

ADAPTIVE DESIGN ASSOCIATION, INC.

CUSTOM IS CRITICAL

2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

Together we ensure kids in NYC get the custom fit they deserve to participate fully.



Rajani's custom floor sitter means experiencing play in a whole new way with her big sister.



MEET YITZY, AND HIS LOW RIDE SCOOTER

WHAT WE DO

We use an innovative approach to disability services. We design and build custom assistive equipment (adaptations) using easily-accessible materials like cardboard and wood, and teach community partners how to do so.

WHY WE DO IT

Most environments are not built with accessibility in mind, creating obstacles for people with disabilities. There are children, adults, and seniors in every community who can improve function and overcome impairments with adaptations suited to their individual needs.

HOW WE DO IT

We collaborate with individuals and their care team to design and fit custom adaptations for use at home, school, or in the community. We are committed to accessibility for all and do not charge for adaptive equipment. Our process includes remote consultations, in person equipment fittings, and subsequent alterations culminating in a one-of-a-kind piece of equipment. All adaptive equipment is designed and built in our shop in Midtown, Manhattan.

"Yitzy's physical therapist contacted us and asked if we could design something where he could lay flat and scoot himself around," said Eric Gottshall, ADA Designer. "We needed to come up with something crafted to his body that would allow him to express the mobility that was in him and being blocked by technology."

"When I was a little boy, I was influenced by Hotwheels cars," said Eric. "I must have had a hundred of them and I loved how sleek and fast they were. I took the idea of a Hotwheels car and designed an indestructible vehicle that Yitzy can control with his arms and scoot across the floor as quickly as he wants.

"The 'Lowrider' stops and turns quickly so that he can chase his brothers and sister down the hall and pivot when it's time to take the race to another part of the house," said Eric.

Yitzy has two bullet cars now, one for school, and a slick, indestructible car at home that stops, pivots and works with Yitzy. "We chose to 'trick-out' his home car using high-end wood detail and wheels that look great, but also help navigate a house full of shoes and toys," said Eric. "It's amazing to hear him laughing on the top of his lungs as he scoots around the house. That's our job, to let kids be kids."

Our goal at ADA is to design mobility devices that are literally extensions of bodies. We are committed to independence, mobility, and honoring the personality of each person who needs an adaptive device to help navigate the world.

Scan or click to see
Yitzy in action



Yitzy's low-ride scooters at school and home mean playing with classmates at gym and keeping up with his siblings.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

ADAPT FOR ACCESS

We created 159 adaptive devices for 68 clients last year, twice the number built in 2021. Clients represent individuals and classrooms. Of the 159, 60 adaptive devices were client-specific. The other 99 adaptive devices were multi-user items customized for use in classrooms. Many adaptive devices are created in collaboration with occupational and physical therapists who understand the specific needs of their clients. We also work with families and adjust the adaptive devices until they fit the needs of every client.

Examples of custom devices include a low-ride scooter for Yitzzy, an 8-year-old with cerebral palsy, so he can move freely in the gym during Adapted Physical Education using just his arms, and a custom floor sitter for Rajani, a 2-year-old girl, that allows her to sit independently and experience play in a whole new way with her big sister.

Each piece of customized equipment is valued at approximately \$1,500 and provided to clients at home at no cost. Devices made for schools and private organizations follow a system for reimbursement according to school policy in providing assistive devices for students with disabilities.

DANNA OVER THE YEARS

Ask anyone at Adaptive Design about Danna and they will share a smile and a story.

Adam El-Sawaf, Senior Adaptive Designer and Fabricator remembers designing a little pink ride-on car for Danna when she was just four years old, allowing little Danna to roll around her park and keep up with her brothers. Antoinette LaSorsa, Fabrication Director, remembers designing and building a purple table and chair for Danna when she was 8 years old and needed an activity center that would support her growing frame. The table and chair allowed her to play with her favorite toys and have a snack while her brothers completed their homework. Eric Gottshall, Adaptive Designer and Fabricator, recently built a reclining chair so that Danna, who is now 12, can comfortably sit at the kitchen table with her family at meal times, or lean back and watch her favorite TV shows after a long day at school.

