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# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Drive Change Community,

As we begin this year, I find myself reflecting on the incredible journey that has brought us to this moment. Our 10-year anniversary was not just a celebration of how far we've come—it was an embodiment of Sankofa, the principle of looking back to move forward with wisdom and purpose. By honoring our past, learning from our experiences, and carrying forward the lessons of the last decade, we are better equipped to shape the future together.

This reflection led us to ask critical questions: Where is Drive Change headed in the next few years? How do we stay on course in an ever-changing world?

Kalilah in our new HQ

To continue growing with purpose, we need more than just ambition—we need a clear and strategic roadmap to get us there. And so we embarked on developing a three-year strategic plan, along with a logic model and formal theory of change, to refine how we measure impact.

To strengthen our capacity, we added new programmatic roles, welcoming a Culinary Associate and Chief Program Officer— while also bolstering our operational infrastructure with a Chief Operating Officer. We are strengthening organizational culture and wellness and partnering with a Professional Employer Organization to enhance our HR and benefits. We diversified our funding streams with government grants, and expanded our advocacy efforts.

With this stronger foundation in place, we are now focused on deepening our impact and expanding our reach for the young people we serve, our Brooklyn community, and employer partners transforming the hospitality industry with us throughout NYC.

We are poised to grow our social enterprise, Drive Change Foods, allowing us to hire more justice-involved young people into full-time, living wage roles, year-over-year. With the launch of this business and the purchase of our new food truck, we will be well-positioned for greater reach and deeper impact. These investments allow us to be more intentional in our leadership, fostering one-on-one teaching experiences, strategic thinking, and stronger thought partnerships.

These were intentional investments toward sustainability, strategy, and the future of Drive Change, laying the groundwork for implementation of our strategic plan.

I am incredibly grateful to the Drive Change community—our fellows, staff, board, partners, and supporters—who believe in this mission and walk alongside us. Together, we are shaping not just an organization, but a movement.

Here's to the road ahead.

With gratitude,

**KALILAH MOON** 

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DRIVE CHANGE INC.

# 2024 at a glance

# **January**

We moved into our new 4,700-square-foot headquarters and began preparing for first Fellowship cohort of 2024.



# Feb-March

We won the Spark Prize from Brooklyn Org, sparking new media excitement on NBC News and News 12!



CARE launched for the fourth year in a row, distributing food to 250 families weekly.



We celebrated our 10 year anniversary and ribbon cutting for our new home, bringing together alumni, fellows, staff and community members past and present.



# June-July

We were honored center court at a New York Liberty game by the Joe and Clara Tsai Foundation Social Justice Fund.

# **September**Union Square Cafe hosted the

second annual All In Event.



# **October**

Our third Fellowship cohort of the year began, bringing our total fellows served in 2024 to 49. We secured funding for our social enterprise, Drive Change Foods!



# **November**

We hosted our 5th Annual Turkey Giveaway, feeding 300 local families for the holiday. Rain could not stop us!

# December

We completed our first Strategic Plan, Theory of Change and Logic Model, setting the vision and road map for our future impact.





### THE TEAM

To support the growing demand for our Fellowship program and engagement with our employer partners, Drive Change strengthened our internal capacity by bringing on five additional roles to form a highly effective team.

Fellowship Associate Brandi Thomas has nearly a decade of case management experience at The Bronx District Attorney's Office and as an Employment Counselor for individuals with special needs and mental health challenges. Driven by her lived experiences, she is an advocate for food accessibility, holistic health, and the advancement of the BIPOC community.

Chief Operating Officer Meredith Dean, an experienced nonprofit executive, brings a wealth of relevant interdisciplinary experience to the role, including as an educator, author, licensed creative arts therapist, board certified trainer in drama therapy, internationally certified alcohol & drug counselor, and clinical supervisor. She has worked extensively with justice-involved youth and incarcerated individuals, people struggling with substance use disorder, and survivors of domestic and intimate partner violence.

Chief Program Officer Nicholas Stanton's work to support New York City youth began in the Success Academy classrooms, where he managed programming for the borough of Queens and led numerous DEI initiatives. At the nonprofit New York Edge, he spearheaded a partnership with the Special Olympics, bringing inclusive sports to over 40,000 participants.

