

# 2022

## ANNUAL REPORT



ChooseWell  
communities



“The opposite of addiction is not sobriety.  
The opposite of addiction is *connection*.”

- JOHANN HARI, BRITISH JOURNALIST & RESEARCHER

Everyone reading this letter is touched in some form or fashion by the disease of addiction. *Every single one of you.* Perhaps your father or mother, sister or brother, best friend from college, boss, co-worker, or maybe even your child.

And you're not alone. The National Institute of Health reported in 2019 that almost 21 million Americans suffer from at least one drug addiction. When you factor in personal networks, that means almost 45 million people are regularly touched by addiction. The lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have only caused those numbers to rise.

Kentucky still leads the nation in child abuse rates.<sup>[1]</sup> In an effort to remedy that, from the moment we meet a parent ready to change their circumstances, we welcome them into an environment that's different from anything else being done in Louisville, Kentucky. One full of human connection, understanding, empathy, and love. ChooseWell Communities follows a person-centered approach, focusing on each participant's needs and growth in their own Recovery Capital<sup>[2]</sup>.

Anyone can create a “program.” Not everyone can build *connections*. At ChooseWell Communities, that's what we're doing. No loopholes, no catches - just options, resilience, and plain old love. When we create an environment in which our participants grow and thrive, we're effectively preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)<sup>[3]</sup>, from which many addictions are born. The connections our participants build strengthen their family units, and the ripple effects are immediate and lasting.

I want to specifically thank our co-founders, Stephanie Barnett and Kimberly Mascaro, for seeing needs in the health care system no one else saw, and creating a foundation from which our families can raise their children in healthy, happy homes free from abuse. Additionally, our Board of Directors don't just serve, they are invested in committees, advocacy, and actual ground work. To our donors, without whom we could not exist, a heartfelt thank you! Also, thank YOU for reading this. Whether you're already part of the CWC family, or just being introduced to us, I appreciate you.

To end with simple gratitude, I am fortunate to get to experience the metamorphosis of our families on a daily basis. I invite you to help us ensure that we have access to the resources we need to successfully sustain the magic of ChooseWell Communities.

Join us any time!

*Leigh Ann Yost*

LEIGH ANN YOST  
Executive Director

<sup>[1]</sup> U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Children's Bureau "Child Maltreatment 2021" report.

<sup>[2]</sup> Recovery Capital is the total amount of resources that a person has available to find and maintain their recovery.

<sup>[3]</sup> Adverse Childhood Experiences (<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/index.html>)



Dear ChooseWell Friends and Supporters:

The end of 2022 marks the eighth year of *ChooseWell Communities (CWC)*. In 2014, we couldn't fathom the impact that ChooseWell would make in the lives of some of Louisville's most vulnerable citizens. We certainly didn't predict the substantial imprint those citizens and their families would have on our dedicated staff, our Board of Directors, friends, and supporters of CWC. We are privileged to have been invited into our participants' lives, to explore the gaps, needs, and “recovery capital” required to maintain long-term sobriety.

*ChooseWell Communities' approach is unique.* We are the only organization in Louisville providing access to long-term, permanent housing suitable for families with young children, coupled with recovery-focused coaching and support for more than three years. By keeping families together, CWC addresses a leading cause of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) with an effective, upstream response to the growing number of Kentucky children whose lives are altered by a parent's addiction.

*Our impact is substantial.* Throughout the following pages, you'll see statistics and outcomes. These are important because this is how society measures successful programs. This data assists you in judging the impact of your generosity in supporting ChooseWell Communities.

However, the numbers often don't tell the whole story. Behind every number and statistic is a family, a family with a story and enough “recovery capital” to main their long-term sobriety. And the beautiful outcome of this? Living in a household free of parental substance misuse during a child's first 3 to 5 years is highly predictive of outcomes that many of us take for granted, such as high school graduation and skilled employment.

