



Beyond Boundaries, Creating Futures:
Unveiling a Year of Impact and Solidarity

2024

Impact
Report





A world where our young adults are inspired 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.



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

Our strategies empower young adults by creating pathways to mental health support, workforce readiness, and entrepreneurial opportunities. By providing alternative safe spaces, we offer environments where young people can explore their passions, develop skills, and build brighter futures.

These spaces serve as creative hubs that inspire confidence, motivation, and self-discovery while addressing systemic challenges in under-resourced communities. Offering innovative programs that connect youth to mental health resources ensures they receive emotional support, helping them thrive personally and professionally.

Additionally, our approach incorporates practical workforce training and entrepreneurial development, enabling young adults to unlock their potential and contribute to their community's economic sustainability. By showcasing their talents and providing resources in dynamic and engaging ways, we help them find their purpose, define their goals, and follow their aspirations—igniting a ripple effect of inspiration and growth throughout their communities.

This transformative model not only reduces barriers to success but also cultivates a generation of confident, empowered young leaders.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS MEAN TO YOU?

What do you want to be when you grow up?

It's a question that everyone of us asks as we make our way through the world.

For some, the answer is an Electrician, Real Estate Agent, Astronaut, Lawyer, or Pilot. For others, it might be a Chef, a DJ or a Dancer. Whoever you are, whatever your answer is, it likely stretches the limits of your imagination—something that ignites your passion.

Every child should have that chance to dream. Unfortunately, many don't.

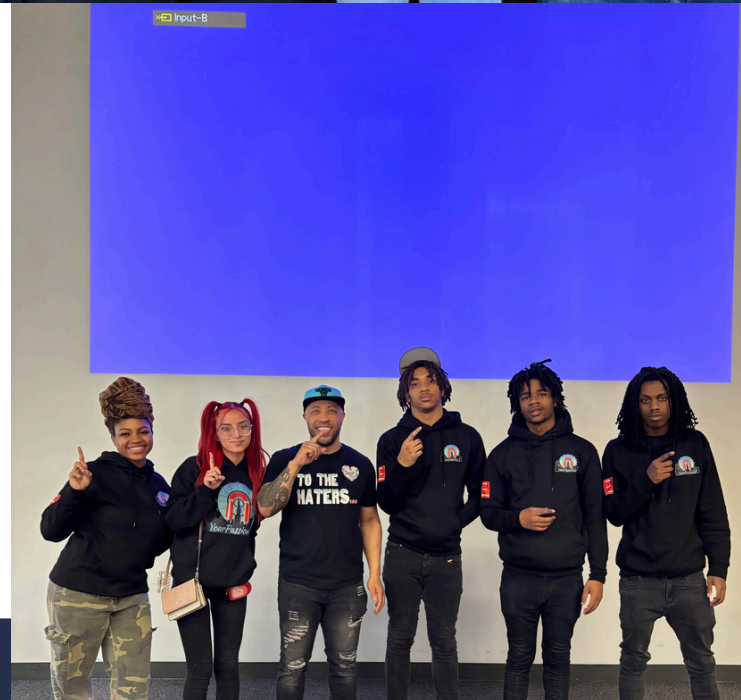
Exposure to community violence as well as depression have adverse effects on social, behavioral, and health outcomes.

Suddenly, their focus shifts from pursuing their dream careers to staying out of gangs or simply staying alive.

Addressing these challenges is crucial to restoring hope and enabling all young people to dream and achieve their full potential.

WE ARE DEDICATED TO TRANSFORMING THIS SITUATION. HOWEVER, WE FULLY UNDERSTAND THE CHALLENGE AHEAD...

- 20% of U.S. homicides occur in the local Chicago area.
- In 2022, the U.S. Surgeon General declared firearm violence a public health crisis, noting it as the leading cause of death among children and adolescents in the U.S.
- More than 700,000 people die due to suicide every year worldwide, making it the fourth leading cause of death among 15–29-year-olds.





HOW CAN CHILDREN FOCUS ON FOLLOWING THEIR PASSION WITH THINGS LIKE THIS HAPPENING AROUND THEM?

The silver lining is that researchers have pinpointed that 21.1% of this activity takes place between 4 and 7 pm. If we can keep kids off the street during that time, working toward their dreams, our community can win!

That's exactly what we're doing at YourPassion1st. We're offering youth ages 11-24 opportunities to pursue their passion during those crucial hours of 4 and 7 pm, as well as our in-school offerings, and night/weekend opportunities.

