

so kids
SOAR

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Letter from the Executive Director

Since 2011, I've been with this organization, sewing my own seeds into the DC nonprofit space, ingratiating myself with families, and learning how to be a better leader and spokesperson for those with differing abilities. I am still constantly growing whilst ingesting knowledge and I thank you to our families, volunteers, and donors for seeing mine and SOAR's potential to be a community resource and paradigm for adaptive programming.

It is never without fail that when you are in the most comfortable of times that something sudden occurs to flip your world upside down. Our 2023 annual report is dedicated to our SKS All-Star participant Myles Raupp and his superhero parents... Christie and Joel (who have been on our parents committee since its conception in 2017). Myles and his parents have always played a big role in shaping SKS and I had hoped we would one day see Myles matriculate through and graduate from Your Path To Success, our vocational building program. But other plans were laid out for this incredible young man and in early January 2024, Myles physically left the earth.

It's hard to put into words how this impacted our entire organization. Many of our board members have watched Myles grow over the last ten years—becoming family to us. As a mom of two young children, I cannot even begin to understand the complexity of emotions and loss that his parents are facing and enduring.

As I begin to reconcile my feelings around this devastating loss, I piece together the importance of our mission because...

Sometimes I forget the fragility of our participants when seeing them accomplish feats of endurance with such strength at our clinics.

Sometimes I forget that all of our successes are a result of a deeply invested and engaging community.

But I always remember that these kids--our participants--are the real superheroes who have impacted our lives in a very dynamic way.

I know Myles' courageous spirit will stay with me and So Kids SOAR forever. Christie and Joel are what I hope to aspire to as parents. Families like the Raupps are the reason we continue to fight for our programs and the individuals that benefit from them. I promise to never allow SKS to be sedentary and always strive for bigger goals to keep evolving the disability landscape, much like Myles did.

With gratitude, Glenda



Letter from the Board Co-Chairs

As we look back on the year 2023, the journey of So Kids SOAR (SKS) is defined by change and growth, echoing the vibrant spirit of our organization. It's with immense pride and gratitude that we embrace this transformation, stepping into our roles as Co-Board Chairs of the Board of Directors in September. This transition marks a new chapter in our history, one that we embark upon with great excitement and commitment. We extend our deepest appreciation to Rachel Merritt, our former Board Chair, whose dedication and vision have shaped SKS over the past decade.

This new chapter has started with some amazing achievements and a continued impact on our great community. Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, SKS remained agile and innovative, swiftly introducing digital clinics to engage participants. This forward-thinking approach resulted in the enrollment of 100 new participants that year. Building on this momentum, we have worked tirelessly to reintroduce in-person programming, exceeding pre-pandemic expectations and welcoming 71 new participants in 2023 alone. This growth speaks volumes about the resilience and commitment of the SKS community.

Volunteers have always been the heart and soul of So Kids SOAR. From 2016 to 2019, our organization thrived with over 300 volunteers annually, reaching a peak in 2019. Despite the disruptions brought about by the pandemic, we have witnessed a steady rise in volunteer numbers, with an impressive 217 new volunteers joining us in 2023. Our dedication to volunteer retention is evident in the approximately 50 volunteers who return each year since 2020, a testament to the strong bonds and shared values that unite us.

We are so excited to continue to serve this community and further expand our offerings in 2024 and beyond. Together, we honor our past, embrace the present, and look forward to a future filled with continued growth, impact, and possibility.

Looking forward to 2024 and beyond.

Sincerely, Will Cole & Christi Main



Christi Main

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words from a graduate and his guardian...

Patrick Green Quick SKS Stats:

32 adaptive clinics (began with SKS in 2015)

2020 Your Path To Success Graduate

**2021 - 2024 SKS Cooking and Games Instructor
(has led 3 in-person and 9 virtual clinics)**

Patrick recently taught his third in person cooking clinic with his friend and fellow YPTS graduate Milan. The night before the cooking clinic, a nearby house explosion in Sterling, Virginia shook the land, the news, and Patrick's heart. His mother, Kendra, shared with us that Patrick used his instructor earnings to donate a Chick-Fil-A nugget tray to each of the Sterling Volunteer Firefighter stations (there are 3 stations). These run \$40 each. "I'm sure you heard about the house explosion in Sterling. This was

not far from us. I was outside when it happened and immediately told Patrick to turn on the scanner. We listened together and it was heartbreaking to hear their pleas for help. We wanted to help. Thank you for always being so generous and teaching SKS participants to do the same."

The So Kids SOAR mission is to take our participants on a journey of self-realization of their potential. Each of our programs provides different types of empowerment; 1) social engagement through our adaptive clinics; 2) community service through our Holiday Program; 3) confidence building and career development through our Your Path To Success program. With So Kids SOAR, many of our children have the opportunity to be a part of a community where they feel important and validated.



