

The Social and Learning Institute has been serving the La Porte County area since 1976. Our knowledgeable leadership and staff are dedicated to cultivating the social, emotional, and educational development of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Our Mission

- To provide a social and learning program for our students
- To provide programs which include: learning activities, self-help, motor, language and speech development skills, training in activities of daily living, pre-vocational training, and adjustment skills with opportunities for experiences conducive to social and educational development
- To provide respite and resource services for individuals and families
- To serve as a resource to individuals, families, and community at large regarding resources and best practices for persons with intellectual disabilities.

A Year in Review



New Buses Have SLI Students Riding in Style

Getting from Point A to Point B has long been a challenge for the students and staff at The Social and Learning Institute. Having to rely on two aging passenger vans made getting out and about in some ways difficult and in other ways dangerous.

“Many of our students do have mobility issues,” says SLI Executive Director Debbie Sellers. “The safety features weren’t there and neither of the vans were easily accessible to students with physical limitations.”

In November 2017, Sellers set out to improve SLI’s ability to allow its students to discover the community it calls home. Through grants by the Federal Transit Administration, the Indiana Department of Transportation, the Michigan City Community Enrichment Corporation, along with donations from private donors, the Institute acquired two 15-passenger buses in May 2019. The vehicles are both wheelchair accessible, allowing SLI the ability to provide transportation to wheelchair-bound students.

The two buses allow SLI to continue providing a vital portion of its programming that includes

participation in offsite activities within and outside of Michigan City and La Porte. “Having the ability to transport all 27 students safely and comfortably, rather than relying upon additional transport by staff and volunteers, has eliminated previous limitations on our ability to engage students in the community,” Sellers says.

“Having the ability to transport all 27... safely and comfortably [helps to] engage students in the community.”

Debbie L. Sellers - Executive Director

The convenience and efficiency of the new buses was definitely worth the wait.

“It was a long but much needed process,” Sellers says. “We were so excited the day they were delivered. The support from all levels, especially our local community, made all the pieces fall into place. It’s really been a huge asset.”

The next goal for SLI is to further develop partnerships with the local business community to sponsor each vehicle. “We are seeking sponsors to provide financial support to offset the annual operating cost of maintaining our vehicles,” Sellers says. “Each sponsor will have to opportunity to utilize the vehicle exterior for marketing.”

Science & Nature Exploration

Dunes Learning Center visits SLI once a month to teach students science and nature topics. Each session includes an interactive powerpoint, a craft, and a game to engage with and get students involved. SLI students also go to the Center for field trips a couple of times a year.

“Our whole team enjoys... the opportunity to share our love of nature with such a diverse and appreciative group.”



Dunes Learning Center - Outreach Education Coordinator Alisha Zick



This program is supported by a grant from Unity Foundation of La Porte County.

Mother-Daughter Duo Helps Bring the Family Feeling to The Social & Learning Institute

Amy Armstrong's time at The Social and Learning Institute began about 15 years ago.

"I'd come in on certain days to volunteer and I would help them with scrapbooking," says Armstrong, who is now in her second year as Program Coordinator at SLI, a privately funded non-profit organization providing a day program for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

“*[Students] feel good when they're here and they look forward to what we're going to do.*”

Shirley Dolph - Program Assistant

school, she found her way back with a little bit of coaxing from mom – Shirley Dolph.

Dolph is currently a program assistant at SLI, but has served a variety of roles over the past 25 years. She worked along side the late founder of SLI, James Guerrucci, after first being introduced to the Institute by a co-worker.

"I worked at Fannie May," Dolph says. "I was kind of looking for something extra to do and I've been here ever since."

When surgeries forced Dolph to take some time away from the Institute, Armstrong was asked to step in and fill the void left by her mom. That ultimately led to Armstrong landing her current position.



Both Armstrong and Dolph say that the students are the ones who have kept them striving to make the SLI all it can be.

"You can come in to work and you look at that first student that comes in and they are so happy to see you," Dolph said. "They feel good when they're here and they look forward to what we're going to do."

Armstrong says that the students have an uncanny ability to turn around her own day.

