

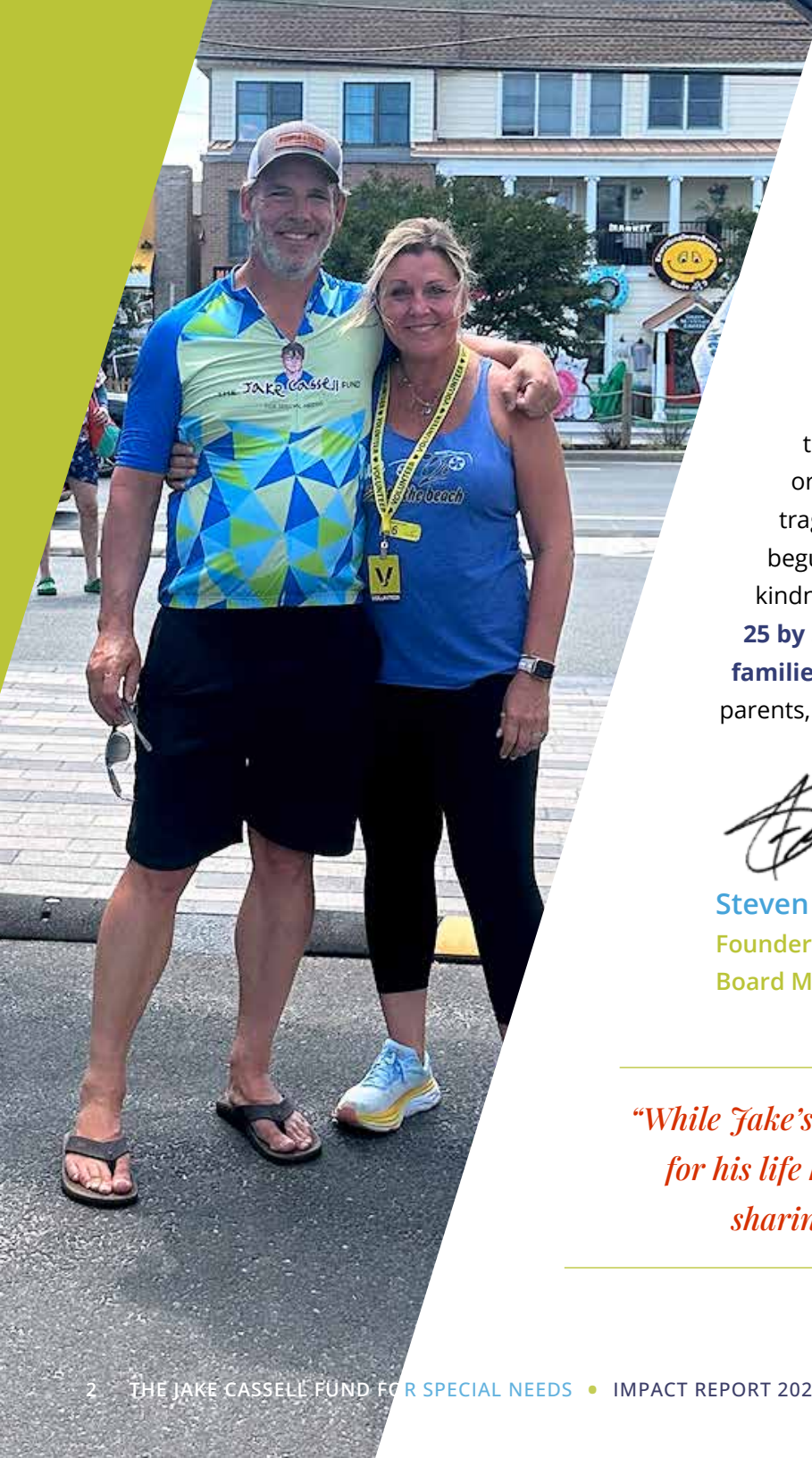
THE JAKE CASSELL FUND FOR SPECIAL NEEDS • IMPACT REPORT 2022-2024

---

# Rooted in Community, Reaching Beyond: Our Grassroots Disability Impact Report

Tracking the Dollars, Honoring the Partners, and Celebrating the Grantees Behind Our Work





# A Letter from the Founders

## Dear Friends and Supporters

When we established The Jake Cassell Fund in 2022, our purpose was clear. Our family had been blessed with the financial resources to get our son Jake the best therapies and special-needs education available. To most families, that is simply not possible because they lack the resources to pay for services, or those services are not available in their communities. While Jake's life was tragically cut short in 2019, we knew that God's purpose for his life had only just begun and that we were being called to continue sharing Jake's heart of love and kindness with other families. **We strive to fulfill Jesus' admonition in Matthew 25 by supporting children, teens and young adults with disabilities and their families in underserved communities.** It was the privilege of a lifetime to be Jake's parents, and it is our further privilege to share him with the world.

