

Developments

Spring Edition • May 2025

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Jody's Message



"Giving of their time, talent, and treasure, board members are fiduciaries steering ProBerco towards a sustainable future."
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Bringin' the Sunshine

One Employee's Light Shines Bright in the Lives of Others

As our Community Participation Supports (CPS) programs grow, we remain committed to creating meaningful, person-centered experiences that inspire and empower individuals. While many ProBerco employees go above and beyond meeting the needs of individuals, one employee stands out—Doug Strimple, a Direct Support Professional whose creativity, compassion, and enthusiasm radiate throughout our CPS programs. His talents not only uplift participants but also transform the workplace into a vibrant hub of positivity.

Doug fosters creativity and fun among participants, and he can often be seen drawing and painting alongside them while encouraging participants to explore their hidden talents. His passion for music has morphed into a weekly event that everyone in the CPS programs eagerly anticipates. With Doug's guidance, program participant Nick has flourished, honing his natural talent for singing and music. Joined by fellow employee Jennie, the trio formed Bringin' the Sunshine, a band that has become a source of joy for all. They rehearse regularly, delivering

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Jessica Penchard
Development & Public Relations Director

Executive Director's Message



Any Executive Director will tell you that the success of their nonprofit corporation hinges on a strong partnership of professional staff, individuals receiving services and their families, volunteers, and board members. At ProBerco we have been fortunate to benefit from the expertise and dedication of many quality Board Directors over our 48-year history. This accomplishment has resulted from strategic board recruitment involving current Board Directors recommending desired exceptional candidates, advisory committee members stepping up to serve on the Board of Directors, active involvement with Leadership Berks, and welcoming former Board Directors back for a second "stint" on the Board.

How grateful I am as CEO that the combined efforts of our partners have yielded a governing body of business and community leaders and family members who share a passion for our mission of enriching the lives of people with disabilities and their families by providing innovative, person-centered, community-based services. A passion for our mission is absolutely the most important quality in volunteers serving on our board. However, we seek professionals with expertise in varied roles such as finance,

accounting, construction, education, engineering, real estate, human resources, legal, and development, to support the needs of the corporation. In addition, we value Board Directors who are committed to their role, actively engage in the corporation's activities, participate in meetings, and willingly serve as ambassadors for ProBerco. Sharing our story with their networks expands community awareness and increases the support of ProBerco and the individuals we serve.

To support our Board of Directors in fulfilling their roles, we recently held a two-hour board training and networking event where they gained a deeper understanding of our financial operations, current and future program activities, and how, as members of our governing body, they can support the goals of the corporation. Giving of their time, talent, and treasure, board members are fiduciaries steering ProBerco towards a sustainable future as a leader in the service delivery system for adults with intellectual disabilities.

(Pictured above is Jody Wagner talking with Board Treasurer, C. Robert Rice, Jr., Esq., CPA, during a Board networking event in February.) 🌟

ProBerco Proud

We've Achieved Select Tier Status!

ProBerco is thrilled to share a major milestone in our journey to provide services of excellence for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities—ProBerco has officially been awarded Select Tier status under Pennsylvania's Performance-Based Contracting (PBC) initiative for residential services.

This prestigious recognition places ProBerco among an elite group of providers across the state. Out of 433 residential service providers who applied for accreditation, only 16 were awarded the Select Tier designation. This achievement is a testament to our unwavering commitment to quality, innovation, and to the individuals and families we serve.

What is Performance-Based Contracting?

The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) modified how residential services are managed, with a strong focus on sustainability, quality improvement, and clinical capacity. PBC sets rigorous performance standards for both residential providers and Supports Coordination Organizations. The goals are clear:

- Enhance service sustainability
- Improve care quality
- Strengthen clinical support for individuals with complex needs
- Implement workforce support strategies

What Does Select Tier Mean for Our Community?

As a Select Tier provider, ProBerco is positioned to offer greater continuity of care and enhanced support for individuals enrolled in its programs. This designation affirms our commitment to delivering person-centered, high-quality services that adapt to the evolving needs of those we support.

Supporting Our Workforce: Resources and Incentives for Direct Care Staff

One of the most impactful aspects of Select Tier status is the access to additional resources and incentives aimed at strengthening our workforce. These include enhanced funding opportunities that allow us to improve compensation for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs)—the backbone of our care delivery system.

