



# ROCHESTER ACCESSIBLE ADVENTURES



# 2024

## ANNUAL REPORT

Published June 6, 2025



***Dear Community,***

***As we reflect on this past year, I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved together. We successfully launched new inclusion partnerships, expanded our geographic outreach and impact area, and systematically removed barriers and enhanced access to inclusive recreation, sports, and tourism. All of these are building a stronger community as individuals and families living with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities are able to participate TOGETHER in active, healthy recreation!***

***We are encouraged by the expansion of interest in and willingness to invest in inclusion by local, regional and state entities. We anticipate that 2025 will see great opportunities for adding new inclusion partners, proliferating our capacity to support the community in truly inclusive operations, and developing innovative methods of directly connecting people living with disabilities and medical conditions to inclusive opportunities. We'll strengthen community connections and increase our volunteer base. With our team's dedication, and your fantastic support, we are confident in achieving amazing new milestones!***

**Cheers to inclusion!**

*Anita*

**Anita O'Brien  
Executive Director  
Rochester Accessible Adventures**





# Year in Review

We made significant strides in 2024 towards our mission-driven work to make inclusion happen within communities and across WNY, the Greater Rochester, and the Finger Lakes regions. Expansion of our core service areas resulted in increases in output by a growing staff and volunteer base, and resulted in strengthened community connections. This Year In Review section will highlight some of our successes and illuminate our responsiveness to the needs of the communities we work with.

## Pivotal Inclusion Partnership Expansion

Worked with both local, regional, and state entities in Inclusion Partner contracts which exponentially expanded our geographic impact area

## Increased DirectConnect Outreach

Implemented new strategies to enhance our ability to conduct outreach to individuals, families, and service organizations

## Increased Inclusive Opportunities

Leveraged the inclusion work being done by our Inclusion Partners to remove tangible operational, physical, and programmatic barriers and enhance equitable access to recreation, sports and tourism



## OUR IMPACT 2024



### RAA's DirectConnect BY THE NUMBERS:

10,560 PEOPLE REACHED THROUGH 125 EVENTS

304.5 HRS OF ENGAGEMENT

75 VOLS/ 1053.25 HRS



Your support makes inclusion happen!

# Year in Review

## Inclusion Partnerships

We increased the number of Inclusion Partnerships in 2024 and saw an expansion into Erie and Niagara counties to the west and Wayne, Seneca, and Saratoga counties to the east. In a dramatic, catalyzing development, our efforts led us into a relationship with the NY Power Authority and the NYS Canal Corp to implement the Accessibility Education Program to support businesses to operate inclusively along the Canal communities. Our unique Inclusion Partner services ensure businesses receive training and apply it to assess and evaluate their work, strategize for inclusive programming, and implement their tailored Inclusion Action Plan across all operations.



### **Increase in Intentional Welcoming**

Our mentored inclusion services have resulted in an exponential increase in the number of designated Inclusion Points of Contacts and the addition of accessibility tabs to their websites to provide easier access to information.

### **Removal of physical barriers**

Whether enhancing access to restrooms, adding ramped observation platforms, or creating more accessible wayfinding, our Inclusion Partners now build access into their strategic plans.

### **Increased invitations to inclusive experiences!**

More than EVER before, inclusive choices are now rolling out across NYS, from birding, kayaking, and fencing, to nature exploration, cycling, and artistic expression!

Stay tuned to  
**RAA In the Media!**



Photo highlights:

- Stony Point Art Studio class participant
- Genesee Land Trust installs accessible viewing platform at Salmon Creek Nature Preserve
- Corn Hill Navigation's Riverie vessel is no-step entry with large bathroom on board
- Hudson Crossing Park installs accessible QR codes on signs to link to audio descriptions
- Ludus Fencing Studio expands to include Blind fencers



# Year in Review

## Programmatic Operations



This was a year of growth for RAA. We increased our staff resources and engaged in numerous community planning projects, offered new inclusive opportunities in sports, led a focused effort to connect resources to the community, and provided individualized support and referrals.

### **Increase in DirectConnect Services**

Since formalizing our DirectConnect inquiry process in 2024, we saw a 62% increase over 2023. More community members and professionals now turn to RAA as a first-stop resource for information on accessible and inclusive recreation.

### **Expansion of Sports Opportunities**

In collaboration with USTA and Greater Buffalo Adaptive Sports, RAA introduced [wheelchair tennis](#) to Rochester and also brought in [wheelchair lacrosse](#). Our Inclusion Partner, Ludus Fencing Studio, continues to expand their services and now offers [blind fencing](#). We continued to provide sled hockey and youth wheelchair basketball, as well.

### **Agritourism and Eclipse Planning**

RAA developed an inclusive eclipse programming guide and extended those resources to include general event planning. We were invited to meet with NE Region Agritourism members to consult on accessibility in these spaces which are so often the destination point for field trips and family adventures.

### **Pickleball & Collaborative Research**

RAA collaborated with Nazareth University occupational therapy students and their professor to research the impact of participation in inclusive pickleball on people living with Parkinson's disease.





# Year in Review

## Our Volunteers

RAA has a strong, and growing, volunteer team which enables us to meet the increased needs. Volunteers supported RAA and our Inclusion Partners, contributing over 1,053 hours of service in 2024. Our volunteers come from many backgrounds, from health care professionals to community members to teenagers who want to contribute to their community. Without our volunteers, RAA would not have been able to reach the 10,560 people we did in 2024.



### Increased Volunteers on our Team

We increased our volunteer team size by 24%, including those volunteers who come in for one-time, event-specific assistance. Our volunteers collectively completed 61 hours of training and education to help them be more knowledgeable and effective in their roles.

### Increased Community Outreach

Volunteers provided awareness and resources at 17 community outreach events, engaging 3,810 individuals.

