

2025

ausm
autism society of minnesota



Autism
Society

ANNUAL REPORT

Minnesota's First Autism Resource[®]





A YEAR OF CHALLENGE. A COMMUNITY OF STRENGTH.

Your support helped sustain and strengthen AuSM when it mattered most.

As Executive Director of Autism Society of Minnesota, it is my privilege to reflect on a year that tested our resilience, clarified our purpose, and demonstrated the strength of our community.

Meeting Challenge with Resolve

The 2025 landscape presented significant challenges across Minnesota. Shifting public policy priorities, uncertainty in state and federal funding streams, and evolving disability service systems created real strain for nonprofit organizations and for the autistic individuals and families who rely on consistent, affirming support. Like many mission-driven organizations, we faced difficult questions about sustainability, access, and how to continue meeting growing needs in an unpredictable environment.

When we were confronted with funding instability late in the year, our community responded in historic fashion. Supporters from across the state rallied behind a bold and urgent fundraising campaign—our most ambitious year-end effort to date. Donors, partners, volunteers, and self-advocates came together with remarkable generosity. That extraordinary show of support did more than help us meet a financial goal; it affirmed that our work matters deeply to Minnesotans.

You Sustained Us

Community investment sustained us in one of the most challenging moments in our organization's history, and it positioned us to move into 2026 with renewed strength.



You Shape Our Programs and Services

Throughout 2025, we continued to provide effective, timely, and affirming programs across the state. We expanded opportunities for authentic community building, creating spaces where autistic people of all ages could connect, belong, and lead. Our education initiatives equipped families and professionals with practical tools and evidence-informed strategies. Our mental health services offered compassionate, neurodiversity-affirming care during a time when emotional support was urgently needed. Our advocacy efforts elevated the voices of autistic Minnesotans in policy conversations that directly impact their lives.

We are especially proud that our work remained grounded in dignity, inclusion, and partnership. Autistic individuals are not simply recipients of services at AuSM—they are leaders, advisors, educators, and changemakers within our community. Their insight continues to shape our programs and our priorities.

This year reminded us that stability cannot be taken for granted—but it also reminded us of the power of collective action. When systems falter, community rises. When uncertainty grows, connection strengthens. The generosity and trust placed in us during 2025 reinforce both our responsibility and our resolve.

As you read this annual report, I invite you to see not only the programs delivered and the milestones reached, but the deeper story: a community that chose solidarity over scarcity, courage over contraction, and hope over hesitation.

Thank You for Standing with Us

Because of you, autistic Minnesotans and their families continue to have access to the resources, relationships, and advocacy they deserve. Together, we are building a more understanding, inclusive, and supportive Minnesota.

With gratitude,



Ellie Wilson
Executive Director



2025

www.ausm.org

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) is to create connections, empowering everyone in the autism community with the resources needed to live fully.

AuSM seeks to enhance the lives of all who are part of the Minnesota autism community, with a fundamental commitment to advocacy, education, support, collaboration, and community building.

OUR VALUES



Advocate



Educate



Support



Collaborate



**Build
Community**





2025 FINANCIAL REPORT

Rising to Meet a Critical Moment

AuSM entered 2025 following a deficit year, even as our programs continued to grow and financial gaps were steadily narrowing. However, a series of external challenges created significant uncertainty for AuSM and the community we serve. Changes to Medicaid administration in Minnesota disrupted reimbursement for several programs. Shifting federal priorities and a decline in corporate diversity and inclusion initiatives reduced opportunities for training partnerships, sponsorships, and consultation work. Grant funding also became increasingly limited.

Rising Pressure on Essential Programs

As the year progressed, these combined pressures created real risks for the sustainability of key AuSM services, including mental health care, education, camps, and family navigation support. By late summer, it was clear that decisive action would be needed to protect the programs our community relies on.

