



COMPASS
for Kids



Annual Report 2024-2025





OPPORTUNITY. EMPOWERMENT. COMMUNITY.



OUR PURPOSE

Our **mission** is to provide academic and social-emotional support to empower children and families underserved by our community.

Our **vision** is that all children in our community experience success and reach their full potential.





CONTENTS

- 3** A Note From the Chief Executive Officer
- 5** Our Team
- 6** A Note From the Board President
- 7** Field Trips That Inspire
- 8** Impact Report
- 11** Financial Overview
- 13** Recognizing Our Supporters
- 18** Program Stories





A NOTE FROM THE FOUNDER & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

A Year of Growth and Impact: How Compass for Kids Is Bridging the Achievement Gap

It's always fun to look back on everything we accomplished the previous year! As an organization that is always growing and adapting, it is important to pause, reflect, and celebrate our progress.

Our hope is for every child in our community to have the opportunity to participate in a high-quality, effective, out-of-school time program.

What separates us from other not-for-profits' programs is our results. And I can't wait for you to read our update on how amazing our students in Club Compass, YLDP, and Camp Compass have done!

If you haven't already heard, in summer 2024, Camp Compass received national recognition from the US Department of Education when we were awarded with an "Engage Every Student Program Champion" award. We were one of thirteen not-for-profit organizations in the country, and the only one in Illinois, to be recognized with this award. I want to personally recognize our administrative staff, Springfield Public Schools - District 186 teachers and administrators who spent their summer with us, and all the Camp counselors who each had a part in making this program award-winning.



In December 2024, we presented on summer learning loss and its impact on the achievement gap at the Citizens Club of Springfield. I encourage you to watch the recording to learn more! The achievement gap between low-income and higher-income students will not be closed without addressing summer learning.

On February 1, we wrapped up our Camp Compass 2025 Campaign and raised approximately \$180,000 for Camp Compass. Thank you to all of you who gave. Along with Title I Funding from District 186 and a grant from United Way of Central Illinois, this enabled us to plan for two Camp Compass sites and serve over 300 kids in summer 2025.

A NOTE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER CONT.

At the end of the school year, we celebrated completing our second pilot year of the Youth Leadership Development Program, our alumni program. Students showed improvement from pre- to post, and we've been making changes to the program for year 3, including switching to a new curriculum called Wayfinder. This program is a natural and much-needed extension of our Club Compass school-year program for elementary students. At Club, the students make huge strides in essential social-emotional skills and find a place of mentorship and belonging. It broke our hearts and theirs to have to leave after 5th grade. We owe it to our students to keep building this program so that they can stay with their Compass family all the way through their high school graduation!

We are so grateful to our volunteers, community partners, school staff, sponsors, donors, and everyone who makes our community-based programs possible!

It has been a big year for Compass for Kids, and we couldn't impact the children and youth in the community without the generous support of all of you! Together, we are changing lives and making our Springfield community a better place, now and in the future.

Molly Berendt Grogan

Sincerely,
Molly Berendt Grogan
Founder and Chief Executive Officer



Wellsville



Our Team

Stacey Austin	Site Coordinator
Amy Balster	Club Counselor
Molly Berendt Grogan	Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Lana Blitstein	Summer Learning Program Manager
Olivia Collins	School Year Program Mentor
Christy Freeman Stark	Marketing and Communications Manager
Lynette Hays	Site Coordinator & Club Counselor
Kieley Hendricker	Site Coordinator
Laura Huerta	Backpack Feeding Program Coordinator
Jack Hummert	Camp Compass Assistant
Shelly Kinner	Volunteer & Special Events Coordinator
Taylor Mullin	Executive Assistant
Sarah Oglesby	Chief Operating Officer
Adaeze Onyewuchi	Club Counselor
Ryan Reitmeier	Director of Programs
Kathy Seadler	Director of Finance & Administration
Brandy Stabler	Senior Donor Relations Manager
Kavita Sundaram	Youth Leadership Development Program Coordinator
Vyvyan Wesley	School Year Program Manager



