



BUILDING

BRIGHTER

FUTURES

2023 CHICAGO LIGHTS
ANNUAL REPORT



**Chicago
Lights**



MISSION, VISION, AND HISTORY

Chicago Lights builds brighter futures for Chicago's youth and adults through supportive relationships and life-changing programs.

We believe every person deserves access to the resources they need to overcome systemic barriers and achieve their ambitions.

Chicago Lights provides creative youth development and social services that help people build the skills they need to lead fulfilling lives. We partner with Chicago's youth and adults in mentoring, supportive services, academic enrichment, career development, and arts education.

Chicago Lights grew from the commitment of Fourth Presbyterian Church to social justice and compassionate service. In 1991, that commitment gave rise to a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which in 2004 was renamed Chicago Lights and significantly expanded in order to bring together under one banner several programs that continue to partner with nearly 3,000 individuals each year. Today, Fourth Church continues to be a vital source of support for Chicago Lights, including providing volunteers and covering a majority of our overhead costs. Because of this partnership, our team of professional staff and dedicated volunteers can continue to build brighter futures for Chicago's youth and adults.

Thank you to the Fourth Church community for your commitment to Chicago Lights!





YEAR IN REVIEW



Amanda Felt
President
Chicago Lights Board of Directors

Stacy Jackson
Executive Director
Chicago Lights

For Chicago Lights, 2023 was a year of renewal, growth, celebration, and reflection.

The Social Service Center marked 40 years of walking alongside individuals as they pursue greater stability. And we were reminded of the continuing need for this support as the team provided clothing, food, winter gear, case management, and housing support to 75% more people than the prior year. This growth came as we welcomed hundreds of new arrivals seeking asylum in the United States, while continuing to partner with our neighbors experiencing poverty and homelessness.

The Tutoring and Summer Day programs continued to provide high-quality, year-round programming to Chicago youth living in historically disinvested communities. More than 200 elementary and high school students received both academic and social support during the school year through one-to-one partnerships with tutor/mentors and small-group arts and enrichment programming. And close to 120 students in 1st-9th grade enjoyed safe and fun summer learning at Summer Day, where all participating students maintained or improved their skills in language arts and math.

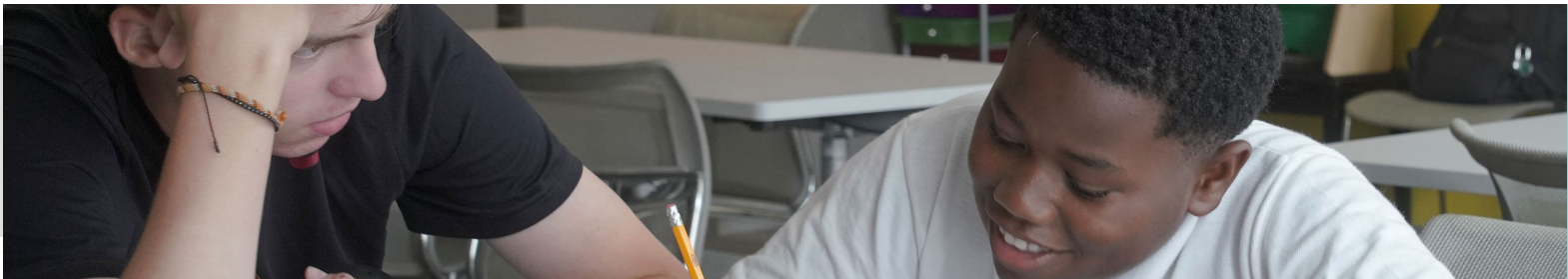
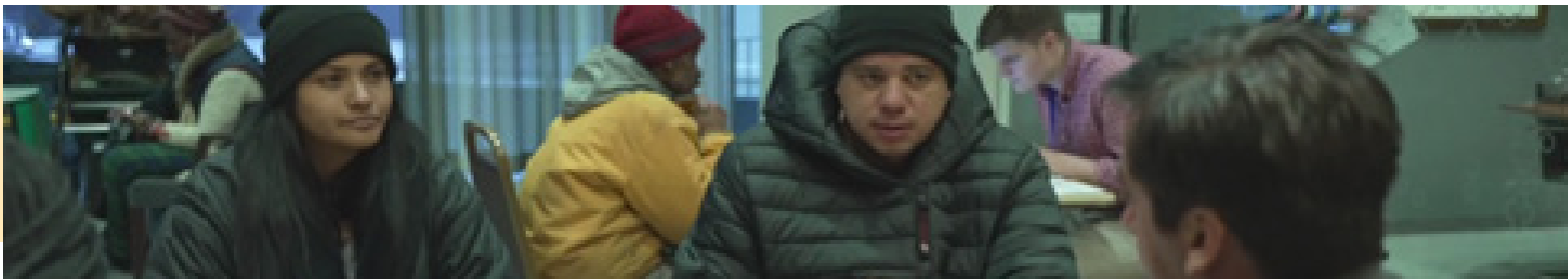
The Urban Farm continues to be a bright, beautiful three-quarter-acre oasis in the city, even as high rises go up all around it at Chicago and Hudson. More than 5,500 pounds of produce were harvested last year, with 85% distributed to individuals and families with low incomes. Community members volunteered or attended events at the Farm, and youth participants learned about urban agriculture, the food system, and gained transferable job skills.

