

Looking Back

Looking Ahead

Our 2022 Annual Report



Who We Are

VISION

A world where our young adults feel empowered to find, define, & follow their passion into the workforce or entrepreneurship and cause a ripple effect, transforming families and communities while inspiring the next generation of youth.

MISSION

Inspire under-resourced young adults to overcome adversity and empower them to leverage their passion through mentorships, collaborative events, festivals, and innovative workshops.

OVERVIEW

YourPassion1st is a unique international non-profit organization 501(c)3 that empowers under-resourced young adults to find, define, and follow their passion into the workforce or entrepreneurship, becoming the world's future innovators. We look to transform communities by inspiring young adults to leverage their passion through mentorships, collaborative events & festivals, innovative workshops, coaching and mentoring programs, and project-based learning experiences.

Numerous young adults around the world are suffering from depression and a number of other mental health challenges, as they strive to be productive members of society. We are actively working on strategies to help young adults turn their passions into careers in Art, Music, Entertainment, Sports/Wellness, Culinary/Nutrition and more. Our goal is to make neighborhoods safer, while minimizing mental health challenges in young adults by providing them the tools and resources necessary to tap into their passion while distilling it into sustainable income.

Your support is crucial to our efforts to minimize firearm violence, and improve the state of mind of our young adults and communities here in Chicago as well as in Brazil & South Africa.

“I can't say enough good words about the YourPassion1st program. My favorite part is putting the change in the world for these young adults by helping them and the organization tell their story. — Aaron Weekes (USA Advisory Board Member '22)



Looking Back



I'm So Grateful

Upwards of 50,000 opportunity youth in Chicago are disconnected from the mainstream — not attending school and ill-prepared for the workforce or higher education. From our research and experiences, young adults across the globe are experiencing similar challenges. According to the McKinsey Global Institute, future predictions of African-American unemployment in 2030 suggest further widening the wage gap between races, ages, and socioeconomic classes. To make matters even worse, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has exploded the suicide rate to 9.5x the average from ages 10-24 (Brown University), has destroyed small businesses and the economic heartbeat of communities, and negatively compounded the tourism industry. High unemployment rates lead to depression, low self-esteem, lack of financial resources, violence, opportunities to engage in less productive activities, and blocked perceptions of routes for building thriving families, communities, and productive working careers.

These significant problems plague young African American adults in Illinois and devastate under-resourced communities worldwide. YourPassion1st has been building a platform that allows young adults to vulnerably find, define, and follow their passions into the workforce or as entrepreneurs.

Young adults need safe spaces, a multitude of resources, and confidence which can help improve self-worth. Over the past three years, we've found that passion inspires confidence, which can transform young adults into productive young role models that uplift their community.

We are thankful for the opportunity to serve our community, and looking forward to another amazing year!

Chris Thomas,
Founder



2022 Programs

- In partnership with Mi Casa Holiday & Insight In You, from May - Dec 2022, we were able to **mentor and coach 35 young adults 5 from South Africa, 20 from Chicago, and 10 from Brazil**, by connecting them with skill-based mentors & mental health coaches as they find, define, & follow their passion into the workforce. Thanks to BUILD Chicago & West Side Health Authority for your partnership through the One Summer Chicago Program.
- Our young adults were able to collaborate with other young adults from around the world, in similar areas of passion and **showcase 5 team projects**, which helped them hone in on their areas of passion and get one step closer to earning revenue (creating value), as they find, define, and follow their passion into the workforce or entrepreneurship.
- We co-hosted our **Wellness Festival** in partnership with A Greater Good Foundation, our Youth Empowerment Festival in partnership with Chicago Westside Chamber of Commerce, Austoberfest in partnership with Project Exploration, and our Team Project Showcase hosted at Gone Again Travels.
- Thanks to Paint the City, Star Events & Chicago Loop Alliance, we were able to have a number of our **young adults sell their products at Sundays on State, and connect with a number of resources & organizations** to support them as they find, define, and follow their passion into the workforce.]
- Thanks to the amazing partnership with Pastor Mac & What About Us Charitable Enterprises Inc. we were able to support a number of **summer pop-up events at LaFollette Park**, providing fun, entertainment, and engagement to the community.
- Also in partnership with What About Us Charitable Enterprises Inc and Mt. Olivet M.B. Church we were able to provide food, groceries, and resources to 1,500+ families here on the West Side of Chicago.
- In partnership with GreenStar Movement & AAABNA, we were able to **create an amazing mosaic on the front of AAABNA**.

