



inspiration
corporation

Impact Report

Fiscal Year 2022

July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022

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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.

Each year, Inspiration Corporation provides resources and opportunity to hundreds of resilient Chicagoans who face systemic disparities rooted in social, racial and economic inequities, that result in homelessness, hunger, and social isolation.

In order to help individuals and families experiencing homelessness and poverty overcome these barriers, we connect them to economic security, housing access, and meals and engagement services.

Inspiration Corporation meets people where they are in life, helping them identify their goals and access the support they need to achieve them.

Our Story

Inspiration Corporation was founded in 1989 out of a little red wagon filled with coffee and sandwiches. Lisa Nigro, our founder, walked around the Uptown neighborhood forming meaningful connections with people through food, a practice that has remained central to our work to this day.

The wagon eventually grew into a full-service cafe for people experiencing homelessness. To help guests at Inspiration Cafe meet their needs, we expanded beyond meals to offer other programs, including job training, housing, and supportive services, becoming Inspiration Corporation.

“

In short order, Inspiration Corporation steps up to the plate to meet the challenges of the times with both vigor and grace.

”

Cafe Volunteer

Year in Review

Inspiration Corporation is proud to have accomplished goals for many of our programs during fiscal year 2022, while continuing to navigate the impacts of the pandemic and its impact on Chicago's most vulnerable residents.

Our Housing Program continued to provide unparalleled supportive services to families and individuals, with a housing retention rate of 100% in our permanent supportive housing units. Along with continued high-quality services for 152 households, we were able to launch and plan new initiatives deepening and expand services for all members of the families we serve.

Our Food Service Training Program relaunched in-person training in August of 2021, and has shown robust enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. Our refined programming includes continuous personal and professional development courses, and takes advantage of virtual materials developed in the midst of the pandemic. As a result, we have been able to offer increased flexibility to participants in the program, while more adequately preparing them for careers in the food service industry. Impacts on the industry by the pandemic produced challenges for placing graduates, both new and old, in employment, but robust partnerships with employment partners allowed us to make 53 job placements.

During fiscal year 2022, Inspiration Corporation was able to produce and serve more meals than ever before, responding to the historic levels of need in the community. At Inspiration Kitchens, our social enterprise restaurant and job training facility in East Garfield Park, 56,615 meals were produced for peer organizations, including several transitional housing programs and shelters. We continued to produce meals throughout the fiscal year, while also reopening the social enterprise restaurant to the paying public, offering revenue opportunities for the organization and real-life training opportunities for participants in the Food Service Training Program.

The 56,090 meals produced at Inspiration Cafe in Uptown were primarily distributed as to-go lunches, with a return to limited in-person restaurant-style breakfast service in the last two months of the fiscal year. We look forward to returning to more in-person dining at the Cafe in the coming year, using food as an entry point for deeper levels of service for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. These services will be provided by our Homeless Engagement and Prevention Services Program, which continues to see increased levels of need as well. During fiscal year 2022, our HEPS Program provided 549 drop-in case management appointments (compared to 291 in the previous fiscal year) and enrolled 54 individuals in clinical case management.

Housing Program

During fiscal year 2022, our Housing Program continued accepting referrals from the City's housing waitlist, **helping 21 new households exit homelessness** and find a safe, affordable place to call home during the pandemic.

Supportive care provided by case managers resulted in **100% housing retention rates** for participants in our permanent supportive housing, and a **100% rate of those leaving transitional housing moving into permanent housing**.

With innovation and resilience, our team continued to provide high-quality care in spite of staff vacancies, a challenge faced by many organizations that has stressed the homeless services system in a variety of ways.

Emergency Housing Voucher Success

We were able to take advantage of Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) funded by the American Recovery Plan Act.

With these vouchers, participants in our programs were able to move on from supportive housing or homelessness, transitioning to living independently. We worked to identify individuals who were prepared to make this transition, successfully supporting **26 participants** with applications for EHVs during fiscal year 2022. As participants were approved for these EHVs, it opened up other spots in our programs for other Chicagoans who have been waiting for supportive housing services.

