



Olivewood[™]
Gardens & Learning Center

15
ANNIVERSARY

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

July 2024 - June 2025



CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF
Growth - Impact - Community

A Message from Olivewood



Nearly
10k youth
& adults
served

We are pleased to share Olivewood's 2024-25 Annual Impact Report, celebrating 15 years of growth, impact, and community.

It is an honor to serve alongside the many individuals and organizations working to ensure everyone has access to nutritious food, clean air, outdoor spaces, and the civic resources needed for a thriving and just region.

This year brought both joys and challenges—from milestone celebrations and new program growth to the real impacts of national decisions felt within our local community. Through it all, Olivewood remains committed to our mission: **to nourish communities and cultivate a deep connection to the environment through nutrition education, sustainable urban agriculture, collective advocacy, and intergenerational leadership.**

Our work continues to be guided by our core values:

- **Equity** – acting with openness, respect, and cultural responsiveness.
- **Community** – creating inclusive, welcoming spaces that reflect the warmth of those we serve.
- **Health** – centering wellness and empowering people to live healthier lives.
- **Integrity** – following through on our commitments with honesty and care.
- **Transformation** – creating deep, lasting change through data-driven, innovative approaches.

We celebrated **15 years of partnership with the National School District**, reaching nearly 4,000 students through field trips, in-school, and after-school programs. We **expanded our high school programming** with the launch of a Culinary Arts program that connects youth with industry mentors and hands-on experience. **We welcomed the 600th Kitchenista graduate** through our Cooking for Salud program and began developing a Kitchenista Catering & Training initiative through the San Diego Food System Alliance Pollinator Program.

Our gardens flourished, supported by a new greenhouse, solar installation, and an orchard of 100+ fruit trees. Weekly produce stands and nature-based spaces continue to nourish our community. We deepened partnerships through the **National City Healthy Culturas Coalition, San Diego Food System Alliance, and National City STEAM Collaborative**, strengthening collective advocacy for health, food justice, and clean air.

Our team of 27 continued to learn, reflect, and grow together—building a culture of care and equity through ongoing training, reflection days, and collaboration.

We are deeply grateful to our **community of supporters and partners** who make this work possible. Together, we continue to lead with love, center community, celebrate culture, and care for our environment.

With gratitude,
The Olivewood Team



Our Team

Staff

Jacqueline Ante*, Kitchenista Outreach Coordinator

Jeni Barajas*, Director of Youth Programs

Salina Brice, Environmental Education Specialist

Yolanda Bernal*, Administrative Coordinator

Ellyse Briand*, Events & Culinary Program Manager

Patty Corona*, Director of Kitchenista Engagement & Cooking for Salud

Angelica Gastelum*, Communications & Marketing Manager

Claire Groebner, Associate Director

Laura Guerrero, Garden & Nutrition Education Specialist

Morgan Harris*, Youth Nutrition Education Specialist

Sabrina Heimer, School Garden Specialist

Monica Lim*, Kitchenista Program Manager

Rocina Lizarraga*, Garden Support Specialist & Transit Project Coordinator

Maya Markillie, School-Based Environmental Education Specialist

Jen Nation, Executive Director

Carlos Olvera, Social Media Content Creator

Paola Orjuela*, Accounting Coordinator

Kelsey Pennington, Youth Program Manager

Isaac Ramos, Garden Support Specialist

Birdy Rivera, Garden & Nutrition Education Specialist

Jorge Robledo, Facilities Manager

Teddy Routsis, Volunteer Coordinator

Miah Tatola, School-Based Environmental Education Specialist

Adan Teposte, Garden Support Specialist

Leonard Vargas, Director of Gardens & Facilities

Jennifer Walker*, Development Manager

Alyssa Zurita, Garden Support Specialist - Fruit Tree Focus

Board

Krupa Asher - Board Treasurer, Business Strategy, Calbright College

Rita De La Fuente - Board Chair, Principal & Co-Founder, Evolution Affairs

Angela Elo-Rivera - Board Secretary, Media Communications Specialist, UCSD T. Denny Sanford Institute of Empathy and Compassion

