



LADIES of VIRTUE  
Transforming Lives. Destined for Greatness.

# ANNUAL REPORT



## LETTER FROM OUR

# Founder

I am so proud of our LOV team, mentors, volunteers and staff who work tirelessly to uplift our girls in every way.

While many nonprofits had to close their doors or reduce the number of people they served, we served more girls than ever! From 165 to 245 girls with plans to serve 350 next year!

Other 2021 accomplishment include:

- Hired our 2nd full-time staff member Program Manager, Kenya Mercer
- Expanded our mental health support with one on one, small Group and mental health workshops for our LOV sisters and parents

And that's not all...

- 93% of our LOV sisters stated that their leadership skills increased
- 97% stated that they accomplished one or more of their goals
- 100% of our high school seniors were accepted to college
- 90% of our seniors enrolled in college, trade school or armed forces
- 97% of our LOV sisters ages 16 and over were placed in summer internships

I am thankful for our Board of Directors, Friends of LOV Council, Host Committee, Sponsors and Staff. In addition, whether you donated for the first time or increased your financial giving it all truly made a difference not only in the lives of our girls but also for the future of Ladies of Virtue.

We may be a small grassroots organization today but sustainability is our north star. We recently partnered with the University of Chicago to complete our 3 year strategic plan. Our vision for the next three years is that Ladies of Virtue will be recognized as the leading mentoring and leadership development program for Black girls in the greater Chicago region, which fosters sisterhood and strengthens families and communities.

Next year, we have plans to enhance our infrastructure and technology while also expanding our leadership program to more girls in the Chicago land area.

But we won't get there without your support. Thank you to all of you for walking with me on this 10 year journey. I could not have done it without you.

Thank you so much for your support! Here's to a future where our Black girls feel:

**Respected.**  
**Honored.**  
**Protected.**  
**Cherished.**  
**Loved.**

**We are Ladies of Virtue.**





# OVERVIEW



# THE NEED



## **Black Girls are viewed as needing less nurturing and less support but it doesn't have to be this way.**

Black girls live in and witness the same issues as Black boys but feel that their concerns go mostly unaddressed and overlooked. Research confirms what our girls have been telling us all along. Due to stereotypes, a 2017 Georgetown Law Study showed that adults believe black girls ages 5-19 need less nurturing, protection, support and comfort than their peers of the same age.

### **Why Black Girls?**

There are significant barriers preventing our girls, specifically Black girls, from living up to their fullest potential in preparation for their future. For example, the Chicago Public School created the Early College and Career Credential (ECCC) program so that more students are prepared and positioned to accomplish great things after high school. This program provides increased access to college-level coursework and career training in schools (examples include Dual Enrollment, AP Exams, JROTC and Career Technical Education). Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) website found that only 37.2% of Black female high-school students earned an ECCC compared to 58% of Latinx female students and 73.2% of white female students.

Furthermore, although there has been a decrease in youth out-of-work rates from 2014 to 2016, substantial racial and gender gaps remain. The 2016 American Community Survey found that in Chicago, only 14.3% of Black females ages 16 - 19 were employed compared to 29.4% of white female teens.

Many students living in divested communities may not have access to their school counselor (avg ratio in CPS = 330:1) to help them navigate the path to college and typically hit barrier after barrier. Black girls want and need support as they navigate the post-secondary planning process which often consist of weighing options that include 2 or 4-year college, trade school or the armed forces.

### **Black Girls and Mental Health**

Studies show that from 2007 to 2018, suicides rates for Americans ages 10 to 24 rose by 57%, and the increase was significant among young girls U.S. suicide rates actually decreased somewhat during the early months of the pandemic, compared to the year before it—but given spiking anxiety and depression rates during the pandemic, which studies suggest took a particularly harsh toll on young people, there's good reason for continuing concern.

Girls of color are increasingly accounting for this trend. According to one 2019 Pediatrics study, the number of white children attempting suicide in the U.S. decreased from 1991 to 2017, while the number of Black children attempting suicide went up. All told, about 15% of Black female high school students attempted suicide in the year leading up to the CDC's 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, compared to about 9% of white female students and about 12% of Hispanic female students. Actual suicide death rates for Black American girls ages 13 to 19 increased by 182% from 2001 to 2017. Black youths are two times more likely to die by suicide compared to their white counterparts



# THE SOLUTION

For more than 10 years, we've led the charge in empowering Black girls in some of Chicago's most underserved communities on their journeys to becoming confident, purpose-driven leaders through character development, career readiness, and civic engagement.

