

DEC

DEVELOPMENTAL ENTERPRISES CORPORATION

Annual Report 2014

# Life's Greatest Lessons

What we can  
all learn from  
people with  
disabilities



DEC



*If I call you a friend,  
You'll always know,  
A friend you have in me.*

-Author Unknown

They have been called many names, defined by various stereotypes.

Too often, these descriptions have been wildly inaccurate, even cruel and dehumanizing ...the unconscionable upshot of fear and ignorance, combined with stigmatization and misunderstanding. Happily, most of these inappropriate and insensitive tags that have long been pinned on people challenged by cognitive disabilities -- including the dreaded "*R-word*" -- are being excised from our vocabulary. Too slowly, perhaps, at least in some circles; but disappearing nonetheless.

Men and women once labeled as "morons," "idiots" and "feeble-minded imbeciles," not just by society but even the medical profession itself, are now respectfully referred to as intellectually and developmentally disabled (IDD) adults.

Rather than be defined by their disabilities, developmentally disabled adults are increasingly being valued for their *abilities*. In essence, Americans are at long last shifting from dismissing these people as handicapped to accepting -- even respecting -- them as handi-abled.

We know them as workers. Consumers. Taxpayers. Volunteers. Neighbors. Yet there is still one name we rarely, if ever, call people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Teachers.

Every week, every month, every year since 1971, with passion and compassion, with uncommon patience and perseverance, DEC's family of dedicated staff lovingly teach hundreds of local men and women with intellectual and developmental disabilities important daily living skills, such as housekeeping activities, grocery shopping, personal hygiene, meal preparation and other activities that promote self-reliance and community participation.

To be even more responsive to the aspirations and wishes of adults with intellectual challenges and developmental disabilities, DEC continues to introduce new, innovative services and activities that teach individuals how to exercise meaningful control in their daily lives. To live life to the fullest, to reach their potential (whatever that may be), to feel safe, valued and respected. To make informed choices, to exercise independence, to enjoy social relationships and community integration. To "make it," regardless of tough obstacles that stand in the way.

But neither teaching nor learning is a one-way street. People who rely on DEC for daily living and vocational skills, educational development and even survival skills are, themselves, teachers.

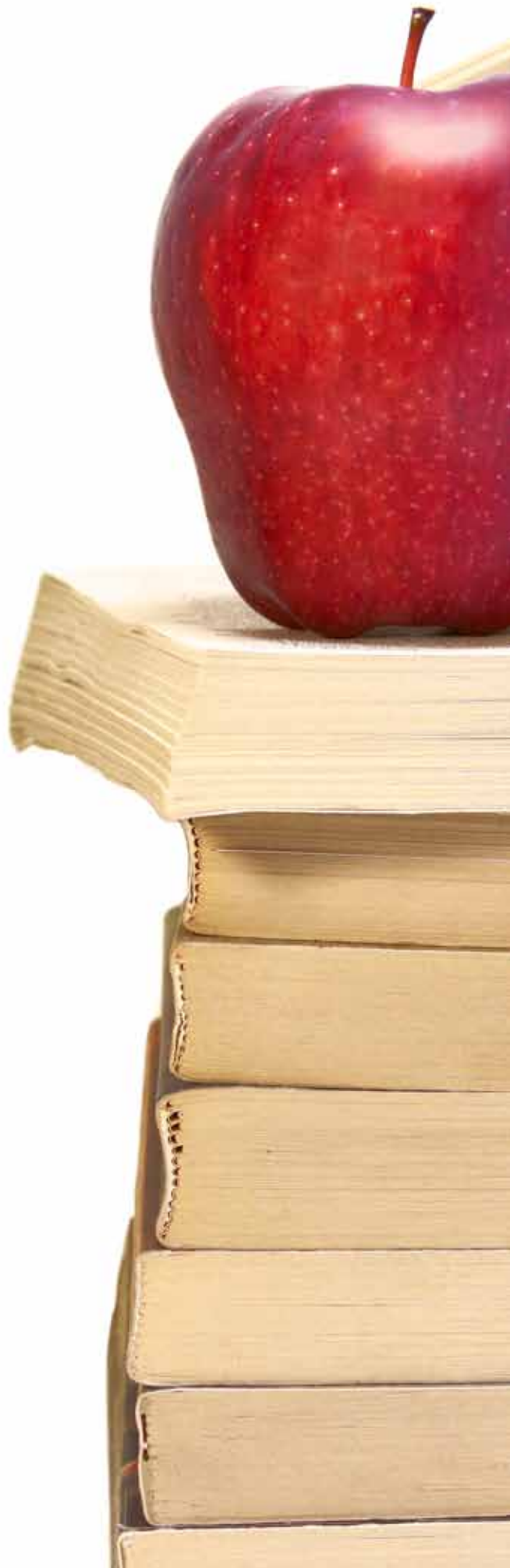
You see, people with disabilities -- physical, intellectual, developmental -- live each day with determination and strength, leaving many of us to secretly wonder if we could do the same thing. Men and women who learn so much throughout their lives from DEC staff can share life lessons that few of us ever get to experience.

