

ASSIST. EMPOWER. ELEVATE.



The Rural Outreach Center

2025 Annual Report

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Board of Directors & Staff Listing.....	3
Letter from Our Executive Director.....	4
Empowering Communities.....	5
Letter from Our COO.....	6
Year in Review.....	8-9
Counseling & Play Therapy.....	10-11
Care Coordination & Outreach.....	12-13
Experiences.....	14-15
Responding to a Crisis.....	16
Volunteers.....	17
2025 at The ROC.....	18
ROC Squad Academics.....	19
2025 Outcomes.....	20
A Growing Need.....	21
Financials.....	22-23

OUR MISSION

The ROC's mission is to break the cycle of rural poverty by accompanying people toward self-sufficiency.

We assist, empower, and elevate.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Timothy Lafferty, **Chair**
Jane Vosseller, **Secretary**

Katherine Daley, **Vice Chair**
Brian Maze, **Treasurer**

Lori Bannister
Vicki Feine
Amelia Hakes
John Hart
Sheret Jagord
David Murray

Stacy Oar
William Owens, Jr
Christye Peterson
Damario Sarden
Marcia Keller, Recording
Secretary

STAFF MEMBERS

Dr. Frank Cerny,
Executive Director

Monique Albee Brannon,
Chief Operations Officer

Dr. Nichole Barrett
Sue Boyle
Nancy Ehlers
Sam Gorski
Larry Galuski
Maria Knickerbocker
Amelia Leggett

Emily Levin
Lisa Liedke
Vignesh Ramaiah Surrendra
Marnie Robel
Christy Schrecengost
Kelly Shanahan
Kelsey Welgoss

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

There's a time for everything. A time for looking back and a time for looking forward. An annual report is a time to do both.

In this report you will see the data; the numbers from 2025. You will see the number of services provided. Interesting, but these numbers won't tell you about the lives changed. You will see the numbers on changes in outcomes – housing or transportation or educational status, in mental health status and so on. These outcomes will get you closer to life transformations that happen at The ROC. But that still doesn't give you the power of what happens at The ROC.

There's nothing like looking at individual lives to truly understand what these numbers represent in terms of lives transformed.

At the most basic level, outreach efforts and number of services offered tell you that over 3,000 rural residents know that someone cares for them. If, “thank you for being there,” or “thank you for caring,” or “thank you for all you do,” came with financial rewards, our financials would be glowing. But putting numbers on the real-life transformations isn't possible.

What number would you put on the traumatized 6-year-old who was unable to communicate 4 years ago, but who now is a vibrant 10-year-old because of her participation at The ROC?

What number would you assign to the parents who took in a sister's children without the resources to create a healthy environment, but now, because The ROC gave them an opportunity to examine their lives and develop a path forward, has formed a loving circle within which these children can thrive?

Looking back at this information should give us encouragement to look forward.

We look forward to doing more, but better. We look forward to increasing our contribution to increased awareness of the needs of our rural population. We look forward to continuing our leadership in delivering care in a health system that coordinates, physical, mental and social needs. We look forward to helping rural communities improve housing, transportation, health care and employment opportunities.

And, yes, we look forward to continuing our partnership with many of you who have helped us get to this point and who believe in our work enough to help us move to where we need to go.



Frank Cerny, PhD., MDiv.
Executive Director

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

From our beginning, The ROC has believed in empowering those we serve. Our focus has primarily centered on the most immediate changes we could help make: supporting individuals and families with basic human needs, providing counseling and other supports, and offering services directly to people who need them.

We will continue to do all of that and more. But we have learned many things over the past 13 years. Our biggest lesson has been that you cannot expect to change a person's circumstances dramatically if you are not willing to also help change their larger community ecosystem.

What does that mean? To give an example: Jake came to The ROC struggling to pay his bills and dealing with a diagnosis of depression. He grew up in poverty. As an adult, he worked as a gas station clerk. The ROC offered Jake the same support we offer every Participant: counseling, care coordination, mentoring. But Jake's situation wasn't changing. Why?

Jake knew he needed a higher paying job. But there weren't any nearby, and he didn't have reliable transportation. Without a higher income, he consistently struggled to pay even the basic bills - especially rent, which is an increasingly heavy burden in rural households. Not being able to pay his bills only made Jake's depression worse. No coping skills learned in counseling could counter-act his reality.

The ROC realized many of our Participants were in this same situation. Individual change makes a difference, but only systemic change can truly end the cycle of rural poverty. And so, The ROC grew into our next role: an advocate for broad community change.

