

Save OUR Youth
MENTORING

2021

IMPACT
REPORT



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LETTER FROM THE CEO



Dear Friends of Save Our Youth,

2024 was a very special year for our organization because it marked Save Our Youth's 30th anniversary and allowed us to intentionally reflect on countless moments of connection, growth, and transformation. Uncovering powerful stories, reconnecting with alumni, and gathering for our thirtieth anniversary celebration reminded us that consistent, Christ-centered relationships have the power to change lives.

This past year, we settled on the word *illuminate* as our anniversary theme because "no matter how dark it gets, hope is always present; it just takes work to uncover, or rather, shine a light on what is not easily visible." As a staff, we concluded that if our mission is to "connect young people to hope," then we should have an obvious understanding of what hope means, how we bring our youth closer to it, and how we can measure it. With this goal in mind, we purposely set out to understand what hope means to each of us, through reading, thoughtful discussion, and challenging one another. Through the process, we settled on the following definition of hope for our organization: **the belief that our young people can have something better than they have now and that they have a role to play in making it better** (informed by the book *Hope Rising: How the Science of Hope Can Change Your Life*). We want to point our kids toward a future of hope and equip them with the tools to help them stay on that path once they reach it.

As we've closed out our thirtieth year as an organization, it is evident that we're standing on a foundation built by decades of faithful service, and we're dreaming boldly for what's ahead. The testimonies and data in this report are evidence of what God can do when we say yes to being a light in an often-dark world.

Through communal generosity and God's faithfulness, we watched hope break through in ways we could have never imagined. Mentors showed up in more ways than they were required to. Mentees grew—some in their faith, others academically. Families were holistically seen and supported. Communities were strengthened. Light pierced through darkness.

As we move into the next chapter of our story, we carry with us the legacy of faith-filled mentors, courageous youth, and diligent partners. The support of our community continues to make it possible for us to reach more young people, help connect them to hope, and point them toward the One who is hope Himself.

On behalf of our board, staff, and the entire Save Our Youth family, thank you. We celebrate this past year with joy, and we look ahead with great expectation. Thank you for walking with us, giving generously, and choosing to illuminate hope in the lives of our young people.

With a grateful heart,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Russel Dains".

Russel Dains
President & CEO



ABOUT SAVE OUR YOUTH



Save Our Youth was founded in 1994 in response to Denver's historic Summer of Violence—created to meet the urgent needs of disconnected and emotionally impoverished youth. At the time, a reported seventy-four gang-related deaths sparked concern for the social and emotional landscape of youth in Denver. A task force consisting of over one hundred socially conscious agencies, churches, and non-profit organizations gathered to identify the root cause of the citywide unrest. Feedback from youth identified the need for positive adult role models who would listen, provide guidance, and encourage social, emotional, and educational growth. The leader of the task force, Luis Villarreal, responded to this request and founded Save Our Youth.

Today, Save Our Youth continues in this effort by providing one-to-one mentorship to young people (ages 10-17) as a pathway to help them overcome adverse experiences and learn to embrace hope: the belief that they can have something better than they have now and that they have a role to play in making it better.

For over thirty-one years, Save Our Youth mentors have faithfully mentored thousands of youth across the Denver Metro Area. As a result, we have seen young people in our program break cycles of poverty, be the first in their families to graduate high school and/or college, and persevere through unimaginable circumstances. Because of the investment of a caring adult, many young people who had little hope of becoming anything more than a statistic are now on a course toward purpose and hope. In turn, we have also witnessed the many ways in which our mentors' lives have also been positively affected by their mentees. It's a two-way street, and we are simply honored to direct traffic!

VISION & MISSION

VISION

To see a world where every young person embraces their God-given worth.



MISSION

We connect young people to hope through long-term mentoring relationships.





