ANNUAL REPORT 2025–2026

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A look at Well Chicago’s first year of impact, investment, partnerships, and what comes next.

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A LETTER FROM OUR

Executive Director

Dear Friends of Well Chicago,

When we started Well Chicago in 2025, we began with a belief that every young person should have access to after-school art and STEM programs, regardless of their family's income.

We didn't have a large budget, a permanent space, or a long list of programs. We had a dream, and we showed up. We brought art, invention, and hands-on learning directly into Chicago neighborhoods, listened to families and community partners, and built from what we learned.

In our first nine months of programming, we served nearly 200 young people. We gave caregivers back more than 120 hours of personal time, hired nine creative professionals, and built eight community partnerships, including **CareerSpring, The Parlor, Chicago Public Library, Generations Housing Initiatives, Anne's Haven, Litter Caterpillars, Chicago Innovation,** and the **Jefferson Park Chamber of Commerce.**

But numbers tell only part of the story. At the North Austin Branch of the Chicago Public Library, participants spent eight Saturdays imagining, designing, building, and testing their own inventions. In a letter to Well Chicago, Children's Librarian Mrs. Elvira Camargo described watching children "dream up their own inventions, design them, and build prototypes," *while developing problem-solving skills, confidence, and the belief that their ideas matter.*

Building lasting partnerships is at the heart of how Well Chicago operates. Our collaboration with Generations Housing Initiatives is a powerful example. The connection to Well Chicago grew from a recommendation by a parent whose child participated in our Invention Challenge at the Jefferson Park Public Library. We then launched a summer pilot at the Pines of Edgewater, an affordable housing building, bringing residents of all ages together through art and community projects with the support of GHI.

A successful pilot became a sustained partnership. Pines will continue working with Well Chicago, while GHI is helping us expand into additional properties, including Thrive Englewood. There, we are connecting young people and adult residents through art, gardening, and neighborhood beautification alongside our partner Caterpillar Park, a community green space directly across the street (talk about serendipity!)

Our relationships and a job "Well" done made this growth possible. Artists, educators, organizations, businesses, families, and supporters have contributed space, expertise, funding, materials, meals, and time. *Most importantly, they believe our young people: the future of Chicago.*

For our next chapter, we are implementing consistent programming across Jefferson Park, Portage Park, Austin, Englewood, Uptown, and Edgewater.

We are also building the next evolution of our model: the **Well Chicago Civic Innovation Lab.** Through technology, inventiveness, and civic learning, young people will identify community challenges, develop solutions, understand who makes decisions about the issues they care about, and bring their ideas to those decision-makers. Our training through the **Pulitzer Center's Local Letters** program will strengthen this work by connecting youth's learning, shaping their voices, and taking action.

Mrs. Camargo at the North Austin Library also wrote that investing in these experiences helps build "a future filled with innovators, creators, and confident young leaders." I cannot think of a better description of the future we are working toward.

To every family who trusted us with their child, every participant who brought an idea to life, every educator who shared their knowledge, every organization that opened its doors, and every supporter who believed in a new organization with a dream: thank you.

You helped prove what can happen when a city makes room for its youngest residents to have a say. The best is in the making!

With gratitude,

Tetyana Klymko
Founder & Executive Director
Well Chicago

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

Investing in Young People, Building a Well Chicago

A look at how cash and donated resources supported our programs, people, and growth.

$18,186
Total resources invested

$8,286
Unrestricted cash funding

$9,900
In-kind contributions

WHERE OUR RESOURCES WENT

Investment Area	Amount	Share
Administrative & organizational costs	$2,755	15.1%
Facilitators & contracted support	$2,560	14.1%
Program materials	$1,891	10.4%
Food & snacks	$1,080	5.9%
In-kind donated space	$3,900	21.4%
In-kind administrative consulting	$6,000	33.0%
TOTAL	**$18,186**	**100%**

THE STORY BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Cash expenditures of $8,286 funded organizational administration, facilitators, contracted support, program materials, and food and snacks for youth workshops.

In-kind donated space ($3,900) reflects the estimated value of partner-provided facilities used to host workshops and community programming.

In-kind administrative consulting ($6,000) reflects donated professional expertise and support for organizational operations and infrastructure.

Unrestricted cash funding ($8,286) came from private donors and board supporters. In-kind support ($9,900) is noncash and is included in total resources invested. Percentages are rounded; individual shares may not sum to exactly 100%.

PROGRAMMING & COMMUNITY IMPACT

Creativity With a Path to Community Impact

Across the city, Well Chicago curated hands-on arts and invention experiences that invited young people to imagine, build, collaborate, and improve the spaces around them.

190+	26	2
children served	total workshops in 9 months	public-space art installations

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Jefferson Park Public Library • Portage Park Public Library • North Austin Public Library • Pines of Edgewater • National Public Housing Museum • Caterpillar Park

SUMMER 2026 INVENTION CHALLENGE

Jefferson Park + North Austin Public Libraries

5- and 8-week **Henry Ford Invention Challenge** programs using curriculum from **Chicago Innovation**.

Youth practiced creative problem-solving through hands-on design, experimentation, and invention.

