

2021



Annual Report

Directors Message

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Director

This was another unprecedented year for Creating Alternatives. The COVID-19 pandemic had significantly impacted our sector in unimaginable ways. With each setback we experienced, we rebounded with fiery, increased determination and with a positive attitude. The resonating theme over the last year weaving between our families, participants, and staff is resiliency.

As Jaeda Dewalt has once said,

“when we learn how to become resilient, we learn how to embrace the beautifully broad spectrum of the human experience”.

Creating Alternatives remained connected with our families throughout the worst of times and found endless ways to celebrate life when the sun was shining. We are grateful for our dedicated staff, the participants and their loving families. We have pushed boundaries in 2021 to recover and explore opportunities for growth, innovation and partnership.

As a commemoration to our achievements thus far, and in honor of our 22-year anniversary, we have taken a moment to reflect back on key milestones that have helped to shape Creating Alternatives into what it has become today. Our hope is to invest our years of knowledge, expertise and the lessons learned into the next chapter to be bolder and reach higher.

We look forward to continuing to build our presence in the community and to do our part in supporting our most vulnerable. 2022 will be a time when we will venture into uncharted territory and go where we have never been before.

“A good half of the art of living is resilience”.--Alain de Bottom



Phyllis Santone, Founder & Board Chair
Danielle Dang, Executive Director



Celebrating 22 Years of *Creating Alternatives*



Creating Alternatives is no stranger to being resilient. Over the past 22 years, Creating Alternatives has not lost sight of its roots in pursuit of its vision, despite adversity and challenging times.

The search for an alternative began in the mid-1990s, when Board President and founder, Phyllis Santone, began navigating options for her daughter, Rita, after graduating from high school. Phyllis quickly found that there were no appropriate prospects or opportunities for work and socialization in the community for individuals with a developmental disability like Rita.

With limited resources available in the sector, Rita faced long wait lists or would have to accept supports that would not fully address her needs, her desire to connect with others socially, or her wishes to contribute meaningfully to society. Phyllis envisioned the existence of a program that would provide families with options that would redefine the client-centered approach and that would provide her daughter the dignity of acceptance as a valued citizen of her community. Thus, the journey to create a parent-driven model for day support began.

Phyllis, along with a few other parents of children with developmental disabilities advocated for an alternative solution to the government funded programs offered. In 1998, "Employing Special People" was established with the intention of making and selling promotional buttons and chocolates to provide trainees with employment skills so that they could take on meaningful vocations within their community.

The popularity of the program and the chocolates quickly took off with an increased demand for chocolate and requests from parents to have their children join in this venture. With all funds

raised from the sales of chocolates going directly to support programming, the day program was able to expand and serve many families within the community.

Four years later, with on-going support from the community and a grant from The Ontario Trillium Foundation, 'Alternatives Integrating Special People in Vaughan' (Alternatives) was born. Alternatives moved out of Phyllis' basement into an industrial unit in the community and established itself as a registered charitable organization.

In 2005, the organization continued to evolve with the times and changed its name once again to 'Alternatives Integrating People with Cognitive Challenges'.

Relaunching ten years later with the program changing its name and organization branding to 'Creating Alternatives Day Program' marked the beginning of a new era for the organization. The re-envisioned program would start a movement to unite all of Ontario together to recognize the need for services in the community for adults with developmental disabilities.

Creating Alternatives has grown tremendously over the years with generous support from donors. A program that started with only 4 participants in 1999 has grown exponentially to currently support over 56 individuals. Over the years, Creating Alternatives has supported and advocated for over 80 individuals.

Along the journey of the past 20+ years, Creating Alternatives has succeeded in providing this same vision and opportunity to many others who have joined the organization for the very same reason it was established.



