

2025



ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

Firefly Autism



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Welcome to Firefly Autism's 2025 Impact Report.

In 2025, Firefly Autism expanded the scale of our work, achieving more than **1,000%** growth in measured reach and impacting over **3,000** individuals through direct services and professional training efforts.



OUR MISSION

Empowering autistic individuals experiencing access barriers to thrive through personalized programs and fostering supportive community connections.

OUR VISION

Firefly has created communities where autistic individuals are empowered and fully supported.

FIREFLY'S APPROACH

Firefly Autism works constantly with the needs of the community to reimagine the landscape of behavioral health. We support autistic individuals from 18 months to 70+ years, in addition to education systems, medical systems and a broad variety of community programs across the nation. We utilize the principles of assent-based and values-based practices to ensure a wholly person-centered approach to care.



Dear Firefly Community,

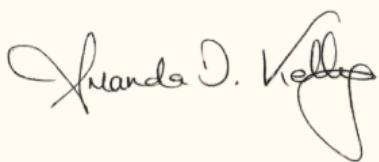
Reflecting on the past year, I am deeply inspired by the progress we've made together. Guided by our mission to empower autistic individuals experiencing access barriers to thrive, we continue strengthening the landscape of behavioral and mental health across the lifespan.

Firefly Autism remains a place where every person is valued and supported, from early intervention for young learners to programs that empower the most unique teens and adults reach their individual goals. This year, we expanded our offerings in both depth and breadth, now serving learners across the state of Colorado and in multiple states across the US. Through strategic planning, our focus on staff and facilities is the strongest it's ever been, working towards optimal environments for learning and growth. These collective efforts helped us support more than 3,000 children, adults, and families.

None of this impact would be possible without you. Your support allows more underserved children and families to access services and helps us train and equip caregivers, schools, and organizations statewide. This year, we were also humbled and honored to receive a truly transformative gift that allowed Firefly to establish an endowment and a building reserve. Milestones like these recognize the importance of our work and help secure a strong, sustainable future for Firefly. As you explore this year's report, I invite you to take pride in the meaningful outcomes your support has helped make possible.

Every milestone achieved and every challenge met reflects the power of this community and the shared belief that every individual deserves the opportunity to succeed.

Thank you for standing with us, championing our mission, and supporting the children, adults, and families who rely on Firefly.



Dr. Amanda Kelly
President & CEO of Firefly
Autism



Dear Firefly Community,

It has been a truly remarkable year for Firefly. As we reflect on our journey, I'm filled with pride and gratitude for all that we've accomplished together. This year's Impact Report captures the depth and breadth of our work—and the lives we've touched through our unwavering commitment to our learners and their families.

At the heart of Firefly's success is our extraordinary staff. Their dedication, compassion, and expertise continue to inspire us all. Every day, they bring light and learning into the lives of children with the highest needs, and we celebrate them with deep appreciation. This year, our Board adopted a bold new strategic plan that charts an ambitious course for the future. It's a plan rooted in our values and driven by our mission—to provide individualized, high-quality care to those who need it most.

We're also proud to share two major milestones that will strengthen Firefly for years to come. First, thanks to a generous gift from an incredible donor, we've established a building maintenance reserve to ensure our beloved facility remains in top operating condition. Our building is more than just a space—it's a sanctuary of growth and possibility. This reserve allows us to preserve it with care and foresight.

Second, we've taken the first steps toward building an endowment. This marks a transformative moment for Firefly, as the endowment will provide vital operating stability. It ensures that our programs can continue to thrive with consistency, even in uncertain times, and that our learners will always receive the care and support they deserve.

Our committed board joins me in thanking you for being part of this journey. Your support and belief in Firefly fuels our progress and makes everything we do possible. Together, we are building a brighter future—one learner, one family, one moment at a time.

With gratitude,



Linda Childears
Firefly Autism Board Chair





FIREFLY SENIOR LEADERSHIP



President & CEO
Dr. Amanda Kelly



**Senior Director of
Business Operations**
Allison Moffett



**Director of Clinical
Services**
Meghan Tolley



**Director of
Development**
Craig Baldwin



**Director of Training
and Education**
Cristina Theis



**Director of Center
Based Services**
Amber Varela





FIREFLY STAFF



At the heart of Firefly is an extraordinary team of dedicated professionals who show up every day with an unwavering commitment to the individuals and families we serve. This year's impact is a direct reflection of your work: the long hours, thoughtful collaboration, and deep care that often happens quietly and without recognition. You meet each learner where they are, and your contributions shape Firefly's impact in ways that extend far beyond what numbers can measure.

Thank you for your professionalism, your heart, and your belief in our mission. Firefly's progress, growth, and future are possible because of you.



MAJOR MILESTONES REACHED

Establishing Our First Building Reserve & Endowment: A Transformational Gift for Firefly's Future

This year, Firefly Autism reached a profound milestone in our organizational history. Through an extraordinary anonymous gift, Firefly is establishing its first-ever Endowment and Building Reserve Fund.

By providing a dependable, permanent source of funding for our core needs, our Building Reserve and Endowment funds ensure that Firefly can focus its resources on what matters most: delivering life-changing therapeutic and educational services without disruption. We are deeply grateful to the anonymous donor who made this milestone possible.

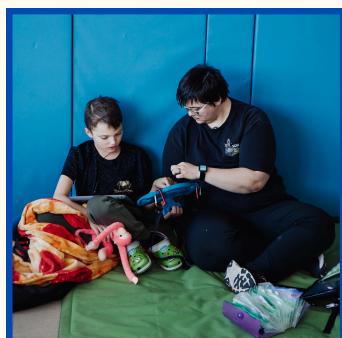
Building Reserve Fund

The building reserve will ensure:

- Critical building system upgrades such as HVAC and energy efficiency improvements.
- Long-term capital planning, allowing Firefly to proactively address repairs and upgrades
- Sustainable growth, ensuring our campus can evolve alongside the needs of our learners and clinicians for decades to come.

