



# IMPACT REPORT



2023



## OUR MISSION IS TO EMPOWER YOUTH THROUGH MUSIC AND MENTORSHIP

Guitars Over Guns offers students from our most vulnerable communities a combination of music education and mentorship with professional musicians to help them overcome hardship, find their voice and reach their potential as tomorrow's leaders.

Nearly **10,000**  
students served  
since **2008**

## 2023 - 2024 AT A GLANCE

**1490** Students

**52**

School &  
Community  
Sites

**83** Mentors

## 17 ARTISTIC DISCIPLINES TAUGHT

Guitar, Bass, Cinema, Keys, Dance, Drums,  
Latin Percussion, Modern Band, Music  
Production, Songwriting, Spoken Word,  
Photography & Digital Media, Poetry &  
Creative Writing, Rap, Visual Art, Vocals, DJing



**Miami**  
Since 2008



**Chicago**  
Since 2014



**Los Angeles**  
Since 2021

# OUR IMPACT

During the 2022-23 program year...



of students said that their mentor expects them to try new things and do their best



of students demonstrated measurable growth in multiple core Positive Youth Development capacities



of students would recommend Guitars Over Guns to a friend



of students felt encouraged by their mentors to work through difficult problems



of students said that their mentor pays attention to their lives and can be counted on for help



## HOW DO WE MEASURE IMPACT?

Young people in Guitars Over Guns programs complete biannual surveys through Hello Insight, a nationally benchmarked, research-based data platform that helps youth development organizations identify and respond to the needs of their participants. In these surveys, our young people self-report on growth across six Positive Youth Development (PYD) capacities, including their ability to set and manage goals and contribute positively to their communities. We also ask them to share the number of supportive adults in their lives who believe in them, broaden their interests, and challenge them to grow artistically, emotionally, and academically.

Guitars Over Guns mentors use healing-centered, culturally affirming PYD practices in program sessions. By investing in the mental health and creative capacities of our young people, we create space for each student to work hard and own their path in life.

## Measurement & Evaluation Tools

- Hello Insight SEL & Positive Youth Development Evaluation Platform
- Student, Parent, and Partner Satisfaction Surveys
- Artistic Scale Measurement
- Academic Achievement Data

## Measurement Methods

- Hello Insight
- Artistic scale measurement
- Academic achievement data





# THEORY OF CHANGE

**Our mentoring-centric approach helps alleviate primary challenges faced by youth in vulnerable communities by providing:**



Trusting relationships  
with caring adults



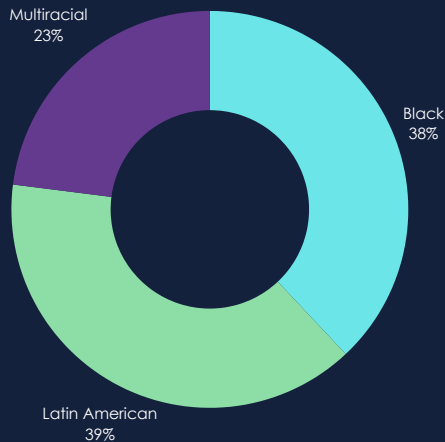
High-quality, no-cost arts  
education during typically  
unsupervised hours



Enriching, safe activities  
that foster self-esteem &  
creative self-expression

Guitars Over Guns is addressing three primary, interrelated challenges facing youth from vulnerable communities in Miami, Chicago and Los Angeles: the need for positive adult relationships, the lack of access to high-quality arts programming, and the cycle of disenfranchisement, apathy and violence. Guitars Over Guns is not only providing quality arts programs and the opportunity to develop creative skills to populations that would not otherwise have access, but also personalized care by adults who are there solely to support their mentees' advancement and development as creative, self-directed, responsible and engaged individuals who are not only on the path to completing their high school education, but also have the capacity to be economically independent and socially, civically engaged leaders far beyond their secondary school education.

