and improving wellness and community living, to social and recreational opportunities, we fuel their aspirations and provide the necessary guidance for success as individuals transition out of educational programs and into adulthood. By providing vocational training, job placement assistance, and ongoing support, we pave the way for individuals to obtain meaningful employment. Our collaborative efforts with corporate partners encourage inclusive environments that enable individuals to overcome barriers and expand their potential in the professional sphere.

Celebrating Achievements

Birch Family Services was featured in a Fox 5 New York News special for Autism Awareness Month. The segment, Autism: Life on the Spectrum took a closer look at what life is like for people with autism and highlighted several outstanding individuals who are supported by Birch. Birch’s New Frontier members and alumni including Ryngin Garcia, Piankhi Wade, Ajuwon Newton and Johnny Ramos allowed us to peek into their lives and learn more about the unique challenges they face and how they are overcoming them.



Ryngin Garcia, employed by ShakeShack since 2021.

Employment Placement

This year, New Frontier has:

- Grown overall program participation by 50%.
- Enabled more than half of New Frontier participants in our Pre-Vocational Program to be ready for the transition to supported employment.
- Provided guidance to program members looking to advance their career.
- Helped all employed program members maintain their positions.

Additionally, once a New Frontier participant has been placed in employment, we offer continued job coaching when needed based on their skill level, as well as employer training and support. Our corporate partners benefit from this program by having access to an untapped talent pool while gaining a better understanding of how to be inclusive of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Participants gained employment this year in such places as:

- Home Depot
- Queensboro Correctional Facility
- Starbucks
- Zucker's

CORPORATE ADVISORY NETWORK (CAN)

Breaking Down Barriers in the Workforce

The Birch Corporate Advisory Network is comprised of a group of like-minded corporate and organizational leaders who share a vision of inclusivity and diversity in the workplace. Within our network, CAN members create job opportunities for young adults (21 or older) on the autism spectrum who have completed specialized training programs. CAN members participate in educational workshops aimed at breaking down barriers and biases surrounding disabilities in the workplace. CAN partnerships serve as catalysts for positive change, opening doors for employment and mutual success.

In March 2023, we held our first meeting in more than a year, bringing together existing members and warmly welcoming new partners. The event featured a presentation by President and CEO Matt Sturiale, which provided a comprehensive overview of Birch Family Services and the importance of partnerships. Additionally, we proudly showcased the inspiring stories of our New Frontier participants, including a mentor/mentee relationship at Lloyds Bank North America. With the presence of over two dozen CAN members, the meeting symbolized a significant stride towards renewed consistency and collective progress.

Powering Partnerships with Corporations

Forging partnerships with corporations are a fundamental aspect of our growth and sustainability at Birch Family Services and further our mission to create a more inclusive world. In April of 2023, corporate partner InsideSource participated in a mock interview and resume review session with over half a dozen New Frontier participants who gained practical experience in developing skills to further their journey to obtain employment.

Another noteworthy corporate partner that deserves special mention is Lloyds Bank North America who has been a steadfast supporter of Birch, specifically our New Frontier program. As members of our Corporate Advisory Network, they have mentored young adults which helped drive connections with young adults on the autism spectrum such as Piankhi Wade.



"I feel satisfied and accomplished to be getting this experience for my future. Birch has really put me into the position to find my fit for a career. It's giving me hands on experience and the first steps toward joining the IT field."

PIANKHI WADE, NEW FRONTIER PARTICIPANT



Piankhi Wade, employed by Lloyds Bank North America since 2022.

Our Partnerships

With deep gratitude for our invaluable partners, we have accomplished significant milestones in our journey to support individuals with autism and developmental disabilities. We move forward, knowing that together, we will continue to make a lasting difference in creating a more inclusive world.



Making a Difference Together

In naming Birch Family Services as their Charity of the Year, Lloyds Bank North America has remained a steadfast source of support. Lloyds Bank North America employees have provided ongoing aid through fundraising initiatives and various volunteer opportunities including the creation of sensory books for students in Birch schools, volunteering time at Birch programs and fundraising events, and participation in the organization’s mentorship program.

