

# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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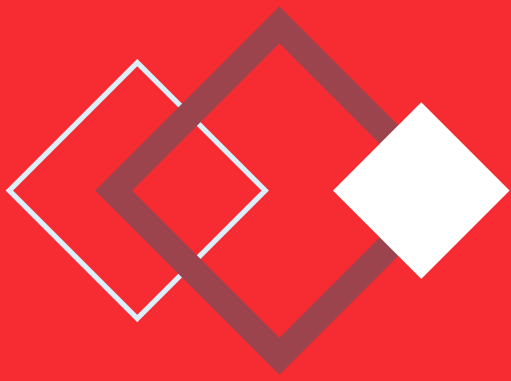
Struggle of Love Foundation



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A MESSAGE

# FROM DENVER MAYOR MIKE JOHNSTON

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"Struggle of Love Foundation is an amazing organization. They have been here 25 years, they do grassroots, community-based engagement to reduce violence, and they have had historic results. Right now we are seeing one of the lowest levels of crime in this neighborhood in more than 25 years. If you haven't seen them – learn more – come over to see Struggle of Love."



A LETTER FROM OUR FOUNDERS

# LAKESHIA AND JOEL HODGE

Dear Friends and Supporters,

2025 marked a historic and transformative year for the Struggle of Love Foundation. One of our proudest milestones was moving into our new, permanently owned Montbello LOVE Center—a moment that represents far more than a building. It symbolizes stability, growth, and a long-term commitment to the communities we serve.

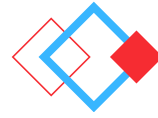
The LOVE Center is not just the home of Struggle of Love Foundation. It belongs to Northeast Denver. It belongs to the families who walk through our doors seeking support, connection, and opportunity. Most importantly, it belongs to every young person who has ever needed a safe place to grow, learn, and be supported.

Even in its early stages, the LOVE Center is already serving as a hub for collaboration and community impact. We are currently hosting several partner organizations in our shared space, strengthening our collective ability to serve youth and families. Looking ahead to 2026 and beyond, we are excited to expand the facility into a fully integrated community resource center. Our vision includes developing a no-cost grocery store, a learning kitchen, a community garden, an athletic center, and additional programming and gathering spaces that will allow us to serve even more people in meaningful ways.

Our vision is bold because the needs of our community are great, but with partnerships and shared commitment, we know what is possible. We are grateful to every funder, partner, volunteer, and community member who made 2025 such a meaningful year. Your belief in our mission fuels the work we do. This progress belongs to all of us.

With gratitude and love,  
LaKeshia and Joel Hodge  
Founders  
Struggle of Love Foundation





# MISSION VISION VALUES

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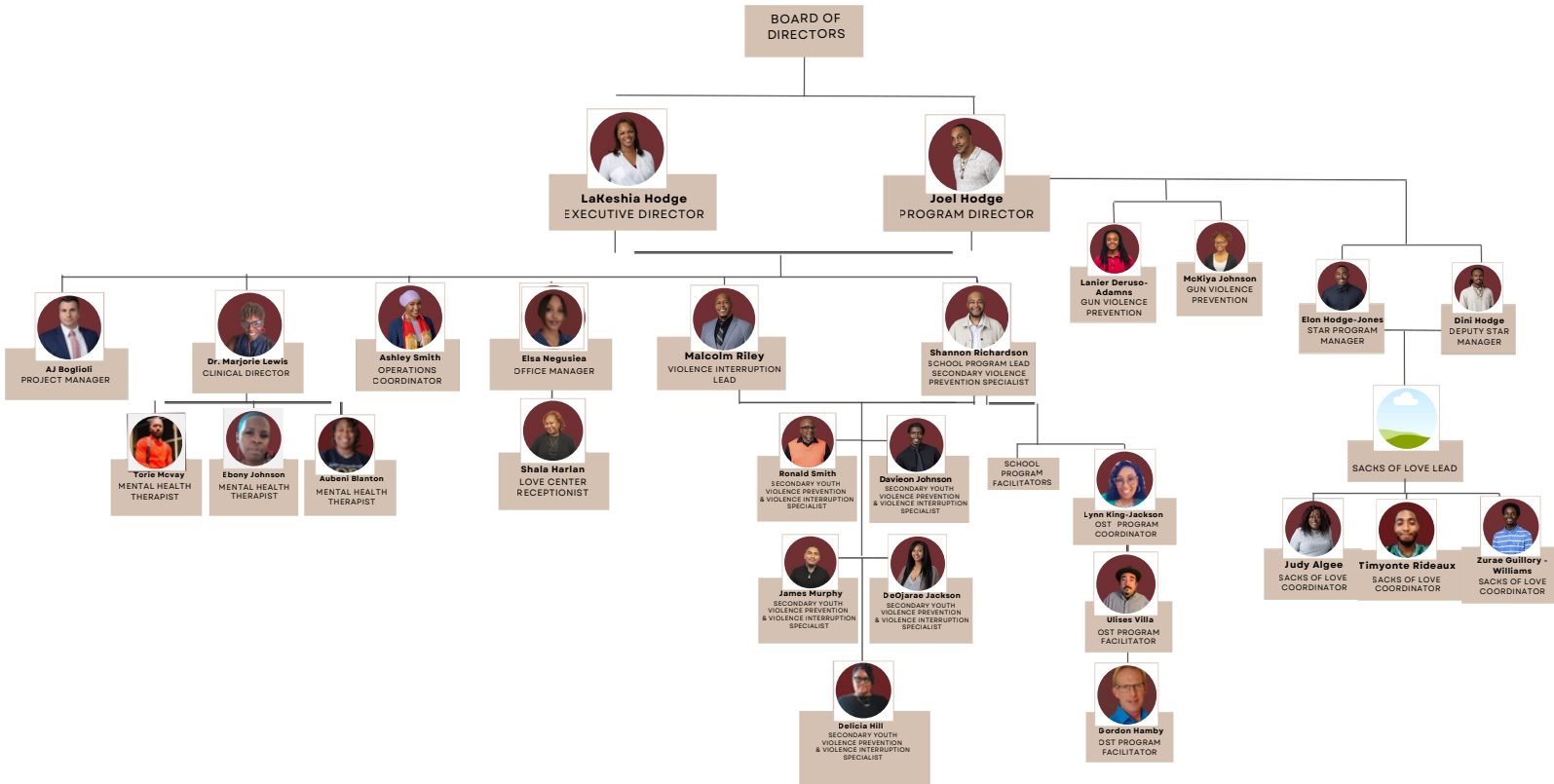
The SOLF **mission** is to provide community awareness, involvement, togetherness, and positive social experiences for youth, adults, and families through a variety of vital programs and resources.

