YouthLink

2011 Report to the Community

by the numbers

Where every number has a story and every story has a name
Brittney is smart, engaging, and ambitious. Turned out by her mom the day after her high school graduation, Brittney felt alone and anxious until our outreach worker, José, found her and told her about YouthLink. Here at the Drop-In Center, her journey toward safety and stability began. YouthLink staff arranged shelter for her, helped her complete paperwork so she could receive services from public agencies, and provided access to health care and career counseling. Now with a place of her own, and a steady job, she is working her way to a brighter future thanks to the stability and support she received from the Youth Opportunity Center at YouthLink.
To our community friends:

Brittney, David, Liz, and Jewel are just some of the more than 1,800 young people we served at YouthLink and the Youth Opportunity Center during the past year. Their individual stories of homelessness may differ, but they all desired shelter, food, clothing, and the opportunity to change the direction of their lives.

Homeless young people face complex, precarious, and life-threatening challenges every day on the streets. The resilience of these young people provides an important key to guiding them as they reframe their view from life on the streets to a healthier, productive future.

We’re thankful and appreciative to our friends, community partners, private and public constituents, and other caring individuals for giving their resources, time, talent, and expertise. We simply would not be able to make a difference in the lives of homeless young people without this support.

Since the opening of the Youth Opportunity Center at YouthLink, demand for services continues to grow. In fact, in 2011, there was a thirty-four percent increase in homeless young people seeking services and support over 2010’s totals.

Access to the Youth Opportunity Center for homeless young people and young people in crisis is a priority. At the end of 2011, we were fortunate to receive support from the Otto Bremer Foundation, which allowed us to offer more access to daytime services, reaching homeless young people, ages 18-23. We now are able to provide daytime and evening services.

The YouthLink Board of Directors, together with our Community Advisory Council, engages us consistently to look beyond today into the future. Armed with a new strategic plan, we are committed to making sure our services are not only effective, but also efficient and relevant to the complex needs of homeless young people and young people in crisis, now and in the future.

We are so thankful to you and all of our friends, donors, and supporters. Because of you, Brittney, David, Liz, and Jewel are now moving beyond the streets to new opportunities for achieving their hopes and dreams in life.

Respectfully,

Heather H. Huseby, Ed.D.
Executive Director, YouthLink – Youth Opportunity Center

Bruce Nerland
Chair, YouthLink Board of Directors

Our vision
Empowering youth to shape their futures by providing a safe, supportive, respectful, and responsive community of excellence. YouthLink is the place where the end of homelessness and the end of poverty begin for youth served.

Our mission
Build healthy relationships with youth and the community to address youths’ urgent needs so that doors of opportunity are opened to futures of empowerment, connectedness, and self-reliance.
YouthLink helped 194 young people find a safe place to call home through our supportive housing programs, allowing them to focus on their education and employment goals. For David, having a stable home gives him the foundation to work toward his future success.

A “people person,” David faces life with charisma and compassion. He has an admirable drive to succeed and the intelligence to put his ideas to work. If you met him today, you wouldn’t guess that he has weathered plenty of rough times.

Overwhelmed by chaos, instability, and abuse, David left home at 15. He had three younger siblings, and his mother, raising them alone, struggled. With no father in the picture and acute financial stress, David’s mother fell into a deepening depression that led to alcohol abuse. To survive, David knew he had to escape his unstable environment. He loved his mom, but he couldn’t be the parent.

David befriended a bus driver who let him ride his bus all night on one fare. That’s where he slept at first. He drank energy drinks to stay awake on nights when there was...
no place to go. He stayed with an older sister for a time, and with friends. He managed to get to high school from wherever he happened to be staying.

At 16, David found a job selling coffee beans through CityKid Java, an Urban Ventures youth initiative. He hoped to raise funds to provide Christmas food and gifts for a family in need. “Someone did that for us once—toys and clothes and food,” he says. “It meant a lot.” His generosity, in the face of his own homelessness, made the local news, and eventually drew national attention. He collected enough money to donate gifts to eight families. The following year, David was the first-ever recipient of the “Emerging Legend” award, established to recognize young people who have served their communities with distinction. General Colin Powell presented the award to David.

Despite the national coverage and numerous awards, David was still homeless. He struggled to connect with the services he needed to live in safety and stability. At 18, he stopped attending school and began to spiral into his own depression.

Then, while attending a community event with his sister, he met the YouthLink outreach team, who were there talking with young people and offering information, support, and hope. They encouraged David to come to the Drop-In Center, where he could explore how YouthLink could connect him with the resources he needed.

