

ANNUAL

REPORT

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About WILS

In 1997, West-Central Independent Living Solutions (WILS) became one of the now 22 Missouri Centers for Independent Living. Centers for Independent Living (CIL) are authorized and funded under the Rehabilitation Act 1992 amendments. CILs provide programs, resources, and services for individuals with disabilities so they can remain or become independent within their community.

OVERSIGHT

CILs must prepare and submit a report at the end of each fiscal year that shows compliance, ongoing monitoring, and oversight.

MISSION

WILS works to empower people with disabilities to achieve and maintain their independence.

VISION

We envision a community where all individuals can participate fully, unencumbered by physical or attitudinal barriers.



2023 Reflections



Deb Hobson

Executive Director

As we reflect on the year 2023, it's evident that our journey towards a more connected and prepared community has taken significant strides. Our commitment to expanding transportation options and fostering a sense of preparedness among our members has been at the forefront of our endeavors. Let's take a moment to delve into the highlights of the past year.

1. Expanding Transportation

Horizons: In 2023, we continued to prioritize accessibility and convenience for our community. Our expanded transportation options aimed to enhance your mobility, providing more choices for your daily needs and special outings.

2. Branded Vehicle Wraps: A striking visual transformation took place as our fleet donned vibrant and distinctive branded vehicle wraps. This not only added a touch of uniqueness to our transportation services but also symbolized our commitment to standing out in the community.

3. Group Trips Made Easy:

Recognizing the joy of shared experiences, we introduced group trip options for our community members. Our group trip buses offer an accessible, comfortable, and communal travel experience. Because the journey is just as important as the destination.

4. Sharing Emergency Buckets for Community Preparedness:

Understanding the importance of being ready for the unexpected, we embarked on an initiative to share emergency preparedness buckets. These thoughtfully curated buckets contain essential supplies to help you and your loved ones stay prepared for unforeseen circumstances.

WHERE THERE'S A WILS
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THERE'S A WAY.

ADVOCACY

Reach out for assistance with advocacy skills. Learn to speak up and clearly communicate.



Advocacy

WILS consumer, Donna, called WILS Benefits Specialist regarding her Medicare drug plan from 2022. She discussed how she was trying to find her plan information because she felt like they overcharged her in 2022. They discussed how she could look up the plan name, look at the packet mailed to her during open enrollment, or use the Medicare.gov account they had set up online together to find the information. Donna was able to find the original paperwork that she had received in the mail at open enrollment and then was able to contact the prescription drug plan.

Consumers united together as advocates to celebrate Disability Rights Legislative Day at the Capitol with live watch parties at WILS offices. Emcee of the event Michael L. Cross said, "Look at this ramp and look at these steps when you write your policies. Do not write them as steps which can only be supported for an able individual, write policies thinking [of] them as [a] ramp which can support everyone able or disabled."



172

Number of people who requested and successfully received advocacy services.

"It makes me feel more confident."

"It has helped me to take care a little bit better of myself."

"It gave me a more positive attitude."

"Not to give up on yourself but to keep trying."



95%

Percentage of people satisfied with the advocacy services received from WILS.

"I gained a lot of knowledge about things that I did not know."

"It helped in everyway to make things a little bit better for me."

Amanda's Advocacy

Hello, I'm Amanda, and I have a remarkable success story to share. At 37 years old, I've been a part of the WILS community since 2014, and it has been a life-changing journey. My involvement in the Consumer Directed Services (CDS) program, offered by WILS, has not only preserved my independence but also guided me towards a path of personal transformation.

When I first joined the CDS program, I was facing substantial challenges in my life. Weighing approximately 420 pounds, I struggled with daily household tasks, and I often felt overwhelmed by depression and sadness. But WILS and the CDS program gave me hope and a chance to turn things around.

Participating in various events hosted by WILS, like attending baseball games, swimming, holiday parties, and peer support groups, filled my life with joy and a sense of belonging. These activities provided me with opportunities to connect with others who understood the difficulties I faced, and I started to regain my self-esteem. One of the most significant changes in my life came when I was granted the freedom to hire an attendant through the CDS program. This support system became the cornerstone of my journey to a healthier and happier life. My attendant lifted the weight off my shoulders, both figuratively and literally. They helped me with tasks I had struggled with for years and provided the encouragement I needed to take charge of my life.

