

# 2021 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT







## MISSION

The Link works with youth and families to overcome the impacts of poverty and social injustice.

## VISION

A community supporting all youth in having equitable access and opportunity



# FROM THE CEO

## **Dear Friends, Community and Partners:**

2021 was a year filled with both profound pain and remarkable resilience. There continues to be a high level of suffering, crisis and need among the youth and families we work with as our community continues to navigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising gun violence, racism and all forms of oppression. Amid these challenges, I remain inspired by the tenacity and strength of young people.

**As we support each other through crisis, we realize over and over again that in this community lies great hope, resilience, and motivation.**

This could not be truer of The Link family and wider community which includes all of you!

There is also so much to be proud of this year as The Link continues to creatively navigate and rise up to face every new challenge which has made all of our programming even stronger. During 2021, we expanded to serve more youth by opening our newest site-based housing program, PERIS Housing, for youth aging out of foster care in Hennepin County. We also grew our Northside Homeless Prevention program for Black youth and families in North Minneapolis.

I am beyond grateful to all of our staff who have continued to work tirelessly, stepping up when youth have needed it most. I am grateful and motivated by our Black and Brown community members, staff, and youth who not only face oppression daily, but are also actively working to dismantle white supremacy in our community. I am grateful that The Link is able to be an active partner in this work daily with each of the youth we work with along with the wider local, state and national levels of work to fight all forms of oppression.

I am also so thankful to our donors, volunteers, and community partners who continue to show up for us – your support is truly what makes our work possible. We are all in this together and we could NOT do this work (and really it is not work, it is a mission) without you all!

Our youth leaders continue to do amazing work and inspire us all. This includes young leaders such as Lewiee Blaze, our 2021 Youth Leadership Award recipient. Lewiee is a former Link program participant of the Marshall Reed Youth Center (MRYC) who now works in that same program and has a profound impact on youth at the MRYC. He also co-created The Link's youth led racial justice program called "We Will Breathe" and continues to help lead our youth led racial justice work. He also formed his own organization called the N4 Collective, is a well known artist, and works within many leadership roles across the community to work to prevent violence and eliminate racism. Lewiee is amazing and we continue to learn and be inspired by him along with all of the young people we get the honor to work with!

**None of this work would be possible without you-** it takes a village and we are so thankful you are a part of ours! Thank you to each and every one of you for your commitment to equity and to helping young people build the futures they deserve. I look forward to seeing everything we can accomplish together in the years to come!

Wishing you all health and happiness,

Beth Holger  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Link

# WHAT WE DO



## **HOUSING & SERVICES**

The Link provides a continuum of support for youth and young families who are experiencing homelessness: homeless prevention, street outreach, drop-in center, emergency shelter and supportive housing. Once stably housed, staff help youth meet their basic needs and work towards personal goals related to health and wellness, education, employment and much more.



## **SAFE HARBOR**

All of our Safe Harbor Programs are specifically designed to help youth heal from the trauma of being sex trafficked and support them in achieving their goals and building healthy futures. Services include the Passageways Emergency Shelter and Housing Program, mobile case management, aftercare and a 24/7 crisis response through the West Metro Regional Navigator.



## **YOUTH ADVOCACY**

Our community-based programs offer advocacy, case management services, and group programming to youth struggling with school engagement and/or involvement in the juvenile justice system. Through a holistic approach, these programs build young people's independence, opportunities, and prevent further contact with law enforcement systems.



# OUR COMMITMENT TO RACIAL EQUITY

The Link will promote ongoing learning to better serve youth and families, broaden staff knowledge base and cultural awareness/competence resulting in equity, diversity and inclusion visible at all levels of the organization.

## YOUTH HEALING

### WE WILL BREATHE

Led by former Link program participant and community leader, Lewiee Blaze, and Todd Barnes of Equity News Network, "We Will Breathe" is a racial justice and healing initiative designed for Black youth. The 12-week program offers a facilitated space for youth to engage in artistic expression, learn how to process trauma and oppression, and participate in racial justice advocacy.

