

2023 Impact Report

URBAN GATEWAYS



URBAN GATEWAYS

We believe that every young person deserves the chance to experience art, no matter what their zip code is. Urban Gateways' mission is to engage young people through arts experiences to inspire creativity and impact social change.

As we enter a new chapter in our leadership, both our city and Urban Gateways are at a critical crossroads as we find ways to build a better and more equitable future. A sense of wonder and collaboration are key to building that future which is why our organization continues to provide a safe place for wonder and connection for young people. From increasing access to arts experiences for young Chicagoans with special needs to creating spaces for young people to explore and share interests with each other, Urban Gateways and our community of artists, educators, and supporters impact the lives of young people by facilitating connection through curiosity.

We continue providing the gateway between Chicago youth, artists, educators, and community partners. From Touring Performances and Artist Residencies, to Street Level and Teen Arts Pass, we invite you to take a look at the pages that follow to dive deeper into the impact of our programs and some of the exciting changes within our organization .

Urban Gateways engages young people in arts experiences to inspire creativity and impact social change.

61,524

PARTICIPANTS



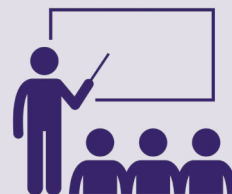
112

PARTNER SITES



26

TEACHING ARTIST



26

PERFORMANCE PROGRAMS



Urban Gateways Programs, September 1, 2022 - August 31, 2023



Leslé Honoré

This year we welcomed our new CEO, Leslé Honoré, to Urban Gateways in 2022. In addition to leading Urban Gateways, Leslé was appointed as Co-chair of the Arts and Culture subcommittee of Mayor Brandon Johnson's transition team to set the vision for Chicago cultural policy. She was also recently appointed to the mayor's Advisory Council on Women. She is a Blaxican poet, activist, and published author. She has dedicated her career as an educator, artist and civic leader to helping marginalized communities stand in the gaps that social, economic, and racial inequalities create.

“What would Chicago be without the arts? I am honored to join a team that knows that the thread that connects us to each other’s humanity is a thread of creativity, a team that works purposefully every day to create opportunities for the youth of Chicago to be able to harness their own power and find their voices when they create.”

PARTNERSHIPS



As part of several key structural initiatives led by Leslé we've partnered with Hansra Consulting, who first assisted in leading all staff through Conscious Ambassador Training, developing strategies with Urban Gateways for safe, inclusive workspaces that see people in their full humanity

Hansra then facilitated a series of think tanks to build our new Strategic Plan that will be the organization's guide over the next three years.

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Another key structural shift through transitions in our Communications department has been the exciting partnership with Rudd Resources, a communications agency that focuses on advancing people, communities, and ideas and has supported Urban Gateways messaging and communications.

Through collaboration, Rudd Resources has worked with us to organize and extend the message of our mission farther than ever.

"We have been the proud communication partner of Urban Gateways this year as it enters a new chapter in its history...We've been delighted to help Urban Gateways tell their story to the larger media about all of the work that they are doing and the incredible art that young people are making and experiencing."

[Leslé Op-Ed in Chicago Sun Times](#)

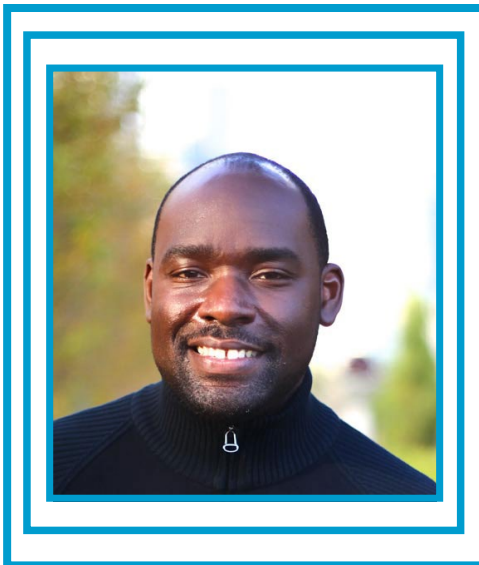
[77 Flavors Podcast with Leslé](#)

[Uptown Blues interview with Marko Stats](#)

NEW BOARD CHAIR

From the beginning of our organizations' founding over sixty years ago, Urban Gateways has relied on the dedicated work of community members who are committed to our mission.

