



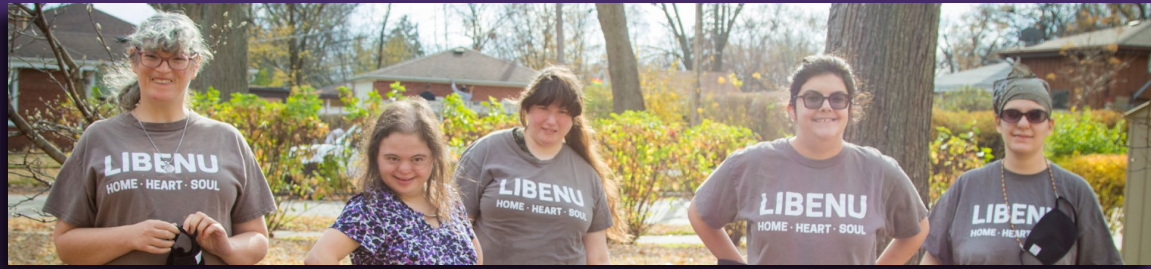
# LIBENU

*Home Heart Soul*

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**ANNUAL**  
*Report*  
**2022**

# A Letter From The CEO



Dear Friends:

Fourteen years after launching a grassroots response to our community's need for kosher housing and respite services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, Libenu has grown from a local startup to an established and professional nonprofit organization that has earned national recognition for excellence. Libenu's goal is to provide a lifetime of care and support for children, teens, and adults with disabilities, empowering them to live with dignity as fully included members of their Jewish community.

Over the course of 2022, Libenu invested in a comprehensive strategic planning process with Debra Natenshon of DBN & Associates, a social purpose consultancy firm. We clarified the focus of our vision and mission, which has broadened in keeping with the community's needs, to make sure that our work remains relevant, sustainable, and successful. Libenu reaffirmed our unwavering and heartfelt commitment to the Jewish community and to the people we serve. We examined our goals and set our strategic priorities for growth and expansion in the coming years. Finally, we articulated Libenu's theory of change, which conveys the significant impact we ultimately hope to have for individuals with disabilities, their families, and the entire Jewish community.

Libenu is the leading provider of robust, life-changing respite services for families who have children with disabilities in our community. Our bold and exciting plans to expand our highly successful Lev Respite after-school program and our one-of-a-kind Lev Lilah overnight respite program are strategic priorities. These vital programs provide children, teens, and young adults with disabilities a safe, loving place to socialize and play while developing essential skills, and they give parents and families a much-needed break from the constant demands of caregiving.

Libenu continues to be at the vanguard of providing warm, loving person-centered kosher homes in the heart of the Jewish community, where adults with disabilities can thrive, have a voice, experience a true sense of inclusion and belonging, and be valued for their unique strengths and contributions.

Libenu currently offers opportunities for our residents to maximize their personal choices, independence, and self-determination in a comfortable and familiar environment. Looking to the near future, Libenu is planning a new women's home for families on our waitlist looking to provide their daughters with a home to call their own.

Libenu also offers expertise, leadership, and advocacy on a multitude of disability issues, working with state and local legislators to promote initiatives that improve lives. Our consultation services to communities throughout the U.S. have enabled them to emulate our outstanding services and create programs of their own.



Libenu is proud of our past achievements and invigorated by our commitment to the future. We welcome your help, as well as our ever-growing collaborations with organizational partners, to maintain and build on the highest standards of excellence in programs and services. Together we can provide a multitude of opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, ensuring that they are embraced by the community, and that their families have respite and peace of mind for the future.

This annual report reflects Libenu's dedication to excellence along with our commitment to our Jewish roots and values. Thank you for your generous support and for enabling Libenu to become an integral part of the community.

