

2026
IMPACT REPORT

FR1ENDS of the CH1LDREN
Twin Cities

TOGETHER, **WE SHOW UP**

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD CHAIR





Dear Friends,

At Friends of the Children–Twin Cities, we believe showing up changes lives. Not just once, but consistently, through challenges, milestones, and everyday moments. That belief is at the heart of our promise to children and families: 12+ years of professional mentoring and unwavering commitment, no matter what.

This year has reinforced why that promise matters. As families navigated uncertainty, disrupted routines, and the stress of events like Operation Metro Surge, our Friends remained a consistent presence, offering encouragement, connection, and support.

Throughout this report, you'll see that commitment reflected in Darlington's story, our partnerships with families and organizations like Head Start, and the generosity of supporters who believe in long-term relationships.

We also shared a joyful afternoon with Olympic champion Simone Biles, who spent time with our youth and Friends talking about courage, big dreams, and having people in your corner. Simone reflected on the value of consistent relationships, reminding us that every child deserves someone who believes in them and stays alongside them.

This has also been a year of organizational transition. We're focused on strengthening the financial and operational foundation needed to sustain our promise. We're grateful for partners like the Sauer Family Foundation, who understand that strong programs require strong organizations behind them.

Sustainability is about more than balancing a budget. It's about ensuring children and families can continue counting on us. That requires strong partnerships, a committed community of supporters, and thoughtful decisions that protect our long-term promise.

None of this happens without you. Whether you give, advocate, or share our story, YOU are a part of the circle of support surrounding our children and families.

Thank you for showing up alongside us. Together, we're building something that will have a long standing ripple effect in our community for generations to come.

With gratitude,

Mary Rennekamp
Interim Executive Director

Kyrra Rankine
Board Chair

OUR **VALUES**

Put Children First

Build Relationships on Love

Commit to Empowerment

Pursue Goals Relentlessly

Unlock All Potential

Our values guide us to achieve our mission. Each value applies not only to our youth, Friends, and program teams, but also to all Friends of the Children–Twin Cities employees, volunteers, and partners. We use our values to make informed decisions; to hire, coach, and manage; and most importantly, we use our values to change the way the world views and treats the youth and families we serve.

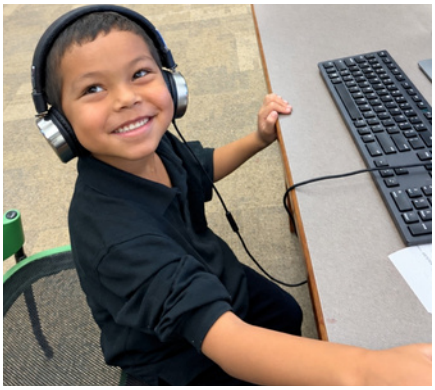


OUR **MISSION**

Impacting generational change by empowering youth who are facing the greatest obstacles through relationships with professional mentors

– 12+ years, no matter WHAT.

HOW IT **WORKS**







1. SELECT

We identify children ages 4–6 who face systemic obstacles and have experienced significant adversity.

2. HIRE & TRAIN

We recruit, hire, and train full-time, paid professional mentors we call Friends.

3. COMMIT

We commit to every child from kindergarten through high school graduation. 12+ years, no matter what.





4. INDIVIDUALIZED

Each child has a dedicated, one-to-one Friend. Our relationship-based approach is intentional and tailored to each child.

5. MEET THEM WHERE THEY ARE

Friends work with youth in school, the community, and at home.



6. MEASURE & IMPROVE

Third-party research and data from Friends, youth and caregivers help us continuously improve.

OUR MODEL WORKS

92% of youth enroll in post-secondary education, serve our country, or enter the workforce.

90% of youth earn a high school diploma or GED.

96% of youth avoided criminal justice system involvement.

95% of youth avoided early parenting.

Compared to youth who experienced foster care without a Friend

55% 74% 74%

THE POWER OF **SHOWING UP**

YOUTH & FRIEND STORY



Jaylen* loves exploring new interests. Lately, he's been getting into different sports, spending time at the park practicing soccer and basketball with his Friend, Darlington. They have also been working toward Jaylen's reading goals. When Darlington showed him that his reading level had gone up on his latest assessment, Jaylen was proud to see his progress.

