



BUILDING

THE

FOUNDATION

FOR

FUTURE

SUCCESS

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



EMPOWER

A NOTE ON 2023

2023 was a year of new beginnings and goal setting. As my first year as Executive Director, I made it my mission to take steps that would set this agency on a path to future success to ensure that we are able to continue to provide support services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities for years to come.

From purchasing new facilities, to hiring key staff members, to updating and re-tooling our strategic plan - 2023 was a year designed to lay the foundation for future success. The 2023 annual report takes you through a series of strategic events and decisions that placed our agency on a solid footing.

It has been an honor to serve as the Executive Director of Empower, and we will continue to work every day to provide the highest quality services to the individuals within our care and continue to empower them to **live the life they choose!**

-Diane Baehre
CEO and Executive Director of Empower



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2023 LEADERSHIP

Diane Baehre, *Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer*

Patrick Cosgrove, *Chief Financial Officer*

Bill Krayss, *Director of Quality Assurance and Corporate Compliance*

Kim Kiely, *Director of Day Programming and Job Training*

Petrina Sciandra, *Director of Human Resources*

Kathleen Bailey, *Director of Education*

Christian Chase, *Director of Communications*

Pamela Dunn, *Director of Community Housing*

2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Russ Petrozzi, *President*

Donald Napoleon, *1st Vice President*

Robert DiFrancesco, *2nd Vice President*

James D'Angelo, *Corresponding Secretary*

Yvonne Anderson, *Recording Secretary*

Stanley Fera, *Treasurer*

Thomas J. Caserta, Esq, *Immediate Past President*

Daniel Vitch

Richard Sawicki

Kory Schuler

Liz Zulawski

Diane Baehre, *Executive Director (non-voting)*

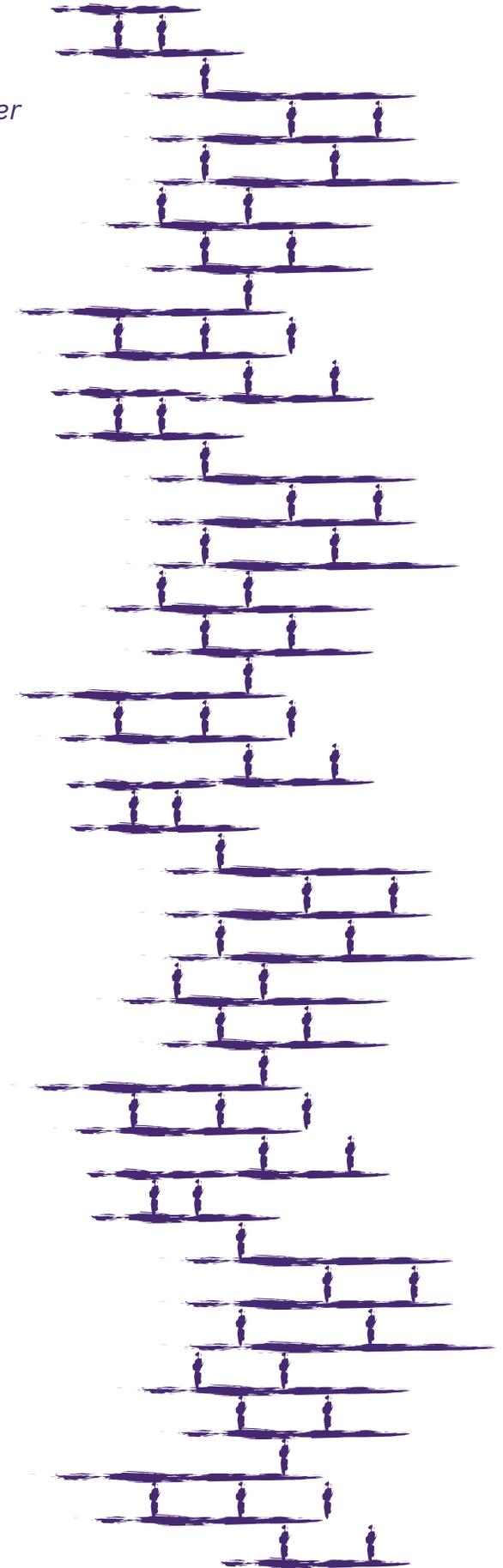
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EXPANDING OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

