



THE
**URBAN
VOICES**
PROJECT

IMPACT REPORT 2023

To our incredible community



Looking back over the past year, we're amazed at the impressive growth we have experienced as an organization. Returning to in-person programming has been no small feat. We are thrilled to share that we are fully back in the Skid Row community, maintaining hybrid offerings for participants to join remotely as we prepare ourselves for new program partnerships.

Here are just a few major highlights from the past year:

- Kate Richards Geller was selected by our board to serve as our first full-time Executive Director
- After a one year hiatus our signature Coffee House event returned, providing training and stage experience for 15 of our singers
- The C'mon, Sing! Festival partnered with some amazing new organizations, including LA Master Chorale, Selah Gospel Choir, DTLA Proud, Angel City Football Club, and the Japanese American National Museum
- Our Monday Music Lab returned to in-person at Studio 526 at The People Concern
- Neighborhood Sing is continuing at Joshua House in Skid Row, with expansions to the LA Public Library and others in 2024
- Family Sing is going strong at the L.A. Care Community Resource Center in Lynwood and on Zoom

We are back to the momentum we were experiencing before the pandemic - this time with a fortified organizational foundation, staff, board of directors. All this incredible work would not be possible without the support of funders and partners that believe in our mission and vision. Thank you for your championship of Urban Voices Project.

Sincerely,

Kate Richards Geller, Executive Director
Leeav Sofer, Artistic Director

Our Mission

Rooted in Skid Row through music, community, and openhearted inclusion of the most marginalized members of society, Urban Voices Project amplifies artistic expression to improve well being, strengthen social networks, and inspire individuals to be their own best advocates.

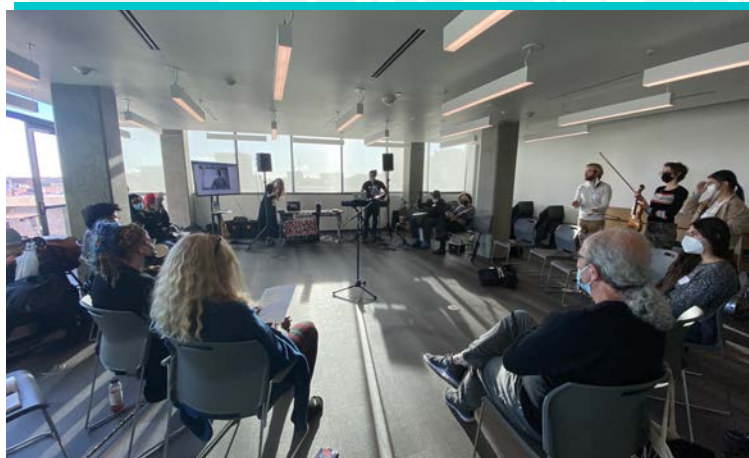




PROGRAMS

NEIGHBORHOOD SING

Since 2022, Urban Voices Project has held Neighborhood Sing every Wednesday at the Joshua House Clinic on 7th and Wall. The significant connection between health and music is demonstrated through our ongoing partnership. Neighborhood Sing transforms Joshua House's Wellness Center into what we now endearingly call the "Joshua House of Blues," with participants joining in with creative songwriting and expressive singing. Community members now find the clinic more vibrant and welcoming, participants have the opportunity for low barrier access to healthcare, and new relationships are built with the shared value of humanity and community.



250+

unique participants annually.

MUSIC EDUCATION LABS

In September 2023, Music Education Labs returned to in-person in partnership with Studio 526 at the Village of The People Concern. Equipped with foldable keyboards and beginner-friendly music theory booklets, participants dig deeper into music theory, vocal performance, and piano technique. As a sister member of Skid Row Arts Alliance, Studio 526 is the community arts and cultural platform of The People Concern's main interim housing facility in Skid Row.



50

unique participants annually.

MUSIC WELLNESS LABS

During our return to in-person programming, Music Wellness Lab participants expressed that virtual participation via Zoom was the best fit for their needs. The program offers practical ways to use music to create change in the mind and body. Using primarily the voice and body as instruments, participants play with the elements of music to settle the nervous system and to address mood, concentration, stress, pain, fear, isolation, and loneliness.



50

unique participants annually.

FAMILY SING

The Family Sing program has been held weekly at L.A. Care's Community Resource Center in Lynwood and on Zoom. Adults and families with young children engage in play-based activities to connect and communicate, explore the world around them, and create a nurturing safe haven in the joy of music. "Mi Cuerpo, mi cuerpo, hace musica! My body, my body makes music!"



Community Resource Center

80

unique participants annually.

BUSKFEST

Buskfest has always been our most street-focused program; facilitators and volunteers set up a pop-up open mic on the corner of 5th & San Pedro in Skid Row, across from our partners JWCH Institute and Skid Row People's Market. These vibrant sessions invite community members and passersby to express themselves musically and artistically, and connect to UVP programs and other health and social services. This year, we worked with Skid Row Arts Alliance and other partners to offer more arts and outreach activities for participants.



