



IMPACT REPORT



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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends, Partners, and Supporters,

Every young person carries within them a story still being written. This past year, we had the profound privilege of walking alongside young people — ages 15 to 24 — as they drafted some of their most important chapters: landing a first job, mastering a skill they once thought was beyond them, and discovering the quiet confidence that comes from knowing you are capable. None of that would have been possible without you.

This report reflects a community's commitment — yours. Your generosity funded workforce training programs that helped youth earn industry-recognized credentials. Your belief in our mission supported life skills workshops where young people learned to navigate finances, communicate with confidence, and build the resilience that sustains a career over a lifetime. And your trust in our work opened doors to new employer partnerships, turning training into a real opportunity.

Behind every number in these pages is a face we know by name. There is Rico, who arrived hesitant and quiet and left with full-time employment. There is Omar, who used our financial literacy curriculum to open their first bank account. These are not outliers— they are what happens when a community decides that every young person deserves a fair start.

We are deeply grateful to our funders, corporate partners, and volunteers who showed up whenever we needed a supportive hand. We are grateful to the community organizations that trusted us with referrals and to the employers who took a chance on our graduates. And we are especially grateful to the young people themselves, who brought their whole selves to the work and reminded us, every single day, why this matters.

We do not take lightly what it means that you chose to invest your resources, your time, and your trust in this work. On behalf of every young person whose life you have touched — often without ever meeting them — thank you. The impact is real, it is lasting, and it belongs to all of us.

With deep gratitude,



TANYA JENKINS

Curt's Café Executive Director

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW



→ Vision

Curt's vision is to cultivate a community where students develop personal strength, empowerment, and belief in their potential. We facilitate student access to services and deliver customized employment training by collaborating with Cook and Lake County organizations and employers. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are fundamental values that shape our programs, partnerships, and leadership. We strive to foster an inclusive environment where students can flourish, irrespective of their background or identity.

→ Mission

Curt's Café improves outcomes for young adults living in at-risk situations through work and life skills training.

→ Board of Directors

Rich Amend
Richard Basofin
Frank Clements
Audrey French
David Graham
Steve Keen

Greg King
Alena Laube
Rick Marsh
Nehama Morton
Dana Pearl
Jeremiah Sargent

SUCCESS STORY

Ricardo B. joined the Curt's Café program in the fall of 2025 after being referred by Thresholds for additional support in developing workplace and life skills. From the beginning, Ricardo demonstrated a strong work ethic and a willingness to learn. However, he often preferred working behind the scenes and found social interactions challenging, particularly in customer-facing environments.

Through consistent coaching, hands-on training, and encouragement from Curt's Café staff, Ricardo steadily built both his technical and interpersonal skills. As his confidence grew, he began taking on responsibilities at the front of the café, engaging with customers and coworkers with increasing ease and professionalism.

Over time, Ricardo transformed from someone who preferred to stay out of the spotlight into a valued team member who was comfortable interacting with the public and contributing to a positive customer experience. His growth reflected not only improved job skills but also increased self-confidence and personal development.

In March 2026, Ricardo successfully graduated from the Curt's Café program and secured employment at a local restaurant. Ricardo's journey is a powerful example of how supportive workforce development programs can help young adults build confidence, strengthen life and employment skills, and achieve meaningful career opportunities.

Our Impact



ONCE A STUDENT
JOINS OUR
PROGRAM, WE'LL
SUPPORT THEM
WHENEVER
NEEDED, DURING
OR AFTER.



YEAR IN REVIEW

Evanston Renovation

Many thanks to the State of Illinois and City of Evanston for their financial support, we were able to renovate our cafe after 13 years of operation. We now have a bimonthly rotating art gallery provided by over 400 local artists from Evanston Made.

→ RENOVATION

Evanston location updated.

Music Theatre Works

We also collaborated with Music Theatre Works with the heartwarming production, Godspell, in a modern-day Curt's Cafe. After the November 9th production Curt's had the opportunity to sit with the creative director, Kyle Dugan, to learn more about the brainchild behind this production as well as our mission.

