

Message from Executive Director

Anthony Zambrano

2025 was a year of many successes and challenges, and I am proud to say that our management team, Board of Directors, and parents all worked hard to help us navigate each issue we faced.

Did you hear *Viewpoint*, the esteemed educational program hosted by Dennis Quaid, announced a new episode in partnership with Downeast Horizons? Filming took place in August 2024 at the Brewer Center, and the show featured key members of the Downeast Horizons team along with individuals benefitting from our programs.

The seven-minute feature story explored how community support and tailored programs empower individuals with developmental disabilities to lead active and fulfilling lives in their communities. We also produced a 30-second commercial in collaboration with *Viewpoint*, which was shown along with our segment. The story aired during peak (7:00–11:45 a.m.) and prime (6:00–11:45 p.m.) times on national news networks including CNN, CNN *Headline News*, MSNBC, CNBC, Fox News, Fox Business Network, TLC, Travel, and Discovery from January 6th–31st.

Additionally, our seven-minute feature story was distributed nationally to all Public Television affiliates beginning the week of January 13th and airing throughout 2025.

Downeast Horizons is actively engaged in a Lifespan Waiver grant program, with participation from both Adult Services Directors as well as representatives from Human Resources, Accounting, Quality Assurance, and the Shared Living Coordinator. This initiative aims to educate providers statewide on the effective integration of the new Lifespan Waiver into existing service frameworks.

The Lifespan Waiver shares significant similarities with MaineCare Waivers 21 and 29, primarily differing in definitional nuances. Individuals currently enrolled in Waivers 21 and 29 will have the option to transition to the Lifespan Waiver or retain their existing coverage through a grandfathering provision. Ultimately, Waivers 21 and 29 will be phased out and replaced by the Lifespan Waiver.

In recognition of Downeast Horizons' participation and contribution to this grant program, the organization will receive \$65,000 in reimbursement. This program requires extensive involvement in creating agency documents and completing mandatory webinars. While the project is time-intensive for all involved, it will provide Downeast Horizons with a significant competitive advantage over non-participating agencies in the future provision of Lifespan Waiver services.

On behalf of Downeast Horizons, I am grateful to all of our program participants, members of the Board of Directors, parents, staff, Case Managers, and State agency employees for everything they do. I am fortunate to be the leader of this fantastic agency and I'm confident that together we will be able to overcome any and all future challenges. I look forward to a wonderful and exciting 2026.



Downeast Horizons Board of Directors

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Downeast Horizons Senior Management

Anthony Zambrano, Executive Director

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Nikki Cutchens, Children Admin.
Ashley Mitchell, Children Admin.

Tracey Morey, Adult Services Dir.
Jeff Jones, Adult Services Dir.
Alicia Holdsworth, Shared Living Coord.
Jenny Ashmore, QA Coord.
Wesley McFarlin, Children Admin.

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Brewer Office

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Toll Free: 1-855-894-3599

Mission Statement

Downeast Horizons assists and supports individuals with developmental disabilities to live complete and fulfilling lives.

www.dehi.org



Investing in
the Future

Assisting Adults & Children
with Developmental
Disabilities Since 1974



Annual Report

2025

Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

The following is an outline of recent accomplishments.

Community Supports

Both the MDI and Brewer Day Programs continue to volunteer with Meals on Wheels, as they have for many years. Program participants enjoy this opportunity to give back to their communities by delivering lunches to elderly, disabled, and home-bound people in the Mount Desert Island, Ellsworth, and greater Bangor areas. The Downeast Horizons staff and participants play an important role, traveling to the Meals on Wheels office/preparation area and bringing the meals from there to those in need. Both staff and participants report that this volunteering activity made especially rewarding by the joy and smiles the interaction brings to those receiving the meals.



