



# ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Strength in Ability.  
Power in Community.

*Paving the path to possibility by  
shaping tomorrow, together.*



## A Message from our President

# Len Cipollone



Dear Friends and Supporters,

This past year has been one of meaningful growth and continued impact at Easterseals of Greater Waterbury. Thanks to the dedication of our staff, the generosity of our donors, and the support of our partners, we've expanded programs, deepened community connections, and strengthened the services that make such a difference in people's lives.

As you'll read throughout this report, our team has made remarkable strides—from expanding The Creative Curriculum for Preschool across all classrooms to enhancing opportunities for inclusion through our Employment and Community Services (ECS) programs, including the Enhanced Community Engagement Program and the ECS Lawn Crew. These accomplishments reflect the heart of our mission—to help individuals live, learn, work, and thrive as active members of their communities.

To our staff, whose compassion and professionalism define Easterseals every day—thank you. To our funders, donors, community partners, and Board of Directors—your trust, generosity, and leadership make everything we do possible. Together, we are creating a stronger, more connected community for all.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Len Cipollone". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Len Cipollone  
President & CEO

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## Teddy Bear Clinic Collaboration with Kaynor Technical High School

This year, the Children’s Center partnered with the Health Technology Program at Kaynor Technical High School to host a Teddy Bear Clinic—a creative and engaging event designed to help young children learn about health and wellness in a fun, age-appropriate way.

Under the guidance of instructor Nicole Lamere, RN, BSN, Kaynor Tech students applied their classroom learning on growth and development in a real-world setting. The event gave them the opportunity to serve as mentors and positive role models, teaching children about topics such as tooth hygiene, handwashing and germs, doctor’s tools and equipment, and basic first aid (“boo-boos and band-aids”).

“For my students, the goal of this collaboration was to give back to the community while applying their newly learned knowledge of growth and development in a real-world setting,” said Nicole Lamere, RN, BSN. “Through the Teddy Bear Clinic, students were able to demonstrate leadership, practice effective communication, and collaborate with one another while sharing lessons that helped children learn about important health topics in a fun and engaging way.”

Cindy Pirro, Director of the Children’s Center, reflected on the positive impact for the children:

“The Teddy Bear Clinic was a wonderful experience for our children. It helped them feel comfortable with healthcare routines and the idea of visiting the doctor, all while having fun and learning through play. The Kaynor students were so patient and engaging—our children loved the hands-on activities and proudly practiced what they learned about handwashing and taking care of their ‘patients.’ It was a perfect blend of education and imagination, and it truly supported our goal of helping children build confidence and curiosity about the world around them.”

The Teddy Bear Clinic was a shining example of collaboration between local educators and Easterseals, creating meaningful connections that benefit both students and the children we serve.





## Building a Foundation For Life Long Learning

Last year, Easterseals piloted The Creative Curriculum for Preschool in our Pre-K classrooms, made possible through the generosity of MacDermid Community Giving. The pilot's success led to a grant from CHEFA, allowing us to expand this nationally ranked curriculum to all of our classrooms in Waterbury and Meriden. Together, these partners have strengthened our long-term commitment to early childhood education.

Children have also been inspired by the new studies, especially Architecture, where they become "city planners," creating blueprints on butcher paper and building bridges and skyscrapers from recycled materials—using the five C's: critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, collaboration, and character.

The Creative Curriculum for Preschool—ranked #1 in the nation—empowers children to be confident, creative, and caring learners through play-based, hands-on investigations that integrate language, literacy, and mathematics throughout the day. It also provides teachers with tools to support every learner and connect families to what their children are discovering.

At the Children's Academies/Children's Center, our goal is to build confidence, creativity, and curiosity in every child. With support from our community partners, we are giving children the strongest possible start on their educational journey.

Our teachers have embraced this approach with enthusiasm and pride:

"The Creative Curriculum for Pre-K is teacher-friendly and made teaching fun again by showing us new, developmentally appropriate ways to teach."

"I love it—it's easy to use, hands-on, and saves time so I can focus on the children."

"I feel like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders. The curriculum helps me plan with purpose and stay on track."



## Community Partner Recognition:

### Brookfield Dairy Queen

At Easterseals of Greater Waterbury, our mission is to foster community integration and connection for the individuals we support. Since opening our Brookfield location just over a year ago, we have been fortunate to experience the warmth and inclusivity of this wonderful community—and in particular, the kindness and partnership of Terry and Tim Bomba and their exceptional team at the Brookfield Dairy Queen.