Behind the scenes, we have implemented a new database to more accurately track participant information and metrics, as well as created a Director of Evaluation and Impact position, so Chicago Lights can now better measure growth, make data-informed program improvements, and more boldly tell the story of our impact.

On behalf of the many thousands of lives changed through participation in Chicago Lights, THANK YOU! Our work to serve the children, youth, and adults of Chicago continues, and we are grateful to have your partnership and support.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS






TUTORING & SUMMER DAY

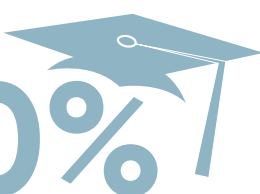
Young people served by Chicago Lights Tutoring and Summer Day programs often lack adequate support systems and relationships focused on the development of the whole child—academically, emotionally, and physically. After decades of systemic disinvestment, many neighborhood schools cannot support their students' full academic potential, which leads to low reading and math scores on standardized tests and may leave many students far behind their nationwide peer cohort in lifetime earnings and achievements. However, research has proven that participation in high-quality, out-of-school-time programs offering a combination of mentoring, academic support, and enrichment activities helps to decrease persistent achievement gaps between children from families with low incomes and their more resourced peers.



In the face of such disparities as poverty and community violence, both Tutoring and Summer Day provide the type of guidance and structure needed to help young people become emotionally resilient, learn strong social skills, and recognize life's positive possibilities.

210  **STUDENTS** in grades 1-12 were matched **ONE-TO-ONE** with volunteer tutor/mentors.

100% **OF STUDENTS** in Summer Day maintained or **INCREASED THEIR SKILLS** in Language Arts and Math over the summer.

100%  **OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS GRADUATED** and were accepted into post-secondary institutions.

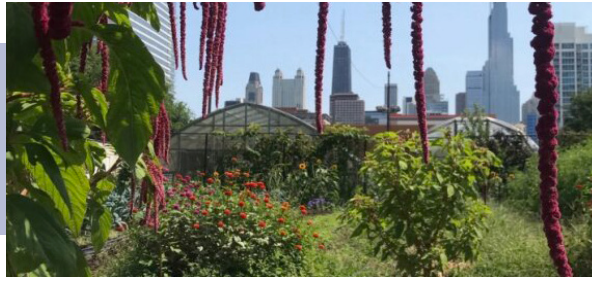
29 **TUTORING STUDENTS** received high school and college **SCHOLARSHIPS** to support college and career success.

15 **STUDENTS** engaged in paid, **SUMMER INTERNSHIPS**.

20 **STUDENTS** participated in **CAREER DEVELOPMENT CLASSES**.

119  **STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN SUMMER DAY.**





URBAN FARM

With so many Chicagoans facing economic insecurity and food instability, the Urban Farm team digs deep to harvest thousands of pounds of produce to ensure our neighbors have access to fresh, healthy food and a beautiful, vibrant oasis where Chicago's youth learn to grow, harvest, and make change in their community while gaining skills that will unlock their futures.

Sadly, we also mourned the loss of one of our long-time Assistant Growers, Jonquil—known as Johnny, whose young life was taken by gun violence. For the remainder of the season, the Farm team poured their hearts into continued growing and service to the community in honor of Johnny.



5,505 

POUNDS OF PRODUCE WAS GROWN.

266 **VOLUNTEERS** supported the growth of the Urban Farm through **855 HOURS** of service.

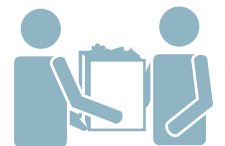
6  **PEOPLE** living in Cabrini or with barriers to employment were hired part time as Assistant Growers, Farm Camp Assistants, and Community Engagement Assistants.

