

# GROWING STRONGER



# GROWING TOGETHER



## 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



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



At The Link, we believe no young person should ever experience homelessness. No youth should ever have to trade sex to survive. And no young person should be criminalized because of poverty, racism, or a lack of opportunity.

Until we live in a community where every young person is safe and supported, The Link will continue working on the frontlines to help youth out of crisis and into safety and stability. We will also work alongside youth leaders to advocate for the funding and policy changes we need to truly end youth homelessness, sexual exploitation, and involvement in broken systems.

I am excited to share that we have made incredible progress in these movements over the past year. The Link has expanded our housing programs to serve more youth than ever before. Our juvenile justice alternative programs have partnered with youth to find employment, complete high school, and avoid future involvement in crime. And we have invested in BIPOC-led mental health and wellness services and substance abuse counseling that youth tell us are needed to heal from trauma.

In addition to growth, this year has been focused on deepening our investment in our youth leadership model. I am proud to lead The Link, but I am even more proud to do so in partnership with incredible youth leaders. Their voices, perspectives, and ideas are essential in shaping our programs and initiatives, ensuring that we are not just serving them but truly working with them to create a future where every young person has the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for standing with us, for being partners in our mission, and most importantly, for believing in the amazing potential of youth. Together, we will continue to grow and create a brighter future for the next generation.

With gratitude,

*Beth Holger*

**Beth Holger, CEO**

**85%**  
of youth  
identify as  
BIPOC

**2,171**  
youth and  
young  
families

**10-24**  
year-old youth and  
their dependent  
children

## WHO WE SERVE

### YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Youth who don't have a safe place to sleep – often because they have been kicked out of their home, fled domestic violence, or aged out of the foster care system

### SEXUALLY EXPLOITED YOUTH

Young people who have been sexually exploited or trafficked – vulnerable youth are often targeted by traffickers who prey on their need for food, shelter, or a sense of belonging

### YOUTH INVOLVED IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Youth who are not attending school or who have been involved in crime – most often because of poverty or underlying trauma affecting the youth and/or their family

Culturally specific programming including financial support to prevent eviction and housing for youth and families experiencing homelessness in North Minneapolis who aren't eligible for government support.



### PREVENTION

Youth experiencing sexual exploitation or homelessness can get immediate support by calling our 24/7 West Metro Regional Navigator line or connecting with a Street Outreach worker.



### OUTREACH & CRISIS INTERVENTION

Youth and young families without a safe place to sleep have a room of their own, their basic needs met, and support finding long-term housing.



### EMERGENCY SHELTER

## WHAT WE DO



### SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Youth and young families are connected with high-quality housing and supported in maintaining stability through rental assistance, life skills development, and ongoing support.



### SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Offering youth-driven case management, mental health and wellness services, substance abuse counseling, medical care, educational support, employment services, family and early childhood programming, and aftercare.



**307** youth and young families transitioned out of homelessness into stable housing

**85%** of youth maintained stable housing after completing Supportive Housing Programs

**117** youth victims of sex trafficking received safe shelter, supportive services and a path out of sex trafficking

**96%** of youth victims of sex trafficking reported an increased sense of self-worth

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

**92%** of female-identifying youth on probation in our POWER Program did not reoffend in the year after programming

(compared to 60% of all Hennepin County teens)



*“There were so many times I thought I couldn’t take it another day – I was so tired and had no hope in finding a place to stay, let alone my own apartment. I’m thankful I gave it a little more time – I have a home, support and feel better.”*

# ANNA'S STORY

A school social worker referred Anna to The Link after a friend’s mother found her sleeping in their garage. Anna had been staying there for several months after fleeing an unsafe living situation with family. Staff worked with Anna to move into housing at The Link’s Lindquist Apartments Program. An incredibly determined young person, and despite her circumstances, Anna had continued to attend school with perfect attendance. While working with The Link, Anna celebrated her 17th birthday and graduated from high school a year early. Today, Anna is working toward a nursing degree and continues to maintain stable housing.