FY25 Board of Directors

Officers

Drew Thomason (President)
Mike Blitstein (Immediate Past President)
Jim Sullivan (Vice President)
Catherine Scherschel (Treasurer)
Ray Zinnen (Secretary)

Directors

Jay Behrends
Beverley Chapman
Mike Crews
Christy Crites
Linsay Gordon
Brittani Hopper

Brad Menezes
April Miles
Maryann Phillips
Lakeisha Purchase
Donna Smylie





A NOTE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Together, We're Making a Difference That Lasts a Lifetime



At Compass for Kids, we believe every child deserves the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive... regardless of circumstance. For me, that belief became personal when my own daughter started kindergarten in District 186. She had the benefit of her grandmother, a former kindergarten teacher, preparing her for school, but I quickly saw that not every child came with those same supports. Learning about Compass, and how it wraps around our community's most vulnerable children with the academic, social, and emotional tools they need, made me want to get involved.

Since joining the board in 2023, I've had the privilege of seeing firsthand the impact Compass makes. I've watched kids walk into Camp Compass shy and uncertain, then leave at summer's end full of confidence, curiosity, and joy. This past year, more than 900 children found not just a safe place, but a place where they could truly thrive.

The heart of this organization beats because of the generosity and dedication of our community. Last year's Match Campaign was a perfect example. With the loss of federal ESSER funding, our Board knew this effort was critical to keeping programs strong. Every member stepped up - making calls, sharing stories, rallying friends - and together, with our donors, we raised \$220,000.

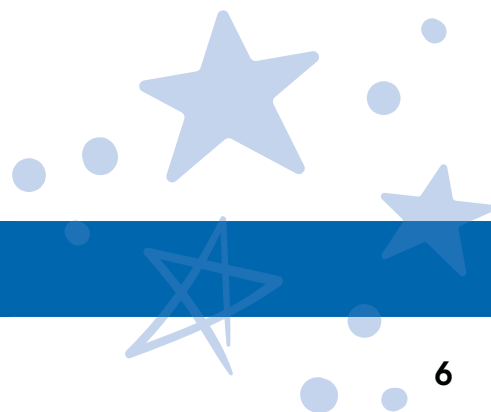
Serving on the Board also means being an ambassador - telling the stories of Compass kids, inviting others to give or volunteer, and finding creative ways to sustain our mission. Behind the scenes, it's about strategy, problem-solving, and always asking, "How can we keep making a difference?"

I am most proud that, even in a year of uncertainty, we never compromised on the quality of support we provide to our kids. We are not only meeting their immediate needs but also setting them on a path toward long-term success. Every child we help grow socially, emotionally, and academically has a better chance at a future they might not have otherwise found.

To our donors, volunteers, and partners: thank you for believing in this mission. Your support changes lives, one child at a time.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Drew Thomason".

Drew Thomason
Board President 2024-25



Field Trips, Real Futures

How Compass for Kids and a New Set of Wheels Are Fueling Big Futures, One Field Trip at a Time



Youth from the McClernand Club site visited the Channel 20 News station for a behind-the-scenes tour. During the visit, one of our curious 5th graders, Amir, stood out with his thoughtful questions about what it's like to work in a newsroom. At one point, Amir asked, "Do you have to be confident to be on TV?" Kenny, a team member at the station, took the time to answer Amir's questions and share what it takes to build a career in broadcast journalism. Their conversation sparked something in Amir; he confidently replied, "I'm going to get the degree I need and come back to see you for a job."

This experience was made possible by Compass for Kids' commitment to giving students real-world exposure to their dreams. Thanks to a generous grant from Meridian, Compass purchased two vans to transport students on field trips like this one, unlocking access to experiences beyond the classroom walls.

Field trips have always been more than just a break from routine; they are a gateway to opportunity. Whether it's a news station, a museum, a university, or a nature preserve, these experiences fuel imagination, curiosity, and self-belief. They turn "I wish" into "I will."

Amir's story is just one example of how Compass for Kids is creating pathways for Springfield youth to dream bigger and reach higher. With every van ride, every field trip, and every "aha" moment, we're helping kids see a future that includes them.





