



FREED AT 40

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

CALL US GROUPIES



FREED turned 40 in 2025, and we're reflecting on our roots as a peer-led organization, supporting people with disabilities and older adults in groups both new and long-rolling.

Let's Get Together

At FREED, we believe that the people who understand a challenge best are the people living it. That's the foundation of the independent living philosophy, and it's why peer support is so often centered in our work. As we celebrate our 40th year, we're shining a light on work that doesn't always make headlines but quietly transforms lives, our group services. Whatever the need, from looking for housing, tech support, tools for managing depression or Traumatic Brain Injury support, all our peer services share a

common thread. People show up not just to receive support, but to give it. We are groupies, in every sense. We see what happens when people with disabilities are given room to learn from and with each other: confidence grows, isolation shrinks, and community takes root. In Community,

Carly Pacheco,
Executive Director



The Wisdom of PEARLs

For the past 12 years that approach for FREED staff member the groups at the jail Maureen Gerecke with great success. has been facilitating The women really programs for love engaging in incarcerated women making small in the Nevada changes in their lives County jail. Maureen and in their thinking brings a wealth of processes to create knowledge to the the changes they group and has desire in their lives. utilized multiple It reduces symptoms approaches to of depression and support participants. anxiety. Not only When services were that, it galvanizes paused during the them to support one COVID-19 pandemic, another in reaching Maureen became their goals, building certified in PEARLs, camaraderie among the Program to them and breaking Encourage Active down walls so they and Rewarding feel cared about and Lives, and she's supported. since been using

Tech Tuesday

Technology is ever changing, and it can be hard to keep up with the constant stream of updates, apps and latest and greatest versions of phones, computers and every other gadget that keeps us connected.

FREED recognized the need for basic tech support for consumers and took action to create

Tech Tuesdays, a weekly drop-in service that provides 1:1 help with devices. One attendee wrote in to tell us: “Jason, the instructor, is remarkable. He is knowledgeable and teaches with kindness and respect. He is patient and communicates well. We have warm humorous visits. We need Jason’s help, but we also need the connection with each other.” We love to help make it possible for technology to support human connections!



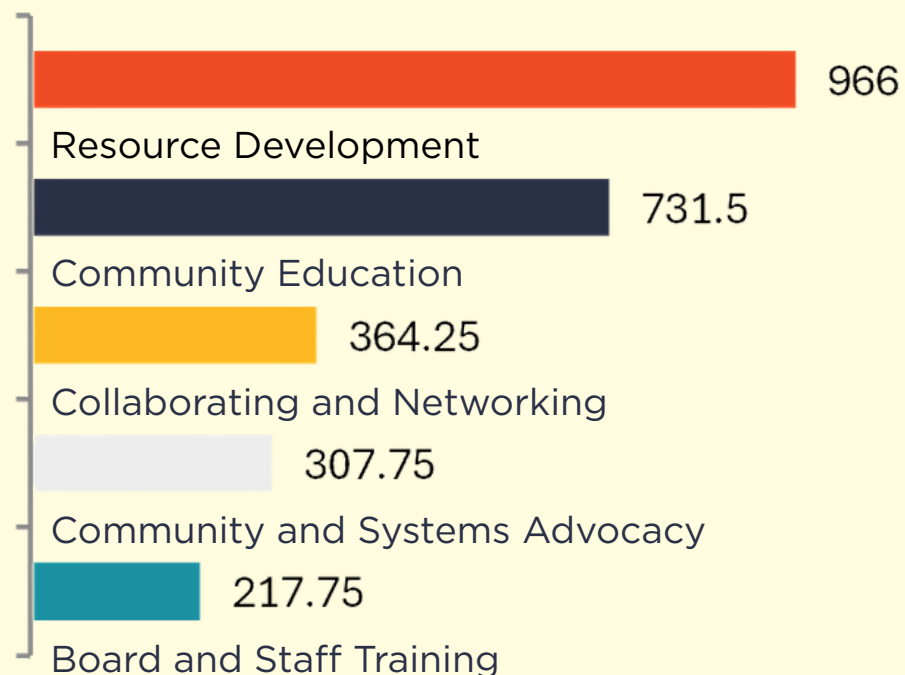
By The Numbers



Consumers Served

- **Assistive Technology** - 884
- **Housing, Home Modification and Shelter** - 704
- **Transition Services** - 366
- **Advocacy and Legal** - 260
- **Communication** - 191
- **Peer Counseling** - 169
- **Transportation** - 154
- **IL Skills Training and Life Skills Training** - 113
- **Counseling & Related Services** - 71
- **Other Services** - 499

