



Impact Report for 2021

“I told her once I wasn’t good at anything. She told me survival is a talent.”

— Susanna Kaysen, Girl, InterruptedAnd

In 2020 we put out a simple Impact Report like this one that referenced the story called “How Are the Children?”. The concept was that if answered “All the children are well”, that peace and safety prevail; the priorities of protecting the young and the powerless are in place; that the Masai people had not forgotten their reason for being, their proper function, and their responsibilities.”

As an organization we still hold ourselves accountable to that idea, that if our Students are well, then we know that we are doing our jobs and that your money is being spent in the most valuable and impactful way possible.

The quote from Susanna speaks a little bit to how we feel about 2021 – that although often we felt we couldn’t do anything right as we all battled with the impact of illness, violence, depression, opportunities lost, staff loss, covid policy after covid policy, people lost, and so much more. But we learn from our Students daily how to survive and that we did, and most of the time we even thrived!

When sharing our successes for 2021 please keep in mind that the challenges we all faced in 2020 and 2021 are new to us, and pretty much all anyone talks about, but those challenges are what our Students face each and every day of their lives.

Us: Afraid that someone walking next to us is going to give us covid and make us sick, or worse

Students: Afraid that someone in their neighborhood, or even police, may shoot them, rape them, beat them up, or harm them in some way.

Us: Feeling we can’t trust anyone because friends we thought we knew are not vaccinated and putting us in danger – or have lied about being vaccinated rather than just telling us the truth.

Students: Feeling that their friend from childhood had to align with a different group to stay safe because they moved across town, and now they don’t know if they can trust them to have their back.

Us: Not seeing smiles anymore when in community, often not knowing if someone is friend or foe.

Students: Having to “wear a mask” everyday to get through the different neighborhoods or cliques just to get to work, never knowing if the people behind the closed doors would allow them to pass.

These are real fears the Students at Curt’s face every day. Our Students live in a Covid type fear from morning until night and yet they survive and thrive – ‘Survival is their Talent’.

OUR STUDENT'S SUCCESS THROUGHOUT YET ANOTHER CHALLENGING YEAR –

At years end ...

- 48 new Students in total in the program in both cafes (our goal was 60).
- 40 Students graduated in 2021 – 8 remaining in program entering 2022.
- 48 new Students attended Life Skills Programming throughout the year
- 48 new Students received one-on-one counseling whenever needed throughout the year, with at least one check in per week while in the program.
- 19 graduate Students received extensive support
- 12 graduate Students come to café monthly to check in, eat, engage in support periodically
- Students went on 20 Experiential Trips to museums, gardens, places of business, restaurants, on tours, and to escape rooms.
- 3 Graduate Students elevated to management positions (1 in 2021) – this with only 12 staff in total!

We also implemented for Students Success -

- Started to rewrite Workforce workbook, per Student request, so its easier to manage during their time at the café and also easier to use as a resource when they graduate
- Hired Program Manager to rewrite Life Skills Curriculum and Experiential Trips to adapt to the requests of Students – more interactive classes, more work on financial literacy, more cultural experiential trips
- Working on concept to get more needs met for Students by providing more support in Social Service Division

COLLABORATIVE EVENTS IN 2021

City of Evanston's Safe Summer

- Curt's Café was the exclusive Caterer for all Safe Summer Events
 - First Friday Community Picnics, serving well over 300 people each night for 5 months in the summer.
- Curt's Café provided food/staff for all Safe Summer Community Centers pop-ups young adults
 - From Monday to Friday, June through early August Curt's provided food for participants in the community centers to enjoy for free.
- Curt's Café provided picnics for Block (**Bringing Love To Our City and Kids**) Parties almost every Saturday in June, July, August – often providing food for over 200 people per block!

Lake County Collective Summer Picnic

- Highland Park Students approached Staff with the need to have a picnic similar to Evanston's because of all the violence that occurred in one month in Waukegan. The Students, with Staff support, developed concept, menu, games, invitations/flyers and collaborative partners and executed our first ever Lake County Collective Summer Picnic in August.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2022

- Our goal remains to graduate 30 new Students per cafe each year. If our Staff/Students are healthy/safe all year we are confident we can do that. We will put safety first when making our decisions based on Covid regulations.
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- Our Graduate program will be fully up and running by March 1, 2022, and our confidence with its success is built on hiring someone to run the program this year, rather than relying on Staff members with a full workload to manage it.
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- As of 1.13.20220 we already have 3 new collaborative partnerships in Lake and Cook County in the mix that will bring more opportunities to our Students and more support to Staff. We will continue to build on these opportunities throughout the year. Our goal is for Curt's Café to be able to offer what we are best at – Tangible and Purposeful Workforce Training along with Social and Emotion Support – and take resources from others such as training in Constructions, Nursing, Administration, etc. from other organizations to enhance our Students knowledge of what work is and can be.
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- To research additional funding streams to ensure that we are able to shore up the losses financially we are experiencing because of the lack of business in both cafes because of covid, which is also impacting catering as well.
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- Begin researching opportunities of expansion, taking our lead from feedback from many collaborative partners that would like to see more cafes that we can work with for the benefit of the increasing number of young adults living in at-risk situations.

As always – we will continue to use our resources wisely and to be respectful with all funding we receive, while giving our Students every opportunity to Survive and Thrive!