As Joe Kye, Board Chair for three years, transitioned out of his position, we welcomed New Board Chair Kendrick Cox. As long-time supporters of the arts and education we are deeply grateful for their leadership on the Urban Gateways Board.



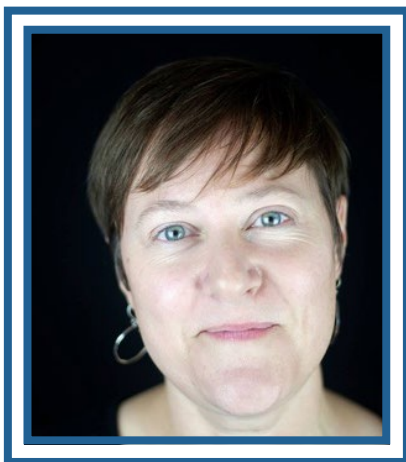
Kendrick Cox

Kendrick Cox comes to us with a global mindset and experience in working with broad groups of people and teams as an HR leader at Walgreen Boots Alliance, CNA and Fannie Mae. He is also a passionate fan of the arts; in his free time, Kendrick can be found walking the neighborhoods of Chicago photographing works created by street artists. As an organization that is dedicated to providing cultural exchange and a global perspective and has helped many young develop as leaders, we are excited to bring Kendrick into the Urban Gateways community.

“I look forward to being able to share this passion more broadly and contributing to the ongoing mission of Urban Gateways to expand arts education and access to the youth of Chicago helping to inspire creativity and impact social change.”

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Along with Kendrick this past year we are joined by several outstanding new Board members:



Cate Hill (they/them)

Cate Hill works for the Obama Foundation as Chief of Staff of the Obama Presidential Center, Operations & Implementation, the team responsible for the campus being built on Chicago's South Side. From a lifelong love of the arts and a career spanning more than a decade, Cate is thankful for the opportunity to serve on the Urban Gateways board and support its work to foster a love of the arts in young people throughout Chicago.

Rhonda Hawkins-Lyke (she/her)

Born and raised in Chicago and a product of Chicago Public Schools, **Rhonda Hawkins-Lyke** has been a Family Law attorney for 30 years, with a focus on at risk youth, family preservation and juvenile justice. She has served on the Board of Directors for the SouthSide YMCA, Bronzeville YMCA and Project Higher Ed. Rhonda is an active member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Jack and Jill of America Incorporated, The American Bar Association, Cook County Bar Association and National Association of Black Prosecutors.



NEW BOARD MEMBERS



Angela Stewart (she/her)

Angela Stewart is Executive Director of the Helen Miller SEIU Member Education and Training Center (METC), a Labor-Management Training Partnership in workforce training and development. In addition to working in educational programming for youth and adult learners, Angela has extensive experience in the private and corporate sectors of healthcare.

Jessica Madsen

As Practice CAO at Northern Trust Company, **Jessica Madsen** focuses on streamlining initiatives and strategic goals for the practice, and liaising with Enterprise and business unit teams to achieve investment practice objectives.

“In today’s environment, it is more important than ever for our youth to have an outlet that allows them to focus their energy through positive and creative mediums. My goal is to support this cause by supporting young people who are craving opportunities in the performance arts.”-Jessica Madsen



NEW ASSOCIATE BOARD CHAIR

In addition to new leadership and members of our Board, our Associate Board also welcomes a new chair, La Keisha Leek.

La Keisha Leek (she/her)

La Keisha Leek is an administrator and artist advocate based in Chicago. With a love for operations and supporting nonprofits, she currently serves as Grants Management Administrator at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. In previous roles, she has worked within nonprofit arts and higher education mission-driven organizations in Chicago and New York City. In 2019 she created L’Louise Arts to support the growth of early career Chicago-based artists and arts workers of color by providing thought partnership and economic resources. She is a founding member of Candor Collective, a group of creative practitioners interested in changing how we think about arts economies, and co-founder of The Petty Biennial, an exhibition project that complicates dominant narratives of contemporary cultural, social, and political norms, with collaborator Sadie Woods.