With Best Wishes,

Shana Erenberg, PhD.  
Co-founder & CEO



# Libenu's New Mission, Vision, and Theory of Change

## *Our Mission*

Libenu's mission is to provide a lifetime of care and support for children, teens, and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, empowering them to live with dignity as fully included members of their Jewish community. Libenu partners with families, enabling them to create the life they want for their loved ones, resulting in decreased stress and an increased sense of security for the future.

Libenu fulfills its mission by providing life-changing, robust respite services infused with Jewish values for families; warm, welcoming person-centered kosher homes for adults; inclusive social and recreational opportunities; partnerships for day programming and vocational training; and leadership in community education and advocacy.

## *Our Vision*

Libenu envisions a Jewish community where individuals with disabilities have a home, an extended family and a future; where they can thrive, have a voice, experience a true sense of belonging, and are valued for their unique strengths and contributions; where families have a reprieve from the demands of caregiving as well as the peace of mind of knowing that their loved ones' futures are secure.



## *Our Theory of Change*

With the support of an engaged board, experienced professionals, dedicated staff, passionate volunteers, leadership and advocacy, collaborative partners, and standards of excellence, Libenu provides a lifetime of care for individuals with disabilities, empowering them to live with dignity as fully included members of their community. By partnering with families to create the life they want for their loved ones, Libenu decreases stress and increases a sense of security for the future. Respite participants develop essential skills and enjoy safe spaces to play and socialize. Teens experience inclusive community programs, volunteer activities, and skill development that promote independence. Adults thrive in loving, person-centered kosher homes with opportunities to maximize personal choice, independence, and self-determination. Families have peace of mind, a reprieve from caregiving, stress reduction, and improved mental wellness. Ultimately, the community becomes an inclusive and welcoming place where individuals with disabilities are valued for their unique strengths and contributions.



# Libenu Loves Our Volunteers

Libenu works with a cadre of dedicated volunteers to advance our mission and provide services for our clients and their families. Our council of high school volunteers from ICJA, Hannah Sacks, and Skokie Yeshiva plan and implement social and recreational activities for our residents and respite participants, thereby promoting inclusion and belonging. We also have a dedicated cadre of high school and college volunteers in our Lev Respite after-school and Lev Lilah overnight programs, which helps us to provide individualized attention and a 1-1 ratio to meet the diverse needs of our participants. While our volunteers bring their enthusiasm, passion, energy, and engagement, to the Libenu programs, their lives are also enriched by their experience. Many of these volunteers have gone on to pursue careers in disability related fields. In addition, we have a number of adult volunteers who help out in our respite program, teach cooking and art classes for our adult residents, plant gardens at our homes, and make barbeque dinners at our Libenu homes. Our participants love the extra attention from their adopted “grandparents” and our volunteers have the fulfillment of making a meaningful difference in their lives. Most importantly, our volunteers facilitate inclusion and promote a sense of belonging for all of Libenu’s participants.



# Home Heart Soul

Libenu believes that a nurturing **home** environment, based on the Jewish values of community inclusion and respect, is essential for individuals with disabilities to thrive and feel a sense of belonging. Libenu’s kosher homes are tailored to meet our residents’ unique needs and play a crucial role in fostering independence, dignity, meaningful connections and overall well-being. By offering personalized care and opportunities for skill development, Libenu empowers adults with disabilities to lead fulfilling lives, where their hearts can truly call **home**.



The **heart** of Libenu’s residential services lies in the compassionate and dedicated staff who are committed to providing comprehensive support. Highly trained professionals, including caregivers, therapists, and social workers, form a collaborative team to address the diverse needs of residents. They create personalized care plans, assist with daily activities, and facilitate opportunities for social engagement and community integration. Beyond meeting physical and medical needs, these professionals recognize the emotional well-being of residents as a priority. By fostering a culture of empathy, respect, and inclusivity, they create a home where individuals with disabilities feel seen, heard, and valued. Through their tireless efforts, Libenu’s homes become places where the **heart** finds solace and joy, allowing residents to embrace their full potential and lead enriched lives.