"My name is Patrick and I am 25 years old and I have a part-time job at Chick-Fil-A which I really enjoy! I have been in So Kids SOAR in 10 years now and have received so many incredible opportunities and learned so many valuable lessons."

Patrick Green



Our Mission

So Kids SOAR (SKS), a not-for-profit 501(c)(3), provides life-changing programs that empower youth with physical and developmental disabilities to Strive, Own, Achieve and Realize their potential.

Our Vision

SKS enables participants to SOAR through a suite of adaptive programming that includes athletic, recreational, and skill-building activities. The self confidence and skills gained through these programs inspire each child to realize that their disability will not prevent them from fulfilling their potential.

Honoring Myles



As we touched on earlier, we lost a bright young man who has been with So Kids SOAR since 2015 and attended 23 clinics, 4 holiday programs, and was our 2017 participant of the year (see below image receiving his award). Myles and his parents touched our lives through their jubilation, candor, and kindness. We wanted to take a moment in our annual report to honor one of the most important and memorable participants to ever be a part of So Kids SOAR. Myles always brought a smile to the faces of our staff, our Board of Directors, our partners, and our donors. His reach is endless as he and his parents are celebrated by his school, community groups, and so much more. Myles, you will forever be a part of the So Kids SOAR story: past, present, and future.



“ We are saddened with the loss of our friend Myles. He filled our hearts with a legacy of joyful memories. We loved to see his passion for water sports, and the joy he brought us all with his laughter, excitement, and endless smiles. ”

**Bob Kasper, Founder of On The Edge Children's Foundation
(Adaptive Water Sports partner of 13 years)**

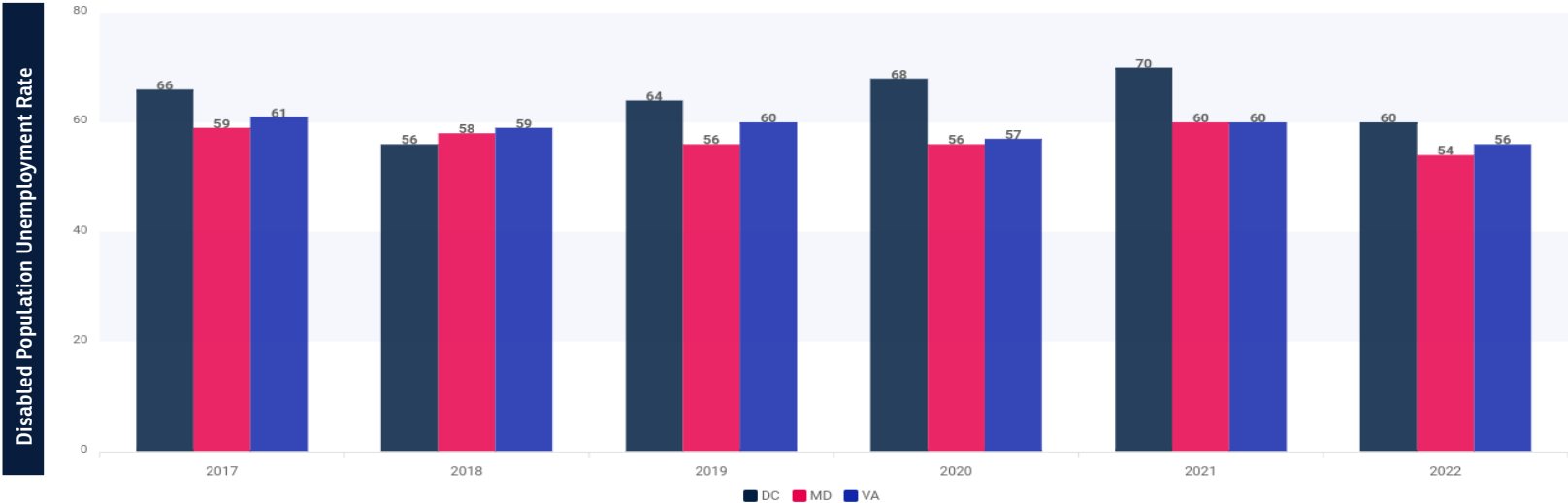


“ For years Myles has been a favorite of mine at every DFK now SKS event. When I think of him I think of that big smile and the joy he brought with him into every space he entered. His absence will forever be felt by the SKS community. I draw comfort in knowing that wherever he is now, he's wearing that big Myles smile. ”

