



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

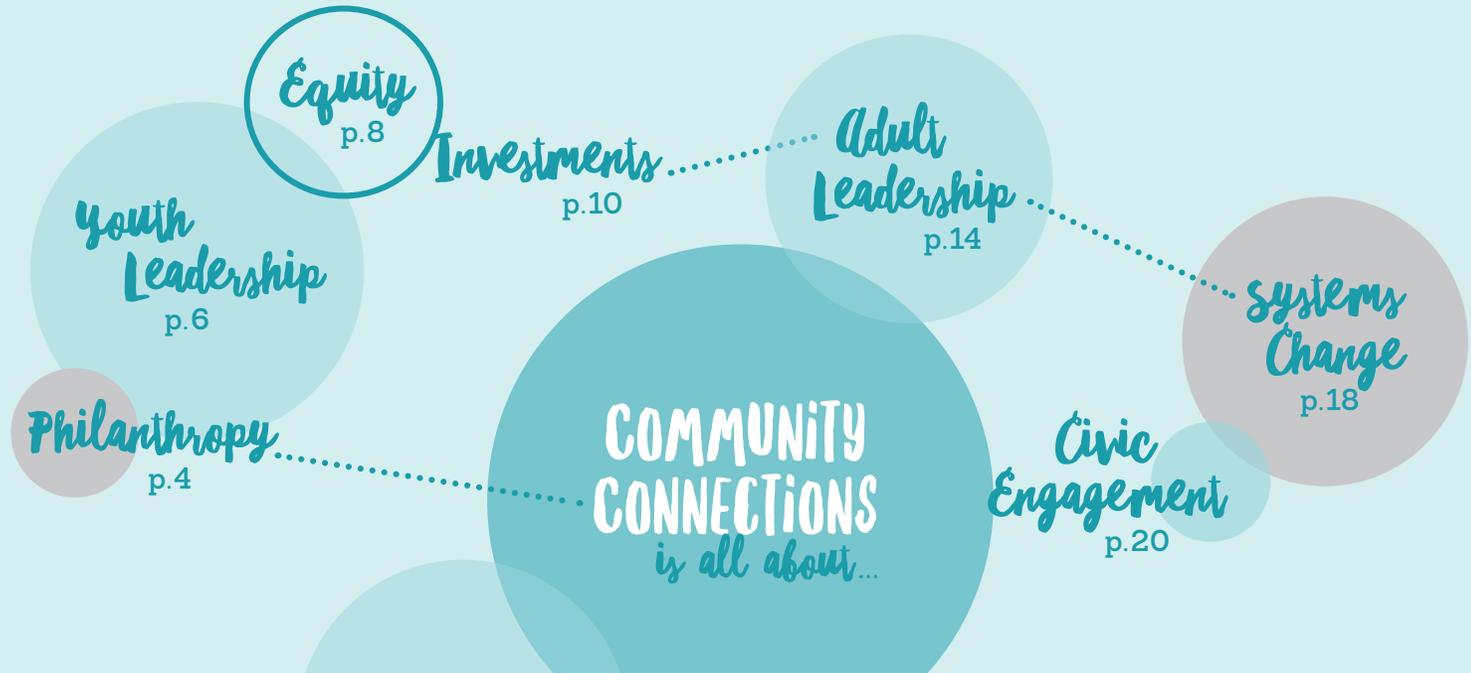
small grant program

2006–2016

A retrospective

Unless someone like you cares an awful lot,
things aren't going to get better. They're not.

— Dr. Seuss





More than money.

Grassroots Grant-Making is an emerging form of philanthropy that challenges assumptions made by traditional philanthropy about who is best to decide what a community needs and who decides who receives support.

Community Connections practices fair and inclusive principles, and takes the mystery out of the grant making process by providing:

- A simple and transparent application process
- Extensive outreach and technical assistance to engage and support traditionally overlooked groups
- Monthly grant reviews by grant reviewers from the community
- Opportunities for grantees and reviewers to learn new information and network
- Alternate forms of evaluation that allow us to capture outcomes that might not be best measured by numbers and charts
- Commitment to evaluate problems and solutions through a racial equity lens

Philanthropy



New leaders. New futures.