It was during a weekend spent with a close friend, I realized that I wanted to make a significant change in my life, starting with my health. With newfound determination, I reached out to a doctor to explore weight loss surgery. Through determination and unwavering support from my WILS case worker, I successfully underwent the surgery and embarked on a remarkable weight loss journey.

Throughout this journey, I faced challenging moments, but the assistance of my dedicated attendant was my lifeline. As I continued to shed the pounds, my WILS community provided me with unwavering support and encouragement. I am thrilled to share that I have lost an incredible 184 pounds, a testament to my dedication and the support of the WILS team.

My ultimate goal is to achieve complete independence and reduce my reliance on assistance, which will eventually lead to the closing of my services with WILS. Thanks to this incredible journey and the support I've received, I'm well on my way to achieving that dream.

My story is proof that with determination, the right support system, and the opportunities provided by organizations like WILS, remarkable transformations are possible. I am proud of the person I've become, and I look forward to the day when I can stand on my own, living a life of independence and empowerment. WILS has not only changed my life, but it has empowered me to shape my own destiny, and for that, I am forever grateful.

INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS

Learn how to be in control of your own life as your needs or abilities change. Try new things; set and meet goals.



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THERE'S A WAY.

IL Skills

In an era where staying connected and navigating the digital landscape has become increasingly important, Missouri Assistive Technology (MOAT) has taken a significant step towards ensuring that seniors and Missourians with disabilities have the opportunity to bridge the digital divide. Thanks to the MO Goes Tech grant from KC Digital Drive, MOAT recently sponsored three computer classes aimed at empowering these individuals with the digital skills they need to thrive in today's world.



A Day of Learning

WILS Back to School attendees had the chance to acquire new knowledge and relive the joys of childhood. They engaged in practical training, navigated the internet, and discovered online discounts. All participants enhanced their digital skills. They ended the day with a picnic lunch and park recess. The event highlighted the enjoyable aspect of education and emphasized the opportunity for acquiring new skills and knowledge at any age.

Money Matters

WILS participants were able to take a Bucket List Club trip to the Money Museum at the Federal Reserve in Kansas City. On the way, they discovered innovative ways to save money, sign up for unique benefits, and discover unclaimed cash or valuables.

INFO & REFERRALS

Explore the unknown. Tap into available information, resources, and community services.



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Info and Referrals

Through a network of resources, WILS Information and Referral services offers individuals information and services on a wide range of topics.

Here's what people had to say:

"WILS provided me with information that I can use."

"I'm now aware of an agency that can help me."

"I understand transportation options available to me better."

"It makes me feel more independent to where I don't have to rely on other people."

"I didn't know who could help me. WILS talked to me about what I needed and was able to refer me to another agency that I could get the assistance I needed."



1985

Number of people who requested and successfully received services.

"They gave me a lot of information services that I didn't even know about."



94%

Percentage of people satisfied with the information and referral services received from WILS.

"I learned about WILS Bucket List Club and the other services the organization offers. I didn't know they had so much to offer."



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PEER SUPPORT

Share experiences, make connections,
and gain new friends.



Peer Support

WILS Transportation driver, Steven, arrived at Jan's residence a bit earlier than planned in hopes of easing her pre-flight jitters as she prepared for her trip to KCI airport.

Upon reaching Jan's home, it was evident that she was flustered, not quite ready, and uncertain about what she could bring in her luggage for her flight. Drawing from his own travel experiences, Steven shared personal insights to help Jan make well-informed luggage choices. Thirty minutes later, they finally set out for the airport.

Jan remained apprehensive and struggled to relax, feeling they might be running behind schedule. Steven assured her that they had ample time, and she would reach the airport as per her itinerary.

Jan expressed her gratitude, saying, "Thank you for saying that; it makes me feel much better to know you are driving."

Steven safely delivered Jan to the airport on time, assisting with her luggage and ensuring she was comfortable with the skycap service. Jan was delighted and insisted on giving Steven a warm hug before parting ways.

Outdoor Adventure

WILS Outdoors Without Limits event exemplified community inclusivity, providing an opportunity for individuals with disabilities to connect with the outdoors and each other. Nearly 100 participants were able to experience the thrill of reeling in their first catch, discover their inner archer as they took aim with a bow and arrow, and practice their precision and aim during target practice. As we look back at the event, we're reminded of the power of coming together, trying new things, and creating memories that last a lifetime. A special thanks to our partners at MDC, Stealth Gobblers, and Warrensburg Parks and Rec!