We hope you are pleased. Your generosity contributed to these *highlights of our 2022 achievements*:

- Proudly recognizing our third graduating class, with an average of 3.5 years of sobriety each.
- Establishing a Collaborative Partnership with The Healing Place to provide a cohesive range of behavioral health services for our participants and their families.
- Return to pre-Covid levels of full on-site programming, ensuring that client's families' needs were met.
- Establishing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Work Group to examine our governance and practices at the Board, staff, and participant levels to ensure that CWC reflects and serves our diverse Louisville community.
- Welcoming five new Board members, our largest Board class yet.
- Hosting our 5<sup>th</sup> annual Walk Through the Wild at the Louisville Zoo, the largest fundraiser in CWC history.

Everyone associated with ChooseWell Communities is proud to continue to build upon these achievements. On behalf of the Board, Staff, and Member Families, *we are looking forward to an outstanding 2023*, and we hope you will continue with us on our journey! Thank you.

*Kim Mascaro*

KIMBERLY H. MASCARO, MPH  
ChooseWell Communities Co-Founder and Chair, Board of Directors

## ChooseWell Communities faithfully journeys with parents working to maintain sobriety while improving the health and well-being of their young families.

Parenting is tricky. Navigating new sobriety is equally so. Imagine doing both at the same time. The first five years of children's lives are more critical to healthy brain development than the rest of their lifetimes. Meanwhile, the first years of sobriety are predictive of long-term recovery.

Kentucky leads the nation in child abuse, child maltreatment, and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). All of CWC's parent participants have experienced six or more ACEs – childhood experiences of abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction that significantly increase the risk of poor health and social outcomes in adulthood.

Unsurprisingly, research affirms that children living in safe, healthy, and socially connected home environments realize more favorable outcomes in physical and social/emotional health and learning readiness than their peers whose lives have been challenged by the early childhood adversity that accompanies a parent's substance misuse. By keeping families together, CWC breaks the cycle of trauma and addresses a leading cause of ACEs with an effective, upstream response to the growing number of Kentucky children whose lives are altered by a parent's addiction.

Since ChooseWell Communities was founded in 2014, 95 families have found suitable, permanent housing and participated in recovery-focused coaching and support, learning strategies and participating in experiences that result in reunification with their children in safe, healthy, and drug-free homes and dramatically improving odds of long-term sobriety.

ChooseWell Communities' mission is to create a community that *equips families in recovery* with children under the age of five *to choose well for their futures.*

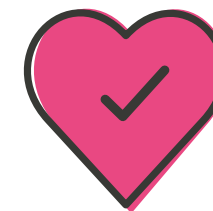
### *our focus areas*



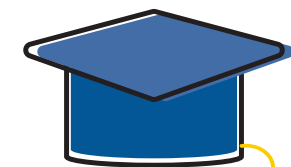
*housing*



*parenting*



*health & wellness*



*education*





ChooseWell Communities meant a new start for me and my family. It means independence and connection.

- *Anteshia*



ChooseWell Communities to me means that I never have to be alone. It means friendship and long-lasting bonds with other mothers. It means just a little bit less worry when it comes to being a woman and a mother.

- *Brittany*



ChooseWell Communities means to me an overwhelmingly awesome team of support, that no matter what difficulty I face, I know they are here and ready to help me.

- *Jennifer B.*

ChooseWell Communities means a commitment of mothers that's been through the struggle & despite our addiction, we come together as a whole family with NO judgement. We are there for one another when we fall short. We love each other, we are family!

- *Jennifer J.*



ChooseWell Communities means a new beginning. A resource to provide the necessary parts to aid me to become successful. By providing me with my basic physiological needs. From there I have been able to rebuild myself. Absolutely, an important piece in my sobriety.

- *Jennifer L.*



ChooseWell Communities meant a second chance for me. A second chance to be a mother, a friend, and someone with a future.

- *Katie*



ChooseWell Communities means family, fellowship and a community of people that don't judge you for your past because they too have been where you are.

- *Lindsey D.*



ChooseWell Communities meant a new beginning. It meant a little accountability to keep me clean and a new family of women who are trying to do the same things I am.

- *Lindsey W.*



ChooseWell Communities means to me stability, healthy relationships, and home. I've always doubted myself about what my home would look like bringing a child into the world. CWC has given me a foundation to build off of and now I have a loving and nourishing home for my daughter and I.