"If you come in and you're in an off mood, they know it," Armstrong said. "They sense it and they're there with the hug and it just changes your day. For me, it's not about the paycheck. It's about the love that you get. It's the hug. It's the caring."

After Guerrucci's passing in March of 2015, Debbie Sellers was chosen to take over the Executive Director's position at SLI. Dolph said she sees a synergy between Amy and Debbie similar to the one that existed between herself and Guerrucci.

"I've been here long enough to see a lot of changes," Dolph said. "This was always Jim's baby. Debbie and Amy remind me a lot of Jim and myself. I think our school will go on for years and years."

The former stay-at-home mom and hair stylist stepped away from the Institute for a time, but once her children had gone off to

Equine Assisted Learning



This program was made possible thanks in part to support from Unity Foundation of La Porte County.



Staff

Debbie L. Sellers, MPA
Executive Director

Amy Armstrong
Program Coordinator

Tricia Dittmer
Program Assistant

Shirley Dolph
Program Assistant

Stephanie Gordon, MSTOM, L.Ac
Health & Wellness Program Coordinator

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Resolution Specialist, Indiana Department of Transportation

Professional Development

Through the Capacity Building Grant initiative of Healthcare Foundation of La Porte, SLI Executive Director Debbie Sellers was 1 of 20 local non-profit leaders to participate in the 2019 IU Nonprofit Leadership Academy presented by Indiana University Executive Education at the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs.

"Nonprofit organizations exist to serve a need within the community and spend their time providing resources to others," said Maria Fruth HFL President and CEO. "Capacity building opportunities like this IU Nonprofit Leadership Academy are our way of giving resources back to the organizations who do so much for our community, allowing them to acquire more 'tools' to deliver services more effectively and efficiently."

"The professors and practiced facilitators from IU Executive Education shared a wealth of knowledge over the 10-day course," Sellers said. "The opportunity to share successful practices and explore challenges with non-profit professionals of our community was an outstanding development experience."



www.hflaporte.org

Health and Wellness Program a Hit Among Students

Building and maintaining a garden as well as participating in yoga and Zumba are just a part of The Social and Learning Institute's recently implemented Health and Wellness Program that delighted students in 2019 and has found renewed funding for 2020.



The garden, built just outside the SLI's James J. Guerrucci Building, has yielded kale, zucchini, tomatoes, and potatoes among other growables. From the idea's inception, the students have played a crucial role in the development of the garden.

"It all started in the winter months," said SLI Executive Director Debbie Sellers. "They watched YouTube videos to think about what we could do. They were involved from the concept all the way through to where it is today. Building the boxes, putting in the dirt, putting in the plants."

"It is their garden. It wasn't something somebody brought in already assembled."

Program Coordinator Amy Armstrong says the students were able to get their hands dirty and got a kick out of using tools that they typically only saw in the hands of others.

"Seeing the looks on their faces when they had that drill in their hand," Armstrong said while laughing. "You could see the pride on their face. I did that."

Stephanie Gordon was brought on to serve as SLI's Health and Wellness Program Coordinator. She has introduced students to yoga and Zumba, two activities that some might believe wouldn't mesh with adults with intellectual disabilities and physical limitations. As it turns out, the students have completely bought in.

Gordon, who holds a Masters of Science in traditional Oriental medicine and a Bachelors Degree in nutrition, hadn't worked specifically with this population prior to coming to SLI, but it didn't take long for any reservations she had to disappear.

"I just had to have an open mind," Gordon said. "I knew within the first couple of hours that we were going to be okay. I was definitely nervous when we first started because I didn't know any of my students. Now they're like family. It's my favorite day of the week."

Gordon says the advantages of the wellness curriculum has been seen beyond the confines of the school.

"We've had a student's medical doctor come back and ask his mom, 'What is he doing differently?'" Gordon said. "His cholesterol levels have lowered. Weight loss is happening. Healthier blood pressure. What in the world is he doing different?"

"I am blown away by what yoga has done for them. Some of the students have bought yoga DVDs and asked for them for Christmas. It's neat to see it leaching out into their homes and into the community. Some of them have even gone to public classes."

