

Impact Report



Central Community House
At Our House, People Are Central



2022

Dear Neighbors,

Reflecting on 2022 immediately brings feelings of pride, resilience, and appreciation for all we have achieved together, and is a reminder that together we can accomplish just about anything. More than any year since I have been with Central Community House (“Central”), staff have come together as a family, caring for each other and our neighbors with compassion, altruism, and a personal commitment to improve the world around them. For this I could not be more thankful.

As you likely know, Central has something for everyone! Multi-faceted programming throughout 2022 created fellowship; educational and social components ensured fun; and program activities met needs and embraced gifts of our community.

As we continue on our journey towards connection and community, we are honored that you have chosen to join us as a partner, supporter, and friend.

Read more about our accomplishments last year in the pages to follow.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tamar Forrest".

Tamar Forrest, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Central Community House



Youth

Elijah is all smiles at Summer Camp

Laughter and learning go hand-in-hand in our Afterschool and Summer Camp Programs, which help youth succeed in school and in life through activities that embrace culture, creativity, and social-emotional learning. At Central, youth have a safe place to play with friends and discover their strengths—helping them lead happier and healthier lives.

In 2022, Central's Youth Program:

Served
105
unique
youth.

Provided
7,312
healthy
meals.

Helped
96%
of youth
improve
their reading
skills.

Helped
77%
of youth
improve their
social-emotional
competency.*

Provided
FUN
opportunities
to learn.**

What do parents say about Central?

96% of parents said their child had an enjoyable experience at Central.

100% believed their child was in a safe and caring environment while at Central.

"It was a blessing that my daughter was able to attend summer camp at Central. She loved that each day was different and really loved the weekly cooking classes! I'm very grateful for everything she got to experience and thankful for the staff who made it all happen."

- Parent of Second Grade Camper, 2022

Youth Programming in Action – Olentangy Caverns

Field trips are a fun way youth get to experience new things and apply concepts taught in educational lessons. In May, our afterschool youth spent a balmy day exploring the “chilly rooms” inside the Olentangy Caverns. Youth tried their hand at spelunking (a fun word for cave exploring!). They experienced science firsthand, learning about different types of rocks, how far underground they were, and the unique temperature qualities of caverns.

Wrapping up their day full of adventure, youth climbed out of the dim caverns to finish exploring the rest of the grounds, which included a trip to the petting zoo to see goats, chickens, deer, and pigs. One of the Group Leaders shared that her favorite part was “seeing how excited they were to feed the animals.”

Julian & Lillian

Julian, a third grader, has been part of the Youth Program at Central Community House for the past two years. When he first started coming to Central he was shy but now gets off the bus eager to see what activities are scheduled and if his favorite meal is being served. Julian has consistently improved his confidence and proficiency as a reader during the afterschool and summer programs. This year he was selected as a reading helper and given the new responsibility of assisting younger students with sounding out words, understanding new concepts, and becoming confident readers just like him! This is a role he takes seriously. When asked about his favorite activities at Central, Julian immediately responded, “Reading group time, because everyone tries their best and we get to help each other!”

His younger sister, Lillian, is in the first grade and also appreciates the new friendships she has formed at Central. She works diligently on her homework with the help of her afterschool Group Leader, and her favorite activity is art because she “gets to paint what she wants her future to be” and “make fun things out of clay.”

Julian and Lillian enjoy their time at Central so much that they encouraged their older cousin to join Central’s youth programming last year. They now get to see him make new friends and learn new skills as well. These youth bring excitement with them, and are always eager to read a challenging book or learn new math skills, knowing they will get to play with all of their friends while they learn.



Our Strong Families Program offers tools and resources that remove barriers to economic mobility and create pathways toward stability. This includes soft skills training, employment assistance, financial literacy education, and emergency housing programs to help families access rent, mortgage, and/or utility assistance. Additionally, we provide opportunities for neighbors to come together, building systems of support and social capital that help prevent future challenges. We also provide access to healthy food and meals, nutrition education, health care, parenting support groups and workshops, family field trips, and so much more.

In 2022, our Strong Families program:

Served
376
households.

Distributed
\$1,034,546
in material assistance,
primarily rent and utility
assistance.

Facilitated
46
classes that focused
on parenting, financial
literacy, and wellness
for women.



Strong Families

Aiesha

Aiesha's connection to the Near East neighborhood traces back to her childhood. Despite leaving the physical boundaries of the community she grew up in, the strong roots that were planted many years prior eventually brought her back home. Last year Aiesha made the courageous decision to flee an abusive relationship and returned to Columbus with her four children. With so many unknowns about her future, there was one thing Aiesha knew with certainty -- Central Community House would help. Strong Families staff connected the family to safe and affordable housing, then shifted the focus to employment. Aiesha worked with her Case Manager to apply for jobs and eventually secured a position with the City of Columbus.