**Steven Cassell**  
Founder, President  
Board Member

**Jennifer Cassell**  
Director of Marketing  
Board Member

JCF WEBSITE



---

*“While Jake’s life was tragically cut short in 2019, we knew that God’s purpose for his life had only just begun and that we were being called to continue sharing Jake’s heart of love and kindness with other families.”*

---



## Jake's Story

Jacob Brian Cassell (aka, "Jake") was born with autism and other special needs which attempted to limit and define him, but instead, he overcame them all. **He lived his life spreading endless joy, love and affection to everyone who had the privilege of meeting him.** Jake taught us to love greater, to be kind and considerate, and to look at the world with wide eyes full of wonder. He was a role model for kids in the Bethesda, MD special needs community through dancing, theatre, bocce ball, and softball, and also volunteered with the Arc of Rockbridge in Rockbridge County, VA for three summers.

Jake's happiness was infectious, and he spread cheer everywhere he went, especially on the sidelines of Churchill High School, where he served as mascot. Jake exhibited an unusual joy and happiness from an early age. He was enormously sweet and empathic, an attribute that became a defining characteristic. Jake attended The Rock Youth Ministry at the Montgomery County, MD Campus of McLean Bible Church and his love for God and enthusiasm for worship guided him as a young man.

**Jake had a heart for serving others** which manifested in two mission trips in 2019. In January, he traveled to Honduras with his

mother and grandmother in support of their non-profit, Project Honduran Child, spending a week obtaining and distributing backpacks of school supplies and uniforms to over 140 kids in 5 mountain villages. In July, he traveled to the Dominican Republic with McLean Bible Church, where he helped lead a Vacation Bible School, worshipping and sharing the Gospel with many.

---

*"He lived his life spreading endless amounts of joy, love and affection to everyone who had the privilege of meeting him."*

---

Jake was an active participant in Boy Scouts of America and had advanced to the rank of Life, just one rank shy of Eagle Scout, and had almost completed all of his requirements for his Eagle Scout badge when he lost his life.

Jacob Brian Cassell was tragically struck by a vehicle after falling off his bicycle on Old Georgetown Road in Bethesda, MD on Wednesday, July 31st, 2019.