Community Activity Hours



**Subscribe to
Our Podcast at
DisabilityRap.org**

or listen on
KVMR 89.5 FM
Every 2nd
Wednesday
at 6:30pm



Produced by FREED since 1987



Social Security Workshops: Advocacy & Education to Support Community Needs

FREED has worked with consumers for many years to provide guidance applying for all types of Social Security benefits. Our extensive experience in this area has allowed staff to build strong knowledge of the Social Security system and the often complex processes required to successfully apply for benefits.

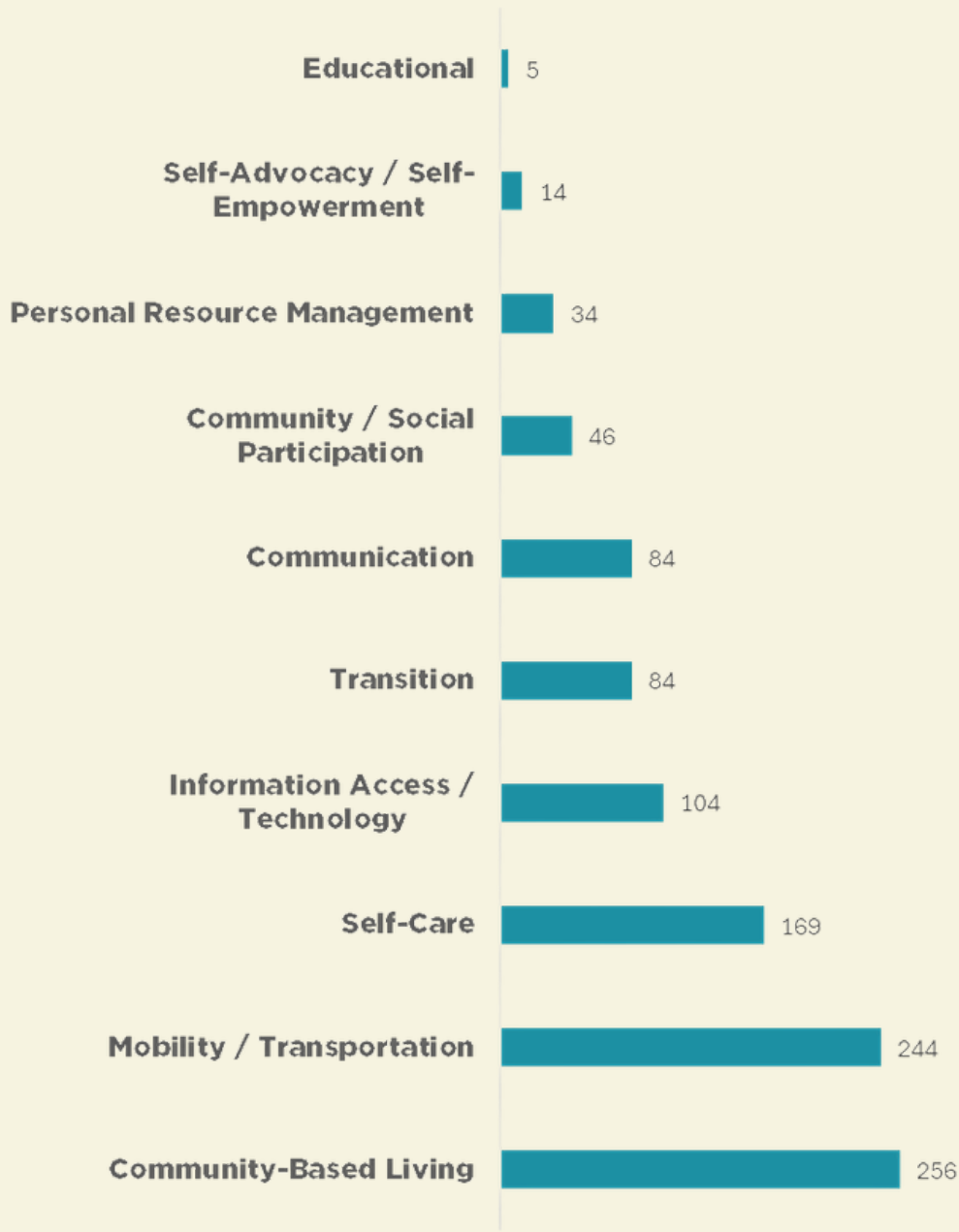
In the Grass Valley office FREED is contracted to manage the Housing Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP); one core