We expanded our kitchen team, welcoming Culinary Associate Stella Brown, to support with culinary facilitation preparing fellows to transition to the industry. After culinary school she moved to New York to work in restaurants, bakeries and cafes and has since developed a strong interest in social justice relating to the hospitality industry.

Manager of Recruitment & Program Delivery Elizabeth Pontes, is a trained social worker with expertise in youth development, particularly the effects of incarceration on young people. She leads the Fellowship's trauma-informed approach, and makes referrals to essential resources such as housing support. By prioritizing both hard and soft skills, while supporting fellows and their employers, we are creatively responding to the increasing need for holistic workforce development programs that equip participants to thrive in an evolving professional landscape.



### THE BOARD

The Drive Change Board contributes to the success of the organization and its programs by leveraging their expertise, networks, and leadership to advance our mission. With members who bring deep experience in philanthropy, the nonprofit sector, and the hospitality industry, the board strengthens our Hospitality for Social Justice (HSJ) network, enhancing opportunities for fellows and expanding our reach. Through strategic guidance, oversight, and active participation, the board helps Drive Change remain innovative, sustainable, and focused on creating meaningful, transformational opportunities for formerly incarcerated young people.

We were excited to add two new members to our Board of Directors, bringing us to eight members in 2024.

Lakimja Mattocks brings over fifteen years of leadership in the nonprofit sector and currently serves as Chief People and Culture Officer at LEAP. In addition to her primary role, she also partners with senior and emerging leaders as a strategic thought partner and coach, and works with organizations to assess and co-create solutions to organizational design, culture and learning, and development challenges through collaborations with Renew and Redesign Consulting and What's Next Now.

Arti Doshi currently serves as the Director of Place for the William Julius Wilson Institute at Harlem Children's Zone, where she specializes in place-based strategy. Arti has over 10 years of experience as a program manager across various education institutions and EdTech companies.

Their deep commitment to social justice and skill sets will contribute greatly to our organization as we continue to grow.





### **FELLOWSHIP**

In 2024, we took bold strides to expand the reach and impact of our core program, the Drive Change Fellowship. With the successful completion of our first capital project, we were able to welcome our first cohort of the year into our thoughtfully designed, newly renovated headquarters. In building out our state-of-the-art training kitchen and classroom, we succeeded in creating an inspiring space where young adults can cultivate their skills and build brighter futures. To elevate our program's innovation and effectiveness, we welcomed Chief Program Officer Nicholas Stanton, whose leadership ensures our curriculum remains dynamic and impactful. We also strengthened our support system with the addition of Fellowship Associate Brandi Thomas, who guides fellows from recruitment to career placement, and Culinary Associate Stella Brown, who brings expertise and passion to our kitchen training.

Beyond expanding our team, we deepened our commitment to data-driven impact by developing a logic model and theory of change—powerful frameworks that will sharpen our ability to measure success and drive meaningful outcomes. With these strategic investments, we are not just growing; we are transforming lives and shaping a future where opportunity is accessible to all.



BRIANNA COHORT 13 FELLOW

Drive Change has taught me the most valuable thing in life. You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream!



### **3 PHASE JOURNEY**

In 2024, the Drive Change Fellowship Program was reimagined from 16 weeks to a highly focused 12-week, three-phase journey—Head, Heart, and Hands—designed to equip young adults with the skills, confidence, and community support necessary for long-term success in the culinary industry and beyond. Rooted in restorative justice principles, the program fosters personal growth, professional development, and social responsibility, ensuring fellows are empowered to take charge of their futures.





This phase deepens culinary and professional skills with over 155 hours of kitchen training. Fellows take ownership of family meals, developing leadership and teamwork. They complete the Food Handler's certification and continue refining job readiness through structured interviews and time management coaching. New to the program is our Alumni & Hospitality for Social Justice (HSJ) Partner Panel which connects fellows with industry professionals, expanding their networks and career insights.



### "HANDS" (WEEKS 9-12)

Fellows transition into employer trails, working 21-30 hours per week at HSJ partner sites with clear learning goals. Weekly check-ins provide support, ensuring a smooth shift from training to employment. By the end of this phase, fellows are ready to secure job offers and begin their careers as skilled professionals. Drive Change equips young adults with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to thrive—creating lasting impact in their lives and communities.



