



ALTERNATIVES
**ANNUAL
REPORT
FY2016**



Youth Shaping Positive Change

alternativesyouth.org



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A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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As the famous Margaret Mead saying goes, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed individuals can change the world: indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Throughout our 45 years as a youth and family services agency, Alternatives has used the process of listening to young people to better understand underlying issues and to develop programming through collaborative efforts that build skills, responsibility, teamwork, problem solving, and community. While life poses many

challenges to us as individuals, the secret to overcoming them often lies in working together.

At Alternatives, this simple idea guides everything we do, from our programming with youth and schools to the way we deal with unexpected setbacks. Both within programs and as an agency, we have taken a cue from the resilient youth we work with every day by relying on a combination of resolve and teamwork to take on several challenges, both positive and negative, over the last year.

One of the most formidable challenges we faced was the Illinois state budget impasse, a serious situation that is ongoing. As a consequence of the political stalemate in Springfield, funding for social services has been cut across the state, including over \$1 million for crisis and counseling services here at Alternatives. In response to this predicament, our staff have worked together to ensure that internal and external resources are shared and youth continue to receive the support they need.

In contrast to the cuts in counseling services, we were delighted to take on the exciting challenge of raising \$75,000 in new and increased gifts in just six months, an amount that a generous funder promised to match by 150% if we were successful. Our Board of Directors and friends went all out (one even ran an ultra-marathon!), and we exceeded that challenge by raising \$109,000.

Within our programs, young women took on the significant challenge of harassment on Chicago public transportation. Participants in Alternatives’ Girl World program waged a successful campaign in collaboration with the CTA Board to install anti-harassment signage on trains and buses, and the CTA even changed its website.

We are proud of all we’ve been able to achieve by working together. As we look to an exciting and challenging future of expanded programs, we know that the spirit of community will continue to guide our progress.

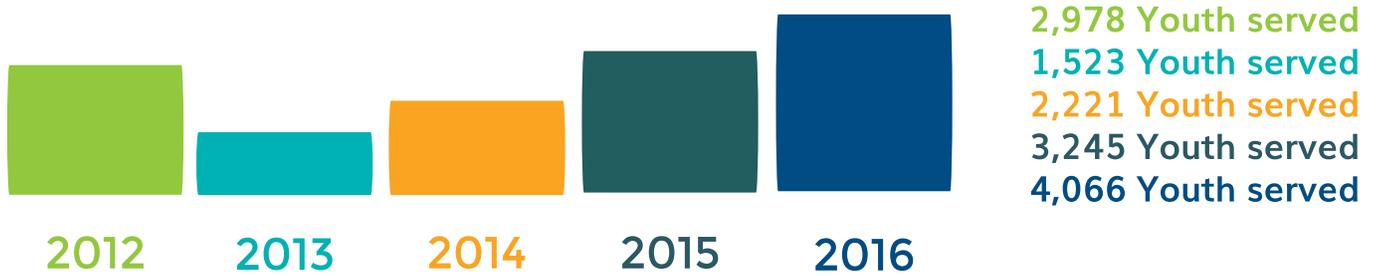
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Judy".

Judith M. Gall
Executive Director

REACHING MORE YOUNG PEOPLE HELPS INCREASE OUR IMPACT

5 YR GROWTH TREND

Over the course of 5 years, we have increased the number of youth we serve by 37%.



2,978 Youth served
1,523 Youth served
2,221 Youth served
3,245 Youth served
4,066 Youth served

85%

of youth in Alternatives' programs say they learned how to communicate better with their peers.

79%

of youth in Alternatives' programs say they became better at getting along with others who are different from themselves as a result of their experience with us.

81%

of youth in Alternatives' programs say that they have gotten better at working with a group or team.

