



IMPACT REPORT

Marking another year of delivering on our mission:

In an atmosphere of dignity and respect, Inspiration Corporation connects people and creates opportunity through access to social services, job training, housing, and food.



FISCAL YEAR
2024

July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
[inspirationcorp.org](https://www.inspirationcorp.org)

A Letter From Our CEO

For 35 years, Inspiration Corporation has been a leader in Chicago's efforts to support our most vulnerable neighbors by offering a continuum of impactful services that provide meals, housing, and economic security.

This year was no exception. I am very proud of our organization's impact in the past fiscal year as you will read about in this report. Over those 12 months, we invested in both our programs and our people, leading to innovative services and deeper connections:

- We were thrilled to return to in-person, sit-down meals at Inspiration Cafe in Uptown every weekday, our proven model for engagement and impact.
- We expanded services to provide our participants with more resources tailored to their needs, dramatically increasing drop-in case management for people experiencing homelessness and adding a food pantry.
- We added new staff and systems to better integrate our signature Foodservice Training program with Inspiration Kitchens, our social enterprise restaurant in Garfield Park. These innovations contributed to increasing our graduation rate by five points over the prior year.
- We invested over a million dollars in direct support to our participants. That includes rental subsidies, transitional job wages, educational support, transportation, utilities assistance, meals and other resources to ensure their stability.
- As a retention strategy, we increased entry and manager level salaries for our hardworking staff who are on the front lines every day helping our participants succeed in their apartments and end their homelessness for good.

We continue to see an increased demand for our services, as COVID-era benefits end and homelessness is on the rise (up 17% in Chicago from pre-pandemic levels). However, Inspiration Corporation stands ready to meet the increased need with our hallmark values of dignity and respect. Thank you for your continued support – our work would not be possible without your dedication, compassion, and generosity.



Shannon K. Stewart
Executive Director and CEO





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MEALS & SUPPORT

At the beginning of fiscal year 2024, Inspiration Cafe completed the transition back to seated meals from its COVID era to-go format.



We welcomed back a dedicated corps of volunteers and staff who took orders, prepared, and served each meal with care and compassion. Inspiration Cafe offered breakfast Monday-Friday, and for a portion of the year, we also served Thursday dinners. We saw an increased need for assistance with most meals at capacity. Participants came from nearby encampments and from across the city to enjoy a made-to-order hot breakfast. With a return to our seated-restaurant style service, each meal was an opportunity to connect with participants and to open the door to deeper engagement and impact.

And thanks to the support of individual, corporate, religious, and other community groups, we were still able to offer participants a bagged lunch to-go. This year, Inspiration Corporation also opened a food pantry to distribute shelf stable, refrigerated and frozen food, as well as toiletries and other hygiene supplies. The pantry is open to participants from all our programming. We are grateful to our partnership with the Greater Chicago Food Depository and other donors who helped to create this vital new resource.

Impact Snapshot:

19,688

Meals Served

4,245

Bagged lunches donated

238

Individuals served
through our food pantry

934

Drop-in sessions
(e.g. referrals to housing,
legal assistance, etc.)

363

Individuals receiving
drop-in services

Meals & Support continued

This year, our Resource Room was open regularly so participants could gain access to phones, computers, mail delivery and more. Our Homeless Engagement case managers were on site daily to help participants connect to additional support and navigate options for healthcare, jobs, housing, legal services and benefit applications. Our staff provided almost twice the number of drop-in case management sessions as in fiscal year 2023. While it takes time, we know that lending support and connecting participants to these essential services is critical in their journey towards greater stability and security.



Participant Perspectives



"Five breakfasts is great. I can come here every morning and start my day off right. Then I can go straight to my job."

"You are the only company in the neighborhood that does meals like this. Now I can come Monday through Friday."

"It's hard for me to get food because food stamps only allow me to get so much. This gives me a chance to sit down and enjoy the meal."

"This is my only meal for the day."

"Where else am I going to get bacon, eggs and coffee for free every morning?"



HOUSING STABILITY

The Housing Program continued connecting people experiencing homelessness with access to housing through ongoing rental support and wrap-around support services.

During fiscal year 2024, Inspiration Corporation provided individuals and families experiencing homelessness with not only access to housing and ongoing rental support, but also a dedicated case manager who worked to help them remain stably housed and pursue their personal goals. Through the Aftercare program, we have been highly effective in supporting participants as they transition out of our programs and into their own housing. In fiscal year 2024, we served the largest number of households since launching the Aftercare program in fiscal year 2022.

"It is the way you treat people, talk to people...When you have a good listener, it is like having a soft pillow."

- P.G.



Impact Snapshot:

138

Households served over the year

272

Adults and Children served

23

Households served through Aftercare program

98%

Of people kept their housing for one year



ECONOMIC SECURITY

Our free 12-week Foodservice Training Program prepared students for sustainable and successful careers in the foodservice industry. Learning in a working restaurant provided our participants with invaluable real world experience.

Inspiration Kitchens continued to focus on growing our catering operations in fiscal year 2024. Students in each of the year's five cohort had the opportunity to help prepare food for patrons at our restaurant, as well as for catering events around the city. They appreciated having the chance to gain hands-on experience in larger scale production and engage with the public in a professional setting. Staff assisted new and returning graduates with finding employment and stable and sustainable income. Our Lori and Ron Jericho Memorial Education Fund assisted individuals in pursuing educational goals to advance their careers in a variety of other fields.



Impact Snapshot:

58

Students Enrolled

41

Job Placements

\$17.69

Average starting wage for graduates

44

Catering events





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Our day-to-day work of creating opportunities and connecting people experiencing poverty and homelessness to the services and resources they need is not possible without a community of dedicated supporters like you.

Thank you for helping us drive progress and make a difference!

We are grateful for new and existing partnerships with donors, volunteers and corporate, community and philanthropic organizations that contributed to the key achievements and positive impact we had this past year. If you are interested in getting more involved with our work, visit our website, follow us on social media, and reach out to us to learn more.

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