

# IMPACT REPORT

**2020-2023**



WE ARE ONE UNITED, INC.  
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Palm Springs CA 92262  
(909) 486-3775

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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**03 — Introduction**

**04 — Message from Our Leader**

**05 — About Us**

**09 — Our Programs**

**21 — Our New Teams**

**25 — Our Partners**

**31 — Our Donors**

# INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to present the Impact Report for We Are One United. Our nonprofit organization is dedicated to continuing our vision to create thriving communities with access to resources and equity for all.

Since our beginning in 2020, we have continued to provide access to educational resources with our Virtual Cafés and partnered with businesses to provide employment opportunities and career counseling services through our Career Fair on March 30th, 2023. We have also partnered with Esri mapping software to create interactive maps highlighting the impact of our programs.

We are excited to announce that we have expanded our team and strengthened our relationships with local community leaders, inviting them to our quarterly Community Leaders Summit to engage in meaningful dialogue. We are happy to introduce our Community Research Specialist Team, a diverse group of local community members, nonprofit leaders, and professionals helping us with our programming. They have been conducting research to ensure that our programs and initiatives are tailored to meet the specific needs of the community.

We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to our donors, partners, and volunteers. We are deeply grateful for your contributions and commitment to our mission



# MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADER

04

What an amazing journey we have begun. I never would have imagined that We Are One United would grow this quickly. We began the important process of planning our future as an organization. It was immediately obvious that we wanted to be different, and we began talking about being a “community and data driven” organization.

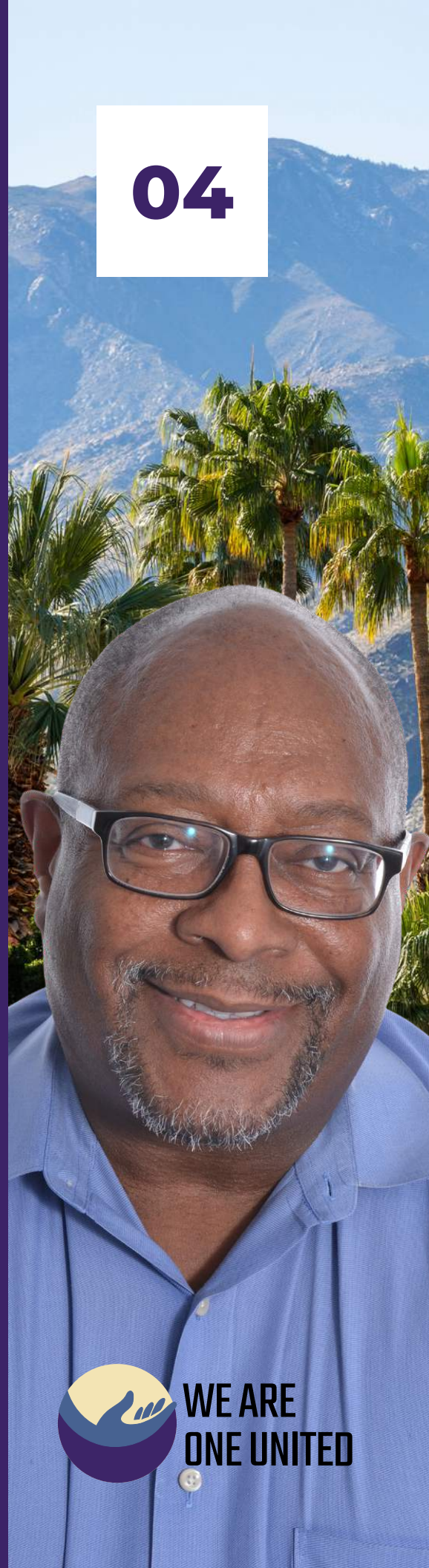
Rather than focus on developing a particular program or service that we would provide in the community, we decided that we would ask the community a fundamental question: What Do You Want? And then listen to what they had to say. We are a “Catalyst for Change” with a mission of equipping, encouraging and empowering the community to determine their own futures.