We are the only organization offering our unique community-based model that integrates culture, one-on-one and group mentoring, leadership development, and mental health support specifically for the needs of Black girls.

Committed to educational advancement, in 2021, 100% of our girls have been accepted into 4-year colleges and universities and 97% of our girls are placed in summer internships compared to 14% of African American teens who have been employed.

Even greater, our impact extends beyond their high-school graduation. We mentor and support our alumni for six additional years to further their development and success.

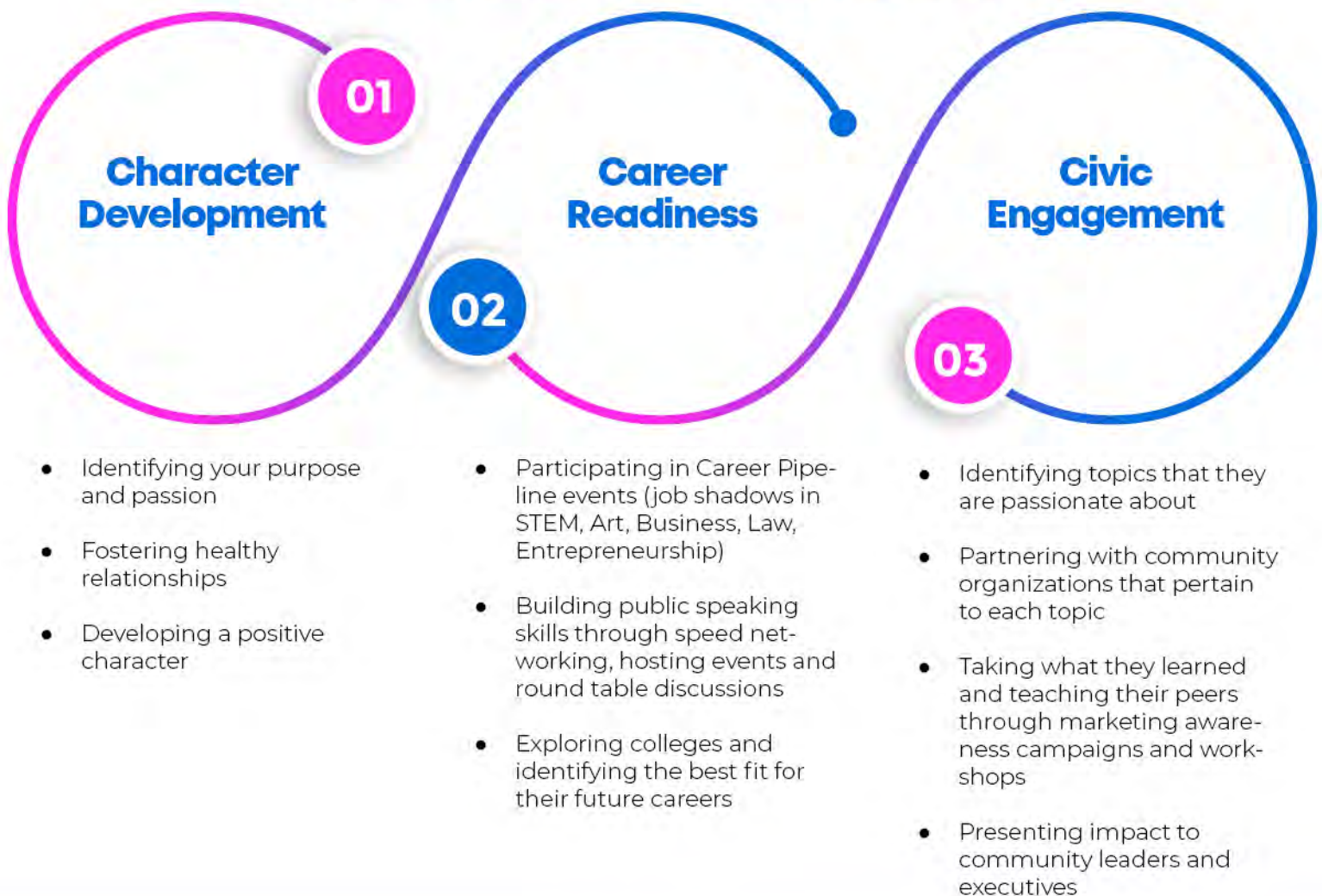
Through the support of our Board of Directors, staff, volunteers and community, we've been recognized by The Obama Foundation, The University of Chicago, The Chicago Innovation Awards, and many others.



