COMMUNITY MATTERS

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A Place to Belong

IMPACT REPORT
JULY 1, 2024 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2025

Introduction

A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Dear friends,

This past year reminded us how much it matters to remain steady in the face of uncertainty.

As rising costs and increasing unpredictability in work, expenses, and daily life continued to shape many families' experiences, neighbors walked through the doors of Community Matters knowing they would be met with care, dignity, and support. Together, we made sure food, resources, connection, and opportunity remained accessible—not just in moments of crisis, but week after week, season after season. That consistency is only possible because of your partnership.

This year made it especially clear that impact is not only about responding in hard moments, but about building a foundation that lasts for future generations.

As Community Matters has grown, our work has become deeper and more interconnected. Our programs are strong, our partnerships are trusted, and our role in the neighborhood continues to expand. With that growth comes a responsibility to ensure the systems, people, and leadership holding this work are supported with the same care we offer our neighbors.

Over the past year, our board and leadership team have focused not only on outcomes, but on what sustains them. We are committed to doing this work well and responsibly as we steward growth in a way that protects the relational, neighbor-centered approach at the heart of Community Matters.

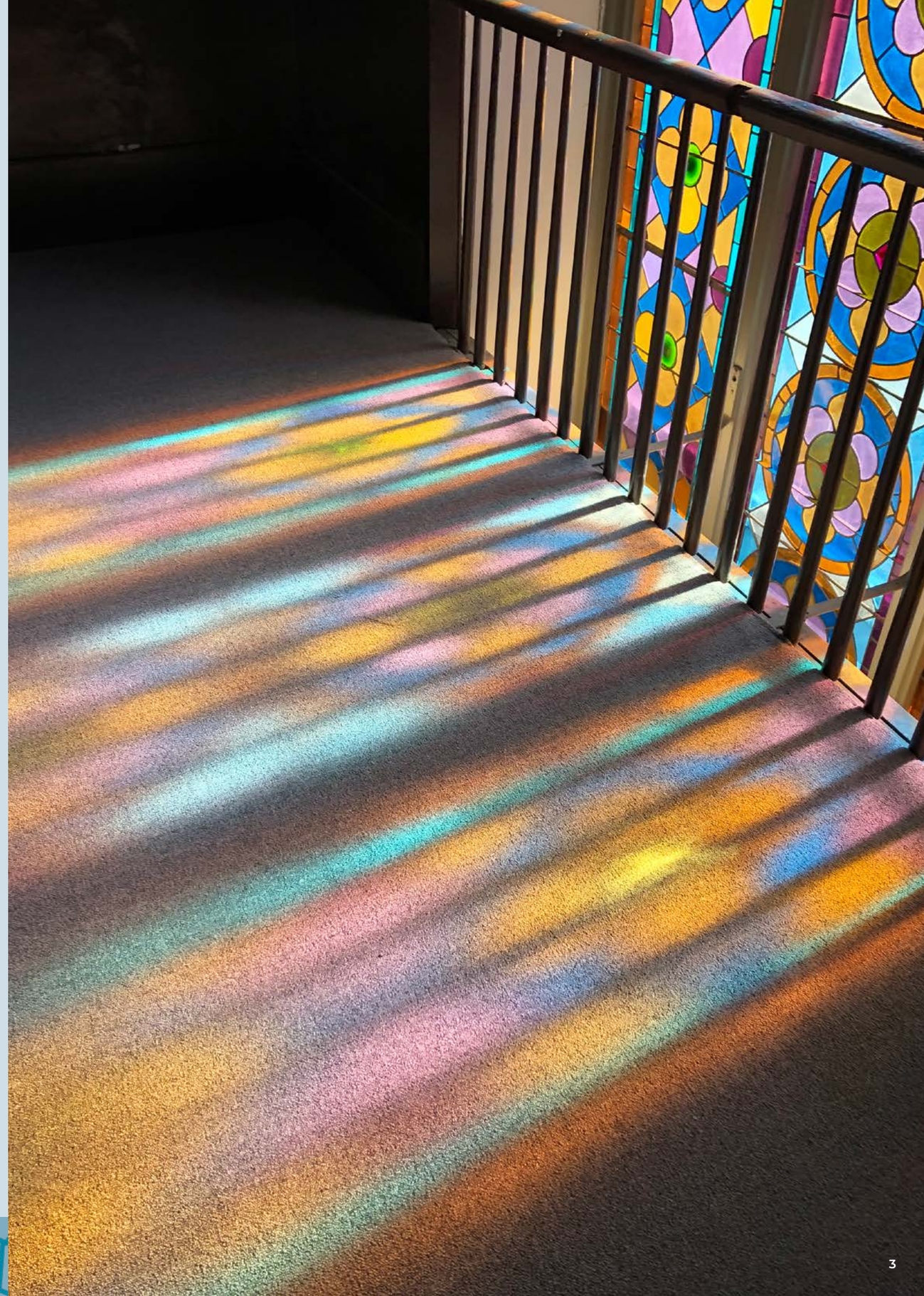
This annual report reflects both the impact made possible by your generosity and an important moment of preparation for the future. It tells the story of a community that continues to show up for one another and an organization that is being intentional about what it takes to remain strong, responsive, and built to last.

