

VINFEN 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

TRANSFORMING LIVES TOGETHER



Vinfen
Transforming lives together

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Dear Friends,

It is our honor and pleasure to present Vinfen's Annual Report. This exciting publication tells the story of Vinfen: describing our range of vital programs and services, spotlighting the remarkable people we're privileged to support, and sharing our vision for a future where bringing the two together results in opportunity, independence, and transformation for those we serve.



The past year has been one of growth, innovation, and community connection at Vinfen. With the opening of five new programs, we are now serving more people than ever before—in communities from Haverhill, Massachusetts to Hartford, Connecticut—thanks to the tireless and resilient commitment of our more than 3,000 dedicated Vinfen employees. At a time when the workforce crisis remains a relentless challenge with which to contend, we cannot say enough about how proud and grateful we are for these incredible colleagues who have chosen to share our mission.

Within the pages of this annual report, you'll read about some of the ways that we work to accomplish that mission. One shining example is our commitment to expansion in the City of Lowell. The opening of our Community Behavioral Health Center (CBHC) is a game-changing initiative that aspires to provide impactful, integrated services that are available to all. Since its opening, our CBHC has provided critical behavioral health services to thousands of individuals, offering care that extends beyond traditional outpatient therapy—such as 24/7 crisis care, and seamless connections to a host of other services that address people's diverse needs, from housing to long-term care. This has brought us a key step closer to building a continuum of care, where people can depend on ongoing and personalized support regardless of their needs and circumstances.

We believe in the power of technology in shaping the future of human services, and at Vinfen we have made it a priority to bridge the digital divide for those that we serve. This year, thanks to a \$4.4 million Digital Equity Partnership grant award, we've worked tirelessly to increase digital access and literacy for people with disabilities. Our digital navigators have helped countless individuals unlock new opportunities by providing essential devices and training. From gaining access to healthcare and housing to fostering communication and independence, technology has become a transformative tool in the lives of so many.

We are always committed to inclusion, empowerment, and innovation at the heart of everything we do. Through programs like Gateway Arts, which celebrated its 50th anniversary this year, we have continued to affirm that creative expression can be a viable career for adults with disabilities. Gateway Arts is more than a studio—it's a space where individuals like Colleen McFarland and Sidney Perry can find their voices, share their talents, and build meaningful careers.

As we look to the year ahead, we remain focused on building upon our successes. Our vision is clear: to be a dynamic and innovative leader in health and human services, always evolving to meet the needs of the communities we serve. Whether it is expanding our services in Massachusetts and Connecticut; strengthening legislative, community, and provider partnerships; or exploring new ways to deliver person-centered care, we are driven by the belief that together, we can transform lives. It's a mission that cannot be achieved without our extended Vinfen community, and we are extraordinarily grateful for your steadfast support—now, and in the days to come.

Warm Regards,

Jean Yang, President & CEO

Philip A. Mason, Chair, Board of Directors



SERVICES

At Vinfen, our dedicated staff use evidence-based practices to support the people we serve in leading more independent, healthy, and meaningful lives. Our services include a range of residential and day programs, as well as clinical outreach and care coordination supports for individuals with mental health conditions, substance use disorders, intellectual and developmental disabilities, autism, and brain injuries.

MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) is a 24/7 comprehensive service for individuals living with long-term mental health and substance use challenges. A multidisciplinary outreach team offers clinical and rehabilitative interventions, as well as peer and housing support. Housing is an integrated part of the program, with around 25% of participants living in staffed Vinfen group residences and others living in Vinfen-managed apartments or independently.

Program for Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) delivers highly individualized rehabilitative and clinical services to help individuals with mental health conditions reduce or prevent psychiatric relapses. Specialists in psychiatry, nursing, and vocational rehabilitation form a multidisciplinary team and collaborate to support each individual's recovery.

Clubhouses are daytime psychosocial rehabilitation programs for people with mental health conditions. Vinfen's seven Clubhouses combine employment and education services with social activities, life skills, arts-based rehabilitation, and advocacy. Members and staff collaborate on all aspects of Clubhouse operations.

The Community Behavioral Health Center (CBHC), based in Lowell, offers routine and urgent therapy and medication management services, 24/7 crisis intervention through a mobile team, and 13 short-term crisis stabilization beds for adults and youth. Vinfen also operates an outpatient behavioral health center in Lawrence.