A powerful group of youth leaders emerged from the JIRAN program, a program housed with ACCESS. The group started with adults arranging training for youth to begin to speak frankly about race with their peers, family and neighbors. Adult facilitators encouraged the young people to think and act beyond the initial training. The rest is history.

Youth leaders seized control and continue today planning and implementing programs to benefit themselves, their peers and the community. They applied for and received funding for training to strengthen their ACT scores. They also serve as trainers to other youth who continue the race dialogue sessions and participate as leaders in many other projects in their community, Chadsey/Condon, and across the city.



“I would really be tired if I had to really work hard with the kids after work on their projects. It’s really easy though because they lead themselves. I’m just here as a resource.”

– *Aswan Almakary*

Adult supporter of JIRAN

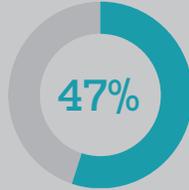


INVOLVEMENT & BENEFIT

Youth helped develop the project application:



Youth helped develop the project report:



Projects offering credit for high school graduation:

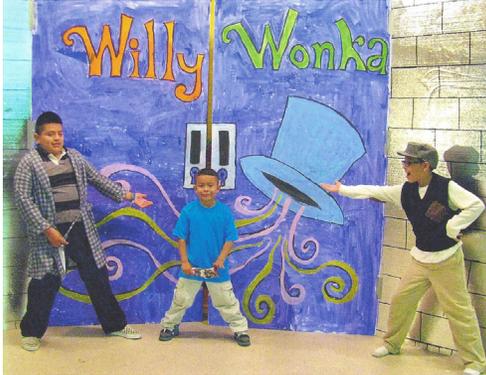


Projects offering work experience:



Youth Leadership

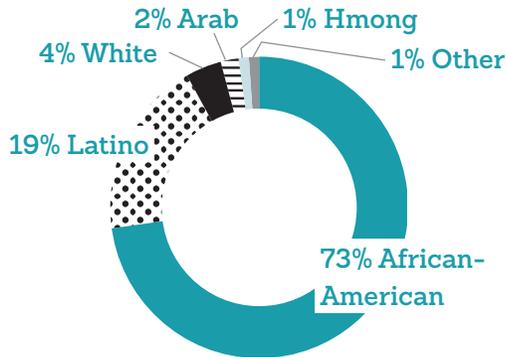




• Black/Latino males (boys of color) ages 0–17 make up 51% of our youth in projects.

The biggest risk is when we don't invest where the greatest needs exist.

A pivotal aspect of the program involves viewing all problems and solutions through a prism of race, gender and class. Well-intentioned efforts often exclude or invite undo harm to the most vulnerable residents. Our team, including grant makers, routinely scrutinize all aspects of our work to anticipate consequences of our decisions on grantees and youth. We are serious about increasing advantages for those most in need.



“Support for our program lets the boys know someone cares about them. It’s also a springboard to allow us to experience new relationships and to attract more resources for African-American Boys.”

– *Odys Bellinger*

Building Better Men Program



“It is doubtful we would have grown to where we are today without Community Connections believing in us. Grassroots groups deserve a chance to make a difference.”

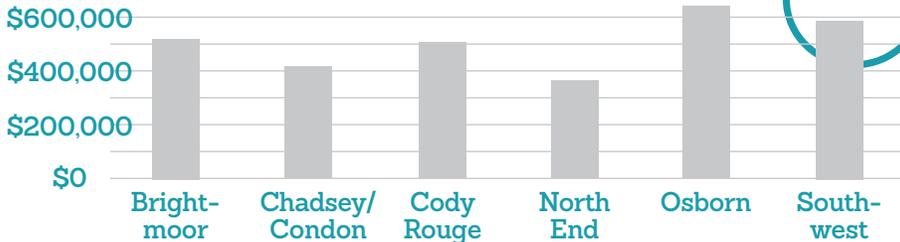
– *Kim Newberry*

Developing K.I.D.S.



