



AJ Foundation

Empowering the Autism Community



The AJ Foundation and
Comprehensive Learning Center
2019-2020 Annual Report



Comprehensive
Learning Center
For Individuals with Autism

Dear Families and Friends of The AJ Foundation,

Each year I get this great opportunity to thank all of you for your support of The AJ Foundation. Without it CLC would not be celebrating its 20th year of operation! But in this new year, a year that has brought to all of our doorsteps unexpected and unprecedented challenges, my feelings of gratitude for you, our supporters, has taken on a whole new meaning and new level of appreciation. As you know, our events were heavily affected by COVID-19, causing concern that we would not be able to deliver the same amount of support to CLC as we typically do. Some events were canceled, some were made virtual, and some we were able to still hold but at a much smaller capacity. Yet you came through with donations, large and small, to ensure our efforts were not for naught. We are truly humbled that your support never wavered, and in fact, that our fundraising goals were met and exceeded in some cases! Because of you, celebrating 20 years at CLC means not only celebrating the accomplishments of our students and staff, but also celebrating the generosity and kindness of our community. Thank you for always believing in us, and thank you for always believing in the promise of tomorrow for our children and adults. We couldn't do it without you!

Your gifts to The AJ Foundation have helped CLC provide the incredible services that our children not only need but deserve!

You have helped make a better life for all the students we serve and their families.

Thank you! - Joanne Corless



Dear Comprehensive Learning Center Community,

CLC is celebrating an enormous milestone...20 years spent making comprehensive, science-based intervention possible for our students and adults with autism! What started as a conversation between a parent and her son's therapist around a kitchen table has evolved into an established, successful program with a 20-year track record of producing meaningful outcomes for students with autism and their families! Even through the uncertainty of a global pandemic, CLC has pushed forward with our mission. The efforts of everyone involved at CLC has been tremendous! Between our instructional staff, administrative staff, board of directors, and parents, we continue to address the needs of our students under the most complicated of circumstances. What is equally impressive is that the fundraising efforts, through The AJ Foundation to support CLC, didn't miss a beat either. The on-going generosity of all the donors out there that support our mission is astonishing! We look forward to our future and are excited for the opportunity to continue our important work. Here's to the next 20...! Thank you so much for all you have done and continue to do!

Your gifts to the Comprehensive Learning Center have made opportunities available for people living with autism that otherwise, would not have been possible! Thank you for supporting our mission and allowing us to create these wonderful opportunities!

Thank you! - Cindy Murphy



Graduations & Promotions

Congratulations Drake! Drake graduated from the Comprehensive Learning Center's education program in August 2020. Although we had to make some modifications to the ceremony, the pandemic didn't stop us from celebrating all of the many successes Drake has accomplished during his time at CLC. Drake's infectious smile and unparalleled energy and enthusiasm is going to be deeply missed at CLC. That's why we are extremely excited for Drake's future transition into the Adult Life Skills Program at CLC. We know that he will do an amazing job just like he did in the education program and are looking forward to seeing him around the school from time to time! We wish him the best of luck and are confident that he will excel in all of his future endeavors.



Amanda Fremont began working at CLC as an Instructor in 2012. With some experience working with individuals with autism prior to CLC, Amanda quickly and enthusiastically identified that the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis were crucial to help the students thrive. Over the next few years, Amanda's continued, and consistent growth led her to a promotion to Module Trainer in 2015. Amanda's competencies as a Special Education Teacher paired with her growing skills in Applied Behavior Analysis led her to further her education, ultimately becoming credentialed as a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) in 2019. It was easy to identify that Amanda's skill set should be utilized across the program as CLC's needs continued to grow so she was promoted to Program Trainer in 2018. In her new role, Amanda was able to spread her vast knowledge and training across the Education Program and Adult Life Skills Program. When the opportunity to add an additional Clinical Director to CLC's team occurred in May 2020, Amanda was the clear and obvious choice. Her skill set paired with her dedication to the students and families of CLC is truly something special. We are thrilled to have Amanda in her new role as **Clinical Director** and know that her leadership will allow for CLC to continue to grow and evolve to meet the needs of all of CLC's staff, students and families!



Understanding Autism

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurological condition with a complex range of developmental differences. In some cases, individuals possess uniquely strong abilities, some have intense learning and behavioral difficulties, and for some, there is a range of these strengths and weaknesses. At CLC, we provide highly individualized educational programs for each of our students so we may tailor instruction around specific areas of need. While our services are designed for the individual, what is constant across all is our adherence to best practices that are grounded in science.