At Libenu, we recognize that caring for individuals with disabilities goes beyond meeting their physical needs; it also encompasses nurturing their **soul**. We understand that each person has a unique essence, a depth that extends beyond abilities or challenges and embraces their inherent value, dignity, and the beauty of their inner being. Libenu homes nurture the **soul** by providing opportunities for our residents to express their spirituality and the freedom to practice their personal religious beliefs in ways that are familiar and comfortable to them.

At Libenu, **home** transcends the physical space. It is a place where **hearts** and **souls** come alive in the embrace of a compassionate community. With a commitment to fostering meaningful connections and nurturing personal growth, we strive to create an environment where residents can find love, support, purpose, fulfillment, and a true sense of belonging.



# Lev Respite

## A Lifeline for Families



Libenu's Lev Respite program provides professional, dependable, well-structured respite services in a safe, nurturing environment so that parents can get a much-needed break from the constant demands of caregiving for a child with disabilities. With full confidence that their child with special needs is in a warm, nurturing environment at Lev Respite, parents can spend quality time with their other children and have time for themselves, thereby strengthening and stabilizing family relationships. Parents describe Lev Respite as their "lifeline to sanity."

Respite participants enjoy a variety of social and recreational activities based on best practices and centered around goal-oriented social, emotional, communication, and life-skills learning. A delicious, healthy, kosher dinner is served nightly. Our dedicated, enthusiastic staff and volunteers ensure that everyone's needs are properly addressed and that Libenu's "gold standard of care" is maintained. Lev Respite groups meet Monday through Thursday afternoons, including legal holidays.

The efficacy of the Lev Respite program is supported by data from our quarterly parent surveys, in which 100% of caregivers reported a significant reduction in personal and family stress and anxiety levels; 90% of respondents reported improved family relationships with their spouse and/or other children; and 90% reported a reduction in their physical symptoms of depression and anxiety while their child was in respite care. As one parent shared, "Lev Respite gives me a chance to breathe and regroup. I can take better care of my other children because I have this break from the difficult demands of caring for my child with a disability."

Lev Respite is supported in part through generous grants from The Walder Foundation, JUF, and the Illinois Department of Human Services.

## Introducing Lev Lilah



Libenu's Lev Lilah program is the first of its kind in the Midwest offering overnight respite care for Jewish families with children, teens, and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). The constant vigilance needed for caregiving takes a significant toll on the physical and mental health of the caregivers and is not sustainable without support. Between daytime care and nighttime concern's, parents have expressed that they simply don't have the energy for their other children. The stress is felt by the entire family.

Lev Lilah addresses the unmet needs of Jewish families with children, teens, and young adults with disabilities by providing short-term overnight respite services for a full Shabbat. Most of these families have not had a full night's rest since their child with disabilities was born, impacting the mental health of entire family units. While parents, grandparents, and other caregivers can enjoy a peaceful Shabbat with their families, the participants in the Lev Lilah program enjoy a fun-filled Shabbat with delicious food, games, rituals, and friends in a safe, nurturing environment. They can attend services and go to the park with other children during the afternoon, like any typical family. Neighbors and community members stop by to visit, thereby promoting inclusion and belonging. Their participation in the community has the added benefit of raising community awareness of the needs of individuals with disabilities and their families and of reducing stigma. After all, a Shabbat at Lev Lilah is not only fun for the participants, a break for their families, but also joyous for the community. As one parent wrote,

"Lev Lilah is a lifeline for my family. It is the first time we ever had a peaceful shabbat since our son was born. Thank you for the gift of normal."

Lev Lilah is supported in part through a generous grant from JUF.



# Partnerships

Libenu believes that collaboration between organizations leads to greater impact and improved outcomes for individuals with disabilities. As such, we actively partner with local and national organizations to provide a lifetime of care and support for children, teens and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, empowering them to live with dignity, as fully included members of their community. Libenu also partners with organizations to share our expertise and coordinate efforts to maximize community resources and promote efficiency in service delivery.