Our Community Steps Forward

In September, AuSM launched a crisis fundraising campaign with a goal of raising \$500,000 by the end of the year. The response from our community was extraordinary. Supporters organized peer-to-peer campaigns, companies volunteered time to help write handwritten appeals, and media partners amplified our message. Families and program participants shared powerful stories, and hundreds of individuals contributed through Give to the Max Day, year-end giving, and other grassroots efforts. Together, these community-driven initiatives raised nearly \$350,000 before the close of the year.

A Transformational Investment

During this critical time, AuSM also received a transformational \$1 million multi-year restricted grant to support mental health services for disabled individuals with Medicaid insurance. Spanning 2025 through 2028, this investment provides essential stability for one of our most vital service areas. The portion of the grant for 2026 through 2028 is listed as a restricted asset in the statement of financial position that follows.

Looking Ahead with Gratitude

The generosity and dedication shown by our community in 2025 cannot be overstated. Every contribution—whether a gift, a volunteer hour, a shared story, or a partnership—helped sustain AuSM during a period of profound challenge. Because of you, we continue to provide vital programs and services to autistic individuals and their families. As we move into 2026, we remain committed to careful stewardship, thoughtful adjustments, and continued focus on the programs that create the greatest impact for our community.

**We are deeply grateful
for your support.**

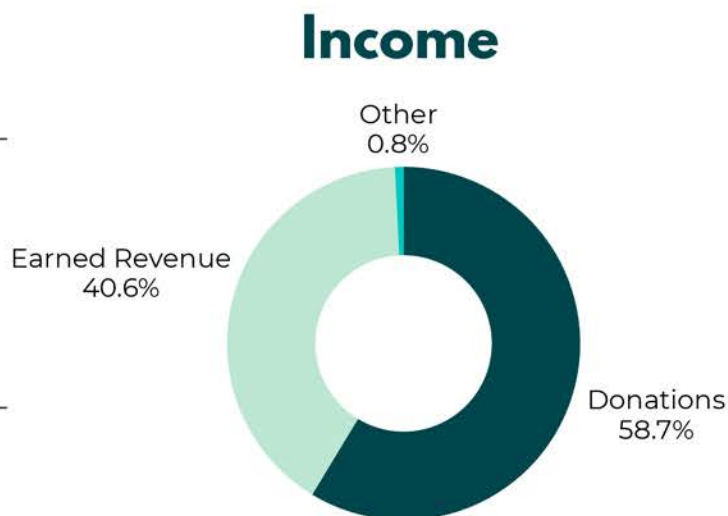


2025 FINANCIAL ACTIVITY

AuSM is dedicated to transparency, accountability, and financial health. All donations given to AuSM support programs and services for our local autism community. The 2025 Financial Report presents figures rounded to the nearest \$1,000. All financial information provided in the annual report is tentative. After our routine annual audit, we will post final records at ausm.org/about/financials.

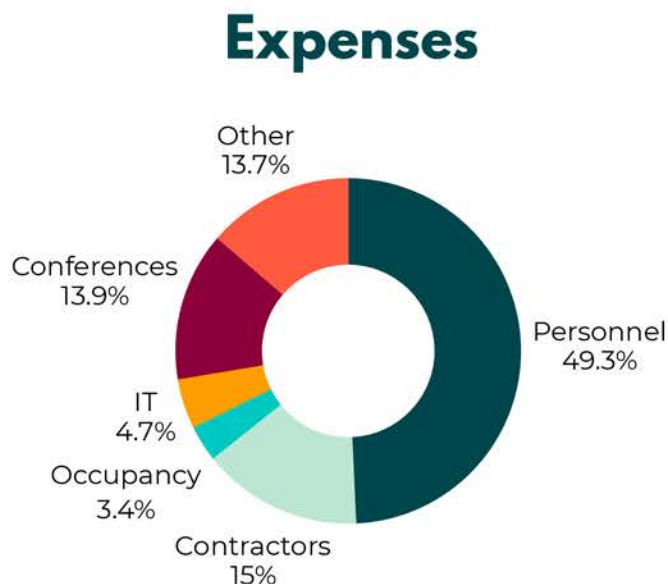
INCOME

Contributed Support	1,981,000
Earned Revenue	1,357,000
Other	26,000
TOTAL INCOME	\$3,364,000



