

What Connects Us:

**RESILIENCY.  
OPPORTUNITY.  
COMMUNITY.**



VOCATIONAL  
GUIDANCE  
SERVICES

2020-2021  
**ANNUAL REPORT**



## AGENCY HIGHLIGHTS



Dear Friends,

Despite the challenges of the past year, we have never been prouder of our work, our team, or our community. Throughout our 131-year history, we have been steadfast in championing and supporting individuals with disabilities. Over this past year, the need for support has been more critical and urgent than ever before. Our reach in 2020 was limited by the COVID-19 pandemic, but we are proud to have served over 800 individuals with disabilities across 24 Ohio counties.

Statewide, individuals with physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities experience high rates of isolation and are among the least likely to be employed with a living wage. Of the 1.6 million Ohioans with disabilities, only 36% are employed.

VGS addresses these disparities by providing opportunities for individuals with disabilities to work in accessible environments where they can earn a paycheck and build relationships. We are committed to innovative approaches to help individuals with disabilities overcome the challenges and barriers that keep them from being fully integrated into the workforce.

In 2020, we partnered with 75 different businesses to help nearly 300 individuals with disabilities become competitively employed in the community. As we look to the future, we do so with diversity, equity, and inclusion as our guiding principles.

With your support, we will continue to transform and enhance the ways individuals with disabilities engage in the community, achieve greater independence, and access employment.

Thank you for helping us build brighter futures for Ohioans with disabilities.