Safe Havens are supportive residential programs for individuals just transitioning out of homelessness. Individuals can live there for up to a year, receiving supports that reacclimate them to housed living and prepare them for more permanent housing.

The Young Adult Access Centers in Everett, Lawrence and Lowell are low-barrier services to help individuals aged 16-26 transition into adulthood, focusing on personal stability, secure housing, employment, and positive relationships.

Our **Recovery Connection Centers** and **Recovery Learning Centers** are peer-operated drop-in programs that offer support, advocacy, education, and social activities in a sensitive and person-centered manner.

Care Coordination teams connect people to medical providers, behavioral health care services, and in-home support. Our staff can help make appointments, arrange for transportation and address other health-related social needs.



DISABILITY SERVICES

Vinfen provides a comprehensive array of residential and day services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, brain injuries, and autism.

Residential Programs offer 24-hour support to individuals who need assistance with daily living tasks, such as meal preparation, transportation, and financial management.

In Home Supports help individuals live independently in their own residence with intermittent staff assistance.

Adult Companion Services provide non-medical care, supervision, and socialization for individuals with brain injuries, assisting individuals with daily tasks like meal preparation and shopping.



Day Programs offer skill-building opportunities to help individuals achieve personal goals and greater independence. Vinfen offers the following day programs:

- **Day Habilitation** focuses on improving communication, motor skills, and socialization through art, music, and horticulture. Integrated therapies such as occupational, physical, and speech therapy are also available.
- **Community-Based Day Supports** promote personal and vocational growth, offering training in life skills, community access, and independence.
- **Employment Services** provide community-based vocational training and job support, helping individuals develop critical job skills and experience.
- **Gateway Arts** is an internationally recognized studio that provides professional development for over 100 adults with disabilities. Artists are supported in developing their careers through diverse creative processes and venues including Gateway's own gallery and retail store.
- **Clubhouse 2422** is a psychosocial and vocational rehabilitation program for adults with brain injuries. It provides voluntary, member-driven support to increase community integration and build meaningful work and interpersonal relationships.





The Family Support Center empowers families supporting a loved one with an intellectual or developmental disability by offering education, home visits, training, and access to resources. The center serves as a primary contact for individuals and families, providing parent networking, referral services, and more.

Vinfen's **Autism Support Center** provides an array of information and referral services, resources, and supports to children and young adults up to age 22 with autism and their families, including support groups, parent and peer networking and mentoring, and social and recreational activities.

VINFEN CONNECTICUT

In addition to our services in Massachusetts, Vinfen also provides community-based services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and mental health conditions at more than 45 locations throughout Connecticut. Our Connecticut services include residential programs and day services. To learn more about our service offerings in Connecticut, please visit www.vinfenct.org.

YEAR IN REVIEW



SEPT
15
2023

RUN-4-LIFE

Vinfen staff and supporters participated in a 200-mile relay race to raise awareness and funds for individuals with mental health conditions, disabilities, and life challenges. The event raised over \$14,000 for Vinfen's Health and Wellness fund.



SEPT
21
2023

16TH ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

This annual celebration of the exceptional collaboration between Vinfen staff, persons served, and their families was a night full of inspirational stories, awards, and recognition of outstanding families and staff. We were also proud to honor Rep. Aaron Michlewitz with our Public Official of the Year award.



OCT
18
2023

ART OF THE POSSIBLE: GATEWAY 50TH ANNIVERSARY BENEFIT

Vinfen celebrated the 50th anniversary of its Gateway Arts program with an event at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, featuring art exhibits and conversations with artists. The benefit raised \$450,000 to support current artists, attract new talent, and expand community engagement.



NOV
2023

VINFEN NAMED TO TOP PLACES TO WORK LIST

Vinfen was recognized by *The Boston Globe* as one of Massachusetts' top places to work, an honor earned through positive feedback from employee surveys. Staff praised Vinfen's positive workplace culture and personal and professional growth opportunities.



