



**STABILIZE TODAY.**

**BUILD SUSTAINABILITY FOR TOMORROW.**

A Proposal to Lory Doolittle and The Doolittle Trust

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**During its more than 70-year history**, Pine Castle has evolved into a beloved resource for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Founded on the principle of creating a safe and supportive environment, we have become a pillar of the community, offering education, vocational training, and compassionate care. While we've accomplished much, including a recent campus renovation and the elimination of long-standing mortgage debt, our current foundation needs strengthening as we look toward the future.

**Since early 2023, Pine Castle has faced significant financial and operational challenges.** Changes in government agency billing systems caused months of delayed payments, leaving the organization in a vulnerable position. Additionally, the long-awaited Employee Retention Tax Credit of more than \$600,000 has yet to arrive, further impeding our financial recovery. Enrollment, once at a steady 300 participants, declined sharply post-pandemic, and while we've made strides in increasing our numbers, we have not yet returned to our pre-pandemic capacity.

**Compounding these issues are rising operational costs**, particularly due to mandated minimum wage increases and escalating expenses related to maintaining our aging infrastructure. With a large 10-acre campus and multiple facilities including five group homes, recent equipment failures have resulted in additional financial strain, forcing us to divert resources toward critical repairs.

**To secure the future of Pine Castle and for the participants that rely on us, we must undergo a transformation NOW.** Much like carbon responds to pressure by becoming a diamond, we aim to become stronger, more resilient, and enduring, but achieving this vision requires significant investment. A transformational gift will provide the rock-solid foundation we need to continue serving individuals with I/DD for generations to come.





# CURRENT CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS

In 2023, Pine Castle faced numerous setbacks due to changes from major income sources like APD (Agency for Persons with Disabilities) and VR (Vocational Rehabilitation), including billing code updates and new software system implementations that didn't function properly for months and caused serious cash flow issues. Though many of these problems have been resolved, Pine Castle is still recovering financially. Additionally, a \$600,000 IRS Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERC) refund has been delayed for nearly two years, further straining cash flow.

**Enrollment, once a steady 300 participants pre-pandemic, dropped to 165 post-pandemic due to various factors, and Medicaid funding for new participants became unavailable. Pine Castle has since pivoted to serve private-pay families and has increased enrollment to 225, though this is still below the historic 300 needed for sustainability.**

Rising labor costs are another challenge. Florida's mandated minimum wage increases affect participant and staff wages, and a recent Medicaid rate hike only brings Medicaid funding to 82% of the agency's cost to serve a participant. Additionally, unexpected air conditioning failures due to the 2024 heatwave, slab leaks due to old and outdated galvanized piping and roof issues have added significant repair costs, further straining



## MISSION

Empowering adults with intellectual and developmental differences through opportunities to learn, work, and connect.



## VISION

A community where persons with intellectual and developmental differences achieve their potential for independence.

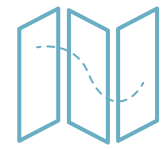


## CORE VALUES

- Embrace Differences
- Respect Personal Choice
- Care Deeply
- Empower Through Education
- Transform Our Community



# A VISION FOR THE FUTURE



**Despite these challenges,** Pine Castle remains hopeful and focused on its mission of education, life skills, and vocational training. With increasing competition from universities offering programs for individuals with I/DD, Pine Castle has found its niche in hands-on vocational and life skills training. While others may target serving the highest-functioning individuals, Pine Castle aims to serve those who need more life skills coaching and practical job training.

Pine Castle is a well-respected, long-standing organization in the Jacksonville community. **As one of the oldest agencies in the Northeast Florida region,** Pine Castle is uniquely suited to address the unmet needs of adults with intellectual and developmental differences.



## INNOVATIVE CURRICULUM

The award-winning Pathways Curriculum, recognized by the Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, is attracting new participants, and six other Florida agencies have purchased the program, confirming we are leading the way.

## DEDICATED STAFF

Staff turnover rates are decreasing, providing consistent care for participants.

## CAPACITY FOR GROWTH

A recent study shows the agency can serve up to 450 participants, doubling current enrollment.

## CERTIFIED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

The agency offers certified training in culinary, and custodial work, and hands-on experience in woodshop, and manufacturing fields, preparing participants for community jobs.

## NEW OPPORTUNITIES

A new aquaponics greenhouse project will provide fresh produce for the agency and create potential revenue through community sales and partnerships with local grocers and schools.

