



Reality

ministries

ANNUAL REPORT
2021-2022



Creating opportunities for adults with and without developmental disabilities to experience belonging, kinship, and the life-changing Reality of Christ's love.

A Word from Susan McSwain, Our Executive Director

IT'S THE DAWNING OF A NEW DAY AT REALITY.

“Reality is like caring
and sharing and all
the stuff. It just might
cool, cool, cool.”

— MIKE, PARTICIPANT



Looking back at the year gone by, I see days marked by rejoicing, anxiety, curiosity and hope...all happening amidst the richness of lives shared in so many ways. Our program model has shifted to smaller, innovative group gatherings (adaptive rock climbing, Thrills from the Grill and the Coffee Crawl, to name a few). 130 new individuals have brought their particular personalities and gifts to this dynamic community. We've engaged deeply in the holy work towards racial equity. We've grown weary of COVID and the chaos it continues to bring at times. We've celebrated triumphs (the Talent Show back in action at the old Durham Bulls baseball field) and grieved the loss of loved ones together. So much knowing and being known all day, every day.

As we enter the second half of our 15th year, we have expanded our organizational capacity by adding two new positions to our team. The Program Director takes on the administrative leadership of programming, making it possible for our Coordinators of Community Life to invest even more time and energy in shepherding community. The Coordinator of Community Engagement and Giving will grow our capacity to invite donors, churches and other community stakeholders to partner with Reality.

Over the years we've developed a practice of marinating in Scripture. We have found it rich to stick with one story for a while and engage with it in different ways. Earlier this year, we dove into John 21:1-12, when Jesus appears to his weary, confused, discouraged disciples and provides a miraculous catch of fish. When they realize it is the resurrected Jesus, his friends are astonished and overcome with relief and joy.

This feels like a story of Reality Ministries. We are gathering in our weariness and hope, being welcomed by Jesus and one another, and it is very good. Thank you for being on this glorious adventure with us!



Finding Friendship Here

REFLECTIONS ON COMMUNITY AT REALITY MINISTRIES
FROM GRANT AND ROSE PEARSON, A REALITY FAMILY

- ROSE

Grant's life has been hard. Before Reality, Grant didn't have a place where he could find friendships and feel loved. I could tell he was uncomfortable around others, sometimes hiding from his peers. He didn't want to be seen. The Reality community means the world to me **because Grant is finding friendships here.**
- GRANT

Sometimes when I arrive at Reality, I like to go to the door to check and see who is arriving because I'm always curious.
- ROSE

I want Grant to continue to grow...but it seems like, being a parent of a person with a disability, you run up against a lot of brick walls. People don't voluntarily give information. You have to hunt to find the help you need. Alisa [Reality's Outreach Coordinator] sends out emails, oh my goodness, every week about resources that she has found for us. I'm looking forward to joining her for her [parent/caregiver] coffee meeting.
- GRANT

At the Tuesday night group, I get to have dinner with a group of friends, share Friends News, and share warm and heartfelt thoughts.
- ROSE

You all have made a difference. I've seen this in Grant's confidence. He just appears more comfortable in his skin, with who he is. **I get emotional when I think about the love and acceptance from the people at Reality.** Thank you, Reality Ministries, from the bottom of my heart.

1 ton

OF PRODUCE
HARVESTED AT
THE REALITY FARM



Reality Ministries

BY THE NUMBERS*

*FROM JULY 2021-JUNE 2022

355

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS
AND VOLUNTEERS



"From the start, I felt welcomed."

—CLAUDIA, CAREGIVER

942

TOTAL DONORS

220

RECURRING DONORS

420

FAMILIES SERVED
WITH FARM
PRODUCE

102

GROUPS OFFERED

52

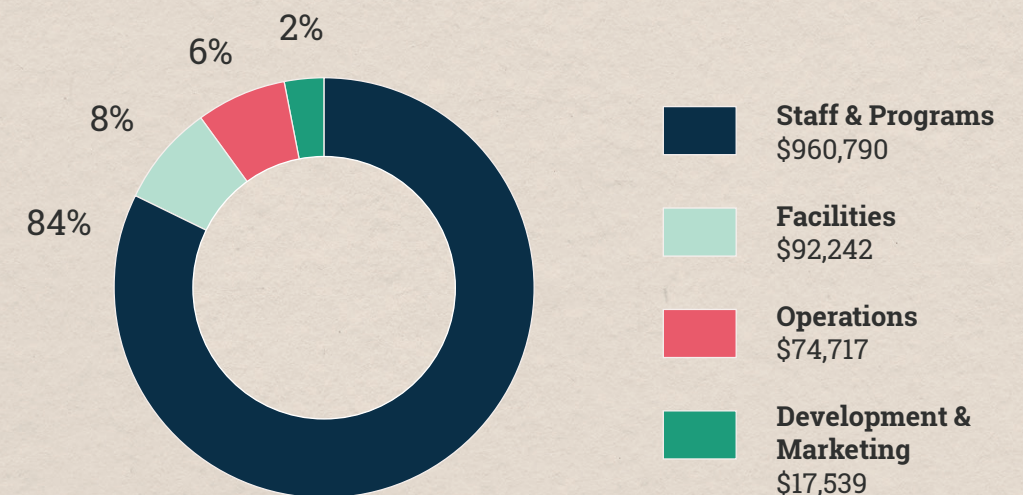
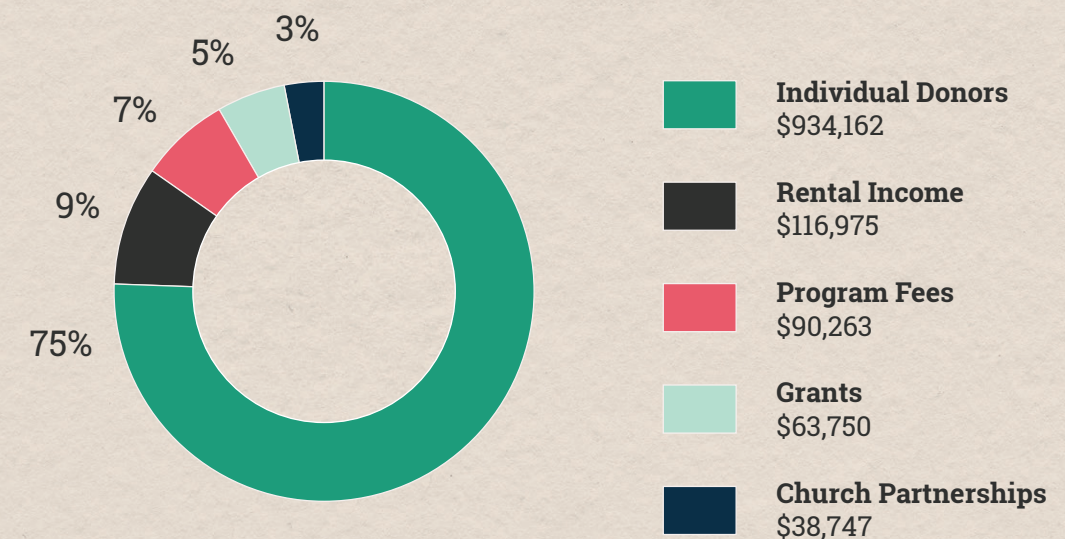
NEW
PARTICIPANTS

79

NEW VOLUNTEERS

10

AVERAGE
GROUP SIZE



"Erica is such a joy and shows the love of Christ to everyone...she often calls me 'her favorite person.'"

—WILMA, VOLUNTEER





Heaven on Earth



THE FIRST STEPS OF REALITY'S 3-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN BY CATE MCLEANE, REALITY BOARD MEMBER

When asked, "What three words would you use to describe Reality Ministries?" one parent offered the response "heaven on earth." The room nodded in silent agreement as each person momentarily retreated to their own profoundly holy memories at Reality. This summer and fall the board and staff of Reality Ministries are coming together to clarify Reality's vision and mission. This process will ultimately create a set of 3-5 focus areas for the next three years and map action steps for realizing our goals.

Over the summer, we hosted listening sessions, focus groups and interviews with participants, volunteers, parents, supporters, church partners, housing residents and other key stakeholders. **Oh, how these listening sessions have called forth what we all cherish about this powerful place!** What we learned in these rich times of connections, combined with analyzing programs and financial data, have guided our process.

We plan to share the 3-5 priority areas in the months ahead, as they come into focus. We invite you to join us in praying for and working towards an even more sustainable and life-giving community of belonging, kinship and mutuality for those with and without developmental disabilities. Thank YOU for being a member of this beautiful community.



If you have any thoughts you'd like to share about Reality's strategic plan, please reach out to Cate at cate.tidwell@gmail.com.



**“Reality is a
community that
celebrates
people—
a place that
makes Durham
feel like home.”**

— MARLEIGH, VOLUNTEER

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