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TRANSITIONS

Life is always changing. Learn how to adjust and transition as your needs shift.



Transitions

In 2021, Dorcus, a resilient double amputee, found herself in a difficult situation. Homeless and in need of medical attention, she was admitted to the hospital for care and support.

When it was time for her to be discharged, Dorcus faced a new challenge. With nowhere to go, she was placed in a nursing home. As days turned into months, Dorcus longed for a place she could truly call home.

In June 2022, she made up her mind and decided to seek a place in the community where she could live independently. Dorcus reached out to the Missouri Show Me Home program. It's designed to help Missourians aged 63 or older and adults with physical disabilities to



transition from a nursing home to suitable housing and supportive services.

Once approved, Dorcus was connected with Samantha at WILS. Samantha assisted Dorcus through every step of the process, from the planning process, finding housing, applying for community support, and settling her into her new home. Setting up a new household was not an easy task for Dorcus, as she didn't have many personal belongings, she only owned a lamp and a TV. Recognizing this need, Samantha reached out to our collaborative partner organization Manna Harvest, Jeremiah 29:11. This partnership allowed Dorcus to obtain the essential items needed, including small electric appliances, cleaning supplies, household goods, personal care products, and even assistive technology. These aids included tools to help her navigate her bathroom and kitchen from her wheelchair, enabling her to live independently and with confidence.

Dorcus has begun her journey of independence. The WILS team continues to provide person-centered, high-quality services to ensure she has the necessary supports to thrive in her new environment, empowering her to lead a fulfilling and self-sufficient life.

WILS PROGRAMS



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CDS STORY

I am a 35-year-old woman who lives in the community with my 39-year-old husband, who also receives Consumer Directed Services (CDS) through West-Central Independent Living Solutions (WILS). I have a disability of Degenerative Disease, and my husband is paraplegic. We both began receiving WILS services back in 2021, including participating in the CDS program. I would say, "WILS program helps me with day-to-day to make it easier for me to be able to still live independently." My husband says that, "WILS helps me get tasks done that I would not be able to do on my own. They allow me to achieve my goals by helping with the tasks I otherwise couldn't do." -Amanda & Johnny

I am a 57-year-old woman who lives alone in my community. My primary disability is cancer, although I have other diagnoses as well. I began participating in the Consumer Directed Services program through WILS back in 2019. I feel that "Having an aide has kept me in my home. I don't know what I would have done without it." -Christina



I am a 49-year-old man who lives at home in the community with my mother and my stepfather who receives home and community base services as well. My primary disability is Multiple Sclerosis, along with several other physical disabilities. My mother is my attendant and has been providing for my care in the Consumer Directed Services program through WILS since 2012. I would like to say that "[The WILS CDS] program has helped me stay out of [the] nursing home because my mother has been able to help me with my needs." -Michael

RAMP STORY

Brenda is a 63-year-old woman with several disabilities, including COPD, emphysema, lung cancer, mixed connective tissue, and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and has had COVID. She is in need of a wheelchair ramp so she can continue to age in place in her home. There is currently an old, rotted ramp at the home but due to its deteriorating condition, Brenda can't safely use her electric wheelchair on the ramp. She was working with University of Missouri's Aging in Place program

to receive funding for the ADA ramp construction.

After Brenda signed her release of information, WILS was contacted by Elizabeth Curtis, Senior Project Coordinator of the Sinclair School of Nursing at the University of Missouri (MU). Ms. Curtis stated they had been working with Brenda on the construction of the wheelchair ramp and had informed MU that WILS could build the ramp. Curtis stated WILS would be considered a subcontractor, so WILS filled out and submitted the required documents and detailed budget of the projected expenses and was approved as a subcontractor.