IMPACT REPORT

BY THE NUMBERS



106 KIDS

were served this year by Compass for Kids during **Club Compass**



5 SITES

Black Hawk | Dubois | Graham | Harvard Park | McClelland
served students from **6 schools** within Springfield Public Schools - District 186



98% OF STUDENTS

improved in at least one of their social-emotional skills
the most significant improvement in "doing the right thing"



15,952 MEALS PROVIDED

to the kids and their families through our **Backpack Feeding Program**
and **family-style dinners**

85 COMMUNITY PARTNERS

provided **enrichment activities**, **life skill lessons**, and **family-style dinners**



4,581 VOLUNTEER HOURS

contributed by 67 dedicated volunteers

348 SEL LESSONS

taught **weekly** to the kids using the "Leader In Me" social-emotional learning curriculum

8,143 FAMILY INTERACTIONS

including **special in-person events**, **e-mails**, **phone calls**, and **texts**

IMPACT REPORT

BY THE NUMBERS



YLDP

Youth Leadership Development Program

19 CLUB COMPASS ALUMNI

from Springfield Public Schools - District 186 participated in YLDP

100% OF STUDENTS

improved in at least one of their social-emotional skills

2,436 MEALS PROVIDED

to the youth and their families through our Backpack Feeding Program and family-style dinners

41 COMMUNITY PARTNERS

provided enrichment activities, life skills lessons, and family-style dinners

330 HOURS

of Community Service Learning (CSL) completed by the youth

422 VOLUNTEER HOURS

by 8 dedicated community members

15 SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LESSONS

taught using the evidence-based Teen Outreach Program (TOP) curriculum

550 FAMILY INTERACTIONS

including special in-person events, e-mails, phone calls, and texts





IMPACT REPORT

BY THE NUMBERS



924 CAMPERS

between **kindergarten** and **fifth grade** from all 22 Springfield Public Schools - District 186 elementary schools

7 SITES

Addams | Black Hawk |
Dubois | Enos | Owen Marsh |
Matheny - Withrow | Ridgely



37,824 HOURS

of **academic instruction** in math and literacy by certified teachers

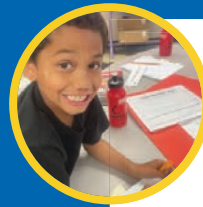
89%

of kids improved or maintained their **math** skills



96.1%

of kids improved or maintained their **literacy** skills



97.7%

of campers showed growth in at least one social-emotional (SEL) area, with the greatest growth in "**stands up for others who are treated unfairly**"

44 COMMUNITY PARTNERS

teaching the kids about **art**, **positive thinking**, **astronomy**, **finances**, **exotic animals**, **STEM**, etc.



11 FIELD TRIPS

including **bowling**, **roller skating**, **swimming**, **Springfield Clinic Pediatrics**, **BounceTag**, **Gymnastics Zone**, and **Memorial Wellness Center**

449 SEL LESSONS

taught weekly to the kids by **incredible camp counselors** using the "Leader in Me" social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum



45,814 MEALS

provided to the kids, including daily **breakfast** and **lunch** and the weekly **Backpack Feeding Program** for the weekends

