

INREACH

Empowering people with disabilities to live life their way

· Fall 2021 ·



A Message From Our President *Lori Gougeon*



Lori Gougeon

I will be celebrating my 32nd year with InReach on Jan. 2, and have to say that 2021 has been the most challenging year of my career. We started the year in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis, and it has continued to rear its ugly head, although hope is on the horizon.

Our staff shortage is like no other we've experienced – finding and retaining good, quality staff is our number one priority. Providing our over 500 staff members with the pay and other incentives needed for the very important jobs they hold is critical as they truly make a difference in the lives of over 1,100 individuals with developmental disabilities. It is difficult competing with other industries that are raising their hourly pay. We are doing all we can to increase wages by lobbying our legislators for increased funding and dedicating more time and effort to our fundraising campaigns and special events. Our HR team is improving training initiatives and staff incentives, including sign-on bonuses, finder's fees, healthcare benefits, and increased matches in our retirement plan.

With all of the challenges, we have so much to be thankful for and celebrate!! Our accreditation review in September by the Council on Quality & Leadership (CQL) was a great success. We achieved "Person Centered Excellence" and were awarded an esteemed four-year accreditation. The CQL staff member stated, "This is the best agency I have ever seen in all my CQL reviews across the country."

We also opened our new Day Activity Center in June on Clanton Road. It is providing a larger space to spread out and enjoy activities and various classes that we are offering both in person and virtually.

Special thanks to each of you who contributed to our "Colors for a Cause" and "Dream Maker" events. Our Dream Maker video will be available to watch until Dec. 15 at www.DreamMaker2021.com. Dream Maker donations for 2021 may be made through Friday, Dec. 31. They will help us move into 2022 on good footing.

We are looking forward to upcoming spring fundraisers including our "Crown Town Throw Down" which has been canceled the past two years. I really hope to see everyone in person this year!

Wishing you all the blessings of a wonderful holiday season!



16th ANNUAL **DREAM MAKER** Program



"Dream Maker: Home Edition 2021"

What a treat for your heart and soul! There's still time to set aside a few minutes out of your busy day to take in some inspiration, laughs, and challenges presented on your computer screen. InReach's Dream Maker program, presented virtually again this year, may not be a social gathering as in years past, but the heartwarming stories shared are well worth 15 minutes of your time.

Event Co-Chairs Candy and Darren Bing will welcome you to the program that focuses on "Home" and what it means to our many InReach program participants. From Sharon Towers to our 12-plex "Mother Teresa Villa," the place called "Home" is different for each of us. The feeling of safety, security, and belonging is important to everyone. Sit for a few minutes with us as we visit Mac, Tammy, and lots of other InReach folks in the place EACH of them calls home.

The dollars raised through the Dream Maker fundraiser will be devoted to helping InReach increase the hourly wages we are able to pay our frontline workers, the individuals who work hand-in-hand, day in and day out, with our program participants. From the staff in our group homes to those who assist our people with securing and maintaining jobs, and everything in between, our staff work tirelessly to help provide happy, safe, healthy lives for over 1,000 people every year.



Jeannine Julien Smith with program participant Tammy.

Our Dream Maker sponsors, and you, make it all possible!

You can view our Dream Maker program through Dec. 15 and donations can be made through Dec. 31. We hope you'll take a look!

www.DreamMaker2021.com



Program participant Mac.



◀ *Tammy with her friends, Beth and Sharon. We sadly lost Sharon to cancer after this photo was taken.*

DREAM MAKER

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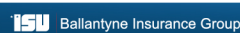
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Piedmont Club Foundation

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FRIEND OF INREACH



In loving memory of Frances and Don Bryant

Hey pottery lovers!

INREACH POTTERY HOLIDAY SALE

DECEMBER 10TH | 10 AM TO 2 PM

UNDER THE TENT

PARKWOOD BUILDING PARKING LOT

4530 PARK RD CLT 28209

If you're unable to attend but are interested in checking out our pottery, please contact John Wirz at 704-536-6661 or jwirz@InReachNC.org

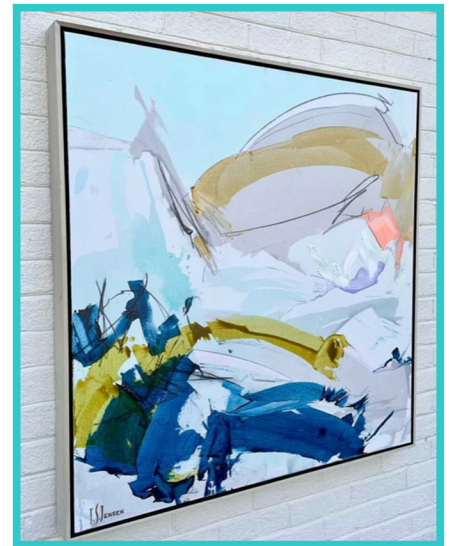


"Colors for a Cause" Art Auction Raises \$10,300



InReach's "Colors for a Cause" virtual art auction ended Nov. 7 with \$10,300 in the bank to fund our programs and initiatives. With the help of 47 talented artists and a few bidding wars reminiscent of epic eBay battles, the final bell rang with many wonderful pieces claimed for homes in Charlotte, Hickory, Jacksonville and beyond.

