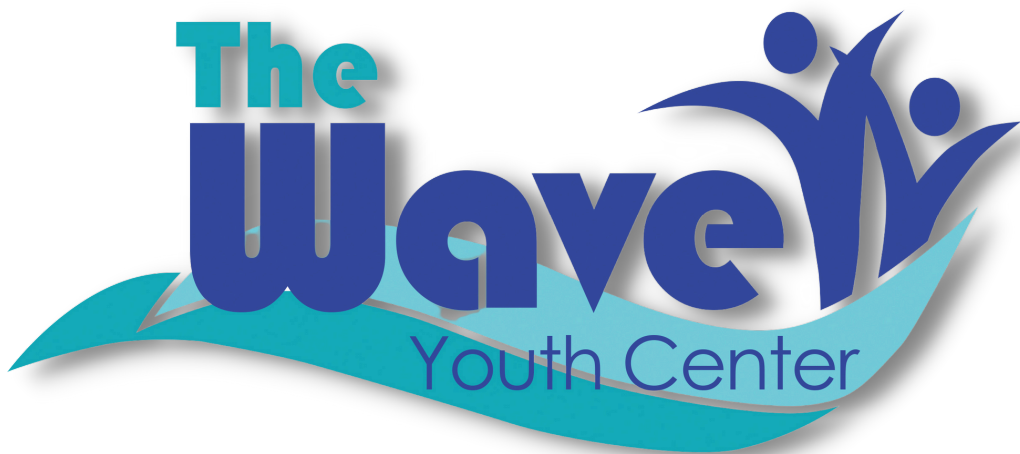


Annual Impact Report

# The Wave Youth Center

2023



#makingwaves

# A Note From Our Founder



## Message from the Founder: 2023 Reflections and Looking Ahead

As I reflect on 2023, it's evident that this year has been both rewarding and challenging for The Wave Youth Center. We've seen tremendous growth in our programs and impact, but we've also encountered obstacles that tested our resilience.

Fundraising presented notable challenges this year. Some of our traditional events didn't generate the expected support, prompting us to rethink our approach. We've started exploring new revenue streams and implemented several low-effort fundraisers to ensure we're good stewards of our donations while maintaining financial support. These changes are promising, but we know that increasing funding is critical to keep pace with our growing programs and to continue meeting the needs of our students.

Our plans for a new, state-of-the-art facility are currently paused. While we've been awarded a \$1.8 million Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) grant, it takes time for the government processes to move forward. We remain committed to this project and look forward to breaking ground once everything is in place.

Expanding our mental health services has been crucial this year as we've seen an increasing demand for support among our students. Our on-site licensed mental health professional has played a vital role, facilitating group discussions and offering emotional support to those in need. Moving forward, we hope to expand these services to better address the mental health challenges our youth are facing.

Despite these hurdles, I am deeply grateful for the steadfast support of Sherburne County, community organizations, and our collaborative partners. Their backing has been invaluable in helping us continue to serve the youth in our community, and they remain key to our mission.

Looking ahead, increasing funding remains an urgent priority. We have ambitious goals for the future—expanding our programs, building our new facility, and continuing to offer essential mental health services. With the ongoing support of our community, partners, and donors, I am confident that we will overcome these challenges and continue to create a brighter future for the youth of Big Lake and Sherburne County.

Thank you for standing with us on this journey.

*Molly Schroeder*

President



## Our Mission

The mission of **The Wave Youth Center** is to be a safe and welcoming place that can meet the needs of the body, mind, and spirit of the youth in our community.

## Our Vision

Through partnerships with the community The Wave works towards their vision in the community by offering support and mentoring for academic, vocational, social, and life skills.

## Our Strategic Goals

- Deepen our impact through the continued development of innovative programs
- Develop Mentor recruitment strategies and training
- Train and equip our staff to support our students through all the diverse lived experiences they experience
- To increase our corporate sponsorships
- Continue to develop revenue streams

## Our Social Impact

Our social impact goals are triple-fold

- To give all youth in our community a safe and inclusive space where they feel welcome, appreciated, and respected
- To empower our youth with life and social skills to live well and thrive
- To instill the importance of community and create this and future generations of good neighbors and engaged community members.



# Programs



## Mentoring

The Wave's Mentoring Program fosters resilience, self-confidence, and equips youth with essential tools to navigate life's challenges. A key component of building resilience is having caring and supportive relationships, and we are committed to creating these through both adult-to-youth and peer-to-peer mentoring.

Our Program Assistants play a crucial role in this, focusing on mentoring and building meaningful connections with the youth. They receive training in relational skills, healthy boundaries, and conflict resolution. In addition to our staff, we provide community mentors who actively engage and build relationships with the youth, offering consistent, positive adult interactions.

