



2024-2025 GRATITUDE REPORT

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MISSION

The Connect Center provides help for a more secure and connected life.

VISION

The Connect Center believes in a community that knows we are all connected.

VALUES

Our organization is built on a foundation of compassion, integrity, and accountability. We believe in treating everyone with dignity and respect, and we are committed to using our resources in the most effective and efficient way possible

A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

With The Connect Center's Fiscal year ending in June, we take time to reflect upon and celebrate the many ways that we have helped youth, families and individuals reach their goals. Most of our clients needed help with finding and/or maintaining housing. We helped fifteen youth get into youth housing programs or market rate apartments. Many clients needed help with financial assistance with rent and car expenses. Connect Center Advocates work hard to connect clients with resources, financial assistance, County benefits and healthcare.

Working long-term with clients makes all the difference in the progress that they make. Advocates listen and get to know their clients and their needs. Clients are empowered and helped with breaking down their goals into action steps that lead to accomplishing goals and dreams.

The Connect Center partners with other nonprofits, County departments, foundations, faith communities and other community groups and members to be able to achieve great impact in the lives of our neighbors in need of our help. We could not do all that we do without these partnerships and supports.

Our vision states that "we believe in a community that knows we are all connected." It is a translation of the Lakota words Mitakuye Oasin. Our actions and our words make a difference. Let's live more fully knowing that we are all connected and make good choices with our words and our actions. Grateful to our Board of Directors, staff, volunteers and all who support our good work.

With Gratitude,
Cindy Parsons
Executive Director

WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER.

FAMILIES

Families work with the Connect Center for many months to many years. Long-term intensive case management helps families reach short and long-term goals. Connect Center Advocates empower families to reach their goals by meeting with them on a regular basis to set and celebrate action steps. Advocates help with applications for benefits, jobs, education, and housing. Families are also connected with mental health services and other resources.

YOUTH

Youth through age 24 are defined as youth. The Connect Center helps youth that have unstable or no housing. Advocates help youth get into youth housing programs and into market rate apartments. Advocates assist youth with other needs as well, from finding employment, furthering their education, transportation, budgeting, learning life skills, applying for benefits, and getting help for their mental health and other needs.

SINGLES

Singles that need housing receive help from our AmeriCorps Housing Resource Navigators and Connect Center Advocates. Barriers to housing are addressed as well as other goals that will help with finding and maintaining housing.

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

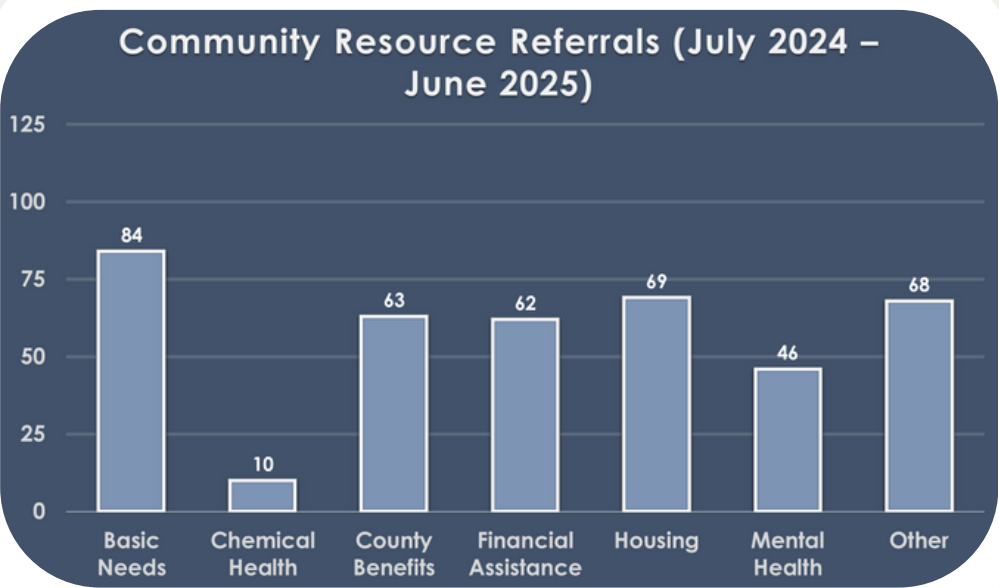
Kids, ages 6-16, gather on Tuesdays and Thursdays for an After School Program every week for fun, games, social-emotional learning activities, art and cooking. From making slime, to drawing and painting, to board games and outside group games, kids are welcomed, listened to and taught important life and social skills. This year 37 children participated.

FROM JULY 2024 - JUNE 2025...

