



Akron
Urban League

*Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.*



Annual Report 2023



ON OUR COVER: Global Ties Akron visits Akron Urban League

Visitors from 17 countries (Australia, Canada, Egypt, France, Hong Kong S.A.R., Israel, Malaysia, Mauritius, Montenegro, Nepal, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, United Kingdom) came for a diversity discussion with our Young Adult Council members. YAC would like to thank Michelle Wilson, Executive Director of Global Ties Akron, for engaging us in this important discussion.

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OUR WHY

Mission

The mission of the Akron Urban League is to improve the quality of life of the citizens of Summit County, particularly African-Americans, through economic self-reliance and social empowerment.

Vision

Our vision is to become the anchor of collaborative services known for transforming and repositioning Summit County citizens. We strive to pull individuals and families out of generational poverty and into self-sufficiency and economic independence.

Core Values

PURPOSE - To fulfill our mission by working together with determination, intention, and perseverance in pursuit of excellence. Our objective is to serve with the common goal of uniting and lifting the Greater Akron community.

COLLABORATION - We work through local, state, federal, and private partnerships to achieve excellence and bring transformational programs to Summit County.

COMPASSION AND RESPECT - As ambassadors of our community, our role is to lead, listen and respond to people's experiences with kindness. Simultaneously, we eagerly share how our programs can help achieve economic self-sufficiency through employment, entrepreneurship, wealth-building, education, and community outreach.



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Dear Valued Supporters and Community Members,

As we embark on our 100th year Centennial, it is a fitting time to reflect on the profound impact we have made. The Akron Urban League remains dedicated to delivering programming that not only empowers individuals through education, but also paves the way toward economic self-reliance through employment and entrepreneurship. We remain steadfast in our commitment to advocacy, activism, and social empowerment in the face of renewed threats to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In the last year, we have also intensified our efforts to support the reentry population, recognizing the importance of providing opportunities for individuals seeking to reintegrate into society. Additionally, we have taken significant steps toward bridging the digital divide and reducing the recidivism rate, understanding the crucial role technology plays in today's world.

I want to thank our many community partners; your support and collaboration have and will continue to be vital as we confront the issues that face our community. As we chart our course into the future, I am confident that together, we can continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals throughout Greater Akron and beyond.

Even though I retired on April 1st, please know that it has been my distinct honor to lead such a dynamic organization and team that is truly mission-driven and dedicated to making a difference in the lives of those we serve. Their passion and commitment are unparalleled, and it is through their hard work and dedication that we can achieve our goals and positively impact the community as illustrated in this annual report, as we continue the fight to eradicate racism and bigotry and encourage inclusion and equality in all spaces for ALL people.

YOUR Akron Urban League fights for you and will continue to do our part to improve the quality of life of the citizens of Summit County with three guiding principles—
Defend Democracy, Demand Diversity, and Defeat Poverty.

Thank you for your unwavering support and belief in our mission and I will see you around town!

Once an Urban Leaguer, Always an Urban Leaguer!

Teresa R. LeGrair
President & CEO
(2019 - 2024)



Dear Teresa,

On behalf of the Board of Directors at the Akron Urban League, we are delighted to offer you sincere congratulations on your retirement. You have provided five years of dedicated service to the AUL, and your retirement is well-earned. Your passionate leadership, wisdom, innovative thinking, and tireless efforts are valued and recognized as transformative, and we appreciate the great legacy you are leaving us to build upon.

It has been an honor to serve with you and witness our Akron Urban League elevate its position of being a leading agency in our community providing great programs and services that make a positive impact in the lives of those in need. You have been a champion of our mission and we are grateful for your commitment.

We are so grateful for all you have brought to the community, and we wish you all the best in your next chapter; and as you move into the next chapter of your journey, we know you will pursue it with the same passion, grace, attentive spirit and kind heart that we have all experienced with you here at the AUL. With sincere thanks and best wishes always,

Jolene A. Lane, Chair and the Board of Directors



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TERESA R. LEGRAIR

SPECIAL INITIATIVES FUND



The AUL Board of Trustees has established the **Teresa R. LeGrair Special Initiatives Fund of the Akron Urban League**. This fund will enable future Akron Urban League presidents to better respond to unforeseen opportunities and challenges. Friends of Teresa and the Akron Urban League are encouraged to support.