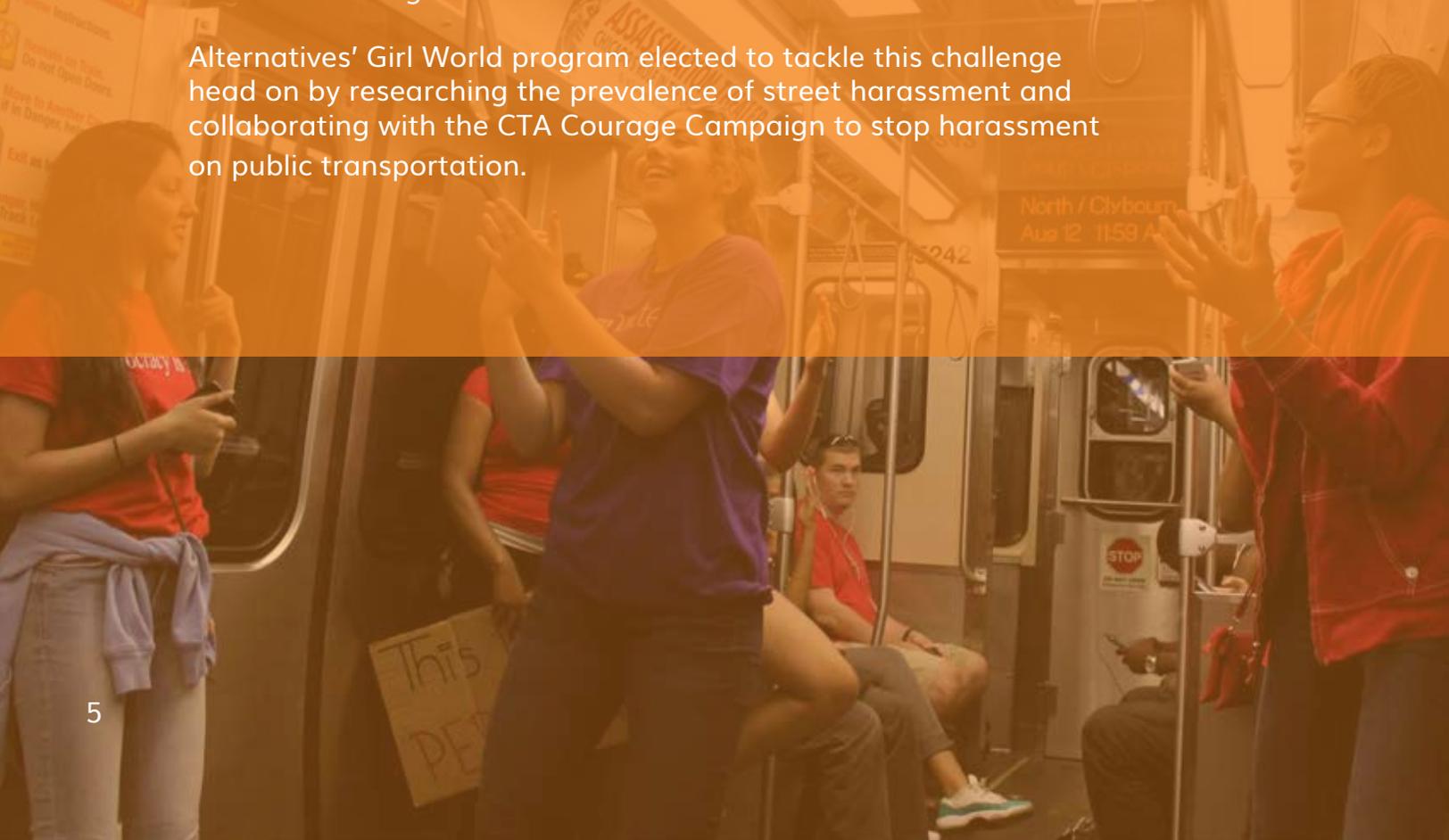




GIRL WORLD

Street harassment is a significant problem faced by many girls and women in Chicago.

Alternatives' Girl World program elected to tackle this challenge head on by researching the prevalence of street harassment and collaborating with the CTA Courage Campaign to stop harassment on public transportation.



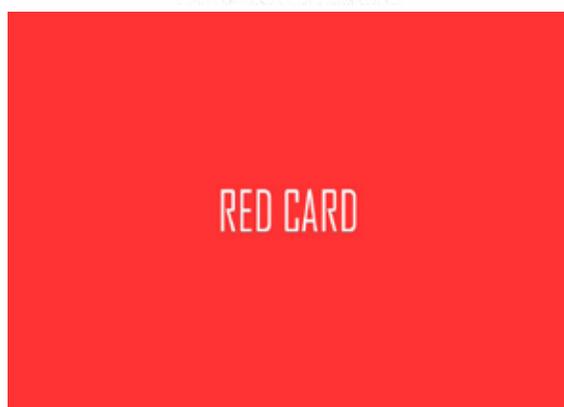
Girl World participants conducted surveys and interviews to understand the frequency of street harassment in their community. They found that while 92% of people they surveyed had been harassed in a public place (both men and women), 61% intervened when they saw someone being harassed, but only 3.7% had ever reported an incident.

When program participants presented their research findings and personal experiences to the CTA Board, members were so shocked and distressed by what they heard that they created a task force to follow up on the concerns that Girl World raised.

The task force looked at what other transit authorities around the country were doing to address the issue and brought some ideas to Girl World participants for feedback. The task force's initial response focused on encouraging riders to report harassment when it happened. However, Girl World felt that, though this was important, the CTA could also discourage incidents before they occurred with signs stating that harassment is not acceptable on CTA buses and trains.

