

Annual Report 2023

Breast Cancer Support and Education for New York's Capital Region



Message from the President



For 25 years, To Life! has been a beacon of support for those facing breast cancer. From Mara Ginsberg's kitchen table to our now three locations, we've consistently evolved to meet our clients' changing needs.

Two years ago, we set ambitious goals in our strategic plan. Thanks to the unwavering dedication of our incredible team, what once seemed lofty is now within grasp. Our work remains challenging, but our impact continues to grow.

Client advocacy has always been the heart of To Life!'s mission. Recognizing that many who need us most can't easily reach our locations, we've taken a significant step: bringing our services directly to clients. The importance of this initiative cannot be overstated.

This year, we opened a mastectomy fitting boutique in Amsterdam, thanks to our New York Oncology Hematology partners. Located within their facility, we now offer Spanish-speaking services, eliminating transportation and language barriers for many clients.

Our goal of making help accessible to anyone dealing with a breast cancer diagnosis is doable and we're making great progress. I'm profoundly grateful for the hard work and generous partners that are making it possible.

We've also expanded our programming to better serve our clients' needs. The Women's Health Conference returned in person for the first time since 2019. New offerings like yoga, hiking, and other wellness programs have become popular additions to our services.

Community partnerships have been crucial in extending our reach. The word is spreading, evidenced by 47 different organizations hosting events to raise funds and awareness for To Life!

As we reflect on our progress, we remain committed to our mission: supporting and educating those affected by breast cancer in the Greater Capital Region. With your continued support, we look forward to being there for more lives in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Rita Cox

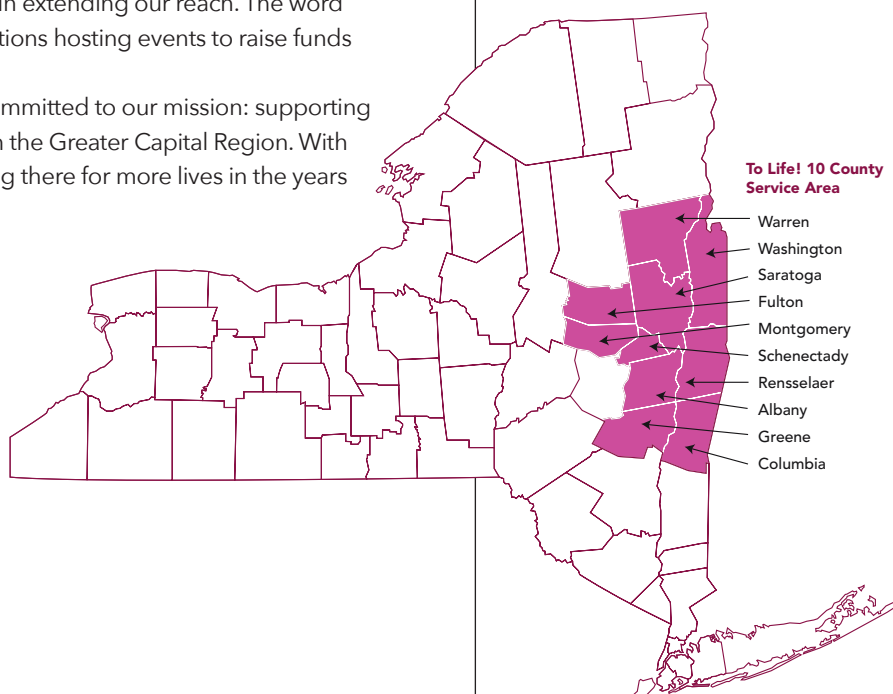
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Jamie Brown
Alice Duncan
Lillian Johnson
Hilary Miller
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Community Impact

(# of people served)

To Life! provides direct services to individuals in the Greater Capital Region.



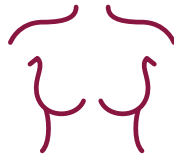
Education Programs

522



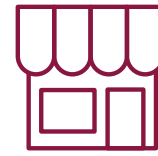
Support Groups & Peer Mentoring

336



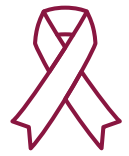
Breast Health Workshops

95



Boutique Services

531



Wellness Programs

210

Outreach

To Life's digital outreach informs the Greater Capital Region about our programs and services.