BOARD OF DIRECTORS



RUSSEL DAINS

President & CEO
Save Our Youth

SARAH JULIANELLE

Nurse Practitioner
Highlands Health & Wellness

MATTHEW MISEGADIS

Tax Accountant
Misegadis & Associates LLC

SHANNON DREYFUSS

VP of Campus Development
Colorado Christian University

DAVID BROOKS

Founder & CEO
Cirrus

KIRK ROBERTS

SVP of Strategic Development
BONA

SARAH ANDERSON

Hiring Director, Licensed Agent
Globe Life Family Heritage

REV. CHERYL MENDES-ELLIS

Director of Community Engagement
Cherry Creek Presbyterian Church

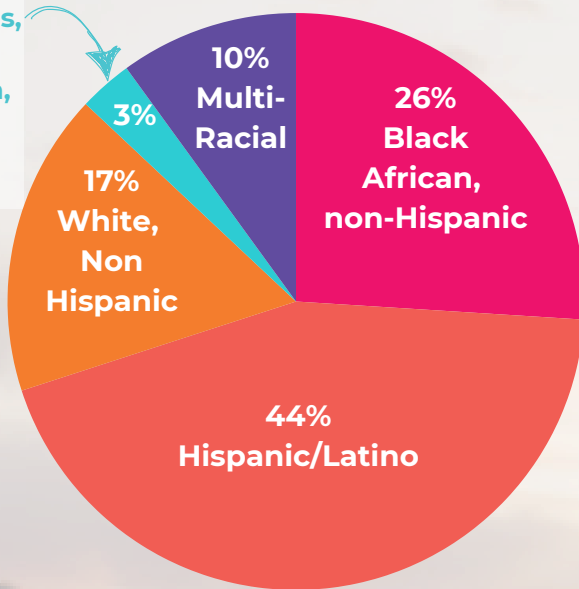
MATT MANNING

Senior Pastor
Crossroads Church

WHO WE SERVE

RACE & ETHNICITY

Indigenous,
Native
American,
Alaskan
Native



291



COLORADO YOUTH
SERVED IN 2024

13.41%



INCREASE IN NEW
MENTOR/MENTEE
MATCHES FROM
'23

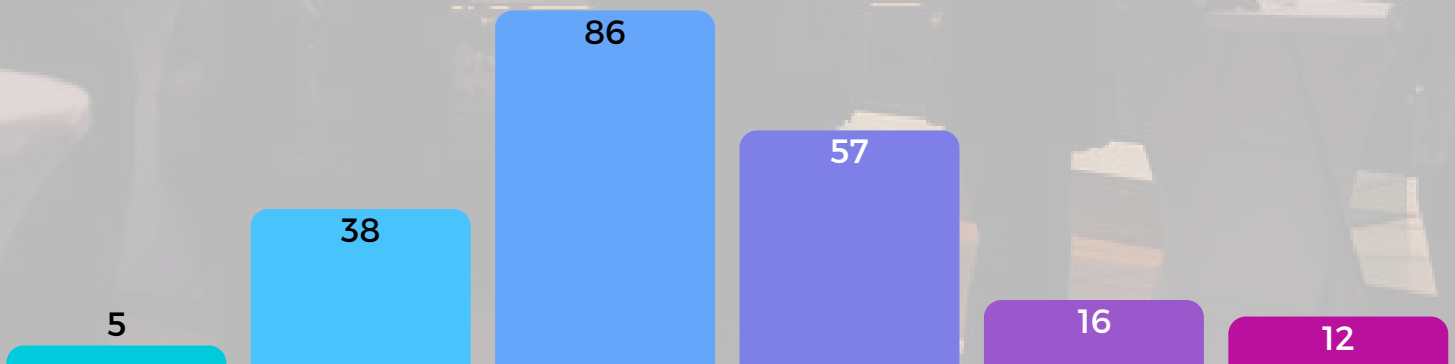
57% FEMALE

42% MALE

*FAMILIES MAY
OPT OUT OF
SHARING SPECIFIC
INFORMATION ON
THIS PAGE.

