

Focusing on Sustainability by Investing in the Future



Via
of the Lehigh Valley

2023 IMPACT REPORT



Via friends,

As most of us turn our thoughts forward to warmer weather and Summer activities, we also like to look back at the many positive things that happened at Via this past year.

Without hesitation, we point to the people of Via as its strength - the most dedicated employees, working with the most inspiring people - each helping one another grow in different ways, each entering Via and our partner sites day after day with eagerness and anticipation and leaving with a sense of joy and pride.

Via employees logged 7,377 hours of training, far surpassing requirements, honing existing skills, keeping up with industry developments in care and standards, and learning new ways to help our participants meet goals and find fulfillment.

Since 2020, there have been 48 internal promotions at Via - from Direct Service Professional to Corporate Officer. Since 2021, Via employees have attained 248 professional certifications.

Because of your generous support, Via was able to grow the number of people served at the Kristi Hanawalt Life Skills Center in Allentown, make impactful investments in technology, replace the 100-year-old plumbing system at our Spruce Street location, boost our fleet of wheelchair accessible transport vehicles, make cosmetic and safety improvements at Lehigh Children's Academy, and invest in the recruitment and retention of employees - Thank You!

We were delighted to achieve the Candid Platinum Level Seal of Transparency on GuideStar, and to be recognized for the first time as one of *The Morning Call's Top Workplaces*, ranking third among the Lehigh Valley's mid-sized companies.

Please know that your gifts to Via are solid investments in providing the highest quality care to people with disabilities and we do not take that lightly.

With gratitude for your commitment to Via's mission to help individuals meet their full potential,



Jerry Somers
Board Chair



Lisa Walkiewicz
President & CEO



“We were delighted to be recognized for the first time as one of *The Morning Call’s Top Workplaces*, ranking third among mid-sized companies.”



Sharing Her Sunshine

Her family said she was “a wonder,” “sassy,” “full of life and love,” and “an on-the-go type of woman.”

But whatever she was lovingly called, it is likely Kristi Hanawalt would have flashed her unforgettable smile.

Kristi, who received services through Via for a number of years, passed away in 2020 at the age of 51. People who knew Kristi would say those 51 years were filled with overcoming obstacles, earning service awards, realizing her passions, and sharing an indomitable personality described as “sunshine.”

When she was born, even doctors doubted the type of future she would have.

Yet, Kristi grabbed life by the horns and did not let go. She graduated from Lehigh County Vocational Technical School, worked at Wegmans for 12 years, participated in several Special Olympics teams, forged countless friendships, and made a lasting impact in every one of those endeavors.

Meghan Muldoon, Kristi’s Coordinator and Direct Service Professional at Via, remembers Kristi’s sass and her sharing one-liners, stating, “She was full of life; she always brought her own sunshine and had one of the best smiles I have ever seen. When I had the honor of working with her, her passion for art shone through. She loved nothing more than being in front of a craft table, showing her personality through her artwork. I was blessed to be part of Kristi’s team and to see her creativity and personality always shining.”

Kristi was the first-born child of Robert “Bob” and Gloria Hanawalt. Younger brother, Rob remembers picking up his sister from her job at Wegman’s, where she won several Employee of the Month awards, and watching as she worked in the bakery department. “She got tremendous support and encouragement through Via,” he said.

Scott, Kristi’s youngest brother, shared, “Kristi truly was a wonder; a magnificent person who had limitations but rarely let them get in her way. In today’s jargon, Kristi would be known as a ‘beast’ because she operated in ‘beast mode’ by maximizing what she had been given. Yet, she was the sweetest, kindest, most innocent little thing I have ever experienced.”

Kristi was the inspiration for **Via’s Kristi Hanawalt Life Skills Center**, which opened last May at 1020 S. Cedar Crest Boulevard in Allentown, funded in part by private donations.

Kristi’s family was there for the official opening of the center that bears her name, knowing she would approve. Her father, Bob said the new center “means the world” to his family and that Kristi would be beaming with pride if she was there to see it. Sadly, Kristi’s mother, Gloria, passed away in July 2023, and Bob, just a month later.

