

# Annual Report 2024



Family  
Resource  
Network

Independence powered by community



autism  
family  
SERVICES  
OF NEW JERSEY



caregivers  
OF NEW JERSEY



epilepsy  
SERVICES  
NEW JERSEY

## Looking Back at 2024

2024 was a year of resilience and growth for the Family Resource Network (FRN). After the challenges of 2023, we saw growth across our programs, stronger community engagement, and momentum fueled by the dedication of our staff, families, and partners.

From expanding employment and transition opportunities to strengthening support coordination, respite, and recreation services, FRN delivered critical resources that foster independence, inclusion, and well-being. We also achieved new milestones in training, advocacy, and public education. This work equips communities with knowledge while advancing safety and awareness for people living with disabilities and chronic conditions.


Our signature events grew in both reach and impact, bringing together thousands of individuals and families in celebration, connection, and belonging. These moments remind us of the power of community and the strength that comes from supporting one another.

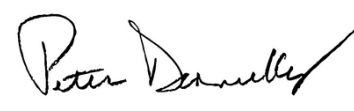
Even with these accomplishments, financial pressures persisted. While 2024 showed improvement compared to the year before, revenue goals were not fully met. Looking ahead, federal policy changes threaten to restrict access to services and healthcare for the vulnerable populations we serve.

For FRN, this is a time that calls for courage and commitment. We are prepared to advocate, innovate, and lead to ensure that every individual and family has access to the resources, dignity, and support they deserve.

As we reflect on 2024, we recognize that every milestone was possible because of your partnership. If you are inspired by the impact of our work, we invite you to deepen your commitment to this mission. Together, we will strengthen families, build inclusive communities, and ensure that no one walks their journey alone.



  
**Liza Gundell**  
Chief Executive Officer

  
**Peter Donnelly**  
Board President

## Our Year in Review

One Mission | Three Affiliates | Infinite Impact

↑ **42%**

Average increase in event revenue across key annual fundraisers

↑ **38%**

Growth in total event attendance year over year

↑ **\$84k**

Raised at the Annual Autism Beach Bash

↑ **\$50k+**

Net proceeds from Walk for the ONE

↑ **15k+**

Individuals trained through public health programs

↑ **1.4k**

Guided to essential health services & coverage

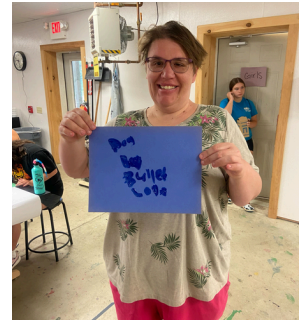
↑ **1.6k**

Individuals served through our programs and services

↑ **42k+**

Trained in seizure recognition & response

These milestones reflect the continued growth and success of our signature programs. Each one helps raise vital funds, build community, and expand our mission across New Jersey.





## A Personal Connection

A Powerful Partnership



When Assemblyman Paul Kanitra welcomed Epilepsy Services of New Jersey into his office this year, it was more than a meeting. It marked the beginning of a meaningful partnership rooted in lived experience and shared purpose.

Assemblyman Kanitra reflected on his late mother, who lived with epilepsy and likely passed away from a seizure at just 46 years old. A single mother, she faced years of doctor visits, shifting treatments, and daily challenges with grace and strength. Despite it all, she dedicated herself to raising and educating her son, a devotion he credited as the foundation of his success.

Her story powerfully reminded us that epilepsy is not an obstacle to love, achievement, or impact. It also reinforced the importance of our mission.

As Assemblyman Kanitra shared, "I wouldn't be anywhere close to where I am without her love and tremendous sacrifices. Today, I had the honor of hearing about the incredible work Epilepsy Services of New Jersey does to help those affected by this horrible disease. It was simply inspiring."

We were proud to have Assemblyman Kanitra's support and look forward to working together to advance policies, raise awareness, and improve the quality of life for individuals and families living with epilepsy.



## Empowering Futures

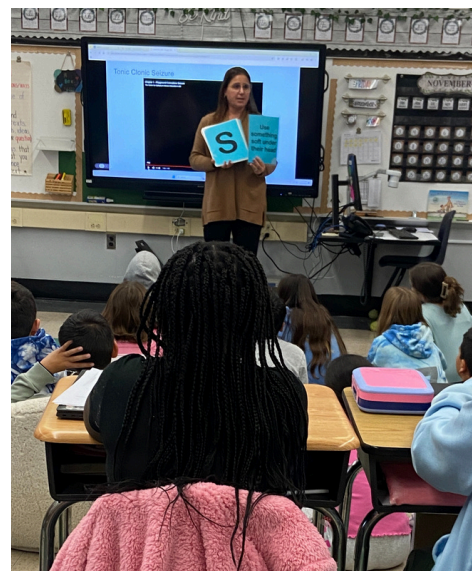
Expanding opportunities in Employment and Health.