From our very first visit, the staff at the Brookfield DQ have gone above and beyond to create a welcoming, respectful, and inclusive environment for the individuals and staff of Easterseals. They take the time to get to know each person by name—remembering not only their favorite treats, but also their specific dietary needs and food consistency requirements.

This thoughtful attention has made Dairy Queen a favorite destination among the individuals we support. They look forward to every visit and even have their favorite seats picked out. The warm, friendly atmosphere has fostered a genuine sense of belonging, turning each trip into a joyful and affirming experience. Even during moments when individuals may exhibit socially challenging behaviors, the staff and fellow customers respond with understanding and kindness—reflecting the true spirit of inclusion.

“These guys have been coming here since we opened,” shared Terry, Manager of the Brookfield Dairy Queen. “We love having them. They come almost every Friday, and it’s been wonderful to watch them grow and develop. Many can now order on their own, and it’s been a real pleasure. I look forward to Fridays—it’s the best part of my week.”

“The team at Brookfield Dairy Queen truly embodies what community inclusion looks like,” said Tiffany, Program Manager at Easterseals. “They treat everyone with genuine respect and kindness. It’s more than just a stop for ice cream—it’s a place where our individuals feel seen, valued, and welcomed every single time.”

Easterseals of Greater Waterbury proudly recognizes the Brookfield Dairy Queen with our Community Partner Award for their outstanding commitment to inclusion and community. This honor reflects our gratitude for their compassion, partnership, and the meaningful connections they have built with the individuals we serve.

Thank you, Brookfield Dairy Queen, for being an exemplary partner in our mission to create a more connected and inclusive community.



## Enhancing Community Engagement and Connection



Through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) awarded by the Connecticut Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Easterseals launched the Enhanced Community Engagement Program—an innovative initiative designed to help individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities build friendships, gain independence, and stay connected to their communities.

Originally funded as a one-year pilot, the program was so well received that DDS graciously awarded continued funding, allowing Easterseals to sustain this meaningful work with 4–5 community events each month in both the Waterbury and Brookfield areas.

Many of the individuals supported by Easterseals sometimes feel isolated or have limited opportunities to take part in community life. This program opens doors for participation and inclusion by offering engaging recreation and leisure opportunities that foster connection, confidence, and joy.

Over the past year, the program served an average of 68 unique individuals per quarter, who together participated in an average of more than 500 community outings each quarter. Activities included trips to the movies, the Peabody Museum, dance classes, The Big E, and Lake Compounce—each experience creating opportunities for friendship and discovery. “It’s amazing to see the smiles when people get to try something new,” shared one staff member. “Whether it’s going to a concert or just grabbing coffee with friends, these moments matter.”

“I’ve made new friends and gone places I never thought I’d go,” said one participant. “I look forward to every outing—it makes my week.”

“The program gives people choices and chances to be part of their community,” another staff member noted. “You can see how much it means to them to be included.”

The Enhanced Community Engagement Program embodies Easterseals’ mission to enrich lives by promoting choice, inclusion, and active participation. Every event—large or small—helps individuals create lasting memories and a deeper sense of belonging within their communities.



## Growing Skills & Opportunities



Easterseals' Employment & Community Services (ECS) Lawn Crew continues to flourish—literally and figuratively. This year, the crew expanded its operations to include lawn care services at the DDS Regional Center in Meriden, two group homes, and the Department of Labor facility in Wethersfield.

The crew is made up of seven hardworking individuals who earn competitive wages while learning valuable job skills and gaining independence. Guided by their job coach, they take pride in maintaining each property with professionalism and attention to detail.

"All of the guys are proud of the work they do," said their job coach. "They've developed teamwork, reliability, and a strong sense of ownership. When they see how great the grounds look, they know they've accomplished something important."

"It's hard work, but I like it," shared one crew member. "We work together and make the lawns look really nice."

"I like being outside and keeping things neat," added another. "When people thank us for how good it looks, it makes me feel proud."

## Staff Recognition

At Easterseals of Greater Waterbury, our dedicated staff are the heart of our mission. Every day, their compassion, skill, and commitment make a meaningful difference in the lives of the individuals and families we serve.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all of this year's honorees for their continued commitment to excellence and to the mission of Easterseals.