500+

unique participants annually.

UVP PERFORMANCE CHOIR

This year has been an incredibly exciting and busy year for the Urban Voices Project's Performance Choir. Performances included Ceremony, the 50th Annual Pasadena Mayor's Interfaith Prayer Breakfast, MUSE/IQUE's Gospel and the King, LTSC's Umeya Project Groundbreaking, LA Metro Station Dedications, ceremonies at LACMA, UCLA, USC, and many more!



12,000+

audience members annually.

CHOIR RETREAT

In September 2023, the UVP Performance Choir had its first full Choir retreat since 2019 at the First Baptist Church of Pasadena. Lorinda and Leeav led workshops, sectionals, conversations and rehearsals for the choir. Choir members connected and conversed over meals, met and sang with members of FBC's own choir, and prepared for a busy fall full of exciting performances and engagements.





EVENTS

COFFEEHOUSE

Held at Inner City Arts' Rosenthal Theatre in April 2023, Coffeehouse featured choir members and program participants performing a varied repertoire that highlighted their unique voices. Eight weeks of one-on-one coaching with industry musicians included identifying repertoire and learning performance techniques. Participants also prepared artist materials including professional headshots and biographies.



100

participants and audience members

THE C'MON, SING! FESTIVAL

Our second annual C'mon, Sing! Festival was held as a summer series from June to August. Building excitement and sharing a new volume of our C'mon, Sing! songbooks, June and July gave community members a chance to get involved ahead of the August 27 festival. Partners included the Angel City Football Club, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Pasadena Chorale, Selah Gospel Choir, Japanese American National Museum, Terasaki Budokan, Historic Downtown Farmer's Market, Arts District Brewery, and more! Teams of musicians, Skid Row community members, and volunteers engaged participants and passersby through soulful music, bringing neighborhoods together in song.

Christopher Mack: "When you sing, you create community. Superficial differences of economic class slip away and we are left to connect with our shared humanity."



1200+

engagements across downtown LA

A HOLIDAY CALLED HOME

Conceptualized, strategized, and implemented by Urban Voices Project participants, A Holiday Called Home Celebration is a community-driven event intended to bring housed and unhoused neighbors together through arts programming. Held on Inner-City Arts' campus in December 2023, the celebration invited participants to engage in various creative and musical arts activities, including visual arts tables, music workshops, family theater performances, an open mic, dj sets, drum circles, sound baths, and more. Meals were provided by community food partners.



200

Engagements in 2023



STAKEHOLDER TESTIMONIALS



“ The focus of the partnership between UVP and LACHC has been serving the community of Skid Row. We share a common goal of providing resources and creating an inclusive environment as a holistic method to a road of wellbeing through music. UVP’s Neighborhood Sing, held in the Wellness Center at our Joshua House Health Clinic on Wednesdays, is a music workshop, social group and safe space for members of the Skid Row community, LACHC patients, and LACHC staff.

LACHC has been able to provide resources and connect patients through UVP’s Buskfest on the streets of Skid Row, and UVP has joined our in-house events including our Farmers Market, allowing music to bridge a gap of communication for patients.

This collaboration has positively impacted the community we serve, using music as an alternative for patients to become involved, find a sense of community and hope, towards embracing inner healing.

”

Los Angeles Christian Health Centers (LACHC)
Outreach & Care Coordination, Program Supervisor,
Wendy Fuentes



“

I know that music has tremendous healing power. As a board member, I feel uplifted and honored to be part of the work that UVP does daily; we embrace people who have often been marginalized and misunderstood so they can be connected with others through the universal bond of shared song.

”

*UVP Board Member & Fund Development Committee Chair,
Brenda Wiewel, DSW, MSW, LCSW, LMFT*



“

Unfortunately, I'm aware of numerous organizations and/or agencies that have a temporary interest in the Skid Row community and then leave. I didn't know if Urban Voices would be the same. But over the years, I've seen my friends and community members thrive and shine in Urban Voices Project. The sense of purpose and belonging to something greater than themselves is just beautiful.

”

*Choir and Programs Instructor,
Lorinda Hawkins Smith, MBA*



“

For me it's about what our music does for our communities. It helps people understand the various people and situations that have been homeless, are homeless, and are in a community advocating.

”

Choir Member and Board Member,
Marilyn Irizarry



WHAT'S NEXT



STAY CONNECTED

<https://linktr.ee/urbanvoicesprojectla>



2024 will be UVP's tenth anniversary – stay tuned for lots of exciting opportunities to celebrate with us all year long!

Join us/mark your calendars for our signature events next year:

C'mon Sing: April 28, 2024

Coffee House: August 24, 2024

A Holiday Called Home: December 14, 2024

We are excited to share that UVP's programs will continue to expand in the upcoming year, with Neighborhood Sing programs starting at LAPL's Central Library and Pico Union Branch, St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Tustin, and returning to our program home of JWCH Institute.