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Annual Report

Grateful for

YOU • FRIENDSHIP • A COMMUNITY OF BELONGING

“

I marvel every day at the goodness and love and creativity amongst you. I am so grateful we found Reality.

- KATHY, MOM OF REALITY PARTICIPANT SASHA

Reality Ministries fosters friendships amongst people of all abilities marked by mutuality, authenticity, and the reality of Christ's love for all.

Reality Overview

Fostering Friendships

Our Heart

A COMMUNITY
OF BELONGING

Our Mission

TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULTS WITH
AND WITHOUT DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
TO EXPERIENCE BELONGING, KINSHIP, AND
LIFE-CHANGING REALITY OF CHRIST'S LOVE.



“Once again, during the pandemic, Reality has lifted our souls. A drive to the Reality Center to be met by a smiling Amy (Reality Farm Manager) and a bounty of tomatoes, peppers, flowers, basil, kale, and a kit to make pesto at home! It shouldn't surprise me, but every time Camille is greeted with open arms and a smile, I am thankful for the bounty you give our souls and bodies.

- LIBBY, MOM OF REALITY PARTICIPANT CAMILLE



ALL Abilities

Reality bridges the divide between people with and without developmental disabilities through friendship. Barriers break down when participants and volunteers share life together.



Come As You Are, to Love and be Loved

In contrast to many goal-oriented services that seek to improve or change people with disabilities, Reality focuses on mutual friendship and growing together. Although Reality is a faith community rooted in the Christian tradition, people of any or no faith are fully welcomed.



Shared Experiences

Relationships flourish through a variety of activities, including communal meals, outings around town, music, fitness, dances, community service, and organic expressions of friendship. Reality friends are there for each other, from celebrating birthdays and weddings to being present with one another through the hard times of life.



A Place to Call Home

Reality owns several houses, opening spaces for people of diverse abilities to live together in intentional communities. These homes are anchored in the practices of eating, praying, and celebrating together.

Lifting Our Souls

2019-2020 Highlights

PURCHASING THE FRIENDSHIP HOUSES IN FULL

Launched in July 2018, the Welcome Home Capital Campaign raised \$745,000 from 42 donors to purchase in full the Friendship Houses, securing two more homes for friends of all abilities to live together.

ADDING RESIDENTIAL DIRECTOR POSITION

With three Reality residences and a growing imagination for future iterations of shared life, we were thrilled to create a position uniquely focused on “home.” Greg Little, Reality staff member for six years and Corner House resident, is serving as our first full-time Residential Director.

SENDING DAVID SITTSE TO LAUNCH SIDE BY SIDE MINISTRIES

The vision expands to the West Coast! Longtime beloved staff member, David Sittser, returned to his home state of Washington to launch Side by Side Ministries, an organization modeled after Reality.

OLD FRIENDS BECOME NEW STAFF

We joyfully welcomed longtime Reality volunteer and Reality Fellows graduate, Quinn Holmquist, as a new Community Leader. Zach Bond, a Kansas native who discovered Reality as a volunteer while studying at Duke Divinity School and living in the Friendship House, is now serving as our new Volunteer and Fellows Coordinator.

RESPONDING TO COVID-19

It's been beautiful to see how every single staff member dove in with robust creativity to keep our Reality community connected. A detailed system was put in place to make sure every participant is in touch with a staff person or volunteer regularly. It was a gargantuan task to get everyone with Internet access (which is most, but not all) set up on Zoom, but we did it! Tablets and iPads were donated and delivered to individuals who didn't have them.

Evening groups have gathered over Zoom weekly, and Daytime groups gather daily. There are Zoom birthday parties, dance parties, and farm visits. Although most have access to technology, Zoom is just not for everyone. So we are writing letters, crafting coloring books from designs submitted by Reality friends, and mailing monthly prayer guides to every single participant. Our community is pulling together to learn how to connect with one another in new and different ways.



The Beauty of Being Yourself

Friendships You Helped Make Possible

“Reality is where Ricky goes and I can take a deep breath and relax. He can be himself and it’s beautiful.”

- LINDA, SISTER OF REALITY
PARTICIPANT RICKY

At Reality Ministries, we are building community based on mutuality and authenticity. Friends learn each other’s quirks and fears, call each other to laugh or cry together, help each other move houses, get on each other’s nerves, share each other’s wounds and griefs, hopes and dreams. Here are a few of our stories.

KNOWING AND BEING KNOWN

by Allison Waters

I’m on my computer, pouring over coronavirus news once again. I find that as I keep reading, my heart is tempted toward despair. But at just the right moment, my phone rings, and it is one of my favorite people in the world: Adam.

“Hello Allison Waters,” he says.