Endowment Fund

The establishment of Firefly's first endowment marks a defining step toward long-term financial stability for the organization. It reflects a deep commitment to responsible stewardship, and proactive planning while honoring the vision of a donor who understood that strong infrastructure is essential to lasting impact. This fund also creates a meaningful opportunity for legacy giving, inviting supporters to invest in the future of Firefly by securing the services that allow autistic individuals to thrive.



MAJOR MILESTONES REACHED

A Landmark Partnership with the Colorado Department of Education

A major milestone this year was Firefly securing a statewide contract with the Colorado Department of Education. This partnership expands access to high-quality autism support for districts across Colorado, particularly in *rural* communities where resources are often limited.

Through virtual and on-site consultation, targeted training, and collaborative planning, Firefly is strengthening district capacity to support learners with autism across all grade levels and build systems that last.

Together, this work reflects Firefly's commitment to serving communities facing access barriers and ensuring that every child, regardless of location, can benefit from evidence-based autism supports.



Expanding Access in Rural and Underserved Communities

This year, Firefly reached a major milestone by securing a contract with the Estes Park School District, expanding our mission of empowering autistic individuals experiencing access barriers to thrive through inclusive support within a public school setting.



FIREFLY ADVOCACY EFFORTS



Thanks to support from the Morgridge Family Foundation, along with additional generous donated time of RD Sewald of Sewald Hanfling and Associates, Firefly strengthened our advocacy work over the past year and expanded our role in policy discussions that affect the most vulnerable in our community.

With continued guidance from RD and his team, Firefly met with a number of key State figures including Mayor Strom, Commissioner Zenzinger, Representatives Sirota and Taggart, Senators Kirkmeyer and Amabile. These meetings ensured visibility and education on the barriers facing our learners and helped advance conversations on issues critical to maintaining access to high-quality care.

SEWALD HANFLING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS



Firefly was grateful for the opportunity to engage with the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) on recent and upcoming changes to state Medicaid rates and regulations affecting autism treatment. Discussions covered reimbursement models, authorization rates, and policy structures that directly shape service access for families, ensuring the voices of profoundly impacted children are not lost.

The support also allowed for engagement with state and national associations including the Council for Autism Service Providers (CASP) and the Colorado Association of Family and Children's Agencies (CAFCA), helping us stay aligned with local and national policy and regulatory trends.

CASP



A key focus of our advocacy is making sure that children, teens, and adults who face the greatest access barriers - those with significant support needs, those living in rural areas, and those without the resources to advocate for themselves - are not lost in policy decisions.