# WE SERVE...

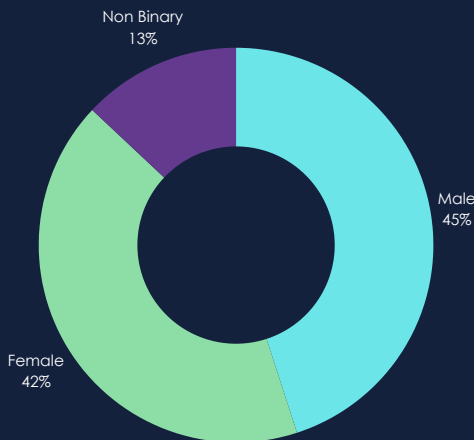


**39%** identify as Hispanic or Latin

**38%** identify as black or African-American

**23%** identify as multiracial or other BIPOC

**91%** live at or below the federal poverty level



**45%** Male

**42%** Female

**13%** Non-binary \*or chose not to disclose

## STUDENT VOICES

"Guitars Over Guns as an experience was a lot of fun. Right when my hope to continue music was fading, GOGO showed up and brought that spark back brighter than ever. I had the chance to explore my curiosity and gave me the push to really pursue music outside of GOGO."

— Angelina, Miami Southridge  
Senior High School

“

"I love that our mentors care about our mental health. Even if they see that we're having a bad day, they'll check on us. It pushes me. It shows me that I actually have someone in my life who cares about how I do."

— Arianna, Kenwood Academy  
High School

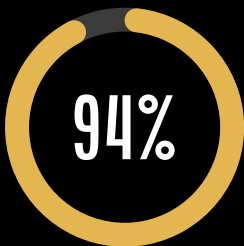
# FOCUS ON OUTCOMES

## Unlocking Leadership Capacity

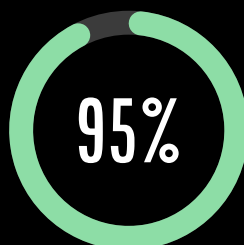
Our country is failing to place youth who live in vulnerable and poverty-impacted communities on a path to success. We believe that young people who thrive in the face of adversity have the capacity to be our greatest leaders.

For Guitars Over Guns, the key to unlocking that capacity is a caring mentor who connects with them through the transformational power of music. We leverage music as a vehicle for expression, a gateway to dignity, a universal language, and a bridge to connect youth to a mentor who can help unlock their potential, empowering them to break the cycles that often dominate the realities of their environment. Our students have a positive sense of self, build the capacity to redefine and achieve success both personally and academically, and take accountability for their future.

## VALUES-BASED OUTCOMES



of Guitars Over Guns students made or maintained academic gains in the school year 2022-2023.



of Guitars Over Guns students improved conduct in their classes over the course of the school year in 2022-2023.







## OUR CURRICULUM

Just like a band has a signature sound or a dancer has a signature move, Guitars Over Guns has a signature session. It's a model that we believe, if put to practice every day, will produce the highest quality musicianship, personal growth, and fun for students in our programs regardless of age, city, neighborhood, or background. Each session starts with a song that grounds the day's activities and M-Power opening circle. Songs are chosen from a shared repertoire of 15 selections that best represent the organization's diverse musical taste, each vetted to meet the following criteria: they are values-aligned, fun for young musicians to learn, and can hype a crowd on stages of all sizes. From there, each student is given a chord chart, tab, or lyric sheet to mark up, promoting a shared language for teaching and learning among Guitars Over Guns programs nationally. When it's time to rehearse as a group, our mentors share power with students, who make key decisions around the song's arrangement, strum patterns, lyrics, song form, solos, and more. This decision-making power expands each Spring when students take the lead in selecting songs, crafting setlists, choosing wardrobes, and serving as emcees during their annual music video projects and Spring showcases.

## POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

We use Positive Youth Development (PYD) measurements to evaluate key capacities, including:

- Academic Self-Efficacy
- Contribution
- Positive Identity
- Self-Management
- Social Skills

## CURRICULUM

Want to learn *\*why\** we teach from our Songbook? Scan here to learn how we *\*choose\** & how we *\*teach\** the songs in our songbook using the Contemporary Music Framework.