Sabrina Falquier Montgrain, MD, CCMS, Culinary Medicine Physician, Consultant, Sensations Salud, LLC, Founder & CEO

Amelia Porras*, Kitchenista & Former San Diego County Office of Education Early Childhood Interventionist

Marisa Aurora Quiroz, President & CEO, International Community Foundation

Blanca Meléndrez - Board Vice Chair, Executive Director, UCSD Center for Community Health Altman Clinical and Translational Research Institute

Garry Rollins, Community Connector, Tech Consultant

Nancy Sasaki, President & CEO United Way San Diego

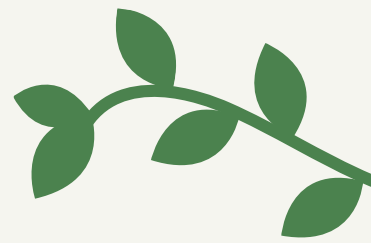
*Kitchenista



15 Years of Partnership

Olivewood's flagship Children's Field Trip Program, launched in 2010, brought several classrooms from National School District (NSD) schools to Olivewood for garden and nutrition education. Fast-forward to 2025, Olivewood and NSD have developed a robust partnership, with Olivewood STEAM programming integrated into classroom learning. During the 2024 - 25 school year, we:

- Provided a three-lesson, school garden-based program to all **3,679 TK - 6th grade students**
- Provided a **3-part field trip program to all 633 4th graders**
- Managed all 10 NSD school gardens through year-round maintenance, **harvesting over 1,150 pounds of produce!**
- Piloted a **new 7-week afterschool program utilizing hydroponics gardens and cooking carts** to deepen culinary and agricultural knowledge and skills for students grades 3rd - 6th



"First of all, I learned about how plants grow and I love plants!.....And I absolutely loved learning in the kitchen! Did you know that when I usually cook in my house, I'm very cautious and I'm scared of some of the kitchen tools, but now I feel confident and brave because you taught me how to hold a knife correctly and how to use it the right way so I don't get cuts. And I usually get scared using a knife because I might hurt myself, but now I know how to use knives correctly! "
- NSD Palmer Way 4th grader



"National School District is proud to be a long standing partner with Olivewood Gardens and Learning Center. The Children's Garden Science & Nutrition Education Program transforms how students and families engage with science, nutrition, and the environment. **Students leave our classrooms not just with knowledge, but with the confidence to make healthy choices and to act as environmental stewards in their communities.** Families notice the enthusiasm and confidence these programs build."
- Dr. Leighangela Brady, NSD Superintendent





62 High
School
Leaders

'I participated in Olivewood's Youth Community Leadership program...to help me develop better leadership and life skills to assist me with my future. During the program, we hosted a community listening forum...to gather feedback on ways we could improve Olivewood's property for community use. We then took action and developed four projects, including a living wall near the hillside, building a worm composting bin for educational purposes, adding more seating to the property to promote comfort and make others feel more welcome, and adding informational signs in multiple languages to trees and plants to help identify them.'

Through this process I acquired the knowledge needed to work with my peers and managed to form a family. At Olivewood, even though we faced challenges, we knew we had each other, we knew we were one just by being a part of Olivewood itself. With my team, as well as the team at Olivewood, I managed to further develop my social skills and work on my team engagement. With my time at Olivewood, my skills of throwing myself at leadership improved, I managed to talk to everyone in my team without the fear of being judged. I would personally like to thank Olivewood Gardens, not only for the amazing work they do here but also for the family and community they're constructing. I'll forever look back at this moment, as a special one, because Olivewood allowed me to keep taking one step forward. At Olivewood, we're all a family.'

- Pierce, High School Intern

Emerging Leaders

High School Leadership Programs

Our High School internships build skills, knowledge, confidence, and community around sustainable urban agriculture, nutrition, culinary arts, leadership, placemaking, and civic engagement.

