

emergent works

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

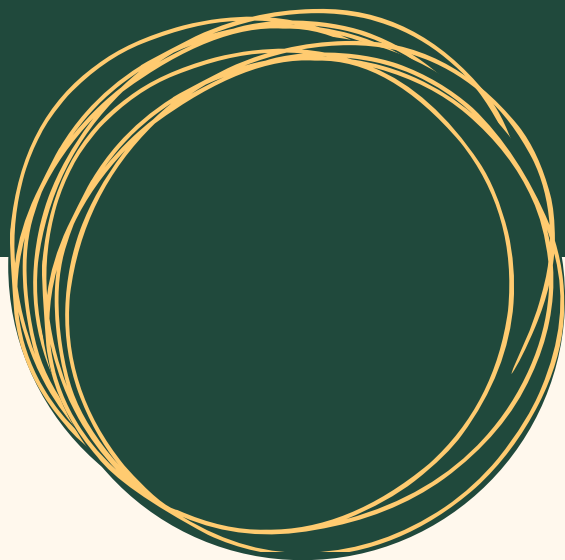


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Executive Summary



In 2025, Emergent Works supported 52 system-impacted youth through six cohorts, blending digital literacy, music production, SEL development, and workforce training into a program young people love showing up to. Participants:

- Built personal and collective **websites**
- Conducted **community-based research**
- Produced original music and **albums**
- Strengthened **leadership, communication,** and **emotional skills**
- Earned **stipends**, received **wellness supports**, and gained real **workforce experience**

Participants achieved meaningful outcomes, including:

- **Employment** across culinary, retail, trades, and creative industries
- Acceptance into further **education** and **training** programs
- Industry **certifications** and career-aligned **experience**

This year, five EW alumni were also contract-hired as Peer Mentor, Audio Engineer, Instructor, Program Associate, and Program Intern—demonstrating the power of pathways that lead from student → alumni → staff.

2025 proved that when creativity, community, and opportunity intersect, transformation happens.

Key 2025 Capacity Wins

- Updated Theory of Change with support from Arbor Rising
- Built evaluation and feedback loops for participant success
- Improved financial management and tracking systems
- Strengthened partnerships with workforce and education ecosystems

Team Highlights

- Staff delivered more workshops than ever
- Alumni stepped into leadership roles
- Board support increased, especially for fundraising and strategy
- Community partners amplified our impact through referrals and collaboration

Challenges We Navigated (With Transparency)

Every year brings growth and challenges — and we are committed to sharing both:

- Increased demand for digital literacy support beyond current capacity
- Limited staffing strained program expansion
- External funding cycles delayed program timelines
- Participants needed deeper SEL and stabilization support
- Earned revenue opportunities required more internal infrastructure

These challenges shape our priorities for 2026 and strengthen our path toward long-term sustainability.

Looking Ahead to 2026–2027

The next two years will be transformative.

2026 Goals

- Raise \$250,000+ to sustain and expand programs
- Train 20 alumni as paid leaders and facilitators
- Pilot 3 earned revenue partnerships (digital literacy, SEL/T.RAP™, workforce prep)
- Launch hiring partnerships with 2 employers or technical training programs
- Hire a full-time Operations Lead to strengthen systems and reduce ED operational load by 25%

2026 North Star

To build a justice-centered, alumni-led digital empowerment ecosystem where:

- Participants learn digital fluency, creativity, and emotional resilience
- Alumni return as paid community catalysts
- Communities gain equitable access to tech pathways
- Systems-impacted young people thrive — not just survive

This is where we're headed.

And with your support, we will get there.

Sincerely Yours,

Army Armstead
Executive Director

Outcomes & Impact

As an outcome of our program and ongoing alumni engagement, our participants was able to achieve the following successes:



Employment

79% of graduates obtained employment or paid internships, earning an average hourly wage **\$2+ above the NYC minimum wage**

- ✓ Mover/Driver \$20/hourly
- ✓ Crew Member \$21/hourly
- ✓ Sales Associate \$20/hourly



Education

28% of graduates are pursuing education (HS or GED), continuing to advance their learning and future opportunities.