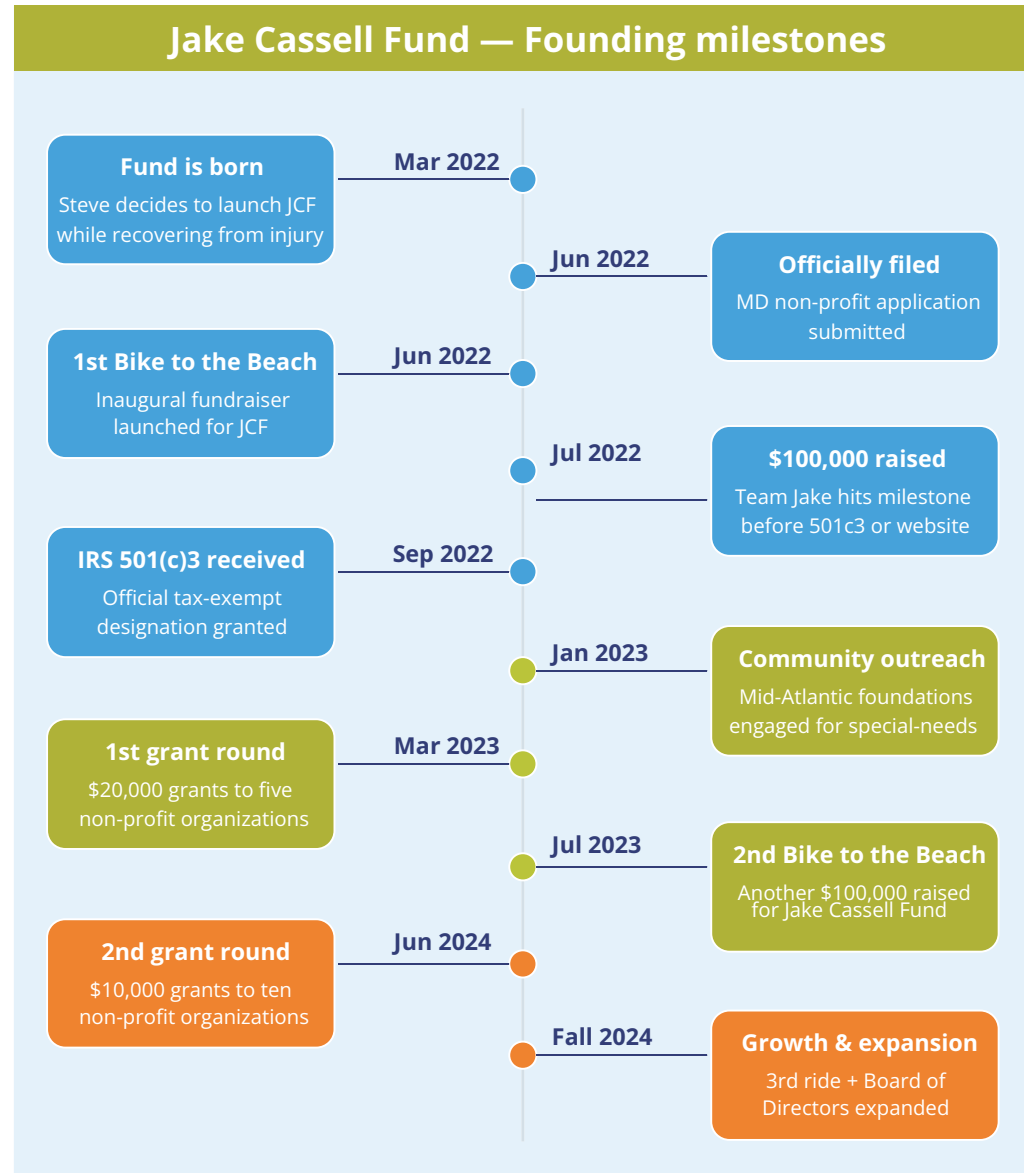
# The Jake Cassell Fund for Special Needs

## MISSION

Our mission is to provide resources to non-profits, schools, and similar organizations who **provide services to special needs children, teens, young adults and their families in underserved communities in the Mid-Atlantic states and beyond.** We aggregate funds through fundraising events and corporate sponsorships and are establishing ourselves as a trustworthy steward of grant awards from larger foundations.

## VISION

Our vision is to be a **trusted grantmaking vessel through which foundations and corporations can distribute funds to grass-roots organizations serving the special needs community.** The universe of non-profits serving the special needs community is fragmented and fundraising is difficult, time-consuming and inefficient. We aim to partner with well-resourced foundations and corporations to identify and facilitate support for smaller non-profits and schools across America.



# Our Impact

In our first two years, we raised more than \$200,000 through our Bike to the Beach fundraising event and directly through website donations. As a result, we awarded five \$20,000 grants in 2023 and ten \$10,000 grants in 2024. All of the organizations we awarded were identified through community foundations around the Mid-Atlantic, through direct outreach or referral.

Three of the 2024 grant recipients were repeat awardees, reflecting our goal of identifying outstanding organizations with which we can partner to bring about long-term impacts to the communities they serve.

Our relationship with Lakota Technical High School at Pine Ridge, South Dakota resulted from a targeted outreach to the indigenous community in which efforts were made to identify schools and/or non-profits operating within the reservation system.



a

The incidences of intellectual disabilities are higher on the reservations than the general population for a number of reasons including high level of alcoholism and poor diets. **Over the last two years, we have granted \$30,000 to the special needs department at Lakota Tech** to establish life skills program that teaches

everything from basic personal hygiene, how to prepare meals, clean your home, prepare and keep a budget as well as the funding of special trips off the reservation to learn more about educational and training opportunities, apprenticeships, and job opportunities available to them after graduation.



---

*“...the funding of special trips off the reservation to learn more about educational and training opportunities and apprenticeship and job opportunities available to them after graduation.”*

---

A second program we are continuing to support is **Reclaimed Hope Initiative (“RHI”)**. RHI provides support, counseling services and peer groups to parents of special needs children and both foster and adoptive parents in Albemarle and surrounding counties in central Virginia, primary through their “Thrive” program. Services provided directly to families include family crisis support, respite care, in-home caregiving, meals, and mental health support, while additional funds were directed toward support group efforts.