Residential Services

Downeast Horizons attended a meeting at the Brewer Police Department with the School Resource Officer and the Chief of Police to discuss a program called **Blue Envelope**. This new program, already adopted by the State Police, Bangor Police, and several other municipalities, is designed to improve interactions between police and adults with developmental disabilities. People who decide to take advantage of the program would pick up a blue envelope from Downeast Horizons or the Brewer Police Department. They could then put information in the envelope that would help improve potential interactions with law enforcement. For example, they might choose to carry guardian contact info, or information about communication abilities, or explain that loud noises may cause agitation, and so on. The blue envelope would be carried by the person with disabilities and would only contain information they want to share with police. The police, in turn, would be trained to recognize these blue envelopes for the valuable information they contain.

The Adult Services Director coordinated a flu and COVID vaccination clinic at the Ellsworth Center. Shaw's Osco Pharmacy was nice enough to offer the clinic free of charge as long as 20 or more people signed up; there are currently over 50 staff and persons served on the list. Annual flu vaccinations are required for Direct Service Providers by the State of Maine (COVID vaccinations are no longer required), and offering a clinic at the Ellsworth Center will make getting those vaccinations much easier and more convenient for staff, residents, and program participants.

Agency-Funded Activities

Many of the individuals DEHI supports have very limited budgets, so we strive to offer a number of no-cost opportunities for them to enjoy our little corner of Maine the way that everyone should. Some of the truly inspiring events that are made available to our program participants include Timber Tina's Great Maine Lumberjack Show, Downeast Scenic Railway, the Schooner Margaret Todd, Bar Harbor nature cruises, drive-in movies, the Maine Special Olympics, the Blue Hill and Bangor state fairs, tours of Acadia National Park, and summer weeks at Camp CaPella. We know of no other provider that offers all agency-sponsored activities at no extra cost to program participants. We are so grateful to our generous donors for making these life-enriching activities possible.



Solar Farm Agreement Contract

We received notification in December 2024 that some of our sites have been selected for solar farm connection.

The Executive Director and the Business Manager began working with a representative from Arcadia/Ampion to switch all of our Versant Power accounts to solar farms in May 2023 and we were put on a waiting list. All upcoming bills will be switched over once there are available farms. We track our cost savings, which are projected to be 10–15%.

DEHI State of Maine Annual Report

The Business Manager is officially the new filing agent for the State of Maine Annual Report for DEHI, DEH Foundation, and Knox District Housing. Up until 2023, the DEHI State of Maine Annual Report filing was done by the office of Attorney Thomas Wheatley, who retired in January 2024. The Business Manager met with Attorney Wheatley's staff back in December 2023 to obtain all of the records being kept by the office for DEHI, DEH Foundation, and Knox District Housing (KDH). At this time, the process of how to complete the annual report submission (due May 2024) under supervision of Attorney Wheatley's office was reviewed. The Business Manager included the mandatory reporting of all Board members to the State, as required. The submissions were found complete and were approved. The Business Manager applied to be the official certified agent for the annual reporting for all three agencies moving forward, as instructed by the State. In September 2024 the State confirmed that our application was under review, and in December 2024 we received notification that our application was approved. The Business Manager submitted the necessary documentation and paid the filing fee in May for DEHI and DEHI Foundation. KDH was processed by MDI Housing this year to mainstream their process.

Trainings

All Children's staff participated in a number of training sessions this year. Topics included Mandated Reporting, Water Play and Safety, Trauma and the Importance of Self-Care, and How to Recognize Burnout. They also ran through scenarios on professionalism and boundaries to sharpen their skills and were given some feedback on certain situations that may occur. Staff were trained on processing grief and developing coping skills. The last training that was provided was How to Break Prompt Dependency. Staff were given steps to ensure that they were using the least restrictive intervention needed to ensure that eventually the child will be able to do the task on their own.

Children's staff were trained on the difference between tantrums and meltdowns, the DEH Sexual Harassment and Flu policies, and how to maintain confidentiality in different situations. Staff participated in the annual Blood Borne Pathogens and Trauma trainings.

