

For more than 60 years, the Girlstown Residential Program has been the foundation on which the rest of our services are even possible.

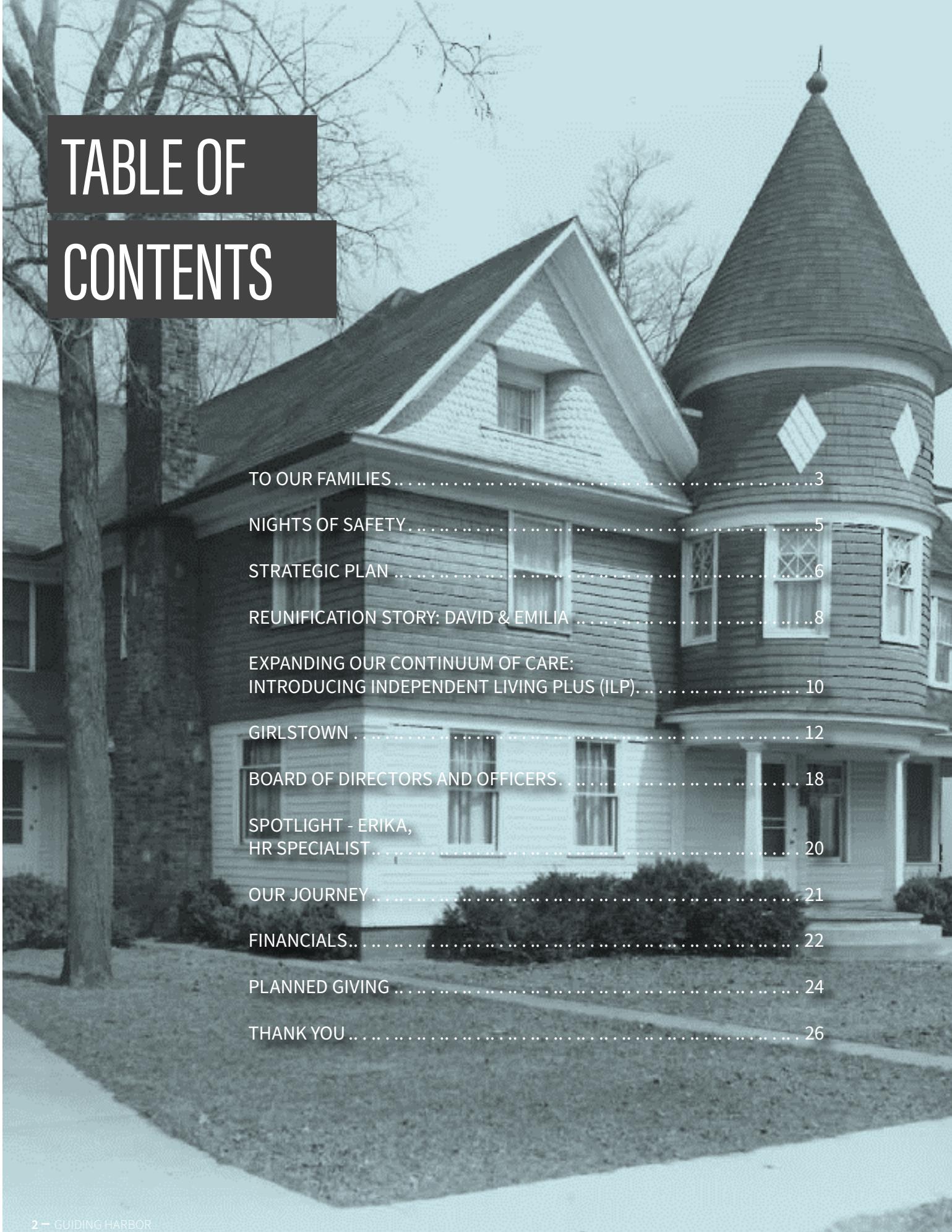
# Guiding Harbor



## 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

**Improving the quality of life for  
children and families**

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# TO OUR FAMILIES



**Jennifer Trotter**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Guiding Harbor

**Dear Friends and Supporters,**

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with profound gratitude and pride in sharing the Guiding Harbor 2024 Annual Report. This report serves as more than just a summary of programs and milestones, it is a celebration of the lives transformed through the dedication, compassion, and tireless work of our community. Through powerful stories and real experiences, we invite you to witness the profound impact Guiding Harbor has made in the lives of the youth and families we serve.

This year marked a significant milestone with the launch of Independent Living Plus (ILP+) in May 2024. This program provides critical transitional support for young adults aging out of foster care, equipping them with the tools, skills, and stability needed to pursue their goals and live independently. ILP+ represents a bold step forward in our mission, reaffirming our commitment to walking alongside youth as they navigate their journey into adulthood.

We extend our deepest appreciation to our dedicated staff, volunteers, board members, and partners whose unwavering belief in our mission continues to drive our success. Your support makes it possible for us to create safe, nurturing environments and provide empowering opportunities for those who need them most. To our generous donors and community advocates, thank you. Your contributions are the foundation on which lives are rebuilt and futures are reimagined.

We hope this report inspires you as much as your support inspires us every day. Together, we are building a future where every child and young adult has the opportunity to thrive.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Trotter".

Jennifer Trotter, CEO



## Who We Are

Guiding Harbor provides services to children in Michigan's foster care system. We license and recruit foster homes, we provide foster care case management, adoption services, residential treatment and independent living services.

At Guiding Harbor, transformation is not just an aspiration it is a daily reality. Every child who walks through our doors carries a story shaped by adversity, but here, that story begins a new chapter of hope. Through trauma-informed care, nurturing foster homes, and unwavering advocacy, we illuminate the path toward healing and empowerment.

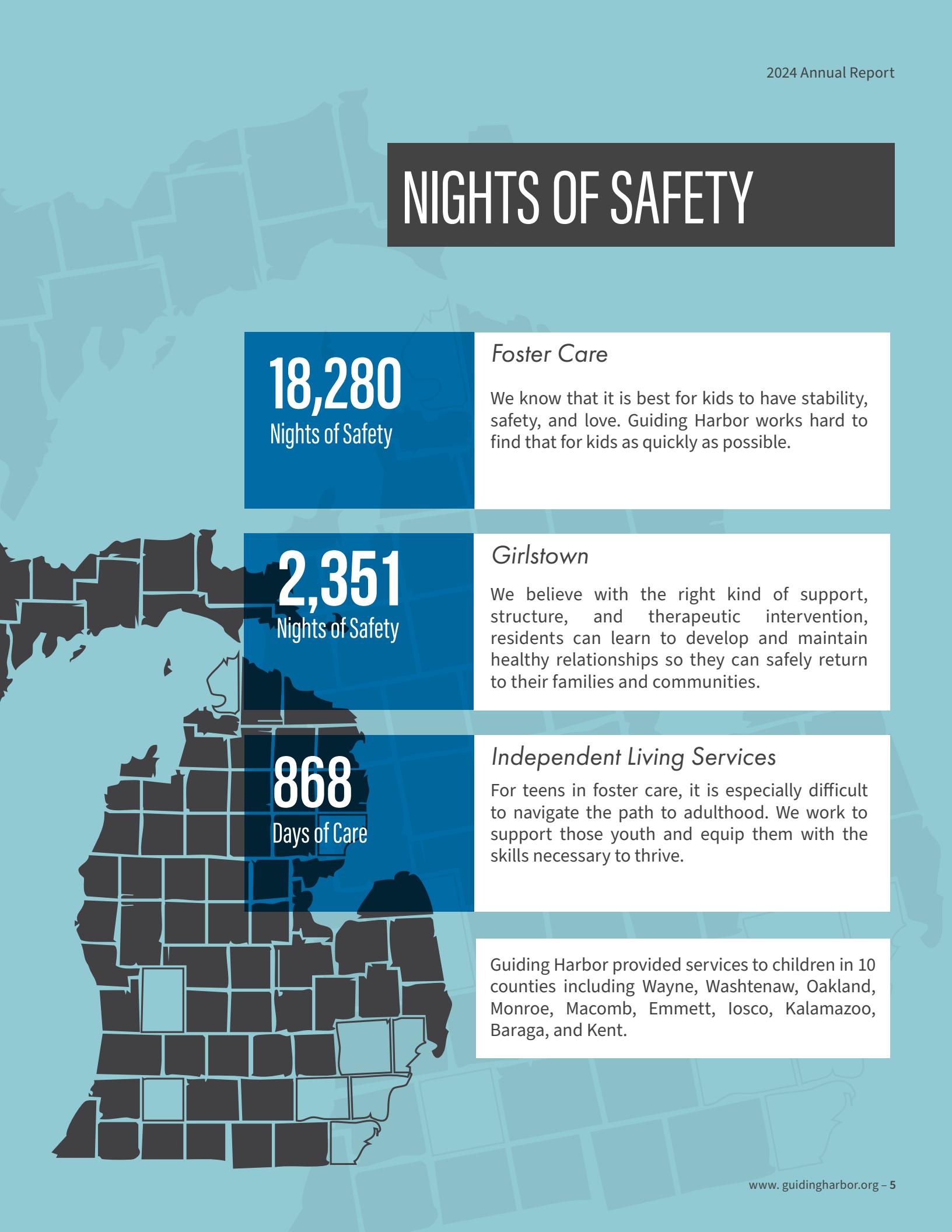
Our programs don't merely respond to needs, they ignite change. Whether it's helping a child rediscover their voice, guiding a young woman toward independence, or supporting a family in crisis, our work reshapes lives with purpose, compassion, and enduring commitment. The impact of Guiding Harbor is seen in the quiet victories: a smile after years of silence, a graduation that once seemed impossible, a family reunited. These are the milestones of transformation we foster.