Finally, we chose to continue our support for Foundation Learning Center (“FLC”) in Landover, Maryland. FLC offers special needs education to autistic children in grades kindergarten through tenth, eighty-four percent of whom identify as male and 80 percent as African American. **FLC focused their efforts on developing a life-skills program, which includes the launch of a student run café where students practice key workplace skills like taking**

orders, making food, and enforcing safe food practices. Students also learn to budget for and shop at Costco to source ingredients for the items they prepare.

Students also launched a design center where they are able to design and print t-shirts, mugs and bags, hoping students develop their independence in creating products for sale with reduced staff assistance and hand-over-hand support.

---

*“Students have created shirts, mugs, and bags that they donated to our school fundraiser for the Special Olympics, helping FLC contribute over \$2,000 toward the cause.”*

---





# Grant Partners

The following summarizes the grants awarded and programs supported through our 2023 and 2024 grant seasons.

## 2023 GRANTEES

### Heshima Children’s Center

*Nairobi, Kenya*



Heshima Children’s Center provides wrap-around services to the “hidden children” and their mothers from the slums and underclass of Nairobi including education, therapies, food, shelter, fresh water, employment opportunities, security and dignity. **A grant from The Jake Cassell Fund enabled Heshima to build a greenhouse and create a program to sustainably grow food and teach horticulture** skills to the moms and children of the program.

### Reclaimed Hope Initiative

*Charlottesville, VA*



**Reclaimed Hope Initiative nurtures families navigating foster care, adoption, and children with disabilities in central Virginia and beyond.**

They offer services to each member of the family, including education, advocacy, mental health and respite support in order to maximize family preservation. Thrive, RHI’s cornerstone program, encompasses parent support groups and in-home respite care while also connecting families to necessary resources in the community.

### Oglala-Lakota Technical School

*Pine Ridge Oglala-Lakota Reservation, SD*



Oglala-Lakota Technical School serves indigenous students in one of the most impoverished counties in the USA, with a student population that features an unusually high percentage of Special Needs students. One of the staff’s objectives for the students is to help them prepare for life after school. **The Jake Cassell Fund grant funded off-reservation field trips to vocational schools and to companies willing to provide post-school employment opportunities.**

## Wood County Society

Parkersburg, West Virginia



Wood County Society serves over 1,800 individuals with disabilities in eleven counties in West Virginia and Ohio comprising the “Mid-Ohio Valley”, providing eighteen therapeutic, educational, and respite care programs. **A grant from The Jake Cassell Fund helped expand the initiative to serve over 200 youth, 3 years of age to 10 years of age throughout their 12-county service region.**

## The Foundation Learning Center

Landover, MD



The Foundation Learning Center, an affiliate of The Foundation Schools, is a 12-month school for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in grades K-12. **A grant from The Jake Cassell Fund funded the establishment of a Life Skills Program** to give FLC’s students the tools and experiences that will equip and empower them to become productive young adults, rise above their challenges, and pursue their goals.

## Monocacy Foundation

Frederick, MD



**Monocacy Foundation used a grant from The Jake Cassell Fund to grant wishes to special needs children and adults throughout Frederick County**

at its annual award ceremony. Examples of the many ways TMF helps their citizens includes the purchase of medications, medical and dental bills not covered by insurance. Therapies include; music, speech & language, physical, water, and equine, educational costs for specialized college courses, and swim lessons, adapted equipment, computers, and assistive technology, musical equipment, art supplies, summer camps, etc.



## 2024 GRANTEES

### Abilities Network

Baltimore, MD



**Abilities Network received a grant from The Jake**

**Cassell Fund to expand and support The Inclusive Teacher Development Project**, which aims to improve early childhood educators' skills and attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities. 60 early childhood professionals from across Maryland benefited directly, enabling approximately 2,300 children supported by those professionals each year to receive higher quality of care.

### The Arc Mid-Ohio Valley

Parkersburg, WV



**The Arc Mid-Ohio Valley utilized a grant from The Jake Cassell Fund to offer targeted Occupational Therapy**

**and Speech Language Therapy services to approximately 20 students** with identified Individualized Education Plans and/or diagnosed developmental delays, aged 6th-12th grade. Many students with developmental disabilities do not qualify for extended school year, and receive very shortened amounts of therapy provided during their school day.