One evidence-based practice CLC employs is that of parent training so that parents may promote their child's learning well beyond the school day. Parent training, as a component of autism intervention, became a topic of scientific research over four decades ago.¹ By working in conjunction with their child's instructors, parents learn specialized strategies to build speech, independence in daily activities, and participation in family activities, among numerous other skills!²

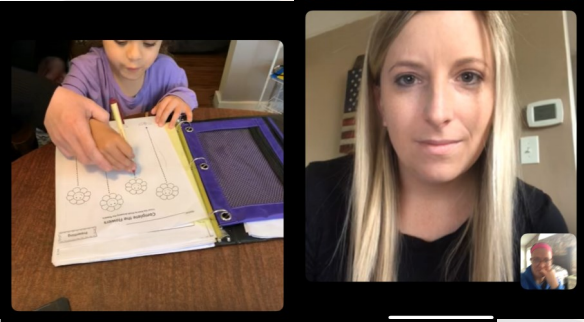
CLC has incorporated parent training from the day we first opened 20 years ago. Our model involves parents visiting school to work alongside their child's instructor and, the instructors regularly visiting the child's home to ensure that the valuable skills taught in school, are used at home and in the community where those skills ultimately matter most. The benefit of this service has never been more prominent than in 2020, the year of the world-wide pandemic.

When CLC, like schools everywhere, closed in March, 2020 due to the spread of coronavirus, we were abruptly faced with a very challenging situation. Our students were without the one-to-one, face-to-face, intensive daily instruction they need to make progress. Somehow, we had to find a way to educate our students remotely. Anyone familiar with the needs of individuals with autism knows this couldn't be further from ideal. This is where the benefit of our parent training model became a tremendous advantage.



Understanding Autism

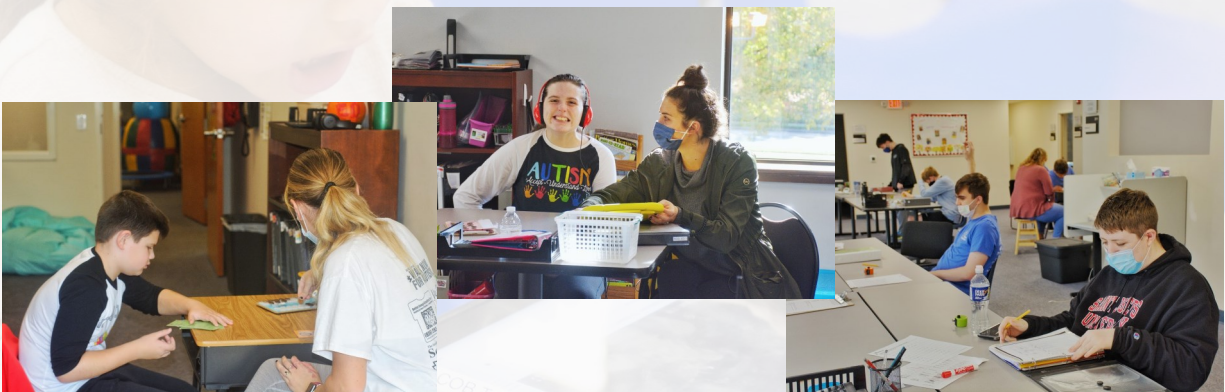
We had a structure already in place for CLC staff to work collaboratively with parents. This paired with parents' desire to do all they could to keep their child moving forward while school was closed, gave us a unique opportunity to help our students in a way that otherwise, would not have been possible. CLC staff were able to consult with parents via phone and video conference to guide participation in educational activities. Parents recorded their child doing various tasks to share with the instructor for review and troubleshooting. Finally, parents assisted their child in participation in video-based instruction with their CLC instructor using Zoom. While far from perfect, we were very happy that our parent training model was in place long before the pandemic struck as it greatly facilitated our ability to support our students remotely when school was closed.



CLC was able to safely return our students to their classrooms this past July. It has been a learning experience to navigate all the modifications necessary to allow for safe operations, and as much as we love having our students back, we must be ready for the unknown future. One way we have been preparing for another possible closure is by building out more extensive virtual learning opportunities. By creating individualized virtual "classrooms" for each of our students, they and their parents will have more elaborate resources for quality learning time while at home. Again, this is still far from perfect but, with the opportunity to prepare in advance for another potential closure coupled with the unwavering dedication from our CLC families, we will find our way through these challenging times together.