The Mentoring Program supports mental health, academic achievement, vocational exploration, and the development of critical life, leadership, and social skills. A highlight this year was our partnership with Legacy 2 Inspire. Each week during the school year, they brought their mobile workshop to The Wave, allowing youth to work on hands-on projects alongside positive adult mentors. This simple yet powerful interaction strengthens connections and provides valuable mentoring experiences for our students.



## Good Neighbor & Community Steward

The Wave's Good Neighbor & Community Stewardship Program is designed to foster a sense of belonging, acceptance, and value among our middle and high school students. By providing a safe and supportive environment where youth feel heard and respected, we aim to instill the importance of community in our participants.

Our goal is to build a strong, interconnected community by bringing together youth and adult members to engage and support one another. Through various activities and events, we create opportunities for youth to learn about their community and actively participate in it.

One of our key initiatives is "Community Days", where community leaders engage with our students through presentations, Q&A forums, and interactive activities that showcase local businesses and organizations. These events help youth understand how they can get involved and contribute to the community.

# Programs Continued

## Good Neighbor & Community Steward Cont.

Another important element of the program is “Workforce Wednesdays”, where students explore different vocations and businesses in the area. Throughout the year, our students also took part in:

- Volunteering at Spud Fest, fostering a sense of giving back to the community.
- Field trips to local businesses to develop social skills and model positive community interactions.
- Leadership development through various initiatives, encouraging students to take on active roles.
- Trips to the Sherburne National Wildlife Sanctuary, where students learned from a naturalist and explored the sanctuary with a scavenger hunt app, thanks to the Becker-Big Lake Knights of Columbus.
- Hosting BINGO at Keller Lake Commons and organizing social events for senior neighbors, such as crafting and a pie and ice cream social, again supported by the Becker-Big Lake Knights of Columbus.
- These activities help our youth build connections, develop leadership skills, and experience the power of community involvement firsthand.

## Mental Health & Well-Being



Our Mental Health & Well-Being Program, an extension of our Mentoring Program, takes a holistic approach to supporting students by offering activities and programming that help them feel valued and understood. We focus on teaching principles of self-care, proper nutrition, and establishing healthy boundaries in relationships.

Recognizing the increasing mental health needs of our students, we expanded the program to include two licensed counselors, who now visit twice per week. While we cannot provide one-on-one counseling, our in-house clinicians facilitate meaningful group discussions and teach essential mental health and well-being lessons that many students would not otherwise have access to. Our clinicians connect with youth in unique and engaging ways, ensuring they feel supported and heard.

Additionally, we are proud to partner with the Big Lake Community Food Shelf, which helps us provide healthy snacks for students and, in some cases, groceries to take home to their families.

Some key highlights from this past year include:

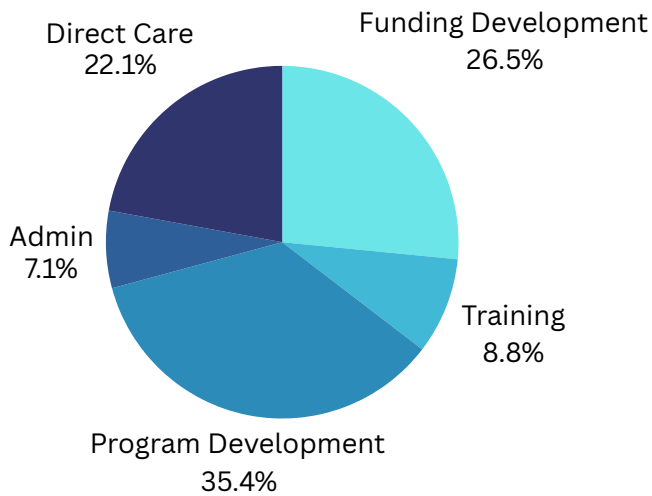
A Public Health Nurse offering lessons on nutrition, healthy boundaries, relationships, self-care, and sex education.

Monthly discussions on mental health topics chosen by students, such as making and maintaining friendships, managing anxiety, setting boundaries, and navigating difficult conversations with parents.