### Camp Holiday Trails

Charlottesville, VA



Camp Holiday Trails is a 50-year-old organization that provides summer camp to children and teens with intellectual

and medical disabilities. **A grant from The Jake Cassell Fund provided financial support to families and campers to cover shortfalls in the many items from their Things to Bring list** that they cannot afford to provide such as toiletries, sleeping bags, rain gear, flashlights and bug spray. Estimated impact on 300 kids/families.

### The Foundation Learning Center

Landover, MD



**The Foundation Learning Center utilized a continuing grant award to support five experiential learning field trips to expose**

**our students to career opportunities** and healthy ways to positively engage with our local community, extension of the student-run Arctic Café and Design Center, and the purchase 10 TeachTown student licenses to teach students how to appropriately interact with law enforcement, comply with safety professionals and how to handle emergencies.



### Creative Works Farm

Waynesboro, VA



**Creative Works Farm utilized a grant from**

**The Jake Cassell Fund to support and expand Camp LIGHT, a summer day camp program for individuals with special needs and at-risk youth** that serves 250 kids and young adults during summer and 500 through adaptive field trips. Many kids with disabilities or chronic illnesses are sedentary and do not get to participate in sports or recreational activities, therefore missing out on the social, mental, and health benefits that exercise brings. Camp combines learning environments with these physical activities, giving kids with behavioral or learning problems the chance to develop needed skills during the summer.



## Oglala-Lakota Technical School

*Pine Ridge Oglala-Lakota Reservation, SD*



**Oglala-Lakota Technical School utilized a continuing grant to expand the scope of Lakota Tech's Life Skills Program to enable students with disabilities to transition from high school to the adult**

**world.** In 2023, Lakota Tech purchased a curriculum to implement cooking skills in the classroom, teaching students the basic skills required to plan and prepare meals, including planning, budgeting and executing shopping trips. Another focus was cleanliness, including house cleaning, doing dishes and washing clothes. Lakota Tech also partnered with local businesses to provide students with volunteer and internship options to gain hands-on experience in different career fields.

## Reclaimed Hope Initiative

*Charlottesville, VA*



Reclaimed Hope Initiative nurtures families navigating foster care, adoption, and children with disabilities, providing a safe healing community in central Virginia, offering services to each member of the family, including education, advocacy, mental health and respite support. **A 2024 grant continued the work from our prior year, addressing various needs within the Thrive program including family crisis support, respite care, in-home caregiving, meals, mental health support and skilled caregiving.**

## Spectrum Support

*Baltimore, Frederick and Carroll Counties, MD*



**Spectrum Support received a grant to expand its case management support to youth with disabilities** by connecting youth with resources within their

community in the areas of **housing, education, transportation, food and government benefits.** Staff providing this service also spent time on self-advocacy and self-awareness, to enable youth to be ready to obtain and retain a paid job. The grant supported 50 youth with disabilities ages 14-24 in Baltimore, Frederick and/or Carroll Counties.

## Variety DC

*Washington, DC*



**A grant to Variety DC from The Jake Cassell Fund provided three adaptive bikes for**

**children with special needs.** For children with special needs, adaptive bicycles bring an immense improvement in their physical and emotional well-being by strengthening their bodies through exercise, increasing their mobility, and improving their outlook. The grant was also utilized to provide \$400 Emergency Grants to 15-20 special needs families encountering medical and therapeutic bills that Insurance and Medicare don't cover.

# Our Team

The Jake Cassell Fund was founded by Steve and Jennifer Cassell, Jake's parents, to honor Jake's life by sharing his mission of love and empathy to special children and young adults who struggle with autism and other special needs. Steve serves as President of the Fund, while Jennifer serves as Director of Marketing, and both serve on the Board of Directors.



**Steven Cassell**

*Four Points, LLC*

Steven is the father of a special needs child and, through that experience, has experienced the beauty, innocence, unique perspective and promise that special needs children and young adults contribute to their families and communities.



**Jennifer Cassell**

*Cassell Communications*

Jennifer Cassell, mother of Jake Cassell, has decades of experience supporting the local special needs community. She ran Project Honduran Child for ten years, enabling over 160 students to attend school in underserved communities, and manages all marketing for the organization, including the website, print, and social media.



