



**EMPOWER**

**Jeff Paterson**  
Chief Executive Officer



Jeff Paterson joined [Empower](#), the not-for-profit organization formerly known as Niagara Cerebral Palsy, in November 2014. He launched the Empower brand in 2015 – a rebranding effort that earned “best of show” recognition from the [Public Relations Society of America Buffalo Niagara Chapter](#). With a \$14 million budget and 300 employees, Empower is one of Western New York’s 60 largest not-for-profit organizations.

On Jeff’s watch, Empower’s reputation index among key constituencies shot up by 98% in two years, and the organization is gaining recognition as an agency on the move. In 2018, Empower gained the prestigious Quality Assurance Accreditation from the Council on Quality and Leadership. The organization has transformed its job training and day programs, integrated children without disabilities into its special education preschool program, expanded community supports for people with disabilities, launched services for new populations, rightsized unsustainable programs, modernized operations, and begun preparing for the I/DD system’s transition to managed care. Because of his stewardship, in 2015 Jeff received the [Buffalo Business First 612’ C-Level Executive Award](#), an honor that recognizes the region’s most effective business leaders.

Previously, Paterson served for 12 years in senior leadership roles with the [Health Association of Niagara County Inc.](#), where he played a central role in establishing [Complete Senior Care](#), a multimillion dollar program that enables frail elders to remain living in their own homes. As executive director of [Community Music School of Buffalo](#) from 2012 to 2014, he established a music therapy practice and expanded community partnerships.

Paterson’s roots are in the for-profit world; he began his career as an account executive in two different Buffalo-area marketing communication agencies, where he assisted clients ranging from [Rite Aid Corporation](#) and [BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York](#) to [Catholic Charities of Buffalo](#) and the [Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo](#), among many others. Paterson is a past president and board member of the Public Relations Society of America Buffalo Niagara Chapter. He has received the organization’s Distinguished Service Award, Outstanding Practitioner Award and Rising Star Award, along with 70 Excalibur Awards recognizing outstanding public relations programs and projects – including four platinum “best of show” awards. From 2004 to 2015, Jeff was a part-time faculty member in the [SUNY Buffalo State Communication Department](#), where he helped many students to establish successful careers. He received the SUNY Buffalo State Communication Department Professional Achievement Award in 2016.

Jeff is proud of his community involvement. He serves on the board of the [Developmental Disabilities Alliance of Western New York](#) and chairs its Government Affairs Committee; he is also a board member of the [Person Centered Services Care Coordination Organization](#) and the [Western New York Integrated Care Collaborative](#), and belongs to the [Niagara County Subcommittee for People with Developmental Disabilities](#) and the [Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center Care Coordination Task Force](#). He is a past board chair of the [Niagara Falls Housing Authority](#) and a past board member of [Community Missions of the Niagara Frontier](#) and the [Niagara Police Athletic League](#). Jeff served for more than 10 years as a board member of the [Niagara Falls Urban Renewal Agency](#) and the [NFC Development Corporation](#), the lending arm of the [City of Niagara Falls](#); he was a member and vice chair of the [Niagara Falls Human Rights Commission](#) and a member of two mayoral transition teams.

Jeff’s faith animates his life. He co-chaired the merger transition team that united [St. Charles Borromeo Parish](#) with [St. John de LaSalle Parish](#) in Niagara Falls. He is a pastoral musician at St. John de LaSalle, where he also leads the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. He was the first layperson to chair the board of [Our Lady of Victory Homes of Charity](#), part of “Father Baker’s” family of institutions; there, he chaired the 2018 search for a chief executive officer and remains an active board member. He is a past member of the [Buffalo Diocesan Liturgical Commission](#) and has been involved in lay leadership roles with the [Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities](#) and the [Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Divine Child](#), both based in Williamsville. He was a founding faculty member in [Niagara University’s](#) certificate program in applied urban ministry. In 2017, Jeff received the Rev. Martin Blake, CM, Award from [Our Lady of Angels Association](#) and [Vincentian Charities](#) for his advocacy for people who are marginalized.

Paterson is a summa cum laude graduate of [Canisius College](#) in Buffalo, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in communication studies. He earned a master’s degree in pastoral ministry from [Christ the King Seminary](#) in Buffalo. He lives in Niagara Falls with his wife, Michele, and their son, William.