Projects included technology-enabled bracelets designed to repel sharks, an adaptive eyebrow product for people experiencing illness-related hair loss, a litter-collecting robot, a collapsible door and mattress concept for people experiencing homelessness, a cloning machine, a friendship bracelet designed to support autistic children, and many more imaginative solutions.



ARTS + COURTYARD BEAUTIFICATION

Pines of Edgewater

A 5-week summer 2026 pilot combined collaborative art with neighborhood beautification, evolving into a consistent partnership with Generations Housing Initiatives, a nonprofit serving affordable housing buildings throughout Chicago.

Participants in the Edgewater location worked on traditional canvas paintings, tape art, and steppingstone decorations, which were installed in the Pines of Edgewater community courtyard.

The building's resident coordinator, Jorge Rivera shared that ***"[Habitat] Management was excited to see the children decorate the courtyard. The parents and grandparents are just as engaged as the kids. Great program!"***



CREATIVE WORKSHOPS AND PUBLIC ART

Across partner sites, including Jefferson Park and Portage Park Libraries, National Public Housing Museum, Caterpillar Park

Workshops included the Invention Box;
Wonder Lines tape art;
Wonder Lines pattern-making with food;
Brave Stage personal superhero plushies;
Wonder Lines art using upcycled clothing donated by the Parlor;
and painted stepping stones created for installation at Caterpillar Park in Englewood.



















SUPPORTING CHICAGO'S CREATIVE ECONOMY

Investing in the People Behind the Programs

Our impact extends beyond the young people we serve. Well Chicago also invests in local talent, emerging professionals, and small businesses that help Chicago's creative ecosystem thrive.

9	7 + 2	$60
people hired	facilitators + interns	average stipend per 2-hour workshop

CREATING PAID OPPORTUNITIES

Well Chicago hired 9 people to bring our work to life: 7 facilitators and 2 interns.

Facilitators brought art, invention, youth development, and creative expertise directly into community spaces, while internships created opportunities for emerging professionals to contribute to a growing nonprofit.







INVESTING IN LOCAL TECH AND BUSINESS TALENT

We partnered with **Truvigil**, supporting a local Woman-owned tech business while strengthening Well Chicago's own infrastructure. Together, we improved our website, registration experience, tracking and reporting systems, and day-to-day operations.

TruVigil

WHAT'S NEXT

From Creative Learning to Civic Action

Our next chapter is about consistency, strong neighborhood partnerships, and elevated tools for participants to turn creativity and civic thinking into action.

GROWING CONSISTENTLY ACROSS OUR COMMUNITIES

Jefferson Park • Portage Park • Uptown • Edgewater • Austin • Englewood

NEIGHBORHOOD-ROOTED PARTNERSHIPS

Generations Housing Initiatives + Caterpillar Park

Building on our relationship with **Generations Housing Initiatives**, we are connecting their Englewood property, “Thrive”, with Caterpillar Park.

More than 30 youth and adult residents will participate in art, gardening, and lot beautification.

At Pines of Edgewater, our returning partner of GHI, we plan to continue consistent 8-week programming throughout the 2026–2027 calendar year.



TECHNOLOGY + CIVIC LEARNING

Tech, invention and Local Letters

We are developing a book that helps participants use technology as tools for their projects.

Learning will be supplemented by training from the **Pulitzer Center's Local Letters** program, teaching participants about how to reach out to decision-makers and local officials to advocate for their inventions and ideas.

IN DEVELOPMENT FOR REST OF 2026

WELL CHICAGO CIVIC INNOVATION LAB

Turning the self-paced product into an in-person experience

Beyond the workbook, we will launch the **Well Chicago Civic Innovation Lab**: an in-person program built on the book’s foundation and Well Chicago’s programmatic successes.

Eight-week programs at partner locations will bring together arts, technology, invention, and civic learning, helping young people develop ideas, build solutions, and engage the people who can help move those ideas forward.

IN DEVELOPMENT FOR EARLY 2027

LOOKING AHEAD

Invest and Grow Locally

For the 2026–2027 program year, Well Chicago aims to raise $20,000 to sustain and expand accessible art, invention, technology, and civic-learning programs in six neighborhoods.

We believe the strongest community investments begin close to home. Local businesses understand their neighborhoods, employ community members, serve local families, and help shape the places where young people grow up. We are focusing on a hyperlocal business support model centered on mutually valuable partnerships.

When a business invests in Well Chicago, we go beyond placing its logo on a flyer. We introduce our partners to our growing network of families, educators, neighborhood organizations, and community supporters. Through program materials, family communications, digital promotion, live events, and youth showcases, we help participating businesses strengthen their local visibility and build genuine relationships with the communities they serve.

Our goal is for community investment to create value in both directions. Local businesses help make high-quality youth programming possible, and Well Chicago helps communities recognize and support the businesses investing in their future.

What $20,000 Will Support

- Consistent arts, invention, and civic-learning programs in six neighborhoods
- Paid local artists, educators, and creative professionals
- Technology, learning materials, meals, and supplies
- Youth-led community projects and public showcases
- Development of the Well Chicago Civic Innovation Lab

If You Own a Business - Join Our Local Business Network!

Businesses can support this work by sponsoring a workshop, funding a multiweek program, contributing goods or services, donating an auction or raffle item, or making a gift of any amount.