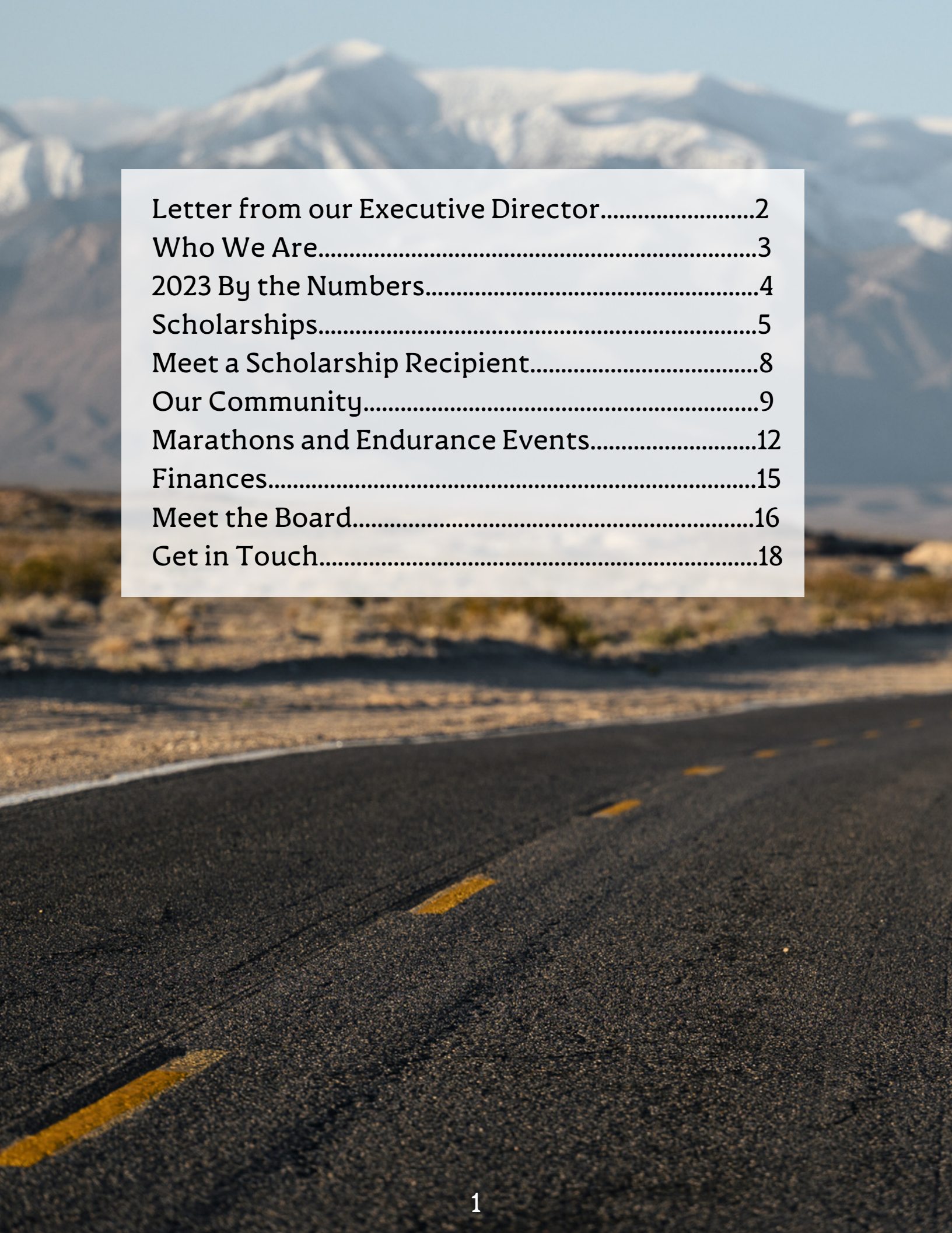


2023 ANNUAL REPORT
RELEASE
FOUNDATION





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A NOTE FROM DOUG LEVY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2023 was a remarkable year of growth for the Release Recovery Foundation, but before we get into the numbers, I want to take you first to late September across the Atlantic – and a moment that tells you everything you need to know about the work your support allows us to do.

I'm in Berlin, Germany preparing to run my seventh marathon with nine other Release team members to raise money for the foundation's scholarship fund: to give those who can't afford it the same opportunity to recover that I was given 14 years ago.

My cell phone rings, and on the line is Andre: a man experiencing homelessness and deep in the throes of addiction. We had been trying to help Andre for some time, but it had been hard to locate him. We finally got the call that he was ready for help, and we were ready to provide it.

