



2022

Annual

Report



INTRODUCTION

Dear Laughter League Supporters:

We are beyond grateful for the opportunities that have come our way in the past several years. At the beginning of the pandemic, and as it dragged on, we had some anxiety about the sustainability of our programs as we took everything to the virtual format. As luck would have it, the launch of our Nose to Nose visits helped us to bridge the gap with our hospital partners while we waited to get back to in person visits. We learned that children on the autism spectrum were greatly invested in weekly online visits with the clowns and that kids and teens who were normally extremely shy felt comfortable to interact and have fun with the clowns in the virtual format. We were also fortunate to be classified as essential workers at Cook Children's Medical Center, and were able to resume in person rounds just eight weeks after the start of Covid in 2020.

All of this work allowed us to enter the 2021-22 fiscal year with a head of steam and confidence that our work was being received as a serious contribution to the circle of care. This year has been a year of tremendous growth for the Laughter League. We adopted the clown program (formerly Room Circus) at Seattle Children's Hospital. We recruited and trained three new clowns in Fort Worth and four in Boston, with a particular focus on recruiting people of color and varied cultural and physical backgrounds, and we invested in company wide training in DEI through Cultural Equity Learning Community of Arts Connection International in Boston. We also added two new administrative positions: Chief Equity Officer and Project Coordinator. Last but not least, we launched a brand new program at Hassenfeld Children's Hospital at NYU Langone, cultivating a robust group of donors with a rich history in circus and clown care work through the Big Apple Circus.

Laughter League's Board of Directors and Young Professionals Board have continued to support our growth. Board of Directors: Debbie Carpenter, Kathy Beazley, Dr. Raymond Quigley, Martha Quigley, Guinea Bennett-Price and Rhonda Thompson. Our Young Professionals Board members are Brandon Hassan, Chet Monday, and Emily Faith. We hope to expand the board to include representatives from each market area where Laughter League has a program.

As the year draws to a close, we are proud of our recent growth and extremely excited about where the organization is headed. We are committed to growing thoughtfully and to being a contemporary organization that looks to the future. We hope to be good stewards of the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and continue to work as seriously at being an anti-racist organization as we work at fulfilling our organization's mission.

Tiffany Riley & Dick Monday

*Dr. Slappy &
Dr. Monday*



Mission

Laughter League is a non-profit organization whose mission is to improve the lives of the people we serve through the transformational power of laughter. Our professional healthcare clowns work in pediatric hospitals throughout the United States. Working in teams of two, Laughter League artists partner with medical staff, using music, magic and merriment to engage and empower hospitalized children.

Vision

We hope to contribute to the integrative health movement in the United States, which is working to turn healthcare environments into places that see patients as whole people and not just their diagnoses. **We believe that laughter and play are essential to young people's well being.** We imagine a future where every pediatric unit has arts and play programs, including healthcare clown programs, as part of a comprehensive care approach. We believe in consistently improving the quality of our artistry, and together with the North American Federation of Healthcare Clowning Organizations (NAFHCO) strive to raise the standards of hospital clown work throughout North America.



Values

Laughter League values a collaborative work approach throughout the organization, from performers working together in duos in the hospital to the way that the administrative team works together. **We value listening, connection, and empowering those whose voices are less heard.** In the hospital we do this through play, but we also hold these values in our more serious interactions with our colleagues.

We at Laughter League have created and committed to a plan of action for anti-racism in our work, our communities, and our homes. The entire staff of Laughter League is listening, educating, and acting upon the changes required to truly be anti-racist.



INCLUSION & BELONGING GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Laughter League believes that building and sustaining an inclusive and diverse culture is essential to our hospital clown programs, and it is the right thing to do. **This is who we are:**

- ◊ We believe in an inclusive work environment where Laughter League clowns, supervisors, and staff are welcomed, valued, respected, and heard.
- ◊ We believe that clowns, supervisors and staff will be provided a safe work environment.
- ◊ We believe that diversity brings strength.
- ◊ We believe in equality of opportunity free from discrimination.



