

# Impact Report 2023/24

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**TEEN  
CENTER**   
TOGETHER, A BRIGHTER FUTURE

We promote opportunity for students through intentional after school programming that provides education, exposure, and mentorship.

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## GREETINGS, FRIENDS!

What a year it has been! In Spring 2022, we began discussing the potential idea of relocating inside Burke High School. My initial gut reaction was "no." We believed the students needed to get outside the school building after dismissal, but the more we discussed and brainstormed how that would look, we realized that the relationships we cultivated over the past 17 years were stronger than physical walls or a street address. Things moved fast, and by June, we were hauling printers and yoga mats across the street.

### Here is what we learned during our first year inside Burke High School:

**1.** The demand for in-school support was substantially higher than anticipated. **We established a Return to Learn policy with the school**, allowing students to access our program during the school day. This ranges from providing services such as period products to offering tutoring during lunchtime.

**2.** The critical importance of our new hire was more than evident. **We hired an Assistant Director of Academics and Data** who has a Master's Degree in Administration and Special Education Curriculum B-12. She is a former Burke teacher and has received prestigious awards, such as the Apple Distinguished Educator and Buffett Outstanding Teacher Awards. We are closer than ever to achieving our academic goals and bolstering student support.

**3.** The move into the school building has **increased collaboration and relationships with Burke beyond our expectations**. While our partnership with Burke has always been strong, being inside the school has increased the excitement and willingness for further collaboration among both the administration and staff. This has created additional opportunities for impact and access. As one administrator expressed,

**"HAVING THE TEEN CENTER WITHIN OUR BUILDING IS MAGICAL. SEEING OUR STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL TRUSTED ADULTS GUIDING THEM HAS MADE SUCH A POSITIVE IMPACT."**

Michele Stodgill, Assistant Principal, Burke High School



**4.** The expanded accessibility is clear. Previously located across the street at St. Luke UMC, our program faced limitations in access for a variety of reasons. Now, based within Burke High School, **both highly engaged students and those in the Alternate Curriculum Program (ACP) can access our program**, whereas they previously could not. These students, who have intellectual disabilities and require additional support and supervision, now have the opportunity to benefit from our program.

We are so proud of the work we have done during this transition and are actively planning for continued growth, innovation, and expanded accessibility. Thank you for your confidence and investment during this pivotal year.