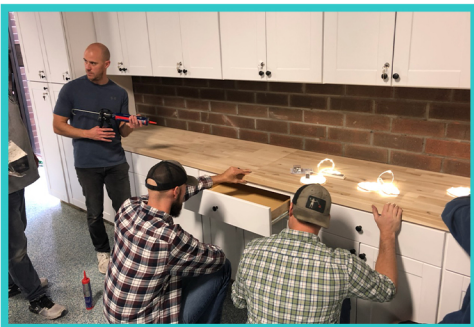
A beautiful abstract by Charlotte's Josh Jensen attracted the highest bid among all the impressive pieces. Josh is a counselor in the Ballantyne office of Southeast Psych with expertise in working with Asperger's/Autism spectrum and the integration of spiritual concerns with the work of therapy.



Josh Jensen's abstract attracts highest bid.

We are so grateful to ALL our artists and bidders for supporting this effort! We are hopeful we can host an "in-person" meet-and-greet with our artists for the 2022 auction.

Elevation Church Shares the Love with InReach



Elevation Church team building storage cabinets.

Kevin Carpenter and his team from Elevation Church are knocking out a much-needed project over at our Clanton Road Day Supports and Activities Center in Charlotte.

As part of the church's annual "LOVE Week," where time, talent and treasure blanket nonprofits all over our community, Elevation is constructing an enormous storage room and storage cabinets for us.



We are so very grateful for everything Elevation has done to support InReach over the years, from substantial grant funding to providing much-needed cleaning supplies during the pandemic, they are magnificent, caring partners. A huge thanks goes to Suzanne Spantgos, who heads up Elevation's Outreach Hospitality and is the mother of Cat, one of our "Barnyard News" puppeteers, for engendering Elevation's love of our organization.

◀ Kevin Carpenter and his team from Elevation Church.



Second grader Greaber holds candy sale.

What a wonderful life lesson mothers Gaya Myers and Caitlin Horne have taught their children. We all know the importance of teaching our children and the children of others the values of kindness, acceptance, and giving to others. It's a delight to see those lessons put into practice, as we have recently witnessed.

Gaya's son, Greaber, a second grader at Trinity Episcopal School in Charlotte, held a candy sale in front of his house to benefit InReach. He had learned about InReach through our puppet production, "Barnyard News," that has been presented annually to the school's second graders for the past four years, as well as over 1,200 children in and around Charlotte.*

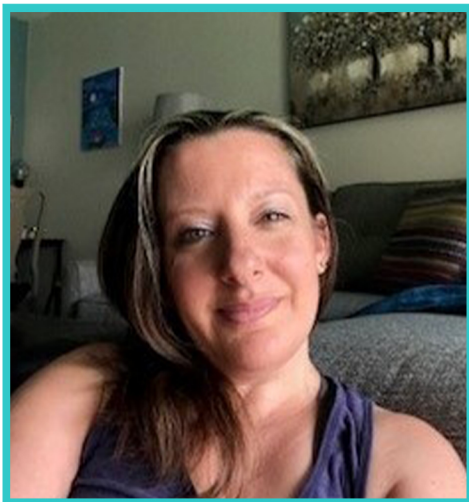
We learned about Greaber's efforts from Caitlin Horne, an InReach Board member, who remarked, "I was so thrilled when I saw a post on our neighborhood Facebook group that he was hosting a candy sale for InReach. Since the sale, Greaber and his sister, Marion, have donated their Halloween candy (over 11 pounds!) to InReach to be used at the activity centers. I am grateful for Trinity Episcopal School's partnership with InReach and for Greaber's sweet, giving spirit."



Greaber, Marion, Jack, Haines and Caitlin.



*If you are interested in having "Barnyard News" presented at your child's school or preschool, please contact John Wirz (jwirz@InReachNC.org or 704-536-6661).



Elizabeth - SPIRIT Club's newest Instructor

Introducing SPIRIT Club's Newest Instructor

A virtual exercise and fitness program based in Kensington, Maryland, is making a tremendous difference in the health of InReach's program participants. SPIRIT Club provides interactive fitness instruction for people of all abilities. InReach's participation in the program has been funded by The Merancas Foundation.

InReach participants, as well as hundreds all over the country, are tuning in and working hard to achieve their fitness goals. Participants can now see our very own Elizabeth, an InReach program participant, on the screen as SPIRIT Club's newest instructor! Elizabeth has received support from InReach for many years, and is proud to be giving back to our organization and to the entire SPIRIT Club community as an inspiring, motivating instructor. Folks are getting off their couches and working out thanks to Elizabeth and other club instructors!

Jared Ciner with SPIRIT Club has great admiration for Elizabeth and said, "Elizabeth is AWESOME! She is such an amazing addition to the SPIRIT Club team. She is friendly, fun, and a very hard worker. She is always looking for more opportunities and responsibilities. We are so grateful to have her incredible SPIRIT! Every class she joins is better because she is there."