By investing in competitive wages, professional development, and recognition programs, we are not only elevating the quality of care but also honoring the essential contributions of our direct care staff. This focus on workforce stability is key to building long-term, trusting relationships between caregivers and the individuals they support.

How We Got Here

Achieving Select Tier status required meeting a series of stringent performance measures. Our Leadership Team worked diligently to align our operations with ODP's high standards. Key initiatives that contributed to our success include:

- Establishing a Nursing Department: Ensuring residents have immediate access to clinical support when needed.
- Credentialing Program for Direct Support Professionals: Elevating performance and recognizing the vital role DSPs have.
- Employee Recruitment and Retention Strategies: Building a stable, skilled workforce to support continuity of care.
- Robust Incident Management and Reporting: Promoting transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Looking Ahead

This achievement is not just a recognition—it's a responsibility. ProBerco remains committed to advancing its services, supporting its workforce, and most importantly, enriching the lives of the individuals and families we serve. We thank our dedicated staff, partners, and community for helping us reach this milestone. Together, we're setting a new standard for care in Pennsylvania. 🌟🌟





"I love to see the program participants laughing and singing and having fun. I am grateful for the opportunity to be creative and bring joy to others." - Doug Strimple

(Continued from page 1) motivational performances each week that bring smiles and energy to the enthusiastic audience. Watching this natural progression unfold is truly inspiring, as the fondness for music unites everyone in a shared experience.

But Doug's love for performance doesn't stop there! As Nick will tell you, "He's multitalented." Every month, Doug entertains CPS participants with a captivating puppet show that not only entertains but also delivers messages for building social skills. Using humor and creativity, he engages his audience in a way that makes learning enjoyable and memorable. These performances spark conversations, encourage personal growth, and help build vital social connections among participants.

What's truly remarkable is the contagious spirit that Doug has brought to the CPS programs. His passion and energy inspires those around him, motivating colleagues and program members alike to explore their own talents and embrace their creativity. It is a powerful reminder of how one person's actions can ripple out, creating a positive atmosphere where everyone feels valued and inspired.

As ProBerco continues to enhance its programs, it remains grateful for employees like Doug who exemplify our mission of enriching lives by fostering inclusion, creativity, and connection. Together, we are building a community where every voice is heard, every talent is celebrated, and where heart and soul truly make a difference. 🌟

Game On: A Space for Fun, Movement, and Connection



The excitement is palpable as we unveil our brand new game room—an initiative designed to get folks up, moving, and engaged in an innovative way. Featuring a Virtual Reality training program alongside a variety of gaming stations, this space is all about fun, connection, and a bit of sneaky exercise. Even just standing in front of the Pac-Man arcade game gets people on their feet, immersing them in a nostalgic yet active experience (but let's not tell them they're getting a workout!). The game room fosters the development of valuable skills—hand-eye coordination, cognitive abilities, dexterity, and movement as participants engage with interactive challenges and immersive experiences.

To make the space vibrant and fun, Doug Strimple put his artistic talents to work, painting a colorful mural inspired by Pac-Man, Space Invaders, and Super Mario—a fitting tribute to gaming classics that continue to spark excitement and imagination.

This initiative has been in the works throughout the year, sparked by last year's Golf Tournament's Call to Action with golfers showing up in a big way, raising over \$7,000 for the purchase of VR headsets and Catapallo training modules. Adding to the generosity, M&T Charitable Foundation stepped in with a \$1,000 donation to help fund three large-screen TVs and wall-mount systems, elevating the experience even further. (Pictured above is Nathan wearing a VR headset.) ✨

Motivated by Kindness: CPS in Action



Making a Difference for Seniors Through Our CPS Program

At the heart of our mission lies a dedication to enriching lives and serving our community through the ProBerco CPS program. We believe that meaningful activities instill purpose, fostering connections and creating lasting impacts.

In partnership with Berks Encore, our incredible team of more than 30 volunteers, including DSP Kervin Lazarre and Scott pictured above, mobilize to deliver over 800 Meals On Wheels each week, ensuring that those in need don't go hungry. But our efforts don't stop there—our dedicated volunteer corps lends a helping hand to seniors in the community by assisting with their shopping needs, making everyday life a little easier and more accessible.

