



**NorthwestCenter**  
People of all abilities

# Centered on Solutions

Northwest Center Annual Report 2022

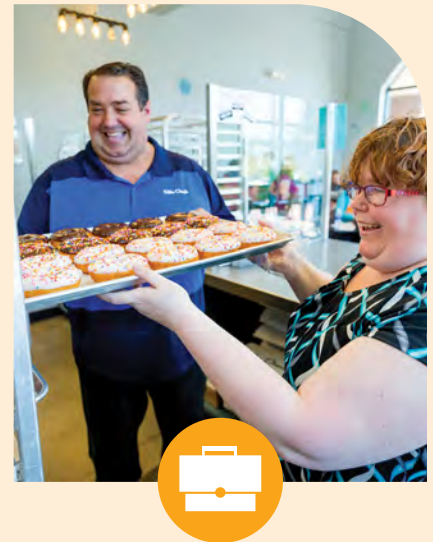
# A Message from the CEO

In times of challenge, you find out who you really are.

The last few years have brought us all plenty of challenges. Navigating the unknowns of a pandemic. Figuring out how to continue not just our day-to-day organizational business, but also critical therapy for children and skill development for job seekers, in a virtual world. And a return to “normal” where the at-work landscape has changed.

But if challenges teach us who we are, I learned that the people of Northwest Center are exactly who I knew them to be: Doers. Innovators. Ready to take on whatever comes next. Unwilling to let down a single person we serve.

## From Cradle to Career



Our vision is a world where people with and without disabilities have equitable access to education and employment. We work toward that vision by serving people with disabilities from cradle through career. We understand only too well how much more there is to be done. But Northwest Center keeps rising to the challenge.

On the cover: Graduating preschool students at Northwest Center Kids Early Learning



## In 2022, our services reached more people than ever.



**1,271**

babies, toddlers, and families served by Early Supports—a record number



**681**

adults supported by Employment Services in Washington and Northern Idaho



**180**

students in inclusive early learning at our two Seattle schools



**12,701**

children reached by IMPACT inclusion training for early learning centers

## We keep pushing forward because, frankly, the world needs us.

In 1971, our founders gave all children the right to an education with Washington House Bill 90, “Education for All,” the blueprint for the nationwide Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). But the promised federal spending for inclusive education has never been fully funded. Schools still isolate kids with disabilities most of the time—and our home state of Washington ranks among the worst. The unemployment rate for disabled workers remains twice as high as the average.

But here’s where the doers and innovators come in.

**Northwest Center has always committed to doing not just what’s funded, but what’s needed.**

Our IMPACT (Inclusion Mentorship Program for increasing Access in Childcare Team) program is a shining example.

## Since 2018, IMPACT has:



trained more than **7,000** early educators



reached more than **45,000** children



built a library of **35** virtual courses

Just as IMPACT is increasing classroom inclusion by training educators, a new Employment Services program will do much the same for workplace inclusion. Our Employment Transformation Collective (ETC) is designed to combat workplace ableism and tear down barriers to disability inclusion, and is already offering the Accessibility Partners Service for blind and low-vision employees at two of the nation's largest companies. You can read more on page 15.

In our work to help other schools and businesses include people with disabilities, we still strive to lead by example. Thirty-two percent of employees across Northwest Center have a documented disability, with some divisions' inclusion ratio as high as 70 percent.



### **Innovation also needs everyone. Your support makes it happen.**

Northwest Center is committed to eliminating ableism and meeting the challenge to do more for disability inclusion and our community. The kind of innovation required to keep centering on solutions is fueled by our donors, families, and business partners. We're grateful for your continued support.

Onward & Upward,

**Gene Boes**, President & CEO



Heading out to playtime at our Greenwood Early Learning school

### **Our Mission**

To promote the growth, development, and independence of people with disabilities through programs of therapy, education, and work opportunity.

# An Inclusion Revolution

Since 1965, Northwest Center has led the charge for disability inclusion.

## Disability Inclusion

People with disabilities are welcome, seen, valued, and appreciated for their individual contributions in the classroom, workplace, and community.



### 1965

Four Seattle moms founded Northwest Center (NWC) to disprove the notion that people with disabilities didn't belong in the classroom, workplace, or community.