We are focused on bringing more resources to the community, increasing their capacity as leaders of change, and bringing the community together so that their collective voice can be heard loud and clear in those places where it counts. We are grateful for this opportunity to walk the extra mile together!

**John Epps**  
**Executive Director**



**WE ARE  
ONE UNITED**



# ABOUT US

05

## Vision

At We Are One United, we create thriving communities with access to resources and equity for all.

## Mision

We add value to communities through innovative, high-quality, high-impact programs and practices.



# OUR SUPER TEAM

06



**Cathy Giles**



**Jilka Chandrasena**



**Billy Harris**



**Vladana Hrivnakova-  
Gonzalez**



**Zubair Bakubye**



**Quana Hall-Beverly**



**Edwin Ramoran**



**Iris Williams**



**Emma Cooper**

# OUR BOARD

07

## Meet Our Board

We are proud to have a diverse and experienced board on our side.

## Board Members

Matthew Campos

Lauren Bruggemans

Luz Moreno

Christina Gregorio

James Donovan

Anyse Smith

Jennifer Braun

Alex Avila

Scott Cooper



# OUR JOURNEY

08



## **New team, new partners, new challenges**

Many things have changed since our beginning in December 2020. The pandemic gave us the necessary drive to start, but it was team determination that helped us thrive. We would like to thank those who are no longer with us but whose contributions have left a lasting impact on us all. A big thank you to Lauren Bruggemans and Diane Alford for your hard work and support. We are also grateful for the support of our first Virtual Café Youth Team for their constant energy and dedication.



## **The Funding**

We will continue our mission to support underrepresented communities of color and address youth violence in District 1 neighborhoods of Palm Springs and the immediate region. We are grateful for and acknowledge our major funders: the California Board of State and Community Corrections, City of Palm Springs, and the Regional Access Project Foundation.







# OUR PROGRAMS

## YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

The goal is to provide a positive, safe, and nurturing environment for growth service, and expression for all youth aged 10-18 and young adults 19-24, especially those in underserved communities and communities of color.

## SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AND EMPLOYMENT

We aim to increase economic opportunity in the community by preparing individuals for success in the workplace, meaningful careers and economic prosperity. We believe that one of the best ways to find a job is through networking.

## COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAMS

These programs will harness technology to provide youth with mental health resources and skills to navigate and reduce adverse experiences. We plan on working on challenges caused by language barriers, cultural stigmas or lack of trust.



# MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

## YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

Our comprehensive mental health programs aim to ensure that all youth have access to the resources they need to support their mental health wellness. By prioritizing mental health and working to reduce the stigma associated with seeking support, we are empowering young people to prioritize their well-being and lead healthy, fulfilling lives.

## COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAMS

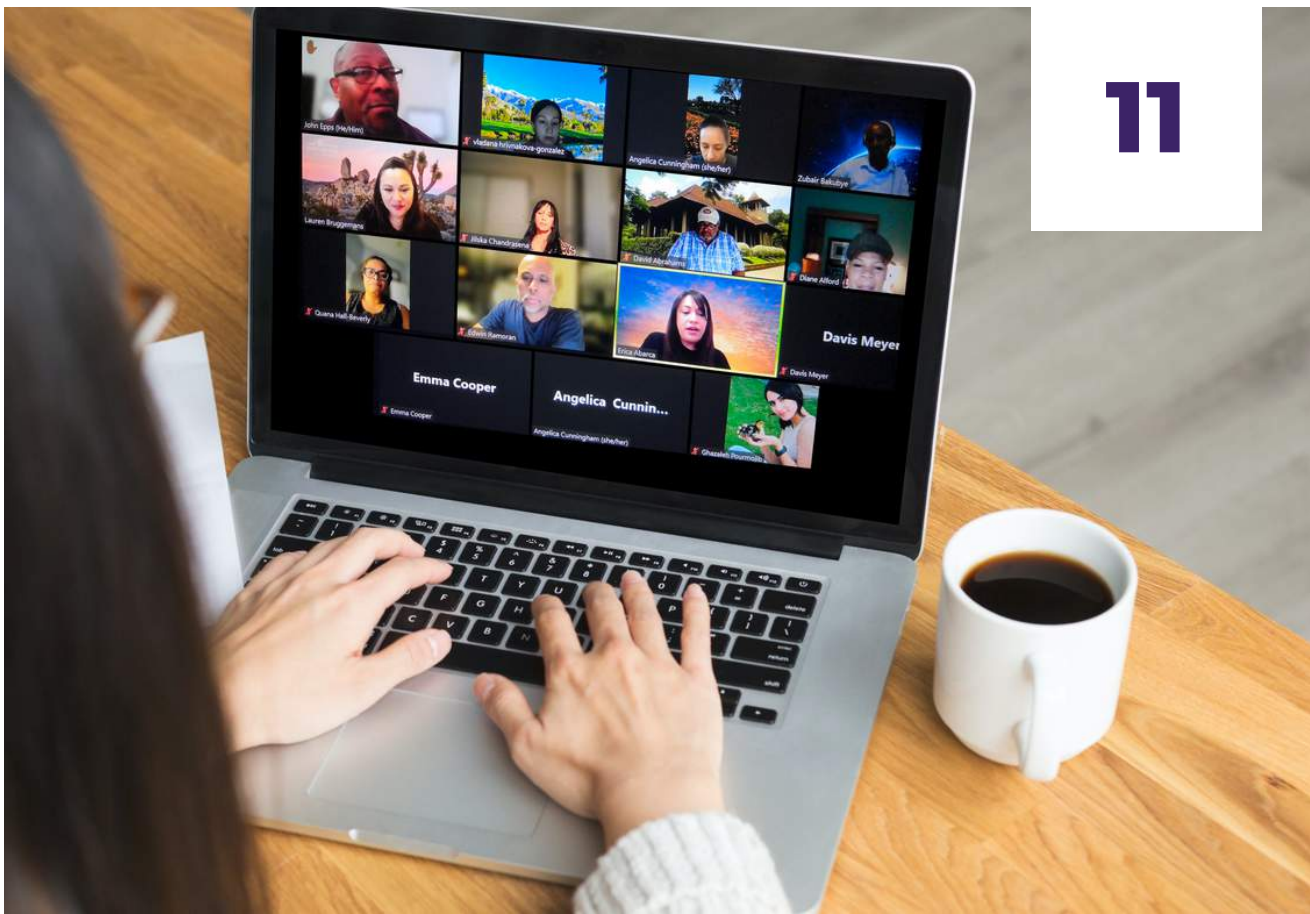
Our current initiatives include Circle of Friends, and in the near future, we will be opening Parents Learning Walk, an open group session dedicated to dealing with post-COVID-19 stress on families and its impact in our communities. Our Mental Health Program will operate together with the WAOU Employment & Social Enterprise Intervention Program under the SEECER Center. Our goal is to foster emotional well-being and resilience within our community.

**Circle of Friends Support Program**  
 with Jilka Chandrasena

Friday, 4-5 PM at PS Leisure Center - All Ages

Join our free session and discover a safe space to share, heal, and thrive together. Embrace your struggle and celebrate victories. Expand your network and experience the strength of the friends.

For registration and inquiries contact:  
 (760) 808-1416 or jchandrasena@weareoneunited.org



# VIRTUAL CAFÉS

Our Virtual Community Cafés took place every Wednesday from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM, offering a unique opportunity for community members to gather, listen, and connect. We covered a wide range of essential topics, including mental health, cultural diversity, careers, technology, and sustainability. Throughout our journey, we successfully organized over 30 Virtual Cafés, featuring 35 professionals sharing their expertise with an eager audience. We are delighted to have participants joining us from the East Coast, Mexico City, and Sri Lanka. All our past Cafés are accessible on our official YouTube Channel.