Our participation in the program, alongside that of peer organizations, played out on a system-wide level here in Chicago, providing more services and offering relief to an already over-burdened and underfunded housing response system.



152 Households
provided with rental
subsidies

344 people supported,
43% of whom were
children

Aftercare Initiative

Through our Aftercare Initiative, we have added up to a year of additional supportive services for households that have recently exited our Housing or Homeless Engagement and Prevention Services (HEPS) Programs. This extended support prepares participants for unforeseen challenges during a vital transition period, helping them maintain stability and prevent a return to homelessness, in turn supporting a more efficient homeless response system.



PROJECTS	DETAILS	OUTCOME
Permanent Supportive Housing	Rental subsidies and supportive case management for formerly homeless households	100% of households retained housing at the 2-year mark
Rapid Rehousing	Time-limited rental support and case management with a goal of exiting the program into permanent housing	90% of households leaving short term supportive housing exited to permanent housing
Aftercare Initiative	Fourth quarter launch of continued supportive care for households that exited our programs	12 household members referred for continued supportive services
Employment Navigation	Income and employment intervention services for participants, helping with resource referrals and job searches	12 household members referred for services, with 9 job placements and 9 referrals out to other organizations and programs

Food Service Training Program



We were thrilled to be able to **return to in-person training** at Inspiration Kitchens, where case managers, chef trainers, and social enterprise staff have been able to provide hands-on holistic job training to individuals facing multiple barriers to employment.

This return to the space at Inspiration Kitchens has been vital, with the facility designed to help meet some of participants' and graduates' **most pressing needs**. The space includes **locker rooms, showers, laundry, and easy access to case managers** on site directly adjacent to the training kitchen.

The free training offered through the program now lasts 8 weeks, and includes culinary and softs skills training, paid training opportunities through transitional jobs, and job placement and retention support after graduation.

This refined program model, investment in paid training, and return to the Inspiration Kitchens space resulted in strong outcomes for fiscal year 2022.

65

People enrolled in training



74%

Graduation Rate



53

Total Job Placements



SNAP to Success

We focus on supporting people who are most in need of support, and through the Illinois' SNAP to Success Program we can cross-enroll people in both our training as well as Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

Meals Program



Inspiration Kitchens

Inspiration Corporation quickly leveraged our Inspiration Kitchens social enterprise restaurant and job training facility to produce free meals for those in need at the onset of the pandemic. This production has continued since then, with the facility producing 56,615 meals during fiscal year 2022 (and more than 117,000 since March 2020). Meals were distributed to peer organizations serving those in need, and participants and graduates of our Food Service Training Program were able to **gain paid work experience** while helping produce these meals.

Inspiration Cafe

For decades, Inspiration Cafe has served restaurant-style meals to individuals in Uptown who were enrolled in the program. During the pandemic we modified and expanded meals production at Inspiration Cafe to **meet the rising needs of our community**, and served **56,090 meals** during fiscal year 2022. Throughout the year, we continued serving to-go meals to any community member in need, while **reintroducing seated breakfasts** twice a week for some of our most vulnerable community members. These seated meals offer important opportunities for socialization with volunteers and fellow diners, and also act as an entry point to supportive services through our Homeless Engagement and Prevention Services Program.



