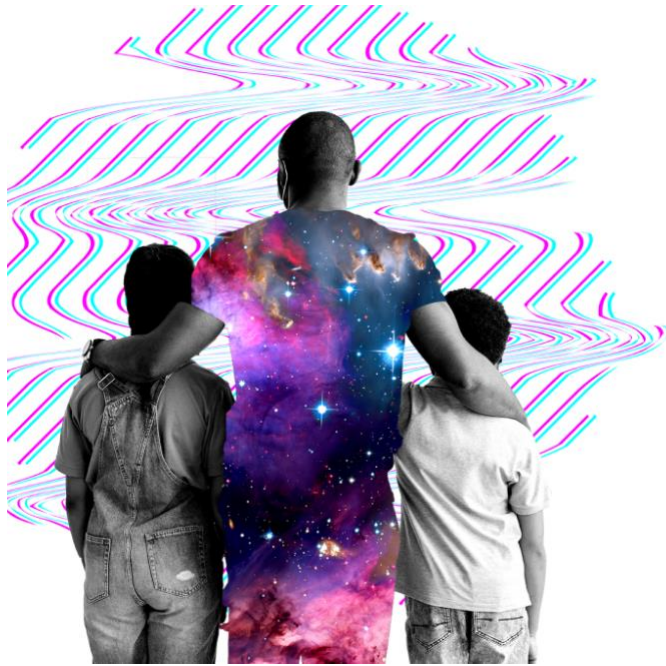




# WHAT'S YOUR FORTÉ FOUNDATION

## IMPACT REPORT





The What's Your Forté Foundation's mission is to invest in the equitable economic advancement of youth and families through partnership and purposeful relationships.

As a powerful lever for social change, we utilize community leaders, mentorship, and tailored programming to facilitate transformational development.

## OUR VISION

OUR VISION  IS TO BE A POWERFUL LEVER FOR  
SOCIAL CHANGE,  THAT FACILITATES  
TRANSFORMATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  ON THE  
SOUTH & WEST SIDES OF CHICAGO

“We have been called to give back what God has already given us”

Matt Forté.



What's Your Forté Foundation

## FROM OUR FOUNDER



These unprecedented times call for everyone to take a self-assessment and ask, “what am I doing to impact my community?” For centuries, African Americans have struggled at the hands of systemic oppression and racism, manifesting in so many ways. The wealth disparity between black and white families is that of nearly twelve times the rate and is only projected to increase as time passes. One reason for this extreme disparity is institutional discrimination and under investment.

While playing for Tulane, I lost a teammate to senseless gun violence. Brandon Spencer’s passing leveled all of us and left me and his Fiancé and two young daughters feeling an indescribable loss. Attending his funeral opened my eyes to the work that needed to be done around this issue. When I was drafted by the Bears, I felt a calling to be a catalyst for change for young men, to offer them more than what they saw around them. For the last 10 years I have been operating under a strategic plan to prevent gun violence and to bring economic equity to Chicago’s South and West sides. Through innovative opportunities, robust engagement, and a continuum of services, our Foundation holistically supports entire families by offering character development, career exploration, wellness, and wealth building programming.

Philanthropy is more than writing a check but partnering with our neighbors to bring economic development, opportunity, and generational wealth back to their families. Our foundation is not about programs but community-based projects. We are invested in the community through resources and relationships.

The What's Your Forté Foundation has pledged to build our Chicago community from the inside out. We will do this through financial empowerment as well as financial literacy. We believe that empowering small communities’ business, especially African American-owned businesses will not only help close the racial wealth gap, but will also celebrate, serve, and strengthen the Black community. Additionally, this will help recirculate profits, create more job opportunities, and garner financial stability within these communities. By coming together with your support, we can create a blueprint for successful black leaders. The transformation continues.....

*Matt Forté*

## FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The What's Your Forté Foundation is unlike any other family foundation. Matt and Danielle have manifested a culture change through strategic data informed action that has brought about sustainable economic successes. With over 1 million dollars invested over the last 10 years through projects and partnerships, the foundation is poised to double that investment in 2024 (just one year)!