### 1971

Our founders wrote and passed the first statewide law to guarantee education to children with disabilities: House Bill 90, "Education for All."



### 1980

Northwest Center launched an education and therapy model where children with and without disabilities learn together. The rest of the country didn't start to catch up for another 24 years.



### 2001

Two Seattle pioneers joined forces as we began staffing janitorial positions at Amazon. Today, Northwest Center @ Amazon fills and manages hundreds of roles including reception, call center, and event support.

### 1967

Value Village offered to pay Northwest Center to collect used clothing and household goods. The partnership is still going strong today.



### 1975

Education for All went nationwide. Our founders helped create the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), first signed into law by President Ford.



### 1994

We pioneered workplace inclusion as we opened our next social enterprise business, Puget Sound Laundry Services.



### 2008

The employment gap for people with disabilities begins in high school. Employment Services joined the School-to-Work program to help close this gap.





## 2015

Northwest Center marked our 50<sup>th</sup> year by breaking new ground in disability inclusion:

- We built a full-size simulation of an Amazon sortation center where job seekers could have immersive interviews.
- Early Supports helped launch Hospital-to-Home, support for babies and their families following hospital stays.



## 2021

Employment Services expanded into Northern Idaho.

Accessibility Partners (AP) began services for blind and low-vision employees at some of the nation's largest companies.

We celebrated 50 years of Education for All with a panel of disability advocates, founder Janet Taggart, and former WA governor Dan Evans.

Private sector assets of Puget Sound Laundry Services were sold to ImageFIRST. An ImageFIRST partnership positioned NWC to expand our mission of inclusion to other parts of the country. We continue to serve government customers.



## 2019

Responding to the changing needs of the market, we restructured our businesses: Electronics was acquired by a larger magnetics company and Assembly & Packaging was phased out.

## 2018

To address the child care crisis for families needing an inclusive preschool, Northwest Center Kids launched IMPACT, training and consultation services to child care providers throughout King County, WA.



## 2020

Northwest Center social enterprises entered the printing industry with the acquisition of Lithtex NW.

## 2022

Our business with Amazon has grown to more than 300 employees staffing 11 programs including The Spheres, reception, Banana Stands, and call center.

The Employment Transformation Collective (ETC) was launched, offering end-to-end services to empower employers to create anti-ableist workplaces.

## Changing our Language

Northwest Center has traditionally used people-first language such as “adults with disabilities.” But in recent years, self-advocates have switched to identity-first language such as “disabled person” or “autistic man,” often because a disability or diagnosis is a fundamental part of a person’s identity, or as a show of solidarity with others with the same disability or diagnosis. In recognition of this shift, Northwest Center is changing our language to include both people-first and identity-first descriptions.

# Early Supports

## Children reaching critical milestones before age 3

Our Early Supports team works with children from birth to age 3, when 80 percent of brain development occurs, helping them reach milestones despite communication, motor, social-emotional, adaptive, or cognitive delays. Our services take place not in a clinical setting but where the child lives and thrives: the family home, school, a playground, or anywhere that is part of daily life.

## Early Supports 2022 Highlights



**1,271 children** received services



A record **405 children** with a diagnosed delay or disability received services each month



**35 new** community connections for our services



Every child received care from at least **2** and as many as **5 providers**

Our Early Supports team continues to expand services and expertise through partnerships with organizations such as the University of Washington (UW), participating in research on bilingual language learning and hosting Speech-Language Pathologist internships. Early Supports provided trainings and consultations with Perinatal Supports of Washington, Center on Human Development and Disability at UW, and the Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF), and was invited to represent Washington state in a cross-state cohort exploring how agencies and organizations can partner to implement Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health policies and practices.

Our EPIC team joined an ECHO (Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes) research group with other providers supporting families of children with autism. They also began work with the pediatrics team at SeaMar Community Health Centers to provide more comprehensive autism evaluations.