## FUTURE PLANS FOR VIRTUAL CAFÉS

In the future, we aim to enhance our Virtual Café, making it a more professional and interactive experience. Currently, we are searching for a studio to meet our recording needs and plan to invite speakers from all over Riverside County. Our goal is to create an inclusive space on our blog and social media, sharing positive news that can positively impact our community, as we believe in the life-saving power of good news.

The new Virtual Cafés will be an inclusive space to discuss, learn, meet experts, or plan how to make our community a safe and progressive place to live in.

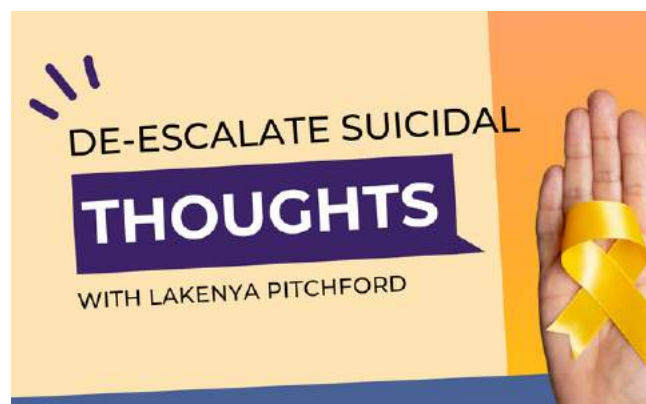
## HEAR FROM OUR PARTICIPANTS

"I found Virtual Café to be very informative as someone who works with children. The conversations were applicable for all ages. I learned so much in such a short period of time. I felt so grateful to be able to ask a professional personalized questions that directly affect my work."

**Ghazaleh, 22**

"I personally enjoyed Cafés about mental health, Last time I attended I learned some tips about how to regulate my emotions that I found so helpful. I also learned about finances and business that gave me insights about how things work."

**Payton, 42**





# YOUTH PROGRAMS

## YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

We are dedicated to cultivating new leaders and fostering positive youth development, equipping youth with the necessary skills and opportunities to thrive and make a meaningful impact in their communities. To achieve this goal, we have implemented a framework that incorporates the principles of developmental assets and methodology utilizing developmental relationships, which are strongly supported by the Search Institute. Through this approach, we have identified activities that keep youth engaged, while providing them with the necessary skills.

## THE FUTURE

We Are One United's future youth development plans include a 2023 Youth Summer Camp for disadvantaged youth in the Palm Springs area. This also includes Youth Council, Summer Youth Employment Program, Youth Theatre, Arts, Culture, Media, and Production Company, VELA Black Youth Development Program, Out of School Time Program in August/September 2023, Youth College Collaboration, COD Internship, Inter-generational Mentoring Program, and STEM program.



# COMMUNITY WELLNESS

## COMMUNITY WELLNESS

Our organization aims to empower the community to determine its own destiny by building capabilities and relationships, evaluating the impact of COVID-19, prioritizing physical and mental health, ensuring access to programs and services, and expanding our reach by partnering with existing community organizations.

## THE FUTURE

Under our Community Wellness program, we have various planned programs, including community gardening, local BBQs, and mixers aimed at building better relationships. These programs also aim to teach and model mediation, negotiation, and reconciliation practices. Additionally, we have engagement plans to bring all communities together, with a focus on arts and culture. We will be partnering with organizations such as Bayanihan Desert, Advancing Steps, DeAtzlan Consulting, Urban Palm Springs, James O. Jesse Community Center, BRAAF, and James Woods as "Dat Yoga Dude." Moreover, we aim to connect with different communities and address issues related to policing, homelessness, and hunger.