Website Visits

8,740

Social reach

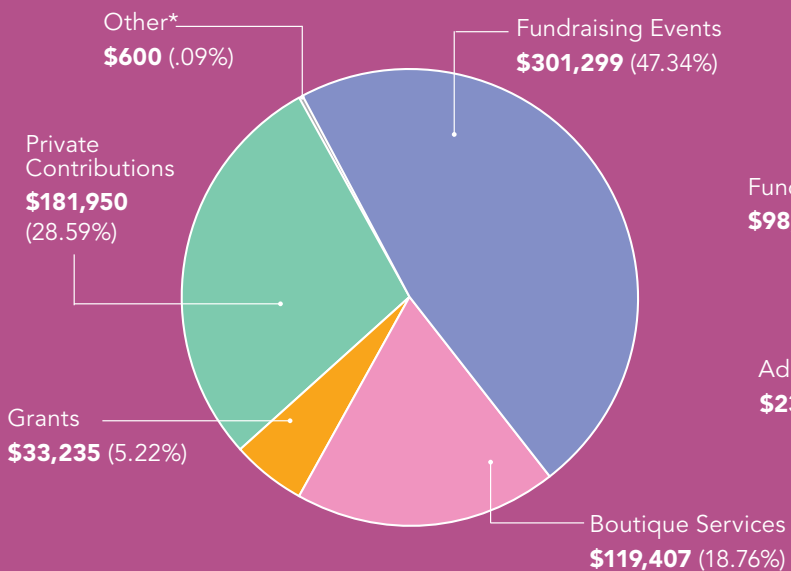
36,402

Email reach

29,125

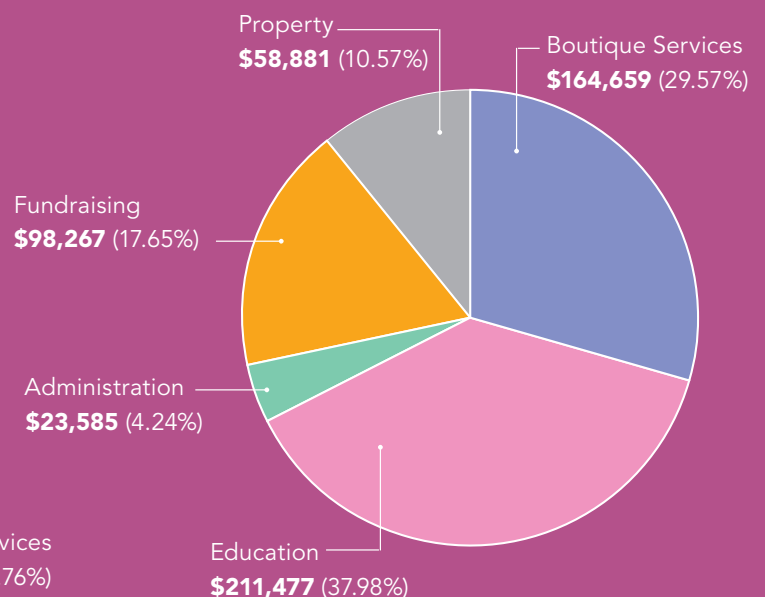
2023 Financial Report

TOTAL REVENUE \$636,491



*PPP Loan Forgiveness

TOTAL EXPENSES \$556,869



November 8

13th Annual Women's Health Conference Series

The 13th Annual Women's Health Conference returned to an in person event on November 8, hosted at the University at Albany, School of Public Health campus in Rensselaer, NY. Lunch was provided in the UAlbany Research Facility. Tours of the Conklin Lab provided a glimpse into the research work being done in breast cancer.



Dr. Lynn Choi
Albany Medical Center



Dr. Ted Farhangi
Albany Medical Center



Dr. Ami Negandhi
New York Oncology Hematology



Dr. Heidi Godoy
New York Oncology Hematology



Gretchen Moore
The Guardian Society



Janna Neitzel
Stram Center for Integrative Therapy



David Carpenter
University at Albany, School of Public Health



Education Programs

To Life! brings relevant educational presentations to our survivor/thrivers and medical professionals. Throughout 2023, many were offered virtually out of an abundance of caution and concern for our survivor population.