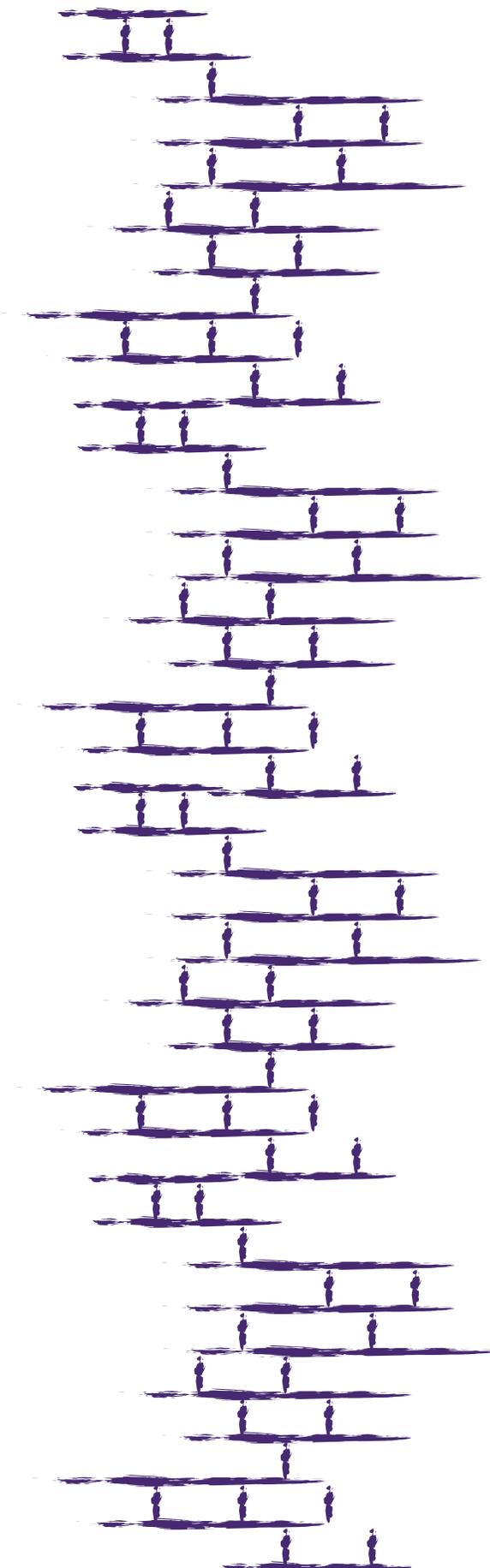
2023 was a year of expansion and new ideas for Empower. This year, we were honored to welcome three new board members to help innovate our systems and operation. We welcomed Kory Schuler (CEO of Niagara USA Chamber) and Liz Zulawski (CEO of Leadership Niagara), They have hit the ground running, and Liz has formed a by-laws committee to ensure we are continually improving our processes.

EMPTIES FOR EMPOWER GETS A NEW HOME

This year we decided to purchase a brand new facility to house many of our vocational services. Taking over for our 4701 Military Rd location, our new building, 7500 Porter Rd, will house our redemption center, document shredding business, job placement services, and some of our day habilitation (day hab) services. With the grand opening set for 2024, this building will allow us to expand our service offerings, innovate, and help more individuals in Niagara County.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Our agency has nearly 300 employees operating over 10 different locations throughout Niagara County. To ensure everyone is staying up to date, this year we launched an agency-de digital newsletter to provide updates about what each division and senior leadership is doing. Divisions and employees submit information and pictures to be included, and we use this as one of many tools to ensure we are all working each day toward the same goal!



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EXPANDING OUR TEAM

This year we made a significant hire to our senior leadership team - our new Director of Education, Kathleen Bailey. She has hit the ground running and working to ensure the best possible outcomes for our students. Additionally, we hired Mary Wilkinson as our new training coordinator - she is responsible for ensuring Empower staff and new hires are trained and able to provide the best possible care.

NEW FUNDRAISERS AND NEW RECORDS

2023 marked major fundraising milestones for Empower. In June, our annual golf tournament set a record with over 90 participants and bringing a record of almost \$34,000 in for the agency. Our 2024 golf tournament will occur on June 10th and registration is now open on our website. Additionally, we held our first annual meat raffle and raised over \$11,000. Empower held two other fundraisers this year as well. Our preschool held their first annual Harvest Basket Auction that raised \$4,591.41 and we also held our first ever board and brush fundraiser! We are looking to holding these events in the upcoming year and breaking new records!



