



# 2023 Annual Report: Celebrating the Start Line

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## MISSION

Achilles International is a leading adaptive running nonprofit that transforms the lives of youth, adults and veterans with disabilities through athletic programs and social connection.

In January 2023, Achilles celebrated 40 years of breaking down barriers to the start line by ringing the Nasdaq Stock Market Opening Bell in New York. Members of the community shared their favorite memories on social media using **#MyAchillesMile**.

## **IMPACT IN 2023**

62 Chapters Worldwide

Flagship Cities: New York, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Washington, D.C.

1,530: Workouts Held Globally Outside of the U.S.

1,940: Workouts Held in the U.S.

875: Start Lines Crossed on the Achilles Marathon Tour by athletes, guides and charity runners

100: Veterans' Lives Changed

634: Most workout check-ins in one month (Achilles New Jersey)

12 hours: Longest walkathon/runathon/rollathon (Achilles Denver)

1,472: Reservations of Adaptive Cycling Equipment in NYC Sponsored by Citi Bike® Lyft

6,885: Achilles Hope & Possibility® Finishers in NYC

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

### Celebrate the Start Line

Celebration so often centers around crossing a finish line. To finish something is exhilarating, whether it be a year, a goal, a workout or a race. As incredible as a finish is, however, I want to ***celebrate the start line***. Despite endless responsibilities, societal crises and personal challenges, thousands of community members still chose to run, walk and roll with Achilles International in 2023. They started a journey and uncovered something new within themselves.

Each one who made the choice to join us had their own personal “why.” Maybe it was to build a new community of friends. Maybe it was to run in honor of a loved one. Or maybe it was to shatter any doubts on what is possible.

The first step to the finish line begins with the decision to start. The impact we can have to transform more lives starts with you. With every push, step and sprint we take together, our world becomes a more inclusive place.

***Our work is not finished until everyone gets a chance to start.***

I have the great privilege to represent a community founded on hope and possibility every day. The Achilles neon yellow jersey is a bright symbol of unity and inclusion and a reminder of how sport can bring us together. When we step out into the world wearing neon yellow, we instantly become teammates.

As you may know, an estimated one in six people worldwide lives with a disability. That’s a neighbor, a friend, a loved one, or even you, the reader. We hope that you will extend an invitation to others to join us in feeling the positive energy of movement.

Remember, ***your finish line could be someone else’s start line.***

Thank you for supporting the Achilles community.

Sincerely,

Emily Glasser  
President and CEO

## Why Achilles

“Achilles is so important because the organization gives me opportunities to be around other adaptive athletes. It introduced me to handcycling, which prompted my sports journey and allowed me to compete on a stage that is much bigger than me.”

- *Rome Leykin, Achilles Athlete and Donor*

## ACHILLES KIDS SPOTLIGHT

### **From Isolation to Community: Henry and Joanne Delli Santi, Team Achilles Kids**

In some settings, 11-year-old Henry might be viewed as “different.” Not at an Achilles workout though.

“If you are a parent of a child with special needs in a typical world or a typical school, you can often feel isolated. Other parents are very kind but some might feel sorry for you or stay away because they don’t know what to do,” says Joanne Delli Santi, a Team Achilles Kids parent.

“Achilles creates a community where you can be around other parents going through the same thing as you. Everyone is so understanding. It’s such an empowering thing for us both,” she says.

Joanne first learned about Achilles from Henry’s physical therapy teacher, a volunteer guide with Achilles. He has looked forward to his Saturday morning workouts in Central Park in New York ever since.

“A lot of children with special needs like Henry don’t like loud noises so group activities and sports are challenging. An individual sport like running allows them to be successful at their own rate and is much easier to organize. It is something anyone can do as we can see from Achilles wheelchair athletes and blind athletes,” says Joanne, a recurring donor to Achilles.

The family has been a part of the program for over two years. Joanne says she has experienced first hand the difference it has made in her son’s life.