Aiesha remains engaged with Central through financial literacy training, women's wellness programming, outings with her children, and our monthly community dinners. When she thinks of Central, she thinks of "support, education, and love". And Aiesha is paying it forward by giving rides to other families without transportation, and sharing resources that helped her through hard times.



Strong Families Programming in Action – Chat & Chew

In October 2022 our Strong Families program launched a monthly "Chat & Chew." On the first Friday of every month, our neighbors arrive at Central for a meal and conversation about whatever is on their mind – from resource sharing to parenting to everyday struggles. The group connects with one another over a healthy meal, while offering a friendly ear, and sometimes even considerate advice, on a topic that resonates with them.

Reflecting on this new offering, a Central Case Manager expresses her joy at seeing our neighbors connect, saying, "That's the whole reason we wanted to create an event like this, so they know they aren't alone in the things they face." Because of these monthly gatherings, what began as a group of 27 strangers has become a community of individuals who care for one another. They welcome each other exactly as they are, and offer a safe space to discuss and reflect on the impact of solidarity.

Seniors



Line dancing at the Village Central Open House



Calvin

Calvin has been engaged with Central Community House for over 30 years. A proud cancer survivor, Calvin is focused on maintaining his health, often taking walks around the neighborhood for exercise. He has been present for many of the changes that have happened in the Near East over the years, and worries about his neighbors being displaced. Village Central helps prevent this by providing minor home repairs and specialized case management that reduces barriers to maintaining housing. These services are why he believes Central Community House is so important. According to Calvin, “Central means the survival of the community.”

In addition to Village Central’s services that allow seniors to age in place, educational programs and opportunities for social engagement go beyond traditional senior programs, incorporating the arts into many of the workshops offered, and through an intergenerational approach. “To me, art is the piece that has the power to build relationships. It is all about creating impact for future generations.”

Village Central offers programming for adults ages 60 and older that allows them to maintain independence and combat isolation as they age. Led by the members themselves, seniors collaborate and share their lifelong gifts with one another through wellness programs, technology access and training, organized social events and field trips, and community engagement. Village Central also offers individualized supports to help Seniors navigate their basic needs, including rent, utility and food assistance, and minor home repairs.

In 2022, Village Central:

Served
366
unique seniors.

Provided transportation to grocery stores, doctor's appointments, and social events for
136
unique seniors.

Hosted
331
classes and workshops that provided opportunities for learning and social connection.



Village Central members enjoying an excursion to the Columbus Zoo

As a result of programming:

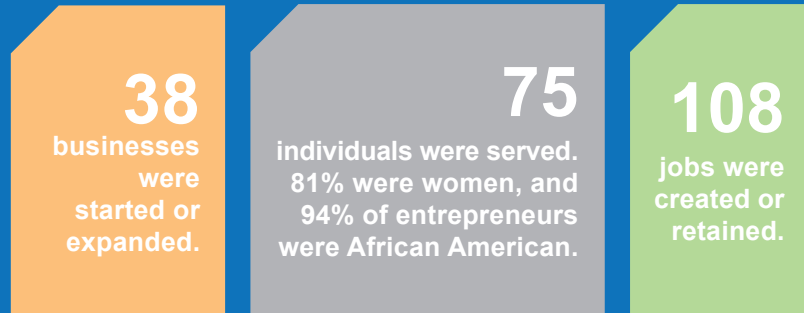
88% of seniors reported feeling more socially connected.

98% of those experiencing a barrier to health had their needs met.



Bringing together industry experts and budding entrepreneurs, the Academy for Community Entrepreneurs (ACE) helps individuals jumpstart their business ideas and provides them with the hands-on training and capital resources they need to make their dreams a reality.

In 2022:



ACE in Action – Pitch Competition

In August, entrepreneurs from our ACE Business Planning & Marketing cohort transitioned from the classroom to the real world as they participated in our ACE Business Pitch Competition. Program members were tasked with creating a “Pitch” for their business. Participants had to prepare all the components of a traditional business pitch, including a description of their business, a marketing plan, and financial projections.

The goal of the contest was to enable business owners to feel confident and prepared in selling their business to potential customers, banks, and investors by simulating a real-world situation. Every contestant received verbal and written feedback from a panel of expert judges, with most contestants stating that this feedback was their favorite part of the experience. According to the ACE Program Manager, “It was great to see their business plans and overall confidence grow while in the cohort; I really enjoyed how they delivered their Pitches!”

The winner of 2022, receiving a \$1,000 prize, was Chelsea Johnson, owner of Columbus Chaos. Columbus Chaos is a Women’s Full-Tackle Football team. Fueled by grit and determination, Chelsea’s goals for the team are to create a safe environment for young girls to thrive in the sport they love – football. She is also passionate about giving girls a healthy outlet to express themselves, grow their community engagement, and gain a sense of responsibility.



Destini getting ready to share “Sum Sweets” with the community during the Village Makers Festival last September

Destini

Our paths in life are rarely linear, and that is definitely the case for Destini who always imagined she would work in a doctor’s office. But fate, or maybe ‘Destini,’ had other plans.

