



Watauga Opportunities, Inc.

Summer-Fall 2022

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.

2022 Board of Directors

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President/CEO

Enabling Self-Reliance

Estimated Community Wages Earned Since 1994:
\$7.79 Million

Estimated Reduction in Government Subsidies:
\$3.12 Million

Job Placements since 1994:
1421

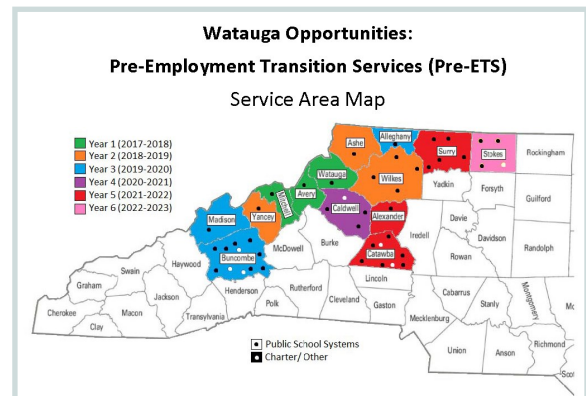
Job Placements Year End 2022:
68

A Growing Pre-ETS Program

18 School Systems in 14 Counties: 944 Students Served



A Pre-ETS student explores career options at Catawba Valley Community College



For the 2022-2023 school year, Pre-ETS services have expanded to include several new school districts and high schools. We are now serving students in 18 school systems across 14 counties in western NC, including: Watauga, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Yancey, Wilkes, Alleghany, Stokes, Surry, Buncombe, Madison, Catawba, Alexander, and Caldwell. Through this growth we now have a team of 35+ Pre-ETS Specialists who will be serving an anticipated 1,500-1,800 students in 50+ schools during the 2022-23 school year. With this growth, an updated curriculum has also been created.

The updated Pre-ETS curriculum incorporates options for teaching job exploration and job readiness skills in both the classroom and community settings. Since the Pre-ETS team serves students with a range of skills and abilities, multiple activity options have been included to ensure that each Pre-ETS student can access the information and learn at their own pace. Pre-ETS Specialists have spent the summer creating lesson plans and activities for each milestone to make learning relevant and engaging at each student's level!

In addition to spending the summer working on curriculum, the Pre-ETS team also hosted multiple summer Pre-ETS training sessions. Students in Catawba County spent several summer sessions exploring local businesses in the human services and trade industries – visiting locations including the local airport and a therapeutic riding center. In other areas, Pre-ETS students were able to tour local colleges and universities and worked on skills to add to their resumes.

WOI Receives 14th Consecutive 3-Year CARF Accreditation



In November of 2021 Watauga Opportunities had our triennial CARF Accreditation Survey. WOI hosted 3 surveyors for two days visiting many of our sites. Resulting from that survey, in January we received our 13th consecutive 3 year CARF accreditation. WOI has now been accredited by CARF for 40 consecutive years. We are accredited in the following areas: Community Employment Services; Employment Supports and Job Development, Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation, Community Integration, and Community Housing. Their report showed the surveyors were highly complementary of our integrated services, and participant choices offered at the Boone and Ashe facilities, within our communities, and at our group homes. The survey reported that “persons served and family speak highly of the services and staff at WOI” and quoted a family member as saying that “staff are great, they have allowed my family member to thrive...we are very satisfied”. The survey also reported “WOI has fostered partnerships within the community to prepare, empower, and support people with developmental disabilities and their families to participate fully in the life of the community.” Congratulations to our Staff, Board, and Leadership Team on these commendable results.