Surely each of us would be better informed, enjoy greater wisdom, have a more pronounced understanding and therefore possess more power if only we would take the time to learn from each other --and that very much includes our loved ones, our friends, our neighbors with IDD. There's so very much we can all learn from the men and women we lovingly call "special."

*Where there is pain, there will be strength.  
Where there is sadness, there will be wisdom.  
And where there is fear, there will be renewal.  
Having a good friend is the best certainty in life.  
If we listen we learn from each other.*

-Ritu Ghatourey, Indian author

There's much we can all learn from people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. If, that is, we take the time to listen.





Lesson |

Being different is an opportunity.



Confronting one's developmental disabilities can be enormously challenging. But when given the chance, individuals who receive personalized therapies and training from DEC can make an enormous difference in the lives of others and in the success of businesses throughout our region.

Savvy business owners and managers are discovering an entire source of talent they never realized existed: men and women with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It's not as if these people weren't available all along, of course. But now that their bottom line value is finally beginning to be recognized, companies on the cutting edge are competing to capitalize on the many advantages presented by hiring individuals who, until recently, had been widely ignored.

Individuals with IDD are overwhelmingly reliable, dedicated workers with an unsurpassed work ethic. Their below-average absenteeism increases overall productivity. They contribute to a team-based workplace. And, as if all that weren't sufficient, federal tax incentives for hiring individuals with developmental disabilities give the bottom line a healthy boost.

DEC Employment Services has provided job placement and support for developmentally disabled individuals since 1986. On-the-job training and follow-up help teach each worker the responsibilities of the job, plus how to effectively and efficiently perform the functions that are required. A DEC Employment Consultant offers a high level of hands-on support for as long as the individual is employed, thereby helping to proactively identify and address any problems or issues that may imperil productivity and the individual's long-term career development.



***"He's taught me to appreciate the small things, to stop and take a breath every now and then, and to be more observant about my surroundings."***

Gideon Walsh, Facilities Supervisor at the Wyncote, Pa. office of Lincoln Investment Planning, a leader in the financial planning and wealth management industry with almost 235,000 clients representing more than \$24 billion in assets, can't stop raving about Matt Gross.

"Matt is proactive with good ideas, he's super reliable, a great people person who emits a positive energy, and is on top of things that I might otherwise overlook," Walsh says of his Facilities Aide. "He's determined to never allow his disabilities to get in the way of performing a superlative job here at Lincoln Investment, or prevent him from meeting a deadline. Matt's a ray of sunshine -- happy, helpful, upbeat, cooperative and very easy to supervise."

Lofty accolades, indeed, particularly for a man with developmental disabilities who, as an infant, was diagnosed with Pierre Robin Syndrome: a congenital condition of facial abnormalities, which produces an airway obstruction as a result of backwards displacement of the tongue base. Matt's cleft palate, a common abnormality among those with PRS, makes his speech difficult at times for others to understand, but he never gets upset or impatient if asked to repeat himself.

The name Matthew in Hebrew means "Gift of the Lord," and Susan Gross proudly boasts that her son is truly "a blessing" from whom she learns something new on a daily basis.

"Matt cares deeply about how *you're* doing," she explains, "and is very protective of me, especially since my husband died. As his mother, he's taught me the meaning of total love; to breathe it all in -- to live, not simply exist; to stand up for others, including people you don't even know, and to realize how you feel about yourself means more than how others feel about you."

Lesson 2 | True happiness is quite possible,  
regardless of one's limitations.