What needs to be addressed? In broad terms: the availability of services providing or supporting physical health, housing, transportation, and employment opportunities and workforce development. In some instances, The ROC has stepped forward as a leader: forming The ROC Affordable Housing Coalition. In others, we have joined as a partner with other agencies working toward a common goal of improving the overall wellbeing of the rural community we all love.

Systemic change takes time, effort, and the hard work of entire communities - but it can happen. Just as The ROC has transformed lives, we are committed to transforming our rural communities into places where individuals and families can thrive.

FROM OUR CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER

Dear Supporters, Partners, and Friends,

It's an honor to share this year's operational update with you on behalf of The Rural Outreach Center. Every day, I have the privilege of seeing the dedication, compassion, and hard work of our staff, volunteers, partners, and donors. Simply put — this work would not be possible without you.

This past year has been one of steady progress and impactful growth. As the needs in rural communities continue to change, our focus has remained the same: removing barriers, strengthening our systems, and ensuring that individuals and families can access the resources and assistance they need to move towards self-sufficiency.

Building a Stronger Foundation

Behind the scenes, we've been working hard to make our services more efficient and responsive. This year, we:

- Streamlined our intake and care coordination processes to reduce wait times
- Strengthened collaboration across departments to better coordinate services
- Invested in staff support, training and professional development
- Enhanced compliance, financial oversight, and reporting systems

While these improvements may not always be visible, they ensure that every dollar entrusted to us is used wisely and effectively.

Expanding Access in Rural Communities

The demand for services continues to grow, and we are committed to meeting that need. Over the past year, we:

- Increased service capacity throughout rural communities
- Strengthened partnerships with other local agencies and providers
- Expanded transportation and mobile service options to reach more individuals
- By refining how we operate, we've been able to serve more people while maintaining the compassion and personal connection that define our work.

FROM OUR CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER

Supporting the People Who Serve

Our team is truly the heart of The Rural Outreach Center. This year, we focused on supporting staff through increased flexibility and improved communication, recognizing that when we care for our team, they are better able to care for others.

We also continued to deepen volunteer engagement. The generosity of community members who give their time and talents is both inspiring and essential to our mission.

Looking Ahead

As we move into the coming year, we are excited to continue building on this momentum. Our priorities include:

- Using data more intentionally to guide decisions
- Leveraging technology to improve service delivery
- Diversifying funding to ensure long-term sustainability
- Expanding collaborative partnerships across Western New York and beyond

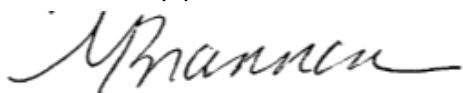
Rural communities deserve consistent, reliable access to essential services — and we remain committed to making that a reality.

With Gratitude

To our donors, board members, volunteers, and staff — thank you. Your trust, generosity, and belief in our mission make this work possible. Because of you, rural individuals and families are finding stability, hope, and opportunity. They are empowered.

Together, we are strengthening rural communities, creating lasting impact and transforming lives.

With sincere appreciation,



Monique Albee Brannon
Chief Operations Officer

2025: YEAR IN REVIEW



Good for the Neighborhood

The ROC continues to collaborate with the Independent Health Foundation for our quarterly Good For the Neighborhood Events. Good for the Neighborhood is a community-based wellness initiative that brings healthy living, training, and learning tools to communities where access to healthcare is limited.

The 5th Annual ROC Classic

Held this year in the spring and at a new location, new and seasoned golfers alike enjoyed a fantastic day - including starting off with a hole-in-one! The amount of fun had was matched only by the support shown for The ROC. The 2025 tournament raised close to \$30,000! The tournament has come into its own as a year tradition for many of our golfers. We hope you'll join us in the future!



Dream Big! Summer Experience

We launched our sixth Dream Big! Experience on July 7, 2025, welcoming an average of 29 kids each day for a summer filled with exploration and play. Highlights included field trips, weekly creek days, pool sessions, Friday flag football, and Free Play Fridays sponsored by Project Play Western New York. With 872 total attendances, Dream Big! offered joyful, meaningful experiences that kids and families continued to celebrate long after the program ended.

Back-to-School & Winter Prep

We were proud to support three back-to-school events providing providing more than 300 backpacks and school supplies to families in need. Our Winter Prep Outreach helped clothe 350 kids across 15 school districts. These moments were a powerful reminder of how removing basic barriers can uplift and empower our Participants.