15

# COMMUNITY BACKPACK GIVEAWAY

In 2021 and 2022, thanks to our friends at James O. Jesse Desert Highland Unity Center in Palm Springs and Cabot Yerxa Elementary School in Desert Hot Springs, we had the opportunity to participate in two Backpack Giveaways.

In addition to providing necessary school supplies, we aimed to create a fun and engaging experience for the kids and their parents. That's why we set up a craft table where they could make adorable bookmarks together. We also conducted a Community Survey, and as a token of appreciation for those who participated, we gave away \$25 gift cards.

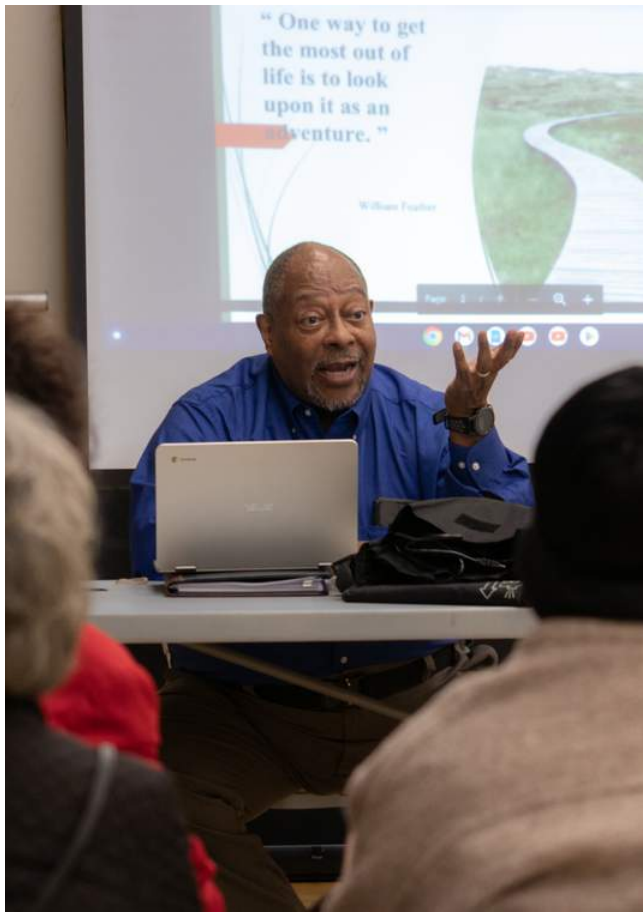


# REMEMBERING 9/11

On the September 11 National Day of Service and Remembrance, we invited people to James O. Jessie Desert Highland Unity Center to come together in service to honor those lost and those whose lives were forever changed that fateful day. We had the privilege to host amazing speakers, such as René Brown, Scott Nevins, Nancy Irbin, and Grace Garner.

This event was organized thanks to AmeriCorps, the federal agency for volunteerism and national service in remembrance of fallen lives. We were grateful for the opportunity to create a space for reflection, community building, and service.





17

# COMMUNITY LEADERS SUMMIT

The Community Leaders Summit is a vital event that aims to connect us with leaders and community members to discuss initiatives and ensure that we continue to build strong relationships in our community. We host quarterly summits and have successfully held them in September 2022, January 2023 and in Desert Hot Springs on April 24th and May 22nd.

Guests such as BRAAF, Chase Bank, Police Chief Andrew Mills, and Palm Springs Mayor Grace Garner have attended these summits, along with our board who contributed to a highly engaging and productive event. We plan to hold future meetings in cities throughout Riverside County.



# EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

## SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND JOB NETWORKING

Our organization is dedicated to increasing economic opportunity in the community by preparing individuals for success in the social enterprise development of businesses and in the workplace. We firmly believe that one of the most effective ways to succeed is through entrepreneurship and networking. As part of this, we organized a Career Fair on March 30th to facilitate valuable networking opportunities for the local community.