“I’m thrilled to lead the associate Board of Urban Gateways. As a former arts worker and lover of the arts and artists, I was searching for ways to stay connected to creative, inspiring and impactful work. This led me to the Associate Board. I’ve been impressed by Urban Gateways for a variety of reasons. Their dedicated staff, their output of arts education and arts experiences for Chicago’s young people, and how they invest and value their teaching artists.”-La Keisha

NEW STAFF MEMBERS



Christopher Rapisarda (he/they)

Managing Director of Instructional Programs

Christopher's career has been spent at the intersections of education, equity, and community. Most recently he worked at UIC doing diversity, equity, and inclusion work as well as curriculum planning for student dialogue courses. Prior to this, Christopher was a Director in the Violence Intervention and Prevention Services (“VIPS”) department at UCAN. Combined with a lifelong passion for the arts, he is happy to find a new home at Urban Gateways.

Gabriel Chalfin-Piney (they/them)

Senior Instructional Programs Manager

Gabriel Chalfin-Piney is an artist and organizer passionate about creating manageable and mutually beneficial artist programs and systems. They have thirteen years of experience working with community arts organizations and museums, interfacing with the public, and supporting artists in a career-changing capacity. Previously they held the position of Manager of Programs at the Lunder Institute for American Art, Colby Museum. Additionally they produced professional development workshops, performances, artists talks, and a visiting artists program.



ARTIST RESIDENCIES

Leif Ericson

At Leif Ericson, 80% of students had never had an arts class. This shocked Teaching Artist Nicole Beck, who has been teaching with Urban Gateways for over 20 years. Nicole specializes in creating permanent public art projects with her apprentice artists that are collaborative, and integral reflections of their communities.

For the arts residency at Leif Ericson, she held the same approach. Held during Black History Month, the idea was to choose someone to honor and acknowledge their contributions to Black History so she worked with the students to do that and it turned out to be a very personal experience because they got to choose.

“The school had very high expectations for this residency, so therefore I needed to adjust my curriculum to accommodate these young artists by creating simplified projects that incorporated basic art standards like color and line, and to use media they had never handled like watercolor paint.”
-Nicole Beck, Teaching Artist

The beautiful work these novice artists created depicting their heroes, not only opened their eyes to the wonder of the arts, but also instilled confidence, pride, and a sense of accomplishment, especially when they were hung for all to see in the school’s atrium

“As a teacher I’ve noticed that they’ve cut music and art, and I think art develops a different side of the mind. You know we have an academic side and a creative side.”
-Mr Perkins, Teacher at Leif Ericson Scholastic Academy



3,116

YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

63

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

25

SITES

20

ZIP CODES

Special Olympics

In partnership with Special Olympics (through Special Children's Charities) Urban Gateways provided Summer programming for persons with intellectual or physical disabilities. These programs were held across 14 Chicago Park District sites across the city, through 22 arts workshops for over 500 young people all throughout the summer.

The workshops were multidisciplinary, led by Urban Gateways Teaching Artists Roberto Ferreyra (Visual Arts), Zineb Chraibi (Yoga/Wellness, Interdisciplinary) Yolanda Jean Pittman (Afro-Caribbean Dance), and Olinda Chang (Chinese Cultural Dance.)