August 2 (virtual)

Beat The Odds

“Genetics in Cancer Prevention and Therapy”

*Dr. Padma Sheila Rajagopal
(2023 Cynthia Shenker Speaker)*

Dr. Rajagopal is a Physician-Scientist Early Investigator in both the Cancer Data Science Laboratory and Women’s Malignancies Branch in the Center for Cancer Research at the National Cancer Institute. Her clinical practice focuses on both patients with breast cancer and families navigating hereditary cancer syndromes.

Small Group Programming

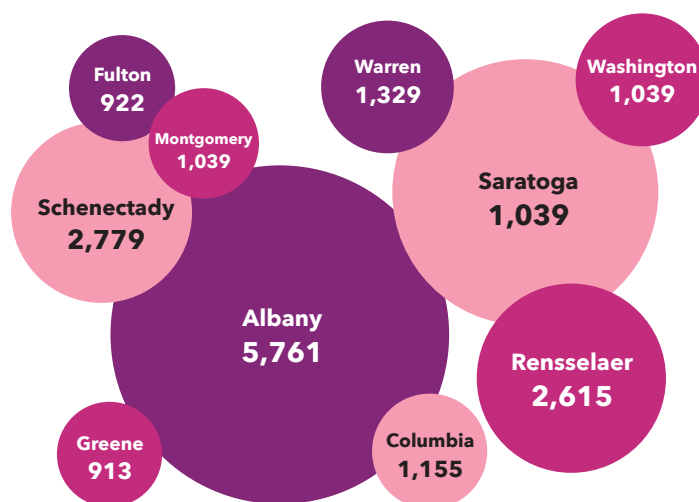
Ask the Doctor with Dr. Ami Negandhi, Brain Fog with Cheryl Syta and a program on lymphedema hosted by Lori Reichel were three of the small group informational sessions held periodically throughout the year.

Supportive Wellness Programs

Many survivors have asked for more yoga and other fitness programs. To Life! offered yoga throughout the year in partnership with Jai Yoga in Slingerlands and Jannell’s Dance Experience in Delmar. We also hosted outdoor guided nature walks the Wilton Wildlife Preserve and other locations around the Capital Region. Other programs included Equine therapy, Llama therapy, Sex and Intimacy, Nutrition and Financial Literacy.



Capital Region Breast Cancer Survivors by County



All stages, male and female

Community Events & Fundraisers

Our reach and visibility in the community is greatly impacted by friends who help raise funds for To Life! Programs and services.

Friends Fundraisers

1st National Bank of Scotia
Academy of the Holy Names
Bare Blends
Beck Fur Shopping Day
Bellini's - Slingerlands
Bethlehem High School
Homecoming Game
Bethlehem Middle School
XC Team
BMX Race
Broadview
Capital Region W2W
Entrepreneurial Event
Chadwick Square Pumpkin
Painting
Saratoga Clay Arts-Chili Bowl
Cook Off

Circles
Come Together for a Cure
Community Reformed Church of
Colonie
Fabulous Fillies
Facebook Fundraiser - IHO
Becky Christner
First NY Federal Credit Union
Hannaford - Bloomin' 4 Good
Hannaford - Saratoga -
Bloomin' 4 Good
Hannaford Reusable Bag
Program- Delmar
Hannaford Delmar -
Bottle Return
Hannaford - Wolf Road BBQ
Harding & Mazzotti, LLP
Hudson Valley AAA Brooks BBQ
Fundraiser
J McLaughlin
Market 32 - Glenmont Grand
Opening
Lebanon Valley Speedway
Car Show
Mbellish Boutique Sip and Shop
Naval Nuclear Laboratory
Niskayuna Youth Football, Inc.
NYSTEC Think Pink
OneHope Wine

Regeneron
Ribbon Café
Rivers Casino and Resort
Scotia Glenville Field Hockey
Program
Scotia Glenville Girls Varsity
Softball Team
St. Kateri Tekakwitha Parish School
Ta Ta Golf Tournament
Ta Ta Wine Tasting
The Dance Experience
The Spinney at Van Dyke
U Albany - Community Table at
Crossgate's mall
Unitas Memorial VFW Post 9594
Auxiliary
Waterford Dragon Boat Festival



May 11

24th Annual "A Toast To Life!"