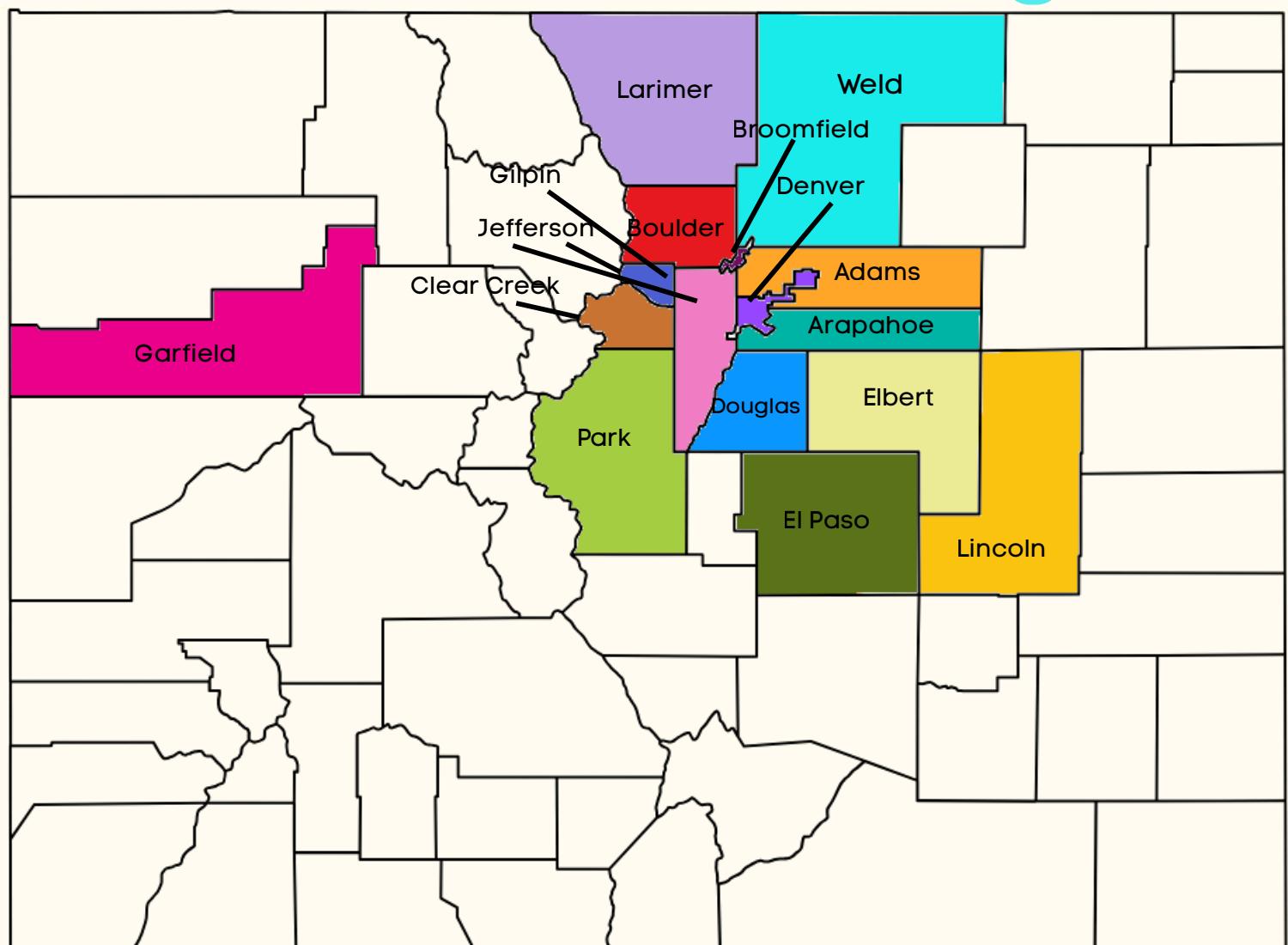


FIREFLY PROGRAMS

FIREFLY AUTISM COUNTIES SERVED IN COLORADO

16

Firefly currently serves individuals in 16 counties across Colorado.

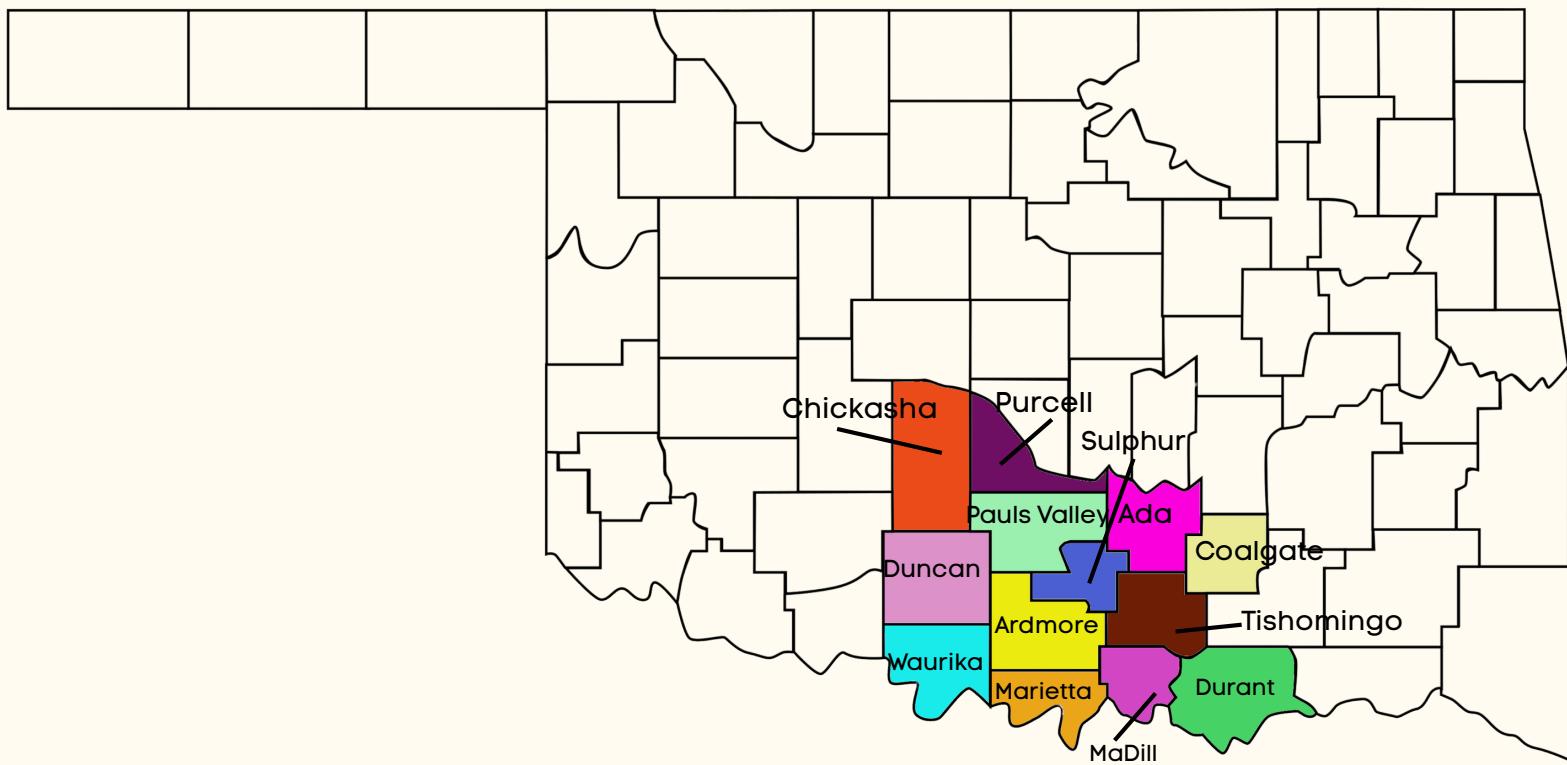


FIREFLY PROGRAMS

FIREFLY AUTISM COUNTIES SERVED IN OKLAHOMA THROUGH THE CHICKASAW NATION

13

Firefly currently serves individuals in 13 counties across Oklahoma.



FIREFLY PROGRAMS

Center Based Programs

Firefly Autism's Lakewood center provides individualized, center-based ABA services for learners ages 3 to 21 through Early Intervention, School-Age, and Vocational and Transition programming, while also serving as a gathering space for Adult Groups.