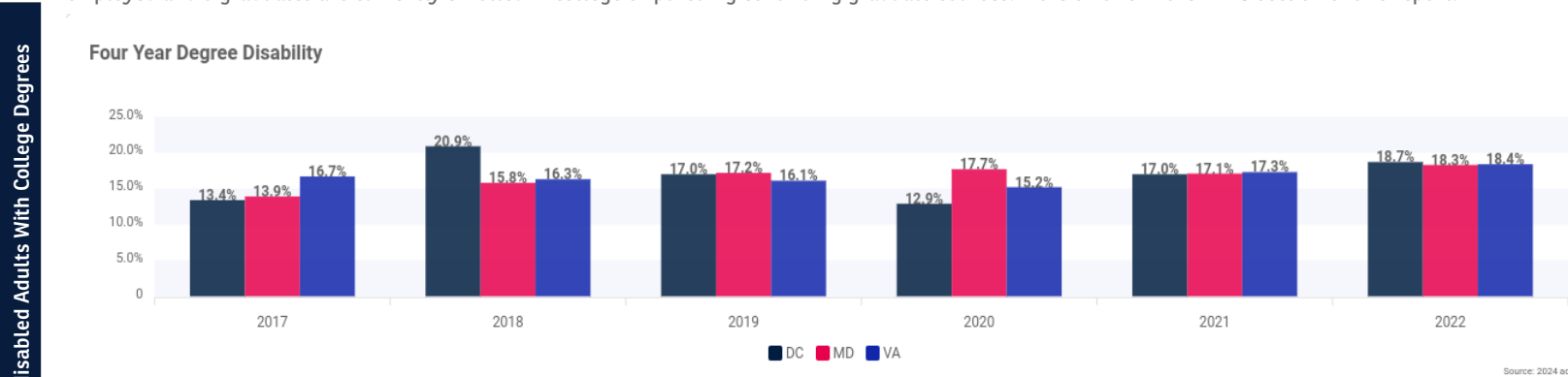
Jay Chesley, So Kids SOAR Board Member

Why We Exist

As with each year's annual report, we like to educate our community and stakeholders on why our work is vital to youth with disabilities by analyzing the overall disability metrics landscape. If you have followed our journey, you know that we recently hired a YPTS graduate as our full-time Programs Analyst, which brings this page full circle as we have this graduate performing the below data analysis and depicting our impact for you. SKS Programs Manager Kierra Johnson reviewed this year's Annual Disability Statistics Compendium and compared it with previous year compendium data to add support for our mission and programs. We begin by cross referencing the regional unemployment rate and percentage of disabled adults pursuing continuing education with the success of our Your Path To Success (YPTS) program. We can deduce that there is a correlation between the unemployment rate decreasing and the four-year degree percentages increasing as more disabled young adults matriculate through YPTS. The first graph below shows the current Compendium's unemployment rates in our area:



As seen above, the unemployment rate continues to decrease post pandemic. We believe this indicates a relationship between vocational building programs (like YPTS) and job recruitment for this demographic. The second graph show the percentage of disabled adults who have college degrees. If our participants are not ready for a career, then we give them the confidence they need to enroll in and matriculate through a four year college. In fact, 18 YPTS graduates are currently employed and 5 graduates are currently enrolled in college or pursuing continuing graduate courses. More on this in the YPTS section of this report.



Source: 2024 added



SKS Clinics

SKS adaptive clinics allow those with physical and developmental disabilities to come off the sidelines and unite with their peers. The empowerment and self confidence gained through participation in SKS clinics... the home, classroom, and community, allowing them to realize that their disability will not prevent them from fulfilling their dreams.

Each child is partnered with a volunteer to learn the essence of teamwork and develop camaraderie. Beginning in 2020, SKS added digital clinics to our offerings as an outlet to connect our community during the pandemic. We will continue to provide opportunities to participate in a virtual environment on a monthly basis.



Why We Exist

Disability Population



The need for programs such as So Kids SOAR is more important than ever as the disability population has risen across all three states and more youth need the guidance and support of the world to achieve results in the real world.

Source: 2024 data



In 2023, SKS provided 13 in-person clinics and 12 digital clinics and a total of 169 participants and 290 volunteers. From waterskiing to STEM, here is a glimpse of our 2023 adaptive clinics.



SKS Holiday Celebration

Throughout the year, So Kids SOAR provides a wide variety of adaptive clinics for children with physical and developmental disabilities— from waterskiing and football to cooking and Prom. The SKS Holiday Celebration is more than a seasonal party; it is our culminating year-end event that provides participants the opportunity to “pay-compassion-forward”. Participants engage in a variety of philanthropic activities at the Holiday Celebration, including: wrapping presents for underprivileged children; decorating desserts for homeless shelters; making holiday cards for Veterans, and more. The Holiday Celebration is a time for fun and philanthropy, and a reminder that their disabilities will not hold them back from reaching their potential.