Berks Encore recently recognized the ProBerco volunteer corps in its newsletter **beConnected**. "Through volunteering, individuals gain life skills, confidence, and a sense of purpose, all while helping to meet daily needs of older adults in our community. ... ProBerco volunteers bring joy, connection, and independence to so many lives," the article stated. ProBerco is proud to extend its reach and community impact. Through collaboration and shared purpose, ProBerco strives to bring dignity, independence, and happiness to those who rely on our programs.

Together, we are not just providing meals and assistance—we are building a stronger, more connected community.



Peggy Shares Her Love of Teaching Through Arts & Crafts

Each month, Peggy Allen hosts a vibrant arts and crafts class at Faith Lutheran Church in Mount Penn, specifically designed for our CPS program. Participants have the opportunity to express their creativity and explore various art techniques, all while enjoying a supportive and inclusive environment. And, at the end of the class, participants have a beautiful craft to take home and share with their families and others., like this beautiful Easter Wreath Jermaine made.

These engaging sessions not only allow for artistic expression but also help build self-esteem through meaningful social interactions among individuals in our programs. It's truly inspiring to witness the joy and transformation that these activities bring.

We invite others to volunteer and share their talents by leading various classes for CPS participants. Consider leading a cooking, baking, or arts and crafts class. Simply by sharing your talents you can make a difference in the lives of those we serve. If you're interested in volunteering, please contact Jessica at jpenchard@proberco.org.

Together, we can continue to enrich the lives of program participants and create lasting community relationships.

The ProBerco CPS program is dedicated to fostering engagement, independence, and creativity within the community. Whether through art, music, or interactive programs, ProBerco continues to inspire and empower individuals living everyday lives.





On the Horizon: A New Chapter for the CPS Program

We are excited to announce the appointment of Eileen Slovik as the new CPS Director who is replacing James Rhodes after his recent retirement. With an impressive 32-year tenure at ProBerco, Eileen brings a wealth of experience, dedication, and vision to this pivotal role.

Her journey with ProBerco began as a Direct Support Professional in Residential Services. Over the years, she has held several positions in residential and day services. During the pandemic she transitioned to the human resources department. Most recently, Eileen served as the Compliance Director. In each role, Eileen has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to quality, innovation, and person-centered care.

One of Eileen's most notable achievements was her instrumental role in helping ProBerco attain the prestigious Select Tier designation. This accomplishment reflects her understanding of compliance, program excellence, and professional development—expertise she can now bring to the CPS program.

As Eileen steps into this new leadership role, she is eager to leverage her experience to enhance the CPS program further, ensuring it continues to empower individuals and foster meaningful community engagement. Please join us in congratulating Eileen on this well-deserved appointment and in looking forward to the exciting future ahead for the CPS program. (Pictured above is Eileen with Anthony and Robert.) ✨

Heartfelt Thanks 5th Annual Harmony Walk Marches to Success



ProBerco is delighted to express deep gratitude to everyone who participated in and supported the 5th Annual Harmony Walk, an event dedicated to promoting inclusion and opportunities for people with disabilities. The overwhelming support we received from our sponsors, the amazing staff at the Santander Arena, and the many volunteers who worked tirelessly behind the scenes ensured that we had a fun and successful event while raising awareness and funds for ProBerco. The walk kicked off with a welcoming ceremony that included Nick Yanuskiewicz singing the National Anthem and a ribbon cutting. We had 129 walkers registered for the event, including members of the community, Ice Angels, Reading Royals Hockey Team, and Slapshot, all of whom contributed to the vibrant and inclusive atmosphere of the walkathon. Walkers enjoyed a lively time as they walked, jogged, danced, and grooved around the concourse to the upbeat tunes of DJ B. Lee and were refreshed by contributions made by Berks Fire Water Restoration, Kimberton Whole Foods, and an anonymous donor who purchased Philly Pretzels. We are thrilled to share that we danced our way to 76% of our event fundraising goal and hope to move closer to our goal of \$20,000 over the next couple of weeks. Click on the QR Code to donate.



Our many event sponsors paved the way for a successful fundraiser. ProBerco would like to thank those who led the charge: Harmony Sponsors Dolan Construction, Gallagher Insurance, Maggs & Associates, Tompkins Community Bank; Inclusion Sponsors EnerSys, Mitsubishi Chemical, Reading Truck; Diversity Sponsors Bell Media, DJ B. Lee, P.K. Consulting, Reading Hospital Tower Health; and our many other sponsors including Advanced Comfort Specialists, Inc., Gail Landis & Doug Myers, and Weaver Associates, Inc. ✨

Empowering Excellence

DSP Credentialing and Career Advancement

At the heart of our mission to provide exceptional care for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities is a deep commitment to the growth and success of our Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). We believe that quality care begins with quality training—and that's why we've launched a robust Career Ladders Program for DSP and Frontline Supervisors (FLS) to achieve nationally recognized credentialing through the National Association of Direct Support Professionals (NADSP).