Much appreciation,

**Abbey Jackson**  
Executive Director



## A Space Transformed:

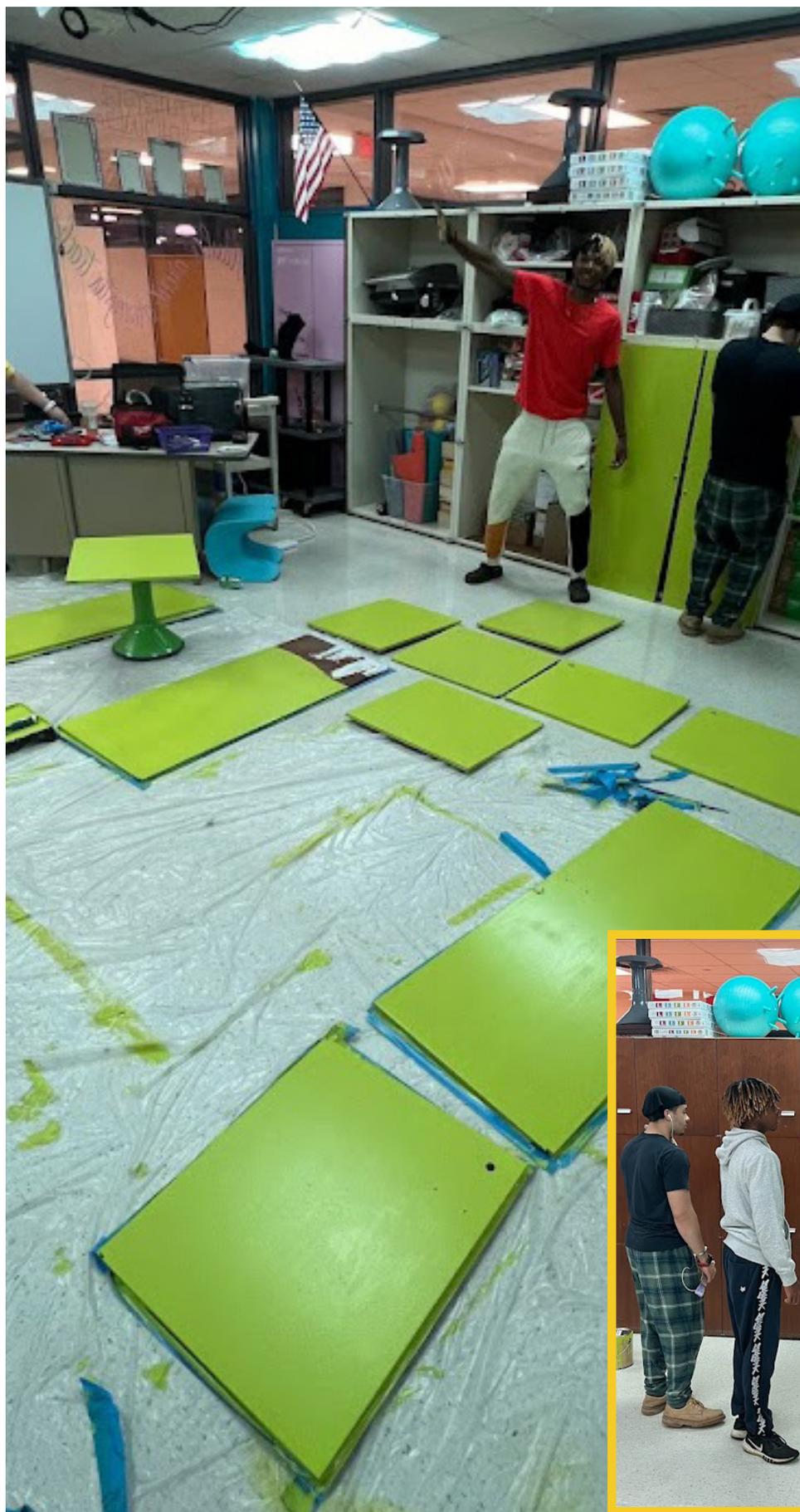
Our space has been completely transformed, bringing fresh energy and purpose to our environment. Our classroom has two full kitchens, perfect for hands-on learning, and our office space has been revamped for a more comfortable, collaborative feel.

We involved students and alumni in the renovation, letting them paint the spaces and add personal touches. One alumna even decorated the windows with beautiful calligraphy featuring phrases like “Love is the Default.” With the help of an Amazon wish list, we furnished the space to feel cozy and welcoming, making it a true home for our community.

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## New Grant:

We are thrilled to announce that we received a generous \$10,000 grant from the Dixon Family Foundation. This funding will allow us to update appliances, make much-needed improvements, and carry out repairs to enhance our space.





## Ann DeGray Spirit Award

This award is given to underclassmen who encourage authentic relationships and interactions within the Teen Center community. One who lifts others up and treats them with respect while exhibiting a humble and compassionate spirit.

This year's recipients are:

- 1. Alianna Grayson**
- 2. Emmanuel Okereke**
- 3. Samuel Askeland**
- 4. Jacori Lothridge**







**"TEEN CENTER STUDENTS ARE USUALLY MY FAVORITE STUDENTS. THE LOVE THEY RECEIVE AND THE LIFE LESSONS THEY LEARN AS MEMBERS OF THE TEEN CENTER CARRY OVER INTO THE CLASSROOM, THE HALLWAYS, AND OUT INTO THE WORLD. NOW THAT THE TEEN CENTER IS HOUSED IN BURKE, IT MAKES ME HAPPY THAT ALL OF THE BURKE STAFF CAN EXPERIENCE WHAT I'VE BEEN PRIVILEGED TO KNOW FOR A WHILE: THE TEEN CENTER IS AN AWESOME, UNIQUE, AND VITAL GROUP THAT THE STUDENTS ARE SUPER LUCKY TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN."**