"He's been saying how he wants to work hard to be smart," Darlington says. "We've talked about how one day the ultimate goal would be to go to college."

This summer, Jaylen took another step toward that goal when he graduated from kindergarten. Darlington was there to celebrate with him and spent time with members of Jaylen and his dad's longtime circle of support, including people who have cared for Jaylen's family across generations.

As they learned more about Friends of the Children, they were struck by what makes the model different: Friends are paid, professional mentors with dedicated time to show up in a young person's school, home, and community.

More importantly, they had seen firsthand what Darlington's consistent presence meant for Jaylen. "They were very thankful that I was such a mainstay in Jaylen's life. They were really impressed by the intentionality of what we do."

Jaylen's dad sees that presence up close. "It's been a life-changing experience. Having Friends of the Children in our life has been amazing! Everything they do for me and my son we are truly grateful."

For Darlington, hearing from people who have known and loved Jaylen's family for years was a powerful reminder that the impact of mentoring extends beyond one relationship. Over time, Darlington has become another trusted adult showing up consistently and working alongside the people who care about Jaylen most.

That is part of the power of the Friends model: a Friend doesn't replace the relationships already surrounding a child. They join and strengthen them.

**Youth name changed for privacy*

"IT REASSURED ME THAT I AM IN THE RIGHT PLACE AND HAVING A MAJOR IMPACT NOT ONLY IN MY YOUTH'S LIFE, BUT ALSO WITH THOSE WHO ARE CLOSEST TO HIM."

- Darlington Yonly, Friend

OUR IMPACT IN **2026**

Our time-tested, proven model focuses on the power of one-on-one professional mentoring. Each child is paired with a paid, professional Friend who stays alongside them for 12+ years. As part of our 2-generation approach, we also partner with caregivers to strengthen the network of support around each child.



96%

of youth demonstrated growth in **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS**, shown to buffer against the impact of adversity

83%

of youth recently accomplished something **THEY ARE PROUD OF**

94%

of youth exhibited or reported a **SENSE OF BELONGING** to their community

100%

of youth made progress toward individualized **ROADMAP GOALS**

83%

of caregivers feel **EMPOWERED** to overcome barriers in their lives

66%

of caregivers engaged with their child's Friend **AT LEAST TWICE PER MONTH**

83%

of caregivers feel **SUPPORTED** by Friends-Twin Cities Staff



SOMEONE WHO **BELIEVES IN THEM**

CAREGIVER STORY

For Aisha*, having a Friend in her child's life has meant more than mentoring. It has meant knowing there is another trusted, caring adult consistently in their corner.

Since joining Friends of the Children–Twin Cities, Aisha has watched her child become more confident, comfortable, and connected. Having Te'Ashia as a Friend has created a relationship where her child can talk openly, learn, and feel supported while gaining greater independence and a willingness to try new things.

"I didn't expect something as simple as having a consistent, caring Friend to make such a noticeable difference in their confidence and happiness."

The relationship has made a difference for Aisha, too. Parenting can sometimes feel isolating, and knowing her child has another caring adult supporting and encouraging them has brought a sense of reassurance.

Perhaps most meaningful has been seeing how quickly a genuine relationship developed, and how much that relationship now means to her child. Along the way, Aisha has found herself paying greater attention to the small steps, recognizing how encouragement, consistency, and positive relationships can add up to meaningful change.

For their family, Friends-Twin Cities has become more than a program.

"Having a Friend means my child has someone who believes in them and helps them see their own potential. For our family, it is a relationship that has brought hope, confidence, and positive change into our lives."



Pictured: Caregiver Aisha in back, her child in front, and Friend Te'Ashia Parker on the right.

"AS A PARENT, I FEEL MORE SUPPORTED AND LESS ALONE. IT GIVES ME PEACE OF MIND KNOWING THAT MY CHILD HAS ANOTHER CARING PERSON IN THEIR CORNER."