“The Achilles Kids program has had such an impact on Henry both socially and physically. I have noticed that his recall has improved and his coordination and gross motor skills have gotten so much better. Achilles provides both a social and a physical outlet that means so much to the children and their families,” she says. “Knowing that there are other people outside of the family circle that care, means everything.”

Visit [achillesinternational.org/achilles-kids](http://achillesinternational.org/achilles-kids)

## RUN TO LEARN SPOTLIGHT

### Meet the Phys Ed Teachers Creating Cultures of Inclusion on Campus

Achilles Kids: Run To Learn is a free school-based program for students in preschool through high school that integrates professionally developed lesson plans into running, walking or wheeling workouts for those who may use a wheelchair or an adaptive bicycle.

Meaghan Healey and Carolyn Ferguson, physical education teachers at South Side High School and South Side Middle School in the Rockville Centre School District in New York, have utilized the program with their students with special needs and developmental disabilities for over 10 years. They say the true impact however, reaches far beyond their students. It becomes an annual community celebration of their accomplishments.

“For the kids to be able to make a connection outside of school is rewarding as well as the recognition they get from their peers at the end of the year. There is an inclusivity piece that also touches the adults and other students who participate in our annual celebration,” says Meaghan. “Whether they are doing a heart pumping activity, or a half mile, Achilles provides attainable goals for each day that they can work at their own pace.”

George Svejda, a physical education teacher at Brooke Grove Elementary School in Maryland’s largest school district, agrees.

“We need to educate the public about how people with disabilities can participate in anything they put their mind to. This program is changing the culture and the expectations around what kids with disabilities can do. It’s very powerful to be able to show parents the data of what their children accomplished. A lot of my kids don’t feel like they have the opportunity to move outside the program with long 45-minute commutes to the classroom,” he says.

From pool noodles and popsicle sticks to music themed runs, George has leveraged his creativity and 26 years of experience to get kids active across the schools **he has taught in**.

“Sometimes parents don’t hear anything positive about their child. I am able to share positive concrete data about something positive they have done with me thanks to Achilles’ programming. One father didn’t know his fifth grade daughter could run. He was in tears at graduation last year and started going to the track walking and jogging with her,” says George.

Achilles Kids: Run to Learn Program

- 122 schools, across 14 states
- 8,396 students

- 52,679 miles logged

Visit [achillesinternational.org/run-to-learn](https://www.achillesinternational.org/run-to-learn)



## ACHILLES ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT

### Seeing A Dream Come True: Francisco Hernandez, Achilles Mexico

Running was always a favorite hobby for Francisco Hernandez of Mexico City, but the sport turned into a life line after he lost his sight.

The former police officer was struck by a stray bullet during an assault on his way home from work in 1995. The bullet, which remains lodged, penetrated his right eye. The shot shattered his right eye and damaged the optic nerve of his left eye, leaving him blind. Later that same week, fellow officers were slain, crimes that remain unsolved to this day. For years following the shootings, he felt a sense of denial and depression.

"I didn't want to be a burden to anyone," he says.

When he learned about the Mexican Paralympic Committee and that it was still possible to participate in the sport he loved with a guide, his mindset shifted. When he found a new community, his spirit soared.

"I came to Achilles International in 2018, and the experience has reinvigorated me. I've felt supported from Day One," says Francisco, an Achilles Mexico athlete better known to his teammates as "El Toro" (Spanish for the Bull).

Thanks to the training and support of the chapter, his competitive drive was reawakened. For a while, it was a challenge to find a guide who could keep up with his consistently strong paces. The bond he formed with volunteer Brianda Rascon has been unmatched, with the pair pushing each other to their best.

"When I run with a good guide, I don't feel impaired. It is a feeling of freedom," he says.

