



FOUNDING YEAR

2023–2024

ANNUAL REPORT

December 2023 – August 31, 2024

FROM VISION TO SERVICE

Empowering Youth. Strengthening Communities.

Stamford, Connecticut • www.irosacares.org



1st MLK Day of Service with some of our youth.

A Message from Our Founder

In December 2023, IROSA Cares, Inc. was born from a simple belief: when people are given meaningful opportunities to serve, they can make a real difference in the lives of others and in their communities.

The name IROSA honors my parents, Ira and Rose, whose example helped shape my belief in the importance of helping others. Their values, along with the influence of my family and my many years as an educator, inspired me to create an organization where service, education, and community could come together.

We did not begin with a large budget or an established network of programs. We began with an idea and a community willing to believe in it.

Within weeks of our founding, supporters contributed approximately \$1,000 through GoFundMe to help us organize our first MLK Day of Service in January 2024. That support turned our vision into action.

Seventy volunteers joined us for our inaugural event, completing service projects that supported military service members, seniors, first responders, families in need, and the Stamford community.

To every volunteer, donor, community organization, family member, and supporter who believed in IROSA Cares from the start—thank you. You helped build the foundation upon which we continue to grow.

“

Our founding year was only the beginning, but it showed us what was possible.

Catherine E. Stephenson
Founder & CEO



Mom and dad (Ira and Rose Smith) and me

Who We Are

IROSA Cares, Inc. was founded in December 2023 in Stamford, Connecticut, with a commitment to connecting young people and community members with meaningful opportunities to serve others.

OUR MISSION

IROSA Cares Inc. empowers youth—especially underserved youth—to lead through volunteerism, education, and service.

OUR VISION

A future where young people—especially underserved youth—have the opportunity to lead, give back, and shape stronger, more connected communities.

THE MEANING BEHIND IROSA

IROSA combines the names Ira and Rose, the parents of Founder & CEO Catherine E. Stephenson. Their legacy of family, community, and helping others continues through an organization created to inspire another generation to recognize that they, too, have something meaningful to contribute.

OUR GUIDING BELIEF

Changing mindsets, one volunteer at a time.



Volunteers
enjoying our
first MLK Day of
Service!

Our Founding Year at a Glance

IROSA Cares existed for only a portion of the 2023–2024 reporting year, but those first months established the foundation for the organization we would become.

DEC 2023	\$1,000	JAN 2024
IROSA Cares, Inc. is founded	Raised through GoFundMe	First MLK Day of Service
70	343+	5
Volunteers engaged	Letters, cards & Kindness Rocks	Military care boxes packed

OUR FIRST-YEAR IMPACT

34 letters to troops • 87 senior Valentines • 42 first-responder thank-you cards
180 Kindness Rocks • 1 box of food donated



Our First MLK Day of Service

Just one month after IROSA Cares was founded, our community came together to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. through hands-on service.

Approximately \$1,000 raised through GoFundMe helped make the event possible. Seventy volunteers participated in projects benefiting military service members, seniors, first responders, families in need, and the Stamford community.

5 MILITARY CARE BOXES Packed with donated items and sent through Operation Gratitude.	34 LETTERS TO TROOPS Messages of encouragement, gratitude, and appreciation sent through Operation Gratitude.
87 VALENTINE’S DAY CARDS Handmade for seniors and distributed through Small Acts, Big Change.	42 THANK-YOU CARDS Presented locally to the Stamford Police Department and a Stamford fire station.
180 KINDNESS ROCKS Painted with positive messages and distributed at locations throughout Stamford.	1 LARGE BOX OF FOOD Collected and donated to the Stamford Food Bank to support local neighbors in need.

70 VOLUNTEERS. ONE SHARED PURPOSE.



Mayor Caroline Simmons and son

PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

Our First Community Connections

From the beginning, IROSA Cares understood that meaningful community impact is strengthened through collaboration. Our inaugural MLK Day connected volunteers with established organizations and local community institutions so that each project could reach people beyond the event itself.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Operation Gratitude	Military care boxes and letters to troops
Small Acts, Big Change	Valentine’s Day cards for seniors

COMMUNITY RECIPIENTS & CONNECTIONS

- Stamford Police Department** — Thank-you cards for local police officers
- Stamford Fire Department** — Thank-you cards delivered to a local fire station
- Stamford Food Bank** — Food collected for community members in need
- Stamford Community** — Kindness Rocks distributed at locations throughout the city

SERVICE IS STRONGER WHEN COMMUNITIES WORK TOGETHER.



Community Support Made It Possible

\$1,000

RAISED THROUGH GOFUNDME

IROSA Cares began without a large operating budget. Instead, we began with people who believed in our vision.

In the weeks following our founding, approximately \$1,000 was raised through GoFundMe to support our first MLK Day of Service. Those early donations helped purchase materials and provide the resources needed to transform an idea into a hands-on community service experience.

For a newly established nonprofit, every contribution mattered. Our first donors did more than help fund an event—they became some of the first people to invest in the future of IROSA Cares.

FROM COMMUNITY SUPPORT TO COMMUNITY IMPACT

Community Donations → First MLK Day of Service → 70 Volunteers → Hundreds of Acts of Service → A New Tradition Begins



Early board member,
Dr. Faith W. Smalls
and Founder,
Catherine E.
Stephenson

The Beginning of Something Bigger

Our 2023–2024 founding year was intentionally small. We hosted one major service event—but that one event demonstrated the potential of our mission.

Seventy volunteers showed up. Community members financially supported a newly created organization. Volunteers wrote to military service members, remembered seniors, thanked first responders, supported families experiencing food insecurity, and spread kindness throughout Stamford.

Most importantly, young people and adults had an opportunity to experience what happens when a community chooses to serve together.

1

MAJOR SERVICE EVENT

70

VOLUNTEERS

343+

ACTS OF KINDNESS

THANK YOU

To our first donors, volunteers, community partners, families, friends, and supporters: thank you for believing in IROSA Cares from the beginning.



IROSA CARES, INC.

Empowering Youth. Strengthening Communities.

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VOLUNTEER • PARTNER • DONATE • SERVE