- ✓ 20% in High School
- ✓ 8% in a GED program



Certificates

16% earned professional certifications, gaining valuable skills to advance their careers.

- ✓ Welding & OSHA
- ✓ HR Administration
- ✓ Audio Engineering

Testimonies



This program has truly impacted my life by giving me the confidence to grow, the skills to move forward, and the support of a community that encouraged me every step of the way. - Zeek T.RAP



This program reminded me that no matter what obstacles come my way, giving up can't be an option. There were moments where I doubted myself or felt like things were too hard, but being a part of this program showed me that persistence pays off. I learned that progress doesn't always happen overnight. - Dontay T.RAP



The program showed me the light that there's opportunity out there for us just have to go out and make it work put in the time effort dedication to what you want in life and it will be accessible. - Dotty T.RAP



Emergent Works gave me the tools to successfully navigate the digital landscape of remote work, where success depends on communication, self-advocacy, and professional presence as much as the technical skills. The safe spaces that the team created to work through my own insecurities and anxieties, are things that can't be quantified. Thank you Army & Emergent Works for truly caring about real solutions, just not the problems. - Nashid TECK



"Overall, the Program at Emergent Works has been a life-changing experience, equipping me with the skills, knowledge, and support needed to advance my career and personal growth." - Blueberry TECK



System Involvement

0% of our graduates have returned to the legal criminal system.



9

Graduates reduced their sentence or got time off entirely due to being in the T.RAP



Alumni Hires

5 of our alumni were contracted as instructor, program associate and audio engineer in our program.



Participant Spotlight



Meet Sheiisty

Sheiisty joined EW this summer and quickly found his direction, gaining the skills, confidence, and support to land his first restaurant job. There, he learned time management, patience, project management, and how to handle feedback — even when it was tough. He's since been offered a position in the airport paying \$5+ more per hour, excited to apply what he's learned and continue growing toward his goal of becoming a manager.

Meet Zeek

Zeek joined us in 2025 and is now a senior in high school, already thinking about his future. He has applied to colleges this year while balancing a part-time job as a Packing & Moving Specialist, earning over \$4 above NYC's minimum wage. Through EW, he's building the skills, confidence, and work ethic to pursue his vision of a career in HVAC while continuing to grow as an artist. Zeek is focused on developing both his professional and creative paths, setting himself up for long-term success.



Meet Dontay

Dontay joined us in 2025 and is currently a senior in high school, steadily building his foundation for the future. This year, he landed a new job at Chipotle, earning \$2 above NYC's minimum wage and gaining hands-on experience in a fast-paced work environment. Through EW, he's developing the discipline, communication skills, and confidence needed to take his next big step, pursuing a trade. With a strong work ethic and a clear vision for his future, Dontay is investing in himself, professionally and creatively, as he prepares for what comes next.

Train The Trainer Spotlight

This year, EW hosted a Train-the-Trainer cohort where Monica led our alumni in learning to facilitate EW's Digital Literacy curriculum. Starting in 2026, these alumni will have the chance to become instructors for cohorts, empowering them to teach externally, mentor new participants, and extend EW's impact while gaining leadership and professional development experience.



Check out some of our alumni's former website projects [here](#).



Makeda

Makeda is one of EW's alumni who has been with us since the beginning, and is now working in the tech industry at Checkr.



Nashid

Nas is one of our leading TECK alum & is now paving the way in a non-profit supporting justice-impacted communities.



Blueberry

Blueberry is EW's Southern Bell, passionate about the movement against mass incarceration through her own non-profit work.



Emiliano

A graduate of EW's first UI/UX cohort, Emiliano is a design wizard and Founder of Project Protocol, empowering people on parole.



Kat

Kat is our Queen of Hawaii who joined our first Digital cohort & has been rocking with us since. She now works in a project management role.



LaiQuan

LaiQuan is T.RAP's dedicated leader, guiding and supporting our youth with compassion, structure, and mentorship as they grow.