Birch cultivates collaborations with companies that align with our mission. By uniting our efforts, we address obstacles confronted by individuals with autism and developmental disabilities and their families. Through these partnerships, we establish a more robust and all-encompassing community where each person can prosper and achieve their utmost capabilities.



Young Professionals Board (YPB)

This year, the YPB reached their first full year in operation engaging a new generation of advocates for Birch Family Services’ mission. YPB members actively contribute their time, talents, and passion to strengthen our fundraising and network building. By immersing themselves in our cause, these ambassadors both deepen their understanding of our mission and play a vital role in raising awareness and support. Members participate in a variety of ways, including fundraising, personal donations, introducing Birch to their network, attending workshops and trainings to further their knowledge and understanding of the people Birch supports, and volunteering at Birch events and programs. The YPB fielded a successful fundraising team for our 5K, raising more than \$4,000 and hosted their first fundraising event in September.



Making an Impact Together

Through our special events, Birch Family Services raised critical funding that allowed us to directly benefit individuals in our schools, residences, and employment programs. With many events expanding, our community joined together to make a positive impact that mattered to the people we support.



Birch Family Services Soirée

In November 2022, our annual gala was once again held in-person, reimagined as the Birch Family Services Soirée. With the theme of “Honoring Everyday Achievements”, we celebrated longtime Birch partners, supporters, and advocates. We recognized our corporate partner and vendor, Lamb Insurance Services, for their continued support of Birch’s mission. We celebrated Debbie Breznay on behalf of the Edith Glick Shoolman Children’s Foundation for their legacy of giving. Finally, we thanked our legislative advocate, New York City Assemblymember Michael Benedetto, for his commitment to the community we serve. Joining together for a remarkable evening recognizing our community, supporters, and the individuals we support raised \$301,000.

Golf Classic

Entering our second year as Lloyds Bank North America Charity of the Year, we continued our partnership together. The major pillar of this partnership is hosting the Birch Family Services Golf Classic. By selecting Birch as the charity partner for 2022-23, Lloyds Bank has not only supported this event, but ignited various other fundraising and volunteer efforts. Over 125 guests joined our evening reception to further support our mission, engage with Birch Family Services staff and leadership, and hear inspiring words from two young adults on the autism spectrum.

With support from 30 corporate partners, Board Members, and more than a dozen volunteers, our Second Annual Golf Classic raised over \$140,000.

5K Forward

Our Birch Family Services 5K Forward: Fast Track to Empowerment race brings all our stakeholders together to honor inclusivity and celebrate the potential and abilities of everyone. The event also raises additional resources to help Birch Family Services deliver the excellence and expertise that the people we support, and their families can expect from our schools, community services, and employment programs each day.

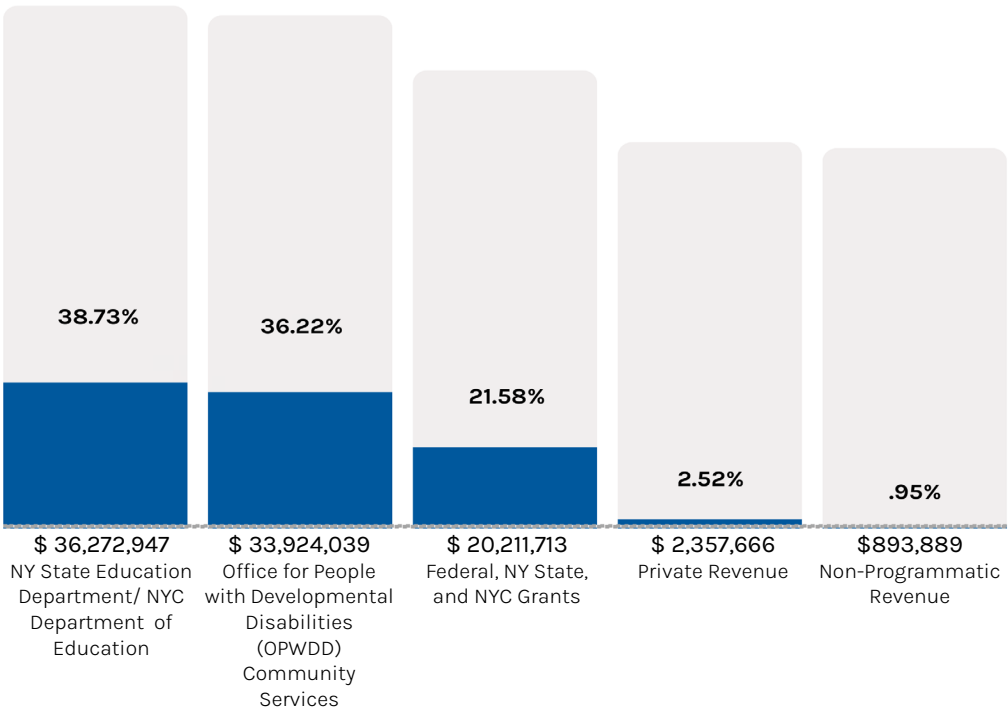
For the 2022 5K Forward: Fast Track to Empowerment, the event was held in Central Park for the first time ever. With hundreds of Birch supporters, sponsors, corporate partners, volunteers, staff, and individuals we support and their families joining us on July 9, 2022, our first event in the heart of Central Park exceeded all expectations of a new space. The event raised over \$101,000.