# MEET JAHSSIAH

# A JOURNEY OF GROWTH, RESILIENCE, AND OPPORTUNITY

Jahssiah first heard about Drive Change while participating in a reentry program. At that time, finding work felt impossible, and the pressure of financial instability weighed heavily on him. Learning about the Fellowship was an opportunity that promised both professional development and stability. It felt like a lifeline.

Walking into Drive Change that first week, everything felt foreign. Jahssiah had no prior culinary experience beyond watching his grandmother cook, yet he embraced the challenge. Learning in a professional kitchen, earning his Food Handler's license, and having structure in his life excited him. It wasn't just about cooking—it was about gaining skills that could shape his future.





### BUILDING SKILLS, BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Throughout the Fellowship, Jahssiah discovered the true power of transferable skills. The job market was tough, especially for young people like him. Drive Change helped him understand that soft skills—like adaptability, teamwork, and professionalism—were just as crucial as technical ones. He learned how to showcase his strengths in a way that made employers take notice. The ability to pivot, to apply what he learned in multiple career paths, became invaluable.

Mentorship played a major role in his journey. Every staff member at Drive Change served as a guide, offering advice, encouragement, and support. They weren't just authority figures—they were real people who cracked jokes, shared their own stories, and truly cared. When Jahssiah lost his cousin during the program, he experienced firsthand the depth of that support. His mentors and peers checked in on him, noticed when something felt off, and made sure he knew he wasn't alone. That sense of community became one of the most powerful aspects of his time at Drive Change.

### **GROWTH BEYOND THE KITCHEN**

The Fellowship wasn't just about job training-it was also about personal growth. Drive Change's focus on mental health and restorative justice helped Jahssiah navigate one of the toughest transitions of his life. As he faced uncertainty in school and the fear of losing his scholarship, Drive Change reminded him of his resilience. It also provided critical resources as an LGBTQ+ individual, including support in legally changing his gender on his ID-something that meant the world to him. The experience reaffirmed his belief in the power of programs that genuinely care about the whole person, not just their workforce readiness. The practical skills he gained in the kitcheneverything from knife techniques to understanding kitchen safety and workflow-translated seamlessly into the real world. At Drive Change, mistakes were learning opportunities rather than liabilities. That environment of encouragement built his confidence. preparing him for the realities of professional kitchens where precision and discipline are key.



### A FUTURE FUELED BY DRIVE CHANGE

Today, Jahssiah is proud to be working at Soul Bites, a job he landed through Drive Change. But his connection to the Fellowship didn't end there. As an alum, he continues to be involved, representing the organization and sharing his journey. The support never stopped—Drive Change continues to invest in him, just as he invested in himself during the Fellowship.

Reflecting on his journey, Jahssiah sees Drive Change as a rare kind of workforce program—one that doesn't just prepare people for employment but actively connects them to real jobs. Unlike other programs that offer internships without a clear path forward, Drive Change ensures that its Fellows are truly set up for success.

Most importantly, the experience shaped his perspective on leadership and community. He learned that leadership isn't always about being in the spotlight—it's about stepping up, taking initiative, and leading by example.

His advice to anyone considering the Fellowship? Lock in. Take it seriously. Show persistence, work hard, and Drive Change will meet you with the same energy. If you commit to the program, it will change your life.

# TYASIA'S STORY

# FROM DRIVE CHANGE TO A FUTURE OF POSSIBILITIES

Tyasia first learned about Drive Change through an email from another reentry organization. The Fellowship immediately caught her attention—she saw an opportunity to join a community of likeminded individuals and build hospitality skills that could open doors. She was eager to immerse herself in the experience and, from day one, she knew this program would challenge and shape her.

At first, the structure of Drive Change reminded her of high school. Discipline was key—early mornings, strict policies on lateness and language, and a strong emphasis on teamwork. But beyond the rules, there was a deeper connection. Despite coming from different places, she and the other fellows shared similar upbringings. That bond created a foundation of trust and support, making the experience even more meaningful.