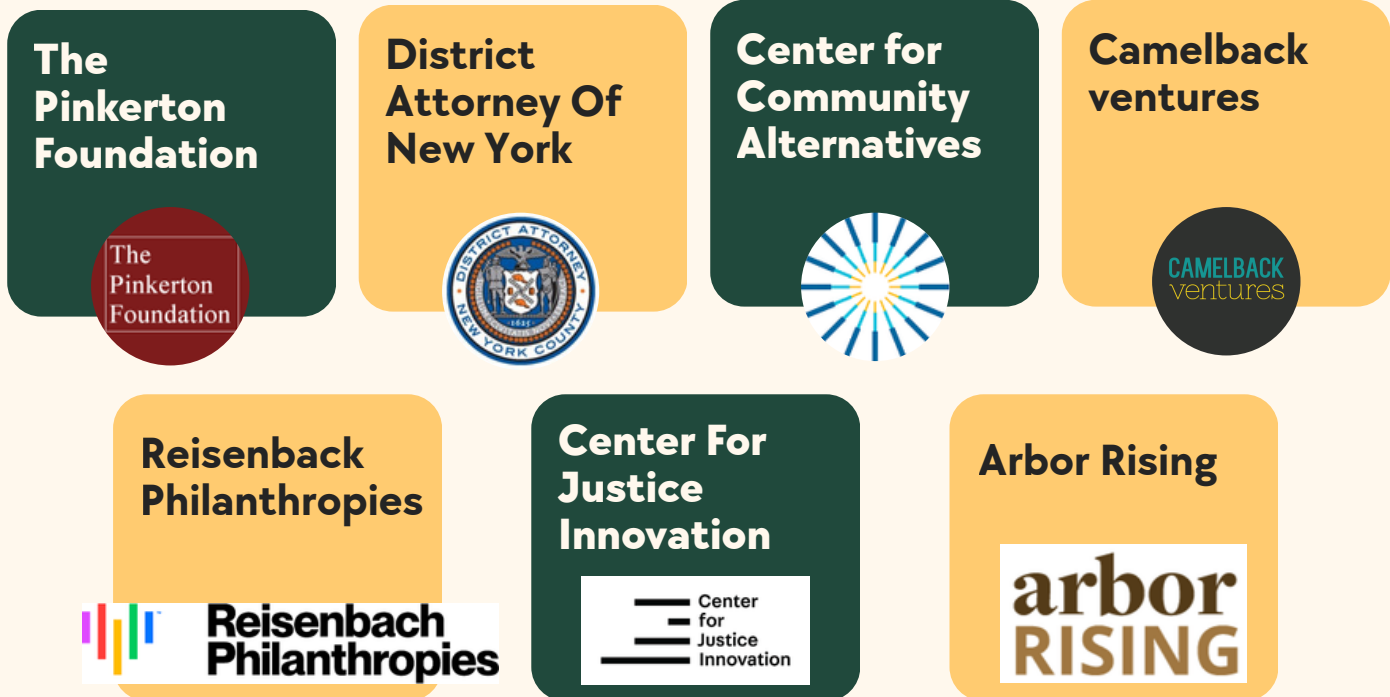
Strategic Partnerships

This year, our community showed up for justice-impacted youth & adults in extraordinary ways. Together, we secured the resources, partnerships, and belief needed to expand opportunity and build pathways that last.

Thanks to the generosity of funders, partners, and donors, **Emergent Works raised \$426,000 to support our 2025 programs** — surpassing our \$250,000 fundraising goal. This represents a major vote of confidence in our mission and our direction for 2026.

Major Funding Partners

We are honored to be supported by institutions committed to digital equity, economic mobility, and community leadership. In 2025, EW secured a total of **\$410,000** from the following strategic partners:



These investments directly fund digital literacy training, Social Emotional Learning (T.RAP), internship stipends, alumni leadership opportunities, and community-driven healing and empowerment. Several of these grants represent renewed or increased support — a powerful endorsement of EW’s growth, impact, and long-term vision.