## STAFF LEARNING

### MOSAIC COMMITTEE

The Link's internal MOSAIC Committee works to develop and implement strategies, activities and events that benefit the Link's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) efforts and also contributes to The Link's work to advance racial justice and to dismantle white supremacy and other forms of oppression.



"We are working with young folks to help them intentionally plan for their future by learning from their past."

- Lewiee Blaze former participant at The Link, artist, and community leader



## YOUTH LEADERSHIP

### **We value and incorporate youth voice into all we do**

As a youth and adult led organization, The Link has five youth advisory committees that are made up of youth that have experienced homelessness, sex trafficking and/or involvement in the juvenile justice or child welfare systems. These committee members are paid, part-time staff at The Link, helping to lead the organization and working for social and racial justice at the community, state and national level.

#### **Youth Advisory Committees:**

Survivor Advisory Committee | PERIS Youth Advisory Committee  
Power of Youth Advisory Committee | Project Live Out Loud Advisory Committee  
RILE: Rooted in Lived Experience Advisory Committee



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**Thank you to all of  
The Link's community  
boards for their  
volunteerism and  
leadership:**

Community Advisory

Dakota County Advisory

Safe Harbor Advisory

Young Professionals





THE link  
**30**  
YEARS

## HONORING OUR FOUNDERS



They are truly people who are about doing what needs to be done to help the youth and the community. They are some of the best and most inspiring people I have ever met and cannot thank them enough for founding this great organization!"

-Beth Holger, CEO

### **The Link honored founders Jim Marshall and Oscar Reed at our 2021 Annual Event**

The Link was founded in 1991 by two local Black leaders and former Minnesota Vikings players, Jim Marshall and Oscar Reed to help youth on the Northside of Minneapolis who were struggling with poverty, homelessness, getting victimized by crime or recruited into criminal activity. The two leaders started the organization in a very community grounded way with a philosophy of doing "whatever it took" to help young people on the Northside.

We are proud to continue to have their great support and leadership, remain dedicated to their vision and continue to expand what they started to help and empower more and more young people every day.



# 30 YEARS OF SUPPORTING TWIN CITIES YOUTH

**1991**

Professional Sports Linkage established by Jim Marshall and Oscar Reed



**1996**

Juvenile Justice Transition Program worked with youth exiting Red Wing Correctional Facility



**2005**

Opened first housing program with Lindquist Apartments in North Minneapolis



**2002**

Truancy Intervention Program begins- now called School Matters



**2011**

Began our First Rapid Rehousing Program, now providing 100+ units of stable housing to youth experiencing homelessness



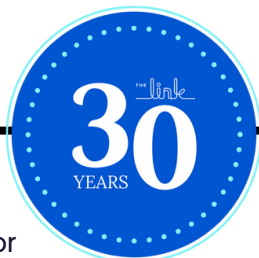
**2014**

Started the Safe Harbor Division with the opening of Passageways Program for sexually exploited youth



**2021**

Providing 200+ units of safe, stable housing for youth in the community  
Serving 2,000 youth each year



**2018**

Started homeless prevention programming for Black youth in North Minneapolis through the creation of the Northside Homeless Prevention Program



**2016**

Opened Project Live Out Loud- the first culturally specific housing program for LGBTQ+ youth in Minnesota



  
**406**

youth received intensive  
case management  
support through our  
juvenile justice  
alternative programs

39 youth AVOIDED  
homelessness through our  
culturally specific Northside  
Homeless Prevention  
Program for Black youth



# 2021

## BY THE BY NUMBERS

**37**

youth provided safe  
shelter and critical  
support at **Dignity House**  
emergency shelter for  
10-17 year olds



**83%** of youth  
identify as BIPOC

**40**

families  
provided with  
vital resources  
through our  
Parent Support  
Program



47 sex trafficked youth were provided  
shelter and housing at Passageways

**532**

visits made by youth  
experiencing homelessness  
to the CORE Drop-In Center  
for basic needs support



22 LGBTQ youth exited  
homelessness through our  
culturally specific Rapid  
Rehousing Program  
(Project Live Out Loud)

**242**

youth & young  
families  
transitioned out  
of homelessness  
into stable  
housing

**1,907**

youth & families  
served





## MEET RIKI

### School Matters Program Participant

Riki was kicked out of her home at the start of her senior year of high school and spent most of the first part of the school year moving between different friends' homes. Riki had always been a good student, but between difficulties with housing and long-distance learning, she understandably struggled to stay on top of schoolwork.

