

# STEPS OF IMPACT

Progress and Milestones 2023-2024

Stepping Stones Network is a division of Oasis  
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# Stepping Stones Network

## Who We Are

We are a network of trained professionals and compassionate individuals who partner with adults and nurture children impacted by commercial sexual exploitation as they take steps to interrupt the cycle of trauma, develop life skills, and build a safe circle of support.

## Change Theory

We believe that lives damaged by abusive and destructive experiences can be restored one step at a time. We do this by engaging the community and selecting clients who are determined to actively participate in rebuilding their lives. We then surround them with a circle of love and support that provides safety, basic needs, and individualized therapeutic programming that addresses purpose, home management, financial empowerment, health and wellness, spirituality, parenting, relationships, trauma and addiction recovery, and education and job preparation.

## The Stepping Stones Program



## Our Impact Plan

To learn more about our impact plan scan the QR code.



# Empowering Families

## Growth of Direct Services

Stepping Stones Network (SSN) provides two direct service offerings:

- **Prevention & Outreach**—ad hoc assistance, advocacy and education
- **Moms & Kids Program**—multi-year program with holistic goals

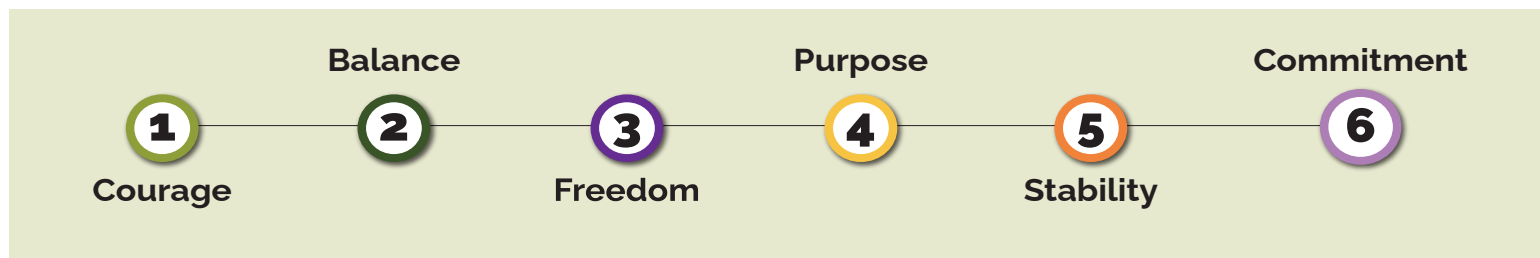
**Over the past three years, SSN has served 36 families (93 lives) across both programs.**

Twenty of these families enrolled in the Moms & Kids Program. In 2023-2024, 85% met the program's "Get Safe, Stay Safe" objective, transitioning away from unsafe environments and creating safe support systems.

**With the help of our donors and grantors we have quadrupled our service capacity.**

The Moms & Kids Program independent living model can now serve 16 families at any given time. Over two to four years, the families receive services in their homes, the community, and at our Adult & Child Development Center in Libertyville, IL.

**Nearly all participants have made significant progress via our six stage program as shown in the graph below. Each stage focuses on unique aspects of recovery and life skills. 60% of participants are in stage 4 or beyond.**



**SSN is "faith-based, free to choose."** Despite our spiritual programming being optional, **14** participants were recently baptized and **11** children dedicated. Our CEO received this unsolicited email, shared with permission here:

*"I would like to thank you for baptizing me, my daughter and grandson.\* This has been something I wanted to do for a long time, and my wish came true. Stepping Stones has been such a blessing for me and I have met some wonderful caring people. To be honest I'm not sure where or how I would have been before you guys came into my life. I know I was depressed and I snapped out of that quick. So thank you, all of your staff for coming into my life and helping me grow and make a change for the better. So I guess you're all stuck with me now. I don't consider Stepping Stones as a group but as a family ♥ God brings people in your life for a reason. I'm so glad he has brought me into you all's life."*



\*All three generations are a part of the Moms & Kids Program

# Participant Progress and Milestones

## Adult Development

- **9** participants opted into the face-to-face group Adult Development program.
- **2** graduated from our program and **2** more are on target to graduate soon. All **4** have full-time jobs and **3** received promotions already!
- **11** completed career assessments or enrolled in Workforce Development.
- **4** enrolled in or graduated trade schools in Cosmetology, Hair Braiding, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), and Medical Assistant (MA).
- **1** graduated high school, **1** started college, **3** are in GED prep.
- **2** served as participant interns with SSN. **1** now works for us full-time.
- **15** are actively working with a financial coach.



