



*The Arc*<sup>™</sup>

*Community Advocates*

# ANNUAL REPORT

2021

# Message from our Executive Director

Greetings Everyone,

As I sit here in 2022, reflecting on what we have achieved, I am struck by how much things have changed between the beginning of 2021 and today. As I finish my 3rd year at Community Advocates, I am so incredibly grateful to have the opportunity to work alongside so many great people as we lead this organization into its 7th decade.

In some ways, 2021 was a continuation of 2020. Covid was still impacting the ability of people to even have the time and inclination to reach out for assistance. Many people were struggling with just addressing the day to day needs of their families. The people we were serving had more complex needs because of the additional factor of the pandemic and its fallout.

One of the most significant achievements of 2021 was our move back downtown and into the home base we left almost 7 years previous. With the generous support of 2 local foundations, we not only paid for the move, but were able to paint, install new flooring and countertops, purchase some new office furniture, and install automatic doors.

Moving back into this neighborhood has brought us back to a more visible and accessible location. We are beginning to get reconnected to other non-profits as COVID and its subsequent adjustments settle. Someone mentioned to me that there are close to a dozen non-profits within easy walking distance of our offices. Having a more visible presence in the community has many benefits, including people walking in and being curious about what we do.

We are excited to be embarking on a project to capture the history of Community Advocates. As we prepare to celebrate our 70th Anniversary we are looking for people who would be interested in sharing stories of how Community Advocates has impacted their lives and their community.

While 2021 seemed to be a year of treading water, 2022 is already proving that people are going to need even more support as they navigate the Post-COVID world. It appears that 2023 is shaping up to be another turning point in the history of Community Advocates. With additional funding, we are well positioned to meet that need, while celebrating the 70 year commitment Community Advocates has made to improving the lives of individuals who experience disability and their families.



Sheldon Schwitek, Executive Director

# Strategic Goals

For more than seventy years the organization has touched the lives of countless individuals and families. Board, staff, and volunteers worked in partnership with Change Agent Consulting, to embark on a journey to complete a three year strategic plan integrating their previous plan and the most critical strategy that will take the organization to the next level.

## Strategic Partnerships



- Increase partnerships based on diversity, geography, business and agencies that service the ALICE population.
- Partnerships with other local agencies such as Communities in Schools, OutFront, Michigan Alliance for Families, Ask Family Services and Disability Network of Southwest Michigan.

## Stakeholder Engagement



- Increase outreach and trainings
- Designed a new membership program
- Create community conversations
- Ongoing development of e-news and social media presence.

## Expand Funding Base



- Grow budget by three times by increasing individual donors
- Establishing a United Way investment
- Expand funding through Kalamazoo Community Foundation and others

# 2021 Through Numbers

## NEW & RETURNING FAMILIES/INDIVIDUALS

Returning Clients  
34

Intakes  
59



Screenings  
85

# 63%

OF OUR CLIENTS HAVE NEVER HAD OUR SERVICES BEFORE

# 37%

OF OUR CLIENTS HAVE HAD OUR SERVICES BEFORE

## GOALS

*Each family/individual that we serve has an advocacy goal whose team works hard to achieve. In 2021, 90 goals were created.*