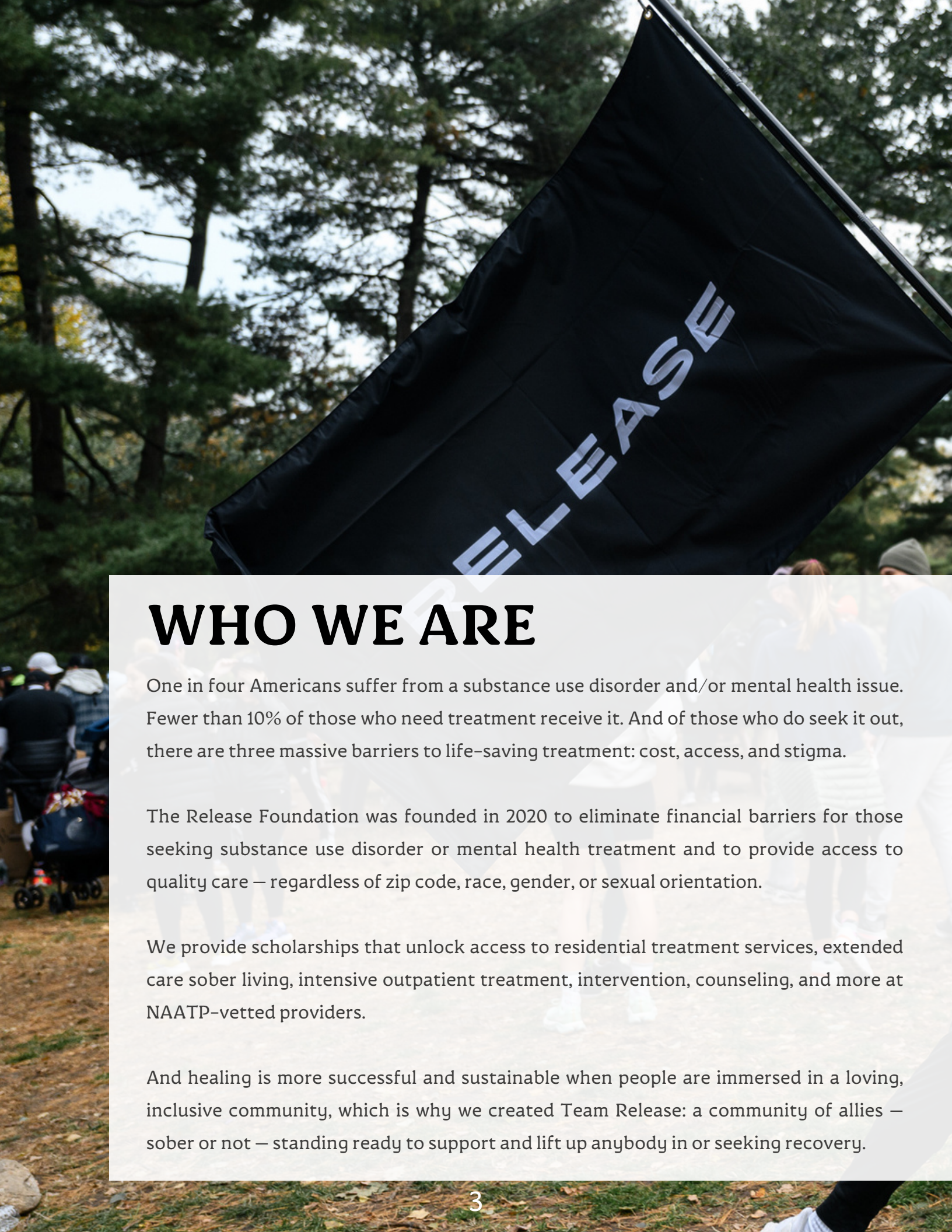
26.2 miles later, we had raised \$65,000 dollars for the scholarship fund that would propel Andre into treatment that very weekend – the help he so desperately needed but otherwise couldn't have afforded.

I've spoken to Andre recently. Eight weeks into treatment, his latest message to me read: "I am regaining my power back, as well as my strength and confidence thanks to the support of the Release Foundation...I am so grateful!"

At the Release Foundation, simply put, we are saving lives. Andre is just one of the 60 people who received scholarships for life-saving treatment this year and 150 overall who have received scholarships since the foundation's inception in 2020.

