

Friends of the Children identifies kindergartners in communities most impacted by poverty and gun violence and pairs them with salaried, professional mentors — “Friends.”

We commit to staying by their side for 12.5 years. *No matter what.*



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YEAR-END REPORT | 2022

Building Resilience

Thank you for your generous support of Friends of the Children-Chicago.

This past year has shown us how resilient our youth and families are in the face of tremendous obstacles.

A 4th grader attending school regularly for the first time, a homeless mother of five filled with optimism about her children's future, a little boy in foster care learning to express his feelings.

These are the children and caregivers who know they are not alone because the Friends-Chicago team has thrown our arms around them without hesitation. We have helped them overcome challenges, see new possibilities, and build the skills and resilience they need to thrive.

It's your support that makes this possible.



2022 HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ We added two new Friends and 16 children, bringing our community of youth and families to 72.
- ▶ Our Friends spent an average of 13.5 hours per week with each child, supporting their emotional, social, and academic development.
- ▶ 89% of caregivers reported that their child's social skills and behavior improved over last year.
- ▶ We opened our new Clubhouse in North Lawndale.
- ▶ Philanthropist MacKenzie Scott made an unrestricted \$1.4 million gift to Friends-Chicago, part of a \$44 million gift to the Friends of the Children network nationwide.
- ▶ The Friends of the Children network grew to a total of 29 cities across the United States.
- ▶ We celebrated all of this and more at Friendsfest 2022, an event which netted more than \$200,000 for our mission.

As we help each child create their own personal path toward success, so too are we building a resilient organization. Friends-Chicago is committed to growing responsibly, to being responsive to our children and families, and to delivering on the promise we've made to them. 12.5 years. No matter what.

TRAUMA-INFORMED MENTORING

There is no quick fix for a child exposed to significant trauma. Whether it be exposure to gun violence, domestic violence or a caregiver struggling with substance abuse, healing from trauma is possible – but it takes time.

If we want to bring about lasting change, we must provide children born into these circumstances with in-depth, long-term support, right now.

That's exactly what we do at Friends of the Children.

Our Friends go through intensive training, both up front and ongoing, to stay on top of the latest practices that are proven to mitigate trauma.

We are also fortunate to have the support of five professionals who form our Mental Health Consultancy. These therapists and doctors volunteer their time to meet with our Friends monthly to talk through the specific challenges our Friends face with their children and to advise on the best practice strategies to support them.

100% of our youth have experienced *five or more* Adverse Childhood Experiences

THE CHALLENGE

Research shows that the more Adverse Childhood Experiences a child has, the more likely they are to suffer negative mental, behavioral, and physical health outcomes.

THE GOOD NEWS

Trauma is not destiny. Survivors of trauma can heal. Research demonstrates that the presence of a stable, caring adult in a child's life is the single most important factor in recovering from trauma and building resilience.



"Friends of the Children supports children who have experienced trauma, helping them understand how it affects their body and mind and teaching them how to respond to intense emotions with non-aggressive actions. By reaching these children early and providing sustained, trauma-informed supports, Friends of the Children is helping our city's young people get and stay on a positive life trajectory. The long-term impact will be significant."

Arne Duncan
Managing Partner, Chicago CRED

TRACKING RESILIENCE IN OUR YOUTH

Friends-Chicago adheres to a proven model developed over the past 30 years by the Friends of the Children network. We know it works in the long run, and we are careful to understand how each child is developing along the way. We utilize the Child and Youth Resilience Survey, a measure of social-ecological resilience which is used by researchers and practitioners worldwide.

The survey gathers responses from youth themselves, and from the ‘Person Most Knowledgeable’ about their unique obstacles, in our case, their Friends. We conducted a baseline survey last year and then re-conducted it in October 2022.

Percent of Friends-Chicago children scoring high or exceptional on the Child and Youth Resilience Measure:

Reporting Party	2021	2022	Increase in Reported Resilience
Child	66%	91%	25%
Mentor	7%	52%	45%

We will continue to work with an advisory group to identify best practice methods for following our youth’s progress as they move through different developmental stages.



SUPPORTING OUR FAMILIES

Our Family & Community Engagement Specialists deepen caregiver support, including connecting families to housing, food, education, legal, physical and mental health, and other essential services.

They also provide monthly Caregiver Cafés where parents and caregivers gather for trainings on financial management, share parenting challenges, and sometimes just play games together for fun.

It’s all about building a community to bolster the entire family. This two-generation approach helps ensure our youth have the best chance to thrive, including a safe home, good nutrition, and quality health care.



Building a Foundation of Language and Literacy

Literacy is critical for academic success, but it is so much more. Literacy opens a whole world for a child. It engenders curiosity, helps build independence, and promotes self-esteem. Most children enter our program already behind their peers in reading and writing. The pandemic and remote learning exacerbated this discrepancy. Literacy is one of the key skills our Friends focus on with their youth. They incorporate reading and writing into almost every activity and children participate in our weekly reading program at the Clubhouse. This year we partnered with Chicago HOPES to conduct literacy assessments for our children using the DIBELS® tool (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills). Baseline assessments were completed in June of 2022. Follow-up assessments will be completed in January of 2023.