# Ladies of Virtue (LOV) Stands In the Gap For Those Who May Not Have Positive Role Models in Their Lives

Launched in 2011, we match our girls with mentors and prepare them for leadership through character development, career readiness and civic engagement. We also provide mentoring and support up to 6 years after high-school. We want our ladies to become confident and purpose driven leaders.

## We Prepare Our Girls for Leadership in 3 Ways:







**Our mission** is to instill purpose, passion, and perseverance in girls, ages 9 to 18, while preparing them for college, careers and to become change agents in their communities.

**Our vision** is to become a world-class mentoring and leadership training institution for black girls.



# IMPACT





# OUR REACH IN 2021

9

**Programs**

calendar year

79

**Volunteers**

calendar year

245

**Participants**

program year

July 2020 to June 2021

1,550

**Residents served  
for COVID-19  
Initiatives**

calendar year





# IMPACT OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS

	2018	2019	2020	2021
# of People served	150	150	1385	1795
Percent ages 16 and over placed in summer internships	96%	95%	91%	97%
Percent graduated from high-school	100%	100%	100%	100%
Percent trained in project management / leading projects that benefit the community	100%	100%	100%	100%
Percent accepted into college, trade school or armed forces	100%	100%	100%	100%
Percent enrolled in to college, trade school or armed forces	89%	100%	92%	90%
Revenue	\$ 229,279	\$ 299,449	\$ 553,513	\$ 794,513



# 2021 HIGHLIGHTS:

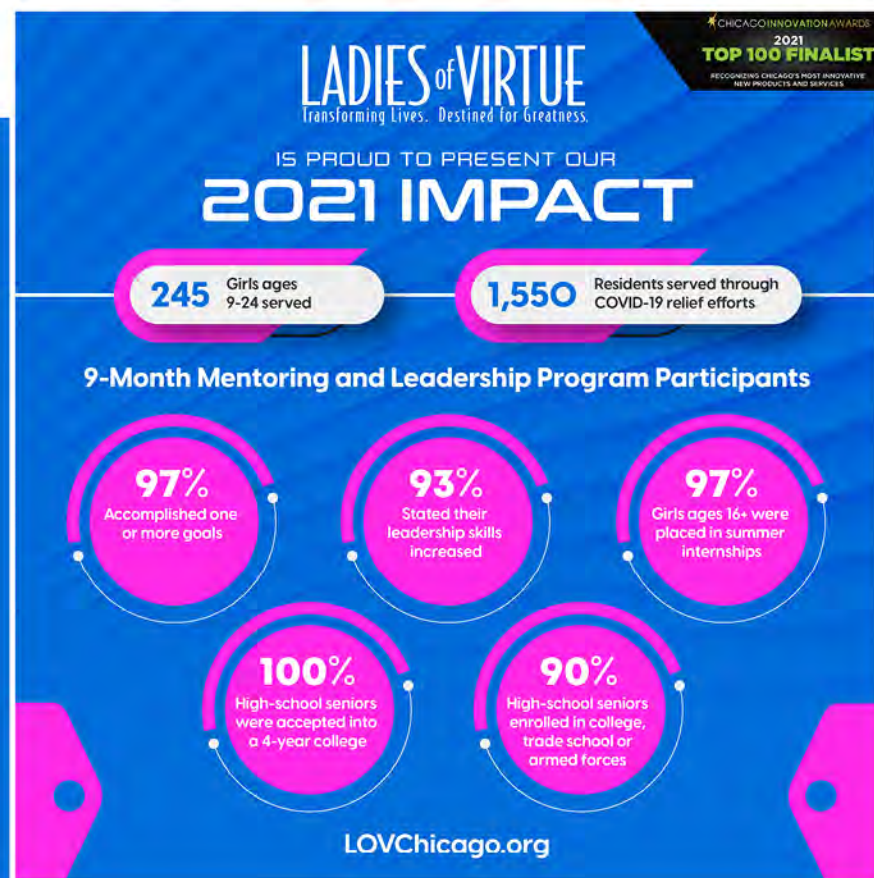
Chicago Innovation Award Winner - Top 100 Finalist

Partnered with the University of Chicago to develop our 2022 - 2024 strategic plan

Funded by the Oprah Winfrey Charitable Foundation

Notable partners include: AT&T, JLL, Northwestern Medicine, Rush University, the Office of the City Clerk Chicago, Bright Star Community Outreach, Project Management Institute Chicagoland Chapter, Obama Foundation and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois

Funded by Niantic (Developer of Pokemon Go)





# TESTIMONIALS



# TESTIMONIALS

## LOV Sisters



### Madison, 11th grade

"Ladies of Virtue has impacted my life because I was given a group of women and girls, that look like me, to look up to and lean on. No matter what I'm going through academically, personally, or emotionally, everywhere I turn there is love and guidance"



### Kayla, Alum

"As a first generation college student, I was lost and confused about how to continue my education after high school, but the mentors at Ladies of Virtue helped me with my college applications, scholarships, and my personal statements. With their support I was able to attend a 4 year university"



### Treazure, Alum

"I learned all the skills that I needed such as public speaking, dining etiquette and just how to be a woman in general. Ladies of Virtue has shown me a different side of the world that I would have not seen if I did not join".

