



**Advancing Technology, Community Inclusion & Partnerships
for Better Futures**



[Partnerships]

Advancing Technology, Community Inclusion and Partnerships for Better Futures

This annual report demonstrates how UCP has grown to reach more people with disabilities and how we continue to expand to new areas of our state by using assistive technology and fostering new partnerships. We've also created more opportunities for the people we serve by forging new initiatives that foster wider community inclusion.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (AT)

UCP has grown to serve people across CT to find the right assistive technology. We provide 100s of people with disabilities, including seniors with new technology, access, training and support.

Now our Assistive Technology services are embedded inside UCP's programming. We recently created an Assistive Technology (AT) lead teacher position within our Day Program. AT empowers individuals in day programs to participate more fully in activities by providing tools that enhance their abilities and independence. This new role is designed to keep our staff at the forefront of technological advancements. The lead teacher learns the latest technologies and brings that knowledge and new AT devices, back to our programs.

UCP's **In-Home Support Cluster** recently outfitted their entire kitchen with Smart Kitchen technology that allows opportunities for individuals to learn how to easily and safely cook meals on their own.



Our **AT services** involve careful assessment and exploration, through a collaborative effort between families, caregivers, educators and professionals, to identify and implement the most effective tools for each person's unique needs.

Our AT Lending Library has a new online product catalog which serves up a wide

“UCP provides 100s of people with disabilities, with new technology, access, training and support.”

selection of technology tools for anyone to borrow, anytime, FREE, allowing people to try technology before they buy it.

These tools help more and more people to communicate, control their environment and perform activities of daily living at work, in school and at home.



COMMUNITY INCLUSION

The Day Program at UCP has hired an activity lead teacher with the goal to increase community inclusion. This has worked to get participants of UCP's Day Program out and into the community more frequently, to experience wonderful new outings and events.

Recently, on an trip to Pinspiration, which is a crafting studio in East Lyme, our participants discovered the experience of their unique Splatter Room, and learned the fun craft of creating Splatter Art.



Individuals we serve get out into the community on a regular basis to volunteer. At The Lyme-Old Lyme Food Share Garden individuals from UCP volunteer by tending to the gardens and they pick vegetables. This helps the Food Share Garden with their goal to donate and provide fresh produce to help alleviate food insecurities and support healthy nutrition to area families.

Every day, we strive to provide an array of new and exciting activities aimed at developing skills, increasing socialization

and broadening community inclusion for the people we serve.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

This past year UCP has strengthened existing partnerships and formed new ones. Through the generosity of the Gemma E. Moran United Way Labor Food Center, UCP's Bette's Bounty Food Pantry has experienced tremendous growth. UCP receives over 80% of our non-perishable food donations from this generous organization. A key point of distinction of our Food Pantry is that it serves only people with disabilities and their families in Eastern CT. At the same time, it offers individuals with disabilities job skills.

Our new partnership with **Hunts Brook Farm**, offers a one-time stipend of \$1000, through an agricultural grant, to UCP's participants and their families to visit the farm to purchase fresh fruits and veggies. The owner, Rob Schacht, also provides food donations to our pantry.



Our new partner, **Big Y**, in both Groton and Old Saybrook, has shown their generosity by donating baked goods and breads to us on a weekly basis. Through UCP's partnership's with area housing authorities, we donate part of our donations from Big Y, to others in need, to the elderly and people with disabilities, who don't have access to transportation.

Our pantry visitors are excited about our newest advancement — refrigeration! This allows UCP to provide new, healthy options like fresh produce, milk and eggs.



Hartford Healthcare's Backus Hospital is the work site and new partner of our Project SEARCH internship program for 2024/2025. Interns are provided on-the-job training, career exploration and coaching which helps them find a path to gainful employment at competitive wages.

Our personalized programs offer a lifetime of support, at all levels of need and all ages and stages.



DAY PROGRAMS

Our group and individualized day programs offer participants meaningful and enriching activities and community engagement.



RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

Maximizing independence with drop-in and overnight support services customized to meet individual needs.



ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SENIOR PROGRAMMING

We provide assessments, demonstration and lending of assistive technology devices used to increase independence and reduce social isolation for children, adults and seniors with disabilities. Increasing the wellbeing of older adults by reducing social isolation and connecting them to vital community resources. Increased technology and connectivity helps seniors better access telehealth to improve outcomes.