A Letter From the President: Annual Report Financial Year 2021-2022



Dear Friends of Watauga Opportunities,

Since 1974 it has been WOI's mission to **enable self-reliance and enhance independence** by offering employment, pre-vocational, and community opportunities to the people of western North Carolina. In November of 2021, this 48-year tradition of excellence was exemplified by WOI's 13th consecutive 3 year CARF accreditation, representing 40 years of accreditation. As stated in the January 2022 CARF survey report; "persons and family members served speak highly of the services and staff at WOI... "they have allowed my family member to thrive"". Our WOI Mission continues to be enhanced through ongoing growth in WOI's service area with the expansion of both our community employment and Pre-Employment Transitional Services (Pre-ETS). Pre-ETS services are now provided in 18 school systems, across 14 counties, to EC students in 50 high schools across western North Carolina. The ability of Watauga Opportunities to continue this service evolution and expansion through continuous change is credited to the efforts of a knowledgeable, dedicated, and visionary Staff and Board. It is due to this vision, knowledge, and dedication we look optimistically toward a future which continues the WOI tradition of excellence.

Highlighting 2021-2022 was WOI's continued pursuit of service enhancement and growth targets. Through NCDVR, we further enhanced our Pre-ETS program while expanding to 50 high schools in 14 counties. In 2021-22, we added new Pre-ETS and Community Employment services in Catawba, Alexander, and Surry counties with plans to add Stokes County in 2022-23. Through VAYA Health we continued Long Term Community Support (LTCS) and Medicaid services, transitioning from COVID while assuring continuity in the lives of those we served. In the past 15 years our community immersion services have grown over 950% with participant community civic hours increasing from 476 in 2007 to 4,543 hours in FYE 2022, recovering from a COVID impacted 1,837 hours in YE 2021. Expansion of employment services also continued in Catawba and Alexander counties. Our controlled environment medical manufacturing department has now produced 13 million COVID test kit sample collection vials while our Quality System was recertified in medical manufacturing ISO 13485-2016.

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 2021-2022, Watauga Opportunities services **grew by 47% totaling 1,278 individuals served**. Our employment programs saw 68 individuals attain **self-reliance through employment**; Work Adjustment placed 36 individuals while Supported Employment accounted for 32 community job placements. Evaluation, Work Adjustment, and CBA served 85 individuals, Supported Employment served 52 individuals in job development/training and 81 in Follow-Along, LTCS served 46 individuals, Innovations served 18 individuals, School programs served 994 students, and our group homes served 12 individuals. WOI served individuals from Watauga, Ashe, Avery, Alleghany, Buncombe, Mitchell, Yancey, Madison, Caldwell, Catawba, Alexander, Wilkes, and Surry Counties.

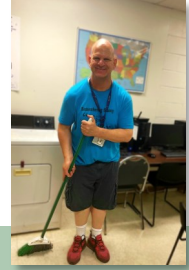


Watauga Opportunities continues in our quest to **enable our own self-reliance** through reduction in the use of tax dollars in provision of our services. In FYE 2022 19% of non-residential operating revenues were self-generated. While the economic impact of Watauga Opportunities is important, the true 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 \$7.79 million, while their government subsidies have reduced by an estimated \$3.12 million. Community job placements now total 1,421. 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

On the Job: Community Employment Anniversaries

Congratulations to **Ricky Corley**, who is celebrating his **20-year work anniversary** as a janitor at Watauga Opportunities. Some of Rick’s responsibilities at WOI include cleaning common areas and hallways, sweeping and mopping, and emptying trash cans. During the height of the Covid pandemic, Ricky was diligent in his efforts to help keep surfaces sanitized and safe for everyone. Ricky’s supervisor says that he is a very dedicated employee who always takes initiative to get the job done. WOI would like to thank Ricky for his years of hard work!



Ty Ruvolis has been an employee at our local Publix for the last **5 years**. He has been providing service with his customary smile and positive attitude that have made him an excellent worker and friend to his co-workers. While Ty did have to take a temporary break from work due to Covid, he jumped right back into his job as soon as he was able and continues to this day.