FRN's Employment and Transition Programs prepare youth and adults with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities for competitive integrated employment through pre-employment transition services, education, training, and ongoing support, empowering individuals to work, grow, and fully participate in their communities. In 2024, FRN was awarded a 2-year grant through the NJ Department of Labor to launch the EmployAbility program. This initiative promotes competitive integrated employment for adults with disabilities through intensive job readiness training, hands-on internship experiences, and capacity building with support coordination agencies. Each participant receives individualized and group training, completes a 120-hour internship in a field of interest, and is supported in securing meaningful employment upon completion.

## Public Health Program Improving Safety and Expanding Awareness

FRN's public health programs provide advocacy, education, and support to individuals with disabilities and chronic illness, as well as their caregivers, by connecting them to critical resources and services across the lifespan. In 2024, our Information and Referral team educated over 42,762 individuals through in-person trainings and online webinars. A major milestone was reached in November, with over 150,000 people trained in Seizure Recognition and Response since the program's launch in 2020, marking a significant step in improving emergency preparedness and community safety for individuals with Epilepsy.



# Annual Report

## 2024



## NCC 2024

### Empowering caregivers

The 2024 National Caregivers Conference brought together caregivers, professionals, and advocates for a weekend of learning, connection, and inspiration. From the powerful keynote by John F. Crowley, President and CEO, Biotechnology Innovation Organization, to breakout sessions on self-care, veterans' caregiving, family dynamics, and community resources, the event delivered timely insights and practical strategies.

An engaging afternoon panel explored disability, aging, and policy, while exhibitors offered tools and services to support attendees in their caregiving journeys.

We are deeply grateful to our sponsors, speakers, and exhibitors for making this event possible and for helping strengthen the future of caregiving across communities.