ROctober

This year's event was one for the history books! We went back to our roots and returned to Elm Street Bakery and the General Riley House for the 2025 ROctober celebration. Torrential downpours didn't stop this from being our most successful ROctober yet! We love you and we thank you all.

Thanksgiving

In 2025 we provided 316 Turkeys and more than 100 bags of sides to our rural families across three separate outreach efforts. This outreach was supported by West Herr, Niceforo, Braun & Nowack DDS & Staff, and Astronics.



Christmas

This Christmas a total of 33 Participant families, made possible through the generosity of community members, local businesses, & local schools. The outpouring of support was truly overwhelming, and we are deeply grateful for the kindness shown. Thanks to this collective generosity, we were also able to extend Christmas support to 8 additional eligible families in our rural community.

“THE ROC IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE PLACES TO BE.”



Eight-year-old Jenna was going through a lot: her parents were getting a divorce. She and her mom had moved and she was at a new school where she felt isolated.

Jenna started lashing out at home and at school, having angry outbursts that only isolated her further. Her teacher suggested to Jenna's mom that she try reaching out to The ROC, having seen them help other kids in her school with similar behaviors.

Jenna began play therapy at The ROC, meeting weekly with her counselor to start addressing the emotions behind her outbursts. Her counselor then suggested she join a counseling group for girls with big emotions. The 'Emotional Explorers' group met weekly for two months and offered each girl a safe space to express their emotions without fear of being judged.

The group helped Jenna understand how to cope with her big feelings and to relate to other kids in a healthy way. She formed new friendships, including with a girl who goes to her school.

On the final day of group, the girls wrote each other compliments. Jenna took home a piece of paper filled with compliments like, "You are kind," and "You are a nice friend".

Jenna told her counselor, "I didn't think I'd have this much fun but The ROC is one of my favorite places to be."

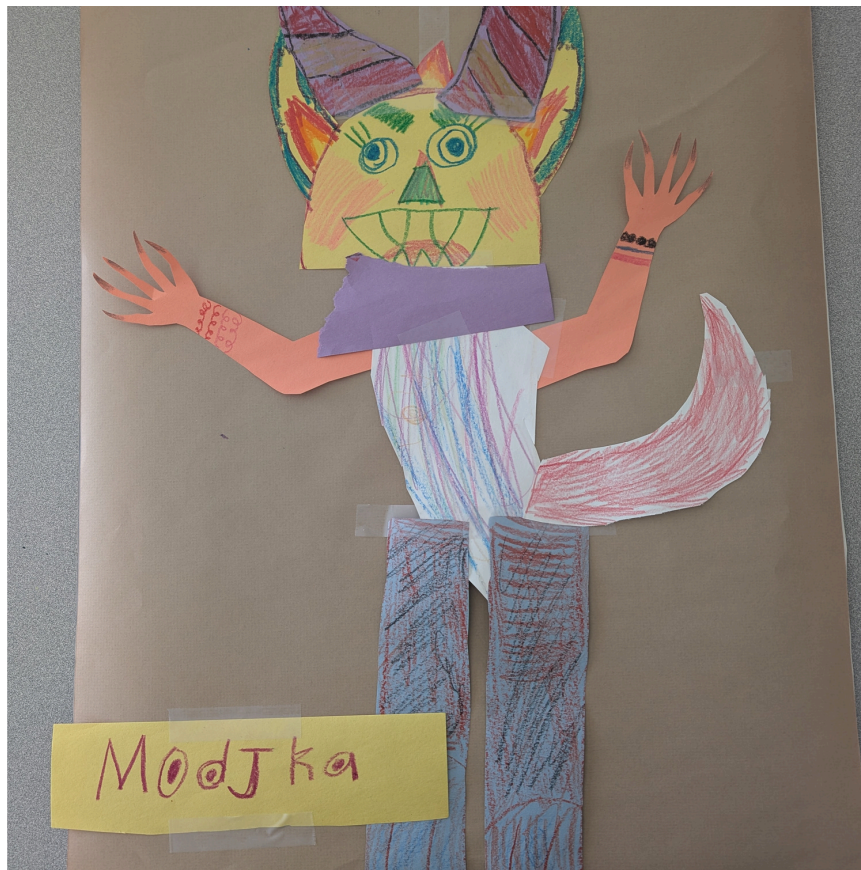


COUNSELING AT THE ROC

2025 was a year of growth for the counseling department at The ROC. Due to the ever-growing need for mental health services in our service area, The ROC hired an additional full-time social worker in June, welcoming one of our previous interns to the staff. With this additional support, The ROC was able to provide a significant increase in mental health services to children and adults alike, both at The ROC and at school satellite locations in our service area.

