

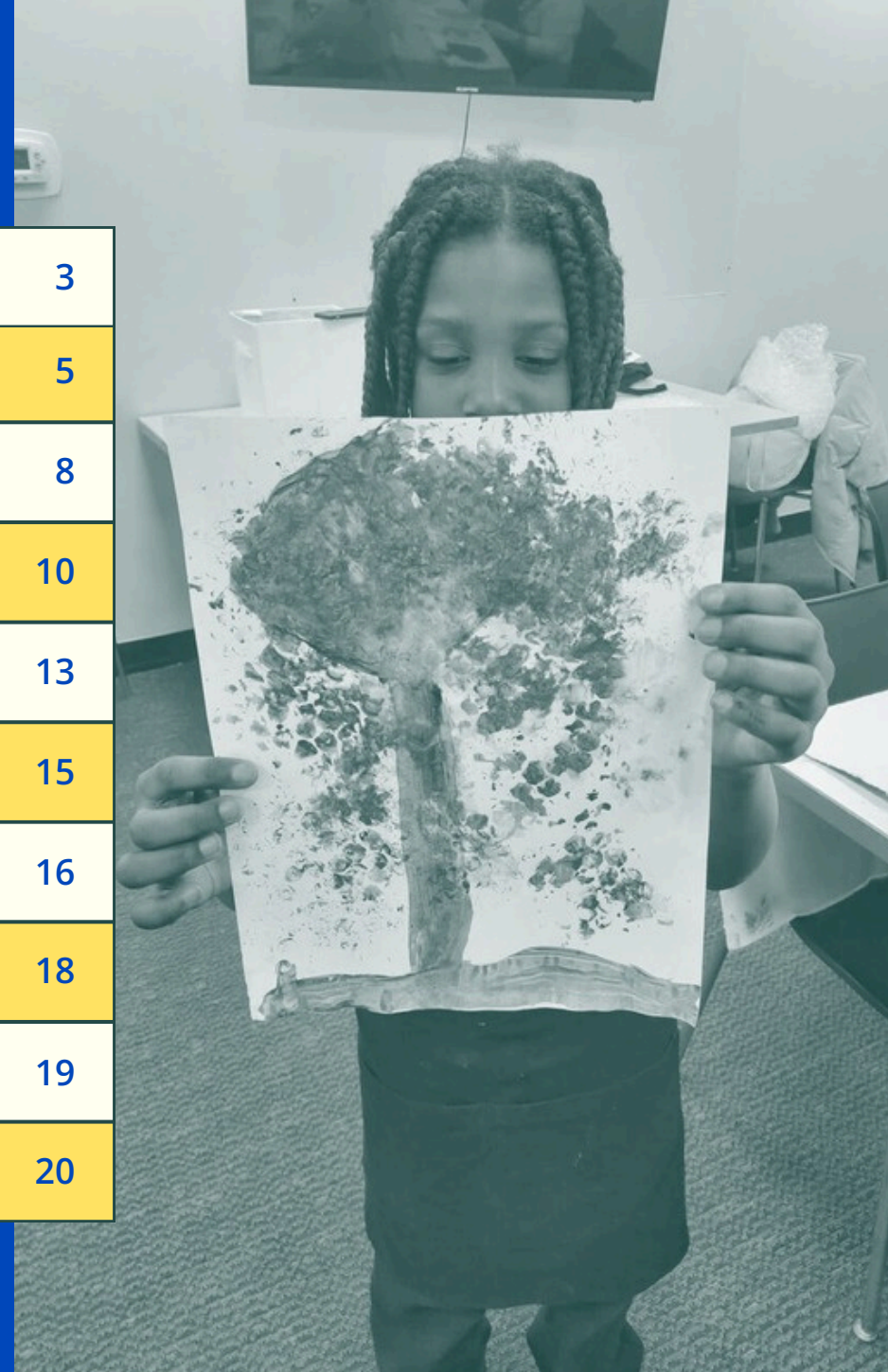


# Hope in Motion

Transforming Challenges into Change

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# A Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friend,

**During the past year at Southside Center of Hope, I have seen examples of *hope in motion*, this report's theme, in powerful ways.**

I've seen it when a mother opens the door to her very own furnished apartment, creating a safe space for her children. I've seen it in the laughter of kids gathered for art classes and in the smiles of families dropping by our meeting rooms for holiday celebrations. And I've seen it when a resident takes steps toward long term stability by finding work, pursuing education, or building supportive relationships.