requirement is that participants have a disability that likely qualifies them for Social Security benefits. As HDAP has expanded, we have seen a steady increase in the number of people seeking assistance with Social Security applications. Also, many individuals who do not meet HDAP eligibility criteria still need the same level of support and advocacy to navigate the Social Security system.

In response to this growing demand, FREED developed a monthly Social Security workshop, designed to provide education, guidance, and advocacy to consumers at various stages of the application process, regardless of their participation in HDAP. Through these workshops, consumers gain an understanding of eligibility requirements, application steps, documentation needs, and timelines, empowering them to move forward with greater confidence. At the same time,

staff in Yuba and Sutter counties also observed an increase in the need for Social Security-related assistance for consumers. In our Yuba City office, participation has grown so much that the Social Security Workshop now has two separate sessions each month, one for disability benefits, and the other for retirement benefits. These workshops have helped consumers be informed, prepared, and supported as they work toward financial stability and long-term independence.

Consumers Who Met Goals



TBI Crew

Our Traumatic Brain Injury team had a busy year, hosting multiple workshops, classes and groups. The A.H.E.A.D. class (Achieving Healing through Education, Accountability, and Determination) supports consumers to better understand their symptoms and learn new strategies for daily life. The TBI Support Group, a long-rolling peer support group, offers strategies for managing symptoms, improving communication, and a place to connect with

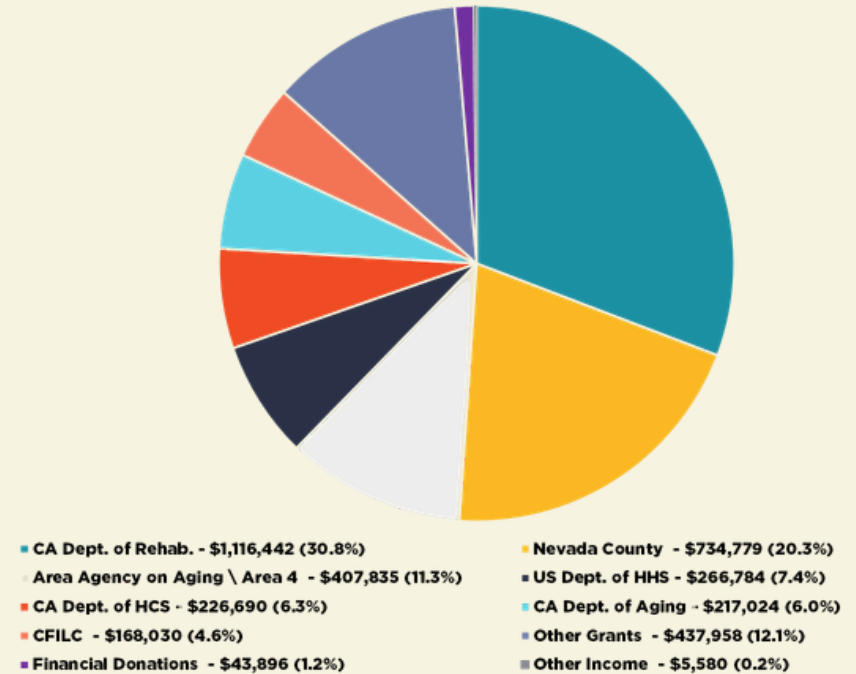
peers and share experiences without judgement. The group expanded this year to include a monthly meeting in Truckee, and fun group outings in the community. The TBI team also offered a Compassionate Communication course, supporting consumers with strategies for empathetic listening and the skill to express and understand the feelings and needs behind all communication.