Scott Hanawalt said, “The fullness of Kristi’s life, her ability to flourish and become the best Kristi she could be was 100% enabled by the most incredible set of parents. Generations of people will be better because they knew Kristi and because they experienced the life that my parents created for her and the family that they created around her. There is a greater amount of compassion, empathy, tolerance, and appreciation in this world because of the three of them.”

The Hanawalt family credits Via for being a large part of Kristi’s success, bringing to life before their eyes its mission to help those with disabilities reach their full potential.

Scott summarized what Via meant to his sister and what she means to Via, “Kristi showed resilience to achieve and a desire to belong, and Via gave her the chance to do both. I look forward to seeing how Kristi’s legacy will help others.”

The Kristi Hanawalt Life Skills Center supports individuals who are interested in building their personal independence for everyday living by practicing skills such as maintaining personal care, doing laundry, cooking, and cleaning.



Want to make a lasting impact?
Consider making a donation by visiting www.ViaNet.org

Talent Among Us

*“One of the most important strategies for employee retention is to **build up your workers’ engagement** with your organization. Engaged associates take initiative, assist fellow team members, and believe in their organization’s mission. Beyond wanting to thrive personally, engaged employees want their company to succeed.”*

Forbes, July 2023

According to the same Forbes article, **offering career development** to employees significantly improves the workplace by increasing motivation and productivity, improving retention, attracting top candidates, and increasing effectiveness.

Via’s employee engagement rate was among the top 3 in mid-size Lehigh Valley companies in 2023, according to *The Morning Call* and *Energage*, a Philadelphia-based research company that surveyed more than 20,000 employees throughout the Valley. Via had one of the top engagement rates with 83% of 141 employees responding to the survey designed to measure employee engagement and workplace satisfaction. This resulted in Via receiving its first **Top Workplace** designation.

A key indicator of employee engagement is an agency’s turnover rate which measures the percentage of employees that leave an organization in a given period. Via has dramatically improved its annual turnover rate – dropping from 57% in 2018 to 21.6% in 2023.

One of the contributing factors to retaining employees is offering career advancement opportunities. As far as team growth goes, Via believes in looking inward first when a position needs to be filled.

That approach has paid off well. Consider that Lisa Walkiewicz, President and CEO, began her career at Via as Communications Director in 2007. Denise Pioli, Chief Services Officer, began her tenure at Via in 2001 as a Prevocational Instructor. Chelsea Reiter, who was hired in 2014 as an instructor, was recently promoted to Director of Community Connections, Adult Training Services, and Behavioral Supports.

From 2020 to 2023, 48 Via employees were promoted internally. In fact, 89% of all Leadership, Director, Manager, and Front-Line Supervisor positions were filled by existing talent.

Via’s successful philosophy of promoting from within is highlighted in the Employee Spotlight on the next page. Read on.





EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Meet Chelsea Reiter

Chelsea Reiter began her career with Via in 2014 as an instructor in Via's Creative Expressions Adult Training Services at the John E. Walson Center.

In the past ten years, she has served as an instructor in the Prevocational Workshop, Program Coordinator for individuals who attend both Community Connections and the Prevocational Workshop, Manager of Community Connections, and Director of Community Connections and Adult Training Services.

Recently, Chelsea was promoted to oversee Via's Behavioral Supports Services, while maintaining oversight of the Kristi Hanawalt Life Skills Center, Creative Expressions, and Community Connections.

Reflecting on the best part of her job, Chelsea responded, "helping and watching the people we serve live an everyday life whether it be reaching a goal, giving back to their community, or landing a new job or job skill! Not only do the people we support bring me joy, but so does each employee who works here, knowing they are helping our individuals reach their full potential."

"The best advice I have is to get to know your coworkers and listen to their advice. We have some of the BEST employees who know the ins and outs of this job and are a wonderful resource for new employees! Always ask questions."