By believing in the strength and potential within every person we serve, we help turn pain into resilience and fear into possibility. In a world often marked by instability, we offer not only safety but the promise of a brighter, self-determined future.

This is the power of Guiding Harbor: to be a lighthouse guiding hurting souls to safe harbors and boundless new beginnings. We use the tagline "Foster Care with a Heart" because it captures the essence of who we are. At Guiding Harbor, our work is grounded in compassion, dignity, and a belief in the power of human connection. We go beyond providing services we lead with heart. Every decision, every relationship, and every act of care is rooted in empathy and a deep respect for the people we serve. It's not just foster care it's foster care that heals, uplifts, and transforms.



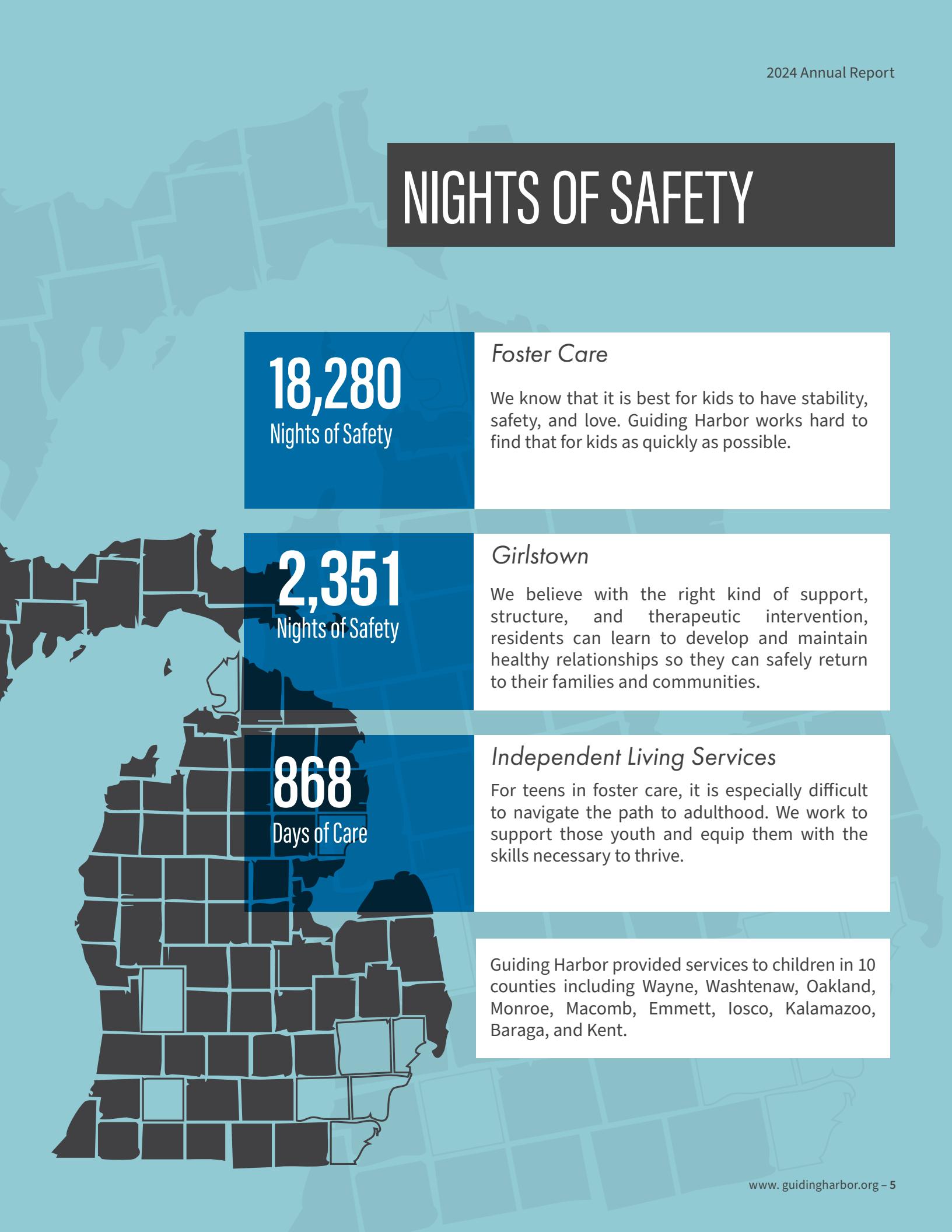
# NIGHTS OF SAFETY



**18,280**  
Nights of Safety

## Foster Care

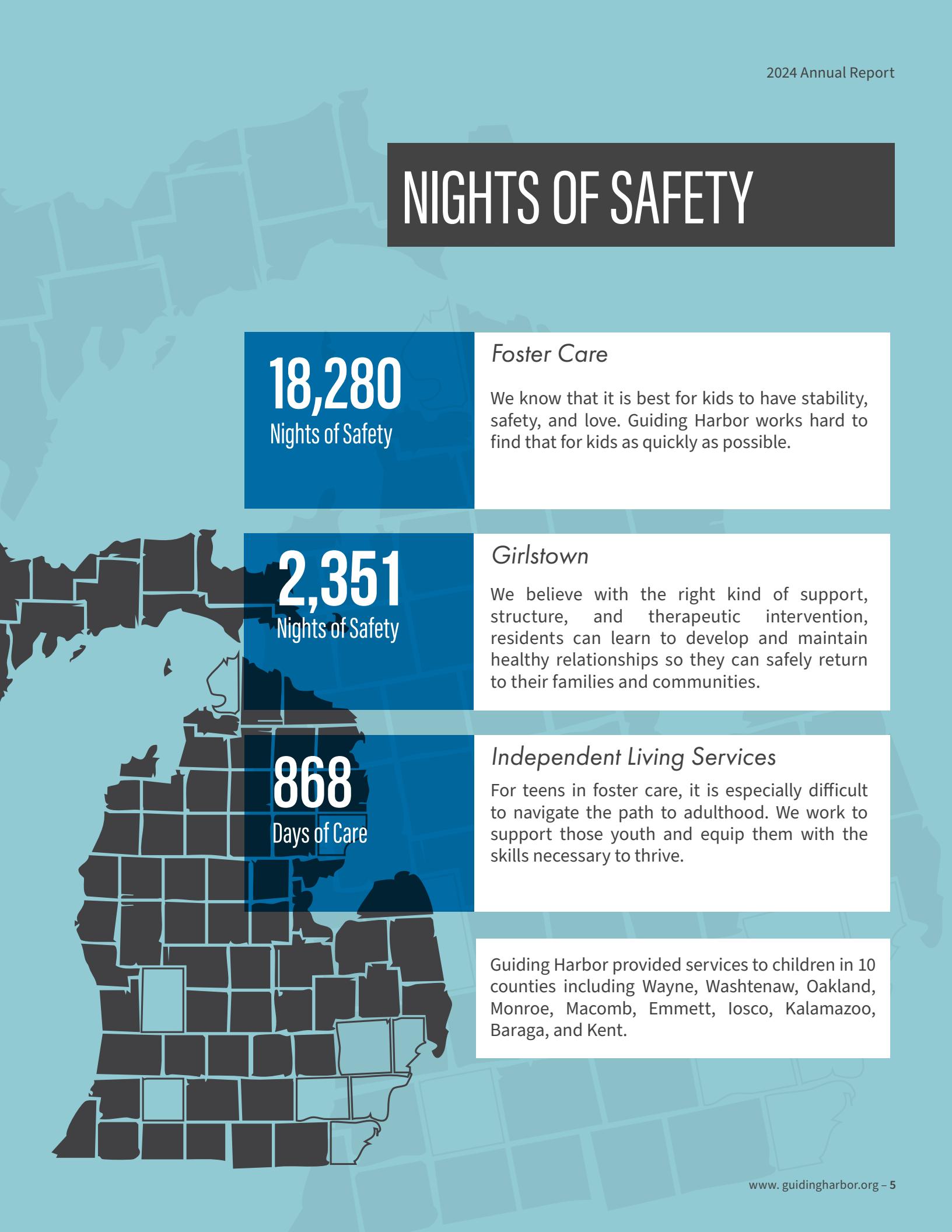
We know that it is best for kids to have stability, safety, and love. Guiding Harbor works hard to find that for kids as quickly as possible.