Tricia Dittmer, a SLI Program Assistant that has been with the Institute for going on 20 years, says that the Health and Wellness Program has been a tremendous addition to the offerings SLI provides its students.

"I'm shocked how well they do," Dittmer says. "Some of them are more flexible than others. Some that I thought wouldn't follow along, they're really trying. They are really getting the calming part down."

Gordon, who says she grows much of her own food at home says that one of the biggest additions to the curriculum for 2020 will involve the irrigation system the Institute uses to water its gardens.

"We need water and the school doesn't have gutters where we need them," Gordon said. "I found a company that makes saucers that catch falling rainwater. We're going to use drip irrigation. The goal is to be able to leave the garden during breaks and know that it will be watered."



This program is supported by grants from Duneland Health Council and Healthcare Foundation of La Porte.



Health Promotion Through The Arts



Lubeznik Center for the Arts has been honored to offer weekly art classes for SLI for the past 12 years. This partnership is one of the best things we do, and it is a joy to work with the students each week and observe their creative and expressive growth in the artworks they create.

*Hannah Hammond-Hagman,
Education Director Lubeznik Center for the Arts*

This program is supported by a grant from Duneland Health Council.



Community and Lifelong Learning

SLI's program is designed to stimulate and engage its students through a structured balance of socialization and learning activities. The Institute maintains an adaptive curriculum integrating the strengths and abilities of all students and is committed to providing innovative programs that promote personal growth. SLI actively engages students in the community through outings that are fun and entertaining while at the same time reinforce social skills, provide an educational experience, and expose students to local culture and recreational activities.



Visitors from Franciscan Health Michigan City Chest Pain & Stroke Center & La Porte County Emergency Medical Service



Teamwork Challenge



Challenger Learning Center on the campus of Purdue University Northwest in Hammond



Shopping Skills



City Lanes Bowling Center



Adult Enrichment Program at Michigan City Public Library

SNAP Curriculum

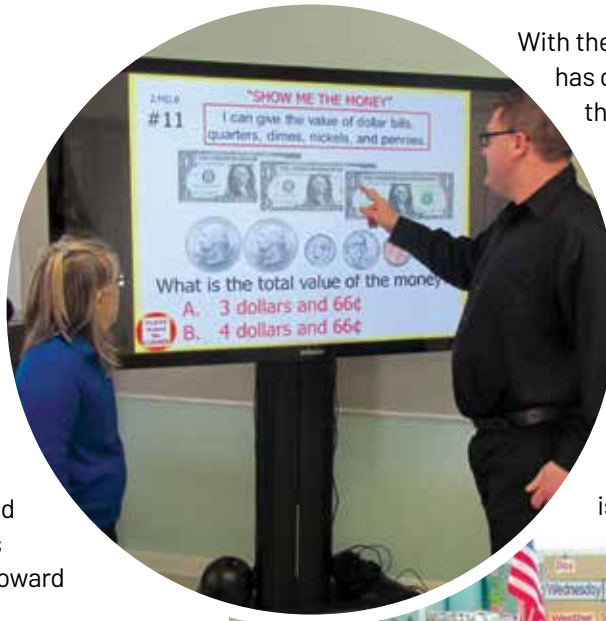
A new curriculum that focuses on practical life and social skills has been introduced at The Social and Learning Institute.

The Specific Natural Activity Program, or SNAP for short, covers a wide range of topics and teaches students the ins and outs of everything from shopping and money skills to nutrition and personal care. What makes SNAP unique is that while programs have always existed to teach students about the topics involved, most have been geared toward a younger student.

"All we have here are adults and a lot of the stuff you find online is geared toward children," SLI Program Coordinator Amy Armstrong says. "They need to learn to find a job. They need to learn how to find an apartment, how to do their laundry and take care of themselves at home. The SNAP curriculum covers all of those bases."

In order to introduce the current subject, Armstrong says that they engage in "roundtable discussions."

"We teach them that there are no stupid questions," Armstrong said. "If you have a question, maybe somebody else has the same question but they're too afraid to ask."