**“The Stepping Stones community has truly helped me grow personally and professionally. I was a participant, I graduated, and now I serve as Assistant Manager of Basic Needs. We grow, learn, love, worship and live alongside each other here from start to finish!”**

## Child & Parenting Support

- **4** moms have been reunified with their children.
- **5** participants are receiving parenting support services and have Safe Families\*

*\*Our Partner, Safe Families for Children, hosts vulnerable children and creates extended family-like supports .*



NOTE: Stock images are used in place of participants' photos in this publication for privacy.



# Participant Progress and Milestones

## Holistic Health

- **11** participants received mental health assessments, counseling, or referrals.
- **3** successfully completed substance abuse treatment, with **1** earning a Recovery Coach Certification.
- **5** received major dental treatment not covered by insurance.
- **3** completed probation programs, including community service.



**“The Stepping Stones Program is a dream come true! I never had an opportunity to better myself mentally, physically and emotionally while having a team with tons of experience to guide, support and mentor me. This experience is allowing me to be free of ALL the obstacles, challenges and trauma that I have faced for years and when I look back I can see that I would not be where I am today without them.”**

## Housing, Basic Needs & Case Management

- **20** participant families have been provided housing and furnishings.
- **2** received Section 8 housing vouchers, with **1** helping others apply.
- **3** received donated vehicles and **8** received free vehicle repairs.
- **1** disabled participant was supported through major medical challenges, moved to accessible housing and her vehicle was modified to be able to drive.



**None of this would be possible without our amazing partners:**

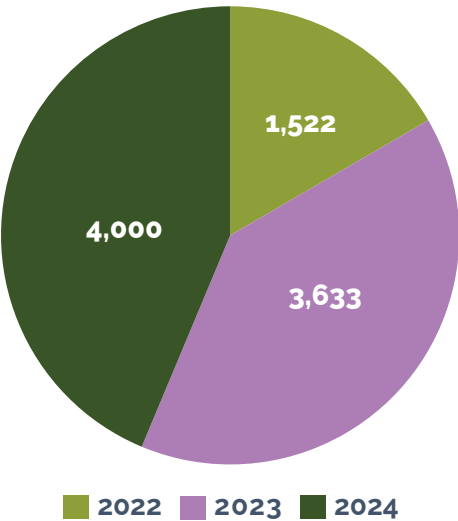
*Great Lakes Credit Union, Lake County Workforce Development, Safe Families for Children, Upscale Rummage, and Willow Creek C.A.R.S. Ministry.*

# Program & Operations

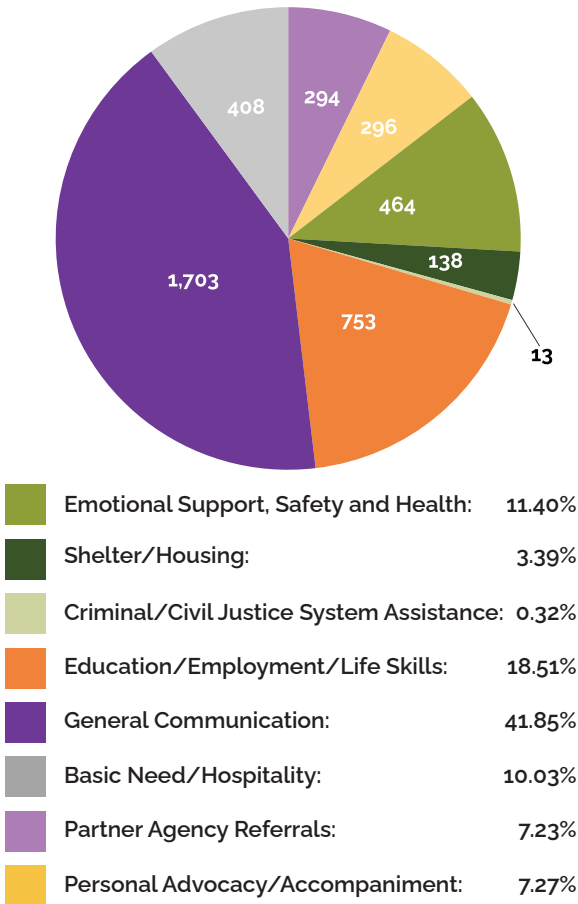
Stepping Stones Network's (SSN) program is unique because it is high-touchpoint and highly relational. **Each participant family receives two to twelve relational touchpoints per week.** Our unique approach has garnered high voluntary engagement, built a deep sense of trust, and created a strong sense of community.