→ COLLABORATION

Music Theatre Works
Evanston Made
City of Evanston
Evanston Grows
Youth Job Center
The Moran Center
Haven Family Services
Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice
Connections for the Homeless
Wintrust Bank

13 Years

On May 1st we celebrated our 13th anniversary at our Evanston Cafe. It was a great celebration with lots of supporters. We are looking forward to many more years to come. Curt's Cafe hosted our 13th annual fundraiser at Double Clutch Brewing Company in Evanston, with a record turnout. 100% of the proceeds support our students and the programming we offer.

→ CELEBRATION

Anniversary Celebration
Annual Fundraiser
Re-Grand Opening of Evanston
Graduations

2025 IN NUMBERS



Recidivism Rate

State vs. Curt's

Recidivism is typically measured over a three-year post-release window using three primary indicators: Rearrests, Reconvictions, and Reincarceration. In Illinois, recidivism rates for young adults (ages 15-25) are among the highest in the justice system, roughly 45% to 55%.

Curt's Recidivism Rate

→ 5%

Certificate Rate

Program Completion

We provide comprehensive support for all of our students throughout their time in our program, as well as continued assistance following program completion, regardless of when a student concludes their studies.

Curt's Program Completion

→ 98%

of Cultrual Exposure Trips

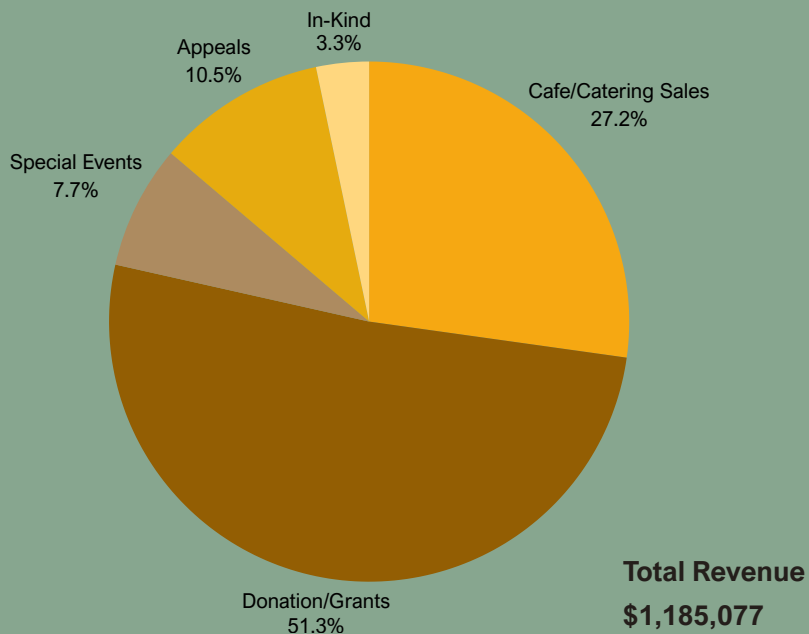
→ 14

of Graduates Supported

→ 21

FINANCIALS

Revenue



→ Cafe/Catering Sales **\$322,510**

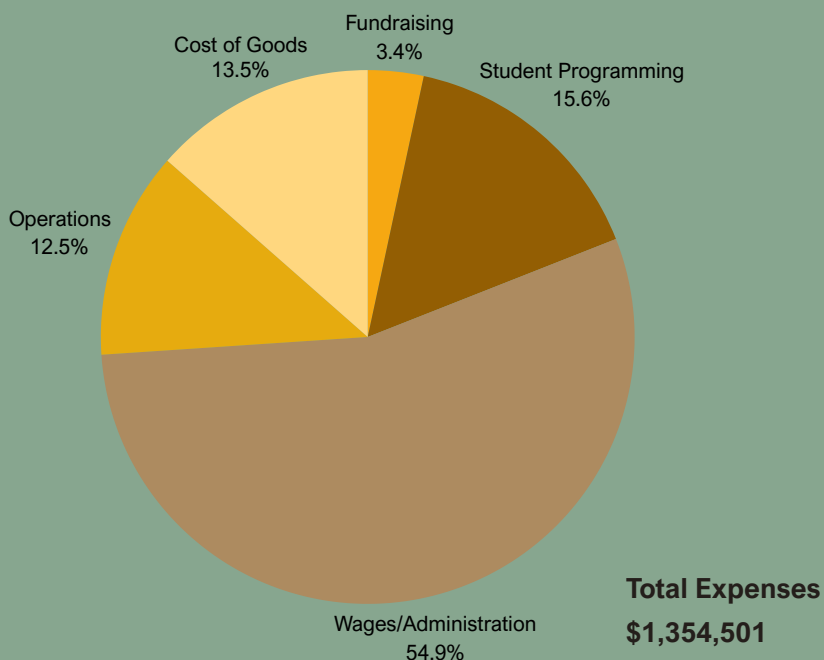
→ Donations/Grants **\$607,976**

→ Special Events **\$91,105**

→ Appeals **\$124,607**

→ In-Kind Donations **\$38,877**

Expenses



→ Fundraising **\$45,673**

→ Student Programming **\$211,912**

→ Wages/Administration **\$743,914**

→ Operations **\$169,933**

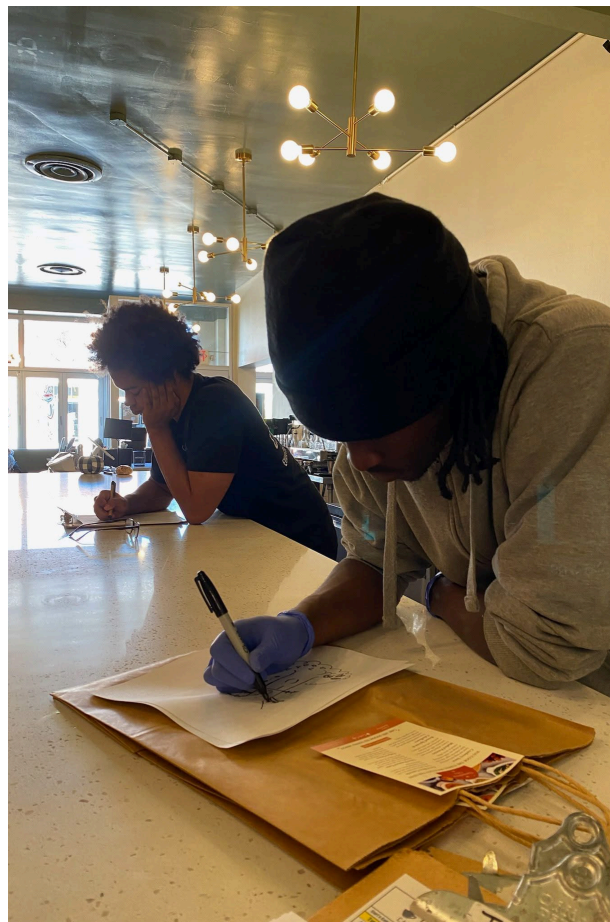
→ Cost of Goods **\$183,069**

TESTIMONIAL ON OUR GRADUATES

"I've been extremely impressed by MC and JG since I first began working with them. They consistently bring strong client interaction, a helpful attitude, and a willingness to step up whenever needed. MC has shown initiative by taking on difficult cleanup tasks without hesitation and contributing creative marketing ideas, while JG's passion for the kitchen is contagious. He has helped develop specialty food items and new packages that we plan to roll out soon.

Beyond their professionalism and teamwork, both have shown genuine kindness and support, and our guests love them. I feel very lucky to have them on our team and our guests love them!"

- Mike Caulfield, Wayfarer Theatre



→ We thank you for your ongoing support of our mission.