- *Meredith*



# WHO WE HELPED

**58**  
families led by a parent in early recovery

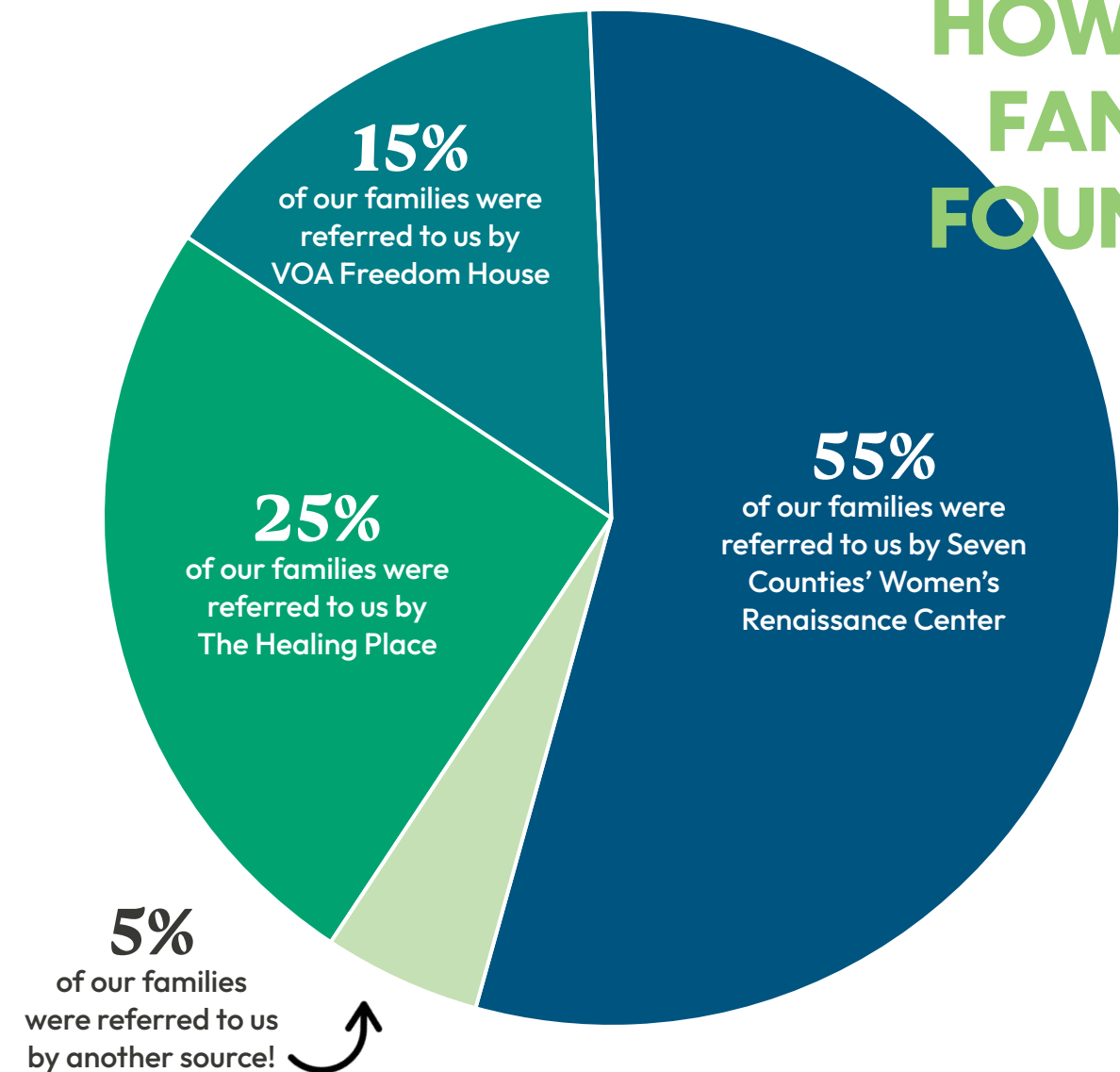
**100%**  
of our families were at or below the federal poverty