**Gerry Doros**

*Sagewind Capital, LLC*

Gerry is a dedicated husband and father of two, including a daughter with autism. After 20+ years navigating special needs systems in the DMV area with his wife Arielle, he now gives back through the Jake Cassell Fund and as a board member of The Neighborhood of Maryland, which provides housing and community options for young adults with special needs.



**Michael O'Hanlon**

*Brookings Institution*

O'Hanlon and his wife Cathy have a daughter diagnosed with autism who lives with them in Bethesda. Together, they created Friends on the Move, a monthly club for young adults with autism featuring outings, hiking, and community bonding. He also hosts events at Brookings on autism awareness and policy.



**Michael Schecter**

*Morgan Properties*

Mike was Jake Cassell's Cub Master, Scout Master, and Eagle Advisor, and has led with Scouting America for over 20 years. He currently heads an annual winter camporee attracting over 1,000 Montgomery County scouts and is passionate about ensuring all kids, regardless of ability or background, have access to outdoor experiences that build independence and resilience.



**Roger D. Winston**

*The Real Estate Group*

Roger is the grandfather of 17-year-old Maxwell Winston Monschein, whose experience at The Keswick School in Charlottesville, VA has been transformative for their family. He believes the Jake Fund is vital to providing similar resources to neurodiverse individuals and is committed to supporting children and youth with disabilities.

# Our Supporters

The Jake Cassell Fund would not exist, and we would be unable to fulfill our mission if not for the steadfast support of our individual donors and corporate sponsors. We are so thankful for the generosity of all of our 750+ individual donors and the ongoing support of our corporate partners.

## CORPORATE SPONSORS

### \$15,000 Platinum Sponsors



### \$10,000 Gold Sponsors



### \$5,000 Silver Sponsors



### \$2,500 Bronze Sponsors



## INDIVIDUAL DONORS

### \$5,000

Scott Cassell  
Tommy Chambers  
Ed Chu  
Blake Fellows  
David Grizzle  
Mike Leavitt  
Ryan Riel

### \$2,500 - \$5,000

Chris Ballard  
Justine Fitzgerald  
Fred Klein  
Mike Leavitt  
Preston Miller  
Dennis/Carmen Perkins  
Hans Schmidt

### \$1,000 - \$2,000

Geoffrey Baker  
Mike Bennett  
Buwa Binitie  
James and Jennifer Bognet  
Kevin Brown  
Rob and Marcella Bowell  
Bill Boyle  
Todd Buterbaugh  
Benji Bullard  
Sam Chapman  
Bob Cohen  
Scott and Jillian Copeland  
Elma Galimba  
Ned Goodwin  
Hirschler Fleisher  
HKS Architects  
David Jannarone

William Jarvis  
Mike Keene  
Matthew Leydig  
Dan Loeffelholz  
Sean McCabe  
Aaron McCleary  
Todd McNamara  
Chris Mizerak  
Bob Murphy  
Michael O'Hanlon  
Cecil and Grace Puvathingal  
Kurt Richter  
Michael Schecter  
Rahul Shah  
Keith and Lynn Turner  
Chris Warren  
Jackie Williamowski