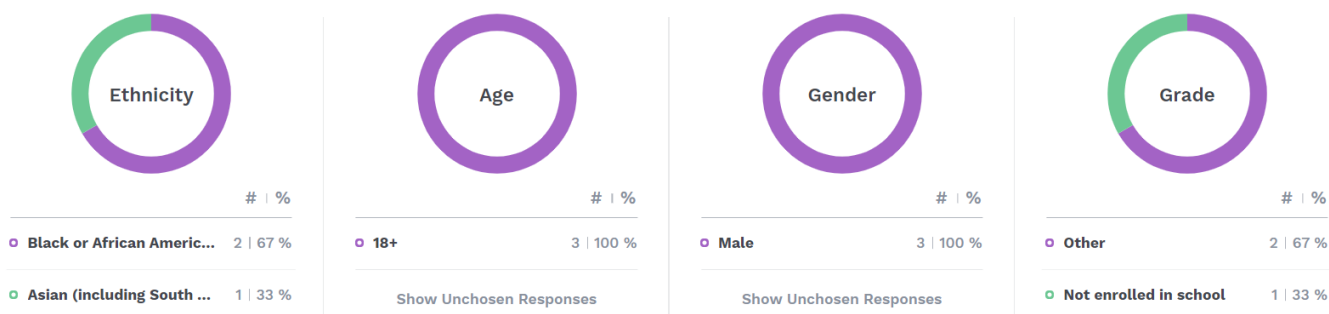




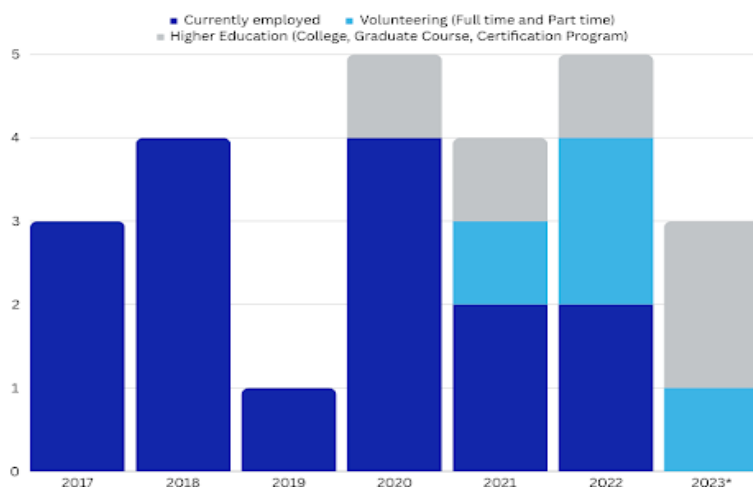
At the 2023 SKS Holiday Celebration, participants and volunteers achieved the following goals: wrapping 200 presents for DC Metropolitan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association, 50 presents for The Napkin Network, 50 presents for Untrim A Tree; stuffed 122 backpacks with school supplies and toys for Kids In Need of Defense; made 50 Kong balls for Montgomery County Partners for Animal Well-Being; and created 70 flash cards for Hands On Tokyo.

Your Path To Success

So Kids SOAR's mentorship program that provides communication, leadership, and vocational skill building for young adults with developmental delays and/or physical disabilities. The program concept derived from the need to provide SKS participants with resources to expand and grow after their time in SKS clinics. The three month program offers participants skill-building workshops on topics such as resume development, interviewing, and formal e-mail communication, as well as off-site group projects, site visits to places that employ those with disabilities, and opportunities to network. We seek for participants to walk away with meaningful relationships, new confidence, and real skills that allow them to pursue independence and gainful employment.



Your Path to Success Graduates
Post Program Career Placements 2017-2023*



*We are currently placing the 2023 cohort graduates into jobs for 2024, but the results look extremely promising as we attempt to get more young adults with disabilities into higher education and the workforce.

Thank you to our 2023 YPTS Major Donors

Rho Psi Foundation, Dr. James Hsu, Wawa Foundation, Van Metre



Van Metre

The
Wawa
Foundation

Meet Our 2023 YPTS Mentees



CALEB



DARIUS



NIHAAL

Caleb, Darius, and Nihaal graduated in November 2023 after a 100% attendance rate and participating in mock interviews during the final session. Their confidence building during the curriculum is the source material for our first ever SKS superhero comic--inspiring all of us to strive, own, achieve, and

Every year, we perform a quarterly check-in with all graduates since the program's inception in 2017. We record where each graduate is in their journey – from volunteering to interning to working full-time. Of all the graduates since 2017:

- 45% (18 of 40 graduates) are currently employed (in full-time, part-time or internship roles)
- 10% (4 of 40 graduates) are currently (or recently completed) in higher education courses or technical/advancement programs
- On average each year, three YPTS graduates find job placement within one year of completing YPTS
- 2022 YPTS graduate Kierra Johnson was hired by So Kids SOAR in January 2023 as the part-time Programs Coordinators; starting in January 2024, she will be brought on in a full-time capacity as the Programs Analyst
- 2020 and 2021 YPTS graduates Patrick Green and Milan King (respectively) have taught our annual in-person and virtual cooking clinics since 2021



YPTS 2023 graduate Nihaal Yerram training on site at Jake's Gourmet Popcorn store in Falls Church, Virginia. December 2023.