SCAN TO DONATE

EDUCATION

The mission of the Akron Urban League's Education Department is to expand and deepen authentic learning opportunities for students in our community by fostering a strong sense of self, encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills to eliminate the achievement gap and challenge systemic, institutional, and historical disparities.

STEAM AFTERSCHOOL ACADEMY



Our STEAM Academy provided out of school time programming to 27 students in grades 3-5 from public, private and charter schools in the Akron area. Students were provided with individualized, adaptive learning through a variety of computer applications and curriculum. In addition, students received social emotional learning components that emphasized the Ohio Department of Education's Whole Child Framework.

Students were exposed to real world and authentic learning opportunities through the incorporation of Problem Based Learning lesson explorations as well as field trips and speakers.

- 100% of Students were introduced/exposed to STEAM-based careers
- 10 Students gained their library card
- 18 Students were exposed to math and reading support through Edmentum's Study Island Program
- 100% of Students were exposed to arts education
- 100% of Students expanded their exposure to social emotional learning and development by engaging in Circles and learning the Zones of Regulation

SUMMER ENRICHMENT DAY CAMP



In 2023, Akron Urban League offered a seven-week, day-long camp to students in grades 3-6.

Our program expanded to include sixth graders. All campers enjoyed a robust arts and STEAM curriculum through our partnerships with the Akron Zoo, All-American Soap Box Derby, Born to Dance 330, First Tee of Akron, Mad Science of Northeast Ohio, and Rubber City Theater.

- In 2023, 47 students in grades 3-6 enrolled in Summer Enrichment Day Camp
- 100% of students were exposed to Social Emotional Learning Skills through morning meetings, mindfulness circles, programming, and summer camp clubs
- 100% of campers were exposed to STEAM based careers, concepts, through partnerships with Akron Zoo, All-American Soap Box Derby, Mad Science of North East Ohio, and First Tee of Akron
- 100% of campers were exposed to the arts education through partnerships with Rubber City Theater and Born to Dance 330
- 100% of our students developed financial literacy skills through programming



SCHOLARS ACADEMY





The Akron Urban League Scholars Academy is a program that supports high school students grades 9-12 in their college and career path decision-making process. We provide college and career readiness skills through experiential learning, workshops, mental health supports, and mentoring.

In 2023, our Scholars Academy participated in workshops focusing on mental health and wellness, workforce development, professionalism, HBCU and the Divine Nine Black Greek-letter organizations, and financial literacy.

These sessions supported their academic growth and built our Scholars' confidence to allow them to feel comfortable in professional settings. Our Scholars participated in a networking mixer, where they were able to connect with professionals and confidently share their educational goals, and elevator pitches they prepared.

26 SCHOLARS 
completed the program

25 SCHOLARS 
were awarded scholarships

 **\$297,832.00** 
awarded in scholarships

YOUNG ADULT COUNCIL



The Akron Urban League Young Adult Council was founded in the Fall of 2022 in response to the tragic killing of 25-year-old Jayland Walker with the support of ARPA funds. AUL partnered with the City of Akron, United Way of Summit and Medina County, and Akron Public Schools to bring dynamic young adults, ages 16-26 to dialogue about the state of race in Greater Akron in relation to police accountability, school system and teacher Training, access to mental health, and police use of force and training.

- In 2023, 28 Young Adults enrolled in Young Adult Council
- Young Adult Council connected with 17 community partners to learn more about the supportive services available throughout the City of Akron
- Contracted by AUL, Dr. Erica Glover and Kenny "JoJo" Smith, council members completed 18 sessions and 732 hours of research and collaboration over a period of 6 months
- Love Akron partnered with us and provided a gift of \$300 to Young Adult Council members who attend at least 17 sessions
- YAC members attended an experiential Learning Trip to Montgomery, AL to explore the Equal Justice Initiative and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. This experiential learning experience will Inform and enhance the young adults research into solutions for the issues that they identified in March 2023
- On March 19th, the YAC presented their findings to their peers, the Akron Urban League Staff, and partners (including City of Akron staff) at a Symposium hosted by AUL at House Three Thirty

WORK FORCE DEVELOPMENT



Akron Urban League's Workforce Development programs assist adults 18 and older in advancing employment opportunities by developing the professional and personal skills needed for long-term job retention and advancement. AUL also supports our corporate partners in their efforts to find, advance, and retain employees by providing services to help create opportunities.

