



# Opening Our Doors

BUILDING BETTER CONNECTIONS STARTS HERE

2023 COMMUNITY BENEFIT REPORT



**DIRECTION HOME**

AKRON CANTON AREA AGENCY ON AGING & DISABILITIES

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMAN

Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities had an exciting end to 2023. We facilitated not only the transition of top leadership but also moved into a new headquarters, all while providing quality services to thousands of older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers. The success of these changes and other highlights of our year would not have been possible without proper planning and holding true to our strategic vision.

Our Agency has planned for the retirement of Gary Cook, our President and CEO for the last several years. Abigail Morgan, previous Chief Operating Officer was selected as his successor and started January 1, 2024, in a seamless transition. Ms. Morgan brings with her a 20-year commitment to older adults borne from her connection to her older loved ones, experience at the national level from the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the U.S. Administration on Aging, and a connection to the larger network of Area Agencies on Aging across the nation from her previous time at USAging, our national trade association.

Our leadership is not the only thing new as we closed out 2023. Our new office building was completed to allow staff to start working at the end of December, allowing us to start a new year in the new building. Our new headquarters allows for continued growth in our staff, currently at 250 strong, with a hybrid utilization concept and layout. This layout provides office-based staff with permanent desks and office spaces while also affording work-from-home staff the ability to “land” in the building as needed. This design combined with a new 200+ person conference center will provide a truly central location for our four-county area, Portage, Stark, Summit and Wayne Counties. We will be able to host community events for internal and external audiences, grow our current training

programming, and facilitate in-person meetings for a post-pandemic audience anxious to meet “face-to-face.”

This community focus continues to be one of our primary hallmarks of success. We have grown our connections to like-minded leaders such as Executive Ilene Shapiro, whose vision and tenacity allowed us to co-develop a new “Aging in Place” program. This limited-time offering is designed to help older adults access services like home-delivered meals, personal care, home repair projects and more — letting them stay in the home they choose. This new program combined with our Age Friendly Akron Summit and Age Friendly Stark initiatives provides us with many opportunities to grow our community engagement for the benefit of older Ohioans in our area.

The evolving landscape of health care, long-term services and support, and community-based services that address discrepancies in the Social Determinants of Health provide ongoing opportunities for Direction Home. We are well positioned to act on these opportunities, foster positive interactions with health care, and continue to serve our community because of our leadership, our investments in the future, and our steadfast commitment to building our strengths, providing choices for people to live independently in the place they want to call home.



PICTURED LEFT TO RIGHT:  
Abigail Morgan,  
David B. Reynolds, M.D.,  
and Gary Cook

# BUILDING BETTER CONNECTIONS STARTS HERE



# BUILDING BETTER PARTNERSHIPS

The way we approach health care in our country continues to evolve. We have seen this evolution align with our past expertise in managing community-based supportive services, focusing on the Social Determinants of Health. These are the factors outside of the doctor's office and hospital that contribute to the overall health of a person.

We now see that our past experiences are combining with current focuses on new payment models and reimbursable supports to create a future where AAAs and community-based organizations can play vital roles in the improved health of our community.

For 50 years the Area Agencies on Aging have been working to address social determinants with great success. Since 2000 we have been working to “rebalance” long-term care spending in Ohio, shifting the Medicaid spend from nursing home-based care to community-based care. We have used Medicaid Waivers such as PASSPORT and MyCare Ohio to provide choices for people to receive their supports where they want, at home. We have ensured older adults had food to eat, safe environments through emergency response technology, hands-on care from home health professionals and more thanks to our network of dedicated provider organizations. These experiences have positioned us to be important partners in the goal of better health outcomes and experiences at a lower cost.

Current changes to our health care system provide exciting opportunities for Area Agencies on Aging. We are working with similar state and national organizations to leverage redesigned payment models and allowable services within Medicare that build on our strengths. Medicare Advantage Plans, the option to have services

through a private insurance company, will soon be able to offer better coordination of care as a reimbursable benefit. We prioritize closing the loop by connecting individuals from the Aging and Disability Resource Center process to the community-based services offered by our local provider network. This, combined with our proven success in care management makes Direction Home a natural fit for this work, linking patients, doctors, and medical providers with resources that also address Health-Related Social Needs.

2024 also brings exciting changes to Medicare that will continue our evolution. Behavioral health support is in increased demand in our population, prompting us to become more acquainted with approaches and providers in this space. As we continue to grow our expertise in this area, Medicare also focuses on adding providers and access to over 400,000 clinicians (AARP, 2023) to assist with mental and behavioral health care. Additionally, Medicare Advantage Plans will be required to notify beneficiaries of their unused supports such as transportation, home accessibility improvements, and meals, many of which Direction Home already offers through our provider network. Linking our past and present capabilities with these future offerings makes us the logical choice for the medical community seeking to better serve older adults.