# Tyasia at her sister Brianna's Drive Change graduation.

# LEARNING PATIENCE AND BUILDING CHARACTER

One of the most valuable lessons Tyasia feels she gained from Drive Change was patience—an essential skill in hospitality. The ability to create a welcoming experience for guests isn't just about serving food; it's about how you make people feel. Every interaction requires understanding, composure, and adaptability. She had the chance to develop these skills firsthand, not just through working with guests but also by teaching and learning from her peers. The program became a testing ground for growth—building patience, communication, and resilience in a way that extended far beyond the kitchen.

Some moments from the Fellowship left a lasting impression, especially working in teams to create recipes. The process of collaborating, experimenting, and cooking together became a core memory—one that brought joy, creativity, and a deep sense of accomplishment. The experience was so meaningful for Tyasia that she recommended it to her sister Brianna, who later joined Drive Change and graduated.

### THE POWER OF MENTORSHIP

For Tyasia, mentorship took many forms. Within Drive Change, she found guidance, but she also took it upon herself to support her peers, helping them through their struggles and celebrating their progress. That sense of mutual mentorship carried into her current role at Union Square Cafe, where seasoned colleagues continue to walk her through complex aspects of the restaurant industry. Their willingness to share knowledge and help her grow reinforces the idea that learning never stops, no matter how experienced you become.

Beyond technical skills, Drive Change also encouraged deep reflection on justice, restoration, and society. Healing circles and discussions about what people truly deserve in life reshaped the way Tyasia saw the world. Questions about whether individuals should be cast aside or given opportunities to rebuild were eye-opening. Those conversations still resonate with her today, influencing how she approaches both personal and professional relationships.



# A CAREER WITH ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

Tyasia takes immense pride in how far she's come-excelling in the Fellowship, thriving in her role at Union Square Cafe, and building a network that spans artists, musicians, and elected officials. Being surrounded by inspiring people has fueled her ambition. She's now looking for opportunities in the arts, planning to enter the bartending world, and working toward her ultimate goal of becoming an entrepreneur. With experience in hairstyling, hospitality, and art, she envisions starting her own business—one that allows her to blend creativity with the skills she's developed.

Drive Change wasn't just a workforce program; it was a launchpad. Unlike other organizations that provide training without clear pathways to employment. Drive Change integrates hands-on experience, industry connections, and holistic support. From team-based learning to real-world kitchen dynamics, the Fellowship prepared her in ways no other program had. It wasn't just about getting a job—it was about preparing for life.

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

Leadership and community have taken on new meaning for Tyasia. She's seen firsthand how underserved youth, often underestimated by society, can become strong, capable leaders. Sometimes, leadership means stepping up when a peer is struggling. Other times, it means simply being present, offering a listening ear, or setting an example through hard work. Community is just as important—being there for one another, lifting each other up, and recognizing that success is never a solo journey.

For those considering the Fellowship, her advice is clear: **Be ready to work. Be open to new experiences.**Keep an open mind and heart. The more effort you put in, the more you'll get out of it.

Looking toward the future, Tyasia dreams of traveling the world, moving into her own place, and turning her passion for art into a thriving business. She knows that Drive Change was just the first step. Today, she works in one of the most prestigious restaurants in New York City—a testament to what's possible when opportunity meets determination. And she wants future fellows to know that the same path is open to them. Drive Change is more than a program; it's a stepping stone to something greater.



### **CARE PROGRAM**

In 2024, Drive Change's Culinary Access & Relief Events (CARE) continued to serve as a powerful bridge between food justice, youth leadership, and community care. Held biweekly in the heart of Bed-Stuy, CARE provided free, culturally relevant groceries and prepared meals to over 5,000 families across 20 events throughout the year. These meals were not just prepared for the community—they were prepared by the community, led by justice-involved young adults participating in our Fellowship.

To better understand who CARE serves and how we can meet community needs with dignity and relevance, we conducted a participant survey in 2024.



### **Surveys revealed that**

55.7% identified as Asian24.3% identified as Hispanic18.6% identified as Black

71% female

44.3% over the age of 65

65.7% household income below \$30,000

While these data raised important questions, they also affirmed the value of accessible, culturally relevant food in a neighborhood facing overlapping barriers to health and economic security. In 2025, we look forward to leveraging our new CRM system to enhance data collection and further deepen our understanding of participant needs.



