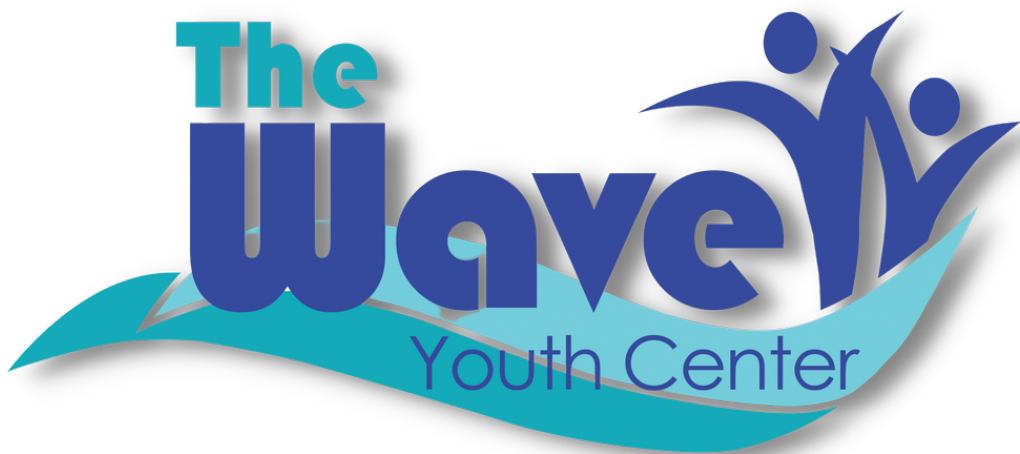


Annual Impact Report

The Wave Youth Center

2024



#makingwaves

A Note From Our Founder



Message from the Founder: A Year of Growth, Connection, and Momentum

When I look back at 2024, what stands out most is how much The Wave continues to grow while still being the same place we set out to create five years ago. More students are walking through our doors, and they keep coming back because they know they have a place where they belong, where adults know their names, and where they can simply be themselves.

Every day looks a little different at The Wave. Sometimes students need help with homework or someone to talk to. Sometimes they just need to laugh with friends, play a game or have a safe place to spend a few hours. We continued to build on that throughout 2024 with programs like Workforce Wednesday, Community Days, mental health support and opportunities for students to get involved in their community.

Summer continues to be especially important. For many young people, summer means fewer routines, fewer connections to trusted adults and a lot more time alone. We were able to give students a place to come, spend time with friends, try something new and stay connected.

We also made significant progress toward the future home of The Wave. The \$1.8 million Congressionally Directed Spending award moved us another important step forward, while much of the year was spent working through design, planning and funding for the project. We know this building is about much more than having additional space. It is about creating something that will serve young people and families in our community for many years to come.

This year also marked five years of The Wave. When we started, we knew young people needed a place like this, but I don't think any of us could have fully imagined what The Wave would become. None of it happens without the volunteers, donors, community partners, board members and so many others who continue to show up for our kids.

There is still a lot of work ahead of us, and the need isn't getting smaller. But neither is our commitment.

Thank you for believing in The Wave and, most importantly, for believing in our young people.

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
- 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 is at the core of everything we do, creating consistent, supportive relationships that help youth build resilience, confidence, and a stronger sense of self. We intentionally foster both adult-to-youth and peer-to-peer connections, recognizing that meaningful relationships are one of the most important factors in helping young people navigate life's challenges.

Our Program Assistants play a critical role in this work, focusing on building trust, modeling healthy boundaries, and guiding youth through everyday situations. In addition, community mentors provide consistent, positive adult interaction—offering encouragement, perspective, and support that extends beyond a single moment.

Through these relationships, youth are supported not only in their mental health, but also in academic growth, vocational exploration, and the development of essential life, leadership, and social skills.

These relationships are what make The Wave more than a program—they are what make it a place where youth feel they truly belong.



Good Neighbor & Community Steward

The Good Neighbor & Community Stewardship Program helps youth see themselves as valued members of their community while building a sense of belonging, responsibility, and connection.

Through this program, students engage directly with local organizations, businesses, and community leaders, gaining a better understanding of how their community functions and where they can contribute. Initiatives like Community Days provide opportunities for students to ask questions, explore different roles, and build meaningful connections.

These experiences help students develop confidence, social skills, and a sense of purpose, while strengthening the relationships that make a community thrive.

Programs Continued

Mental Health & Well-Being



The Wave's Mental Health & Well-Being Program takes a relational, accessible approach to supporting youth—meeting them where they are and creating space for open conversation, learning, and connection.

As the needs of our students continued to grow, we maintained access to on-site mental health support, with two licensed counselors regularly connecting with students at The Wave. While we do not provide one-on-one therapy, our model focuses on group discussions, real-life skill-building, and creating an environment where students feel comfortable asking questions and sharing their experiences.

Throughout the year, students engaged in conversations around topics most relevant to their lives, including managing anxiety, building friendships, setting healthy boundaries, and navigating difficult conversations. Additional support through partnerships and educational sessions helps reinforce these skills.

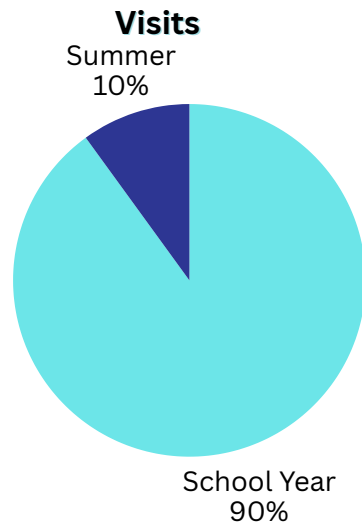
By combining consistent relationships, accessible education, and a supportive environment, we are helping youth build the confidence and tools they need to navigate challenges both now and in the future.