In a short time, with the help of his YouthLink case worker, David was back in school, earning his diploma. There was help with transportation, health care, and independent-living skills. He took advantage of opportunities for leadership training and support groups. With the help of HIRED, a Youth Opportunity Center partner, David landed an internship with a local caterer, eventually earning a full-time job there, then a promotion to supervisor. Finally, with skills and support in place, it was time to apply for his own apartment.

The end of one story is the beginning of another: In February 2012, David moved into his own home, an apartment at Nicollet Square. He’s proud of his success, but takes nothing for granted, saying with his customary smile, “Just because you aren’t at the best place in life doesn’t mean you stop doing your best.”
70% of case-managed young people overcame one or more barriers to their long-term stability such as accessing medical and mental health coverage or identifying a safe, supportive adult. For Liz, a caring case manager helped her remove barriers and allowed her to pursue her dreams.

Liz was desperate for someone to believe her. When no one would, she had to protect herself—to live “safely” away from the adults in her world who couldn’t seem to help.

Liz was seven years old when the state took her from her mother. She had faced enough challenges in her few years to last a lifetime. When she was adopted by a single mom, Liz had a second chance at a safe childhood in a loving home.

All might have been well, stable, and better for Liz. But shortly after her adoption, her mom married a man who craved control. He didn’t like her given name, Leanna—it was “too Hispanic.” He convinced his wife to call the little girl “Elizabeth.” And so began Liz’s lonely journey through betrayal and danger.

Liz was subjected to her step-dad’s unwanted attentions within a year of her adoption. “He told me it was okay, because I wasn’t his real daughter,” she recalls. Like all young
children, she was vulnerable and did what she was told, until, at 13, she was able to tell her mother about the abuse. “My mom didn’t believe me,” says Liz.

So when her mother’s work schedule left her alone with her step-dad, Liz had to defend herself. Calling authorities or talking to school counselors did no good—she struggled against their skepticism, too. With no one to believe or help her, the abuse continued until she left home at 16.

Liz quickly found herself in a group of kids who became her allies and her support. On her own to find shelter and income, she lived dangerously, adopting risky behaviors. Vulnerable and dependent, she fell into a destructive pattern of gang crime.

At 17, a gunshot wound to Liz’s shoulder brought life into painful focus. She managed to leave the gang, but had no stable place to live. While staying with a friend, she learned about YouthLink. She decided to check it out.

“I was nervous!” she recalls. “But my case manager, Hallie, convinced me that here were people who just wanted to help me be safe and secure. Hallie helped me get my GED.” She adds, “I think I’ve used just about everything here—the clothing closet, hygiene supplies, GED tutoring and vouchers, the health clinic, the Internet. It’s all in one place, and people here know me. They really care about me.”

YouthLink also helped Liz find a job as a manager at a local restaurant. Now able to pay rent, she shares an apartment in South Minneapolis with a roommate and has two beloved pups.

Liz hopes to take her lifelong love of dogs and horses to the next level. With YouthLink’s help, she’s investigating classes in pet grooming. Eventually, Liz plans to have her own business, fitting horses with the perfect saddles.

YouthLink’s staff members have been reliable listening ears and advocates for Liz. They’re the first adults in her life to believe her, and to believe in her. Sunny and confident, Liz is excited about her future. “Some people dwell on the past, but I’m not going to be disappointed. I’ll make it.”

45% of homeless young people in Minnesota have experienced physical or sexual abuse.
60% of young people housed in our supportive housing programs pursued education during the program year. Once safely housed, young people, like Jewel, can focus on what young people should be doing—completing their educations and planning for the future.

Jewel was desperate to stay in high school, but it was too hard without a stable place to live. Just 16 years old, and with nowhere to stay when her mother refused to house her, Jewel and her cousin turned to friends, hopping from home to home, trying to find a safe place to spend the night. “My cousin and I would hang out in downtown Minneapolis with friends, where maybe we’d stay the night.”

Tired of staying with friends here and there, Jewel turned to the Internet to research housing options for homeless young people. “I went to St. Barnabas Apartments to fill out an application. I met CeCe, and that’s when my life started to change,” says Jewel.

CeCe was YouthLink’s resident manager at the apartment building. She saw intelligence
and spark in Jewel and encouraged her to ask for help from YouthLink. Jewel describes her old self this way: “I was really wild, and a mess. I told CeCe that if I got arrested and sent to jail, maybe that’s where I belonged. CeCe told me, ‘You don’t belong in jail!’”