Organizational Milestones (2021-2022)

WORKING IN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

As the Covid pandemic has waned and shifted into a longer term reality, the United States has been confronted with a Behavioral Health Crisis. We have seen evidence of this crisis in all the hospitals where Laughter League works, and we have been invited to forge new partnerships, bringing moments of levity to teens suffering from depression, eating disorders and suicidal ideations, providing them with opportunities to laugh, play and dream. These are intentional visits that often come with directives and goals for us to work toward achieving through the application of therapeutic humor.

Laughter League is now working in Behavioral Health at: Boston Children's Hospital, Cook Children's Hospital, Hasbro Children's Hospital, the inpatient unit for pediatrics at The Cambridge Health Alliance at Harvard Medical School, and in 2023 we will add the Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine Unit at Seattle Children's Hospital to weekly rounds.

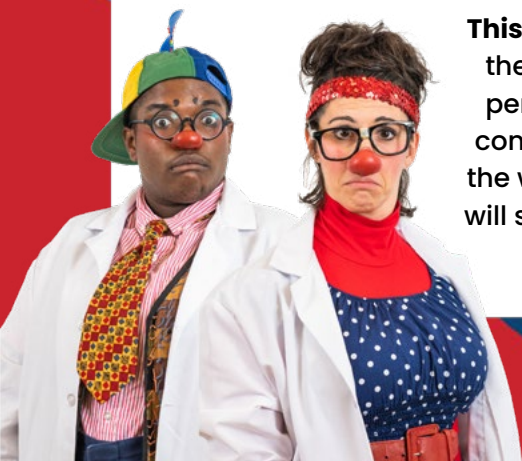
"In our efforts to help with the growing Behavioral Health crisis, we've learned that sometimes our best effects come from seemingly small actions - a silly game; a fun new skill; simply listening and being open to connections. The invitation of play, imagination, and engagement to those struggling with their mental wellness is what Laughter League can offer - that is what we do best."

DOC SKEETER, LAUGHTER LEAGUE BOSTON

CULTURAL EQUITY TRAINING

As part of our plan of action for anti-racism, this year Laughter League leadership committed to providing cultural equity training to all of its employees, signing up for Arts Connect International's CELC Training. The Cultural Equity Learning Community (CELC) is a two-unit, 12 session, asynchronous anti-racism course with wrap-around supports, open to arts and culture leaders committed to building intersectional racial equity. The CELC is a program of Arts Connect International, funded by Mass Cultural Council, and filmed by HipStory.

This training has impacted the organization in many ways. Though the main part of the training was done independently at each person's rhythm, the training also included drop-in sessions and continues to include small cohort conversations. We now embark on the work of figuring out how what we have learned from this training will shape Laughter League's work, objectives, and structure.



OUR PROGRAMS

Our Programs

HASSENFELD CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL AT NYU LANGONE

Last year was filled with incredible growth for Laughter League, and perhaps the most exciting expansion was the beginning of our partnership with Hassenfeld Children's Hospital at NYU Langone. As we continue to evolve and grow as pioneers in the field of healthcare clowning, having a program in New York City has been a dream for several years. This dream became reality with resounding positivity.

Chris Brown, Director of Therapeutic Recreation, Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy at Hassenfeld Children's Hospital, was instrumental in launching this Laughter League program and continues to be a strong advocate for the work. **Our goal is to bring the therapeutic power of humor and laughter to the kids and families there, but also to intentionally collaborate with the staff** in order to begin documenting the impact clowns are having on the patients and families.