The ROC's clinical team provided mental health services to more than 170 individuals over the course of 2025, including admitting over 70 new Participants into clinical services.

The clinical team also supported countless small successes and major victories for ROC Participants - everything from a child using a coping skill for the first time to an adult recognizing patterns of abuse in their relationships and learning how to set boundaries to protect their own wellbeing. The ROC is proud to support these moments of progress.



Meet Modjka - the emotions monster that The ROC's Emotional Explorers counseling group created as a physical representation of their more intense emotions and feelings.

Each girl created a part to represent their most intense feeling. In creating and naming Modjka, the girls were able to talk about how they were feeling and what emotions came up when they looked at the emotion monster.

“YOU’LL NEVER GUESS WHAT HAPPENED AT WORK TODAY.”



The Rural Outreach Center’s staff has received many calls and messages from Harry over the last few years - crisis calls over food and housing, asking for help with finding employment, and simply needing someone to hear him.

This time, the call was different.

Harry, now in his mid-twenties, grew up in foster care and became homeless once he turned 18 and aged out of the system. With no support system and no idea of how to live on his own, he turned to alcohol for comfort. By the time he came to The ROC, he was struggling to believe that the future held anything positive for him.

When ROC staff first sat down with Harry, they made him a promise: we won’t give up on you - as long as you don’t give up on yourself. Even when Harry was feeling at his lowest, he held up his end of that promise. He started counseling at The ROC, working to understand his complicated feelings about personal relationships. He began getting treatment for his alcohol use at a facility recommended by his ROC counselor. He spent hours working with The ROC’s staff to explore his skills and interests and identifying job opportunities that would not only earn an income but make him happy.

When there were bumps in the road, Harry didn’t give up - because he now had a support network behind him. When he realized that a jobsite had too many triggers that threatened his new-found sobriety, he came back to The ROC and asked for help to find a different job.

Today, Harry is completely self-sufficient. He has his own apartment, a job he enjoys, and is even in a committed relationship. And that phone call?

“I was named employee of the month.”

CARE COORDINATION & OUTREACH

Through targeted outreach activities, we strengthened partnerships with other organizations and increased visibility of available resources and services for individuals and families they serve.

In 2025, we engaged in more than 30 outreach events throughout rural Western New York, ranging from community celebrations and school-based outreach to cross-sector collaborative initiatives.



The New York State Medicaid 1115 Waiver program supports Medicaid members of all ages who experience health-related social needs, including housing instability, food insecurity, transportation barriers, or caregiving challenges. The ROC works in collaboration with Social Care Networks (SCNs) to support individuals who may benefit from coordinated, non-medical interventions designed to improve health outcomes, strengthen stability, and support independent living. Participating in the Waiver program has empowered our care coordination efforts to offer more support to the people who need it most.

Through twice-monthly visits to the Hulbert Library in Springville, The ROC offers care coordination and support to rural residents who have limited or no transportation - including those experiencing homelessness. Together, we are expanding access to basic services our community needs and deserves.

A new partnership with Bertrand Chaffee Hospital and Fidelis Cares led to new wellness initiatives in rural Cattaraugus county. The goal of these wellness events is to meet people where they are at by providing one stop shop access to services in areas where transportation is a barrier and to promote awareness of organizations available to those in rural and underserved communities.



“YOU’RE THE FIRST PLACE THAT MADE ME & MY KIDS FEEL LOVED.”

When we first met Amy she was in crisis and unsure how she was going to support herself and her three kids Samantha, Corey, and Jenny. She was on her own after leaving an unhealthy situation and was ready to make a change and take control, but she didn’t know how. She was overwhelmed. We surrounded Amy and her kids with love and support, provided stabilization, and then asked each of them what they wanted their future to look like.

- Amy wanted to be able to support her kids without worrying.
- Samantha wanted to make friends.
- Corey wanted to learn how to control his anger.
- Jenny just wanted to play.

While our care coordinator helped Amy set goals and access resources, the rest of our team focused on her children, creating spaces for them to explore, dream, and be heard. Through play therapy, mentoring, and experiences like Dream Big! at The ROC, each child was empowered to grow in their own way. As Amy worked toward stability, Samantha found her voice and a supportive peer community, Corey built coping skills and confidence, and Jenny’s imagination opened the door to new possibilities.

