

# 2024 REPORT TO OUR COMMUNITY



*Supporting and empowering young  
people on their journey to self-reliance*

# Letter from our Board Chair



"2024 presented several unexpected headwinds for the non-profit sector, and organizations that work with youth in particular. In a challenging economy, where several partner-organizations closed their doors, YouthLink served 20% more youth, capping a three-year period where the number of youth seeking and receiving YouthLink services more than doubled.

Most remarkable is that the organization achieved this operating milestone despite a small decline in overall revenue. This is a result of a stable leadership team and management expense controls instituted early in the year, where tough choices had to be made. But most importantly, our

generous and growing donor community really stepped up and offset the gap in other areas.

Martin Luther King Jr wrote that a man's measure is where he stands at times of challenge and controversy—and YouthLink stands both strong and proud. The organization enters 2025 on stable financial footing with a balanced budget. Strong programs and partnerships are yielding positive results—including a 90% housing stability rate for youth in our supportive housing. We are grateful for our community's continued support, and we remain committed to ensuring every young person has the resources to thrive."

***Rachael Scherer, Board of Directors Acting Chair***





# Letter from our CEO



“At YouthLink, the young adults we serve and the homes we help them find are at the heart of everything we do. In 2024, we faced extraordinary challenges, yet our impact grew stronger. Since 2021, the number of youth seeking support has increased by 123%, with 2,561 young people turning to us this year alone. This growth reflects both the rising need and the trust youth place in our services. We’re more than a social service—we’re a mission-driven organization committed to meeting every challenge with resilience, innovation, and unwavering compassion. No matter what comes next, we’ll continue showing up, adapting, and fighting for a future where every young person has a place to call home.”

***Rich Melzer, YouthLink CEO***

## YouthLink’s Leadership Team



**Rich Melzer,**  
Chief Executive  
Officer



**Shennika Sudduth,**  
Senior Director of  
Programs



**Lisa Tozer,**  
Director of Human  
Resources



**Heather Haynes,**  
Director of  
Development

*For a full list of YouthLink staff, please visit [youthlinkmn.org](http://youthlinkmn.org)*

# V.O.Y.A.C

(Voices of Youth Advisory Council)



"2024 was a big year for V.O.Y.A.C. We stayed true to our mission—uplifting youth voices and ensuring YouthLink's decisions reflect what young people need. We strengthened our presence through surveys, meet-and-greet events, and partnerships, including new relationships with policymakers and elected officials that represent our district. In 2025, we'll keep pushing for youth-centered change while deepening our role in policy and advocacy. By working with policymakers and community partners, we'll continue driving real impact for youth experiencing homelessness. Our voices matter—inside YouthLink and beyond."

Clyde Quarles, VOYAC Chair

## 2024 Highlights

### Policy

- **Homeless Day on the Hill:** Advocated for youth experiencing homelessness in key legislative discussions.
- **Pass the Mic Survey:** Helped shape policy by gathering data from Minnesotans in poverty, influencing future recommendations.
- **Engagement with elected officials** at the local and state levels.

### Programs

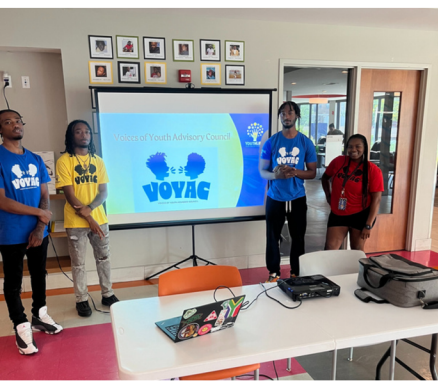
- **The Next Steps Initiative:** Guided youth in structured goal-setting for personal growth.
- **Colors of Change:** Hosted monthly art workshops for youth, led by professional artists.
- **Youth Justice Writing Workshop:** Gave youth a platform for self-expression with paid participation.
- **Voter Engagement:** Highly successful outreach and events in the Drop-In Center to help youth register to vote and learn about civic participation.

### Procedures

- **New Guest & Grievance Policies:** Ensured youth voices shaped YouthLink's policies for better access and experience.
- **Focus Groups:** Provided input on systemic changes through discussions with YouthPrise, Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain, and the Metropolitan Council.