Crown Plaza Desmond Hotel

The annual fundraising event, A Toast To Life!, was held at the Crowne Plaza Desmond Hotel in Albany. Our theme "We Shine Brighter Together" summarized the evening perfectly. There were more than 200 attendees enthusiastically supporting our honoree, Debra Rinaldo. Our Honorary Chairs Alica Jacobs and Cindy Martin welcomed guests and Liana Bonavita served as our emcee.

You're an Angel Award



A dedicated To Life! volunteer for many years, **Debra Rinaldo** has worn many hats (both literally and figuratively!). Whether as an employee of the NYS Legislature for 38 years, a community member, wife and mother, Debra Rinaldo

is the consummate "people person".

One of Deb's special qualities is her ability to step into a situation and figure out how to organize the details so that the event comes together as it should. She repeatedly earns her spot as an indispensable team member, one who can get things done.

2016, Deb attended her first To Life! Educational event and made friends right away. She enthusiastically volunteered on the spot and became an essential volunteer for many activities, including the Pink Ball, any Silent Auction, A Toast To Life, Fabulous Fillies Day at the track, Beat the Odds every summer, and the Women's Health Conference each fall. Her warm smile, and genuine interest in each and every attendee makes people feel comfortable and welcomed in her presence.



THE PINK BALL

Sharing Hope in the Next Era

October 21

The Pink Ball

Wolferts Roost Country Club

The 2023 Pink Ball featured Jill Kovachick as Honorary Chair and Dennis Connelly as auctioneer.

Awardees



EXTRA MILE AWARD

Dr. Lynn Choi is a gifted surgeon, specializing in breast surgery and serves as the Director of the Breast Center at Albany Medical Center. Her medical training included the University of Massachusetts

Medical Center and Albany Medical Center. Following her General Surgery residency, she joined the professional staff of Albany Medical Center.

THE COMMUNITY ADVOCATE AWARD



Sandra Foster is a 22-year Breast Cancer Survivor. With her daughter, Jessica Manchione by her side, and countless friends, Sandra has made it a priority to raise funds to help fellow survivors/thrivers. During her own treatment, she

had limited resources and information. As Sandy says, "I put on my big girl pants and FOUGHT."

Survivor Art Showcase

The Pink Ball featured a display of curated creative works by breast cancer fighters and survivors. Donated to support To Life!, each piece was displayed along with the artist's personal/professional statement.



celebrate 25

25 years of Breast Cancer Support in the Capital Region

"You've got cancer". These are not words that anyone wants to hear. In just 25 years To Life! provided over 34,000 people who've heard these words with a supportive community. We've understood, empowered and comforted each other through support, education, wellness and boutique fitting services. Now we look toward the next 25 years and continuing to help people through their personal journey to live their best lives. To everyone who has worked with us, donated to us or walked the journey with us- thank you. Thank you for your confidence, compassion and generosity. We couldn't have done it without you!



Federal Proclamation recognizing 25 years of service presented to Mara Ginsberg (center), Founder and President Emeritus of To Life!

Founders Circle donors

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1998



To Life! is founded by Mara Ginsberg

Unable to find local information or support while dealing with her own treatment, Mara starts an organization to provide those things for the community.

Educational Programs, Newsletter

The first educational program is held and the first newsletter is distributed.

1999

Offices, Support Groups, Boutique Services

The first office opens on Delaware Ave. in Delmar. Support groups, mentoring, educational programs, and boutique services begin.

Fundraising Gala

The first gala is held at Albany International Airport.

2005

Expanded space - Building Purchased

A building is purchased and renovated on Kenwood Ave. in Delmar, offices and services are moved.

The Pink Ball

The first Pink Ball is held

2006-
2007

2nd Location - Saratoga Springs

The first satellite location opens, first in Saratoga Hospital, then Spring St. where the boutique opens.

Website

An updated To Life! website is launched

2011

Women's Health Conference

The first full-day Women's Health Conference is held for survivors, caregivers, and medical professionals.

2012

E-news

The first monthly e-newsletter is sent.

2018

Website and Social Media

A new website and a focus on social media begins.

2020

Adapting to the pandemic

Support and education programs become virtual. Boutiques re-open under strict safety protocols.