AARP, 2023- <https://www.aarp.org/health/medicare-insurance/info-2023/future-medicare-changes.html>







# BUILDING BETTER COLLABORATIONS

Kathi is a 64-year-old woman who has used inspirations of music, knowledge, and travel to remain active while her life journeys led her from Cleveland, Ohio, to California, to South Carolina, and finally to Kent, Ohio with several other places in between. Now, she enjoys singing in her home, recording her ASMR podcast, and experimenting with book-writing and storytelling media.

Kathi's doctor expressed concern at her living alone in her home due to her ongoing health issues. Her friend referred her to the Ohio Department of Aging and Direction Home so that Kathi could receive home-delivered meal assistance when she first relocated back to Kent. Kathi was in an uncertain period of her life where she wasn't sure if she'd be able to continue living independently or how to find the services she needed in her new space. She contacted Direction Home's free Aging & Disability Resource Center, was assessed for services, and her care manager took a personalized approach to her care plan so that her son could serve as her primary caregiver. Kathi was able to continue living in the home she loves and near the people she cares about.

Kathi is working on her next recorded work of art at home because she receives home health assistance through Direction Home. She is one of 7,400+ individuals that receive care management services through Direction Home each year. In 2023, over 20,000 individuals called the Aging & Disability Resource Center for information and assistance, resulting in 5,332 assessments like the one that connected Kathi with a solution for her long-term care insecurity.

Kathi is a perfect example of Direction Home services not only keeping people at home, but also empowering older adults to live artful and active lives. Direction Home filled 2023 with

advocacy and partnership development to direct exciting community wellness opportunities. We are functioning as a leading organization in local Age Friendly initiatives in Akron and Stark and Summit Counties, creating a framework for community planning that evaluates the needs that impact healthy aging. We are engaging more community members in activities that interest them and improving access to creative programs through Age Friendly and other grant initiatives.

The Aging in Place and Healthy Aging grant programs in our service area should increase access to services that provide for the overall wellbeing of older residents through digital access, minor home modifications, and care coordination of home-based health services. These local- and state-funded programs support a holistic approach to care that extends past the initial need and promotes connectedness and independence, especially for those who cannot qualify for Medicaid but are unable to pay for their own care.

Our present focus on including social and creative supports while addressing the root causes of poor health allows us to evolve into a future organization that aligns older adults, providers, payments, programs, and community-based solutions to help people live full and active lives like Kathi.

Scan QR code to see Kathi's positive aging video.



# BUILDING BETTER SOLUTIONS

Direction Home takes pride in our organizational culture. We value the 3C's — competency, courtesy, and compassion as the hallmarks of right-fit talent. We are purposeful in our culture development and reinforcement. We strive to hire the best candidates who fit with our cultural expectations and have a passion for our mission.

Direction Home has a rich history of hiring licensed professionals and helping them grow their skillsets and talents into careers. In addition to the professionalism exhibited through the continued protection of our members, our staff genuinely care for their teammates, themselves, and the populations we serve.

Our approach takes more than focusing on our “3C's,” however, as we continue to invest in our leadership to strengthen our culture and achieve our goals. Training and education ensure our staff are prepared for challenges that could impact service delivery, and arms them with the empowerment to put this information into practice.

In addition to the leadership culture we foster, we also focus on a culture of compliance. We have annual training on HIPAA and Fraud, Waste, and Abuse to ensure everyone understands what is expected, how to protect members and the Agency, and how to do the right thing. Our approach to a culture of compliance contributes to a high degree of quality. We have been able to achieve both HITRUST and NCQA accreditation which illustrates our commitment to digital security and best-in-class Care Management processes.

We are also building on our work of inclusion and sensitivity. Our Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and

Awareness (IDEA) Committee is committed to policy improvement and community engagement projects. IDEA works with internal and external audiences to foster difficult, yet necessary, conversations, develop an understanding of different cultures, and embody sensitivity to what other groups experience.

We also build a culture of preparedness by creating robust emergency management processes, Continuity of Operations Plans, and an Incident Command structure to ensure we keep helping those who need us regardless of what might happen. We plan for smaller issues like power outages to larger impact situations like severe weather. We have standardized requirements for training and continue to grow our understanding of preparedness by applying best practices from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

All of these cultural initiatives would be remiss if the people implementing them were neglectful of the ideals they are designed for. By hiring the right people and committing talented staff to our culture, we can build on successful implementation of these ideas. Direction Home continues to grow with the older population to ensure everyone has a chance to live a fulfilling life as they age.





# MISSION MOMENTS

Our Mission Moments of 2023 continue to work towards fulfilling our mission— provide older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers long-term care choices and consumer protection so they can achieve the highest quality of life. Scan QR Codes to watch videos!