**2,351**  
Nights of Safety

## Girlstown

We believe with the right kind of support, structure, and therapeutic intervention, residents can learn to develop and maintain healthy relationships so they can safely return to their families and communities.



**868**  
Days of Care

## Independent Living Services

For teens in foster care, it is especially difficult to navigate the path to adulthood. We work to support those youth and equip them with the skills necessary to thrive.

Guiding Harbor provided services to children in 10 counties including Wayne, Washtenaw, Oakland, Monroe, Macomb, Emmett, Iosco, Kalamazoo, Baraga, and Kent.

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## Our Mission, Vision, and Values.



### **Mission**

To improve the quality of life for children and families.

### **Vision**

To educate every person in our care, teaching life skills that foster wise decision-making and a path to becoming productive members of society.

### **Core Values**

1. Physical and Emotional Safety – We prioritize the well-being of children, families, and employees.
2. Respect and Belonging – We foster an environment of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
3. Small and Mighty – We use our size to deliver individualized experiences for all we serve.
4. Strong Community – We strive to positively impact those around us.
5. Ethics and Transparency – We ensure our services are grounded in integrity and openness.
6. Resiliency – We support people as they heal and grow from trauma.



### **Ongoing Commitment**

These strategic objectives guide our efforts as we continue to deliver high-quality care and services to children and families in Michigan's foster care system. We remain dedicated to evaluating and refining our goals annually to ensure alignment with our mission and community needs.



## Strategic Goals: 2023–2026

### **Strengthen Staff and Client Recruitment & Retention**

- Retain skilled staff while actively recruiting new foster families to serve more children.
- Distribute annual staff satisfaction surveys to gauge morale, engagement, and fulfillment.
- Partner with the University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University to bring on interns, helping to reduce staff workload.
- Organize monthly staff trainings that promote learning, connection, and team-building.

### **Promote Inclusivity Across the Agency**

- Acknowledge the 2021 HRC report: 1 in 3 youth in foster care identifies as LGBTQ+, yet only 14% of LGBTQ+ adults can identify an inclusive foster agency.
- Build a more inclusive culture to increase family placements, adoptions, and client satisfaction.
- Conduct inclusive recruitment by leveraging community outreach, social media, and advocacy partnerships.
- Evaluate our inclusivity annually through internal surveys of staff perceptions of our programs and policies.

### **Expand Community Outreach**

- Develop new partnerships with local businesses and community organizations to support our mission.
- Host events using existing community resources to increase visibility and engagement.
- Share stories, photos, and videos on social media to raise awareness, destigmatize foster care, and encourage advocacy.
- Contact local business leaders via phone, email, and social media to share our annual report, partnership proposals, and informational presentations.

### **Unite Programs on One Campus**

- Launch a capital campaign to fund a consolidated campus that houses ILP, Girlstown, and Guiding Harbor staff and services.
- Expand our donor base through strategic social media engagement and partnerships with local university social work programs.

# REUNIFICATION STORY:

## DAVID & EMILIA



The story of David and Emilia illustrates how stability, structured support, and community involvement can profoundly impact lives within the child welfare system. Their journey began when they were placed with their great aunt, giving them a stable environment during a difficult time.

David and Emilia, just 9 and 8 years old, entered the foster care system in January 2022. They were in the same grade, and deeply bonded. Their removal from home was necessary due to multiple concerns: ongoing exposure to domestic violence, allegations of neglect, the presence of drugs in the household, and growing worries about their mother's mental health. They were placed with their great aunt—thankfully, their only placement during the case. This stability gave them a much-needed sense of continuity, even as they coped with trauma and uncertainty.

Their family faced serious challenges. Their mother struggled with depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, while their father had violent outbursts and couldn't manage his emotions. Together, these issues created an unstable home, requiring a well-planned approach to help both the parents and children.

With help from their dedicated case worker Brandi and the support of Guiding Harbor, a plan was set up to guide the parents toward reunification. This included therapy, parenting classes, domestic violence education, and support for visitation. The children also received specialized care. David got help through an educational advocate, behavioral intervention, and an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to assist with learning difficulties. Brandi worked tirelessly alongside the family, helping the mother rediscover her strength and voice.

# With help from their dedicated case worker, Brandi and the support of Guiding Harbor, a plan was set up to guide the parents toward reunification.

Over time, their parents made steady progress. Visits began as supervised, then moved to unsupervised, and eventually overnight stays. A turning point came when their great aunt gave a 30-day notice, inspiring their mother to fully commit to bringing her children home. With Brandi's help and support from Guiding Harbor, their mom became actively involved in her children's lives. She made sure they attended school, managed their medical needs, secured David's medication, and participated in his IEP process. Most importantly, she rebuilt a loving and safe relationship with her children.

In July 2024, after more than two years of hard work and growth, the family was reunited. David and Emilia returned to a stable home with a mother determined to give them a bright future they deserve.



# EXPANDING OUR CONTINUUM OF CARE:

## INTRODUCING INDEPENDENT

### LIVING PLUS (ILP)



We are thrilled to announce the expansion of our services to better meet the needs of youth in foster care through our new Independent Living Plus (ILP) program. Guiding Harbor opened our ILP program in May 2024 and we couldn't be more excited.

For many teens, transitioning to adulthood is a challenge. They need critical skills such as financial literacy, problem-solving, self-advocacy, and emotional resilience to manage life independently. However, teens in foster care often face additional hurdles, including frequent moves, disruptions in education, and the absence of stable, supportive adults, leaving them less prepared for adulthood.

The ILP program is designed to bridge this gap, helping foster youth aged 16 and older develop essential life skills in a safe and supportive environment. Open to youth of all gender identities, the program requires participants to either work and/or attend school as part of their eligibility.

Research shows that ILP programs reduce rates of incarceration and early pregnancy among foster youth while improving educational achievement, employment outcomes, and earlier identification of mental health needs.

Guiding Harbor's ILP program operates in a home-like setting tailored to meet each youth's unique goals for independent living. The program is a transitional, temporary intervention that helps youth prepare for traditional independent living placements. While the length of



stay is determined by individual assessments, services conclude by the youth's 20th birthday.

The ILP home offers a fully furnished space where each youth has their own private bedroom with a locking door, fostering both independence and security.

The ILP program focuses on empowering youth to achieve the following goals:

- Consistent employment or school enrollment
- Completion of an individualized treatment plan
- Building a financial foundation through savings
- Enhanced decision-making

and problem-solving skills.  
 • Demonstration of core life skills competencies

A successful transition from ILP may look different for each participant, but it typically involves moving to a traditional independent living program, equipped with the skills and confidence to thrive.