- Youth Community Leadership Program students **created a living plant wall along our hillside, created more seating, and added signage**
- Culinary Arts students participated in this **pilot program and planned and prepared the meal for our annual Holiday Bazaar, raising over \$1,500**
- Sustainable Urban Agriculture Entrepreneurship Academy students **raised nearly \$2,000 through two spring plant sales**
- Garden 2 Kitchen interns collaborated with Chef Educator Christina Ng to **plan and prepare colorful spring rolls and sauces for nearly 300 Seedling Soirée attendees**





Emerging Leaders

Internships & Apprenticeships

Interns and Apprentices provide critical support for Olivewood's work, while gaining hands-on job skills and training. This year, we piloted a new Garden Apprenticeship program that provided an intensive and immersive learning experience with our garden team. Program highlights included:

- Sustainable Urban Agriculture Intern **Micaela** participated in field trips as an elementary student and came back as a college student to explore their passion for environmental and nutrition education

"This experience has been so amazing, it's become my happy place. It feels fulfilling and empowering to be here and tending to the land. I've gotten to grow a few crops, and that's been really rewarding to see them thriving. I was a little nervous at first, but learning more, every plant is different, so there's trouble shooting. I like taking care of this place, because when you walk in it feels special. I took my family on a tour and they saw the magic I see."



I grew up nearby and had no idea this was here, so when I found it I knew I had to come back and be a part of it. And it's been so healing for my mental health, being outside, being around all the green, finding cool bugs and birds, it's been so healing and special. I'm really happy. I'm really excited to see Olivewood expand, thrive, and reach more communities."

- Charlene, Garden Apprentice

- Sustainable Urban Ag Intern **Sofia** gathered soil from various areas around Olivewood, and her findings will include recommendations for improving soil health.
- Dietetic Interns **Rachel** and **Julia** developed and demonstrated recipes for our weekly donation-based produce stand, such as loquat dressing and chard salad.
- Nutrition Education Intern **Pablo** explored the connections between the garden and kitchen - supporting field trips and also getting his hands in the soil and helping to plant an avocado tree.





Celebrating Food & Culture

Cooking for Salud

This year, we graduated the **31st Generation of Cooking for Salud** and celebrated 12 years of this highly impactful 9-week program.



"[I now] cook more with vegetables and less meat, eat healthier meals, [and learned how to] lower your sugar intake and replace salt with spices."



"I am excited to try new herbs and spices in my food and drinks. I am going to be more involved in the community and planning on starting a garden with my neighbors."



"I have begun to feel more confident in my...Mexican culture, and around the women...This class helped me feel accepted."

*"My experience with the Cooking for Salud program was more meaningful than I ever imagined. I learned so much about healthy eating and cooking. These weren't completely new ideas for me, but **through Cooking for Salud I gained a better understanding of basic nutrition that I can apply to myself, my family, and my community....***

*After each class, I left feeling inspired to use fresh herbs and spices that I normally wouldn't try. I'm so grateful for all the knowledge I gained. Beyond what I learned in the kitchen, **Cooking for Salud gave me a strong sense of belonging. Becoming part of the Kitchenistas community has been a beautiful experience. Volunteering as a Kitchenista has deepened my connection and commitment to my community, and it feels good to give back in a meaningful way.***

*I'm so thankful that this opportunity was made available to us. It allowed us to be part of this incredible effort to teach our community about healthy living. I'm deeply thankful for this experience and everyone who made it possible. **It inspired me to keep growing, cooking, and giving back.***

- Carolina, Generation 31 Kitchenista



Building Community

The Kitchenistas

Parent & Community Presentations

Kitchenistas provided **two different nutrition presentations and food demonstrations at each of the 10 NSD schools**, as well as presentations and film screenings for local groups and as far north as Humboldt University and as far south as Mexico City.