Thank you for standing with us. Your support allows Community Matters to meet today's needs while thoughtfully preparing for what comes next. We are grateful for your trust and look forward to continuing this work together.

With appreciation,

Mary Delaney
Executive Director

Jai'La Nored
Board Chair



Essential Resources

CONNECTING NEIGHBORS TO CONSISTENT SUPPORT

The Job and Family Services on-hold music is the soundtrack of Tracy Gulleman's workday. One of her most common tasks as a social worker is helping neighbors apply for and manage food and medical benefits, so she spends a lot of time each week calling—and waiting to speak with—JFS representatives.

"I can get a lot done while this is on in the background," she said with a chuckle, as music echoed from the speaker of her cell phone.

Which is good, because those calls are just one part of the daily work happening inside the Opportunity Hub, where neighbors come for help connecting to critical resources and navigating complex systems.

Some arrive looking for food. Last year, **more than 500 families shopped in the Community Market choice pantry**, selecting groceries that fit their household's needs and tastes. Through a partnership with Sweet Cheeks Diaper Bank, **Community Matters also distributed about 8,500 diapers to local families.**

Others need help accessing resources around the city. **Nearly 1,000 Metro bus passes helped residents travel to work, classes, and appointments.** When needed, staff also drive neighbors to doctor's visits, court appearances, and other important commitments.

For many families, the challenges run deeper. Tracy and her colleagues, LaMonica and Cicely, often work alongside neighbors to secure housing, recover important documents like birth certificates and identification cards, apply for disability benefits, or stabilize rent and utilities.

Every situation looks different. But the starting point is often the same—walking through the doors of the Opportunity Hub. Inside, there's hot coffee, a place to sit, and a friendly face ready to help untangle whatever challenge a neighbor is facing that day.

Sometimes, a visit to the Opportunity Hub also becomes the first step toward something more—helping neighbors find their voice and shape the future of Lower Price Hill.

FAMILIES CONNECTED WITH THE OPPORTUNITY HUB MORE THAN 3,800 TIMES.

Trusted Relationships

ELEVATING THE IDEAS OF OUR NEIGHBORS

Mill Creek Corridor Development
Chris has lived in Lower Price Hill for nearly 40 years. He is always helping out, from construction projects in the community garden to shoveling snow off sidewalks. He also spends time fishing along the Mill Creek.

So when a group approached the neighborhood with plans to revitalize the Mill Creek area, Chris decided to join the conversation—even though he normally doesn't get too involved in development projects.

He brought valuable insights about how neighbors access the Mill Creek and what improvements could make fishing there more accessible. His advocacy around the future of the creek has connected him with other neighborhood leaders and created opportunities to share his love of fishing with others in the community.

LPH Community Gardens
Like Chris, Lemuel has connected with his neighbors by stepping into a leadership role. Lem is an incredible gardener, and his time in the LPH Community Gardens has led to his unofficial role as a garden guru for gardeners across the neighborhood. He is also a thoughtful steward of the Sassafras and Victory community gardens, helping ensure that everyone feels welcome there.

Lem's expertise allows him to lead workshops where neighbors learn how to use plants from the garden for healing, including tinctures and teas. His leadership has not only created a place where plants can grow, but where relationships among neighbors flourish as well.

Relying solely on outside "experts" to guide projects like the Mill Creek or community gardens would miss the crucial insight that neighbors bring to these spaces.

Chris and Lem are two of many leaders in Lower Price Hill who show that when a community invests in the passions and talents of its residents, everyone benefits. And often, that leadership begins in the shared spaces where neighbors gather, learn from one another, and work side by side.

63 NEIGHBORS CAME TOGETHER TO LEAD OR INFORM INITIATIVES THAT IMPROVED THEIR COMMUNITY LAST YEAR.

Welcoming Spaces

INVESTING IN THE PLACES THAT BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER

Strong neighborhoods are built on more than programs. They are built on places where neighbors gather, solve problems, celebrate milestones, and build relationships that carry them through difficult seasons.

In Lower Price Hill, access to welcoming, well-maintained community spaces has not always been a given. Over the years, Community Matters has invested in developing and managing physical spaces that meet practical needs (like laundry access) while also strengthening the social fabric of the neighborhood.

These spaces have become an essential part of the social infrastructure, the foundation that allows both families and community life to flourish.

