



CREATE • CONNECT • ACHIEVE

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Autistry Studios

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DONATE



CONTENTS

Letter from our CEO	3
A Year of Growth	4
Building Identity Through Diverse Experiences	5
Expanding our Café	6
CEO/ Executive Director, CFO/COO, & Clinical Director	7
Timeline January - June	8
Timeline June - December	9
Autistry Staff	10
Financial Summary	11
Looking Ahead	12
Fundraising Asks	13
A Big Thank You	14

OUR MISSION

We Build Independent Adults!

Autistry staff help autistic/neurodivergent teens and adults become successfully independent by leveraging their interests and talents while creating a robust, supportive, and productive community.

GEARING UP FOR A GREAT YEAR AHEAD!



Dear Friends, Supporters, and Partners,

As I look back on 2024, I am amazed at what we have accomplished together. We have experienced enormous growth in the number of individuals we serve and the number of staff members working with us. We have created new community partnerships offering social, vocational, and creative opportunities. We have launched new academic courses supporting life-long learning and intellectual development.

Our success would not have been possible without the dedication of our staff, families, and board members, and the support of our community. You have been a testament to the power of collective action and to the unwavering commitment to our mission: to help autistic/neurodivergent teens and adults become successfully independent.

Autistry is a unique collection of talented, skilled, and quirky individuals - both staff and students. Our diversity gives us strength and opens up possibilities that a singular viewpoint would never reveal. This passionate diversity inspires me every day to learn more, to reach further, and to take new risks.

As I set out to assemble this Annual Report, I did not realize the sheer number of events and amount of progress we had achieved this year. To truly understand the vibrancy of 2024, we created the monthly activity calendar below. Something cool happens each month and often several cool somethings!

Our hard work in 2023 created a firm financial footing for our growth in 2024. The 2024 financial reports will show even greater financial stability, and thus the ability to implement exciting plans to expand our reach and impact in 2025. On behalf of everyone at Autistry Studios, I thank you for believing in our mission and for investing in a brighter future for our community. Your trust and support mean everything to us, and we are honored to have you by our side as we continue our journey together.

With gratitude and hope,

Janet Lawson, LMFT
CEO/Executive Director



A Year of Growth, Community, and Identity

2024 has been a transformative year for Autistry Studios. Our work centers around our two maker spaces, comfortable and collaborative environments where students build their vocational skills and interact with the community. Through their experiences here, students gain confidence and practical abilities they can carry into broader environments, empowering them to thrive both personally and professionally.



The Maker Space: Fostering Skills and Social Connections



The 4th Street Maker Space, located in downtown San Rafael, has been instrumental in helping students develop hands-on skills and social reciprocity. Our café exemplifies this vision: it brings the community into a welcoming space where students practice interacting with others. These interactions prepare them to navigate new environments confidently and competently. Whether crafting products or serving customers, students learn and refine skills that reflect their growing capabilities.

Educational Innovation

This year, we introduced a new series of classes to address a critical need: the elimination of remedial education courses offered by community colleges. In response, Autistry launched basic literacy, English, Math, and Geography courses tailored to our students' academic needs.

A highlight of our curriculum was the Story Xperiential course, developed in partnership with Pixar. Through this program, students learn the fundamentals of storytelling—structure, plot, and character development—using animation as a medium. Beyond fostering creativity, the course hones executive function skills, empowering students to think critically about their own life stories, set goals, and envision meaningful outcomes.



2024 HAS BEEN A TREMENDOUS YEAR OF GROWTH AND EXPANSION

Autistry added new students and created exciting new programs.
We are set to continue growing & expanding in 2025!"

– Janet Lawson, CEO

Building Identity Through Diverse Experiences

At Autistry, we believe that understanding one's identity is key to becoming an independent adult. Our variety of experiences—from performing in plays to participating in community events—enables



students to explore their place in the world and their connections to it. This year, our partnership with Marin Shakespeare Theater culminated in a remarkable performance, showcasing the transformative power of the arts. Even students who initially struggled with verbal communication took to the stage, demonstrating profound growth and confidence.

Community Engagement and Recognition

Autistry's impact was recognized in three prominent publications—*The Pacific Sun*, *Marin Magazine*, and *The Marin Independent Journal*. These articles highlighted the potential and progress of our students, bringing greater awareness to our mission.

Our community involvement extended to events like the Marin County Fair, where student stories written in our English classes won awards, and the Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival, where products crafted in our studios were successfully sold. We also participated in the Fairfax 4th of July Parade, further embedding ourselves in the local community.

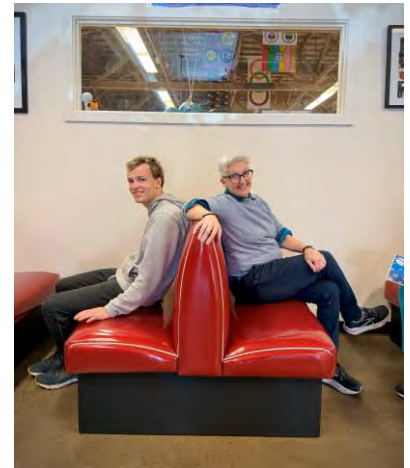




Autistry's students joined the FreeMo Train Set project, learning planning, building, and project management skills while contributing to a larger collaborative effort. This initiative emphasized the importance of teamwork and adhering to shared standards, which is perhaps a metaphor for their integration into the broader community.