DEC
2023

VINFEN OPENS EXPANDED COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CENTER

Vinfen's Lowell Community Behavioral Health Center (CBHC) expanded to a new facility, allowing us to add 13 crisis stabilization beds and 24/7 support for individuals in crisis to our continuum of behavioral health services. *Learn more about the CBHC on page 10.*



JAN
2024

VINFEN SELECTED TO DEVELOP RESTORATION CENTER PROGRAM

Vinfen was chosen by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services to implement a behavioral health diversion program in Middlesex County. The center will provide specialized care and support for individuals in behavioral health crises as an alternative to jail or emergency rooms.

46TH ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE RECEPTION

Vinfen self-advocates joined nearly 400 others at the Massachusetts State House to advocate for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The event emphasized the need for continued support, particularly in the recovery of human services post-pandemic.

MAR
6
2024



VINFEN FILM FESTIVAL

Vinfen's 17th annual festival used the power of film to raise disability awareness and combat prejudice. The event was hosted at GBH Studios, and featured documentary films and shorts, followed by panel discussions with filmmakers and advocates.

MAR
23
2024



MASSACHUSETTS CLUBHOUSE COALITION (MCC) EMPLOYMENT CELEBRATION

Vinfen staff and clubhouse members attended the MCC Employment Celebration, recognizing employers who partner with clubhouses to provide jobs for individuals with mental health conditions.

MAR
28
2024



VINFEN OPENS TWO NEW SUPPORTIVE BRAIN INJURY RESIDENCES

Vinfen added two new brain injury residences, bringing our organization's total to 20. These homes offer a safe environment and specialized care, promoting independence for individuals transitioning from long-term facilities.

MAY
2024



NAMIWALKS

Vinfen participated in NAMIWalks, Massachusetts' annual event on Boston Common, joining over 1,600 participants to fight stigma and support mental health programs.

MAY
18
2024



BICC RENAMING

Vinfen's Brain Injury Community Center (BICC) in Somerville was renamed "Clubhouse 2422" during a community Open House event. The renaming celebrated the center's commitment to helping individuals with brain injuries foster independence.

JUNE
7
2024





I was in a black hole. Today, I smile a lot more.

PAT'S STORY

Since moving into Vinfen's new group residence in Haverhill for individuals with brain injuries (BI) and mental health conditions in March 2023, Pat has found more than just a place to live—she's found a home. "It's really the closest thing to living in your own home—and where else could I live and get to pick on the program director every day?" she jokes, her contagious laugh echoing through the house, bringing warmth to both staff and housemates alike.

There wasn't much joy in Pat's previous living situation. Coming to the Vinfen BI house—as most residents do—from a long-term nursing care facility, Pat dealt with the trauma of losing dozens of housemates during the COVID-19 pandemic. As she anxiously waited for her name to make its way to the top of a placement list to move out of the facility, Pat served as the president of the resident council and tried to find solace for herself and others by creating a memorial COVID garden, featuring rocks painted with the names of those who'd been lost.

It took three years for Pat to get the call that there was a spot open at the new Vinfen house, and she quickly found a home that supported her and her goals. The first of those goals? "I had dreamed that when I came here I could get a cat—I've always loved cats," she says. "So, we worked out a plan for how it could work, and then went and rescued a beautiful black cat named Abby. She's become a part of the house."

Pat also became a member of Vinfen's Point After Clubhouse (PAC) in Lawrence, where she goes most days to be part of a close community and engage in various activities. "I love it there. We get to explore our creativity. We have a gallery space where members can display their art—I do abstract painting and collage-making. We also have a jug band, and we sometimes go around to nursing homes and entertain residents."

Never reluctant to share her opinions and speak up for her fellow Vinfen service recipients ("I'm no shrinking violet," she laughs), Pat is working with the PAC's grant writer to raise funds for a second accessible van to transport members who, like herself, are confined to wheelchairs. She is also part of an advisory council that meets regularly with Vinfen's Board of Directors. "We're there to be the voice of people served and give recommendations."

It took her time to find it, but Pat says she's now in a place that offers safety, community, and much more of the joy she sought for so long. "Let's put it this way," she says, "I was in a black hole. Today, I smile a lot more."



JOEY'S STORY

Since his early childhood years, Joey, 31, has dealt with isolation and loneliness due to a variety of mental health conditions. Beginning at the age of 3, he experienced the terrifying effects of Charles Bonnet Syndrome, a condition that caused him to see bright lights and hallucinations. As he grew older, his battles expanded to include depression, anxiety, and a seizure disorder. Discovering his homosexuality only deepened his sense of alienation as he faced rejection from his peers.