Congratulations to **Tucker Page** who will be celebrating his **5-year anniversary** with TJ Maxx this November! He helps with unpacking deliveries, putting away merchandise, and any other tasks they may need him for. He is an extremely hard worker and is great with customers. Tucker is always willing to help a customer in need and has made many friends while working at TJ Maxx whom he considers family. Tucker loves his job and is very proud of what he does. He feels honored and privileged to work there, and he would not have it any other way!



Production Update

Watauga Opportunities finished the 2021-2022 fiscal year strong in our manufacturing department. As we enter post-pandemic, the employees of WOI continue to work hard to provide quality product to our customers despite the challenges of inflationary pricing and labor shortages.

We continue to see growth as we start to return to the new normal following the pandemic. We continue to assemble and package sample collection vials used in Covid-19 tests and have also resumed the assembly/packaging of our Cell Scrapers in our controlled environment rooms. Our thermoforming department has seen an increase in food grade plastic trays for Barry Callebaut. We now produce over 100 different trays that are used by our customer during their production of themed chocolate shapes to ship globally.

Our registrar, BSI, will be here in September for our ISO 13485:2016 three-year recertification.

We look forward to our continued growth and meeting the manufacturing demands/challenges of both our existing and new customers.

Satellite Highlight: Ashe Opportunities



When Ashe Opportunities participants expressed a desire to find ways to spread warmth and cheer throughout their community, an idea was hatched. To fulfill their vision, participants were supported in forming the “Cup of Cheer Club”. Now every Monday morning, club members don brightly colored aprons, brew fresh coffee,

stock their cart and head to the Family Central main campus in Jefferson. There, they travel through the halls offering coffee, conversation, and printed quips, to help brighten the day of their fellow citizens. Feedback from business members located on the campus affirms that Cup of Cheer Club visits truly make Mondays more pleasant. The mutual benefit of building positive relationships continues to be remarkable!

2021-22 Program Evaluation

WOI served a total of **1,278** individuals as follows:

LTCS & TN	46	Evaluation, Work Adjustment, CBA	75
Innovations	18	Supported Employment	52
SE Follow-Along	81	School and Pre-ETS	1006



A total of **68** individuals were placed in community jobs. Participants provided 4,543 hours of community/civic time. Satisfaction surveys yielded 98% positive responses rate.

Community Garden

One participant's desire to expand their skills in gardening through volunteering flourished into a shared interest among several participants. Watauga Opportunities has plots at Leola Community Garden where participants have planted, cared for, and harvested a variety of vegetables. Fresh produce from the garden has been donated through the Hunger Coalition's "Plant A Row" program. Additionally, some fresh produce has been used to create snacks through WOI's Happy Hearts Snack Shoppe. The Happy Hearts Club is in association with the NC Extension/Community Association and provides healthy snack alternatives. Participants have enjoyed preparing and tasting new healthy snacks using produce they grew.

While working in the garden, local residents have engaged participants in conversations regarding their shared interest for gardening. Other community gardeners have connected with participants with whom they have shared produce. Gardening has not only allowed for participants to develop relationships with other gardeners, but also for one participant to build a new connection with a local greenhouse where they now volunteer. Gardening has positively impacted participants in increasing their excitement for healthy eating, developing new friendships, and identifying new ways to volunteer and give back to the local community.



WOI Calendar of Events

Closed:

- July 4**
Independence Day
- September 5**
Labor Day
- November 11**
Veterans Day
- November 24-25**
Thanksgiving
- December 23-30**
Winter Holidays

Events:

- August 25**
Board of Directors Meeting
- October 28**
Board of Directors Meeting
- December 5**
Staff & BOD Holiday Party
- December 9**
In-House Holiday Party



OUR QUALITY POLICY

Watauga Opportunities, Inc. is mission driven, quality focused, committed to meeting all regulatory requirements and exceeding all customer expectations.

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(828) 264-5009 • www.woiworks.org

Enabling Self-Reliance Through Employment



FM560456



Accredited by CARF in Community Employment Services: Job Development & Employment Supports; Community Integration; Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation; and Community Housing Services.

An Equal Employment/Affirmative Action Employer and Service Provider