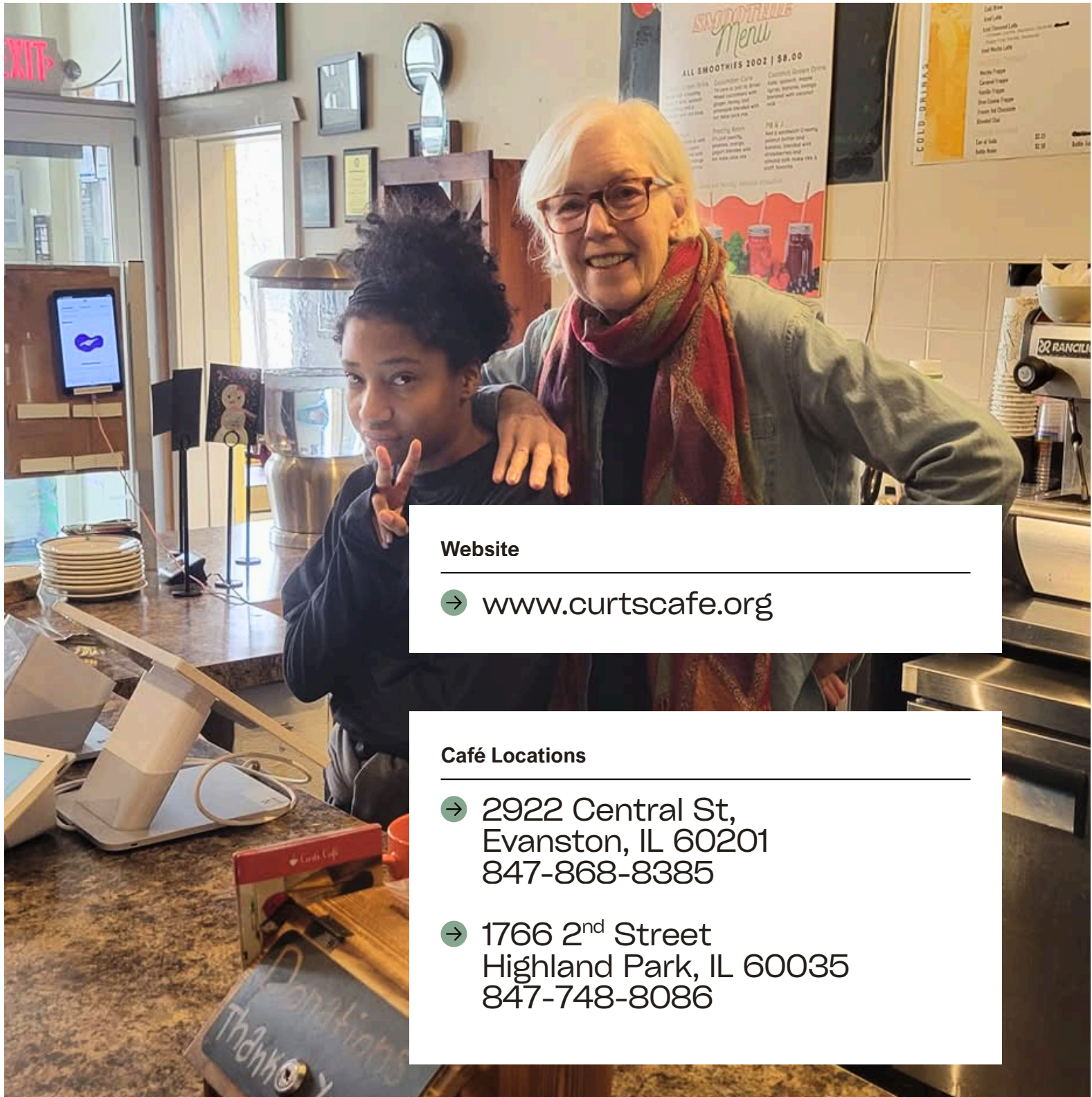
We would like to take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude to each and every individual who has supported us over the past year. Your contributions have made a significant impact, whether you have supported us financially, volunteered your time and skills, frequented our cafes, utilized our catering services, or simply spread the word about our mission. Your involvement has been invaluable to our success.

A special acknowledgment goes out to our dedicated staff members. Your hard work and commitment not only ensure the smooth operation of our organization but also provide essential support and encouragement to our students. Your efforts in fostering a positive and nurturing environment do not go unnoticed, and we are truly grateful for the passion you bring to your roles every day. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of those we serve.

with gratitude,

Tanya Jenkins & Curt's Café Board of Directors

VISIT US



Website

→ www.curtscafe.org

Café Locations

- 2922 Central St,
Evanston, IL 60201
847-868-8385
- 1766 2nd Street
Highland Park, IL 60035
847-748-8086