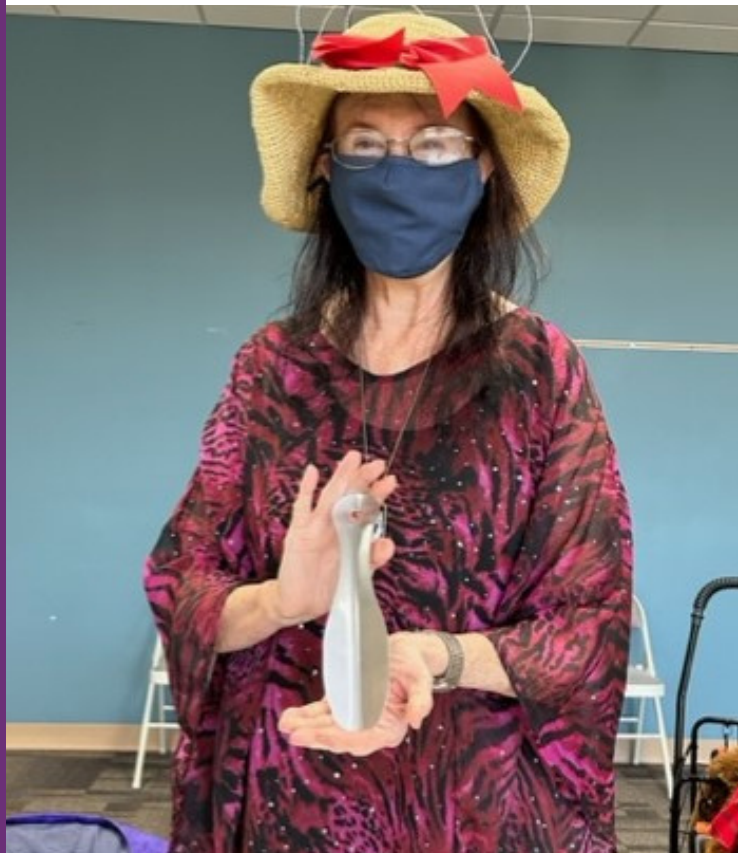
On August 17, 2023, WILS completed the ADA ramp construction at Brenda's home. When contacted about her completed ramp, Brenda said, "the ramp is awesome! I can now leave my house and get the mail and do whatever I want to do. I cannot thank you guys enough." Brenda now utilizes OATS transportation for medical and essential shopping and participates in WILS peer support events.

Total cost for the ramp was \$1,624.70 which was reimbursed by "The Curators of the University of Missouri", ASSETs for Aging in Place (AIP) Program.



AT STORY

"I wanted to say thanks so very much for the loan of the contrast keyboard this week. I was attending and presenting at the Connecting Entrepreneurs Conference held in Benton County by the University of Missouri Extension. I planned to finish my presentation Tuesday evening and realized on the ride down that I didn't have my keyboard for my laptop, and it is a requirement for me. The University did not have one in the IT department or the Accessibility office and I was 3.5 hours from my office. I was able to finish and present, as well as catch up a little on e-mail. I can't express enough how relieved I was that you had one like I use and were able to loan it to me! It made all the difference." - Darla



Jan Saks has a Traumatic Brain Injury. She has been working with WILS on some Independent Living Skills. Jan writes a task on her to-do list, but by writing it, her brain thinks she has completed the task. IL Coordinator Samantha has worked with Jan on color coding each different topic to break them apart to easily see them. They talked about using a numbering system for importance, and using a black sharpie marker to boldly cross out the task once it has been completed. Jan was able to successfully get some tasks completed on her list by implementing these different strategies.

TRANSPORTATION STORY

WILS consumers can schedule appointments for accessible transportation services so they can access health and wellness needs, grocery shopping, pharmacy pick-ups, physical therapy or fitness, and more.

