

LOVE COLUMBIA NEWSLETTER

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Read about the importance of friendships across the community and how Love Columbia is making a difference.

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A note from our Executive Director and Co-Founder

Jane Williams



Fifteen years ago this month, Love Columbia (then known as Love INC) opened its doors in our 800 sq ft office at Kelly Plaza. We had organized to provide a coordinated response to community need through a clearinghouse to receive requests and collaborative engagement of churches and volunteers to respond to the identified needs.

Our community needs survey had provided overwhelmingly uniform results: 1) restart the furniture bank that served Hurricane Katrina evacuees and, 2) provide rent and utility assistance.

Word spread quickly we were providing help to struggling neighbors and we immediately had a steady stream of callers and visitors to our small office. We were ready to provide essential furniture and housewares, thanks to a group of committed volunteers and donated warehouse space and truck. We knew we could never raise enough money to meet all the requests for rent and utility assistance, but that was never our goal. We wanted to help people create long term solutions and improve their lives.

We decided to ask each person requesting financial assistance: If we pay your bill this month, how will you pay it next month? Most people did not have a plan and became open to receiving financial or career coaching.

We learned that some of our neighbors had experienced an unexpected turn of events and needed one time help. Others needed long term coaching. **Everyone needed someone to listen to their story and give them hope.**

Our first caller was a grandmother who had unexpectedly received custody of her grandchildren when her daughter was sent to prison. She had spent her money on clothes for the kids and couldn't pay her utility bill. As we talked, she told me about her own childhood abuse and said she had never told anyone before. I repeated, "You have never told anyone before" and, she replied, "No one has ever listened to me this long before."

That first phone call established that our most important role was to listen, to truly hear (and be changed by) the heart cries, hopes and dreams of our neighbors. Thousands of calls later, we are still listening and stepping into difficult situations. The volume of requests has allowed us to see clear patterns of unmet need and create programs and services to best respond. As we mark our 15th anniversary, we want to thank everyone who has listened with us and responded with their resources, time and love. Your response has been powerful. It has caused ever increasing momentum to build toward making Columbia a city where everyone flourishes.

Jane Williams

The Power of Friends:

HOW SOCIAL SUPPORT CAN CHANGE LIVES

When we opened our doors in 2008, we posted this message on the wall: Learn New Things, Try New Things, Meet New People. Our experience was that nearly everyone who exited poverty attributed their success to a person who provided mentoring, new information or key connections.

We quickly saw that many of the people who called us for assistance reported having few supportive relationships and one in four said they had none at all. Our response was to create weekly classes and individual coaching programs where people could learn and form relationships. As people met and we matched coaching pairs, we saw lives change across Columbia. People from zip codes and backgrounds that did not often mingle became friends. New practices and skills were learned and life struggles were shared.



> There are some people in your life that are unforgettable, not because of what they have done but because of who they are. She has made a lasting impression on my heart, soul and my mind. Without her, there would have been many seasons in my life I wouldn't have made it through.
>
> *Myria Key about her friendship with Rockie Alden*

Economic Connectedness

In 2023, the term for what we are promoting is: economic connectedness – The degree of interaction between low- and high- income people. Recent research using 21 billion friendships from Facebook indicate economic connectedness is the single strongest predictor of upward mobility identified to date. What we are doing is powerful! We invite you to join us in creating bridges across our community.

VITA TAX SEASON SUCCESS



Love Columbia is thrilled to announce the successful completion of the 2023 VITA tax season! With the hard work of 14 dedicated volunteers, we were able to complete 110 tax returns.

Our VITA volunteers provided personalized support to help people overcome the fears and challenges often associated with filing taxes. Some had not filed in several years. Others had never filed before and needed help understanding the process. One new business owner had no system for recording receipts and expenses and was overjoyed to get help with this. Several clients were referred to financial coaching to plan how to best use their tax refund to retire debt, obtain reliable transportation or begin a plan for homeownership.

We want to express our gratitude for all the volunteers who contributed a total of 541 hours to make this season a success. We are grateful to our volunteers for their dedication to serving our community, and we look forward to continuing to offer this valuable service in the years to come.

14 DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS

99 CLIENTS HELPED

169 ONE-TO-ONE APPOINTMENTS

110 COMPLETED TAX RETURNS

Love Tech
PROGRAM LAUNCH



Love Tech is a program that refurbishes and donates gently used computer equipment to those in need. We are excited to share that we've provided laptops to four local organizations - St. Thomas More Newman Center, Stonebridge House, Jesus House, and Destiny of Hope - to support their work in the community.

"Making computers accessible is a life-long dream of mine."

JACK SLAUGHTER,
LOVE TECH COORDINATOR

At the Intersection

OF NEEDS AND RESOURCES

EquipmentShare

We're so grateful for the support from Equipment Share! As part of their Days of Caring week, they generously donated cleaning kits, birthday kits and wellness kits to Love Columbia.

These kits will make a big difference for our clients, helping them keep their homes clean and celebrate special occasions with their loved ones. Thank you, Equipment Share, for your commitment to giving back to our community and helping us love people forward!





MIZZOU ATHLETICS

Thank you to Mizzou Athletics, for your generous donation of diapers from the Mizzou Women's Basketball Diaper Drive! These diapers will be distributed to families in Columbia who need them most.

It's donations like these that help us continue to love people forward and make a real difference in our community. Thank you, Mizzou Athletics, for your generosity and commitment to making a positive impact!

THE LOVE SEAT

When you donate to or shop at The Love Seat, you are helping your neighbors in need!

IN 2022:

181 HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVED FURNITURE

111 HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVED HOUSEWARES

210 HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVED STORE SHOPPING VOUCHERS

25 HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVED MOVING ASSISTANCE



The Love Seat resale store provides a place for shoppers to find quality, low-cost furniture, housewares and clothing and for Love Columbia program participants to obtain essential items.

The Love Seat Furniture Bank provides free furniture and housewares to families in crisis or transition.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE LOVE SEAT