CeCe also helped Jewel find a position as a volunteer with The Check Yo'Self Crew, whose mission is HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness for young people. Jewel soon had a job there, helping other young people. Jewel and her cousin both applied for apartments through YouthLink. When the first unit became available, Jewel’s cousin moved into The Archdale Apartments. Just a few weeks later, Jewel got word that there was another apartment, this time for her, exactly one floor beneath her cousin’s new home.

At first, Jewel found independent living to be a bit daunting, but there was on-site help. “The weirdest thing was meeting with Annie, my case manager at Archdale, every week. I wasn’t used to that, but now I love being with Annie. She’s helping me set goals and make them happen.”

Annie nominated Jewel for YouthLink’s Youth Leadership Program, where Jewel has met other young people whose lives are also taking turns for the better. “We talk about what it means to be a leader. Everyone has different strengths. The trick is to figure out who does what really well,” she says.

With the help of GED tutors at the Youth Opportunity Center, Jewel, now 18, completed all of her tests and obtained her GED earlier this year. With Annie’s encouragement and help with financial aid forms, Jewel applied to cosmetology school and has been accepted for the Fall 2012 class.

The Youth Opportunity Center linked Jewel with caring mentors, a job, education, access to services, and help with independent living skills. Jewel says, “I was never good at asking for help. I never knew anybody cared about me—about what happened to me. Now I know that CeCe, Annie, my tutors—lots of people—want to help me succeed.”

Only 55% of homeless young people in Minnesota, ages 18-21, have graduated from high school or received their GEDs.
Ken left home at a young age to escape his abusive environment. Now 31, with a home and loving family of his own, he applauds the 1,800 young people who accessed services in 2011 at the Youth Opportunity Center at YouthLink — a 34% increase over 2010.

“I really don’t know where I would be now if YouthLink hadn’t believed in me when I needed them.”

Meeting him for the first time, you’d never know he had experienced homelessness as a teen. Ken is 31 now, a husband and a homeowner, complete with an education and a great job in his chosen field. The future holds nothing but promise, stability, and confidence for this bright, resourceful young man. And he says he owes it all to YouthLink.

“I really don’t know where I would be now if YouthLink hadn’t believed in me when I needed them,” says Ken. That was half a lifetime ago, when he was only 14, trapped in a home where his alcoholic father hit him. His mother, also an addict, seemed powerless to keep Ken out of harm’s way.
He tried asking for help. But at the emergency teen shelter, they didn’t see bruises or evidence of the beatings, and he was sent back home. It happened more than once. Scared and confused, Ken began to feel that he really was on his own, all alone. He became adept at hiding from the authorities, afraid of being sent back to the abusive situation at home.

Living in deserted buildings downtown was risky, but Ken found groups of other homeless young people to connect with—people who had similar life experiences. One day, José, part of YouthLink’s street outreach team, approached him and told him about the Drop-In Center. It sounded good: a place to go, to be warm, with food and supplies. So he came one afternoon to the Drop-In Center, met Bob and other staff who guided and supported him, and with that, his life began to change. That very night, YouthLink found Ken a bed in a shelter.

It wasn’t all sweetness and light, however. This charismatic, bright, resourceful, and still-very-young teen had some growing to do. As Ken tells it now, “I was kicked out of several shelters. I broke rules.” Ken pushed the envelope because he was frustrated and angry. “I was trouble. But YouthLink staff never gave up on me.”

Now strong and confident, Ken says, “I needed so much. I was just a kid. YouthLink helped me finish high school. They gave me food, clothes, bus fare. I had no idea how to live on my own, or how to live safely, and YouthLink helped me find safe places to stay while I figured it out. I counted on YouthLink to connect me to the right things—to help me figure out how to grow up.”

Ken still talks with José often and visits YouthLink when there’s time in his busy life. He tells his story with deep gratitude, and gives YouthLink staff credit for helping him learn to use his intelligence and resourcefulness to make good decisions.

“For so many years, they were my family. They believed in me when no one else did, and they never let go.”

Ken was lost, alone in a world with no one to turn to. YouthLink met Ken right where he was—helping him find shelter, get food, clothing and showers, and complete high school—laying the cornerstone for his new life.
Navigating the legal system

On Mondays, attorneys and law students sign in at the Youth Opportunity Center. They’re here for the weekly Youth Law Clinic, volunteering to spend their time helping young people who have legal issues or questions.