### Partnerships

- **Unity for Youth Campaign:** United nonprofits, donors, and officials to raise awareness and drive action on youth homelessness.
- **Twin Cities Futsal League:** played futsal with youth, shared stories, and collected donations from youth who give back through service.
- **Constellation Fund & Research in Action:** Led survey efforts to prioritize youth perspectives in funding and programs.



# 9 Guiding Principles\*



These nine guiding principles, developed by a coalition of youth-serving organizations in the Twin Cities metro, including YouthLink, provide a framework for effectively supporting youth and young families experiencing homelessness:

- 01 Journey Oriented**  
*We interact with youth to help them understand the interconnectedness of their past, present, and future as they decide where they want to go and how to get there.*

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- 02 Trauma-Informed**  
*We recognize that most homeless youth have experienced trauma; we build our relationships, responses, and services on that knowledge.*

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- 03 Non-Judgmental**  
*We interact with youth without labeling or judging them on the basis of their background, experiences, choices, or behaviors.*

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- 04 Harm Reduction**  
*We contain the effects of risky behavior in the short term and seek to reduce its effects in the long term.*

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- 05 Trusting Youth-Adult Relationships**  
*We build relationships by interacting with youth in an honest, dependable, authentic, caring, and supportive way.*

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- 06 Strengths-Based**  
*We start with, and build upon, the skills, strengths, and positive characteristics of each youth.*

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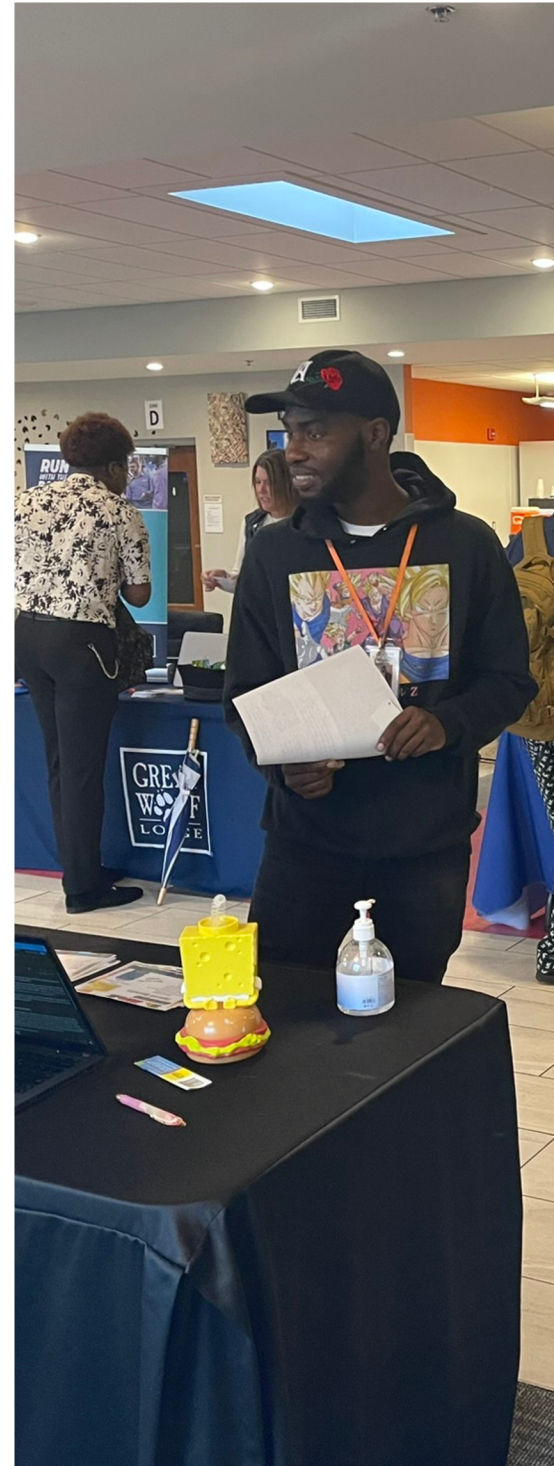
- 07 Positive Youth Development**  
*We provide opportunities for youth to build a sense of competency, usefulness, belonging, and power.*

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- 08 Holistic**  
*We engage youth in a manner that recognizes that mental, physical, spiritual, and social health are interconnected and interrelated.*

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- 09 Collaboration**  
*We establish a principles-based, youth-focused system of support that integrates practices, procedures, and services within and across agencies, systems, and policies.*



\*Nine Guiding Principles to Help Youth Overcome Homelessness, Patton & Murphy, 2014

# Our Approach



At YouthLink, we work to support young people on their path to stability and independence by providing holistic, youth-centered services. For nearly 50 years, we have been a trusted resource for young people experiencing homelessness, offering access to essential needs, education and employment support, health and wellness services, and safe, stable housing. Through our Youth Opportunity Center, we collaborate with community partners to create a seamless network of support, ensuring young people have the tools they need to build brighter futures.



