



OUR MISSION – Watauga Opportunities, Inc. will enable self-reliance and enhance independence through the provision of vocational, residential, and community opportunities to individuals with barriers to employment and community involvement.

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Enabling Self-Reliance

Estimated Community Wages Earned Since 1994:

\$7.48 million

Estimated Reduction in Government Subsidies:

\$2.99 million

Job Placements since 1994:

1326

Job Placements YTD:

25

WOI Helps The Nation In The Fight Against COVID, Receives 2020 Chamber Alfred Adams Award for Economic Development



Posted by David Jackson in *Chamber News*
Watauga Opportunities, Inc produces a variety of products within three manufacturing divisions: medical devices, custom plastic thermoforming, and packaging/subassembly. They also serve as a nonprofit community rehabilitation program providing vocational training, job placement, employment opportunities, community opportunities and residential services to adults who have barriers to employment and community inclusion. With

dedicated space to assemble test tubes and other equipment for the medical industry, the Boone-based organization has become **a major contributor to the nation's much needed COVID-19 test kit supply.**

Working with Sarstedt, Inc out of Newton-Conover, Watauga Opportunities, Inc received an initial order in March to assemble 750,000 collection sample vials for use in COVID-19 test kits. Just one month later, Sarstedt returned to order 1 million vials. As demand continued to increase, Watauga Opportunities began to hire staff at a time where many other industries were forced to shed workforce.

Now with a standing order for nearly 2 million vials per month, Watauga Opportunities, Inc completes a significant step in the supply chain that provides COVID-19 test kits to the Centers for Disease Control, National Institutes of Health, and North Carolina-based Lab Corp. **In early December, the staff in Boone passed the 10 million mark of vials assembled.**

The Alfred Adams Award for Economic Development recognizes individuals and/or organizations who have worked for the orderly growth and development of Boone and Watauga County. Adams served as a local banker and provided an influence on many Chamber committees in the organization's formative years. This award is sponsored annually by Wells Fargo.

WOI Hosts COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics

Through the federal long-term care vaccination program, WOI partnered with Walgreens to provide COVID vaccination clinics for residents, participants, and staff. The clinics were held at the Watauga Opportunities main Boone location and Creekside group home on December 28, 2020; January 25th, 2021; and February 22nd, 2021. A total of 77 individuals were fully vaccinated through this program. **As of March 2021, 95% of WOI's main Boone location staff and participants were fully vaccinated.** All other staff are strongly encouraged to become fully vaccinated for COVID-19.