We are deeply grateful to every funder who chose to stand with us this year. Your investment is more than a grant — it is a commitment to possibility, to second chances, and to the brilliance of the young people we serve. Because of you, participants had access to safe, creative learning spaces, paid opportunities, and the kind of support networks that change the trajectory of lives.

Your partnership strengthens our community. And your generosity helps ensure that justice-impacted communities don’t just find programs — they find pathways, purpose, and people who won’t give up on them.

Community Partnerships

Emergent Works thrives thanks to our amazing partners. Their support drives our mission and multiplies the impact we achieve together. We're truly grateful for their dedication, collaboration, and commitment to empowering system-impacted individuals to create brighter futures.

Workforce1 Harlem

Our continued partnership with Workforce1 Harlem in 2025 has been invaluable. They've connected our participants to trainings, workforce support, and career opportunities, helping youth build skills, gain real-world experience, and take meaningful steps toward employment and long-term success.



TechFin

TechFin's generous donation of laptops has been instrumental in supporting our participants' digital literacy journeys. By putting technology directly into the hands of justice-impacted youth and adults, TechFin helps remove barriers to learning, creativity, and career readiness.



Avenues For Justice

Avenues for Justice has provided multiple referrals from their programs to our participants while also receiving referrals from us. Their comprehensive services—including mentorship, legal support, and reentry resources—help connect our participants to the guidance, opportunities, and support they need to thrive.



Beyond Boxing

Beyond Boxing has provided our participants with incredible athletic opportunities, offering a space to build strength, discipline, and teamwork. Multiple participants have joined their programs, gaining fitness skills, mentorship, and a supportive community while exploring new avenues for personal growth and resilience.



All Kings

All Kings has offered our participants multiple opportunities to engage in their fellowship retreats and internships, gaining valuable experience while contributing meaningfully to the community.



Midtown Community Courts

MCC has been a steadfast partner for Emergent Works, consistently showing up to support our initiatives and programs. They actively refer participants to our programs, helping connect justice-impacted youth and adults to transformative opportunities in digital literacy, creative expression, and workforce readiness.



Prime Produce Limited

We have continued our multi-year partnership with Prime Produce Limited to support its program "Serving Justice-Impacted Communities." We also continue to use the Prime Produce community guildhall as our base of operations in NYC.



prime produce limited
your grassroots 501(c)3 community incubator

Program Outputs



96% 50 participants graduated.

70 SEL and civic engagement workshops in music production, group projects & community research.

44 Digital Literacy workshops, facilitated by software engineers, teaching current digital essentials necessary in the workforce.

56 Mental health sessions with a licensed social worker.

200 Work readiness mentorship sessions, supporting participants with employment and further education.

\$38K Distributed for internships, providing real-world experience.

Deliverables

Participants developed individual digital portfolios including resume, cover letter, updated LinkedIn profile and their personal websites showcasing their personal brand and creative work.

Participants developed a research framework and facilitated Participatory Action Research on gun violence in Harlem and solutions to it based on their 33+ interviews with Harlem residents.

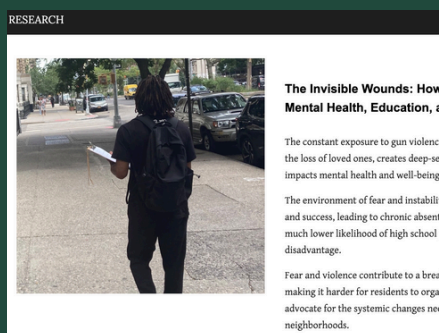
Facilitated two community concerts incl. street outreach, produced marketing materials, performed songs, presented their work on websites and research as well as practiced public speaking.

Through our 8-week Train-The-Trainer program, six participants became instructors in EW's Digital Literacy curriculum, equipping them to facilitate workshops starting in 2026.

Research & Website

Check out our participants' participatory action research on gun violence in Harlem on the website they built.

[Website](#) →



Albums

Listen to our participants' impactful albums they created based on their research and reflective journeys.