EXPENSES

Personnel Expense	1,180,000
Contracted Services	360,000
Occupancy	81,000
Info Technology & Equipment	112,000
Conference, Convention & Meeting	334,000
Other	330,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,397,000



15%

Administrative and Fundraising Expense Rate (AFR)

(Total Administrative Expenses + Total Fundraising Expenses) / Total Expenses

NET INCOME **\$967,000**

2025 FINANCIAL POSITION

As of December 31, 2025

ASSETS	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
Current Assets	662,000	526,000	1,188,000
Fixed Assets	0	0	0
Other Assets	284,000	300,000	584,000
TOTAL ASSETS	\$946,000	\$826,000	\$1,772,000

LIABILITIES	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
Current Liabilities	137,000	0	137,000
Long-Term Liabilities	230,000	0	230,000
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$367,000	\$0	\$367,000

NET ASSETS	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
Beginning Balance	390,000	49,000	439,000
Net Income	190,000	777,000	967,000
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$580,000	\$826,000	\$1,406,000

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$946,000	\$826,000	\$1,772,000

ADVOCATE



Safety Legislation

Throughout the legislative session, AuSM responded swiftly to urgent community needs—partnering with Minnesota’s Somali community to advance legislation ensuring swim lessons are covered for children under 12 whose diagnoses place them at higher risk of drowning.



Leadership Development

With support from The Arc Minnesota, AuSM launched its first-ever Policy Power Cohort, equipping emerging self-advocates leaders with hands-on training in disability history, the legislative process, and bill development. Participants culminated their experience in mock legislative meetings with Jessica Hanson, building confidence and real-world advocacy skills.

Accessible Special Education

AuSM helped pass a statewide Language Access Plan requirement, ensuring school districts provide language accommodations and establish an appeals process when support is denied.

Protecting Medicaid

In a challenging budget year, AuSM and coalition partners successfully protected 71% of Medicaid funds on the chopping block, safeguarding Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services for more than 150,000 Minnesotans. Working alongside Robert Hicks, AuSM organized a grassroots rally that amplified the voices of the disability community and helped prevent devastating reductions. Advocates also successfully opposed harmful proposals, including deeper disability budget cuts, restrictive changes to BI and CADI eligibility, a 2% waiver cap, and the return of TEFRA parental fees.

Beyond the Capitol

AuSM continued building inclusive community spaces—expanding its presence at Pride by hosting the Escape Space, participating in Youth Pride, leading a collaborative community art project, and, for the first time, providing a sensory break space at the parade through partnership with Joy Collaborative.

2025



EDUCATE



Trainings and More

- **600+** training participants
- **460** Autism Conference participants, in-person and virtual
- **160** Autistic Community Summit participants, in-person and virtual
- **3** Autism Certification cohorts and **1** Policy Power cohort



Workshops

We hosted 8 workshops, serving more than 600 parents, autistic adults, educators, providers, and community members.

Understanding Autism

We welcomed 315 participants to our FREE Understanding Autism classes throughout the year.

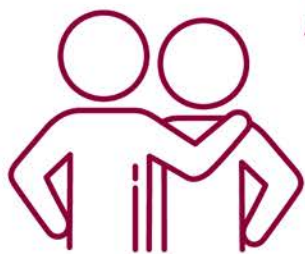


Serving the BIPOC Community

We hosted 4 workshops tailored to the BIPOC community, reaching nearly 200 people.

“ I will never forget what you have done for our family. I have countless examples of how you have made a difference in our lives and continue to do so when my kids come to summer camp each year. I hope you are around for many years to come so you can continue to help many more families like my own. ”
— AuSM Community Member

SUPPORT



AuSM Counseling and Consulting

- 308 clients, 4,056 hours
- 60 support group sessions, 610 participants • adult, women, LGBTQ, family member, and new BIPOC group
- 12 professional networking group sessions • support for therapists from around Minnesota

AuSM therapists provide critical one-on-one mental health services and also support AuSM's education function by identifying trending topics important to autistic adults and families. Themes this year included community building, gender and sex positivity, and trauma. AuSM therapists are invaluable resources to the broader Minnesota community of therapists and mental health providers as they host a free monthly Community of Practice group in which providers can drop in for de-identified consults on working with autistic adults.