A Letter from the President

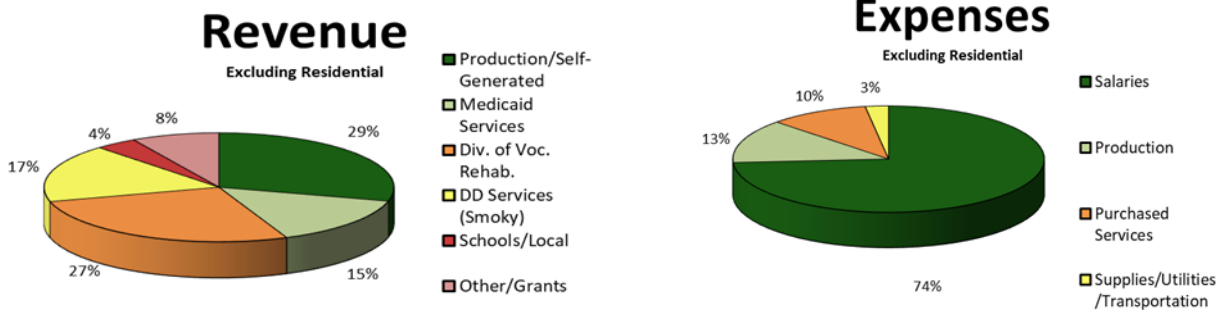


Dear Friends of Watauga Opportunities,

In October of 2019 Watauga Opportunities, Inc. celebrated its 45th Anniversary. Then in March of 2020 the COVID -19 pandemic hit. Since 1974 it has been WOI's Mission to **enable self-reliance and enhance independence** through provision of employment and community opportunities for the people of Northwestern North Carolina. In response to the pandemic WOI developed three goals; to maintain our mission, to be proud of our pandemic efforts as we looked back, and to view the pandemic as an opportunity for excellence. We now proudly report that our Mission continues to be enhanced with further growth of WOI's service area through the expansion of our Pre-Employment Transitional Services (Pre-ETS). WOI now provides Pre-ETS services (virtual and in person) to 22 high schools within a ten county (Watauga, Avery, Ashe, Alleghany, Wilkes, Mitchell, Yancey, Madison, Buncombe and Caldwell counties) region. Plans are developing to add high schools in Alexander, Catawba and Surry counties in 2021-22. We welcome these new students and high schools to our WOI tradition of excellence. We also proudly report that WOI not only did not lay off staff but instead added staff during the pandemic, while in our medical manufacturing area, we also produced over 10 million COVID sample collection vials for use in COVID test kits. During the past 45 years much has changed in terms of services, expectations and systems; however, one constant has been the stability and excellence of WOI's mission driven, high quality, leading edge services. The ability of Watauga Opportunities to evolve and prosper through this continuous change is credited to the efforts of a knowledgeable, and visionary Staff and Board of Directors.

Highlighting 2019-2020 was WOI's continued pursuit of service enhancement and growth targets. Through NCDVR we adapted our Pre-ETS program to a virtual curriculum while expanding to 22 high schools in 10 counties, with plans to add Catawba, Alexander and Surry counties. Through VAYA Health, we adapted our Long Term Community Support (LTCS), and Medicaid services to a telehealth platform, assuring continuity in the lives of those we served while they stayed safe at home. In the past 13 years our community immersion services have grown over 1,260% with participant community civic hours increasing from 476 in 2008 to 6,009 hours in FYE 2020 (20% reduction from 2019 due to pandemic). Expansion of employment services also continued in Mitchel, Yancey, Madison and Buncombe Counties along with the addition of Caldwell and Alexander counties. Our controlled environment medical manufacturing produced 10 million COVID sample collection vials while our Quality System was recertified in medical manufacturing ISO13485-2016.

We continue to partner with NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, VAYA Health, numerous County Boards of Education and others in the provision of vocational, community and residential services. During FY 2019-2020, Watauga Opportunities community & vocational services **grew 41% totaling 760 individuals served**. Our employment programs saw 45 individuals' attain **self-reliance through employment**; with Work Adjustment placing 27 individuals while Supported Employment accounted for 18 community job placements. Evaluation, Work Adjustment, and CBA served 84 individuals, Supported Employment served 38 individuals in job development/training and 90 in Follow-Along, CAET/LTCS served 32 individuals, Innovations served 14 individuals, School Transitional programs served 502 students, and our group homes served 11 individuals. In total WOI served individuals from Watauga, Ashe, Avery, Alleghany, Wilkes, Mitchell, Yancey, Madison, Caldwell and Buncombe Counties.



Watauga Opportunities continues in our quest to **enable our own self-reliance** through reduction in the use of tax dollars in provision of our services. In FYE 2020, 29% of non-residential operating revenues were self-generated. While the economic impact of Watauga Opportunities is important, the true human impact of our service is best seen in the growth of our participants' own **self-reliance**; since 1994 participant community wages earned are estimated at \$7.48 million, while their government subsidies have reduced by an estimated \$2.99 million. Community job placements totaled 1303. WOI truly is **enabling self-reliance and enhancing independence**. The above charts show the source of our revenue and its expenditure.

Thank you for your partnership,

Michael Maybee
President/CEO

Programs Adapt to a New World

While 2020 presented us with unprecedented challenges, WOI programs seized the opportunity to get creative and adapt. With a focus on our mission, staff worked to ensure the delivery of services to meet each participant's needs. As WOI entered a pause in facility-based services during the spring, guardians expressed concern for participants experiencing loneliness, boredom, and isolation while remaining at home. Watauga Opportunities responded quickly by providing daily telehealth services through platforms offering real-time audio and visual streaming. WOI has received positive feedback for our telehealth services as participants have had continued opportunities for social interaction, health and wellness activities, and skill-building activities. Several participants have expressed that they "love" telehealth services. Telephonic services have also been provided and include supporting participants with their goals by phone. One participant expressed that telephonic services shows that WOI cares about them and allows them to maintain their connection with program staff. WOI has served approximately 80% of participants through a combination of telehealth and telephonic services. With the return of some participants to WOI facility-based services in July, WOI has continued to offer telehealth and telephonic to those who remain at home due to COVID-19.