Through financial barriers and the unpredictable cancellations of the pandemic, Hernandez's belief in destiny was unwavering. In April 2023 he completed his lifelong dream crossing the finish line of the Boston Marathon thanks to Achilles. For athletes like Francisco, the journey to the start line uncovers a new sense of belief.

*Read Francisco's story in [ESPN](#) online.*

Visit [achillesinternational.org/find-a-chapter](https://achillesinternational.org/find-a-chapter)

## ACHILLES FREEDOM TEAM SPOTLIGHT

### The Never Give Up Attitude: Travis Wood, Achilles Freedom Team

There were many “cannots” he heard from doctors, but Travis Wood, 40, of Cedar City, UT, remembers vividly the day he met Achilles International, and the refreshing feeling of “I can.”

Travis, a former staff sergeant in the U.S. Army, was severely injured in 2007 after his vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan. The explosion resulted in more than 80 surgeries and the loss of his right leg.

“Just because one door closes doesn't mean another won't open. Movement is life. We have unlimited resources available and all we have to do is look and start reaching for them,” he says. One day in 2008, Janet Patton, then Director of the Achilles Freedom Team, comprised of military veterans with disabilities, hosted a clinic at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center encouraging him to try handcycling. The experience unlocked a new outlook. It was the first time someone spoke to him “like normal” and awakened a spirit of competition with his friends in the hospital.

“It's [handcycling races] now something I love to do. There's a sense of accomplishment in a world where you have so much going against you. It's something you can do and accomplish, it tells your brain that you can do other things that are hard,” says Travis.

Continuing his commitment to service, Travis works as a high school teacher, particularly passionate about mentoring youth who have grown up in the foster system like he did.

“They [Achilles International] fueled my focus on seeing not what I couldn't do anymore, but rather finding new doors to open and limits to test. It has improved every aspect of my life, most importantly my mental health. It has paved the way and aided in my capacity to return the favor as I strive to give back to my community with the youth I serve. I bring a never give up attitude to my students that I have gained in large part due to Achilles,” he says.

“Achilles meets you where you're at and helps get you where you should be. It magnifies the gifts and talents in an environment where you can see others like you that are so much farther ahead and that gives you hope. All you have to do is continue to try.”

Visit [achillesinternational.org/achilles-freedom-team](http://achillesinternational.org/achilles-freedom-team)

## RACES TO REMEMBER

Every year, you may recognize us on race courses around the globe by our neon yellow jerseys and loud “Go Achilles!” cheers. In the cities where we have a major presence below, we plan a series of special team bonding gatherings and experiences that are part of what we call the \*Achilles Marathon Tour. We roll out the red carpet for Achilles athletes and military veterans of the Achilles Freedom Team in a variety of ways thanks to our sponsors to ensure race weekend is meaningful, memorable and successful.

- \*January: Walt Disney World® Marathon Weekend
- \*March: Los Angeles Marathon presented by ASICS
- \*April: Bank of America Boston Marathon
- May: Achilles Relay
- June: Achilles Hope & Possibility® 4M Presented by TD Bank
- \*September: BMW Berlin Marathon
- \*October: Bank of America Chicago Marathon
  - Detroit Free Press Marathon
  - Marine Corps Marathon
- \*November: TCS New York City Marathon

Visit [achillesinternational.org/marathon-tour](http://achillesinternational.org/marathon-tour)

## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

### Opening New Doors for the Disability Community: Donna and Perry Golkin

The widespread impact of Achilles International would not be possible without the continued support of The Perry & Donna Golkin Family Foundation. The family's roots with Achilles run deep, with a meaningful connection that has lasted over 15 years.

For Perry, his passion for running and a close friend's connection to the National Disability Center led to his desire to help break down barriers to sport for the disability community. For Donna, Co-Chair of Achilles Board of Directors, she saw first hand the organization's impact after her son David started volunteering as a guide in 2007.