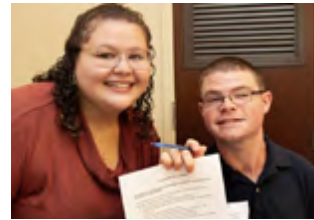
EMPLOYMENT

UCP provides training, on-site support and coaching to prepare for and facilitate opportunities for competitive employment and success in the workplace.



STUDENT TRANSITION PROGRAM

We help students prepare for life after high school to develop life and vocational skills to increase independence.



INTERNSHIPS

Project SEARCH, an internationally acclaimed program, provides young adults with disabilities workplace skills to secure competitive employment, through a series of rotations in various departments, this year at Backus Hospital.



INCLUSION AND ADVOCACY

UCP facilitates inclusion, assists in the removal of barriers, provides resources and referrals to services and we advocate for the rights of those we serve.

MISSION STATEMENT

UCP's mission is to advance the independence and full citizenship of individuals across a spectrum of disabilities, including Cerebral Palsy (CP).

Letter from the

Executive Director and the President of the Board

Dear UCP Community, Partners, and Supporters,

As we reflect on Fiscal Year 2024, we are profoundly grateful for the remarkable achievements and contributions that continue to strengthen and expand our mission at UCP of Eastern Connecticut. This year has been one of growth, community-building, and impactful change as we worked together to advance technology, promote community inclusion, and establish enduring partnerships to benefit individuals with disabilities across our region.

Empowering Lives Through Technology and Innovation

At UCP, we understand the power of technology in breaking down barriers and creating opportunities for independence. This year, we have expanded our Assistive Technology Services to seniors through our Bridging the Digital Divide program, which offered internet connectivity, assessments and training to ensure that individuals have the tools they need to participate fully in everyday life. Through key partnerships our Assistive Technology services have empowered many to reach new milestones.

Building Community

We are deeply grateful for a transformative \$1 million gift, reflecting our community's trust in UCP's mission and our shared impact. This gift supports program expansion, infrastructure, and sustainable growth. In partnership with the United Way of Southeastern CT, it also enabled us to open Bette's Bounty Food Pantry – a vital resource now serving many local individuals with disabilities and their families. We are especially proud that young adults with disabilities from UCP's Employment Program and local high school transition programs are operating the pantry, gaining essential work skills and experience.

A Vision for the Future

As we look to the coming year, we are excited to continue our mission of unlocking potential and increasing opportunity for all individuals with disabilities. We remain committed to empowering our clients, embracing our communities, and ensuring that every person has the support they need to thrive.

On behalf of UCP's Board of Directors, our leadership team, and our dedicated staff, we extend our deepest gratitude to each of you. Thank you for your support, trust, and unwavering belief in a more inclusive future. Together, we are shaping a world where every individual can live a life without limits.

Warm regards,

Jennifer Keatley
Executive Director

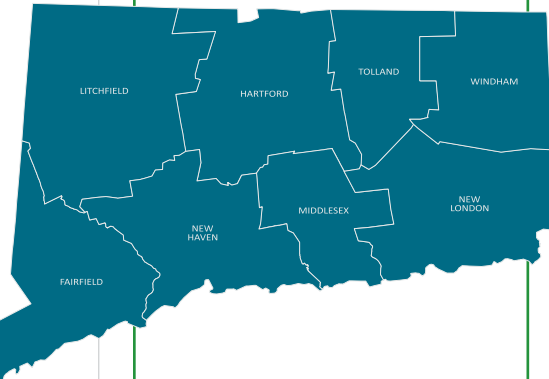
Diane Deedy
President, Board of Directors



Jennifer Keatley, Executive Director (top photo)

Diane Deedy, President of the Board (bottom photo)

“
UCP'S
PROGRAMS
SERVE
THE ENTIRE
STATE OF CT



“ We are more
than our name:
80%
of those we serve
have disabilities
other than
Cerebral Palsy
(CP). ”

Leadership

UCP OF EASTERN CONNECTICUT

Board of Directors

President – Diane Deedy
Vice President – Elizabeth Duarte
Treasurer – Elizabeth Ritter
Secretary – Lloyd Johnson

Directors

Harry Colonis
James Harris
Victor Ebersole, Jr
Gregory Massad
Mark Lathrop
Mark Spinnato
Jennifer Gregory