Today, Amy and her children are thriving. Amy secured full-time employment and is saving toward a home of her own. Samantha has emerged as a role model for her siblings and younger kids at The ROC. Corey discovered a passion for sports, building confidence and focus. And Jenny now believes her future holds endless possibilities. Together, they have each achieved meaningful milestones and are determined to continue moving forward.

OVERVIEW OF EXPERIENCES

2025 was a transformative year for ROC experiences. Our tutoring and mentoring program, the ROC Squad, saw steady and meaningful growth, and Dream Big! had its most successful year since it began in 2020. Thanks to the incredible support of our community, we were able to offer a wider range of opportunities than ever before—far surpassing those of previous years. While our numbers reflect part of this success, it is equally important to celebrate the growth, confidence, and possibility that data alone cannot fully capture:

- Two seventh-grade Participants demonstrated remarkable perseverance by completing the entire math assessment—including concepts they had not yet learned—and then requesting to review every unfamiliar problem to deepen their understanding.
- The 4th grader who discovered that she wants to “do something with kids” when she grows up.
- A struggling reader who once shut down when asked to read in the fall picked up her assessment confidently and read each sentence independently.
- Two elementary-aged children who could not write their names, now do so with pride and have progressed through decodable readers, carrying themselves with new confidence whenever they are asked to read or write.
- A middle schooler arrived eager to share homework because he “knows that The ROC can help,” showing how trusted support has strengthened his motivation and ownership of learning.
- A fourth grader lit up with excitement as she shared that she earned 100% on her most recent math test—a milestone she could not wait to celebrate with us.
- A ninth-grade Participant who asked when she would get to be a volunteer.
- Parents who have expressed deep gratitude, sharing stories of successes that reflect their children’s growing confidence and skills.
- Tutors and mentors regularly share reflections filled with “high-five moments,” celebrating the small victories and meaningful breakthroughs they witness in nearly every session.



RESPONDING TO A CRISIS

When it became clear that the federal government shutdown would delay SNAP and HEAP support for the families throughout our community, The ROC quickly stepped in.

The ROC was selected as one of five agencies across WNY by the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County to distribute grocery gift cards to families and individuals needing food assistance. We were able to distribute more than 50 gift cards totaling \$2,650 in direct assistance.

Community members immediately stepped up, donating food, grocery gift cards, and basic needs items like personal care products. Several local businesses ran collections or specials in support of The ROC's work.



Throughout November and into December, The ROC was able to provide families the supplemental support they needed. When SNAP payments returned and the need lessened, The ROC was able to pass along the remaining food donations to several of our food pantry partners in the community, ensuring that families who needed the food most still had access.



Although much of the public attention was centered on food needs, The ROC also heard from family after family about their concerns that HEAP - the Home Energy Assistance Program - had not yet opened. As temperatures dropped and snow started falling, those concerns grew more desperate. There are limited protections for people who use electric or gas heat. For

people who rely on propane or firewood deliveries, those protections do not exist. For many in rural areas, these deliveries need to be made before the snow gets too deep - and deliveries will not happen before payment is made.

The Borderland Home Heating Initiative was established with the support of Borderland Music & Art Festival, who donated the proceeds of this year's can recycling efforts to help families and individuals who needed help with heating bills and associated costs.

ROC VOLUNTEERS: MAKING AN IMPACT

In 2025, ROC volunteers made a huge impact! Whether they were supporting an event, helping with yardwork, or mentoring a child, our volunteers were ready to provide a helping hand. Their support and hard work is much appreciated!



2025 AT THE ROC!

178
Individuals
Received
Counseling

2,379
Play therapy
and counseling
sessions
provided to
children

1,148
Adult
Counseling
Sessions

353
Care
Coordination
Sessions

174
Benefits
Application
Appointments

872
Attendances at
Dream Big!
Summer
Experience, where
44 kids ages 5-15
spent 6 weeks
playing, learning,
and exploring!

315 Backpacks

351 Sets of new
coats & boots

316 Thanksgiving
Turkeys

31
Kids received
counseling at
school

71
New
Counseling
Admissions

183
Child Mentoring
Sessions

244
Child Tutoring
Sessions

Counseling Sessions at Schools:

132 Sessions at Harold O. Brumsted
Elementary School

199 Sessions at Parkdale Elementary
School

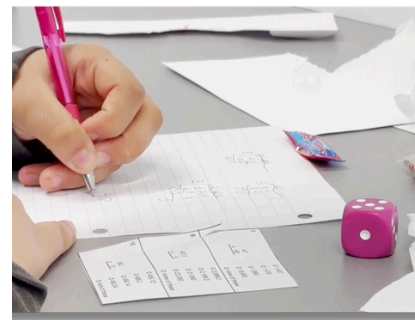
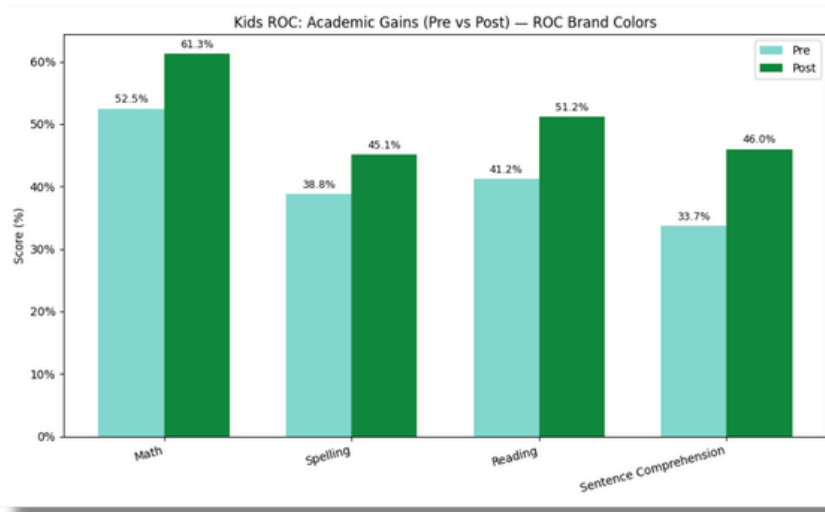
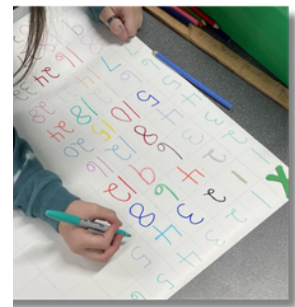
64 Sessions at Delevan Elementary
School

ROC Squad provides mentoring and tutoring for school-aged children at The ROC. This snapshot covers the 2024-2025 school year for our kids engaged in tutoring. Participants are assessed academically at the beginning of their intervention & again at the end of the program cycle or completion of the intervention.

ROC SQUAD ACADEMICS 2024-2025

Assessment Tool: The Wide Range Achievement Test, Fifth Edition (WRAT5)

SUBJECT	PRE (%)	POST (%)	POINT INCREASE	% CHANGE
Math	52.5	61.3	8.8	16.8%
Spelling	38.8	45.1	6.3	16.2%
Reading	41.2	51.2	10.0	24.3%
Sentence Comprehension	33.7	46.0	12.3	36.5%



All four areas improved from pre to post:

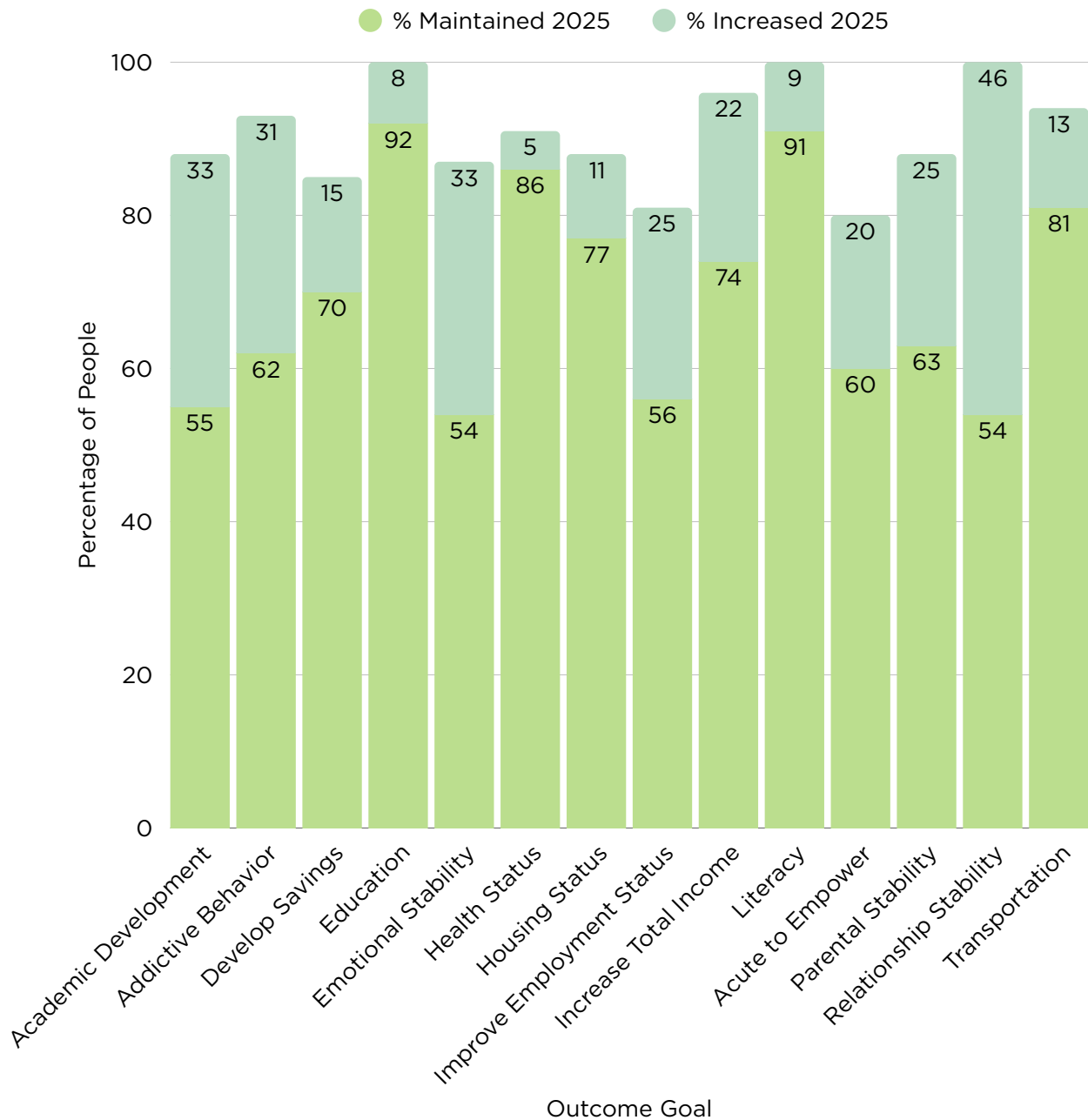
- Math rose from 52.5% → 61.3% (+8.8 percentage points; +16.8%).
- Spelling increased 38.8% → 45.1% (+6.3 pts; +16.3%).
- Reading climbed 41.2% → 51.2% (+10.0 pts; +24.3%).
- Sentence Comprehension saw the largest relative gain: 33.7% → 46.0% (+12.3 pts; +36.5%).

2025 OUTCOMES

The ROC supports Participants as they set and work towards goals. We track progress on 14 outcome measures on a quarterly basis, with Participants being tracked on the outcomes which match their set goals. Year after year, we see Participants increase their outcome scores and/or maintain previous improvements.