In 2023, AUL Workforce Development helped general job seekers by -

- Creating 196 client resumes.
- Completing 138 client intakes.
- Staging 34 mock interviews.
- Helping 55 general job seekers find employment.

NEXT

In 2023, the NEXT program served 136 adults who were experiencing a reduction in public assistance benefits due to an increase in income, commonly known as the "benefits cliff." We provided intensive case management, employment preparedness, and referral support to help these individuals reduce their barriers to employment. 90% of NEXT members completed financial literacy courses at the Financial Empowerment Center to learn how to budget and prepare for the financial incentives of up to \$4,400 each member received upon completion of the program.

- 25 members upscaled into new employment positions at a livable wage during their time in the NEXT program
- 95 retained employment for 6 months, and 67 retained employment for 12 months
- 95 of our members received job advancements in 2023 as they learned to focus on personalized goal progression
- 30% of our members received utility assistance and over \$40,000 was paid out to members for transportation work support.

ASSET (Achieving Self Sufficiency through Effective Training)

In 2023, AUL held two sessions of our ASSET business and office administration courses. These courses provided in-depth training in job readiness skills. The first ASSET class in the spring of 2023 focused on office administrative skills, while the second class provided more general professional skills. Both sessions provided individualized help with resumes, mock interviews, job searching, emotional intelligence, mental health, and soft skills. Participants ranged in age from 25-45+.

Career Clothing Closet

AUL Workforce Development maintains a Career Clothing Closet that is primarily donation-based. We provide community members with professional clothing that is clean and in good condition. Along with our employment readiness training, the Career Clothing Closet helps provide confidence for job seekers as they prepare for interviews and new career opportunities.

- Our Career Clothing Closet served 131 visitors in 2023.

NEW PROGRAMS

Recidivism

Recidivism is a new program at AUL, launched in October 2023. The goal of the program is to equip participants who have been impacted by the criminal justice system with case management, emotional intelligence, and other supportive services needed for long-term employment and reduction in recidivism. We provide impacted families with the support needed to overcome barriers by offering the opportunity to earn industry recognized credentials, job readiness upskilling, and form positive relationships with their communities. We offer workforce development, targeted training, and a support system.

One way to address the needs of some of these families is to provide digital literacy. Our goal is to provide access, education, and technical assistance. We provide access to broadband connection by ensuring our families are aware of locations with mobile hotspots and Wi-Fi in their community.

Education covers how to better use broadband connections for opportunities such as remote work, online trainings, and healthcare. Our technical assistance and troubleshooting build the confidence that will allow our community families to better use technology. Our Digital Navigator provides support and technical training at the AUL or in participant's homes. We utilize our relationships with community partners to provide additional technical workshops. The AUL is passionate about creating culturally competent programs where individuals with justice system involvement feel safe, welcome, and confident that they can successfully begin their journey of reintegration despite the additional barriers they are facing.

Neighborhood Ambassador

Neighborhood Ambassador is another new program at AUL that started in October 2023. Neighborhood Ambassador creates a supportive network for participants to receive mentorship services with a focus on cultivating professional development. AUL works with members to establish suitable mentoring relationships that give members flexibility to join groups and/or one-on-one mentorship arrangements. This provides the flexibility needed to accommodate members' work schedules. AUL offers a platform to share insights on furthering careers.



WORK FORCE DEVELOPMENT SUCCESS STORIES



How has the Akron Urban League helped you?

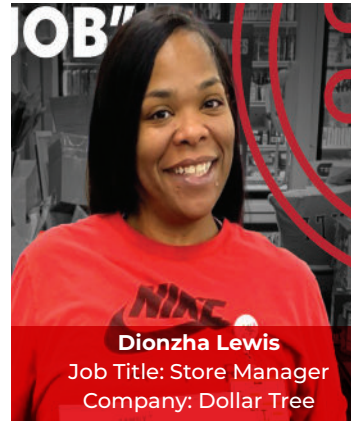
“Akron Urban League was able to help me find employment when I was struggling to find it on my own.”