Adaptive Design is committed to each constituent over time. We cheer successes as babies turn into toddlers, then preschoolers and on up into adulthood. We know our clients well and are constantly thinking of new designs for adaptive equipment. We are the only organization in New York City providing lifelong adaptive equipment to clients and their families. The entire ADA staff looks forward to helping Danna as she enters her teen years and beyond.

All adaptive equipment built for home use at ADA is provided at no cost to our clients and their families.

Danna's reclining chair means she can sit at the table with her family, watch TV with her brothers in the afternoon and lean back when her body needs relief.

Innovative design.

Building one-of-a-kind equipment.

Removing barriers.



COMMUNICATION CARDS

We create standardized, three-dimensional communication cards for individuals who are non-verbal or have visual disabilities. Two blank cards are provided in every set to allow for customization for the end user. The cards are an important source of revenue for ADA. Last year, we sold 8,019 handmade cards to American Printing House for the Blind for national distribution.

Our in-house team also designs and assembles custom communication cards. One teacher requested that ADA create a card her students with limited vision could use when they needed to use the bathroom. Typically a tile is used but in this case, the teacher discovered that her student recognized the bathroom by feeling for the top of a raised head of a nail that was on the door of the bathroom. ADA created a customized card containing the raised head of a nail. This card empowered the student to share their needs during the school day.

ADA provides professional development workshops for teachers and professionals who use communication cards with their clients. We provide instruction and materials in our workshop in Midtown Manhattan.

Workshops and other custom card collaborations led to the development of 748 custom cards. We are committed to ensuring that children always have access to these and other communication tools needed at school and home, including boards for communicating choices and easels to aid in writing and drawing.

Choice boards are lightweight, easy to transport and provide opportunities for teachers to introduce choice-making to students on the go, in the playground, the cafeteria or during story time.



Activating communication through touch.



Workshops provide staff with an opportunity to customize and build communication cards. This card embedded with a syringe on it, helps students with limited vision know they are entering a school nurse's office.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Every fabrication activity doubles as a teaching-learning opportunity. As we create critical custom solutions for people with disabilities, we involve marginalized, often-overlooked populations in creating these items, providing much-needed transition skills and learning opportunities. We have educational programs for youth with autism, people with disabilities, community members, and individuals involved in the criminal justice system.

ADA's collaborative design and building process involving cardboard is well-suited to create curriculums that allow teachers to engage students of varying abilities. While our process is new to many participants, cardboard is an inexpensive and approachable material and allows mistakes to be part of the learning process.

Opportunities to engage in the workshop - building skills for fulfilling futures.



Made to Learn program means Mo and his classmates gain technical skills to create adaptive toys and other devices for others in their community.



RIC participants build easels with high contrast colors for students with visual disabilities.

Made to Learn (M2L)

Established in 2013, the M2L program is an innovative in-school and community-based program, teaching pre-vocational skills in design and fabrication to young adults with autism. In 2022 we taught 27 sessions for 49 participants, including 22 youth with autism and their support staff. The students were introduced to adaptive toy-making and learned to build electrical circuits for the first time.

Re-imagined Communities (RIC)

The RIC program targets accessibility and inclusion by creating new connections between people with disabilities and their communities. In 2022 we began a partnership with a local Alternatives-to-Incarceration program, teaching cardboard carpentry and adaptive design to youth involved with the justice system. Two cohorts completed the program and delivered adaptive devices to local special education programs.

OPENING OUR DOORS



25 volunteers, including 10 retired professionals, contributed 1060 hours of service.

At ADA, we believe in sharing our knowledge, our designs and latest innovations with the world. We offer both in-person and virtual educational opportunities ranging from how to assemble communication cards to educational seminars on how to design and build adaptive devices.

In 2022, we reached 1,037 people from over 49 organizations in 4 different countries, 8 states, and five boroughs of NYC via 64 presentations.