# 2021

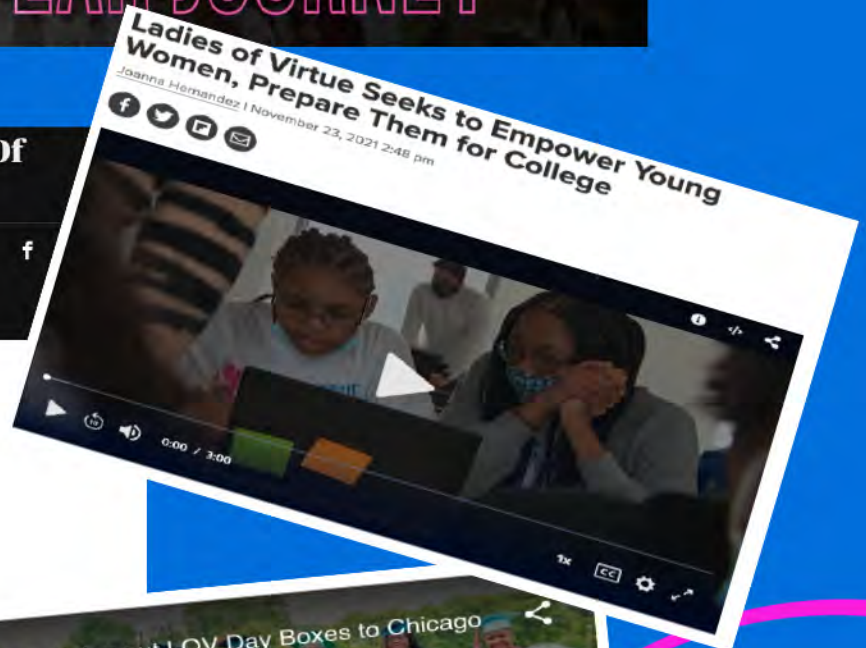
## NEWS & MEDIA



### Ladies Of Virtue Celebrates 10 Years Of Serving City's Black Girls



NOVEMBER 9, 2021 / 10:07 AM / CBS CHICAGO







# Top 5 Moments of 2021

# 5



## Developed 2022 to 2024 Strategic Plan

In 2021, the University of Chicago partnered with Ladies of Virtue to establish a 3 year strategic plan. Over the course of 9 months, our Board of Directors, staff, mentors, participants and parents provided their thought leadership on the future of Ladies of Virtue.

This included a new 3 year vision:

Ladies of Virtue is recognized as the leading mentoring and leadership development program for Black girls in the greater Chicago region, which fosters sisterhood and strengthens families and communities.

We appreciate Sharon Grant and the entire University of Chicago team for leading our strategic planning process.



# 4



## **Founder Hired 1st Full time Employee**

Kenya Mercer was hired in March 2021 as a Program Manager to facilitate programs for our LOV Clubs along with managing special projects.

She was our Founder's first full-time hire.

She has done a phenomenal job with not only identifying areas of improvement but also providing and implementing solutions. We salute Kenya for her leadership along with her ability to make everyone feel like they are apart of the team.

We appreciate Kenya, for all of the love, dedication, and hard work that she has given to us.

3



## **Ladies of Virtue is Awarded Top 100 Finalist by Chicago Innovation Awards**

Ladies of Virtue was selected as Chicago Innovation Awards Top 100 Finalist from 425 nominees for incorporating robust mental health support in our leadership programming.



# 2



## LOV Sisters Meet Michelle Obama

Our LOV sisters Kourtney and Madison participated in a conversation with First Lady Michelle Obama at a roundtable discussion with girls from mentoring programs across Chicago! The event was hosted by the Obama Foundation and the participants learned more about the Girls Opportunity Alliance and how they planned to impact Chicago. Our girls loved learning from First Lady Michelle Obama, and we truly appreciate the work she has done to create such inspiring paths for young girls around the world.