Statewide Support

AuSM therapists also present at statewide conferences. Sara Lahti MA LPCC spoke at the Minnesota School Social Workers Association on support for autistic and LGBTQ students. Lahti has also been licensed as a supervisor to help guide professional learning for others seeking licensure.

Expanding the Team

AuSM's mental health services team expanded by three neurodivergent practitioners:

Kendrick (Cronin) Hogue, a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, joined the team with an emphasis on LGBTQ identity and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, with a focus on self-acceptance and social justice.

Ashley Tobias, a Licensed Graduate Social Worker on track to independent clinical license, specializes in the support of late diagnosed adults, workplace accommodations, and identity. Ashley has a robust history of working in multiple facets of disability and mental health services.

Amber Johnson, seeking licensure in Marriage and Family Therapy, is experienced in complex family dynamics, including aspects of parenting, relationships, and multiply-diverse family compositions. Her work emphasizes the power of secure attachment in relationships, supporting mental health.



The support, community, and opportunities at AuSM have led me to my life's work. AuSM exists as a foundation for me to always know I can land on. AuSM must continue to exist for all Autistic people + families. AuSM Forever!



— AuSM Community Member

RESOURCES

Information Resources

- **334** online form requests
- **752** consult phone calls
- **900+** texts and emails



Providing accessible, trustworthy information is central to our mission.

Throughout the year, AuSM connects individuals, families, and professionals with the guidance they need to navigate autism-related services, education,

and daily life. Whether through personalized responses from the Information and Resources team, a widely used online directory of services, or a library of articles, toolkits, and practical guides, these resources help Minnesotans find answers, make informed decisions, and feel less alone as they move through complex systems.

Free online Resource Directory

Viewed over 31,000 times this year, helping you find supports and services

BIPOC Parents of Children with Autism Support Group

Reflecting the diversity of the Minnesota autism community, this group was launched, serving 34 families

Translated Videos and Tip Sheets

Created in 2024, distributed in eight languages to reach multiple communities in 2025

Website Resources Page

Visited more than 8,700 times by community members as they explored tools, guides, articles, and more



BUILDING COMMUNITY



Events

- **310** in-person participants and **150** online for Minnesota Autism Conference
- **400** Steps for Autism participants
- **643** Puzzle Competition participants, in-person and virtual
- **160** Autistic Community Summit participants, **100%** autistic speakers
- **120** Coffee Club participants



2025 Minnesota Autism Conference

On the eve of the 2025 Minnesota Autism Conference, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released new national autism prevalence data. This was paired with polarizing comments from federal leadership that quickly sparked concern and conversation across the community. As the conference began, the gathering created a timely and meaningful space for the Minnesota autism community to process this news together through learning, reflection, and thoughtful discussion grounded in expertise and lived experience.

Collective Resilience

The conference became more than a learning event; it was a space of collective resilience. Many attendees shared that being together, in community with autistic individuals, families, professionals, and advocates, helped them navigate the moment with clarity and support, offering a sense of connection that felt remarkably helpful, if not protective, amid negative narratives about autism.



This was my second year attending the Minnesota Autism Conference. I've walked away with a reminder that I am not broken as an autistic person and with strategies to help me thrive. I especially valued reconnecting with my community during a challenging time. Thank you for putting together such a meaningful event!



— AuSM Community Member

TOGETHER

AuSM provides trusted guidance, advocacy, and programs on which families and individuals rely. Our community appreciates AuSM's impact.

Invaluable Resources

"The advocacy, camps, events, and resources that AuSM provides to the Minnesota autism community are invaluable. Thank you for all the progress you have made in creating a welcoming, supportive autism community."