This initiative is designed to recognize, reward, and elevate the vital work of our DSPs and FLS. As employees progress through the credentialing program, they gain access to structured learning opportunities, hands-on skill development, and the chance to earn rate increases tied directly to their achievements.



A Pathway to Professional Growth

The credentialing program offers a clear and supportive pathway for DSPs and FLSs to:

- Build specialized skills in supporting individuals with complex needs
- Demonstrate competencies through structured assessments and real-world application
- Advance their careers through tiered recognition and compensation
- Contribute to a culture of excellence in every community living home and day services programs

Investing in Our People, Investing in Our Mission

The Career Ladders program aligns with our Select Tier status and reflects our unwavering belief that investing in our workforce is essential to delivering the highest standard of care. By equipping DSPs and FLSs with the tools, training, and incentives they need to thrive, we're not only enhancing their professional journey—we're also enriching the lives of the individuals and families we serve.

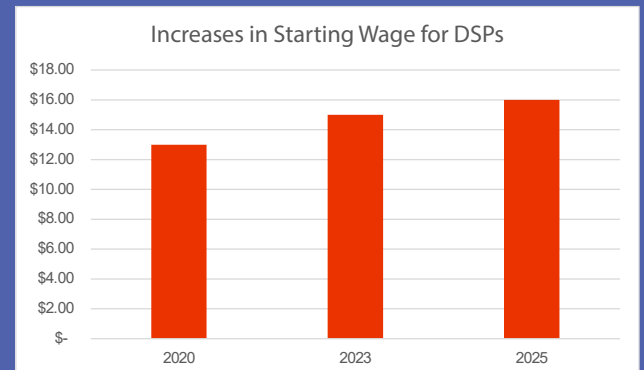
To ensure employees are successful, we created a new position to oversee the program. The Career Development Director will guide employees through the credentialing process. Earlier this year, ProBanco hired Jessica DePietro to assume this new position. While the first few months were invested in creating the framework for the position, Jess has begun to enroll employees into the program and is working with 12 DSPs and FLSs to assist them in their career journey.

(Pictured above is Jessica DePietro, Career Development Director.) 🌟

Investing in DSPs: Wage Increases and Incentives

To support recruitment and retention of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), we've steadily increased wages and added meaningful incentives:

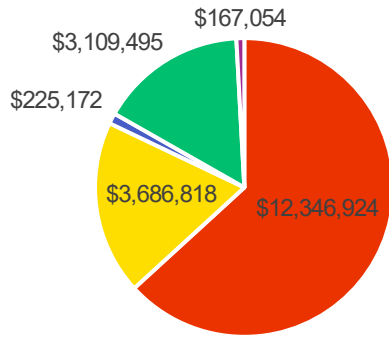
- Starting wage rose from \$13/hour in 2019, to \$15 in 2022, and \$16 in 2025.
- A \$1,000 sign-on bonus was introduced in 2021, and increased to \$2,000 in 2024.
- In 2025, shift differentials to better support staffing and reward flexibility were implemented.
- In 2025, relaunched DSP Credential Program and introduced Career Ladders.



These efforts reflect our commitment to valuing DSPs and strengthening the quality of care we provide. 🌟

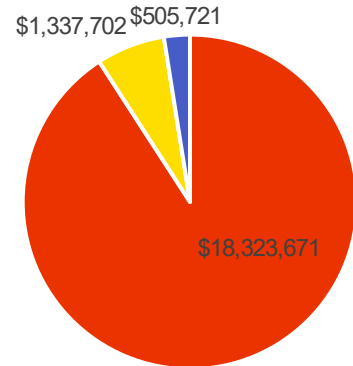
FY 2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT

TOTAL EXPENSES - \$19,535,463



Community Living Homes Day Services Family Support Services
Administrative Fundraising

TOTAL REVENUE - \$20,167,094



Program Income Contributions Investment Income

**84% of ALL FUNDING
DIRECTLY SUPPORTS PROGRAMS**

OUR IMPROVEMENTS

Contributions helped to fund these projects.



