



Empowering People, Building Communities - Together

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

*Empowering People,
Building Communities - Together*



www.thesbrn.org ~ info@thesbrn.org

HISTORY



For more than 40 years, the Spina Bifida Resource Network (SBRN) has been empowering children, adults, and families living with Spina Bifida and similar disabilities throughout New Jersey and beyond. Through trusted resources, educational programs, advocacy, financial assistance, peer support, and community connections, we help individuals build confidence, increase independence, and thrive at every stage of life.

Our roots date back to the 1970s, when parents of children with Spina Bifida came together to form self-help groups, offering support to one another while navigating the emotional and financial challenges of raising children with disabilities. Their shared vision led to the founding of the Spina Bifida Coalition in 1982, which received 501(c)(3) nonprofit status in 1987.

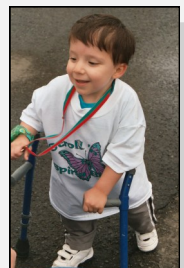


In 1992, the organization became the Spina Bifida Association of New Jersey, and in 2008, it evolved into the independent nonprofit organization known today as the Spina Bifida Resource Network (SBRN).

While our name has changed over the years, our mission has remained constant: to empower individuals and families through education, resources, advocacy, and meaningful connections. We provide reliable information on the medical, cognitive, social, and emotional aspects of living with Spina Bifida and similar disabilities, helping individuals make informed decisions, prevent complications, and achieve greater independence.



At the heart of SBRN is the belief that no one should face life's challenges alone. By fostering peer support and building a strong, inclusive community, we continue to empower individuals and families to reach their fullest potential.



MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

As I reflect on my first nine months as Executive Director of the Spina Bifida Resource Network, I am filled with gratitude for the warm welcome and support I have received from our community. It has been a privilege to work alongside our Board of Directors, volunteers, donors, partners, and the individuals and families we proudly serve.

Throughout 2025, SBRN remained committed to empowering individuals with Spina Bifida and similar disabilities through education, advocacy, resources, and meaningful connections. Our virtual support groups, educational programs, and community outreach continued to provide opportunities for individuals and families to learn, share experiences, and support one another.

While continuing our mission, we also focused on building for the future. During 2025, we developed plans for several exciting initiatives that would launch in 2026, including our Unstoppable Teen Program, a Financial Wealth Management Education Series, and the return of our Empowerment Retreat, enhanced with a dedicated teen component.

None of this would be possible without your generosity and commitment. Your support through donations, sponsorships, grants, fundraising events, and volunteer service enables SBRN to continue making a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

Thank you for believing in our mission and for being part of our journey. Together, we are empowering people, building communities, and creating brighter futures.

With gratitude,



Nanette Forte-Gerst
Executive Director
Spina Bifida Resource Network



OUR MISSION

To provide educational resources, social events and advocacy programs that empower people with disabilities and their allies to challenge perceptions, embrace interdependence and live their best lives.



OUR VISION

A thriving community where people with disabilities have equitable access to resources and opportunities to optimize their wellness and realize their unlimited potential.

2025: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

HEALTH & WELLNESS SUPPORT

Providing individuals and families with reliable health information and support has always been an important part of SBRN's mission. In 2025, we continued to connect our community with resources and education related to living with Spina Bifida and managing healthcare needs. We remain committed to expanding opportunities that promote wellness, self-advocacy, and informed healthcare decision-making.

VIRTUAL PEER SUPPORT & EDUCATION

Our spirited virtual community continued to grow in 2025, providing opportunities for adults with Spina Bifida and similar disabilities from across the country to connect, learn, and support one another. Through our peer-led support groups—including ***Afternoon Chats***, ***Crafty Corner***, ***Get Fit with SBRN***, ***Men's Chat***, and ***Golden Girls***—participants found encouragement, friendship, and a welcoming space to share experiences and navigate life's challenges together.

Our ***Empowered Conversations: Virtual Speaker Series*** continued to provide engaging educational sessions featuring guest speakers, self-advocates, and professionals who shared valuable insights on a wide range of topics. These interactive programs empowered participants with practical information, new perspectives, and meaningful discussions that promote independence, confidence, and overall well-being.

Together, these virtual programs strengthen connections, reduce isolation, and reinforce SBRN's commitment to building an informed, supportive, and empowered community.

EMPOWERMENT RETREAT

For many years, SBRN's annual adult ***Empowerment Retreat*** has provided adults with Spina Bifida and similar disabilities with a unique opportunity to connect, learn, and grow in a supportive environment. Through educational workshops, peer discussions, wellness activities, and social events, the retreat has fostered lasting friendships, increased self-confidence, and strengthened our community.

While an Empowerment Retreat was not held in 2025, we spent the year planning for its return in 2026. The retreat will continue to provide the engaging educational and social experiences participants value while introducing a new Unstoppable Teen Program, expanding opportunities for connection, leadership, and personal growth for individuals of all ages.

2025: THE YEAR IN REVIEW *(continued)*

ADVOCACY & AWARENESS—UPDATE

Throughout 2025, SBRN continued to raise awareness of Spina Bifida while strengthening our commitment to advocacy on behalf of individuals with disabilities and their families.

Our annual Walk for Empowerment once again brought together individuals, families, friends, volunteers, and community partners to celebrate, connect, and raise funds in support of SBRN's mission. Beyond fundraising, the Walk serves as an opportunity to increase public awareness of Spina Bifida and highlight the importance of inclusion, accessibility, and community support.