With gratitude,

**Susie Barragante**  
President & CEO

**Matthew Joyce**  
Board Chair

## OUR IMPACT



# 823

**individuals served in 24 Ohio counties**

# 298

**job placements  
for individuals  
with disabilities**



# \$1.45 million

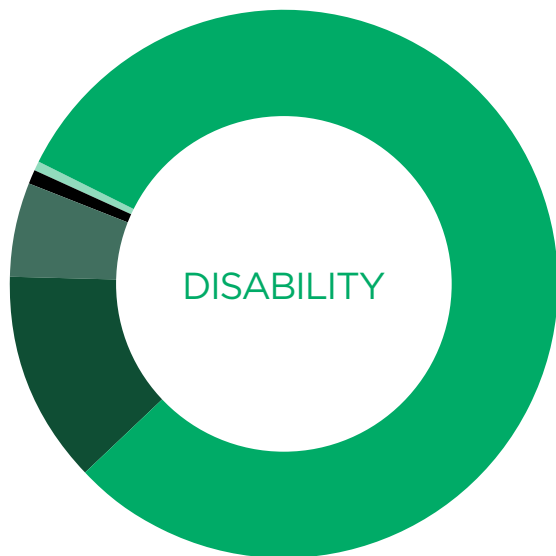
**paid in wages  
and benefits**



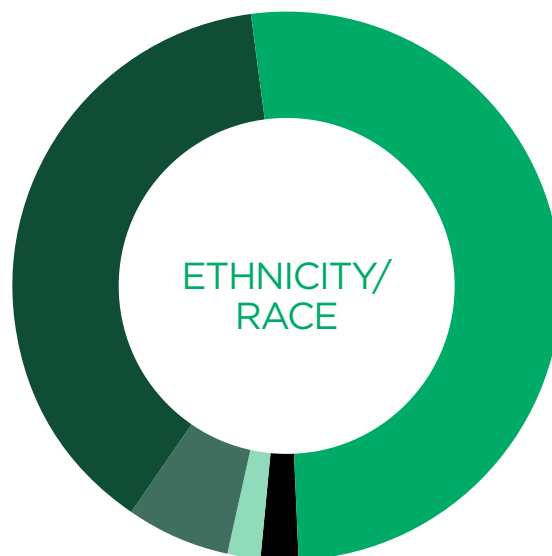
# 75

**partnerships  
with  
businesses**

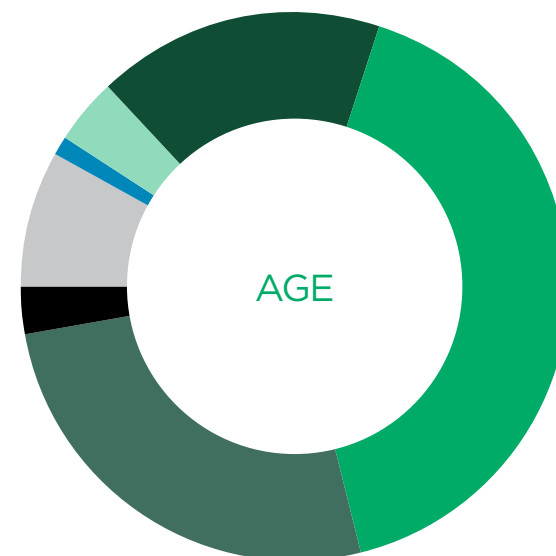
## WHO WE SERVE



Developmental Disability	80.7%
Mental Health Condition	12.6%
Physical Disability	5.5%
Hearing Loss	.8%
Vision Loss	.4%



Black	51%
White	38%
Unknown	6%
Latinx	2%
Two or More	2%



15 - 19	3%
20 - 34	26%
35 - 54	41%
55 - 64	17%
65 - 74	4%
75+	1%
Unknown	8%

# RESILIENCY | Latasha

Latasha struggled to find a job out of high school. She was ready to work but continued to hear “no” every time she submitted a job application. That is, until she was referred to VGS by Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. Though she did not have any prior sewing experience, Latasha thrived during her training and she has been a valued member of the Sewing Department team at VGS for the past 10 years.

**“It isn’t about skillset, it’s about mindset.** What Latasha has accomplished is one thing, but that she’s accomplished it at such a young age is remarkable.”

Latasha makes uniform pants for women in the United States military and, most recently, the United States Postal Service. Beyond her success at work, Latasha purchased her first home in December 2020, a goal she has had her eye on for the past seven years.

She worked diligently to build her credit and prepare for the down payment but finding a home during the pandemic was especially challenging. Latasha shared that she was close to giving up on the process and sent the listing for her current three-bedroom home to her realtor out of frustration. Latasha now says, “the house is perfect. It feels really good to be a homeowner.”

Latasha has already outfitted one bedroom as a walk-in closet and another as a play area for



her three pet ferrets – Teeny, Tiger, and Pudding. Next up, she plans to learn how to mow her own lawn and decorate her basement.

Steve Smith, VGS Sewing Department Manager, shares that Latasha’s journey demonstrates how “It isn’t about skillset, it’s about mindset. What Latasha has accomplished is one thing, but that she’s accomplished it at such a young age is remarkable.”

*Latasha with Steve Smith, VGS Sewing Department Manager*



# COMMUNITY | Betty & Barb

Betty and Barb have a strong bond but not only because they are sisters-in-law. Betty has down syndrome and dementia and, as Betty's caregiver, Barb has had a front row seat to the many ways Betty has pushed beyond the limits of what many people would assume is out of reach for someone with a disability.

Knowing how capable Betty is, Barb encourages Betty to try new things and experience as much as she can independently. At this point, Betty looks

forward to having weekend activities at times when Barb is preparing to relax!

“Having this community of support is essential, Barb said, to feeling like she is not alone when it comes to supporting Betty's journey.”



Barb shared with us the many ways Betty blossomed when she started doing more things independently. She learned to travel on public transportation, leading a team of her peers to and from work, and worked the night shift on a custodial cleaning crew for years. When reflecting on Betty's experiences thus far, Barb shared that she is grateful for the Support Administrators and team at the Southwest Career & Activity Center, where Betty has been coming for more than 25 years. Having this community of support is essential, Barb said, to feeling like she is not alone when it comes to supporting Betty's journey.

Betty has also left an indelible mark on her nieces, Barb's twin daughters Sarah and Grace. Sarah and Grace were babies when Betty first moved in with their family and, today, they both work in disability services and special education.