This past year, we were not only able to expand the number of scholarships offered, especially to those in underserved communities; but we also further fostered a resilient and supportive community of our own. From our Monday Night Run Club and marathon activations across the world (literally) to our zero-proof party and our first-ever gala, we've built a vibrant community of more than 16,000 allies.

None of this would be possible without those of you reading this letter. I am immensely grateful for your support and cannot wait to show you what we have planned for 2024.



WHO WE ARE

One in four Americans suffer from a substance use disorder and/or mental health issue. Fewer than 10% of those who need treatment receive it. And of those who do seek it out, there are three massive barriers to life-saving treatment: cost, access, and stigma.

The Release Foundation was founded in 2020 to eliminate financial barriers for those seeking substance use disorder or mental health treatment and to provide access to quality care – regardless of zip code, race, gender, or sexual orientation.

We provide scholarships that unlock access to residential treatment services, extended care sober living, intensive outpatient treatment, intervention, counseling, and more at NAATP-vetted providers.

And healing is more successful and sustainable when people are immersed in a loving, inclusive community, which is why we created Team Release: a community of allies – sober or not – standing ready to support and lift up anybody in or seeking recovery.

2023 BY THE NUMBERS

\$1.6 Million DOLLARS RAISED

This figure is a testament to the growing reach of the foundation and our expanding community of donors who believe that addiction and mental health treatment needs to be more accessible and that building a community of allies – sober or not – is how we make that a reality.

16,400 LIVES TOUCHED

Community is at the heart of everything we do. In 2023, nearly 17,000 people attended a Release event or were touched by our programming.

\$8,000 AVERAGE SCHOLARSHIP COST

We've not only gone to bat to find and vet true partners; we've also worked to negotiate reduced rates for care to ensure donors' dollars go farther to help more people. In many cases, we can provide access to care that would typically cost \$30,000 for less than \$10,000.

60 SCHOLARSHIPS PROVIDED

We provided 60 people with scholarships for life-saving treatment, treatment they desperately needed but otherwise could not have afforded. No two scholarships look the same, covering various types of behavioral healthcare tailored to what our recipients need to heal and recover.

24 TREATMENT PROVIDER PARTNERSHIPS

We work only with world-class behavioral healthcare providers, tirelessly vetting them to ensure funding only goes to the ethical professionals. We doubled the size of our provider network in 2023.

SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS AND PARTNERSHIPS



Release Foundation envisions a world where everyone has access to addiction and mental health treatment. Our goal is to remove financial barriers to treatment for those who can't afford it through scholarships at NAATP-vetted facilities across the country. Our scholarships can go toward residential treatment services, extended care sober living, intensive outpatient treatment, intervention, counseling, and more. In our first three years, we've given out more than 150 scholarships to those in need.

We have seen a disturbing trend among treatment centers: very low rates of minorities and LGBTQ+ are accessing services, even though NSDUH data shows the LGBTQ+ community suffers from higher rates of substance abuse than the general population. NSDUH data also reveals the BIPOC community is 10% less likely than the general population to seek treatment for substance use disorder or mental illness and 25% less likely to complete it. That is why we have created scholarships specifically devoted to bridging the gap in these communities.

DEI FUND WITH ASHLEY ADDICTION TREATMENT

In partnership with Ashley Addiction Treatment, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Scholarship Fund aims to improve racial diversity within treatment settings and remove financial barriers to treatment.

Studies show that despite similar rates of substance use disorder, people of color — including Black, Hispanic, Latinx, Native American and Asian Americans — are more likely to encounter barriers that limit their ability to access or successfully complete treatment, especially barriers such as cost.

Since its inception, Release Foundation has allocated more than \$250,000 to this scholarship fund so that more Americans have the chance to recover.



Alex Denstman, CEO of Ashley Addiction speaking at 2022 NYC Marathon shakeout

Meet some of our trusted partners

We're proud to partner with the below treatment providers and professionals to offer life-saving care across the country to those who need it, but otherwise couldn't afford it.

Ashley	Shoreline	MARC
Caron	Muir Woods	Alpha 180
Charlie Health	Synergy Houses	The Retreat
Right Path House	Wendy Caplan	The Bridge
Mountainside	Integrative Life	MusiCares
Surfside	St. Paul Sober Living	Adventure Recovery
High Watch	Breaktide Coaching	Alina Lodge
Sylvia Brafman	Brookdale	Innovo Detox

NIC PAGANO LGBTQIA+ FUND WITH CARON TREATMENT CENTERS

Nic Pagano was a passionate member of the LGBTQIA+ community, a voice for justice in the transgender community, and a talented stage and film actor. He died tragically of an overdose in June 2021.