## THE FUTURE

Our Job and Business Club Initiative will provide interview and resume support, guidance on dressing for success, and access to resources from partners such as Advancing Steps or Chase Bank. Additionally, our SEECER Center will collaborate with small businesses and entrepreneurs to create jobs and expand opportunities for job seekers in our club, while also offering business development classes in English and Spanish through a partnership with Get In Motion. Finally, we plan to explore job opportunities with partners like IBEW, Riverside County Black Chamber of Commerce, Riverside Greater Chamber of Commerce, and The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Coachella Valley.



**WE ARE ONE UNITED**

# CAREER FAIR

**Palm Springs High School**

**Thursday, March 30th**

**Are you ready to focus on your future?**

**5PM to 7PM**

**Open to all ages**

The gate opens at 4:30, so come discover your local opportunities and future path with us!

[www.weareoneunited.org](http://www.weareoneunited.org)



**19**

# CAREER FAIR

Inspired by Dr. Seuss' "Oh the Places You'll Go," our aim was to demonstrate that successful careers can align with individuals' interests and that it's never too late to pursue such opportunities. Our goal was to inspire attendees by showcasing the wide array of career paths available in the Coachella Valley community.

We extend a heartfelt thank you to the incredible speakers who joined our panel. We greatly appreciate their generosity in sharing their knowledge and experience. Special thanks to Coachella Valley Economic Partnership, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Coachella Valley High School Health College, Visit Greater Palm Springs, and Riverside County Black Chamber of Commerce for their support.



20

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH

First and foremost, community outreach gives back to the community. As a new organization, we know we still have a lot of work to do. We are community members who want to give back, a diverse team that has come together to use our experience to bring new opportunities to the communities we grew up in.

Local partners and organizations we work with, such as Advancing Steps, College of the Desert, James O. Jessie Desert Highland Unity Center, Building Resilient Communities, Bayanihan Desert, or Creative Excellence, have done so much to help make our vision a success. We have been a part of building so many amazing projects. Without our community, we would be nothing.

As such, when given the opportunity to participate or help out a great cause, we love to do so.



**LET US KNOW HOW WE CAN HELP!**



## OUR NEW TEAMS

Since our beginning in December 2020, many things have changed. At We Are One United, we are constantly looking for new ways to expand and reach more people and are always seeking out new partnerships and collaborations. We believe that by working together, we can achieve more than we ever could alone.

Seeing people grow and achieve their goals is one of the most rewarding aspects of our work. We are inspired by the stories of our members, who come from all walks of life and have overcome incredible obstacles to achieve their dreams. We are proud to be a part of their journey and are committed to supporting them every step of the way.

We build on a foundation of a love for learning, a commitment to diversity, and a dedication to providing opportunities for our community. We believe that by coming together, we can achieve more than we ever could alone. We are proud of our team and the various programs they are leading, and we look forward to continuing to grow in the years to come.

# DISCOVER OUR DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Since January 2023, We Are One United has experienced remarkable growth and expansion. Our team has expanded, and we are on a trajectory of rapid development and financial sustainability. Spearheading our development efforts is the capable leadership of Iris Williams and Edwin Ramoran, who guide our dedicated Development Team.

Our team, composed of Iris Williams, Edwin Ramoran, Beverly Legal, and Emma Cooper, bring together diverse expertise and a shared passion for our mission. Working in unison, they are fully dedicated to effectively report and manage our awarded grants and continuously seek local funding opportunities. To optimize our donor management capabilities, we are thrilled to introduce DonorPerfect as our new platform, streamlining communication, reporting, and engagement with our supporters. Their work is driven by their unwavering commitment to secure the necessary resources to fund operations and develop our community driven programming.