We offer mentoring in areas like: music/entertainment, sports/wellness, and culinary/nutrition. Kids in our programs also experience cross-cultural networking, employment opportunities, and exposure to leaders in their industry via our collaborative festival & events. They also get to experience the reward of using their unique skills to give back to the community through our innovative workshops & community engagement experiences..

HOW ARE WE DOING?

- **OUR 6TH ANNUAL WELLNESS FESTIVAL (IN PARTNERSHIP W/ A GREATER GOOD FOUNDATION & MI CASA HOLIDAY, AND 4TH ANNUAL PITCH COMPETITION & MUSIC FESTIVAL HAD 600+ IN ATTENDANCE**
- **WE ENGAGED 250+ YOUTH IN 2024 THROUGH OUR AMBASSADOR PROGRAM.**
- **WE ARE BUILDING A MOBILE APP TO CONNECT MORE YOUTH TO OPPORTUNITIES THAT HELP THEM FIND, DEFINE, AND FOLLOW THEIR PASSION INTO THE WORKFORCE OR ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

IN 2024, WE MADE SOME INCREDIBLE STRIDES TOWARDS CREATING A MORE SUSTAINABLE PLATFORM FOR OUR YOUTH.

- We have added 3 new vital members to our **Board Of Directors** (Dr. Toya Crain, Sharif Walker, & Will Wagner) & we will be adding more to ensure we have the expertise needed to achieve our goals.
- We've **engaged with 250+ young adults & coached (1 on 1) 26 young adults** through our ambassador program. Out of those 26, 16 were able to start their journey toward making their passion a career through *paid opportunities*.
- We have added **Jeff Cole to our Advisory Board** & have a dedicated team of 9 volunteers hard at work building out our **mobile application** for youth ages 13-24 to connect them to mentorship & opportunities that help them find, define, and follow their passion into the workforce or entrepreneurship.
- We will be releasing our 2nd season of **The Undivided Bridge** focused on bridging the gap between youth and challenges they see in their community (IG, FB, YouTube @theundividedbridge).

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT OF THE YEAR 2024

Total Raised in 2024: \$224,627	2024 Program Expenses: \$172,793
	2024 General Expenses: \$68,579
	2024 Total Expenses: \$241,372

**Total Raised Since
2020:**

\$796,928

A Message from our Founder

"We've made incredible strides over the past 5 years, and it's all thanks to the dedication and heart of our YourPassion1st community. As a child, I dreamed of creating one of the most inspiring and impactful community centers—one that could truly change lives. While we aren't there just yet, every step we've taken brings us closer to that vision.

Let this be a reminder: your dreams are possible when you stay committed to them. In order to achieve your dreams, you have to follow #YourPassion1st."

Chris Thomas
Founder & Executive Director



A Message from the YourPassion1st Team



"None of this would be possible without the help of our donors, volunteers, mentors, and, of course, our amazing kids. We want to extend a huge, heartfelt thank you to everyone who helped us in some way this year. Our results this year have been amazing and we're excited to do even more together in 2025!"



HELPING YOUNG ADULTS ACHIEVE THEIR DREAMS THROUGH A DREAM TEAM

Our partners represented below have played a crucial role into helping the organization make an impact in the Greater Chicago community. YourPassion1st is forever grateful for our partners!



DEC 27TH 2024

How can you help?

Interested in being a mentor or volunteer?

Volunteer Days twice a month starting in February 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?

Follow the link below for further details:

<https://www.yourpassion1st.com/contact>

Interested in being on our Podcast?

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

Does your organization offer opportunities for young adults?

Sign-up today: <https://jtmt.typeform.com/to/OH GK3GBq>

Interested in being a partner at one of our festivals/events in 2025?

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?



Donate

Since 2019, coached 119 young adults in entrepreneurship & workforce readiness; 78 connected to paid opportunities. Since 2019,...

YourPassion1st

Our Board

Jonathan Ellwanger
(President)

Dr. Orson Morrison, PsyD
(Vice President)

Kim Marzano
(Secretary)

Tere Wang
(Treasurer)

Sharif Walker

Will Wagner

Dr. Toya Crain

Advisory Board

Julius Spates & Janelle Martin
Innovation & Engagement

Dakota Gipson
Community Engagement

Danielle Porter
Program Management

Kim Marzano
People & Culture

Tere Wang
Operations & Project Management

Christian Udu & Moheth Muralidharan
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Alandon Pitts & Sade Okunlola
Fundraising

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