

# THE YEAR OF INNOVATION



## ANNUAL REPORT

COMMON THREADS FISCAL YEAR 2022

October 1, 2021 - September 30, 2022



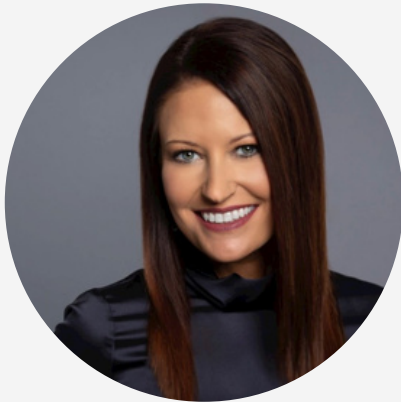
# LETTER FROM THE CEO & BOARD CHAIR

Dear Friends,



Linda Novick O'Keefe  
CEO & Co-Founder

As we dive into 2023, we reflect on the year that was, the tremendous work our team has accomplished, and the lessons we have learned. Excellence was the theme this past year and it has allowed for progress and moved the needle in a positive direction, but there is still work to be done. We've gained a deeper understanding of the role that food access plays in contributing to health disparities among low-income families and communities of color that too often suffer disproportionately from chronic illnesses. We examined the effects of nutrition insecurity on the mental health of both children and adults. We are committed to making community-informed decisions that are driven by lived experiences of those we serve.



Angie Cooper  
National Board Chair

Now, with guidance and leadership from our Board of Directors, celebrate the past the Year of Innovation. Common Threads is vested in deepening collective impact, sharpening our focus on systems that support local food economies, and embedding the voice of those we serve into our strategy and work within the community. In FY'22, we focused on taking an innovative approach to create and strengthen long-term partnerships. Our partners are instrumental in ensuring that more people in more communities experience the benefits of hands-on nutrition education.

At Common Threads, we are bold, thoughtful builders and co-designers. We are earnest, we are entrepreneurial, and we believe our jobs are as big as we make them. Our culture reflects our collective effort and ability to listen and challenge each other. Our work would not be possible without you and we thank you for being part of what makes this organization and its work so undeniably simple and beautiful. We will continue to use our platform and relationships to prove that food is medicine and food is love. Thank you for being at our table.

In Good Health,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Linda Novick O'Keefe". The script is fluid and cursive.

Linda Novick O'Keefe  
Co-Founder & CEO

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Angie Cooper". The script is fluid and cursive.

Angie Cooper  
National Board Chair

# INTRODUCING THE KITCHEN CLINIC PILOT PROGRAM

After nearly two decades of providing cooking and nutrition education to K-8th grade students, families, and educators, Common Threads is re-entering a stage of innovation to further our impact within the communities we serve. 2022 marked the launch of a new high school pilot program called the Kitchen Clinic - our first curriculum designed specifically for, and with input from, 9-12th grade students. The program builds healthy life skills through hands-on culinary education, exposes students to nutrition-related careers in healthcare, and fosters health communication skills as students have the opportunity co-teach nutrition education at local elementary schools. While many culinary programs for high schoolers focus on career readiness for the hospitality industry, our program helps students connect the dots between nutrition, food, and future career pathways in health.

Given our longstanding partnerships with school districts in Los Angeles and New York City, Susan Miller Dorsey Senior High School (LA) and Frederick Douglass Academy (NYC) were selected to participate in our first iteration of the program. Efforts in 2022 largely focused on program planning and laying the groundwork for critical evaluation to ensure the program is participant-informed.

As a special kick-off, Common Threads hosted "Community Top Chef LA", a friendly cooking competition that showcased our students' skills and talents. Four students were paired with a Top Chef alum, preparing a Common Threads recipe that was judged by a team of local community leaders. Read more about the event and pilot program [HERE](#).



# BY THE NUMBERS



**50K**

## **PARTICIPANTS**

reached by Common Threads  
(children and adults)

**275K**

## **SNACK & MEALS**

prepared and enjoyed by  
participants during programs

**315K**

## **PROGRAM HOURS**

completed throughout  
the year

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"Common Threads! The food we gave away yesterday, brought tears to a parent's eyes. A "Shout Out" to your organization for not only having a wonderful nutrition education program but for partnering with Senator Leroy Comrie and making it possible to have these types of programs for our children, in our communities in Queens."

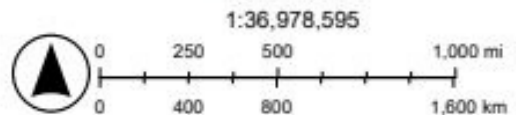
- Ms. Belton, PS 132Q Parent Coordinator

”

# WHERE WE WORK



5/23/2023



CONANP, Esri, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, Esri, USGS

# RAISING THE STANDARD OF PATIENT CARE

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In 2022, CT continued to focus on nutrition in healthcare. We partnered with five healthcare organizations to implement provider and patient facing programs, highlighting the connection between nutrition and chronic diseases. Chicago continues to be a major hub for healthcare partnership programming, and highlights are presented below.

