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I feel like I am advancing my skills and learning a lot with computers. I am also learning to work with others, follow directions, and stay focused on work.

ALAN

30 years old
QA Analyst since 2009
What happens when you dare to dream big?

Whose lives can you change?

Where will you go next?
The environment and people are nice and helpful. I’ve learned a lot about myself, and I feel a sense of accomplishment.

CONDRE

25 years old
Fundraising Assistant since 2018
(former QA Analyst)
Dear Friends,

The theme of this year’s annual report, Cultivating Growth, reflects our past and points to our future. Aspiritech began as the seed of an idea nearly 10 years ago. Since then, we have established strong roots thanks to engaged leadership, received nourishment and encouragement from our donors, supported the economic ecosystem through top-notch quality assurance testing at competitive prices, and grown in stature both nationally and internationally. None of this would have been possible without our incredible employees. We currently provide meaningful employment to 75 neurodiverse individuals—more than twice as many employees as the beginning of 2016!

In 2017, the Board of Directors and staff came together to create a strategic plan. This plan sets the foundation for the next three years and paves the way for sustained growth. We will continue to “branch” out in 2018 with expansion into the new space on the second floor of our suburban office, as well as a new satellite office in Chicago.

When the new office opens this spring, we will be able to introduce additional training opportunities and create more possibilities for bringing together like-minded individuals and groups to build a world that embraces neurodiversity. To that end, we are thrilled to be hosting Dr. Temple Grandin on Friday, June 22. Stay tuned for more information.

This year also brings a change in board leadership. We are exceedingly grateful to Beverly Shapiro and Gene Weiss, M.D., for their decade at the helm. Their dedication and passion contributed in countless ways to Aspiritech’s success. We applaud them!

As our tenth anniversary year begins, there is much to celebrate and more to be done. Thank you for joining us on this journey, whether you have been there since the beginning or are just getting to know us. Together, we can help cultivate a more accepting and innovative world.

Sharon Bielski
Chair, Board of Directors

Brenda Weitzberg
Executive Director
"I’ve learned to have more confidence in myself, and my self-esteem has increased. I feel like I’m valued, instead of being a burden."

JONAH
36 years old
QA Analyst since 2017
HOW IT ALL BEGAN...
SEEDS OF OUR SUCCESS
Mission and History

Aspiritech empowers individuals on the autism spectrum to fulfill their potential through meaningful employment combined with social opportunity. We envision a world that embraces neurodiversity by valuing talents, supporting challenges, and welcoming differences.

At Aspiritech, we connect the unique talents of individuals with autism—talents such as laser-like focus, attention to detail, strong visual processing skills, superior ability to spot irregularities, superlative technical skills, and lack of boredom with highly repetitive tasks—with clients seeking this level of expertise. Our employees provide quality assurance (QA) services in regression testing, data migration, test design, compatibility testing, data analysis, user acceptance testing, automation, design consistency, hardware testing, and many more areas.

But Aspiritech is more than a connector. It can be life-changing. Our employees tell us, time and time again, that Aspiritech is unlike any other employer. “I can be myself here” is a common refrain. “This is the first time I’ve made friends at work” is another. Aspiritech is a place where social quirks are embraced. It’s a place where independence flourishes, self-esteem grows, and challenges are overcome.

These gains also happen through the Stepping Up & Out Program, which is open to adults ages 18 and up, including those who are not employed at Aspiritech. Many adults on the autism spectrum find social interactions particularly challenging. The Stepping Up & Out Program provides a comfortable space to interact with other adults on the spectrum. Weekly activities, such as game nights, community outings, arts and crafts, and group meals, help reduce social isolation and give participants an opportunity to improve their social skills.

Much has changed in the world since our founding. There is an increasing awareness and understanding of autism and neurodiversity in the general public. There are more companies like ours, and we’ve been happy to serve as a role model along the way. Plus, technology continues to evolve. But one thing that hasn’t changed is our purpose. We are proud to provide meaningful work and social opportunities for individuals on the autism spectrum.
2008
Aspiritech incorporated

2010
First test engineers hired

2012
New industries join as clients; business development director hired

2014
Client revenue doubles compared to prior year

2015
New office and service offerings; client revenue exceeds $500,000

2016
Grew staff from 27 to 50 employees on the spectrum; client revenue exceeds $1,200,000

2017
READ ON!

2011
New services offered; autism specialist hired

2013
Aspiritech continues to thrive

2009
The company’s pilot program, a hands-on software testing training program, launches
“Before this job, I was really close to giving up my job search. I was in a really bad place. I owe Aspiritech a lot.”
GROWING GREATER EVERY DAY...
STRETCHING OUR BRANCHES
2017 Highlights

Glowing Growth
The number of staff members with autism increased from 51 in January 2017 to 63 in December 2017.