### ***A Note about Our Name***

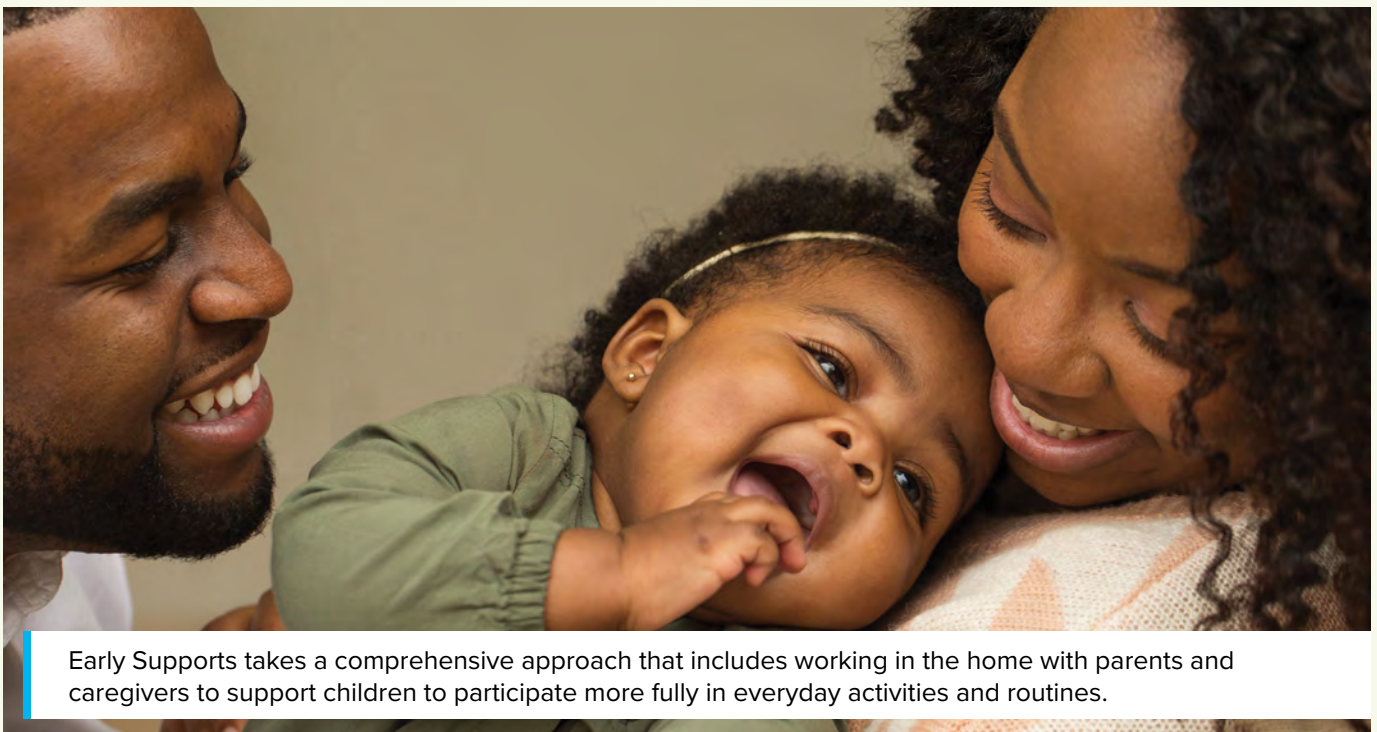
Early Supports was previously known as Early Intervention. We shifted away from that term as we received feedback from our community that, historically, families have had negative experiences with “interventions” from state-funded programs. Upon reflection, we also realized that we do not intervene with families; we support and work alongside them. Our new program name better matches what we do.

### **EPIC**

Social connections are an essential foundation for vital learning experiences. EPIC (Expanding, Play, Interaction, and Communication) promotes meaningful social connections for children, families, and providers, especially when children have neurodiversity or have experienced limited social interaction or trauma.

### **Hospital-to-Home**

This Early Supports program supports babies, their families, and clinicians in the critical time when babies transition home from a hospital stay.



Early Supports takes a comprehensive approach that includes working in the home with parents and caregivers to support children to participate more fully in everyday activities and routines.



## From Hospital-to-Home therapy to Early Learning, Northwest Center supports Jackson every step of the way

Jackson was born with heart complications and 22q-11 deletion syndrome, a condition that can cause 200 health and developmental issues. At four days old, he had heart surgery. He spent the first month of his life in the ICU. When he came home from the hospital, he used a feeding tube.