Patrick Woodman, Social Studies Teacher, Burke High School



## Alexis Mattan

I did what you do in high school—followed my friends—to the Teen Center. It was what my best friend was doing, so that’s where I wanted to be. I recall meeting staff and feeling immediately comfortable, safe, and supported. We had access to so much opportunity, but everything was done with such intention. After school time was a time to decompress, be myself, and have mentors. Electives were chances to try new things; retreats were filled with conquering fears and learning about who we were; leadership trips allowed for opportunities to step outside comfort zones, networks, and grow as an individual. The Teen Center provided me with an essential foundation of experience and knowledge during pivotal years of my life.

My plan was always to go to college. The programs at the Teen Center helped me to prepare and plan. After completing my financial aid, I learned I was just short of being able to access funds, and I was heartbroken. Staff rallied around me, shared options with me, and together, we made a plan.

I had begun college and was ready to chase my dreams when I learned I was pregnant. The first thing I did was reach out to Teen Center staff. I knew I could land with all my emotions and no judgement. This wasn’t how it was supposed to be. I had a plan and I felt like I had ruined it. Shame and depression took over.

My focus shifted to motherhood. I lost sight of myself, my dreams—practically everything. I ended up finding myself in an extremely dark place and dangerous situation. On the most difficult of days, I picked up my phone and reached out to Teen Center staff. Years had passed, but it didn’t matter. They showed up that day in a substantial and lifesaving way. That day was the first day of the rest of my life.

I was ready to rediscover me in all the ways. I completed college graduating with a degree in Interior Design. I worked tirelessly under a mentor to learn everything I could. I studied and obtained my contractor’s license, thus becoming the first and only black woman in the state of Nebraska to be both an interior designer and a contractor. I opened my own business, Alexis Mattan Designs, LLC.

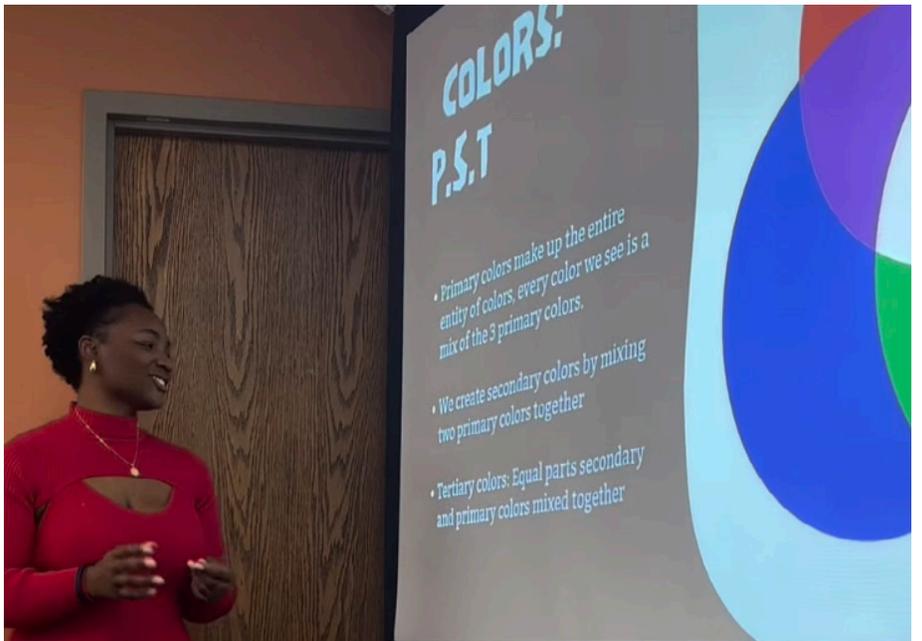
I am passionate about designing spaces that are accessible and open to all. I tend to shy away from trends and enjoy creating personal and intentional spaces for individuals to corporations.