Our Certified Mandt Instructor conducted a one-day de-escalation training for the Brewer Adult Program staff. The training emphasized early intervention strategies to prevent escalation in participant behavior. By recognizing subtle behavioral cues that may indicate escalating anxiety or distress, staff can proactively implement de-escalation techniques, such as removing the individual from the stimulus or removing the stimulus itself. While recognizing these subtle cues can be challenging, early intervention significantly increases the likelihood of de-escalating the situation and returning the individual to a more stable emotional state.

Audits and training on Reportable Event reporting and processing were completed with staff. We also worked to develop new ways to ensure that all requirements are met in that area now and moving forward. Both actions were taken at the behest of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Rental Subsidy Contract

The State of Maine has ended all rental subsidy contracts with agencies as of January 31st. DEHI's annual rental subsidy contract was approximately \$24,000. The State is now calling the funding Housing Support Funds. Each residential client has to submit an application for the funding and will receive the funds directly, not the agency. The State's announcement letter did not include much more information about the program. Adult Services Director Tracey Morey has been working very closely with our Homes, Case Managers, Rep Payees and Guardians as we try to learn about this new system.

Maine Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML)

As of January 1st, any employer with at least one Maine-based employee must withhold payroll contributions to Maine Paid Family Medical Leave. Employers with 15 or more employees must contribute 1% of wages and may deduct up to half of the contribution from the employee's wages. Employers with less than 15 employees must contribute 0.5 percent of wages and may deduct the entire amount from the employees' wages.

Employers were required to begin their first quarterly wage reporting April 1st, with the first payments due by April 30th. The required deductions started taking place with the first DEH payroll of 2025. The portal process with the State was completed in January when the portal became available. All funds have been rendered to ADP with our bi-weekly payroll processing, and ADP is submitting those funds to the State quarterly per the new law.

Employee Retention

We are currently working on onboarding techniques to lower our 25% turnover rate. Of note, our research shows that majority of this turnover consists of staff that have been with the agency for less than three years. This is primarily because college students work part-time until they complete their degree, then move on to their career choice. On the average, our employees work here 7+ years. This is something that will remain a focus for us moving forward.

On behalf of all the hard-working staff here at DEHI, a big Thank you! to the entire Board of Trustees for approving the July 2025 incentive totaling \$135,597. As staff had been made aware by information the Executive Director had been sharing for several months' prior, this incentive seemed unlikely to happen. Fortunately through their hard work, diligence, and dedication, the financial trajectory of the agency improved. This was definitely a wonderful summer surprise! It is the philosophy of the Executive Director and the Board of Directors to reward staff, when possible, when the agency is successful, because it is the staff that make Downeast Horizons a success.