Our **vision** is to promote and create holistic lifestyles through mentorship, intervention, prevention, health, and wellness.

Our **values** guide everything we do: Communication, Integrity, Accountability, Inclusivity, Love, Fun, Forgiveness, and Growth.



# STRUGGLE OF LOVE FOUNDATION ORGANIZATION CHART

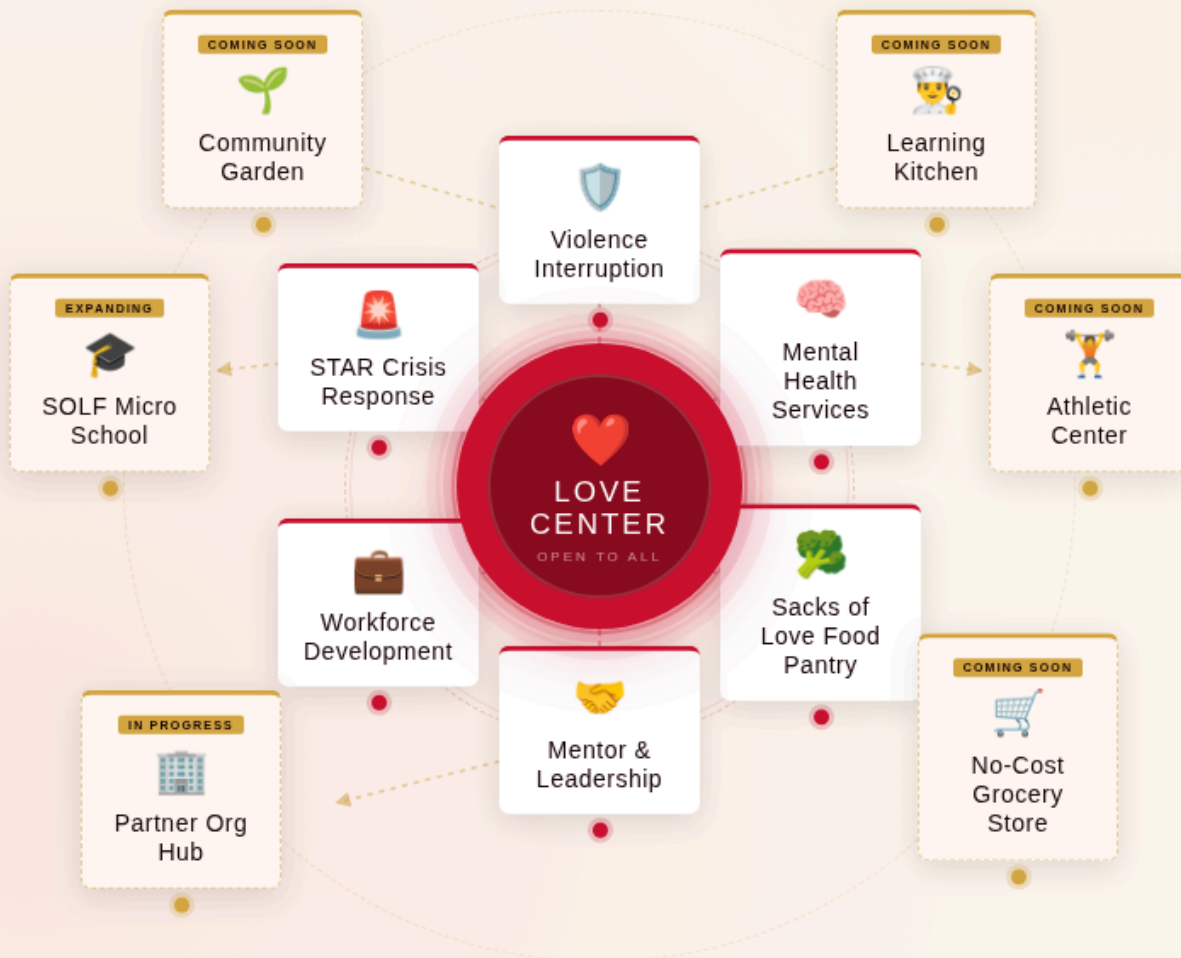


# THE LOVE CENTER

ONE PLACE.  
EVERY NEED.  
YOUR  
COMMUNITY.

*A full-service community hub where every door connects to another form of care.*

2025 marked one of the most significant milestones in SOLF's 25-year history: the purchase and move into a permanently owned facility in Denver's Montbello neighborhood. The new Montbello LOVE Center is not just a building. It is a declaration that SOLF is here to stay. In 2025, over 1,900 visitors came through the LOVE Center for services, drop-in case management, respite, and community connection. With this new facility, we plan on expanding our current programs in addition to providing new resources in the future.