A New Resource Created by Parents for Parents of Children with Disabilities

This year, UCP also announced a partnership with Start Here, a groundbreaking community program and website dedicated to supporting parents of children with disabilities. Developed by parents who have walked the same path, Start Here is a reliable resource that aims to provide timely information and resources precisely when parents need them most. Created in collaboration with the United Cerebral Palsy Association and Adapt Community Network, Start Here is committed to providing a pathway of support throughout the various stages of childhood. Recognizing the importance of early detection and the critical role assistive technology can play at a young age, this resource is tailored to assist parents during crucial early days. The online community is a collection of resources; a place for connection, networking and shared experiences to guide families through the challenges and triumphs of parenting a child with disabilities.



Milestones & Events

Food Pantry Celebration & Official Citation from the General Assembly

In partnership with United Way of Southeastern CT, we held a ribbon cutting ceremony earlier this year to officially celebrate the opening of UCP's Bette's Bounty Food Pantry. At the ceremony, we were presented an Official Citation from the General Assembly from State Representative Kathleen McCarty (38th General Assembly District covering Waterford and Montville). Also in attendance were Julie Way, Caseworker & Field Representative from the office of Congressman Joe Courtney, 2nd District, CT, as well as United Way and UCP leadership, staff, board members and guests.



Bette's story of empathy continues through her legacy. This year, UCP created a new Marion "Bette" Alfiero Scholarship, established for people residing in Eastern CT. The \$2000 scholarship supports people pursuing education/training to assist children or adults with disabilities. By furthering their education, scholarship recipients will make meaningful contributions to address barriers to inclusion, promote accessibility and improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities.



Project SEARCH Kick off with DDS and Backus Hospital

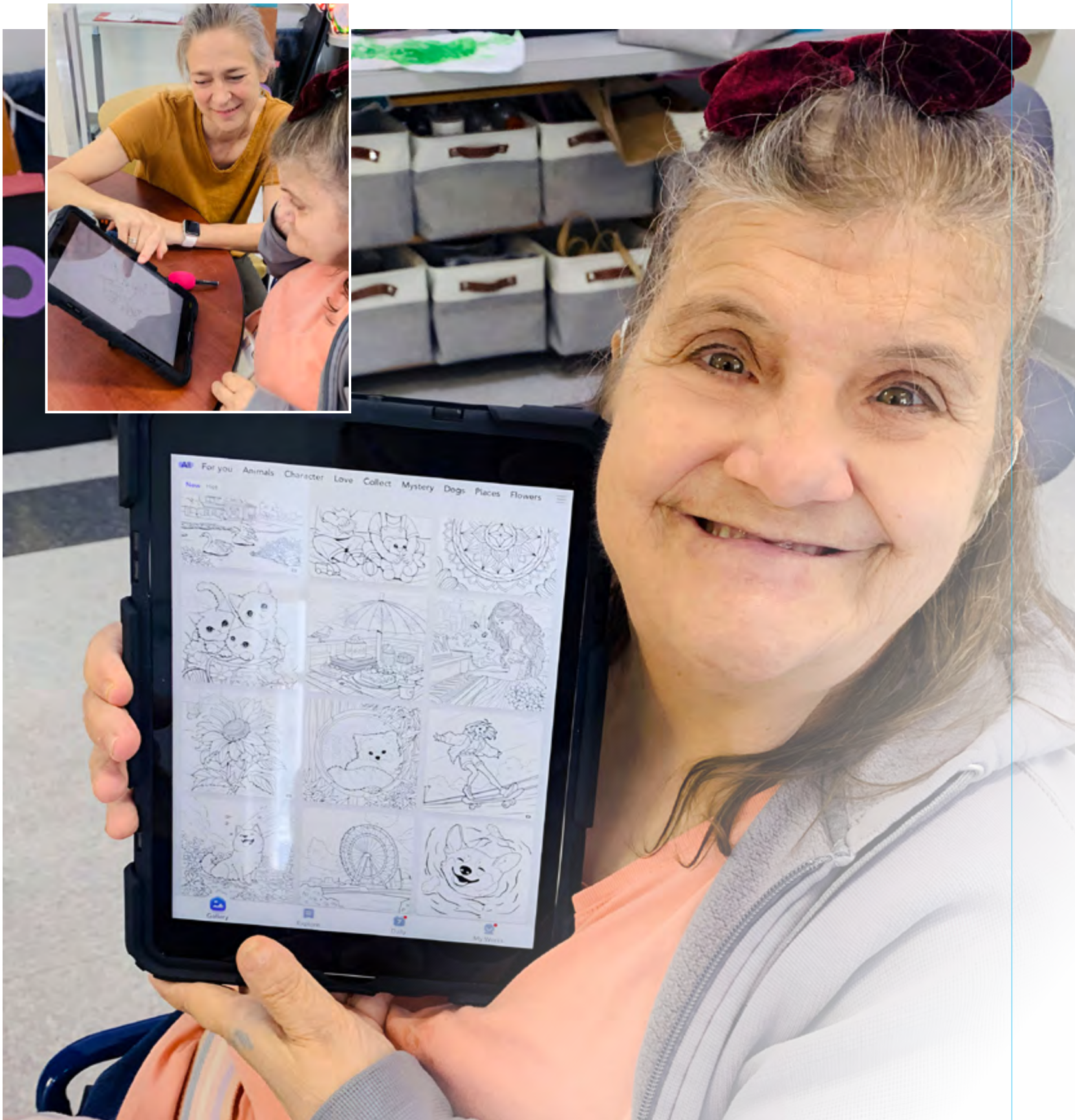
Hartford Healthcare's Backus Hospital is the new work site and business partner for UCP's Project SEARCH internship program for 2024/2025. In August, five interns signed contracts and toured the hospital to begin on-the-job training, career exploration and coaching which will help them find a path to gainful employment at competitive wages. The 9 month program equips interns with valuable, transferrable workplace skills through a series of internship rotations in various departments at Backus. Project SEARCH, is a collaboration between UCP, Backus Hospital and DDS.