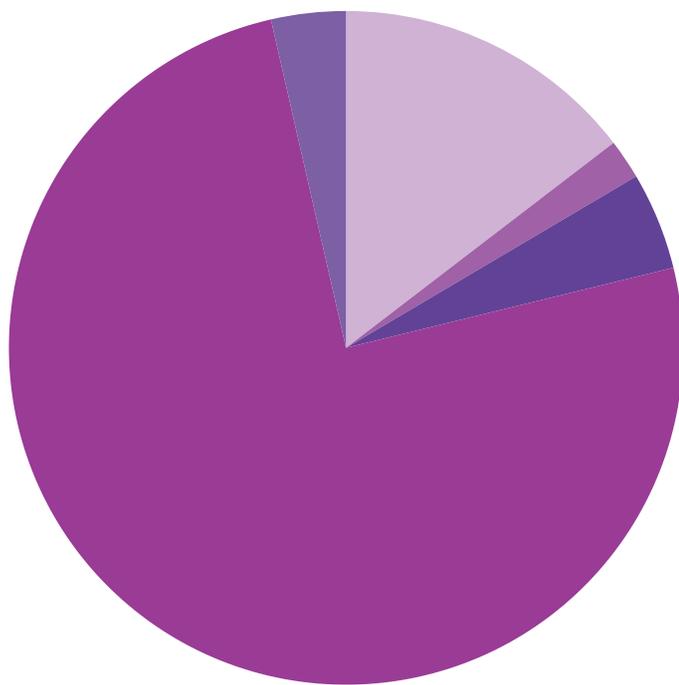
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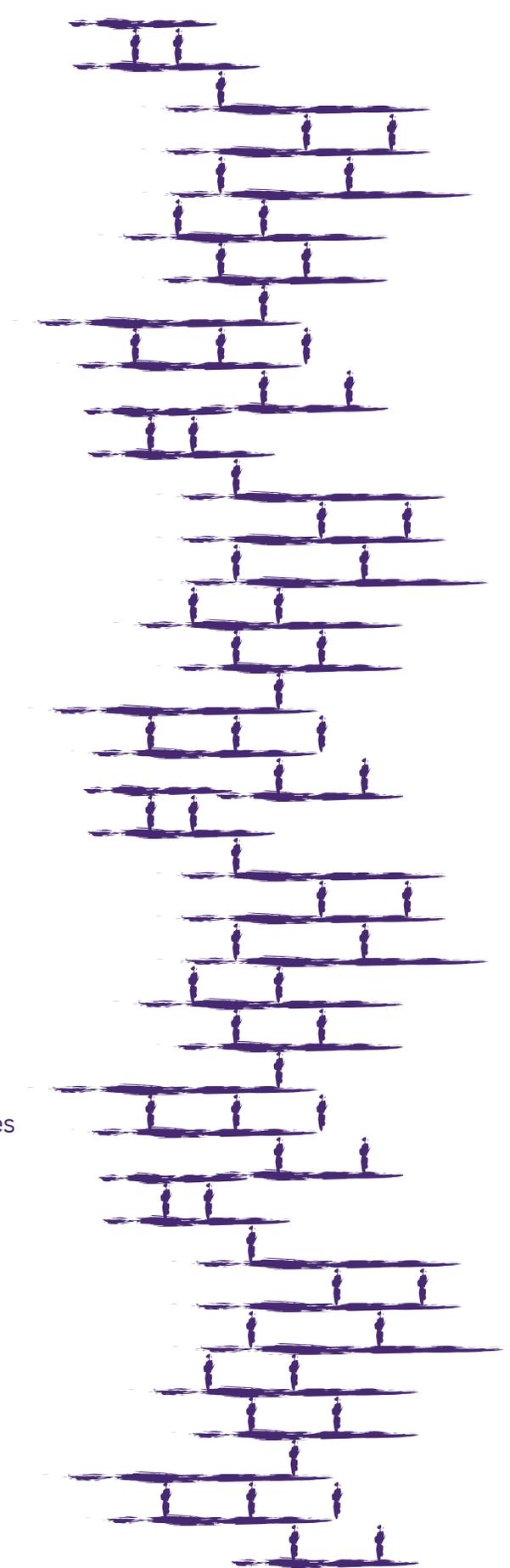
2023 BUDGET AND FUNDING SOURCES

2023 brought some funding challenges, however we have emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic strong, and are continuing to build.

