



# ANNUAL REPORT

2023

**CHRISTOPHER**  
LEARN DREAM ACHIEVE **HOUSE**



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## A Letter from our CEO and Interim President

*To our friends and supporters,*

2023 was a year that held many celebratory moments for the Christopher House community – from hosting the signing of the 2023 Illinois State Budget, to seeing our third class of graduates walk down the aisle at 8th grade graduation. We are continuously humbled by and sincerely proud of the strength, empathy, and achievement of our community. To all those who made this past year possible – thank you! It has been a joy to experience the continuous growth and evolution of our community over this past year, but our work in ensuring opportunity and educational equity is far from over. The needs of our community are evolving, with an increased need for mental health and social emotional support for our scholars and families, and a persisting teacher shortage in the wake of the pandemic.

As we continue to respond to arising challenges through adapted internal programming, we also seek out community partners who are experts in their fields and can facilitate this vital work. It is through our immersive family supports, paired with these key relationships, that we are able to offer holistic and comprehensive support to our scholars and families. We are excited to announce that through a thoughtful and collaborative process, which included diverse voices and perspectives from both families and staff, we have finalized and committed to a new FY24-FY26 strategic plan. The plan is anchored by three main priorities: 1) High Student Achievement for All Students; 2) Best Place to Work; 3) Investing in Equity.

It is no coincidence that these carefully outlined goals directly correlate with our 4 key values – Commitment to Excellence, Achievement and Perseverance, Respect and Compassion, Equity – which act as a beacon for our scholars, families, staff, and teachers as we continue to navigate both the short- and long-term effects of the pandemic.

We look forward to what the future holds for the talented and resilient members of our Christopher House community, and we offer our deepest gratitude for all of our dedicated supporters who will be joining us on the journey.

In partnership and service,



**Libby Shortenhaus**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



**Julie Dakers**  
INTERIM PRESIDENT

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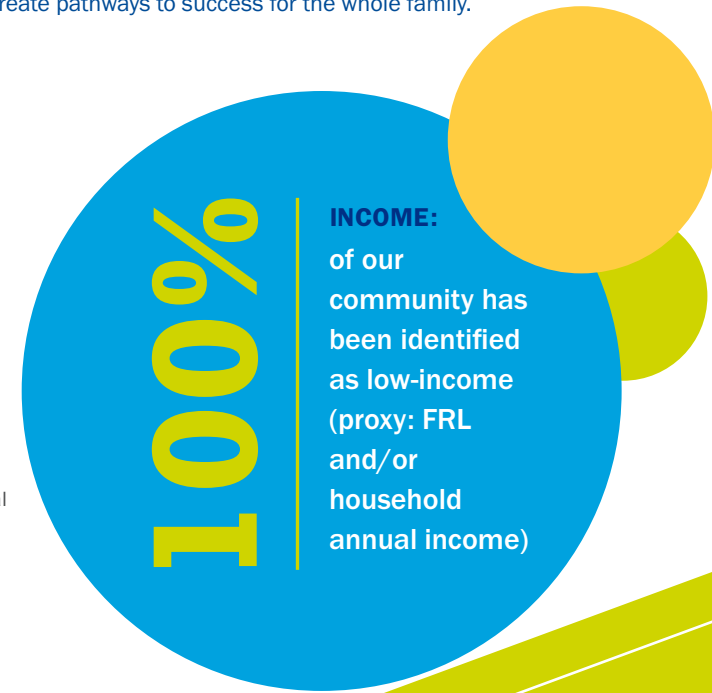
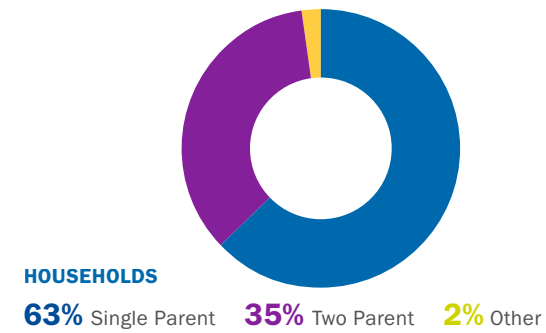
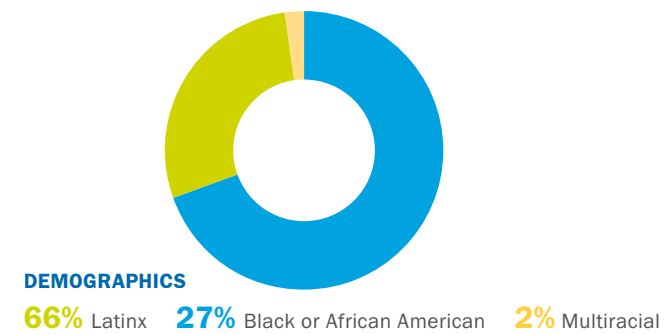
# About Christopher House