AGE

10 or Under 11-12 13-15 16-18 19-21 22-25



WHO WE SERVE

The following numbers represent the percentage of mentees who have experienced or are experiencing the following risk factors.
(Included but not limited to)

57% SINGLE PARENT HOUSEHOLD 

23% STRUGGLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

20% ALCOHOL ABUSE IN THE FAMILY

17% DRUG ABUSE IN FAMILY 

15% INCARCERATED FAMILY MEMBER

14% SOCIAL SERVICES INVOLVEMENT

6% LIVE IN A BLENDED FAMILY 

6% HAVE A DECEASED PARENT

6% HAVE EXPERIENCED HOMELESSNESS

5% LIVE WITH EXTENDED FAMILY 

4% EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

4% IMMIGRANT FAMILY

3% REFUGEE FAMILIES 

1% ARE IN ADOPTIVE OR FOSTER CARE

**Families may opt out of sharing specific information on this page.*



OUR PROGRAM



ONE-TO-ONE MENTORING



We focus on one-to-one youth mentoring to help address financial, emotional, educational, spiritual, and relational poverty among young people across the Denver Metro Area.

CASE MANAGEMENT



We hire intentional case managers, called Mentoring Specialists, who focus on caseloads of no more than forty mentor/mentee matches.

MENTEE PROCESS

Mentoring Specialists interview interested youth, ages 10-17, to ensure a proper understanding of our mentoring program; they also help discover interests and talents so that the mentee can be matched with a mentor who shares their passions and is best suited to help them grow and develop.

MENTOR PROCESS

We extensively vet potential mentors to ensure the safety of mentees; those who qualify are then thoroughly trained, matched, and fully supported by their Mentoring Specialist.

MENTOR COMMITMENT

Mentors commit to meet with their mentee for an average of two hours each week, for at least one year. They help their mentee set goals for the mentoring relationship.



EFFECTS OF MENTORING

We believe that “Mentoring can be an effective instrument to improve youth outcomes including: better attendance and attitude towards school, greater chances of obtaining higher education, less propensity to use alcohol and drugs, and increased social attitudes and relationships”



(Hair, Jekielek, Moore & Scarupa. [Mentoring: A promising Strategy for Youth Development](#)).

OUR MODEL

HOPE

THE BELIEF THAT YOUR FUTURE CAN BE BRIGHTER AND BETTER THAN YOUR PAST AND THAT YOU HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN MAKING IT BETTER.

HOPE PROMOTER

A person who cultivates their own hope and invests it back into their relationships and community, creating a lasting legacy of hope.

VISION

The ability to imagine a future that is brighter and better than the past, inspiring hope and purpose.

WAY

Exposure to undiscovered pathways helps inform decisions to turn a vision into reality.

WILL

The personal drive, skills, mindset and support needed to walk the path, overcome challenges, and stay on course.

OUR MODEL

THEORY OF CHANGE





OUR IMPACT



The average mentor/mentee match length = 50.9 months
THAT'S NEARLY 4.5 YEARS

75% OF MENTEES SHOWED SKILL GROWTH

71% OF MENTEES WHO INITIALLY REPORTED FEELING LONELINESS NO LONGER REPORT FEELING LONELY

11% MENTEES DEMONSTRATED AN IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS AFTER ONE YEAR OF MENTORING

(These skills include emotional regulation, empathy, relationship-building, and responsible decision-making.)

VOLUNTEERS

330 VOLUNTEERS

10,950 VOLUNTEER HOURS

\$307,000 VOLUNTEER HOURS VALUE

OUR IMPACT

After one year in our mentorship program, mentees report
**A 50% DECREASE IN THE AVERAGE
NUMBER OF CHALLENGES**
they face, compared to their intake survey.



TOP FIVE MENTEE STRUGGLES REPORTED AT INTAKE:

39.8% SADNESS

40.7% MOTIVATION TO GO TO SCHOOL

48.8% GRADES

49.6% WORRY/ANXIETY

52.4% ANGER

“THE MENTORING EFFECT”

BY MENTOR: THE NATIONAL MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

55% OF YOUTH WITH MENTORS ARE MORE LIKELY TO ENROLL IN COLLEGE.

78% MORE LIKELY TO VOLUNTEER REGULARLY.

46% LESS LIKELY TO USE DRUGS.