Voting Rights Clinic for Individuals with Disabilities

Together with the Disability Rights CT, UCP presented a Voting Rights Clinic for individuals with disabilities in September. The Disability Rights staff was available to answer questions about voting rights, absentee ballots and to help people register to vote. The clinic was made as accessible as possible, using UCP's vast array of assistive technology, to accommodate all levels of ability, for those in attendance.





“ Thanks to a technology grant from Bridging the Digital Divide, which is a program for older adults and individuals with disabilities. ”

Mission Moments

Lily's journey: Enriching daily living through the power of technology.

Lillian (Lily) Green has been a valued participant in UCP's Day Program in Old Saybrook for about a year and a half, attending 6 hours a day, four days a week. At 71, Lily lives in a skilled nursing facility on a fixed income, which limited her access to technology before joining UCP. Initially, her knowledge of computers was minimal – she thought of them as devices connected to keyboards. However, when she observed others using iPads, manipulating them effortlessly with their fingers, her curiosity was sparked, and she was eager to learn. UCP's Assistive Technology (AT) training program, recently integrated into the Day Program, proved to be the perfect avenue for Lily to embark on her iPad journey.

Jennifer Keatley, UCP's Executive Director, highlighted the program's innovative approach: "We recently created an assistive technology lead teacher position within our Day Program. This role is designed to keep our staff at the forefront of technological advancements. The goal is to train our staff, who then incorporate new technology into daily activities for the individuals we serve, according to their personal goals and interests. This ongoing training helps everyone at UCP, including staff and caregivers, stay updated on the newest technologies that can enhance independence and quality of life."

When Lily expressed her desire to learn how to use an iPad, the AT training program responded quickly, helping her develop new skills. Thanks to a technology grant from Bridging the Digital Divide, which is a program for older adults and individuals with disabilities, UCP was able to deliver a new iPad to Lily. Practicing at home accelerated her learning, and her patience and dedication paid off. Once full of questions, Lily now skillfully uses coloring and gaming apps on her own, enjoying creative ways to pass the time.



Amy Owens, a Day Program Manager at UCP, reflected on Lily's progress: "At first, Lily had difficulty using her fingers to navigate the iPad, so we provided her with a stylus featuring a built-up handle for better grip. That adjustment made all the difference. It's incredibly rewarding to see her mastering the technology and gaining a sense of accomplishment. I've been with UCP for 15 years, and moments like these make me proud of the work we do. This is why I love being here."

Lily's journey with UCP demonstrates the power of technology in transforming lives, fostering independence, and enriching daily living.