We also continued to promote awareness through community outreach and educational initiatives, including our annual Spina Bifida Awareness Month campaign, sharing information and resources to help educate the public and increase understanding of the challenges and achievements of individuals living with Spina Bifida.

Advocacy remains a cornerstone of SBRN's mission. Throughout the year, we supported efforts that promote equitable access to healthcare, community services, and opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Looking ahead to 2026, we are excited to expand these efforts by launching our Advocacy Initiative, providing training and resources for individuals interested in becoming effective advocates and helping amplify the voices of the Spina Bifida community at the local, state, and federal levels.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE—UPDATE

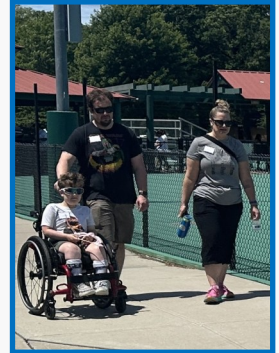
SBRN's Community Fund provides financial assistance to New Jersey residents with Spina Bifida to help address one-time healthcare and quality-of-life needs. Eligible individuals may apply for up to \$300 per calendar year, helping to ease unexpected expenses and support greater independence and well-being.



Information about eligibility requirements and the application process can be found on our website at www.thesbrn.org.

2025 WALK FOR EMPOWERMENT

Sunday June 8th at Roosevelt Park, Edison, NJ



INFORMATION & RESOURCES—UPDATE

SBRN continues to serve as a trusted source of information and support for individuals with Spina Bifida, their families, caregivers, and professionals. Through our website, www.thesbrn.org, visitors can access a comprehensive Resource Directory featuring information on healthcare, education, financial assistance, advocacy, independent living, and community services.

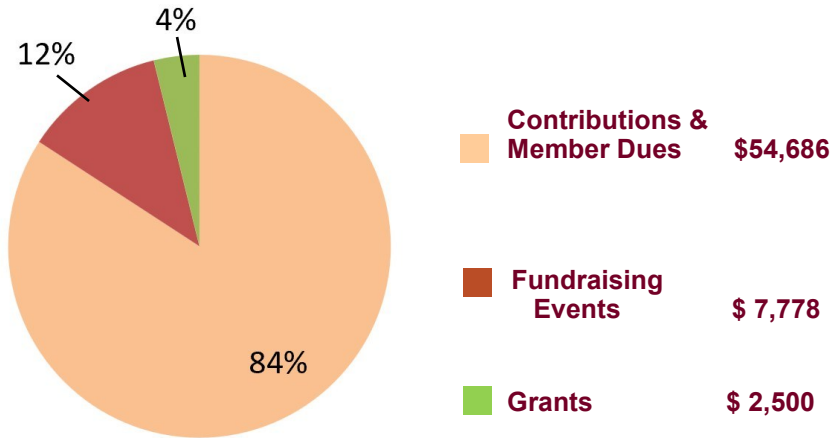
We also respond to phone and email inquiries, publish our quarterly Empowerment Zone newsletter, and share timely updates through our social media channels to keep our community informed, connected, and empowered.

Looking for Resources?

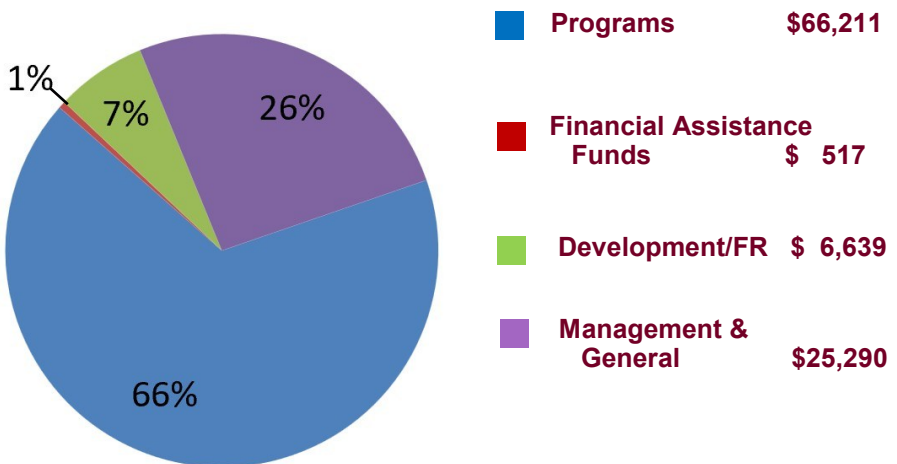
Visit www.thesbrn.org and explore our online Resource Directory for healthcare information, educational resources, financial assistance programs, advocacy tools, and much more.

2025 SBRN FINANCIAL SUMMARY

2025 Total Income - \$64,964



2025 Total Expenses - \$98,657



Total End of Year Assets = \$48,037

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2025

- Millie Gonzalez, *Chair*
- John Keith, *Treasurer*
- Eileen Creenan, RN
- Gregory Morganoff
- Amanda Sloan

- Nanette Forte-Gerst
Executive Director

SBRN STAFF 2025

- Nanette Forte-Gerst, *Executive Director*
- Jeremy Cantilina, *Business Administrator*
- Laura Larice, *Administrative Assistant*



SOME UPCOMING EVENTS IN 2026



WALK FOR EMPOWERMENT

Sunday - May 31st

Roosevelt Park, Edison, NJ



SBRN EMPOWERMENT RETREAT

for Adults with Disabilities

Fall 2026



ONLINE DISABILITY EMPOWERMENT AUCTION

Fall 2026

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Flemington, NJ 08822

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