A passionate group of former Big Apple Circus Board members brought their depth of knowledge and understanding of the core values of hospital clowning along with the financial resources to put "noses in the hallway." Not only have they made financial contributions, they have helped us in so many ways with their long standing relationships, expertise and generosity. It is impossible to thank them enough, but we would love to give them a shout out. **Thank you to the Zankel Scala Family Foundation, Ginny and Dick Keim, Mary Jane Brock, Nancy Paduano, and Pat Vance.** You are the true superheroes of the Laughter League.

SEATTLE

After more than 2 years of virtual programming, Laughter League returned to in-person programming at Seattle Children's Hospital in June of 2022. We held auditions, and 1 new artist joined the team. Laughter League has been asked to start working in the behavioral health unit. We are so excited to expand our program starting in February 2023. We are seeking funding to expand this 1 day a week program to a 2 day a week program.



BOSTON

Upon the opening of the brand new Hale Building at Boston Children’s Hospital, Laughter League was asked to expand our program to six days per week in an effort to cover a few floors in the Hale Building. Each week, we round on all pediatric units, including daily visits to the very busy Emergency Department. In 2022 we held auditions and 4 new artists joined the team. We are diligently working to recruit people of color to this work, and recognize it is a long process since the clown profession has been predominantly white for its long history.

Laughter League is now part of the orientation process for new employees at Boston Children’s Hospital. When a new Child Life Specialist is hired at BCH, LL artists give them a short orientation to the Laughter League team. With a very high expansion and turnover, this happens fairly frequently. The goal for these orientation sessions is three-fold: to give new Child Life Specialists a brief overview of our team’s history at BCH and how our program works within the BCH Circle of Care; to explain our team’s goals, talents, and skills; and to express our gratitude and our desire to be an asset in all ways.



OUR PROGRAMS

PROVIDENCE - HASBRO

We have been gifted once again with a substantial grant from the Hasbro Foundation to continue our work there. This year, we acquired funding from an additional source that has allowed us to double our program at Hasbro. With this time, we have increased our involvement in both the Partial Hospital Program and the Aubin Center. Our team at Hasbro has been integrated into these departments, thanks to our strong clown teams and the commitment of the Child Life Department and the Psychology Department. The four clowns hired for Boston will also serve Hasbro.

DALLAS/FORT WORTH: COOK CHILDREN'S & CAMP JOHN MARC

At Cook Children's Hospital our program expanded to include the Emergency Dept and Urgent care. We are now present 5 full days a week. In 2022 we held auditions and 3 new artists joined the team. In addition to our work in the hospital, we have an enduring presence at Camp John Marc, a camp for kids with chronic health conditions.



We have committed to deepening the level of emotional support that artists have access to in a variety of formats, including group therapy sessions, drama therapy, individual sessions with staff psychologists, and chaplains.





THANK YOU TO OUR HOSPITAL PARTNERS



Organizational Growth

CHIEF EQUITY OFFICER

We are growing as an organization, and with that growth comes the need to develop our support staff more fully. We added Michelle Matlock as our Chief Equity Officer. Their role is to help guide us through difficult conversations about racism and health equity. Michelle has been a phenomenal addition to our team. We are positioning ourselves as pioneers in this work, and recognize that it is an ongoing process of learning how to be inclusive and rethink the hierarchy in a way that is clearly anti-racist.

PROJECT COORDINATOR

Our second new hire is Selena Rook Mc Mahan, Project Coordinator, who comes to us from le rire medecin in France. Selena is not only a healthcare clown herself, but also brings a wealth of administrative knowledge to the Laughter League. Selena will split her time between artistic work as a clown and clown teacher, and as an administrator focused on helping to streamline work processes across the organization and develop new areas of work, such as the Joy Family Program for people living with dementia.