When most charities and nonprofits are often fragmented and lack the big-picture vision coordination, we intentionally partner with changemakers, institutions, and government agencies. It has been our charge to seek out the forgotten, disconnected (Opportunity Youth), and marginalized. Centering our outreach on youth and families in Austin, Woodlawn, Auburn Gresham, Englewood, Roseland and beyond, is the key to our success. Our signature violence prevention and economic empowerment projects have made a 23% percent impact in the most historically underdeveloped and impoverished neighborhoods in Chicago.

- [Your Forté – Our Finance](#)
  - Our wealth building program for small businesses and entrepreneurs
- [Reach4Life](#)
  - 40 week coaching app that guides youth to positive pathways and provides a roadmap to implement successful habits. This violence prevention tool along with our year-round initiatives, allows for instant corrective training and mentorship assistance -to be at their fingertips.
- [The Matt Forté Career Camp](#)
  - Both youth and families hear from C-Suite & senior level employers who can offer lucrative career options for those who may not have traditional skills sets or lengthy resumes. We offer a buffet of lower “barrier of entry positions” that have life altering “*per hour*” or “*salaries*” attached to them. The program’s main focus is aimed at connecting the community with direct employment avenues and to help them sustain a fruitful career.

In addition to our signature programs, we have two new initiatives (Finding Your Forté) and our Community Justice Fellows (gun violence survivors completing an Influencer Fellowship). Combined with our annual programs we are meeting the direct needs of youth and families on the South and West sides and making a substantial difference through education and within the finances of these communities. In this 2023 Impact Report, it is our pleasure to share what we have accomplished that has allowed us to bring our mission to life!

*Jamia Powers*



## OUR APPROACH:

By utilizing community leaders, mentorship, and tailored programming we ensure the foundation of our mission is sustained.

## HOW WE IMPACT:

Through philanthropy, innovative opportunities, robust engagement, and a continuum of services; we holistically support the entire family by offering character development, career exploration, wellness, and wealth building.



# ECONOMIC EQUITY

## BACK TO SCHOOL DRIP



\$1,000 Backpacks



\$15,000 in School Supplies

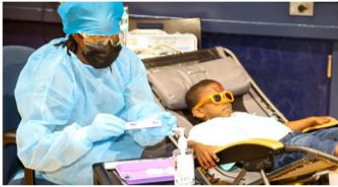


\$2,000 in Household Goods



\$50,000 worth of In-Kind Gifts

To date, the What’s Your Forté Foundation has given away over 1,000 back backpacks and over 15,000 worth of school supplies to youth and families. In 2023, our partnership with Conagra and Convoy of Hope distributed over 2,000 household goods totaling over 50,000 in in-kind gifts. The “essentials” event provides K-12-year-old students with “drip” and school supplies while supplying parents with items such as food, blankets, Clorox wipes, mops, immune boosters, shoes and more.



The Back to School Drip is rooted in resources so while we ensure fun, (facepainting, games, and inflatables), there is also a food truck, dental cleanings, and in 2024 we will add vision screenings. Last but certainly not least, at our Back-to-School Drip we also hold arts workshops (modern dance and music education sessions). Our foundation focuses on the hardest hit neighborhoods on the South and West sides, but the giveaway is open to the entire city.

## BLESSING ON THE BLOCK

During the year, we feed over 1,200 people, collect gently used or new professional clothing for interviews, and as winter approaches, we gather winter coats, hats, and gloves. This resource donation is a bi-annual drive the What's Your Forté Foundation and Progressive Baptist Church collaborates on to provide items that students and families in the community are in need of. With inflation on the rise, many families cannot afford these essential everyday items for their growing children. Corporate partners have the opportunity to donate individual items or Friends of Forté can “sponsor” a specific family’s wish.