- Aisha, Caregiver



SIMONE BILES
VISITS YOUTH AT FRIENDS–TWIN CITIES

There was plenty of star power in the room when Simone Biles spent an afternoon with Friends of the Children–Twin Cities this fall. But for our youth, the afternoon quickly became less about medals and more about dreams, courage, and the people who help us along the way.

Simone has been a longtime champion of Friends of the Children. She shared with our youth that her own experience growing up in foster care is part of what first connected her to the organization.

> **"I WISH I HAD SOMETHING LIKE THAT, KIND OF THAT CONSTANT, THAT YOU GUYS HAVE WITH YOUR MENTORS."**
>
> - Simone Biles to Friends-Twin Cities Youth

Sitting together over pizza, our elementary-aged youth asked Simone the questions only kids can ask: What's your favorite food? What's your favorite gymnastics move? How are you so famous? Was it really hard to do the flip?



Simone answered every question with genuine interest, as though she were hearing them for the first time. But she also talked about the harder parts of becoming who she is. She told them about the coaches and family members who believed in her, the importance of asking trusted adults for help, and the years of practice behind what they see on television.

When one child shared that a friend once told her she couldn't do gymnastics correctly, but her coach encouraged her to keep trying, Simone immediately responded: "You're facing your fears. That's so brave of you. Perseverance."

Before the afternoon ended, Simone left our kids with a message that felt especially fitting for Friends: "Always dream big and dream bigger after that."

At Friends, we know big dreams rarely happen alone. They grow when children have people in their corner who see their strengths, listen to their dreams, encourage them through the hard moments, and keep showing up. For one afternoon, our youth got one more person in their corner. And she reminded them to dream bigger.

IN THEIR **OWN WORDS!**

We asked youth five questions to get to know them better. Here's a look at some of their answers.

DREAM BIG

What are your dreams for the future?



What's your favorite class in school?



What makes you feel supported?



What is something you're proud of?



What do you do when you need a break?



A HEAD START ON A LASTING **RELATIONSHIP**

PARTNER STORY

When Midway Head Start began partnering with Friends of the Children–Twin Cities in fall 2024, both organizations shared a goal: reach children early, strengthen the relationships around them, and help lay the foundation for long-term success.

Midway Head Start, part of Community Action Partnership of Ramsey & Washington Counties, builds trusted relationships with families and works alongside them to help children thrive. Because Head Start staff know the children and families they serve, they are well positioned to identify children who could benefit from a Friend as part of their existing circle of support.

The partnership began with Head Start staff learning how children are selected and matched with professional mentors, and how Friends of the Children-Twin Cities commits to each child from kindergarten through high school graduation. Since then, the partnership has grown into a trusted referral relationship, with more Head Start families expressing interest.

Hareen Lankford, Center Education Coordinator at Midway Head Start, says what stands out is how Friends meet children and families where they are and build relationships that last.

For Friends–Twin Cities, partnerships like Midway Head Start are essential. Our work begins with trusted community partners who know children and families and can help identify where a long-term relationship could make a difference.

“The intentional design of the Friends working with the children through high school is imperative…to continue to show them they matter.”

- Hareen Lankford, Center Education Coordinator at Midway Head Start

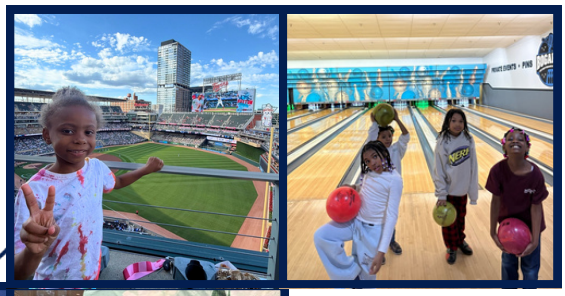


HIGHLIGHTS **FROM 2026**

In 2026, Friends of the Children–Twin Cities youth set goals, explored places beyond their usual routines, and built confidence by trying new sports! Literacy remained a priority throughout our programming, with engaging activities that helped youth work toward their reading goals. And in a year that was especially challenging for many of our families, Friends made space for youth to process their feelings, find their voices through journaling, and hear their strengths celebrated.