Empowering Mobility: Acquisition of 9 Caravans to Enhance Transportation for Community Living Residents and CPS Participants



Safeguarding Our Most Vulnerable: Installation of Backup Generators in Three Community Living Homes to Ensure Resident Safety and Continuity of Care During Power Outages



Enhancing Quality of Care: Installation of Accessibility Ramps and Mechanical Lift Systems to Support Safe and Dignified Transfers for Residents Who Need Assistance



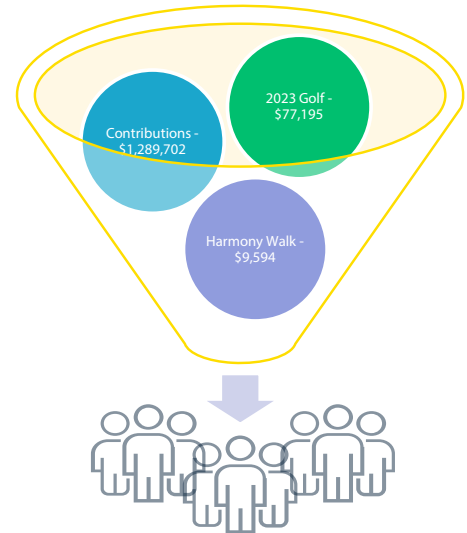
Investing in Excellence: Funded Education and Financial Support for Two Employees to Attain LPN Licensure, Advancing Our Commitment to Quality Care and Innovation



Creating Safe and Comfortable Homes: Invested in Renovations Across Several Community Living Homes to Enhance Safety, Accessibility, and Quality of Life for Residents

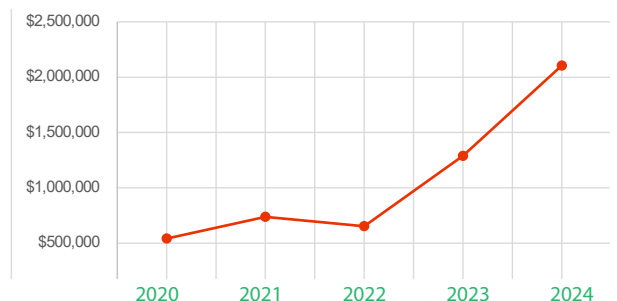
YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS

Together, we are breaking barriers and building brighter futures.