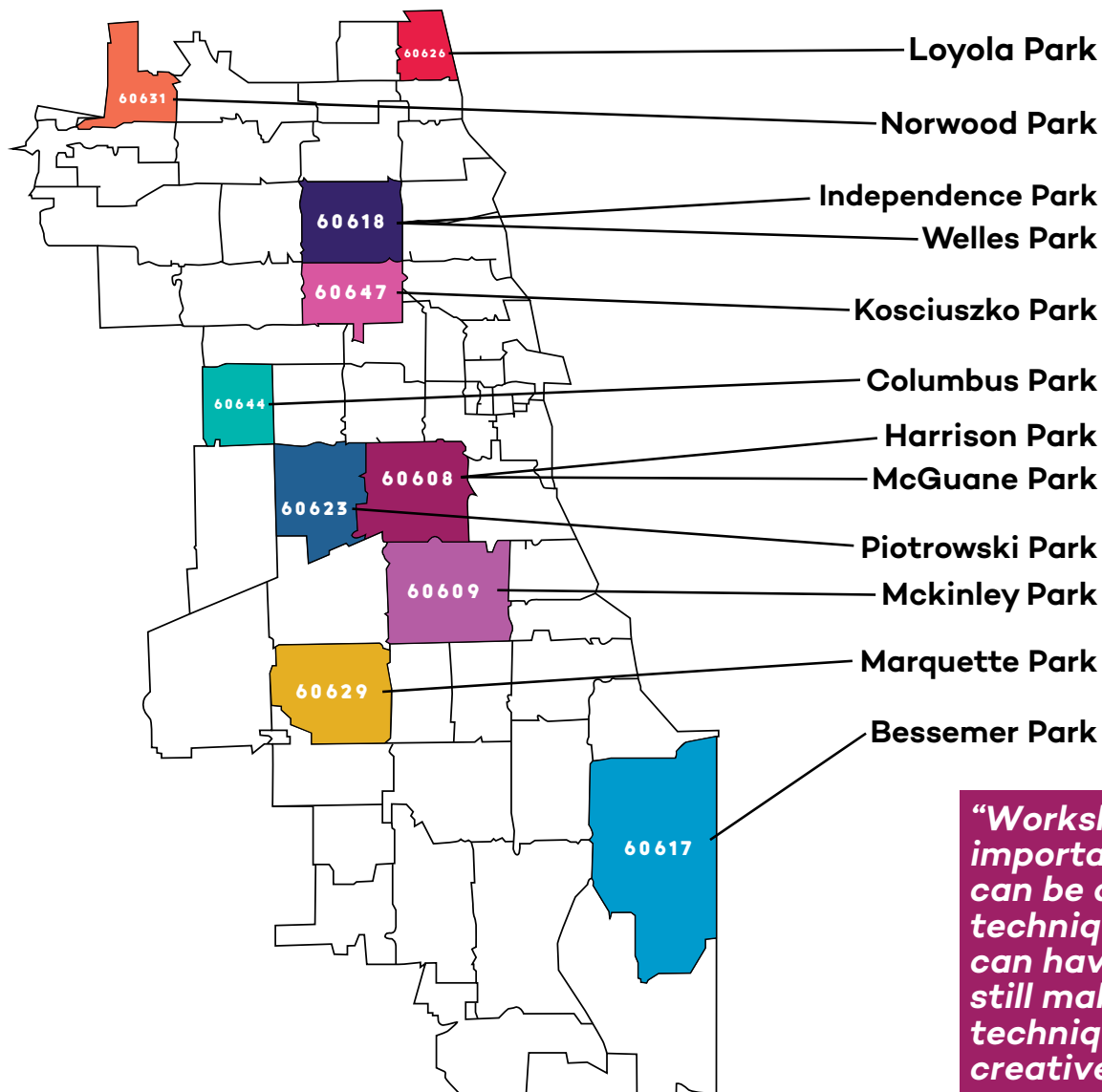
560

Total Special Olympics Participants



Special Olympics

Parks Included:



“Workshops like these are important because (the art form) can be abstract. You’re teaching a technique and [the participants] can have fun with it. You can still make sure they learn the technique, but then you can be creative.”-Yolanda Jean Pittman

Through high quality Performance Programming, Urban Gateways shares critical access to arts and culture with Chicagoland schools, children, and communities. These performances are carried out by our partnering Touring Artists, who are Chicago’s most skilled professional artists in music, dance, theater, literary arts, visual arts and digital media. These Touring Artists then create interactive and educational shows through their mediums.

Learn how to bring a residency like this to your school or organization [here](#).

TOURING PERFORMANCES

"I'm really just excited that we're getting back to a place of providing live arts experiences similar to before the pandemic started. I want to see how many shows, schools and communities in the city that we can get to... But yeah, I'm happy about that number, and also I know that there's more to be done." - Audrey (Performance Programs Manager)

AYODELE

We are happy to connect Teaching Artists with any partnering organization that wants to share performance art with their community! [Find out how you can host a Teaching Artist at your school or organization.](#)

This includes show-stopping performances from groups like Ayodele, with their show Amazing Africa an incredibly high energy show that combines West African dancing, drumming, acrobatics, and stories. These dynamic performers take audiences on a journey to West Africa without having to leave your seats (but you'll definitely want to!)