Each of these investments began with a clear, practical purpose. Over time, each has become something more relational and community-driven. Together, they form a network of spaces where neighbors can access basic needs, develop leadership, and celebrate life's most meaningful moments.

This is the quiet work of building social infrastructure. When families have places to gather and connect, resilience grows. When residents have welcoming spaces to lead and create, ownership deepens. When a neighborhood has room for both problem-solving and celebration, it becomes stronger from within.

In Lower Price Hill, these spaces are not just buildings. They are investments in belonging, and they help hold us firmly together.

HIGHLIGHTS

Washing Well
The Washing Well began with a simple goal—to ensure families have reliable access to clean, affordable laundry. Yet, as the doors opened, something deeper began to unfold. Neighbors lingered. Deeper conversations started over the folding tables. Children played while parents shared coffee. Staff were able to connect families to opportunities beyond the walls of the laundromat.

What began as a laundromat quickly became a trusted third space. Not home and not work, but instead, a place of belonging.

Over the past year, the Washing Well helped strengthen both household stability and neighbor-to-neighbor connection for 798 families in our community.

Outerspace
A similar evolution has shaped Outerspace. Originally envisioned as a small arts gallery, the space has grown into a multi-use hub for creative expression and community leadership. Art Club, Neighborhood Action Team, the Lower Price Hill Community Council, and other creative, educational, and community organizing events now fill the weekly calendar.

The walls still display local artwork, but the deeper transformation happens in the relationships built there. Outerspace provides room for residents to gather ideas, build confidence, and lead initiatives that reflect their priorities. The space itself invites participation.

Outerspace hosted nearly 1,000 neighbors and guests through a broad range of events last year.

Leadership

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers
Jai'La Nored, Chair
Council on Aging of Southwest Ohio

Matt Strange, Vice Chair
The Christ Hospital

Doug Cushman, Treasurer
EY

Matt Good, Secretary
U.S. Bank

Directors
Brian Borcherding
Messer Construction

Caitlin Behle
Independent Strategist & Facilitator

Eric Braun
Fifth Third Bank

Jim Daffin
Realize Wealth Management

Marisha Davis
Williemeania's Treats

Jennifer Fishwick
PEOPLEfirst Talent & Retention

Terence Harrison
University of Cincinnati

Neil Kelly
Hamilton Co. Job & Family Services

Kai Lewars
Kaiker Development + Construction

Basette Smith II
The Empower Group

Rossana Stettler
The Cincinnati Insurance Companies

STAFF

Leadership Team
Mary Delaney
Executive Director

Emily Eskridge
Chief Financial Officer

Patty Lee
Chief Advancement Officer

Jenna Hippensteel
Chief Operations Officer

Erica Ninneman
Chief Learning Officer

Core Team
Felicia Dowdy
Laundry Attendant

Sarah Groeschen
Lead Instructor

Tracy Gulleman
Community Social Worker

Patty Heideman
Childcare Provider

Alicia Hildebrand
Lead Community Organizer

Hannah Hippensteel
Instructor

Cicely Johnson
Community Navigator

Scott Priestle
Advancement Officer

LaMonica Sherman
Community Social Worker

Lissette Robinson-Young
Instructor

Brandon Thomas
Laundry Attendant

Kimmi Thomas
Programs Assistant

Financial Data

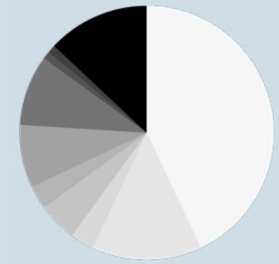
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Audited financial data is reported from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2024. Revenue does not reflect funds received in or carried forward from prior years.

Revenue	
Contributions	$1,154,221
Rental Income	$91,376
Special Events	$58,503
Program Revenue	$146,297
Government Grants	$168,790
Interest Income	$21,846
Other Income	$18,088
In-Kind Gifts	$255,425
Total Revenue	**$1,914,546**
Expenses	
Programs	$1,676,859
Management	$46,010
Fundraising	$123,626
Total Expenses	**$1,846,495**

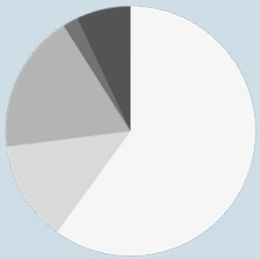
SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Contributions	
Foundations	43%
Corporate	14%
Individuals	3%
Rental Income	5%
Special Events	3%
Program Revenue	8%
Government Grants	9%
Interest Income	1%
Other Income	1%
In-Kind Gifts	13%



USES OF SUPPORT

Resources	60%
Relationships	13%
Spaces	18%
Management & Operations	2%
Fundraising	7%



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STAY CONNECTED

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