YPTS 2021 graduate Milan King flashes a smile at her first day on the job at the Safeway Bakery in Alexandria, Virginia.



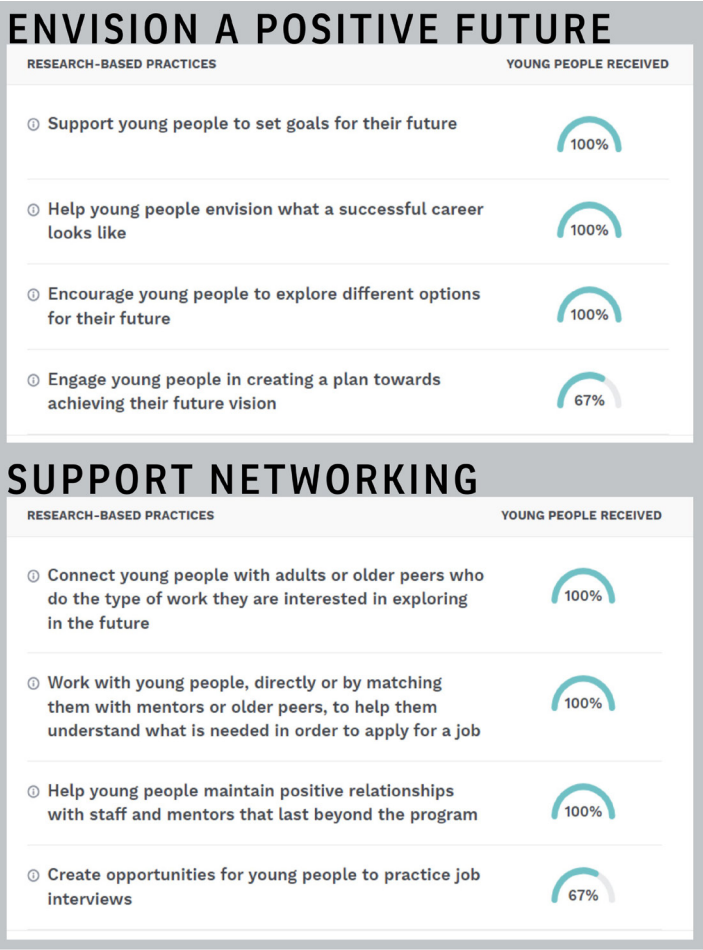
YPTS 2018 graduate Faith McLuckie celebrates after being hired by Bitty & Beau's Coffee in Washington, DC. March 2022.

YPTS SUCCESSES - Measuring Impact

In 2023, Mentees were asked to reflect on their knowledge related to job searching, the application process, and career/workforce skills before and after the program. This chart shows how many young people had good or great knowledge before and after. The change in percentage points or number of young people illustrates gains in their career readiness skills. In order to be career ready, young people must learn about their various employment options and weigh how each fits their educational, emotional, and financial needs. Additionally, they need to learn about various ways of applying for jobs and presenting themselves professionally. This set of measures shows that Your Path To Success is helping to increase young people's knowledge and skills in these areas.

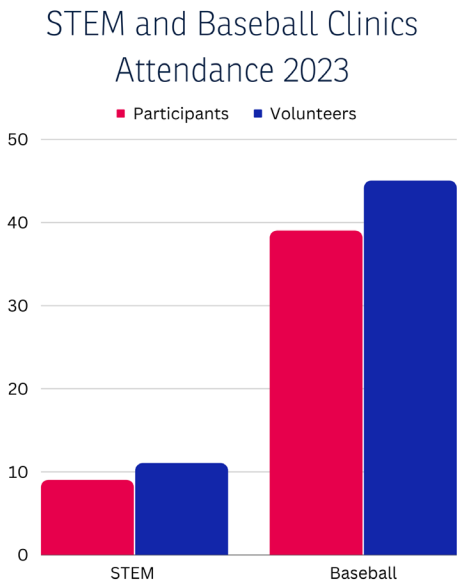
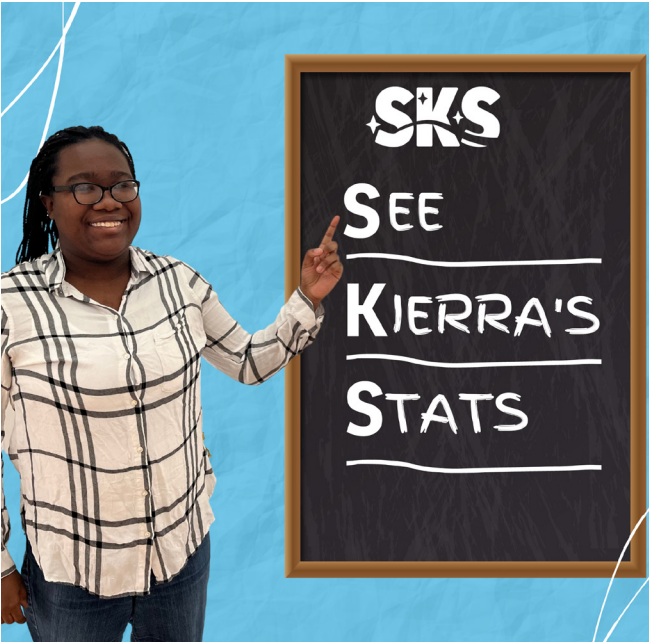
%  #	Number Who Reported Good or Great Knowledge		
	Before	After	Change in Number of Young People
Public Speaking ⓘ	0	2	2
Career Options ⓘ	1	2	1
Job Interest Exploration ⓘ	1	2	1
Application Process ⓘ	1	2	1
Networking ⓘ	1	2	1
Working Independently ⓘ	2	3	1
Time Management ⓘ	2	2	0