53%

Achieved

38%

No Longer Being Pursued

9%

Still In Progress

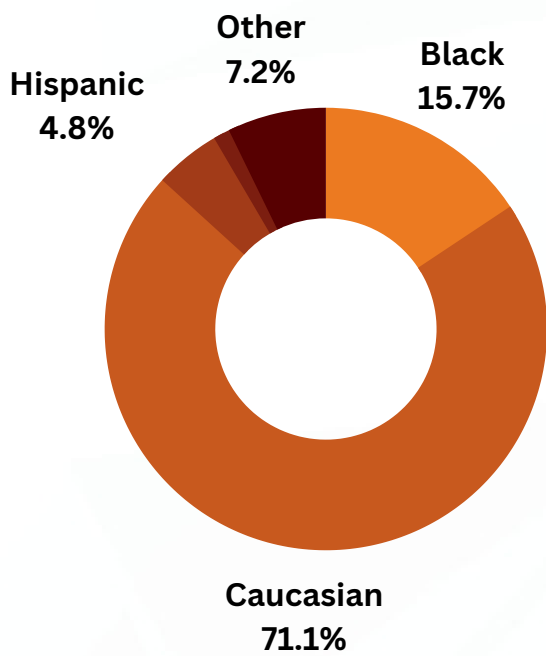
# 4HRS

IS THE AVERAGE ADVOCATE TIME SPENT PER CLIENT GOAL

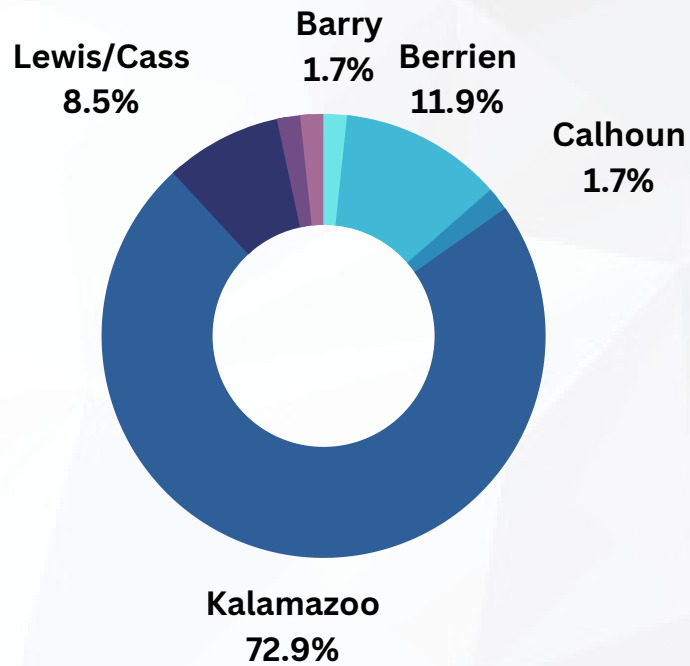
# 569

CONTACTS WERE MADE BY ADVOCATES