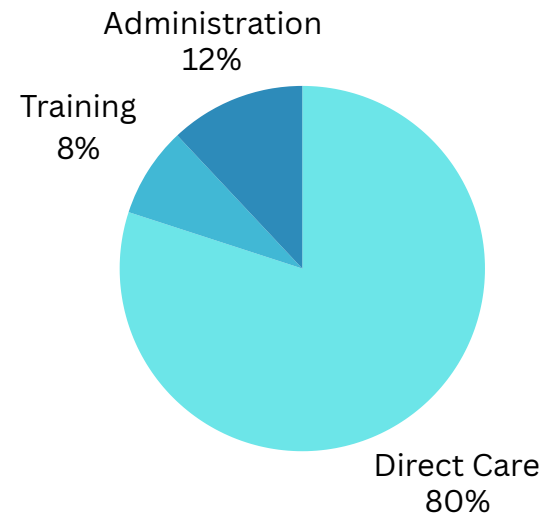
A student panel where participants examine common situations they encounter and provide insight into their perspectives and thought processes.

## How We Spend Our Time

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



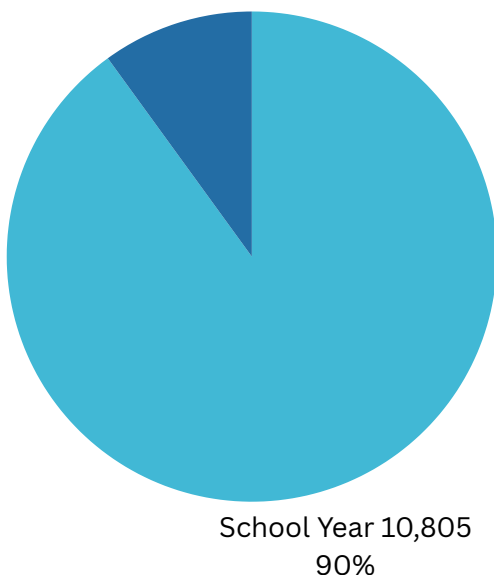
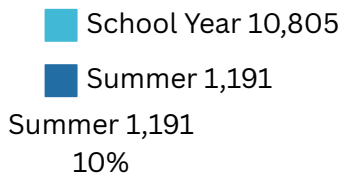
### PROGRAM MENTORS



## Student Numbers

### Individual Visits

**97% of students report improved mood when leaving The Wave for the day!**



### Training

**All our staff have completed or working towards certification in The Art & Science of Youth Work program. Additionally, over 15 hours of youth development training of their choice.**

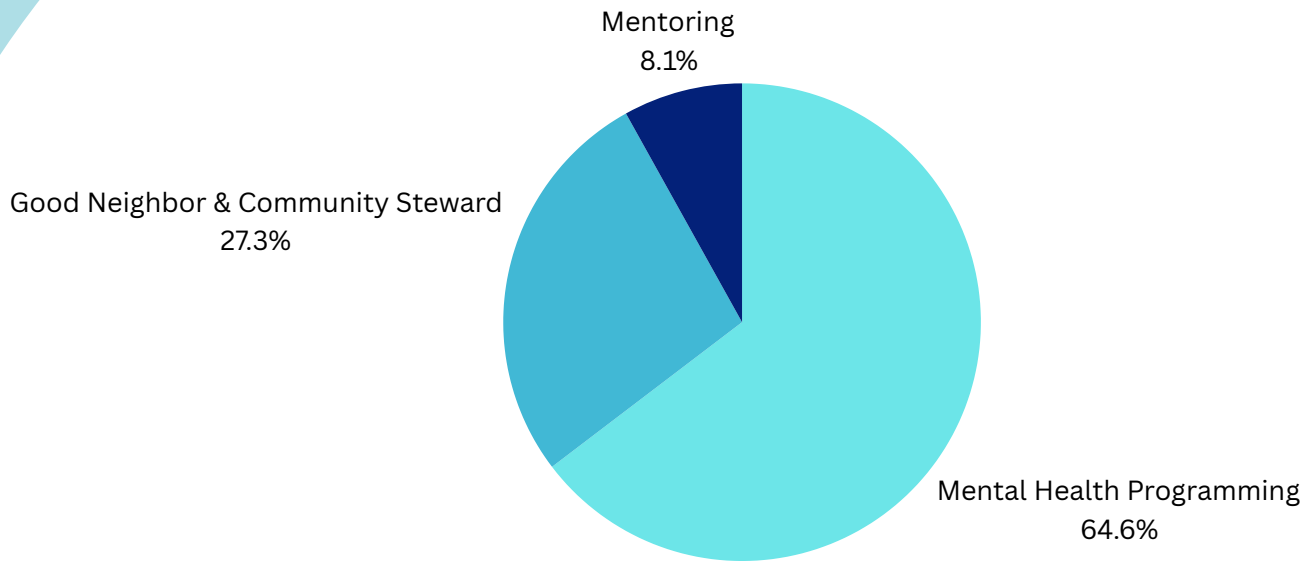
#### Training this year includes:

- Boundaries
- Trauma Informed Care
- Current mental health trends
- Youth Culture
- Suicide Prevention
- Child and Adolescent Development
- Developing Young Leaders



# Finances

## How Your Programming Donations are Spent



## Donations in 2023

In 2023 we received **\$128,594** in general donations, grants and contributions.