### Years of Service Honorees:

25 years:

Heather Dahlman  
Carmen Hall  
John Philippi

20 years:

April Alston-Fain  
Deirdra Lynch  
Gary Nielsen  
Loriann Salvo

15 years:

Laura Bell  
Daphne Franks  
Susan Graham  
Cheryl Eckert

10 years:

Amy Dillger  
Glenda Duke  
Alilmatie Lalman  
Kirsten Zaccaro

5 years:

Antoinette Cianciolo  
Conrad Fortin  
Tianna Grimes  
Jeffery Harper  
Davonique Johnson  
Jen Kee  
Claudia Mestizo  
Phyllis Riley  
Nicole Wallerstein



## Amanda Solla: Empowering Voices Across the Spectrum

### Spotlight Stories

Amanda Solla is a passionate advocate, entrepreneur, and mother of two children on the autism spectrum. She is also hearing impaired and has turned her life experiences into a powerful mission to make communication accessible for all.

In 2022, Amanda founded MrCsVoice Inc, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting individuals with autism and those who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). MrCsVoice provides customized Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS) and AAC tools, sensory-friendly events, training for professionals, and educational resources for families. What began as a grassroots effort quickly gained traction, culminating in a formal 501(c)(3) status after just one year of community outreach.

“We exist to ensure the entire spectrum of autism and AAC communication is understood and accepted—not just managed,” Amanda explains.

MrCsVoice has expanded rapidly, holding events across Connecticut and partnering with organizations like the Greater Waterbury YMCA to bring inclusive programming to more communities. Amanda’s leadership has earned recognition. She was named a Wednesday Warrior by WTNH and is a finalist for the CT IMPACT Awards in the Emerging Leader category.



Through her journey, Amanda connected with Easterseals, seeking support for her hearing loss, which had worsened in adulthood. For the first time, she was navigating state insurance and found the consistent care she needed through Easterseals’ Center for Better Hearing.

“Easterseals didn’t just provide hearing aids—they gave me a better quality of life,” she says. “Dr. Kay and the team made sure I had a routine schedule, explained my coverage clearly, and ensured I was never left behind.”

Amanda now wears hearing aids that are truly suited to her daily needs—whether she’s at a community event, in a training session, or advocating for families. Easterseals’ support has helped her stay connected and empowered to lead.

Amanda’s story is a testament to the power of community partnerships and what’s possible when individuals are given the tools to thrive.

## Terri Willingham - Taking the Wheel Again



For Terri Willingham, driving symbolized freedom and confidence. When dizzy spells and blurred vision forced her to stop driving earlier this year, she wasn’t sure she’d ever feel safe behind the wheel again. Terri had dealt with vertigo since 2015, but her symptoms had intensified, causing disorientation even with simple head turns.

Seeking answers, Terri came to Easterseals of Greater Waterbury’s Driver Assessment Program, where her clinical evaluation revealed signs of a vestibular ocular reflex (VOR) dysfunction—a condition affecting vision and balance. The team referred her to Occupational Therapist Beth O’Sullivan in our Outpatient Rehabilitation Department, who designed an individualized therapy plan to retrain Terri’s balance and visual coordination while addressing her light sensitivity.

After 19 therapy sessions, Terri’s symptoms resolved completely. She returned to the Driver Assessment Program, passed her behind-the-wheel evaluation, and is now driving confidently once again.