Want to learn *\*what\** we do at Guitars Over Guns? Scan here to view our signature session flow!



# M-POWER

## Mental Health & Wellness

All young people deserve a safe space to express their true selves and tell their stories fearlessly and authentically.

That's why we created M-Power, our first-ever dedicated mental health initiative. The program has been providing trauma-informed social-emotional support to students since launching in 2019 through targeted social work interventions including no-cost individual and group wellness coaching. Mentors also receive key resources, including one-on-one wellness coaching, professional development, crisis response support, lesson planning guidance, and more.

Director of Mental Health & Wellness, Natasha Santana-Viera (LCSW), is joined on the ground by interns pursuing degrees in social work and music therapy through partnerships with Barry University, Florida Memorial University, Florida Atlantic University, Jewish Community Services South Florida, and the University of Miami's Frost School of Music. M-Power interns are embedded directly within our arts-based programming, working alongside mentors to guide youth through the challenges they face. Along the way, our M-Power team is building trust among students and their families, destigmatizing mental health, and building equitable, accessible pathways to care.

This year, M-Power is ensuring that our staff and site coordinators receive training and certification in Youth Mental Health First Aid, empowering our mentor corps with life-saving knowledge. Not only that, but M-Power has been deepening its impact in Chicago, launching a series of youth-driven Wellness Summits and facilitating powerful wellness activities at our Camp GOGO summer youth retreat. The 2023-24 program year also sees the brand-new addition of Wellness Mentors to our Miami and Chicago teams, a corps of qualified healing artists working hand in hand with arts mentors to support students' creative and holistic growth.



*Chicago mentees gathered at Haven Studios for our first-ever Youth Wellness Summit.*

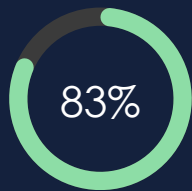


*Natasha Santana-Viera, Director of Mental Health & Wellness, was invited to facilitate a workshop on trauma, burnout and self-care at Florida Blue's 2023 Community Health Symposium.*



# MAKING AN IMPACT

The Childhood Global Assessment Scale (C-GAS) is a widely recognized tool to measure young people's psychological and social well-being. In 2022-23, 62% of students scored 81 or higher, indicating they were doing well. Additionally, 100% of GOGO students whose score indicated some noticeable problems showed an increase of 5 points or more!



## FALL 2022

83% of students increased or maintained their C-GAS score

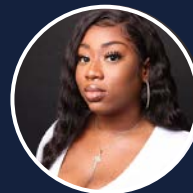
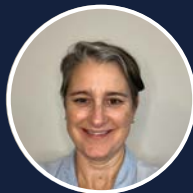


## SPRING 2023

94% of students increased or maintained their C-GAS score

## 2022-23 M-POWER INTERNS

*Daniela Artilles, Erin Brolley, Caroline Gardner, Chelsey Jacobs, Tiana Lanier, Rothan Lyle, Gabriel Rubio, & Malissa Saintil*



“The students and I bonded through our one-on-one sessions, mentor-led circle discussions, and learned healing through music, art, wellness, and mental health. In my time with the students, they improved and presented knowledge on the importance of mental health, confidence, self-awareness, and overall wellness. The students were provided with resources such as hygiene products during my time interning, gearing them up to be successful in the program. With GOGO, I had the opportunity to inspire, create, heal, innovate, support, counsel, and cheer on for the future of the youth.”