Just the sound of his voice reminds me that love and friendship have no quarantine. We talk for a minute and, when I bring up coronavirus, he quickly says “Yes, but I’m going to save the day.” And he certainly did for me.

Every day at about 2:30pm, I get a call from Weston Doll.

“How’s my honey bunny!?” he says, in his trademark sweet voice.

We talk about a lot of things. He describes his breakfast with delight, and then he grieves the Talent Show being canceled. Sometimes I’m not sure what TV show or movie he is referencing or re-enacting, but it doesn’t really matter. **We’re together while apart.** Each day, he ends the phone call by reminiscing about all the things we’d be doing at Reality.

“I miss coming to your office for a big hug, and calling you honey bunny, and eating lunch next to you, and taking selfies.” Each call is full of joy and sadness, and it re-affirms **authentic friendship and relationships are still happening in the Reality community.**





-- LEARNING AND GROWING TOGETHER

by Greg Little

Last fall, on a house retreat in the North Carolina mountains, our curious little two-year-old, JoyAna, asked: "Dada, what is beauty?"

Apparently, she was hearing a lot about it that weekend. I offered something that included a "whoa" and a deep breath and then we went into the kitchen for breakfast. As we passed food around the table, JoyAna and I prompted everyone to respond to the same question. What followed was a profound little picture of the beauty of our shared life at the Corner House.

Bonnie went first and, with all the depth of her eyes locked on JoyAna, **defined beauty as that quality of being yourself**. Tony jumped in with an elegant hand motion and said something along the lines of 'like a flower' in an unidentifiable, utterly delightful accent. The circle continued and other words emerged, like "wonder," "love," "thanksgiving..."

That morning, through word and experience, JoyAna learned beauty in its many expressions.

NOTHING LIKE IT -----

A letter from Cookie, Mom of Reality participant John Mark

Please express our thanks and appreciation for all the work that goes towards making this ministry so special. John and I have toyed with the idea of moving on several occasions, and one thing that keeps us in Durham is John Mark's participation in Reality. **You can't find anything like it anywhere**. I know during these trying times it has been hard, but know we are so grateful for all you do. I cannot tell you how excited JM gets when it is time to Zoom and, if you ever are able to get back together, ask him to recite the memory verses from the prayer guide. Know we love you and can't wait to get back together again.



Friendship By The Numbers

Your Impact



949

TOTAL
DONORS



187

MONTHLY
DONORS



15

CHURCH
PARTNERS



221

PARTICIPANTS



202

VOLUNTEERS



18,600

VOLUNTEER
HOURS



27

COMMUNITY
PARTNERS



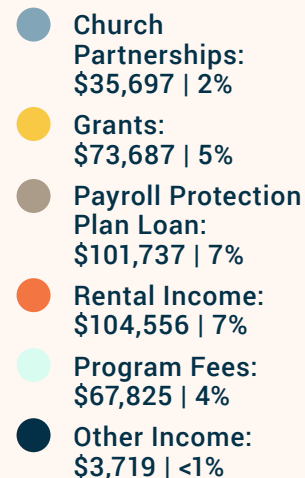
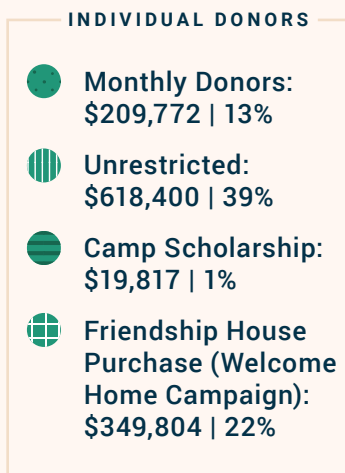
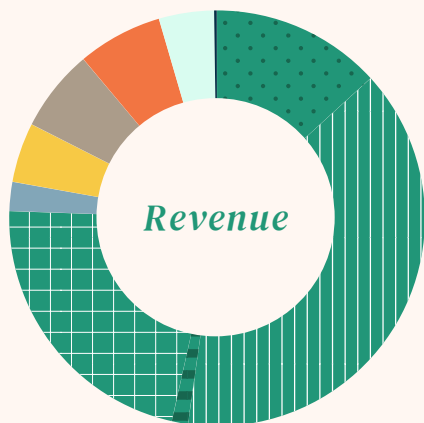
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POUNDS OF PRODUCE
HARVESTED AT
THE FARM