Discovering

New places & experiences



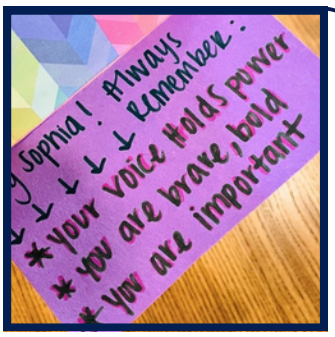


Growing

Literacy, STEM, and social-emotional skills at our SELebration of Summer Camp







Affirming

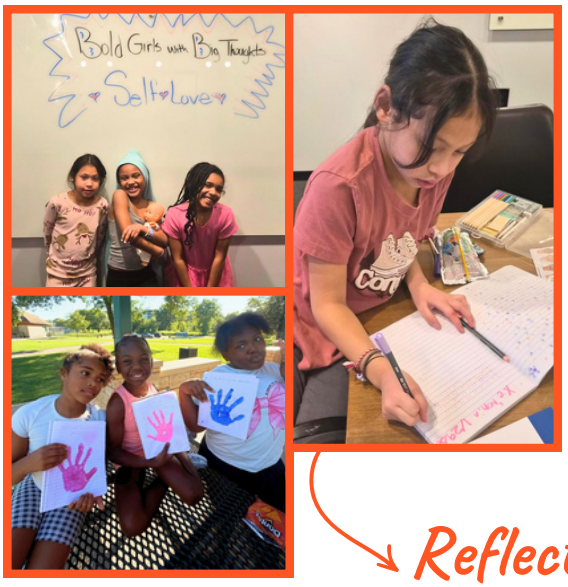
Pictured: Personalized messages from Friends celebrating youth's strengths and potential!





Moving

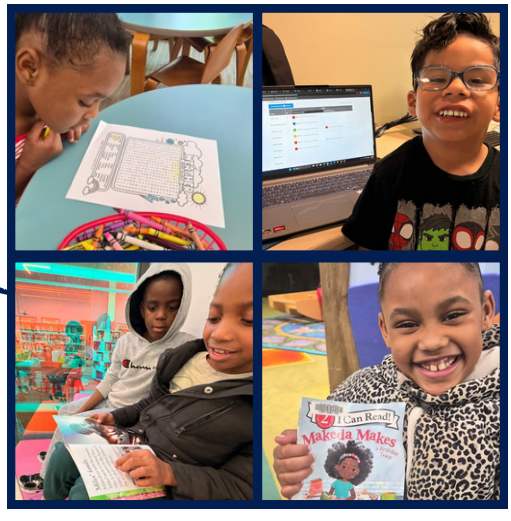
Building confidence and discipline through sports.



Reflecting

Helping youth find their voice through journaling!

Learning



A LEGACY OF **GENEROSITY**

SAUER FAMILY FOUNDATION

For the Sauer Family Foundation, investing in Friends of the Children–Twin Cities begins with a simple but powerful belief: children thrive when they have nurturing, supportive relationships with adults who believe in them.

That belief aligns deeply with the Friends–Twin Cities model. By pairing children and families facing significant adversity with paid, professional mentors, Friends–Twin Cities demonstrates the role consistent, caring adults can play in strengthening a child's well-being. For Sauer, this focus on relationships reflects a core element of its own mission and approach to philanthropy.

What makes Friends–Twin Cities particularly compelling is its long-term commitment. Children remain in the program from kindergarten through high school graduation, allowing supportive relationships to endure across the many stages of a child's and family's growth and development. Rather than entering a young person's life for a single moment or milestone, Friends–Twin Cities is designed around continuity—showing up as circumstances change, challenges arise, and children grow.

This approach reflects one of the Sauer Family Foundation's core beliefs: We believe in the power of nurturing, supportive relationships for children and youth to develop to their full potential.

That belief also shapes the legacy Sauer hopes to leave: communities where young people have the relationships and support they need to realize their potential, particularly when life presents significant obstacles.



For other philanthropists considering investments in long-term, relationship-based work, Sauer offers an important perspective: if relationships are part of the mechanism for change, they should be treated as an intervention, not simply an incidental benefit of a program.