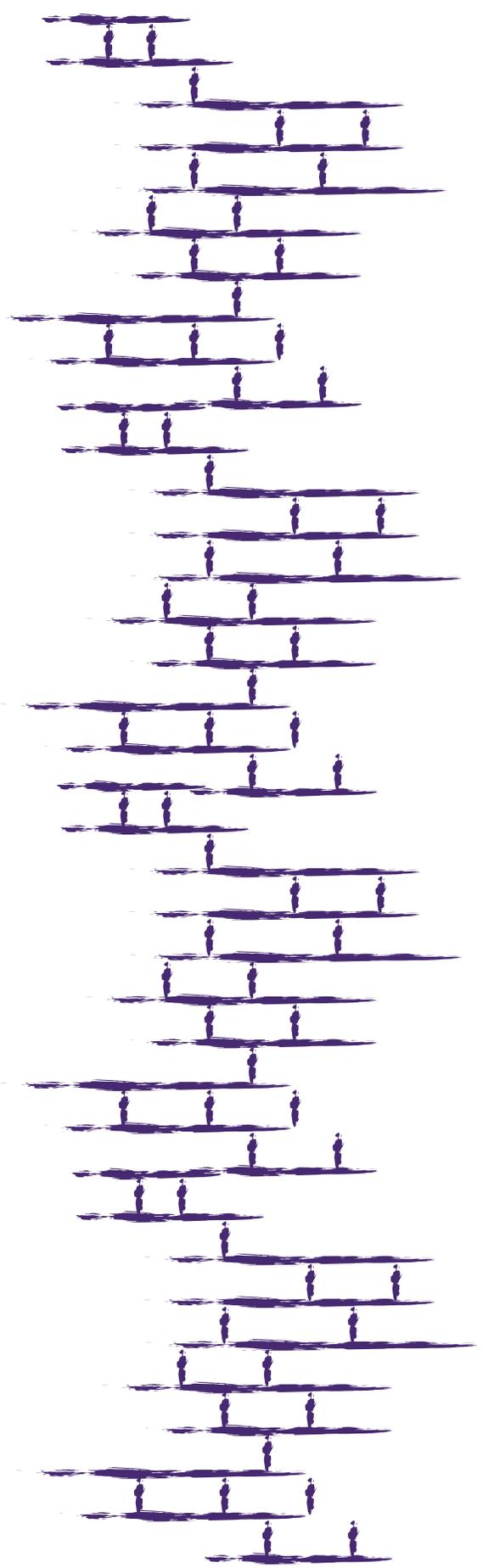
Below is a breakdown of our budget and funding sources for 2023 which totaled \$15,438,291.00:



-  NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities
\$11,812,019.00 - 76.5%
-  NYS Education Department
\$2,289,832.00 - 14.8%
-  Grants and Contributions
\$734,305.00 - 4.8%
-  Other
\$561,578.00 - 3.6%
-  NYS Office of Mental Health/Niagara County
Department of Mental Health Services
\$40,617.00 - 0.3%



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IN THE PRESS

Empower was making headlines across the state this year, as our CEO Diane Baehre was advocating for pay increases and funding for our staff to ensure we continue to retain and attract qualified employees. Diane placed editorial pieces in both the Albany Times and Buffalo News, as well as was interviewed for a statewide story with Spectrum News. Continuing to advocate through the press will set Empower, and our industry, up for success.

VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS CONTINUE GROWING

This year we had major success in expanding numerous metrics within our vocational division. Beyond purchasing the new location at Porter Rd, we closed out the year processing over 6,000,000 cans and bottles across our two locations. Additionally, we were able to provide 14 jobs at our grab n' go cart in the Niagara Falls Fashion Outlets. Finally, we increased our Steps to Work program from three to four participating schools and added an additional 40 new students to the program.

LEARNING NEW SKILLS

This year, we were able to successfully obtain a \$10,000 grant from the Grigg Lewis Foundation. We used this funding to purchase three 3D printers and the requisite supplies - one unit for each of our day hab sites. Now participants have the ability to learn a new technological skill - expect more updates in the future of this program!