## Mission

To support and empower young people on their journey to self-reliance.

## Vision

A community in which all youth, without regard to their living situation, have an equal opportunity to pursue their goals and dreams, and an equal likelihood of achieving them.

# Drop-In Center 2024



**2,335**

youth connected with staff and more than a dozen on-site partners



**18,886**

visits to YouthLink for basic needs and services



**136**

youth secured or maintained housing with Drop-In Center assistance



**90,075**

hot meals served (a 20% increase from 2023)



**1,041**

youth received onsite healthcare through Health Care for the Homeless



**5,016**

items of clothing distributed from the clothing closet



# Homelessness Prevention



YouthLink's Homelessness Prevention services focus on early intervention, harm reduction, and resource navigation to help young people maintain stable housing and avoid the trauma of homelessness. Our Housing Prevention services provide direct financial assistance, case management, and connections to critical resources such as mental health support and employment opportunities. Through rental assistance, landlord mediation, and individualized support, we work to remove the barriers that put young people at risk of losing their homes. In 2024, 59 youth who were at risk of homelessness remained stably housed through YouthLink's homelessness prevention program, demonstrating the power of early intervention in creating lasting housing stability.



## Christian Ybarra: Advocating for Housing Stability

As YouthLink's Housing Prevention Specialist, Christian Ybarra plays a key role in helping young people stay housed. From guiding clients through rental assistance applications to advocating with landlords and county workers, Christian works tirelessly to ensure youth have the support they need to avoid eviction. "A lot of youth already have fragile trust," Christian shares. "It's about being real with them, showing up, and making sure they know they're not alone in this." By fostering strong, trusting relationships, Christian is breaking down barriers and empowering youth to secure lasting housing stability.

# Housing 2024



**44**

new youth moved  
into long-term  
housing solutions

**226**

youth received  
supportive housing  
services

**94%**

of youth remained  
stably housed  
after 6 months

**90%**

of youth remained  
stably housed  
after 12 months



## Supportive Housing

YouthLink's supportive housing sites, Downtown View and Nicollet Square, provide stable, affordable housing with onsite case management to help young people build independence. Downtown View, connected to YouthLink's Drop-In Center, offers 46 units for youth ages 18-25, while Nicollet Square in south Minneapolis houses 42 young people, many that have aged out of foster care. In 2024, Downtown View maintained 85% occupancy, and Nicollet Square remained fully occupied, ensuring as many youth as possible have resources to build stability and thrive.

## InReach Program

YouthLink operates several high-impact housing programs, including the InReach Program. InReach provides vital housing support to young people transitioning out of the criminal legal system. In partnership with Hennepin County, InReach offers intensive case management and wraparound services tailored to each youth's needs. In 2024, the program housed 21 young people and rehoused or prevented homelessness for 25 more. With access to resources and support, young people are reclaiming stability and shaping their futures on their own terms.

# Mental & Chemical Health



A lack of culturally responsive and relevant mental and chemical health care contributes to the persistent gap in access for BIPOC youth. YouthLink closes this gap by partnering with culturally responsive providers, ensuring tailored support. Lack of understanding and stigma are major barriers for young people seeking care, which we overcome through services at our Drop-In Center, supportive housing locations, and via telehealth. Prioritizing empathetic communication, we build trust before discussing care specifics.



## Mental Health



**425**

youth engaged with a mental health therapist at the Drop-In Center

## Chemical Health



**50**

youth engaged with a chemical health professional at the Drop-In Center

## Impact



**70%**

of young people continued to engage in individual and group sessions after their initial session



# T.R.U.E Group



T.R.U.E. Group (Taking Resilience Undoing Endangerment) is designed to provide a safe space for youth to talk about and process trafficking, exploitation, abuse, and other trauma. This peer-support group, facilitated by specialized YouthLink staff, onsite mental health therapists, Family Tree Clinic, and Annex Clinic, was started in the late fall of 2022 with just a few youth showing up each week. Attendance began to climb as the group established itself and word spread among youth.