2025 Outcome Goals

Percentage of People Who Improved or Maintained Previous Improvements



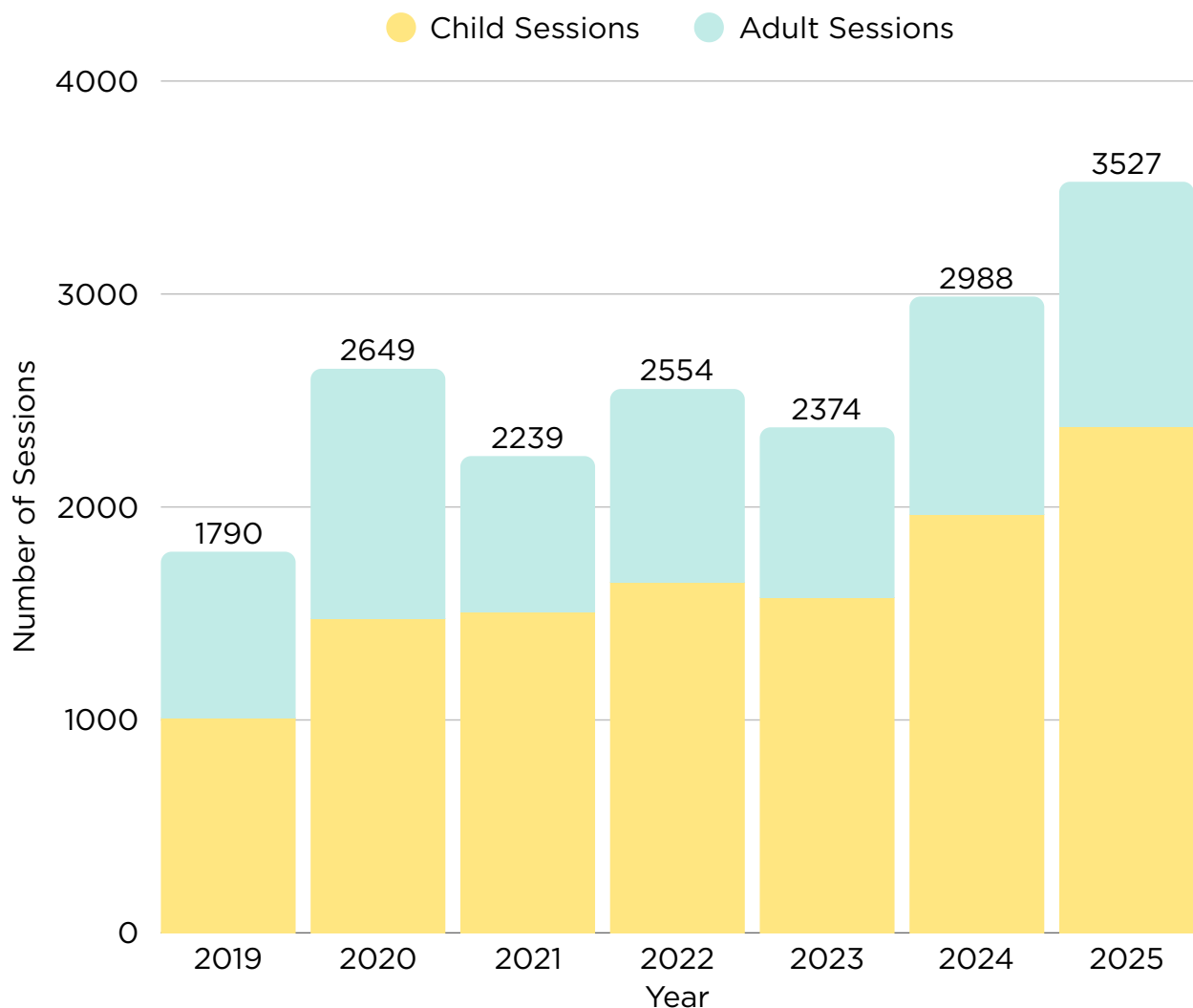
A GROWING NEED

The ROC has seen a rising demand for mental health services since 2023. We also experienced a significant jump in services provided from 2019 to 2020, which can be attributed to both the extreme anxiety and demand for services that the pandemic

caused and the widespread use and availability of telehealth services - allowing for The ROC's clinical team to reach more people when transportation barriers or distance previously limited the frequency of sessions.

Mental Health Counseling and Play Therapy Sessions Provided

2019-2025, Shown by age of Participant Receiving Service



FINANCIALS

Assets

Cash and Cash Equivalents	2,200,013
Investments	265,532
Receivables	153,364
Prepaid Expenses	20,403
Endowment	208,449
Capital assets, net	4,579,413
Total Assets*	7,427,174

Net Assets

Without Donor Restrictions	6,645,642
With Donor Restrictions	694,116
Total Net Assets	7,339,758
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	7,427,174

Liabilities

Accounts Payable	5,266
Accrued Expenses	47,650
Deferred Revenue	34,500
Total Liabilities	87,416

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Support & Revenue

Grants	800,893
Contributions	468,437
Services	432,954
Special Events, Net	94,931
Misc. Income	25,176
Investment Income	59,454
Total Public Support & Revenue	1,881,845


Other Revenues & Expenses

Unrealized Gains of Investments	29,768
Change in Net Assets	165,904


Expenses

Program Services	1,064,543
Management & General	402,503
Fundraising	278,663
Total Expenses	1,745,709

 www.theroc.co

 716-240-2220

 hello@theroc.co

 730 Olean Road, East Aurora, NY 14052

THE RURAL OUTREACH CENTER, INC.



ASSISTING • EMPOWERING • ELEVATING