In 2023, we measured YPTS impact through a Career Readiness tool focused on Career Exploration and Positive Youth Development (PYD). Career Exploration experiences, along with PYD experiences, ensure that young people have a successful start on their career journeys. Each experience is measured by multiple items that have been tested and shown to be valid and reliable measures of each theoretical concept. While all experiences are important and interconnected, our survey uses advanced analytics to predict which promotes the greatest Social Emotional Learning (SEL) growth for each unique group of young people. Social Emotional Learning is the process through which all young people acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships and make responsible and caring decisions. On the right are research-based practices regarding this program that were answered by the mentees.



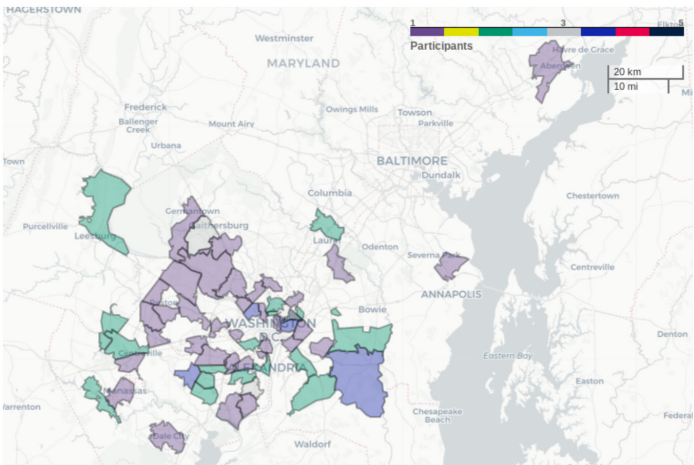
The SKS Pipeline of Talent: Building Tomorrow's Leaders

As noted in the 2022 Annual Report, we were excited to announce the recruitment of So Kids SOAR 2022 graduate Kierra Johnson-- who is now assuming a full-time role with us as the Programs Analyst beginning in January 2024. During her first year with us, Kierra created her own metrics series for our social media, aptly titled "See Kierra's Stats". We wanted to share a glimpse into the data Kierra has helped translate over the past year--with this page itself being a data point of our work. As we look to the future, it is our hope that we will hire more self-actualizing graduates like Kierra, who give a testament to the efficacy of Your Path To Success.

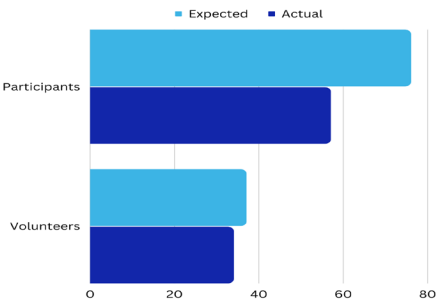


The STEM and baseball clinics had an excellent turnout, with numbers increasing from last year. We nearly doubled our baseball attendance from 2022 to 2023.

This month, I made a heat map of where our So Kids SOAR families live. Here are the results!



Our 2023 water sports clinic on July 8th had the highest number of volunteers and participants out of any clinic since 2019!