360 Adults
educated

11
Kitchenista
Leads

98.5% of participants responded they **feel confident in planning and preparing quick and healthy meals for their family** following the presentation

110
Kitchenista
Programs

100+
Kitchenistas
Engaged

Kitchenista Clubs, Meetings, & More

Annual successes included:

- **Launch of two new clubs:** Entrepreneurs & Wellness Practitioners
- Compost Club harvested over **200 pounds of compost**
- Knitting Club completed beautiful **crocheted tree wraps and holiday decorations for annual events**
- Trainings including: **Emotional Intelligence, Giving & Receiving Feedback, and First Aid / CPR**
- **10 Kitchenistas** participating in the Olivewood Catering program

Cocineras Tradicionales

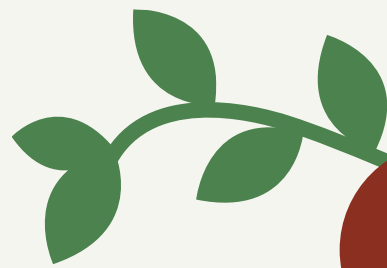
This year, 11 Kitchenistas became the first in the US to become certified 'Cocineras Tradicionales', a **distinguished recognition for traditional cooks who are rescuing and preserving cultural food traditions and ancestral foodways**. Graduates were certified through Centro Universitario IESTUR.



11 Certified
Cocineras
Tradicionales

700+
Hours

Growing Together



1,271
Youth
Served

1,564
Adults
Served



Youth & Family Programs

Olivewood's events and fee-based programs build community, contribute revenue, and expand our impact and reach.

Chefcitos & Garden Explorers

- 188 youth participated these popular, hands-on cooking and garden exploration programs.

"My child loves and looks forward to these visits so much that he asked Santa to please send him gift cards for the whole year of classes."

Field Trips & Camps

- 86 elementary-aged youth participated in all-day camps including our summer camp in partnership with A Reason to Survive and Ocean Connectors
- 47 field trips serving nearly 1,000 students from schools across San Diego County

Family Programs

Our family programs include:

- Talls & Smalls serving children 2-5 alongside an adult guardian
- Gardening classes at Paradise Creek Family Garden in partnership with Mundo Gardens
- Monthly Open Gardens & Tours

Day of Play

This event featured 19

partners providing a variety of hands-on STEAM-oriented activities. Participants shared benefits of attending the event including:

- Commitments to eating healthier and composting food waste
- Benefits of social interactions at the event, spending time as a family, being outdoors, and seeing the happiness and excitement of their children

Halloween Healthy Haunted Garden

This is a long-standing tradition that brings neighbors from throughout National City for family-friendly spooky fun, a beautiful Día de Muertos altar, and healthy treats.

Over
1,000
Visitors



Nourishing Connections

Adult Programs & Events

Adult Cooking Classes

Themes this year included:

- Valentine's Day with Chef Wilmer Braulio
- Local Ceviche with Fishful Future
- Mole with the Kitchenistas
- Vietnamese Curry with Dr. Kevin Young
- Sri Lankan Curry with Integrative Health Practitioner Chef Cham Edussuriya

Garden at Dusk Dinner Series

We re-launched our Garden at Dusk Dinner series, featuring partnerships with bica, Ramona Ranch Winery, Stay Classy Selections, Hearth & Harvest, Oddish Winery, Group Chat, and Jose Suarez.

Private Programs & Catering

Our private programs and catering expanded, offering facility use, cooking and gardening lessons, tours, and catering. In partnership with the San Diego Food System Alliance Pollinator Program, Olivewood gained technical support to begin creating a business plan and curriculum for our Kitchenista Catering & Training Program.

287
Guests



Seedling Soirée

- Raised \$141,500
- 19 food and drink booths
- Silent and live auction items from 42 supporters
- Over 1,600 hours of volunteer support

760+
Adults
Served



"I think every community should have an OWG. I will always walk in here with a smile and leave with a smile. For me community has never been about a specific person or people. It is a place where you learn to let go, and when you learn to be comfortable with yourself. Especially knowing that nobody else around is going to judge you. So I guess when I think of community, I think of here. I can't think of any other place that has accomplished such a positive environment. There is just something about it. It's hard to explain. And I guess the best way I can think of it, it has a vibe. It has a vibe. Community is a vibe and OWG is always vibing!"

- Joshua, Kitchenista, former Intern & Chefcito

Holiday Bazaar

- 5th annual event
- 35 vendors including 19 Kitchenista entrepreneurs
- Plant sales of Olivewood-grown fruits, vegetables, herbs, and ornamentals
- Culinary student prepared meal, serving over 100 people!