Remembered with love as a compassionate member of his sober living home, Nic went out of his way to welcome new clients and help them adjust to their new living environment. While he was always deeply passionate about movies and music and was already a working actor, he began to realize his interest in pursuing a career in therapeutic healing.

The CDC reports that when compared with the general population, the LGBTQIA+ community is more likely to “have higher rates of substance abuse.” In fact, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that the LGBTQIA+ community is at least 2-3 times more likely to develop a substance use disorder.

Our partner for the Nic Pagano Fund is Caron Treatment Centers, a nationally recognized leader in addiction treatment. Caron believes there is more that should be done to address the needs of this population, and it starts with expanded programming, training around cultural competency, and ultimately, increasing access to treatment for those in financial need. Since partnering with Caron, we’ve been able to raise more than \$290,000 in scholarship funding for this community.



First Annual Nic Pagano LGBTQIA+ Fund Benefit Concert

In January, we hosted the first annual “Songs of Deep Emotion and Bright Light” concert to benefit the Nic Pagano LGBTQIA+ Fund. Organized and produced by Rich Pagano and Karen Marks, Nic’s parents, and in partnership with Caron Treatment Centers, the concert took place on a beautiful winter night at City Winery in NYC. With a sold-out crowd in attendance and a star-studded lineup – including Steve Earle, Roseanne Cash, Kate Pierson, and more – this event raised over \$60,000 to help those in the LGBTQIA+ community access life-saving treatment.

Meet a Scholarship Recipient: Molly M.

“Before I was connected to Release, I had no life to speak of. After my brother Nathan was murdered in 2018, I spiraled – going into a darker place than my addiction had ever taken me, which I didn’t know was possible. I wanted to die. And for eight minutes, after hanging myself, I was dead. But after an eight-day coma, I was devastated to learn I had survived.

I had been in and out of treatment before. Bottom after bottom. Nothing seemed to work. It would have been so easy to write me off as a lost cause. But that’s not what happened. On September 16th, everything changed.

If not for the scholarship granted by the Release Foundation, which allowed me to get the care I needed at Ashley Treatment Center, I wouldn’t be here. I wouldn’t be alive. I’m so grateful for the work the Release Foundation does and the community you’ve built. I feel like I have a place and a purpose in this world now.

And I’m determined to pay it forward – to give others the same chance at living that I have. They say the only way to keep it is by giving it away. That’s why I’m so intent on spreading the word and telling my story.

There are so many people like me. People who need care, but can’t afford it. Their lives hang in the balance. Your support means the world. It saved my life and will save more.”





OUR COMMUNITY: TEAM RELEASE



Our personal and professional experience tells us that community is a non-negotiable. And we pride ourselves on fostering a community where ALL are welcome—those in recovery, supporters of those in recovery, and anyone searching for connection.



We actively strengthen the roots we have in New York and also grow our community throughout the country. Why? Because healing is more successful and sustainable when people are immersed in a loving, inclusive community, which is why we created Team Release: a community of allies – sober or not – standing ready to support and lift up anybody in or seeking recovery.



What our community has been up to in 2023:

- A 100-person Release Team ran the NYC Marathon (our third year participating)
- A pre-NYC Marathon shakeout run in partnership with Under Armour with 500+ attendees
- Release teams at several World Major Marathons (London, Berlin, and more to come...)
- A Release team at the Brooklyn Half Marathon
- Over 35 group runs in Central Park
- The Speed Project
- Group fitness classes
- Our first “Zero-Proof Party”
- Our first annual Release Foundation Gala
- “We’ll Wear the Weight” event in partnership with Go Ruck and Kreatures of Habit
- Narcan Trainings





MANUAL Partnership

We proudly partnered with MANUAL, an online men's mental health platform that aims to improve health literacy and well-being for young men, at the University of Maryland. Our partnership helped more than 600 students at UMD and spurred the growth of MANUAL, which is now on more than 30 colleges campuses across the country and has impacted more than 25,000 students. We look forward to expanding our work with MANUAL, including at New York City area colleges and universities.



We'll Wear the Weight

Banding together with GORUCK and Kreatures of Habit, a group of 100 took on a rainy morning in NYC with an 8-mile ruck, marching across the Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges, beginning and ending in Williamsburg. Raising over \$70,000 in the name of recovery, this group truly did "Wear the Weight" and displayed that we are STRONGER TOGETHER.