2022 Financial Report

\$108,797.83
Total
Raised

\$25,000.00 (23%)

Foundations

\$27,000.00 (33%)

In-Kind Goods & Services

\$60,628.25 (56%)

Individual Donations

\$3,886.36 (3%) Sales

\$6,148.76 (6%) Fundraising

\$51,704.41 (49%)

Program Expenses

\$47,943.92 (45%)

General Expenses

\$105,794.09
Net
Expenses

“I improved myself with the workshops, and all of the knowledge helped me to work with the young adults and other individuals in the organization, and am grateful for the opportunity to inspire young adults.” — Beatriz Fonseca
(Brazil Ambassador '22)





“Putting YourPassion1st is about authenticity. If you feel you’re put on this Earth to battle rap, then battle rap. If that’s what drives you to keep pushing through all the obstacles, and don’t let any outside influences try to deter you from doing what you want to do. Do you? — Cleveland Clark (USA Young Ambassador ‘21 & ‘22)

By the Numbers

\$356K raised to date

66 of 75 youth who enrolled in our program created projects focused in their area of passion, getting them one step closer to finding, defining, and following their passion into the workforce or entrepreneurship

57% of participants have leveraged YourPassion1st to earn revenue in their area of passion during the program

63 workforce readiness/development mentoring sessions for program participants ages 14-24

22 community events & festivals on the WestSide of Chicago focused on youth empowerment

72 community resource pop-ups with food donated to 4,500+ families

35 mentors and volunteers averaging two to three hours per week

Keishjuan Owens

“It’s been a breath of life in such a lifeless time in the world. Putting YourPassion1st is more than a nonprofit, it’s a way of life.”

**— Keishjuan Owens
(USA Young Ambassador '20, '21, & '22))**

YourPassion1st means the world to me; I mean, after getting so many paid opportunities, internships new friends, and more food for my thoughts, not to mention that I also won the pitch competition two years in a row from my sheer determination, who wouldn't have it at the top of the list?

I first met Chris in 2019 in the coffee shop where I was doing fashion flats for my upcoming fashion line LumberJackPak, we talked briefly. He gave me his business card and we promised to meet each other somewhere soon.

When that time finally came, I, fortunately, was able to be on the podcast that he was doing at the time; it was incredible! Afterwards, we decided to connect more and he mentioned to me that he had a program coming up called YourPassion1st and how I would be a great fit for it and how I would also have access to a surplus of mentors, opportunities, and plenty of experiences.

At first I was a little skeptical because I didn't have anybody in my corner to cheer me on and give me words of affirmation about the things that I was passionate about, but Chris took the helm of that ride and became one of the best mentors that I had to the point where I consider him a brother as I get older and my mustache gets thicker.

I realize all the things that I can look back on and recall whenever I'm asked this beautiful question: What Does YourPassion1st mean to you?

I can safely say this is a way of life; this isn't just a program to me. This is simply a reminder that I would follow any dreams that I set my mind to. I



would have to put my passion first, and Chris has made sure to drill into my head say what I mean and be where I say I'm going to be.

I'm supposed to be giving my 110% even when I feel like 60% and always speak up for those who have no voice.

Now that I'm older, I want to go from the student to the teacher to teach those who are up-and-coming in the program so I can get them comfortable in the transitioning phase from not believing in themselves to acknowledging that they can do anything.