With gains across communication, social skills, behavior regulation, and adaptive and daily living skills, these outcomes reflect the dedication of Firefly's clinical teams and the strength-based, learner-centered approach that guides all center-based programming.

100%

of learners made progress
in their individualized
goals.

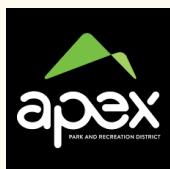


68 learners participated in
center-based services in
2025.

Transition Program

Our young adult program includes the potential for participation in our transition program. Participants can expect daily outings and supported volunteering and workplace training, including customized on-site electronics recycling training, gardening experience, and more.

Thank you to our amazing community partners!



FIREFLY PROGRAMS

Telehealth and School-Based Services

Through Outreach services, Firefly Autism expanded access to ABA intervention through telehealth and school-based support.

Telehealth and school-based services advance Firefly Autism's strategic priority of reducing access barriers by extending individualized, evidence-based support into homes, schools, and communities, ensuring learners and families receive consistent, empowering care regardless of location.

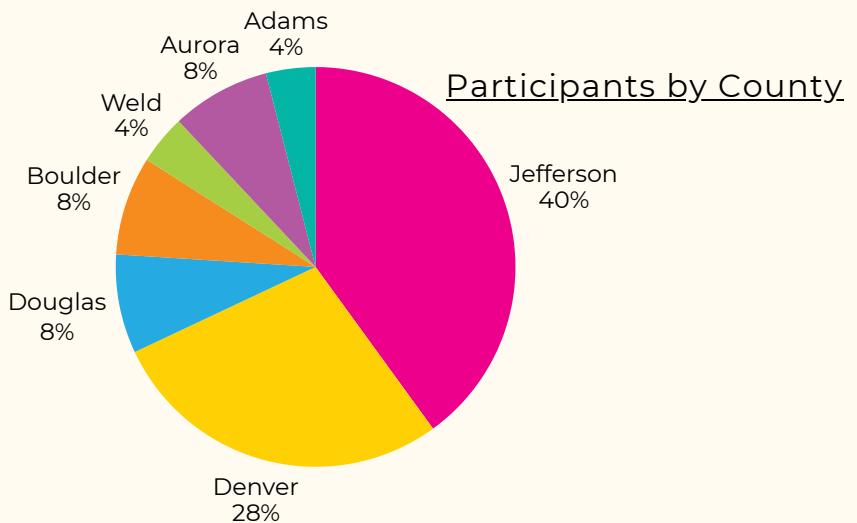
Adult Programs

80%

maintain employment while participating in the group.



The adult group currently has participants of all ages from 20 years to 76 years old.



TRAINING & EDUCATION

Chickasaw Nation

241

Individuals and families served through this partnership.



In 2025 Chickasaw Nation clients ages range from 5-28 years old with 14 being female and 49 being male.

Through our partnership with Chickasaw Nation, Firefly Autism provided expert training and tailored resources. In 2025, Firefly supported individuals and families through consultation, individualized programming, and specialty referrals, expanding access to personalized services within the Chickasaw Nation community.

Firefly's partnership with Chickasaw Nation advances the strategic priority of reducing access barriers by extending individualized expertise, training, and consultation into underserved communities beyond Firefly's physical campus.

100%

of participants reported increased confidence following Firefly Autism's Training & Education sessions.

99%

of participants reported that training content was applicable to their specific context.

100%

participating organizations reported increased capacity to support autistic individuals.

Training and Education Participant Voice

“The course will not only help me manage anyone with a neurodiversity, but will help me as a general manager. The impact of this training is countless, changing the way we respond in situations and improving the services we provide.”

“Great stuff. Thank you for providing insight into a world most of us don't know. Hopefully there are more opportunities to collaborate.”



TRAINING & EDUCATION

Outreach Trainings Provided by Firefly

306

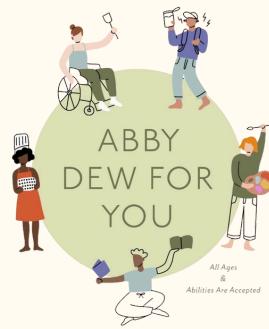
Professionals,
educators, and
community
members reached.

3,000

Learners were directly
impacted.

Firefly Autism delivered professional trainings and educational presentations to partners across Colorado, Oklahoma, and Minnesota, reaching 306 professionals, educators, and community members. Through these outreach efforts, more than 3,000 learners were directly or indirectly impacted through improved autism informed practices and strengthened community capacity to support individuals on the autism spectrum.

Training partners included St. Joseph's School, Chickasaw Nation, Momentum Behavior Services, the Colorado Department of Education, Castle Rock Police Department, Abby Dew for You, and Estes Park School District.



FIREFLY PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES

Adult Program Success Story

A participant in the adult program has made remarkable progress in self-advocacy at her jobs with the Broncos and the Rockies. She now confidently communicates with supervisors and requests the accommodations she needs, such as access to a chair during her shifts. Her efforts and positive presence were recognized when the Rockies named her Rookie of the Year. She has become a well-known and well-loved part of the championship suites community, earning warm support from fans and staff alike.

Outreach Learner Success Story

"When our child first began services, he struggled to express himself and often responded with "I don't know," rarely initiating conversation. Through thoughtful, strengths-based supports that honored how he communicates best, we watched his confidence grow. Now, his voice is clearer, more frequent, and full of connection, he independently starts conversations with our family, friends, and peers, something we once only hoped for."