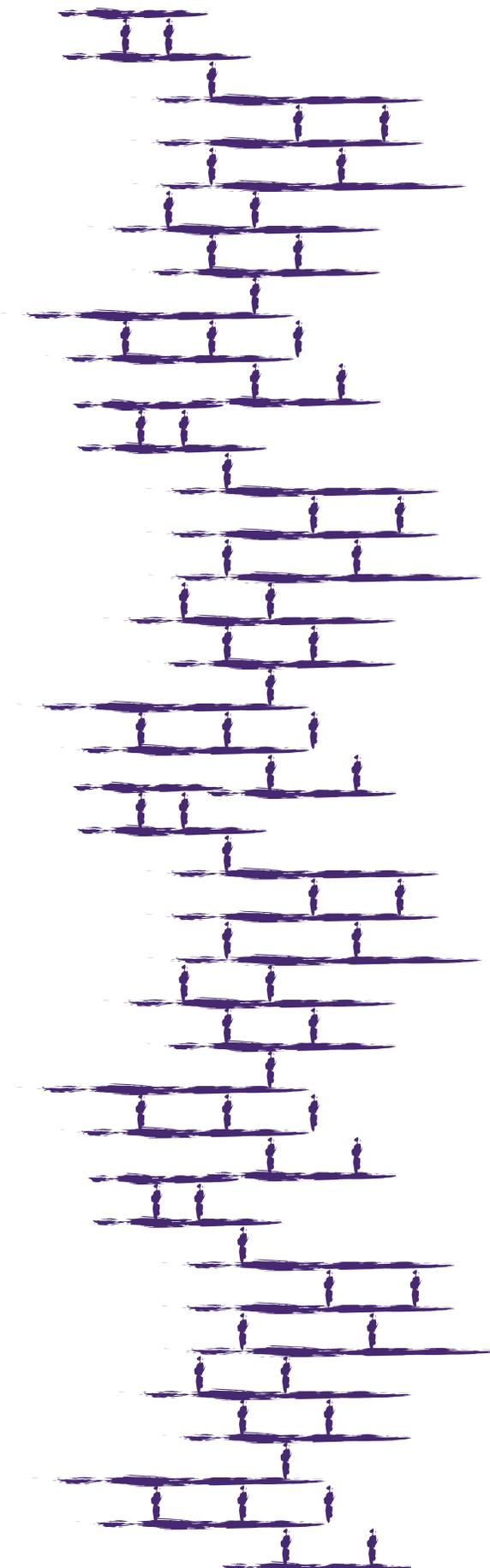
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BRINGING NEW IDEAS INTO EDUCATION

With the hiring of our new Director of Education, Kathleen Bailey, this year we also launched education committee. Comprised of Empower leadership, staff, and parent advocates - this committee focuses on bringing all those involved with our preschool to regularly discuss what's working in the classroom and what can be done to improve results for the children we support. This committee is also working on devising a new strategic plan for our preschool to coincide with our agency-wide plan.

THE DAVE BARRY MEMORIAL AWARD

This year the Dave Barry Memorial/Staff Member of the Year Award was awarded to Christina Ryan of our Vocational Department. Christina continually goes above and beyond for the individuals we support and drives those around her to provide the highest quality care as well. We could not be more proud to have her on the team!



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THE HALLS OF POWER

In addition to making our voice heard in the press, our CEO Diane also traveled to Albany with CP State for a rally in the New York State Capitol. Here she met with legislators, advocates, and individuals to rally support for increased wages in the upcoming NYS state budget.



ON STAGE AT CP STATE 2023

Empower leadership and staff traveled to Saratoga Springs, NY this past fall for the annual CP State Conference. Here Empower staff attended workshops and networking events to sharpen our skills. Additionally, one of our Community Worksite Supervisors, Amanda Rogers, was recognized for her hard work and dedication!



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HELPING EMPLOYEES REACH NEW HEIGHTS

In the summer of 2021, we launched Work/Life Solutions - a resource that connects Empower employees with services and support for personal issues that might affect their work performance, such as food insecurity, homelessness, childcare or transportation challenges, domestic violence, or mental health challenges. Through Evans Bank, Empower employees can get personal loans to address their financial challenges. The loan can be repaid through payroll deduction, which is reported to credit bureaus monthly to improve or establish credit. In its second full year of availability at Empower, Work/Life Solutions has become a highly used benefit. In 2023, there were 58 referrals, 261 interactions with 140 employees, 57 loans provided, and an average credit score increase of 44 points among participants. In the coming year we look forward to continuing this program and helping more employees accomplish their personal and financial goals.

THE COMMUNITY GIVES BACK

This year, volunteers from Wegmans participated in the 2023 United Way of Greater Niagara's Day of Caring and spent the day cleaning up and restoring our nature park at our preschool! Thank you for your time and hard work!