We are excited to expand our continuum of care to empower foster youth with the skills they need to navigate adulthood successfully. This program reflects our commitment to supporting young people as they build brighter, more independent futures.

## Zayne's Story: Turning Passion Into Progress

At 19 years old, Zayne is preparing for a future he's building day by day through Guiding Harbor's Independent Living Plus (ILP) program. His journey has had challenges, but over the past year, Zayne has shown remarkable growth—driven by determination, responsibility, and a deep love for music.

Zayne's experience with the child welfare system began more than a decade ago. In 2023, after a serious incident at home, he was removed and placed into the ILP program. When Guiding Harbor assumed responsibility for the program in 2024, Zayne was among the youth we welcomed into our care.

Since then, Zayne has made tremendous strides. He is actively working toward his GED, has

passed the written portion of his driver's test, and—perhaps most exciting for him—he recently recorded in a professional studio for the first time. What started as creating songs on his phone in his bedroom has grown into real opportunities to pursue his passion. "That day in the studio," he says, "was the best day of my life."

But Zayne's motivation isn't just for himself—it's also for his younger brother. His desire to be a role model pushes him to build a stable, independent life. As he nears his 20th birthday and prepares to transition out of ILP, Zayne is focused on securing a job, building his credit, saving for an apartment, and eventually returning to his hometown with a renewed sense of purpose.

Throughout his time in the ILP program, Zayne has gained essential life skills—budgeting, time management, employment readiness, and housing planning—that will serve him well into adulthood. The ILP program, designed for youth ages 16 to 19 aging out of foster care, provides individualized support, skill-building, and stability during a critical time in their lives.

With the support of the Guiding Harbor team, Zayne is poised to leave the program with the tools he needs to succeed. We are proud of all he has accomplished and will continue to cheer him on as he pursues his goals and dreams.

# GIRLSTOWN

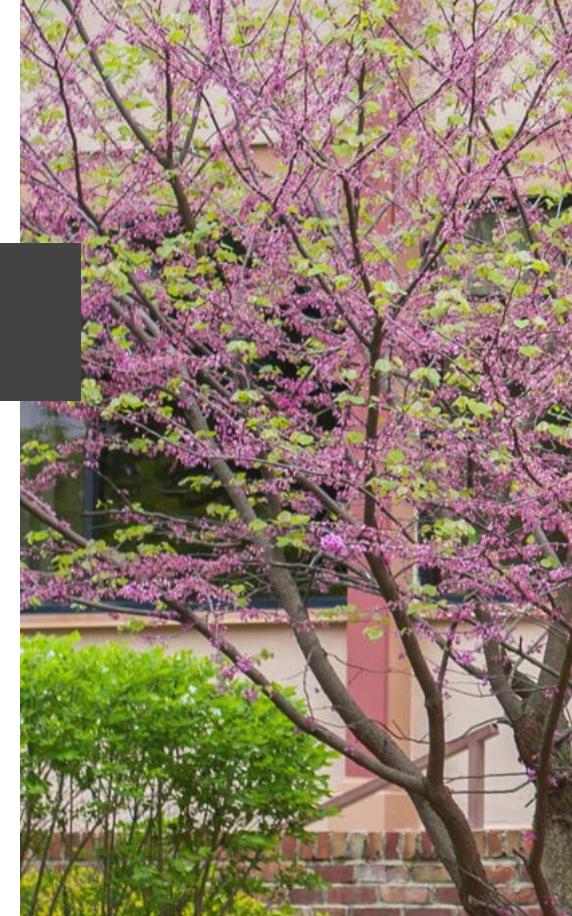
## UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF GIRLSTOWN

Girlstown Residential has been a cornerstone of Guiding Harbor's mission since its establishment in 1958. Initially conceived as a temporary haven for troubled girls seeking a structured environment, the program has evolved significantly over the decades to address the changing needs of the community.

As foster care services became increasingly necessary, Girlstown adapted by focusing exclusively on girls in the foster care system who require more intensive support than traditional foster homes

can provide. Today, the program serves a unique population—girls navigating the foster care system while coping with childhood and current traumas, school truancy, and, in many cases, interactions with law enforcement. These individuals face instability, a lack of familial support, and limited control over their circumstances, underscoring the critical need for the 24/7 structure and care that Girlstown provides.

Despite the many years since this shift in focus, there remains some misunderstanding about



the nature of Girlstown's services. Families and caregivers often inquire about enrolling their children for additional structured support, not realizing that the program specifically serves foster care youth. While we empathize with the challenges faced by these families, Girlstown is dedicated to addressing the complex needs of foster care children, recognizing this as a vital and ongoing mission.

## A Name, A Family, A Future

Victoria entered foster care at the age of 15, accompanied by her two younger siblings following the passing of their mother. Early in the case, their father's parental rights were terminated. Initially, all three siblings were placed together in the same foster home. However, due to ongoing conflict within the sibling group, largely stemming from Victoria having taken on a parental role with her younger

siblings, the team ultimately decided to place Victoria in a separate home to better support her individual needs.

Over time, Victoria transitioned through three different placements. Eventually, she found stability with Kat and Randy, licensed foster parents who were also family friends of her third foster home. Having met Victoria

several times previously, Kat and Randy were already familiar with her, which helped ease the transition into their home.

Although Victoria loves her siblings, their relationship was complicated. Acting as their primary caregiver at a young age created strain and tension, making the separation emotionally complex. Once settled into her new placement,



Victoria didn't feel a strong need to reconnect immediately with her siblings. Instead, she focused on her own healing and growth.

One of the few constants throughout her time in care was her passion for cheerleading. Despite her multiple moves, Victoria remained active on the cheer team, which provided her with emotional stability and meaningful relationships with her teammates.

As she approached her 18th birthday and high school graduation, time was of the essence to finalize her adoption and secure her permanency. The Guiding Harbor team worked tirelessly to ensure that Victoria's adoption with Kat and Randy was completed on time. Their efforts paid off, with a month to spare; her adoption was officially finalized, giving her the forever family she deserved.

## **ADOPTION: FIVE ADOPTIONS. FIVE NEW BEGINNINGS. IN 2024, GUIDING HARBOR HELPED TURN UNCERTAINTY INTO UNCONDITIONAL LOVE — AND HOUSES INTO HOMES.**

Victoria's case worker, Blake, reflected on the significance of this milestone, as it was her first foster care case to result in adoption. She shared her surprise and appreciation that youth in foster care are given the opportunity to change not only their last names, but also their first names, as part of their adoption journey. Blake emphasized how this option allows foster children like Victoria to embrace a fresh start and a new identity with their adoptive families.

Victoria graduated from high school and was accepted into a university, where she is now pursuing her degree. She continues to be involved in club cheer and was awarded the Guiding Harbor Suzanne Baber Scholarship, which

supports foster youth who have received services from Guiding Harbor. This scholarship provides assistance for those pursuing higher education, trade school, or professional training, helping them build brighter futures.

Victoria's story is a powerful example of Guiding Harbor's mission in action. With resilience, support, and stability, she transitioned from uncertainty to a forever family just before adulthood. Her adoption, academic success, and scholarship award show what's possible when foster youth are given the tools and care they need to thrive. Stories like Victoria's remind us why our work is so vital.



## Trunk or Treat

Foster kids are just kids. They love candy, games, belly laughing, and jumping in the leaves. They enjoy playing make-believe and dressing up for Halloween in their favorite character costumes.

On a perfect fall evening when it was slightly warm with a cool breeze, the Annual Trunk or Treat Spooktacular delighted the families we serve. The kids enjoyed pizza, snacks, crafts, Uno, Spooky Bingo, and music. Outside, they played tag and soccer. The evening ended with the kids making their rounds, visiting the Halloween-themed trunks and other stations for trick-or-treating and free books.

This evening of kids just being kids would not have been possible without the generosity of River of Life Church, the loyal volunteers from Ally Financial, Trinity Episcopal Church for donating space, DJ Willy Williams spinning the tunes...Freeze Dance of course...and two Detroit City Football Clubs (DCFC) West teams volunteered and even got festive in costumes and joined in the fun.