"The first athlete he ran with is still one of our most accomplished members. Despite the obstacles presented by being blind, this individual was persistent not just in his athletic goals but also goals in every aspect of life, something that impressed David and, eventually, our family. Although I was aware of Achilles, this personal experience led me to call Achilles to offer support," says Donna.

What made her proud and stood out to her the most was the strength of the community. Donna saw firsthand how despite the challenges of the pandemic and a pivot to the virtual world, the dynamism of this group and program persisted.

"There is no better manifestation of the word diverse than Achilles. We have a large tent and welcome anyone regardless of disability. What has always impressed me is that we have best in class programming and continue to work to make it even better, coupling professionalism with warmth and a human touch. The objective here is not running per se, it is about opening up opportunities for Achilles members to participate in mainstream activities at a level that works for them," Donna says.

In 2023, Donna and Perry made a seven figure gift to help launch adaptive workouts in Staten Island, NY.

"Each and every Achilles member has a story of difficulty and determination that is inspirational. We want to open up the door to becoming part of our community by supporting more athletes [with disabilities] in more locations throughout the U.S. and around the world. The limiting factor is funding for programming and staff, but the impact of Achilles has been proven. Investing in Achilles is money well spent," she says.

While funding is important, there are many ways to get involved.

“We also hope that people will consider guiding, advocating, or just cheering our athletes on. Come watch a race or training, talk to our members and learn more,” adds Donna.

Visit [achillesinternational.org/get-involved](https://achillesinternational.org/get-involved)

## TEAM ACHILLES SPOTLIGHT

### Honoring Her Daughter to Support Disability Community: Kelsey Byrne

Team Achilles charity runner Kelsey Byrne raced the TCS New York City Marathon in honor of her one-year-old daughter Ruby who lives with a rare genetic disorder, GATD2B-associated neurodevelopmental disorder. Kelsey raised over \$44,000 to support athletes with disabilities in her first ever marathon.

“Achilles has taught me about true perseverance, dedication, discipline — the power of getting out there and showing up,” says Kelsey, who joined Achilles as a volunteer guide in 2023. The experience inspired her to fundraise for Achilles.

“Our Ruby works harder than anyone I know. She shows up every day and inches optimistically toward small wins that come as second nature to most of us. That will always be her journey, so knowing there are organizations like Achilles to support her as she gets older is a huge source of comfort. I know they’ll not only help her reach her goals, but appreciate and celebrate her for who she is.

“In life, there is always a choice. I choose to run. I choose to push progress forward for those who struggle to move and speak and communicate in a typical way. I choose to advocate for those deserving of an active lifestyle, one that's filled to the brim with accomplishment, achievement, and purpose.”

Charity Runners: 193

Donations: 4,313

Funds Raised: \$587,675

“Achilles Kids is very instrumental in my social, physical and mental health. In 2018, my parents brought me to Achilles because they needed help teaching me how to run, in hopes of it helping with my sensory disorder, anxiety and ADHD. Achilles Kids was the only running program in the city for children with disabilities.” - Kieron Ragoonath, raised over \$10,000

Get involved at [achillesinternational.org/charity-entrant](https://achillesinternational.org/charity-entrant)

## **Partners in Disability Inclusion**

Our corporate sponsors at the national and grassroots level and celebrity partners help bring us one step closer to a more inclusive start line for all athletes living with a disability. We are grateful for their continued dedication and commitment to inclusion. Together, we are transforming lives by providing greater access to all forms of adaptive running and handcycling.

## Donor Roll

Based on gifts made January 1 through December 31, 2023.