# OPPORTUNITY | Porter Family Workforce Development Fund

For more than 40 years, Frank Porter has been a valued member of the VGS Board of Directors. In partnership with his siblings, Betsy and Steve, the Porter Family made a generous \$300,000 gift to establish a Workforce Development Fund at VGS. Formed in 2019, the Porter Fund is committed to providing employment opportunities for Ohioans with disabilities.

“VGS is a great organization that has helped so many Clevelanders with disabilities,” says Frank. “Our family established the Workforce Development Fund so that in these ever-changing times, VGS has the critical seed money it needs to launch new programs and initiatives.”

The first project made possible by the Porter Fund is in partnership with the Cincinnati-based Fechheimer

Brothers Company. Through the Porter Fund, VGS purchased new state of the art equipment for the Sewing Department.

“VGS is a great organization that has helped so many Clevelanders with disabilities”

These capital investments help to modernize VGS’ operations and offer a wider range of goods and services to business. The Porter Fund has already created nine new jobs and is helping to ensure Ohioans with disabilities have access to job training and supportive services.



Thanks to the Porter Fund, VGS can partner with more employers and offer a pathway to employment for Ohioans with disabilities.





# Cheers to 130 Years

In November 2020, VGS celebrated our 130th Anniversary and the extraordinary contributions individuals with disabilities make to Ohio's workforce. Our first ever virtual event and fundraiser, Cheers to 130 Years was an opportunity for the VGS community to look at our history as a source of pride and our future as a source of inspiration. Cheers to 130 Years raised \$12,000 for VGS and those we serve.



Randy McShepard, Vice President, RPM International Inc.



Bob Gries, VGS Board Member since 1967 with his wife, Sally

# Sunbeam Holiday

BOUTIQUE

## Reimagined



The realities of COVID-19 made it impossible for our Sunbeam Holiday Boutique to take place at its normal venue in 2020, the Country Club in Pepper Pike. Determined to continue this beloved tradition, the Sunbeam Board reimagined the 109th Holiday Boutique. Safe, socially distanced shopping options were offered inside the Van Aken Market Hall, online, and at various brick and mortar locations across the eastside. Each Boutique vendor donated 15% of their sales to VGS raising over \$16,500 for Ohioans with disabilities.

## 2020 Donor List

Vocational Guidance Services is pleased to acknowledge the individuals, families, corporations, and foundations whose contributions allow us to break down barriers to employment for Ohioans with disabilities. Our work is possible because of your incredible generosity.