The Youth Law Clinic exists thanks to the collaborative efforts of local law firms Faegre Baker Daniels, LLP; and Lindquist & Vennum, LLP; Legal Aid Society’s Youth Law Project; the Minnesota Justice Foundation; and Volunteer Lawyers Network. The goal: To help vulnerable and homeless young people find their footing in a confusing, sometimes intimidating, system.

The Youth Law Clinic volunteer attorneys interpret personal situations, then help young people resolve their issues, from expunging juvenile records to petitioning for child support. They also work to resolve school or employer disputes and help with complicated paperwork. Youth Law Clinic volunteers serve as the conduit connecting young people to public legal aid resources.

The Youth Law Clinic’s student volunteers aren’t qualified to counsel, yet, so they park themselves in the Drop-In Center, ready to complete documenting paperwork and eager to contribute what they can. The law students believe in what they’re doing, and feel that their presence adds a link for the young people seeking help. “We’re not much older than they are. We’ve just been luckier.”

“We Want You Back”—They mean it.

It started as a push to locate students who had fallen off the Minneapolis Public School System’s radar. But We Want You Back (WWYB) has grown into a full-time outreach effort, dedicated to finding students who might think their education options have dried up. As it happens, WWYB says, that is never true.

On Wednesdays, WWYB staff members are on site at the Youth Opportunity Center,
answering questions, finding transcripts, and launching young people into lives that include education and opportunity. Although the prime directive of WWYB is to locate students who have dropped out, and to educate them about their options, the staff listens and offers suggestions about a variety of complex education situations. The overarching message: No matter what young people believe, or have been told, there are options.

The art of possibility

At the Youth Opportunity Center, on just about any day of the week, you’ll find Jeff Hnilicka, the executive director of YOC partner Kulture Klub Collaborative, working on new ways for young people experiencing homelessness to enter the world of art and culture. Kulture Klub offers multi-faceted projects and programs to help young people learn about themselves, their community, their talents, and their rightful wish to express themselves. Jeff enlists local artists, who immerse themselves in this untapped community of creativity. The mutual benefit is powerful and therapeutic for all, especially for a young person who has no other outlet for creative expression.

Kulture Klub respects the struggles and transformations of the YOC’s young artists. At the moment, in the downstairs gallery, a chalkboard wall offers a fill-in-the-blank opportunity for expression: “Before I die, I want to ________.” Chalked answers are world-wise, honest, and poignant: “See my daughter succeed;” “Be a good dad;” “Speak for those without a voice.” Jeff says, “It’s inspirational. It’s easy to believe in the power of creative expression for all people. It changes lives.”

The YOC partners provide an impressive range of services to young people who need caring, knowledgeable adults in their lives. By breaking down barriers, all partners open doors of opportunity for young people on difficult journeys—providing life-changing chances to reconnect. Because of the YOC, the possibilities are endless.
Kris was homeless when he first came to YouthLink at 15. Today, at 20, he has his own apartment and works with YouthLink’s chef, Carl, to learn the skills he’ll need for his dream—culinary school—and his own chef’s hat.

**Financial Highlights**

**Statement of Financial Position**
Balance Sheet for year ending December 31, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assets</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2010</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current assets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cash and cash equivalents</td>
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<td>Current portion of pledges receivable</td>
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<td>Grants receivable</td>
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<td>Miscellaneous receivables</td>
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<td>Prepaid expenses</td>
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<td>Total current assets</td>
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<td>Property and equipment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building and improvements</td>
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<td>Furniture and equipment</td>
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<td>99,270</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3,737,674</td>
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<td>Less accumulated depreciation</td>
<td>960,270</td>
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<td>Total assets</td>
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<td>2,734,070</td>
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<td>Pledges receivable, net of current portion</td>
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<td>Total assets</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Liabilities and net assets</th>
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<td>Current liabilities</td>
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<td>Accounts payable</td>
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<td>Mortgage</td>
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<td>Current portion of capital lease payable</td>
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<td>Line of credit</td>
<td>229,631</td>
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<td>Accrued:</td>
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<td>Payroll and payroll taxes</td>
<td>88,965</td>
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<td>Vacation</td>
<td>56,684</td>
<td>44,431</td>
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<td>Other</td>
<td>14,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fiscal agency payable</td>
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<td>3,547</td>
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<td>Total current liabilities</td>
<td>$488,746</td>
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<td>Capital lease obligation, net of current portion</td>
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<td>Net assets</td>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
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<td>Temporarily restricted</td>
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<td>Total net assets</td>
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<td>Total liabilities and net assets</td>
<td>$4,037,080</td>
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**Statement of Revenues and Expenses**