And meaningful relationships require time. Trust grows through consistency, shared experiences, and continuing to show up. That is why multi-year philanthropy can be especially powerful for organizations like Friends–Twin Cities, giving them the stability to make long-term commitments to children and families.

The Sauer Family Foundation's investment in Friends of the Children–Twin Cities represents more than financial support. It is an investment in the idea that lasting change is built through lasting relationships, and that children and families deserve people and institutions willing to stay alongside them for the long haul.

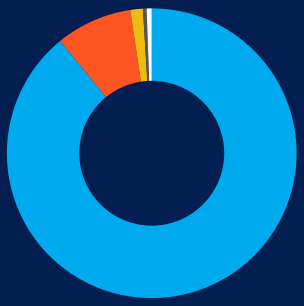
"WE BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF NURTURING, SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH TO DEVELOP TO THEIR FULL POTENTIAL."

- Sauer Family Foundation

FINANCIAL **SNAPSHOT**

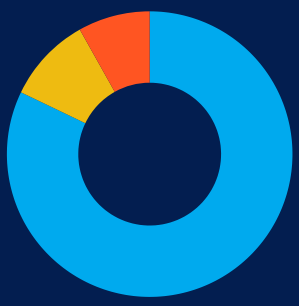
FISCAL YEAR 2026

Financial summary for September 1, 2025 - August 31, 2026



REVENUE: $992,314

- Foundations (89%)
- Individual (8.5%)
- Government (1.5%)
- Corporate (<1%)
- Other & In-Kind (<1%)



EXPENSES: $1,089,983

- Program Services (82%)
- Administrative Services (10%)
- Fundraising & Development (8%)

UNRESTRICTED REVENUE

Foundations	$884,161
Individual	$84,500
Government	$14,000
Corporate	$4,069
Other & In-Kind	$5,584
Total Operating Revenue	$992,314

EXPENSES

Program Expenses	$895,152
Administrative Services	$106,138
Fundraising Costs	$88,693
Total Operating Expenses	$1,089,983

ASSETS

Cash & Cash Equivalents	$156,891
Receivables	$350,385
Equipment	$5,786
Prepaid Expenses	$4,217
Total Assets	$517,279

LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable & Credit Cards	$51,425
Payroll Liabilities	$33,902
Total Liabilities	$85,327

NET ASSETS

With Donor Restrictions	$363,533
Without Donor Restrictions	$68,419
Total Net Assets	$431,952

OUR TEAM

MANAGEMENT TEAM

Mary Rennekamp
Interim Executive Director

Muriel Dorbor
Program Director

Janeth Sanchez
Director of Operations

PROGRAM TEAM

Te'Ashia Parker
Professional Friend

Kyah Thompson
Professional Friend

Roxanne Santa Ana
Professional Friend

Darlington Yonly
Professional Friend

Wuanell Bear-Cummings
Professional Friend

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kyrra Rankine
Board Chair
Executive Director, The Residency

Simone Hardeman-Jones
Executive Director, GreenLight Fund Twin Cities

Negah Connelly
Philanthropist

Courtney Andersen
Vice President, 3M Supply Chain

Amy Pfarr Walker
Philanthropic Advisor, The Minneapolis Foundation

Chris Pham
Shareholder & Co-Chair, Sports & Entertainment Group, Fredrikson & Byron, P.A. and Founder, Elevate LLC

Dave Colling
Community Partnership and Contract Manager, Metro Meals on Wheels

REFERRAL PARTNERS

Community Action Partnership of Ramsey & Washington Counties

Fraser

Hennepin County Child and Family Services

Hmong Prep Academy

The Journey School

Minneapolis Public Schools

Montessori American Indian Childcare Center

PICA Head Start

Shakir Consulting



Pictured. Left to Right: Mary Rennekamp, Te'Ashia Parker, Muriel Dorbor, Janeth Sanchez, Wuanell Bear-Cummings, Darlington Yonly, Kyah Thompson, Roxanne Santa Ana



FRIENDS of the CHILDREN

Generational Change, One Child at a Time

Twin Cities

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