In addition to accomplishing my professional goals, I invested in myself. I lost over 120 pounds and found a physically healthy me. I sought professional counseling and invested in my Christian faith to restore my soul.



**Alexis Mattan Designs**

 @alexismattandesigns



**"I AM EXACTLY WHERE I NEED TO BE.  
I AM WORKING TOWARDS GREATNESS."**

Alexis Mattan, Teen Center Alumni





## History

In the heart of the city, St. Luke United Methodist Church has been a prime location serving the community since the 1970s. By 2005-2006, the congregation began exploring new ways to serve, focusing on Burke High School, directly across the street. The school identified a need for after-school programming due to busing and a lack of support for students ineligible for busing. Thus, in 2007, an

after-school program was created inside St. Luke UMC, aiming to initially and consistently serve twenty Burke High School students. The program exploded! Within the first year, we were serving over 100 participants, driven purely by outreach efforts without religious emphasis.



## Overview of Programs

The pillars of the Teen Center are:

### Academic Support:

We're dedicated to helping our students achieve their academic goals and meet their needs. Our support includes tutoring, collaboration with teachers, access to school supplies, and academic intervention supports.

### Health and Wellness:

We prioritize the overall well-being of our students, aiming to promote health on every level. Our initiatives include activities such as skateboarding, expressive arts, healthy decision-making, and sexual education.

### Enrichment & Exposure:

We believe everyone deserves to have access to new experiences, whether it's petting a kangaroo, touring a hospital, or attending a play or musical. New experiences broaden the world for our young people and foster a growth mindset.

### Student & Family Support Services:

We address real-life challenges by supporting the basic needs of students' families. We offer a food and toiletry pantry, clothing closet, Access Period products, emergency fund, holiday assistance, and more.

### Alumni Support:

Relationships are at the core of who we are. As our students move beyond high school, our relationship evolves into that of adult networking. We have officiated weddings, written scholarship recommendations, visited with those incarcerated, and created connections with community supports.

## Program Impacts/ Demographics:

**72%** of our students are eligible for the **Federal Free/ Reduced Lunch**.

**27%** of our students receive special educational services through an **Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)** or 504 Plan. Knowing this crucial data allows us to create an inclusive space for all learners.

**29%** of our students identify as **LGBTQIA+**. This reflects the strength of our relationships and their confidence to be themselves.

## Outcomes:

Over **50%** of our 2023-2024 budget supported the basic needs of our students and their families.

We maintain ongoing communication with **63%** of our parents—parents of high school students!

Teen Center was proud to have **12** members participate in Burke's Chapter of the Black Student Leadership Council, including both the President and Vice president.

As of March 1, 2024, we reported **245** visits during school hours. On average, each visit lasted 7 minutes and 22 seconds. The breakdown of these visits is as follows:

**36% Academic Need**  
**9% Basic Need**  
**15% Mentorship**  
**22% Other**  
**18% Return to Learn**

**87%** of our seniors are on track to graduate; the remainder are expected to graduate in summer 2024.

**100%** of our seniors noted that they received the appropriate resources for their post-secondary plans.

**80%** of our seniors plan to attend college; 10% are entering a trade; 5% are seeking employment; and 5% are joining a transition program.

The class of 2024 invested **320 hours** into preparing for their college or career path, including campus visits to Metro, College of St. Mary, UNO, and UNL.

**Alumni contacts:** Over **100** meaningful alumni contacts were made this school year, offering scholarship assistance, housing advocacy, health information, career coaching, and more.

### Adults that you trust and/or go to in a crisis:

**27%** reported having 6 or more adults  
**27%** reported having 5-6 adults  
**33%** reported having 3-4 adults  
**13%** reported having 1-2 adults

With only three full-time staff members and one part-time staff member, this highlights the significant role of our volunteers, teachers, and contracted class leaders.

We use a **Likert scale of 1-5** to assess student experiences and how they are doing upon entering and leaving our space during Return to Learn visits. Our results are as such:

Average upon entering our space: **3.88**

Average upon exiting our space: **4.48**

This indicates that we are effectively meeting students' basic needs and sending them back to class in a better state.