## Our History, Mission, Vision

Since its founding in 1906, Christopher House has created opportunity and advanced equity by delivering high-quality, innovative programming that serves the needs of our community. From being one of the first Head Start providers in the 1960s to launching the Christopher House Elementary School in 2013, Christopher House has honed a continuum of education model with immersive family support that enables scholars and their caregivers to thrive.

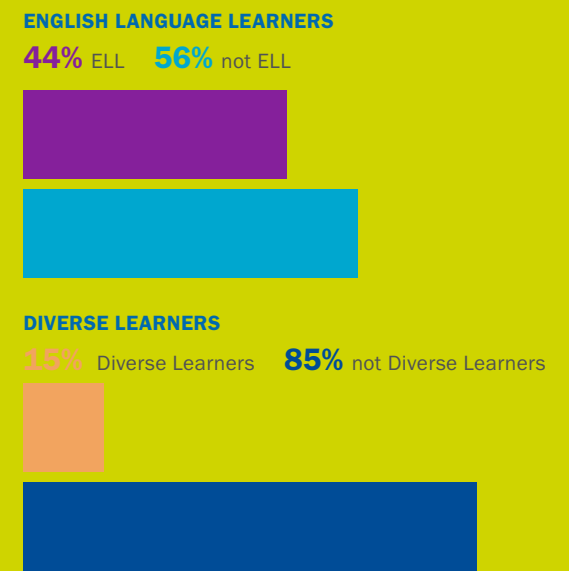
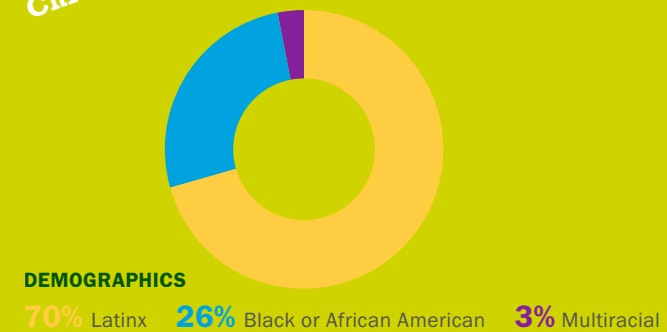
Today, we deliver this model to thousands of scholars, starting at birth through the 8th grade, across our family of schools located in Belmont Cragin, Logan Square, and Uptown. We build strong, trusting relationships with families – scholars and their caregivers – to provide coordinated support and care to create pathways to success for the whole family.

## Christopher House Families



Who we serve

## Christopher House Scholars (Infant – 8th Grade)



# Our Model

Christopher House is a family of schools that helps children and families succeed in school, the workplace, and life. Our unique two-generation model combines a continuum of personalized education and immersive family support, which extends well beyond the classroom.

Christopher House works at the nexus of education and social services to holistically address the individual needs of our scholars and their families. Two generation models like ours recognize that parents are a child's first teachers, and research shows multigeneration support both in and outside of the classroom is essential for success. According to the Aspen Institute, a two-generation model – like Christopher House's – increases economic security and helps create long-term impact for the family unit, including a 17% increase in the child's future earnings and postsecondary success. Through our approach, we work to ensure the wellbeing of our scholars and their caregivers, which positions the whole family unit to gain access to the tools and resources needed to thrive.



# Our Impact



## PEOPLE SERVED

In FY23, Christopher House served

# 1578

individuals (**868** scholars and **710** parents/caregivers across our family of schools)

## GRADUATION



Christopher House celebrated its **third graduating class** to complete their full continuum of education.