Libenu’s partnerships reflect the powerful Jewish value of Kol Yisroel Areivim Zeh L’Zeh - a shared responsibility for providing the best services and care for those in need. We are grateful for our partners who work with us to provide support, resources, and advocacy for individuals with disabilities, ensuring they have the opportunity to fully participate in all aspects of communal life.



# Innovative Programs & Services

## Therapy Through the Arts

Libenu uses music therapy in our residential and respite programs to develop communication and interpersonal skills, such as collaboration, turn-taking, respectful conversation, and active listening, all of which are also soft skills for vocational development. Art therapy promotes positive self-expression and helps participants work through their anxieties and concerns. Drama therapy is used to help individuals recognize and address the need for personal boundaries and to process complicated or confusing social scenarios, which are challenging for our clients.



## Social/Recreational Programs

Libenu’s bowling league and Lunch Bunch - meals at local kosher restaurants – are highly anticipated highlights of the week. The Skokie Public Library’s book club also has become a favorite venue for many of the men and women of Libenu. Children in the Lev Respite program enjoy trips to the park and local attractions, while our teens and young adults have fun on community outings and dining out at local kosher restaurants.

## Libenu Live Well

Libenu’s Live Well program addresses the unique challenges that adults with disabilities face in their daily lives. “Girl Talk” empowers our women to speak with a physician and counselor in a therapeutic setting about hygiene, women’s healthcare, dating, and relationships in the context of Jewish values. The program addresses nutrition, fitness, health, financial literacy, responsible use of social media, and personal safety. Our nursing services ensure that each resident is visited & monitored weekly by a licensed RN. Learning sessions with trained chaplains enable our clients to explore and express their spirituality in ways that are meaningful, personal, and comfortable.

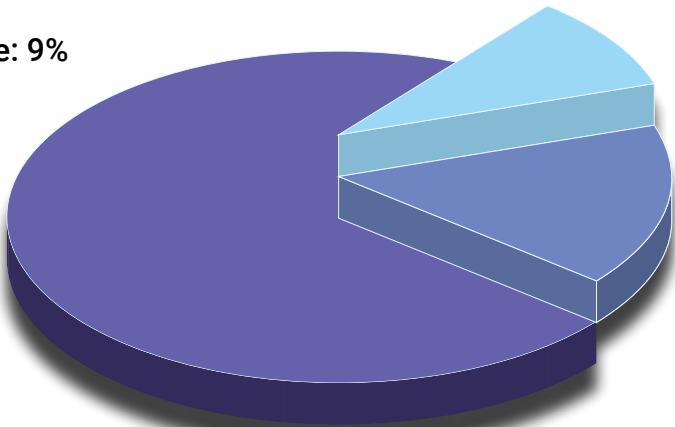




# 2022 Revenues

Total Assets: \$3,963,519

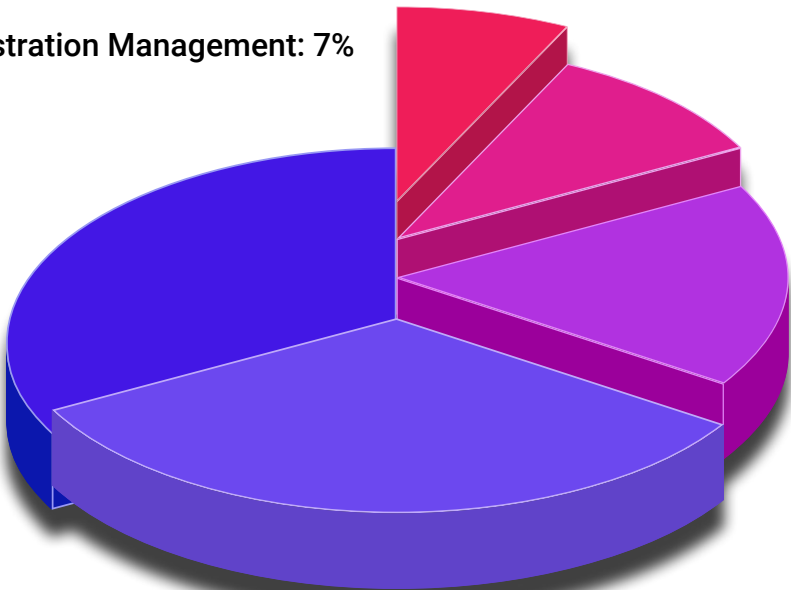
- Individual and Business Contributions: 75%
- Foundations and Grants: 16%
- Earned Revenue: 9%