## Intakes by Race

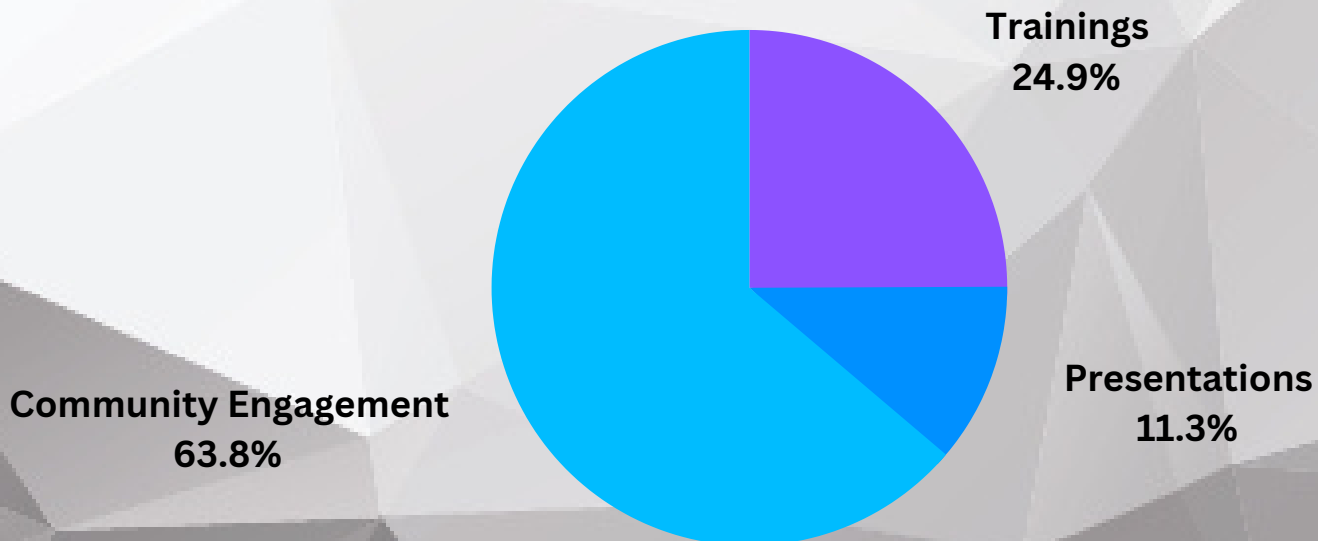


## Intakes by County



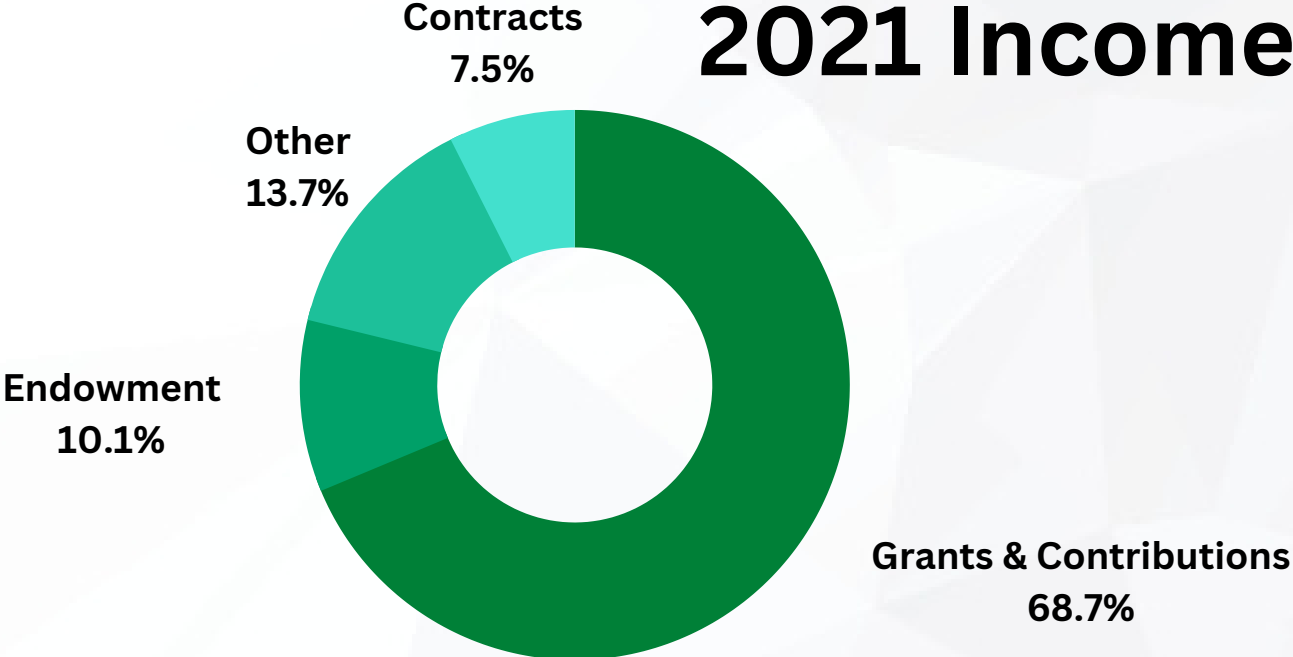
*"Thank you for caring about my child like your own, wanting her to have the best supports for her education that she deserves." - Anonymous Mom*