"I never really had many friends," Joey says. "People thought I was a freak."

A pattern of self-harm developed, including suicide attempts. As an adult, Joey was officially diagnosed with schizophrenia, and not long after that, he moved with his father to Cape Cod. There, a therapist recommended that he consider joining Vinfen's Cove Clubhouse in Harwichport.

"When I came to Cove, I quickly found myself feeling stronger," Joey says. "I really wanted to make connections, and I was immediately welcomed here. I found myself making family, not just friends. When I was sad, I always had someone to talk to. The clubhouse is a place where you can share just about everything and feel accepted and brave."

Through the Club, Joey started seeing a Vinfen peer specialist, who could talk to him about his struggles with socialization. The result, he says, was "I became more accepting of myself. I was gaining more confidence, ambition, hope, and acceptance, which was what I needed for future social interactions."

Today, as an active Clubhouse member, Joey enjoys the group activities and camaraderie, including the regular outings and excursions that the group takes part in. He has become very interested in spirituality, and leads a meditation group for the members. And he's also found himself embracing his skill for, and love of, writing. Several times a week, Joey assembles short Club newsletters. "It's a mix of information relevant to the Club, fun stuff, and just anything I think people will find interesting," he says. In addition, Joey has recently finished his first book of original poetry, titled *You Let Me Breathe: Uplifting Poems*.

Joey credits much of his personal growth to the community he's found at Cove. "I think that this is a place that shows encouragement and care. They really listen and are helpful, and open to doing what each person needs to take steps forward—big or small. Here we can be whoever we feel like being, and that's the magic to it."

They are open to doing what each person needs to take steps forward—big or small. Here we can be whoever we feel like being, and that's the magic to it.

VINFEN AND LOWELL: A COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

The City of Lowell is an excellent example of how Vinfen can become deeply immersed in a community, work with its people to understand their specific needs, and provide individualized and innovative services that help address those needs. Vinfen has operated vitally important services in Lowell since 2009, including 17 residential programs and a young adult access center. We currently serve 400 people with serious mental health conditions through our Adult Community Clinical Services.

In January of 2023, Vinfen’s investment in Lowell was taken to a new level with the opening of our Community Behavioral Health Center (CBHC)—one of 26 such programs established statewide, operated by various service providers under contracts awarded by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

With the arrival of the CBHC, Vinfen has become the leading nonprofit provider of critical behavioral health services to the Greater Lowell area. The CBHC offers outpatient services for youth (ages 4-18) and adults, including individualized assessment, evaluation, and diagnosis of behavioral health issues; individual, family, and/or group therapy; substance use & recovery services; medication management; case management; and care coordination services.

The CBHC is designed as a “one-stop-shop” for behavioral health, offering traditional outpatient therapy and medication as well as crisis services, including:

COMMUNITY CRISIS STABILIZATION (CCS)

This service provides 24/7 person- and family-centered stabilization and support for individuals experiencing mental health and substance use crises in a structured, supportive environment. The CCS includes six beds for youth (ages 13-18) and seven for adults (18+) and allows for short-term (three- to five-day) monitored overnight stays. The CCS program is designed as a more therapeutic alternative to locked inpatient psychiatric units.



MOBILE CRISIS INTERVENTION (MCI)

Provides a 24/7/365 mobile response in the home, school, workplace, or other community settings for youth and adults experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis. Clinicians work with the individual in crisis and, when appropriate, family members or other supportive people in their lives.



“Crisis stabilization beds haven’t been available in Lowell for many years,” says Daniela Johnson, the Executive Director of Vinfen’s CBHC and Outpatient Services. “The benefits of having this service back in our community are significant, for continuity of care and ease of transitions back to the community for individuals in crisis.”

Daniela believes that the adoption of the CBHC model, as part of the Commonwealth’s Behavioral Health Roadmap, has had a tremendous impact on Vinfen’s ability to provide the kind of treatment options people need in a more streamlined and effective way. “Behavioral healthcare, in the past, has operated in a very siloed manner,” she says. “With the development of this service model, there’s been a great focus on breaking down the barriers within the continuum of care people require. We’ve really been able to build a more seamless flow between urgent and acute care and connect people to the kind of services they need.”