## OUR STRENGTHS



## FAMILY STORY: THE OKONAS

There was a time when the word “autism” felt like a burden, a reality too difficult to face. But it’s part of who Zachary is—both beautiful and challenging. Zachary is neurodivergent, and his love for music fills every corner of our lives. From the shower to the car, music is his way of expressing a spirit that refuses to be boxed in. He connects with the world in his own way, whether it’s through music or his joy for the outdoors, like trips to the beach or long car rides.

As parents, we’ve embraced Zachary exactly as he is, but the journey hasn’t always been easy. **Along the way, we’ve met incredible people who have supported and believed in him, guiding us with profound advice: “Find others who want to help your team succeed.”** This wisdom has been our compass, leading us through the ups and downs of raising a child with different needs.

When we realized South Florida could no longer provide the resources Zachary needed as he transitioned into adulthood, we searched for a new community—one that would help him thrive. **That’s when we found a place that understood the power of neurodiversity, a place where individuals like Zachary are valued for who they are.**

Pine Castle has become a lifeline for us, giving Zachary the opportunity to grow in an environment tailored to his strengths. It’s more than just a program—it’s a family. The caring professionals and dedicated staff have created a space where Zachary feels confident, engaged, and excited about his future. **As parents, we are deeply grateful for this community and the hope it brings us every day.**

Our journey is not unique, and we know other families are walking similar paths. Together, we can continue to build a world where individuals like Zachary are celebrated and given the chance to flourish.



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# OUR REQUEST



We are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to present this proposal, recognizing your commitment to creating opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Your unwavering dedication to enhancing the lives of those often overlooked speaks volumes, and the impact of your generosity is felt deeply by the individuals and families we serve.

Your past philanthropic efforts have already made a profound difference, but today we invite you to consider a truly transformational gift—a \$2,000,000 investment that will not only secure the future of vital services but also expand opportunities for generations to come.

This is a pivotal moment in Pine Castle’s history, and your support has the potential to be life changing for those we serve. Your generosity will help restore financial stability, ensure long-term sustainability, and secure the future for adults with intellectual and developmental differences to lead fulfilling lives.

Your investment will be the cornerstone of our “Stabilizing Today, Securing Tomorrow” initiative, a beacon of hope for the future of individuals with disabilities. Thank you for considering this transformational opportunity and for your continued dedication to making a lasting difference.

## FACTS AND FIGURES

**180**

*participants on the Pathway to Life Enrichment.*

**45**

*participants on the Pathway to Community Employment.*

**15**

*participants placed in community employment.*

**33**

*participants served by our Mental Health program.*

**36**

*group home residents residing in one of five owned and operated homes.*

**\$.81**

*of every dollar earned supports Pine Castle’s programs.*

# SECURING THE FUTURE

Pine Castle is a product of more than 70 years of success, but it needs a stronger foundation to withstand current and future challenges. With payroll costs of \$6 million annually, the existing safety nets of \$1 million in Long Term Reserves and \$1 million in endowments are not enough for our future sustainability.



## STABILIZATION

\$1 million to address outstanding operational debt service, campus and facility repairs, mandated minimum wage increases and establish a stronger foundation through a new working capital fund and enhanced capital structure.



## SECURITY

\$500k to grow the Long-Term Reserve Fund, increasing safety net reserves from two months to six months.



## SUSTAINABILITY

\$500k to fund five different Evergreen Legacy Society Quasi – Endowment Funds for critical programs, \$100,000 for each. These invested funds include Health and Wellness (Nursing and Mental Health), Education Academy (Pathway to Life Enrichment), Community Living (Group Homes), Employment Training and Job Placement (Pathway to Community Employment) and Sustainability Fund (Mission Support).

**Your belief in our mission gives us hope. We appreciate your consideration of this transformational opportunity and look forward to the possibility of partnering to secure a brighter future for those we serve.**

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

### *So why not Pine Castle?*

With more than 30,000 individuals across Florida on the Medicaid-funded waitlist who have intellectual or developmental disabilities, services like Pine Castle are more critical than ever. In Northeast Florida alone, more than 3,000 individuals are waiting. And with an employment rate of just 22.5% for adults with disabilities, the question isn't why Pine Castle — it's why not Pine Castle?

Pine Castle is the solution. We are committed to success because we owe it to those who rely on us. Without us, there is no learning, no working, and no connecting.

Now, more than ever, we need partners who believe in Pine Castle and its mission. This is a pivotal moment, and your investment will create a lasting impact. **Together, we can stabilize today, build sustainability for tomorrow, and secure the future of our life-changing services for generations to come.**



**YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS.**

**Thank you for investing in our participants.**