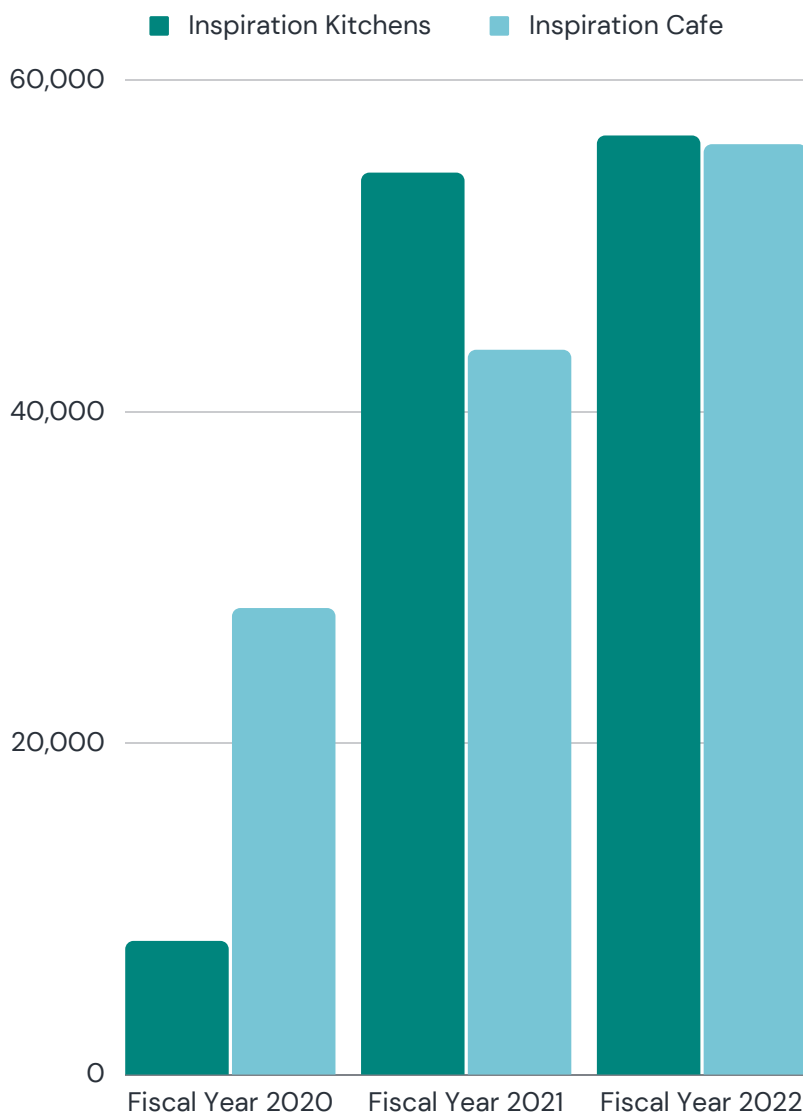
206,268

Meals produced since the onset of the pandemic in March of 2020



Meals Production

During the Pandemic



4,778

Estimated individuals provided with nutritional assistance



13

Peer organizations supported with meals for their participants

Homeless Engagement and Prevention Services

Our Homeless Engagement and Prevention Services (HEPS) Program is housed in Inspiration Cafe, and works with people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood. Meals served at the Cafe act as an entry point for deeper levels of service provided through the HEPS program.

During fiscal year 2022, we formally shifted the program to a drop-in center model, offering drop-in case management during meals service at the Cafe. These appointments helped people access one-on-one support to overcome barriers such as renewing IDs and accessing benefits.

Those in need of deeper levels of support who were at risk of or experiencing homelessness were able to enroll formally in the HEPS Program to receive clinical case management and support.

38 people formally enrolled for deeper case management services

549 drop-in case management appointments provided



Lori Jericho Memorial Scholarship Fund

During fiscal year 2022, the Lori Jericho Memorial Scholarship fund continued to support community members interested in vocational training or education, but lack access to traditional means of financing their education. With a focus on high-growth fields, the fund helps students enroll in and complete programs and training, and gain skilled employment.

During fiscal year 2022, the Fund was able to **support 18 scholars**, including **11 new scholars** and 7 scholars continuing their educations from the previous year.

Thank you for your ongoing support of our programs

Inspiration Corporation relies on your commitment to our work in order to provide services in an atmosphere of dignity and respect. Our success is rooted in our partnership with you – our donors, volunteers, board members, staff, participants, and advocates.



Contact us

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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