- Advocate Medical Group: Common Threads provided our culinary medicine elective for family medicine residents. Over the course of our three year partnership, we will have provided this critical education opportunity to all family medicine residents. In addition to culinary medicine training for providers, patients at Advocate also had the opportunity to participate in virtual cooking classes.
- Northwestern University Osher Center for Integrative Health: Our flagship culinary medicine program, Cooking Up Health, continues to be a part of the education experience for Feinberg School of Medicine students. Students have the opportunity to take an elective culinary medicine course, co-taught by Common Threads, before leading nutrition education in the community.
- Blue Door Neighborhood Centers (BDNC): BDNC, community outposts for Blue Cross Blue Shield, hosted Small Bites sessions to provide nutrition education for residents in South Lawndale, Pullman, and Morgan Park neighborhoods. These efforts were complemented by healthy eating workshops open to all community members.

Additionally, we hosted over 10 dietetic interns from 4 different universities. These interns collectively served over 500 hours, helping to keep our content up to date and rooted in culturally relevant and strength based language.

# GROWING IMPACT

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During 2020 and 2021, Common Threads reimaged our programs in a digital space. In 2022, we realized the great potential of making our programming widely available online. We are now able to reach students, educators, and caregivers living outside of our ten cities in which we lead in-person programs. With this new audience in mind, in 2022 we focused on refining our standards for online resources and curriculum.

## Growing Our Virtual Programming

Common Threads continues to provide teachers, students, and families throughout the country access to online training and on-demand programming. Our goal is to be able to offer schools, educators and communities outside of the markets we directly work in and serve with quality virtual cooking and nutrition education. In 2022, Common Threads reached 15K+ participants through our on-demand portal. One of our primary focuses through this process was rebranding and consolidating our original online platform, CommonBytes, into the new TEACH portal. This change contributed to a registration conversion rate increase from 13% in FY21 (729 total sign ups) to 60% (4,900 total sign ups) in FY22.



*"I enjoyed using the program to supplement our district's provided nutrition content. I found my students enjoyed learning about recipes and gave us an opportunity to bring in conversations about culture and family dynamics. The district provided content that was very dry and did not cover the entire lesson time."*

## Making Our Food Philosophy More Inclusive

Historically, Common Threads Food Philosophy detailed how we developed recipes and other nutrition education resources. In 2022, Common Threads prioritized updating our Food Philosophy and drafted an inaugural set of Practice Standards (available [HERE](#)). Common Threads also established a Recipe Council that reviewed 15 recipes inspired by Mediterranean, Brazilian, Peruvian, Korean, and Puerto Rican cuisines. The creation of the Recipe Council allows Common Threads to hold ourselves accountable to offering culturally diverse, inclusive, and relevant recipes.

Two major successes will support efforts to operationalize the Food Philosophy:

- Common Threads received a grant for a three Health and Heritage Showcase's in Chicago. Local chefs will develop menus based on community flavors and traditions. Their menus will adhere to Common Threads' Food Philosophy and Practice Standards.
- Common Threads will present their Food Philosophy and Practice Standards to the Association of SNAP Nutrition Administrators (ASNNA)

# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION NOURISH US

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Common Threads has continued making progress toward achieving key organizational objectives set by its DEI Committee. In 2022, one key accomplishment was publishing an external webpage dedicated to our DEI Framework. This act makes our intentions for the organization transparent to the public. Additionally, we continued integrating cultural celebration months as a standard practice for our virtual staff engagement events.

A couple of highlights were our delicious cultural cooking demos with Chef Bill Kim to honor Asian-American Pacific Islander Month, and Chef Jenni Lessard for Indigenous Heritage Month (Read about bannock, a traditional Indigenous bread). Furthermore, we began the journey of preparing our first DEI Progress Report, which we anticipate releasing during the Spring of 2023. In this report, we will outline, describe, and report on specific actions we have taken to incorporate positive changes into policies impacting our community outreach, programming, and staffing, with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion practices. We look forward to sharing this progress report with our key partners, board members, and supporters.

An organizational progress report about our DEI objectives and initiatives is in progress, with a planned release date in mid-late 2023.

# FUNDING PARTNERSHIPS

Common Threads is proud to have a strong network of funders investing in program expansion, new innovations, and critical evaluation efforts. Below we have summarized special initiatives made possible by select funding partners.



## Building New National Partnerships

Common Threads serves students and families nationwide. Beyond the 10 cities in which we have local team members, we also reach thousands of participants nationwide through in-person and virtual programs. In 2022, we launched a new national partnership with iHeartIMPACT and Elevance Health, which is growing the reach of our hands-on cooking and nutrition education services. This collaboration is supporting programs in Los Angeles and New York City, as well as new school partnerships in Atlanta and Indianapolis. The exciting effort expands interactive, school-based health and wellness offerings and gets more youth, caregivers, and educators cooking for life!