[Album](#) →



[Album](#) →

Project: Research Website

Our incredible graduates developed a phenomenal website that applied their newly gained technical skills whilst highlighted their community research on societal issues. Please check out some of their findings and their built graphs using Canva and Google Sites, which can be found on their [website](#).

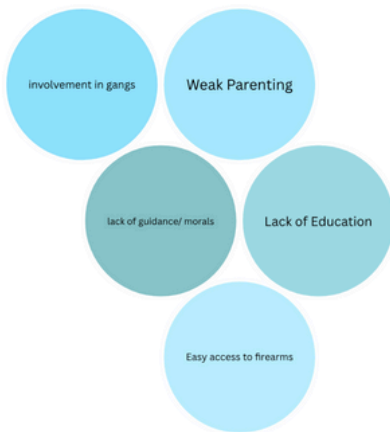
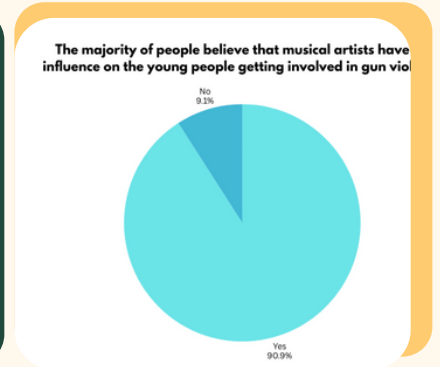
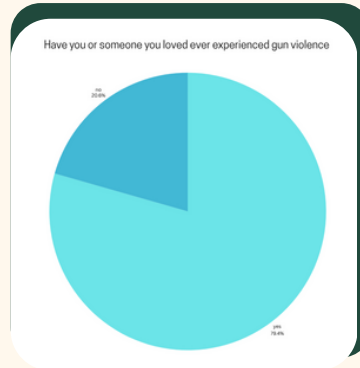


The Pervasive Impact of Gun Violence on Harlem's Youth and Community

Based on our stats 82% of residents in Harlem felt like gun violence has deeply impacted the community, they expressed their fear of going outside also overwhelmed by the loss of loved ones and neighbors.

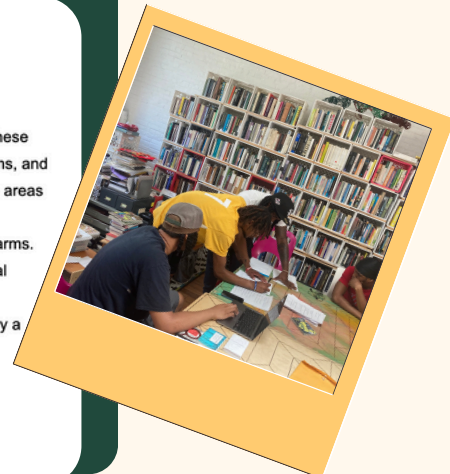
One thing that shocked us while doing this research is many of the shootings involves kids as young as 13 or 14. Both as victims and shooters young people are more likely to witness a shooting then graduate high school on time.

Youth gun violence is fueled by easy access to guns, lack of guidance, and poverty which creates hopelessness and pushes teens towards gangs in dangerous choices. These factors showed that gun violence is more than a crime, it's a failure of systems meant to protect the youth.



Factors Contributing to Gun Violence

Based on the diagram, gun violence is influenced by multiple interconnected factors. These include involvement in gangs, weak parenting, lack of education, easy access to firearms, and a lack of guidance and morals. The diagram suggests that a breakdown in any of these areas can contribute to the issue. For example, a lack of guidance and morals could lead to involvement in gangs, which in turn might increase the likelihood of easy access to firearms. The presence of weak parenting and lack of education can also be seen as foundational issues that could contribute to the other factors. These points collectively highlight the complexity of gun violence, indicating that it is not caused by a single issue but rather by a confluence of social and environmental elements.