A highlight of 2024 was the continued growth of our volunteer network. From alumni and staff to local partners and neighborhood leaders, CARE became a collective effort grounded in dignity and solidarity. In addition to serving food, our staff, alumni, volunteers and Fellows held conversations, learned people's stories, and became visible examples of what leadership and transformation can look like.

Our final CARE event of the year, a holiday turkey giveaway, served 300 families with complete dinner kits, underscoring our commitment to joy, nourishment, and belonging.

As we look ahead, we carry with us the lessons of 2024: that nourishment is a right, not a privilege; that equity starts with listening; and that justice-involved youth are not only capable







Drive Change expanded our Hospitality for Social Justice (HSJ) network of employer partners in 2024, adding 17 new businesses committed to equitable workplace practices and providing opportunities for justice-involved young people. Key partnerships include Porchlight, The Meat Hook, Melba's, Shake Shack and Union Square Cafe, providing fellows with access to externship and long-term employment opportunities. Several fellows from Cohorts 12 and 13 secured job offers during their externship phase, reflecting the strength of these partnerships. Additionally, our CBO Open House was a pivotal event, bringing together over 20 organizations and further reinforcing Drive Change's position as a leader in workforce development.

### **OUR PARTNERS:**

- 2 Chix
- Bartleby & SageBKLYN Blend
- Bonnie's
- Caffe Panna
- Eat Offbeat
- Food As Content

- GaddyLane
  Grovehouse Hospitality
  Lakou Cafe
  Lighthouse BK
  Lost Borough Ice Cream

- Melba's
- Porchlight
- Safari
- Shake Shack
- Soul Bites
- Sweet Catch
- Sylvia Center
- The HatchThe Meat Hook
- The Marlow Collective
- Therapy Wine Bar 2.0Union Square Cafe



# **CATERED 10**

events throughout NYC, providing fellows hands-on, real-world entrepreneurial experience

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### **DC FOODS**

In 2024, Drive Change Foods deepened its role as a social enterprise, generating revenue and extending real-world culinary experience for alumni of our Fellowship program. Over the course of the year, alumni led ten small-scale catering events—including collaborations with The Laundromat Project, Brooklyn Org, and a high-profile CUNY ISLG event at The New School.

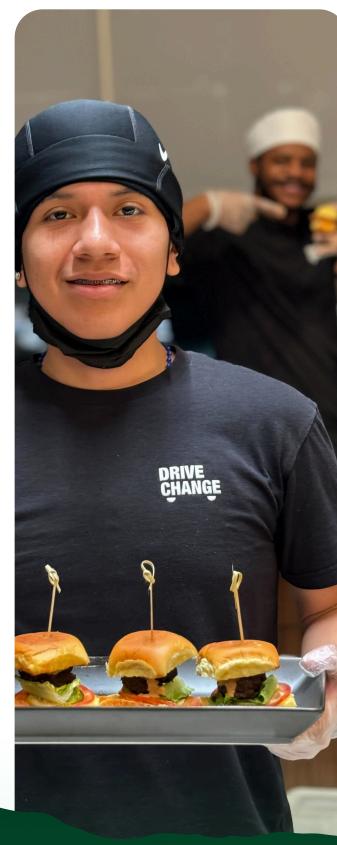
# These events served an average of 75 guests each and generated unrestricted income for the organization.

Current Fellows often worked alongside alumni, offering a valuable opportunity to observe alumni in leadership roles and apply their skills in a live, customer-facing environment.

To support future growth, we secured funding in 2024 for a fully equipped food truck and began readying our expanded commercial kitchen for full-scale operations. Our headquarters at 630 Flushing now offers dedicated kitchen access during non-Fellowship hours—including mornings, evenings, and weekends—and building management has formally requested that the truck operate on-site daily. This provides a unique opportunity to pilot consistent service with a built-in customer base, while building brand recognition and momentum for larger external events.

We also spent 2024 developing a new leadership position to help scale this work: Director of Social Enterprise & Initiatives. This role was designed thoughtfully to sit at the intersection of workforce development, business strategy, culinary arts, and social justice. We look forward to onboarding a new team member in 2025 to lead the continued growth and sustainability of DC Foods.