## Building Connections and Community

Connecting families to resources and support

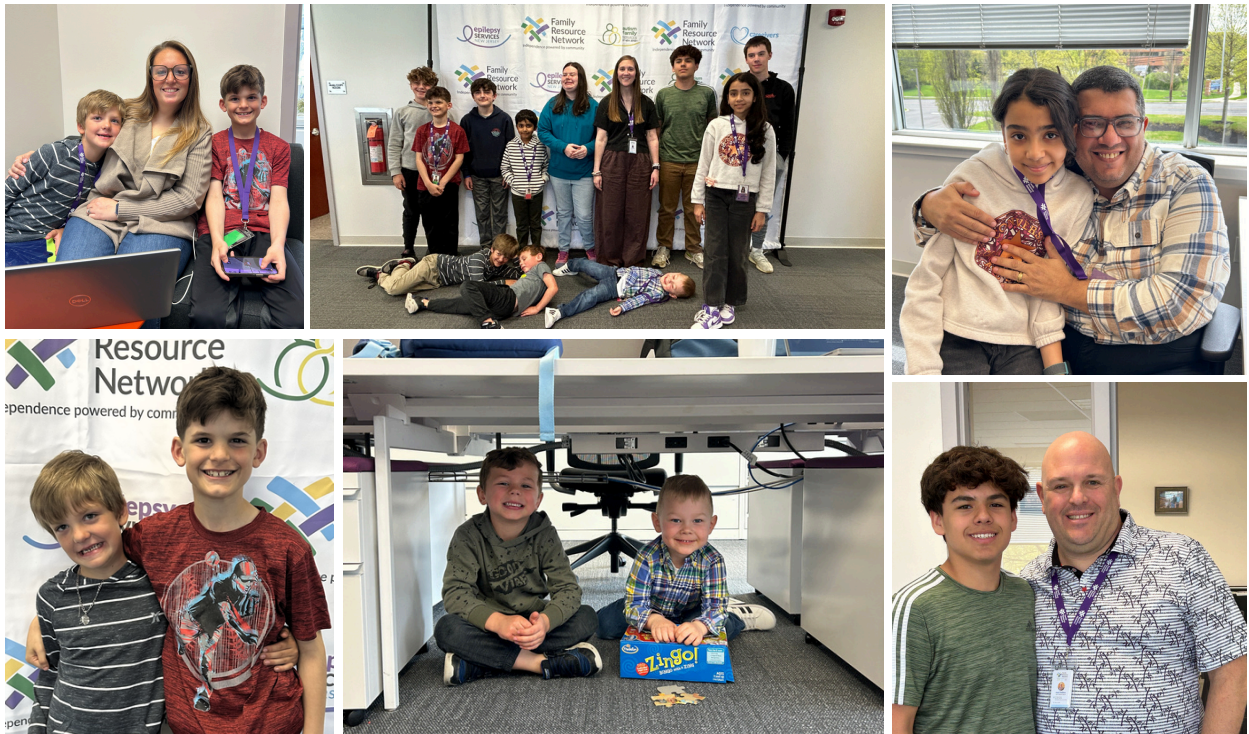


In 2024, FRN expanded community outreach by hosting wellness fairs to highlight vital services, transition fairs to guide students with disabilities and their families in planning for life after graduation, and open enrollment days to help individuals and families access health coverage that meets their needs.



## A Day of Fun and Future Leaders

Kids at Work 2024



Kids at Work Day 2024 brought energy, laughter, and a fresh perspective to the Family Resource Network. Children joined their parents for a full day of hands-on fun, team activities, and a closer look at what happens across our programs and departments.

Families explored the workplace together, participating in projects, games, and shared experiences that highlighted the value of connection and collaboration.

By the end of the day, everyone was tired and happy, with new memories and a deeper appreciation for the work we do together.



### Expanding Our Digital Reach

Saw a 31% increase in social media followers across the network, expanding our reach and strengthening community engagement.



## Recognizing Excellence

Honoring individuals who go above and beyond



Julie Leslie, a dedicated Direct Support Professional with the Family Resource Network since 2014, was recognized with the NJACP Hero Award for her unwavering commitment to the individuals and families she supports.

Balancing her role as a DSP alongside a full-time job, Julie brings compassion, reliability, and heart to everything she does. Families often share how her presence has helped their loved ones grow in confidence, communication, and everyday life skills. Julie's work exemplifies what it means to go above and beyond. We are proud to honor her as a true hero in our community.

**Julie Leslie, FRN's 2024 NJACP Hero Award Recipient**

Michael Vacca, an outstanding participant in our Out N' About and Respite Getaway programs, was honored with the 2024 NJACP STARS Award for his creativity, kindness, and leadership. Whether displaying his artwork at the Montclair Art Museum, working at Employment Horizons, or bowling with his team, Michael approaches everything with heart and enthusiasm. He goes out of his way to welcome new members and foster connection within the FRN community.

Michael's dedication to growth, love for family, and commitment to others truly embody what the STARS Award celebrates.

**Michael Vacca, FRN's 2024 NJACP STARS Recipient**



### Mission Moment | **Brian's Journey**

Brian joined Caregivers of New Jersey in 2018 with a goal of living on his own. In September 2024, with help from his support coordinator and family, he moved into a S.M.I.L.E. home and has been thriving ever since.

He's built new friendships, started a job, and embraced life in his community. This move has given Brian the confidence and independence he had always hoped for, and his family is incredibly proud.



## Pathways to Independence

Connecting families with vital support services.



### Support Coordination That Empowers

Support Coordination honors the hopes and dreams of individuals and their families by facilitating a unique and individualized planning process. Using a person-centered approach, our Support Coordinators work closely with individuals and their families to develop individualized service plans, connect them to services, and support their goals for independence and quality of life. In 2024, we provided support to nearly 790 individuals across New Jersey. The Support Coordination team hosted four comprehensive transition fairs in collaboration with Rancocas Valley Regional Schools, Woodstown High School, Lawrence Township Public Schools, and Hunterdon Central Regional High School. These events helped students and their families navigate the path from school to adulthood by connecting them with critical resources and services.

### Support Services Impacted Lives in 2024

FRN's Support Services provide respite care and recreational programs for youth and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, offering meaningful experiences that promote independence, inclusion, and well-being. These services also give families the support they need to lead balanced and fulfilling lives. In 2024, over 850 individuals received services through our support programs. A key accomplishment this year was the successful completion of over 220 home modification and assistive technology projects for families of youth with disabilities, 145 home modifications and 81 assistive technology installations. These projects are designed to increase functional skills and promote greater independence, enabling youth to thrive at home and within their communities.



## 13th Annual Paint the Pony Purple

Turning up the volume for epilepsy awareness



**The iconic Stone Pony was filled wall to wall as more than 300 attendees gathered for the 13th Annual Paint the Pony Purple.**

The event brought together music, energy, and community to raise critical funds and awareness for those living with epilepsy in New Jersey.

Four volunteer bands lit up the stage in an unforgettable Battle of the Bands, with The Bovine Bandits taking home the top prize. The crowd showed up in full force, and together, nearly \$30,000 was raised to support the work of Epilepsy Services of New Jersey.