In 2024, youth attended these evening sessions 502 times, many of them attending multiple times throughout the year. Many have spoken to the value the group holds for them and the healing that it has made possible.



## Core Youth Opportunity Center Partners

The Youth Opportunity Center thrives through collaboration with key partners who provide essential onsite services and programming, supporting YouthLink's mission to empower youth on their journey to stability and independence. Core partners include:

- Avivo – Provides mental health care and support.
- The Soul's Apothecary – Offers licensed alcohol and drug counseling.
- Health Care for the Homeless Clinic – A full-service medical clinic addressing youth health needs.
- Hired – Provides career training, job placement, and GED services
- Kulture Klub Collaborative – Facilitates creative self-expression through arts and a recording studio.
- The JK Movement – Provides mentorship, group coaching, anger management, and life skills training.
- Goodwill Easter-Seals – Supports youth with job placement as they work toward completing their GED or diploma

# Tabling Partners



**Strong community partnerships are essential to YouthLink's ability to serve and resource youth. Thank you to the following partners who show up for youth throughout the year:**

- 365 Degrees Housing Stabilization
- Avivo
- Annex Teen Clinic
- Crisis Nursery
- East African Healing Services
- Family Tree Clinic
- FedEx
- Fremont Clinic
- Goodwill Easter Seals
- Gentle Caring Mind Healthcare
- Great Wolf Lodge
- Hennepin County Behavioral Response Team
- Health Care for the Homeless
- Hennepin County (benefit eligibility)
- Hennepin County Library
- Hennepin County Red Door Clinic
- Hennepin County Teen and Child Check-up
- HIRED
- Lifebridge Path
- Lifetime Fitness
- Minuteman Press
- MN Infinite Housing Solutions
- MN Legal Counsel
- MN Lifeline
- MNSure
- Minnesota Internship Charter High School (MNIC)
- Sabathani Community Center
- Smart Tech North
- Summit Academy
- The Aliveness Project
- Tubman
- University of Minnesota Dentistry
- United Parcel Service
- VOYAC
- Wildflyer Coffee
- Youthbuild



YouthLink staff are also well-connected to other service organizations, working closely with partner agencies including The Link, The Bridge for Youth, Avenues for Youth, Ain Dah Yung Center, Brittany's Place, StreetWorks, Face to Face, Youthrise, Youth Services Network, and others to do outreach and connect youth to specialized services including overnight shelter and housing. YouthLink participates in local, state, and national networks and coalitions to better identify trends and service gaps and share resources. We believe that by strengthening partnerships across the continuum of care, we are strengthening the safety net and scope of services for youth.

# On-Site Volunteer Support



We are deeply grateful for the dedicated volunteers who make a difference at YouthLink. In addition to the many individuals who give their time, several groups volunteered on-site in 2024, helping to support youth through hands-on service and engagement:

- Allianz Life
- Cottage Grove Church
- Marvin Windows & Doors
- Medica
- Optum
- Target
- Wakely Consulting
- Xcel Energy



## Volunteer Hours



**554**

On-site hours contributed by all individual and group volunteers

## Individuals



**112**

Individuals who volunteered on-site

# Off-Site Volunteer Support



Many corporate, faith-based, and community groups hosted off-site volunteer opportunities this past year. These groups created much-needed care packages, blankets, snack bags, and kits (hygiene, street outreach, and move-in) for the youth we serve. Their combined efforts resulted in an estimated value of \$37,907 of essential goods distributed directly to young people in need:

- Accenture
- Affinity Plus Federal Credit Union
- Allianz Life
- Allegion
- Ameriprise Financial
- Backpack Project MN
- BDO USA
- Carlson Family Foundation
- Cub Scouts Pack 3426-Minnetonka
- Dayforce
- Greater Twin Cities United Way
- HUM Yoga + Barre
- Minnesota Twins
- Minnesota Vikings
- Minnetonka High School
- Normandale French Immersion School
- Piper Sandler Companies
- Pohlad Companies
- PRC Wind
- Proverbs Christian Fellowship
- Surest
- WCCO
- Westwood Professional Services
- Winnebago Industries
- Xcel Energy

We apologize if there are any errors or omissions. Please reach out to us with corrections or additions at [donations@youthlinkmn.org](mailto:donations@youthlinkmn.org) or by calling 612-252-1226. Thank you!