2024 Program Highlights

- Ongoing focus on mental health and well-being, including group discussions and life-skill development
- Partnership with a Public Health Nurse providing education on relationships, boundaries, self-care, and overall wellness
- Over 5,354 pounds of food provided through partnership with the local food shelf
- Workforce exploration opportunities, introducing youth to career pathways and real-world experiences
- Monthly Community Days, connecting students with local organizations, businesses, and community leaders
- Community service opportunities, including participation in events like Spud Fest
- Intergenerational connection through activities with senior community members
- Community Adventure Days, creating opportunities for connection and belonging during the summer
- Continued emphasis on mentoring and relationship-building, ensuring every student is known and supported

Student Impact & Program Reach

More Youth. Deeper Impact.

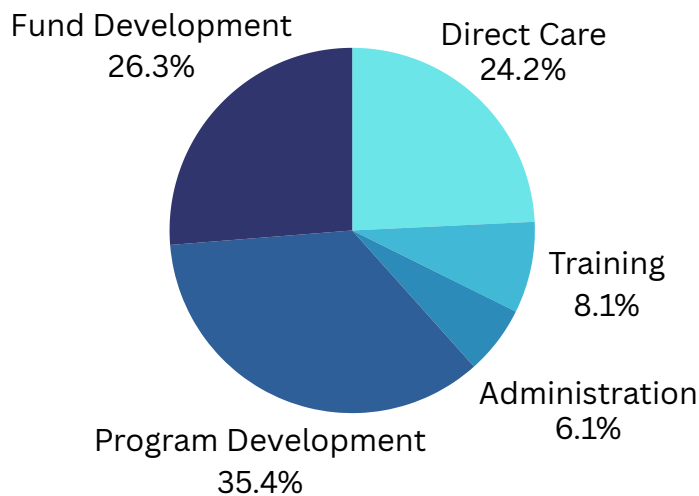


97% of students report leaving The Wave in a better mood than when they arrived. This number has remained remarkably consistent year after year.

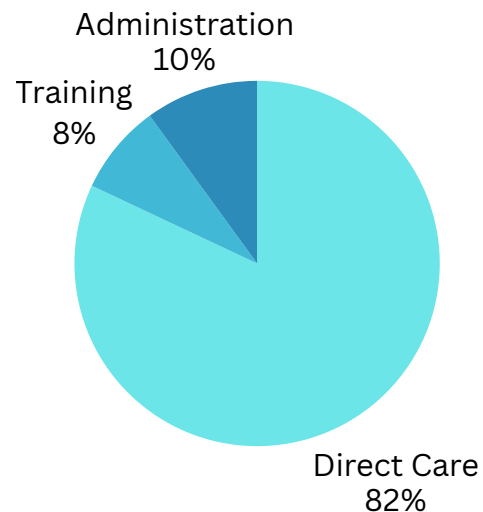
Daily check-in data shows the impact of a safe, consistent, relationship-centered environment.

Student visits increased by nearly 3% in 2024, to 12,356 visits reflecting growing engagement and trust among youth in our community.

Executive Director



Program Mentors Focus



As participation continues to grow, more staff time is dedicated to direct engagement with youth—ensuring every student who walks through our doors is known and supported.

Training

All staff have completed or are working toward certification in The Art & Science of Youth Work program, along with ongoing training in areas such as:

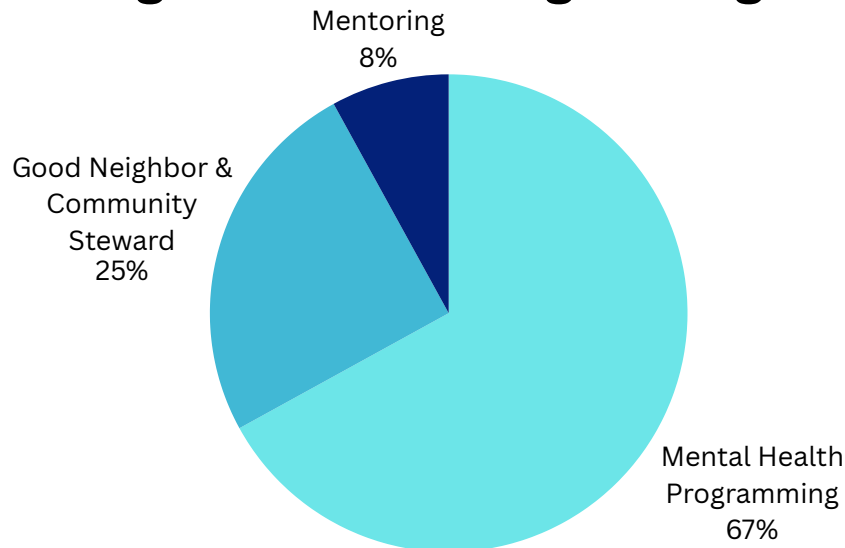
Boundaries, Trauma Informed Care, Current mental health trends, Youth Culture, Suicide Prevention, Child and Adolescent Development, and Developing Young Leaders

We prioritize ongoing learning to ensure every student is supported with care, consistency, and best practices in youth development.



Finances

Investing in Youth. Strengthening Community.



Donations in 2024

In 2024 we received **\$148,409** in general donations, grants and contributions.

In 2024 it cost **\$140,719** to run The Wave Youth Center.

The majority of our resources are directed toward programming—ensuring that funding is used where it matters most: building relationships, supporting mental health, and creating opportunities for youth to grow and thrive.

Community Partners

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

In 2024, over **1,350 hours** were invested by board members and volunteers—representing more than **\$43,000** in time and expertise dedicated to supporting youth in our community.

This year we received **5,354** pounds of food from the Big Lake Community Food Shelf for our students!

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