Center Based Learner Success Story

This year, one of our learners took on new work at the Action Center and truly shined. He confidently supported customers by loading carts, assisting them to their cars, and following directions from staff, all while independently greeting and closing interactions. When he shared that he is deaf and customers signed back to him, his joy was unmistakable, highlighting the power of inclusive, community-based opportunities.

Firefly Parent Quotes

"The changes I have seen have been amazing. The staff support has been so incredible! Firefly has changed our lives for the better."

"We appreciate everyone at Firefly so much. Our child's quality of life has greatly improved. We are very impressed by our BCBA and the RBTs are all amazing."

"We loved our time with Firefly Autism. We learned so much about respectful, kind, and evidence based autism support services. Centering autonomy and self advocacy has resulted in a really happy, thriving child."



SURVEY BASED IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Parent surveys demonstrate meaningful learner progress and increasing caregiver confidence across the year. Results reflect early gains followed by sustained progress as families built skills and stability.

Current Learner Parent Impact

Parents rated their child's behavior progress at an annual average of **7.6 out of 10**, reflecting improvements in emotional regulation, engagement, and daily transitions.

Parents reported an average academic progress score of **7.8 out of 10**, indicating meaningful gains in learning and skill development.

Parents reported an average confidence score of **8.4 out of 10** in applying strategies at home, while confidence in parent guidance from Firefly staff averaged **8.6 out of 10**. Collaboration with Firefly clinicians remained a key strength, earning an average rating of **9.1 out of 10**.

Adult Groups Impact

100% of Adult Group participants reported high enjoyment of the program. Participants described increased comfort in social settings, greater confidence interacting with peers, and opportunities to build friendships in a welcoming environment, with skills carrying over into daily life.

100% percent of parents of Adult Group participants reported positive changes in communication, social confidence, or ability to interact with others. Parents emphasized the value of Adult Groups as a consistent and inclusive social opportunity that supports belonging, confidence, and quality of life for adults on the autism spectrum.



EARL LEE EVANS SENSORY AND COMMUNITY GARDEN

Firefly Autism's Earl Lee Evans Sensory and Community Garden is a therapeutic outdoor classroom used by learners in Firefly's center-based programs. During the growing season, the garden supports communication, regulation, and functional life skills through hands on activities such as planting, watering, and harvesting. The garden also served as the setting for Firefly's 2025 garden-based nutrition and feeding study.



2025 Garden Based Nutrition Study

Between May and October 2025, Firefly completed a formal study examining whether participation in garden-based activities increased learners' willingness to taste nutritious foods. Learners worked with Firefly staff in collaboration with a horticultural therapist from Denver Urban Gardens to grow and harvest food from the garden.

Through hands-on experiences in the garden, learners built greater comfort with nutritious foods, including those who are typically very selective eaters.

92%

of eligible learners were enrolled in the study.

80%

of participants tasted nutritious foods from the garden.

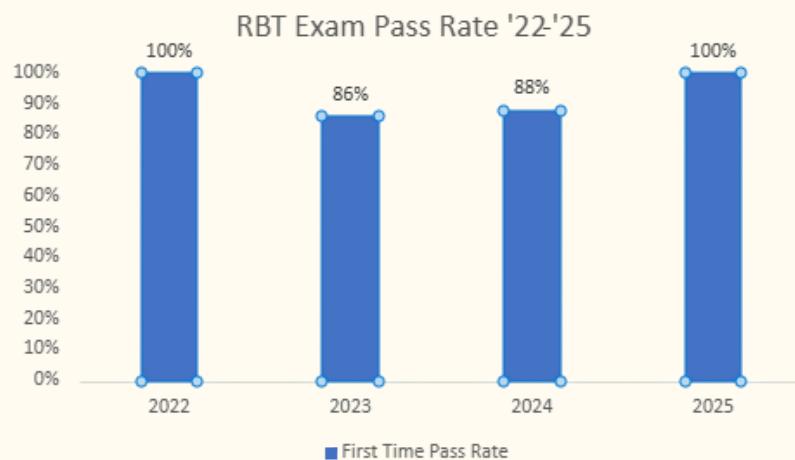
Learners with feeding goals and selective eating challenges successfully explored and tasted new foods.



STAFF DEVELOPMENT

STAFF DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY FIREFLY AUTISM

In 2025, Firefly Autism strengthened its workforce through internal training, recruitment, and professional development. Firefly operates its own Registered Behavior Technician training program that meets national certification requirements, with 12 individuals enrolling and 17 trainees passing the national RBT exam, resulting in a 100 percent pass rate.

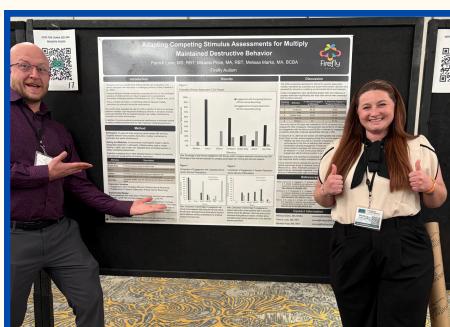


Firefly is proud to provide a comprehensive suite of staff training and certifications.

🌟 Firefly Shines at a State Conference! 🌟

In November, 30 Firefly team members attended the Colorado Association for Behavior Analysis annual conference, where we proudly showcased three research posters highlighting the meaningful and innovative work our staff delivers every day to advance the field of behavior analysis.