## COUNSELING SERVICES

# 528

**counseling sessions** were delivered to Christopher House scholars and families.

## ACCREDITATION

**ALL 3** of our preschools are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).



## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

**+ 500** families received emergency financial assistance throughout COVID to prevent crisis and support stable, healthy home environments.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD LITERACY



**97%** of scholars ages 0-5 met the "Widely Held Expectations" for literacy development, measured using Teaching Strategies GOLD. (as of Spring FY23)



## PARENT SATISFACTION

**92%** of parents/caregivers of our Infant and Preschool scholars felt that their identities were respected and valued at Christopher House.

# Infant and Preschool

Christopher House Infant and Preschool prepares over 300 children for kindergarten, beginning at six weeks old. All three preschools are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) – a distinction awarded to only 10% of early learning schools across the country – and each school has received the highest Gold Circle of Quality ranking from ExceleRate Illinois.

Christopher House's Infant & Pre-School employ a methodology that is centered on personalized education, with immersive family supports. We meet every scholar and their caregiver where they are, embracing an educational pedagogy that is child-centered, social justice motivated, and Reggio-inspired. Together, we work to create classrooms that incorporate and respect each child's identity as a participating member of the community and continuously facilitate a renewed sense of wonder. Christopher House's focus on individualized education includes small group interventions, supported by a FTE Diverse Learner Coordinator, who not only supports our scholars in our classrooms, but also supports scholars' caregivers navigate, if needed, evaluation and other services.

### Our Impact

**97%** of infant to 5-year-old children met widely held expectations in literacy development. (FY23)

**89%** of infant to 5-year-old children met widely held expectations in social emotional learning (SEL) development.

**96%** of infant to 5-year-old children met widely held expectations in math development.

**97%** of infant to 5-year-old children met widely held expectations in cognitive development.



### Our Stories

A direct result of the pandemic has been a decrease in the number of children meeting early childhood developmental milestones, which has resulted in an increase in the number of young children that require early intervention. Christopher House has been on the frontline of responding and providing high-touchpoint support through our unique resources like our FTE Diverse Learner Coordinator, who not only supports our scholars in our classrooms, but also supports scholars' caregivers navigate, if needed, evaluation and other services. In the last year, 30% of our Pre-Schoolers had an active Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which makes Mark's\* story timely in how Christopher House responds and supports our scholars on the path to success.

*During a routine classroom observation, Vincent, our Diverse Learners Coordinator, noticed developmental delays in Mark, a preschooler. Vincent supported Mark's mother to alleviate her worry and provided her with a warm referral for Mark to receive a play-based evaluation. After connecting with therapists, working with adapted materials and receiving routine care, Mark began showing improvements in his communication, fine and gross motor skills. We are pleased to share that he is now testing "Kindergarten-ready" and will continue receiving social-emotional support as he transitions into Kindergarten at our Elementary School this Fall. This continuum of care that engages caregivers and their children ensures stability & provides access to educational resources that enable children and families to thrive.*

\* child's name has been changed

# Elementary and Middle School

Christopher House Elementary and Middle School provides more than 440 scholars – including the graduates of our Infant & Pre-School – with a personalized education, including a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) curriculum, ongoing professional development of Christopher House's qualified staff, and a college-going culture that ensures every scholar is prepared for the bright future ahead. Two key K-8 guiding curriculum principles are STEAM and personalized learning.

**STEAM:** Scholars participate in 30-60 minutes of STEAM instruction daily, in addition to 60-90 minutes of math instruction. Christopher House has a 1:1 Chromebook ratio, ensuring that every scholar has a laptop and can learn the technology skills needed for success in school and the workplace. Science instruction is inquiry-based using the Next Generation Science Standards with a partnership between teachers (determining the unit) and students (choosing the topic to explore). Christopher House also prepares scholars for a future in STEAM by exposing them to STEAM degrees and careers through field trips, career days, and science fairs. The middle school also features a STEAM lab, where scholars will have access to a 3D printer, a Hydro Station, and a maker's space for science experiments, cooking classes, and other creative exploration. Scholars also have access to electives such as Graphic Design and Music Technology.

**Personalized Learning:** In response to the impact the pandemic has had on educational outcomes and the mental health of Elementary age students, Christopher House has prioritized social-emotional learning (SEL) for our scholars. Through our incorporation of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), we provide targeted academic, behavioral, and SEL support to students to meet their unique needs. Christopher House employs three social workers for our Elementary and Middle School and a Middle School Counselor dedicated to our Middle School scholars, resulting in a ratio of 1:220 for the number of social workers per Christopher House scholars. This ratio, in comparison to the Chicago Public School average of 1:865, allows us to address the individual needs of our scholars and offer additional supports, which include a supplemental SEL curriculum and a pull-out classroom for scholars in need of targets support.