Community Connections has awarded
\$3,031,111!

TOTAL GRANT DOLLARS AWARDED PER NEIGHBORHOOD



* Grants were awarded in Cody/Rouge and North End starting in January 2008.



37% of groups leveraged nearly
\$1 for every dollar awarded.

+ Community Connections...

funded
903
projects

awarded
519
groups

averaged
\$3,357
per grant

and
90
grants
per year

* Grant totals August 2006 through August 2016

.. A little  hange can lead to big change.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Investing in knowledge is at least as important as investing grant dollars in projects. Grantees and Change Makers in our network participated in a variety of learning and sharing opportunities locally and nationally each of the last 10 years.

Participating in capacity building opportunities provides a number of benefits including:

- Learning new information that allows participants to increase their effectiveness in their home communities.
- Sharing information with others based on participants experiences in their home communities.
- Expanding professional and social networks that support leaders in their work
- Increased understanding of the systemic nature of challenges experienced in similar communities.
- Demonstrating the value and necessity of creating more opportunities designed to include resident leaders.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Investment in people and relationships yields the greatest payoff for lasting community change. Every aspect of our program is an exercise in relationship building.

Our regular networking opportunities are much anticipated events each year. Grantees share ideas and collaborate on projects. Youth participants share the talent and knowledge they gained through funded projects, and parents are regular staples at these events. Change Makers make regular visits to funded projects to meet grantees and thank them for their efforts. They also participate together in regular strategic meetings and retreats each year. Our office is also “the spot” where grantees are welcome to stop in to touch base or work on applications.



Brightmoor

Groups generally fall into two categories: 1. Youth innovate agricultural products in an urban landscape, and 2. Youth as leaders and innovators in a progressive urban neighborhood. The most common project types are Gardening/Environmental/Beautification, and Arts and Culture.



Cody Rouge

Groups are mostly nurtured and incubated by several stakeholders and hubs, primarily Don Bosco Hall, in the community. The most common project types are Sports and Recreation, and Social Skills Development.



Chadsey/Condon

Groups range in diversity and include African American, Latino and Middle Eastern residents. Many projects are intergenerational and youth-led. The most common project types are Gardening/Environmental/Beautification and Leadership Development/Civic Engagement.



Delford Fort's Yellow Tigers Karate School is an example of the commitment of adults nurturing youth leadership. We dedicate this retrospective, in part, to his generous contribution to youth and families.

Detroit

Osborn

Projects in the community are clustered around neighborhood associations/block clubs, Osborn High School and Matrix Human Services, which acts as a hub and support system for many groups. The most common project types are Sports and Recreation, and Arts and Culture.

Our Neighborhoods



Southwest

Groups encompass a host of flavors, including Latino, African American and Middle Eastern residents. Projects in the area spanned from the central corridor to Delray and into the southern-most section of the city, the 48217 zip code. The most common project type is Arts and Culture.



North End

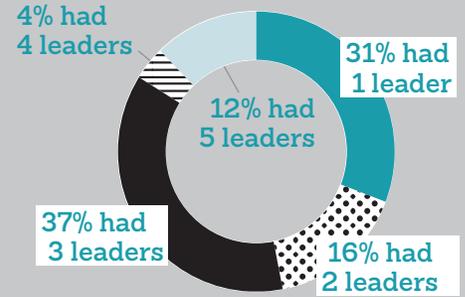
Projects overall are implemented by a small cohort of consistent and trusted change agents. They have each served youth over several generations. The most common project type is Leadership Development/Civic Engagement.

The legendary Deloris Bennett of the North End Youth Improvement Council is an example of the durability of commitment to youth in the North End. We dedicate this retrospective in part to her legacy.





ADULT LEADERS PER PROJECT



ADULT PARTICIPANTS PER PROJECT



32% of projects reported 20 or more adults involved



36% of projects reported 6 to 18 adults involved



32% of projects reported 5 or less adults involved



Lead, follow or get out of the way!