81% MORE LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE IN
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

OUR IMPACT

ANNUAL MENTEE SURVEY DATA

Mentor Impact Statement	AVG. RATING (OUT OF 5)	% STRONGLY AGREE (4 OR 5)
My mentor has lots of good ideas about how to solve a problem.	4.65	96.50%
My mentor helps me take my mind off things by doing something with me.	4.67	94.90%
When I'm with my mentor, I feel safe.	4.82	97.50%
My relationship with my mentor is very important to me.	4.81	98.50%
When something is bugging me, my mentor listens while I talk about it.	4.68	92.40%
I feel close to my mentor.	4.7	93.40%

PATTERNS FROM OVERALL SURVEY DATA SUGGEST THAT OUR MENTORING PROGRAM IS PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE AT:



Reducing negative emotional states (anger/sadness)



Reducing involvement with negative peer influences



Building emotional management skills



Improving decision-making abilities



THE SENIOR EXPERIENCE

in 2024, we officially launched The Senior Experience, a **dynamic** new program track designed to support youth preparing for life after high school. Through a series of three hands-on workshops, students explore pathways in college, careers, trades, military service, and more. They receive **1:1 coaching** on completing the FAFSA, selecting a college or career path, and developing the mental resilience needed for the transition.

With only about one-third of first-generation college students earning a degree within six years, and first-year college dropout rates nearing 30% nationally, our targeted coaching and continued mentorship are **critical to student success**. The Senior Experience **blends practical skill-building** with **celebration**, including fun activities, senior pictures, and inspiring guest speakers from various fields. We believe that by combining **information**, **encouragement**, and ongoing **relationships**, our youth can move **confidently** into their futures.

23 SENIORS GAINED COLLEGE PREP SKILLS IN 2024

21 GRADUATED ON TIME IN 2024



OF THOSE 21:

- 14 CHOSE A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY PATH**
- 2 CHOSE A TRADE OR CERTIFICATION PATH**
- 2 CHOSE TO TAKE AN INTENTIONAL GAP YEAR**
- 3 WERE UNDECIDED**

91.3% OF OUR SENIOR EXPERIENCE PARTICIPANTS GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL ON TIME!

This far surpasses the 55% national average graduation rate for at-risk youth

THE SENIOR EXPERIENCE



**90% HAD A PLAN IMMEDIATELY AFTER GRADUATION
(COLLEGE, TRADE, OR GAP YEAR)**

**ONLY 14% WERE UNDECIDED, COMPARED TO NATIONAL
AVERAGES THAT ARE MUCH HIGHER FOR AT-RISK YOUTH.**

NEARLY 7 OUT OF 10 CHOSE HIGHER EDUCATION

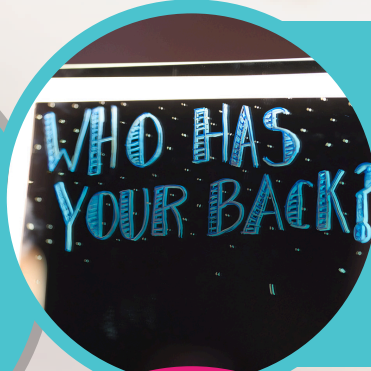


PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR LIFE



SKILLS 4 SUCCESS

A plan that provides ways for mentors to teach, cultivate, and encourage the use of hard and soft skills throughout middle and high school.

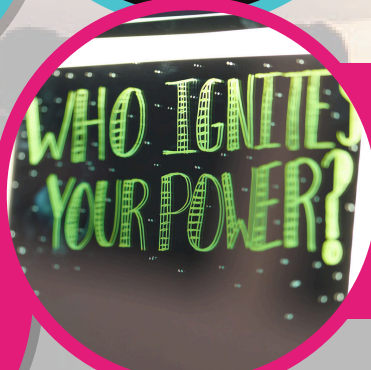


Mentees choose from a list of skills to focus on with their mentor. There are a variety of topics to choose from including goal setting, time management, initiative, self-advocacy, basic math, and communication skills.

Mentors are equipped with training and research-based skills sheets to implement during mentoring sessions to cover the chosen skill.

THE SENIOR EXPERIENCE

Specifically tailored for our seniors to support them as they prepare for graduation.



A year-long Senior Experience with a series of workshops, activities, and guest speakers. Our aim is to help prepare for a post-secondary transition which may include an intentional gap year, trade school, college, or career pathway.

SCHOLARS

Specifically tailored for our mentees as they consider post-secondary options.



All mentees are assigned an advisor to help navigate emotional and academic challenges while making sure students are aware that they aren't alone in this new transition and phase of life.