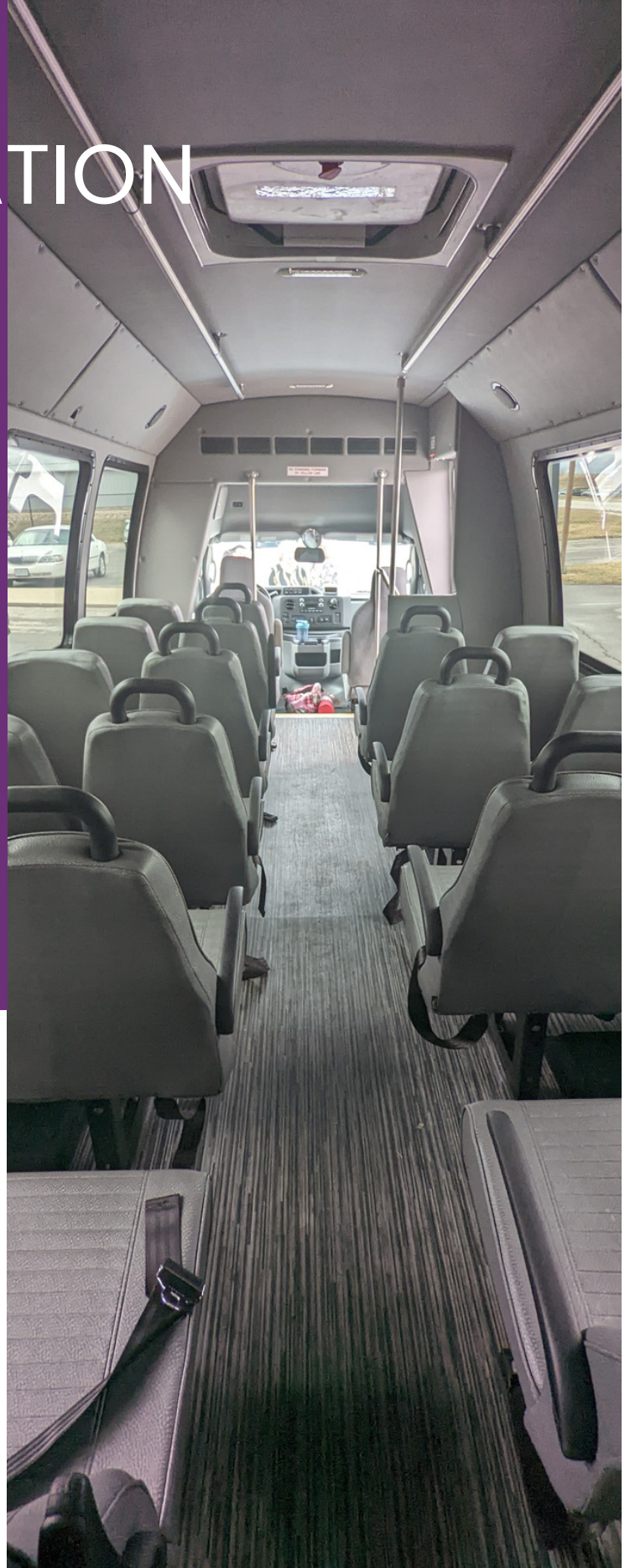
Consumers say:

“I can go with my friends on exciting adventures and I don't have to drive late anymore.”

“I would rather use WILS transportation services because they are reliable.”

Friend Assisted Rides (FAR) is a WILS Transportation program that allows consumers to ask a friend, or a family member to drive them to medical appointments and request gas mileage reimbursement.

Alisha said, "Last year was very beneficial for me to use the FAR program because I couldn't afford all of my trips to my oncologist in Kansas City. With FAR I was able to not worry about making it to all of my appointments when the price of gas was so high. It really helped a lot."



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BUCKET LIST CLUB TRIPS

As a participant of WILS Bucket List Club, you will have opportunities to: engage in your community, try new things, discover new places, meet new people, and learn about resources.



**“We went to see Million Dollar Quartet. It was a great trip. The new buses are a blessing for us old folks.”
– Dell**



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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Thanks to a grant, WILS was able to purchase 5 gallon buckets and fill each with emergency preparedness items such as a first aid kit, whistle, FEMA guide, and food and water rations.



**"I'm so thankful for the emergency bucket. It makes me feel so much more safe in my home."
- Richard**



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COMMUNITY CARE GRANT PROJECTS

Through WILS community cares bags, we were able to connect with individuals and families, and make a positive impact in the counties we serve.



**“Thank you for holding this event. The volunteers were so welcoming and very helpful.”
-Anonymous**



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JEREMIAH 29:11
WAREHOUSE
PARTNERSHIP





In 2023, in partnership with Manna Harvest, Jeremiah 29:11, WILS distributed over 2,000 pounds of essential products to 2,561 households, reaching individuals in need across our communities. WILS distribution encompassed a wide spectrum of products, comprised of:

- 222 Assistive Technology/DME items
- 227 clothing articles
- 2,560 cleaning supplies and household goods
- 109 small appliances
- 2,468 personal care products



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VOLUNTEERS

Whether you choose to volunteer once a year at one of our amazing events or you choose to help us regularly throughout the year, by volunteering at WILS, you will be helping people with disabilities in so many different ways.