During Thanksgiving we have our annual program called Blessing on the Block: Holiday Edition, which provides 500 meals for families for Thanksgiving and supports a holiday initiative to gift 100 bikes to children around holiday seasons of Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and New Years.

### Matt Forte distributed Thanksgiving meals to families On The Cities Southside



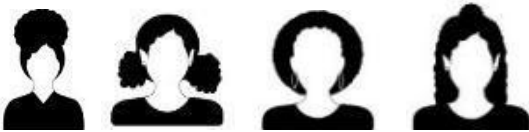
*Former Chicago Bears Players Matt Forte and Anthony Adams, with The Reverend Charlie Dates, Pastor of Progressive Baptist Church, during the What's Your Forté Foundation's Thanksgiving Giveaway.*

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## COMMUNITY JUSTICE FELLOWS



Our Community Justice Fellows Program engages youth 14-20 years old in research, development, and other related activities focused on their experience with gun violence. Through storytelling with the [End Gun Violence 365](#) campaign, our partnership with the [Community Justice Action Fund](#) (CJAF) focuses on the narrative from black and brown communities. The Fellows goals include capturing first person narrative videos centering on community, personal experience, and the current climate of gun violence.



3,310 Youth Engaged & Educated in Gun Violence Prevention



897 Community Members Educated on Gun Violence Prevention

The cohort's body of work will not only underscore their trauma but highlight the tangential impacts, challenges to progress, inroads, and will forecast innovative solutions. With guidance and training provided by CJAF and [Black With No Chaser](#) social media consultants; the fellowship will culminate in deliverable that will transform the conversation around gun violence and its messenger.



Created 100 Violence Prevention Social Media Influencer Videos in 2023



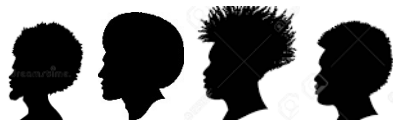
# FINDING YOUR FORTÉ

The Finding Your Forté program is an innovative program aimed at reducing and preventing community-based violence through sustained action. Through this weekly series we educate and uplift Chicago's youth to make impactful, positive choices.

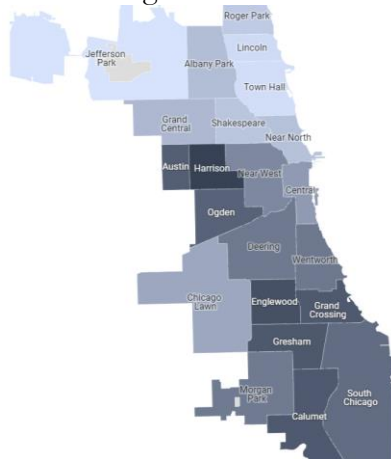


Teens (including girls) hear from today's most influential speakers and learn athletic skills from Matt Forté. We play flag football, basketball, baseball, and soccer year-round. Participants can elect to attend just the speaker series and be connected with an advisor. Inclusive of group mentoring, our volunteers exchange information with participants to be a source of support and facilitate our [Reach4Life](#) curriculum. This app and coaching tool along with our guide and counsel students on how to deal with challenges each week. The program provides a roadmap for successful life outcomes which is informed by the request of our participants. Taking place every Saturday from 11:00am – 12:30pm at Pullman Community Center, the foundation is still taking registrants.

Engaged 50 young men each week



7 of 14 Neighborhoods



**\*\*REACHES 50 PERCENT OF MARGINALIZED, VIOLENT, AND IMPOVERISHED AREAS OF CHICAGO**

# MATT FORTE CAREER CAMP



The What's Your Forté Foundation's goal is to provide attendees with the tools to achieve success in all facets of their lives. The Career Camp hosts the best companies to review employment opportunities with rising leaders that reside on the South and Westside of Chicago. While there is a mutual link between the \*Football Camp and the Career Camp, both are brought together by mentoring sessions, entitled "Chalk Talks". Matt uses his time to stress the importance of getting an education, rejecting negative influences, and working hard to achieve success in life.