Through this program, we also provide financial scholarships for tuition and books to help bridge some of the financial gaps our mentees face. We aim to provide the needed support and resources for them to complete a post-secondary program.

OUR EVENTS

FAMILY FUN DAY

An annual day of fun and games that we host for our mentors and mentees, as well as their families.



GRADUATION

A celebratory event to recognize our graduating seniors and their families.



BACK TO SCHOOL BBQ

A chance to collaborate with several local churches to provide free backpacks to our mentees and their siblings.



CHRISTMAS PARTY

A time to celebrate the end of the year with our mentors and mentees. Music, food, games, gifts, and more!



30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

On October 12, 2024, we joyfully celebrated Save Our Youth's 30th Anniversary—a meaningful evening of reflection on all that God has done in the lives of those we've had the honor of serving, as well as within our own team. A heartfelt thank-you to DaVita for generously donating their beautiful rooftop space to host this special event!



We were honored to have Save Our Youth alum, Alex Bryan, join us as our keynote speaker and performer for the evening. Alex is now a professional composer, pianist, speaker (and so much more!) and we are excited to continue supporting his career endeavors!

Illuminating the hopeful stories of our mentor-mentee matches was central to the evening. We created a space where these stories could shine—inviting guests to read, listen, and experience the light they bring to our community.



MENTEE HIGHLIGHT

A photograph showing the silhouettes of two men from behind, looking out at a bright sunset or sunrise over a body of water. The man on the left is wearing a dark jacket, and the man on the right is wearing a dark shirt.

JAKE'S MENTORING JOURNEY: A STORY OF STEADY GROWTH

Jake, a **resilient young man** being raised by his grandmother, has been matched with his mentor Jesse for an impressive **37 months**. Their journey began with some challenges, as Jake faced struggles with mood fluctuations, bullying at school, and the lasting impacts of past experiences. Despite these obstacles, Jesse demonstrated remarkable patience and commitment, **consistently showing up** to build **trust** and provide **support**.

Throughout their match, Jake and Jesse have engaged in **consistent activities** like shooting baskets and watching sports together—simple yet powerful opportunities for connection that met Jake where he was emotionally. Jesse's steady presence provided Jake with a **safe, supportive** adult relationship during **critical adolescent years**.

Communication between Save Our Youth staff, Jake's grandmother Pam, and Jesse has been ongoing, ensuring that Jake's needs remained front and center. Mentors and staff navigated occasional challenges thoughtfully, recognizing that Jake's journey would have ups and downs. Staff noted that Jesse's commitment and ability to adapt were crucial to keeping the relationship strong and positive.

Over time, Jake showed **significant personal growth**, reflected not only in anecdotal updates but also in **hard data**: His self-reported social-emotional skills **improved by 1.6 points** — one of the largest gains across all mentees surveyed this year.

Jake's story is a testament to the power of **consistency, compassion, and believing** in a young person's potential, even when the path isn't always easy.

MENTEE HIGHLIGHT



SANTIAGO'S MENTORING JOURNEY: *GROWING WITH STEADY ENCOURAGEMENT*

Santiago has been matched with his mentor Jon for a **49 months**. Their relationship is marked by **consistency, patience, and steady encouragement**. Santiago was described as confident and open. In as such, he quickly built rapport with Jon through activities and lively conversation. Their bond **strengthened** over weekly meetings—often centered around active, hands-on experiences like learning baseball and planning fishing trips.

As a mentor, Jon focused on listening, being present, and letting Santiago take the lead in choosing activities. He provided just enough guidance to help Santiago grow without overwhelming him. Jon's **thoughtful engagement**—including asking for feedback about his effectiveness as a mentor—demonstrated his investment in Santiago's success.