 **139**

YOUTH ages 5–24 engaged in Urban Farm programming.

859 **FREE PRODUCE BAGS** were distributed to 78 Cabrini residents and many patients of the Winfield Moody Health Center.

55 **THANKSGIVING FOOD BAGS** were distributed to Cabrini residents.



660 **MEALS PACKAGED** from rescued food were distributed for free to community residents and new arrivals.





SOCIAL SERVICE CENTER

The Social Service Center celebrated 40 years of supporting adults as they pursue goals of greater stability. This anniversary marked the Social Service Center's most robust year of service with hundreds of asylum seekers arriving in early 2023. New participants also included 100 people experiencing homelessness who were temporarily housed by the City of Chicago in the former hotel next door.

In addition to basic-needs services, the Social Service Center provided other life-giving offerings including housing case management and workshops, enrichment groups, English as a Second Language classes, and short-term case management for individuals to receive important resources like state IDs, birth certificates, phones, glasses, haircuts, and more.



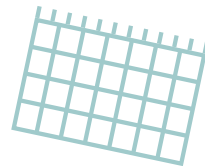
2,272

INDIVIDUALS participated in SSC programming in 2023. **1,785** of those were **NEW participants**. This was a **169% increase**.

196

INDIVIDUALS were met where they were during **OUTREACH SERVICES** and received **566 services**.

1,809



CASE MANAGEMENT APPOINTMENTS served **541 individuals**. This was a **45% increase** from 2022.

1,688

INDIVIDUALS RECEIVED 11,734 RESOURCES during morning drop-in services.

1,172



INDIVIDUALS WERE NOURISHED through **2,241 FOOD PANTRY APPOINTMENTS**. This was a **403% increase** from 2022.



A REFLECTION FROM THERESA THORNBURG, DIRECTOR OF THE SOCIAL SERVICE CENTER

The Social Service Center marked its 40th anniversary in 2023, and we are pleased to remain hard at work to fulfill the vision of our founder, Fourth Presbyterian Church Pastor Dr. Elam Davies. When the SSC began in 1983, Dr. Davies envisioned it as a place for those in the community to seek refuge and support. Over time, what began as one man's vision has become an operation with five full-time and three part-time staff, six Masters of Social Work interns, and five daily volunteers. Now, the Social Service Center provides case management and enrichment-group programming and works with a plethora of community partners who help us operate a food pantry and a clothing closet.

In January 2023, the City of Chicago opened a family shelter for asylum seekers not far from the Social Service Center. Very quickly, we saw an influx of clients who spoke Spanish and had recently arrived in Chicago. We went from seeing 30 people a day to having more than 80 families with children coming in for services. We had no advance notice that the shelter was opening, and no one on staff spoke Spanish. We needed a plan and fast!

Fortunately, we were able to lean into our community of supporters to respond to the increase in participants. We received monetary gifts to purchase winter wear to meet the new demands at our doorstep, recruited volunteer translators, reached out to companies and churches to run clothing and food drives to help keep our shelves stocked, and recruited even more volunteers to keep up with all the clothing donations coming in.



Meeting the needs of our community has always been our mission, and 2023 showed us the ways we need to be flexible and agile, even as we remain committed to supporting everyone we can. The immigration story at its core is a tale of hope. The story of homelessness in Chicago is harder to understand and sometimes harder to hold hope for. Yet even while facing the challenges of responding to the new clients we encountered in 2023, we continued to work hard to offer both hope and resources to every individual.

While many things changed for the Social Service Center in 2023, one thing has stayed the same: When someone walks through our doors, they are greeted with a warm smile, a sense of hospitality, and the knowledge that our staff are ready to walk alongside them in their journey to building a brighter future. We are committed to offering hope, resources, and support—just as Dr. Davies intended—for many more years to come.



A BEAUTIFUL PARTNERSHIP WITH ULTA BEAUTY

"At the heart of Ulta Beauty, we believe beauty is a force for good," explains Chrissy Kubek, Ulta Beauty's charitable program manager. This mindset helps power the company's social impact work, which takes a holistic approach to supporting mental, physical, and social health to nurture a strong sense of self and belonging, particularly among women and teens. "We embrace this work across diverse communities in the U.S. and locally through a portfolio of partnerships with leading nonprofits such as Chicago Lights."

Ulta Beauty has been a supporter of Chicago Lights for several years, and in 2023 they were not only a lead donor to our Gala of Hope—helping to make it a beautiful evening with a fabulous silent auction—but a group of employees from their human resources (known as People Success) team volunteered with the Social Services Center in the food pantry and clothing share shop.