The moment the family walked through their front door, Northwest Center Kids was there to help with Hospital-to-Home, an Early Supports program for babies coming home from a hospital stay. Jackson started immediately on motor and feeding therapy. “It would have been unbelievably difficult to not have that support,” says mom Kamille. “It’s so overwhelming to be hooking your child up to a machine to be fed.”

At six months old, Jackson entered preschool at Northwest Center Kids Early Learning, where Early Supports was built into his day. Jackson joined his class for mealtimes and began to try more foods. By the time he turned 3, his feeding tube was removed.

“Inclusion helped because it wasn’t just Mom and Dad at mealtimes showing him to eat; it was peers,” says his dad Nathan.

“From the very beginning, we started seeing big changes,” Kamille says. “It was amazing. I can’t imagine attempting to do this without Northwest Center’s support.”



Hospital-to-Home therapy and inclusive Early Learning from Northwest Center Kids gave Jackson the support he needed to thrive.



# Early Learning

## Inclusive education for children 6 weeks to 12 years

Northwest Center Kids Early Learning provides quality care and education to children with and without disabilities. We actively welcome and celebrate children with disabilities or behavior challenges in our classrooms. We believe inclusive environments give all children the opportunity to reach their highest potential.

Our School Age program for children ages 5-12 gives kids with and without disabilities an opportunity to play and learn together. We provide a before- and after-school program during the school year and a full-day summer camp that supports social and emotional development through art, science, and activities.



Inclusive early learning at our Greenwood school

### Early Learning 2022 Highlights



Number of Schools

**2**



**180**

children enrolled in Early Learning

In 2022, Northwest Center Kids and Employment Services participated in the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLA), hosting Janielle Todd, founder of her own disability inclusion organization in Jamaica. Todd spent four weeks learning about NWC and gaining new ideas and tools to help scale her organization.

YLA is a U.S. Department of State-funded program where mid-career entrepreneurs from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada collaborate with U.S.-based organizations through professional placements.

Todd is CEO of The A+ Generation, an organization that provides tailored education support to persons with physical, emotional, and intellectual special needs.

# Northwest Center Kids IMPACT

Professional development courses and consultation for early childhood centers to include children of all abilities



With training and strategies from our IMPACT team, preschools are able to welcome kids with and without disabilities or other challenges.

Northwest Center Kids created IMPACT (Inclusion Mentorship Program for increasing Access in Childcare Team) to make inclusive education possible for far more children than our brick-and-mortar schools can hold. IMPACT provides training and consultation on inclusive practices supporting children with disabilities and challenging behaviors to customers including early childhood educators, administrators, school districts, and private education programs. Because children with disabilities and challenging behaviors are expelled from early learning programs at a much higher rate than other kids, IMPACT prioritizes strategies that reduce expulsion and build confidence in educators.

Since 2018, IMPACT has created more than 35 courses, trained nearly 8,000 early learning providers, and made a positive impact on tens of thousands of kids. IMPACT's belief is that, with the right training and support, all early learning educators can implement strategies to successfully include children with disabilities and challenging behaviors.

## IMPACT 2022 Highlights



More than  
**12,000**  
children served



**607**  
consultations



**1,708**  
providers trained

In 2022, IMPACT was invited to present at the International Inclusion Institute at the University of North Carolina on a variety of child development topics and to share the IMPACT model for the third year in a row. The team also presented at the Infant and Early Childhood Conference (IECC) for the fourth year in a row, sharing expertise on inclusive classroom practices and supporting children's language development.



## Inclusive Early Learning makes the difference for Aria

When Shilpa and Deepak were looking for preschools for their daughter Aria, who was born with Sturge-Weber syndrome, “The answers we heard didn’t make us very happy,” Shilpa says.

The syndrome can cause muscle weakness and developmental delays. Some preschool directors told Shilpa and Deepak that Aria would be held back in the infant classroom if she couldn’t be weaned off her bottle. Others said she couldn’t share a classroom with other kids her age if she didn’t hit the same milestones.

“My husband and I both strongly believe that social interaction with peers is a huge factor in development,” says Shilpa. Thankfully, “We learned about Northwest Center Kids from our special educator. She told us, ‘This is the place she should go to and nowhere else.’”

Within a month of beginning inclusive Early Learning at Northwest Center, “Everything turned around,” Shilpa says. Aria began “eating, experimenting with all kinds of foods. Her cognition has grown so much. Her skills have grown. She’s come a long, long way and it would not have happened without Northwest Center. Inclusion makes a huge, huge difference.”