## Program Highlights



Moving inside the school, we naturally collaborated with OPS Nutrition Services for the after-school meal program. Kurt, the Kitchen Manager, has been a delight to work with. His outstanding contributions were recognized when Burke won the National Service Award in the 600+ students category during National School Breakfast Week.



Staff attended the screening of the movie *Periodical*, sponsored by the Lozier Foundation and featuring our partner, Access Period.

"We are so grateful for our partnership with the Teen Center. It's been inspiring to see how the team has been innovative with our collaboration, especially through supplying students with free period products before school breaks when they may otherwise go without." – Kristin Lowrey, Founder and Executive Director, Access Omaha

**"IF THE TEEN CENTER HAD BEEN INSIDE THE SCHOOL WHEN I WAS THERE, I WOULD HAVE RUN TO YOU GUYS INSTEAD OF LEAVING AND AVOIDING SCHOOL. MOVING INTO THE SCHOOL BRIDGES A GAP FOR STUDENTS LIKE ME AND INCREASES ACCESSIBILITY FOR STUDENTS IN NEED. YOUR PROGRAM IS A BEACON OF LIGHT—LOVING, CARING, AND ACCEPTING—ALL DONE SO UNCONDITIONALLY."**

Teen Center Alumnus





The Teen Center collaborated with SkateFest Omaha for the first time this year and the programming was beyond successful. Students and staff alike pushed outside their comfort zones, stayed active, and supported one another. Skateboarding taught confidence, teamwork, and the ability to overcome fears.

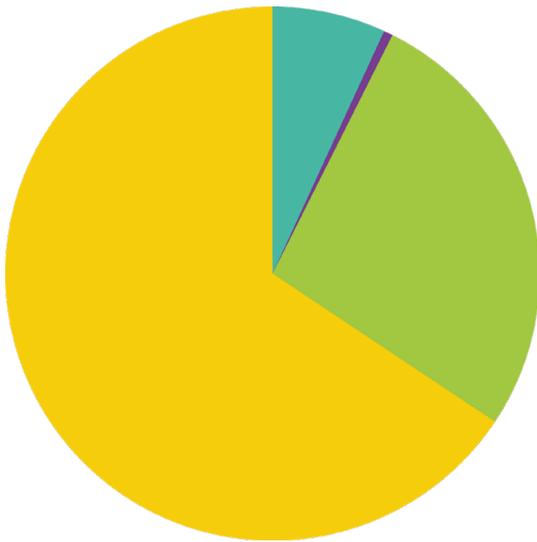


As the need grows and Burke transitions to Title I during the 2024-2025 school year, the expansion of our pantry services has become essential. We are grateful for our **Omaha Award Grant**, which allows us to offer a well-stocked pantry filled with toiletries, food, clothing, shoes, seasonal gear, household items, and period products. Thanks to the generous support of the **Conagra Foods Foundation**, we provide funding for healthy snacks, food access, and culinary exposure through our cooking classes. Our students have had the wonderful opportunity to try new foods, cook together, and prepare meals for breaks, including delicious dishes from various cultures that enrich their culinary experiences!



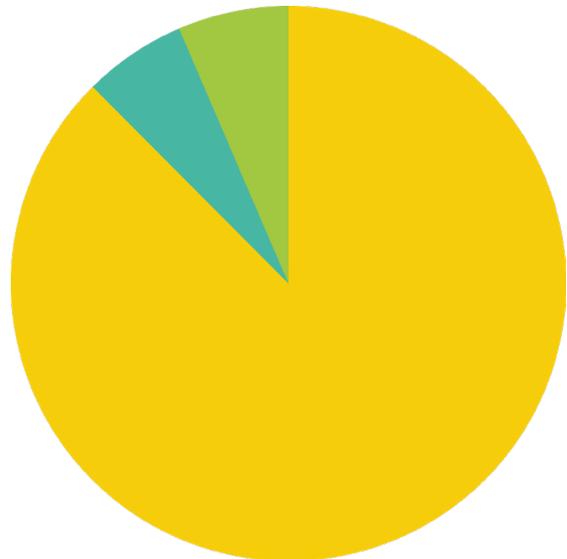


## 2023/24 Financials



Private Donations: \$26,657  
Operating Income: \$2,138  
Fundraising Dinner: \$104,711  
Grants: \$255,101  
Total Revenue: \$388,607

