

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



YOUTHBUILD LAKE COUNTY



A young woman with dark hair, wearing a black graduation cap and gown, is smiling and holding a white diploma. The background is a blurred indoor setting with large windows. The entire image has an orange overlay.

MISSION

Our mission is to provide underserved young adults with the education, training and life skills necessary to become gainfully employed and build a better future.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It's hard to believe that another year has passed at YouthBuild Lake County. As I look back on all we have accomplished, what I have been exceptionally proud of is my staff's adaptability and flexibility as they worked together to serve our young people virtually. Through their creativity and tenacity, they developed new ways to continue to engage our members despite the difficulties the pandemic has placed on all of us while working remotely. While we are still adjusting with COVID's uncertainty, we are thrilled as an organization to be able to serve our members again from the other side of the screen.

It has truly been inspiring to watch as our newest members enter the building each day with energy and excitement, reminding me of the true impact of YouthBuild Lake County. Our members come from diverse backgrounds and many face personal, economical, and social inequities. Our members come to us looking for an opportunity; for someone to believe in them. Their determination and dedication as they commit to creating a better future for not only themselves, but for their families and communities is truly worthy of recognition.

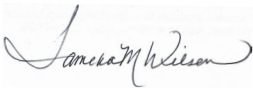
Our members continue to challenge themselves as they earn AmeriCorps service hours, complete mock interviews, participate in communications workshops, tour colleges, receive resume support, volunteer with service projects, transition into

work experiences, and so much more. I am honored to share that despite the setbacks the pandemic placed on these cohorts, 98% of our members earned an industry recognized credential and 96% secured employment.

We look forward to continuing to build what YouthBuild truly is—a community. A community of individuals with common goals and the passion to build strong bonds. Our successes would not be possible without a dedicated team of staff, board of directors, volunteers, and donors who all believe in our mission and more importantly, believe in our youth.

I would like to thank you all for your continued support. It is because of you that we are able to make a lasting impact on the youth in our community. I am grateful for each and every one of you and your commitment to YouthBuild Lake County, especially during these unprecedented times. We are excited for the year ahead and the new opportunities 2022 will bring.

With gratitude,



Tameka Wilson



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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12 WAYS

WE HELPED BUILD A BETTER



HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Many of our members enter our program without their high school diploma. That's why we partner with Penn Foster, an online nationally and regionally accredited high school. Our members work at their own pace with staff support to finish their high school education for free.



RESUME SUPPORT

We work with our young people to help them draft and design resumes that will make them stand out from their peers. For many, this is the first time they have ever built a resume.



YOUTH POLICY COUNCIL

While in our program, interested members can campaign for the Youth Policy Council. YPC members work side-by-side with our Board of Directors to advocate for their peers, promote change, and be leaders within the program. YPC candidates prepare speeches and letters of recommendations in effort to be elected by their peers. Our **3** cohorts of members each had opportunities to participate in YPC elections this year.



SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

We partner with Rosalind Franklin University to provide free mental health services to our members. Counseling offers our members the opportunity to process personal, emotional, and social barriers and issues and provides assistance to work through them. Each member participates in approximately **30** hours of wellness counseling.



LIFE SKILLS & GUEST SPEAKERS

Guests such as post-secondary education and trade school representatives, employers, and motivational speakers in the community visit with and speak to our members. This educates our members on a variety of subjects and provides a great networking opportunity for them.



MOCK INTERVIEWS

Mock interviews give our members experience and build their confidence. Members interview with business professionals and receive feedback to improve their interviewing skills. This year, each of our members participated in **8** rounds of mock interviews.

OUR IMPACT

98%

CREDENTIAL
ATTAINMENT

96%

YOUNG ADULTS FUTURE IN —

2021

GIVING BACK

Service projects are a great way for members to give back to the community and learn the value of service. Members work together to beautify parks, forest preserves, beaches, and more. Members completed **6** service projects this year.

COMMUNICATION WORKSHOPS

This year we hosted **3** communication workshops. These workshops teach our members how to communicate in a business setting and helps them construct and perfect their elevator speeches. They also participate in small group sessions with community volunteers and local business professionals to discuss verbal and nonverbal communication skills.

JOB SEARCH & PLACEMENT ASSISTANCE

We want both our current members and alumni to always have access to upcoming job opportunities. Our Career Access Department focuses on placing our young people in jobs that will help further their careers to create a sustainable future for themselves. We continuously work to build relationships with employer partners and career centers to offer our members many resources to secure employment.

HOLIDAY BASKET DISTRIBUTION

This holiday season, we distributed holiday baskets to our members and alumni. Through the generosity of our community, we gifted **35** baskets filled with food, clothing, gift cards, toys, and household and personal items. We also distributed **25** turkeys to those who needed them, ensuring all of our young people were able to celebrate the holidays with a little less stress.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

We partner with Great Lakes Credit Union to help our young people open bank accounts. Our members also complete MyPath, a financial literacy course that teaches about credit and helps our young people set savings goals and budget their money.