During the high school Career Camp sessions (there are separate sessions for adults), Matt and other industry leaders talk about successfully navigating college life as a student athlete. The goal of these career sessions are to pass on new learnings, best practices, and encourage these aspiring leaders. Having an opportunity to hear directly from various sectors will allow students and families to lean into lucrative careers that they do not traditionally have access to. The What's Your Forté Foundation will introduce and highlight this combined program (football & career) in 2024 complete with role models while providing another mechanism for families to access new revenue streams thereby increasing economic advancement.

\*Paused due to COVID. Reconvenes summer 2024



## SUMMER EXPERIENCE



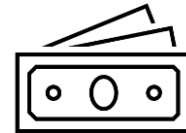
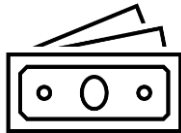
Behind the scenes at Navy Pier

This initiative engages Chicago's youth with personal growth opportunities and a chance to enhance their future development. The What's Your Forté Foundation along with coalition partners Ada S. McKinley, Youth Guidance (Becoming A Man -B.A.M.), and Salem Baptist church, sought a solution to the **3-week gap in education and recreation each summer** for young men and young women in the community. During those 3 weeks Chicago endures some of the most turbulent and violent acts perpetrated by youth who lack structure.

The Summer Experience provides up to 300 attendees ages 12-18 with activities and tools to enjoy their summer break by fusing educational sessions alongside physical and entrepreneurial opportunities. These evening 5:00-10:00pm engagement sessions are designed to reach the most at-risk youth, provide on-ramps to alternative avenues for experiencing Chicago, and offer workforce options that will engage each participant to become connected to successful life outcomes. The chosen evening hours were intentionally selected to offset the usual mischief that happens when youth "don't have anything to do". A sampling of the sessions is below:

- Transportation
- Dinner
- Forté Field Trips
- Table Top -Game Days
- Vibe with VIP's
- Sports Tournaments
- VR Experiences
- Chalk Talks & Forté Explorations
- Influencer Training Internship
- Empowerment Sessions
- Next Steps Facilitation

2024 Pilot Program will impact 500 -1,000 Youth  
YOUR FORTÉ – OUR FINANCE



\$800,000 in economic vitality to South & West Side Neighborhoods

The What's Your Forté Foundation and Greenwood Archer Capital have collaborated to create the Your Forté, Our Finance program. The program operated and exclusively funded through Greenwood Archer Bank aims to invest, grow, and rebuild the underserved communities in the south and west sides of Chicago. The program's mission extends beyond providing micro-financing benefits to primarily African American-owned small businesses, the program empowers entrepreneurs to support economic development within their community, in turn leading the way for a stronger infrastructure.

Investing in marginalized and underinvested communities provides long term effects that span beyond the support of our program. Compounded over time, these investments can lead to access to better schools, healthier food, and higher standards of living.

**Through our partnership, we've been able to support the following businesses:**





- \$200,000 to One Stop Jamaica Jerk Restaurant, a Caribbean fast-food restaurant located in Chatham. The restaurant is using the funds to purchase and move into a new location as relief from recent fire. The business purchased a mixed-use building in the South Shore neighborhood.
- \$192,000 to Chicago Bodyshop, LLC a fitness center located in South Shore. The funds were used to support gap funding to activate a NOF grant, to refinance an existing mortgage, and purchase equipment and inventory.
- \$100,000 to Every Girlz Obsession LLC, a custom dress shop located in Tri-Taylor. The funds were used to purchase the location the business is currently occupying.
- \$100,000 to Bass Furniture & Rug Co Inc., a local furniture store that offers kitchen, bedroom, dining room, and living room furniture based in Roseland. The funds from the loan were used to activate a NOF Grant received from the City of Chicago. The combination of these funds will allow for the renovation of both the interior and exterior of the building.
- \$200,000 to Java Green Health Wellness LLC, a start-up wholistic health store located in Bloomington, IL. The funds were used to purchase the location the business is currently occupying.

