



# Gathering Strength

For Living Your Best Life



**Empowering people with disabilities to achieve better health, increase self-sufficiency, and become more engaged in the community.**



## Innovative Impact

At Gathering Strength, we know that lasting change requires the voices of those with lived experience. Disability-led and impact-driven, we are transforming lives through wellness programming, uplifting community events, and advocacy for accessible housing and transportation in Louisville and beyond – discover how.

**2025: 1,500+ Participants**

### 111 FREE online adapted exercise and stress-reduction classes.

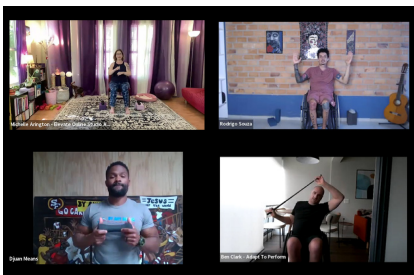
364 participants from the U.S. and 3 countries. These free classes counter the common barriers to health-promoting exercise: transportation, cost, and lack of accessibility.

### 3 FREE online financial empowerment webinars

701 participants from around the nation. Free webinars on saving and working while on benefits because the rules are confusing, and financial knowledge is key to independence.

### 4 FREE in-person social and educational gatherings

220 participants from the Louisville area. Studies show that people with disabilities are more isolated than able-bodied peers which is correlated with poor health outcomes

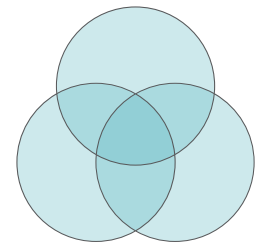


### SIGNATURE EVENT: The Adaptive Recreation Showcase

In 2025, this event brought together:

- 14 youth and adult teams to demo adapted dance, boccia ball, archery, wheelchair rugby, and more
- 20 exhibitors
- Over 230 participants.





## Long-Term Impact

Gathering Strength addresses systemic barriers that undermine the health, independence, and community connections of people with disabilities. Our work is rooted in the belief that inclusion of people with disabilities benefits everyone –strengthening individuals, families, and the community as a whole.

### **RWJF grant to transform accessible housing in Louisville.**

Gathering Strength is one of only 30 nonprofits in the U.S. to receive a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant for the first comprehensive report on accessible housing in Louisville, KY.

There is a profound shortage of accessible housing - for every accessible home, there are 6 households waiting to find one. The need is growing as Louisville rapidly ages. This data persuades developers and funders to increase accessible units.

### Local Data for Equitable Communities



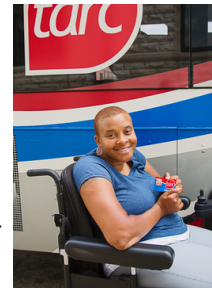
**18,031**  
households with wheelchair users

**3,032**  
wheelchair-accessible units

### **Improving accessible transportation.**

Gathering Strength collaborated with two metro council members to amend the Louisville Accessible Parking Ordinance to improve enforcement.

Gathering Strength is consulting with Louisville’s public transit agency (TARC) on improving paratransit services.



## Testimonials

### **Online Adapted Exercise:**

“My endurance has improved noticeably over my time in this class.” Michelle

“These classes are part of the motivation that has helped me lose 91 pounds in 4 years.” Carla

“These classes are extremely helpful in strengthening my upper body and core.” Kathy

### **Online Stress-Reduction:**

“Thank you, sincerely, for offering these classes. It’s a god-send for those of us who have difficulty attending in person.” Julie

“Mindful Movement makes a real difference. It has helped me loosen muscles that I was struggling with.” Sharon

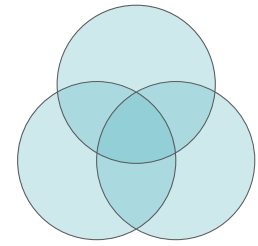
### **Adaptive Rec Showcase:**

“This event was positive and cheerful. It was normalizing to see so many chairs in one place.” Garrison

“It’s amazing to feel a part of something and knowing I’m not alone.” Amber

“The impromptu networking was wonderful.” Alison.

**Financial webinars:** “Clear Info on work incentives for SSI & SSD. I hadn’t realized they were different.” “All of it was very educational. I have a deaf daughter. Wish I had known this sooner.” “It was very good and please keep offering this.”



## 2025 Financials

**Total Revenue:** \$ 335,654 (\$91,000 temporarily restricted)

**Expenses:**

Total Program Services: 107,878

Administrative: 29,193

Fundraising: 20,494

Total: \$ 157,565

**End of year Net Assets:**

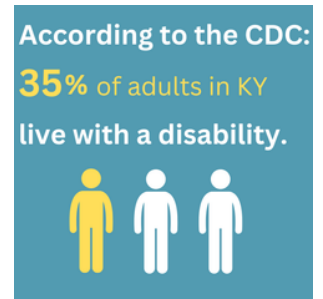
\$345,073

## Motivation

In Kentucky, 35% of adults live with a disability—the second-highest rate in the nation—and face a 3x higher risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes.

People with disabilities face greater isolation, lower employment, and double the poverty rate of those without disabilities. A local study confirms that wheelchair users are significantly more isolated than their able-bodied peers.

Lack of affordable, accessible transportation and housing are persistent causes of isolation and poor health outcomes. For every wheelchair-accessible home in Louisville, there are 7 households that need it. 36 years after the ADA was passed, too many parking amenities and healthcare services fail to comply.



## Leadership

Gathering Strength's leadership sets it apart. Gathering Strength is disability-led and deeply representative of the communities it serves: 80% of the board and 62% of the team live with disabilities.

Founded in 2018 by Elizabeth Fust, an attorney with a spinal cord injury, we draw on lived experience to identify barriers, design practical solutions, and advocate for systemic change.



**Board of Directors:**

- Cathy Spalding (Chair/Treas) - Retired CEO of Frazier Rehab
- Quinn Driskel - (Secretary) Business Analyst at Baptist Health
- Kathy Mershon - Retired E.V.P of Nursing at Humana
- Marcellus Mayes - President of Metro Disability Coalition
- Amy Verst - pediatric NP; wheelchair basketball coach
- Elizabeth Fust - ex-officio, non-voting member