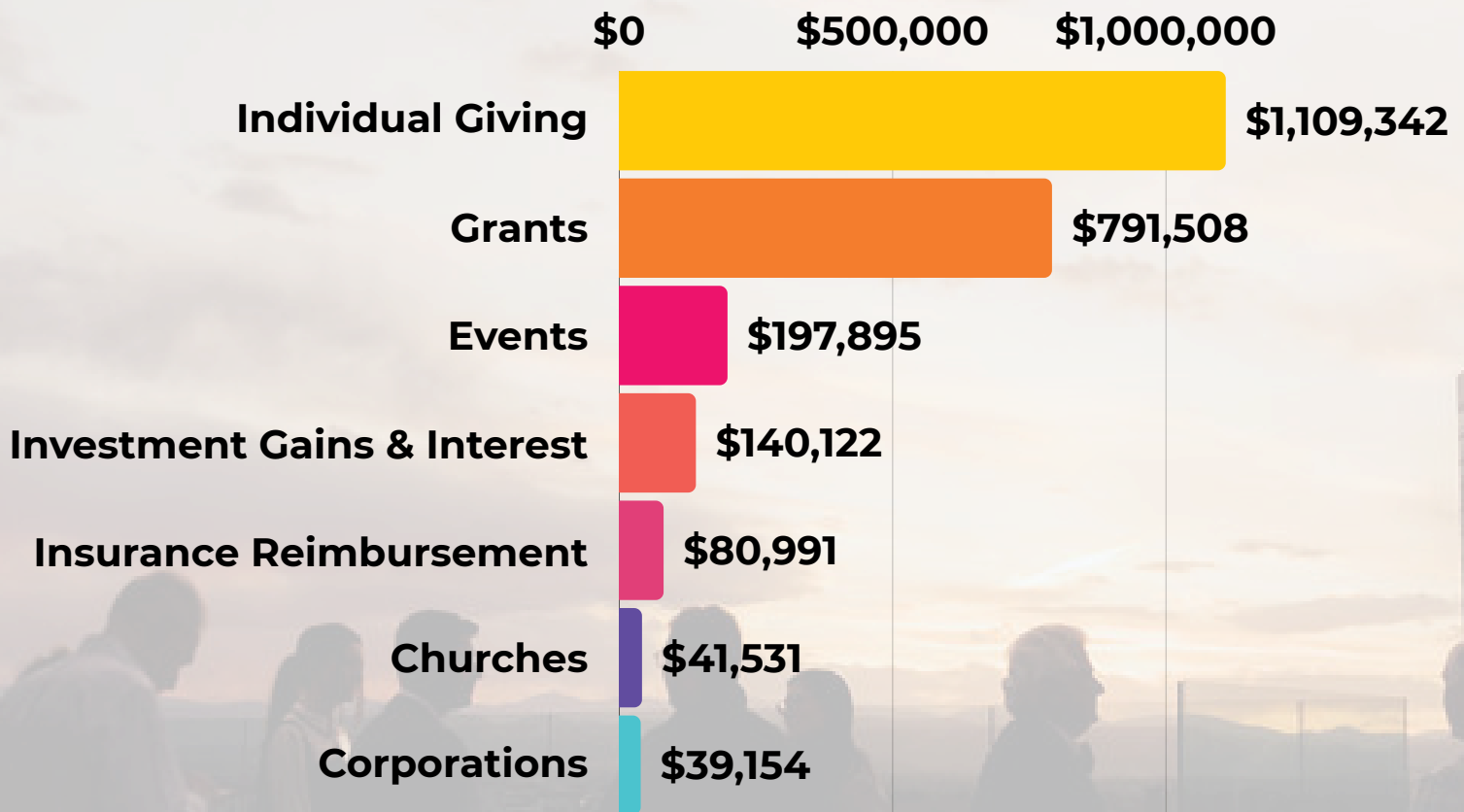
As Santiago entered high school, their meetings naturally shifted to biweekly, reflecting the new realities of adolescence like sports, relationships, and growing independence.

Jon adjusted support as Santiago matured. Together, they began focusing more intentionally on **life skills development**, such as practicing driving, considering post-high school options, and setting goals for the future—all critical milestones for a teenager on the cusp of adulthood.

Throughout their match, Santiago's development was noticeable not just in life events but in his emotional growth as well. His self-reported social-emotional skills **improved by 1.4 points**—another example of one of the highest gains among mentees surveyed this year.