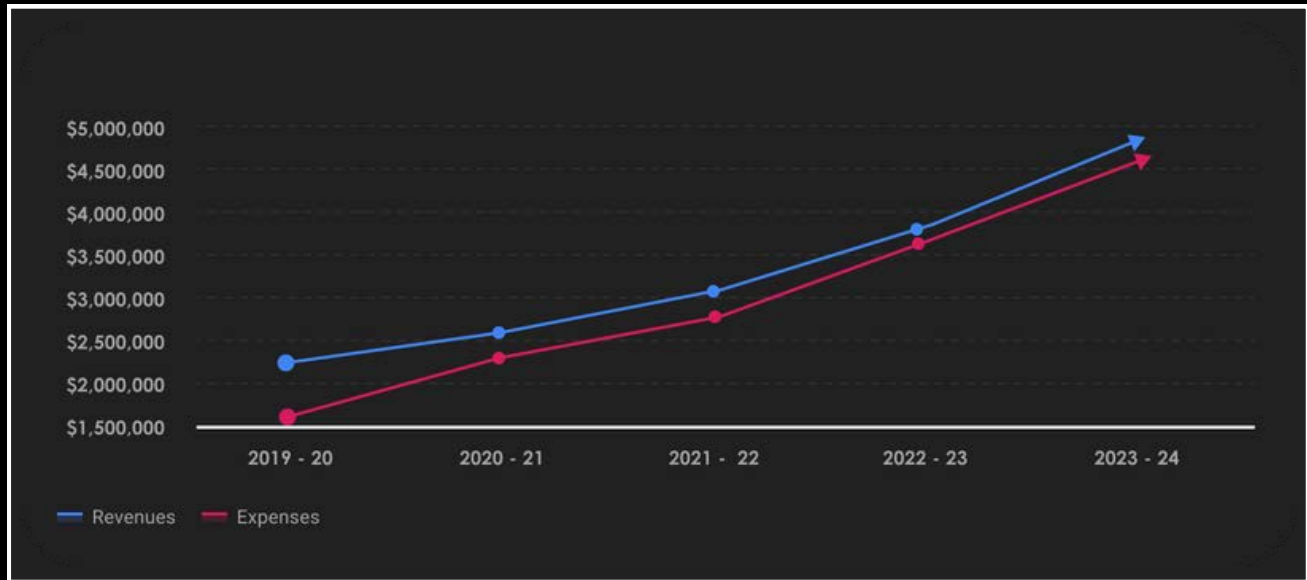
— Malissa Saintil, M-Power Intern, 2022-2023

“During my incredible time working with GOGO, I saw growth in the majority of my students, especially one. This specific student and I built a relationship that was based on transparency, motivation, and love. While working with her, I learned about her extremely difficult life at home. I was able to educate her on breathing techniques and affirmations that she can implement in her daily life. These tools allowed her to open up authentically and tap into a unique form of self-expression. When I reflect on the progress she has made, it brings a gigantic smile to my face. She embodies true resilience and is an inspiration to me.”

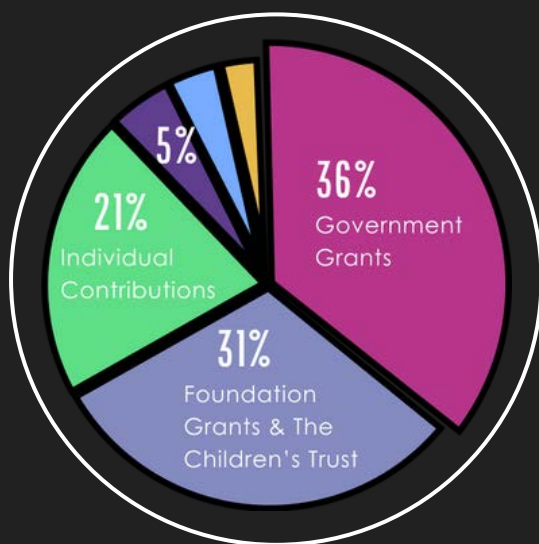
— Chelsey Jacobs, M-Power Intern, Spring 2023

# ANNUAL BUDGET GROWTH

Over The Last 5 Years



## SOURCES OF REVENUE



- Government Grants
- Foundation Grants & The Children's Trust
- Individual Contributions
- Special Events
- Program Services & Earned Revenue (4%)
- Corporate Contributions (3%)

# STRATEGIC HIGHLIGHTS



Launched Alumni Listening tour to reconnect with our alumni, hear how we can better serve them, and create pathways to college, career and beyond

In Chicago, 22% of our workforce are former mentees.



Expanded use of Hello Insight organization-wide, an evidence-based Positive Youth Development data collection tool helping us measure our impact among a national cohort of peer organizations.