As a result of these meetings, the CTA added a new section to their website about harassment, and they placed signs in the advertising sections of trains, stations, and buses.

This campaign was hugely impactful to the young women in Girl World and was a testament to what young people can accomplish when they work together to make their voices heard.



Girl World participants created these "red cards" as a safe way for women and girls to confront someone who is harassing them on the street. Each card said Red Card on one side and, on the other side, featured a creative message designed by participants, like these two examples.

Because of participating in Girl World

92%

of the girls reported setting higher goals for themselves.

92%

felt they improved their communication skills.

92%

said they now have a higher level of confidence in their abilities.

100%

felt they improved their problem solving skills.

100%

said they now have a higher level of confidence expressing their opinions.



URBAN ARTS

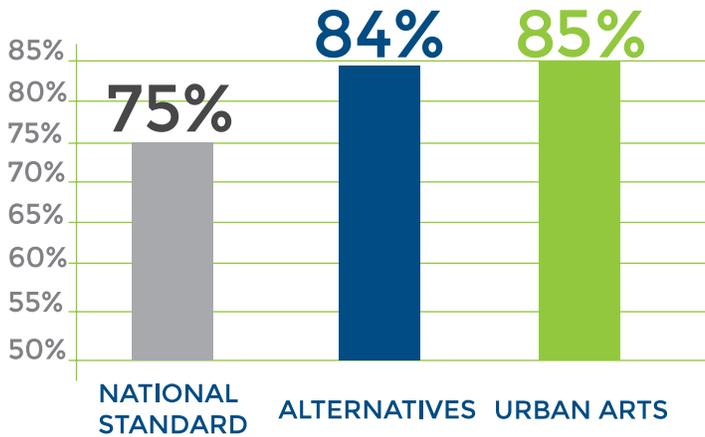
Our Urban Arts program staff have been working hard to further develop a more replicable model that uses arts instruction to build young people's skills in self-expression, conflict resolution, and leadership. This powerful approach was recognized as a violence prevention strategy and granted funding from Get IN Chicago.

This new funding made it possible for us to expand to four Chicago high schools and work with approximately 80 additional young people.



PROGRAM ATTENDANCE MATTERS

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE



Building positive relationships is just one of many ways to reduce conflict and develop peaceful solutions to interpersonal problems. In our Urban Arts program, young people make positive connections with peers and adults, which helps them build and maintain healthy relationships throughout their lives.

Alternatives' youth development programs have a consistently high rate of attendance, a strong indication of young people's level of engagement with our programming and staff. However, we cannot overlook the many challenges that young people face outside of the safe space Alternatives provides, challenges that can sometimes make it difficult to reduce or eliminate conflict.

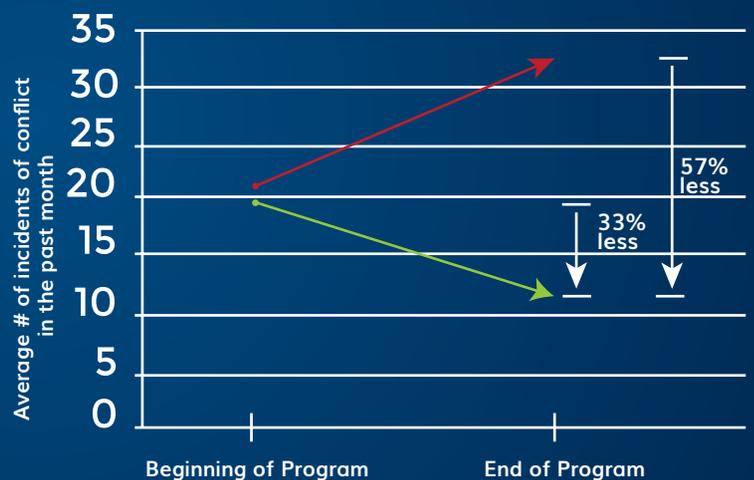
Consider an example: Jason meets Brittney during their freshman year of high school. They take several classes together and form a close relationship outside of school. But off school premises, they have to deal with the stresses of family conflicts and community violence, problems which stem from poverty and lack of investment in their neighborhood. Over time, their relationship becomes tense and difficult to manage, resulting in escalating levels of conflict between them that could lead to verbal or even physical confrontation.

Stories like this, which are typical among the young people we serve, end differently depending on whether youth have access to engaging programs that help them cultivate the skills they need to keep their relationships positive while navigating a world full of challenges. Young people's success in reducing conflicts after attending our programs testifies to the importance of the safe, constructive space Alternatives creates.