Another key to Vinfen’s ability to provide the services that Lowell needs, Daniela says, are the strong working partnerships we’ve established with major local institutions and care providers, including the Greater Lowell Health Alliance, Lowell Police, and the police departments of surrounding municipalities, the Department of Youth Services, the Department of Mental Health, the Lowell Public Schools, and—critically for the care coordination of many we treat—Lowell General Hospital.

Amy J. Hoey, RN, is the President of Tufts Medicine Lowell General Hospital and has seen firsthand the significant impact that Vinfen has made within the community through the CBHC. “We are excited to have a program like the CBHC right down the street from LGH’s main campus on Varnum Avenue,” she says. “The program supports patients and families we serve who are struggling to get the critical behavioral health services they need, while also helping alleviate emergency department boarding issues. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with Vinfen to help ensure that those experiencing behavioral health challenges can access care and treatment before they reach a point of crisis, and hopefully avoid the need to seek care in a stressful Emergency Department setting.”

In addition to services through the CBHC, Vinfen’s commitment to Lowell includes an innovative new service called the Restoration Center. In December 2023, Vinfen was awarded the Restoration Center contract from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services to develop this new program designed to provide easy access to behavioral health and substance use disorder services for individuals who interact with, or are at risk of interactions with, law enforcement or the court system.

In Lowell, and in all the cities and towns across Massachusetts and Connecticut where Vinfen operates programs, we are continually looking to expand and diversify our service offerings in line with the needs of those communities. It’s part of our commitment to being a good neighbor and a dynamic and innovative leader within the health and human services industry.

BUILDING CONNECTIONS AND BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

“At Vinfen, we believe that access to technology isn’t a luxury anymore, and it can’t be treated like it is,” says Jessie Wolfe, Vinfen’s project director for Digital Equity. “With all the significant barriers that individuals with disabilities can face daily, access to technology shouldn’t be one of them.”

Studies have shown that people with disabilities are nearly 20% less likely to own a computer or smartphone, and they are three times more likely to say that they never go online (Pew 2021).

Vinfen is determined to help those we serve overcome the “digital divide.” In 2023, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’ Executive Office of Economic Development through the Massachusetts Broadband Institute awarded Vinfen a two-year, \$4.4M Digital Equity Partnership grant, specifically to support a statewide network of mental health and disability organizations called the Human Services Alliance for Digital Equity.

The Alliance’s goal is to increase digital inclusion among low-income people with physical disabilities, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and serious mental health conditions. According to the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, **Digital Inclusion** refers to activities necessary to ensure access to digital technology and the skills to use it.



Affordable, robust internet service



Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user



Digital literacy training



Technical support



Content to encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration



When people don't have the equipment and the knowledge of how to use it, they are cut off from life and face a significant disadvantage above and beyond those directly presented by their disability.



“Technology is embedded in our lives, from the moment you wake up until the moment you go to bed,” says Wolfe. “When people don’t have the equipment and the knowledge of how to use it, they are cut off from life and face a significant disadvantage above and beyond those directly presented by their disability.”

Before Vinfen received the Digital Equity Partnership Grant, it had piloted the program out of necessity during the pandemic. With many in-person services cut off, we found the people we serve increasingly isolated and needing new ways to access support. “We gave out over 200 phones to people in our Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) programs and started a pilot Digital Navigator program in Lowell,” says Wolfe. “We learned from those programs that we had to do a lot of work to help people get familiar with technology and comfortable utilizing it.”

In pursuit of that goal, the Digital Equity Partnership grant provides funding to the eight organizations within the Alliance (Advocates, Behavioral Health Network, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Boston Center for Independent Living, Clinical and Support Options, Open Sky, Riverside Community Care, and Vinfen) to deploy 15 regionally-based digital navigators to provide people with digital devices (smartphones, tablets, and laptops), develop their digital skills, and help them enroll in low-cost broadband programs. The digital navigators work one-on-one with people served in their homes and in-service settings.

Justin Stewart is one of Vinfen’s digital navigators, and he’s had the opportunity to witness up close the many ways in which individuals we serve can benefit from access to technology. Whether a person’s goal is accessing medical and behavioral health care through telehealth, opening doors to new employment opportunities, or enhancing communication using text-to-speech and speech-to-text apps, Justin has seen technology’s transformative effect on people with disabilities.