# Community Engagement: Girlstown Youth Volunteer with Belleville Rotary Club

This year, several youth from Girlstown had the opportunity to give back to the community by volunteering with the Belleville Rotary Club. In preparation for the Duck Race, part of the Taste of Belleville event, the youth helped “get their ducks in a row”, organizing race materials and supporting event setup.

The experience not only promoted community service and teamwork but also strengthened our youth’s connection to the local community. Events like this offer meaningful ways for our residents to engage in civic life and develop a sense of contribution and pride.

The Duck Race took place during Taste of Belleville and youth were proud to play a role in its success.





## Community Support from the Charles B. Cozadd Rotary Foundation of Belleville

Thanks to the generous support of the Charles B. Cozadd Rotary Foundation, Guiding Harbor's Girlstown Residential Program was awarded a grant to purchase three endurance bedframes specially designed for behavioral and mental health facilities.

These endurance beds are constructed from a single molded piece of high-density, tamper-proof polyethylene plastic. They are exceptionally durable, free from exposed hardware, and easy to clean, making them ideal for ensuring safety in therapeutic environments where self-harm may be a concern. While traditional metal bedframes serve most residents well, certain behavioral

crises have required us to remove these frames, leaving residents to sleep with only a mattress on the floor. Though done solely for safety and never as punishment, this approach compromises comfort and dignity.

With the introduction of these new beds, our team can now provide a safe, secure, and dignified sleeping arrangement, even during times of behavioral health crises. These beds are marketed as virtually indestructible and are commonly

used in other residential and clinical settings. The variety of color options also allows us to maintain a warm, welcoming environment that supports therapeutic care.

This investment, made possible through targeted grant funding, directly enhances both the physical safety and emotional wellbeing of the youth we serve, reinforcing our ongoing commitment to trauma-informed care and continuous improvement of our residential services.



# Tigers Game Outing Thanks to Belleville Area Kiwanis

A huge thank you to the Belleville Area Kiwanis for their generous donation of Detroit Tigers tickets to Guiding Harbor. These tickets were given to clients in need of a positive, family-friendly outing, offering them a special opportunity to relax, bond, and create lasting memories together.

Moments like these go a long way in supporting the emotional well-being of the individuals and families we serve. We are truly grateful to be part of such a caring and community-minded network here in Belleville.

Thank you, Belleville Area Kiwanis, for making joy and connection possible for our families!



## East Middle School Donates Nail Kits to Guiding Harbor Youth

We are grateful to the National Junior Honor Society at East Middle School (PCCSk12) for their thoughtful and generous donation to the youth and children of Guiding Harbor. The students, affectionately known as the “Easties,” collected an array of nail polish and essential manicure supplies, making it possible for our youth to enjoy some well-deserved self-care and creative expression.

Thanks to their kindness, our kids now have the tools to enjoy fun, stylish, and confidence-boosting nail days. Gestures like this not only brighten

spirits but also remind our youth that they are seen, supported, and celebrated by their broader community.

Thank you, Easties, for helping our youth feel fabulous!



## Life Skills in Action

This year, the Independent Living Program (ILP) youth experienced a memorable and meaningful early Thanksgiving celebration, one that blended tradition with hands-on learning. With guidance from Mrs. O, the youth took ownership of the entire meal, from meal planning and grocery shopping to preparing and cooking a full holiday dinner.



The menu featured a delicious spread of Cornish hens, mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese, asparagus, cornbread, and banana pudding. Each dish was prepared with care and shared with gratitude. Not only did the meal bring everyone together in the spirit of the season, but it also provided a valuable opportunity for youth to build essential life skills in budgeting, nutrition, and meal preparation.

This holiday event is just one example of how ILP fosters both independence and community, ensuring our youth are supported, celebrated, and equipped for the future.

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

During 2024, the Board of Directors played a pivotal role at Guiding Harbor, steering our strategic vision, overseeing governance, and guiding crucial decision-making processes. Comprising 20 individuals with diverse backgrounds and expertise, our Board's collective dedication is instrumental in ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of our organization.

Our Board members bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to the table, representing diverse fields including public education, finance, human resources,

and personal insights from the foster care system. This breadth of perspectives enriches our decision-making and empowers us to effectively address the challenges our clients encounter.

Board members are elected by their peers at the Annual Meeting from a diverse slate of candidates, serving two-year terms with the possibility of reelection. They convene five times annually to deliberate and vote on organizational matters, ensuring the best interests of Guiding Harbor are served throughout the year.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF GUIDING HARBOR'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1. Governance and Oversight: The Board is responsible for setting the Guiding Harbor's mission, vision, and strategic direction. They ensure that we operate in accordance with our mission and values, and they oversee management to ensure effective implementation of the strategic plan.
2. Fiduciary Responsibility: The Board has a duty to ensure that Guiding Harbor is financially sound and that resources are managed responsibly. They approve budgets, financial statements, and major expenditures, and they monitor financial performance to protect our assets and investments.
3. Executive Oversight and Accountability: The Board hires, evaluates, and if necessary,

replaces the executive leadership. They provide guidance and support to the leadership team, ensure that the organization complies with legal and ethical standards, and maintain accountability to stakeholders, including donors, members, and the community.

These duties collectively ensure that the Board acts in the best interests of the organization and its stakeholders, maintaining transparency, accountability, and strategic foresight.

If you would like more information about the Board of Directors or if you are interested in joining the Board, please contact Jennifer Trotter at [jtrotter@guidingharbor.org](mailto:jtrotter@guidingharbor.org).

## Angel Award

Robin Chapekis, Vice President of the Guiding Harbor Board, was awarded the 2024 Angel Award. This award is made by the Board President and recognizes individuals who embody the Guiding Harbor mission through passionate and dedicated volunteerism.

Robin joined the Guiding Harbor Board of Directors in 2023 and has been a crucial asset to the organization. Drawing on her extensive human resources expertise, she spearheaded the revitalization of the Guiding Harbor personnel manual, bringing essential improvements to the organization's operations.

Once from Metro Detroit, Robin now lives in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Despite the distance, her dedication is unwavering. She frequently travels to attend board meetings and participate in Guiding Harbor events, demonstrating her commitment to the mission.

## Guiding Light Award

While gathering votes for the Angel Award, fellow board members wanted to ensure that Linda was recognized for her commitment to the work she does. Linda consistently impresses her peers with her dedication to foster children in Michigan. She serves on nine different board committees and attends every meeting for each, which can mean up to three meetings per week depending on the time of year.

In addition to committee meetings and quarterly board meetings, Linda also attends the majority, if not all, of the district GFWC meetings as a representative of Guiding Harbor. These meetings, held throughout Michigan, are critical for raising awareness about Guiding Harbor's mission and work. Linda ensures either she or an appointed representative is present to champion this cause to our dedicated supporters statewide.

Time and again, board members praise Linda's dedication to Guiding Harbor, recognizing the immense time and emotional commitment she continues to give. There is no greater advocate for the children of Guiding Harbor.

Linda, everyone who has had the honor of meeting you know how deeply you care about foster children in Michigan. You remain an invaluable asset to Guiding Harbor, and both staff and board members are continually inspired by your passion and dedication. Thank you for being such a strong advocate for the causes you believe in.

Linda Clayton, Guiding Harbor Board President, was awarded the Guiding Light Award at the Guiding Harbor holiday party in 2024.



Robin Chapekis  
Angel Award Recipient

## 2024 BoD Roster

Monte Bertram - Treasurer

Linda Clayton - President

Robin Chapekis - Vice President

Paula Coulier

Bridget Hanson

Colleen Hau

Rae Lynn Hicks

Connie Hopkins

Sue Johnson

Jill McCormack - Secretary

Deb Mohre

Ruth Ann Norton

Stephanie Saville

Becky Steffens

Vincent Warren

Carol Wilson - Member at Large

# SPOTLIGHT - ERIKA,

## HR SPECIALIST



Guiding Harbor is pleased to welcome our new Human Resources Specialist, Erika. Like many nonprofit organizations, Guiding Harbor depends on dedicated individuals wearing multiple “hats” to keep operations running smoothly despite limited capacity. In 2022, after conducting a thorough needs assessment, we identified a critical gap: the need for a dedicated Human Resource Specialist.