# Leadership 2024



## Board of Directors

**Rachael Scherer,**  
**Acting Chair**

*Community Volunteer,  
Retired,  
Medtronic LLC*

**Brian Johnson,**  
**Treasurer**

*Executive Director of  
Banking and Business  
Development,  
Choice Bank*

**Jay Belsito**

*Civic Engagement,  
Gender Justice*

**Alicia Berger**

*Regional Vice  
President, Gas  
Operations,  
Xcel Energy*

**Jared Brewington**

*Founder/CEO,  
Improv Hospitality  
Owner,  
Brick & Brew  
Properties, Official  
Fried Chicken*

**Ethan Casson**

*CEO,  
Minnesota  
Timberwolves and  
Lynx*

**Dan Coleman**

*Real Estate Agent,  
First and Third  
Properties*

**Kumar Das Gupta**

*Senior Vice President  
Enterprise Operations,  
Allianz Life*

**Ann Doepner**

*Senior Director of  
Diversity, Equity, and  
Inclusion,  
Minnesota Vikings*

**Chris Garcia**

*Principal,  
Lee & Associates*

**Devan Heinsen**

*Fundraising  
Consultant,  
Brave Fundraising*

**Jamal Knight**

*Commercial Real  
Estate Attorney,  
Taft Stettinius &  
Hollister LLP*

**Mike Mills**

*Director of  
Construction  
Management,  
Ryan Companies*

**Quincy Powe**

*Senior Manager of the  
Opportunity Youth  
Network,  
Youthrise  
Co-Founder,  
Voices of Youth  
Advisory Council*

**Patrick Troup**

*Vice President of  
Student Affairs,  
Minneapolis  
Community and  
Technical College*

## Young Professionals Board

**Rhea Barrow**

*Root Down Realty*

**Lexi Byler**

*Office of U.S. Senator  
Tina Smith*

**Aubrey Hamilton**

*Allegion*

**Ben Kill**

*Allina Health*

**Cameron Kipper**

*JPMorganChase*

**Sammi Noebel**

*SPS Commerce*

**Lindsey Phillips**

*Eide Bailly LLP*

**Clyde Quarles**

*Minneapolis Youth  
Congress & VOYAC*

**Nellie Siers**

*Minnesota Housing*

**Malik "Des" Thomas**

*Kulture Klub  
Collaborative &  
VOYAC*

## Voices of Youth Advisory Council

**Clyde Quarles**

*Chair*

**Joseph "Ra" Cole**

*Vice Chair*

**Malik "Des" Thomas**

*Advocacy Advisor*

**Manny Bekoe**

*Secretary*

**Kenneth "Tre" Savage**

*Events Advisor*

**Starr Pate**

*Communications  
Advisor*

**Htoo "Sky" Paw**

*General Council  
Member*

# Financials

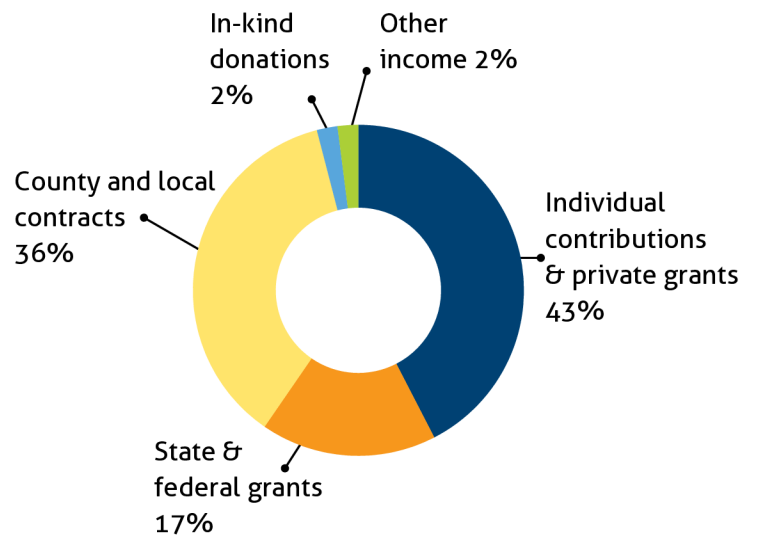


Fiscal Year 2024 was about getting financial policies and practices in place to sustain programs at a level that meets the growing need with potentially fewer but well-managed resources. We reshaped the budget and revenue/expense management to become breakeven and eventually positive as the organization moves forward. The investments made in FY 2024 have already begun yielding measurable results in FY 2025 as we have seen cash flow and monthly profitability improve in the first six months of the year.

