



All Brains Belong VT
Neuroinclusive Healthcare & Community



2025 Impact Report
You're Not Alone: Healthcare is Community

2025: Threats and Opportunities



Mel Houser, M.D. (she/they)
Founder & Executive Director

I don't need to remind you how hard 2025 was. You lived it. You saw safety nets collapse — along with crumbling public health infrastructure and mounting threats to our patients, communities, and the nonprofit sector. This report shows what else happened: how the ABB community rallied, persisted, and built paths through the chaos. It was a year of solidarity, co-creation, and remembering what becomes possible when people care for each other on purpose.

If you're new to this work: All Brains Belong supports people who think and experience the world differently. We combine medical care, community connection, and education to help people feel less alone. This improves health. Our programs are co-created with the people we serve — because they are the experts on their own experience.

What 2025 taught us:

1. Our community can get through anything.

The floor dropped out, and people kept showing up — to give, to organize, to care. The community asked us to reopen to new patients. Over the past year, we planned carefully to make that possible — **welcoming 100 new kids and adults whose needs had gone unmet by traditional healthcare**. We also deepened our commitment to community health. When patients lost access to food, housing, insurance and basic needs, **our community created the Community Health and Access Fund** — a mutual aid effort providing groceries, medications, healthcare supplies, and sliding scale access. Beyond material support, this was a message: *You belong. We've got you.* After all, **healthcare is community**.

2. Solutions come from those closest to the problem.

This community kept showing up for one another: Parking lot meetups for art and aid distribution. Peer support integrated into employment-focused medical care through *BOOST (Building Opportunities Through Support & Training)*. Patients dropping off meds and groceries to fellow patients stuck at home. When people told us what they needed, we listened. *BOOST* doubled in size because patients said they couldn't heal in unsafe jobs. Brain Club® marked its 250th episode — having served 2,700+ people through community-driven education. These programs were built from lived experience. That's what makes them work.

3. We're not just delivering care — we're changing the system.

93% of our patients report improved health this year — even though 97% live with complex neuroimmune conditions. Our model works because it addresses more than symptoms. It helps people understand their needs and realize: *I'm not broken*. That shift ripples outward. **ABB's resources and trainings reached more than 14,000 people this year** — shaping neuroinclusive workplaces, clinics, and schools. Systems change doesn't start at the top. It starts here.

2026 so far doesn't look any easier. But now we know: we've got this. Thank you for being part of this transformative work.

Mel

CHANGING STORIES

OUR PROGRAMS

ABB's innovative model for healthcare combines medical care with social connection, employment support, and community education.

When ABB community members connect with other people, they discover that they're not alone. They're not broken. This shift in self-narrative is what allows them to transform their own lives. Most of our patients have complex chronic illness. Many are homebound, even bedbound. Most have needs that went unmet for years, even decades, by traditional healthcare. Many have been told they're "too much" or not enough. Not anymore.

"Being held in the safety of the ABB community, I am beginning to unfurl and love my brain, and the gifts it offers me and my community."

- Olivia Tyler, ABB Patient Care Coordinator



"I love All Brains Belong. I've made lots of friends. I can show up as my true self."

Zachary, age 9, ABB Junior Advisory Board member



"Thanks in large part to the time I spent with the group, I've found my voice and confidence to go back to school, begin celebrating all of me, and request that my needs be met in the world."

- Cynthia Shanti, *Brain Club* participant, ABB community member

"We're not broken. I get to have access needs,* and I get to learn what they are and ask for them to be met." - AnnaRose Jenisch, ABB community member

*what anyone needs for full, meaningful participation - everyone with all types of brains has needs

"Now I have healthcare. I have friends. I feel understood... I'm able to share my gifts with the world... and do what I was meant to do in my lifetime."

- Amy Noyes, ABB Community Advisory Board member

"This opportunity to be able to connect with people that know what you're going through, that's just very healing. There's something kind-of magical about that."

- Amy Ruddy Wertenbaker, ABB community member



In 2025, ABB's medical, community, education and employment programs **served 5,684 people.**

CHANGING COMMUNITIES

At ABB, healthcare is community. Patients come here to meet other patients. They learn they're not alone. They belong to a community of people who not only "get" it, but show up for one another. When systems collapse, our community steps up to make sure nobody has to face The System alone.

Patients frequently come in and leave little presents in the office for others: a heart rock, a supportive note, hand-made art – acts of acknowledgment and solidarity.

The **Community Health and Access Fund** was started by ABB patients to support fellow patients to access groceries, medications, supplies, and healthcare appointments when they've lost insurance.

"This is a mutual aid program," explains Sierra Miller, DNP APRN. "It means something when we tell patients that this is something that the community they belong to has created for them. It's not charity. Also they're not just getting medicines or groceries – they're getting community."



"I've learned to be more authentic. **I get to ask for help and help others. This doesn't need to be shameful.**"

- Susan Whitehead, ABB community member

Here is a community care meetup in our parking lot - distributing aid, making art, being together.