**Touchpoints per family have tripled from 2022 to 2024.**

NUMBER OF TOUCHPOINTS



TYPE OF TOUCHPOINTS  
(2024 Breakdown by category)



**SSN has a total of 18 employees, volunteers and contractors (4 Full-Time, 14 Part-Time.)**

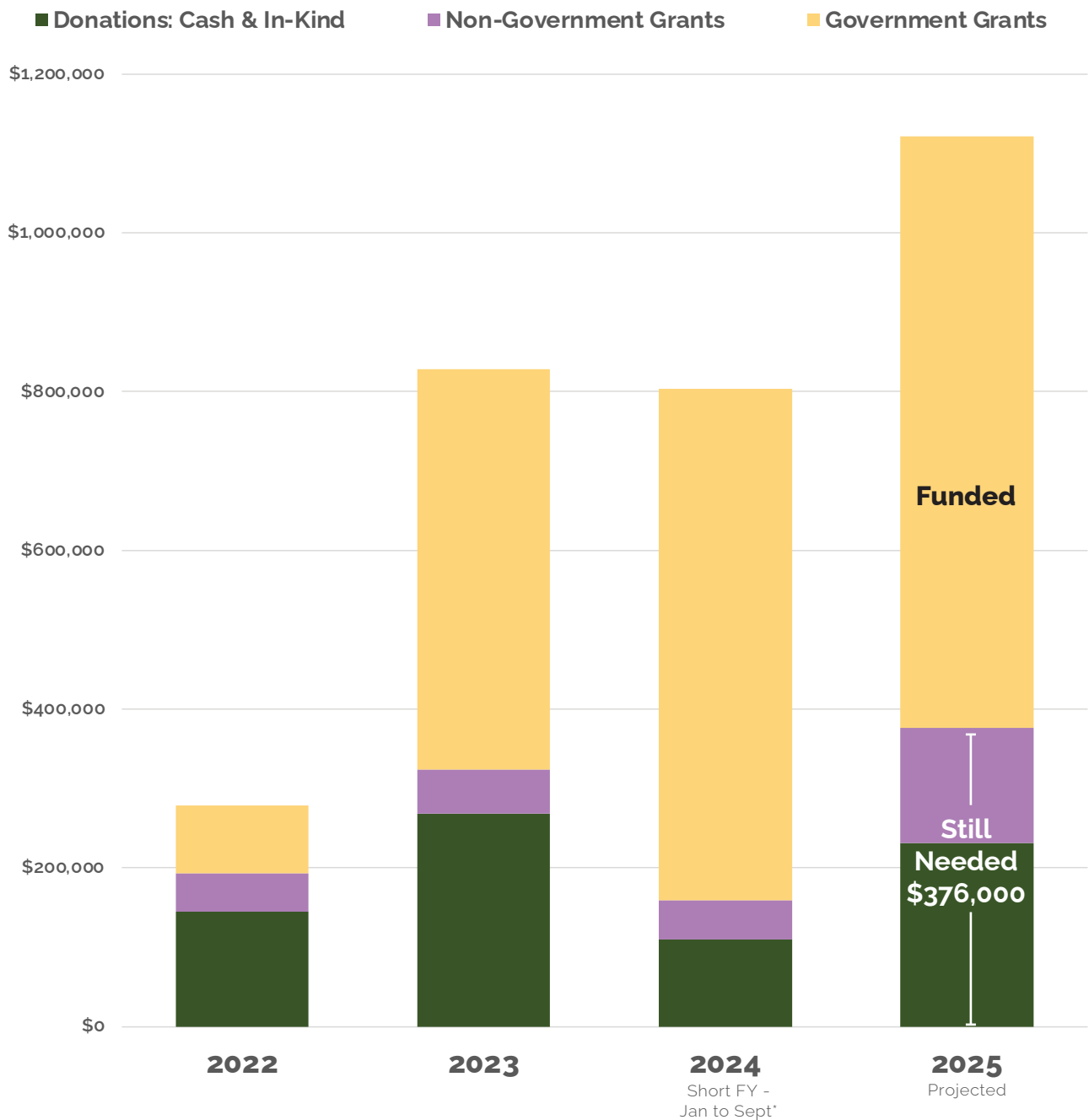
- 9 provide Adult Development, Parenting Support, Clinical Support, Basic Needs, Housing & Case Management.
- 9 manage Finance, Funds Development, Human Resources, Operations and Communications.