WELCOME TO THE CLUBHOUSE

We opened the Clubhouse in June of 2022 in North Lawndale. It's a game changer for Friends-Chicago!

This is where mentors meet with their youth to build, create, read, and play. Children dream and set goals here, they interact with other youth to develop their social skills and make meaningful connections, and they find a safe and stable place when the rest of their lives are far from stable. Caregivers come here, too, to participate in monthly "Caregiver Cafés" and to meet with Friends or with the Family & Community Engagement Specialists.

We couldn't have created our Clubhouse without the incredible financial support of Pitch Your Peers and design expertise provided *pro bono* by Hartshorne Plunkard Architecture.

The Clubhouse is a *home* for Friends-Chicago and our community.



We hope you'll stop by and visit!

CARTER & JONATHAN

Carter is a fifth grader whose smile can light up an entire room. He's open to trying new things, but particularly loves Big Macs and basketball.

Carter came into the Friends of the Children program when he was five years old. When we met him, his teacher had placed him at the back of the classroom facing the rear wall because she couldn't get him to sit still.

Carter had recently witnessed his father's death from a drug overdose. He and his mother started living from friend to friend and he attended four schools in one year. During that time, they briefly stayed with an older brother of his who beat him. That's when Carter was placed in foster care. Despite multiple attempts at reconciliation, Carter's mother gave up custody of Carter and he is now permanently placed in the foster care system.

Self-regulation and self-confidence are two challenges Carter faces every day. He often feels that nobody loves him and even suggested he change his own name to "X." His Friend Jonathan is helping Carter build a network of support around himself to show him he is loved.



They build robots, get together with other boys in our program, and go to the barbershop regularly.

Carter is gaining confidence and his natural kindness is shining through. On a recent outing to the Planetarium, Carter saw an elderly gentleman drop his cane. Rather than avoiding interaction as he once would have done, Carter ran over quickly, picked up the cane, and handed it to the man. He then returned to the group proud and happy to have helped—that infectious smile on his face.



SARIAH & POSHLYN

Ten-year-old Sariah is easy going, smart, and loves to laugh. Her passions are drawing and dancing. She is unusually observant for her age and has a lot of compassion for others.

Sariah struggles with low self-esteem, not unusual for survivors of trauma. When she was an infant, her father was murdered near their family home. Her mother, who has been through multiple traumas, has difficulty expressing her own feelings or responding to Sariah's emotional needs. It took a while for Sariah to trust her Friend Poshlyn and even longer for her mother to open up.

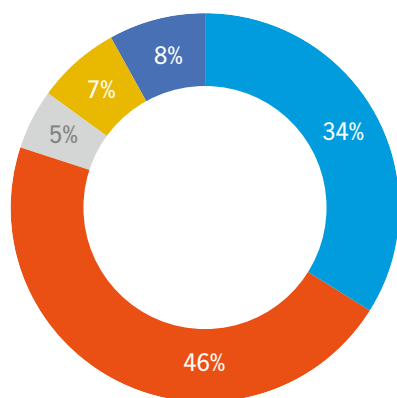
A consistent and trusting relationship is one of the most important things we can provide for Sariah's healing journey. As she enters the pre-teen years, Sariah has already developed a deep and trusting bond with her professional mentor Poshlyn. The two of them have created a safe space where Sariah can express her feelings and work through her emotions.

This genuinely loving relationship is complemented by Poshlyn's professional expertise and knowledge of trauma-informed practice. She recently completed her master's degree and is working to receive her license in clinical social work. She is able to tap into our Mental Health Consultancy and her own clinical advisor to develop ways to empower Sariah. Among them are weekly checks-in with Sariah about her feelings and regular communication with Sariah's mother to provide support at home. They have recently been enjoying reading *The Skin You Are In*, a book that promotes self-acceptance.

It is this level of professionalism, authentic engagement, and long-term commitment that will help Sariah build resilience and thrive.

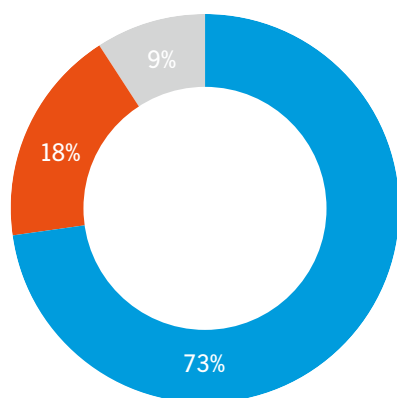
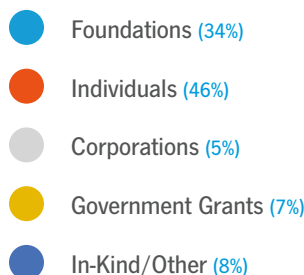


FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT | FISCAL YEAR 2022



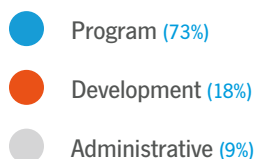
FY 2022 REVENUE

TOTAL: \$3,843,379



FY 2022 EXPENSES

TOTAL: \$1,574,028



*Unaudited

BUILDING A RESILIENT ORGANIZATION

- ▶ An unrestricted grant from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott, combined with funds from Invest for Kids and a surplus from FY2022, has enabled us to establish the *No Matter What Sustainability Fund* with an initial balance of just over \$1 million.
- ▶ Our Board of Directors was directly responsible for giving/raising more than \$533,000.
- ▶ We applied for and were awarded a significant grant from Cook County and two from the State of Illinois. Combined, these grants total more than \$2 million over three years.
- ▶ We also established an *Opportunity Fund* of \$300,000 to invest in capacity building. We've used this fund to invest in management training for our leadership team, a strategic personnel assessment to help us plan for expanded staffing needs, and we are embarking on a strategic planning process in early 2023.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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OUR COMMUNITY MAKES US STRONG

Throughout the year, caring Chicagoans came together to support our children and families. **We are deeply grateful.**



Friendsfest 2022, held at the Epiphany Center for the Arts, raised more than \$200,000 in celebration of the possibility inherent in our kids.

Friendsfest 2022 Sponsors

- Anonymous
- Discover
- KPB Foods
- Hartshorne Plunkard Architecture
- Tom and Deb Abrahamson
- Crowell & Moring
- Fifth Third Bank
- Oak Park Bank, A Wintrust Community Bank

The cost of the event was underwritten by an anonymous donor, meaning that every dollar raised went straight to fulfilling our vital mission.



Our Winter Gifts Drive ensures that our children and all of their siblings have presents to open during the holidays.



We were proud to be the recipient of Invest for Kids' annual investment conference. Their \$200,000 gift enabled us to hire a Family & Community Engagement Specialist, grow the number of children in our program, and build our operating reserves.



August is a time of celebration as our kids and their siblings return to school with well-stocked backpacks donated by our community.



Our *No Matter What Club* donors commit to making monthly donations to Friends-Chicago. Their steadfast support is essential to our ability to fulfill the promise we make to our kids. 12.5 years. No Matter What.



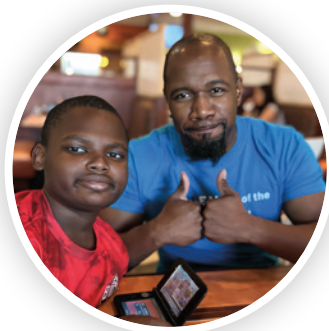
The BFF Club is a group of dedicated individuals who commit to providing a child with a Friend for six weeks or more. Their gifts of \$1,500 and above ensure our kids have every opportunity to overcome obstacles and reach their dreams.



KPB Foods and KFC run two coupon book drives every year, all of the proceeds going to Friends-Chicago. In 2022 it added up to more than \$180,000!

EXPANDING OUR REACH

In 2023, we are expanding our program to serve children and families living on Chicago's South Side. Focusing on the neighborhoods of Auburn Gresham, Chatham, Englewood, West Englewood and Roseland, we are in the process of identifying community partners and a Clubhouse space. By Spring of 2023 we will enroll our first cohort of 24 children and families on the South Side, while at the same time adding 32 children and families living on the West Side.

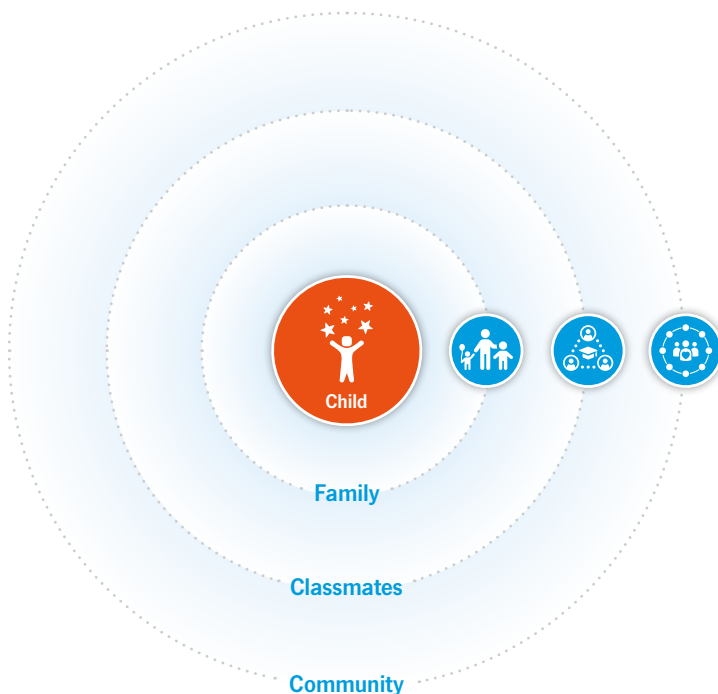


By June of 2023, we will have 128 children and families in our program!

The ripple effect for each child is enormous.

The positive impact of what we make possible extends to siblings, caregivers, classmates, and our larger community.

This is the way we can disrupt generational cycles of poverty and violence.



We couldn't do it without you. Thank you for making a real difference in the lives of Chicago's children.