Deepened collective impact work with the Miami Gardens Music Alliance (powered by the Music Access Miami Fund), collaborating with Miami's arts-based youth development ecosystem to ensure that every single student in Miami Gardens, FL receives access to high quality music education.



Invested in our rising talent to bring our impact to the next level, including elevating a Director of Program Quality and the new position of Chicago Regional Director for Haven Studios founder Andre "Add-2" Daniels.



Launched use of the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS), a method of powerfully aligning our team to achieve key strategic priorities that represent our mission, vision, and values.



Facilitated four days of training for teaching artists from Miami, Chicago, and Los Angeles to learn skills and best practices for implementing high quality arts-based mentoring programs as they headed into the new school year.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

Our goal is to serve 10,000 students annually across the U.S. by 2030.

*Audited Financial Statements and Form 990 available upon request by emailing [info@guitarsoverguns.org](mailto:info@guitarsoverguns.org)*



2022 - 2023

# CHICAGO HIGHLIGHTS

## CAMP GOGO

In June 2023, we embarked on the first-ever edition of Camp GOGO, spending four days at Covenant Harbor in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. Guitars Over Guns staff, mentors, and high school volunteers led 7th and 8th-grade mentees in an unforgettable camp experience.



## FIELD MUSEUM

Mentees from Curie Metropolitan High School had the opportunity to perform at the Field Museum to celebrate and honor their incredible Chicago Public Schools' principals. Our young musicians were able to perform and see the impact that they, as artists, can have on their community.

## TEDX CHICAGO

In October, our mentees from Evergreen and Haven Studios had the opportunity to perform in front of a full house at this year's TEDx Chicago event at the Harris Theater. Our mentees created an original song titled "Shine" that speaks on overcoming obstacles and finding our individual lights to show to the world.



## BAND TOGETHER

An incredible night! One hundred thirty attendees, delicious food, live performances, and lively bids on 30+ auction items. A huge thanks to all who celebrated, donated, and participated in our first big Chicago annual fundraiser, Band Together!