Take the time to know, to understand, to appreciate men and women with cognitive disabilities ... and you will learn a mighty valuable lesson. Happiness can be found simply by being alive -- loving others and being loved by family and friends.

Ours is a fast-paced world in which things seem to change dramatically by the minute. The smartphone you bought last month has already been outsmarted by a more advanced version. And that big screen TV you purchased after the salesman swore it was state-of-the-art? Well, it's already in another state, surpassed by a new fangled model with even more bells and whistles.

So it's nice to know some things remain constant over the passage of time. Like the bonds that tie Stevie Lotman and his family. Stevie *knows* he's Number One. Not because he's the oldest of three siblings. But because his late father, Bert, lovingly assured Stevie he'll forever be his Number One Man.

A devoted father, Bert Lotman often reminded his wife and daughters that since Stevie was not able to fly his own banner, they would have to fly it for him. Together, the family would raise Stevie to be first. It is an attitude, a resolve, an unbreakable commitment that's been passed on from generation to generation. Things change, but Stevie Lotman remains Number One.

There was a time when Stevie was such a normal, beautiful baby that a photographer was eyeballing him as a commercial model. But life took a horrific turn for Bert and Evelyn Lotman when their 14-month old son fell into a coma. First mistakenly thought to be suffering a fatal disease that would end his life within 16 months, Stevie was diagnosed with tuberous sclerosis complex (TSC), a genetic disorder that causes non-malignant tumors to form in many different organs, primarily in the brain, eyes, heart, kidney, skin and lungs. The aspects of TSC that most strongly impact quality of life are generally associated with the brain: seizures, autism, developmental delay and intellectual disability.

"He's had so much to overcome," recalls Evelyn. "Stevie has always been funny, sweet, sensitive and caring. But school officials wrote him off as 'too hyperactive.' I'd call all over for help, but there was never a place for him to receive an education. We had no choices."

Today, happily, there is a place for Stevie Lotman. A safe, welcoming place where he and his many friends can have choices, be productive, enjoy their independence, be accepted as "ordinary" people living in comfortable, dignified surroundings. A place called DEC.

"I appreciate everything DEC does for my son," Evelyn states. "It's taken a huge burden off my shoulders, knowing how much Stevie is loved and respected by the entire staff. And I'm free to enjoy life with my other kids and grandkids."

"Stevie reminds me just how incredible life is. His positivity is infectious. He's taught us about unconditional love, and that everybody deserves respect."

Look around you. Institutions are crumbling at an alarming rate. Families, once the glue that kept society together, are increasingly dysfunctional -- if not disintegrating. However, the bedrock of Stevie Lotman's life remains the love and devotion he receives from his family.

Notes nephew Sam Goldberg: "Stevie reminds me just how incredible life is. His positivity is infectious. He's taught us about unconditional love, and that everybody deserves respect."

Adds niece Olivia Goldberg: "Stevie's taught me how precious innocence is. Rather than worry about the little things, live a life that's filled with love and acceptance of others."

Max Goldberg cannot fathom a holiday or celebration without his uncle there to be part of the festivities. "Love comes in all shapes and forms," he explains. "Stevie offers to help everyone even though he functions at a lower level. He's taught me the true meaning of compassion."

All of us can all learn a lot from our loved ones, our friends, our neighbors with cognitive disabilities. Spend the time to see for yourself what it takes to be ... Number One.

## Lesson 3 | You can't judge a person by his or her looks.

*"While you judge me by my outward appearance I am silently doing the same to you, even though there's a ninety-percent chance that in both cases our assumptions are wrong."*

-- Richelle E. Goodrich, American author and poet

A fool focuses on someone's disabilities. Concentrate on the whole person, and you might be amazed by what that individual is able to accomplish. Motivational speaker Earl Nightingale wisely noted, "When you judge others, you do not define them, you define yourself."

Case in point: Franz Knorr, a young man with a million-watt smile that cloaks the challenges presented by cerebral palsy and some developmental delays. Franz insists you not pity him; rather, see him as your equal. We are, he'll remind you, all human beings.

Care to argue with Franz? Do so at your own risk. After all, this Special Olympian, who (his disabilities notwithstanding) excels at swimming, bowling and golf, has competed along with 7,500 other disabled athletes from 185 nations at the World Summer Games in Athens -- and returned to his home in Collegeville with a pair of medals that he won for Team USA. Through sheer determination and perseverance, Franz has earned Boy Scouting's most prestigious rank, Eagle Scout. So ... still think you can judge a book by its cover?