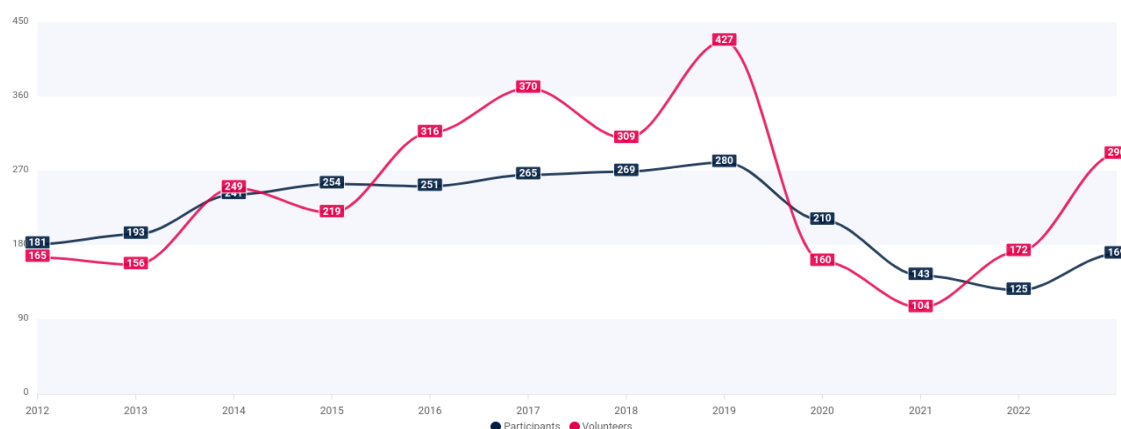
Our Impact, Our Metrics

The So Kids SOAR mission is to take our participants on a journey of self-realization of their potential—giving them the confidence to succeed in all areas of their life. Over the last three years, we have been able to hire our own participants, which creates more depth to our programming.

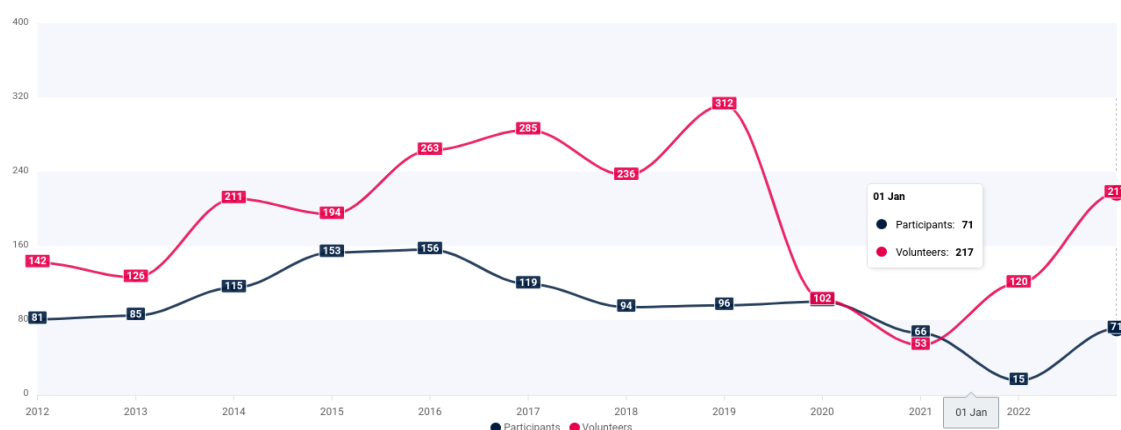
OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- In 2023, we engaged a total 169 participants; with 71 being brand new participants
- In 2023, we engaged a total 290 volunteers; with 217 being brand new volunteers
- Since Your Path To Success' inception, we have helped employ 18 young adults with disabilities (average per year) within one year of graduating from Your Path To Success

Total Participants and Volunteers Served



Total New Participants and Volunteers



Our Staff



Dan Cerullo, Programs Manager

Dan recently joined us in January 2024. He was born and raised in the Maryland-DC area; and went to college in Pennsylvania. He graduated from York College of Pennsylvania in 2022 with a degree in Sports Management and a minor in Non-profit Management. We are excited to welcome him to the team as he has past experience with children with disabilities before in camps.



Kierra Johnson, Programs Analyst

As a YPTS graduate, Kierra provides incredible insight into the pacing of our programs and the support that is needed to help our mentees excel. Kierra was hired as our part-time Programs Coordinator in January 2023, and accomplished many professional and personal goals in just seven months—from appearing on live-television interviews to passing her Driver's License test and completing a graduate Statistics course.

Glenda Smith, Executive Director

As the Executive Director since 2011, Glenda has developed relationships with professional sports teams in the area, increased fundraising to capacity build, and saw to the development and successful implementation of new programs. She loves sharing her passion for SKS with her two amazing children (5-year old daughter Lily and 2-year old son Cameron) and is focusing on SKS expansion efforts to multiple cities.



SKS Leadership

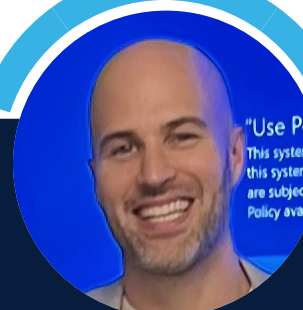
Thanks to the guidance of the Board of Directors, SKS has developed successful programs, processes, and is poised for growth. Your vision and dedication made SKS into one of the leading organizations in the DMV providing programming for youth with disabilities.



