

# Building the Path

CELEBRATING FIVE YEARS  
SERVING CHICAGO'S FAMILIES

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RIVER CITY COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT CENTER

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



## R CITY EXISTS TO

*bring together the best of our city  
to build a path for families  
to walk from cradle to career  
to the glory of God.*

## R CITY EXISTS WITHIN

*Chicago's vibrant community of  
West Humboldt Park amid neighbors  
overcoming disenfranchisement, injustice,  
and high levels of violence.*

## R CITY EXISTS BY

*building trusted, multi-year relationships with  
families & welcoming youth of all ages into a  
safe space with the resources and relationships  
to achieve their purposes.*

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### *In Memoriam*

In this year when so many have lost so much,  
we pause to remember those who have gone before us.  
We especially honor R CITY friend Don Kuss, a true and forever fan  
of West Humboldt Park and its magnificent children.

# Dear friends of R City,

I stand in a roomful of remote learners, one of four pods of students making R CITY their Second Home, and I think of five years ago. I remember when R CITY was more ideas than reality, more questions than answers. Now, by the grace of God and the gifts of your hands, R CITY is a place where families walk the path from kindergarten to career.

This path is never secure. All kinds of trauma--scarcity, shootings, sickness, sadness--come at our youth. Helen Keller said, "Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it...Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing." When we walk alone, life's risks press us toward *nothing*. But together? This year more than ever we saw how amazing the adventure can be.

When COVID first hit, we made a commitment: to gather every possible resource for our families and to continue bringing income to our youth and graduates. There were a dozen pivots: we became mask makers, food servers, surprise deliverers, and remote learning supervisors. Your donations built a Graduation Dress Boutique and makeshift pharmacy store; a PPP loan allowed us to hire a Graduate Crew of young adult tuckpointers in a season of rampant unemployment.

In retrospect, the cost of these adaptations was immense: an additional \$128,000 spent for a 42% increase in expense. Had we been working alone, such financial risk could have been disastrous. But together? Together miracles happened. With hundreds of people giving generously, the funds came in: enough to cover 2020's "adventure" and more. Join us in celebration: the victories are ours together.

*Elizabeth Galik*

Executive Director



# 2020: A Year of Pivots

2020 was a year like none we've ever experienced. It was a year that began with difficulties all too common to our community. Our streets saw a rate of homicide in the top 5% of all Chicago, and grief and mental health crises abounded. The struggles our neighbors regularly encounter were compounded in the face of a global pandemic.

This year, again and again, we shifted directions and pivoted to respond to the needs before us. We continually considered competing risk factors and tried to discern how to keep our families as safe as possible. In each choice, we looked to find creative ways to love our families, overcoming each new obstacle however we could.

# 161

unique individuals  
served in COVID-safe  
youth programming

# 50

Families contacted  
with regular  
wellness checks

*We are especially thankful for  
**River City Community Church**  
collecting over \$30,000 for R CITY  
remote learning as well as  
organizing emergency rent  
assistance and ongoing food  
deliveries to neighbors.*

## SPECIAL HEROES

Even in a year of social distancing we were overwhelmed by the support of **volunteers who jumped in** to help in times of difficulty. The month of June provided weeks of in-person opportunities for volunteers to serve meals, sort clothing, deliver groceries and donate goods to care for our community.



## JANUARY

After School programs started the year with our **highest attendance yet**.

## MARCH

Starting March 17, Chicago began its **stay-at-home order** and schools closed. Print Shop & Art shop moved classes to Zoom designing our "Good Vibes Only" mask and we **opened our mask store**.

## APRIL

As quarantine continued, we made regular wellness check phone calls, **delivered care packages**, and started our **HIP Hip Hooray** program to bring some fun incentives to online learning.

## MAY

Using the PPP loan, Harambee launched our **Grad Crew** of young adults providing tuckpointing on a sliding scale for homeowners in need. Harambee also held remote **construction safety classes** with our teens.