Zero-Proof Party

In partnership with Absence of Proof and at the beautiful Twenty Three Grand Restaurant in SoHo, our first Zero-Proof Party was one for the books! With unlimited zero-proof cocktails, music by the supremely talented Eva Westphal, and a delicious selection of desserts – this party brought people together and showcased how you can still have the quintessential NYC nightlife social experience – even if removing alcohol from your life or taking a night off.



On the first Tuesday in May, we hosted our first annual Release Foundation Gala. To say it was epic is an understatement. Here are some of the highlights:

- Over 600 people joined us at Tao Downtown in NYC .
- Over \$500,000.00 was raised to support scholarships for individuals who cannot afford substance use disorder and mental health treatment.
- We honored two heroes, Dr. Ryan Neinstein (Keep Going Community Service Award) and Melissa Crouse (Keep Going Lifetime Service Award).
- A scholarship recipient bravely shared her testimony from the stage, showing everyone that recovery is possible.
- The Boy Band Night helped us dance the night away.

We are grateful to all of our sponsors and to our community who showed up to make this night so special. We will be back at it in 2024 – the first Tuesday in May. Mark your calendars.



FIRST ANNUAL RELEASE FOUNDATION GALA

NYC MARATHON



Some of the 500 person group in attendance to our 3rd Annual NYC Marathon Shakeout Run in partnership with Under Armor and Citius Mag

Our belief in the power of marathons has deep roots. When Founding Board Member Zac Clark moved to New York and watched the NYC Marathon in person for the first time, he was incredibly moved and inspired. He saw a day where it did not matter where you were from, what you believe, or who you know – a day where everyone rooted for each other for a singular purpose.

For the third consecutive year, Release ran the New York City Marathon as a Silver Level Charity Partner. With 100 runners lining the streets of NYC in November with “Release” across their chests, we raised over \$600,000 in the name of recovery.

This year, we were proud to partner with Under Armour throughout the NYC Marathon season. UA outfitted our team head-to-toe in custom Release gear, partnered on our electric cheer station and shakeout run (which had 500+ people in attendance!), and made a generous donation.

Release Run Club

Open to all, our Monday night runs are our longest-running tradition. Leading up to our biggest fundraising event of the year, you can catch our squad in Central Park Monday nights at 6:30pm from early spring through the New York City Marathon in November. All abilities are welcome for these non-competitive and community-focused events, where our awesome partners supply giveaways, we celebrate accomplishment, and we lift each other up.

Berlin Marathon

Our first year at the iconic Berlin Marathon was an overwhelming success! A dedicated team of ten runners laced up their shoes in pursuit of PR's and with a clear mission to raise funds to further our mission. In a testament to their commitment, the squad raised an impressive \$65,000 in donations. The marathon became more than a physical challenge; it transformed into a collective effort, leaving a lasting impact on the lives touched by their generosity. The funds raised contributed significantly to the Foundation's mission, marking this marathon a memory of a lifetime!

London Marathon

Our third year at the legendary London Marathon was one that we will not soon forget. Our team of five "London Ladies" took on this trip across the pond to soak up all that the capital of England had to offer and raise dollars to help us help others. Together, they raised over \$50,000 while enduring the ever so typical rain-soaked marathon day. Their shared journey is one that inspires us and the weekend of bonding and sharing stories of purpose is what we are all about. We will be back in 2024 with a team of 20!

THE SPEED PROJECT



In late March, a team of HEROES, led by board member Andrew Schwartz, descended upon Southern California to take on the challenge of a lifetime: The Speed Project. Over 48 hours on their 340-mile journey from Los Angeles to Las Vegas, memories were made, lives were changed, and funds were raised! And it was all documented.

It all started at 4:00 a.m. on March 24th at the Santa Monica Pier for our team of 6 runners, and what happened between LA and LV was the adventure of a lifetime – forming bonds with fellow runners and supported by the most selfless crew that anyone could have imagined.