# 290 YOUTH AND FAMILIES HAVE A SAFE PLACE TO SLEEP EVERY NIGHT

In 2023, The Link became the largest provider of emergency shelter and housing for youth in Minnesota



# OUR INNOVATIVE APPROACH

The Link offers housing programs tailored to meet the needs of youth most impacted by homelessness

### YOUNG FAMILIES

Supporting young parents in creating a safe and stable environment for their children to grow and thrive

### BLACK YOUTH IN NORTH MINNEAPOLIS

Building equity in North Minneapolis by providing homelessness prevention funds and culturally specific housing for Black youth

### YOUTH WITH EXPERIENCE IN THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

Developing support systems and stability for youth who are too often left behind when they age out of the foster care system

### YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

Offering more intensive services to support youth to overcome barriers and build independence

### LGBTQIA+ YOUTH

Fostering an accepting community where every young person has a safe place to sleep and is honored for who they are



# YOUTH LEADERSHIP

The Link is a youth and adult led organization. Young people who have experience in The Link's programs can apply to be on one of three Youth Advisory Committees that work alongside adult leaders to co-lead our organization. All youth leaders are hired as part-time staff and receive the same wages and benefits as adult staff.

## HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Youth who have experienced homelessness help oversee our Housing & Homeless Services Division and participate in the movement to end youth homelessness

## SURVIVOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Youth survivors of sexual exploitation and/or trafficking help oversee our Safe Harbor Division and participate in the movement to end sex trafficking

## RILE (ROOTED IN LIVED EXPERIENCE) ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Youth who have experienced truancy or involvement in the juvenile justice system oversee our Youth Advocacy Division and participate in the movements to reform the juvenile justice system

## YOUTH COUNCIL

New in 2023: All youth leaders at The Link are members of the overarching Youth Council to unify and strengthen youth voice in our agency. Youth Council members also participate in monthly professional development workshops to deepen their leadership skills.



# PROJECT LIVE OUT LOUD

***LGBTQIA+ youth are 2x more likely to experience homelessness than their peers***

often because they were kicked out or experienced abuse at home due to their identity. While on the streets, LGBTQIA+ youth also face increased violence and mental health crises with 62% having seriously considered suicide in the last year.

Launched in 2016, The Link's Project Live Out Loud (PLOL) Program was the first rapid rehousing housing program dedicated to supporting LGBTQIA+ youth experiencing homelessness in the nation. PLOL was developed in partnership with youth leaders at The Link who identified a need for a culturally specific housing program for LGBTQIA+ youth. The program continues to be overseen and guided by our Housing Youth Advisory Committee.

In 2023, PLOL doubled in size and now provides a safe place to sleep and culturally relevant services to 30 youth each night. With the expansion, The Link was able to secure a 9-unit apartment building ***dedicated to LGBTQIA+ youth***. For young people who have experienced unimaginable trauma and rejection, it can be lifesaving to move into an apartment where they are surrounded by people who accept and celebrate them for who they are.



YOUTH LEADER PROFILE

# MEET KARLI

*Youth Council President & Housing Advisory Committee Co-Chair*

**HOW DID YOU BECOME A HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER?**

I was in The Link's Rapid Rehousing Program and my case manager suggested I should apply. She was like 'you can give us insights on the way that the programs are running'. So, then I applied, and I got excited when I got hired.

**WHAT DO YOU DO AS A YOUTH LEADER AT THE LINK?**

A lot. I get to talk to the public and actually make people aware that The Link is here and we're here to help youth. I've gotten to sit in on interviews and, 9 times out of 10, they want us to take charge, like to conduct the interview get that experience and that knowledge. I have spoken to the board members. Got to go to the [Minnesota State] Capitol.

**HOW DO YOUTH LEADERS INFORM THE LINK'S PROGRAMS?**

I am able to give my input on some of the ways that I feel programs could be better- like how case managers can better work with youth, or how they can connect a little more, or the approach that they take. We give that insight of what younger people would want to see.

**HOW HAS PARTICIPATING IN THE YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELPED YOU PREPARE FOR YOUR FUTURE?**

My goal is always to go into the medical field. Before the advisory committees, I was kind of going downhill and not going on that path. But since joining the advisory committees, I got into college, I graduated with my bachelor's.

**WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED THROUGH PARTICIPATING IN LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS AT THE LINK?**

I have learned not to be as hard on myself. I've learned not to downplay the achievements I accomplish. I've learned to walk into a space with confidence.