*May 25, 2020 George Floyd was killed, deepening our longing and reigniting our fight for racial justice. Our community experienced looting and local businesses essential for food, clothing and medicine were temporarily closed. Read our statement of our commitment to racial justice at [citycdc.org/justice](https://www.cityofchicago.org/justice).*

## JUNE

Our community faced new needs and the response was **INCREDIBLE!** Mobilized by local and widespread support, we provided **groceries, health care kits, clothing giveaways, sporting goods**. Neighbors made shopping appointments and our space fostered in-person community amid fear and pain. Volunteers created a formal dress shop for our 8th grade graduates and passed out hotdog meals and snow cones. So many donations were given that we were able to distribute a small cash gift to each 8th grade graduate at Cameron Elementary. **College Scholarships** were awarded to our **Successbuilders**. **June was a busy month!**

## JULY - AUGUST

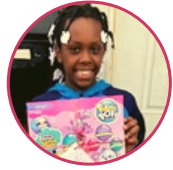
As Chicago released reopening guidelines we began **COVID-safe summer programs**: camp for children, Harambee for teens, gym time and Print Shop for junior high, and care packages for families at home.

## SEPTEMBER

As Chicago prepared for a school year online, R CITY launched **Operation Second Home** providing remote learning support in COVID-safe pods. Harambee teens continued work in the community and the Grad Crew continued through **Chicago Youth Service Corps** funds.

## OCTOBER-DECEMBER

Remote learning programming continued while volunteers completed wellness checks on families at home. Print Shop **completed their first mural** in the community and designed hoodies as Christmas gifts for all R CITY youth and staff.



# Dreambuilders

## BUILDING FOUNDATIONS & DREAMS

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM  
HIP HIP HOORAY  
SUMMER DAY CAMP  
REMOTE LEARNING

## PROGRAM NUMBERS

**75** YOUTH AFTER SCHOOL  
**33** KIDS ATTENDING SUMMER CAMP  
**20** KIDS REMOTE FOR SUMMER CAMP

### H.I.P.\* HIP HOORAY

**9** week \**Homework Incentive Program* : )  
**62** students participants  
**15** Cameron teachers participants  
**144** prizes awarded & delivered

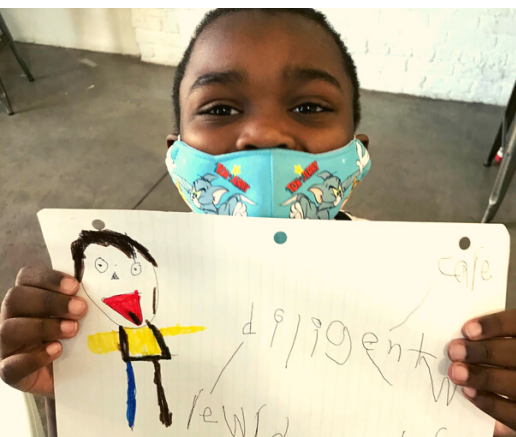
## BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY

In 2020, leaders spent a great deal of time debating the resources and systems needed to educate in a pandemic. At R CITY, we tried to look at education through the eyes of students. We remembered the things that keep children engaged in school: friends and favorite teachers, contests and prizes, special events and parties. We took these motivations, small for adults but huge for kids, and used them to **engage children in remote learning in every possible way.**

Whether it was delivering pizzas to homes or celebrating holidays in the breaks between students' remote learning classes, our message to our kids was the same: **"You are not alone. We will do this together."**

## OPERATION SECOND HOME REMOTE LEARNING SPACE

**33** CHILDREN K-5  
**24** TEENS 6-12  
**12** WEEKS OF SUPPORT



# CREATIVITY AMID CHALLENGE

2020 was an unusual year for the arts. With venues closed and gatherings restricted, spaces for artistic showcase were limited. Yet R CITY's Print Shop found ways to keep its young artists connected to one another, producing art, and sharing it with the world.

The first pivot of 2020 came when the initial need for masks quickly surpassed the supply. R CITY staff began sewing masks, and Print Shop **youth earned stipends through their own work at home**: designing custom graphics, cutting pieces, and painting unique designs.

In summer youth met with windows open, **each designing and screenprinting a custom shirt**. Youth gained customer service experience by selling their products at an outdoor sale with partner Rotating Market.

In fall, youth gained a broader canvas to express their art: **an outdoor mural in the midst of their community**. The combination of group collaboration and individual perspectives made their a unique piece that will last for years to come.