What did you get from the Akron Urban League?

“I received help to build a more professional resume to get better job opportunities.”

Why should someone go to the Urban League?

“I think the Akron Urban League is a great option for someone struggling to find employment and know the correct steps to take towards that goal.”



How has the Akron Urban League helped you?

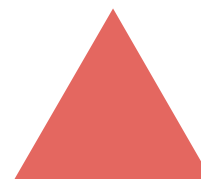
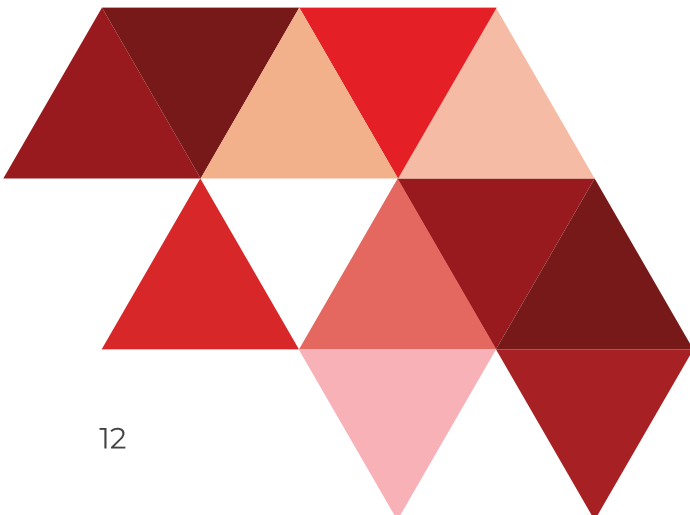
“The Akron Urban League has helped me in countless ways, such as assisting with resumes, providing community resources and programs like the NEXT program. They also offer career training programs, such as STNA and office administration including certifications that I was able to obtain.”

Why should someone go to the Akron Urban League?

“I recommend the Akron Urban League to anyone and everyone. They can help in so many different ways. The staff cares and is friendly. They are also very knowledgeable.”

What did you get from the Akron Urban League?

“I received support, resources, career advice, career training, and a brighter outlook on my future and career options. I gained a sense of purpose.”



JUSTICE & EQUALITY

On June 27, 2023, the Akron Urban League co-sponsored a powerful rally at the heart of American governance, the Department of Justice in Washington DC, to advocate for justice and support Jayland Walker. Departing from the First Congregational Church, a bus trip embarked towards the nation's capital, filled with passionate individuals determined to make their voices heard. This rally wasn't just about one individual; it symbolized a collective demand for fairness, accountability, and equality under the law. It showcased the power of grassroots activism and the unwavering commitment of communities to stand up for what's right, igniting hope for a future where justice truly prevails for all.



MCCAP ■ MINORITY CONTRACTOR CAPITAL ACCESS PROGRAM

MCCAP is a collaboration between the Western Reserve Community Fund and the Akron Urban League that provides financial and technical assistance to Akron and Summit County-based minority, women, LGBTQ+, veterans, and disabled-owned businesses in the construction trades. Eligible businesses apply and are evaluated based on need, experience, and growth potential. Once accepted, those businesses can apply for financial assistance in the form of short-term credit to pay for costs related to specific construction contracts. Participants are also connected to educational resources, including training and certification programs, to help their businesses grow. The program is designed to support minority-owned and other construction businesses and provide them with the best opportunities for long-term success and stability.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Participants receive access to technical assistance, targeted training, and mentorship that builds the business skills needed to thrive in the construction trades. MCCAP participants can receive support with bidding and estimating project management, government contracting, compliance, and more. They also receive assistance with general business practices such as bookkeeping, marketing, human resources, and certifications. Lastly, we help participants grow their businesses by connecting them with new opportunities to bid on contracts.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Western Reserve Community Fund provides participants access to short-term credit that can be used to pay for costs associated with a specific construction contract. When the participant receives a contract, they can borrow funds to pay for the costs of labor and materials on the job. MCCAP participants can also finance a bond premium if one is required for a contract. These low-cost short-term loans are repaid as the contractor is paid for work performed on the job. Short-term financing can help a construction business scale and manage the cash flow challenges of the construction draw process.