"Our associates have shown time and again the power of volunteering their unique skills and expertise, mentoring, and simply being there for those in need," Chrissy says. "We value the work Chicago Lights is doing to provide services and programs to underserved communities."

Ulta Beauty also feels a kinship with Chicago Lights because both are local organizations. Ulta Beauty's corporate offices are in Lemont, IL, and their first store opened in Lombard in 1990. "We believe it is important to support our hometown community. Chicago Lights is one of many hometown partners."

Ulta Beauty CEO Dave Kimbell has been a member of the Chicago Lights Board of Directors since May of 2020. "We are grateful for Dave's commitment, leadership, and the partnership with Ulta Beauty that helps to make Chicago Lights' life-changing work possible," says Chicago Lights Executive Director Stacy Jackson.

"As Ulta Beauty continues to expand, our goal is to provide even more opportunities for our associates to do what they do best: create meaningful connections to spread joy and encourage self-discovery," says Chrissy. "This pairs perfectly with Chicago Lights' mission to empower Chicago's youth through supportive relationships and life-changing programs to help unleash their potential."



IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE WITH AETNA BETTER HEALTH[®] OF ILLINOIS

"Health happens outside the clinical setting/ medical office," says Shaan Trotter, Health Equity Officer at Aetna Better Health[®] of Illinois. Yes, they are an insurance company, but Aetna Better Health is also "committed to strengthening communities" and improving quality of life for those they serve, he explains. And since 2022, Chicago Lights has been a trusted partner.

"Aetna seeks alignment with organizations that are positively impacting our community so we can work together to provide sustainable solutions and resources to the people and communities we serve. Because of the great things Chicago Lights has done to provide educational resources, social services, and urban farming knowledge to Chicago, the organization was on our radar," Trotter says. "Contributing to Chicago Lights enables us to...not only [provide] quality healthcare but [take] our reach further by supporting the people in those communities with resources like education and job opportunities."

In 2023, Aetna made a \$25,000 donation to help fund the eight-week summer Career Development internship program for Tutoring students. This program helps students build resumes, interview skills, and employment experience, while working hands-on (and getting paid!) at a local office or business. Trotter says Aetna Better Health could not pass up this "opportunity to help shape what is possible for youth and contribute to the well-being of our community's future." He knows the benefit of developing knowledge, skills, and abilities—not to mention making connections and forming a network. "Aetna is committed to activating the potential in every person," he adds. "This program spoke to us because it helps children become their best selves."

And even beyond this program, Chicago Lights

is a good partner for meeting Aetna Better Health's objectives. "Aetna is engaging in work that is known to show better quality of life results in other communities," Trotter explains. "Education, employment, fresh food, clean water, physical activity, and stress-reducing activities are shown to reduce a person's chances of getting sick and dying prematurely." Because Chicago Lights is "embedded into the community," supporting our programs allows Aetna to help "eliminate some of the burdens and hurdles some in our communities experience on a daily basis by providing resources to a trusted partner."

Going forward, this working relationship has the potential to become even more robust. "We hope to continue to support Chicago Lights by providing resources that help people live life to their fullest extent," says Trotter. Future collaborations could include community events and health screenings, as well as referrals for those who qualify to other Aetna Better Health programs and products, such as their Workforce Innovation & Training Center (WITC), which will open in summer 2023.

"Chicago Lights has been a joy to work with," Trotter adds. "Knowing that children have been able to excel because of the program we helped fortify is an honor."



Aetna Better Health[®] of Illinois



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USDA Summer Food Service Program
Walter Payton College Prep
Wells Fargo
Wintrust Bank
Women Giving Back
Women of Fourth
Xavier University



2023 FINANCIALS

REVENUE

Individual Contributions	\$1,144,050	49%
Foundations/Corporations	\$544,395	23%
Program Receipts	\$585,735	25%
Draw from Invested Funds	\$71,068	3%
Total:		\$2,345,248



DISBURSEMENTS

Management and General	\$253,139	11%
Fundraising	\$475,053	21%
Tutoring	\$592,838	26%
Summer Day	\$205,148	9%
Social Service Center	\$446,750	19%
Urban Farm	\$327,789	14%

Total: **\$2,300,716**



Net Surplus / (Deficit): \$44,533

Source: the Chicago Lights 2023 unaudited financial statement.
An audited statement is available after June 30, 2024.



SUPPORTERS

CHICAGO LIGHTS is grateful for each and every supporter who made a donation in 2023.

With your generosity, our programs continue to partner with Chicago's youth and adults to build brighter futures.



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