Previously, most HR responsibilities fell to our CEO, Jennifer—a less-than-ideal situation given her already demanding workload. Additionally, tasks like

interviews and personnel issues often fell on program managers and supervisors, adding significant time burdens to their already busy schedules. Recognizing the strain this placed on our team, we had many discussions, reworking our budget, and leveraged the generous support of our Giving from the Heart donors to address the issue.

In 2022, we were thrilled to welcome Erika as our new Human Resource Specialist. Erika has been transformative in streamlining Guiding Harbor’s HR processes, including recruitment, hiring, onboarding, policy updates, and compliance with employment laws. Her contributions have gone far beyond administrative duties; she has been instrumental in fostering a positive work environment, supporting staff, and significantly improving staff retention.

In recognition of her outstanding contributions, Erika was honored with the Wings of Excellence Award, presented to staff members who consistently go above and beyond in their roles..

Guiding Harbor is so grateful for Erika’s dedication, professionalism, and the lasting impact she has made in strengthening our team and helping us fulfill our mission to serve foster children in Michigan.

# OUR JOURNEY

## Honoring Our History, Shaping the Future

Since 1958, Guiding Harbor has been a place of safety, stability, and hope for children and youth in foster care. What began as a small effort to provide a safe home for girls has grown into a mission-driven organization that empowers young people to heal, learn, and build brighter futures.

Our history is anchored in a simple yet powerful belief: every child deserves to feel loved, valued, and supported. Over the years, we have expanded from residential services to independent living programs, foster care, and adoption. Guiding Harbor has continually evolved to meet the changing needs of those we serve.

As we reflect on our past, we are proud of the countless lives we have touched, the children who found a safe place to call home, the teens who learned to believe in their own potential, and the families who received guidance and support during challenging times. Our history is not just our own; it is written in the stories of resilience, growth, and success of the youth who inspire us every day.

### Our Programs

- Residential Program Providing therapeutic, safe, stable housing and 24-hour support

for girls ranging from 12-17 who need a nurturing place to heal and grow.

- Foster Care Services Supporting biological and foster families to ensure children from birth to 18 are placed in loving, stable homes with the goal of reunification.
- Independent Living Program Preparing teens and young adults aging out of foster care with life skills, financial literacy, and career readiness so they can succeed on their own.

Looking ahead, we remain steadfast in our vision of creating opportunities where every young person in our care can thrive. The challenges facing today's youth in foster care are complex, ranging from mental health needs to educational gaps and the transition to independence. In response, we are committed to enhancing programs that prepare our young people for adulthood, strengthening community partnerships, and ensuring that every child we serve has the tools and support they need to succeed.

### Building for the Future ADD OTHER PLANS

We look forward to expanding our impact through new and innovative programs designed to meet the evolving needs of youth

in our care. Initiatives include a Driver's Education Program to give young people the mobility and independence they need for school and work, the addition of a Therapy Dog Program to provide comfort, emotional support, and healing, and the creation of a One Campus Model where all of our services can be offered in a centralized, supportive environment.

These future initiatives reflect our promise to remain a guiding harbor for every child, calming rough waters, charting steady paths toward independence, and building a strong community of care that embraces every young person who finds their way to our care.

Our future is bold, and it is built on the foundation of our history. With the continued generosity of our supporters and the dedication of our team, we are charting a course toward greater impact. Together, we will ensure that Guiding Harbor remains a guiding light yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

# FINANCIALS

## Guiding Harbor Belleville, Michigan

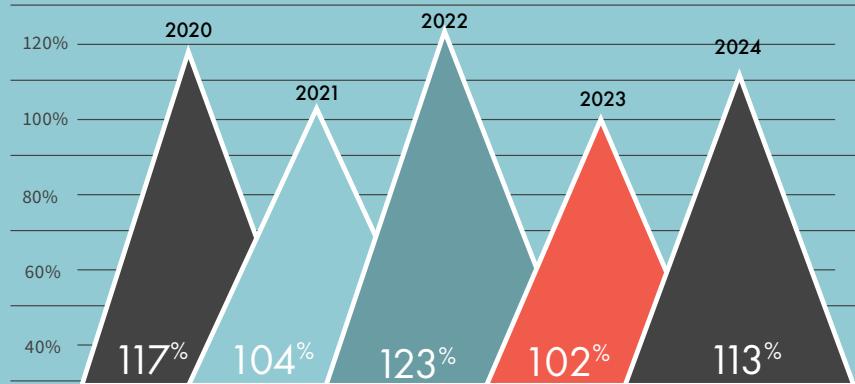
Brief Report on Financial Statements

Year ended December 31, 2024

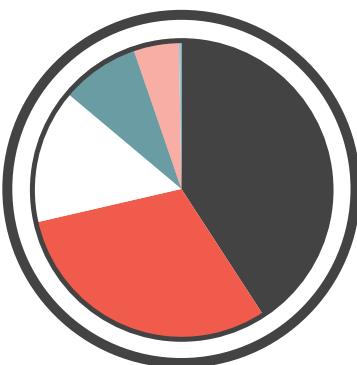
### Auditor's Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material aspects, the financial position of Guiding Harbor as of December 31, 2024, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

### Total Expenses/Revenue



### 2024 Expenses

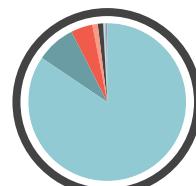


<span style="background-color: black; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	Foster Care
<span style="background-color: red; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	Residential - Girlytown
<span style="background-color: white; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	Management & General
<span style="background-color: teal; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	Independent Living
<span style="background-color: lightred; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	Adoption
<span style="background-color: lightblue; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	Fundraising

### Allocated Costs

The costs of program and supporting services activities have been summarized on a functional basis in the statements of activities. The statements of functional expenses present the natural classification detail of expenses by function. Accordingly, certain costs have been allocated among the programs and supporting services benefited. Salaries and related expenses have been allocated to program service activities based upon estimated time percentages for each employee. Most other costs are either charged directly or are allocated to program service based on management's estimation of actual salaries by function.

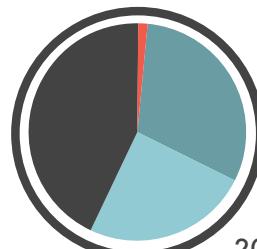
### 2024 Support & Revenue



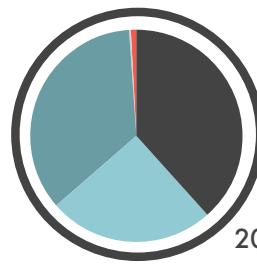
<span style="background-color: lightblue; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	Care Reimbursements
<span style="background-color: darkblue; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	ERC credit/COVID relief funds
<span style="background-color: red; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	Grants and contributions
<span style="background-color: lightred; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	Special event support
<span style="background-color: darkgrey; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	Training reimbursements
<span style="background-color: lightgrey; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	School Lunch Program
<span style="background-color: teal; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	Clothing Reimb.
<span style="background-color: purple; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span>	In-Kind

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION	2024	2023
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Current assets		
Cash	\$325,605	\$362,333
Investments	257,052	239,256
Accounts receivable, net	450,367	334,061
Inventory	-	2,739
Prepaid expenses	14,310	5,312
Total current assets	1,047,334	943,701
Noncurrent assets		
Fixed assets, net of accumulated depreciation	468,827	468,827
TOTAL ASSETS	1,512,147	1,412,528
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Current liabilities		
Accounts payable	26,990	-
Accrued Payroll Expenses	128,795	84,722
Line of Credit	90,167	74,511
Notes payable, current portion	34,891	30,084
Long term liabilities	18,910	29,490
TOTAL LIABILITIES	299,753	218,807
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Without donor restrictions		
Board designated	42,259	42,259
Board designated for Fundraising	24,813	23,509
Undesignated	1,145,322	1,124,713
With donor restrictions		
TOTAL NET ASSETS	1,212,394	1,193,712
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$1,512,147	\$1,412,528