From the music to the mission, every part of the evening reflected the strength and unity of this community. We're grateful to our sponsors, donors, volunteers, bands, and The Stone Pony for helping make it all possible.

**334** attendees

**11%** gross revenue growth

**13** sponsors secured

**\$34k+** total revenue

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**18%**  
increase in sponsorships



## 48th Annual ESNJ Golf Outing

Driving impact for the epilepsy community



### The 48th ESNJ Golf Classic Drives Impact for the Epilepsy Community

At Upper Montclair Country Club, FRN brought together 172 golfers for a round defined by connection and purpose. Together, attendees and sponsors helped raise more than \$23,000 to support programs for individuals living with epilepsy.

A significant portion of the funds will sponsor over 35 campers at Camp NOVA, providing access to a week of connection, confidence-building, and fun. The event also helps sustain vital programs like respite, recreation, employment support, and education across New Jersey.

We're grateful to our sponsors and everyone who made this event possible. Your support drives meaningful change in the lives of those we serve.

172 golfers

11% gross revenue growth

21 sponsors secured

\$144k+ total sponsorships

**\$23k**

raised for Camperships to sponsor Camp NOVA

## 20 Years of Impact: Autism Beach Bash

An unforgettable day in Belmar with Surfers Healing



### The 20th Annual Autism Beach Bash was a celebration of joy, inclusion, and belonging.

There are few places where families living with autism can feel completely at ease and experience a sense of belonging. That's exactly what unfolded on the sand in Belmar, as more than 3,000 attendees came together for a day of surfing, connection, and celebration.

Hosted by Autism Family Services of New Jersey, the 20th annual event featured the unforgettable surfing experience led by Surfers Healing, together with support from the City of Belmar, a team of dedicated volunteers and generous sponsors. Beyond the waves, families discovered services and resources under the exhibitor tent, while also finding comfort in connecting with one another. It was a powerful reminder of what's possible when a community comes together to ensure every family feels seen, supported, and free to simply enjoy the day.

**3k+** attendees

**5%** gross revenue growth

**36** sponsors secured

**\$84k+** total revenue

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**40%**  
growth in attendance



# The Magic of Camp NOVA

Empowering Campers Through Fun and Friendship



For 36 years, Camp NOVA has been more than just a sleepaway camp. It has been a home away from home for youth and adults with epilepsy and intellectual and developmental disabilities. This summer was no exception.

Our 7-day, 6-night adventure was filled with joy, laughter, and a wide range of inclusive activities that brought campers together through shared experiences. From adaptive rope courses and team boating to swimming, arts and crafts, and lively card games, every moment was designed to empower participants and create lasting memories.

The highlight of the week was the Carnival-themed dance party, complete with cotton candy, popcorn, and an incredible DJ. The music, dancing, and pure excitement captured the magic that happens when the Camp NOVA family comes together.

Camp NOVA is more than a program. It is a transformative experience that builds confidence, strengthens friendships, and creates memories that last a lifetime. We are deeply grateful to everyone who made this year's camp possible, and we look forward to welcoming our campers back each year for more Camp NOVA magic.



## 11th Annual Walk for the ONE

Uniting for the 1 in 26 living with epilepsy



**This year's Walk for the ONE was a powerful reminder of what it means to come together as a community**

Families, friends, and supporters gathered with strollers, wagons, costumes, and even a few four-legged companions, all walking in solidarity with those living with epilepsy.

The energy was unmatched, and the turnout reflected how deeply this cause continues to resonate. With more attendees, stronger support, and increased sponsor involvement, the event not only grew in size but also in impact. Every step taken helped raise awareness, build connections, and move us closer to a future where everyone affected by epilepsy feels supported and understood.