**I'm proud of those signs of hope, and I'm proud of the impact you'll read about in the following pages.** Our new Food Freedom program, in particular, matches an expressed need of our residents with a concrete, holistic solution. Families receive fresh, healthy groceries delivered right to their door, as well as cooking demonstrations that bring nutrition education to life. In total, 1,134 pounds of food were delivered last year, equivalent to 945 meals, bringing nourishment and dignity to 24 households.



**Yaisa Hagood**

Executive Director,  
Southside Center of Hope

**This year has not been without challenges, though.** The women and children we serve continue to face the lasting impacts of poverty, trauma, and systemic inequities. Our organization faces a federal funding landscape that has changed drastically in a very short period of time, as well as broader economic uncertainty. Yet time and again, we have seen how hope, resilience, and community can transform even the hardest challenges into stepping stones for change.

Hope is not static – it moves, grows, transforms. And **Southside Center of Hope is committed to being flexible and responsive to the needs in front of us.** We are planning an after school tutoring program for Independence House students and expanding job readiness activities to help residents gain skills and strengthen their path to independence.

I am deeply grateful for our staff, board, volunteers, and partners who keep hope moving forward each day. And I am especially thankful for you, the friends and supporters whose generosity also makes this work possible. **Together, we are building a future where women and children can thrive.**

A yellow line-art illustration of a hand holding a small plant with three leaves, symbolizing growth and care.

*Yaisa Hagood*

**Executive Director**  
Southside Center of Hope

*“Hope is not static – it moves, grows, transforms.”*

# Independence House: By the Numbers



**1 in 4**

27% of residents, more than 1 in 4, have a documented substance use disorder.



**25**

25 chronically unhoused women live at Independence House with their 75 minor and adult children and other relatives.



**96%**

96% of residents have income below the federal poverty line.

SSCOH provides on-site case management, behavioral health services, healthcare referrals, vocational support, art classes for children, parenting classes, cooking classes, food access support, and more to the residents of Independence House.

**Our goal: support families holistically and ensure they stay housed now and in the long-term while gaining the skills and resources they need to change their lives.**

# Your Support Made This Possible

Together, we're making a real difference for women and children!  
Here's a snapshot of your impact:



100% of families maintained permanent supportive housing.



3 new families moved into fully furnished apartments.



42% of heads of households were working full or part time.

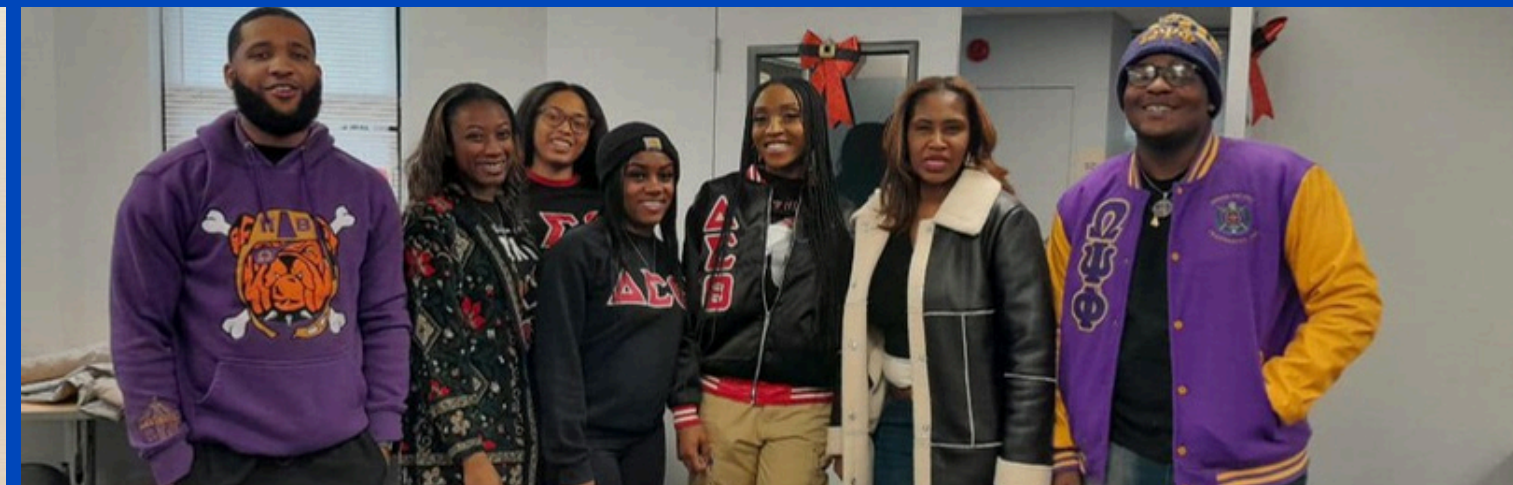
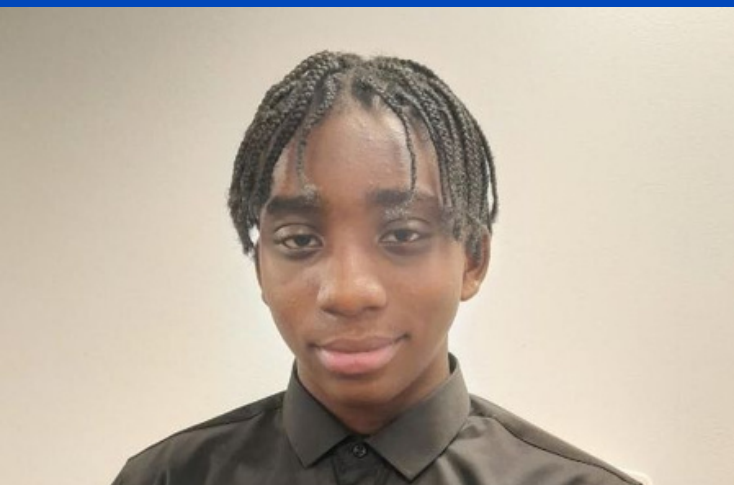