Setting the Foundation
Three additional analysts moved to competitive employment elsewhere.

Moving On Up
Five hourly analysts were promoted to full-time salaried project lead (senior QA analyst) positions.

A Growing Footprint
Thanks to a generous grant from the Grandy Foundation, we were able to expand our office to the second floor in January 2017. The additional 4,500 square feet of space includes private consultation and meeting rooms, space for 30 more analysts, and a larger gathering place for staff meetings and Stepping Up & Out.

Novel Network
We became a founding member of Neurowrx, an international alliance promoting employment of people with autism spectrum disorder in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math).
STRETCHING OUR BRANCHES
2017 Highlights

Making the Dough
Average monthly wages for ASD staff grew by 50 percent.

$%

Superior Support
We created a broader support team structure by adding a social worker and job coaches.

Punching In
The average shift length increased from 5.30 hours in January 2017 to 5.90 hours in December 2017.

Full Steam Ahead
The percentage of employees working full-time hours increased from about 25 percent to 36 percent. Full-time employees are eligible for the company health plan.

A Map For the Future
Executive Service Corps (ESC) of Chicago helped us formulate updated mission and vision statements, as well as a new strategic plan. The three-year plan sets exciting goals for the next phase of our growth and development.
We’re not the most conventional company, but what everyone agrees on is that we are thorough and a good value for the client.
EXCEPTIONAL CLIENT CARE EVERY TIME...
Aspiritech takes great pride in providing tremendous service for clients from a range of industries. In 2017, our client work grew by 80 percent over the prior year. We offer quality testing that is on time and on budget. This case study gives a sneak peek into the process.

In November 2017, one of the country’s largest branded food operators contacted Aspiritech for guidance on how to make its popular website accessible for individuals with disabilities. Aspiritech was asked to identify all necessary types of testing to ensure compliance with Section 508, as well as lead the testing efforts. Aspiritech employed its team of DHS Certified Trusted Testers to run the project.

Outcomes included:

- Aspiritech decomposed existing functionality of the website to ensure thorough coverage.
- The Trusted Testers team provided evaluation reports with detailed explanations of WCAG 2.0 and/or Section 508 compliance.
- The report also included documentation of specific accessibility and usability errors, code samples, resources, and recommendations to fix accessibility issues.
- The Trusted Testers team provided a severity rating to indicate the potential impact of each issue and help the client prioritize fixes.

In summary, Aspiritech was able to break down all features and functionality of the website to thoroughly test for compliance.
“I love that they are willing to accommodate us, and just knowing that those accommodations are there makes me a more effective worker.”

SAM
25 years old QA Analyst since 2016
WHERE WE STAND...
2017 REVENUE $2,485,287

- Individuals: $49,179
- Foundations: $157,172
- Businesses: $68,727
- Released from Restricted: $63,030
- Software Testing Revenue: $2,146,158
- Other: $1,021

2017 EXPENSES $2,278,454

- Program Costs: $2,138,635
- Fundraising: $10,986
- Management/General Cost: $128,833

2017 Surplus $206,833
“Working here has given me more self-esteem. I feel good about accomplishing things, and I feel good about promoting this company.”
WE COULDN’T DO IT WITHOUT YOU...
Aspiritech extends its heartfelt thanks to the following donors who graciously supported us in 2017.

**$150,000**
The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation

**$43,000**
Grandy Foundation

**$30,000-$35,000**
Anonymous
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**$25,000**
Healthcare Foundation of Highland Park

**$10,000-$16,000**
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Underwriter’s Lab, LLC
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Season of Change Foundation
Trillium Foundation

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**$250-$499**
Amazon Smile
Aon Foundation Matching Grant
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Jeanni Watson
Will Weigler

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Christina Macovski
Neil Nieto
Eric States
Ian Strahan
Brian Tozzo

A NEW BRANCH
2018 Sneak Peak

Coming soon: a satellite office in Chicago! A $150,000 grant from the Harry and Jeannette Weinberg Foundation will allow us to expand to Chicago in April 2018. Stay tuned for more information about our new space.