The most phenomenal, noteworthy and catalytic component and outcome of the Community Connections story is the impact of adult leaders on youth and the overall neighborhood. The number of adults that participated in projects as facilitators and volunteers exceeded anyone's imagination. They provided leadership, guidance and nurturing to young people, many who languished within broken systems and lacked consistent and effective support.

That is impressive on its own. However there is research (Illinois 5 essential survey) that confirms that the presence of 3–5 consistently available adults in the lives of kids helps them navigate toward positive decisions and solve problems that may have derailed their progress. Community Connections provided a conduit for resident leaders to positively impact the lives of youth. That's an investment that yields sustainable returns.

"I don't teach a child to read better or play instruments. I light a fire within them."

– **Randall Mosley**

The Amistad Reading Project



Adult Leadership

ADULT PARTICIPATION BY NEIGHBORHOOD

Neighborhood	Range
Brightmoor	7–43
Chadsey/Condon	2–44
Cody Rouge	1–32
North End	5–45
Osborn	1–100
Southwest	2–557

* Projects varied widely in size — the number of adults involved reflects a low of one teacher/instructor to a high of 557 adults at an annual community/school event.

Only those who have walked a day in your shoes should judge you.

The lifeblood of the program — Review Panelists, also known as Change Makers — are neighborhood residents who volunteer their time monthly to deliberate as a panel and decide which grant proposals are approved. They are a diverse family holding, different opinions and personalities. Deliberations can at times be intense, yet they are always fair and balanced.

Each Change Maker takes their role seriously as a grant maker. The term Change Maker was adopted due to them going beyond the decision making process to build and share knowledge about grant making, equity and other subjects. They visit projects as well as act as support and coaches to grantees in their communities. They are informed change agents. A better deliberation and leadership panel cannot be found anywhere on the planet.



Ground Zero: Where community ownership and decision making meet.

Thank you for exercising leadership and influence on behalf of your neighborhoods.



CHANGE MAKERS



Mohammad Dawood



Bryan Hardaway



Mary Luevanos



Samantha Magdalano



Maxine Mickens

Panelists



Tracy Moore



Roberta Sanders



Victor Robinson



Aaron Vinson



Tangy Washington



Sabrina Young

Hussein Ahmad
Roosevelt Bell
Debra Bernard
Eileen Bourne
Teferi Brent
Tawana Brookins

Sheila Crowell
Ericka Cullum
Nada Dickerson
Jari Beth Disla
Erica Foxx
Amber Griffin

Sheila Jackson-Carter
Sankeydra Jones
Althea Kyles
Sangustine Latham
Mia Lee-Sanders

James Martin
Otis Mathis
Eugene Moore
Lewis Moore
Jennifer Ragland

Gary Ringer
Rito Villareal
Tom "Coach" Watkins
Dawn Wilson-Clark
Father Ed Zaorski

Change how you work if you want to change how things work!

Oakland Avenue Farm-Way is an example of one group whose efforts demonstrate systems change. They were initially committed to introducing kids to nature. Jerry Hebron and her team literally started with cups, dirt and seeds. The enterprise has grown to include several hoop houses, multiple growing areas and community houses, with plans and investment to expand exponentially. Their approach is to invest and trust in community, including people. Organizational policies of the Farm-Way have created solutions to previously entrenched social problems including:

- Living wage + employment for several employees, including nearby residents
- Improved nutrition for neighbors who exchange sweat equity for fresh vegetables
- Productive use of previously vacant and blighted land
- Support for cottage industries in the community
- A destination place for serenity, art and health education
- A means to gain employment experience and credentials transferable to other industries



COMMUNITY-LEVEL OUTCOMES

Q: “Did your project empower residents to improve and/or influence schools, organizations, institutions or your neighborhood?”

A: **83%** said “Yes!”

“Did your project help to increase opportunities and equity for youth of color, especially black and brown boys and young men?”

78% said “Yes!”

“Did your project connect, or interact, with local policy makers?”

24% said “Yes!”

“Did your project contribute to any changes in resources and public policies affecting youth and your neighborhood?”