- 58.4% of Clients Received Housing Search Assistance
- 26.4% of Clients were Assessed for Coordinated Entry
- 69.7% of Clients who were Assessed for Coordinated Entry were Accepted into a Housing Program
- 8.8% of Clients Obtained Market Rate Rental Housing

A CLIENT'S PERSPECTIVE

"My advocate at The Connect Center, was more than just a helper – she was a lifesaver. I met her shortly after I had my baby, at a point in my life where I was a single mom feeling overwhelmed and alone with very little support. She became an incredible inspiration and a true friend. She was endlessly encouraging, genuinely helpful, and made me feel like I wasn't invisible, which meant the world. I firmly believe that without her unwavering support, my struggle with postpartum depression and anxiety would have been significantly more severe." -Single Mom of Three Children



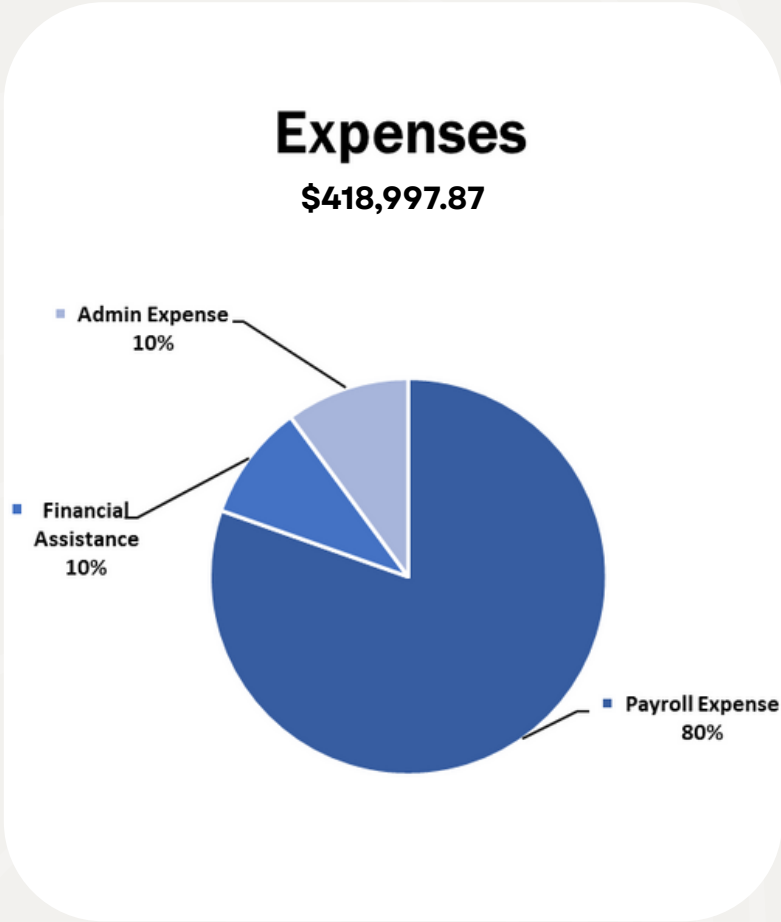
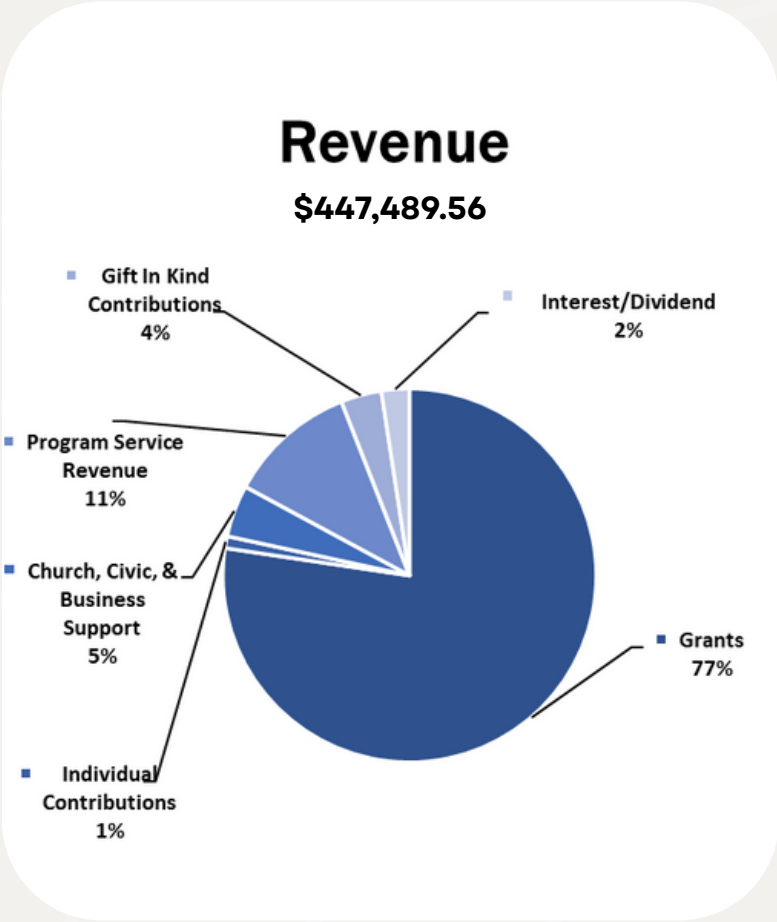
FINANCIAL REPORT