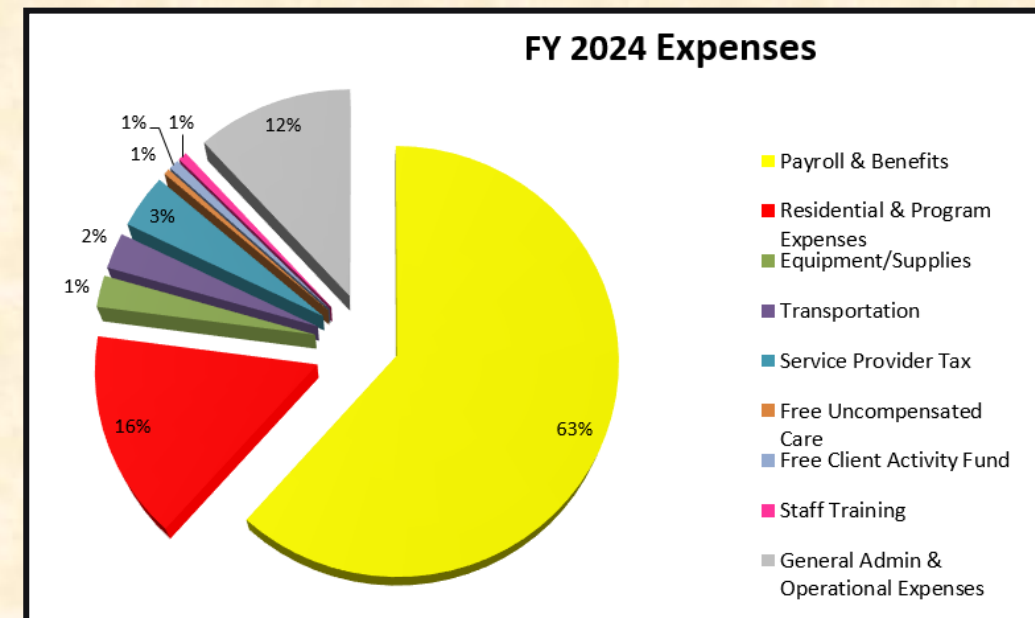
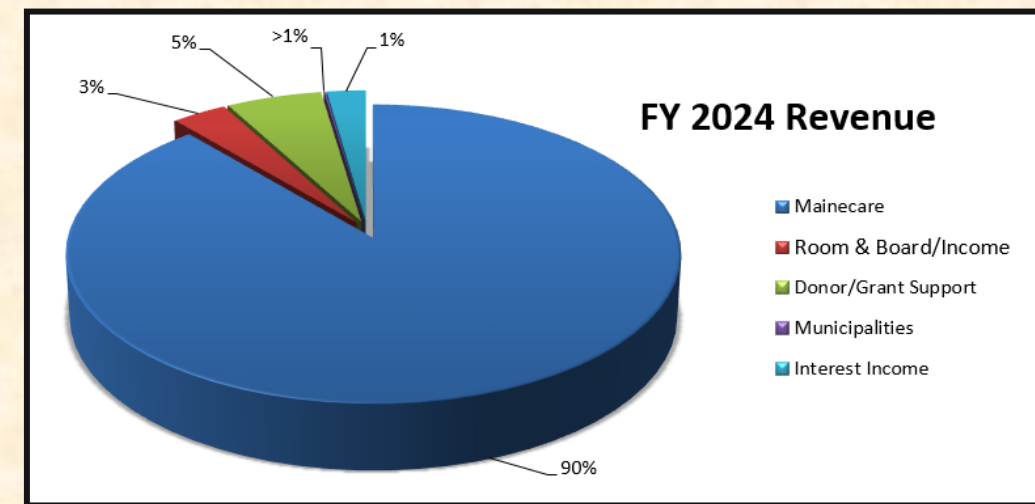
Downeast Horizons' full-time employees receive the following benefits: annual performance-based raises; 10 paid holidays per year; a retirement plan with matching contributions of up to 5%; dental, health, and life insurance; short- and long-term disability; and paid time off.



FINANCIAL INFORMATION

(July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024)

Statistics are based on a \$10,025,000 budget



Downeast Horizons Services

Adult Residential Services, Day & Evening Programs, Work Supports, and Shared Living:

Direct supports are provided to the adults we serve with the goals of increasing and maintaining social and community participation and developing and maintaining skills that support health and wellbeing. Services may be provided in groups or on an individual basis. All supports are scheduled in accordance with individual treatment plans.

Personal development activities may address: self-care and self-management skills; physical fitness; behavioral management; sensory, motor, and psychological needs; interpersonal skills to cultivate supportive personal, family, work, and community relationships; and opportunities to participate in activities promoting social and community engagement.

Children's Services:

Direct support is provided to children and young adults with cognitive impairments up to age 21. These services can be delivered in home or community settings, with the goals of increasing the person's level of function and skill development while decreasing maladaptive behaviors. Treatment plans are developed based on the strengths and needs of the individuals.

Downeast Horizons provides Children's Behavioral Health Professionals for one-on-one supportive services in the home and community. Their focus is on teaching children the necessary skills to gain independence with activities of daily living, with foci on community integration and behavior management, as identified in individual treatment plans.

Both Adult and Children's services are carefully designed to be fun and rewarding while focusing on the personal needs and challenges of each individual.