- Residential: 33%
- Respite: 33%
- Community and Education (includes respite & residential): 17%
- Fundraising: 10%
- Administration Management: 7%

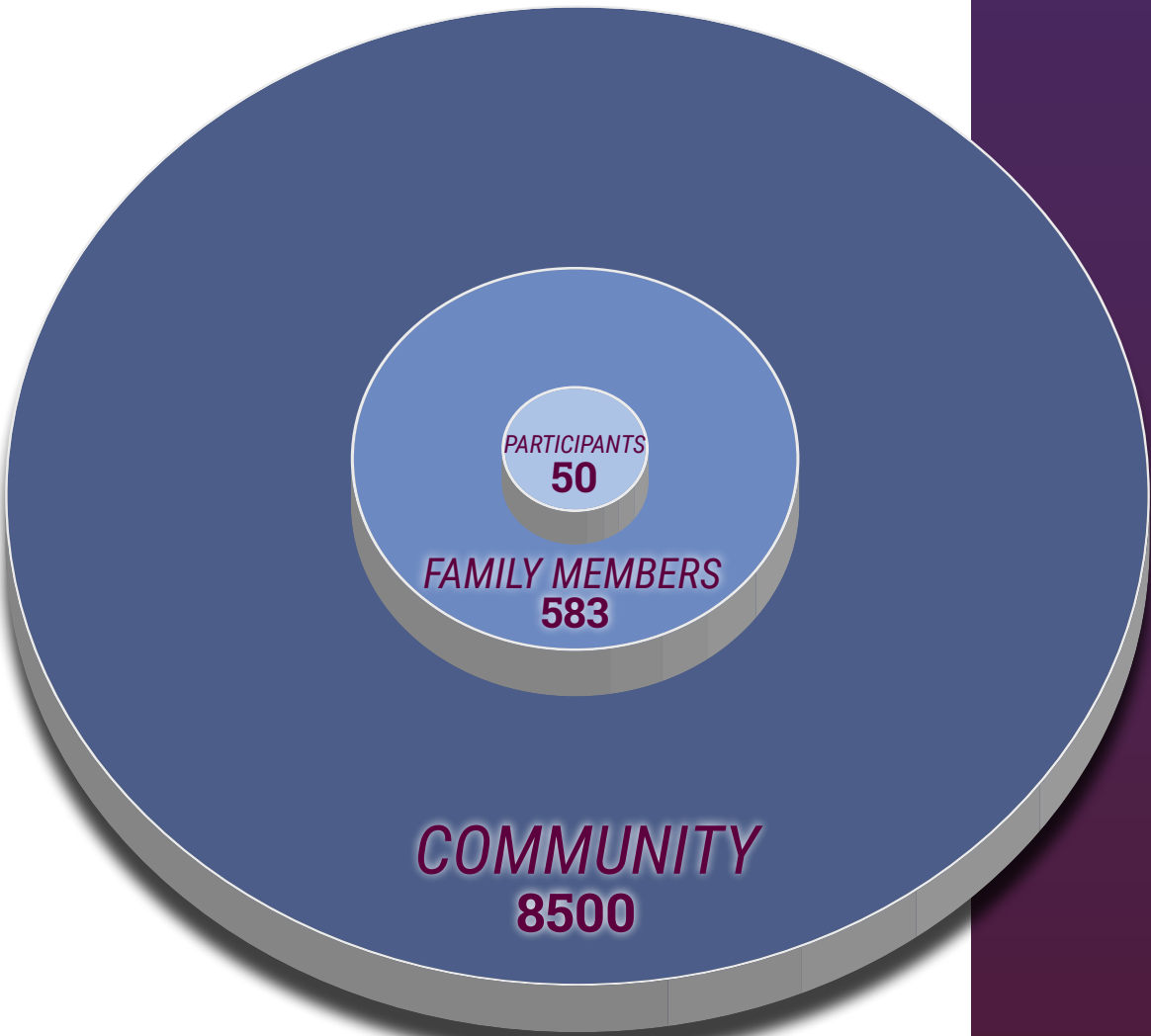
## Expenses

Total Liabilities: \$963,812



# Impact

Libenu strives to strengthen the fiber of the community, enriching the lives of our residents, respite clients, and others in our orbit. The synagogues we attend, the guests who join us for programs, and the organizations we partner with bring more and more opportunities for engagement and inclusion.



# Thanks to your generous support in 2022, Libenu provided:

**157,680 Hours of  
Residential Care**

**8736 hours per resident**



**30,000 Hours of  
Lev Respite After School**

**750 Hours of  
Lev Lilah Overnight Respite**



**1000 Hours of  
Art, Music, Drama  
Therapies, Special  
Programs, and  
Torah Classes**



## WITH HEARTFELT THANKS

We are grateful to each and every member of our community who understands the importance of supporting and including adults with disabilities, and who has expressed that value through donations, volunteering, or other forms of support. The financial supporters listed here are foundations, corporations, and campaign matching-gift donors.

Libenu carefully spends every dollar that we receive, ensuring that the majority of expenses are directly related to our programs. We were especially glad to see gifts from over 500 new individuals and families during the 2022 Live, Love, Libenu campaign and the Berkowitz Family Libenu Golf Outing, and we hope that you, our generous supporters, will continue to tell your friends about the worthy work of Libenu.