One poster earned first place in recognition of its exceptional quality and impact. A second Firefly poster received second place, further demonstrating the depth, rigor, and excellence of our team's work.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & VOLUNTEERS

67

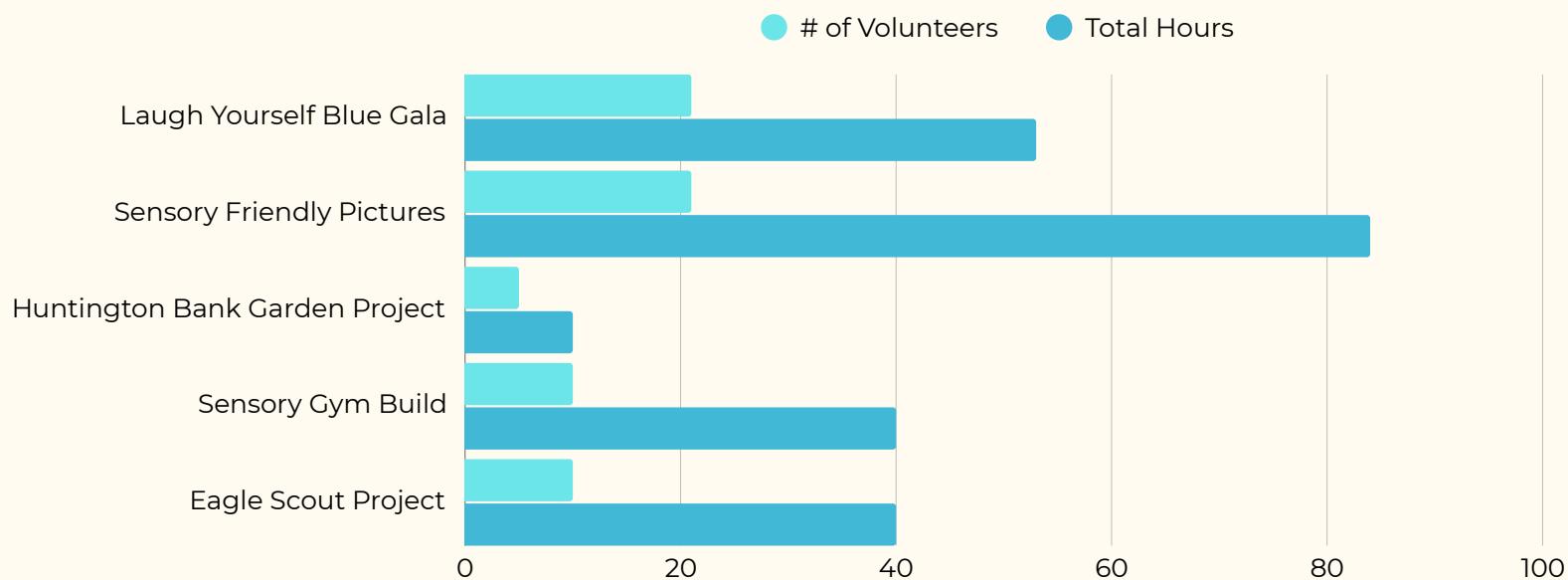
Volunteers supported Firefly in 2025.

Community engagement played an important role in advancing Firefly Autism's mission in 2025. 67 volunteers supported programs, events, and campus improvement projects across the organization.

Volunteer efforts strengthened key initiatives including the Laugh Yourself Blue Gala, Sensory Friendly Santa, Sensory Gym build out, Sensory Garden spring clean up led by Huntington Bank volunteers, and campus improvements completed by Eagle Scout volunteers, with additional support from Gratacon.

These contributions resulted in meaningful campus improvements, including new sensory gym equipment, classroom repairs and painting, and seasonal preparation of the Sensory and Community Garden. Volunteer support also generated cost savings, allowing more resources to be directed toward learner services.

This work aligns with Firefly Autism's strategic plan by strengthening community partnerships and expanding organizational capacity to deliver inclusive, high-quality services.



COLORADO GIVES DAY

Firefly raised \$46,584 during our Colorado Gives Day campaign to enhance existing sensory friendly classrooms with thoughtful upgrades that support calm, comfort, and connection. The upgraded classrooms continue to provide supportive environments where learners of all ages can feel safe, engaged, and empowered to grow and shine.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITIONS

Firefly is proud to be recognized by multiple community organizations for our leadership and the meaningful impact of our work.



National Philanthropy Day®

Firefly was an award recipient for the 2025 National Philanthropy Day in Colorado in the Inspiration category!



Firefly was the charitable partner for the Colorado Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame Night. A night dedicated to celebrating legends who give voice to our communities



Firefly received the 2025 Denver Business Journal Partner in Philanthropy Award for advancing community impact through partnerships, giving, and volunteerism.



Firefly Autism was honored to be recognized as the beneficiary of Hall Financial's 2025 Client Appreciation Gala for our work supporting autistic individuals and their families across Colorado.



Dr. Amanda Kelly, Firefly's President & CEO was named one of Denver Business Journal's 40 Under 40.



FIREFLY AUTISM EVENTS

Firefly events bring families, professionals, and community partners together to build connection, share knowledge, and expand access to autism-affirming support.

Firefly Autism 2025 Laugh Yourself Blue Gala

Firefly Autism hosted its 14th annual Laugh Yourself Blue gala at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts in May 2025, raising \$784,409 to support individuals and families impacted by autism. With 516 attendees and 38 sponsors, this signature event continued to celebrate community, awareness, and the joy of laughter while strengthening support for individuals on the autism spectrum.



3rd Annual Lifetime Classic

Lifetime Home Remodeling proudly hosted the third annual Lifetime Golf Tournament at the Colorado Golf Club in July 2025, raising \$162,373.80 to benefit Firefly Autism. With 80 golfers and 26 generous sponsors, this beautiful day on the course brought our community together in support of Firefly's mission. Participants enjoyed great weather, connection, and purpose as they helped create lasting impact for the individuals and families Firefly serves.