Our 2022 Supporters

Donors:

Turano Bread
Starbucks
Safe & Peaceful Communities
Chicago Cred
Advanced Resources
Race Conscious Dialogues
One Earth Film Festival

Partners:

Mi Casa Holiday
Grow Exponential Consulting
Working Better Together
What About Us Charitable Enterprises
Insight In You
Antidote
Community Leadership Fellows (CLF)
Taproots
Earth Remedies
Project Exploration
My Chi My Future
A Greater Good Foundation
Oak Park Public Library
Territory NFP
Root To Fruit, BUILD Chicago
West Side Health Authority
West Side Chamber of Commerce
Elevated Services
Paint The City
Star Events
Green Star Movement
Austin African American Business Network Association (AAABNA)
Gone Again Travels

Mentors:

Julius Spates
Shanna Williams
Nancy Shaw
Chris Thomas
Robert Bernice
Beatriz Fonseca
Erika Dandara
Nathalia Souza
Ruben Tellado-Aponte
Kaila Peterson
Daryl Satcher
Betania Leon
Kaneesha Arnold
Aggrey Mokoena
Christian Udu
Vanessa Liberman





Ready to Grow

What is envisioned for new programs starting in 2023:

- \$414k fundraising target
- 35 youth who enrolled in our program will create projects focused in their area of passion, getting them one step closer to finding, defining, and following their passion into the workforce or entrepreneurship
- Our target is that 68% of participants in our program will leverage YourPassion1st to earn revenue in their area of passion no later than six months post program
- 22 workforce readiness/development mentoring sessions for program participants ages 14-24
- Eight community events & festivals on the WestSide of Chicago focused on youth empowerment
- 36 community resource pop-ups with food donated to 1,750+ families
- 500+ young adults impacted
- 10,000+ in attendance at our Festival Series

Resources needed to implement these programs:

- Location with a performance arts stage/venue
- Capacity building funds to hire employees
- Board Members, Advisory Board Members, Volunteers, and mentors

Looking Ahead

How You Can Help

Interested in being a Mentor?

April through November, 2023, 3-5 hrs per week

Signup to learn more: <https://jtmt.typeform.com/to/OH GK3GBq>

Interested in being a Volunteer?

Volunteer Days twice a month starting in April to support Festivals & Events

Generally 4 hour windows on weekends

Signup to learn more: <https://jtmt.typeform.com/to/OH GK3GBq>

Interested in being on our Advisory Board or Board of Directors?

For further details: <https://www.yourpassion1st.com/contact>

Interested in being on our Podcast?

Do you have some knowledge/tips to drop to our young adults?

One hour time commitment (time TBD)(Season 4 kicks off in March 2023)

Signup to learn more: <https://jtmt.typeform.com/to/OH GK3GBq>

Interested in being a Partner at one of our festivals in 2023?

Below are the types of engagement experiences we look to produce:

Explore: the opportunity to get hands-on experience that day

Participate: the opportunity to physically interact and engage in your work

Learn: access to valuable insight and resources to expand their knowledge

Work: the ability to start a career on the spot by signing up for a program/ interview, or the ability to create and/or sell something that day

Inspire: Intergenerational Testimonial/Spoken Word/Storytelling

Signup to learn more: <https://jtmt.typeform.com/to/OH GK3GBq>

Interested in being a Sponsor?:

<https://secure.givelively.org/donate/your-passion-1st>

Any Young Adults looking to find, define, and follow their passion

into the workforce, can register below for mentoring & coaching, job opportunities, and to be a part of our International Young Ambassadors program: <https://jtmt.typeform.com/to/pOr9V3iq>

Our Board

Board Members:

Current:

Chris Thomas

Sara Aby

Catherine Kirk

New:

Jonathan Ellwanger

Chris Thomas

Sara Aby

Advisory Board:

Julius "The Mad Thinker" Spates — Innovation & Engagement

Shanna "Queen Prophecy" Williams — Mentorship & Mental Health

Kim Marzano — People & Culture

Tere Wang — Project Management & Operations

Roberta Bernice — Program Development

Nelly Gamino — Finance

Jacob Ragsdale & Lee Ann Eiland — Fundraising Co-Chairs

Larry Stein — Legal

Aaron Weekes — Marketing



Looking Up



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