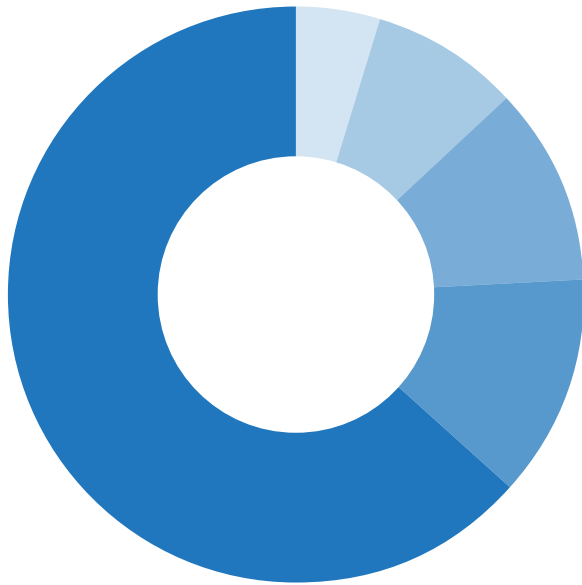




“The clowns make such an impact on the kids, that the child wants to come back...to the hospital. I mean, what child wants to come back - to the hospital?”

LORI MACDOUGAL, NURSE AT BOSTON CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL





Operating Revenue

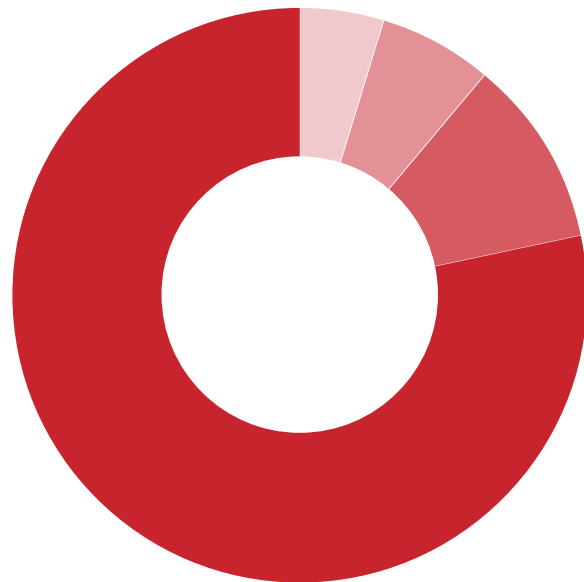
PARTNER CONTRACTS	\$360,000	63.5%
LARGE DONATIONS	\$70,000	12.3%
GRANTS	\$63,500	11.2%
EVENTS	\$47,500	8.4%
DONORS	\$26,000	4.6%

FY22 TOTAL \$567,000 100.0%

Operating Expenses

PROGRAM	\$432,500	78.5%
OPERATIONAL	\$58,500	10.6%
MARKETING	\$35,000	6.3%
ADMINISTRATIVE	\$25,250	4.6%

FY22 TOTAL \$551,250 100.0%



FY22 NET REVENUE \$15,750



Corporate Grants

Big Thought
 City Of Dallas Office Of Arts And Culture
 Dallas City of Learning
 Hasbro
 Moody Fund For The Arts
 Park Place Motors
 Sid Richardson Foundation
 Texas Commission on the Arts

Program Donors

The Zankel Scala Family Foundation
 Ginny and Dick Keim
 Mary Jane Brock
 Nancy Paduano
 Pat Vance