"It's important that one of the things that we say in our performances is that we don't come to show how well we can dance or play a drum or to sing. We come to show the greatness in people," - AYODELE

Watch this incredible overview of their "Amazing Africa" performance [\[here\]](#)

Korean Performing Arts Institute

Another performance on our touring roster is from Korean Performing Arts Institute of Chicago with their show "Harmony of Korean Drumming and Dancing." This showcases traditional Korean instruments and movement, including an hourglass drum, spinning ribbon hat choreography, and also a Korean line mask dance.

"Our mission is to develop and promote and provide the authentic Korean Performing Arts throughout the Chicago area" - Korean Performing Arts Institute of Chicago

View an amazing recap of their performance [\[here\]](#)!



47,808

AUDIENCE MEMBERS

251

PERFORMANCES

87

SITES

50

ZIPCODES

STREET LEVEL

2023 culminated in a unique hybrid of programs with an even wider scope for youth engagement. This learning ecosystem includes free membership, access to our studio space, and equipment for young creatives to work on personal projects. All while also offering training, hands-on workshops, and community partnerships focusing on workforce development.

Street Level Residencies

Vaughn Occupational High School, which provides a specialized education for high school students with cognitive, developmental and multiple disabilities, is Street Level's longest residency partnership. After being the first Chicago school to close during COVID in 2020, Vaughn finally returned to in-person programming at Street Level.

I have been working with Street Level for I think 12 or 14 years... it's always been a wonderful Journey. This session, coming back from the pandemic, it's just been a joy to come into this space again and feel the sense of community and warmth that it brings.