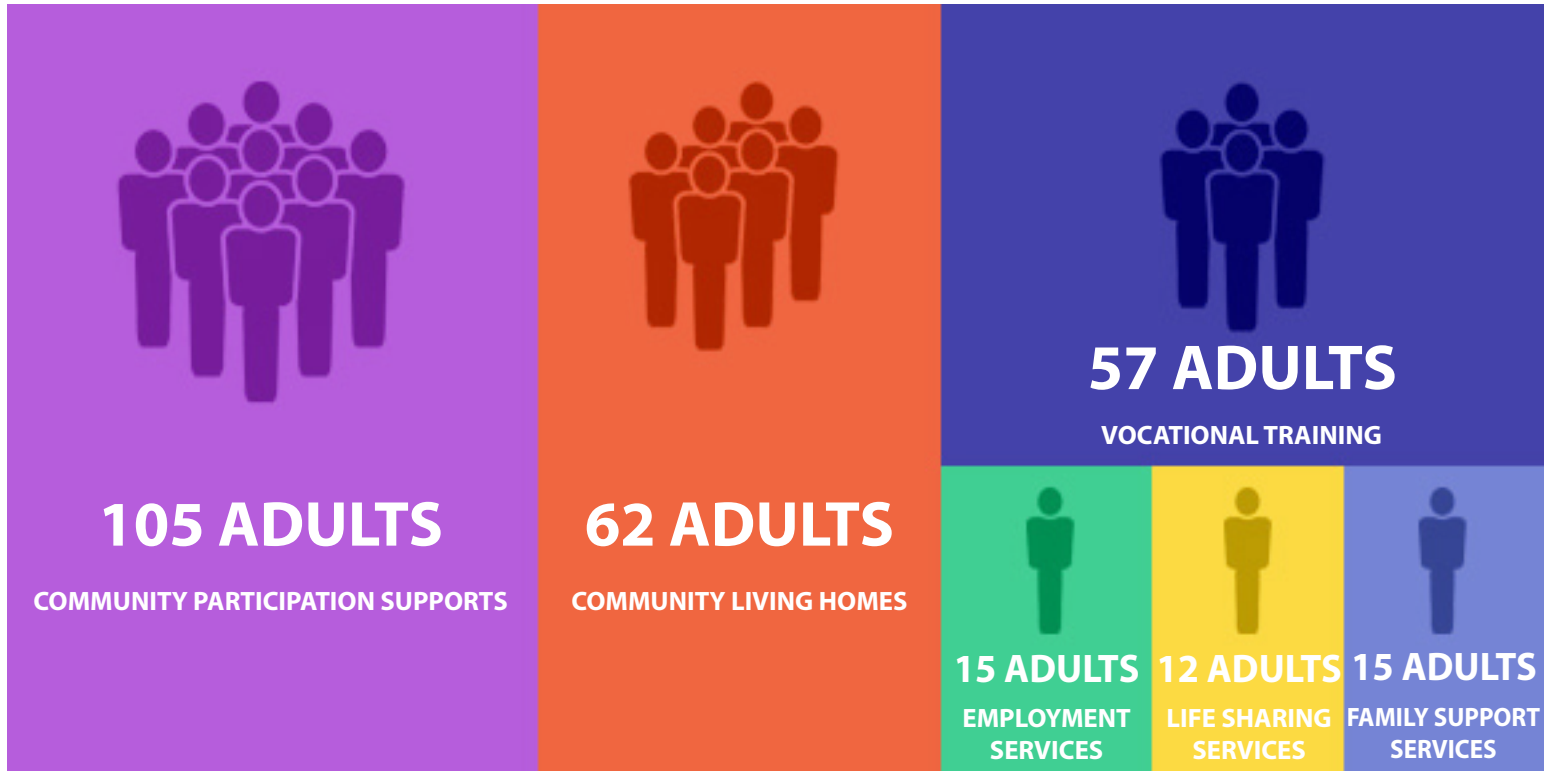


OUR ENDOWMENT - \$2,104,963

A planned gift today can have a lasting impact on our future.