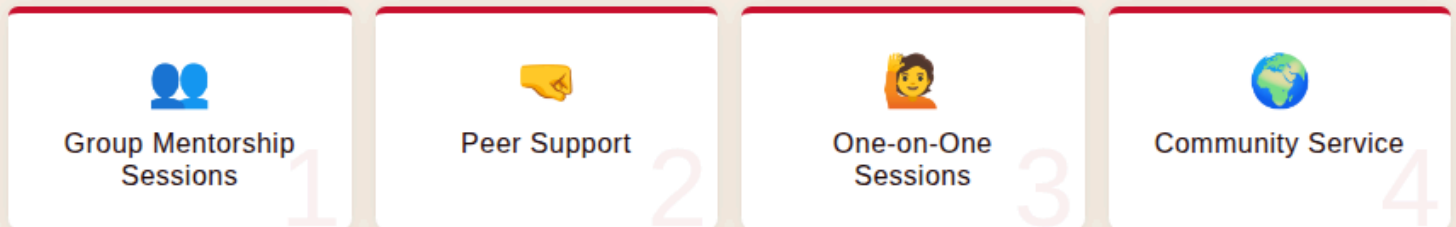
# SPREADING OUR LOVE MENTOR AND LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

In 2025, the Spreading Our Love Mentor and Leadership Program served more than 640 students across nine partner schools in Northeast Denver and North Aurora. The program is one of the most comprehensive youth violence prevention and mentorship models in the region, and it is delivered by staff who hold certifications in Trauma-Informed Practices, Youth and Adult Mental Health First Aid, Mandated Reporting, and the Alternative to Violence Program.

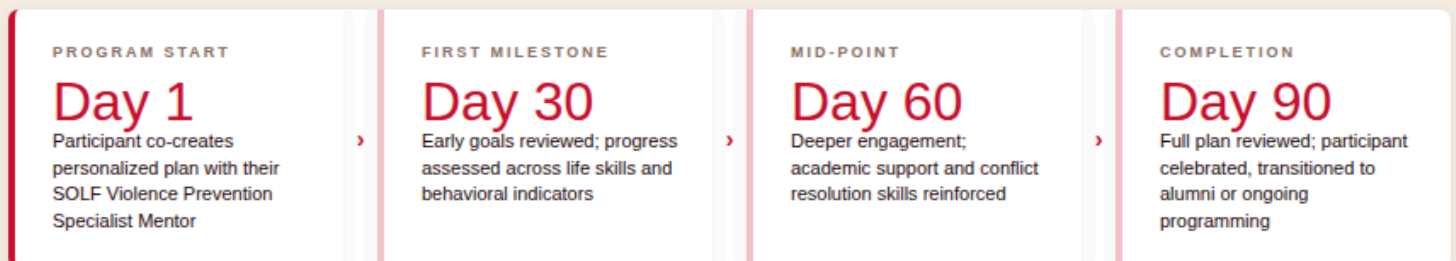
The program achieved an 89% overall success rate, measured using a combination of metrics including improved school attendance, academic performance, reduced interactions with law enforcement, progress in personal relationships, and completion of community service hours, mentorship sessions, and other core program activities.