DECEMBER 31, 2024 (with comparative totals as of December 31, 2023)

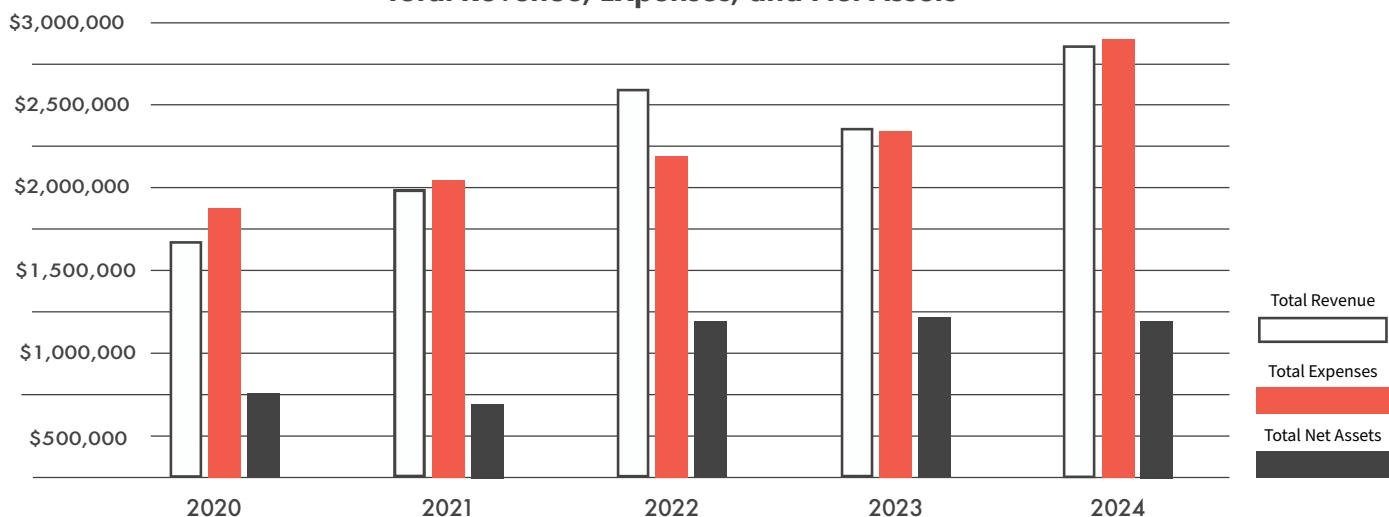
**ASSETS**

2024



2023

Cash | Investments | Acc. Rec. | Inventory | Prepaid Ex.

**Total Revenue, Expenses, and Net Assets**

# PLANNED GIVING

Planned Giving/Leave a Legacy  
Planned giving is a way to ensure your “fiber” continues to strengthen the lives of children long into the future. By including Guiding Harbor in your will, trust, or estate plan, you help create a lasting legacy of stability, safety, and opportunity for the youth we serve. Your commitment, made today, becomes part of the strong, interconnected fabric that will support vulnerable children for generations to come. Getting started is simple: you can name Guiding Harbor as a beneficiary of your retirement account, life insurance policy, or other assets,

or work with your attorney to add a gift to your will or trust. We are here to help guide you through the process and answer any questions. With planned giving, your compassion becomes timeless, ensuring that your values and generosity live on in the lives of children who need it most.

## **How to get started:**

Planned giving is a personal and thoughtful choice. We recommend consulting with a financial advisor or estate planner to determine the best planned giving strategy for your circumstances.

Your decision to include Guiding Harbor in your legacy is a testament to your commitment to making the world a better place for vulnerable children. Together, we can continue to provide hope, support, and opportunities for those who need it most.

For more information on planned giving or to discuss your legacy gift, please contact us!

Thank you for considering planned giving as a way to support Guiding Harbor. Your generosity will have a lasting impact on the lives of children and families in need.



## Leave a Legacy

**A legacy gift is a planned future gift that designates part of your estate to Guiding Harbor.**

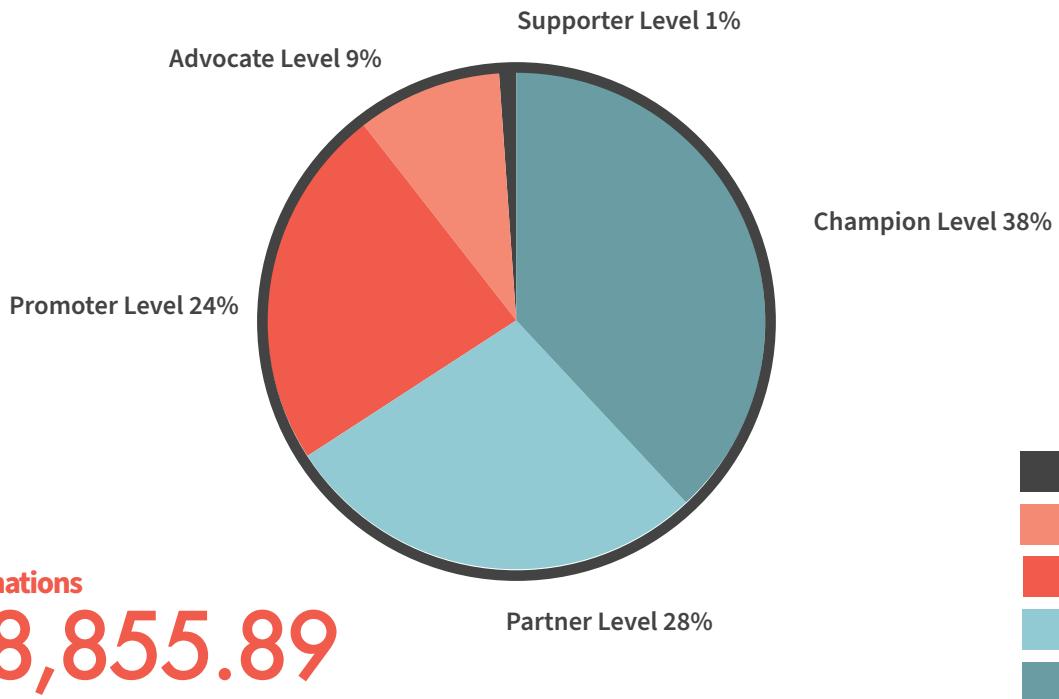
**We would like to recognize Jean Watson Trust Fund for the legacy donation in 2023.**

**Contact Linda Clayton or Jennifer Trotter for more information.**

## Guiding Harbor Donor Summary

January 2024-December 2024

Percent of total received donations



\$10-50
\$51-250
\$251-1000
\$1001-2499
\$2500 +

## Recurring Giving

Becoming a recurring donor is one of the strongest “fibers” in the network of care that holds our children steady. Monthly gifts provide reliable support that allows Guiding Harbor to plan ahead, respond quickly to urgent needs, and invest in programs that create lasting change. Just as fibers woven together form something strong and unbreakable, your

ongoing commitment strengthens the safety net for every child we serve, month after month, year after year.

Joining is simple: choose the amount you would like to give each month, whether it is the cost of a cup of coffee or a family meal, and set up your gift through our secure online donation page. Your

contribution will be processed automatically, and you will receive regular updates showing the difference your generosity is making. With each recurring gift, you are not just donating, you are weaving your own fiber into the fabric of a child’s future.

# THANK YOU

## **“WE CANNOT LIVE ONLY FOR OURSELVES. A THOUSAND FIBERS CONNECT US WITH OUR FELLOW MEN.” — HERMAN MELVILLE**

Although Guiding Harbor is primarily funded by MDHHS Michigan Department of Health and Human Services for every night a child spends in our care, we depend on the support and generosity of our donors. The support of our donors is part of a bigger network of care. Like the “thousand fibers” Melville describes, their contributions connect them to the lives of our youth who might otherwise feel unseen or unsupported.

When donors give, they are not just making a financial transaction, they are reinforcing the social threads that hold vulnerable children in safety and opportunity. Their role is essential, not optional. In an “optimally functioning society,” everyone who can help does help, and donors embody that principle through their choice to give.