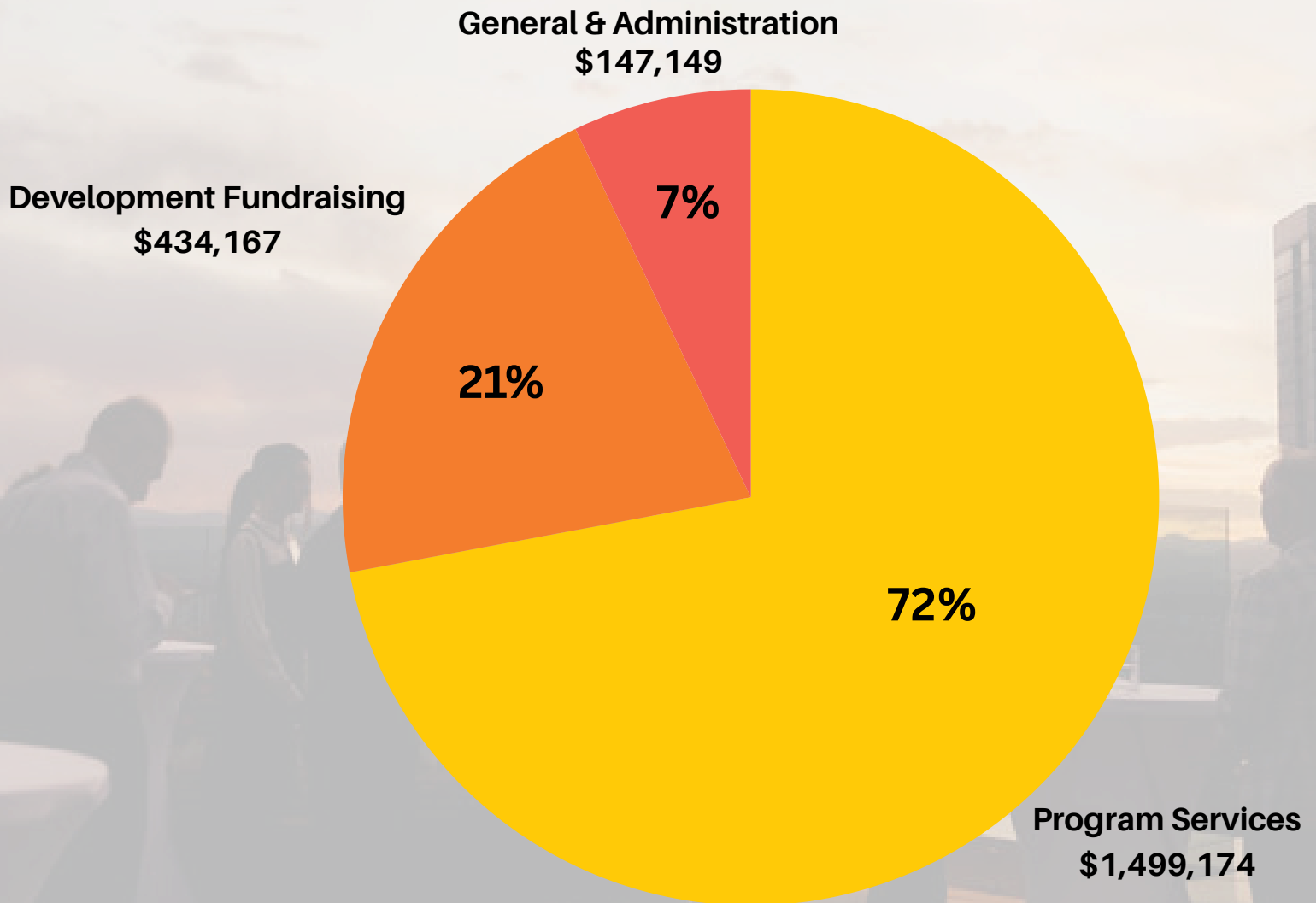
Santiago's journey highlights how a mentor's consistent encouragement, listening, and support **empower** a young person to believe in their future and take **meaningful steps** toward independence.