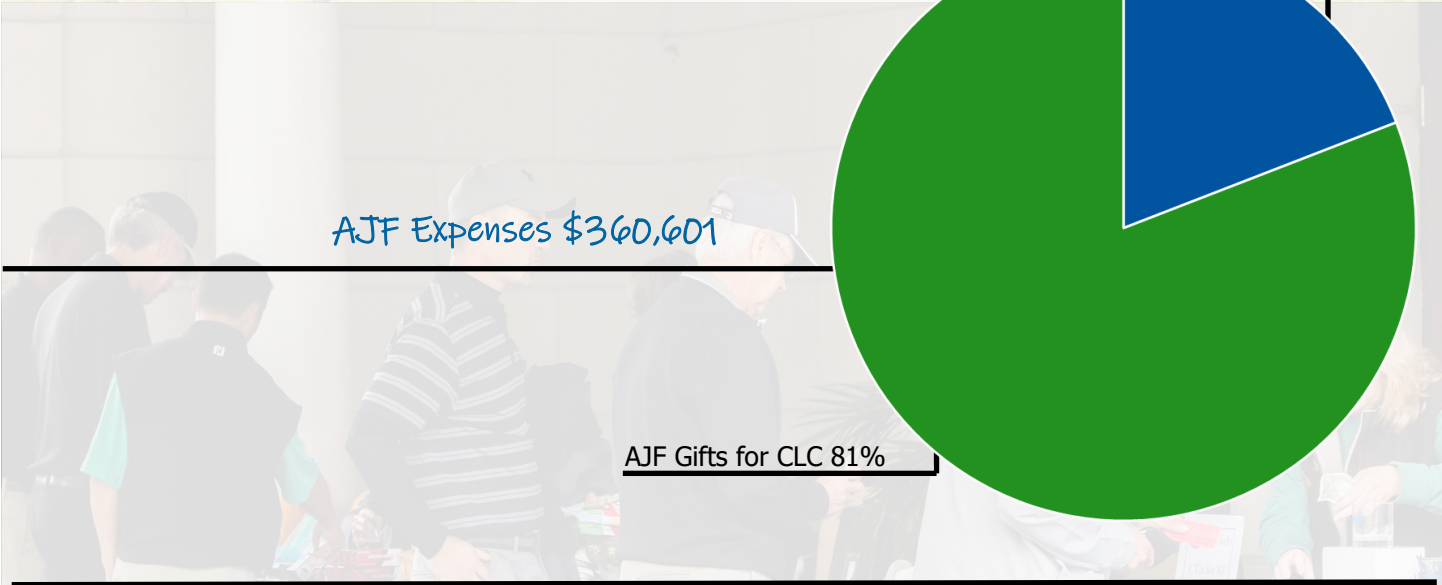