### **\$250,000 +**

The Cigna Group  
The Perry and Donna Golkin Family Foundation  
The Gordon and Llura Gund Foundation  
Lyft

### **\$100,000-\$249,999**

HOKA  
Metro Detroit Chevrolet Dealers LMA  
The Moody Endowment  
TD Bank

### **\$50,000-\$99,999**

The Deerfield Foundation  
The Lois E. and Neil J. Gagnon Foundation  
General Motors  
The Moody Foundation  
Eileen and Leslie Quick  
Robert Russo and Gerle Shagdar  
Rich Shutran  
The Sullivan Family Fund  
The Town Fair Tire Foundation

### **\$25,000-\$49,999**

The Blavatnik Family Foundation  
Elizabeth Elting and Michael Burlant  
Emily Glasser  
Louise Glasser  
The Greenstein and Mandel Family Fund  
Jeffrey, Martha, and Alex Kohn  
Julie and David McKenna

### **\$10,000-\$24,999**

The Altschul Foundation



Bloomberg  
The Boston Athletic Association  
The Busboy Charitable Relief Fund  
Robert and Jane Cremin  
The Eleven Eleven Foundation  
Kevin and Karen Fittinghoff  
Google  
The Gray Foundation  
Agnes Gund  
Healthcare Business Media  
Michael Klein  
The Dorothy Lemelson Foundation  
Irving Matthews  
Trisha Meili and Jim Schwarz  
Alan Mulally  
The Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation  
Stephanie & Mark Robinson  
The Thomas A. and Georgina T. Russo Family Foundation  
Tyrrell and Joe Schmidt  
Howard Schultz  
Jill and Niraj Shah  
The Slomo and Cindy Silvan Foundation  
Sandra J. Solomon  
Lise Strickler and Mark Gallogly

**\$5,000-\$9,999**

Emily H. Altschul-Miller  
The Susan and Eliot Black Foundation  
Katherine Borsechnik and Gene Weil  
MaryEllen and Tom Branna  
Erin Branna  
The Stephen Colbert Americone Dream Fund  
The Crane Fund for Widows and Children  
Jennifer and Reuben Daniels  
The Department of Veterans Affairs  
Dorrian's Red Hand  
Maria and Phil Ehrlich  
Arlene and Edward Fox

Jon Zaidins Hermann  
The JDJ Charitable Foundation  
Robert Katz  
Michelle Kelban  
Orin Kramer  
Loughlin Family Fund  
The McDonough Corporation  
Nationwide Mortgage Bankers  
Pennymac  
The Maureen and Paul Rubeli Foundation  
The Select Equity Group Foundation  
Paul Trebilcock  
Union League Club  
The Walt Disney Company  
Mary and Glenn Weinstein

**\$2,500-\$4,999**

Egen Atkinson  
Bank of America  
Prudence Beidler  
Cathy and Scott Bortz  
Courtney Campbell  
Kafela Craft  
Michael Dorrian  
Thomas Duffy  
Michael Frain  
Gallery O  
The June George Charitable Fund  
Daniel Grabowski  
Philippe Guenat  
Elie Hirschfeld  
Robert Hourihan  
Betsy and Vladimir Jelisavcic  
Christina Jenks  
Harika Kasireddy  
Rebecca and Bennett Lindenbaum  
William Maimone  
Michael Mathews

Ross Moody  
The New York Road Runners  
The New York Life Insurance Company  
Ryan O'Connell  
Mary Kay O'Rourke  
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation  
Grant Palmer  
Joseph Patellaro  
Prudential  
Caroline Reilly  
Tim Reynolds  
John Reynolds  
Goldman Sachs  
Salesforce  
Scott Silver  
Cynthia and William E. Simon Jr.  
Kevin Suckiel  
Marjorie and Louis Susman  
Alex Tang  
Suzanne Waltman and Martin Friedman  
The Warburg Pincus Foundation  
Lauren Warner and Michael Macieira  
Andrew Wong  
Cynthia Young and George Eberstadt

**In-Kind Gifts**

Bank of America  
Boston Consulting Group  
The Cigna Group  
DePaul University  
General Motors  
Gil & Schonig CPAs, LLP  
Howard Harris  
HOKA  
William Lehman  
Neil Mellen

Reevemark  
 Shah Family Foundation  
 U-Haul  
 Winston & Strawn LLP  
 YANKEE LINE