Shilpa credits inclusive Early Learning at Northwest Center Kids for Aria’s progress.

# Employment Services

## Closing the employment gap for people with disabilities

At Northwest Center, it's not just "getting a job" for people with disabilities; we work closely with job seekers and employers to find the perfect match between the employee's interests and skills and the employer's needs. The result is work that is meaningful and valuable to both. Services include:

### Job Development:

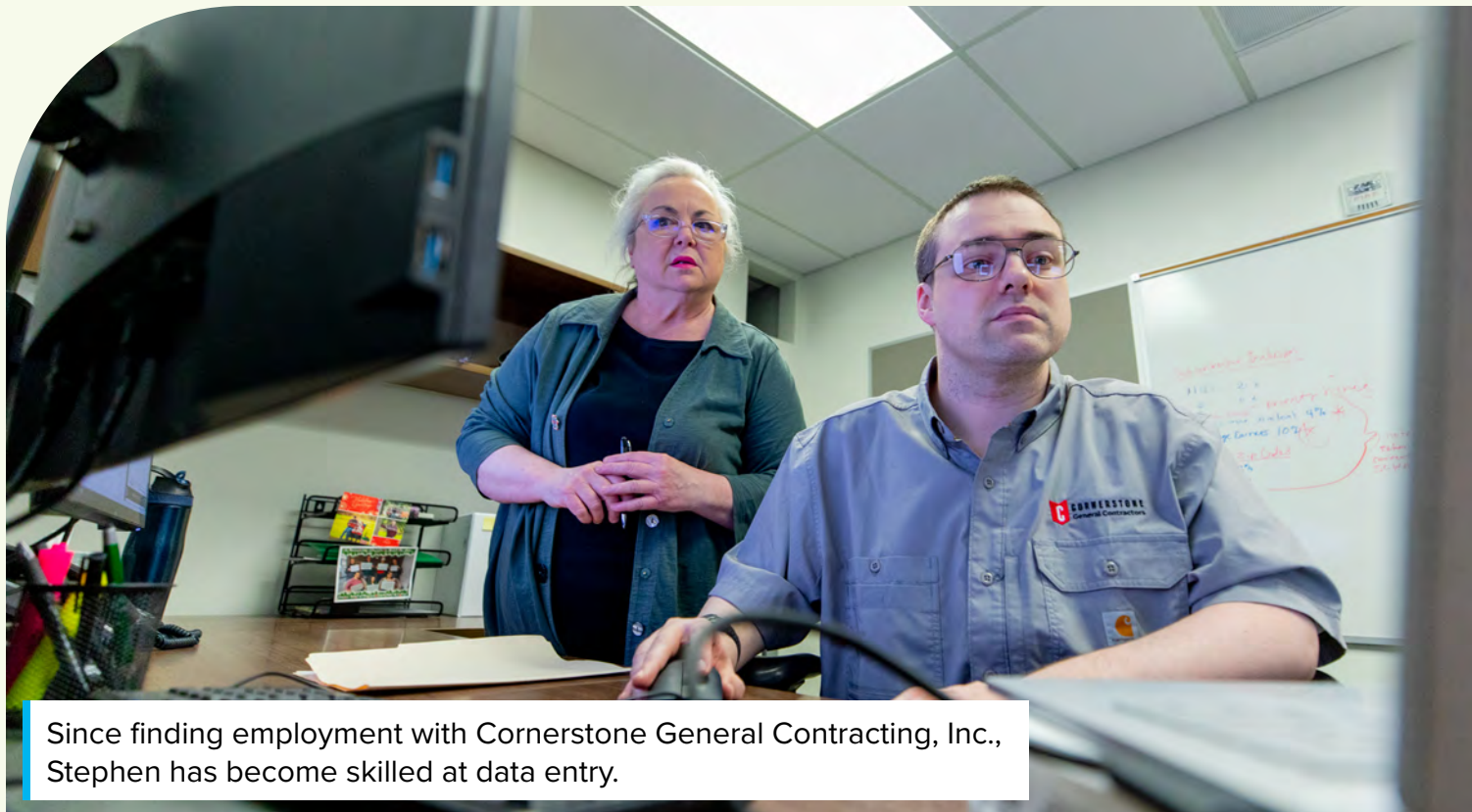
We work with adults with disabilities to find employment meaningful to both them and their employers, assessing career interests and providing hands-on training and ongoing job support.