Our philosophy of growth and leading innovation is enriched by learning from others. In 2022, we welcomed new ideas about design, systems of operation, and curriculum building from five talented interns, including graduate-level social work students and students from design and engineering programs. Many of these students shared invaluable insights that have significantly benefited ADA. We learned from them, and they learned from us.

Twenty-five volunteers provide significant support for ADA's staff of seven. Volunteers assemble communication cards, assist in the adaptive device workshop and assist in administrative tasks. Volunteers come to ADA with impressive work backgrounds and bring great ideas with them. At ADA, we are learning all the time from one another every day.

Carly, ADA's Design intern, created a scalable 3D printable file customizing key guards used by students to articulate picture selection on communications systems on tablets.



56 corporate volunteers from the American Institute of Architects, Regeneration, Tech Gives Back and Two Sigma dedicated a day of service.



Celebrated Council Member Botcher's Penn South accessible playground remodel initiative.



Doctors from Gujarat, India learned cardboard carpentry to better serve their community, as did participants from Brazil, Mexico and the UK.

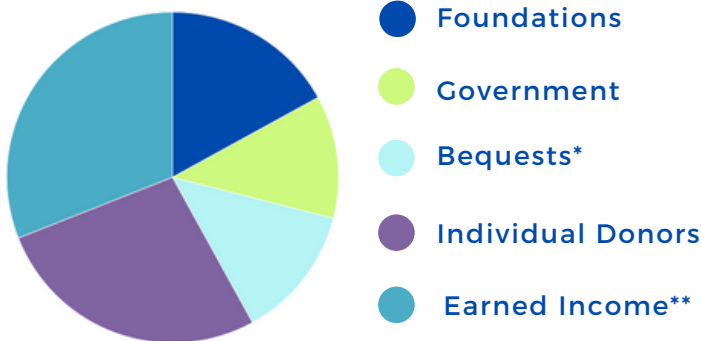
FINANCIALS

JULY 1, 2021 - JUNE 30, 2022

Bella's custom stander means learning to stand independently while exploring music.



REVENUE



Total: \$ 739,399

Surplus revenue explained:

*Bequests represented \$112,500 in unbudgeted revenue.

**Demand for additional communication cards also brought income over the proposed budget

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

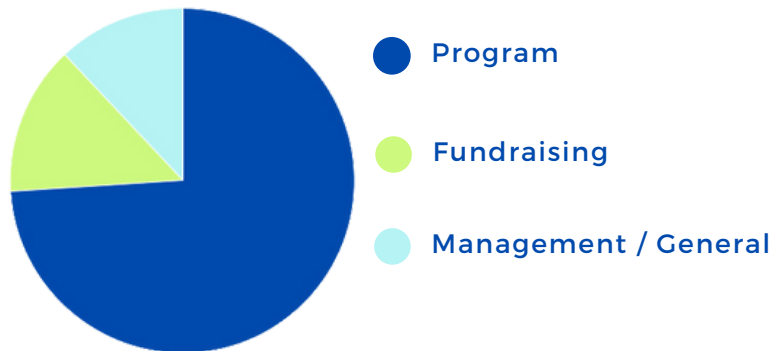
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FUNDERS

CORPORATIONS, FOUNDATIONS,
GOVERNMENT AND MAJOR GIFTS

Adobe Employee Community Fund
Barker Welfare Foundation
City Council of New York
DJ McManus Foundation
Edna Wardlaw Charitable Trust
Harry S. Black & Allon Fuller Fund
Hyde and Watson Foundation
Lavelle Fund for the Blind
Manhattan Community Award Program
Mary Alice Fortin Foundation
Marietta Teitler
Robert & Dolores Freidenrich Charitable Fund
Samuel Freeman Charitable Trust
Sheila Daley Foundation
Tim Taylor

EXPENSES



Total: \$ 578,194

ADA is committed to financial transparency. The NYS Office of the Attorney General provides access to the annual filing for charitable organizations. [Click here](#) for the FY22 990.





Sasha's 3D printed trumpet harness means she can now play her instrument with one hand.

Thank you for being part of the community that makes life's experiences accessible.

Stay up to date on the latest stories and programs on our blog. www.adaptivedesign.org/blog



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