Our Financials

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.

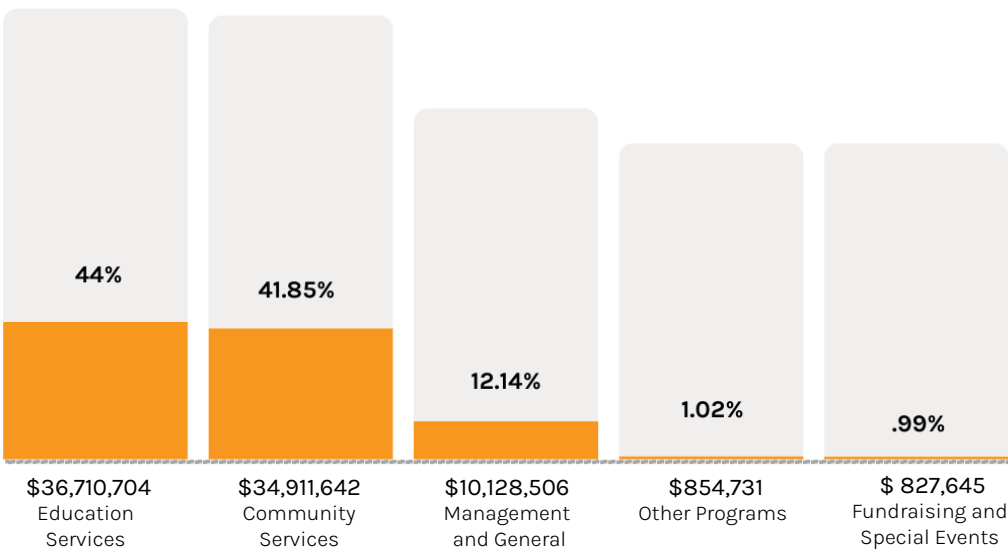
REVENUE

\$93,660,254



PROGRAM/SUPPORTING EXPENSES

\$83,433,228



Our Donors

DIAMOND

\$75,000+

Gladys Brooks Foundation

PLATINUM

\$25,000-\$74,999

Amazin' Mets Foundation
Judge Brian Cogan and Ms. Robin Keller
Lamb Insurance Services
Lloyds Banking Group
Marilyn Lichtman Foundation
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GOLD

\$15,000-\$24,999

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SILVER

\$5,000-\$14,999

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BRONZE

\$500-\$4,999

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Thomas O'Rourke
Ponce Bank
Predator Pest Control
Riggs Construction
Ropes and Gray LLP
Samco Properties
Josh Scher
David Schlamm
Ryan Schneider
Christy Searl
Matthew Shelhorse
Shutterfly
Tajinder Singh
Peter Skerry
Susan Sobolewski and Prajit Dutta
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Anastasia Thrasher
Maria Ramirez Tovar
Nicholas Tryphonides
Two Sigma
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United Staffing
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Bridget Waldron
The Weeks Lerman Group, LLC
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