Housing Club

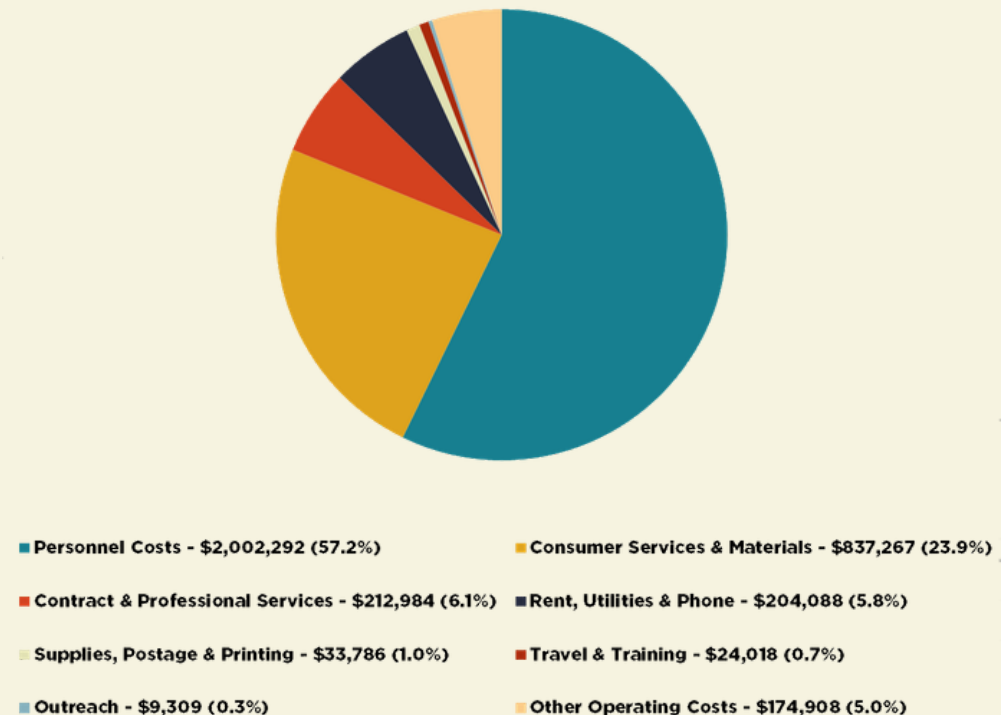
One of the greatest needs in rural communities like ours is affordable and accessible housing. While systems level advocacy efforts continue around housing and programs like the Landlord Liaison help increase available rentals, people still need support to find housing options that meet their needs. FREED's housing team hosts weekly Housing Clubs in both our Grass Valley and Yuba City locations, creating

welcoming spaces where consumers can receive guidance and support applying for accessible housing that fits their budget. These drop-in sessions present the various options for rentals, and staff assist people to find the best fit for their situation. For some, Housing Club can be part of ongoing work with FREED, or it may be a first connection that serves as an entry point to support individuals not only in securing housing, but also in building greater stability and independence.

\$3,625,018 Total Income



\$3,498,652 Total Expenses





We had a fab and fun 40th party!

It was a night of music and memories with new and old friends, hosted by our board and staff at Gold Miners Inn.



Jason & Carly



Musicians



Geeta & Maureen



Rich Mead



Sands Hall



FREED Staff



Nacho Mama

IN MEMORIUM

Mark Fenicle

Mark Fenicle, longtime FREED Board member and chair of the 2024-2025 board, passed away August 1, 2025. Mark was a student at UC Berkeley in the early 1970s as part of the Physically Disabled Students Program, and later went on to work for the Department of Veterans Affairs for 31 years. An avid ocean diver, musician, cook and public speaker, Mark was a passionate advocate for the disability community, and always reminded us to center disabled people in all our programs and services. Asked to reflect on 30 years of fighting for disability justice, Mark said, "We just have to persist. You have to just keep after them. Use whatever tools you can find."



FREED



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