COLLEGE VISITS

At YouthBuild, one of our goals is to see our young people further their education. College tours get our members excited for their future and open their eyes to new opportunities. For many of them, these visits are their first time touring a university.

**SECURED
EMPLOYMENT**

8,932

**COMMUNITY SERVICE
HOURS COMPLETED**

8

**AMERICORPS
SCHOLARSHIPS EARNED**



CHELSEY / CLASS OF 2019

Chelsey was falling behind in school before she found YouthBuild. "It was the end of junior year, but I was still considered a sophomore. I knew I wasn't going to be able to catch up and I didn't want to graduate that late. I saw a poster for YouthBuild at the credit recovery school I was attending and decided to apply. What caught my attention was that I could get paid to go to school while picking up a trade. I love to work with my hands, and it seemed like a great opportunity." At YouthBuild, Chelsey earned her high school diploma as well as four industry recognized credentials. "YouthBuild really helped me build connections and taught me the importance of networking. I used to have a hard time talking to people but the staff helped me get comfortable with myself and with having conversations." Chelsey went on to complete a culinary pathway program at Roberti Community House. "I think being hands on with all of the service projects and getting the feeling of giving back really made me appreciate that type of work. I always wanted to pursue something with entrepreneurship and cooking became a passion of mine." After working in a couple of kitchens, Chelsey decided she wanted to start her own business and she started Chelsey's Kitchen. She sells plates of food to those in the community. She

has since used that business to connect with two friends, and together they have started a non-profit called L.O.V.E. (Loving Our Vecinos Everywhere). L.O.V.E. is a modern organization that sustainably provides charitable assistance and resources to the homeless, while also providing solutions to the environmental issue of pollution in the Chicagoland area. They have organized free school supply drives, community clean ups, and have distributed over 500 meals and hygiene bags to underserved people in the community. Chelsey uses profits from her small business to help fund her non-profit while they work to network with more donors. She was presented with the Waukegan Proud Award in recognition of her volunteer efforts and selfless service to the community. "Right now, we just received approval for our 501(c)(3) status. I want to continue giving back to my community as much as possible, especially YouthBuild. I am working to offer volunteer hours to current members so they can earn hours by volunteering with us. YouthBuild was the first choice I made on my own, and since then, I've never looked back on making choices for myself. If anyone is hesitant to join, they should. It will benefit you in more ways than you realize so you might as well take that step."

FERNANDO / CLASS OF 2021

Fernando wanted to make a change in his life before he applied to YouthBuild. "I did not have my high school diploma and there were a lot of events that happened in a row that made me realize I could easily be doing better for myself." Fernando heard of YouthBuild a few years back and decided to make the first step towards his future by reaching out and applying. "YouthBuild showed me a support system and that there are people out there beside your own family that will motivate you and help push you in the right direction," Fernando said. "YouthBuild really cares about their members and wants them to succeed." In his time in the program, Fernando completed his high school diploma and earned several industry recognized credentials. "I have always had an interest in construction and earning my forklift certification. YouthBuild led me to a lot

of better opportunities." Fernando now works full time at Culligan, where he uses his forklift certification as a material handler. In the future, he plans to apply for an apprenticeship in the trades. "Right now, I am focused on saving money. I plan to help my mother pay off her house and I am saving for a house of my own. I know that when the time is right, I can reach back out to YouthBuild and use them as a resource to get into a good apprenticeship program." What makes Fernando hopeful for the future is knowing that this is just the beginning. "I have goals for myself and for my future. Some great advice that I was told is that no one is going to flip the switch for you. If you are determined to do better for yourself, you have to go out and make it happen." That's just what Fernando is doing.





ALEXA / CLASS OF 2021

Alexa was searching for better opportunities before she found YouthBuild. "I had been working warehouse jobs and I had honestly gotten comfortable. I started to think that maybe school wasn't for me, but I realized I didn't want to work in a warehouse for the rest of my life." Alexa had dropped out of high school when she became pregnant with her first child. She had been working towards getting her GED, but found it difficult to balance online school with work. "I knew I needed something with more structure. I heard of YouthBuild from a friend and decided to apply. It wasn't an easy decision for me at first because I was worried about being able to dedicate time to the program while supporting my family, but I knew I needed to make a change, so I decided to put all my effort into this. I wanted to better myself not only for me, but for my three kids." At YouthBuild, Alexa earned her high school diploma and several industry recognized credentials. "I knew from an early age that my dream was to go into the healthcare field and the staff at YouthBuild