Chelsea resides in Fleetwood, PA with her husband, John, their 7-month-old daughter, McKenna, and their Golden Doodle, Hank. Her favorite pastime is traveling with family. On the weekends, the Reiters like to explore farmers' markets and local restaurants searching for the BEST chicken wings.

**Want to start
your career
at Via?**
Click on Careers at
www.ViaNet.org

Second Chances Matter

NAME: Octavian "Tav" Lopez

AGE: 30

EMPLOYMENT LOCATIONS: Office of the Attorney General, Allentown
Lehigh State Police Barracks

HOBBIES: Loves all Philadelphia sports teams and video games

FUTURE: So bright, he's gotta wear shades!

Spend ten minutes with this bright young man and you're ready to become the founder of his next fan club chapter.

Tav's smile and personality seem to have a gravitational pull.

To explain what Tav is like, you might first describe what he is *NOT*: flashy, quiet, or intimidating. He will be the first to tell you that sometimes he has anger issues. He is not afraid to say what is on his mind.

What he *IS*: fun, genuine, talented, award-winning, and most of all, grateful for second chances.

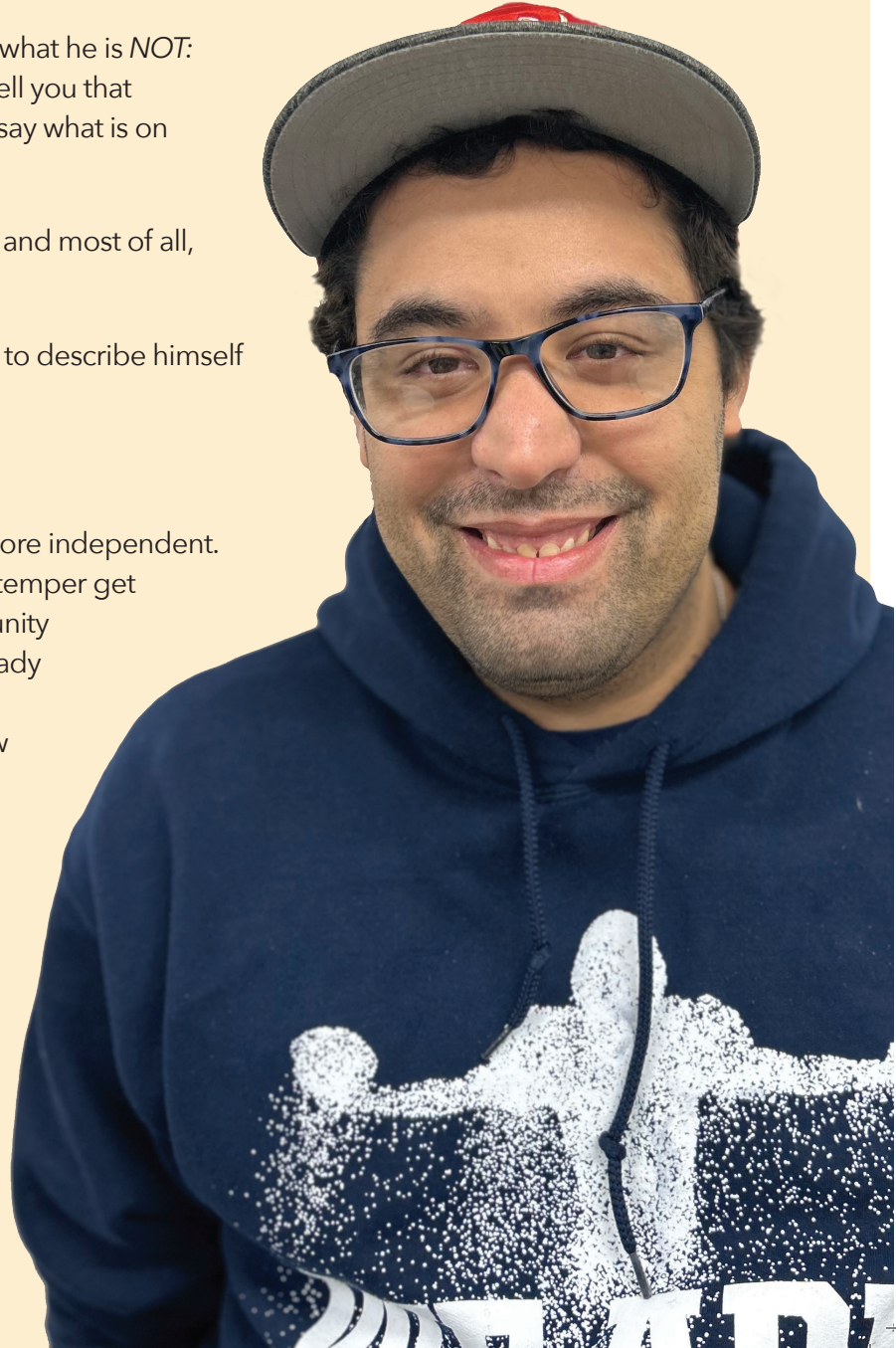
In fact, when asked, the three words Tav would use to describe himself are: "hardworking, easygoing, and funny."