“This program is an excellent opportunity to help small business owners in the construction trade industry to grow their companies and become more successful,” said Gail Wilson, MCCAP Director.



MCCAP 2023 Graduation photos at Akron Urban League.


OUTCOMES

FISCAL YEAR 2023

165 NEW CONTRACTS SECURED

For **21** Participants



 **\$2,758,066** \$\$\$
in contracts.

65 NEW JOBS 

SINCE PROGRAM INCEPTION OCTOBER 2020 TO DECEMBER 2023

379 NEW CONTRACTS SECURED

 **\$7,738,845** \$\$\$\$\$\$\$
in contracts

141 NEW JOBS 



Testimony



Gary Barton
President
**B&G Masonry
and Remodeling**

"I have been with the MCCAP Program for two years. The program enabled me to grow my business with the purchase of new equipment and hiring of additional employees."

MCCAP 2023 Networking Event at House Three Thirty.

MBAC ■ MINORITY BUSINESS ASSISTANCE CENTER

MBAC Akron is one of seven host centers across Ohio that works with entrepreneurs and emerging business enterprises to help them achieve scale, and market success. Supporting businesses means providing them with resources that include technical and professional assistance, access to capital, surety bonding, and connection to business opportunities. The goal is to help small businesses contribute to Ohio’s job creation and economic growth.

MINORITY BUSINESS SUMMIT The Summit sponsored by Huntington National Bank, joined forces to celebrate and empower minority-owned businesses in Greater Akron. The Minority Business Summit, held on November 16th, 2023, at 4:00 PM, was a cutting-edge event hosted by the Akron Urban League in collaboration with The Huntington National Bank. Attendees were treated to an evening of empowerment, connection, and celebration. The summit provided a platform for minority-owned businesses to thrive, featuring activities such as a community partner panel discussion, a marketplace showcasing local businesses, an award ceremony honoring outstanding businesses, and an exclusive networking reception. The event underscored the commitment of both organizations to connect under-resourced small businesses with essential resources and capital, aiming to strengthen and empower Summit County entrepreneurial community as a whole.

Our procurement series “SHOW ME THE MONEY” was a huge success! A training session was held every Tuesday during the month of November and December. Procurement Professionals from The County of Summit, State of Ohio, Akron Public Schools, Ohio Department of Transportation, and Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority all presented a hands-on presentation in our computer lab. Each session was designed to allow participants to log onto the presenter’s website and enroll or search for procurement opportunities.





Minority Business Summit recap photos at Akron Urban League.

MBAC SUCCESS STORIES



India Rush
Owner of India INK
Tattoo Company

MBAC would like to celebrate India Rush, Owner and CEO of India INK Tattoo Company as being the recipient of the 2023 “At Your Service” MBAC Award and complimentary \$500 cash prize. India Ink is the only black female and LGBTQ owned tattoo shop in Akron. They specialize in portraits, black, grey, and color realism. Hours of operation are from Tuesday – Saturday, 11am to 7pm.

India would like to thank AUL Minority Business Assistance Center for not only the award but also for the all resources, information, and general pointing in the right direction. She says that she took a chance just jumped out there has been working backwards to put the business piece together. “I don’t know where I would be without MBAC’s assistance,” she said in an interview.

India Ink Tattoo Company
21 Furnace St. Akron, OH 44308
330-475-9727
india@indiainked.com



Sharonda Armour
Founder & CEO of
WildFlowers-HWG LLC

MBAC would like to celebrate Sharonda Armour, Founder & CEO of Wild Flowers-HWG LLC for obtaining the State of Ohio Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) Certification, Veteran-Friendly Business Enterprise (VFBE) Certification and Woman-Owned Business Enterprise (WBE) Certification.