160 counseling hours delivered;  
120 case management sessions conducted.



## SSCOH provides a full calendar of activities for Independence House residents, including:

- Art Club for children
- Job Club, including internship placements for teens/young adults
- Movie Nights for kids with family-friendly films and popcorn
- Birthday Parties with cake, ice cream, games, and gifts
- Easter Basket Workshop
- Mother's Day Gift Baskets
- Back-to-School Event with new backpacks and school supplies
- Halloween Party with costumes, game, and candy
- Thanksgiving Meal Kits
- 12 Days of Christmas Giveaway
- and MORE!





## HOPE IN MOTION: CREATING A BETTER FUTURE

*After 13 years of sobriety and 10 years of stable housing, Lasandra reflects on her journey and the cycles she's breaking for her daughter.*

**Lasandra is like any other mom of a recent high school graduate: she proudly recounts her daughter Crishonna's accomplishments and voices worries about her spreading her wings in college.**

But Lasandra's pride and joy have been hard-won. For many years, she suffered from chronic homelessness and an addiction that robbed her of safety, stability, and a positive relationship with her children.

The roots of Lasandra's homelessness and addiction lie in the sexual abuse she experienced as a child, starting at age 7. By age 11, she was drinking to numb the pain of her experiences.

"I was homeless for years," Lasandra said. "Sleeping on the streets, in abandoned buildings, in other people's houses for a night or two, in crack houses, on trains, and even in jail."

Eventually, Lasandra found a way to get clean. It took a couple of court-ordered stints in rehab, a family friend who took her to Narcotics Anonymous meetings, and a young daughter she wanted to be better for.

Today, Lasandra has 13 years of

sobriety under her belt.

She and her youngest child, daughter Crishonna, moved into Independence House 10 years ago.

Lasandra says, "As a single mom on a limited income with a history of homelessness and addiction, finding stable, affordable housing was a challenge. Independence House makes it possible for us to have our own apartment."

For the past nine years, Lasandra has worked in recovery facilities, serving others who are on the same journey she's been on. It's her way of giving back.

Despite her years of relative safety and stability, the previous decades of trauma, homelessness, and addiction have left their mark on Lasandra.

In the introduction to the book she's writing about her experiences, she says:

*"There's so much childhood pain to overcome, so much hurt to tread through. I feel this emptiness inside, this void, this need to know myself. All of my life, I've been in search of companionship and love. I was a little girl in search of anything to ease the pain."*

Lasandra was in recovery when she had Crishonna, but with little support, she relapsed and lost her daughter for a year. When she was reunited with Crishonna after a year, she was determined to give Crishonna a better childhood and life than she had.

### **And she's done that.**

Lasandra drove Crishonna to a wonderful high school on the North Side – far from Independence House – every day for four years to give Crishonna the chance to succeed that she didn't have. And Crishonna has shined!

In June, she graduated with high honors and a full ride scholarship to college, where she's enrolled today.