Riki was connected to The Link's School Matters Program for support. Due to her hard work and the help of School Matters staff, Riki found an apartment, started working part time, and reconnected with school. Riki is on track to graduate in 2022 and feels confident about her future.



# GROWING OUR IMPACT

**30% of youth aging out of foster care will experience homelessness before turning 21**

**PERIS Housing is working to break the cycle**

Launched in November, PERIS Housing offers 15 supportive housing units in Lowry Hill for youth aging out of foster care. The program was designed with the PERIS Advisory Committee which is made up of young people that have lived experience in the foster care system. The goal of the program is to prevent homelessness among youth in foster care through stable housing, supportive services, and one-on-one support to empower youth to reach their goals.

**EST.  
2021**

The Link's PERIS Housing Program is located at PERIS Hill Apartments in Lowry Hill and made possible through a partnership with Volunteers of America, and the PERIS and Graves Foundations.

## PERIS HOUSING PROGRAM







**"The Link is a safe place/environment where I can be myself. "**

**- Youth at Passageways Housing**

## **PASSAGEWAYS HOUSING EXPANSION**

In 2021, The Link doubled the number of housing units available to support sex trafficked youth.

The Link added 5 new units of housing for sex trafficked youth across the Twin Cities. With these additional units, The Link can support up to 10 young people with a safe and stable home in the community at one time. Passageways Housing participants are provided with the intensive supports needed to heal from trauma, increase their independence and realize their goals.

### **The Link provides vital services for youth who have been sex trafficked including:**

- 24 Hour Crisis Response
- Emergency Shelter
- Supportive Housing
- Mobile Case Management
- Survivor Leadership
- Street Outreach

# FINANCIALS

## REVENUES AND SUPPORT

Community Giving	\$ 812,850
Corporations and Foundations	\$ 3,868,622
Government Contracts	\$ 8,134,361
In-Kind Contributions	\$ 347,182
Events	\$ 311,260

Total Support and Revenue: \$13,474,275

## EXPENSES

Program Services	\$ 9,029,348
Management and General	\$ 1,510,190
Marketing and Development	\$ 543,828

Total Expenses: \$11,083,366

Total Change in Net Assets: \$2,390,909

## ASSETS

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 4,143,573
Contracts and Grants Receivable	\$ 1,356,118
Other Assets	\$ 151,346
Property and Equipment Net	\$ 962,367