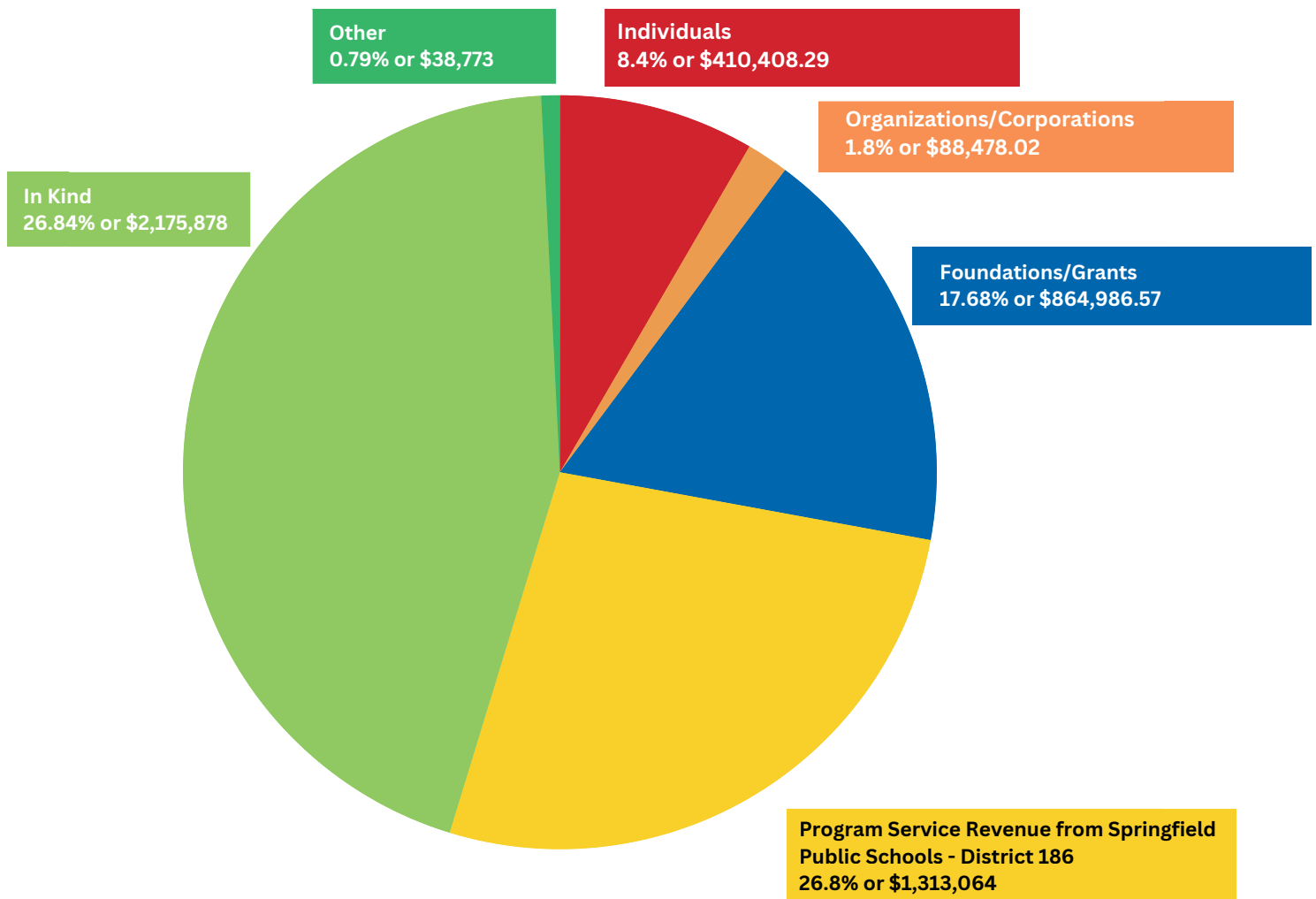
855+ VOLUNTEER HOURS

generously contributed by 77 people who had a **wonderful influence** on each and every child