### Supported Employment:

Employment consultants support individuals through the entire employment process, including on-the-job supports as long as needed.

### Transition Services:

Our team helps students with disabilities graduating from high school to make a successful transition to the working world.



Since finding employment with Cornerstone General Contracting, Inc., Stephen has become skilled at data entry.

## Employment Services 2022 Highlights



**52** new companies  
employing our clients



**\$2+** million  
in gross wages earned by clients



**104**  
total job placements



**681**  
clients served



**76** new  
employment sites

Northwest Center Employment Services contracts with the Developmental Disability Administration (DDA) to provide long-term employment support to individuals with developmental disabilities, and in 2022 expanded DDA services in four Washington state counties.

In 2021, Employment Services in Spokane, WA began offering inclusive employment resources to residents and businesses in a number of regions in Idaho including Kootenai, Shoshone, Benewah, Bonner, and Boundary counties.

Seattle Employment Specialist Debra Tan was named 2021 Innovation Direct Support Professional of the Year by the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), a national organization for providers of services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

ANCOR again recognized a member of the Employment Services team in 2022, when Senior Employment Consultant Shannon Ramsey was selected from more than 300 nominees as Washington's 2022 Direct Support Professional of the Year.

Our newly formed Employment Transformation Collective (ETC) hosted a training on anti-ableism for the DEI team of the world's largest online retailer. (Learn more about ETC on page 15.) Many attendees realized for the first time that disabilities should be included within a DEI framework.

### Uncompensated Service

Northwest Center provides services according to need, not just funding. We often provide education and employment services where the cost is not fully reimbursed by any individual or program.



## Employment Transformation Collective helps employers break down barriers to disability inclusion

Northwest Center is not merely about creating inclusive workplaces but about creating anti-ableist workplaces.

“To realize the potential of all employees, leaders need to understand that creating an enabling environment is not a one-month special initiative placed on human resources,” writes Nora Genster, senior director of the newly created Employment Transformation Collective (ETC), in an op-ed published in USA Today. “Instead, leaders need to intentionally equip managers, operations, and team leaders with knowledge and tools to make anti-ableism part of the rhythm of business.”

ETC provides the consultation, services, solutions, and support to make that happen, with the goal of anti-ableist workplaces that attract, retain, and develop top talent and where all employees, with and without disabilities, can do their best work. Services include:

### **Accessibility Partners Service:**

Customized support for blind and low-vision employees in the workplace to remove digital and physical barriers and make meetings, data, and documents more accessible.

### **Training & Consulting Services:**

Working with businesses to develop cultures of accommodation.

### **Customized Options:**

Collaborating with disabled employees and their employers so everyone has the tools they need to succeed in an inclusive workplace.

## **Ableism**

A systemic value and belief structure that devalues and discriminates against disability and disabled individuals, ableism impacts how we judge and value others, and impacts how we assess our own value.

## **Anti-ableism**

Strategies, theories, and practices that challenge and counter ableism. At Northwest Center, we practice anti-ableism because we believe all of us are responsible for ensuring inclusion—not solely the disabled individual.



## Disability inclusion and stellar service shine at a Seattle icon

One of Seattle’s most popular tourist attractions stays clean and welcoming thanks to employees with disabilities hired and managed through Northwest Center Employment Services. Northwest Center (NWC) holds a longtime AbilityOne/SourceAmerica contract with the Army Corps of Engineers to provide janitorial services at the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks—better known as the Ballard Locks.

Five NWC clients help maintain the site indoors and out, even “in snow, sleet, hail, rain, wind,” says NWC Senior Group Supported Employment Supervisor Karen Roe. The team love being part of a Seattle icon, and many have worked there for a decade or more—one since 1998.