## Ensuring Culturally Relevant Programming

Ensuring nutrition education is culturally and lifestyle relevant is essential, as our students and families bring their own food experiences, traditions, and preferences to each lesson. In 2022, Common Threads received generous funding from the Paso del Norte Health Foundation to implement our core nutrition education programs for 1,000+ El Pasoans. Additionally, funding supported community research with El Paso parents and caregivers. We seek to learn from them about the intersection between their cooking habits, health, and cultural heritage to inform future programs, curricula, and recipes.

# FUNDING PARTNERSHIPS

## CONTINUED

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### Amplifying Impact Through Local Sourcing

A healthy food system requires access to nutritious food, the know-how and comfort to prepare this food, and a thriving network of local farms and food businesses to provide it. In 2022, Common Threads advanced our commitment to local sourcing for nutrition education, expanding partnerships with Chicago-based urban farms and adopting the Good Food Purchasing Pledge on a national level. This work is powered by a new grant from the Builders Initiative and the continued support of the USDA Farm to School program.



### Strengthening Crowdfunding through Partnerships

Common Threads continued our cause marketing partnership with First We Feast as their official charity partner, rooted in our mutual interest in making food fun and approachable for all audiences. In December 2021, First We Feast hosted their first online [Holiday Extravaganza](#) to raise money for our programs, resulting in over \$130,000 in funds raised. Each year, we strive to find more and more meaningful ways to make an impact with First We Feast.

### Increasing Support from Local Leaders

Common Threads was grateful for the support of several elected officials across the communities we serve, including:

- New York Senator Leroy Comrie, of State Senate District 14, provided generous support that allowed Common Threads to partner with three schools in Queens to implement Small Bites lessons celebrating Black History Month.
- Congressman Bobby Rush of Illinois' 1st Congressional District and Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney of New York's 12th Congressional District awarded Common Threads Congressional Community Project Funding.

# FINANCES FISCAL YEAR 2022

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Unaudited, October 1, 2021 - September 30, 2022

Unaudited Common Threads - [Financial Statements Sept. 2022](#)

# SUPPORTERS

October 1, 2021 - September 30, 2022

## VISIONARY (\$500K+)

New York Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance

Texas Health & Human Services Commission

## LEADER (\$250K+)

Elevance Health

iHeartIMPACT

## INVESTOR (\$100K+)

Anahata Foundation

Builders Initiative

Florida Department of Health Miami-Dade

Giant Eagle

ISA Foundation

Paso Del Norte Health Foundation

## PIONEER (\$50K+)

Annenberg Foundation

Heart Foundations

Illinois' 1st Congressional District

Miami-Dade County

PennState College of Health & Human Development

The New York City Council

New York's 12th Congressional District

The New York State Assembly

United Way Miami

USDA Farm to School

## SUSTAINER (\$25K+)

The Ahmanson Foundation

Ann B. Zekaukas Family Foundation

The Batchelor Foundation

Bayer Fund

The Children's Trust

FMI Foundation

Griffith Foods

Northwestern Medicine

Peacock Foundation, Inc.

The New York State Senate

## ALLY (\$10K+)

Austin Public Health

AXA XL

Boeing Chicago ECF Chapter

Change Happens Foundation

Chicago White Sox Charities

Conagra Brands Foundation

The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust

Hunt Family Foundation

Ithaca Hummus

The Julia-Child Foundation for Gastronomy and Culinary Arts

Kaiser Permanente, Southern California Region

Lakeshore Beverage

Miami-Dade County District 8

Miami-Dade County District 13

Nielsen-Massey Foundation

Shipt

Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation

SNAC International

Miami-Dade County District 8

# SUPPORTERS

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**October 1, 2021 - September 30, 2022**

## INDIVIDUAL DONORS

### **\$10,000 +**

Neil Cotty  
Susan Maxwell

### **\$5,000+**

Sarita Dandamudi Rao  
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David Culbertson  
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Rhonda Krasselt  
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Henry Artalejo  
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Rizwan Faruqui  
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Jorge Azze  
Jennifer Einersen  
Jedidiah Miracle  
Tom Batchelder

# NATIONAL & REGIONAL BOARDS

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**October 1, 2021 - September 30, 2022**

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Jesus Salgueiro | Vice Chair  
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Elizabeth Halle  
David Lanster  
Jennifer Einersen  
Jon Nguyen  
Javier Ramirez  
Chris Sanz  
Lucette Talamas

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**October 1, 2021 - September 30, 2022**

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Kate Rubin (Minneapolis)  
Gail Simmons (New York)  
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Angela Odoms-Young Ph. D. (Chicago)  
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Fatima Cody Stanford, MD, MPH, MPA (Boston)