2022

Strategic Plan

A 5-year Strategic Plan is developed and undertaken by the Board of Directors and Staff

2023
and beyond

Mara's Vision Continues

The commitment never wavers, but services adapt to changing treatments and needs. Priorities include:

- Support for Young Survivors
- Metastatic Disease Support
- Expansion of Services into new Communities
- Wellness Programs Tailored to Survivors
- Fitness and Movement
- Nutrition and Healthy Eating
- Mindfulness

Support Services



Message from the Executive Director

Greetings friends,
The network continues to grow and evolve. In this past year, as we were celebrating our 25th year of service, To Life! was recognized by the Capital District YWCA, Anthem BlueCross Blue Shield and Hearst Newspapers. Talk about three diverse organizations! This recognition is extremely meaningful. We are reaching people and meeting the needs of the survivor population. Additionally, many organizations worked to raise funds for the continuation of our programs and services. By any measure, we are better together. Most of the people who are dealing with a breast cancer diagnosis come to us because someone recommended us or they searched for us online. For all readers of this publication, thank you for sharing information about our services with anyone who may benefit. My gratitude and appreciation go out to the wonderful staff, the members of the board of directors, volunteers, and supporters. I marvel at all that has been accomplished in this past year. I am deeply thankful to our supporters; it is a collective effort. Let's not forget, we are in this together.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eileen'.

Eileen Howe Bird
Executive Director



Dana Pleskovic, Support Services Program Manager poses with a breast cancer survivor crafted quilt.

The Support Services program is now managed by Dana Pleskovic, a trained social worker. Dana is our front line resource, providing supportive counseling, managing group discussions, connecting individuals with helpful resources and making connections between survivors. The peer network is a strong resource for anyone dealing with a breast cancer diagnosis. Dana leads the Newly Diagnosed and In Treatment group, bringing extensive experience as a group facilitator. Support groups offer a

safe and supportive space for those facing a breast cancer diagnosis, enabling them to connect and share their experiences with others walking a similar journey as their own.

While many of our survivors have support from their family and friends, a support group unique to their diagnosis, such as those provided at To Life! help to foster a safe and meaningful space for our survivors to gain a sense of hope and empowerment that perhaps only other survivors can provide.

In Dana's own words "As the group facilitator, I have witnessed the power of supporting another's journey while facing a life-altering diagnosis".

Support Groups meet monthly

Newly Diagnosed/In Treatment

- A starting place for survivors to gather with others who are also dealing with a diagnosis.

Metathrivers - Individuals who are dealing with advanced cancer or a cancer recurrence often face complex challenges.

Positively Living - Focus on the mental, emotional, and spiritual transition one goes through following a breast cancer diagnosis.

Bi-Lingual group - An open group for those at any stage in their cancer journey.

Peer to Peer Mentoring - Ongoing, engaging with a fellow survivor can offer a unique connection and perspective on a survivor's journey.

Accolades



Mara Ginsberg, To Life! founder and President Emeritus, received the 2023 Advocacy Award from the YWCA.

Whole Health Heros

Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield received distinction as a 2023 Whole Health Hero. Their vision “The people and organizations we honor as Whole Health Heroes recognize the potential of the Capital Region and its inhabitants. They are committed to energizing the community, investing in its people and setting the stage for a healthy and prosperous future.”

Times Union “Capital Region Gives”

The Hearst Corporation sponsored the Capital Region Gives contest, highlighting philanthropy in the region and showcasing the way nonprofits and business collaborate for the greater benefit of all. Thirteen nonprofits received a \$10,000 advertising grant to use in 2024, including To Life!



To Life! Boutiques

Breast surgery and chemotherapy are common treatments for breast cancer. Such treatments can have a significant effect on body image. To Life! offers fitting services for mastectomy products, wigs and hats. The To Life! boutiques are held to a high standard of service, offering private fittings in a comfortable setting. Fitters are trained and certified. Our fitting service boutiques are accredited by the Board of Certification, a national accreditation organization.



Thank you to our supporters



August 5

Fabulous Fillies Day

Saratoga Race Track

Local survivors were warmly welcomed to the Saratoga Racecourse for Fabulous Fillies day. Highlights of the day included a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem sung by Darlene Bauer. Other highlights included procession into the inner circle with the entire survivor/honoree group offering the "riders up" signal leading into the fifth race of the day. The group greeted the winner and had photo opportunity with the winning jockey. From the survivor standpoint, the group appreciated the opportunity to gather with fellow survivors and have the opportunity to enjoy the races.



Annual Appeal, 2023

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(continued)

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A Toast To Life!

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Pink Ball - Sharing Hope in the Next Era

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