Rachel Merritt, Outgoing Board Chair
Madison Government Solutions



Christi Main, Incoming Board Co-Chair
Unit 42 by Palo Alto Networks



Will Cole, Incoming Board Co-Chair
Fannie Mae



Chloe Stewart
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Jay Chesley
US Office of Personnel Management



Stoddert Nibley
Lincoln Properties



Kiel Chesley
NJ3Q



Seye Iwarere
US Patent & Trademark Office



Rachel Goldschmidt
Edlavitch DC Jewish Community Center



Kaushik Rath
Compass Real Estate

SKS Ambassadors

"This past year, was another fun year hosting So Kids Soar soccer clinic.

Thank you to all our sponsors, volunteers and board members for making the clinic a success.

It was an amazing turnout. It was great to see new and old faces alike. We constructed different drills, from dribbling to shooting. Followed by a game with the participants playing against each other. **Everyone had a great time.**

To see smiles and laughters on their faces, made this event truly special."

- Kofi Opare



Kofi Opare, Former Major League Soccer Player



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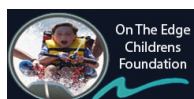
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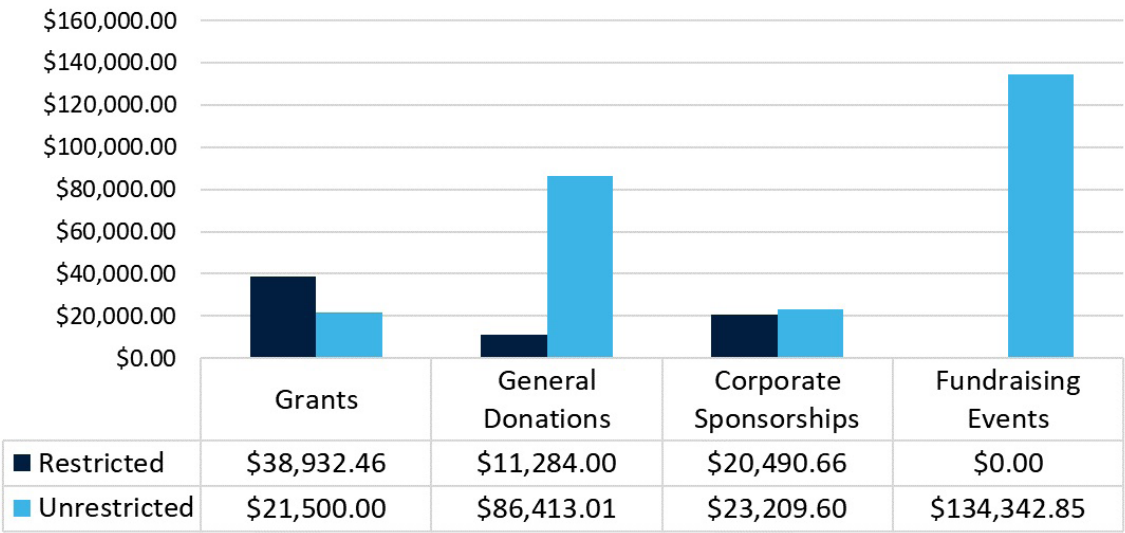


**HOFFMASTER'S
MARINA**

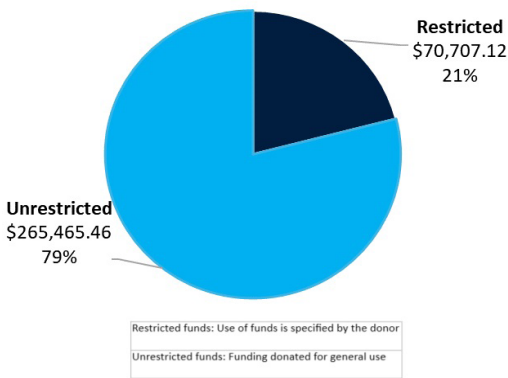
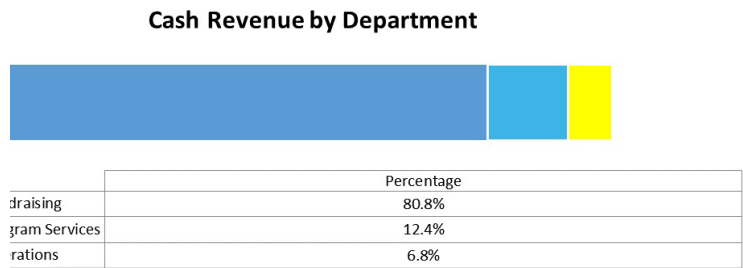


Financials

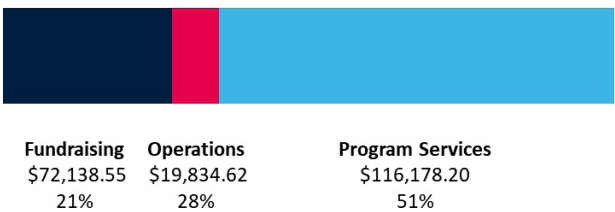
SKS Revenue & Support by Source



SKS Revenue & Support by Funding Type



Cash Expenses by Department



Allocation of In-Kind