17% said “Yes!”

systems Change



WHAT IS SYSTEMS CHANGE?

Changes in organizational culture, policies and procedures within individual organizations or across organizations that enhance or streamline access and reduce or eliminate barriers to needed services by a target population.

When neighbors link up!

There is power in connecting with fellow residents. Many of the most pressing problems — and subsequently their solutions — are local. Residents in Detroit communities have a rich history of working together to improve conditions for themselves and young people where systems often fail them. Community Connections provided resources to groups continuing to sustain communities. The program also served to encourage residents not previously involved to contribute their gifts and talents to making a difference.

MOST COMMON PROJECT TYPES

(Groups identified up to two options from a list of 15.)

Sports and Recreation	27%
Leadership and Youth Development/Civic Engagement	26%
Arts and Culture	17%
Gardening/Environmental/Beautification	15%
Social Skills	12%
Health and Food	10%

TYPICAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS BY NEIGHBORHOOD

Neighborhood	Youth	Adults
Brightmoor	26	14
Chadsey/Condon	33	6.5
Cody Rouge	47.5	6
North End	28.5	14
Osborn	25	8
Southwest	36	14.5
All	36	10

3,096 youth
+ 860 adults
are participating annually.

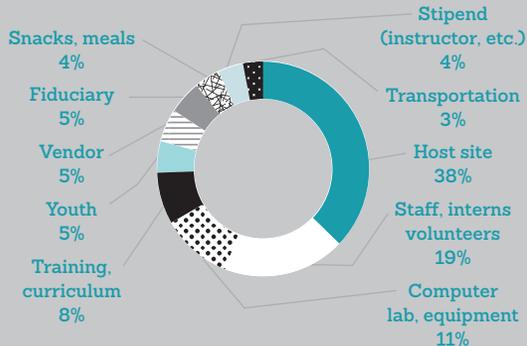
CONTRIBUTIONS BY PROJECT PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS



92 of the 100 groups analyzed described contributions from at least one other organization.



47% of the groups reported that four other groups or organizations were involved in their project.



Civic Engagement



If serving is below you, leadership is beyond you.

The busy beavers working behind the scenes to serve the community are also of the community. They work together mapping strategy, supporting applicants and grantees as well as trumpeting the impact created by the phenomenal work of community leaders. The cast of characters are:



Kayla Perrin
Community Coach
(2014)

She is a permanent fixture in community settings, providing technical assistance to grant applicants and encouraging grantees to think about next steps. Her free time is divided between pursuing her Master's degree in social work and attending music concerts. Kayla serves on the board of the local Self-Development of People (SDOP) committee.



Ms. I. Mims
Program Assistant
and Evaluation
Leader (2013)

She is most likely the first and most friendly face that applicants meet when they contact the program. Ms. Mims' time is equally divided between evaluation and program support activities. Her background is in data management and administrative support. Her interests are family and DIY projects.



Lisa Leverette
Director and C.C.O.,
Chief Change Orchestral
(2006) who managed the program solo for over 7 years

She can be found equally in communities and in strategic meetings. Lisa believes in imagining and implementing practices that challenge traditional models that have largely left black, brown and poor residents languishing on the margins of society. She is a fellow with the Detroit Equity Action Lab (DEAL), board member with Grassroots Grantmakers and Chairperson of the international committee for Self-Development of People (SDOP). Her hobbies are listening to jazz and house music, exploring the city and traveling.

A young child with dark skin and hair, wearing a yellow shirt, is smiling and painting on an easel outdoors. The easel is covered in colorful paint splatters. In the foreground, there are three red plastic cups filled with paint, and a paintbrush is resting in one of them. The background shows a lush green landscape with trees and bushes.

Thank you!

Prevention Network

Touchstone Center for
Collaborative Inquiry

JFM Consulting Group

Acknowledgments

Special and heartfelt thanks to the many groups and leaders who diligently work for and on behalf of youth. We recognize and honor your contributions.

THE SKILLMAN  FOUNDATION

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KELLOGG
FOUNDATION

A Partner With Communities Where Children Come First



Community Connections

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