## FOUNDATIONS AND GRANTS

With deep appreciation and gratitude, Libenu recognizes the generosity of the foundations that support Libenu's programs and services in the community.

**WALDER**  
FOUNDATION

  
**Jewish United Fund**  
TOGETHER *for* GOOD

 **IDHS**  
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT  
OF HUMAN SERVICES

**ROBERT & DEBRA F HARTMAN FOUNDATION**

**JON AND MIRIAM  
FRIEDMAN**

**ROTHNER  
FAMILY**



# Fundraisers



## Our Home, Heart, Soul Winter Online Campaign Matchers Are Our Machers. *(They make magical things happen!)*

### Hearts of Gold

Miriam & Jon Friedman  
Debbie & Robert Hartman  
Rothner Family

### Champions

Lisa & Sidney Glenner  
Chasi & Eli Davis  
Caron Rockman & Stephen Dennis  
JoAnn & Steven Potashnick

### Visionaries

Keryn & David Schreiber  
Rikki & Chaim Rajchenbach  
Asher Kohn

### Dream Makers

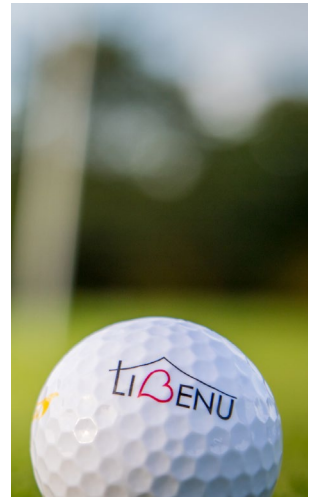
Shana & Steve Erenberg  
Sarita Kohn  
Raphaela & Todd Stern  
Suri & Joey Stern  
Yosef Hellman  
Chaya Tova & David Hartman

### Builders

Zisi & Dovid Seitler  
Chavi & Gary Ashman  
Sheryl & Robert Greenstein

# BERKOWITZ FAMILY LIBENU GOLF OUTING

The 7th Annual Berkowitz Family Libenu Golf Outing on September 18th was once again a huge success and the event of the summer. We are grateful to the over two hundred golfers and guests who joined us at the Ravinia Green Country Club, for a day of great fun, great food, and great friends in support of a great cause that raised over \$420,000. Heartfelt thanks to our event sponsor Dudi and Shira Berkowitz and Family, as well as our generous jewel-tiered sponsors, dedicated golf outing committee, and our energetic staff and volunteers who ensured that the event was a hole-in-one.