The Highlights:

- We raised \$42,000 for our programs
- Finish time: 45 hours, 26 mins
- Brand Partnerships with Optimal Bio, Velous Footwear, Brooks Running, and Free People Movement

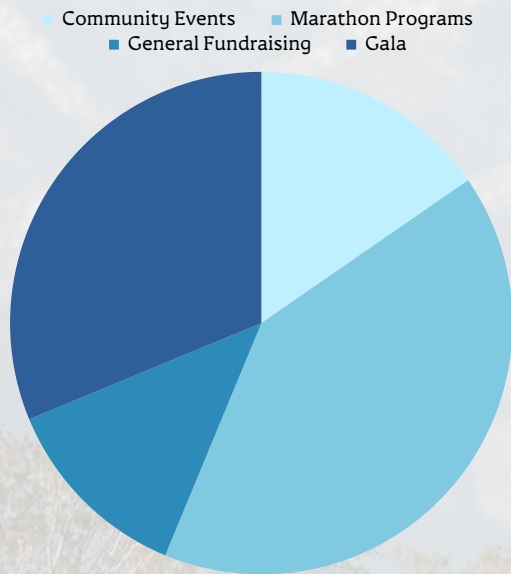
Check out the Documentary on YouTube – “KEEP GOING: The Release Recovery Foundation Takes On The Speed Project | 340 Miles From LA to Vegas” with very special thanks to our partners at Citius Magazine.



2023 Financial Report

Since our inception in 2020, we have raised over 3 million dollars in the name of recovery, provided 150 scholarships for treatment, run 6 marathons with 295 runners, and hosted 87 community events.

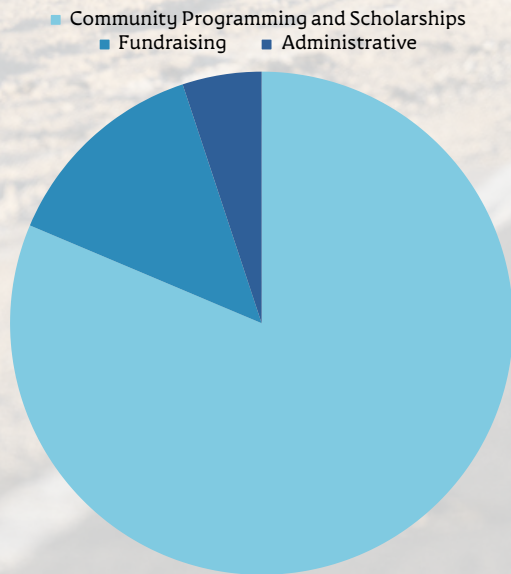
Revenue



\$1,600,000+
Fiscal Year 2023 Donations

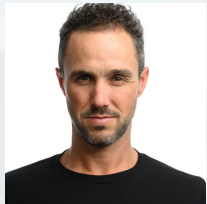
2,462
Total Donors

Expenses



\$650
Average Gift

RF BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Zac Clark

Co-founder of the Release Foundation and CEO of Release Recovery, Zac maintains day-to-day operations of our program, including organizational expansion, staff development, fundraising and strategic planning. He's Chairman of the New York Advisory Board for the Caron Foundation, where he himself received treatment for substance use. Zac has established philanthropic initiatives through the Clark Family and our Foundation.



Hilary Phelps

Hilary is an entrepreneur, motivational speaker, and recovery advocate who, after a RAND study showed heavy drinking increased 41% among women during the pandemic and as statistics continue to demonstrate that men are more than twice as likely than women to seek treatment, felt compelled to share her own struggle with alcoholism and get more involved in the recovery community. Phelps has worked in media, marketing, and event management across a broad range of categories, in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors.



Zac Price

On the Release Foundation Board, Zachary helps with marathon fundraising strategies and initiatives. Skilled in negotiation, sales and networking, he is also the Senior Vice President at CBRE, Inc., the largest global commercial real estate firm. Zachary has been in this role for just shy of 15 years since graduating from the University of Maryland in May 2008.



Matt Rinklin

Co-founder of Release Recovery Foundation, when Matt's not helping and mentoring others, he focuses on direct infrastructure investments. He's the Managing Director of GCM Grosvenor and previous Senior Vice President at Oaktree Capital Management, where he built strategic relationships for the firm and led origination of investments in the transportation sector.



Andrew Schwartz

A community connector and motivator, Andrew helps us raise funds, build the Release Foundation community and advocate for recovery initiatives. When he's not motivating our entire community to be their best selves, he works as a finance partner at a wealth management firm.



Dorothy Delivn

As a board member, Dorothy raises funds and builds a successful, strong Release community. She is also the Co-Founder of DEVLINHAIR Productions and Learning, where she has led her company to double-digit growth, builds and leads teams, and develops and maintains strong client relationships.



Jeff Baum

Managing partner of Baum & Baum with over thirty years of accounting and financial services experience, Jeff provides tax and accounting services for individuals, businesses and fiduciaries - with a specialty in personal taxation and employee compensation. He is a member of the New York State Society of Public Accountants.





GET IN TOUCH

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SCAN TO DONATE