In 2025, our community raised **\$14,805.13** in mutual aid funds covering medications, health supplies, groceries, and sliding scale healthcare, in addition to **531 bottles of medications**. The Community Health and Access Fund **served 78 community members**.



Kid & Teen Connections is a free customized friend-matching program for ages 4-17.

Since its launch in 2022, this program has brought friendship to 584 Sweet Little Loves – often for the first time. **Kid & Teen Connections** serves kids in 29 states and 12 countries.

Silas is a 13 year old from California who has met weekly for the past 3 years with his match, a similarly aged peer from Vermont. This year, they even met in-person. "We had a lot of fun," said Silas. "It's nice to have a friend who likes the same things that I like."

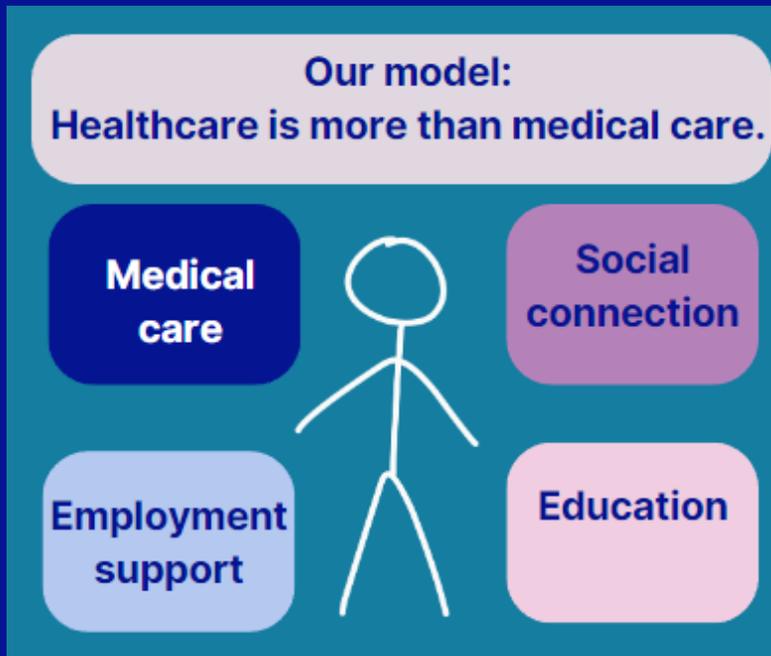


"This program is genuinely saving kids one little connection at a time."
- Dr. Heather Machin, parent of a *Kid Connections* participant

CHANGING SYSTEMS

"You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."

- Buckminster Fuller



"Instead of getting in everyone's faces about change, ABB is just showing that it can be done – and doing it really well. It's **creating the world you want to live in.**"

- Sarah Knutson, ABB Community Advisory Board member

In addition to direct services supporting our patients, here's how All Brains Belong is influencing the broader community to better meet neurodivergent people's needs.

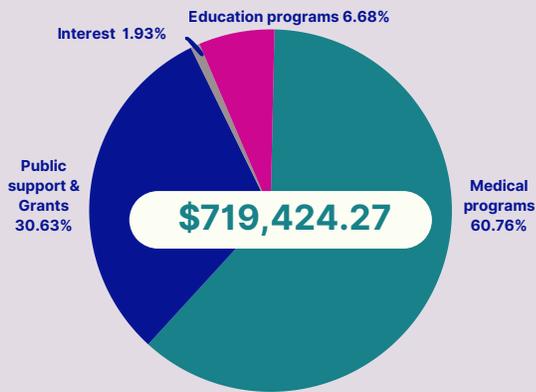
- In 2025, ABB's neurodiversity training served 1,011 employers, organizational leaders, and healthcare professionals. 94% said they learned something that changed how they work. We also provided 14 pro bono trainings in 2025.
- [Brain Club®](#) completed its fourth year as a community-shaped learning space about neuroinclusive culture in healthcare, workplaces, and relationships. More than just education, **Brain Club® is a social change program — modeling how to design for access, navigate conflicting needs, and practice collective care.** In 2025, we also launched the **Brain Club® Digital Resource Library** and **Brain Club®: The Podcast.**
- Since its launch in 2023, "**Everything's Connected to Everything: Improving the Healthcare of Autistic & ADHD Adults**" has been accessed by more than 34,000 clinicians and patients from around the world — shifting how clinicians understand and support neurodivergent people, and equipping neurodivergent people with tools, language, and connection to navigate their care.