Stepping Stones Network now has two locations: Adult & Child Development Center in Libertyville, IL and our Corporate Office at Bridgeport Arts Center in Chicago.

**We are grateful to the following church partners who hosted gatherings and provided other support:** *The Gathering Place, Cornerstone Community Church, Trinity Community Church, Christ Church of Lake Forest, Hope Co, The Orchard, United Methodist Women, and The Chapel.*

# Growth & Financial Overview

Our budget has quadrupled in the last two years primarily due to a major increase in federal grants. In 2022, we leveled up our grant-writing and in 2023, were awarded three, 3-year grants for Human Trafficking Services and Transitional Housing. Two of the three require 25% match via non-federal dollars or in-kind donations. Local community financial support and volunteerism continue to be key to our impact and financial stability.



\*For 2022 and 2023, the fiscal year was Jan 1 - Dec 31. In 2024, we adjusted our fiscal year to Oct 1 - Sept 30. This change shortened the 2024 fiscal year to Jan 1 - Sept 30. As a result, donations are lower because the short year excluded the calendar year-end, a peak period for contributions.

# A Message from Our CEO

As I reflect on the past two years at Stepping Stones Network, I am filled with immense gratitude for the unwavering commitment of our dedicated staff, passionate volunteers, collaborative partners, and generous donors. Together, we have helped adult and child participants interrupt the cycle of trauma, develop life skills, and build a safe circle of support.

Designing and funding our new independent living model has been both challenging and exciting. Our Program team overcame logistical challenges and applied our values of Relationship and Hospitality to support participants in their homes in 20 different locations and as a group at our Adult & Child Development Center. Meanwhile, our Finance & Operations team surfed the complex learning curve of managing three new state and federal grants.

Our results are evidence that both teams knocked it out of the park!

- Almost all of our participants describe our Moms & Kids Program as a safe, family-like experience.
- 60% of our long-term participants are proudly pursuing educational opportunities and jobs with an eye toward economic independence.
- Despite spiritual engagement being entirely voluntary, 83% of 2024 participants have been baptized or dedicated.
- Major grants now fund 63% of our \$1.1M budget.

One of the greatest gifts we can give to our staff and long-term participant families is stability. To do this, we need more committed donors, volunteers, churches and community groups to:

- **Give** - To meet the 25% match requirements of our grants, pay our staff fairly, and cover other necessary expenses.
- **Partner** - To continue and expand our holistic experience to meet the evolving needs of our participant families.
- **Pray** - To encourage and refresh our staff and participants.

Looking ahead, we remain dedicated to addressing the issue of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Your support is vital to our success as we strive to create a program where adult and child participants are in a constructive environment, the cycle of vulnerability is interrupted and families are being restored.

Thank you for your partnership and belief in our work.



Suzanne Baker Brown, CEO



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