PARTICIPANT CONFLICT

We compared the group of students with high program attendance (80%+) to those with low attendance (under 80%). At the beginning of the program, the two groups had very similar average rates of conflict. By the end of the program, participants who attended regularly reduced their conflicts by 33% and had on average 57% fewer incidents than those with more sporadic attendance.

- Participants who attended regularly (80% of attendees attended 80% of the time or more)
- Participants who did not regularly attend (20% of attendees attended less than 80% of the time)



If Jason and Brittney attend Urban Arts regularly, they could learn to resolve issues, but without that support, it is likely their conflict would continue. We see this pattern in our data.

STATE BUDGET IMPASSE

The most substantial challenge that Alternatives faced in FY16 was felt across the State of Illinois – the state's budget impasse.

The Illinois budget impasse created considerable stress and uncertainty for Alternatives and had a significant negative effect on our staff members and our young people, schools, and communities.

We carefully navigated this protracted situation with the goal of maintaining as many services as possible while ensuring Alternatives' financial stability. While the budget impasse disproportionately affected programs with state funding, all staff participated in furlough days. When it became clear that the end of the impasse was not imminent, both service and staff cuts had to be made. This type of uncertain environment takes a toll on everyone, including young people, their families, and staff, as well as communities. In the first quarter of FY17, the state finally passed an 18 month stop-gap budget, and Alternatives was paid for the past year's expenses.

FAMILY INTERVENTION SERVICES

The program most impacted by the State's budget impasse is our Family Intervention Services program. This is one of our most impactful programs that focuses on young people who need support the most -- those who are homeless, have run away, or have been kicked out of their home by their parent or guardian. Family Intervention Services helps connect these youth with temporary housing, provides support to address other immediate needs, and then works to find safe and stable housing within their families -- helping to keep young people out of the child welfare and/or juvenile justice system. Our service area for this program is outlined in the Chicago map (see page 3).

By working together, our staff made it through this challenging period and Alternatives kept this program going when some service providers were forced to close it down.

SHAWN

The best examples of Alternatives' work come from client success stories. Our therapists have countless success stories, and the story of Shawn vividly illustrates our impact. Shawn came to Alternatives back in October of 2015. At that point he had been estranged from his parents for 9 months and was either couch surfing at his friends' houses or sleeping on the train. During this time, he witnessed multiple incidents of violence, including the loss of a close friend. He was not in school, and he had no hope for the future. Shawn was connected to Alternatives' Family Intervention Services program.

We placed him in temporary housing, enrolled him in school, reconnected him with his mother, and generally helped to stabilize his life. He continues to receive counseling

for his post traumatic stress disorder, but his progress is amazing. Last fall, he passed every one of his classes, and in the spring he graduated from high school with a culinary certificate. Program staff attended his graduation ceremony, and he was so full of pride and hope for the future!

There are so many Shawns out there who just need support. With full funding for Family Intervention Services, we could have impacted three times as many young people through this program.

80%

More than 80% of youth in our crisis program are reconnected with stable housing within their families.

\$100,000

Annual taxpayer savings per youth diverted from the child welfare or juvenile justice systems.



DONOR IMPACT

One of Alternatives' long time foundation supporters, Charles E. Marks, Jr. Charitable Trust, announced in FY16 that they were planning to close their doors. Alternatives has been working for many years to increase private contributions and diversify funding, and this funder believed in our Board's and individual supporters' capacity to introduce more people to Alternatives' incredible work with young people.

The foundation's trustees gave Alternatives' Board a challenge grant that was a wonderfully difficult challenge. They said that if the Board could raise at least \$75,000 in new and increased gifts in 6 months, they would match it by 150%. This was during the same timeframe as the beginning of the State's budget impasse.

Each Board member used a different strategy. Several members hosted gatherings in their homes, three worked together to organize a Casino Night at Alternatives' Youth Center in Uptown that raised \$11,000,

and one Board member decided to run the JFK 50 Mile race in Maryland.

This historic race in Maryland begins by following the Appalachian Trail for just over 15 miles. While this Board member, Mike Cramarosso, has run 51 marathons and 7 ultramarathons (50 Km or 31 miles), this race was his longest ever!

Through this heroic show of commitment to Alternatives' work, Mike was able to raise more than \$5,000. This was such a great experience for Mike that he is building opportunities for other Chicago Marathoners to raise funds for Alternatives.

The hard work of our amazing Board of Directors helped bring together hundreds of supporters, and we met the challenge, raising \$109,000 of new and increased gifts by the end of December 2015. These gifts were then matched at 150%, which meant an additional \$260,000, for a grand total of \$369,000!