With the SLI's roots dating back to the 1970's, much has changed when it comes to how we do the things we do. As society has evolved, the little things have sometimes become a little more complex. Armstrong uses the way we pay for things as an example.

"A lot of things have changed since then," Armstrong says. "A lot of our students have debit cards and they know how to use the debit card."

"It's the basic things they need to know."

One of the main benefits of the curriculum is that it allows students to gain a new sense

of responsibility for their actions. While those with challenges will always need a little help and guidance along the way, the feeling of independence works wonders with their mental health.

"I have noticed a big difference

in students honing in on what we went over," Armstrong says. "We've gotten a huge response back from the students. They're learning how to advocate for themselves."



Student of the Week



The Social & Learning Institute

Where Socializing & Learning are Key to Growth

The Student of the Week honor serves as recognition for demonstrating the core values of the SLI program including kindness, helpfulness, cooperation, confidence, best effort, and personal responsibility. The weekly recipient of the coveted award receives a unique 'We are grateful for you because ...' certificate and gains special privileges and responsibilities, such as choosing their weekly job, helping guide yoga class, being first for special events, and sitting a special desk for the week. Tricia Dittmer, SLI Program Assistant has held the responsibility for maintaining this tradition for many years. "The honor serves as positive reinforcement for the behaviors we encourage and expect our students to achieve," says Dittmer. "The award brings pride and confidence to the weekly winner."



“
I'm inspired by the way they help each other. In a world where there is so much judgment, they are so accepting of other's differences.
”

Tricia Dittmer,
Program Assistant

A Look Ahead

Save the Dates for these Upcoming 2020 Events

SUMMER CELEBRATION

June 25, 2020

Creek Ridge County Park



CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

December 16, 2020

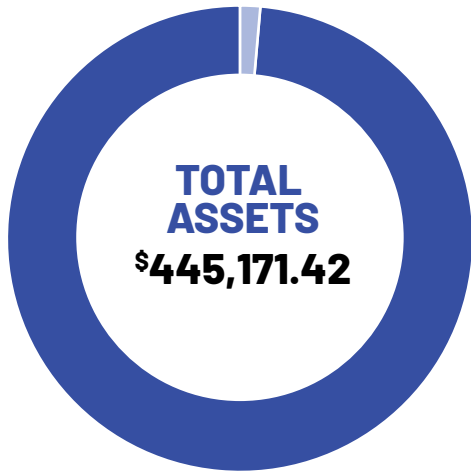
St. John's United Church of Christ



FINANCIALS

Position Report | Fiscal Year Ending 9.30.2019

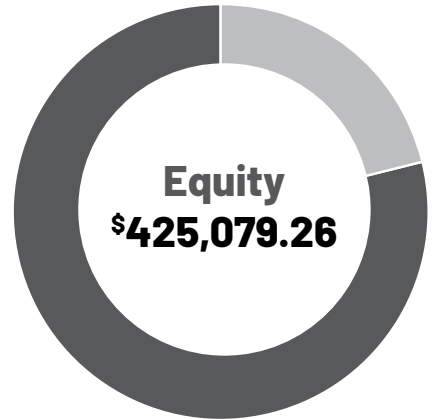
Total Liabilities & Equity \$445,171.42



● Current \$6,777.80
● Fixed \$483,393.62



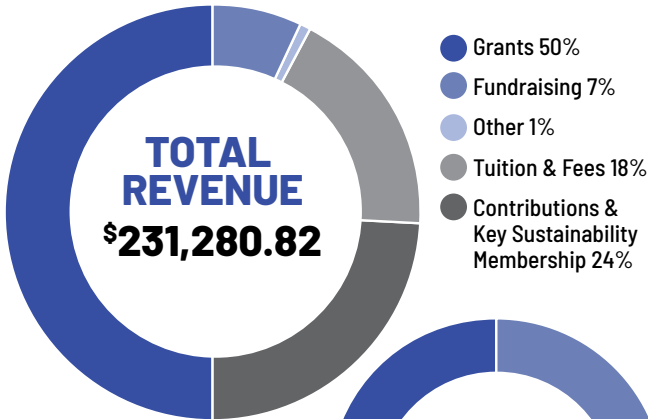
● Current \$1,293.22
● Long-Term \$18,798.94