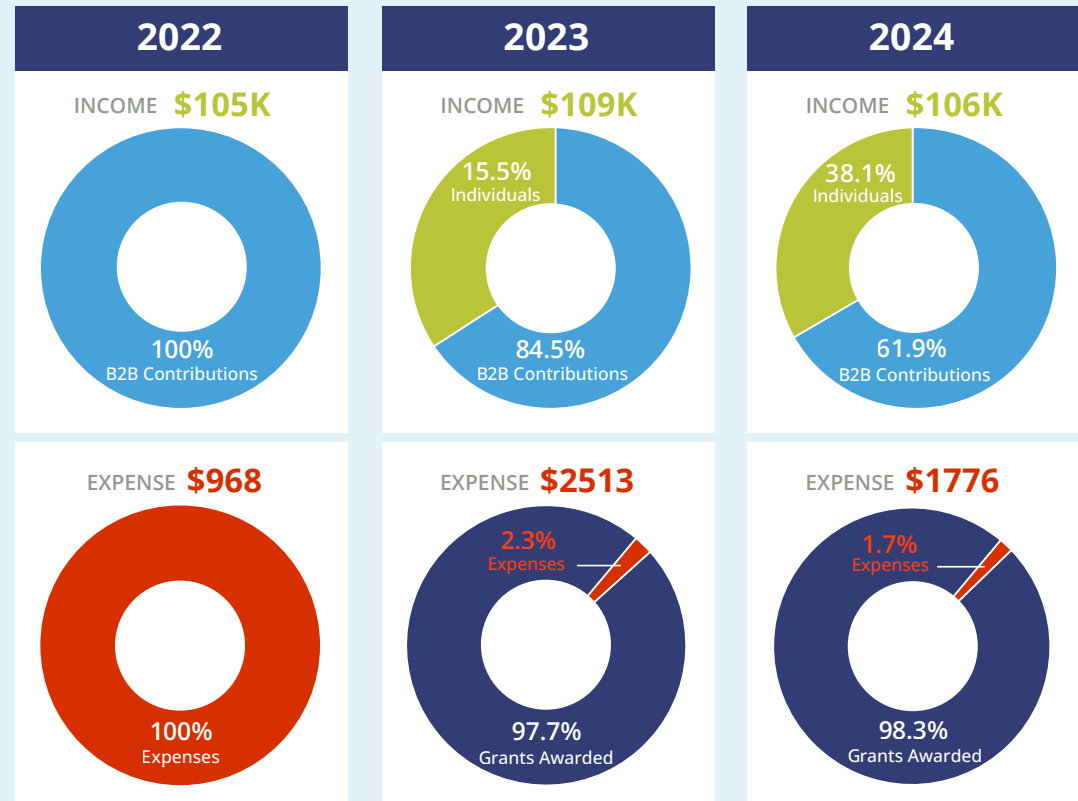


### Donate / Partner with Us

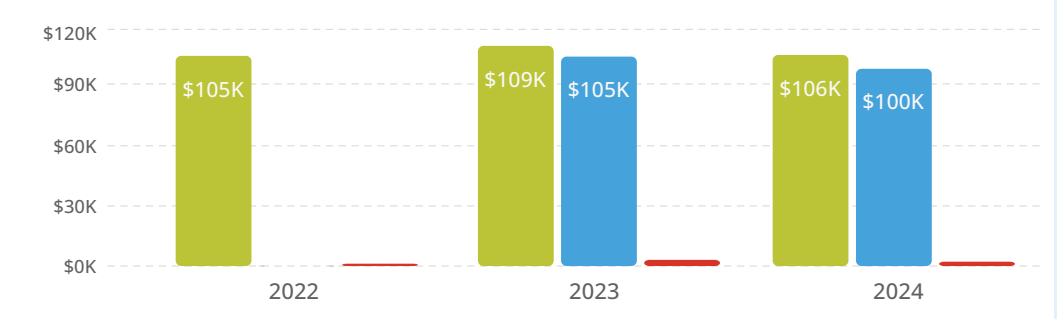
Scan to support the Jake Cassell Fund and join 750+ donors changing lives.