January 1, 2011 through December 31, 2011

### Revenue

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<td>Federal grants</td>
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<td>State of Minnesota</td>
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<td>Hennepin County</td>
<td>1,132,971</td>
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<td>United Way</td>
<td>204,932</td>
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<td>Contract revenue</td>
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<td>Individual contributions</td>
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<td>Corporate/non-profit contributions</td>
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<td>Foundation contributions</td>
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<td>In-kind contributions</td>
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<td>Interest income</td>
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<td>2,247</td>
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<td>Other income</td>
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<td>4,383</td>
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<td><strong>Total revenue</strong></td>
<td>$4,030,332</td>
<td>$3,999,821</td>
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### Expenses

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Program services</td>
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<td>Housing Stability</td>
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<td>Crisis Intervention and Basic Needs</td>
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<td>Health and Wellness</td>
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<td>Education and Employment support</td>
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<td><strong>Total program services</strong></td>
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<td>Supporting activities</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Management and general</td>
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<td>655,201</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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<td><strong>Total supporting activities</strong></td>
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<td>$792,939</td>
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<td><strong>Total expenses</strong></td>
<td>$3,540,862</td>
<td>$3,412,065</td>
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Change in net assets 489,470

| Net assets, beginning | 2,965,367 | 2,377,611 |
| Net assets, ending    | $3,454,837 | $2,965,367 |
2011 Donors and Funders

Corporations & Foundations

$500,000+
Otto Bremer Foundation

$100,000 to $499,000
McKnight Foundation
Target Foundation

$70,000 to $99,999
World Childhood Foundation, Inc.

$40,000 to $69,999
Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Foundation

$20,000 to $39,999
B.C. Gamble & P.W. Skogmo Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation
Charlson Foundation
Patrick and Aimee Butler Family Foundation
Pentair Foundation

Up to $19,999
3M Foundation
Ameriprise Financial
B & H Way Foundation
Bar Abilene
BlueCross BlueShield
Carolyn Foundation
Chanhassen Elementary School Staff Social Fund
Church of the Risen Savior
CoreNet Global Midwest Chapter
Costco
Deloitte
Deluxe Corporation Foundation
Edina Realty Foundation
Elizabeth C. Quinlan Foundation, Inc.
Faegre and Benson Foundation
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
General Mills Foundation
Grace University Lutheran Church
Greater Minneapolis Hotel Association
Holy Name ACCW
ING Foundation
Kopp Family Foundation
Malt-O-Meal
The Minnesota Timberwolves FastBreak Foundation
Morgan Stanley Smith Barney
Open Your Heart to the Hungry and Homeless
Padilla Speer Beardsley
RBC Foundation
Richard and Mary Ann Pedtke Charitable Foundation
Sauer Children's Renew Foundation
Semmergroup
Stanley Consultants Charitable Foundation
Success Computer Consulting Supervalu
Target Corporation
Teens 4 Charity
TXJ Foundation, Inc.
Turner Family Foundation
Vant Hof Memorial Fund
Waymar
Wells Fargo Community Support Campaign
Wells Foundation
White Bear Lake Area Schools
Xcel Energy Foundation

Individuals

$10,000 to $14,999
Heather Huseby

$5,000 to $9,999
Anonymous
Carolyn Chase
Ronald Cornwell
Stefanie Galey
Rebecca Harmon & family
Bruce and Ann Nerland
Ben and Kate Reinhardt

$2,500 to $4,999
Anonymous
Marc and Jackie Hertz
Gary Johnson and Joan Hershbell
Will Roach and Lisa Schwartz
Erick and Frances Roen

$1,000 to $2,499
Barbara Hansen
Jané Harteau and Holly Keegle
Randal and Kay Heise
Barbara Norrgard
Kelley and Josephine Purpaff
Jeff Rank and Beth Andrews
Lovetta Roufs
Dudley Ryan
Michael Sala and Kevin McGee
Catherine Sittanni
Jim Torok and Nancy Hite
Lynn and Carol Truesdell
Eric and Elizabeth Vogstrom

$500 to $999
Gail Dorfman
Michael Eckhardt
Charlnitta Ellis
Richard Hesler
David and Ann Marie Hintz
Leonard Hoffman
Caroline Horton
James and Jane Kaufman
Christina Losee
Alan and Jeanne Maclin
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