“The devices that we’re able to provide people with, and the training to use them, really act as a bridge for individuals to get the services they need,” Justin says. “If a person doesn’t have a phone, it can block them from getting housing, healthcare, and other essentials—we’re closing that access gap. It’s such a rewarding thing to help someone that way—the impacts I’ve seen are life-changing.”

Asked to recall some of the individuals he’s helped, Justin mentions an individual whose ADHD had contributed to issues in her home with hoarding. “We taught her how to utilize certain reminders and calendar apps that focused her on hygiene and cleanliness—when to clean her apartment and take out the trash. Those daily prompts made a huge difference in keeping her living space clean.”

Another person served received a phone and learned to use the quitSTART app, a smoking cessation tool. “It gives regular reminders and suggestions to people how to substitute other behaviors for smoking,” Justin says, “and it worked for this person.”

Vinfen serves such a diverse population—with equally diverse technological needs—that having digital navigators like Justin to do the work of connecting people is key. “We understand our folks and what they need,” says Jessie. “We know how to pace the training to meet each person’s learning capabilities. And that allows us to connect people with whatever that critical piece is that can get them to that next step they’re trying to take. It’s all about enhancing the lives of those we serve—in the specific, individual ways that matter most to them.”



TODD'S STORY

Before finding Vinfen, Todd's life in a group residence for men with developmental disabilities was marked by constant challenges. He grappled with impulse control, struggled to

manage his finances, and found it difficult to keep his Type 2 diabetes in check. The weight of these struggles left him feeling overwhelmed and uncertain about the future.

"I moved into a Vinfen respite residence for about eight months, and in that time, I really made positive strides," Todd says. "I had more staff supervision and support with all my challenges. I was able to manage my spending better, and got help with taking my meds on a regular basis and eating regularly and appropriately."

In 2015, Todd moved into a permanent Vinfen residence—where he still lives today—and began attending day programs at Vinfen's Employment Training Center (ETC) in Somerville, where he's had the opportunity to learn a host of independent life skills and receive vocational training. "I've been connected to different paid work opportunities using the kitchen and custodial skills I've learned at ETC," Todd says. "I've even had the opportunity to take part in the specialized relief program and become a full-fledged employee at Vinfen, doing work for the HR department."

Perhaps the most empowering development for Todd, however, has been in finding his voice as a self-advocate—taking on the responsibility of speaking up for himself, and his fellow individuals served, in settings both within and outside Vinfen. "Basically, it's about taking the opportunity to give my opinions on what will help me and other residents live better and more successfully. And if I ever feel something isn't right, I can tell somebody about it, and ask why it happens to be that way and how to change it."

Todd is the human rights advocate for his house and has been named chairperson of the Metro Boston Self-Advocacy Group. He's presented at the Mass Advocates Standing Strong (MASS) annual conference and the North Shore Legislative Advocacy event, before state advocate organizations like the Arc of Massachusetts, and at various events at the State House, to help influence lawmakers to support those who receive human services and those who provide them.

"The more I speak in public, the more comfortable I am," Todd says. "You get used to people paying attention to you."

Overall, Todd considers it just one of the significant advances he's made since coming to Vinfen. "Basically, it's been a huge help to my independence," he says. "I feel like I get to participate in stuff I missed out on earlier in my life. Not having independence means not being able to do things you love. Now, with the support of the staff here and the skills I've learned, I've been able to retrain myself, make friends, and gain the trust of the people around me."

MAYA'S STORY

Maya is a spirited 14-year-old girl who lives with a number of significant challenges: autism, epilepsy, speech and hearing deficits, and a rare genetic disorder known as IQSEC2—of which there are less than 500 known cases in the world. For her parents, Barbara and Mark, finding the array of supports they needed for Maya was a monumental task.

“Given Maya’s complex combination of diagnoses, we never fit anywhere,” Barbara says. “When you have a child with a disability, it’s overwhelming in so many ways, but something you’re not prepared for is how hard it can be to get them the services and resources they need,” Barbara says, the emotion audible in her voice. “I’ve been fighting for Maya since she was 9 months old, and Vinfen was the first place that was willing to take on the fight for me.”