## Community Outreach

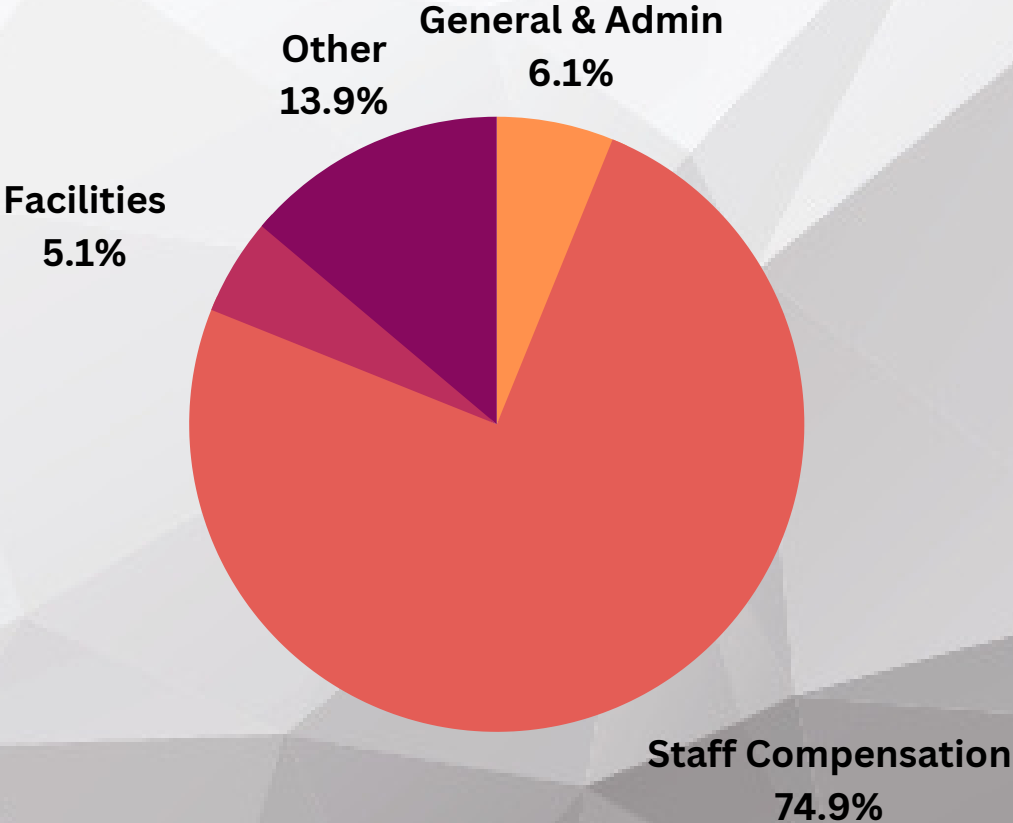


# Financial Accountability

## 2021 Income



## 2021 Expenses



# Joseph A. Cekola Endowment Memorial Fund



Blessing is a 3-year-old girl who uses a wheelchair and has a number of other medical needs as a result of her disability.

Typically, Blessing was transported in a car seat, but it was becoming increasingly difficult to transfer her from her wheelchair and car seat when she needed to leave the house. Blessing is not able to assist in her transferring because of low muscle tone related to her disability. A typical transfer also includes numerous pieces of medical equipment including an emergency bag.

As Blessing continues to grow, it was getting more difficult for her mom to do the transfer. The risk of Blessing, her mom, or other

family members getting injured in the process of transferring Blessing was a huge risk for everyone.

Blessing and her family requested financial assistance to convert a van to include a lift ramp that allows Blessing to stay in her wheelchair for all transportation needs. It has also made the transition to the vehicle safer and Blessing is able to transport all of her medical gear with her seamlessly. While this well equipped van has allowed Blessing to be transported safely, it also allows for more opportunities for her and her family to access their community.

**Joseph A. Cekola Endowment Memorial Fund**  
**2021 TOTAL AWARDED: \$8,429.00**

# Staff & Board

**Sheldon Schwitek, Executive Director**

**Anne Gaertner, Director of Advocacy & Outreach**

**LaTaynia Conant, Marketing & Communications Coordinator**

**Jackie VanHorn, Individual & Family Advocate**

**Kim Hinds-Lepsy, Individual & Family Advocate**

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Allison Hammond, Chair**

**Anne Lipsey, Vice Chair**

**AhNee White, Secretary**

**Angela Weber, Treasurer**

**John Argo**

**Phil Copeland**

**Tamiko Garrett**



## **THE ARC COMMUNITY ADVOCATES**

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