- Union County Happenings -

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InReach Receives \$25,000 Grant from The Dowd Foundation

Charlotte Pipe and Foundry, a major employer in the Monroe area, is supporting the work of InReach's Union County office through a generous \$25,000 grant from its charitable giving arm, The Dowd Foundation. This gift will fund many of the initiatives in the Union County area, including InReach's new activities center that provides daytime classes and activities such as art, music, cooking and movement. The center is a place that sparks imagination and fun for our friends with special needs, all under the tutelage of Activities Coordinator Christie Parker.

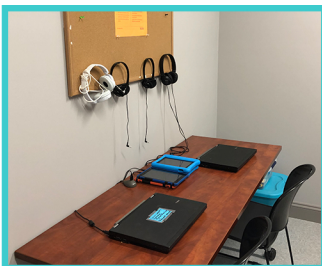
Frank Dowd IV, president of The Dowd Foundation, commented that he and his family "are happy to be able to make a positive difference for InReach's program participants in Union." And what a positive difference they are making!



New Union County office activities center.



Kitchen



Technology Corner



Arts & Crafts Room



Reading Nook



InReach's Union County office.

Union County Office Celebrates First Anniversary

InReach's Union County office moved to its brand-new building in September 2020. Located at 146 Winchester Avenue in Monroe, the 5,000-square-foot space offers room for classes, sensory rooms, a study/computer area, administrative offices, a social/recreation area, and an activities room. There's a lot of action going on there already and lots of room for growth! We hope you'll come for a visit!



Malachi – new Harris Teeter employee.

Stop by to see Malachi and congratulate him on his new job!

Meet Harris Teeter's Newest Employee

Harris Teeter's store at The Shops at Sun Valley offers a little "plus" beyond the normal fruits, vegetables, and other staples. If you're lucky enough to be visiting the store when InReach program participant Malachi is working as a bagger, greeting customers, or busy taking care of the carts, your day is sure to be a bit brighter. Malachi, a recent graduate of Porter Ridge High School, loves his job, and is a valued addition to the Harris Teeter team at the store on Idlewild Road in Matthews.

As reported by the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities, the "pluses" of hiring individuals with special needs are tremendous.

InReach's Alicia Diaz provides support to Malachi and says the store is happy to have him on board. His direct support staff also provide him with outstanding assistance while on the job.



Boy Scout Jacob Ruggieo Comes to the Rescue

What a treasure InReach has found in Jacob Ruggieo, a Boy Scout who is working to earn the distinction of Eagle Scout. Jacob's Scout troop is sponsored by Monroe's First Presbyterian Church.

A steep drop-off behind InReach's Union County office presents a safety concern for program participants and staff. Jacob is coming to the rescue and will be constructing a 200-foot split rail fence around the back perimeter of the building, in addition to ADA-compliant picnic tables.

If you'd like to help, Jacob is working to raise funds for the project materials through a GoFundMe site: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/eagle-project-for-InReach>

Our program participants and staff are excited to enjoy their lunch outdoors and can't wait to see Jacob's project get rolling!



Boy Scout Jacob Ruggieo.

Kindred Spirits Share Love of Nature



Chase and Randall – friends for life.

Randall and Chase are kindred spirits with a shared love of nature and the outdoors. You can find them on the greenways and nature parks in Waxhaw and Charlotte, getting exercise and spotting wildlife. Chase, a young man on the autism spectrum and an InReach program participant, is a proud graduate of Weddington High. Employed until the pandemic created layoffs at Atrium Health in Union County, he worked in the hospital's dietary unit. The bond of friendship between Chase and InReach staff member, Randall, is undeniably one that will last a lifetime.



Chase enjoys the beauty of nature.

Mark Your Calendars



Cornhole is Baaack!!!

Mark your calendars for InReach's 6th Annual award-winning, never-ending fun event! "Crown Town Throw Down" is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, April 23. More details to come! Check back on our website or at www.CrownTownThrowdown2022.com for updates.

Give Thanks

with an End-of-the-Year Donation

As we all prepare to celebrate the holiday season, we hope you will remember those we serve at InReach. Please consider making an end-of-the-year donation in support of our work. Your tax-deductible gift will make a tremendously positive difference in the lives of some very special people, and can be made in several simple ways:

- **Check** sent to InReach at 4530 Park Road, Suite 300, Attn. Development, Charlotte, N.C. 28209
- **Online** via credit card at: <https://www.inreachnc.org/donate-give>
- **Gift cards** from Harris Teeter, Publix and Food Lion dropped off or sent to our office on Park Road will provide meals for those helped through our First In Families program
- **Amazon Smile** where your Amazon.com purchases can benefit InReach with just a few key strokes on your computer
 - Sign in to smile.amazon.com with your Amazon login information
 - Under "Your Account" select "Change your charity"
 - In the "Find Your Charity" search bar, type InReach and click "Search"
 - Click "Select" next to "InReach"
 - Shop away – and bookmark it

Thank you for caring about our friends with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For additional information, please contact Kathi Knier (kknier@inreachnc.org) or Kelly Perez (kperez@InReachNC.org).

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