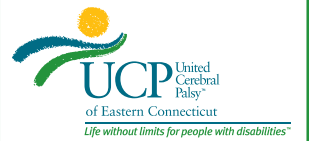
“

It makes me feel proud to witness Lily's progress along with the progress of everyone we support at UCP, as they find their paths to higher functionality and increased independence. Success like this makes me proud of the work we do and it's why I love being here.

~Amy Owens

Day Program Manager

15-Year Tenure at UCP





This agency does not settle for the status quo. I've been in the disability field for 16 years. What's different about UCP is their open mindedness to explore different ideas, programs and activities. I've worked in large settings where 15 or 20 individuals with disabilities are in day programs, with the staff kind of on the outskirts. What I love about UCP is that our caregivers are at the table with the individuals in rooms broken out with 3 to about 6 people per room, with 1 to 2 staff members. This enables us to provide individualized attention and to see progress and real growth, firsthand, for the people we serve

~Eric Robinson

Day Program Activities Lead
Direct Support Provider



Teddy: Breaking barriers and preconceived notions about intellectual disabilities

When Teddy first came to UCP he was very much in a shell. Change was difficult for him, as it can be for others with intellectual disabilities.

At first it was a challenge to get Teddy actively involved in UCP's programming which provides a high level of activity and community inclusion in small group settings.

To help him overcome this, the staff at UCP first took the necessary time to get to know him, to understand his personal needs and his personality. His Direct Support Professional, Eric, who is also the new activities lead for the Community Day Program, realized he was very funny, affectionate and super appreciative of the staff and the peers around him.

To capitalize on those traits, UCP got him involved with several programs that put him together with others and out into the community. Observing that Teddy is really into art and good at it, UCP submitted his work into The Hygienic Art Gallery in New London. His painting was entered into the art gallery's exhibit! He also enjoys playing his guitar and he's involved in our yoga program, which improves physical fitness.

He's grown to love UCP's outings. While he sometimes struggles to understand an activity, the staff at UCP works to reaffirm what we're doing, patiently being transparent and clearly communicating to him, so he understands what's going on. He loves attending baseball games with us. And he's in a new social group, building and painting bird houses.

Recognizing Teddy's mindfulness of others, UCP expanded efforts to get him involved with new people, piquing his interest in volunteering. Now he's become a regular volunteer at local food pantries.

UCP recently brought him to a food pantry where he helped bag up over 200 bags of groceries. He was right in his element in the thick of the assembly line at Backus Hospital, with a bunch of police officers and workers helping out. It was important for him to feel like he was a real part of the team. Teddy also delivers food weekly for the New London Food Pantry to help others in need, like the elderly and veterans. His parents drive him so now it's a family affair!

All UCP's volunteers, including Teddy, gain the added reward of how good it feels to give back to the community through volunteerism.



Rita: Finding Choice and Safety in her own Environment Through Assistive Technology (AT)

Rita is 98 years young. A failed cataract surgery left her completely blind. On top of that her hearing has greatly diminished. Despite these hardships, Rita remains positive and grateful. UCP was fortunate to learn about her through a referral from CT Access Through Technology, an equipment distribution program for residents who are deaf and blind.

UCP's Assistive Technology specialists first provided a formal AT assessment for Rita, which resulted in recommendations for a vast array of tools to help her stay connected and to communicate with others. The journey to finding the right assistive technology also included a collaborative effort between Rita and her family working together to identify and implement the most effective tools for her personalized needs.

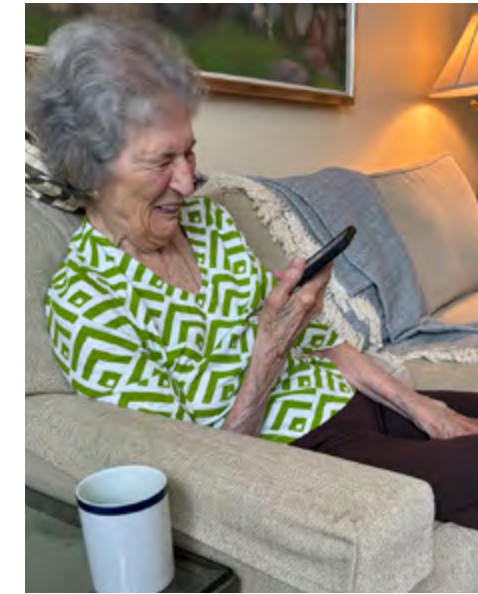
The first thing UCP uncovered was that Rita was missing her meals at her assisted living complex because she didn't hear her landline. She was not receiving messages from the facility that it was time to dine. So, she would end up eating in her room, alone. UCP's technology specialists fixed this issue by forwarding all her calls from her landline to her cell phone which now auto answers the phone – after 3 rings, the act of raising the phone will answer it, and then the phone connects into her hearing aids.