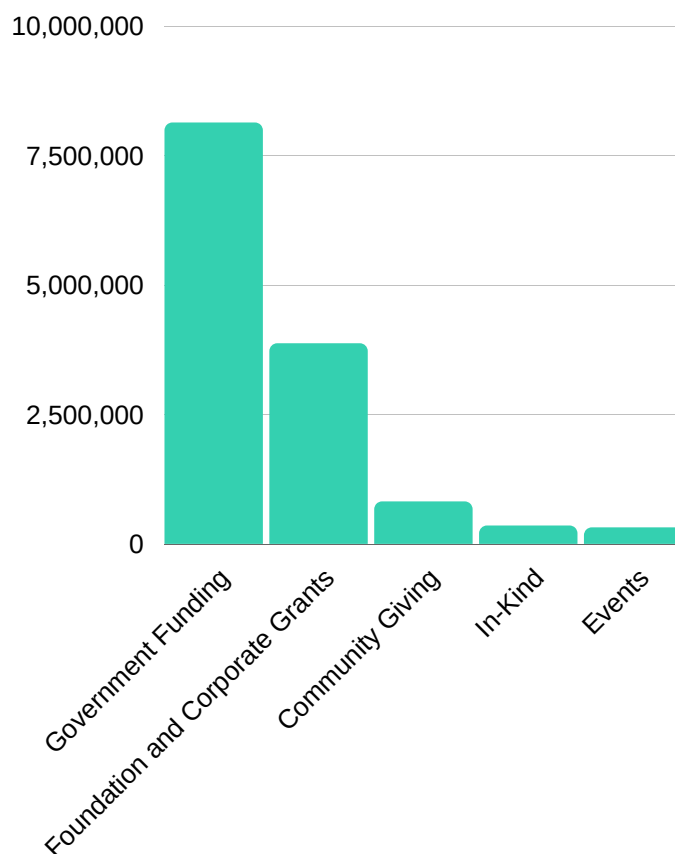
Total Assets: \$ 6,613,404

## LIABILITIES

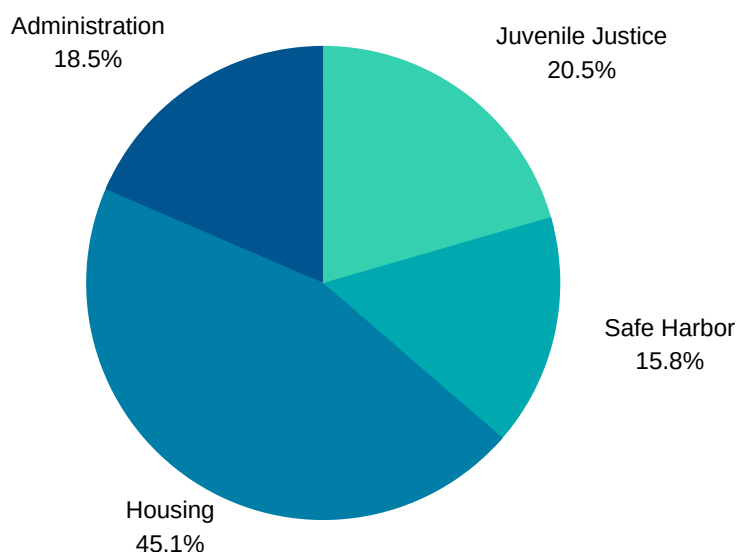
Current Liabilities	\$ 906,711
Long-Term Liabilities	\$ 216,156
Total Net Assets	\$ 5,490,537

Total Liabilities and Net Assets: \$ 6,613,404

## Revenues



## Expenses





# SIGNATURE EVENTS



## APRIL: ANNUAL EVENT

The Link celebrated our 30th Anniversary during our Annual Event held virtually on April 22. Congratulations to our award winners: Jim Marshall and Oscar Reed, Community Leadership Award; Lewiee Blaze, Youth Leadership Award; Jennifer & Greg Hayes, Volunteer of the Year Award.

## OCTOBER: DAKOTA COUNTY EVENT

The Link hosted our 11th Annual Dakota County Event virtually on October 3. This event raises funds for our programs in Dakota County: Street Outreach, C.O.R.E. Drop In Center, Emergency Hotel Shelter and Suburban Rapid Rehousing.



# THANK YOU

## for making this work possible!

# 2021



# 106

members  
joined



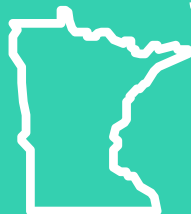
## The Link's Legends Club

# \$48,414

donated by

# 106

monthly givers



# \$109,275

raised on

## Give to the Max Day

# \$2.5M

grant from Bezos  
Day 1 Families Fund  
to be distributed  
over 3 years



# 4,967

volunteer  
hours

# 1,250 volunteers

# LOOKING AHEAD

THE LINK IS HONORED TO CONTINUE TO PARTNER WITH YOUTH AS THEY BUILD THE BRIGHT FUTURES THEY DESERVE.

A black and white photograph of two young people sitting on a wooden bench, viewed from behind. The person on the left is wearing a light-colored hoodie with a graphic on the back and a patterned headwrap. The person on the right is wearing a dark, quilted jacket. They are sitting on a wooden bench in a park-like setting with bare trees and a building in the background. A purple banner is at the top, and a white box with purple text is at the bottom right.

**"My goal for the future is to work for myself and give my daughter a good life"**

-Young parent at The Link