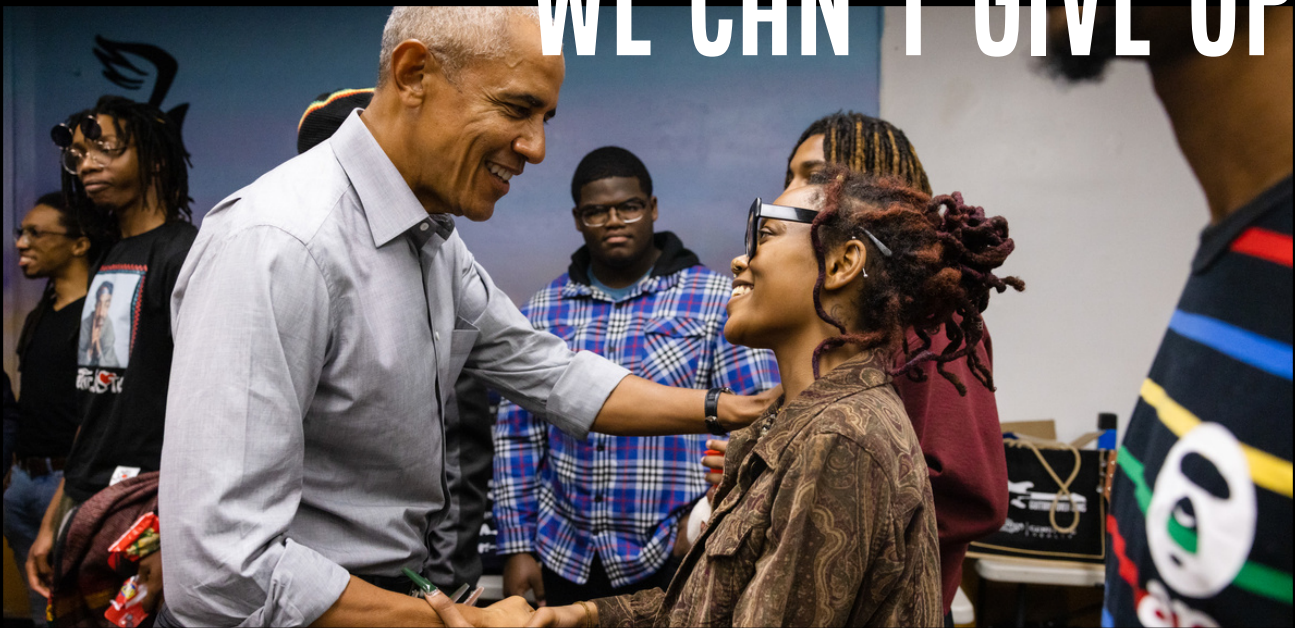
## GUITAR CENTER INSTRUMENT DONATIONS

Thanks to the generosity of the Guitar Center Music Foundation, students at five different schools in Chicago have brand-new acoustic guitars, electric guitars, congas and drum sets. Access to high-quality gear empowers our students and helps them master their craft. We're grateful that the Guitar Center Music Foundation believes in setting students up for success.



Barack Obama @ Haven Studios

# WE CAN'T GIVE UP



**"Even in the absence of action at the federal level, you are still seeing communities able to reduce violence by dealing with not just access to guns but just as importantly making sure that the young people in these communities feel as if they've got someone paying attention to them. We don't have room for cynicism and we can't give up."**

— Barack Obama

Haven Studios started with a dream and came to fruition when Andre "Add-2" Daniels opened its doors with Dennis Thompson in the basement of Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church in 2016. This year, we celebrated a culmination of the many years of work that went into building this safe space for youth on Chicago's South Side, when President Barack Obama dropped by for a surprise visit with our mentees.

The mentees were blown away, as he shook their hands and spent nearly an hour listening to their words, their stories, and their music. He recognized the unique and transformational work taking place. He shared his excitement around our partnership with My Brother's Keeper Alliance and the investment that the Obama Foundation has made in Guitars Over Guns. He told us that "winning the race is more often a function of staying the course," and that "the truly significant things in life are seldom done alone."

The visit was also joined by Nate Burleson of CBS Mornings, which aired coverage of the visit. Shortly after, our leadership team received news that we had received the Freedom Summer Grant from My Brother's Keeper Alliance. The grant was provided by Cities United, a project of The Tides Center, with support from The Barack Obama Foundation. This grant made it possible for us to host mental health summits, master classes, open mics, and lock-in sessions for mentees to collaborate and record new music.

This moment was transformational, and we know it's just the start. We can't see what the future holds for Haven Studios.



Scan to watch

# OUR SITES

## CHICAGO

### NORTH SUBURBS

- Mosaic Hub, North Chicago/Waukegan
- Waukegan High School Brookside\*



### WEST SIDE

- Washington Irving Elementary School
- William P. Nixon Public School
- Roberto Clemente Community Academy
- Rusu-McCartin Boys & Girls Club\*



### SOUTHWEST SIDE

- Evergreen Academy Middle School
- James Shields Middle School
- Curie Metro High School



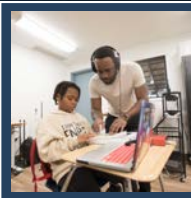
### SUMMER PROGRAMS

- Camp GOGO @ Covenant Harbor
- Haven Studios @ Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church
- Songwriting & Peer Mentoring @ Curie Metro High School
- Photography & Digital Media @ Kenwood Academy High School
- Guitar and Keyboard Intensive @ Roberto Clemente Community Academy



### SOUTH SIDE

- Art In Motion
- CICS Lloyd Bond Charter School
- Gary Comer College Prep Middle School
- Kenwood Academy High School
- Wendell Phillips Academy High School
- Haven Studios @ Mt. Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church
- Juvenile Probation Program at TASC
- CICS Prairie\*
- Chicago Collegiate High School\*



\*Projected Launch: Spring 2024



2022 - 2023

# MIAMI HIGHLIGHTS

## WYNWOOD WALLS

We partnered with Wynwood Walls, exposing our visual art students to world-renowned artists right near their neighborhood. Students had the opportunity to tour Wynwood Walls and create their own collaborative mural.