● Net Income \$90,206.56
● Unrestricted Net Assets \$334,872.70

Revenue & Expenses | Fiscal Year Ending 9.30.2019

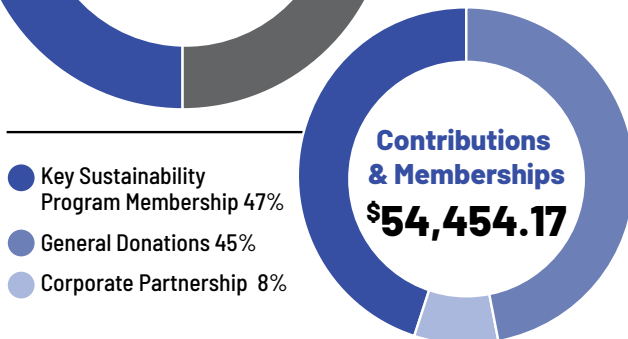
The increase in total revenue included restricted grant funds in the amount of \$86,940 for the purchase of new transit vehicles.



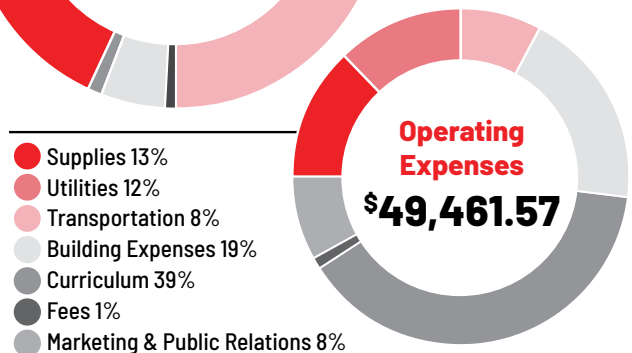
● Grants 50%
● Fundraising 7%
● Other 1%
● Tuition & Fees 18%
● Contributions & Key Sustainability Membership 24%



● Compensation & Related Expenses 57%
● Professional Fees 1%
● Operating Expenses 35%
● Key Sustainability Program 1%
● Fundraising 5%
● Other 1%



● Key Sustainability Program Membership 47%
● General Donations 45%
● Corporate Partnership 8%



● Supplies 13%
● Utilities 12%
● Transportation 8%
● Building Expenses 19%
● Curriculum 39%
● Fees 1%
● Marketing & Public Relations 8%



Thank You Donors

Did you know?

While students do pay tuition to attend The Social and Learning Institute, more than two-thirds of the Institute's annual revenue comes in the form of grants, donations, and fundraising.

"We are grateful to have earned our donors' commitment to our mission, confidence in the service we provide, and faith in the future growth of our program," says Debbie Sellers, Executive Director of the SLI.

With nearly 25% of our sustaining revenue generated by contributions and Key Sustainability Program membership, we simply could not do what we do without our donors.

"Through the generosity and engagement of our local community and individual donors, we are able to fulfill our financial obligations and focus on the further development of programs to best serve the needs, and enrich the lives, of our students, their families and caregivers."

Thank You Donors

SLI is grateful for the continued support of these dedicated community businesses, service organizations and funders who support the program through grants, fundraising and donations:



Duneland Health Council



Healthcare Foundation of La Porte



Unity Foundation of La Porte County

American Legion John Franklin Miller Post 37

Angelos & Rardin, CPA's

The Bar Method Mishawaka

The Barker Welfare Foundation

B.R. Foundation

Culver's of La Porte

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dh2w, Inc.

Dolson Insurance Agency

Domino's Pizza Michigan City

Etsy Montessori Restore

Exchangette Club Michigan City

Fannie May Confections, Inc.

Frosty Boy



General Insurance Services

Hacienda Mexican Restaurants

HairPorte

Holly's Restaurant & Pub

Indiana Department of Transportation

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La Porte County Historical Society

LaBraid Fundraising, Inc.