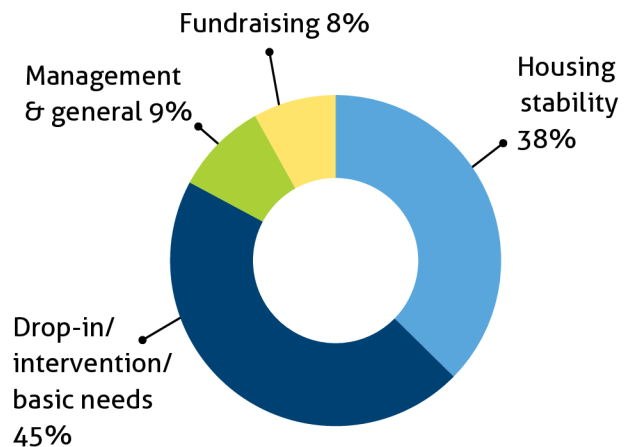
## STATEMENT OF REVENUES & EXPENSES

October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024

Revenue	FY 2024
Individual contributions & private grants	\$1,971,287
State and federal grants	786,649
County and local contracts	1,694,345
In-kind donations	96,357
Other income	114,888
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>\$4,663,526</b>



Expenses	FY 2024
<i>Direct program expenses (82%)</i>	
Housing stability	\$ 2,044,262
Drop-in/intervention/basic needs	2,527,571
<i>Supporting services (18%)</i>	
Management and general	516,329
Fundraising	470,702
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$ 5,558,864</b>
Total revenue less total expenses	\$ (895,338)



From FY 2023 to FY 2024, YouthLink's Without Donor Restrictions column in our audit improved from (\$599,381) to (\$267,797). In addition, net cash used in operating activities improved from (\$416,394) in FY 2023 to (\$95,562) in FY 2024. Even as the growth in youth served continues to significantly outpace available funding, YouthLink remains committed to both serving every youth who needs our services and demonstrating fiscal responsibility and sustainability.

# 2024 Donors

## Foundation & Corporate Partners



### Life Changer

**\$100,000+**

Allianz Life Insurance  
Company of North America  
Andiamo Fund  
Buuck Family Fund at the  
Minneapolis Foundation  
Greater Twin Cities United Way  
Otto Bremer Trust  
Pohlad Family Foundation

### Dream Maker

**\$50,000- \$99,999**

B & H Way Foundation

### Believer

**\$25,000- \$49,999**

Anonymous (1)  
Ameriprise Financial  
Carlson Family Foundation  
Choice Financial Group  
The Hubbard Broadcasting  
Foundation  
Hugh J. Andersen Foundation  
Huntington National Bank  
MN Timberwolves & Lynx  
FastBreak Foundation  
Patrick and Aimee Butler Family  
Foundation  
Richard M. Schulze Family  
Foundation  
Scherer Brothers Lumber  
Company  
UCare

### Inspirer

**\$10,000- \$24,999**

Anonymous (1)  
Andersen Corporate Foundation  
Believe in Minnesota Political  
Action Committee  
Change Starts with Me  
Fund for Safe Communities of  
the Minneapolis Foundation  
Hunger Solutions Minnesota  
James B. Linsmayer Foundation  
Medica Foundation  
Mendon F. Schutt Family Fund  
of the Minneapolis Foundation  
McKnight Foundation  
Outsell, LLC  
Peregrine Capital Management  
United Way Arise Project  
The Victor and Christine Anthony  
Family Foundation  
Walser Foundation funded by  
Walser Automotive Group  
The WCA Foundation  
Xcel Energy Foundation

### Encourager

**\$5,000- \$9,999**

Bogart Family Foundation  
C.H. Robinson Worldwide Inc.  
Edina Realty Foundation  
The Elizabeth C. Quinlan  
Foundation, Inc.  
The Minneapolis Foundation  
Minnesota Vikings  
Open Your Heart to the Hungry  
and Homeless  
Peter J. King Family Foundation  
Wanner Engineering

### Motivator

**\$1,000- \$4,999**

Department of Pediatrics  
University of Minnesota  
Youth Health and Housing  
Lab  
The Hurdles Foundation  
Minnesota United FC  
Old National Bank  
PRC Wind  
Roxy's Cabaret  
Ryan Companies US Inc.  
SFM Mutual Insurance Co.  
Stoney Brook Farms  
Upsher-Smith Laboratories