AFTER SCHOOL  
PRINT SHOP  
ART SHOP  
OPEN GYM

## PROGRAM NUMBERS

- 7 TEEN ARTISTS IN ART SHOP
- 18 YOUTH IN SUMMER OPEN GYM
- 35 AFTER SCHOOL TEENS

### PRINT SHOP:

- 6 TEEN ENTREPRENEURS
- \$5,580 IN SALES



# Citybuilders

## WORK EXPERIENCE THROUGH APPRENTICESHIPS

DREAMBUILDERS INTERNS  
HARAMBEE SUMMER PROGRAM  
HARAMBEE AFTER SCHOOL  
GRADUATE CREW

## PROGRAM NUMBERS

**10** AFTER SCHOOL TEEN AIDES

**9** GRAD CREW YOUNG ADULTS

**33** HARAMBEE TEENS

**\$41,000** STIPENDS PAID BY R CITY

**\$27,000** STIPENDS PAID BY PARTNERS

**\$68,000** TOTAL STIPENDS PAID

## EXTENDING THE PATH

Even amid pandemic, our tuckpointing program had a year of firsts. Harambee was our first program to begin in-person work in May by **launching a Graduate Crew of young adults**. These tuckpointers already wore masks for their dust-filled work, and working outside added the benefit of fresh air.

In addition to launching our third crew, we also implemented a new framework for our homeowners. Rather than completely free, **all homeowners now contribute toward their tuckpointing work**. Our lowest income homeowners now contribute just twenty dollars towards supplies, while other homeowners utilize our sliding scale program, receiving highly subsidized work while paying what they can. In 2020, we completed 14 jobs: six "\$20 Tuckpointing" projects and eight sliding scale jobs for a total of \$4,019 paid by homeowners.

## HARAMBEE HOMEOWNERS

**\$54,191** VALUE OF  
TUCKPOINTING PROVIDED





# MAKING THE FINAL STEP TO CAREER

In 2016, forward-thinking donors tackled a problem that seemed a long way away for our middle school students. They asked: how will River City's university-bound graduates find the resources to continue their post-secondary education? Now, after R CITY's addition of teen apprenticeships, that question is relevant indeed. **Every year, more River City youth graduate**, many seeking to attend university.

This year, COVID caused new challenges for our scholars, sending them home from campuses and ending work-study placements. This fall, seeing the need for additional earned income for our scholars, River City Community Church and the Mustard Seed Foundation joined forces to contribute **over \$40,000 to stipends for three Successbuilders scholars** serving with our Second Home remote learning program. The Mennonite Central Committee provided additional funds for the work. The result? The dozens of students learning at Second Home are led by incredible scholars like Charnesha (below) from their own community. What better role models could they have?

## Successbuilders

SCHOLARS EQUIPPED TO PERSEVERE

SCHOLARSHIP FUND  
SUPPORT NETWORK  
MENTORING

### PROGRAM NUMBERS

6 UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS

\$8,605 IN SCHOLARSHIPS

6 SCHOLARS EARNED  
ADDITIONAL INCOME IN  
R CITY STAFF, INTERN, OR  
APPRENTICE ROLES

### CHARNESHA COLLIER CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY 2020

*Charnesha first apprenticed with Harambee at age 16 and continued tuckpointing every season since, joining R CITY staff in 2017. A caring mentor and talented manager, we are pleased to announce Char's new role in 2021:*

**R CITY ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR  
OF APPRENTICESHIPS**



# Five Years of Fruitful Growth

We are thankful for all who have contributed to R CITY. Each increase in the graph below shows the steps taken to build the path from kindergarten to career.