## PROGRAM MODEL **How the Program Works**

### THE FOUR CORE PILLARS



### PARTICIPANT JOURNEY · STRUCTURED MILESTONE PLANS



## 30 Hours

of Annual Community Service — Every Participant, Every Year

Community service builds leadership, life skills, and civic responsibility — and for many youth, it's the first time they see themselves as contributors rather than recipients.

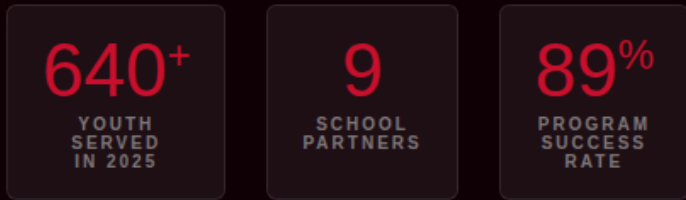
# Spreading Our Love Mentor & Leadership

*Comprehensive violence prevention and youth development — delivered where young people live, learn, and grow.*

## PARTNER SCHOOLS · DENVER & AURORA

- DSST Elevate Middle School
- DSST Elevate High School
- Maxwell Elementary
- Barney Ford Elementary
- Oakland Elementary
- Hallett Academy
- Colorado High School Charter
- Altura Elementary
- Gateway High School - Aurora

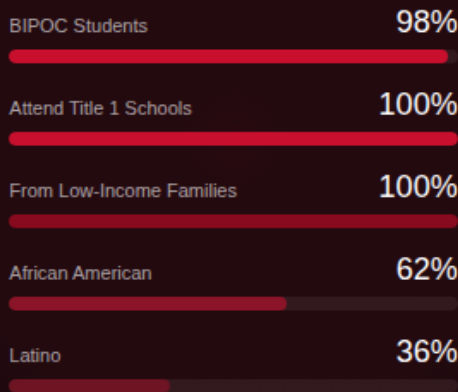
All partner schools serve Title 1, low-income student populations



### Overall Program Success

Based on improved school attendance, academic performance, and decreased behavioral incidents

### Participant Profile



### Intersecting Challenges

- Poverty & Economic Hardship**  
Families navigating food insecurity, housing instability, and limited resources
- Trauma Exposure**  
Chronic stress from neighborhood violence and adverse childhood experiences
- Community Violence**  
Direct and indirect exposure to gun violence and gang activity in service areas
- Educational Disparities**  
Schools with far below-average proficiency, graduation, and attainment rates