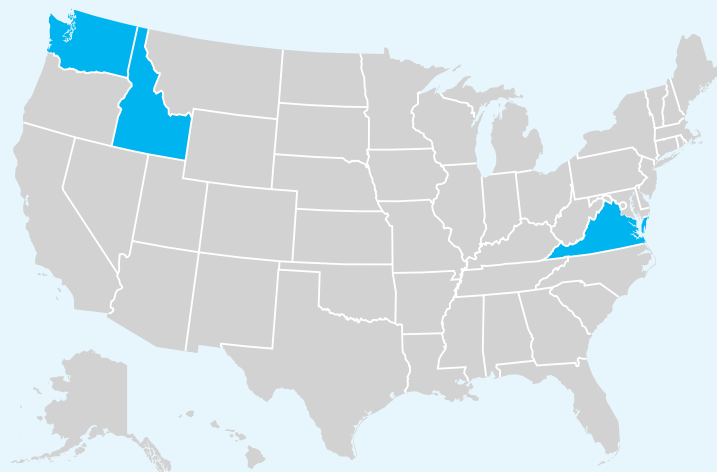
“Best job I ever had,” says Jaymoni, part of the Ballard Locks janitorial team since 2020. “You can enjoy the work. It’s not like you are sitting in your office.”

And while Roe says, “We try to have fun every day,” the number-one goal is providing quality work. The janitorial team passes every monthly Quality Assurance inspection, and Natural Resource Manager Connie R. Grant wrote, “The District Colonel made a note that he had never seen the Administration Building looking so good.”



Northwest Center Employment Services client Jaymoni loves the independence he gets from his work at the Ballard Locks. “Best job I ever had,” he says.

**Our current  
business &  
service locations**



# Social Enterprise

## Helping us achieve more for disability inclusion

A social enterprise is a business whose primary purpose is to maximize benefits to society or the environment, with profits used to fund social programs. Northwest Center runs social enterprises that offer benefits to customers, supporters, and our mission of disability inclusion:

- Social enterprise customers receive the highest quality business services.
- We employ an inclusive workforce, demonstrating the value of disability inclusion in action.
- Because profits defray administrative costs, donations from our supporters go directly to our services for kids and adults with disabilities.

## Northwest Center Social Enterprises

### **Argus Janitorial:**

Comprehensive janitorial services for commercial customers in Spokane, WA.

### **The Big Blue Truck:**

Since 1967, a partner with Value Village in recycling donated clothing and household goods.

### **Laundry Services:**

Hospital-grade laundry services for governmental agencies in the Puget Sound region.

### **Lithtex NW:**

Full-service commercial and digital printing for companies nationwide, headquartered in Bellingham, WA.

### **Managed Staffing Services:**

Expert managed staffing of reception, call center, office supports, and other workplace and customer solutions.

### **OneNorth Integrated Facility Solutions:**

Meticulous janitorial and building services for commercial, retail, health care, government, education, and manufacturing organizations.



## Partners in inclusion

Thank you to the key customers and partners who help Northwest Center further our mission of disability inclusion.