FIREFLY AUTISM EVENTS

Firefly Autism 3rd Annual Summer Garden Party

The 3rd Annual Summer Garden Party was held in September 2025 at the Earl Lee Evans Sensory and Community Garden, bringing together donors, partners, and community members for an evening of celebration and connection. Guests enjoyed live music, food, yard games, and artwork by members of Firefly's Adult Groups in the vibrant garden setting. Firefly staff also shared updates on garden-based research, highlighting the space's role as both a community gathering place and an extension of Firefly's programs.



4th Annual Sensory Friendly Holiday Pictures

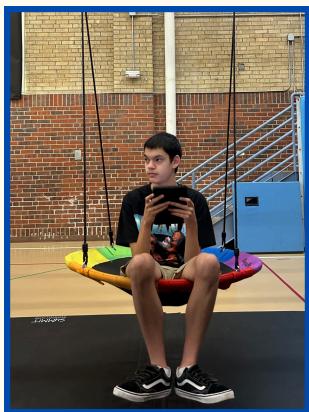
Firefly Autism's Sensory Friendly Pictures provides families with the opportunity to enjoy holiday photos in a sensory-friendly, supportive environment where every individual was welcomed, respected, and celebrated.



FACILITY & CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Sensory Therapy Gym

This year, Firefly Autism opened a new sensory therapy gym to support regulation, movement, and engagement for learners across programs. Equipped with adaptive sensory tools, the gym has already improved readiness for learning, confidence in movement, and overall engagement. Made possible through the generosity of the Morgridge Family Foundation, Summit Sensory, and supporters of our 2024 Colorado Gives Day campaign, this space reflects Firefly's commitment to creating safe, empowering environments for individuals on the autism spectrum.



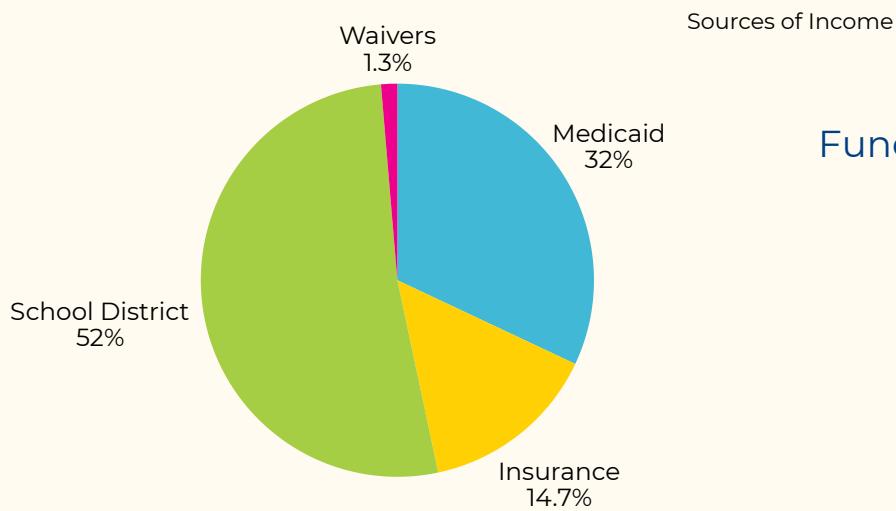
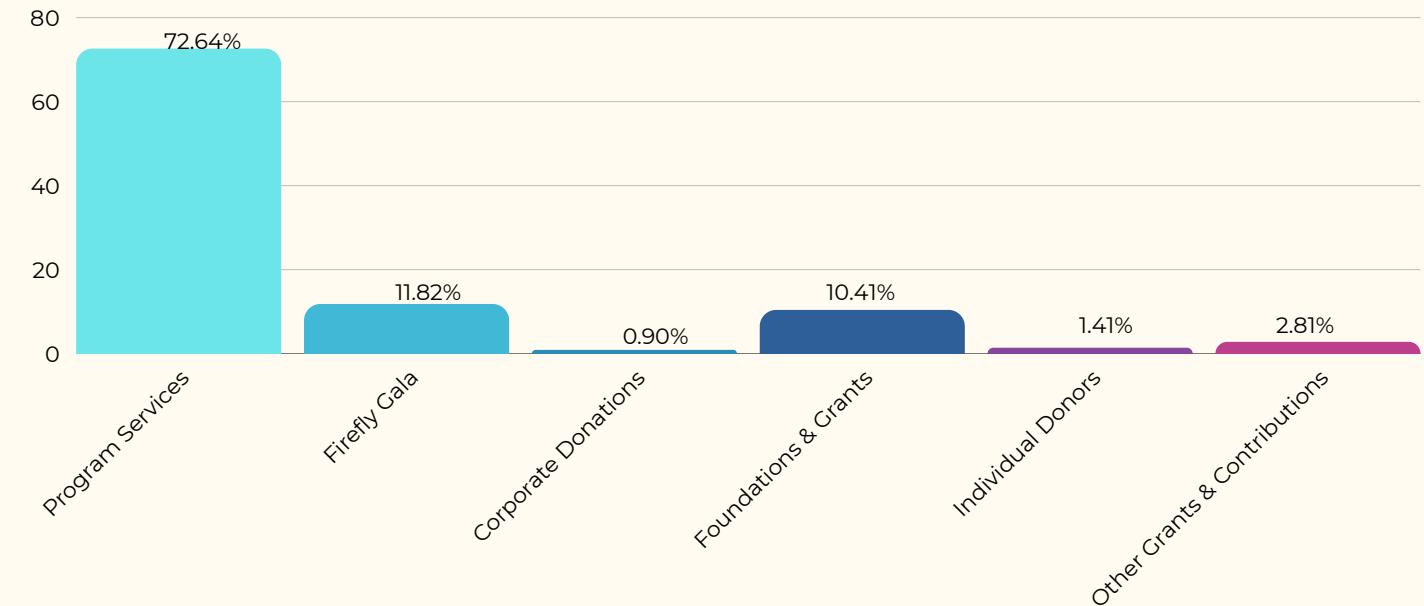
Path to Success | Community Sensory Garden

This year marked an important milestone for the Community Sensory Garden with the installation of the first section of the Path to Success, a brick walkway honoring the individuals, families, and partners who support Firefly Autism. Made possible by generous donors, the completed path improves accessibility to the garden while symbolizing a shared commitment to helping learners grow, thrive, and connect through outdoor learning and therapeutic experiences.