"Take the attitude of a student," advised Augustine "Og" Mandino II, bestselling author and an inductee of the National Speakers Association's Hall of Fame. "Never be too big to ask questions, never know too much to learn something new."

*"They've made me understand that things aren't so bad in my life. It's truly a blessing that I came into this job."*

For almost 30 years, Millie Hill has been fiercely committed to fulfilling DEC's mission: to support individuals with developmental disabilities to reach their fullest potential, while encouraging value, hope and responsibility in a dignified and positive environment.

The veteran DEC Production Coordinator/Direct Service Professional has enabled countless men and women to lead self-directed lives, to meet their goals and to enjoy community inclusion. Yet the teacher often becomes the student. Rarely does a day go by when Millie, herself, doesn't learn a new life lesson.

"People who've suffered disabilities depend on my help to develop vocational and life skills," she says, tears welling in her eyes that unmask a passion burning within her soul. "Yet it's they who've made *me* a better person by teaching me about patience, generosity, honesty and how we should treat one another. When my time comes, I want people to look back and say, 'She touched me.' 'She was kind to me.' 'She extended a hand to me.' 'She showed me love.'"

Program Specialist Elice Johnson serves as the primary liaison between Millie Hill and the other DSPs, DEC facility directors, each individual's support team (which typically includes family members, guardians and others), residential providers and behavioral specialists. It's a demanding job, one that requires outstanding communications skills, patience and tact. But it has reaffirmed a decision she made three years ago to join the DEC family.

"Each individual has softened my heart," she admits, "and helped me to put my own life in perspective. People like Franz are not as different from us as you might think; they simply need more time to process their thoughts. Treat them as you yourself would want to be treated. Take time to get to know them. It will surprise you to learn how interesting their lives really are."

People who live with a disability learn it's okay to receive help from others. Hey, we all need help in our own way -- whether we're a world-class athlete, the President of the United States or the Average Joe or Joanne. It's unavoidable and part of the human experience.

Franz Knorr appreciates the vocational training and personalized support services he receives at DEC's Norristown Training Center. "They push me to accomplish things and help me to be a better human being," he explains.



Suddenly the joyful smile disappears, replaced by a much more serious look that suggests you're about to experience a learning opportunity. Slowly, thoughtfully, confidently, the student is transformed into the teacher.

"Please don't bully me. And don't pity me. I want to be treated equally. I'm just like you."

There truly is much you can learn from men and women with intellectual challenges and other developmental disabilities. Show them the love and respect that they deserve. Provide much-needed financial support so their dreams may yet come true. Please ... take time to listen.

**They are our loved ones, our friends, our neighbors. They are our teachers.**

Life's  
Greatest  
Lessons

He's taught me the true meaning of compassion.



He's taught me to appreciate the small things, to stop and take a breath every now and then, and to be more observant about my surroundings

Rather than worry about the little things, live a life that's filled with love and acceptance of others.



He's taught me the meaning of total love.

Yet it's they who've made me a better person by teaching me about patience, generosity, honesty and how we should treat one another.