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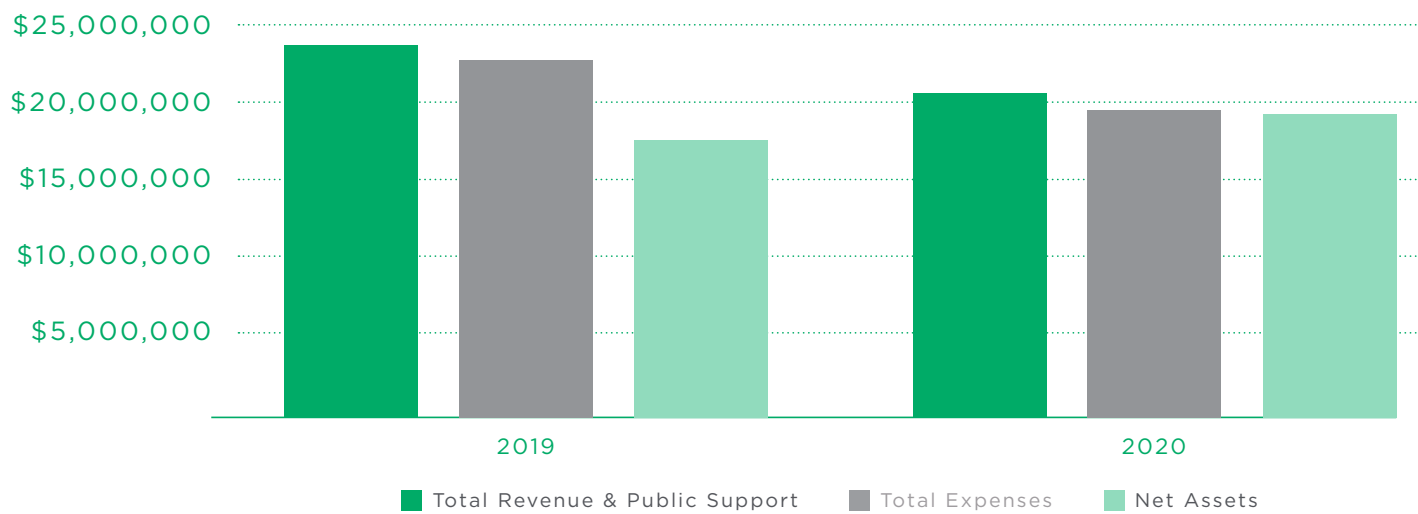
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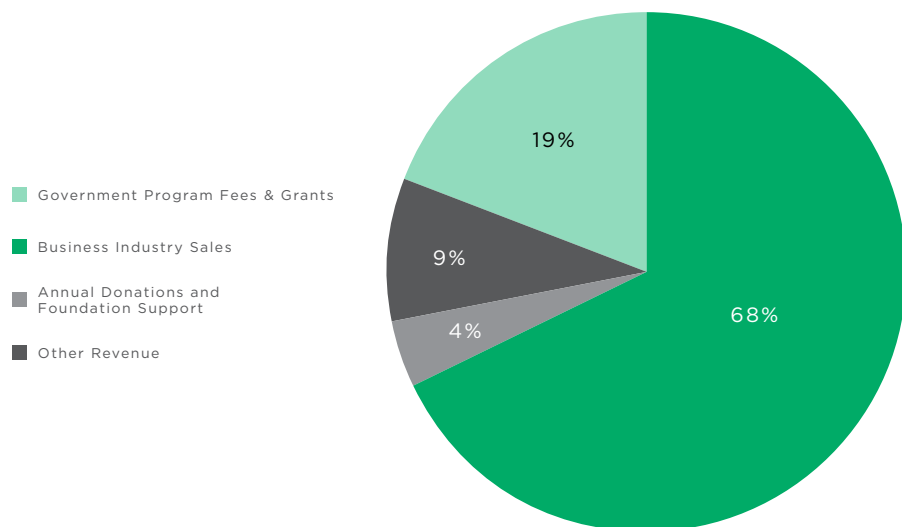


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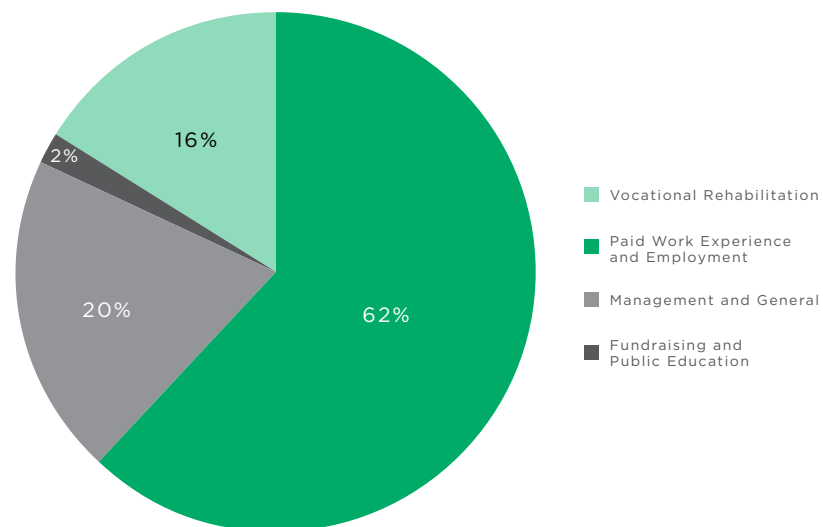
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2020 REVENUE



2020 EXPENSES



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