For the last 7 years, Maya has received Vinfen services through our Autism Support Center (ASC) and Family Support Center (FSC). She and her family also participate in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Residential Prevention Program, through which Maya receives in-home visits from Vinfen clinicians who help develop and update an individualized care plan, teach Maya life skills, and facilitate what the family may need at any given time to support her current needs.

In addition to these supports, Barbara says that Maya’s participation in the ASC’s monthly activities for families have had a profound effect on bolstering her socialization skills. “She’s attended monthly movie nights where Vinfen reserves a theater just for us, outdoor programs in the park, and more—and she’s gotten accustomed to seeing the same kids over and over again,” Barbara says. “And through that repeated exposure, Maya has learned to recognize them. She knows and remembers people she’s met, and will keep pictures of them in her communication device. So, now when we go to activities, the kids can sit together. It builds interaction, a little bit of independence, and a community for the kids.”

That sense of community is a huge part of what the Family Support Center offers. “I can call Sethany (Griffin, director of Family Support Services) or anyone on her team with questions about anything,” Barbara says. “It’s just support when we need it—they’ll come to school meetings with us, or even just listen to us vent, or cry, or celebrate milestones. And, we have a monthly parent support group, where we’re all able to do that for each other—as Maya has grown, I’m now in a position to help parents of younger children. I’ve been lifted up, and now I can help do the lifting for others.”

Barbara says that, over the years, Vinfen has been there and ready to help with everything from negotiating the bureaucratic process of getting schools to provide Maya with the accommodations she needs, to accessing all the adaptive equipment and personal care supplies that she’s eligible to receive. “When we came to Vinfen, Sethany told me ‘You tell me what you need—it’s our job to figure out how to get it for you,’” Barbara says. “It was somebody finally telling me they were here to help us—and, at this point, we don’t even think of the Vinfen team as Vinfen. They’re Maya’s family.”



...we don't even think of the Vinfen team as Vinfen. They're Maya's family.



GATEWAY ARTS: 50 YEARS OF NURTURING POSSIBILITIES

There's no point in trying to define a "typical" day at Vinfen's Gateway Arts in Brookline Village. This dynamic studio art center, gallery, and store has redefined what it means to support meaningful lives and careers for adults with disabilities. Here, every visit is a sensory feast, brimming with the sights and sounds of raw, unfiltered creativity. Whether it's painting, sculpting, digital design, or hand-crafted jewelry, every corner of Gateway pulses with the energy of artists pouring their souls into their work.

In 2023, Gateway Arts marked its 50th anniversary, a monumental milestone celebrated with the theme “Art of the Possible.” A year-long series of special events and exhibitions highlighted the essential role of creative expression and meaningful lives and careers for artists with disabilities. The celebration kicked off with a glittering benefit at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts on October 18, where over 500 guests gathered to admire the incredible works of Gateway artists and raise \$450,000 to continue the studio’s vital mission.

Gateway Arts is not just a studio; it’s a lifeline. For five decades, it has nurtured the creative talents of artists with diverse challenges, strengths, and needs. Here, artistic expression is more than a hobby—it’s a vocation. The center welcomes artists of all experience levels, from seasoned professionals to those discovering their talents for the first time.

“The arts have always been a powerful assertion of the worth and cultural contribution of people with disabilities,” says Gregory Liakos, director of Gateway Arts. “Founded during the early days of deinstitutionalization, Gateway’s vision has always been that everyone has the right to a creative life. But we go beyond that, affirming that art can be a viable career for people with disabilities. That’s the heart of what we do.”

Under the guidance of skilled artist-facilitators, the 75-100 adults who pass through Gateway’s doors each week create individualized works that reflect their unique perspectives. These works are then exhibited and sold both in the center’s store and gallery and also online, with artists earning a 50% commission on sales—an empowering model that supports both the artists and the program itself.

Take Colleen McFarland (pictured, left), for example. Colleen has been with Gateway since 2015, focusing on “narrative painting”—art that tells a story. “Before Gateway, I never imagined myself as a painter,” she confesses. “But here, I found a medium that works for me and lets me convey a lot of different kinds of stories. The community here has helped me evolve. I’m feeding off the creative energy around me—everybody is supportive of each other.”