Program Management: \$260,452  
Programming: \$17,876  
Fundraising Dinner: \$19,194  
Total Expenses: \$297,522



# EXPANDING OUR IMPACT FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

The Teen Center is committed to enhancing support for Burke High School students. As needs grow, so does our determination to meet them.

Our future goals include providing pantry services to all students, expanding alumni support, creating a Guild to unite the community, and hiring additional part-time staff. Together, these initiatives will foster a nurturing environment that promotes success for every student we serve.

## Guild Mission:

The mission of the Guild is to unite proactive individuals within our community with the Teen Center, collaborating to elevate and expand the Teen Center's brand. As a member of the Guild, you'll play a vital role in shaping our initiatives and making a lasting impact. We invite members to contribute a minimum of 20 hours per year through various avenues, such as:

- **Planning and executing engaging events**
- **Serving as brand ambassadors on social media**
- **Volunteering at our annual gala**
- **Organizing and managing the clothing closet**
- **Writing recommendation letters to support future endeavors**

Together, we can create a supportive environment and enrich the experiences of our students and community! **If you're interested in joining the Guild, please contact [abbey@teencenteromaha.org](mailto:abbey@teencenteromaha.org).**

## Alumni Support Services:

Our Alumni Support services are designed to empower and uplift our former students as they navigate their post-graduation journeys. We offer a range of valuable resources, including:

- **Connections to community resources for ongoing support**
- **Access to our basic needs pantry for essential items**
- **Emergency assistance to help during challenging times**
- **School supplies to ensure readiness for academic success**
- **Guidance with scholarship writing to enhance opportunities**
- **Recommendation letters to support future endeavors**

And so much more! We are committed to fostering a strong network that supports our alumni and helps them thrive in their future pursuits.

## Part-Time Staff Hiring:

Hiring additional part-time staff is crucial in enhancing our programs and student experience. These new team members will play an essential role in creating a nurturing environment while supporting our growth. Benefits of hiring part-time staff include:

- **Supporting students during programming**
- **Increasing the number of daily attendees**
- **Offering an additional caring adult for students**
- **Providing flexibility and coverage as needed**

Together, these efforts will help us continue to grow and improve the support we offer to our students and community!

## Pantry Service:

Our mission is to provide accessible, nutrient-dense food options to all current members and alumni, ensuring no one faces barriers based on income. The pantry is a vital resource aimed at fostering health and well-being within our community. Key features include:

- **No income requirements—ever!**
- **Nutrient-dense options to support overall wellness**
- **Available to all current members and alumni**



Donate today!

## MEET OUR STAFF



### **Abbey Jackson // Executive Director**

#### *The Adaptable Designer*

Abbey was hired as the Founding Director in 2007 and now serves as the Executive Director. Originally from Minnesota, Abbey attended Creighton University and fell in love with Omaha (and a teacher). With two elementary-age kids, life is filled with trips to the lake, board games, and youth sports while staying active and involved in the community. She has never tried coffee in her lifetime but loves a good fountain pop!



### **Cassie Young // Assistant Director of Academics and Data**

#### *The Enthusiastic Encourager*

Cassie—the teacher formerly known as Mrs. Benzel, Ms. Frerichs, and Mrs. Young from Burke, Omaha South, and Papillion LaVista South, respectively—took a risk to return to The Teen Center as the Assistant Director of Academics and Data, and she'll never look back. Cassie hails from a farm near Hinton, Iowa, and attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for both her undergraduate and master's degrees in special education, B-12 Special Education Curriculum and Instruction, and School Administration. She first walked through the doors as a tutor and mentor in 2008 and, honestly, never really left. Cassie's special interests include dismantling systems of oppression and "soft pants" (IYKYK).