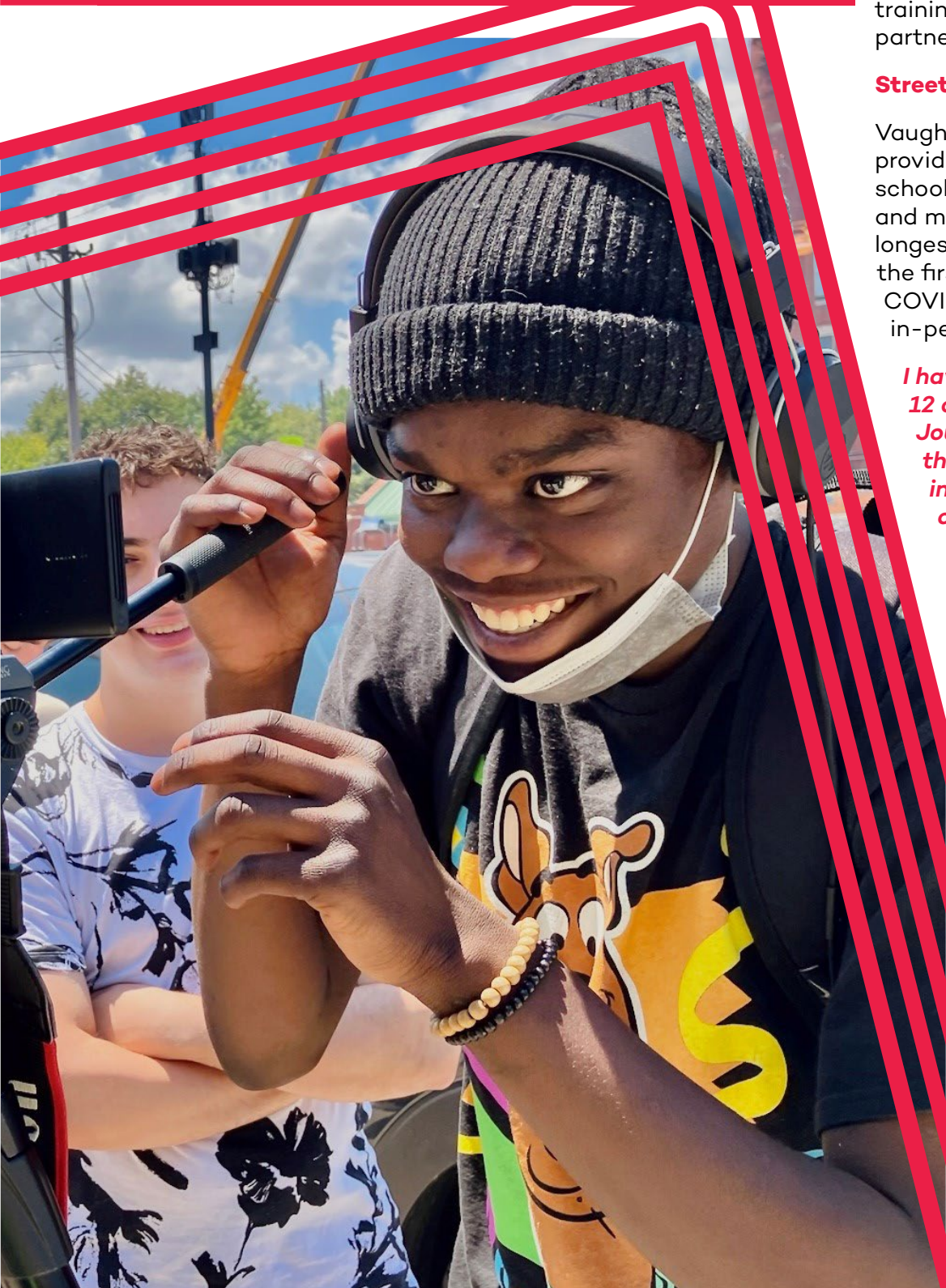
-Kelly Fischer, Teacher at Vaughn

For the past 7 years, Video Coordinator James Duke has led this partnership. Vaughn students worked with James in person to build both creative and social-emotional learning skills through writing, recording and producing their own tracks!

To have [students] back in the space, to have them actually go into the studio and record... that's one of my favorite things to see. Meeting them in person, you get a chance to get that interaction, get a chance to see that "aha" moment when they discover something.

-James Duke

[Find out more about Street Level's partnership with Vaughn here.](#)



In 2023, Street Level also hosted residencies with schools and organizations such as Noble School ITW David Speer, Urban Alliance, and hosted a new residency with Aunt Martha's support center for DCFS youth.

Some of these teens are on the spectrum and finding workforce development opportunities for them can be difficult. Street Level launched a prototype for summer employment for these youth through its multimedia paid internship program. In my fifteen years as an educator, I have never witnessed an external organization having the wherewithal and understanding of how to work with young people quite like Street Level.

-Rachael S. Rosen, PhD, Pre-College & Career Program Manager, at Noble Schools

MILDSAUCE

The name "MILDSAUCE" was given by young creatives for Street Level's digital zine, to showcase the flavors of Chicago through youth culture and interests, while also stimulating civic discourse.

As part of Street Level's four learning pathways (journalism, animation, movies, and music), MILDSAUCE is a digital zine that functions as an extension of journalism. Young journalists working on MILDSAUCE receive a stipend, meet with professional journalists to discuss best practices, attend the MILDSAUCE newsrooms, and undergo multimedia training to hone their storytelling skills.

The MILDSAUCE newsrooms are meant to stimulate civic discourse, healthy debate, media literacy, and encourage youth voice. It is also where stories are approved by a Creative Editor based on a theme.

With this position you really need to be good at the leadership role and something new is going to happen every day. And because of that it's always been giving me a new sense of adventure every day and a new sense of like something to be prepared for the unexpected.

-Jubriel Chaparro, Creative Editor at MILDSAUCE

For this quarter's theme Culture Clash, Markel decided to take on the story of the "clash" between styles of pizza.

I saw reviews that were from people who had harshly judged [deep dish] pizza without trying ... I feel if people were willing to taste it they would have a new understanding. I didn't know what deep dish was as a kid, until I tried it one day I got a new understanding of food and its differences..