## INTERLOCHEN

We were so proud to see eight students attend Interlochen Arts Camp this year! Four art students and four music students participated in the prestigious program.



## MUSIC VIDEO

Students from 19 Miami-Dade schools and three community-based sites came together to professionally film and record a mashup of Lady Gaga's "Applause" and Outkast's "Hey Ya." The song celebrates the people in our lives who deserve applause.



## SHINE VOL. 1

Guitars Over Guns' second studio album, Shine, Vol. 1, features original music written and performed by GOGO students. Youth had the opportunity to write original lyrics, record professionally, and even register as professional songwriters.

Scan to listen



## STUDENT ARTWORK EXHIBITION

Our art program students from North Miami Middle and North Miami Senior High celebrated the incredible accomplishment of presenting an artwork exhibition at MOCA's Pavillion Gallery. This exhibition showcased diverse media, including drawing, painting, collage, and digital illustration.



## Program Spotlight

# BEYOND THE GATE

GATE is Jackson Health System's innovative intervention program for juvenile weapons offenders. As part of their holistic approach, GATE partners with Guitars Over Guns to offer music-based mentorship to boys and young men with a weapons charge on their record. "The boys get a second chance at life," J. explains. "Music is a vehicle to reach them, and have somebody that looks like them show them different ways of going at life." J. and co-mentor Bertrand have been with GATE for 3 years, including a virtual program during Covid lock-down. These days, their team is bolstered by former GATE mentee Nate, who now works full-time with Jackson Health as a GATE peer mentor. "Seeing Nate and my boys graduate and get out of the program, out of the system is a proudest accomplishment," J. shares.



**Jackson**  
HEALTH SYSTEM



"We're inspiring youth to be the best versions of themselves. You hear their parents say, 'I've seen a major transformation in my son.'" As for the future of GATE, things are looking bright. "I envision more youth becoming financially stable, helping to get more life skills, and staying in touch after they graduate. We want to let them know that we do care and we do love them," J. says. "I tell the boys all the time, 'I love you.' They probably feel a little weird about it, but I don't care. I mean it."