### Advocate

**\$500- \$999**

Bell State Bank & Trust  
Blue Plate Restaurant  
Company  
Minneapolis Downtown  
Improvement District  
Minnesota Chapter of  
NAPNAP  
Pryes Brewing  
21<sup>st</sup> Century Bank

### Helping Hand

**Up to \$499**

Atonement Lutheran Church  
Delta Kappa Gamma, Alpha  
Kappa Chapter  
Fulton Beer  
Grace Lutheran Church  
Minnesota Association of  
Professional Employees  
Teneo Hospitality Group

YouthLink is deeply grateful to ALL our funders and donors, at all levels and amounts, for your support of the young people we serve. We heard overwhelmingly in our last community survey that our individual donors are not interested in being listed in annual reports. If you are an individual donor and want to be recognized and share your story in a blog post or newsletter segment, please reach out to us at [donations@youthlinkmn.org](mailto:donations@youthlinkmn.org) or by calling 612-252-1226. Thank you!

# 2024 Donors

## Employer Matching Gifts & In-Kind Donations



### Employer Matching Gifts

Abbott Laboratories  
Alerus  
Allianz Life Insurance Company of North America  
Ameriprise Financial  
BDO USA  
Best Buy  
CHS Inc.  
General Mills  
Land O' Lakes  
LinkedIn  
The Margaret A. Cargill Foundation  
Medtronic  
Microsoft  
Mortenson Construction  
News Corp  
National Instruments Corporation  
Northeast Bank  
Pohlad Family Foundation  
Polaris  
Prudential Financial  
Ryan Companies US  
Thrivent Financial  
TIAA  
Trustmark  
UnitedHealth Group  
US Bank  
UWorld  
Voya Financial  
Wells Fargo  
Winnebago Industries  
Xcel Energy

### In-Kind Donations

*(Organizations)*  
Accenture  
Affinity Plus Federal Credit Union  
Allianz Life Insurance Company of North America  
Ameriprise Financial  
Annex Teen Clinic  
Backpack Project MN  
BDO USA  
BIG LOVIE  
Blind Havoc  
Carlson Family Foundation  
CBX  
Children's Minnesota  
Circle K / Holiday Stationstores  
City of Minneapolis Public Works  
Cub Scouts Pack 3426  
Dayforce  
Delta Kappa Gamma, Alpha Kappa Chapter  
Diaper Bank of Minnesota  
The Drawer  
Greater Twin Cities United Way  
Haworth Marketing + Media, LLC  
Hidden Pines Ranch Camp  
HUM Yoga + Barre  
IHeartMedia / KDWB  
Living Faith Spiritual Community

Loppet Foundation  
Medica  
Mental Health Minnesota  
Minnesota Custom Drywall  
Minnesota Department of Human Services  
Minnesota Timberwolves and Lynx  
Minnesota Twins  
Minnesota Vikings  
Minnetonka High School  
Normandale French Immersion School  
Piper Sandler Companies  
Pohland Family Foundation  
PRC Wind  
ProDrivers  
Project Glimmer  
Proverbs Christian Fellowship  
The Residents of 1200 on the Mall  
Rosetown American Legion  
Sakada Studios  
Sherman Associates  
SOL of the Cities  
Stoney Brook Farms  
Surest  
Taft Law  
University of Minnesota School of Design  
Vikings Table  
Upsher-Smith Laboratories  
WCCO  
Westwood Professional Services  
Winnebago Industries  
Xcel Energy

We apologize if there are any errors or omissions in our list of funders and donors. Please call 612-252-1226 or email [donations@youthlinkmn.org](mailto:donations@youthlinkmn.org) with any corrections.

Funders are listed based on their gift category during the fiscal year in which the donation or original pledge is made.

**THANK YOU TO EVERYONE FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND GENEROSITY!**

# Thank you!



Thank you for supporting young people as they transition out of homelessness and reach for their goals and dreams.

This report is a snapshot of what you made possible in 2024. Please contact Heather Haynes, Director of Development, at [haynes@youthlinkmn.org](mailto:haynes@youthlinkmn.org) or (612) 252-1226 if you have questions about the full scope of your impact or would simply like to learn more about YouthLink's work. Thank you!



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[YouthLinkMN.org](http://YouthLinkMN.org)