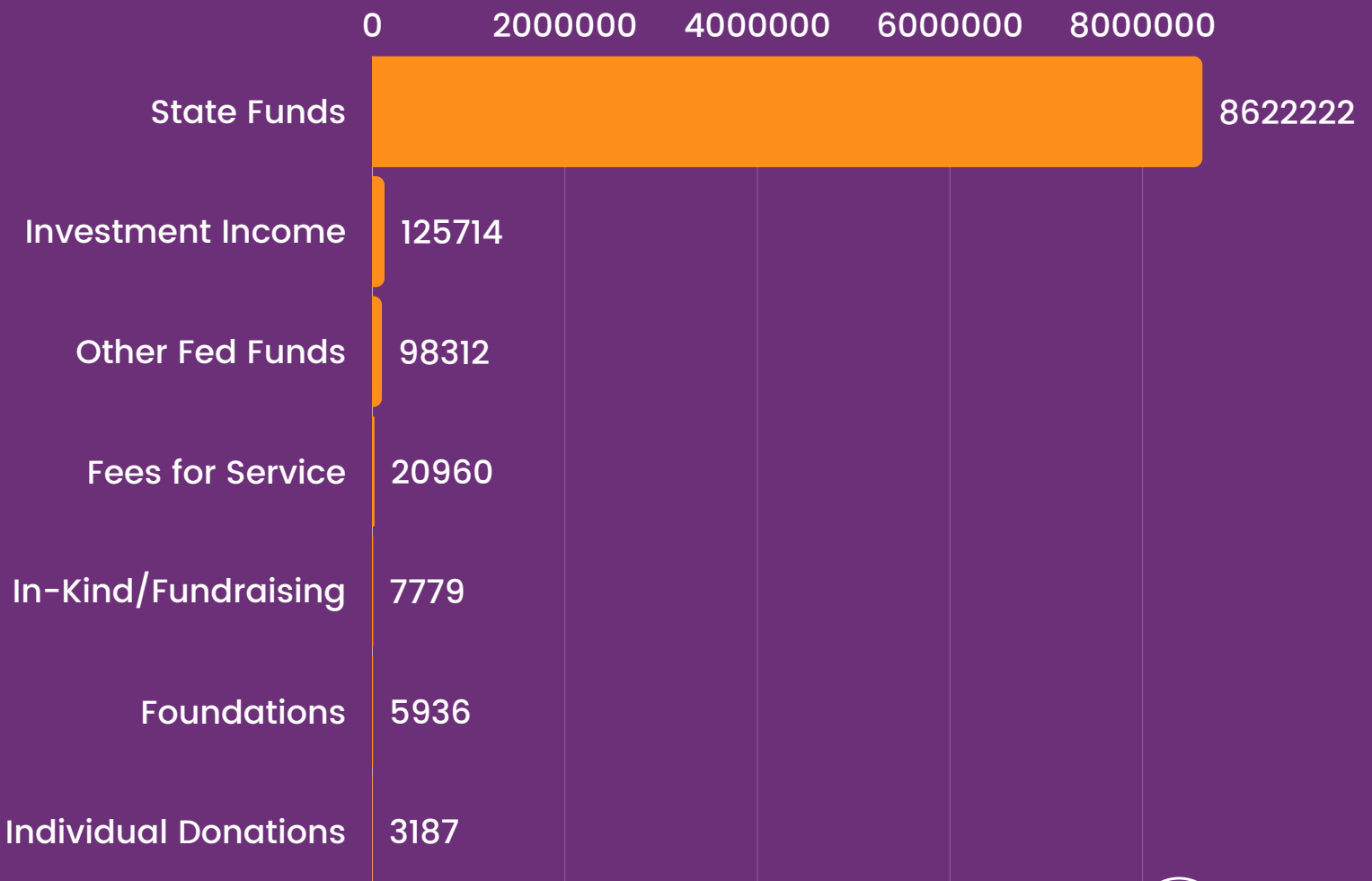


**"I'm glad to be part of an organization that provides transportation services to people who can no longer drive."
- Jeff**



Financial Report

\$8,884,110	Total Income
-\$5,927,333	Pass Through Funds
\$2,956,777	Net Operating Resources



THANK YOU!

WILS impact within our six-county service area would not be possible without the contributions of the people who worked tirelessly on the projects mentioned and many others. It is the work behind the scenes that pulls it all together. Thank you to our board of directors, our Executive Director, our staff, consumers, volunteers, and community supporters. Teamwork makes the dream work!

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