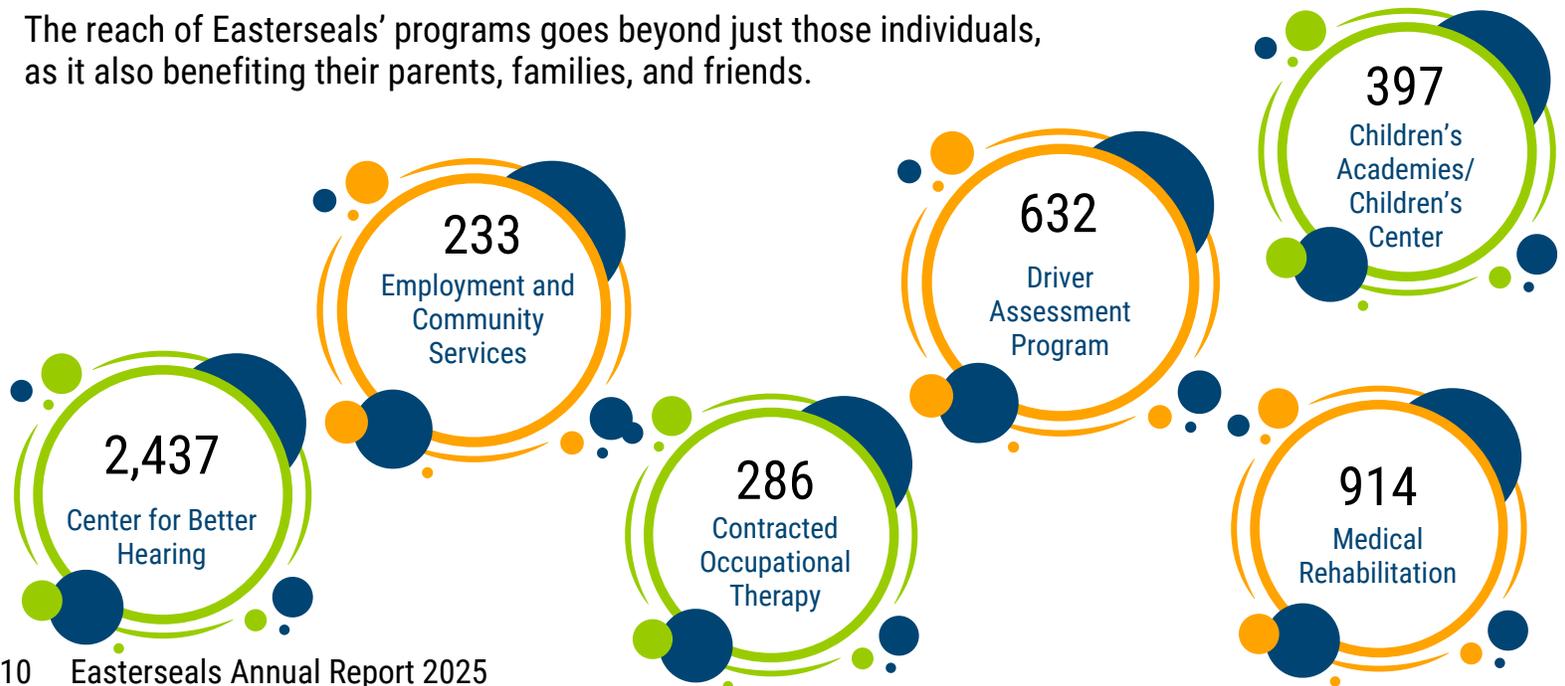
# 2025 Financial Operations Report

Year ending August 31, 2025 (with comparable totals for 2024)(Unaudited)

	2025		2024	
<b>Operating Support and Revenues:</b>				
Public Support	\$444,149	3%	\$116,104	1%
Vocational Training and Educational programs	13,242,837	82%	12,784,838	83%
Medical Rehabilitation Services	2,290,697	14%	2,270,686	15%
Other Grants & Other Income	103,796	1%	112,016	1%
	<b>\$16,081,479</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$15,283,644</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Operating Expenses:</b>				
Staffing, Payroll Taxes and Employee Benefits	12,033,517	77%	\$11,790,916	77%
Professional Services and Operating Supplies	1,835,674	12%	1,767,850	12%
Occupancy and Interest	925,450	6%	911,049	6%
Transportation Service	337,571	2%	300,610	2%
Depreciation & Amortization	586,017	4%	590,645	4%
	<b>\$15,718,229</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$15,316,070</b>	<b>100%</b>
Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	\$363,250		\$(77,426)	
Community Outreach Programs	\$(148,246)		\$(140,063)	
Net Investment Revenues Gain/(Loss)	\$4,004,552		\$5,770,134	
Combined Surplus/(deficit)	\$4,219,556		5,552,645	
Capital Asset Purchases and Improvements	\$382,594		\$1,037,502	

In Fiscal year 2025, Easterseals of Greater Waterbury delivered direct services to **4,899** individuals.

The reach of Easterseals' programs goes beyond just those individuals, as it also benefiting their parents, families, and friends.



# 2025 Annual Donors

To our generous sponsors, donors, and grant funders – thank you. Your unwavering support has made a meaningful difference in the lives of children and adults with disabilities and special needs. Because of you, more individuals have access to the services, opportunities, and care they deserve. Below is a list of contributions received between September 1, 2024, and August 31, 2025.

\$250,000 - \$300,000

Estate of Susan Ritchie

\$10,000 - \$25,000

Element Solutions Inc., MacDermid

Treadwell Corporation

Estate of Rachele Ulaska

\$5,000 - \$9,999

American Savings Foundation

The Leever Fondation

Rheem/eeMax

2,500 - \$4,999

Estate of Nora O'Toole

Edward Segal, Inc

Honda of Watertown

Ives Bank

Liberty Bank

Post University

United Way of Greater Waterbury

We Do Life ... together

\$1,000 - \$2,499

Advanced Wheels

Arthur Gallagher

City of Waterbury

Ditron, INC

Goff Law Group

Jack Hogan

Judith Mirrer

Jim Watkowski

Production Components

Resolute Pointe Private Wealth

Slavin Stauffacher & Scott LLC Attorneys at Law

Washington Trust

The Watertown Foundation, Inc.