Alumni Contract Hires in 2025

This year, EW proudly contracted five alumni in roles including Peer Mentor, Audio Engineer, Instructor, Program Associate, and Program Intern. By bringing alumni back as paid leaders, we're strengthening our programs, creating real career pathways, and ensuring current participants are supported by those who've walked the same path. Their leadership reflects the lasting impact of EW and the opportunities we strive to create beyond graduation.



Nasiar

In 2025, Nas instructed 1 cohort, was a Peer Mentor across 2 cohorts and is now our Program Associate.



Hilight

Hilight has been an instructor with us for two cohorts in 2025,



Kindel

Kindel was a Peer Mentor in 1 cohort and Audio Engineer in another cohort in 2025.



Angie

Angie was our Program Intern handling all social media platforms in 2025.



Julius

Julius was an instructor and audio engineer for 1 of the cohorts in 2025.



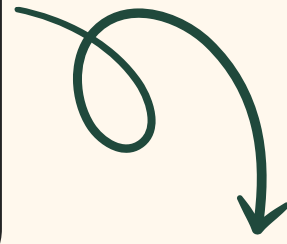
Our Volunteers Are Our Heartbeat

From mentoring and teaching to creating curriculum and supporting behind the scenes, they show up with care, energy, and belief in every participant's potential. Their dedication helps our community grow, learn, and thrive—and for that, we are endlessly grateful. Every moment they give transforms futures and strengthens the impact we can make together.



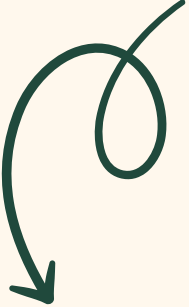
Nikki

"In today's increasingly virtual world, there are fewer opportunities to connect face-to-face with the communities you aim to support. I was lucky enough to beat those odds by teaching the weekly in-person Emergent Works 2025 Spring TRAP digital literacy cohort. I had the privilege of working with a group of young gentlemen on resume building, Canva design, AI fundamentals, and more. Our weekly classes were not only a chance for them to build technical digital skills (with plenty of laughs along the way), but they also became an unexpected lesson for me in how to truly connect with the communities we hope to impact most."



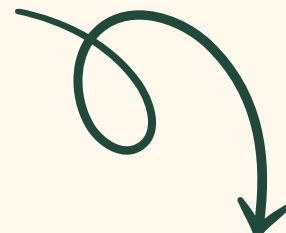
Monica

Shifting from training students in AI and digital literacy to training former students to teach the curriculum has been incredibly rewarding. As an educator deeply committed to workforce development, there's something especially meaningful about teaching people how to teach. It feels like we're building a micro-ecosystem rooted in community and long-term workforce growth."



Alena

"Volunteering with Emergent Works has been an incredibly meaningful and fulfilling experience. Supporting mentee's mental health and emotional well-being has reinforced the importance of safe, affirming spaces where individuals feel seen, heard, and empowered. It has been inspiring to witness participants' growth, resilience, and willingness to engage in self-reflection and healing. This experience has further strengthened my commitment to community-centered mental health support. Emergent Works is not only changing the lives of its mentees, but the staff as well."



Anika

"It has been an absolute honor to teach our digital literacy portion this season. Each of our participants has such a rich personality and background and I've truly enjoyed getting to know them while working together on their resumes, cover letters, interview prep, and job applications. Every guy is working hard to make sure they accomplish everything they set out to and I've just enjoyed being a source of support. I'm so excited to see what each of them do next and what all we learn together in 2026!!"



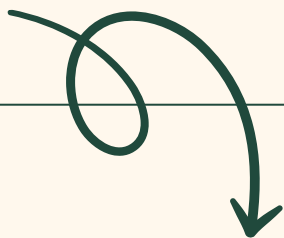
Hours of Love & Support

The time, care, and expertise our volunteers dedicate to supporting our work through fundraising, mentoring, grant writing, teaching, curriculum development, and coaching is truly priceless. They show up with generosity, consistency, and belief in our participants, helping create spaces where growth, confidence, and opportunity can thrive. Because of our volunteers, our programs are stronger, our community is more connected, and our impact reaches further than we could on our own.