Colleen isn’t alone in finding her voice at Gateway. Sidney Perry (pictured, above right), who has been part of the program since the beginning, continues to create intricate needlepoint projects and vibrant rag rugs. His work has been showcased in galleries across the country, yet for Sidney, the real joy comes from the simple act of creation. “When I do my art, I feel very good,” he says with a quiet smile.

Then there’s Michael Oliveira (pictured, above left), who’s been living the artist’s dream since 2000, spending his days at Gateway creating vivid, striking works in a variety of media. “I love what I do here, because I get to express how I feel” says Michael, whose outgoing personality shines as brightly as his art. “Gateway isn’t just a place to create; it’s a place where I’ve made lifelong friends.”

For these artists, Gateway is more than a workspace—it’s a sanctuary, a community, and a platform for their voices. As the center celebrates 50 years, it’s also looking forward, launching a special fundraising campaign to secure its future. “Our goal has always been to break down prejudices and stereotypes around disability,” says Gregory. “Gateway is a daily affirmation of the power of creative expression to connect us all.”

At Gateway Arts, every piece of art is more than just a product—it’s a testament to its creator’s resilience, talent, and passion. As the program steps into its next 50 years, it remains a beacon of possibility for adults with disabilities, proving that with the right support, the extraordinary is always within reach.

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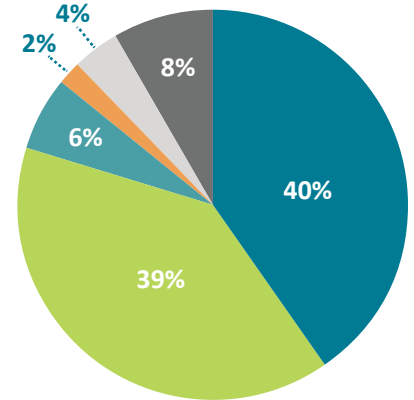


FINANCIAL REPORT

For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2024

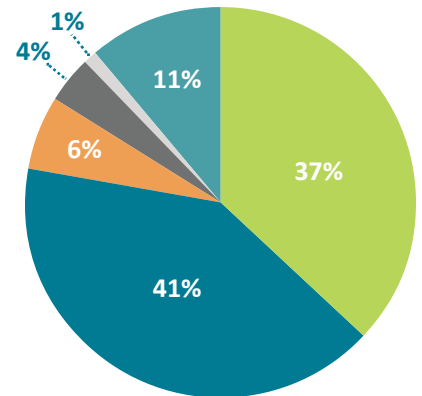
OPERATING REVENUE

● Department of Mental Health	40%	110,872,049
● Department of Developmental Services	39%	107,009,848
● Medicare/Medicaid/MassHealth	6%	17,470,119
● Private Insurance	2%	5,884,037
● Client Fees and Rent Subsidies	4%	11,778,415
● Other	8%	22,828,275
Total	100%	275,842,744



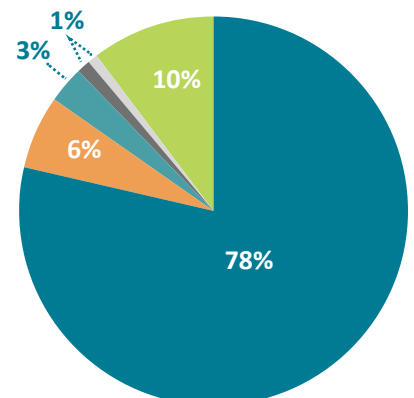
OPERATING EXPENSES

● Psychiatric Rehabilitation	37%	100,736,208
● Developmental Disabilities & Brain Injury	41%	110,436,013
● Clinical Services	6%	15,355,310
● Integrated Care	4%	10,960,368
● Innovation & Other	1%	2,961,309
● Supported Housing	0%	707,287
● General & Administrative	11%	29,395,224
Total	100%	270,551,719



EXPENSES BY FUNCTION

● Personnel	78%	210,800,697
● Occupancy	6%	16,149,889
● Program Supplies & Client	3%	8,886,384
● Information Technology	1%	3,043,814
● Transportation	1%	3,562,249
● Training & Other	10%	28,108,686
Total	100%	270,551,719





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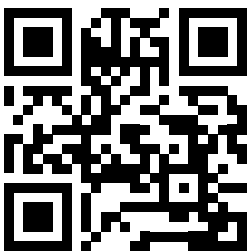
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