**318** attendees

**50%** gross revenue growth

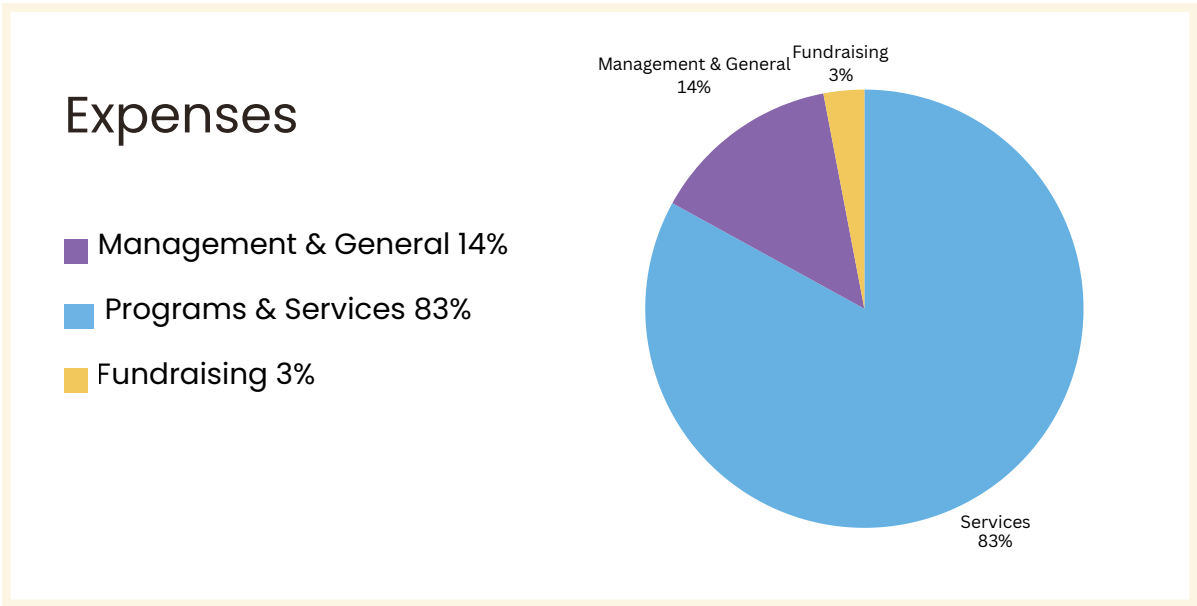
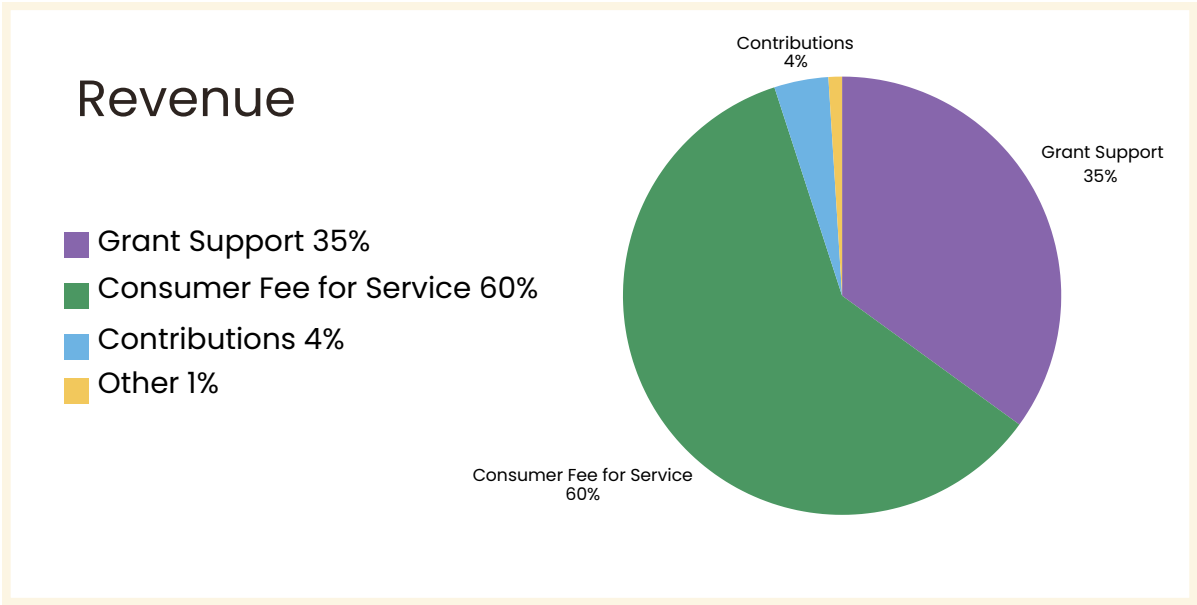
**7** sponsors secured

**\$58k+** total revenue

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**83%**  
growth in registration

# Key Financials







**The Family Resource Network** is a statewide, family-focused organization based in East Windsor, New Jersey. Through its three affiliate organizations, FRN meets the growing need for community-based programs and services for individuals with disabilities and chronic conditions. Each year, FRN provides direct services to more than 3,500 individuals and reaches over 30,000 family members, caregivers, and community members through support, education, and training across New Jersey.

### **Our Mission**

To provide a personalized, humancentric approach to helping families with disabilities find the right resources and support for every step of their journey



## **Contact**

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## **Candid.**