## WHY IT MATTERS

# The Need in Our Community

7%

Montbello students achieving math proficiency

vs. 33% Colorado avg - PublicSchoolReview.com

12%

Montbello students achieving reading proficiency

vs. 45% Colorado avg - PublicSchoolReview.com

28%

Montbello residents without a high school diploma

vs. 11% nationally - City-Data

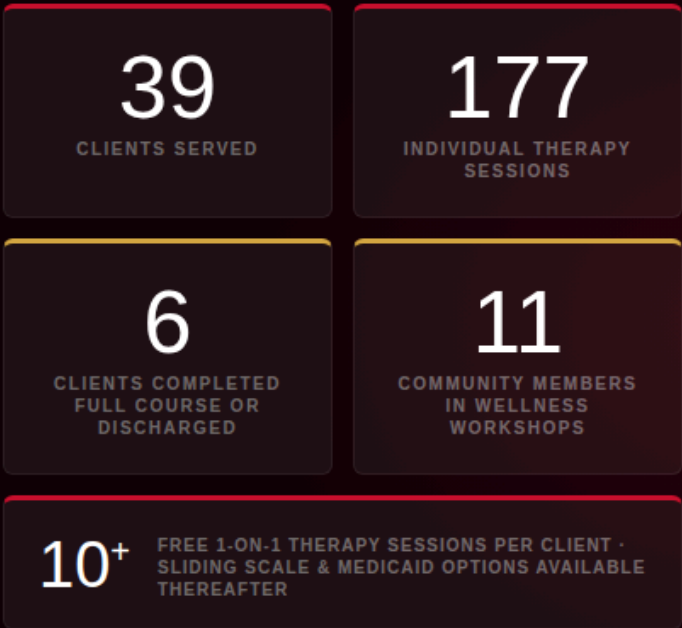
15.8%

Montbello poverty rate; median income \$74K vs. Denver's \$91K

Source: Point2Homes

# Mental Health Department

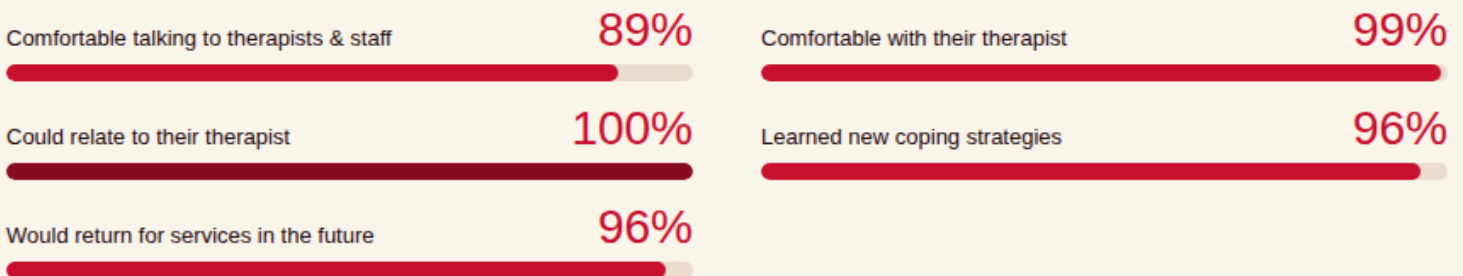
*Culturally responsive, trauma-informed care — meeting our community where they are.*



SOLF's Mental Health Department reflects our belief that healing is inseparable from community safety. Each SOLF Mental Health client receives 10 free therapy sessions at the LOVE Center or via telehealth, with options to continue on a sliding scale or through Colorado Medicaid thereafter. SOLF employs full-time BIPOC licensed clinical mental health therapists who hold Licensed Addiction Counseling certifications, and who provide trauma-informed therapy, crisis therapy, family therapy, and group therapy sessions. When language barriers or other factors prevent SOLF from serving a client directly, our partnership with Wellpower ensures seamless referrals to appropriate providers.

## PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK 2025 Youth Survey Results

123 youth respondents · In-person & telehealth participants

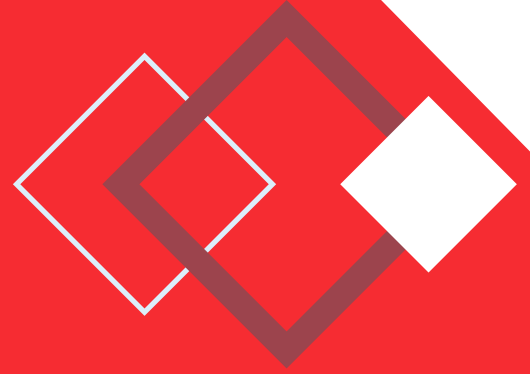


# 100%

### Adult Participant Satisfaction

19 adult respondents · 100% reported satisfaction with SOLF mental health services