-Markel, "Dough and Diversity"

MILDSAUCE

From Cinemas To Couches by Vincente | Motivation for the Future by Jermaine | Gamers Perspective of the future by Ty
The ever changing events of YouTube by Markel | Cars of the future by Jalen | Decisions that shape our future by Alhaji

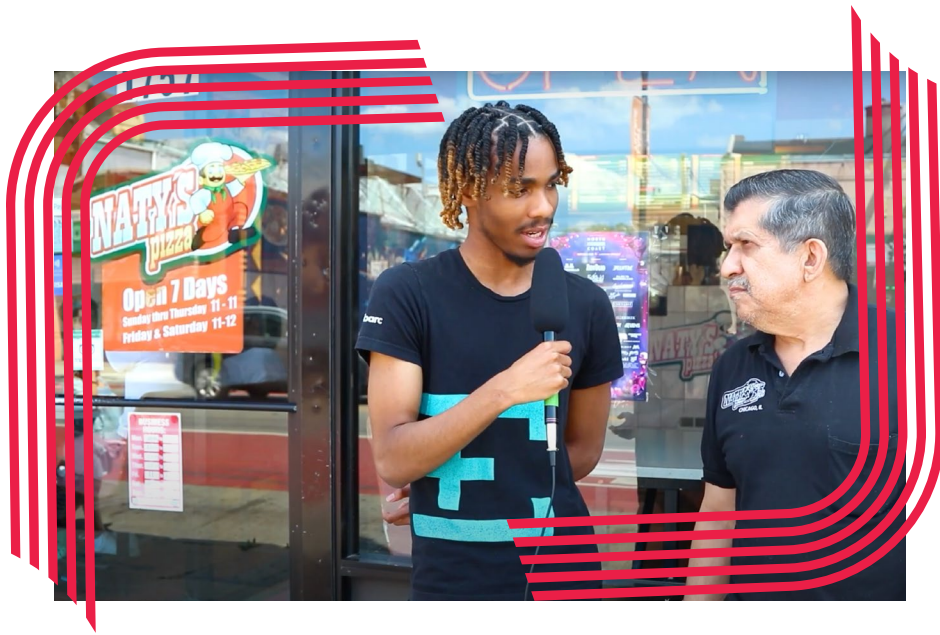


2,300 youth

99 original projects

12 community partners

Street Level Activities, Sept. 1, 2022 - Aug. 31, 2023



Check out more stories from [MILDSAUCE](#)

MILDSAUCE is a proud member of CIMA, a coalition of local storytellers who collaborate to elevate all voices. Through various media entities such as newsrooms, podcasts, documentaries, and more, we share stories about our city, neighborhoods, and suburbs to keep our communities informed and connected.

Workshops

Throughout the year, Street Level offers free workshops from teaching artists and industry professionals to offer youth opportunities to experience rich cultural and creative practices.

DJ Turntablism workshops at Street Level provide turntables, as well as other equipment, while Teaching Artist Johnny Price leads participants through a range of DJ-ing techniques from vinyl to digital software. Johnny also shares the cultural legacy of Chicago through hip hop and house music.

I've been DJ-ing for over 30 years...Everything is not easy but if you have the heart and the focus you can accomplish anything ...as you get into the class you're going to develop much more sensibilities when you take what you've learned out into the world.

-Johnny Price (Watch him in action [HERE](#))

Community Partnerships and Special Projects

Special Projects are often developed through our partnerships with other non-profit organizations and local businesses.

They contribute to the workforce development of our advanced youth as they get firsthand experience in a professional role while receiving both training and stipends. All participants are also encouraged to use the work in their portfolio and/or resume.

These projects are executed at a professional level and led by the Street Level Team often including Associate Producer Justus White who started as a participant with Urban Gateways and now leads in production, training, and editing for special projects.

It's important to have programs like this because they actually impact lives and create change. I too was a young creative who had many ideas, but not many resources to execute them...until as a teenager, I got connected with Urban Gateways. I was able to partake in summer video programs which ultimately provided me with the skills and the inspiration to become the video professional and educator that I am today.

-Justus White, Media Instructor & Associate Producer at Urban Gateways

Lyric Opera-Proximity

Street Level partnered with Lyric Opera in spring 2023 to direct and produce a documentary about the groundbreaking opera, *Proximity*. The documentary film *Proximity: Creating a World Premiere*, was an outstanding opportunity for young creatives Reggie Martinez and Jason Roman to experience the entire process of creating a documentary through collaboration with Lyric. Led by Director of Photography Justus White, Jason and Reggie were immersed in both the technical process of filmmaking as well as the conceptual ideas behind the contemporary Opera itself. The film explores the challenges of bringing a new opera to life, and the importance of community engagement in the arts.