Unwavering Support

"Thank you for ALL that each of you does. Even when I am not actively using services, I find great support and comfort knowing you are there. I'm not sure what the future holds for our neurodiverse communities, but I hope you will always be there."

Strengthening Community

"I'm autistic, and the support groups have done a lot for me to make me feel I'm not alone or broken. From what I've seen I truly believe that AuSM genuinely has the best interests of autistic people at heart."

Here for You

"Thank you for being my primary support in life this year."



WHERE ALL BELONG



AuSM Camps

- **167** Camp Hand in Hand campers, ages 10-50
- **105** Camp Discovery campers, ages 10-50



Acceptance, Activities and Support

Summer camps offered by the Autism Society of Minnesota provide a welcoming, supportive environment where autistic youth and adults can build friendships, practice independence, and experience the joy of traditional summer activities in a setting designed for their needs. For many participants, camp is a place where they can feel fully understood and accepted while developing social confidence, trying new activities, and creating lasting memories. At the same time, these camps offer families peace of mind—knowing their loved ones are supported by trained staff who understand autism and prioritize safety, inclusion, and fun.

Belonging and Respite

The 2025 camp season was especially meaningful as individuals and families across Minnesota were able to access these opportunities. Camps brought together a vibrant community of returning campers and first-time participants, strengthening connections and reinforcing the sense of belonging that AuSM programs strive to create. For many individuals and families, these experiences are more than a week of summer fun—they are an important source of community, skill-building, and respite that supports the wellbeing of families and caregivers.

We hosted six full sessions of AuSM Summer Camps, serving more than 270 autistic adults and kids.



ALL THRIVE

Camp is a place of true belonging where participants build confidence, try new activities, and create lasting memories in a supportive environment designed for them. Camps also offer families and caregivers space for respite.



A Note from a Camp Mom

For Joleen and her family, the programs offered by Autism Society of Minnesota have become an essential part of their lives. Her son Michael, now 30 and on the autism spectrum, has attended Camp Discovery for years—an experience that has brought him joy, connection, and a place where he can truly be himself. From the moment he first arrived at camp, Joleen saw how the staff met Michael with patience, understanding, and genuine care, creating an environment where he felt welcomed and valued.

At camp, Michael has the opportunity to connect with others, try new activities, and enjoy a sense of independence. The staff celebrate who he is, encouraging him to participate while also respecting when he chooses to engage in his own way. For Joleen, knowing that her son has a safe, supportive place where he belongs provides immense peace of mind—and the chance for him to experience the independence of being away at camp as an adult.



More than a Program

For their family, AuSM is more than a program provider—it is a community built on acceptance and inclusion. Joleen says it's the only organization they have ever felt truly connected to. Each year when Michael arrives at camp and lights up at the sight of familiar staff and friends, it reaffirms just how meaningful that community is—not only for him, but for their entire family.



I like all of the activities at camp. At camp, I get to see my friends, staff, and new campers. Camp makes me feel happy and successful. My favorite part of camp is making friends, activities, and being outdoors. I love camp.



— AuSM Camper Isaiah

PREMIER PARTNERS



AuSM Premier Partners are essential to the work of Autism Society of Minnesota, providing the leadership support that makes vital programs, education, and community resources possible across the state. Their partnership helps ensure autistic individuals and their families in Minnesota have access to the support, connection, and opportunities they deserve.

BEST CARE
YOUR CARE. YOUR WAY.



2025 Board of Directors

Jon Ruzek, President
Cassie Wolfgram, Vice President
John Skillings, Treasurer
Paul May-Kramer, Secretary
Jenna Matteson-Laabs, Past President
Tom Cox, Autistic Community Liaison

Joyner Emerick	John Pribyl
Nick Engbloom	Tony Quách
Carly Evans	Frances Stevenson
Robert Firestone	Kelly Thomalla
Michelle Law-Pink	Abbie Wells-Herzog
Nicole Martinez	Anny Woo Collins
Sheila Moore	



2025

www.ausm.org