That has not always been the case.

Tav has not had it easy. He struggled to become more independent. He will tell you that he lost a job because, "I let my temper get the best of me." In his initial assessment for community employment, it was determined that he was not ready to work independently. Later, a team of seasoned leadership and management employees at Via saw Tav's potential and partnered with Bethlehem Emergency Sheltering to give him another opportunity in a work setting. He began cleaning at the shelter a few hours a week.

He knocked it out of the park.

Tav now works at two different government sites – the Pennsylvania State Police Barracks in Lehigh and the Office of the Attorney General in Allentown.



Sean Hartman, Director of Via's Small Group Employment Services wrote the following in nominating Tav for an employment award:

Tav came to Via in a unique situation. We learned that his past challenges prevented him from reaching his employment goals. During our first meeting with Tav, it was clear there were doubts that he could be successful.

Tav's life journey presents many obstacles. For most of us, the effort we need to put forth toward success is hard to compare to the effort Tav needs to make each workday. Where we may have to take an extra step to reach success, Tav at times needs to take two or three.

Tav proved that any doubts about him were ill-placed. Upon his first week of work, Tav formed a professional relationship with his staff. This provided him with the ability to flourish as an employee. It gave him confidence and the chance he needed to show his doubters and himself that he could do it. His dedication to his work has been inspiring. Recently, Tav has shown exceptional leadership skills, guiding the custodial team and ensuring that each task is completed to the highest standard. His drive, positivity, and work ethic truly are commendable.

This year, Tav received the Celebration Award for Employment Achievement presented by The Arc of Lehigh and Northampton Counties, pictured above with Deputy Director of the PA Office of Developmental Programs, Kristin Ahrens. In May, he received a second honor awarded by UniqueSource. Tav shared, **"I was nervous when I first came to Via and met everyone. I thought I got a second chance, but I wasn't sure. Then I knew I got a second chance."**

Tav has gone from working two hours per week, to working three eight-hour shifts per week - shattering expectations - even his own. Tav's goal is to someday work independently, but until that time, he knows he can count on Via.



Unemployable?

No. All Tav needed was a second chance.

30 the number of teens who spent the summer learning and reaching goals while having fun at **Camp Via**.



\$507,268

the total amount earned by individuals participating in Via's prevocational employment program.



264

Adults reached personal goals with social and emotional support in the community and at home through Community Connections.