# VIOLENCE INTERRUPTION

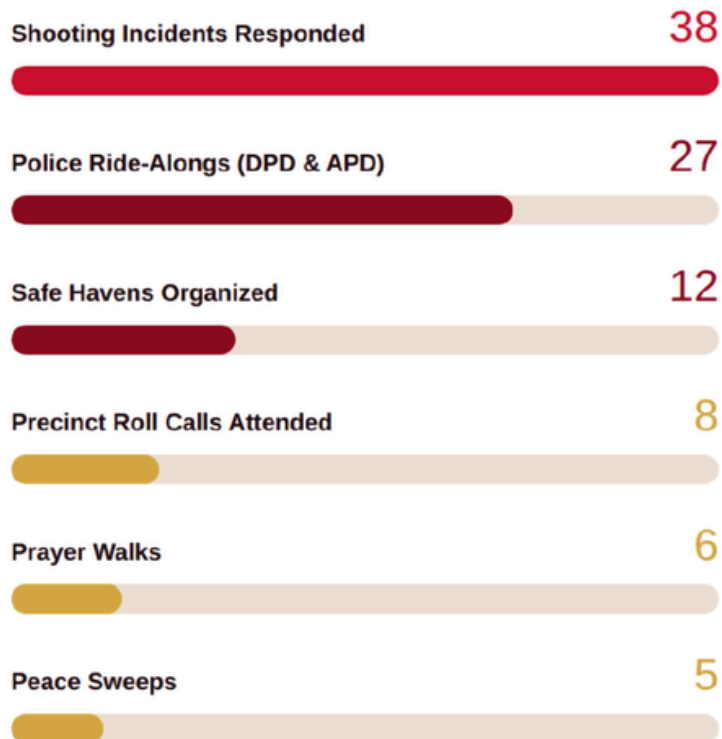


This year, the Violence Interruption Team responded to 38 shooting incidents, providing intensive, trauma-informed support to affected families and community members. The team made 136 total referrals and warm handoffs: 128 to internal SOLF services and 8 to external partners. Staff attended 27 ride-alongs with Denver and Aurora Police Departments and participated in 8 roll calls at local precincts to maintain close coordination with law enforcement on emerging safety concerns. The team also organized 12 safe havens, community gatherings held in response to local violent incidents where neighbors can come together, access resources, and begin the healing process. In addition, staff led 5 peace sweeps and 6 prayer walks throughout the service areas.

## VIOLENCE INTERRUPTION · 2025

### Community Response Activity

All outreach actions taken by SOLF Violence Interruption team

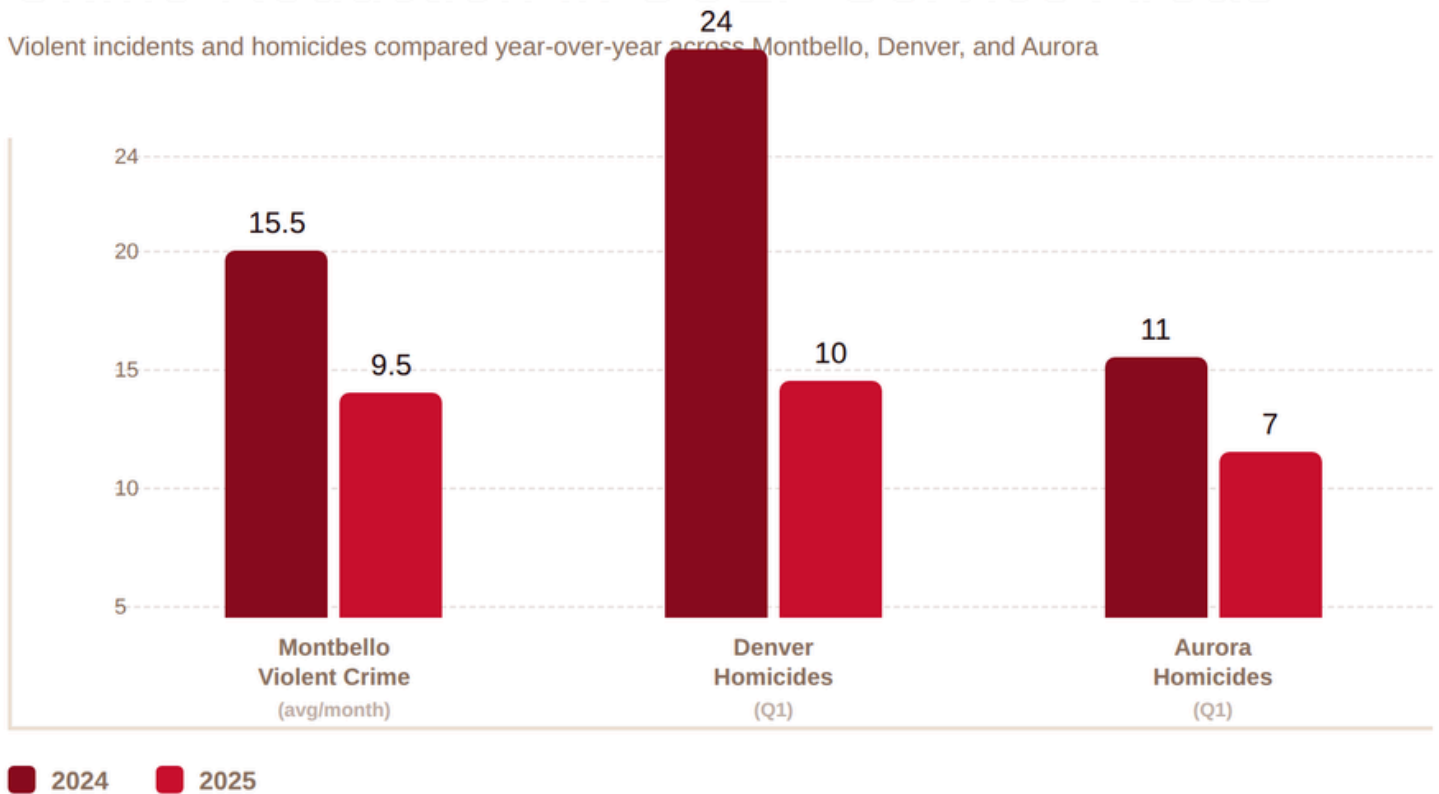


# VIOLENCE INTERRUPTION PROGRAM

VIOLENCE INTERRUPTION · 2024 VS 2025

## Crime Reduction in SOLF Service Areas

Violent incidents and homicides compared year-over-year across Montbello, Denver, and Aurora