“Meeting Michelle Obama was eye-opening and inspiring. She taught me a lot about being a young woman and I learned what I must do to succeed in America.” - Kourtney

“When Michelle Obama hugged me her perfume transferred to my blazer. I’m never wearing this blazer again! I was so inspired by her. Thank you so very much for including me in the event. I will cherish this memory forever.” - Madison

Thank you First Lady Michelle Obama for all you do, you are making history!



# 1



## **Ladies of Virtue Wins \$50k Grant from MacArthur Foundation**

Ladies of Virtue is a recipient of the MacArthur Foundation 2021 Annual Staff Awards!

Each year, MacArthur awards two Chicago-based nonprofits a special \$50K grant.

This will help us continue to provide mentorship, leadership and mental health support for Black girls and women in Chicago.





# **OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS, PARTNERS & SPONSORS**

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## Board Members

**Elsie Cardell**

President at Results Driven  
Marketing  
Board Member

**Risa Davis**

Retired as Vice President of Corporate  
Development at United Way  
Board Member

**Veronica Obianwa**

Corporate Controller at Walmart  
Board Member

**Averil Edwards**

Managing Counsel at United Airlines  
Board Secretary

**Tiana Conley**

Vice President Global Portfolio  
Strategy at Mars  
Board Member

**Sheilina Henry**

Group Vice President of Diversity and  
Inclusion at Bloomin' Brands  
Board Member

**Leah Hobson**

Vice President of Finance at  
Northwestern Memorial Healthcare  
Board President

**Jelani Rucker**

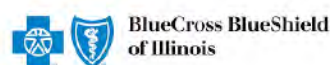
Vice President of Marketing at  
Zeckelman Industries  
Board Member

**Sizwe Kamara -**

Regional Director at Morgan Stanley  
Investment Management  
Board Member



# OUR STRATEGIC PARTNERS



# OUR SPONSORS

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

### BUILDER



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START THE CONVERSATION  
THEPOLICYCIRCLE.ORG

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Veronica Obianwa

### ADVOCATE



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# THE PATH FORWARD

# 2022 – 2024

## Strategic Plan

*Vision:*

**Ladies of Virtue** is recognized as the leading mentoring and leadership development program for Black girls in the greater Chicago region, which fosters sisterhood and strengthens families and communities.

### Goal 1

#### Programs

LOV's program model becomes a proven and unique mentoring and leadership program for black girls in order to scale throughout the greater Chicago region by 2024.

### Goal 2

#### Infrastructure

LOV will develop and execute a plan for new facility space, technology and operation platforms which allow staff to serve and scale programs effectively.

### Goal 3

#### Team

LOV will attract, develop, and retain high performing talent, building a full-time cross-functional staff along with a highly engaged board, mentors and volunteers.

### Goal 4

#### Development

LOV will have a diverse, sustainable development model to support a minimum of a \$1 million annual budget.

### Goal 5

#### Marketing

LOV will develop an integrated marketing approach to support Ladies of Virtue's growth model.



# FUTURE PLANS

## In 2022, we plan to:

- Increase the number of students served
- Hire a full-time Fundraising Coordinator
- Develop a marketing plan
- Increase the number of strategic partners by connecting with corporations and community organizations, in order to align mission, shared vision, increase diversity and build a strong Chicago community.
- Seek additional ways to leverage technology for our curriculum (e.g., app, technology platform)
- Seek to establish partnerships with organizations that will help us enhance our internal HR processes, procedures and structures

# FINANCIALS

In the midst of the pandemic and the recent unrest that took place in Chicago, our supporters truly answered the call for support. In total, we raised

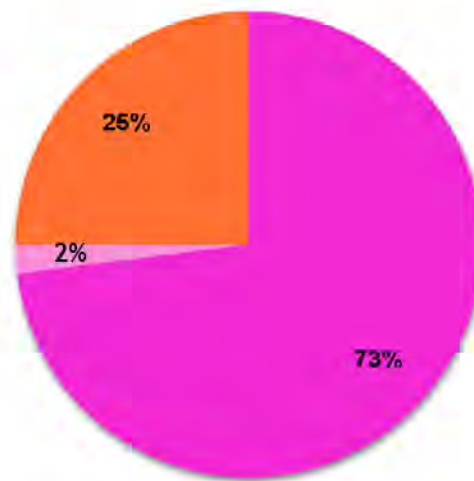
**\$794,487.86\***

## 2021 Revenue



- Corporate and Grants Contributions
- Individual Contributions

## 2021 Expenses



- Fundraising Expense
- Program Expense
- Management and administrative expenses

**\*Note:** Accountant will separate the Corporate Funding from Grants/Foundation starting in 2022.





Thank You!