The year ahead will also bring the hiring of six Fellowship alumni into paid, full time culinary roles. These positions will provide alumni with consistent income and meaningful work, while building skills in leadership, customer service, food safety, and event execution. With this infrastructure in place, DC Foods is poised to grow into a self-sustaining arm of Drive Change—one that extends our impact beyond the Fellowship and models how social enterprise can create long-term opportunity for justice-involved young people.



# MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS





### Brooklyn Paper

### The Brooklyn Org awards \$100k to Spark Prize to five local nonprofits

By Gabriele Holtermann

Posted on March 6, 2024



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### Drive Change: Building a More Just Hospitality Sector

By Patrick Hart, Program Director, Aimee McPhail, Research Associate, and the Drive Change team and community

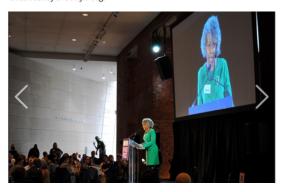


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### 2024 Spark Prize Honors Brooklyn's Equity Champions

Five Brooklyn organizations were given \$100,000 each at Tuesday's Spark Breakfast by Brooklyn Org.



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### news12

### Brooklyn organization awards 5 local causes spotlighting community injustice

A Brooklyn organization is handing out hefty prizes to five local organizations that are spotlighting racial and social injustices in the borough.



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### **SBNATION**

### Winning and Belonging: Liberty having success with both

Prior to the Olympic break, the New York Liberty held a special ceremony honoring four Brooklyn organizations dedicated to social



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### **DRIVE CHANGE: TRANSFORMING LIVES OF** FORMERLY INCARCERATED YOUTH IN NYC THROUGH CULINARY ARTS AND ADVOCACY

Drive Change, a nonprofit organization, is making substantial strides in the lives of formerly incarcerated young adults through its innovative programs.



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# **FINANCIALS**

## 2024 Revenue

**Foundations:** \$2,646,124

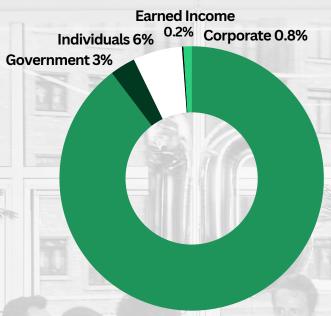
**Individuals:** \$177,638

**Government:** \$92,350

**Corporate:** \$25,000

**■ Earned Income:** \$5,540

**Total Revenue:** \$ 2,946,653



Foundations 90%

# **2024 Expenses**

Fellowship: \$1,116,393

● Hospitality for Social Justice: \$310,795

**CARE:** \$284,051

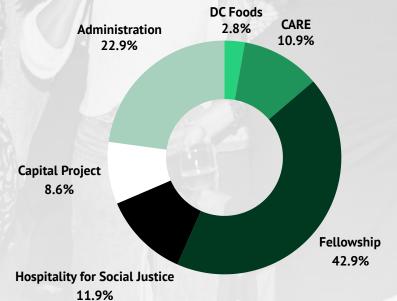
**DC Foods:** \$73,525

Administration: \$595,192

Capital Project: \$223,684

Carry-Over: \$343,012

**Total Expenses:** \$ 2,946,653



### **OUR SUPPORTERS:** \$5,000+

- Brooklyn Org Spark Prize
  Cabbage Hill Farm Foundation
  Carson Family Charitable Trust
  CD&R Foundation
  Con Edison

- Mother Cabrini Health Foundation
- Mother Cabrini Health Foundation
  NBA Foundation
  New York Urban League Communities of Color Nonprofit
  Stabilization Fund
  New York Women's Foundation
  Office of Council Member Chi Ossé
  Pinkerton Foundation
  Regenerational Roots Foundation
  Richard LaPerch
  Robin Hood Foundation
  Scarlet Feather Fund
  Sills Family Foundation
  Sloan Foundation
  Social Justice Fund
  South Wind Foundation
  Summerfield Foundation
  Trinity Church Wall Street
  Union Square Cafe All In Event



Imagine Moving

Winner



# THANK YOU

**2024 ANNUAL REPORT** 