## Financial Highlights

### 2023

<b>Income</b>				
Individual	\$2,263,823.11		Individual	53.30%
Foundations	\$592,955.25		Foundations	13.96%
Corporations	\$1,381,826.75		Corporations	32.53%
Government Grants	\$8,876.49		Government Grants	0.21%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,247,481.60</b>			

<b>Expenses</b>				
Administration	\$633,017.23		Administration	15.34%
Fundraising	\$679,713.21		Fundraising	16.47%
Programs	\$2,813,292.58		Programs	68.18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,126,023.02</b>			

### 2022

<b>Income</b>				
Foundations	\$291,439.64			
Corporations	\$1,227,550.84			
Charity Bib Program	\$522,664.45			
Govt Grants	\$28,623.51			
Individual	\$1,319,473.28			
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,389,751.72</b>			

<b>Expenses</b>					
Admin	\$698,431.63			Admin	19.77%
Fundraising	\$535,894.69			Fundraising	15.17%
Programs	\$2,297,955.60			Programs	65.06%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,532,281.92</b>				

*\*Please note the income figures were categorized differently between 2022 and 2023. In 2022, the charity bib program category contained gifts from individuals, foundations and corporations. In 2023, funds raised through the charity bib program were distributed among the buckets, as appropriate.*

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Donna Golkin, Co-Chair

David Greenstein, Co-Chair and Treasurer

David Paterson, Co-Chair

Tyrrell Schmidt, Secretary

Hank Art

Robert W. D'Loren

Alisa Fastenberg

Thomas Jenkins

Cedric King

Rebecca Lindenbaum

Trisha Meili

F. Robert Russo, Jr.

Paul Savage

Richard Shutran

Ross Wilson

## **ACHILLES INTERNATIONAL STAFF**

Emily Glasser, President and CEO

Richard Herman, Chief of Staff

Karen Lewis, Vice President, School Programs

Janet Patton, Vice President, Event Production and Expansion

Ryan Quick, Vice President, Development

Shiloh Ary, Manager, Development

Casey Bass, Coordinator, Development and Communications

Kristen Cassarini, Chapter Lead, Chicago

Kathryn Chu, Director, Volunteer Chapters and Special Projects

Michaela Cueto, Chapter Lead, Houston

Margaret DeJesus, Director, Communications

Genna Griffith, Director, Event Production and Expansion

Joe LeMar, Chapter Lead, Boston

Francesco Magisano, Director, NYC Metro Region

Hannah McFadden, Regional Manager, Chapter Lead, Washington D.C.

Lindsey Novakovic, Program Manager, Team Achilles Kids

Kelly O'Brien, Director, Development

Hector Ramirez, NYC Outer Boroughs Manager

Arielle Rausin, Director, International Chapters

Domenic Romano, Manager, NYC Adaptive Cycling

Joseph Schneiderman, Director, Finance and Human Resources

Jack Stanton, Major Gifts Officer

Carolyn Wynne, Brooklyn Program Manager, Team Achilles Kids

## Why Achilles

"I have learned that when you're feeling down, there is nothing better than a little exercise and a good group of people to spend time with. That is exactly what Achilles offers its members. Having that kind of support is so beneficial and so important."

- *Puspa Poarangan, Achilles Athlete and Donor*

"Thanks to Achilles Mexico, my mother, my sister and I found a way out of depression. I thought I couldn't run or do anything for myself. Achilles taught me that I can compete with myself, achieve my dreams and meet amazing people. With the support of my guides I was able to run a marathon in my wheelchair and walk across the finish line. I never thought I could feel so much happiness for a goal of mine. Achilles is a loving and safe space. We found a family."

- *Erika Ramirez Soto, Achilles Athlete and Donor*



**Your finish line could be someone else's start line.**

*In loving memory of Richard "Dick" Traum, Founder of Achilles International*

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