Spreading Holiday Cheer



During the holidays, Kiwanis Aktion Club donates gifts and food to those in need. LTCS participants are pictured dropping off Holiday packages through Aktion Club. Participants had 196 gifts to give out this year.

2019-2020 Program Evaluation

WOI served a total of **760** individuals as follows:

LTCS	32
Supported Employment	38
SE Follow-Along and Group	90
Evaluation, Work Adjustment; CBA	84
Innovations	14
School and Pre-ETS	502

A total of **45** individuals were placed in community jobs. Participants provided 6,009 hours of community/civic time. Satisfaction surveys yielded 98% positive responses rate.

Pre-ETS: Paving the Way to Success

The Pre-Employment Transition Services program is in its fourth year of providing services to high school students across western NC. The program has grown quite a bit this year and now serves students in three high schools in Caldwell County and the remaining four high schools in Buncombe County. At the current time, Pre-ETS works with students at over 25 high schools in Alleghany, Ashe, Wilkes, Watauga, Caldwell, Avery, Mitchell, Yancey, Madison, Buncombe, and Asheville City Schools!

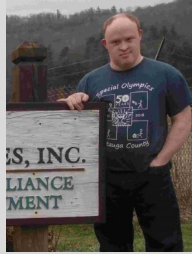
Since the transition to providing education in a virtual environment, the Pre-Employment Transition Services department has spent the past six months getting creative in delivering services over school virtual systems, Google Classrooms, and in outdoor settings - with masks and six feet of distance! The Pre-ETS team has been flexible and creative in teaching high schoolers the skills needed to succeed in the workplace. Pre-ETS Specialists and students have explored job exploration counseling, work behavior skills, self-advocacy skills, postsecondary explorations, and more through activities through virtual job shadows, virtual college tours, and video chats with peer mentors and guest speakers!



Community Employment Milestones

10 Years!

A.J. Reed celebrated his 10th year of employment at Alray Tire and Auto on August 26th, 2020. Over the years, A.J. has assisted the mechanics with maintaining the shop by vacuuming, dusting, sweeping, taking out the trash, and picking up scrap metal though his favorite work task is helping to move tires. A.J. has become an important part of the Alray team and is proud to say he has worked at Alray Tire and Auto for over 10 years now.



5 Years!

Elizabeth Presnell started working at the Watauga Humane Society on April 23rd, 2015 as an animal caregiver. Since then, she has played an important role making sure the cats have a clean and safe environment to live in. She washes pet dishes, cleans litter boxes, changes out bedding, and helps prevent the spread of feline diseases by sanitizing surfaces. Elizabeth is looking forward to celebrating her sixth anniversary.

Photo Spot



Greg McCann gardening at Creekside Group Home!

WOI Fall/Winter 20-21 Events

- November 11th— WOI Closed for Veterans Day
- November 24th—Thanksgiving lunch for participants & staff
- November 26th-27th—WOI Closed for Thanksgiving
- December 21st-25th—WOI closed for the Holidays
- January 1st—Closed for New Year's Day
- January 18th— Closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- January 28th—Board of Directors Meeting
- March 25th—Board of Directors Meeting



OUR QUALITY POLICY

Watauga Opportunities, Inc. is Mission Driven, Quality Focused, and Committed to Exceeding all Customer Expectations!



Watauga Opportunities, Inc.
P O Box 2330
Boone, NC 28607
(828) 264-5009
www.woiworks.org

Enabling Self-Reliance Through Employment



Quality Management System – ISO 13485:2016 Cert. # FM560456
Contract manufacturing, including plastic thermoforming, packaging, & labeling of medical devices to be offered sterile or non-sterile.



CARF Accredited in Community Employment Services: Job Development & Employment Supports, Community Integration, Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation and Employee Development Services
A Equal Employment/Affirmative Action Employer and Service Provider