### **Julie Butler // Assistant Director of Finance and Operations**

#### *The Insightful Collaborator*

Julie Butler was the first-ever volunteer of the Teen Center when it opened in 2007. Life has taken Julie and her family across the great state of Nebraska, but the Teen Center has always held a special place in her heart, making it natural for her to return as staff. Julie is passionate about helping people, and her work history reflects this. From being a Licensed Massage Therapist to working with CASA of Dawson County, her ease of connecting and building relationships is phenomenal. Her second love, outside of her family, is houseplants! Julie loves sharing her knowledge of plants with others. Want a plant? Just ask!



### **Kyla Channita // Program Assistant**

#### *The Idealistic Supporter*

Kyla is no stranger to this program. She is a Burke and Teen Center alumna alongside her two oldest brothers, with a younger sibling now passing through. Kyla serves as the Program Assistant, doing everything from helping serve meals to convincing her students she is not a crazy cat lady (she is). Originally from California, she has been a Nebraska girly since 2005. Kyla has always had a passion for working with young adults and creating meaningful mentorships.

## Board of Directors

**Deborah Carlson // President**  
*President and CEO, Nebraska  
Methodist College*

**Kristi Reimers // Vice President**  
*Nutrition Research Fellow, Conagra Brands*

**Tam Webb // Secretary**  
*Events Manager, Omaha World-Herald*

**Kirk Kellner // Treasurer**  
*Retired, Wells Fargo*

**John Deardorff**  
*Retired, Peterson Brothers Insurance*

**Becky Hand**  
*Para-Professional, Burke High School*

**Rev. Marshall Johnson**  
*Senior Pastor, St. Luke United  
Methodist Church*

## Collaborators

Burke High School

Collective for Youth

Nebraska Methodist College

St. Luke United Methodist Church



## Funders

21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning  
Center Grant

Conagra Brands Foundation

Dixon Family Foundation

Elementary and Secondary School  
Emergency Relief Fund

Hawks Philanthropy

Heider Foundation

James C. Semerad Foundation

Lozier Foundation

Midwest Housing Equity Group

Peter Kiewit Foundation

Sherwood Foundation

Suzanne & Walter Scott Foundation

William and Ruth Scott Family Foundation

## Legacy Dinner

Honorary Chairs: **Tom and Kristi Reimers**

Event Chairs: **Joe and Cari Kenney**

Volunteer of the Year: **Max Connealy**

Providers of the Year: **Tyrome Williams  
and Terry Hill**

**"A LITTLE DREAM,  
BECAME A BIG DREAM,  
BECAME A REALITY,  
AND GREW BEYOND OUR  
WILDEST IMAGINATION."**

Abbey Jackson, Teen Center Executive Director

# A COMMUNITY THANK YOU



The Teen Center began in 2007 with the intention of being a small, community-based program. In its early years, the Teen Center received support from a church, public school, and private university. It was a wonderful example of collaboration coming together to meet a need. Our modest dream has transformed into a huge reality and we have grown immensely. We are so thankful to everyone who has believed in this vision and helped bring it to its new reality. There is more to come. **Please join us on this journey.**



**Scan**  
for more information



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**YOUR UNWAVERING SUPPORT, GUIDANCE, AND KINDNESS HAVE BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN SHAPING THE PERSON I AM TODAY. I AM ETERNALLY GRATEFUL FOR THE ROLE YOU'VE PLAYED IN MY LIFE. SAYING GOODBYE IS NOT EASY, BUT I AM FILLED WITH EXCITEMENT AND ANTICIPATION AS I LOOK FORWARD TO THE NEW ADVENTURES THAT LIE AHEAD. WHILE I WILL MISS OUR TIME TOGETHER AND THE INVALUABLE LESSONS LEARNED WITHIN THE PROGRAM'S WALLS, I'M READY TO APPLY THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS I'VE ACQUIRED AS I STEP INTO THE NEXT PHASE OF MY JOURNEY."**

Ayomide,  
Burke High School Class of 2024

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