INCOME DISTRIBUTION



TOTAL REVENUE = \$2,401,543

FUNCTIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF EXPENSES



PARTNERS

CHURCHES

ALTITUDE CHURCH
 BEAR VALLEY CHURCH
 CALVARY CHURCH ENGLEWOOD
 CALVARY FAMILIA
 CALVARY WELLSPRING
 CHERRY CREEK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
 CHURCH OF THE ADVENT
 COLORADO COMMUNITY CHURCH
 CONNECT CHURCH
 CROSSROADS CHURCH - THORNTON
 DENVER UNITED CHURCH
 DWELL CHURCH
 EASTERN HILLS COMMUNITY CHURCH
 ELEVATION (JOURNEY)
 FELLOWSHIP DENVER CHURCH
 FELLOWSHIP DENVER CHURCH-NORTH METRO
 IGLESIA ORCHARD
 IGLESIA VICTORY
 LANDMARK MINISTRIES
 LOWRY COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH
 MISSION HILLS CHURCH
 MISSION POINT CHURCH OF CHRIST
 MOSAIC - A JESUS CENTERED COMMUNITY
 NORTHGLENN CHRISTIAN CHURCH
 ORCHARD CHURCH
 PARK CHURCH
 RADIANCE CHURCH
 REDEEMER TEMPLE
 RENOVATE CHURCH



SOLA CHURCH
 SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY CHURCH
 THE BRIDGE AT BEAR CREEK
 THE HILLS CHURCH
 THE NEIGHBORHOOD CHURCH
 THE SUMMIT CHURCH
 THORNCREEK CHURCH
 TNL

PARTNERS

FOUNDATIONS

ADAMS COUNTY FOUNDATION
ADOLPH COORS FOUNDATION
ANSCHUTZ FOUNDATION
AUTREY FOUNDATION
BURT (NATHAN B. & FLORENCE R.) FOUNDATION
CHARLES SCHWAB FOUNDATION
COLORADO GIVES FOUNDATION
HAYNES FAMILY FOUNDATION
HUMPHREYS FOUNDATION
LEPTAS FOUNDATION
LLOYD J KING AND ELEANOR R KING FOUNDATION
MCKINSTRY CHARITABLE FOUNDATION
NORD FAMILY FOUNDATION
PERRY FAMILY FOUNDATION
PETE MORGAN FOUNDATION
PEYBACK FOUNDATION
ROSE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
THE DENVER POST COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
**THE EUGENE CURTIS AND FLORENCE ANN ARMSTRONG
FAMILY FOUNDATION**
THE NEW HORIZONS FOUNDATION, INC
TYL FOUNDATION
VIRGINIA W HILL FOUNDATION



PARTNERS

CORPORATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS

AEGIS LIFE & FIRE SAFETY COMPANY
AMERICAN FAMILY MUTUAL INSURANCE
ANONYMOUS (2)
BALL CORP
BALLET ARIEL
BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS COLORADO
CAT FEST
CHFA (COLORADO HOUSING & FINANCE AUTHORITY)
CITY OF DENVER
COLFAX MARATHON PARTNERSHIP, INC
CROSSLANDS DEVELOPMENT COMPANY
DENVER NUGGETS COMMUNITY FUND
ECOLAB
EVANS PERFORMANCE INC
FIRSTBANK HOLDING COMPANY
GARDEN HOME GRANGE NO 407 INC
GIVING UNIVERSITY
GOOGLE
HANNAH LYONS LLC
HEINRICH MARKETING
INNER CITY HEALTH
INNOVEST PORTFOLIO SOLUTIONS
JEDI BALANCING
JOBSITY
KING SOOPERS COMMUNITY REWARDS
KYLE'S MOUNTAIN HOUSE
LAKWOOD CULTURAL CENTER
LONG BUILDING TECHNOLOGIES, INC
MEOW WOLF



MOA
NEXTWORLD
PAYPAL
PINDUSTRY
PRISON FELLOWSHIP MINISTRIES INC
PROSPERITY DENVER FUND
PROVISION BRIDGE DISTRIBUTION ACCOUNT
SOUTH JEFFCO ROTARY CLUB
SUNSTATE EQUIPMENT
THE ERIE COUNTY INVESTMENT CO.
VENARDOS CIRCUS-LITTLETON, CO
VISA CORPORATION
VVV COMPANY
WINGS OVER THE ROCKIES

THANK YOU FOR
HELPING US
CONNECT YOUTH TO
HOPE FOR THE LAST
30 YEARS!