164

individuals were served through Via's Community Employment Services



Total Number of People Served by Via Programs

Fiscal Year 2023 (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023)

- Community Employment Services: 118
- Employment Services for Students: 47
- Early Intervention Services: 190
- Camp Via: 35
- Community Connections: 115
- Autism Services: 17
- Adult Training Services: 24
- Behavioral Supports: 54
- Vocational Training Services: 80
- Small Group Employment Services: 94
- Lehigh Children’s Academy: 265

VIA’S PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Community Employment, Vocational Training Services, School-To-Work Transition, ViaWorks Small Group Employment

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS

Camp Via, Lehigh Children’s Academy, Early Intervention Services: Speech, Occupational, and Physical Therapies, Special Instruction

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Life Skills Training, Autism Support, Behavioral Support, Community Mentoring

2023 FINANCIALS

REVENUES

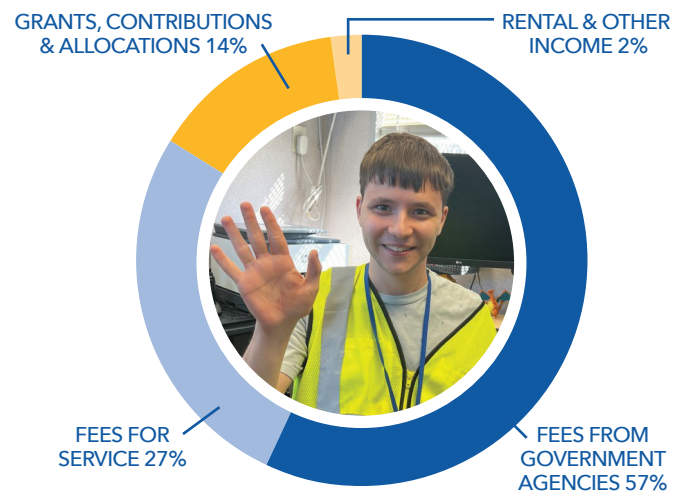
Fees From Government Agencies	\$5,560,704
Rental & Other Income	\$178,761
Grants, Contributions & Allocations	\$1,351,804
Fees For Service	\$2,627,599
TOTAL	\$9,718,868

EXPENSES

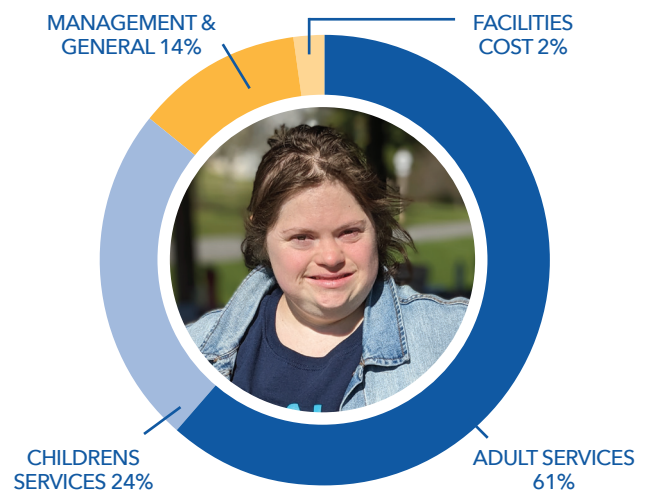
Adult Services	\$6,021,123
Children’s Services	\$2,399,257
Management & General	\$1,210,456
Facilities Cost	\$201,906
TOTAL	\$9,832,742

For a list of our donors, visit:
www.ViaNet.org

REVENUES



EXPENSES





Serving the Community Since 1952

336 W. Spruce Street | Bethlehem, PA 18018
610-317-8000 | ViaNet.org

Via's Mission is to help people reach their full potential through a rewarding career, meaningful relationships, and an enriching community life.

VIA LEADERSHIP TEAM

Lisa Walkiewicz	President & Chief Executive Officer
Denise Pioli	Chief Services Officer
Luke Schaeffer	Chief Financial Officer
Julie Scheck	Director, Development & Communications
Jenna Trach	Director, Human Resources



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Via of the Lehigh Valley, Inc. and Via Foundation are nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations registered in the state of Pennsylvania. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling toll-free within Pennsylvania (800) 732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Via of the Lehigh Valley, Inc. provides services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities like autism, cerebral palsy, and Down's syndrome. The mission of the Via Foundation, Inc. is to provide resources to grow and sustain services provided by Via of the Lehigh Valley, Inc.