Life Changes LLC

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Michiana Lions Club

Michigan City Christian Church Senior Adult Ministries

Michigan City Community Enrichment Corporation

Michigan City Fire Department



Shop with Our Cops

Michigan City Police Department



Modern Woodmen Fraternal Financial



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Payless Self Storage

Profitable Solutions Fundraising

The Rising Phoenix Gallery



Sacred Dunes Integrative Health

Sauers Buick GMC

South Bend Chocolate Company

Starbucks La Porte

St. John's United Church of Christ

The Storage Place

Wilson Industrial Sales Company, Inc.

Shaping Our Future Starts with YOU

Key Sustainability Program

At The Social and Learning Institute, our mission is rooted in the idea that all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are defined by their own strengths and abilities—not by their disability—and that each person deserves every opportunity to thrive and participate fully in society. Our programming is designed to expand minds, teach essential life skills, and help individuals recognize their worth through a structured balance of socialization and learning activities.

We invite you to become a member of our community through our Key Sustainability Program. Individuals and organizations who participate in this program are the backbone of our organization and play key roles in shaping our future.

By becoming a member, you're giving someone a sense of community, access to fundamental education, and a meaningful life that might otherwise have gone unrealized.

Secure credit card donations may be made online at socialandlearning.org

or you may complete and return the membership form on reverse side.



THE FOUNDERS CLUB

\$40/MONTH - \$480 ANNUAL

Donors at this level are celebrated for their dedication to continue and sustain the mission of the original founders.

Founders Club members support the Institute with a gift of \$40 per month/\$480 annually.



THE KEY CLUB

\$20/MONTH - \$240 ANNUAL

Donors at this level are "key" to the sustainability and growth of the Institute.

Key Club members support the Institute with a gift of \$20 per month/\$240 annually.



THE FRIENDS CLUB

\$10+ ANNUAL

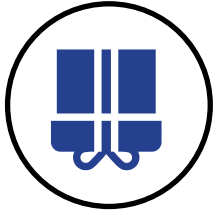
We are grateful for gifts of all sizes which allow us to continue to offer new experiences for adults with intellectual disabilities within our community.

Friends Club members support the Institute with a gift of \$10 or more annually.

The Social & Learning Institute is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt non-profit organization. Your donation is tax deductible. Members can be assured that donations to the Key Sustainability Program will be spent carefully to enhance lifelong learning and enrich the lives of the individuals served.

Visit socialandlearning.org/giving or call us at 219-879-2200 for more information

Check with your employer & work with SLI to determine eligibility



Employer Matching Gifts

Giving offers beneficial marketing opportunities for your company



Corporate Partners

Download a volunteer application on our website



Volunteer

Send donations to 201 East Garfield Street Michigan City, IN 46360



Mail

Make secure credit card donations through our website



Online

You don't need a special occasion to make a difference in a person's life. Every opportunity we are able to provide our students is made possible through your support.

- Ways to Give -

The Social & Learning Institute

Where Socializing & Learning are Key to Growth

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Michigan City, Indiana 46360

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March 2020- Indiana Disabilities Awareness Month

Thank You! You are the key to our sustainability and growth!

Secure credit card donations may be made online at socialandlearning.org or you may complete and return the membership form below.

The Social & Learning Institute

Where Socializing & Learning are Key to Growth

KEY SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM

FOUNDERS CLUB
\$40/MONTH - \$480 ANNUAL

KEY CLUB
\$20/MONTH - \$240 ANNUAL

FRIENDS CLUB
\$10+

AMOUNT ENCLOSED:

PLEASE PROVIDE NAME AS YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE RECOGNIZED ON GIFT ACKNOWLEDGMENT & DONOR LIST.

I/We prefer our giving to be ANONYMOUS and request that my/our name(s) NOT be included on donor lists published by the Institute.

Name _____

Address _____ PO Box _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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I am interested in leaving a gift of property, securities, or other financial assets to The Social & Learning Institute.

I am interested in sponsoring a student by providing scholarship funds to The Social & Learning Institute.

I am interested in volunteer opportunities with The Social & Learning Institute.