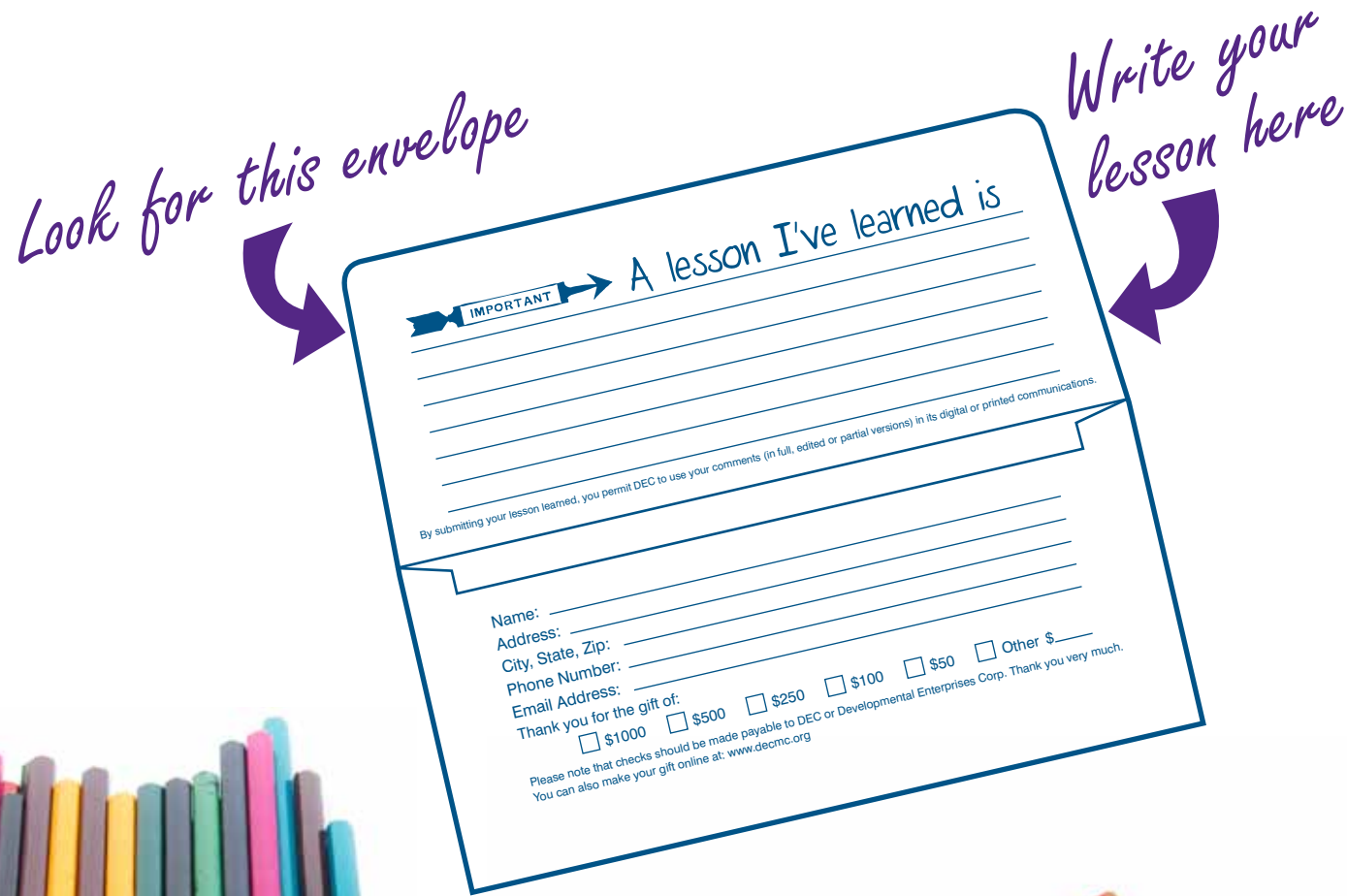
Each individual has softened my heart.



Tucked inside this Annual Report is a special envelope, which we hope you'll use in two ways.

1. Ever hear the Chinese proverb, "If you always give, you will always have"? DEC values its partnership with the community. For our part, we work tirelessly to provide hundreds of disabled men and women with a safe, dignified and productive life. We look to you, our partner in this mission, for financial support. Please help so we may continue doing our important work. Insert your contribution in the special envelope and support the innovative programs and services people with special needs rely on year-round. Remember the proverb. If you always give, individuals and families throughout our region will always be able to count on DEC.

2. On the pages of this Annual Report, we share what some folks have told us they've learned from people with intellectual disabilities. But what about you? Please use the back of the special envelope to tell us what lesson(s) you've learned; then stamp it and mail it in. Thanks!