### Increased Inclusive Opportunities

Volunteers helped RAA support our Inclusion Partners at 11 events and supported another 31 events all of which were designed to introduce people living with disabilities and their friends and families to inclusive recreation.



# Year in Review

## Our Community Allies

In 2024, Rochester Accessible Adventures significantly advanced its community partnerships. Through strategic and innovative programming and community engagement, RAA has made substantial inroads in fostering disability awareness and education, increasing inclusive recreational opportunities, and ensuring greater access to information by people with disabilities. Our experiential education collaborations with area universities are crucial to training the next generation of professionals!



- **Inclusion Ambassador Training reaches its 500 milestone!**
- Saint John Fisher University sports marketing students collaborated to present the inaugural Pickle, Dink, and Lob social pickleball tournament.
- RAA drove efforts on the local and national Eclipse Stakeholder Taskforce to make the eclipse experience accessible to people with a wide variety of intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities.
- RAA Executive Director expanded our reach by addressing state and national audiences from public library associations, the National Eclipse Taskforce, and On the Canals forums.
- RAA engaged students and rehab professionals in a variety of experiential learning and research experiences.



So many Inclusion Ambassadors!

**500**

Registered since 2020



# Impact!



**125** Events including outreach fairs, program sessions, and activity days



**28** Inclusion Partnerships by year end



**26** Outreach highlights in the media!



Surpassed a milestone of **500+** people signed up to become Inclusion Ambassadors



**16** In-services with students & professionals



**75** Volunteers gave **1053.25** hours of time and passion!



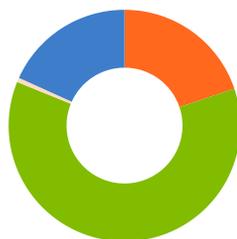
**254.5** Hours of inclusion training reaching **721** people



## Revenue

● Grants	\$54,427
● Fee for Services	\$168,152
● Donations/Fundraising	\$50,024
○ Other	\$1,707

**Total Revenue: \$ 274,208**



## Expenses

● Program	\$169,145
● Administrative	\$31,195

**Total Expenses: \$200,340**



**10,560** individuals reached!

# Making Inclusion Happen!

"You were the very first person I spoke to when Red was going to come live with me. I had no idea of what was available, and you just...you just talked to me for a long time and I remember getting off of that call and feeling like I could do this and there were going to be things for us to do, for her to do."

Red's mom, Good Day Rochester



To me, that is what Rochester Accessible Adventures is all about. They [have created access to] biking, kayaking and so much more! But more importantly, as I've gone from childhood to adulthood, they've taught me about how I can connect to something greater. How I can navigate. How I can grow up to be part of a greater community. How I can get stronger and be more independent and live my life.

Evan, active community member

"You've really done well today. I have to say that I was actually quite nervous this morning when getting ready for this training session. I just wasn't sure how we would be able to do it RIGHT. But already today you've shown us what we are already doing well, and so many ways that we are able to make it even better. And I'm feeling better now."

Inclusion Team member, RAA  
Inclusion Partner, Hudson Crossing Park

"We've made so many changes to our everyday processes that just make so much sense, that it's hard to believe we weren't doing this last year!"

Inclusion Team member, RAA  
Inclusion Partner Eastside YMCA

"I'm sorry I'm tearing up. We just never expected this to happen. And since it happened, all I have seen around me is everything I think my son can't do any more and I worry about what we will be able to do together, and how he will find a way to do things. Just talking with you today makes me see that he CAN and WE can do things once he comes home!"

Mother of adult son, Golisano Neurology & Rehab Center

## Employee Spotlight



Learn



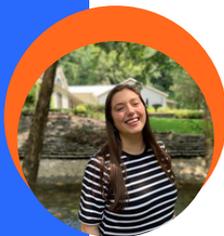
Assess



Plan



Implement



**Liza Beardsley**  
Inclusion Specialist

New to the team, but not to RAA! After 9 years of volunteering, Liza transitioned to organize and facilitate programs and community connections.



**Peyton Sefick**  
Inclusion Specialist

A long-time ally, Peyton starts his role with RAA positioned to expand our service model further east, and is active in Inclusion Partner mentoring and establishing community connections.



**Dee Mascari**  
inclusion Specialist

Dee celebrates 4 years! She is pivotal in leading site assessments, coordinating volunteers, and project data management.

# Looking Forward

## The Tandem Riding Project

RAA has joined forces with Upstate NY Blind Recreation, Erie Canal Boat Company, and R Community Bikes, creating the Tandem Riding Collaborative, which plans to bring descriptive bike riding to people with low vision or who are blind in the summer of 2025.

## Roc Inclusive Collective

Expanding our presence and collaboration within the Greater Rochester disability community, RAA will take a lead role in strengthening relationships and working collaboratively with area stakeholders through the Roc Inclusive Collective.



## Expanding the Accessibility Education Program

Committing to bringing further accessibility and inclusion for all along one of New York's premier recreational destinations, the Erie Canal, RAA will continue to work with the AEP, providing education, assessment, and mentoring to recreational businesses, organizations, and municipalities.



## Driving DirectConnections Forward

Now that we have exponentially grown the number of inclusive opportunities across our region and the state, we will launch exciting plans for ensuring boundless access to information that connects people to this menu of opportunities!

## Closing Remarks

This is an exciting time for RAA as **we celebrate our 10-year anniversary in 2025!** Our growth over the past year has been dynamic, to say the least, and we are gearing up for another exciting year of forward motion.

As we continue along this journey, we have full confidence in our team's capability to innovate, cultivate growth, and further create a culture of inclusion within our community. Together, we will navigate challenges, seize opportunities, and reach new milestones in our work. Thank YOU for your unwavering dedication and commitment to make inclusion happen with us!