**6+**  
100% of the parents we served had an ACEs (adverse childhood experiences) score of 6 or more

**75%**  
of the children in our program were 5 years old or younger

**9**  
new families moved into safe, affordable housing via a ChooseWell Communities-sanctioned Section 8 housing voucher post-residential treatment

## HOW OUR FAMILIES FOUND US



## OUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

**58 ADULTS & 138 CHILDREN**  
*total number of families served in 2022*

**9 GRADUATES WITH 33 CHILDREN**  
*total number of families in CWC's third graduating class*

**120 HOURS**  
*total number of hours each member spent in active CWC programming in 2022*

"Screening children and their parents for ACEs holds the potential for interrupting the intergenerational cycle of adversity and the downstream negative physical and mental health consequences of exposure."

- National Institute of Health

## choosing well makes common cents



Average annual cost to society for substance misuse and its effects

# \$510.8 billion

54,834 children are currently in foster care in Kentucky.

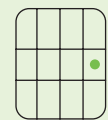
The average annual cost of foster care for a child in Kentucky is

# \$66,303

Only 6,146 kids exited foster care to reunification in 2022.

# \$347

The average daily cost of an inmate with health needs in Louisville Metro Department of Corrections



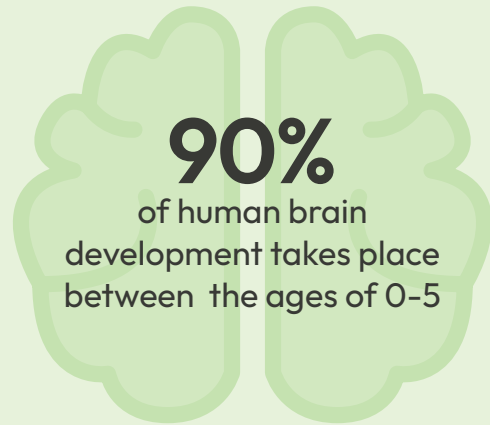
Every dollar spent on substance abuse treatment and prevention saves **\$4** in healthcare costs and **\$7** in law enforcement and other criminal justice costs





# why choosing well matters

the first 5 years of a child's life set the stage for *the rest of their lives*. in fact...



Only 44% of Kentucky kindergarteners were *ready to learn* in the 2021 - 2022 School Year.

the first 3 years of sobriety are predictive of long-term sobriety



the most common reason people use substances is to *self-medicate from past trauma or abuse*, often stemming from their own childhood