Now Rita knows what's going on in her own environment and she has the choice to get involved, whether its dinner time or reading hour.

Shannon Taber, Rita's AT specialist explains it's important to be able to make these connections, not just for community inclusion but also for safety. Recently her communication devices informed her about 3 positive covid cases at her facility, so she knew to isolate until it was safe again.

One of Rita's favorite pastimes used to be reading. Now she uses BARD, a free braille and audio reading service through the state of CT library to rent and listen to books. UCP helped her obtain and learn how to use an Amazon device and an iPad as well, all tools that were recommendations from Rita's assessment. UCP continues to provide her ongoing support.

Vision and hearing issues can create a sense of loneliness and feeling disconnected. Rita now uses all of her assistive technology (AT) devices, on a daily basis, to connect with her daughters, ask about the weather or simply to listen to the news and life's updates. For Rita, assistive technology has offered her more choice, stemmed isolation and brought her joy through increased community and independence.

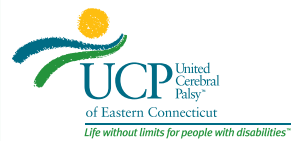


At UCP, we work as a unified team to prioritize your safety, independence, and ability to advocate for your needs. We're committed to ensuring all your basic needs are met, and everyone at UCP shares this dedication. Our collective strength means that those we serve will never feel like they're facing challenges alone – they always have a supportive team to rely on. This holistic approach makes a significant difference in the lives of the people we serve, offering them greater choice in their environments and increased safety. For example, I know that Rita feels more connected and secure and isn't as lonely as she once was.

~Shannon Taber

Director, Inclusion & Accessibility

12-Year Tenure at UCP



Thanks



Thank You to all our Contributors!

UCP of Eastern CT wishes to acknowledge and thank the many associations, corporations, foundations, and individuals whose cumulative gifts represent their significant investment in our mission.

BUSINESS CONTRIBUTIONS

World Insurance
 A. Secondino & Son, Inc
 Safety Insurance
 AMWINS
 Bouvier Insurance
 Charter Oak Federal Credit Union
 Chelsea Groton Bank
 ClearPath Financial Solutions LLC
 Commercial Vehicle Inspection Group
 Connecticut Laborers' District Council
 Core Plus Credit Union
 DiRoma Home & Garden Center
 Family Care Visiting Nurse
 John Henderson Construction, LLC
 Lathrop Vending
 MAPFRE Insurance
 Messier, Massad, Burdick & Assoc LLC
 Mohegan Tribe of Indians
 Norfolk & Dedham Group
 Philadelphia Insurance Co

Mathieu Marketing
 Quincy Mutual Fire Insurance Company
 Selective Insurance
 Sentry Insurance
 ServiceMaster
 Sure-Bright Inc.
 XS Brokers Insurance Agency, Inc
 Connecticut Laborers' District Council
 Niantic Lions
 Wave Construction Group, LLC
 Action Airlines
 Duncklee Cooling & Heating
 I-M Technology LLC
 Northeast Truck and Offroad
 Providence Mutual
 Travelers
 Wheel Pros
 Baruno, Hannaford, Heap, Aurello & Co. CPA, LLC
 Doherty, Beals & Banks PC
 Encova Insurance
 Filomena's, LLC
 Mercury Fuel Service
 Workers Compensation Trust

The Superior Group, LLC
 North Road Properties
 Affordable Services Goshen Road, LLC
 Bartelli Home Improvement
 Birds Eye Cafe
 Breeze Car Wash
 Buscetto Performance Training
 CNA
 David's Cafe
 Dime Bank
 Feigenbaum & Nair Scrap Metal
 Gateway Mortgage Services LLC
 Groton Elks 2163
 Liberty Mutual Group
 Main Street America
 Massad Insurance Agency LLC
 Maxum Irrigation Group
 Mueller Greene, LLC
 Novatae Risk Group
 Paradise Property Management, LLC
 Pro Epoxy
 Queen Bee's Oil, Inc.
 Suchocki & Son Inc.
 Waterford Group Charitable Foundation