The impact on community-level violence has been striking. According to [Denvercrimes.com](#), Montbello saw violent crime drop from an average of 15.5 incidents per month in 2024 to just 9.5 per month in 2025. According to [9News](#), Denver's overall homicide rate declined 58% in the first quarter of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024, falling from 24 to just 10 homicides. Aurora experienced a 36% homicide decrease during the same window, dropping from 11 to 7. Since 2022, Denver's overall violent crime rate has decreased by more than 14%, while Aurora's has dropped by 36%. Aurora's overall crime rate is down 22.2%.

# SACKS OF LOVE FOOD PANTRY

The Sacks of Love Food Pantry is one of the largest and most active food distribution programs in Northeast Denver. Operating Monday through Friday at the Montbello LOVE Center, the pantry serves the entire community without requiring government identification or any other prerequisites, welcoming families, veterans, people with disabilities, immigrants, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and seniors experiencing food insecurity.



1,124,841

Pounds of food distributed in 2025



89,992

Total individuals reached in 2025



5,000+

Unique households served (full year)



200+

Unique households served per day (Mon–Fri)



Looking ahead, the new Montbello LOVE Center will enable SOLF to transition the food pantry from a drive-through, premade box model into a full no-cost grocery store experience. The upgraded space will include a check-in/checkout station, aisles, shopping carts, and refrigeration and freezing capabilities, giving food recipients greater autonomy, dignity, and choice. In addition, SOLF is designing an on-site public community garden. Produce from the garden will flow directly to program participants and through the food pantry, creating a garden-to-table pipeline for families experiencing food insecurity.

# STAR PROGRAM PARTNERSHIP



In 2025, SOLF's partnership with the City and County of Denver's STAR Program continued to deliver critical, 24/7 crisis response to community members in need. SOLF staff receive calls around the clock from the STAR Hotline and respond with trauma-informed, culturally responsive support. The program serves as a crucial bridge between individuals in acute crisis and the full range of SOLF's comprehensive services, from mental health therapy to food access to case management. Every call represents someone reaching out in a moment of need, and SOLF answers.

STAR PROGRAM · 2025

## Services Delivered to 105 Individuals

Breakdown of support types provided through the STAR Crisis Response partnership

ALL 105 INDIVIDUALS — SERVICES RECEIVED



Note: Individuals may have received multiple services

Individuals Received Shelter Assistance 70



Referred to External Services 62



Received Food Support 50



Referred by Partner Organizations 87



Direct Calls to STAR Hotline 18

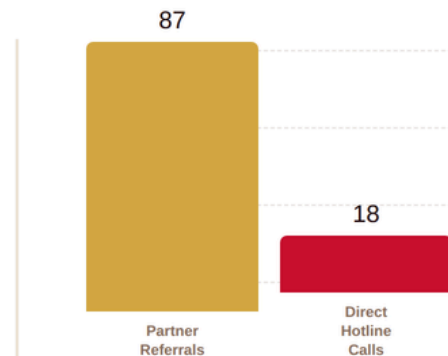


2025 SOLF STAR Program records · Denver, CO

STAR PROGRAM · 2025

## How 105 Individuals Arrived

Pathways into STAR crisis support services

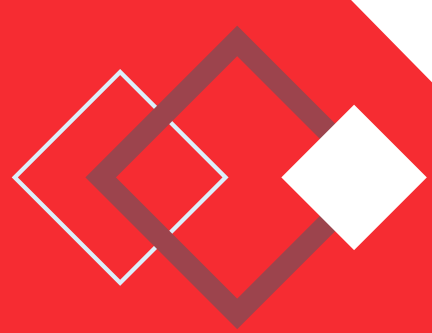


83%  
VIA PARTNERS

17%  
DIRECT CALLS

2025 SOLF STAR Program records

# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



SOLF's Workforce Development program creates real economic pathways for youth who face significant barriers to employment by providing formative first-job experiences that build both skills and confidence. SOLF's own enterprises, particularly the Sacks of Love Food Pantry, serve as active training grounds where young people learn inventory management, customer service, supply chain operations, and professional communication. Additional career development offerings within SOLF's walls include small business development, t-shirt production, beauty salon space, food pantry and concession stand employment, and access to a professional music studio. The new LOVE Center creates expanded infrastructure for these programs, including certification programs for forklift, scissor lift, and construction flagging positions. We are also planning to add a learning kitchen and culinary training center that will open additional workforce pathways in food service and nutrition education.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT · 2025