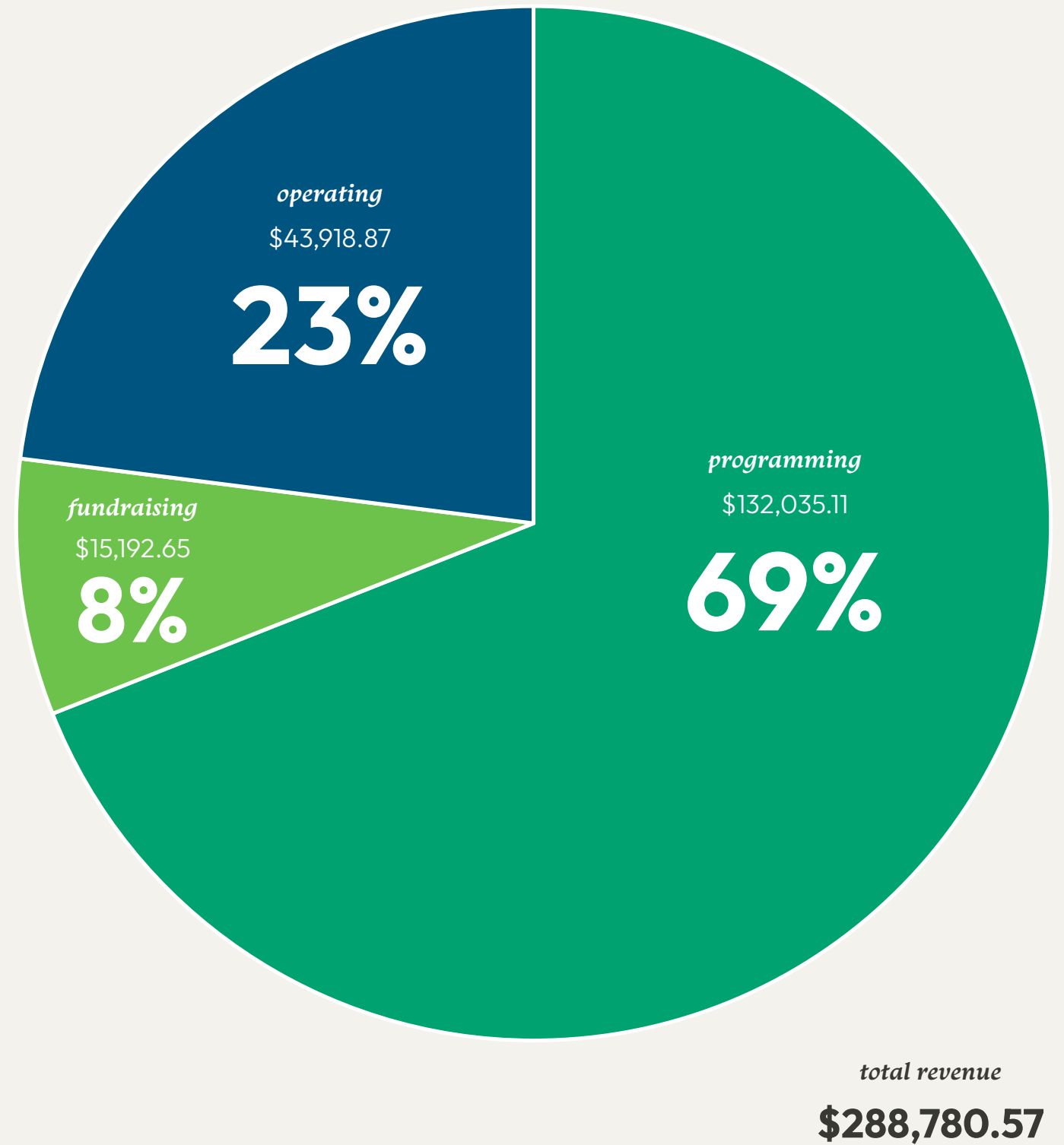
children with parents who abuse alcohol or drugs are **6 times more likely to experience abuse or neglect** than children in other households







## our 2022 financials





# COMMUNITY & FOUNDATION SUPPORT

Adam Willis Realtor  
 Aetna Better Health of Kentucky  
 Alignment Bookkeeping  
 All Peoples Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
 Bearno's by the Bridge  
 Byerly Ford  
 Cardinal Moving  
 ChooseWell Cheerleaders  
 Confluent Health  
 Dolt, Thompson, Shepherd & Conway, PSC  
 Face It Movement  
 Flowers for Robert  
 Gheens Foundation

Grapevine Designs  
 Graphic Packaging  
 The Healing Place  
 Hyland Glass  
 Hyland Insurance  
 InterLINC Mortgage  
 Kentucky Colonels  
 Kosair for Kids  
 LG&E Foundation  
 Louisville Orthopedic Clinic  
 Louisville Zoo  
 MOVE Realty  
 Mutual of Omaha Mortgage

Norton Foundation  
 Norton Healthcare  
 Pinky Jackson Organizing  
 Rehabilitation Specialists of Kentuckiana  
 Republic Bank  
 Sanctuary Church  
 Save-A-Lot Portland  
 Seven Counties Services  
 Sleep Outfitters  
 Snowy Owl Foundation  
 Socially Innovative Properties  
 Steel Technologies

Texas Roadhouse  
 Thompson Miller & Simpson, PLC  
 Today's Woman  
 Tomorrow's Starfish  
 U of L School of Nursing  
 Volunteers of America  
 Whitney Bishop, Change Agent  
 Women Who Wine for a Cause  
 Womens' Renaissance Center  
 Yadda  
 Z Salon and Spa  
 ZenEvo





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*CWC Class of 2020*







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