490+ Hours

Was volunteered in 2025 by our amazing community of supporters! Software engineers, learning and development strategists, coaches, and grant writers generously shared their time and expertise to strengthen our programs and support our community.



Special Shoutout

Special shoutout to Jose Dominguez for the incredible time, care, and leadership he has poured into Emergent Works this year. Jose has been a true force behind the scenes, supporting grant writing and fundraising efforts, coaching our organizational strategy workshops, and connecting us to critical networks that continue to move our work forward. His generosity, insight, and belief in our mission have made a lasting impact, and we are deeply grateful for all the ways he shows up for our community.



Community Events & Concerts

This June, we celebrated our T.RAP graduates with a dynamic graduation concert that highlighted their creativity and hard work. Over the course of the program, participants collaborated to produce a collective album while also building individual websites to showcase their projects and personal growth. The concert was a vibrant celebration of their music, digital skills, and the confidence they've gained, marking the culmination of an incredible journey of learning, collaboration, and self-expression.



In August, our T.RAP cohort celebrated the culmination of an incredible project in partnership with DANY. Over the summer, participants engaged in participatory research, investigating gun violence in Harlem and uncovering insights from their communities. They translated their findings into a dynamic website showcasing their research and collaborated to produce an album that reflected their discoveries and experiences. The graduation was a powerful showcase of their creativity, analytical skills, and dedication, highlighting how T.RAP equips young people to turn knowledge into action and make their voices heard.



This year, on November 18th, EW and our participants joined the Harlem Holiday Lights Celebration with DANY, riding proudly on their floats. It was an exciting evening to showcase the incredible projects made possible through the GVPI awards, connect with other community organizations, and celebrate the meaningful contributions of our youth. Our participants had a blast experiencing the energy of Harlem, sharing their creativity, and being recognized for their dedication, impact, and hard work throughout the year.



Fundraising Events

This year, we also introduced something new: our very first Giving Tuesday Happy Hour fundraiser, hosted by our incredible Young Professional Board Member, Nikki. She organized the entire evening — securing a beautiful downtown Manhattan venue, coordinating catering, curating raffle prizes, and inviting her full network. More than 50 supporters showed up, celebrated our mission, and poured so much love into our community.

Our community stepped up in a major way, raising \$16,000 on Giving Tuesday alone. We are beyond grateful to Nikki, to our Board who also fundraised for the event, our Mentor Board who supported and to everyone who made this special night possible.

*"In 2025, I learned that the change we hope to make in the world is often easier than we think—we just need a little creativity. :) I've been on the Young Professionals Board at Emergent Works for a few years, where fundraising strategy is a constant topic. But this fall, after a nudge from a friend, I decided to organize a Sip, Smile, and Break the Cycle happy hour benefiting Emergent Works. We packed a small East Village bar with my friends and colleagues, as well as the broader YP Board and Emergent Works family. We had donated food, live rap performances by TRAP mentees, an incredible raffle, and by the end of the night we had raised a little over \$9,000! Putting this event together not only helped me overcome my personal fear of hosting, but also reminded me of the immeasurable power of community. When we're part of something bigger than ourselves, we grow individually and collectively. My Emergent Works family showed up with so much love and support, and I feel truly lucky to be part of this community." **Nikki***



This year's Giving Tuesday reminded us of something powerful: when one member of our community takes initiative, the ripple effects are enormous. Nikki's Happy Hour wasn't just a fundraiser — it was a gathering filled with love, joy, and belief in what's possible for our participants. It showed how creative, community-led efforts can spark new energy and open even more doors for the young people we serve.

As we look ahead, we invite more of our supporters to dream with us, host with us, and build with us. Whether it's organizing a small gathering, connecting us to your network, or championing our work in your own circles, your leadership makes a real and lasting impact.

Together, we can keep expanding these pathways — one event, one connection, and one act of community care at a time.