### Our Impact

In June, we graduated our third class of 8th graders.

**100%** of our 8th graders matriculated to high school.

**25%** were accepted to Chicago Public School Selective Enrollment schools, such as Jones College Prep, Lane Tech, Whitney Young, Northside College Prep, & Payton. This is a 33% year-over-year increase, and a 71% increase from our first graduating class in 2021.

**85%** of our graduating 8th grade scholars attended on of their top 3 best-fit high schools.

### Our Voices

We were honored to feature on of our bright, ambitious, and passionate 8th grade scholars, Sara\*, at the 32nd Annual Benefit.

Sarah, a 13-year-old Christopher House scholar, highlighted her favorite and some of the most impactful aspects of Christopher House over the past 12 years. From the diverse teaching staff to individualized social-emotional support, Sarah recounted how Christopher House has successfully prepared her for a future in which she can make her own unique dreams come true.

*"Throughout my journey at Christopher House, I have been able to take things that will guide me on my new journey. I know [it] will have its ups and downs, but I*

*am confident I will succeed while enjoying this new phase of my life. I would also remember the tools that Christopher House has provided me. Christopher House has been able to build up my social skills and confidence. With these tools, I know I will be able to succeed anywhere. With the ability to ask for help when needed or be able to attend office hours, I know the confidence Christopher House has given me will set me up for success. Even standing here now I have been able to gather up the courage to speak to you all. Something that Christopher House has shown me how to do. Now I know I have a long way to go in life, but through it all, Christopher House will always be here, a place where I can always go back to. A home waiting for me whenever I need it."*

\* child's name has been changed

# After School

Christopher House After School works with more than 200 students – including our Elementary School scholars and graduates – from age six to fourteen, to explore new opportunities, achieve academic excellence, and develop healthy behaviors and the soft skills needed for success in school, home, college, and the workplace.

After School operates year-round, providing programming from 2:30 – 5:30PM during the school year and during non-school days operates full-day programming. Scholars participate in a variety of academic and social activities that focus on SEL, academic support, and community exploration. Throughout the school year, one hour/day is dedicated to physical activity, and teachers routinely lead discussions centered on healthy lifestyles. To encourage youth to consider future academic and professional pathways, After School hosts career panels and organizes college visits. To support STEM education, scholars participate in group projects and field trips to locations like the Museum of Science and Industry and the University of Chicago.

### Our Impact

**93%** of After School scholars – school age and youth – achieved two of the three SMART goals they set for themselves by the end of the school year.

**82%** of all After School scholars improved their grades from first semester to second semester or maintained a B average.

**65%** of school age scholars showed interest and were actively involved in After School activities as evidenced by the SAYO-Staff Assessment.

**63%** of school age scholars demonstrated that they can think through and solve problems as evidenced by the SAYO-Staff Assessment.



# Parent School

Christopher House Parent School partners with every parent of each scholar in the Infant & Pre-School, Elementary School, and After School in order to create a stable, healthy home environment that advances their child's academic and social-emotional development by providing holistic resources, including Family Advocates, counseling, parenting educational workshops, on-site food pantries, and emergency financial assistance.

Family Advocates provide advocacy to every Christopher House family by engaging them within the school community, facilitating regular communication, and building strong, trusting relationships with caregivers that are essential in breaking down barriers/stigma of asking and receiving support. Through these personal relationships, our advocates are able to form a deeper understanding of the strengths, needs, and desires of our families, which directly impact the family engagement programs that we offer. These engagement opportunities and parent workshops include Positive Parenting facilitated by Dr. Ferney Ramirez, Cafecito – a parent group that meets and provides caregivers with a safe space to connect and share in their parenting experiences, and UIC's Center for Literacy – a monthly series that provides knowledge and mentoring to caregivers in topics that range from Employment Readiness to Family and Financial Literacy.

Additional support is offered by our licensed clinical Social Workers and community partners who provide school-based counseling services to our scholars. We also offer on-site food pantries are offered bi-monthly at all three sites and distribute fresh produce, dairy and items not covered by government programs. Additional support during the holidays is provided. Emergency financial assistance is also available, and additional support through the Family to Family Giving Program and the Thanksgiving pantry is offered during the holidays.