Thomaston Savings Bank

Vanguard

Webster Bank

Weichert Realtors, The Briotti Group

\$500 - \$999

a.i.tek Instruments, LLC

Automated Business Solutions

Berkshire Industrial Corporation

Carmody, Torrance, Sandak, Hennessey

Carpin Manufacturing

C-B Manufacturing & Tool Company, INC.

Click Bond

Demsey Manufacturing

E.S. Metal Fabrication, INC.

Enliven

Enroll 365 LLC

Jim Watkowski

John Sarlo

Karen Powell

Len Cipollone

M&T Bank

PowerStation Events

Raytheon Technologies

Rotary Club of Watertown

Skyline Financial

\$250 - \$499

Affordable Power Wash LLC

American Online Giving

Antoniette Cianciolo

Berchem Moses PC

Broderick Law Firm

Building Blocks Parents, LLC

Carmen Hall

Christopher A. Jackson

\$250 - \$499 (continued)

Dibble & Rossi CPAs  
FD Community Federal Credit Union  
Gary Nielson  
Harper & Whitfield P.C.  
Law Offices of Dana D'Angelo, LLC  
Lisa McNeill  
Litchfield Bancorp  
Lovely Development Inc.  
Millennium Technology Solutions, Inc.  
Mule Security  
Nancy Traver  
Naugatuck Valley Lawn Management  
Pillar to Post  
Robert Teittinen  
The Worx Group  
Torrco  
Torrington Savings Bank  
Triple Stitch (Direct Threads LLC)  
Union Savings Bank  
USA Waste & Recycling

Nurses for Daycare, LLC  
O'Brien Family  
Patricia Raymond  
Robert McGovern  
Seven Angels Theatre  
Sharon McDonald  
The Taft School

\$1 - \$99

\$100 - \$249

Ann Feinberg  
Bryan Mulville  
Carolyn Smith  
Cindy Kaplita  
Joy Nash  
Justin Golden  
Kay Yanagisawa  
Michelle Fappiano

Abbott Laboratories  
Amy Palmer  
Becky Bruce  
Beth O'Sullivan  
Charities Aid Foundation America  
CyberGrants  
Cynthia Pirro  
Delcia Ifill  
Dennis Buckley  
Destiny Lopez  
Doris Bellemare  
Easterseals National  
Gloria & Peter Timpanelli  
Gregory & Marcia Wright  
James Roosa  
Kim McAllister  
Lauren Buonomo  
Lois Chicano  
Margaret Wrener  
Marie Bernier  
Mary Clarke  
Mindy Fricke  
Network for Good  
Patricia Spinella  
PayPal Giving Funds  
Robert Harlan  
Robert Merhant  
Robert Perganment

In Fiscal Year 2025, Easterseals received over **\$121,128** in grant funding from foundations, organizations, and corporations. These grants were vital in supporting improvements to our programs and services, enabling us to continue meeting and exceeding the needs of individuals and families impacted by disabilities in our communities. Easterseals extends its gratitude to the following foundations and organizations for their generous support in Fiscal Year 2025, helping us fulfill our mission.

American Savings Foundation

CHEFA

Comcast

Cuno Foundation

Element Solutions Foundation Inc., MacDermid

Ricci Trust

The Leever Foundation

United Way of Greater Waterbury

Watertown Foundation



## OUR MISSION

Easterseals is a catalyst for hope and possibility, delivering essential disability and community services that open doors to healthcare, education, and employment. At Easterseals of Greater Waterbury, we stand with individuals, families, and community partners to create opportunities, nurture independence, and inspire full participation in all aspects of life.

## VISIT OUR PROGRAMS

### CENTER FOR BETTER HEARING

22 Tompkins Street, Waterbury

158 State Street, Meriden

690 Main Street South, Suite 4, Southbury

### CHILDREN'S ACADEMY & CHILDREN'S CENTER

22 Tompkins Street, Waterbury - West Campus

128 Avenue of Industry, Waterbury - East Campus

172 Grandview Avenue, Waterbury - Grandview Campus

125 Broad Street, Meriden - Meriden Campus

### DRIVER ASSESTMENT PROGRAM

158 State Street, Meriden

### EMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

117 Old State Drive, Unit 102, Brookfield

1700 Watertown Avenue, Waterbury

### LIONS LOW VISION PROGRAM

158 State Street, Meriden

### MEDICAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

158 State Street, Meriden