Expanding Our Café and Retail Opportunities

In collaboration with Double Rainbow Ice Cream, we began the buildout of an expanded café at our 4th Street location. This new space will increase opportunities for students to learn and work in retail and food service, preparing them for meaningful employment. The café continues to serve as a hub where community and student growth intersect.



Fundraising and Creative Achievements

ICB ART, an exceptional community of artists in Sausalito, chose Autistry as the beneficiary of their Harmony Project fundraiser. 40+ ICB artists created 4 paintings in 4 days and auctioned them with all proceeds going to Autistry. Authors of the anthology, *Love Notes from the Soul* held their book



reading at Autistry. These events and the sale of student-made products provided platforms to celebrate and share their achievements with the wider community.

Looking Ahead

As we reflect on 2024, we are inspired by the strides our students have made in skill development, community interaction, and self-discovery. Autistry remains committed to creating environments where individuals with diverse abilities can thrive, grow, and contribute.

Thank you to our supporters, partners, and community members for being part of this journey.

Together, we are shaping a future where everyone has the opportunity to define their identity and find their place in the world.



Janet Lawson

Co-Founder of Autistry Studios, CEO, and Executive Director. She is a Psychotherapist and published author and has a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science and an M.S. in Counseling Psychology. She is the heart of every relationship created at Autistry.



Dan Swearingen

Co-Founder of Autistry Studios, CFO, and COO. Dan is educated as a scientist in physics and astrophysics with a bachelor's and two master's degrees. He is passionate about creating a financially stable company where autistic students can thrive.



Sara Gardner

Clinical Director, LMFT at Autistry and runs the partnership program with Square Peg Foundation at Cadence Farm. She values relationships built with students, mentors, and families. She loves supporting Autistry students as they work to build rich and meaningful lives.

CONGRATULATIONS

TO OUR STUDENT CHRIS

WHO IS GRADUATING FROM

COLLEGE OF MARIN IN THE SPRING!



WE PACKED A LOT INTO ONE YEAR!



...AND WHAT A GREAT YEAR IT WAS

JUNE



ART

The Pop Culture Art Gallery of Guerneville welcomes Autistry Studios in their Community Corner.

THEATER

Autistry Drama Group has a musical float in the Fairfax Fair and Parade.



JUNE

JULY



TINKER WORKSHOP

The Tinker Workshop began production on a large portable modular model train layout. They will connect these modules with other groups to form a huge train layout.

FACES OF AUTISTRY

Artist Paul Garbaczeski is creating a portrait of every student and staff member. The original portraits are gifted to the individual and a large enlargement will hang on the Production workshop wall.



AUGUST

AUGUST



MARIN MAGAZINE

Autistry featured in Marin Magazine's piece, The Right Place for the Right Mind: Marin County Programs Providing Neurodivergent Support and Empowerment

MILL VALLEY FALL ARTS FESTIVAL

Autistry participates in the Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival alongside over a hundred artists. The Autistry booth was located in the Special Grove dedicated to Art For A Better World.



SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER



SCOOP UP THE VOTE

In partnership with Marin Center for Independent Living and County of Marin Registrar of Voters, Autistry hosted Scoop up the Vote, an Ice Cream Social & Voter Registration Event.

DOUBLE RAINBOW

Construction begins on the expansion of the café to accommodate Double Rainbow.



NOVEMBER

DECEMBER



THEATER

Partnership with Marin Shakespeare Company. Autistry Studios Proudly Presents A MIDWINTER NIGHT'S GROOVY YULETIDE DREAM



Staff not pictured: Liz, Penn, Sandy, Trevor, Kevin, Anya, and Bonnie

AUTISTRY HAS A HIGHLY EDUCATED STAFF

Together we have:

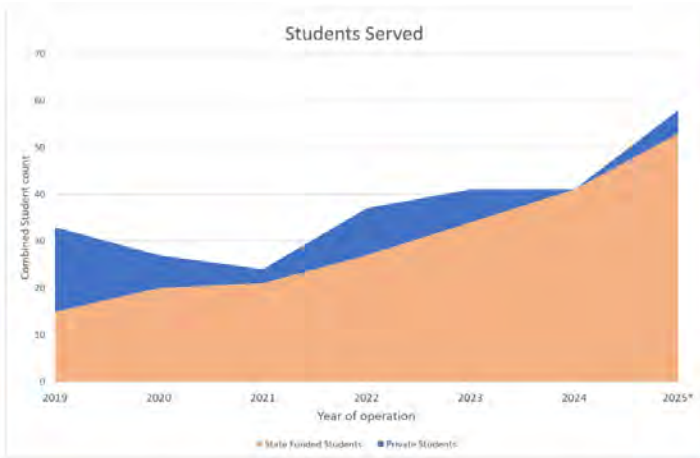
- 2 Doctorates
- 12 Masters degrees
- 29 Bachelor's degrees
- 12 Training certifications
- 8 Teaching credentials