Sharonda would like to thank the Minority Business Assistance Center and Business Counselor Mr. Edward Smith for their commitment to helping her navigate various obstacles. “Whether it is clarifying the various complexity of all of the codes businesses use, providing honest feedback about my ideas, or just a listening ear, MBAC was there with expert advice and unwavering support.”

Sharonda is a veteran of the U.S. Airforce. As a veteran, Sharonda lives in a spirit of excellence. She believes that everything she does needs to be the best it can be, so that others receive the maximum benefit. We thank all Veterans for their sacrifice and service to the United States of America. For more information, please visit <https://www.wildflowers-hwg.com/>



1,459

Counseling hours

198

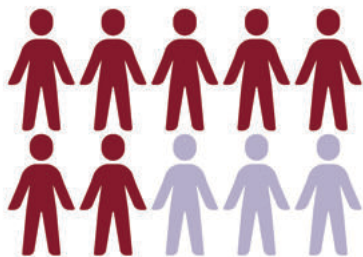
New jobs created

NEW CLIENTS:

328

CAPITAL INFUSED:

\$586,380



773

Training or conference participants

\$3,026,588

Contract assistance

167

Jobs retained

SPECIAL EVENTS

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. ANNUAL BREAKFAST



MAYORAL FORUM



ANNUAL MEETING AND SCHOLARS ACADEMY LUNCHEON



JUNETEENTH EVENT



ANNUAL GALA



SANTA'S COMING TO TOWN



Akron Urban League GUILD

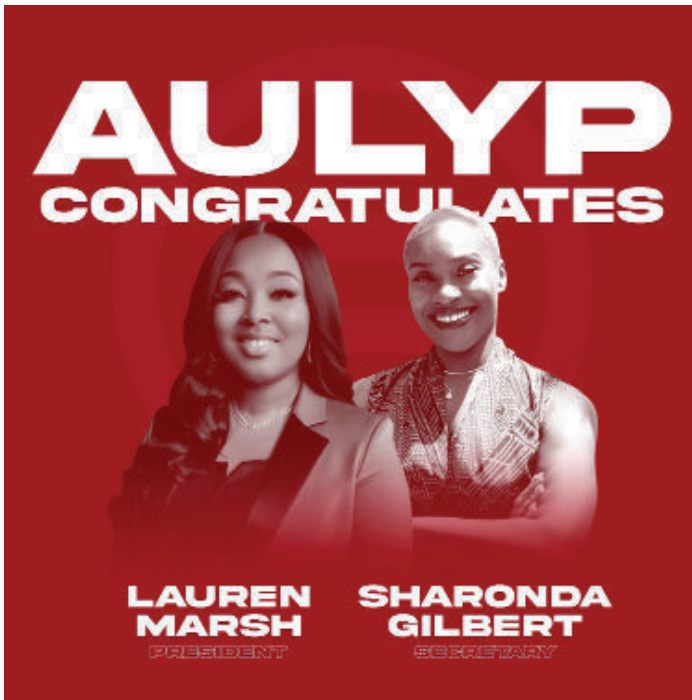


The Guild is an affiliate of the Akron Urban League, supporting our fundraising and community service efforts. Exclusively for ages 41+, this group is responsible for promoting volunteer participation and leadership within our organization.

- Supported MLK Day – purchased 2 tables.
- Financial Literacy – Digital Asset Workshop
- Collaboration with DST Sorority, Inc., AAC
- Conducted Financial Aid Workshop for students in Scholars Academy
- Gave **\$500** toward Scholarship for college student in Scholars Academy
- Conducted Dining Etiquette Workshop for students.
- Donated **\$750** to Akron Urban League for programming.
- Volunteered all day for the Juneteenth event, donated food items.
- Provided a free Community Health Fair
- Served on Gala planning committee and purchased 2 tables.
- Sneaker Ball – Fellowship fundraiser
- Donated to the Santa toy giveaway AND volunteered at the event.