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW - INCOME

As of May 31, 2025



Highlights

United Way of Central Illinois - \$168,000

Match Campaign - \$223,117

Back to School Brunch - \$46,883

PNC Grant for Backpack Feeding Program - \$18,000

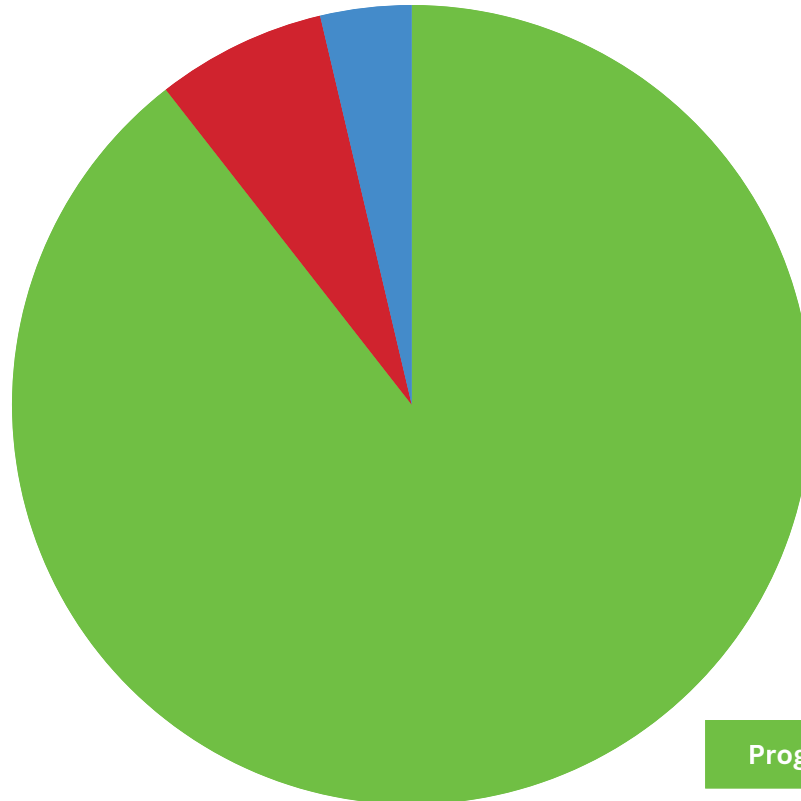
Total Income: \$4,891,579

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW - EXPENSES

As of May 31, 2025

General and Administrative 6.9%

Fundraising 3.7%



Programs 89.5%

Camp Compass - \$3,325,451
Club Compass - \$305,710
Youth Leadership Development Program - \$146,582



Expenses

Programs - \$3,777,743

General and Administrative - \$289,846

Fundraising - \$155,543

Total Expenses: \$4,222,723



ENDOWMENT STORY

Rooted Values, Measurable Impact: Chris and Debra Smith Invest in Springfield's Future



For Chris and Debra Smith, long-time Springfield residents who were married 43 years ago after meeting at a church singles group, philanthropy is more than just giving; it's a deeply personal act of stewardship shaped by their varied, yet equally strong, local roots. It is also an intentional way to address some of today's challenges by supporting organizations that honor and respect individual differences and are inclusive to all.

The Smiths' approach to giving is a fusion of their formative upbringings. Chris grew up steeped in a family tradition of entrepreneurial success and civic responsibility, largely defined by his parents, Henry Dale Smith, Sr. and Betty Smith. His father not only founded H.D. Smith in 1954, the large, privately held pharmaceutical wholesaler that was a cornerstone of the Springfield business community until its acquisition by AmerisourceBergen in 2018, but they also profoundly shaped his philosophy about giving back. This parental legacy instilled in Chris the conviction that philanthropy is an essential expression of gratitude for the good fortune his family achieved through decades of hard work and commitment.

Debra's perspective comes from the rich soil of a nearby farm, where she learned the value of hard work and community support. Her parents heavily influenced her philosophy, captured in her simple yet profound statement: "in order to be a philanthropist, you have to live within your means so you can give back to what is important."

Following the H.D. Smith acquisition, the couple established the A.A. Harvey Foundation, named lovingly after their family dog. This decision was driven by a strategic imperative: the disruption of government funding at the state level left crucial social programs and nonprofits vulnerable. Starting the foundation was a direct response, a way to provide a necessary, stable source of support for community anchors. Strategically, their foundation established a restricted fund for Compass for Kids through the Community Foundation of the Land of Lincoln to which anyone can contribute.



Why Compass Resonates



When Chris and Debra were invited to tour a Compass for Kids classroom, they quickly recognized an organization that aligns with their core values of inclusivity and respect. For Chris, a successful partnership requires mutual trust and a belief in the mission. He saw a clear need he wanted to address - ensuring low-income students have the same chance of success as their peers.

Debra was particularly impressed by the structure and intentionality of the program. “The degree to which there were stated behaviors that were expected of the students, and to be taught what is and isn’t polite” was something that impressed Debra. This focus on life skills alongside academics is crucial for the families served by Compass, many of whom are headed by single parents.