# TESTIMONIAL

# JAYDEN

# HOLMES



“

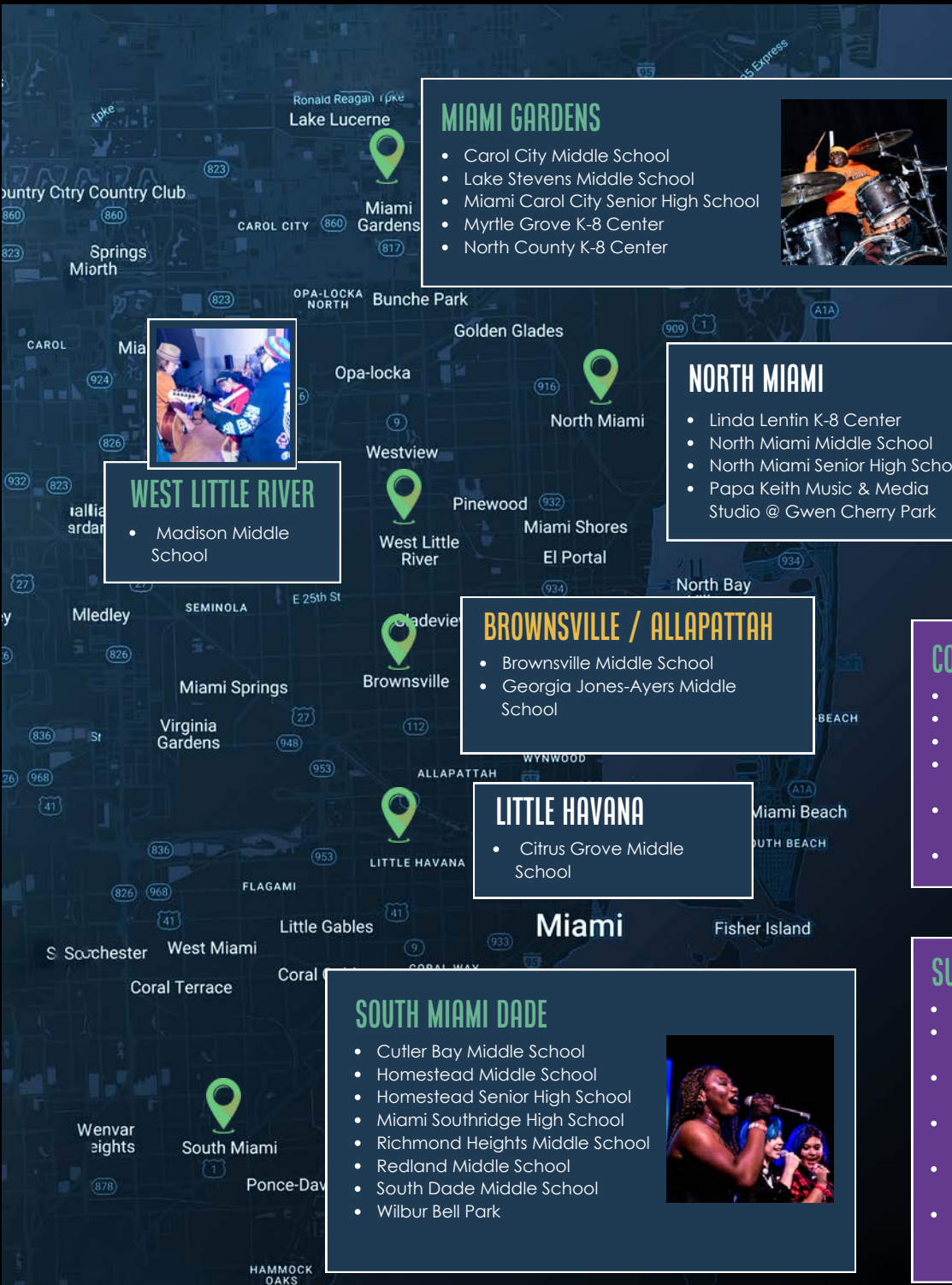
Aside from all my awesome concert stories, my days in the alumni band are some of my best memories. From eighth grade all the way to senior year every Monday and Wednesday was the highlight of my week.”

— 2023 Louis Salgar Award Winner



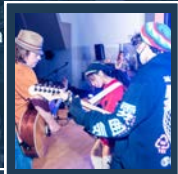
# OUR SITES

MIAMI, FL



## MIAMI GARDENS

- Carol City Middle School
- Lake Stevens Middle School
- Miami Carol City Senior High School
- Myrtle Grove K-8 Center
- North County K-8 Center



## WEST LITTLE RIVER

- Madison Middle School

## NORTH MIAMI

- Linda Lentin K-8 Center
- North Miami Middle School
- North Miami Senior High School
- Papa Keith Music & Media Studio @ Gwen Cherry Park



## BROWNSVILLE / ALLAPATTAH

- Brownsville Middle School
- Georgia Jones-Ayers Middle School

## LITTLE HAVANA

- Citrus Grove Middle School

## COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS

- Ambassador Band
- Demps Park
- GATE Program @ Jackson Health
- GOGO Studio Homestead @ Live Like Bella Park
- Papa Keith Music & Media Studio @ Gwen Cherry Park
- Oak Grove Park

## SOUTH MIAMI DADE

- Cutler Bay Middle School
- Homestead Middle School
- Homestead Senior High School
- Miami Southridge High School
- Richmond Heights Middle School
- Redland Middle School
- South Dade Middle School
- Wilbur Bell Park



## SUMMER PROGRAMS

- Gang Alternative @ South Miami
- Genesis Hopeful Haven @ Live Like Bella Park
- Miami-Dade County Parks Music Camp @ Live Like Bella Park
- Music Camp @ Dennis C. Moss Cultural Arts Center
- Music and Art Camp @ Lake Stevens Middle School
- Music Camp @ Little Havana Leadership Learning Center

# CONTACT

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