### Our Impact

**84%** of Early Childhood parents and 64% of Elementary/Middle parents had an average self-sufficiency score of safe or stable as measured by the Christopher House Family Assessment. (FY23)

**89%** of Elementary/Middle School and 100% of Early Childhood children and teens seen in counseling services achieved 2 of their 3 social and emotional goals for the year (as evidenced by the Goal Attainment Scale). (FY23)

**1,676** (unduplicated) children and adults received food from our food pantry.

**109** individuals received emergency financial assistance to prevent crisis and support stable, healthy home environments, which ultimately supports our scholars and their families to thrive.

### Our Stories

Shanda Starks Douglas, School Age Manager, first joined Christopher House in 2002 as an Assistant Teacher in an infant classroom at our Uptown Campus. In her current role in After School, she strives to create safe, supportive, and healthy environments for her scholars. When reflecting on a powerful memory throughout her time here, she recalled a young scholar, Trish\*, in the After School program who came into her classroom obviously upset on afternoon. When she asked her about it, Trish had said she did not want to talk about it and spent the afternoon playing alone and reading to herself.

Each day that week, Shanda checked in on Trish, asking how she was doing. With a deep sigh, Trish

would respond the same, denying Shanda's offer to talk. Shanda reassured Trish and told her that it was okay if she didn't want to talk, and that whether it was today, tomorrow, or next month, she would be there for her when she was ready. About two weeks later, Trish approached Shanda crying and asked if they could talk. She told Shanda she was been struggling with self-confidence and body image – she worried that she didn't look like her friends. Shanda gave her a big hug, and responded, "Trish, you are seen, you are valued, and you are beautiful for exactly who you are." To this day, Shanda and Trish have maintained a safe and trusting relationship, and Shanda's door is always open in case Trish – or any scholar – are looking for a little extra support.

\* child's name has been changed

### Our Voices

Last year, we heard our community's "Christopher House Story," when we sat down with some of our staff, scholars, and families. It is through these personal testimonies that the true impact and magic of Christopher House can be felt. A mother who has two children, has been a part of the Christopher House family for over twelve years – from Early Childhood to 8th grade graduation – and has received ongoing support from our Parent School had this sentiment to share:

"We have been with Christopher House since it was at Roger's site, [my oldest] was just two years old... The idea of [my youngest] now being here, the education that he will be getting from here, the environment

that is set for him here, the After School enrichment programs that he is involved with, all give me a sense of security. I have participated in the food pantry, clothing drives, we also received school supplies at the beginning of the year. Personally, I even asked if [Christopher House] could review and print my resume for me, and I ended up getting the job!"