# COMMUNITY RESOURCE SPECIALIST TEAM

We're thrilled to introduce our Community Resource Specialist (CRS) Team – a group of talented individuals of all ages, ready to help with our organization's programming and research. Not only are they the friendly faces you'll see in the community, but they are dedicated specialists who are passionate about making a positive impact. We meet twice a week in person, at College of the Desert - Palm Springs, and online on Thursday evenings. We plan, we discuss and we try to understand different point of views. We don't shy away from difficult topics such as racism in education, mental health, homelessness, youth at risk, or the foster care system. That's why we invite local professionals, from organizations such as SafeHouse of the Desert, Learn For Life, DeAztlan Consulting, BRAAF, or local professionals like James Woods, Deiter Crawford, Cynthia Sessions and Phillip Frazier to share their knowledge with us.

According to John Epps, the CRS Team goal is: "We hope this can help us identify resources, opportunities, and jobs in the local economy and help build wealth in the community".



# HOW WE USE DATA: MEET THE DATA TEAM

One of our major accomplishments has been the establishment of the Data Team in February 2023 as part of a data project aimed at assessing the covariates of violence and violence mitigation in the District 1 community in Palm Springs, California. The Data Team, which comprises of Augustine Kposowa PhD, Mihiri Chandrasena MHI, and Charlie Carrera, is an integral part of the Community Resources Specialist Team. The team meets at the College of the Desert Campus in Palm Springs on Tuesdays and Thursdays, as well as virtually as needed.

We are a recipient of the ESRI nonprofit grant, granting us access to their Arc GIS software for two years, which we'll use to aid our community. Our team built their first survey at the Career Fair, contacted SAS, SPSS, and ESRI for data management and analysis tools, and obtained a SAS/STATS version 9.4 license. We constructed a quantitative instrument and gathered feedback from focus groups to adhere to the grant's principles. We're currently conducting a literature review to design effective interventions to reduce violence and promote safety.





# BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

25

## The Arc of Safety

WAOU has a long lasting partnership with Debra Williams, the CEO of Building Resilient Communities. We were honored to participate in their inaugural Ark of Safety Community Resilient Summit, an unique gathering of local leaders, change-makers, and pioneers. We support their vision to create transformational strategies that will build community resilience.



## SMART Moves

From May to September 2022, WAOU had an opportunity to create a curriculum on Cannabis education through the SMART Moves Program at the Boys and Girls Club of Palm Springs. Thanks to this partnership, we helped to develop, implement and maintain education programs that address health, mental health, and wellness for youth in our communities.



# BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

26

## Desert Best Friends Closet

We Are One United had the pleasure of supporting our Board Chair Matthew Campos at Desert Best Friends Closet's Put Your Best Shoe Forward Luncheon and at their annual Women Empowerment Summit. We are glad to support such a fantastic organization filled with amazing people, great learning opportunities and a community focused mission.



## Riverside County Black Chamber of Commerce

We are happy to build on our thriving partnership with Pepi Jackson, the Executive Director of the Riverside County Black Chamber of Commerce. Through our collaborative efforts, we look forward to further supporting and empowering the Black Business and Entrepreneurship community.



# BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

27

## Local Leaders and Governments

We are incredibly grateful for the support of the City of Palm Springs, their City Council, and the Police in our mission. Their unwavering support has been instrumental in our efforts. We are proud to have the backing of esteemed local leaders, such as Palm Springs Mayor Pro Term Grace Garner, Police Chief Andy Mills and numerous community leaders from PS District 1.



## VELA Youth Development Fund

We are thrilled to partner with Earl Mitchell, one of the founders of VELA Youth Development Fund, Inc. VELA Youth is dedicated to supporting the educational advancement of black students through scholarships and honorariums. Their mission focuses on fostering the development of black youth in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa.



# BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

28

## College of the Desert

We've partnered with College of the Desert to provide internships for local communities and to use their Palm Springs campus for our Community Resource Trainings. We value the talent in our communities and love the input of its local students. This partnership enables us to connect with a diverse pool of talented students and offer them hands-on experience.