What truly elevates Compass for Kids in the Smiths’ view is the organization’s commitment to measuring results. Chris states, “that’s what separates Compass from a lot of other organizations, they are always assessing and measuring results.” This dedication to data-driven improvement ensures that their investment translates into tangible student progress, providing assurance that their funds are effectively compensating for unstable public resources.

The Compass program provides an essential bridge for these students, offering homework help, enrichment activities, and a nourishing dinner prepared and served by volunteers. Practical care extends further, with leftover food often packed up and sent home in addition to the bag of shelf-stable food provided through the Backpack Feeding Program, addressing a critical need for food security.

For Chris and Debra, their investment isn’t just charity; it’s a strategic partnership with an organization that values both compassion and accountability, building a stronger future for the Springfield community they call home. As the Smiths look ahead, the reins of the A.A. Harvey Foundation will eventually be passed to their two grown children, Callie and Samantha. It’s their expectation that Callie and Samantha will then fund the organizations that are important to them, ensuring that this powerful local legacy of giving, rooted in hard work, inclusivity, and a deep commitment to measurable outcomes, will continue to serve Springfield for generations to come.



RECOGNIZING OUR SUPPORTERS

Introduction

Compass for Kids is only able to accomplish our mission because of your support. Listed below are Community Partners, Volunteers, and Dinner Providers. For a full list of Corporate, Organizational, and In-Kind Donors, please visit: <https://www.compassforkids.org/about-us/corporate-partners/>



Community Partners

- Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum
- Adams Wildlife Sanctuary
- Animal Protective League
- Autumn Gibson - Exotic Animals
- Bank of Springfield
- Birth to Five
- BJ Grand Salon
- Capital Area Career Center
- CEFCU
- Central Illinois Dumpster
- Central Illinois Wildlife Rescue
- ChangeBridge Consulting
- Christy Freeman Stark
- Clean Impact LLC
- Clocktower Community Bank
- CMT
- Colleen Redpath Feger & Office of the City Treasurer
- Dabble
- Dana Thomas House
- Douglas Avenue United Methodist Church
- Emily Jewel - The Pet Doctor
- Epilepsy Advocacy Network
- Erica Austin
- Family Guidance Center
- First Bankers Trust Company
- First Church of the Brethren
- Gift of Hope
- Girl Scouts of Central Illinois
- Girls Glory
- Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors
- HDR
- Henson Robinson Zoo
- Hickory Point Bank
- Hoogland Center for the Arts
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources
- Illinois State Museum
- Illinois Worknet Center
- Impact Life
- Intricate Minds
- Jay Behrends
- Keller Williams
- Kidzeum
- Kim Dykstra
- Kim Moore
- Kirk Kellus
- Laurel United Methodist Church





Community Partners cont.

- Lee O’Keefe Insurance Agency
- Lex Brown
- Lincoln Library
- Made Wright Inc
- Mayor Misty Buscher & The City of Springfield
- Medics First
- Melissa McCandless
- Memorial Behavioral Health
- Michael Blitstein
- Zac Blitstein
- Mobile Museum of Tolerance
- Motherland Community Gardens
- Music Therapy Connections
- North Side Children’s Community Library
- O’Shea Builders
- Papa Johns
- PB&J Springfield
- Prairie State Bank & Trust
- Prevent Child Abuse
- Pure Performance Fitness Center
- Rotary South Club of Springfield
- Route 66 History Museum
- Sangamon County Child Advocacy Center
- Sara Vig
- Sensory Queen
- SIU School of Medicine
- SIU: Think First for Kids
- South Side Christian Church
- Springfield Clinic
- Springfield Fire Department
- Springfield Police Department
- Springfield Psychological Center
- Steve Smith
- The Cole Project
- Third Presbyterian Church
- Tricia Becker
- UIS: Star Lab
- University of Illinois Extension
- West Side Rotary
- Westminster Presbyterian Church
- WICS News Channel 20

- Wild Rose Artisans Gallery & Boutique
- Yai Moore
- Zaxxon Nation

Volunteers

- Dawn Abraham
- Katie Abraham
- Angie Acakpo - Satchivi
- Rachel Adebola
- David Adekola
- Carter Allen
- Stephanie Allen
- Rachel Becker
- Jim Berendt
- Nancy Berendt
- Deborah Beyah
- Lorna Blackford
- Michael Blitstein
- Joan Boatz
- Madeline Boner
- Meredith Brown
- Dan Brown
- Teresa Bruce
- Randy Burge
- Sue Burge
- Ellen Carpenter
- Rance Carpenter
- Valerie Cates
- Beverley Chapman
- Cassandra Claman
- Ari Collins
- Jay Cook
- Linda Cox
- Mary Crain
- David Curry
- Jenni Dahl



Volunteers cont.