Destini joined the Central family through our Academy for Community Entrepreneurs. Here she has learned all about marketing, business finance, securing funds, and the importance of a strong elevator pitch, all with the hope of one day opening her own bakery. Baking has been at the heart of her family for as long as she can remember, starting with her mother, a baker, and her father, a wonderful and passionate cook. Destini fondly remembers her mother using boxed cake mixes and adding her own flair. “I would sit there and watch her – mostly because I wanted to lick the bowl – but I would also watch the steps she followed. I didn’t know it then, but I was learning how to bake.”

As the owner of Sum Sweet Bakery, Destini has faced many obstacles. Despite this, her motto for life is, “Things can come at any given time, but keep being present and showing up.” Destini hopes to give back to her community not just in food, but in soul. She takes customer feedback very seriously, and strives for them to leave happier than when they came. If you ever get the chance to take a bite of one of her treats, you’ll be able to taste the care and love that she pours into them.



Visit getsumsweet.com to order baked goods for your next event!



Jahmal working on a mural during an Open Mic event. Photo by Audry White.

Tobias

Oftentimes, creative interest and talent runs in the family. This was the case for Tobias, whose brother Diego introduced him to TRANSIT ARTS. When Tobias shared a poem he had written his freshman year with Duarte, one of our Master Artists, it was undeniable that the world needed to hear his words. He performed his poetry for the first time publicly at an Open Mic night, and from then on he was hooked. Since then, Tobias's nerves have faded and he has been able to blossom into a confident artist.

For Tobias, writing is a way to "help others feel less lonely." When asked about what he is most proud of, Tobias mentioned a TRANSIT ARTS poetry book that youth participants created, noting that he likes to think of it as "a reminder of how I've grown as a person." His strong sense of community stems from his "flavorful" neighborhood, where "it's very diversely ethnic, where different kinds of people are like different spices or textures." Tobias hopes to continue to give back to his community through his creative writing.



TRANSIT ARTS brings the power of culture, creativity, and artistic expression to youth in our community. Through free weekly workshops where professional community artists and mentors lead group sessions, monthly “Open Mic” nights, and special performances, TRANSIT ARTS engages community members of all ages throughout Central Ohio.

In 2022, TRANSIT ARTS:

Engaged

352

youth and young adults.

Held

269

arts workshops focused on performing, visual, media and literary arts.

Hosted

11

Open Mic nights that brought community together.

Performed at

37

public events.

Provided mental wellness support for

69

unique participants.

Our artists are going places!

101 participants received public recognition of their talents through performance and exhibit opportunities.

41 TRANSIT ARTS Residency Program (TARP) participants were employed to create public art around Columbus.

As a result of TRANSIT ARTS programming:

96% said TRANSIT ARTS gives them a sense of belonging.

94% tried something new.

90% improved or maintained their self-esteem.



TRANSIT ARTS dancers at the Columbus Arts Festival



TRANSIT ARTS in the News

Over the last 31 years, TRANSIT ARTS (TA) has become a pillar in our community, and a safe haven for artists to develop their gifts – from vocal skills and poetry, to playing an instrument, dancing, painting, graphic design, and everything in between. In 2022, our TA program had the distinguished honor of receiving two awards from the Ohio Art Education Association. One encompassing TA as a whole, entitled the “Distinguished Organization for Art Education.” The other, entitled “Distinguished Citizen for Art Education,” belongs to our TA Director, Jackie Calderone. These awards were made possible by the support of our Master Artists and staff, our friends at Whitehall Yearling High School, the families and friends of our artists, and our community.

But what makes an Arts Education program great? When asked this question, Jackie Calderone animatedly responded,

We believe that it's important to understand each young person individually to help them grow. Youth come to us with different needs, abilities, family situations, and future goals. Our program is most successful when we can work in smaller groups to ensure that each young person can thrive and receive the coaching they need for success.

What sets TA apart is their unwavering dedication to making sure every person that walks through their door feels both heard and valued, and leaves a stronger artist than when they arrived.

The past few years have been increasingly challenging for our families and neighbors. According to Jackie:

Social emotional learning and wellness activities are vital to helping young people fully explore their creative potential.

Art isn't just about showing up – it's about showing out, about utilizing a creative outlet to express yourself. Whether that's underneath the lights on a big stage, or atop the hardwood floors of our Carriage House, our educators strive to continue creating a safe space for youth in our community to grow individually and professionally.

Special Thanks To Our Funders:

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(COHHIO)

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Columbus Kiwanis Foundation

Columbus Music Commission

Columbus Youth Foundation

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Ohio Governor's Office of Faith-Based
and Community Initiatives

Ohio State University College
of Social Work

PNC

Supply House

The Jeffrey Company

The Rotary Club of Columbus

The Siemer Family Foundation

The Women's Fund of Central Ohio

United Way of Central Ohio

Women of Wendy's

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