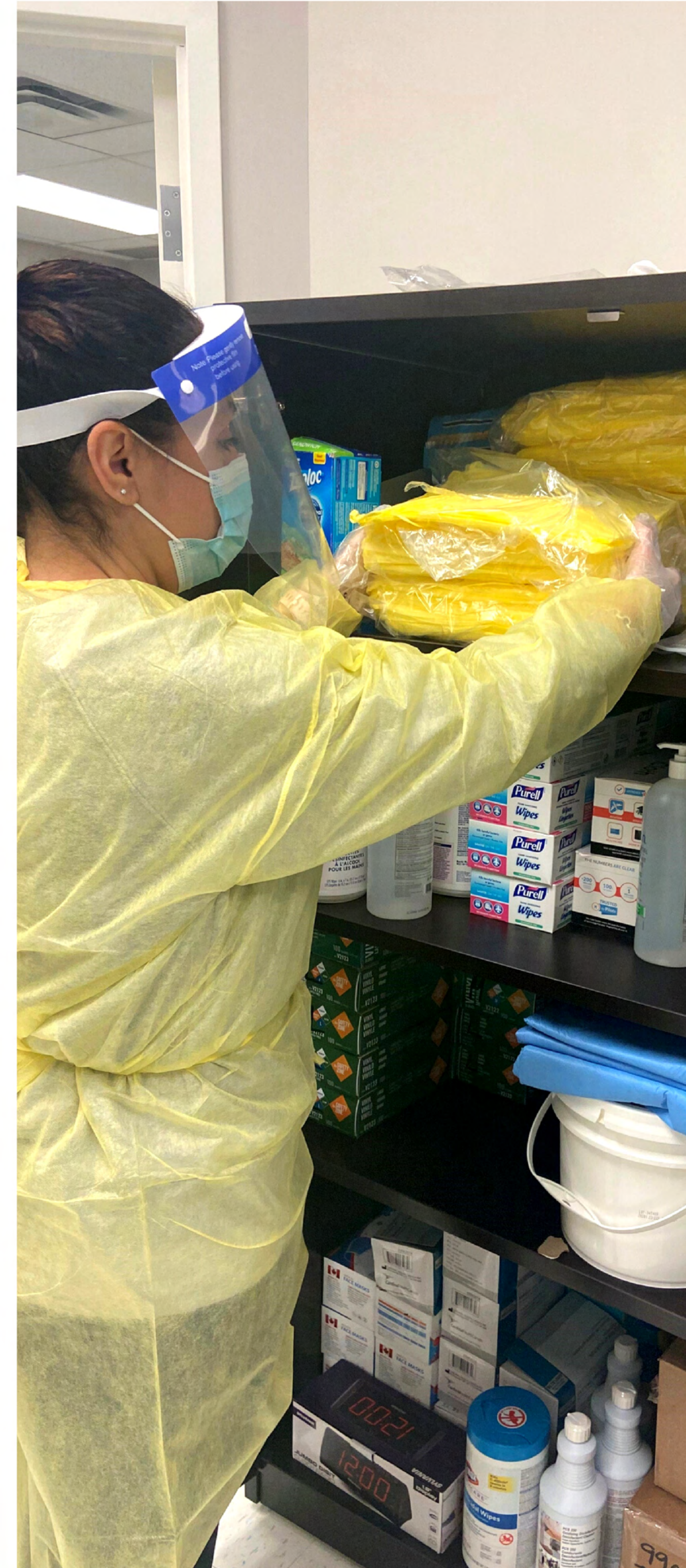
COVID-19 Response

Creating Alternatives was met with unprecedented challenges and barriers during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, but overcame the odds to welcome the return of in-person programming last year.

While things may look a little different, Creating Alternatives has taken precaution so that staff and participants can be together again. The organization has added additional services in response to the imposed pandemic restrictions, ensuring that its programs continue to be accessible by the most vulnerable participants and families. Creating Alternatives was quick to innovate, adapt and "create alternatives" to continue supporting families and minimize service disruptions.

The reopening of the in-person day program was met with some challenges for the organization to align with the newest directives from Public Health, secure appropriate supplies and equipment, and retrain staff on Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) protocols. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, Creating Alternatives had to shift from its previous operating model to incorporate measures that would align with COVID-19 restrictions such as site renovations to redefine safe distanced spaces, the purchase of enhanced PPEs, implementation of strict cleaning measures, and enhanced health and safety policies and protocols, and adoption of a new staffing model.

Creating Alternatives further invested in its information technology infrastructure and systems to support the newly developed virtual program for participants, enabling staff to continue monitoring and providing support to program participants virtually.



Overall revenues have continued to be impacted due to program closures, low attendance, and the implementation of new safety measures. Creating Alternatives has been reliant on federal and provincial COVID-19 funding assistance to cover day-to-day expenses.