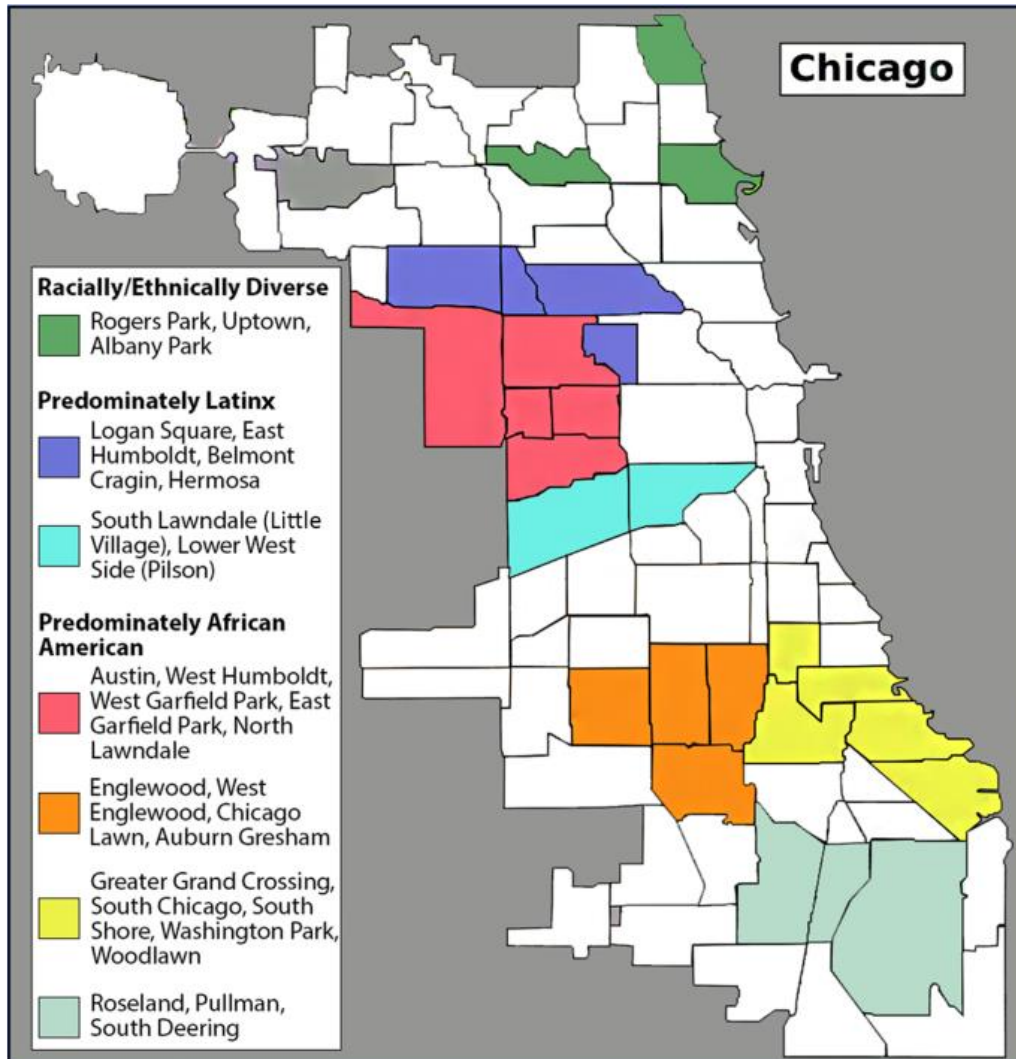


Dionis Harvey

[The Chicago Body Shop](#)

“The money has allowed the business to be competitive with other established gyms, in terms of equipment, personalization, and overall deliverables for the client. For every hour you exercise you get back a day of life. There is institutional legacy here and for the entire 79<sup>th</sup> street corridor.

# WHO WE SERVE



**THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS  
WHO BELIEVE IN TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE  
IN CHICAGO**

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