Individual Donors

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Aaron Schettler | Elizabeth Pasquinelli | Karen Swartz | Michele Garber |
| Alan Relf | Elizabeth Stubbs | Kat Krone | Michelle Robinson |
| Allison Jewell | Elizabeth Wolff | Katherine M Howard | Nana & Tata Duenas |
| Arwen McMakin | Ellen Hollon | Kathleen Beazley | Nancy Foster |
| Asher Karpman | Ellie Johnson | Kathryn Rule | Randolph Christensen |
| Belinda Lessard | Eric Nothman | Kenneth Lewis | Rebecca Barnes |
| Ben Kaufman | Eva Foster | Kimberly Schaefer | Rebecca Berger |
| Ben Model | F. Russell Kellogg | Kirk McBride | Rebekka Koepke |
| Bill Irwin | Genevieve West | Krithika Mukund | Robert Malme |
| Brenda Adair-Cagney | George Smith | Lacey Harman Gant | Robin Sanchez |
| Carla Hellekson | Gina Tran | Laura Buchner | Ron Adams |
| Carrie & Dan | Grace Goodwin | Laura Price | Ruby Smith, In Memory |
| Camin-Rowan | Helen Donnelly | Leo Desilets | Shannon Quadres |
| Casa de Vida - Northpark | Helen Nesteruk | Lisa Head | Shelly Van Blarcum |
| Presbyterian Church | Irving Convention & | Lisa Walton | Steve Colwell |
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| Denise Arribas | Julia Harris | Melissa Reyes | Yana Posovsky |
| Edith Farrar | Julie George | Meredith Scheiner | |
| Edward F Gunsalus | K Froehlich | Michael Getlan | |



Global Organizations

NAFHCO: NORTH AMERICAN FEDERATION OF HEALTHCARE CLOWN ORGANIZATIONS

NAFHCO presented its annual conference in a virtual format in 2022, registering over one hundred healthcare clowns from around the United States and Canada. The five day conference included artistic workshops, panels, lectures and idea exchange sessions. The mission of NAFHCO is to raise standards for and awareness of professional healthcare clown work in North America.

This conference grew out of the “Meeting of the Noses” that was launched first in 2018 between Laughter League and Humorology Atlanta as a way to bring our teams together in service of sharing ideas and deepening our work. It has now grown to include nine founding organizations of NAFHCO, as well as independent artists who participate in these conferences annually. This year’s conference was attended by thirty Laughter League clowns and Board Members.

HCIM: HEALTHCARE CLOWNS INTERNATIONAL MEETING

The 2022 International meeting welcomed over three hundred healthcare clowns and healthcare professionals participants from thirty-five countries. This conference was hosted by CliniClowns Holland, who gathered industry experts from different angles to discuss our impact and role in society, the art of clowning, innovation, online opportunities, and fundraising. Founders Tiffany Riley and Dick Monday attended and presented on several topics.

HEALTHCARE CLOWNS ONLINE ACADEMY

Laughter League and Prescription Joy hosted the first ever Health Care Clowns Online Academy, an online collaboration between the North American Federation of Hospital Clown Organizations (NAFHCO) and the European Federation of Hospital Clown Organizations (EFHCO) to share latest best practices, create innovative programming, and network globally with other healthcare clown organizations. **77 healthcare performers and administrators attended from all over the world.**





This monumental year of growth was made possible by our strong partnerships with the hospitals we work in and the support of individual donors, who help make these programs happen. As we look to the future we hope to continue the organization’s steady and sustainable growth.

We also have some specific goals for the coming year:

- ◊ **Add a second day at Hassenfeld Children’s Hospital at NYU Langone.**
- ◊ **Expand services at Seattle Children’s Hospital and work to develop partnerships with other hospitals in the area.**
- ◊ **Host an intensive training in dementia work with Magdalena Schamberger and Tim Licata from Hearts and Minds and BOLD in Scotland.**
- ◊ **Launch The Joy Family program, an innovative new program working with elderly people living with dementia in partnership with memory care centers for senior residents, in spring of 2023.**

Thank you to our incredible donors who bring not only financial resources but also skilled in kind donations, enthusiasm, and support to make Laughter League’s work possible.

Thank you for your support!

Help us fulfill our mission by **making a recurring donation**, sponsoring a clown for a day, or making an earmarked donation for one of our 4 specific goals this year. Commit to helping improve the lives of hospitalized children, their families, and hospital staff through the transformational power of laughter.

“It is true that if you are laughing, if you can see that side of the world, you don’t just feel better – your life is better.”

DR. JOSEPH MADSEN, NEUROSURGEON AT BOSTON CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL