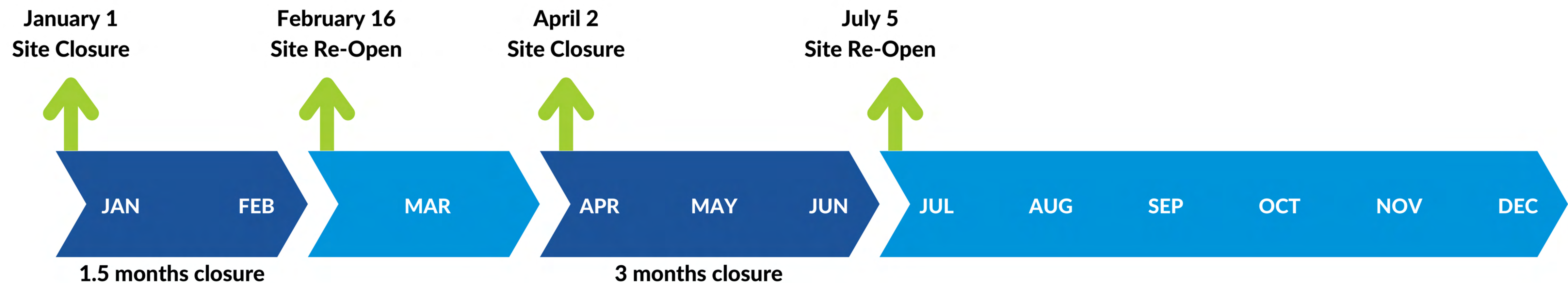
Thanks to our community of supporters and generous donors, we have not had to pause in our quest to connect with and support those who are most vulnerable in the community. We are still challenged with the slow return to the “new normal” as we face continued uncertainty ahead.

We are grateful to our friends at Safehaven for their support and expertise with IPAC protocols and for facilitating on-site influenza vaccinations for staff and participants. We are also appreciative of the grants from United Way Greater Toronto which enabled the purchase of PPE supplies and rental of community spaces to allow Creating Alternatives to support more participants in a safe environment.



Over the course of 12 months from January 2021 through December 2021, Creating Alternatives endured a total of 4.5 months site closure due to COVID-19 restrictions in support of health and safety precautions.

2021 Site Closure Timeline



Strategic Plan Progress



GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY



- ✓ By-laws updated to support new legislation
- ✓ Board sub-committees formalized
- ✓ Accreditation plan developed for 2023

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION & TRAINING



- ✓ Plan developed to support staff professional development
- ✓ Salaries reviewed to align with sector
- ✓ Staffing model reviewed to address service needs

SUCCESSION PLAN/ LEADERSHIP



- ✓ Executive Director recruited to drive growth & ensure quality supports
- ✓ Service analysis conducted to determine sustainability
- ✓ Leadership team developed to support efficiencies

NEW REVENUE STREAMS



- ✓ New partnerships established to leverage expert talents
- ✓ Pilot initiatives launched to address gaps
- ✓ Additional service options introduced to support organizational growth



Day Program Highlights



- Music & art therapy
- Virtual drama production of Beauty & the Beast
- Adopted 2 vulnerable families during the holiday season to provide with basic essentials
- Facilitated outdoor social and recreational events
- Day trips to Sherwood Farms, Dixie Orchards,
- Rented private movie theater, and bowling
- Launched pilot weekend respite program
- Offered "How to be a Roommate" modules as part of the *Plan, Practice, Live* initiative
- Adapted holiday celebration supporting COVID-19 precautionary measures

By the Numbers



56

Individuals Served



2872

Day Program Attendance Days Provided



931

Respite Hours Provided



1695

Virtual Classes Offered



Financials

January through December 2021

REVENUES

\$792,554



EXPENDITURES

\$1,150,315



Top Donors & Supporters of 2021

\$10,000 +



\$2,500 + - The Santone Family, The Imbrogno Family, The Contardi Family, RBC

\$1,000 + - Knights of Columbus Council 13630

\$5,000 +



\$500 + - Peter & Belinda Priede, Mario Rotundo Stone & Masonry Inc., LiUNA! Local 506, Atlas Dewatering Corporation, Kelly Casey, Sapna Hurazee





Together we continue to create alternatives!