

Reality ministries

Annual Report 2025 - 2026







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

A word from our

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Susan McSwain

It has been a **year of much beauty and goodness at Reality**; the numbers, pictures, and stories in this report all bear witness to a vital and growing community! We have so much for which to be thankful. Our commitment to our mission and values is strong, and we are seeing much fruit as friends of all abilities grow in friendship.

Much of the work of the past year has been laying the groundwork for the addition of 50 new participants from our waitlist. We are thrilled to have started our sixth community group in September! There are currently 25 new friends with IDD in that group, and as we add more volunteers we'll continue to welcome more from the waitlist. Our hope is for a full group of 50 participants by the end of the year. With the addition of this group, we are delighted to have added a new church partner, St. Marks AME Zion, as a gracious host for the monthly evening group.

A year ago, the Reality board made the decision to sell the Friendship Houses and Isaac House after a years-long process of discernment. We reached a point of clarity that our organizational structure simply does not allow for ongoing long-term support that is sustainable over the long haul. Our stated hope was to sell the three houses to like-minded agencies committed to creating home life for adults of all abilities and whose work and focus is centered on housing. We are thrilled that this hope has come to fruition!

The homes are being sold to L'Arche NC and GHouse, two amazing organizations that did not exist in Durham when Reality first ventured into housing 13 years ago. Both share our commitment to serving this community into the future with creativity, care, and dedication.

We see this as an opportunity to build on the legacy of these homes while deepening Reality's impact. The proceeds from these sales will be reinvested in our future — supporting the people, facilities, and resources that make our mission possible. This includes investing in our staff and making needed improvements to the Reality Center so that we can continue building a strong foundation for the years ahead.



Susan (center) with Reality friends at the Winter Ball

What a gift to be part of this community of friends who are discovering the richness of relationships where we show up daily in the fullness of who we are. Each one of us both weak and strong, giving to and receiving from one another in a sacred exchange of mutuality. Thank you for partnership in creating this place of unconditional belonging where the dignity of every person is acknowledged and celebrated!

Gratefully,
Susan

FRIENDSHIP BY THE NUMBERS*

275
Participants
(as of Oct 2026)

19
Full Time Staff

180
Volunteers

17,419
Volunteer Hours

36
New Participants
(incl. new Group 6 members added in Fall 2026)

23,482
Shared Meals

425
Reality Cafe
lunches served

1,932
Hours Worked
by participant kitchen helpers

181
Friends on Center Stage
for the 2025 Talent Show

1,071
Donors

252
Monthly Donors

42
Church and Community Partners

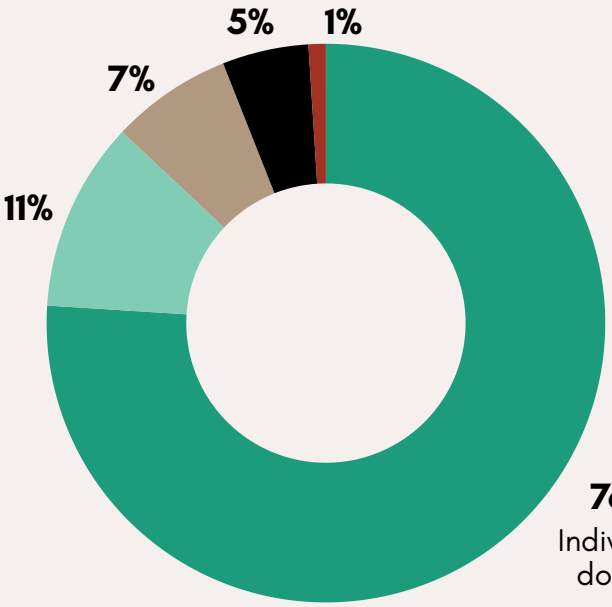


At Reality Ministries, we have a practice of noticing who is missing. We take a few moments to look around the room and call out whoever is missing. People who have been missing for six months or more still have their name called. People who showed up once two years ago still gets there named called. Sometimes, someone who had to leave early gets their name called. But something special happens every once a while, when people start to call out people who have never been to Reality Ministries. Underlying this belief is that everyone belongs before they even arrived. The moment you walk into the door for the first time, you don't have to prove a thing.

– Bryan, Coordinator of Community Life

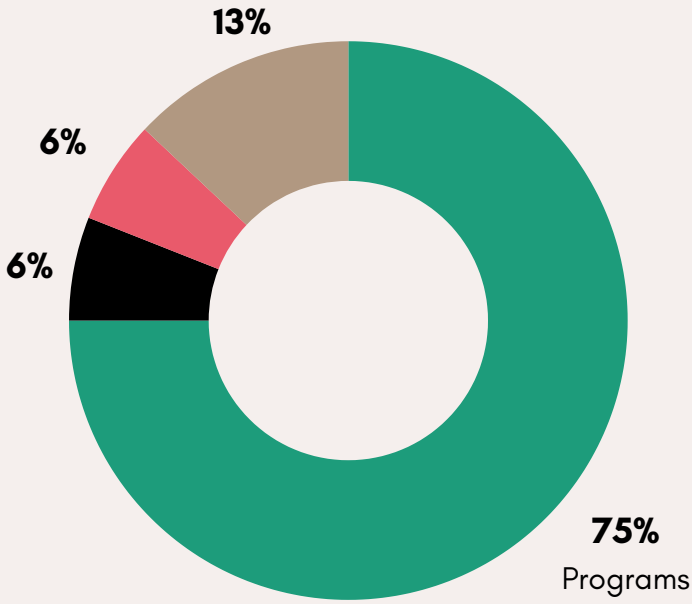
REALITY FINANCES, FY25*

*Revenue FY25 / $1.66mm



- Indiviual Donors $1,263,610
- Rental Income $177,615
- Program Fees $84,575
- Grants & Church Partners $115,000
- Other Income $21,853

*Expenses FY25 / $1.81mm



- Programming (Staff & direct expenses) $1,360,685
- Fundraising & Marketing $100,499
- Management & General Operations $239,679
- Facilities $110,096

**Fiscal Year 25 = July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026. Expenses exceeded revenue in FY25 due to later timing of some grants and our summer 2026 Group 6 fundraising campaign. Net operating loss was covered with reserve funds.*



My Reality home group has been an important part of my life for the past 10 years. I started as a freshman in college. I don't know that there's any other group of people I've had dinner with that consistently for that long, which feels really special.

Over the years, we've celebrated birthdays, weddings, new jobs, and big moves. We've also sat together through illness, surgeries, and disappointments. I think that's what makes this group so rich. Because of all that shared time, we really know each other: what we eat for breakfast, who we were cheering for in the football game the night before, where we've traveled recently, how work is going.

I feel so grateful for Reality, and especially for home groups, for all the ordinary, meaningful moments we've shared over the years.

- Grace, Coordinator of Community Life

REALITY CORE VALUES

Belonging:
Knowing and being known, sharing life together in joy and pain

Mutuality:
Every person both giving and receiving in authentic friendship

Personalism:
Every person is unique, imbued by the Creator with inherent dignity; and all persons are bound by a shared identity as children and image-bearers of God

Equity:
Actively moving towards becoming an anti-racist and anti-ableist community

Jesus at the Center:
The deepest reality of every person's life is the love of God made manifest in the person of Jesus

This community is so dear to my heart. Being a volunteer with Reality Ministries has enlarged my capacity to love, melted my heart with compassion, and incited me to unbridled belly laughter. -- *Volunteer*

Bless Reality! It has changed our whole family's life. -- *Parent*

This community is buzzing with smiles, laughter and friends feeling good about themselves and making memories! -- *Parent*



Thank you all for that you have done to enrich Kaylee's life. The dedication of your staff and volunteers is a true testament to the impact of community. -- *Parent*

Reality is such a grounding force in our life that I just can't express how grateful we are for this community. -- *Parent*

Reality ministries

CORE PROGRAMS

The Goal of Reality's Programs

...is to create opportunities for authentic community amongst adults of all abilities in the Triangle region of North Carolina.

Our programs are designed

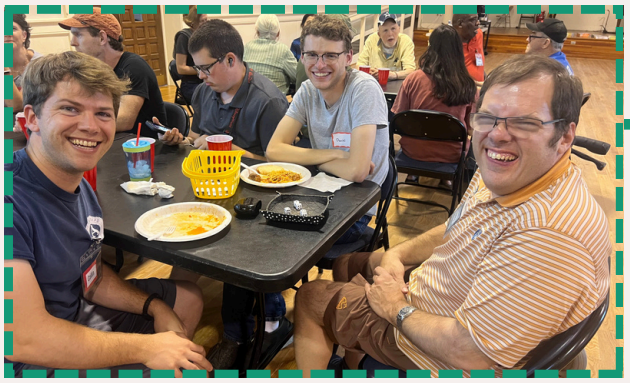
...so that people whose paths might not cross in their ordinary lives can meet, connect, and become friends.

Core Programs

Morning Mingle

Weekly community group gathering for conversation, circle time sharing, games, birthday celebrations, a stroll, and lunch.





Evening Group

Weekly community group gathering for dinner, games, friends' news sharing, celebrations, and hangout time with friends.

Interest Groups

Baking and books, Fix-it Crew, Creative Writing, Garage Band, bowling, and much more.





Special Events + Meetups

Talent Show at DPAC, Live Nativity, Winter Ball, Durham Bulls games, Lunar New Year, rock climbing, line dancing, and more.

Reality ministries

CORE PROGRAMS

cont'd

Other Offerings

The Reality Café

Friends of all abilities prepare and serve a delicious 3-course meal to guests from the wider Durham and Chapel Hill communities.





Parent/Caregiver Support

We have a staff person dedicated to supporting the needs of the **400+ caregivers** in our community through weekly gatherings, yearly retreats, service navigation support, and more.

Internships

Reality facilitates **internships** every year from local universities and within our community to build friendships and support programs.





Spring Retreats

Every season, we take trips to the lake, mountains, or coast so friends can experience the connections, love, and tranquility that comes from time away. **In 2026, we took over 275 friends on day and overnight trips to Kerr Lake**.



OUR LEADERSHIP AND STAFF

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CHAIR
Cari Carson
SECRETARY
Morgan Carnley

Mary Mathew
VICE-CHAIR
Needham Bryan
Madison Cale
Jim Anderson

Cole Johnson
TREASURER
Lloyd Schmeidler
Tanya Johnson

Current Full-Time Staff

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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COMMUNITY LIFE ASSISTANT
Rachel Chang
COMMUNITY LIFE ASSISTANT
Madison Daniel
SPECIAL PROJECTS COORDINATOR
Julie DeConto
OPERATIONS DIRECTOR
Bryan Diver
COORDINATOR OF COMMUNITY LIFE
Tim Field
DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

Melody Franco
COORDINATOR OF COMMUNITY LIFE
Alisa Ginyard
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COORDINATOR OF COMMUNITY LIFE
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COMMUNITY LIFE ASSISTANT
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Tammy Rodman
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Grace Sciascia
COORDINATOR OF COMMUNITY LIFE
Danny Steis
COORDINATOR OF COMMUNITY LIFE
Abbie Woten
COORDINATOR OF COMMUNITY LIFE
Nicole Juarez Zelaya
PROGRAM TEAM ASSISTANT