***"I wasn't given a choice in life, and I didn't want to take that from her. And she's made me very proud. Everybody who knows me says, 'You did a great job with her.'"***

It's all possible because of Lasandra's strength and resilience – and the stability provided by Independence House.



# Program Spotlight:

## Food Freedom at Independence House

Even after finding stable housing, families often struggle with hunger and accessing healthy food due to health challenges, lack of neighborhood grocery stores or transportation, financial hardship, and the need for cooking and nutrition education.

A new program at Independence House seeks to solve this problem by offering both food access *and* education to residents.



In October 2024, thanks to a generous grant from the State of Illinois, SSCOH was able to launch a partnership with *Top Box Foods* and *Eat.Move.Save.* to provide residents with a monthly meal kit containing everything they need to prepare a healthy, delicious meal, including a recipe card, high-quality protein, fresh produce, and more.

A nutrition educator also provides a demonstration on how to prepare the meal, sharing tips on how to read food labels, shop on a budget, season food in a variety of ways, make recipe adjustments based on family preferences, and more!

In addition, families are eligible to sign up for *Top Box Foods*, where they can purchase additional meal kits and other groceries, benefit from free home delivery, and save money with the dollar-for-dollar Link Match program.

# Food Freedom Impact

Our Food Freedom program ensures Independence House families have reliable access to nutritious food, combating food insecurity with dignity.

## OUR IMPACT

**945**

meal equivalents provided

**24**

families supported

**1,134**

pounds of food delivered





# Celebrating a Year of Community



# The Team Behind the Mission

The Southside Center of Hope staff embody hope in motion by showing up each day with compassion, skill, and commitment to ensure residents have what they need to thrive.

**Yaisa Hagood**  
Executive Director

**Myisha Ryland**  
Program Coordinator

**Toby Austin**  
Case Manager

**Coketha Hendricks**  
Clinical Supervisor

**Tanya Hobson**  
Parenting & Life Skills  
Coach

**Yvonne Afable**  
Chief Financial Officer

**Berit Ulseth**  
Accounting Associate

**Jamie Smet**  
Marketing & Grant  
Consultant



# Our Board of Directors

The Board of Directors offers their time, wisdom, and skills to ensure SSCOH is fiscally sound, programmatically effective, and centered on bringing hope and dignity to the women and children we serve.



**Kevin Waklatsi**  
**President**  
Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP

**Charles E. Beavers, Sr.**  
**Secretary**  
US Bank

**Peter Brown**  
**Treasurer**  
The Independent School

**Nihal Afifi**  
**Director**  
Benchmark Health Systems

**Deidra Freeman**  
**Director**  
Deidra Freeman  
Management Services

**Sheryl Morris**  
**Director**  
Avail Yourself Consulting Group

**Johnny Sukurs**  
**Director**  
Master Trades Group

**Mae Whiteside-Williams**  
**Director**  
CKL Engineers, LLC

**Sister Therese O'Sullivan**  
**Emeritus**  
Southside Center of Hope

# Board Member Spotlight:

After being homeless as a child, Mae is putting her hard-won hope into motion by serving on the SSCOH Board.



*"Serving is a promise I made my younger self: if I ever found the means and the influence to do so, I would raise awareness about SSCOH and the women and children it serves."*

— Mae Whiteside-Williams,  
SSCOH Board Member

**As a child, Mae was a resident of St. Martin de Porres House of Hope, the shelter founded by Sisters Connie and Theresa that is known today as Southside Center of Hope.** Mae says, "I remember Sister Connie and Sister Therese vividly and their care for us. The shelter was the first place where I learned that stability is a launchpad, not an endpoint."

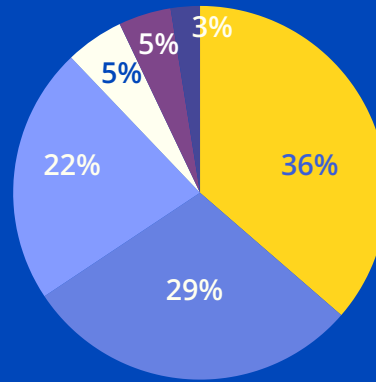
Today, Mae is a civil engineer who owns her own firm and oversees projects in multiple states that include airport design and construction services, construction management services for transit projects, rail construction services, toll road construction, and more.