Thank You To Our Dedicated Donors and Board Members

Donor Shoutout

- Bhargav
- Rosalind
- Meagan
- Sunny
- Montrinaa
- Eli
- Nikki
- Niels
- William
- Nia
- Dion
- Tay
- Anika
- Graham
- J
- Supatra
- Conall
- Angie
- Tyler
- Aria
- Panteha
- Leendert
- Jamila
- Davon
- Dominique
- Thibaut
- Julie
- Mike
- Benjamin
- Abby
- Ryan
- Logan
- Brian
- Jerone
- Christine
- Jacqueline
- Pat
- Spela
- Kimberly
- Michael
- Ajani
- Jeffrey
- Emily
- Melissa
- Jojo
- Rafael
- Akiva
- Lauren
- Diana
- Sarah
- Alan
- Carrie
- Shil
- Kristen
- Dan
- Luther
- Kristina
- Alena
- Antaneshia
- Elizabeth
- Skyy
- Brianna
- Andrew
- Yu-Ann
- Kaysha
- Deja
- Armani
- Kharim
- Clara
- Monti
- Alexandra

Board Members

- Monti Hill
- Dion Ridley
- Rosalind Zavras
- Ashley Chen
- Jerone Hsu

YP Board

- Nikki Nikkhoui
- Meagan Cooke
- Jonathan Hinds



Mission

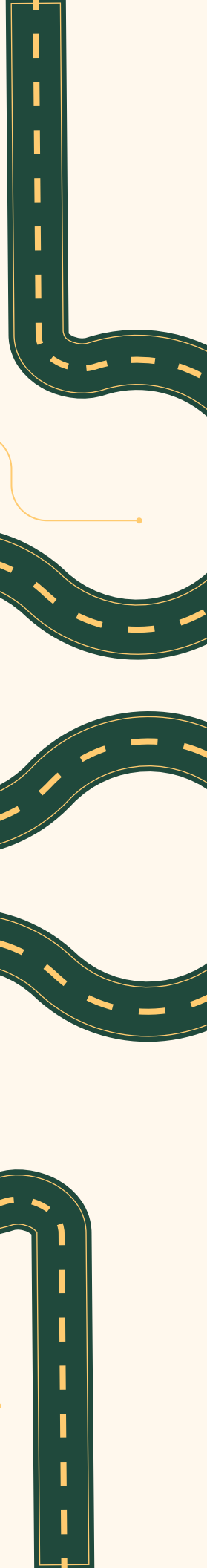
At Emergent Works, we break cycles of incarceration and poverty by equipping Black and Brown individuals impacted by the criminal legal system with the digital fluency, confidence, and networks to thrive in today's workforce. Through education, mentorship, creativity, and career-connected learning, we prepare participants for meaningful employment and long-term economic mobility.

Vision

Emergent Works envisions a world where justice-impacted individuals, especially Black and Brown youth and adults, achieve personal, economic, and creative freedom. They thrive in the global workforce, lead in their communities, and drive innovation in industries that once excluded them.

Theory of Change

We equip justice-impacted youth and adults with the digital, creative, and workforce skills needed to earn higher wages, avoid re-involvement with the justice system, and enter careers where they can thrive and lead, creating economic mobility for communities and a stronger, more inclusive workforce for employers.



Thank You Truly For Supporting Us

We are deeply grateful for our participants, who show courage and commitment every day; our alumni, who continue to lead and lift others; our staff, whose passion and skill make this work possible; our Board & YP Board, for guidance, advocacy, support and belief; our funders and partners, who invest in justice, digital equity, and second chances; and our volunteers & community, whose generosity fuels everything.

Your belief in Emergent Works makes everything possible. Every gift, every hour of volunteerism, and every partnership helps us reach more system-impacted youth and adults, equip them with critical skills, and open doors they never thought possible. It's how we close digital literacy gaps, foster economic independence, and create real, lasting opportunities for those too often left behind.

2024 was a year of momentum. 2025 will be a year of expansion. 2026 will be a year of transformation. Now more than ever, we need your support to sustain and grow our impact. Together, let's build a future where opportunity knows no bounds.

[Donate](#)

[Learn More](#)