"ABB opened the door to my whole new life, even from afar. The (Everything's Connected to Everything) Clinician Guide **changed the way that I work as a doctor. I model my practice based on what I've learned here.**" - Dr. "Heater" Thompson

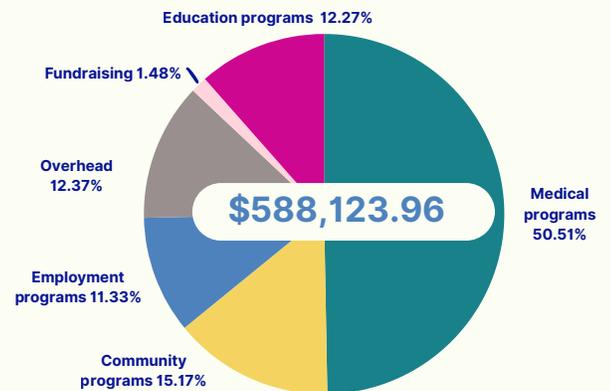
2025 Financial Report

SUSTAINING OUR IMPACT

Revenue



Expenses



Your Support Helped Us Plan Ahead

In 2025, 100% of ABB's community connection programs remained free to participants – a key part of protecting access during an unstable year.

2025 was a year of instability – across healthcare, public systems, and the nonprofit sector. While we always run an intentionally lean budget, this year we pivoted to conserve resources. Our goal was to establish reserve funds to increase ABB's sustainability as an organization. Due to the need for caution in the current economic environment – and in order to build these reserves – we pared down expenses, canceled our large annual event at the State House, held a staff vacancy, and prioritized only the most essential programs in 2025. These choices allowed us to mitigate risk, and end the year with a surplus. In alignment with best practices in the nonprofit sector, we now maintain 8 months operating reserves so that we can confidently navigate whatever new crises may confront our community. In 2026, we are able to reinvest the remainder of 2025's surplus directly into programs through innovative new healthcare and community pilots. As always, your support is essential to equipping us to sustain access and meet rising needs – especially as more patients are shut out of insurance systems (instead, newly relying on sliding scale healthcare) or need care that those systems won't cover.

Alternative Funding for Medical Care: Improving Access to Care

When we surveyed our patient community at the end of 2024, the #1 barrier to healthcare access was cost. 2025 saw a significant increase in uninsured and underinsured patients. To address these community needs, **patients received \$11,474.50 in subsidized medical care** in 2025 through a 15-80% discounted sliding scale and alternative payment methods such as Exchange of Services. Sliding scale healthcare is funded as mutual aid through the **Community Health and Access Fund**, and the **It Takes a Village Fund** provides support for community members struggling with past medical expenses.

2026 Goals and Funding Priorities

1. Ensure the sustainability and protection of our community and our resources:

Continue scenario planning and risk-responsiveness efforts to protect care, staff and community infrastructure.

2. Address barriers to healthcare access. Continue filling gaps where basic needs go unmet.

Subsidize healthcare for uninsured and underinsured patients, expand alternative payment methods, and provide support for medications, supplies, and groceries through the Community Health and Access Fund.

3. Continue to innovate our approach to community-driven medical care for neurodivergent kids and adults with complex chronic health conditions.

4. Expand impact beyond our walls. With the launch of Mel's book in Fall 2026, we'll support others to adapt our model in their own settings. 100% of proceeds from book sales will go directly to All Brains Belong.

WHY THIS WORK MATTERS

OUR WHY

The healthcare system is failing neurodivergent people. Too many of our patients come to us after years – or decades – of feeling dismissed, harmed, or simply not believed. Chronic illness, isolation, and early death are treated as inevitable. But they're not.

When people feel seen, supported, and part of something bigger – they begin to heal.



"I feel supported, maybe for the first time in my life. I've got friends. **True healing happens in community, it doesn't happen individually.** This model really sees people and takes out the pathology and just asks, 'How can we support you?'"
- Weaver Goldsmith, ABB community member

ABB community members gather at our office

"It is so physically, spiritually, emotionally nurturing to be in a space like that. I get a little bit of strength for the rest of my day. It's getting to walk into a room where **my way of being in the world is normalized and affirmed.** It sends a nourishing signal: your needs are not too extreme. You're good here."

- Jacqueline Zapp-Albin, ABB community member

"Of all the amazing things ABB brings to my life, the sense of hope I feel is the very best."

-Aidan Sammis, ABB community member

Thank you for joining us in this work.

On behalf of our whole ABB team, **we are so grateful for everyone who supported us this year.**

Staff

Olivia Tyler

Patient Care Coordinator

Sierra Miller, DNP, APRN, FNP-C

Family Nurse Practitioner

Mel Houser, MD

Executive Director, Family Physician

Lizzy Pieratt

Education Programs Coordinator



After 4 years of working together, this is our first team photo! Lizzy (who lives in California) visited Vermont this past September!

Fun fact: The four of us began at ABB as volunteers and have been working together this whole time. It's very special to be a founding team -- building the plane while flying it, and creating culture along the way.

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Gwen Pokalo Hart

Ian Speers, MPH, MLog



Connie Beal



Rachel Lovins, MD



Jayson Capobianco



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- Paul McAleer
- Matt Mulligan
- Nathan Perry, Esq.

Whether you made a donation, attended an event, or shared our posts on social media, **THANK YOU.**

**YOU are what makes
All Brains Belong possible.**



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