AKRON URBAN LEAGUE
YOUNG PROFESSIONALS



Join Week (First week in February)

- Increased membership by 50% earning two free registrations to the NUL Conference
- Elections for 2024-2025 Term
- President- Lauren Marsh
- Secretary- Sharonda Gilbert
- Hosted multiple community service events
- Ronald McDonald House
- Haven of Rest
- Strengthened relationships with other local young professionals' groups, notably collaborating with Torchbearers in particular
- **77** active members
- Ages 21-40 new members are welcome
- Appointed Leslee Mcelrath as Vice President

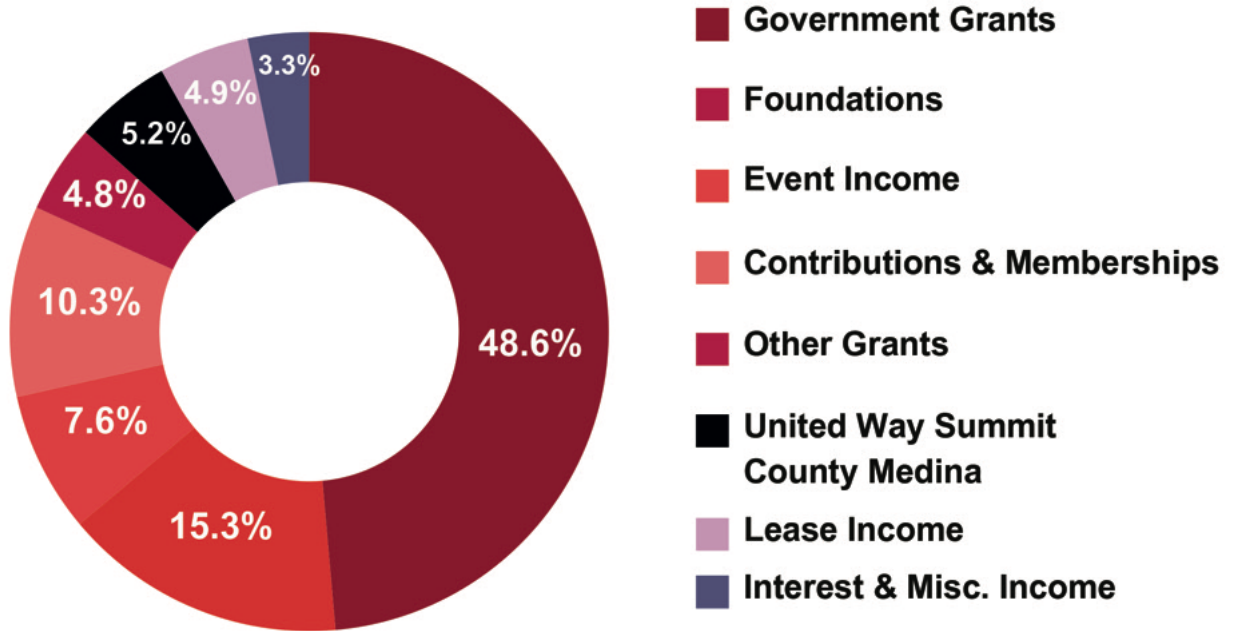


AULYP Hosted the Inaugural Elevate to Lead Conference in May. \$30,000 in sponsorships raised, 110 registered participants ready to forge change.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