But she's never forgotten what it felt like to not have a home. "I was grateful for a safe place to sleep at St. Martin's, but I was also embarrassed to be living in a shelter. I would take the long way home from school because I wanted to hide that I lived in this building that was clearly not a house. Even though inside that building was a lot of structure and safety, it wasn't a home."

That lived understanding of what being homeless feels like – *and what's possible with hope and the right resources* -- make Mae a natural choice for the SSCOH Board of Directors.

Mae says, "I understand the courage it takes for families to trust strangers with their futures. That empathy will guide every decision I make, ensuring programs remain client-centered. My engineering and business backgrounds have equipped me to make strategic decisions and plans, and my broad network provides an opportunity to elevate SSCOH's visibility. "

# FY25 Financials



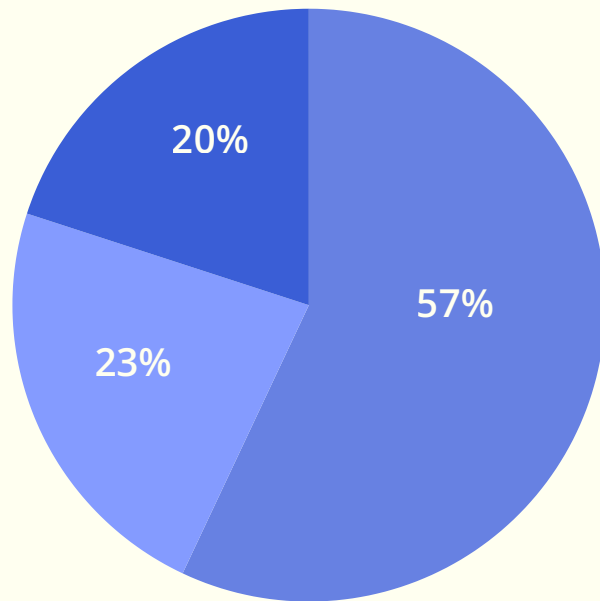
## Revenue & Contributions

- Corporate and Foundation Funding: 36%
- Earned Revenue: 29%
- Individual Giving: 22%
- Investment Income: 5%
- Government Funding: 5%
- Other Income: 3%

Total Revenue	\$436,889
Corporate and Foundation Funding	\$158,753
Earned Revenue	\$128,000
Individual Giving	\$96,109
Investment Income	\$22,604
Government Funding	\$20,000
Other	\$11,423

# Where Your Support Goes

We prioritize maximizing every dollar donated to make the biggest difference for the families we serve.



## Expenses

Program & Services	57%
Fundraising & Development	23%
Management & General	20%

Thanks to your generosity, we expanded our impact and provided a wide range of services and activities for our residents in FY25. Thank you!

# Proudly Supported By

Our generous corporate, foundation, and organization partners make our work possible!



Augustine Stewardship Fund  
B&D Foundation  
Blowitz Ridgeway Foundation  
Helen Brach Foundation  
JP Morgan Chase Foundation  
Chicago Foundation for Women  
Patrick & Anna M. Cudahy Fund  
Dominican Sisters of Springfield  
Exelon Foundation  
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Schwab Charitable Fund  
Leonard Strauch Foundation  
US Bank  
A. Montgomery Ward Foundation  
W.P. & H.B. White Foundation

# Be Part of Our Future



*Together, we put hope in motion.* Your gift to SSCOH gives women and children the tools and resources to empower them to transform their lives!

## Make a donation today to: Southside Center of Hope

820 South Independence Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60624-4112



### Donate Online

Click the button below to learn about one-time, monthly, and legacy giving options.

**DONATE**



### Volunteer

If you or your group would like to volunteer at Independence House, contact Myisha at [myisha.ryland@ssoch.org](mailto:myisha.ryland@ssoch.org) to learn about volunteer opportunities.



### Subscribe

Stay up to date on SSCOH news! Subscribe to our monthly newsletter.

**SUBSCRIBE**





# **You Made This Possible. *Thank You!***

**Nothing we do at Southside Center of Hope would be possible without the support of our community.**

As we work together to fulfill our mission to empower women to transform their lives, I know that both the organization and the women we serve will face challenges and obstacles. Will you join us in this work in the coming year as we practice hope, flexibility, and resilience in this work? ***Together, we will keep hope in motion no matter the obstacle.***

With heartfelt appreciation,  
**Yaisa Hagood**  
**Executive Director**





# SOUTHSIDE CENTER OF HOPE

A Supportive Community for Women

773-643-5843

[SouthsideCenterOfHope.org](https://SouthsideCenterOfHope.org)

