

2025
Annual
Report

THE
Other Way
MINISTRIES

**Walking
Alongside Our
Westside
Neighbors
Since 1967**



“How’s it going at The Other Way?” This is a question I get a lot, and depending on the moment, day, week, or month, the answer I give can vary. In the throes of the SNAP benefit delay last fall, I might have answered with just an exhausted sigh. Coming from an end-of-summer celebration of our youth program, my answer would have been energized, and spoken through an unmistakable smile.

The point is, it can be hard to zoom out sometimes when you’re in the thick of things. As I reflect now on 2025, my answer to the question is likely the same as anyone living intentionally in a community. It was joyful. It had moments of sorrow and loss. It was inspiring. It was hard. But overall—it was good. 2025 had its challenges no doubt, but with its challenges, we saw our community, donors, and dedicated team rally, ready to meet whatever came our way. It reminds me of the concept of “call and response”. When our neighbors weren’t sure when (or even if) they would receive food stamp funds, we called out to our community “**We’re here for you!**”, and to our supporters “**...with your help!**”, and though the crisis was intense, the response was an inspiration. When the state budget delayed after-school funding by an entire semester, the call was “**Help us bridge the gap!**” and the response was swift, and our kids didn’t miss a day of program. And among these moments of short-term crisis, we also felt the continued, long-term growth in trust from our neighbors. We saw more people come through our doors at The Other Way not just seeking assistance, but seeking community, and we also saw our community ready to meet that growth. In our Recharge program, for example, the number of people showing up from the homeless community increased significantly, matched with new community partners extending their hands to help—including medical care (Corewell Mobile Medicine), healthy food (Calvin University), and legal assistance (61st District Court), to name just a few to the growing list of existing partners.

It isn’t hard to point to the problems. But one of my favorite quotes that has become a rallying cry for all of us fans of the late Mr. Rogers is “**look for the helpers—you will always find people helping**”. We find helpers in our community, including those who themselves are seeking assistance. We find it in our volunteers, in our staff, and in people like you who support our work. So as you read the stories and figures in this report, I hope you have a better sense of how things are going here at The Other Way, and I thank you for all the ways you’ve helped make us who we are.



Scott Bloem,
Executive Director

Agape Co-op & Market

\$44,637

in Co-op shares distributed

47

co-op gatherings and events

167

volunteer hours contributed by members

\$34,957

generated in savings for members

Increased energy amongst co-op members and participation in committee meetings has **doubled in the past year!**



Kate English Photography

Pantry



Kate English Photography



10,978

food requests fulfilled

5,964

volunteer hours

2,141+

unique households

Stamp Out Hunger

One of the incredible partnerships that enables us to do the work we do is the annual Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive initiative coordinated by the National Association of Letter Carriers. The amazing USPS workers collect food left at the mailboxes of neighbors in our Westside community and deliver directly to us for our food pantry. 2025's event was a huge success as we nearly tripled the amount of food collected from the year before with **12,732 pounds** of food received. This was able to feed roughly **1,600-2000 families** and we had **24 incredible volunteers** who helped organize all of these donations as they came in.



This year's Stamp Out Hunger was nothing short of miraculous. The increase in donations shows just how much our community cares—and how powerful we can be when we work together.

SCOTT BLOEM, Executive Director



K-5 Program

Our K-5 program currently serves **40 students**, ranging from Kindergarten through 5th grade. We are especially proud of our intentional focus on teaching and celebrating diverse cultures through meaningful events, festivals, and family engagement opportunities that help our students feel seen and supported. This included celebrations for Native American Heritage Month, Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, and more.



We have worked hard to create a safe and welcoming space where children can truly be themselves while also growing in their identity in Christ. Through regular Bible studies, students are gaining a deeper understanding of God, building a strong spiritual foundation alongside their academic and social development. Our youth leaders are deeply passionate about loving each child well and are committed to reflecting God's love in every interaction, ensuring every student feels valued, supported, and known.

Teen Club

Our Teens' Club has grown from 12 to over **40 participants**, a powerful reflection of its impact. Through our partnership with Roanoke Ranch, teens learn to groom and care for horses while also engaging in meaningful conversations about faith, personal struggles, and healing. Our team members, Cody and Heavenly, have been passionate leaders in this work, serving as strong pillars in our Westside community and consistently pouring into our high-potential teens with compassion and support.



Youth & Family Programs

YES

Our YES Program proudly supported **8 interns** who gained hands-on work experience across a variety of Westside businesses and organizations, including John Ball Zoo, Ralph's Market, JBAN, our Food Pantry, and our K-5 program. In addition to their work placements, interns had the opportunity to explore their future through college tours, visits to trade schools, and exposure to cosmetology programs.