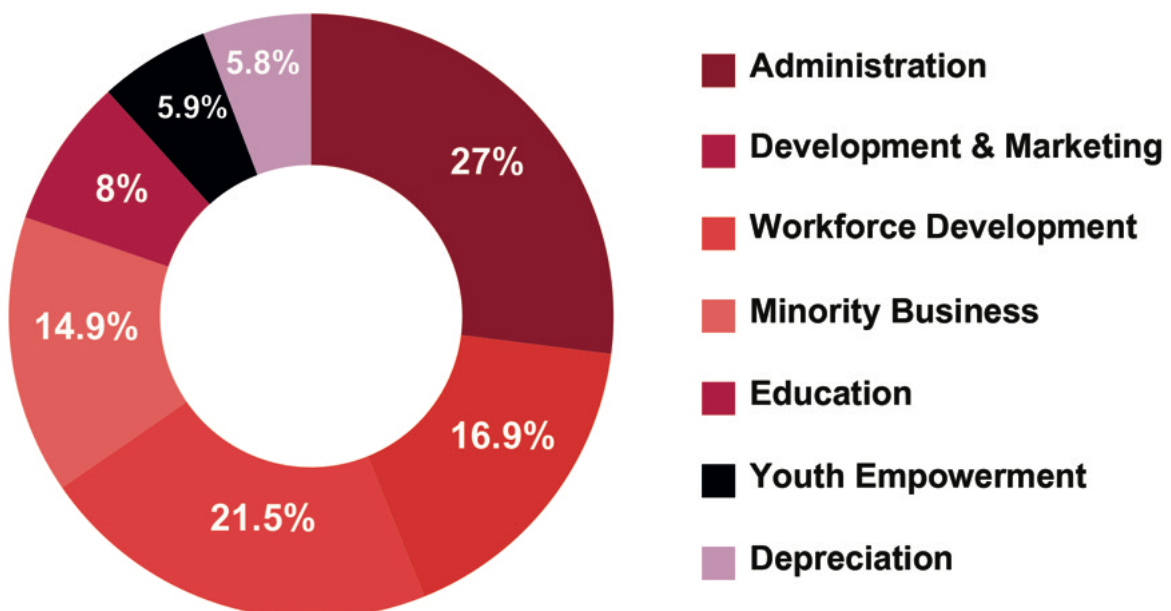
TOTAL REVENUE \$2,781,967

• Does not include \$2.4 million unrestricted contribution from The MacKenzie Scott Foundation



ARPA, MCCAP, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, SCHOLARS ACADEMY, SUMMER ENRICHMENT CAMP (CITY OF AKRON) MBAC (STATE OF OHIO)

TOTAL EXPENSES \$3,529,110





SUMMER ENRICHMENT CAMP

Registration is now open!
Sign up today.



Camp Dates:
Jun 10, 2024 -
Aug 2, 2024
Grades: 3-6

Price \$800 for 8 weeks
\$100 deposit due at registration
ACE credits are accepted

If you have any questions/concerns,
please reach out to us at
education@akronurbanleague.org



SCAN QR CODE
TO REGISTER

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Akron Community Foundation
Akron NAACP
Akron South High School Alumni 1910-1980
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Alan Mitchell
Alanna Nicholas
Aleyah Carmona
All Coker
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Alissa Oduro
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City of Joy
Clare Smith
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CyberGrants
Cynthia Blake
Cynthia D. Robinson
Cynthia Griffin
Cynthia Humphrey
Cynthia Wilson
D. Simonne Hinkson-Wright
Daisiree Black
Dallas & Latifah Grundy
Dana Capers
Dana Frase
Dana Sparks
Daniel Blain
Dannika Stevenson
Darlene Mims
Darnell Davis
David Dyzert
Davidcia Stubbs
Dawn Ahner
Dawn Kohout
De Shawn Partridge
Debbie Wasch
Dee McCall
Dejuana Waters-Herald
Delius Norman
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
Deniece Valentine
Deniesha Newby
Denikka Ray
Denise Littleton
Destine' Deneffield
Development Fund of the Western Reserve
Devetta Telford
Djuan Wash
Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation
Don Drumm Studios & Gallery
Donah Gehlert
Donna Dowler
Douglas Godshall
Dwayne Richardson
Ebony Hill
Ebony Yeboah-Amankwah
Edith Dillard
Edna McCulloh
Elise Miller
Elizabeth A England
Elizabeth Bartz
Elizabeth Oderkirk
Energy Harbor Corp.
Enterprise Holdings Foundation
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Erica Powers
Erika Graham
Erin Robinson
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GPD Foundation
Gretchen Long
Gwendolyn Moorer
Hailey Moxley
Hannelore Gambrell
Harold Colston
Harry K. and Emma R. Fox Charitable
Foundation
Hazel Malone
Herman Hill
Huntington - Akron Foundation
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Ignite Fitness
Imokhai Okolo
Ingrid Abraham-Turner
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Jacquelyn Little
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Joni Fitch
Jordan-Michael Vigorito
Joseph Ray
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Josie McElroy
Joy Tamar Moorer
Juleta Craig
Julie & Steven Brandle
Justin Barnett
Sheriff Kandy Fatheree
Kanika Marsh
Dr. Karen Howard
Karen Kennedy

Kassidy Bernard
Katherine Andrico
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