BEQUEST

Marian Alfiero Irrevocable Trust

CORPORATE & FOUNDATION GRANTS

United Way of Southeastern CT
 Community Foundation of Eastern CT
 Harold & Rebecca Gross Foundation
 Frank Loomis Palmer Fund
 Chelsea Groton Foundation Inc
 UCP National Bellows Fund
 Electric Boat Employees Community Service Association
 R S Gernon Trust U/A
 Charter Oak Federal Credit Union
 Dime Bank Foundation
 Town Fair Tire Foundation, Inc.
 M&T Charitable Foundation

Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation
 The Sprague Family Charitable Fund
 New London Telephone Employee CSF
 Waterford Group

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

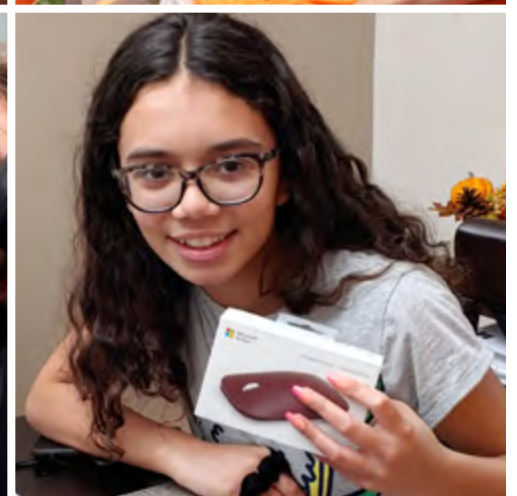
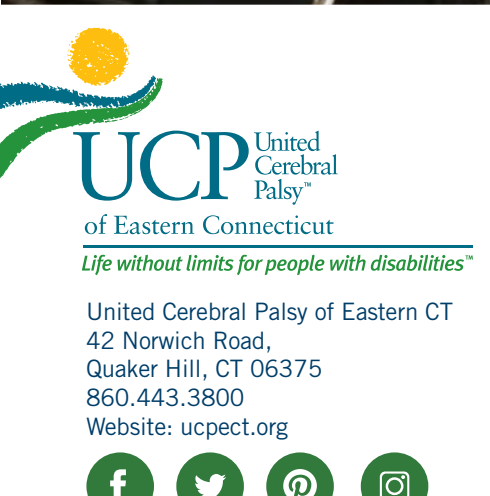
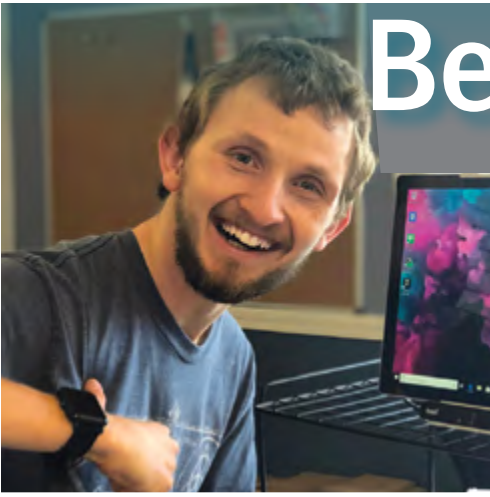
Stephanie Benson
 Kimberly Breen
 Bob Burnside
 Kate & Dan Careb
 Kelly Carter
 Harry Colonis
 Susan Devaney
 Ashley Framert
 Parker Garcia
 James Harris
 Darcy Hicks

Lloyd Johnson
 Mary Ann Kilar
 David Lavalette
 Joan Lundqvist
 Diane Martin
 Diane McLaughlin
 Judith Mik
 Nancy Pagliaro
 Judy & Jack Peregrim
 Rosemary Ricciardelli
 Elizabeth Ritter
 Judith Schillo
 Shannon Taber
 Stephen Zaehringer
 Lousie Zemina

This list may not be exhaustive, and unintentional omissions of donors could occur. We appreciate the contributions of all supporters, and any exclusions are not intentional.



Better Futures




UCP United Cerebral Palsy™
of Eastern Connecticut
Life without limits for people with disabilities™

United Cerebral Palsy of Eastern CT
42 Norwich Road,
Quaker Hill, CT 06375
860.443.3800
Website: ucpect.org