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# FINANCIALS

## REVENUE & SUPPORT

Community Giving \$659,407  
 Corporations & Foundations \$1,279,807  
 Government Contracts \$10,799,645  
 In-Kind Contributions \$409,074  
 Events, Net \$194,280  
 Other \$117,098

**Total Revenue & Support: \$13,459,311**

## EXPENSES

Program Services \$12,683,526  
 Management & General \$1,483,355  
 Marketing & Development \$983,181

**Total Expenses: \$15,150,062**

## ASSETS

Cash & Cash Equivalents \$1,661,627  
 Contracts & Grants Receivable \$1,616,012  
 Property & Equipment, Net \$909,302  
 Other Assets \$424,987

**Total Assets: \$4,611,928**

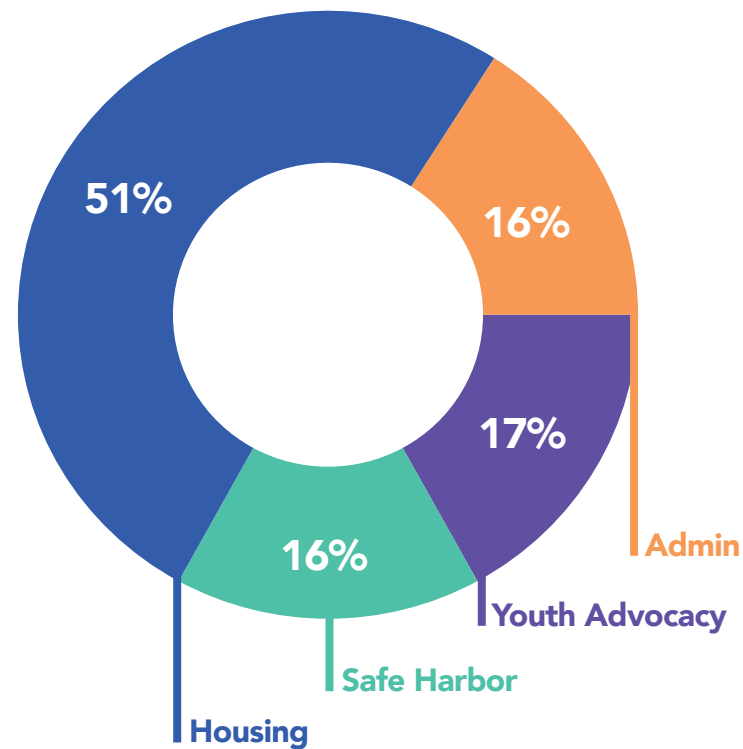
## LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities \$1,153,687  
 Long-Term Liabilities, Net \$176,336  
 Total Liabilities \$1,330,023

Net Assets, Beginning of Year \$4,972,656  
 Change in Net Assets\* (\$1,690,751)  
 Total Net Assets \$3,281,905

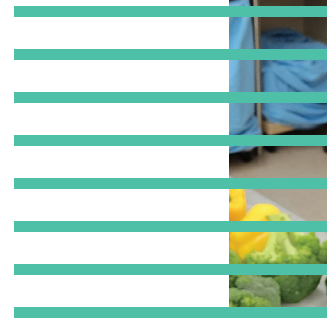
**Total Liabilities & Net Assets: \$4,611,928**

\*The funds released from restriction are multi-year grants that were recorded in the year they were received but spent during the 2023 fiscal year.



### \*FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

- Housing: 51%
- Safe Harbor: 16%
- Youth Advocacy: 17%
- Admin: 16%



# THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who generously supported youth and young families at The Link through making a gift, volunteering their time, and attending our events.

## DONATIONS

The Link's work is made possible by the 1,203 donors who generously made a gift in 2023 including...

- 81 Champions Club members whose monthly gifts sustain our life-changing services for youth
- 130 Legends Club donors who made meaningful investments in shelter, housing and services for youth through gifts of \$1,000+ throughout the year

## VOLUNTEERING

In 2023, 1,531 volunteers shared their time and resources by cooking meals, packing resource kits, making blankets, and more. Volunteers ensure youth have healthy food to eat, hygiene supplies they need, and the knowledge that there is a community of people who care about them.

## EVENTS

The Link's annual Elevate & Empower Gala brings together hundreds of community leaders and supporters each year. In 2023, The Link honored The Armory Foundation as our Community Leader of the Year and Melanie Young as our Youth Leadership Award Winner.

**You can join The Link in the fight to end youth homelessness and sex trafficking. Visit [www.thelinkmn.org](http://www.thelinkmn.org) to donate, volunteer, or register for our events.**





THE *link*

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