We also partnered with organizations like Young Money Finances, who provided practical teaching on budgeting and financial responsibility. Our goal is to equip teens not only with their first job experience, but also with essential life and survival skills needed for adulthood. Through these opportunities, we are committed to preparing our interns to confidently navigate and succeed in the world they are stepping into.

Christmas Store

Our Christmas Store was a big success in 2025! A retail value of donated gifts was **\$38,370**. We had the partnership of 5 Westside businesses who hosted bins and were a toy collection site. These gifts benefited over **150 families** and **404 kiddos** in our community. If you own a Westside business and are interested in being a toy collection site, reach out to Katie Carpenter at kcarpenter@theotherway.org.



Shanicka's Story

We first had the privilege of meeting Shanicka almost 10 years ago, when she needed childcare for her first child. We watched their family grow over the years and ended up caring for her other 2 children as well. Through her relationship with our Family Advocate, we learned that they were struggling with housing. We happily welcomed them into our transitional housing unit and watched that space become their home. They became part of our Other Way family. During their time with us, they met many goals, including obtaining a vehicle, steady employment, supportive schooling, saving thousands of dollars, and obtaining more permanent housing. We were thrilled that they found housing in our same neighborhood so their children can remain in our after-school program, and we can continue to cheer on their successes and support in any other ways if needed. Shanicka is proud to announce that she is starting a home buyers class in hopes of accomplishing their next big goal.

Little Lights Childcare Center

35 families served

50 children within those families

100% of families participated in parent teacher conferences and their child's developmental assessment



If you are looking for a daycare that combines professional excellence with genuine, heartfelt care, look no further than Little Lights Ministry. They are more than just a childcare center; they are an extension of our family.

LITTLE LIGHTS PARENT



Kate English Photography



Parent Leadership Committee

Our Parent Leadership Committee (PLC) is made up of at least four parents who have children currently enrolled at Little Lights and actively attend. We meet every other month and offer childcare, dinner, and a stipend. The meetings are a safe space where parents are empowered to be more active and involved in their children's early education and care. Parents can offer feedback, support, and advocate for change. PLC exists so parents can have a voice, so they are committed and empowered, and so Little Lights is the very best it can be.



Kate English Photography

Recharge

50 program days total in the year

1,473 meals served by The Other Way

268 housing assessments completed by Mel Trotter

1,618 total attendance *not all unique individuals*

568 showers supplied by Mel Trotter trailer

34 eye exams with Clear Sky Eyecare partnership



Added Corewell Street Medicine as a service in late 2025



Volunteering

We had a total of **78** volunteers and **6,648** hours of volunteer hours logged across our different programs during 2025!



Resource Program

1,994 resource assistance/referral requests

Some of the categories with the highest requests:

253 Housing Search Assistance	111 Counseling/Mental Health Services
184 Rent Assistance	84 Legal Assistance
126 Utility Assistance	75 Medical Services
125 Food Assistance	

Zeke's Story

Zeke came to The Other Way Ministries facing intense physical and emotional hardships 9 years ago. He was connected with our Community Engagement Director, Karl Williams, who helped him find assistance for bills, a new place to live, the furniture he would need, connection with our food pantry, and more. With his own determination and skills, along with the partnership of TOWM, he is now employed full time using his God-given talents and thriving. He is assisting Karl with pouring into the lives of men in our men's group and youth in our neighborhood in the same ways he received support before.



With the right people surrounding you and God's influence, good things can happen and you can become an even better neighbor to your community.

ZEKE

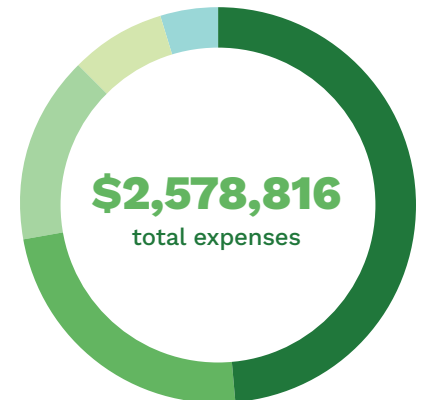


Revenue

● In Kind Donations	40%
● Individuals & Organizations	35%
● Program Revenue	22%
● Miscellaneous	3%

Expenses

● Food Programs	49%
● Early Child Education	23%
● Family & Community Development Programs	15%
● General Admin	8%
● Fundraising	5%



The Other Way Staff

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