## Future of Care

Copley Health Center and The Village of St. Edward at Fairlawn have received funding from a Community Development Block Grant through Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro's office to pilot a robot in their facilities. The funds that developed the two robots were geographically limited. Copley Health Center (robot "Eva") and The Village of St. Edward (robot "Rosie") were selected based on their willingness to try innovative solutions to address staffing issues. Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities was asked to facilitate this pilot project, researching, procuring, and coordinating with the facilities to ensure a smooth implementation of the robots.

Thank you to those who collaborated on this partnership.



## Bringing Meaning to Life

Elsie is a 64-year old Stark County resident who has been receiving Direction Home services for over 3 years. Elsie has severe osteoarthritis which limits her mobility and has caused several surgeries and rehabilitation stays. Direction Home has brought meaning to her life again by helping her transition and

stay home, so that she can enjoy time with her husband, children and grandchildren, and pets.



## Training for Better Community Health

Mind the Gap: Bridging Mental Health and Behavioral Health Needs with Solutions took our 2023 fall conference attendees by storm. Local experts convened to educate on best practices and trends for serving MH and BH populations.

## Leading with Compassion

Congratulations to Direction Home's Chief Operating Officer, Abigail Morgan, recipient of the 2023 Harold K. Stubbs Humanitarian Award for Social Service. We appreciate Abby's leadership, and her dedication to our mission and the community!



## Making All Experiences Accessible

Official launch of The Accessibility Library, a groundbreaking Summit County resource center dedicated to enhancing accessibility at festivals, performances, community gatherings, and cultural shows. We're so grateful for our partners in this project, Advancing Independence Network, Akron-Summit County Public Library, ArtsNow, and Summit DD!

### Aging Well

Ella Kick (93, Wooster), a fan favorite and 2023 State of Ohio Senior Citizen Hall of Fame winner, speaks on how to age well and find fulfillment for the Summit County Age Friendly Network. Ella was also our 2023 Harvey L. Sterns Lifetime Achievement Award winner, for her 80+ years of trailblazing in Ohio (and nationwide!) gerontological achievements.



### Advocating for Care

Misty is a dedicated home health aide who, in many of her client's cases, means the difference between staying home and moving into a facility. Misty submitted written and video testimony to the Senate Medicaid Committee during the Ohio Governor's Budget Approval to advocate for a deserved and needed rate increase for these crucial workers. In 2023, we saw a rate increase vetoed out of the budget but honored by the Governor to take place in January 2024.



### Finding Home

Direction Home's Community Engagement Team takes a guided tour through the University of Akron's Cummings Center for the History of Psychology exhibit: Beyond the Picket Fence. The exhibit features artifacts from two of our members, information on our Agency, and a video slideshow of 60+ responses we collected from the public. Beyond the Picket Fence: The Places & Spaces We Call Home explores the concept of home in all its definitions and asks us to consider the variety of elements that let us know when we have found home.



### Caring for Families

Sister, Christina, and Mom, Brenda, tell Matt's story of trying to secure a formal Home Health Aide and the impact that finding appropriate care has had on their whole network of family caregivers.



### Working Smarter

Direction Home data and quality experts Tracey, Jessica, and Denese presented on using Lean Six Sigma to obtain clinical accreditation at the 2023 USAging conference in Salt Lake City. Great work from this team!





## OUR ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY — EXPANDING CARE

The Direction Home Akron Canton Foundation raises over \$150,000 each year to advocate for services for older adults and people living with disabilities. Our Foundation believes that all older adults and individuals with disabilities should be able to live comfortably in the places they choose to call home, regardless of their ability to pay. However, the Foundation cannot complete this vital advocacy alone, which is why support from our community partners and their real-life success stories are important examples communicating substantial needs.

An example that puts funding behind the need is an \$8 million grant to Direction Home Akron Canton from Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro's office- an Aging in Place program designed to expand access to care coordination, digital inclusion, and chore/minor home modification services. The Aging in Place program will expand care to those who are not Medicaid-eligible or able to pay out-of-pocket for services like home-delivered meals, personal care, furnace and home repairs, or tech devices and education. "Our older adults need help in navigating

an increasingly digital world and we are ready to assist. I know this collaboration with Direction Home is going to make a significant difference in the lives of our older adults and their caregivers," said Executive Shapiro.

Advocacy work for the Foundation's mission has never been more important, nor received a bigger payoff.

**Summit County's population of older adults continues to grow, with the portion of those 60 and older expected to exceed 20% by 2030.**

“Aging in place is a term we all need to learn. Our older adults have told us loud and clear; they want to age in the place of their choosing. For most, this is their current home. Doing so can be a challenge, however,” said Executive Shapiro.

## 850 individuals are estimated to benefit from the additional Aging in Place funding over a two-year period.

## “Direction Home is your go-to for senior services here in Summit County,”

states Executive Shapiro. “Call Direction Home.”