\* child's name has been changed

# Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets

Years Ended June 30, 2023 and 2022

	2023			2022		
	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
<b>Revenue and Support</b>						
Government grants (Note 12)	\$ 17,317,165	\$ -	\$ 17,317,165	\$ 16,676,047	\$ -	\$ 16,676,047
Contributions of cash and other financial assets	924,495	397,654	1,322,149	741,984	126,449	868,433
Contributions of nonfinancial assets	240,509	-	240,509	310,731	-	310,731
Program service fees and incidental revenue	138,820	-	138,820	106,339	-	106,339
Special event revenue	415,425	-	415,425	421,519	-	421,519
Investment income	52,840	-	52,840	18,729	-	18,729
Miscellaneous income	49,540	-	49,540	66,007	-	66,007
<b>Total revenue and support</b>	<b>19,138,794</b>	<b>397,654</b>	<b>19,536,448</b>	<b>18,341,356</b>	<b>126,449</b>	<b>18,467,805</b>
<b>Net Assets Released from Restrictions</b>						
	343,719	(343,719)	-	375,390	(375,390)	-
<b>Total revenue, support, and net assets released from restrictions</b>	<b>19,482,513</b>	<b>53,935</b>	<b>19,536,448</b>	<b>18,716,746</b>	<b>(248,941)</b>	<b>18,467,805</b>
<b>Expenses</b>						
Program services:						
Early childhood development	8,387,729	-	8,387,729	7,590,171	-	7,590,171
Youth development	1,487,065	-	1,487,065	1,160,338	-	1,160,338
Family support services	1,380,105	-	1,380,105	1,406,245	-	1,406,245
Elementary school	7,516,622	-	7,516,622	7,352,591	-	7,352,591
<b>Total program services</b>	<b>18,771,521</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>18,771,521</b>	<b>17,509,345</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>17,509,345</b>
Support services:						
Management and general	1,562,592	-	1,562,592	1,528,737	-	1,528,737
Fundraising	527,511	-	527,511	632,722	-	632,722
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>20,861,624</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>20,861,624</b>	<b>19,670,804</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>19,670,804</b>
<b>(Decrease) Increase in Net Assets - Before nonoperating income</b>	<b>(1,379,111)</b>	<b>53,935</b>	<b>(1,325,176)</b>	<b>(954,058)</b>	<b>(248,941)</b>	<b>(1,202,999)</b>
<b>Nonoperating Income (Loss)</b>						
Gain on forgiveness of debt (Note 8)	-	-	-	1,214,737	-	1,214,737
Net realized and unrealized loss on investments	(9,700)	-	(9,700)	(468,958)	-	(468,958)
Net unrealized gain on interest rate swap	163,545	-	163,545	456,300	-	456,300
<b>Total nonoperating income</b>	<b>153,845</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>153,845</b>	<b>1,202,079</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,202,079</b>
<b>(Decrease) Increase in Net Assets</b>	<b>(1,225,266)</b>	<b>53,935</b>	<b>(1,171,331)</b>	<b>248,021</b>	<b>(248,941)</b>	<b>(920)</b>
<b>Net Assets - Beginning of year</b>	<b>20,979,492</b>	<b>1,382,393</b>	<b>22,361,885</b>	<b>20,731,471</b>	<b>1,631,334</b>	<b>22,362,805</b>
<b>Net Assets - End of year</b>	<b>\$ 19,754,226</b>	<b>\$ 1,436,328</b>	<b>\$ 21,190,554</b>	<b>\$ 20,979,492</b>	<b>\$ 1,382,393</b>	<b>\$ 22,361,885</b>

# Statement of Financial Position

Years Ended June 30, 2023 and 2022

	2023	2022
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,317,276	\$ 2,617,701
Investments (Note 5)	2,490,070	2,417,848
Receivables:		
Grants	2,290,202	2,148,605
Pledges - Net of allowance (Note 13)	416,130	367,111
Fair value of swap agreement (Note 8)	428,832	265,287
Prepaid expenses and other current assets	182,530	219,387
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>7,125,040</b>	<b>8,035,939</b>
<b>Pledges Receivable - Net of current portion and discount (Note 13)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>8,219</b>
<b>Property and Equipment - Net (Note 6)</b>	<b>21,118,466</b>	<b>22,081,687</b>
<b>Right-of-use Operating Lease Assets (Note 10)</b>	<b>106,219</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Finance Lease Assets (Note 10)</b>	<b>62,149</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>\$ 28,411,874</b>	<b>\$ 30,125,845</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Accounts payable	\$ 276,554	\$ 388,210
Accrued liabilities:		
Accrued payroll and vacation	897,483	965,113
Advances from government and funding agencies	114,862	303,527
Other accrued liabilities	45,997	19,346
Current portion of long-term debt (Note 8)	5,715,932	373,144
Current portion of lease liabilities - Operating (Note 10)	85,557	-
Current portion of lease liabilities - Finance (Note 10)	44,227	-
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>7,180,612</b>	<b>2,049,340</b>
<b>Notes Payable - Net of current portion and deferred financing costs (Note 8)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,714,620</b>
<b>Lease Liabilities - Operating - Net of current portion (Note 10)</b>	<b>21,907</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Lease Liabilities - Finance - Net of current portion (Note 10)</b>	<b>18,801</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>7,221,320</b>	<b>7,763,960</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>		
Without donor restrictions	19,754,226	20,979,492
With donor restrictions (Note 11)	1,436,328	1,382,393
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>21,190,554</b>	<b>22,361,885</b>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>\$ 28,411,874</b>	<b>\$ 30,125,845</b>

# 2023 Donors

## \$100,000+

Paul M. Angell Family Foundation  
IMC Chicago Charitable Foundation  
**\$50,000 - \$99,999**  
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## \$10,000 - \$24,999

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