300+
Guests



Growing Food & Caring for our Space

Donation-Based Produce Stand

- Distributed over 7,000lbs
- Served ~20 families a week, reaching 500+ individuals

Fruit Tree Orchard

The orchard planting was completed in 2 seasons: fall of 2024 and spring of 2025. It has **over 100 fruit trees** growing in the space and currently consists of mainly citrus and deciduous fruit trees. **Each tree was planted into a gopher basket, assembled by hand with the help of volunteers and interns**, to protect the root ball and young root system, ensuring the trees develop into mature fruit trees. The irrigation system for this project will be completed in the fall of 2025.

Production Garden & Greenhouse

- **Completed construction of our new greenhouse** and post-production buildings.
- Began **growing 1,000s of seedlings** for Olivewood's garden, NSD school gardens, and Paradise Creek Family Garden.

Native Plants

We received an in-kind donation of **over 100 native plants** from the Xerces Society and support from local biologists from AECOM to incorporate these plants throughout the property. The addition of **California native plants supports and enhances our local wildlife ecosystem.**

Food Forest

Our North Garden Food Forest features nature-based growing methods to improve soil health, increase biomass, **and allow abundant food to grow with minimal intervention.**

Learning Garden

Our Learning Garden features **fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers** that both **contribute to our cooking programs and provide robust exploration opportunities for visiting youth.**

Space Improvements

We had some exciting space improvements this year including:

- Addition of **solar panels on our office and a new thermal heating and cooling system** on the house with support from Hammond Climate Solutions Foundation and San Diego Community Power
- **Renovation of the shade structure** by the pool
- **Improvements to accessibility and safety** with updated stairs and hand rails

8,100+ pounds of produce harvested





Strengthening Our Ecosystem

Food & Environmental Justice Advocacy

1 in 3 National City residents is considered 'nutrition insecure' with 40% of those being children - a number expected to increase in the coming years. National City and neighboring communities continue to have some of the worst air quality in the state, with **Westside National City residents breathing more diesel polluted air than 90% of CA and 84% of cancer risk from diesel pollution and children in National City have two times more asthma emergency room visits than the county average.** These lived experiences result from policies, systems, and environmental decisions. To truly create a healthy and thriving community, it is critical to engage not only in Education and Access - which support on the individual level - but also Advocacy, to address systemic issues that lead to long-term change.

National City Healthy Culturas Coalition

In it's 4th year, the Coalition is a collaboration with Mundo Gardens, Environmental Health Coalition, and community members. This year we:

64
Adults
Engaged

- **Advocated against a polluting fuel transfer station** proposed for the already overburdened Westside National City
- Presented at the Reconnecting Communities Conference
- Hosted a candidate forum for National City councilmembers

SANDAG

Olivewood has been a member of the SANDAG Social Equity Working Group since 2017, **sharing recommendations to ensure equity and community are centered in transit and other regional decisions.** This year, we gathered feedback and provided input on the:

- Vision Zero Action Plan
- 2025 Regional Plan
- Youth Opportunity Pass

Partnerships

Additional partnerships contributing to strengthening our ecosystem, building collective advocacy, and developing regional strategies included:

- Business for Good
- National City STEAM Collaborative
- Place-Based Teaching and Learning Network
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Storytelling Cohort
- San Diego Food System Alliance Stewardship Committee
- San Diego Solidarity Network
- Teaching Kitchen Collaborative



Community of Support



Our community of supporters - donors, volunteers, partners, program participants, and more are the roots that anchor our work, strengthen our collective impact, and ensure we continue to thrive. We practice Community-Centric Fundraising, recognizing that the way we resource our work matters and that those closest to the impact must be centered. This year we have seen severe funding cuts and pauses at all levels particularly for environmental justice, science education; Black, Indigenous, and Communities of Color; LGBTQIA+ communities, immigrant communities, and more - furthering racial and gender inequities, halting decades of organizing activities, silencing communities, and bestowing fear. **Our work and the Olivewood community that we have created - centered in love, care, and connection - is more important than ever. Thank you for being a part of it!**