CLIENTS SERVED

- 308** People Served
- **148** Adults
 - **160** Children
- 68** Families
- 30** Singles
- 22** Single Youth
- 5** Youth Families

VOLUNTEERS

- 10** Community Volunteers
- **193 Hours**
- 3** AmeriCorps Volunteers
- **1,783 Hours**



2024-2025 TCC FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS

BUSINESSES, CIVIC CLUBS, GROUPS:

- Charter Oaks Limited Partnership
- Community Support Our Students
- Forest Lake Lion’s Club
- Lift Bridge Brewing Co.
- Lutheran Social Services
- Nystrom and Associates

FAITH COMMUNITY:

- Christ Lutheran Church WELCA
- First Presbyterian Church
- Holy Cross Lutheran Church
- King of Kings Lutheran Church
- MN Fellowship of Congregationalists
- Newport Lutheran Church
- Our Savior’s Lutheran Church
- St. Francis Catholic Church
- St. Paul Lutheran Church
- The Grove Methodist Church

FOUNDATIONS:

- ECMC Foundation
- Fred C. and Katherine B. Foundation
- Hardenbergh Foundation
- Margaret Rivers Fund
- St. Paul and MN Foundation
- United Way of Washington County East

INDIVIDUALS:

- Millie Balfanz
- Karen Celski
- Corine Crea
- Deb Cunningham
- Marguerite DeFore
- Joette Ebert
- Julie Fermenick
- Tami Gentry
- Julie Goettl
- Mary Griffeth
- Peggy and David Hayden
- Natalie Houle
- Nicole Hunt
- David and Judy Jessup
- Cheryl Jogger
- Gayle Knutson
- Tina Larson
- Dr. Nicole LePera
- John and Jan Malvey
- Lawrence and Mary McFadden
- Vida McDonald
- Steve and Ruth Miller
- Jackie Olafson
- Erica Oesterreich
- Cassandra Peltier
- Edith Peterson
- Walter Potts
- Walt and Paula Richey
- Debbie Rogg
- Cindy and Warren Schulze
- Carol Schuster
- Chris and Adam Smerud
- Mark and Amy Schwantes
- Judy Winter
- Jay Winfield

STAFF & BOARD

THE BOARD CHAIR'S REFLECTION

The Connect Center has continued to live out our mission for the communities of Washington County throughout 2025. We have worked to provide services with compassion for all people while upholding the highest standards of integrity and accountability. This year has not been without its challenges. Inflation, rising rental costs, reduced availability of affordable housing, and the changing landscape of social justice have greatly increased the number of people seeking connections with family, community groups, and support organizations. Our goal has remained to help clients live more connected and supported lives in the St. Croix Valley.

Looking ahead, many indicators suggest that 2026 will also bring challenges. Our staff and advocates are prepared to meet clients where they are and respond to their needs. Securing the necessary resources remains a daily struggle. Whether it is helping with rent, ensuring a family has a meal for the night, filling a gas tank, covering an unexpected car repair, or simply providing someone with the space to talk through solutions, our Client Advocates are dedicated to walking alongside those we serve.

Through fundraising efforts and the generosity of loyal donors and foundations, we have been able to continue meeting many of these needs. The stories of success, which can be found on our website at TheConnectCenter.org, are truly heartwarming. We long for the day when the demand for The Connect Center's services no longer exists. However, that time will not come in 2026. For now, the needs continue to grow, which means more people and families are turning to our Client Advocates and building stronger connections through The Connect Center. -John Richards, Board Chair

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Richards – Board Chair

Vickie Conley

Cheryl Jogger

Jean Larson

Catherine Solheim

STAFF

Cindy Parsons- Executive Director

Bob Dickie- Communications and
Development Director

Bre Isken- Program Manager

Natalie Houle- Client Advocate

Clara Kilgas- Client Advocate

Madi Cseter- Client Advocate

Tabitha Thurman- AmeriCorp Housing
Navigator

DONATE



Your contribution can help us continue our mission to provide essential services and support to those in need. Please consider making a donation today. Donations are tax deductible.



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