## Youth Employment Program

25 youth hired, trained, and paid — building real-world skills in Montbello

Youth Hired **25**



Hours of Work Experience Per Youth **240 hrs**



Stipend Earned Per Youth **\$3,000**



**6,000**

TOTAL HOURS WORKED

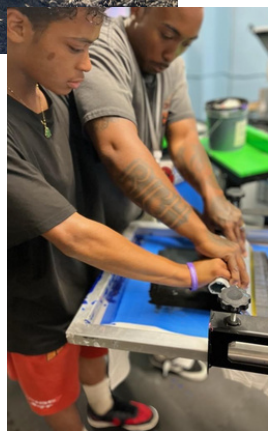
**\$75K**

TOTAL STIPENDS PAID

2025 SOLF Workforce Development Program records

# SUMMER OF LOVE SUMMER CAMP

The SOLF Summer Camp provided an 8-week M-F free day camp experience to up to 50 youth ages 5 to 15 in 2025, with camp counselor opportunities offered to high-performing youth from the Spreading Our Love Mentor and Leadership Program. The SOLF Summer Camp blends fun with intentional personal development. The Spreading Our Love Mentor and Leadership Curriculum is woven directly into the camp experience, so participants are building life skills, interpersonal skills, and self-awareness alongside outdoor adventures. Campers earn access to activities by completing program modules, creating positive incentive structures grounded in growth and achievement.



Activities in 2025 included tennis lessons at Denver Tennis Park, rock climbing at Ubergrippen, nature exploration at Denver Botanic Gardens, roller skating, swimming lessons, CPR and Stop the Bleed training through Denver Health, and visits to the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge located just minutes from the new Montbello LOVE Center. SOLF provides transportation to state parks and natural areas for youth whose families lack vehicles or cannot afford access to Colorado's outdoor spaces.

# LIVE EVENTS



Community events are central to SOLF's identity. They are where the organization shows up visibly, celebrates the community, and connects people to services in a welcoming, low-barrier environment. In 2025, SOLF hosted major annual events including the Reach for Peace Picnic in June, the Brains over Bullets Backpack Giveaway in August, the Need to Feed Thanksgiving Giveaway in November, and the Holiday Toy and Christmas Tree Drive in December.



The new Montbello LOVE Center enabled SOLF to host larger and more impactful versions of these events than in prior years, with the expanded facility accommodating greater attendance, more partner booths, and a wider array of free resources and services. SOLF events include free food and drinks, entertainment, awards ceremonies, resource tables, and mental health staff-led wellness activities. SOLF also participated in dozens of partner-organized community events throughout the year, extending our reach well beyond our own programming calendar. Game nights, youth-organized events, and mental health wellness events round out a year-round calendar designed to keep the community connected, engaged, and supported.



# OUR PARTNERS

SOLF's work is made possible by the generosity and partnership of a diverse group of funders and supporters who share our commitment to community transformation in Denver and Aurora. We are deeply grateful to every organization and individual who invested in this work in 2025.



The Denver Foundation



WE DON'T WASTE  
SAVING FOOD • PROTECTING THE PLANET • FEEDING PEOPLE



THE COLORADO TRUST

*A Health Equity Foundation*



plentiful  
people and food, connected



COLORADO ACCESS FOUNDATION



The Colorado Health Foundation™



FOR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP  
Strengthening • Leading • Transforming



COLORADO



ROSE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



ROSE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



THE ACADEMY OF LAS ANIMAS ONLINE



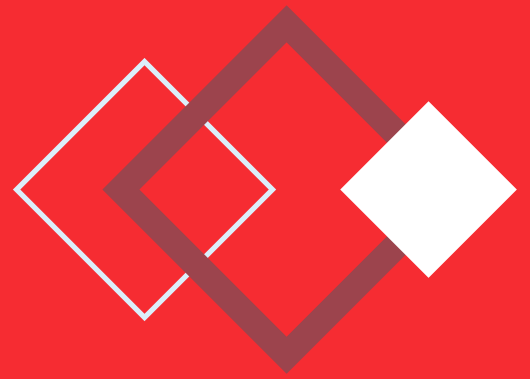
LATINO COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF COLORADO



WellPower



# THANK YOU



Thank you for walking alongside us in 2025. Every meal distributed, every young person mentored, every family supported, and every act of violence interrupted is a reflection of this community's collective commitment to something better. We are grateful for your generosity, your partnership, and your trust in our work. The LOVE Center is open, the doors are wide, and there is always more to do together. We hope to see you there, at our next event, or simply out in the neighborhood doing what we all do best: showing up for each other.

With love and gratitude,

LaKeshia & Joel Hodge,  
and the entire SOLF Family



## Contact Us

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