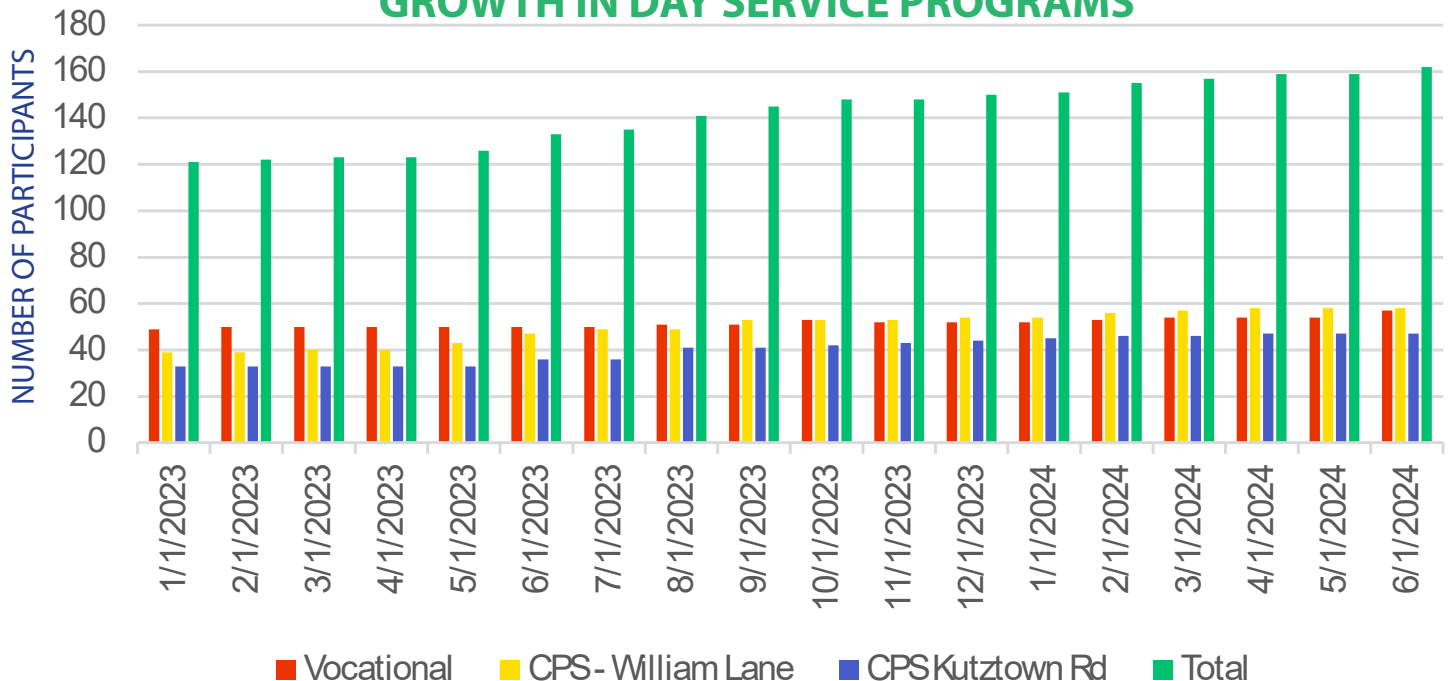
FY 2023-2024 OUR IMPACT



REBUILDING CAPACITY IN DAY SERVICES

ProBerco is working diligently to rebuild capacity within its Day Services programs. While we continue to make significant progress, we are still operating below our full potential. In 2019, there were 275 people enrolled across all Day Service programs. The greatest barrier to expanding our reach remains the recruitment and retention of well-qualified, compassionate staff. Additionally, our Vocational Program continues to face challenges in reestablishing business contracts, limiting opportunities for individuals to engage in meaningful, work-related projects. As we continue to grow, our focus remains on building a strong, dedicated team to serve more individuals with the quality care they deserve.

GROWTH IN DAY SERVICE PROGRAMS





Co-workers from the Vocational program take advantage of a warm day to have lunch on the patio: good friends, good weather, and good food.



Beth Ann enjoys a visit with a few furry friends at the Kitty Cafe!



Ellie celebrated her 80th Birthday with friends, food, dancing, and balloons.



*"Beam me up, Charlie."
For his birthday, Charlie went to the Fan Expo in Philadelphia and met one of his idols, William Shatner.*



The CPS crew got together for a pickup basketball game among friends.



Katie has been working hard on the new assignment, assembling home defender kits, in the Vocational program.



Just one of ten ProBerco Meals On Wheels volunteer teams that deliver meals for seniors living in Berks County.



Jeffery showcases his dexterity in prepping and assembling bottles for Home Defender Kits. He learned to heat the seal under a heat lamp before securing it in place inside the lid.



Mike and John dropped by to visit ProBerco and took a moment to admire the wall mural at Kutztown Road.



Bob and Allen spend a night out on the town with the Golden Girls.



Mike met Danny Glover at Fan Expo Philly—turns out, he's not too old for this pic!



Debbie warms up in a preseason exercise class with All Abilities Fitness.



ProBerco

840 William Lane
Reading, PA 19604-1551
610-372-4637
proberco.org

Developments is a seasonal publication. Comments regarding the content of the newsletter, or to have your name added/removed from our mailing list, contact Jessica at jpenchard@proberco.org. Stay connected, sign up for our e-newsletter, and follow us on social media @[goproberco](https://www.instagram.com/goproberco).



Member of:



ProBerco enriches the lives of people with disabilities and their families by providing innovative community participation, community living, employment opportunities, and family support services.

31st Annual Golf Tournament



July 28, 2025

(Rain Date August 4th)

Moselem Springs Golf Club
684 Eagle Rd., Fleetwood, PA

\$300 per Golfer
\$1,200 Foursome

11 a.m.
Registration Lunch
12:30 p.m.
Shotgun Start - Scramble

Includes Greens Fees, Prizes, Lunch
and Post Tournament Celebration

Golf and/or Sponsor



Escapes & Experiences

RAFFLE

Tickets \$20 ea. / 3 Ticket Bundle \$50

Drawing Held July 28th at 31st Annual Golf Tournament
Don't need to be present to win

Hilton Head, SC

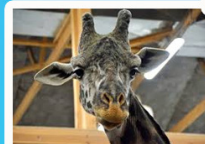


Sept. 5 - 12, 2025

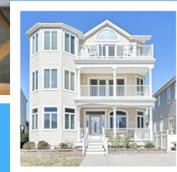
Hollywood Casino



Lehigh Valley Zoo



Brigantine Beach, NJ



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