## Chase Bank

Through this partnership, we aim to provide opportunities for individuals in underserved communities so they too can access the funding they need to start or grow their businesses. We are very proud to collaborate with Darneisha Beeler, Vice President Community Manager at JPMorgan Chase located in Palm Springs.



# THE FUTURE

29

## **OUR PROGRAM GOALS FOR 2024**

We have exciting plans to expand our impact and provide more support to families and children in the community, including launching a high school program that offers childcare for teen parents in 2023 and launching an AmeriCorps program in 2024. We aim to start providing small-scale services for families in our programs through our partnership with the Early Learning Consortium in Riverside and membership in the Coachella Valley planning committee. We are also exploring international partnerships with ITT Africa and BOCA International (Bocas Hospitality Project) in 2024 to gain valuable international cooperation.

## **OUR FUNDRAISING GOALS**

We are building on our growing list of key stakeholders and volunteers. Our upcoming efforts include ongoing community leaders summit meetings, special events like an orientation luncheon to introduce potential supporters to our organization, and community-focused gatherings, activities and engagements that will provide opportunities to ask for more support. Our staff consistently meets with community stakeholders and potential supporters who become donors. For instance, we are building partnerships with the assistance and guidance of those who have made inroads into community building by connecting with leaders, advocates, allies, and talent in our communities.



30

# THANK YOU OUR SUPPORTERS

We Are One United would like to take a moment to express our heartfelt thanks to all of our supporters, whether you are an individual or an organization. We know that it's not always easy to give, but your contributions have made a significant impact on our ability to continue our work. We also understand that your support represents more than just financial assistance. It represents a belief in our mission and a commitment to creating positive change.

**THANK YOU, YOU ARE AMAZING!**

# OUR DONORS

31

## California Violence Intervention and Prevention Grant Program - CalVIP

In June 2022, we were awarded a matching reimbursement grant from the California Board of State and Community Corrections to prevent and reduce Youth Violence. United for Safe Youth Initiative aims to bring peace and new community entrepreneurship programs to families of District 1 in Palm Springs.

## CV Giving Day

We were fortunate to receive a \$10,000 prize during the inaugural Coachella Valley Giving Day on March 1st, sponsored by Desert Community Foundation and FirstBank. We are grateful for this award and thank you.

## Our Board

We want to thank our generous board for their support, guidance, and commitment. Whether you donate your time, your unwavering support or experience, it has been invaluable in helping us achieve our mission.



# OUR DONORS

32

## City of Palm Springs

In order to raise money to match our CalVIP grant, we turned to The City of Palm Springs for help. John Epps and Jilska Chandrasena used a public hearing platform to bring our plea to the members of the city government. The Palm Springs City Council voted unanimously to provide hundreds of thousands of dollars to help address the problem of youth violence in an area of the city where it's needed most. We are incredibly grateful for their help so we can uphold our promise to the community!

## Regional Access Program Foundation

A grant from the Regional Access Project Foundation (RAP) in Palm Desert helped us launch our work in the area of mental health awareness and enabled us to support our community-focused virtual community cafés. We want to extend our thanks to our RAP members who helped us start up programs that will initiate change.







## JOIN THE GAME

### **Become a Partner**

Join our team of corporate and community partners to make an impact through our programs and activities.

### **Volunteer**

We are always looking for volunteers to help us during our events, or planning.

### **Donate**

Your support means the most. Thank you for being on our side.

### **Connect With Us**

Follow and engage with @weareoneunitedinc on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube.



We would like to express deep appreciation to the We Are One United Team for their dedication and hard work.

***"I would like to thank the WAOU team for uplifting and empowering each and every one of us to contribute in our own unique ways, under the same mission and with the same goals."***

Emma Cooper (Intern, CRS Team Member)




We would like to thank Karen Weaver, Richard Chandrasena, and Ghazaleh Pourmojib for the photos that helped bring this report to life. Special thanks are extended to Angelica Cunningham for her editorial and proofreading assistance.

We thank you for your continued support.

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## Contact

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