In 2023 it cost **\$162,110** to run The Wave Youth Center.

## Community Partners

We are grateful for our community partners; without them, we could not support, mentor, and enrich the students' lives in our community.

Our Community Partners have donated over **4,331** hours of their time and services valued at **\$190,478.49!**

This year we received **3651** pounds of food from the Big Lake Community Food Shelf for our students!

This year we received In-Kind donations of items valued at **\$7,381.80!**



# #MakingWaves

## C.T.

"I come to The Wave because it is a safe place to go whenever I need to get away, and have a welcoming community to go to. It is a place to get to know others better and process my thoughts."

## Brian

"I come to The Wave because it's like a second home to me. Here, I can be myself without any judgments. The staff are like my 'other' family, always ready to listen. I can talk to them about things I can't at home. Plus, there are so many cool activities and programs to get involved in, from art to games and tournaments. It's a place where I feel safe, and accepted, and where I can make new friends."

## K.H.

"I come to The Wave almost every day! And, it's the best place to be after a hard day at school or just anywhere! The workers there are so open and caring! And, they are make you happy and do fun activities with you! They are so nice, and its a good place to socialize and make new friends.They helped me fix my friendships when we have a fight too."

## H.S.

"At The Wave, I feel loved and accepted for who I am. The staff are so kind, and we get to do a lot of cool things. I especially loved the community adventures we did in the summer—it was awesome to be a part of it all!"

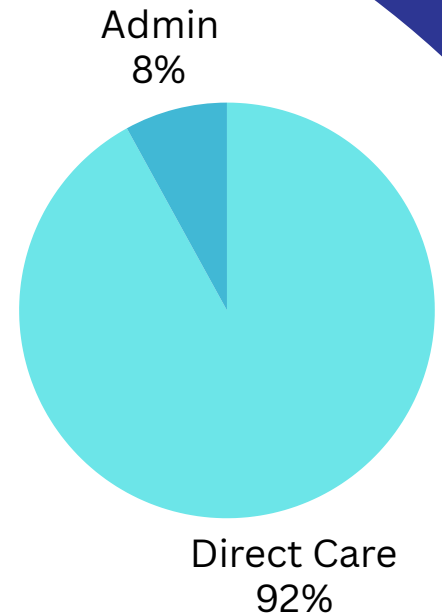






## Volunteers

1,303 Hours by our humans  
364 hours by our therapy dogs



### Heather Michels

"My reason for wanting to volunteer at The Wave is a deeply personal one. Middle school and high school can be a challenging time for kids. I had a really difficult time navigating through this time in my life and would have benefited from a program like The Wave in my community when I was growing up. I wanted to volunteer to be a positive role model for the kids, be a listening ear, a safe adult person to go to for advice, or a calming/fun presence to do arts and crafts with. Having a presence like that in my life as a kid would have been so incredibly helpful that I hope I can be that type of person for them in their lives."



## "Get Involved

If you would like to share your time and talents with the youth please contact molly at [molly@thewaveyc.org](mailto:molly@thewaveyc.org) Your heart will be full and you will make a difference!



## Board of Directors

**Molly Schroeder**  
**President/Founder**  
Consultant

**Kristi McAlpin**  
**Vice President**  
Co-Owner Big Lake Area  
Veterinary Hospital

**Kate Loso**  
**Treasurer**  
Software Development

**Kyle Sidlo**  
**Secretary**  
Pastor-Saron Lutheran Big Lake

**Molly Feit**  
**Financial Oversight**  
Business Owner

**Mandi Sabourin**  
**Executive Board Member**  
Business Owner & Accountant

**Linda Schell**  
**Board Member**  
Senior Project Manager

**Clayton Schroeder**  
**Board Member**  
Business Owner  
Community member

**Raeanne Danielowski**  
**Board Member**  
Big Lake Sherburne County  
Commissioner

**Derek Wieber**  
**Board Member**  
Manufacturing

**Kristina Bruggeman-Maag**  
**Board Member**  
Sherburne County  
Social Worker

**Holly Baker**  
**Board Member**  
Business Owner

**Connie Stegora**  
**Board Member**  
Realtor

**Krystal Gleason**  
**Board Member**  
Parent/Community Member

**James Pionk**  
**Board Member**  
Community Member

**Youth  
Liaison**

Lily