Each year's extensions are:

- **2015** launch of junior high programs
- **2016** year-round K-8th grade programs
- **2017** addition of Harambee teen apprenticeships
- **2018** first post-secondary scholarships awarded
- **2019** five-day weekly K-12 programs & apprenticeships
- **2020** pandemic response & grad crew expansion

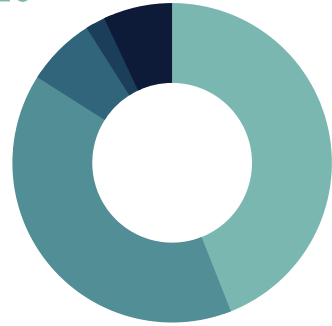
## 2020 SOURCES OF INCOME

- 50%** Donations
- 2%** Earned Income
- 32%** Foundation Grants
- 9%** Government Funds
- 7%** In Kind Gifts



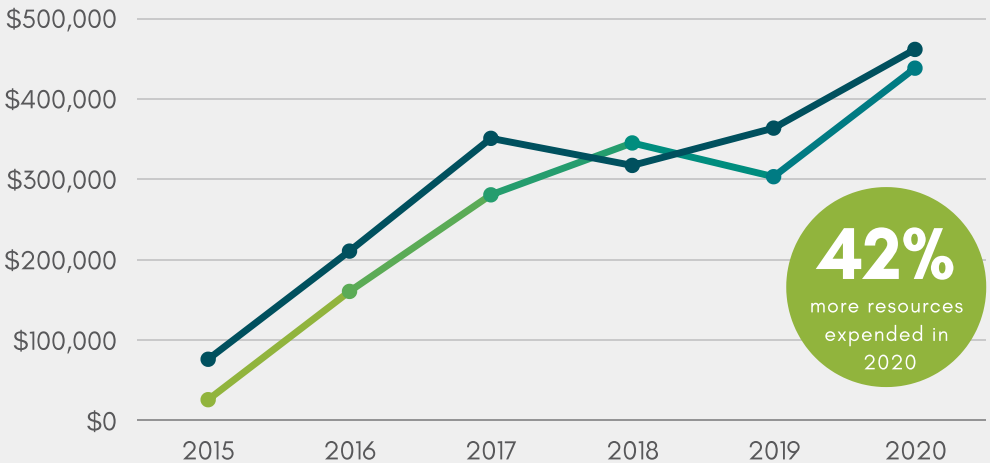
## PURPOSE OF 2020 EXPENDITURES

- 44%** Dreambuilders Children's Program
- 40%** Harambee Citybuilders Apprenticeships
- 7%** Print Shop
- 2%** Scholarships
- 7%** Operation Costs



## ORGANIZATIONAL INCOME & EXPENSE

INCOME ●—●  
EXPENSE ●—●



# The team at RCITY



Elizabeth Galik  
Executive Director



Michelle Johnson  
Apprenticeships Director



Charnesha Collier  
Associate Apprenticeships  
Director



Anthony Johnson  
Tuckpointing Lead



Songine' Clarke  
Finance Lead & Print Shop Support



Jeffrey Peltz  
Print Shop Lead



Terrenzia Bell  
Youth Instructor



Victoria Snyder  
Youth Instructor



Briuna Amos  
Youth Program Support



Cory Dennis  
Youth Program Support



Chumya Powell  
Grad Crew Leader 2020

## 2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Daniel Hill



Yolanda Richards



Kim Moreland



Brandon Green



Beth Blackwell



Y'Shanda Rivera



Mark Blackwell



With thanks to  
John Smith,  
Treasurer 2015-2020

# With Gratitude

## FOUNDATIONS & FUNDING PARTNERS

Chicago Youth Service Corps,  
Christopher Family Foundation, Covenant  
Children's Ministries, Barney II Foundation,  
CPS Office of Faith-Based Initiatives,  
Mennonite Central Committee, Global  
Children's Foundation, Ochsner  
Foundation, MIGMIR Fund, One Summer  
Chicago, Springboard Foundation,  
IL State Treasurer's Charitable Trust,  
Calvary Church Impact,  
We Raise Foundation,  
& more

## ORGANIZATION & BUSINESS PARTNERS

Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council,  
Cameron Elementary School, Compass  
Health Center, Executive Service Corps, The  
Good Board, The Healing Corner, River City  
Community Church with the Mustard Seed  
Foundation, River Roast, Rooted Reps,  
Rotating Market, Big Star, The Publican,  
S & S Activewear, The Sports Shed,  
Wantable, Wellness by Bella,  
Ministry Services LLC  
& more

River City Community Development Center  
3709 W Grand Avenue | Chicago, IL 60651

[RCITYCDC.ORG](http://RCITYCDC.ORG)