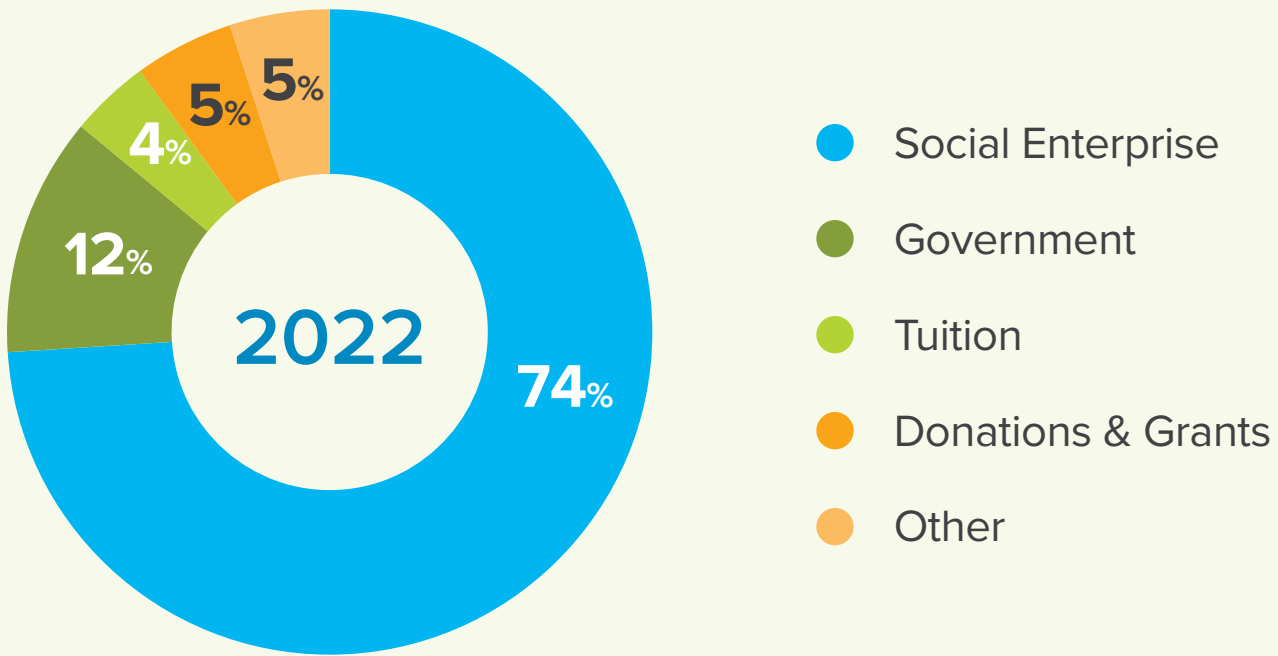
- Amazon
- Bellevue College
- CBRE Commercial Real Estate Services
- Cataldo Catholic School
- City of Bellevue
- City of Seattle
- Collins Aerospace
- Cowles Real Estate/River Park Square
- Cutter & Buck
- Federal Building South
- Hiram M. Chittenden Locks – Seattle District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- JLL Commercial Real Estate
- Microsoft
- Pacific Program Management
- Port of Seattle
- Ridwell
- Seattle University
- Spokane Teachers Credit Union
- Spokane Transit Authority
- Staples
- U.S. General Services Administration
- University of Washington
- Value Village
- WaFd Bank
- Waste Management



Customers and partner businesses like Value Village are crucial to our mission of disability inclusion.

# Financial Information

## 2022 Financials



● Social Enterprise	<b>\$50,235,909</b>
● Government	<b>\$8,569,410</b>
● Tuition	<b>\$2,566,745</b>
● Donations & Grants	<b>\$3,197,974</b>
● Other	<b>\$3,252,974</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$67,823,012</b>

# Northwest Center | Board of Directors

**Stephanie Gebhardt, Board Chair**

MacDonald-Miller Facility Solutions, CFO

**Jay Amandus, Board Secretary**

BECU, Vice President of Indirect Lending

**Charlie Ogle, Board Treasurer**

Lynden International, Regional Sales Manager, Retired

**Mary Barbosa**

King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney

**Gene Boes**

Northwest Center, President & CEO

**David Cuthill**

Clise Properties, President & COO

**Heather Fitzpatrick**

Wellspring, President & CEO

**Mike Gano**

The Partners Group, Managing Partner, Retired

**Parul Houlahan**

Community Advocate

**Joyce Jackson**

Northwest Kidney Centers, Former CEO, Retired

**Tom Mormino**

Turner Construction Company, Retired

**Lonnie Pacelli**

Community Advocate

**Dan Perlet**

Amazon, Vice President, Corporate Communications

**Jeff Roush**

Martin Smith Commercial Real Estate Investment, Retired

**Claire Verity**

Regence BlueShield, Market President

**Laethan Wene**

Community Advocate

# Northwest Center | Leadership

**Gene Boes**

President & CEO

**Robyn Brown**

Chief Development Officer

**Pat Butler**

Corporate Controller

**Del Clark**

Chief Financial Officer

**Tess Connor**

Chief Growth Officer

**Kelsey Fish**

Interim Chief Human Resources Officer

**Laura Kneeder**

Chief Mission Officer



# Centered on Solutions

Our history of working for disability inclusion goes back to 1965. But it's clearer than ever how much more there is to be done. So Northwest Center is more committed than ever to doing what needs to be done to tear down barriers to inclusion, bring anti-ableist and inclusive practices to more schools and businesses, and continue our work toward a world where all people can engage and contribute. Thank you for joining us.



Outdoor playtime at Northwest Center Kids Early Learning





**NorthwestCenter**  
People of all abilities

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