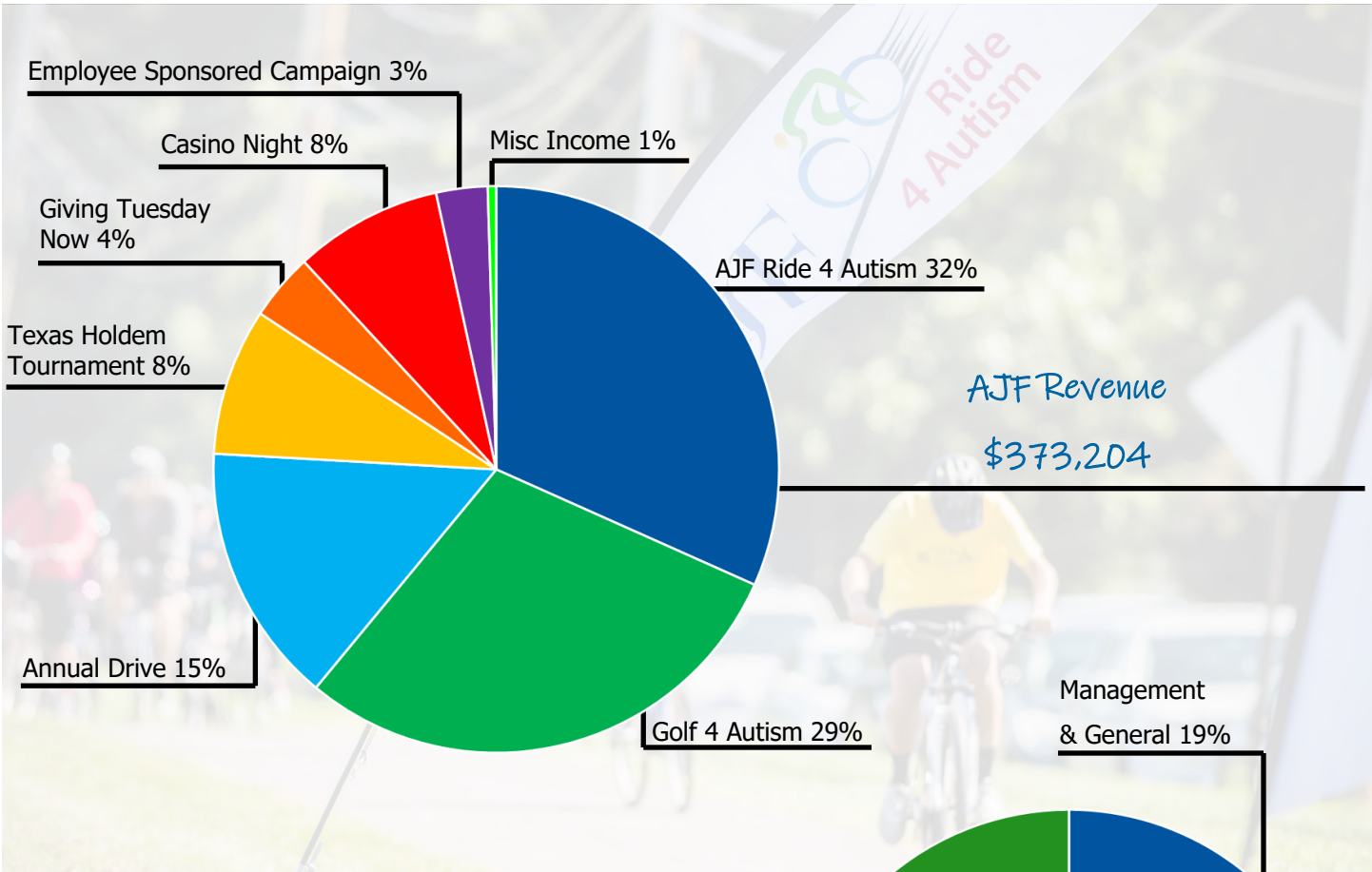