guided me into the right program. I had no idea about all of the opportunities available in the nursing field and having access to those resources has really helped me." Alexa is currently enrolled at State Career College, where she is working towards her Medical Assistant certification. After earning her certification, she plans to continue schooling to earn an Associate Degree. "I want to become a Labor and Delivery Nurse or maybe even a Physician's Assistant," Alexa said. "I am excited for the future knowing I can keep growing and learning. I want to be able to help my kids with college and I know by preparing for my future, I am also preparing for theirs. I don't know where I would be right now without YouthBuild. The staff always pushed me to do better every day and have been so supportive and encouraging. It can be difficult to make a change when you feel like you are starting from zero. I've learned, however, that it's better to start from zero and move up instead of staying there and having nothing."

ADRIAN / CLASS OF 2020

Adrian dropped out of high school and was looking for an opportunity before he came to YouthBuild. "If I had gone back to my high school, it would have taken me three more years to earn my diploma. I knew I needed a better option and that's when my counselor told me about YouthBuild. I wasn't working at the time, so I figured I might as well try it out." During his time at YouthBuild, Adrian earned his high school diploma as well as four industry recognized credentials. "YouthBuild taught me things that I could apply to the real world that my high school never did. They showed me how to build my resume and helped me practice interviewing." Adrian always had an interest in mechanics and decided to pursue automotive, a YouthBuild career pathway. "A staff member called me one day and let me know there was an opportunity for me to interview at a local auto body shop. I already

had my resume and I felt prepared to interview because I had gone through a few rounds of mock interviews at YouthBuild." Adrian was hired and started working at Adam's Auto Body Shop, a YouthBuild employer partner. He was there for only two weeks when they were forced to shut down due to the pandemic. "I got a call back later on from Adam, the owner. He wanted me to come back and work full-time for them as a detailer." Adrian has been with Adam's Auto Body Shop for over a year and a half and has since been promoted to a full-time mechanic. "Right now, I am focused on saving money for a house. Without YouthBuild, I don't know where I would be. I knew I needed to work towards getting my diploma, and now I have a career that will allow me to grow and achieve my goals."





**YOUTHBUILD IS A GREAT ORGANIZATION.
TOGETHER, WE ARE REVITALIZING
NORTH CHICAGO, BLOCK BY BLOCK.**

- David Weil, Ph.D., ReNew Communities President



CONSTRUCTION AT YOUTHBUILD

All young people who enter the YouthBuild program pursue a dual mission: to create a meaningful and productive life for themselves and their families, while giving their best energies to improve the world around them. Our members learn job skills in construction and in other high-demand employment sectors such as healthcare, automotive, HVAC, information technology and transportation, distribution, and logistics. They also learn and refine soft skills such as teamwork, problem solving, communication, and adaptability.

When our members join YouthBuild, they enroll in AmeriCorps, a federally funded program comprised of thousands of volunteers that work directly with non-profits to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. Members who complete 450 hours of community service earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award of \$1,678 to use in furthering their education.

Last June, our members returned to the construction sites. "They pretty much do everything from interior demolition and rebuilding staircases and structures to painting and putting in new windows and doors," said Clay Atchley, Construction Project Manager. "This year's cohorts have certainly developed a good work ethic and work really well together. They have gained necessary skills that they can

apply to any career by showing up every day and applying concepts we have taught them in the classroom, not to mention the construction skills they've learned that will be useful whether they go into the trades or not. Our members have learned that they are never going to stop being tested and that they are never going to stop learning. I'm proud to see them make the connection between what they've learned in programming to the real world as they apply it to the work they do on site."

This year, our members have primarily been working on rehabbing two homes in North Chicago, one of which is near completion with an anticipated official ribbon cutting ceremony this fall. We partner with ReNew Communities, a subsidiary of Matthew Homes, to remodel these homes that are later sold as affordable housing to underserved families in the community. "ReNew Communities is a non-profit working together with YouthBuild Lake County to provide home ownership to the people of North Chicago," said David Weil, Ph.D., ReNew Communities President. "I have been impressed with the can-do spirit of the YouthBuild staff and students. Even during a global pandemic, the YouthBuild team brings their A-game to remodel two of our Matthew Homes. YouthBuild is a great organization. Together, we are revitalizing North Chicago, block by block."



FY21 REVENUE

PRIVATE

23%

PUBLIC + PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS

29%

GOVERNMENT

49%

FY21 OPERATING EXPENSES

FUNDRAISING

12%

ADMINISTRATIVE

19%

PROGRAMMING

69%

2021 Top Employer Partners

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Adam's Auto Body Shop

Blinderman Construction Company

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The achievements attained by our members are possible because of generous supporters like you. On behalf of our members, staff, and Board of Directors, *thank you.*

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