# Annual Financial Snapshot

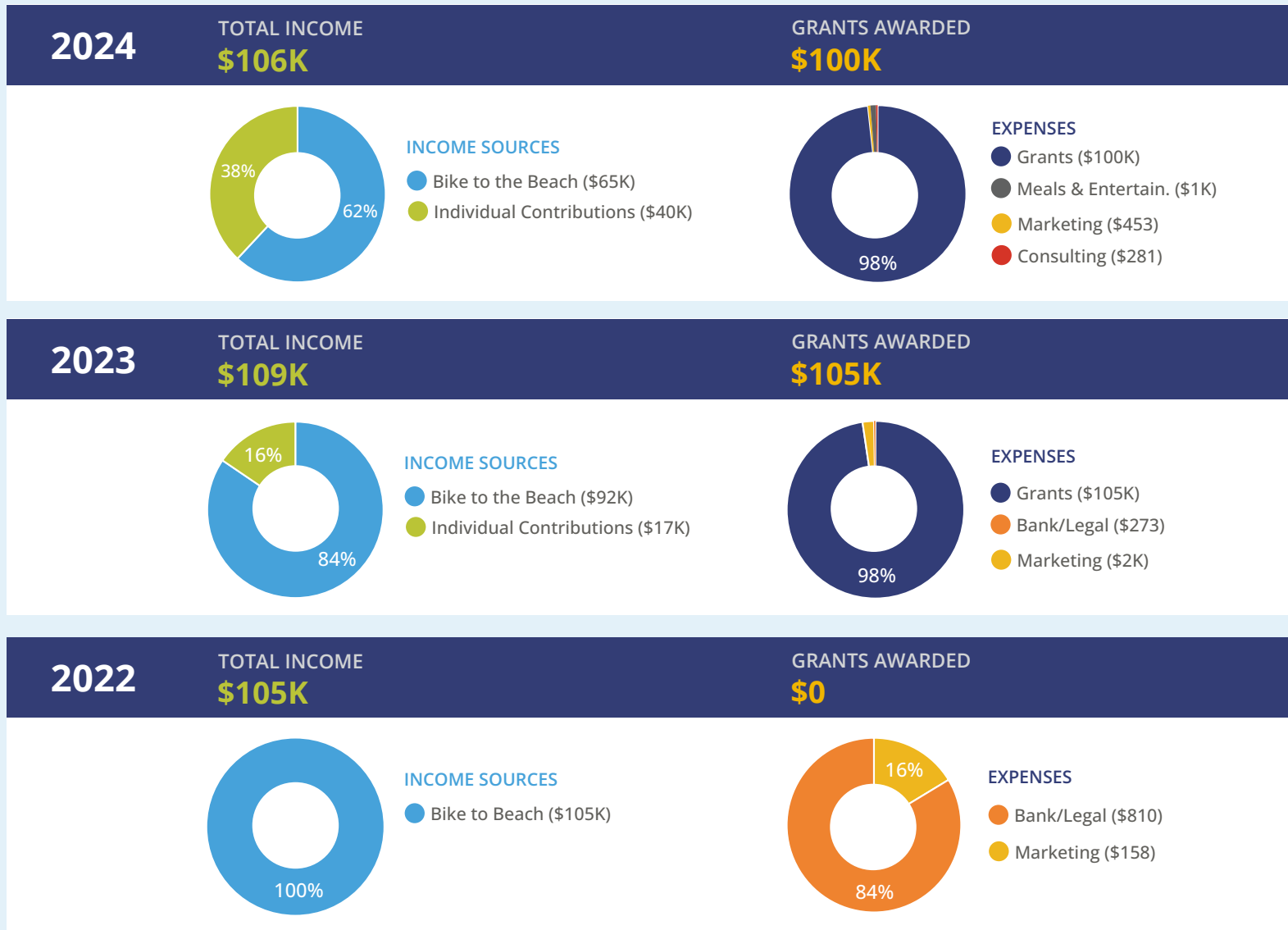


## Year-over-Year Comparison



# Annual Financial Summary

Income Sources & Expense Breakdown • 2022-2024



# Looking Ahead to 2026

## 2025 FISCAL YEAR

Reflecting on the first three years of the Jake Cassell Fund, we are enormously appreciative of every contribution and donor who has enabled Jake's love and kindness to extend to communities throughout the mid-Atlantic and beyond. We are grateful for our partnership with Bike to the Beach and the many ways they've amplified Jake's story and our message. Awarding \$100,000 in grants in each of our first two years exceeded our wildest imaginations at the very beginning of the Jake Cassell Fund, and it's all thanks to you.

Looking ahead, we are ready to grow. We have heard first-hand from our nonprofit partners about the challenges they are facing and their barriers to funding. We are ready to step up. We have developed trusted relationships with small, grassroots, high-impact organizations at the forefront of serving children and youth with disabilities and their families. We are committed to securing resources for them, picking up the effort to make their impact visible in a philanthropic sector that vastly underfunds disability programs. To sustain and grow our commitment to resourcing current and future nonprofit partners, we are engaging foundations and corporate philanthropy.

We are doing the work. We identified and contracted with an experienced grant writer who is helping us become "grant ready" and implement best practices and checks and balances that are critical in accessing institutional giving.

Thank you again to all our supporters. It is a privilege to honor our son's life by spreading his love and heart to underserved communities here in the Mid-Atlantic, to our indigenous friends in Pine Ridge, SD and our partners at the Heshima Children's Center in Nairobi, Kenya. We are thankful.



**Steven Cassell**  
Founder, President  
Board Member



**Jennifer Cassell**  
Director of Marketing  
Board Member





## The Jake Cassell Fund For Special Needs

5813 Wyngate Drive  
Bethesda, Maryland 20817

202.250.1709

Visit us online at [jakecassellfund.org](http://jakecassellfund.org)



---

You power this mission. Every act of generosity, every word of encouragement, every vote of confidence drives our work to support individuals with special needs forward. We're deeply grateful.

The Jake Cassell Fund is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. EIN 88-2936213