"The only way out is through." - Robert Frost

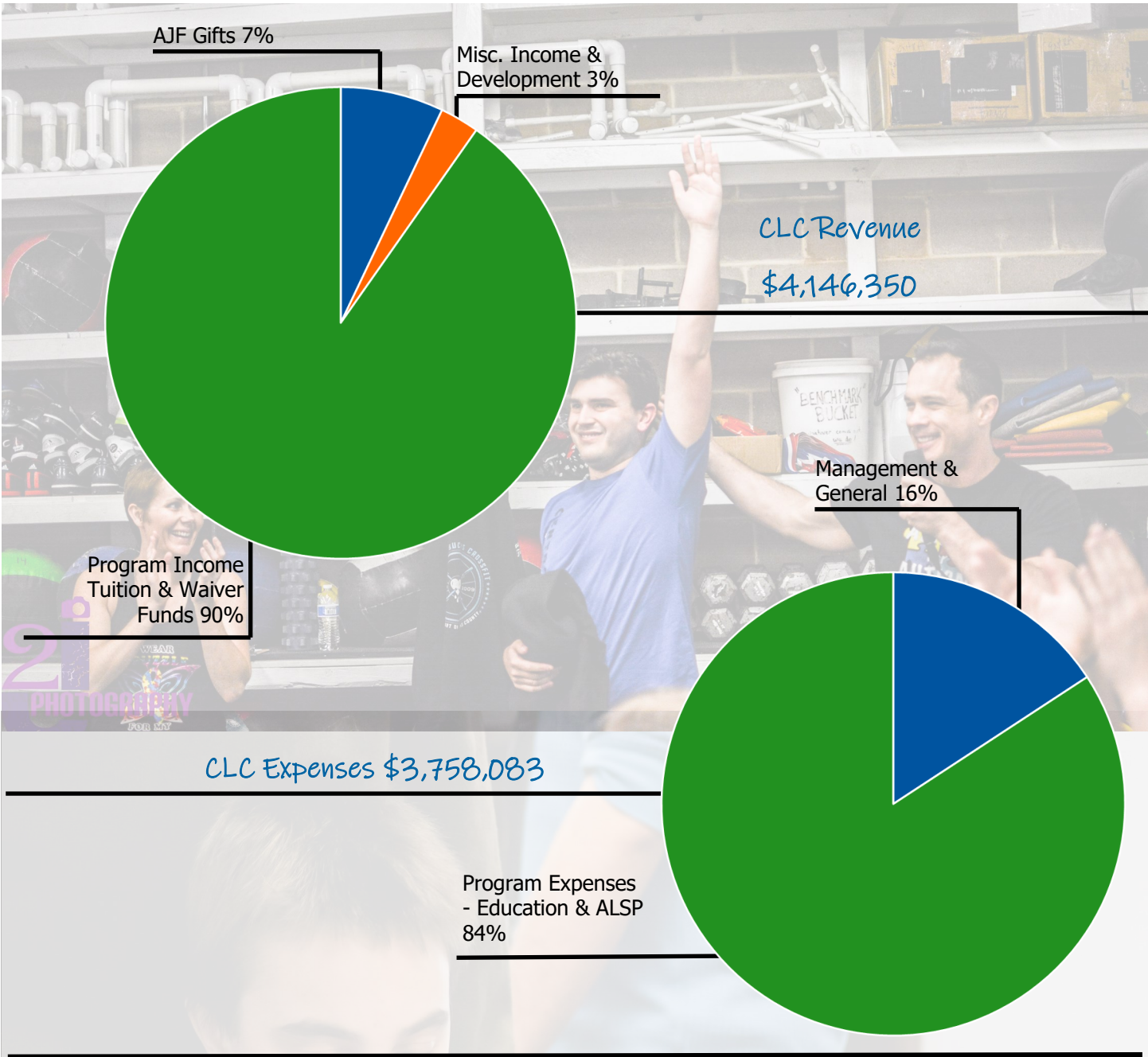


¹ Lovaas O.I. (1978). Parents as Therapists. In: Rutter M., Schopler E. (Eds.), *Autism*. Boston, MA: Spring.

² McClannahan, L.E., Krantz, P.J., & McGee, G.G. (1982). Parents as therapists for autistic children: A model for effective parent training. *Analysis and Intervention in Developmental Disabilities*, 2(2-3), 223-252.



Despite all of the adversity and challenges posed by the current global pandemic, AJF's benefactors and donors continued their consistently generous support of our mission during our 2019-2020 fundraising year and helped AJF meet many of its fundraising goals! We are so grateful for this support so our children and adults with autism can continue receiving the life-impacting services that CLC provides!



The financial turbulence caused by the COVID-19 pandemic painted an unclear future for CLC. With the closure of our in-person services and temporary switchover to remote learning, it was unknown initially if tuition would be impacted. This scare was partially offset by the fact that with our physical site closed, there was a reduction in some of our expenses. With Congress' signing of Act 13, the savings from reduced operating expenses, and the continued success of AJF fundraisers despite the adversity and challenges presented by the current global pandemic, CLC was thankfully able to end 2019-2020 in a strong financial position. These favorable financial results are key to enabling CLC to be in a strong position to proactively anticipate and adapt to ever-changing conditions and requirements occasioned by the current second wave of COVID-19 cases in our region, so that we can continue to properly educate our students during this pandemic. We are incredibly grateful for our supportive community that ensures our sustainability during these very uncertain times!

The funds we have raised with your help, make it possible for our students to excel and grow with the support of CLC.



Looking back over our 19-20 School Year, there are so many of you that have made a difference in the lives of our students and their families, and we would like to take a moment to thank you all!

Supporters who gave \$10,000 or more

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Holly White	Wayne & Eden Winderman	Steve & Rebecca Wolfe
Scott & Christa Wolfertz	Jerry Wolford	Dawn & Richard Wyatt

Mark your calendars for our upcoming events!



AJF Texas Hold'em Tournament

January 23, 2021



AJF AMRAP 4 Autism

April 3, 2021



AJF Casino Night

April 17, 2021



AJF Ride 4 Autism

September 11, 2021



AJF Golf 4 Autism

October 18, 2021