Our boost in donors and funding this fiscal year helped us negotiate an especially challenging period, and we want to use this opportunity to publicly thank the Marks Charitable Trust and all of Alternatives' Board of Directors and donors.

You took action and made the difference in our ability to navigate this challenge and in fact to grow our reserve fund so that we can plan for the future.



(Above) Board member Mike Cramarosso (in orange) ran the historic JFK 50 Mile race in Maryland to raise \$5,000 for Alternatives.

(Below) Board members host a Casino night in Alternatives' youth center.



VISION FOR THE FUTURE

After navigating many challenges in FY16, Alternatives is on stable footing and ready for the future. Near the end of the fiscal year, we began making changes and key strategic investments to put our plans in motion. In March, we opened a temporary office in the Grand Boulevard community area on Chicago's South Side. This space will serve as an important launch point for our full centralized South Side Center.

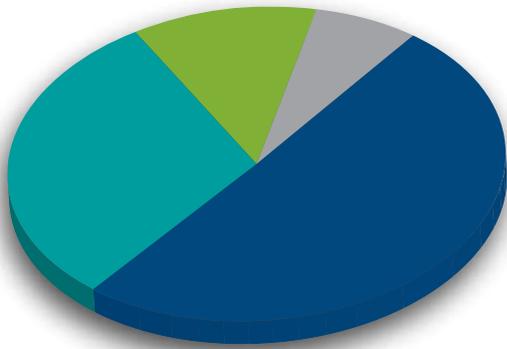
As we grow, we plan to increase connections between our various programs and services in order to provide comprehensive support for young people. In order to facilitate this program integration, we hired a single Director of Programs to oversee both our Youth Development programs and our Behavioral Health Services.

We also created a new position, Director of Operations and Strategic Engagement, to support strategic planning, partnership cultivation, professional development, and community engagement.

Although our plans to open a new site are recent, we have been operating in schools and with partner organizations on the South Side for many years. In these interactions, we have heard repeatedly that young people need behavioral health services. To meet that need and establish a sustainable funding model, we are investing in infrastructure to bill Medicaid for services provided to eligible clients. This key strategic investment will ensure Alternatives' longevity and ability to provide excellent services.

We are looking forward to the future. While we know that more challenges will arise, we are confident in our ability to emerge from them stronger and better able to support the development of Chicago's youth.

FY16 FINANCIALS



Revenue

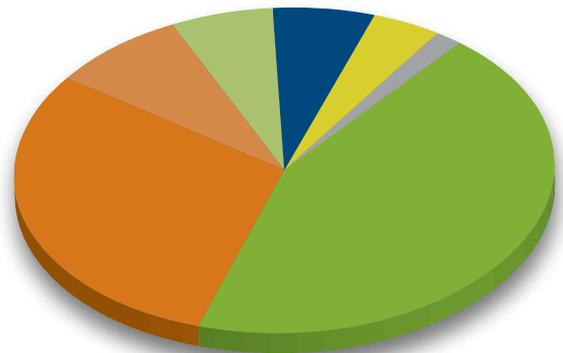
Total Revenue \$3,637,950

- Corporate and Foundation - 44%
- Illinois Department of Human Services - 30%
- City of Chicago & Cook County - 8.1%
- Individual - 6.1%
- Chicago Public Schools - 6.0%
- Special Events - 1.4%
- Miscellaneous (Program fees, Medicaid, In-kind donations) - 4.4%

Expenses

Total Expenses: \$3,291,971

- Youth Development Services - 50.7%
- Clinical Services - 30.5%
- Administration - 12%
- Fundraising - 6.7%



Statement of Financial Position

Assets

Total current assets:	\$1,103,116
Net property and equipment:	\$1,061,893
Permanently restricted funds:	\$138,000
Total assets:	\$2,303,009

Liabilities and Net Assets

Current liabilities:	\$266,368
Mortgage and line of credit:	\$1,073,792
Unrestricted:	\$670,508
Temporarily restricted:	\$420,709
Permanently restricted:	\$138,000

Total liabilities and net assets: \$2,303,009

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

\$50,000+

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 CTU Foundation
 Get IN Chicago
 Michael Reese Health Trust
 Polk Bros. Foundation
 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
 Topfer Family Foundation

\$25,000-\$49,999

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois
 Heartland International Health Centers
 Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation
 McCormick Foundation One Summer Plus
 McDougall Family Foundation
 VNA Foundation

\$10,000-\$24,999

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*Please note that this list includes only those gifts made by a specific individual or organization between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016.

Your collective impact on the organization is immense. Your support is important to us.



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