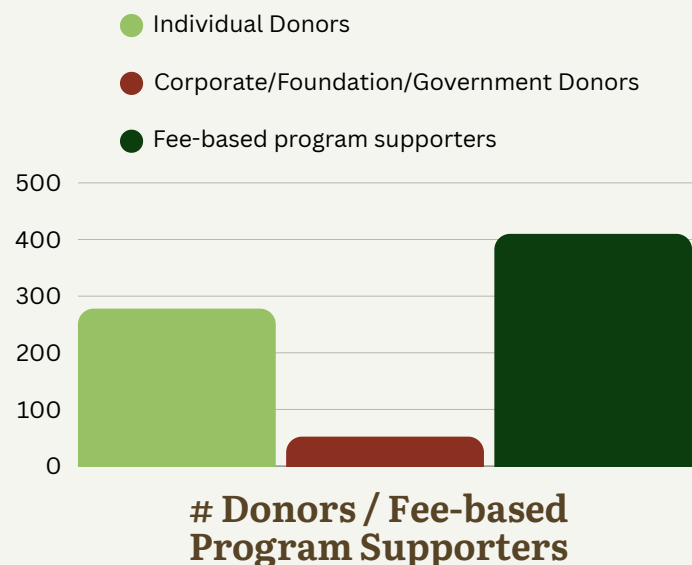
Volunteers

Our **incredible community of volunteers and interns donated 9,300+ hours** to support Olivewood's programs, operations, and events. From weekly garden and field trip volunteers, to Kitchenistas supporting Cooking for Salud, to weekend Chefcitos and Garden Explorers volunteers, to our Board Members, and more - we couldn't do it without this wonderful group of committed and caring individuals!



Donors

Our **wonderful community of donors and fee-based program participants contributed \$2,432,531 to our annual programming and operations, and \$129,440 to our Cultivating the Future Capital Campaign.** From those who have supported since our first field trip 15 years ago, to monthly Roots for Health donors, to supporters that have committed a legacy gift, to first-time supporters and program participants - our dedicated and generous donor community is critical to our collective impact!



Looking Ahead

Deepening Solidarity & Collective Impact

In the midst of a challenging year, we have seen incredible resilience and community care. **We have joined other organizations and community members in San Diego to stand in solidarity**, to not back away from our commitments and values, and to continue to build towards the future our communities deserve. As we look ahead to the coming year and beyond, we are digging deep and **we hope you will stand with us and continue to champion our community!**

Food Access & Food Sovereignty

Since Olivewood's inception, providing access to nutritious, fresh food to our community has been part of our organizational DNA. This goal is becoming even more critical as we see disruptions within our food system and higher levels of food and nutrition insecurity. In the coming year, **we will strengthen our food access offerings** including the addition of seedlings and shelf-stable goods to our produce stand, cultivation of partnerships with local home growers to share abundance with neighbors, and creation of meals for community. Additionally, **Olivewood has been selected as the short-term operator for the Tijuana River Valley Community Garden** - with the goal to preserve this critical resource and support greater autonomy of the garden community.

Building Capacity

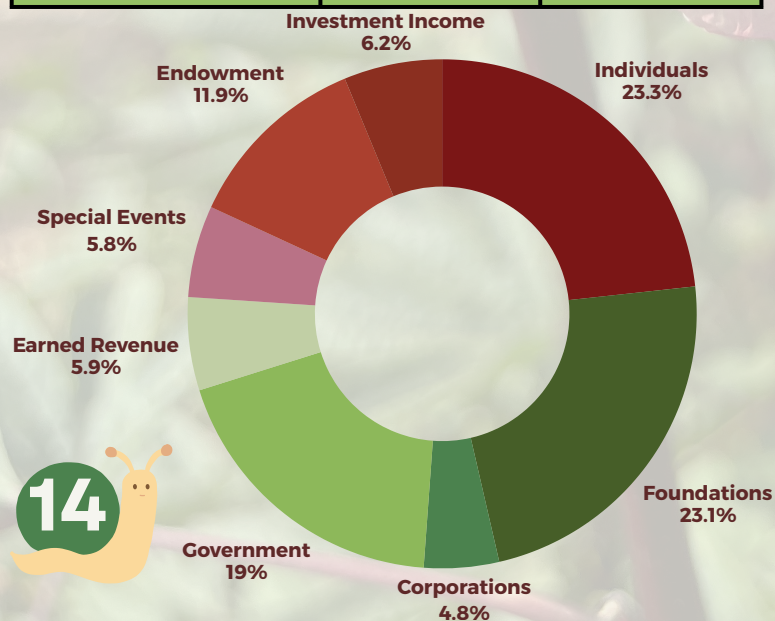
In the coming year, we will continue and begin several projects focused on improving and building our capacity. These include:

- Work through the permitting process for our **future Commercial Teaching Kitchen, additional meeting space off of ICF, and improvements to our Learning Garden.**
- **Pilot our Kitchenista Catering & Training Program** - a year-long program that will include a 12-week training followed by apprenticeship in the Olivewood Catering Company. This program will both support workforce development and economic security, as well as expand our revenue generating capacity through catering.
- **Team leadership development and succession planning with the sabbatical of our Executive Director**, supported by Fieldstone Leadership Network and Clare Rose Sabbatical Program.



Financials

ASSETS	2025	2024
Cash & cash equivalents	\$946,137	\$842,050
Accounts receivable	\$147,223	\$273,029
Pledges receivable	\$83,333	\$100,000
Deposits & prepaid expenses	\$10,173	\$14,441
Investments	\$3,501,577	\$3,461,614
Property & equipment	\$3,058,602	\$2,759,795
Total assets	\$7,747,045	\$7,450,929
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS		
Liabilities		
Accounts payable & accrued expenses	\$104,160	\$91,448
Economic Injury Disaster Loan	\$150,000	\$150,000
Total Liabilities	\$254,160	\$241,448
Net assets		
Without donor restriction	\$2,186,531	\$1,900,184
With donor restriction	\$5,306,354	\$5,309,297
Total net assets	\$7,492,885	\$7,209,481
Total liabilities & net assets	\$7,747,045	\$7,450,929



	Without donor restrictions	With donor restrictions	Total Revenue
Operating Activities:			
Support & revenues			
Contributions	\$289,382	\$1,797,315	\$2,086,697
Special Events	139,134		139,134
Program Fees	\$341	\$128,271	\$128,612
Facility Use	\$12,417		\$12,417
Net assets released from restrictions	\$1,928,529	-\$1,928,529	
Total operating support & revenues	\$2,369,803	-\$2,943	\$2,366,860
Expenses			
Program Services	\$1,843,718		\$1,843,718
Management & General	\$165,891		\$165,891
Fundraising	\$168,381		\$168,381
Total program & supporting services	\$2,177,990		\$2,177,990
Cost of direct benefits to donors	\$54,470		\$54,470
Total operating expenses	\$2,232,460		\$2,232,460
Non-Operating Activities			
Investment income, net	\$119,926		\$119,926
Realized & unrealized gain, net	\$29,078		\$29,078
Total non-operating activities	\$149,004		\$149,004
Change in net assets	\$286,347	-\$2,943	\$283,404
Net assets at beginning of year	\$1,900,184	\$5,309,297	\$7,209,481
Net assets at end of year	\$2,186,531	\$5,306,534	\$7,492,885



THANK YOU

Stay Connected

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 [linkedin.com/company/olivewood-gardens-learning-center](https://www.linkedin.com/company/olivewood-gardens-learning-center)

Build Community with Us

Cultivate: Stay up-to-date on all things Olivewood through social media and our e-newsletter!

Grow: Share with others about Olivewood and invite them to visit with you!

Harvest: Join us for a program or event!

Nurture: Share your time, talent, and/or treasure!

Upcoming Events:

olivewoodgardens.org/upcoming-events



Schedule A Visit or Plan Your Team Building Activity:

info@olivewoodgardens.org

Donate Today

olivewoodgardens.org/donate



Make a Gift of Stock or a Legacy Gift

Contact Claire:

claire@olivewoodgardens.org



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