Of course, the real winners of the day were our Libenu residents, respite participants, and families who benefit from Libenu's services. If you missed the 2022 golf outing - don't be tee'd off. You can have a Mulligan in 2023! Watch for registration information and be a part of the 8th Annual Berkowitz Family Libenu Golf Outing on August 28, 2023.

## DIAMOND LEVEL SPONSORS



WALKER &  
DUNLOP

## RUBY LEVEL SPONSORS

GUTNICKI LLP



CASCADE  
CAPITAL  
GROUP



## SAPPHIRE LEVEL SPONSORS



## EMERALD LEVEL SPONSORS



## PLATINUM LEVEL SPONSORS



## GOLD LEVEL SPONSORS





# Jewish Life at Libenu

*A lifetime of care creates a lifetime of meaning!*





# Family Caregiver Survey

Being a caregiver for individuals with disabilities and/or mental health issues is difficult and emotionally challenging. To better understand how to support caregivers, Libenu and No Shame On U partnered with Measuring Success in 2022 to conduct the Family Caregiver Study in the Chicago Jewish community. The study was funded through a generous grant from Upstart.

Key questions included: What supports do family caregivers need for themselves and their family members? Which interventions have a meaningful impact? How is the Jewish community responding to those needs? What more needs to be done?

Over 265 surveys were returned and analyzed. Caregivers reported that they felt a loss of control over their lives and reported often feeling strained. Many caregivers noted a decline in their personal physical health as well as a negative effect on family and social relationships. More than half of respondents reported that their mental and physical health were not in a positive place. Anxiety, stress, sleep disruptions, depression, isolation and uncontrolled worrying were the most frequent issues reported.

Caregivers also reported that they did not have enough time for personal care and often put their own needs last. They reported difficulty balancing caregiver and family responsibilities, particularly if there was insufficient family or respite support. Financial concerns were also noted due to the increased costs associated with having a child with a disability.

Caregivers described respite services as a mental health intervention and indicated it was one of the most important needs in their lives. Caregivers also indicated a need for housing, employment, and social opportunities for their adult children. The findings of the Family Caregiver Study strongly support the need for and expansion of Libenu's critical residential and respite programs in the community.



# 2023 - Opportunity & Growth



Libenu is embarking on several important initiatives in 2023, leading to exponential growth in our programs:

1. Libenu received \$450,000 of Nonprofit Security Grants through the Illinois Emergency Management Agency for security upgrades and enhancements of our residences.
2. Thanks to a \$1,000,000 donation from the Rothner Family, Libenu purchased the property at 2839 W. Touhy to establish the Lev Avigayil Libenu Center, a permanent home for Libenu's Lev Respite program. The center will allow us to greatly expand respite services in the community and plan new programs for our residents. The Lev Avigayil Libenu Center is dedicated to the blessed memory of Gale Rothner a'h, Avigayil Gittel bat Pesach v' Chava Rivka a'h.
3. Plans for a new women's home are underway to serve a group of young women on Libenu's waiting list.
4. Libenu is piloting Camp Lev, a four day intersession overnight respite program at the former Camp Red Leaf site in Ingelside. The program is designed to give parents extended overnight respite services between the end of camp and the start of the school year.





*Libenu is a five-star nonprofit organization!*



Platinum  
Transparency  
2023

**Candid.**



LIBENU  
*Home Heart Soul*

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