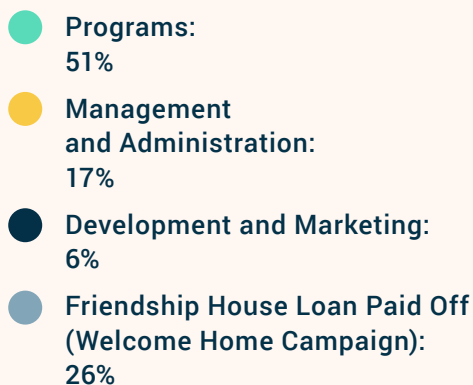


11,400

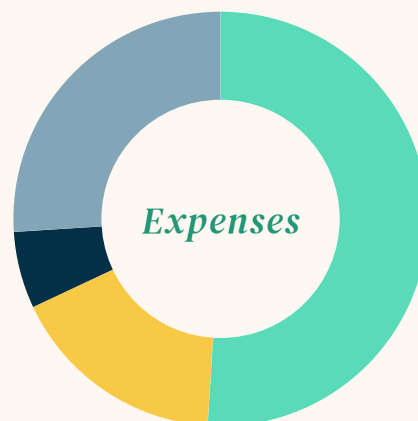
SHARED
MEALS



TOTAL REVENUE: **\$1,585,014**



TOTAL EXPENSES: **\$1,321,781**



We're overwhelmed with gratitude at the generosity of our community this year.

We created a spring campaign "Seeds of Hope" in an effort to replace the revenue from our cancelled talent show. Our goal was \$70k. You gave \$218,880. Wow! We are in awe of the commitment of our donor base. This, combined with cutting costs at the beginning of COVID-19 to be conservative financially and receiving a forgivable PPP loan, has enabled us to add \$254,000 to our cash reserves at the end of FY 2019, a bigger surplus that we've had in previous years.

The spring COVID crisis taught us that we didn't have the financial cushion that we need for an upheaval of this magnitude. Our incredible Reality community responded with an outpouring of funds, which enabled us to move into the next fiscal year committed to the goal of keeping 3-6 months of expenses as a cushion. We still need to raise the money for our operating budget; while we may dip into our surplus to move through the ebb and flow of fundraising, our goal is to keep these reserves strong.

A Vision for the Future *FY20 Hopes*

MISSION-CONSISTENT GROWTH

Our growth has been steady and consistent in recent years, with about 40 new participants joining Reality annually, and this trend shows no sign of stopping! Dozens of people with I/DD graduate from our local high schools each Spring, entering the dreaded “black hole” of nothing-to-do and nowhere-to-go. So many adults with I/DD in our community are sitting at home, longing for friends and meaningful ways to offer their gifts. Our vision is for Reality to continue to be a place of welcome and belonging!

Our future plans include adding two more Community Leaders in the next two years. These are the staff folks who shepherd our participants and volunteers with energy, creativity, and love. In order to remain committed to our core value of knowing and being known, we must continue to go small even as our numbers grow. This means looking to offer a greater variety of small group activities for friends to engage in, more personalization, so that each individual is seen and celebrated.



We are moving in this direction virtually right now, as we have rolled out 33 different Zoom groups which are meeting weekly. Participants choose up to three daytime interest groups per week (in addition to a weekly evening group) from options such as Virtual Travel, Current Events, Sign Language, Yoga, Animal Lovers, Sports Fans, Cooking, and more!

We hope in the coming year to expand our church partnerships, increase diversity amongst our volunteers, and to start a new Community Group meeting one night/week in Chapel Hill in the Fall of 2021. Growing deep as we continue to grow wide, we are excited to continue to build beloved community as the Spirit leads!

Our Leadership and Staff

Board of Directors

Amanda Diekman
PRESIDENT
AND TREASURER
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SECRETARY

Needham Bryan
Cari Carson
Jeff Connolly
Cate McLeane

Louise Morris
Katy Phillips
Michelle Pickett
Erica Ryder

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DIRECTOR
Zach Bond
VOLUNTEER
AND FELLOWS
COORDINATOR
Leah Broadwell
ADMINISTRATIVE
ASSISTANT AND
KITCHEN COORDINATOR
Wallace Cameron
FELLOW (2020-2021)

Amy Curran
FARM PROGRAM AND
CAFE DIRECTOR
Madison Daniel
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Julie DeConto
OPERATIONS MANAGER
Shirley Garrett
FELLOW (2020-2021)
Alisa Ginyard
OUTREACH COORDINATOR
Quinn Holmquist
COMMUNITY LEADER

Elizabeth Houston
COMMUNITY LEADER
Anna Hood
COMMUNITY LEADER
Greg Little
RESIDENTIAL DIRECTOR
Jonathan Mullins
FELLOW (2020-2021)
Allison Waters
CLINICAL DIRECTOR
Angel Whitehead
FELLOW (2020-2021)



FY20 Fellows



*Susan McSwain,
Executive Director*



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