Our donors enable Guiding Harbor to offer essential services such as foster care, adoption assistance, and residential programs for children who have faced abuse, neglect, or other hardships. The

financial support of our donors ensures that these children receive not only the basic necessities but also access to educational opportunities, mental health services, and extracurricular activities that promote their development and well-being.

A donor’s generosity is one of those vital “fibers” that strengthens the bonds within our community. Moreover, the impact of donors extends beyond immediate financial aid. Their consistent support fosters a sense of community and stability for Guiding Harbor, allowing us to plan and implement long-term initiatives that address systemic issues.

For instance, through sustained donations, we can invest in educational enrichment and life skills programs for youth in care, empowering them with the tools, confidence, and opportunities they need to thrive as independent adults. In addition to monetary contributions, donors can provide valuable resources, including time

and expertise, which are critical to the organization’s success. Volunteer efforts, pro bono professional services, and in-kind donations significantly augment Guiding Harbor’s capacity to serve more children and families effectively.

We know there is no shortage of places where you can donate your time and money. That is why we are so grateful to those who have chosen Guiding Harbor. Their support is one of the “fibers” that connects and strengthens our community, ensuring that vulnerable children have the care, guidance, and opportunities they deserve. When you support Guiding Harbor, we honor your trust by using your contributions to create lasting impact for the kids who need us most.

## Champion Level

- Mohre, Deborah
- Giving Hope Women's Giving Circle
- The Village Club Foundation
- First Nation Group, LLC
- Charles B. Cozadd Rotary Foundation
- Meijer
- White, Avis
- Michigan Health Endowment Fund

## Partner Level

- Bertram, Monte
- Fisher, Marguerite
- Celani, Melissa and Joseph
- Clayton, Linda
- Hau, Colleen
- GFWC Menominee
- GFWC Brooklyn Heart of the Lakes
- Hayes, Kim
- Burt Lake Friends
- Herrera, Guadalupe
- GFWC Gun Lake
- Hopkins, Connie
- McCarthy, Kathleen
- Morrison, Jon
- Lewis, Kathleen
- McCormack, Jill
- Hicks, Rae Lynn
- Saint James Lutheran Church
- Cornerstone Christian Church
- Kozlowski, Rachel
- Saville, Stephanie

- Hanson, Bridget
- Edward Jones
- Von Voigtlander Family Foundation
- Wilson, Carol
- Rochester Junior Womens Club

## Promoter Level

- Romeo Monday Club
- Clark, Linda
- GFWC Reed City
- Colby, Brenda
- Steffens, Becky
- Lawther, Linda
- DelVero, Mary Beth
- GFWC - Madison Heights
- Kokenakes, Staci
- GFWC - Tekonsha Research Club
- Bagazinski, Meagan
- GFWC - Evart
- Mohre, Sara
- Knish, Kris
- Gasperosky, Karen
- GFWC-Flushing Women's Club
- Fick, Christopher
- DeMarco, Linda
- GFWC - Gun Lake Area
- Coulier, Paula

- Parenteau, Tammy
- Jenkins, Kris
- GFWC - Lake Orion
- Molnar, Nancy
- Sheeran, Sam
- Blair-Krosnicki, Deborah
- Charron, Andrea
- Cops & Doughnuts LLC
- Guina, Jeff
- Hanson, Jane
- Konen, Sheila
- Michigan Medicine
- Watson, Jean
- O'Keefe, JoEllen
- Faust, Courtney
- RE/MAX Platinum
- Remax
- Martin, Lisa
- Cobb, Jennifer
- Keene Sheeran, Patricia
- Fick, Kathy
- Jenkins, Judy
- Breuer, Lisa
- Walters, Shari
- Vaghy, Christie
- Wright, Ted
- Tarnopol, Kim
- GFWC - Swartz Creek
- Chapekis, Robin
- Belisle, Lisa
- Jones, Alex
- GFWC - Caledonia
- Johnson, Susan
- Crabtree, Becky
- Tomaszewski, Nicole
- Ruczynski, Tom and Vera
- Northon, Ruth Ann
- Trotter, Jennifer
- Melzoni, Tom and Trina
- Precision Garage Door
- Quinlan, James and Judith

## Advocate Level

- Close, Jill
- Landskroener, Rich
- Tulikangas, Paul
- Garden Fantasy on Main
- Nesbitt, Karen
- Bumhoffer, Delores
- Fuller, Fran
- Lambert, Sheila
- Pietsch, Amber
- Robbins, Julia
- Tucker, Elaine
- Ally Financial Inc.
- GFWC - Adrian Woman's Club
- Taylor, Lori
- Schoen, Nicole
- Orvis, Amanda
- Williams, Rico and Janiece
- Birge, Eric
- Meike, Melissa
- GFWC - Harrison Women's Club
- Allen, Denise
- Adamski, R. J
- Christensen, Louis
- Faith United Methodist Church
- GFWC - Big Rapids
- GFWC - Charlotte
- GFWC - Iron Mountain
- Kingsford
- GFWC - Vermontville Women's Club
- Laidlaw, Lyle and Marilyn
- Lande, Shirley
- McNamara, Kevin
- Order of Eastern Star
- Sweeney, Brenda
- Upston, Madilyn
- Whitmire, Lynne
- Zywicki, Ron
- Barnes, Karen
- Dartt, Julie
- Geraldts, Laurie
- Mikutowski, Liz
- Wilke, Deborah
- Allum, Lois
- Foster, Linda
- Harding, Martha
- Krumm, Karen
- Lacey, Thomas and Jeanette
- Roach, Marte
- Sopata, Sylvia
- Steenwyk, Felicia
- GFWC Mt. Pleasant
- Royal Oak Woman's Club
- LaPradd, Jeff
- Malloy, Patricia
- White, Nancy
- Ketelsen, Carol Anne
- Shay, Candy
- GFWC - Rogers City Area Civic League
- GFWC - Hastings Woman's Club
- Nice Enough Entertainment
- Spannuth, Darolyn
- Rodriguez, Hannah
- GFWC - Three Rivers Woman's Club
- GFWC-Manistique
- GFWC-Pigeon Area Women's Club
- Bules, Thomas & Michelle
- Barry, Nancy
- Benefit Review Service inc.
- Crist, John & Jan
- Flemming, Abby & Dave
- GFWC - Grand Valley
- Holzer, Christie
- Klee, Sherie
- Meyer, Tim
- Michigan Virtual
- Wright, Ted and Nancy
- Loosvelt, Kacey
- Feger, Karen
- Green, Beth
- Tull, Heather
- Lambrecht, Jeannine
- Bailey, Carolyn
- Chatterton, Rosy
- Lahtinen, Dianne
- Montague, Dawnetta
- Rough, Linda
- Sykes, Margaret
- Cannon, Teresa
- Connors, Angel
- Panda Express
- Discount Bob Furniture
- Murray, Ann
- Hlckok, Carmen

## Supporter Level

- Strunk, Debra
- Keweenaw Kitchen
- GFWC- Escanaba
- Wesley, Leo & Barbara
- GFWC Lake Orion
- Stella, Kim
- Fravel, Linda
- James, Melonie
- Molnar, Jessica
- Bissonette, Sarah
- Clayton, Larry
- Hogan, Christine
- Murasky, Sue
- Pearcy, Brian
- Smith, Rosemary
- Tomaszewski, Susan
- Vrsek, Shelly
- Yerman, Roslyn
- DiGiovanni, Victor
- Giess, Dianna
- Hawkins, Mary Diane
- Wilson, William
- Povilaitis, Melissa
- Drouillard, Pam
- Porod, Christine
- Brown, Michael
- Czlapinski, Jillian
- Place, Nikki
- Kirchner, Debi
- Dinsmore, Patty
- Carver, Mieko
- Suchovsky, Donna
- Valade, Jan
- Clayton, Chuck
- Frantz, Lana
- Friends of Reggie Miller
- GFWC - Dearborn
- GFWC - Eaton Rapids Women's Clubs
- GFWC - Edmore Womens Club
- GFWC Northwestern District
- New Horizons South Church
- Russell, Sharon
- Strahanoski, Debra
- VanHorn, Delores
- Whitsitt, Colleen





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***Improving the quality of life for  
children and families***