- Arlo Dennison
- Darius Depa
- Eileen DeRoze
- Kent Douglas
- Juliana Eastvold
- Don Ecklund
- Jim Endris
- Fletcher Farrar
- Carol First
- Chrisy Galtmore
- Kris Gates
- Amy Gelber
- Ken Gilmore
- Maryam Hafiz
- Pauline Halm
- Ed Hart
- Alex Haworth
- Vera Herst
- Mark Hilliard
- Lisa Hillestad
- Charlie Holzmacher
- DeAnne Hubbard
- Bob Immel
- Tomarius Jarrett
- Mary Jessup
- Swara Kakumani
- Sophie Kink
- Charlie Koerner
- Carla Kopec
- Marsha Krall
- Cathy Lambdin
- Pam Lawrence
- Terry Link
- Elizabeth Lipscomb
- Laura Lipscomb
- Chad Marcum
- Fran Matthews
- Linda May
- Chris McGee
- Brice McGowan
- Patrick Medley
- April Miles
- Brenda Montgomery
- Linda Morrison
- Liz Muench
- Luke Murphy
- Beverly Neisler
- Chris Noel
- Jane Portugaliza
- Roger Powers
- Mary Kay Reed
- Izabell Reeves
- Donna Reeves
- Michelle Reiman
- Mary Resch
- Lauren Rodriguez
- Sandy Roeloffs
- Liz Rupel
- John Scherschel
- Caroline Scherschel
- Elizabeth Scherschel
- Peter Schownir
- Elizabeth Scott
- Natalie Scott
- Heidi Sherrock
- Merle Shiffman
- Bob Smith
- Linda Smith
- Steve Smith
- Donna Smylie
- Mary Lou Spengel
- Dezire Suter
- Gay Sybert
- Trey Taapken
- Glenda Terpstra
- Kevin Thomas
- Nancy Vereen
- John Watt



Volunteers cont.

- Eric Wells
- Shiloh Wheeler
- Leeza Zavelsky
- Ray Zinnen
- Kirk Kellus

Dinner Providers

- A Taste of Seoul
- AMVETS Post 94
- Marie Bartels
- Tiffany Bauman
- Bisch & Sons Funeral Home
- Black Hawk Elementary Staff
- Bloom Catering
- Susan Brune
- Sara Bruntjen
- Calvary Church
- Carrolton Bank
- Chick - fil - A
- Jessica Covey
- Christy Crites
- Leo Crites
- Jan Darling
- DIM Art House
- Jim Endris
- First Church of the Brethren
- First United Methodist Church
- Graham Elementary Staff
- Suzie Gutierrez
- Harvard Park Baptist Church
- Monica Hays
- Lisa Hillestad
- Melissa Horn
- Nancy Jackson
- JB Home Improvement
- Mary Jessup
- Janice & Jeff Kunz
- Fabiola LaPorte
- Laurel United Methodist Church
- Mayor's Youth Council
- Shirley McCandless
- April Miles
- Mt Zion Apostolic Church
- Diana Nielsen
- Jayme Oglesby
- Shawn Patterson
- Cheri Plummer
- Cheryl Plunkett
- RISE Springfield
- Rotary South Springfield
- Security Bank
- Catherine Scherschel
- Kathy & Dave Seadler
- Leslie & Greg Sgro
- SIU School of Medicine
- South Side Christian Church
- Kelsie Smith
- Stefanie Skeeters
- Reilly Sullivan
- Sunrise Rotary
- Dezire Suter
- Gay Sybert
- Teresa Tran
- Sara Vig
- Youth Leadership Development Program Youth