FINANCIAL DATA

● Program Services ● Firefly Gala ● Corporate Donations ● Foundations & Grants ● Individual Donors
● Other Grants & Contributions



Funding Sources for individuals:

Medicaid = 32%

Insurance = 14.67%

School District = 52%

Waivers = 1.33%

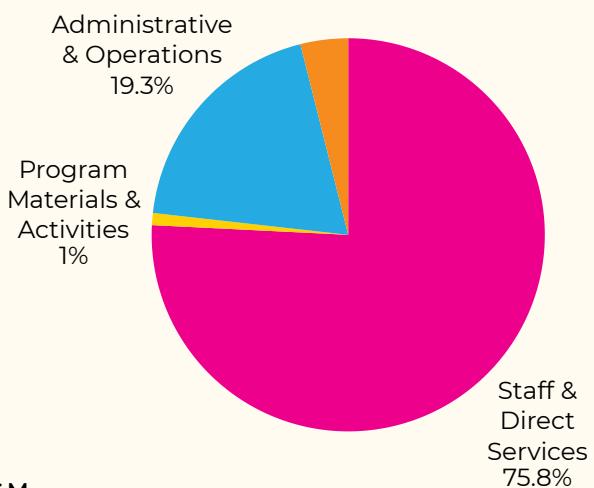
Organizational Spending:

Staff & Direct Services = 76.43%

Program Materials & Activities = 0.15%

Administrative & Operations = 19.47%

Fundraising & Community Engagement = 3.95%





FIREFLY AUTISM BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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Thank you to our title sponsors!

These individuals donated \$50,000 or more to Firefly Autism in 2025.





Thank you to our sponsors and donors!

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Auna Jornayvaz	Clifford Marks	El Pomar Foundation
Bank of America Charitable Gift Fund	CoBank	Elaine Appel
Barbara Grogan	Colorado Behavioral Health Administration	Emily Henderson
Behr Benefits LLC	Colorado Gives Foundation	Emily Mazzeo
Bernstein Private Wealth Management	Colorado Rockies Baseball Club	Emily Spencer
Bill & Cheryl Rooney	Connor Hall	Emma Keever
Bill & Janie Ernstrom	Cora Sexton Wheeler	Ent Credit Union
Bill Kitamura	Coree Schmitz	Eric Spencer
Bill Mason	Craig & Meeri Baldwin	Evan Baklid
Bill Plummer	Cuvee	Evan Sisneros
Billy Leggett	Cynthia Weist	Farmer's Insurance - Eric Davis Agency
Blake Bradley	D.J. Whetter	Faye Tate
Bo Peretto	Dan & Julie Dobler	Fidelity





Thank you to our sponsors and donors!

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GIVE TO FIREFLY AUTISM



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Hands on Learning	Staff & Community Education	Family Support	Building Maintenance
\$250 Kits for planting & growing produce in our sensory garden.	\$250 Community trainings for community groups like first responders.	\$250 Social emotional training for one family.	\$250 Sensory supplies (headphones, sensory toys, etc) for our learners.
\$500 Annual maintenance in our sensory garden.	\$500 Community Education & Engagement session at Firefly Autism.	\$500 4-hour behavioral skills assessment for one learner.	\$500 Playground equipment, repairs, and maintenance.
\$1,000 Transition to Work Program's community outings.	\$1,000 Trauma care training for 4 Firefly staff members.	\$1,000 30 hours of medical care for Firefly's medically fragile learners.	\$1,000 One year of maintenance in the Blue Star Recycling Computer Room.
\$2,500 Adult Groups outings for one month.	\$2,500 Training for Firefly's Neurodiversity Certification for staff members.	\$2,500 1 month of behavior support services for a family.	\$2,500 Cost of building repairs and maintenance.



GIVE TO FIREFLY AUTISM

The Sofia Isabel Soto Fund

The Sofia Isabel Fund for Firefly Autism is in memory of Sofia Isabel Soto, daughter of Javier Alberto Soto, The Denver Foundation's President and CEO. While in Colorado, Sofia received services from Firefly Autism, including abundant support and love. Gifts to this fund will help Firefly Autism support children like Sofia.

[**Donate to the Sofia Isabel Soto fund**](#)

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Whether you are planning for the future, or seeking meaningful ways to give today, legacy gift planning can create life-changing opportunities for the children, teens, and adults we serve at Firefly Autism. This is a powerful way to fulfill your philanthropic goals, enjoy significant tax benefits, and further Firefly's mission while supporting your financial well-being.

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Help us make a difference by donating much-needed supplies to our center! Our Amazon Wishlist features items that directly support our programs and students, ensuring they have the tools they need to thrive. Whether it's sensory toys, educational materials, or everyday essentials, every contribution counts.

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Firefly Autism

Empowering autistic individuals
experiencing access barriers to thrive.



Get in touch with us!

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