Awards:

Heart of Marin Excellence in Innovation, Best of 2009 Gluten Free, Time Magazine, GQ, New York Magazine, VICE, Forbes, Today Show, Grammy's, KQED, Nature Conservancy in Landscape Photography, Teacher of the Year OCPS, and Dominican University's Veritas Cup 2024.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

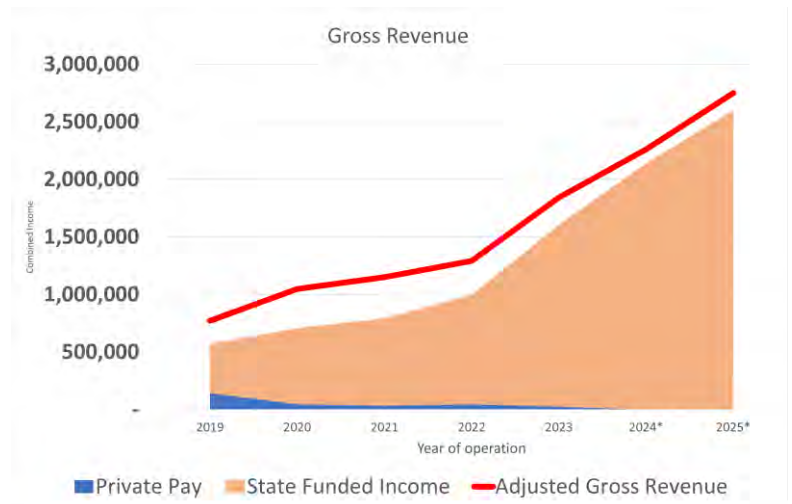
Autistry is on solid financial footing, and we have been growing exponentially. Our CFO Dan Swearingen has always kept Autistry running efficiently. With only a glance at our graphs it is easy to see that our expenses and our revenue climb together as we are progressing towards rapid growth.



Our growth in the number of students has been steady. Our teen weekend program (blue) is still impacted by changes that happened during the COVID-19 era.

Most Autistry students are funded by the Golden Gate Reginal Center and other Regional Centers.

In 2023, we grew in revenue by 50%. In 2024 we have grown by about 20%.



Our largest expense is hiring a diverse and highly skilled staff to execute the finest adult autism education experience.

LOOKING AHEAD

Projected Growth and Expansion

- We have big plans! By the end of 2025 we would like to increase student count adding at least 10 new students and 8 more mentors. We have a need for new staff in the areas of mental health and Information Technology. We have plans to offer more classes: an additional Pixar/Story Xperiential class, English, Geography, and Math. Soon, we would like to develop a cooking program and place students in vocational opportunities. We have missed our teen program and hope to bring it back on Saturdays this year. We would love to research and launch student-owned online shops featuring their creative work. There are so many exciting opportunities ahead!



FUNDRAISING ASKS

The More
We Raise,
the More
They
RISE



Your donation supports Autistry in several ways:

- ❖ **Hiring and retaining professional creators/makers/educators** to mentor our amazing students. Our Autistry staff are exceptionally talented, experienced, educated, and dedicated. We have a 2:1 student to staff ratio which means for every two students we accept into the program we must hire and train one mentor. The strength of our program is based on the quality of our staff.
- ❖ **Providing high quality materials for products.**
For example:
 - \$50 donation = 1-quart high quality furniture paint
 - \$100 donation = 6-month supply of clock & pen components
 - \$250 donation = half-day offsite prefabrication of wood components
 - \$500 donation = 1 year supply of hardwood
- ❖ **Expanding our Friday Excursion program** - donations help us cover the entrance fees and transport the students
 - \$50 donation = parking fees and purchase of lawn games for beach and park outings
 - \$100 donation = fills the tanks of the Autistry vehicles to transport students
 - \$250 donation = entrance fees for 3 groups for the Disney Family Museum
 - \$500 donation = entrance fees for 1 group for the California Academy of Science
- ❖ **Hosting public events** - introduces our students to the community and provides a unique opportunity for our neighbors to meet our staff and students. A donation to Autistry helps us continue our popular events - Holiday Parties, Scientists and Artists Gala events, Author Book Signings, Poetry Readings, Student/Staff Exhibitions - as well as providing funding to create new events.

DONATE



WITH YOUR HELP, WE HAVE...



**OPENED A SHOP & CAFE
 LAUNCHED A BOOK
 STAGED 2 PLAYS
 COLLEGE COURSES
 PIXAR WORKSHOPS
 WORKED WITH HORSES
 BUILT EPIC TRAIN SET
 CUSTOM ENGLISH CLASS
 EXHIBITED AT ART FESTS
 PARADED IN FAIRFAX
 TOURED MUSEUMS, LIBRARIES,
 COOKED, HIKED, WALKED,
 DANCED, SUNG, TRANSFORMED,
 EXCELLED, LAUGHED, LOVED,
 GROWN OUR INDEPENDENCE.**

A BIG THANK YOU!