If you believe your name or organization has been left off this list, please do not hesitate to contact us. We appreciate your support of kids and families in Springfield and want to recognize all who make our success possible.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



PROGRAM IMPACT



Isaac

Isaac, a 5th grader, had a great experience at Camp Compass and was thrilled to join our school-year program. After just two weeks, he told us how much he loves Club Compass—especially making new friends and feeling included. He said it's very hard at school because a lot of his peers often ignore him. But while he's at Club, everyone talks to him—volunteers and other students invite him to play academic games or be their partner during wiggle time activities. Isaac is very happy to have found a “home” at Club Compass.

CLUB



Nelly

When Nelly, an 8th grader, joined the Youth Leadership Development Program (YLDP), she shared that one of her biggest goals was to speak up more. As a quieter student, she wanted to work on sharing her thoughts with others.

We introduced a new leadership opportunity where older YLDP students lead icebreakers for the group. After going through facilitation training, Nelly's group was up—but her peers were hesitant. Without missing a beat, Nelly stepped up, introduced their activity, and led with confidence! We can't wait to see her continue to grow as a leader at YLDP and beyond!

YLDP



Olivia

Olivia, a 3rd grader, made incredible strides at Camp Compass. Her post-Camp assessment showed that she improved both her reading speed and accuracy. When she came to Camp, she could read 54 words per minute with 96% accuracy, and by the end of Camp, she could read 80 words per minute with 100% accuracy! She also increased both her multiplication and division math facts by 20%!

CAMP

With gratitude, we thank you for supporting Compass for Kids and helping us empower every child to thrive.



♥ Every Gift Makes a Difference ♥

At Compass for Kids, your support fuels brighter futures for children in our community. No matter how you choose to give, you're helping kids learn, grow, and thrive.

Here are the ways you can make an impact:

- ✦ **One-Time Gift** – Make an immediate difference today.
- ✦ **Annual Giving** – Join our community of supporters with a yearly contribution.
- ✦ **Monthly Giving** (Wayfinder Friend) – Provide steady support kids can count on, all year long.
- ✦ **Planned & Estate Gifts** – Leave a lasting legacy that ensures Compass continues to serve generations of children.
- ✦ **Tribute & Honor Gifts** – Celebrate a loved one while supporting kids.

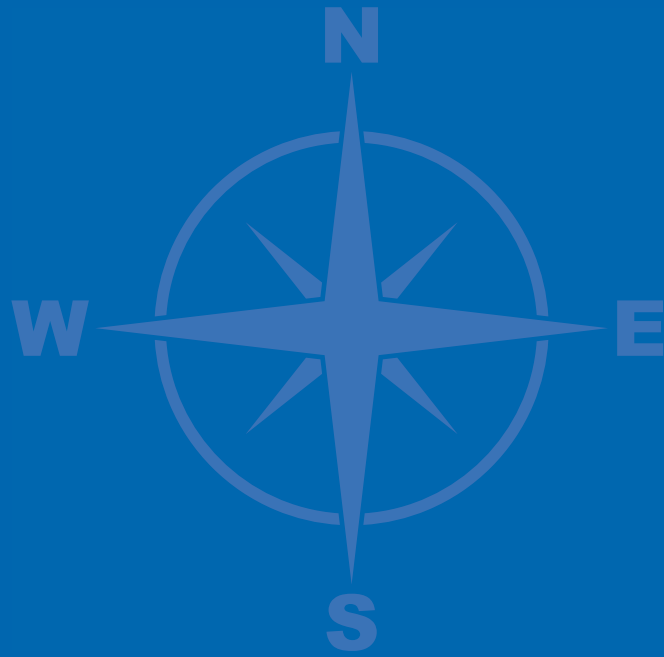
Every gift, big or small, moves us closer to our mission of empowering children through academic and social-emotional support.

🌐 **Give today: compassforkids.org/donate**

✦ **Cash, Stocks & Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs)** – Flexible giving options that may provide tax benefits while supporting our mission.



Community . Opportunity . Empowerment.



1201 S. 4th Street, Springfield, IL 62703
compassforkids.org