See [Reggie's](#) and [Jason's](#) reflection of the experience of making the documentary.

OTHER SPECIAL PROJECTS

Chicago Otaku and Uptown Blues [screening at 21 minus](#)

Uptown Blues screening at [Black Harvest Film Festival](#)

[Gimme Shelter](#) mixtape with Sadie Woods and Chicago Sinfonietta

[Listen to Gimme Shelter Mixtape on Spotify.](#)

TAP

TEEN ARTS PASS

Teen Arts Pass provides opportunities for cultural exchange through embarking on performance visits across the City of Chicago. During its 5th anniversary year, 8,300 members were registered for Teen Arts Pass. TAP Members can see and be seen through art forms such as opera, ballet, jazz, theater, musicals, and so much more.

Each year, the Teen Council directs how the year will unfold. The intention behind the Teen Council is to provide direct program feedback for the Teen Arts Pass program and to provide a space for teens to learn and try their hand at arts administration.

Since its inception, the Council has championed projects that they hope will inspire and connect teens through the arts. This past year, they developed and hosted a Teen Artists Retreat event in collaboration with the Goodman Youth Arts Council to provide an opportunity for youth to create and share artwork in community. Everything was led by the teens, from identifying current youth needs, to coming up with the initial idea, down to the details for the day, including selecting the Teaching Artists. The Retreat's theme was "Identity" and was held at the Goodman Theatre. After getting to know each other as a full group, teen participants were invited to break out into an arts workshop of their choosing (visual arts, theater, literary arts); Each workshop's programmatic outline was designed by council members and was then expanded on and facilitated by a teaching artist.

For 50% of participants, it was their first time at the Goodman Theatre, and several signed up for Teen Arts Pass onsite as a result of their participation in the Retreat.



8,300
TAP MEMBERS

3,860
TICKETS SOLD
(including companion tickets)


TAP MEMBER
ZIP CODES

476


CHICAGO TAP
MEMBER
ZIP CODES

58

Teen Arts Pass as of August 31, 2023

Partners

- Auditorium Theatre
- Black Ensemble Theater
- Chicago Humanities Festival
- Chicago Philharmonic
- Chicago Sinfonietta
- Chicago Symphony Orchestra
- Court Theatre
- The Dance Center at Columbia College Chicago
- eta Creative Arts
- Fulcrum Point New Music Project
- Goodman Theatre
- Harris Theater for Music and Dance
- Joffrey Ballet
- Lookingglass Theatre Company
- Lyric Opera of Chicago

- Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago
- North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie
- Northlight Theatre
- Old Town School of Folk Music
- PlayMakers Laboratory
- Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts
- The Ruth Page Center for the Arts
- Steep Theatre
- Steppenwolf Theatre Company
- UChicago Presents
- Writers Theater

BUBBLES, BOARDS, & BEATS

In March, we held our annual Bubbles, Boards, and Beats fundraiser - the first in person event we've held in four years!

One participant said "you can feel the love in this room," and that was the highest compliment for our staff, sponsors, partners, board, and supporters! CEO Leslé Honoré emceed, DJ Duane Powell provided amazing beats, and Shall We Wine guided guests through fantastic wine tasting! There was also an exciting game of Heads or Tails, with Hamilton tickets as the prize.

Youth performer Khalil recited a riveting poem, artist X'Avier Battles delivered an impactful performance, and Street Level debuted a dynamic commercial. Our silent auction featured art pieces from youth artists, teaching artists, and Street Level alumni- ALL of which found new homes by the end of the night!

The event raised over \$50,000 for our arts education programs.

For a complete list of our supporters for FY23, [please see our website.](#)



URBAN GATEWAYS

1637 N ASHLAND AVE STE 1

CHICAGO, IL 60622

URBANGATEWAYS.ORG

*Help us continue inspiring creativity
and impacting social change.*

Scan this code and donate!



***Urban Gateways engages young people
in arts experiences to inspire creativity
and impact social change.***