Additional aging service funding will be introduced in Portage, Stark and Wayne Counties through Healthy Aging grants.

### 2023 FOUNDATION CAMPAIGN

Thank you to all our purchasers, donors, sponsors, and supporters of the Direction Home Akron Canton Foundation Raffle this year.

## We’ve exceeded our goal, raising \$180,738!

We look forward to trying new fundraising strategies in the future like our 2023 Foundation Auction.

#### 2023 Donors:

Northeast Professional Caregivers	Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro’s Department of Job & Family Services
Simply EZ NFP	Peters & Elliott VANTAGE Aging
Joseph L. Ruby Medical Mutual	SarahCare Adult Day Health Centers
Foundations Health Solutions	Saber Healthcare Group, LLC
Family & Community Services in partnership with AxessPointe	

#### 2023 Raffle Winners:

9th   Stephen Colecchi	4th   Tom Clinton
8th   Kacinda Mitchell	3rd   Kristy Shull
7th   Courtney Flickinger	2nd   Shawntaye Jones
6th   Abigail Sigmon	1st   Rhonda Reed
5th   Robert Bajko	Grand   Jessica Bader

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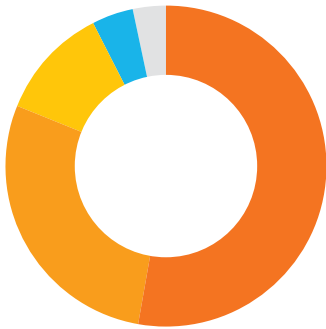
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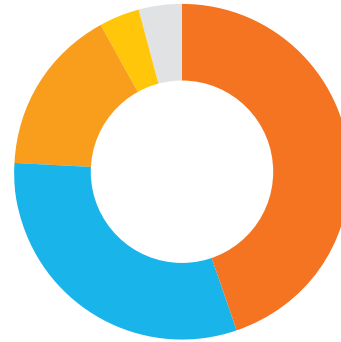
# Consolidated Statements Of Financial Position

## FY2023



TOTAL REVENUES BY SOURCE  
**\$64,056,116**

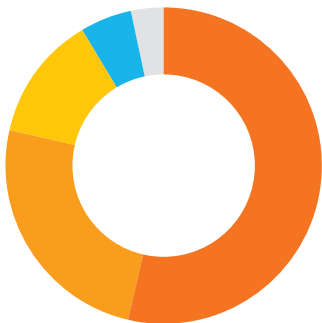
- 53% Medicaid
- 29% Non-government Revenue
- 11% Older Americans Act & Other Federal
- 3% State and Local
- 4% Other Revenue



TOTAL EXPENDITURES  
**\$63,026,109**

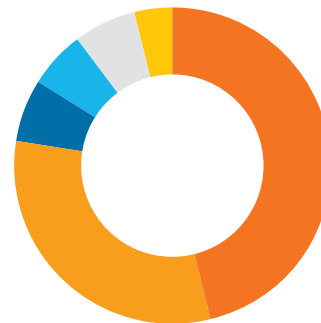
- 44% Care Managed Services
- 17% Information, Assessment, & Community Engagement
- 4% Elder Rights
- 30% Care Management
- 5% Allocations to Community Agencies

## FY2022



TOTAL REVENUES BY SOURCE  
**\$59,383,592**

- 54% Medicaid
- 25% Non-government Revenue
- 13% Older Americans Act & Other Federal
- 3% State and Local
- 5% Other Revenue



TOTAL EXPENDITURES  
**\$57,555,817**

- 46% Managed Care Provider Earnings
- 31% Long-term Services and Supports
- 4% Elder Rights
- 7% Administration & Operations
- 6% Community-based Provider Earnings
- 6% Other Community Supports



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## Akron Zoo Receives Age Friendly Seal of Approval

On May 26, the Akron Zoo became the first zoo in Ohio to receive an Age-Friendly Seal of Approval by the Better Business Bureau, followed by a demonstration of the new pilot program to representatives from the media and local chambers of commerce. The Age-Friendly Seal of Approval pilot program is a multi-sector collaboration by the Akron-Summit Age-Friendly Task Force, spearheaded by County Executive Ilene Shapiro, Mayor Dan Horrigan, and Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities. The Akron Zoo earned its designation through superb accessibility and service to older adults. Applications then opened for other Summit County businesses to become accredited.





### **Our Mission**

Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities provides older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers long-term care choices and consumer protection so they can achieve the highest quality of life.

### **Our Vision**

Direction Home Akron Canton will be the central access point and the preferred long-term care management organization for all people with disabilities.



**DIRECTION HOME**

AKRON CANTON AREA AGENCY ON AGING & DISABILITIES





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