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## DEC Organization

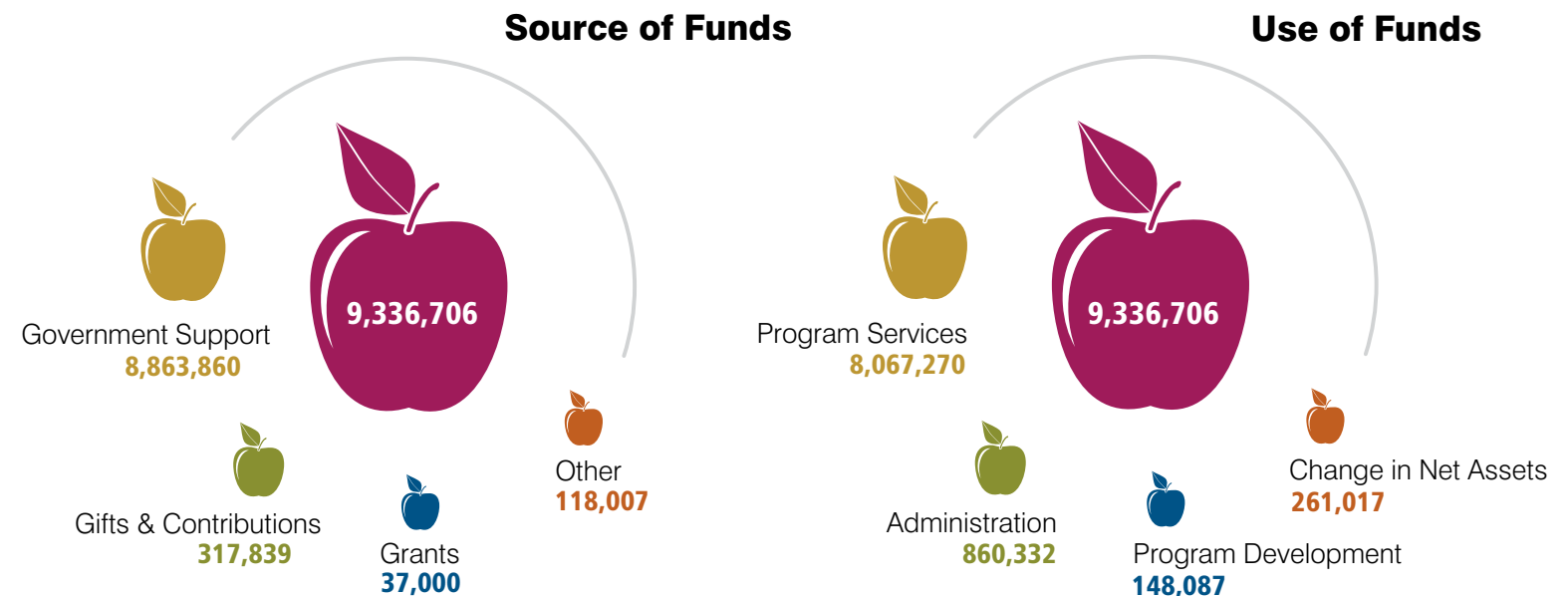
### DEC Administrative Team

Susan Golec, CEO/Executive Director  
 Kathy Alcorn, Quality Enrichment Director  
 Krissy Armour, Human Resources Manager  
 Clare Sweeney, North Penn Training Center Director  
 Tom Kennedy, Maintenance Manager  
 Von Dahms, Director of Programs  
 Jennifer Garvey, Willow Grove Training Center Director  
 Betsy Flatt-Fultz, Community Residences Director  
 Walter Griffin, Controller  
 Sue Heckler, Community Services Director  
 Barbara Kennedy, Pottstown Training Center Director  
 Marleen Livingstone, Director of Development  
 Sally Mandes, Resources Manager  
 Sharon McConaghy, Accounting Manager  
 Tammie Reimer, Center Point Training Center Director  
 Ed Shapson, Public Relations  
 Amanda Stewart, Director of Operations  
 Kathleen Wagner, Norristown Training Center Director

### DEC Board of Directors

James Keating, President  
 Kirk Armbrust, Vice President  
 L. Steuart Brown, Jr., Treasurer  
 John R. Warner, Secretary  
 Mike Barker  
 Mark Cardaci  
 Stephanie J. Peet  
 Mark Phander  
 Greg Small

## Financial Highlights (for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2014)



### Mission Statement

DEC is passionately committed to supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities to reach their fullest potential through personalized training, tailored therapies and other programs and services that promote independence, choice and community integration.

### Vision Statement

DEC envisions persons with disabilities living healthy, meaningful, productive and safe lives that are rich in community associations and contributions and who have valued roles in their communities. DEC's services are dedicated to this vision.





**DEC**  
 DEVELOPMENTAL ENTERPRISES CORPORATION

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DEC provides equal opportunity in all its services, programs and employment. No person will be discriminated against because of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin, disability, military status or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal or state law.