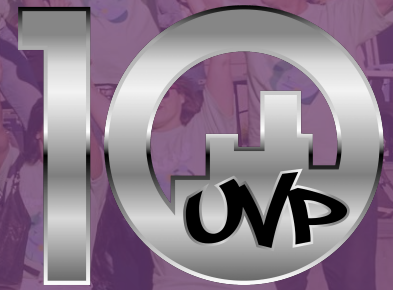


Urban Voices Project

2024 Impact Report



To Our Incredible Community

For the past decade, Urban Voices Project has been a constant source of connection, expression, and community for Skid Row and beyond, offering 52 weeks of music programming each year. From the streets of LA to stages in front of thousands, participants have made their voices heard.

Through the healing power of music, lives are transformed—by amplifying what already exists in each individual: resilience, creativity, and humanity, over simply focusing on what is broken. Singing together regulates the nervous system, shifting individuals from a constant state of fight-or-flight into one of openness, connection and resilience. Our work fosters joy, hope, and empowerment, helping individuals who have experienced homelessness find their voice and become advocates for themselves and their communities.

Our work is further underscored by a growing enthusiasm across sectors for Arts & Health initiatives. We see this reflected in healthcare, social services, government agencies, and educational institutions such as the NEA EpiArts Lab at the University of Florida. UVP has spent the last decade on the ground, witnessing firsthand the profound impact that innovative Arts & Health efforts can have on addressing homelessness.

For those of you who have joined our workshops or attended a choir performance, you know what recent research confirms: “participating in community art groups is associated with enhanced positive affect, life satisfaction, purpose in life, and perceived mastery.”

To Our Incredible Community

“ UVP’s emphasis on collective music-making in a safe, supportive space allows people like me to experience deep connections that foster both healing and growth, empowering us to not just recover, but truly thrive. I want to express my deepest gratitude to Urban Voices Project and its supporters for investing in the much-needed healing and growth for me and for our community. Your support is making a transformative difference in our lives, helping us heal, connect, and thrive. ”

Leanin’Lena

Choir Member



UVP's Significant Strides

- We relaunched partnerships with the Los Angeles Public Library, introducing two new ongoing programs at the Central Library branch, and hosting a workshop at the Pico Union library earlier this year.
- The Performance Ensemble performed more than ever, including performances at a LA County Board of Supervisors Meeting, the HLTH 2024 Conference in Las Vegas, Grand Performances, Metro Ribbon cuttings, L.A. Care Health Plan, and many more.
- We have increased our organizational capacity through strategic investments in staffing infrastructure, transitioning from 3 full-time staff and 6 part-time staff to 5 full-time staff, 5 part-time staff, and 5 part-time teaching artists.
- We restructured our Programs department, enabling us to meet higher program demand and giving leadership the time to focus on strategic growth, vision-building, and expanding the reach of our programming.

UVP's Significant Strides

- As founding members of the Skid Row Arts Alliance (SRAA), we built a dedicated coalition with Skid Row Arts nonprofits to support local independent artists with funding for projects, professional development workshops and performances, and opportunities to make and store their art, and show their work at public events and the Skid Row Museum. This alliance models collaboration and cooperation in an environment that historically values siloes.
- OC Pilot Program: Sunday Supper in held Tustin, CA was piloted and averaged a bi-weekly attendance of 80.
- UVP was well-represented in LA County's effort to gather input from community stakeholders for the Skid Row Action Plan. Three choir members were part of the resident advisory committee and members at all levels of the organization participated in a facilitated process that led to the development of in-depth recommendations for how to improve the Skid Row neighborhood.

To Our Incredible Community

We can't do everything to solve homelessness. We can do this simple act of connecting with the humanity in each other, whatever our circumstances, and singing until we feel the change in our minds and bodies. We hope you'll join us and Leanin'Lena as we continue showing up for our neighbors by singing together. We are creating the Hope that we wish to see in the world today.

Kate Richards Geller

Executive Director

Leeav Sofer

Artistic Director

Programs

- Programs
- Events
- 10 Years



10
THE
URBAN VOICES PROJECT

Neighborhood Sing

Neighborhood Sing, our flagship program, is a music workshop consisting of singing and mindfulness activities led by music professionals. In 2024, we brought weekly programs to Los Angeles Christian Health Centers' Joshua House Clinic and Los Angeles Public Library's Central Library.



Participants singing along at Neighborhood Sing Joshua House

This year, we also partnered with MUSE/IQUE at our Neighborhood Sing at Joshua House through their offstage Encounters program.



Leeav Sofer leading Neighborhood Sing at Joshua House

Neighborhood Sing

“
What you guys bring to the library, it feels like more than just music. For me, it's more than just singing. It's a way to bring communities together. From the unhoused to working people to library staff, they hear us, and come and join us. It's connecting all those different communities together. I can tell people about it, but to get the understanding of it, you have to experience it. We sing, but we also give people a safe place. Even if it's just for an hour, we give people the space to just be themselves. Even for people that want to just listen or rest, it's a safe place. You're okay here. People get what they need. We have something for everybody.”

Alesha Jones

LAPL Library Assistant II

Neighborhood Sing

AVERAGE WEEKLY ATTENDANCE

20

26

2,200

Central Library

*Joshua House
(Hybrid)*

Total Annual Participants

Neighborhood Sing

Top Reasons to Join

- Experiencing recreation & fun
- Finding a community of like-minded people
- Managing stress & emotions
- Improving health & wellbeing
- Having safe space to self-express



Leeav Sofer and Kate Richards Geller leading Neighborhood Sing at Central Library



Participants sharing out at Central Library

Family Sing

Family Sing is an interactive music class that engages adults and children aged 0-5 in play-based activities to communicate, explore the world around them, and create a safe haven in the joy of music. Family Sing is held weekly at L.A. Care's Community Resource Center in Lynwood, and is taught bilingually in English and Spanish. This year, we have also welcomed Miguel Conniff on the team as a Faculty facilitator.

“ *This UVP program is fantastic and very productive, educational, and artistic. Uniting families by singing, making active bonds with parents and children, in addition to helping personal behavior. Fantastic. I am very happy to belong to this great organization. The Family Sing program is incredible.* ”

Miguel Conniff

UVP Faculty Facilitator

Average Weekly Attendance

12

Buskfest

Held monthly on the corner of 5th & San Pedro, Buskfest is a pop-up, open mic-style jam session on the sidewalks of Skid Row. These vibrant sessions serve to amplify musical expression and connect the wider Skid Row community to UVP's programming and health and social services in the area.

750

Individuals Engaged

180

Open Mic Sign Ups



Greg Vaughn
Buskfest Open Mic



Cassius Paxton
Buskfest Open Mic



UVP Participant
Buskfest Open Mic

Pilot Workshop

at Sunday Supper in Tustin, California

A new program is held at Sunday Supper at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Tustin, an interfaith community food program for individuals experiencing housing insecurity. The Buskfest-style workshop adds enriching music experiences for participants and volunteers.

75

AVERAGE WEEKLY ATTENDANCE

Music Education Lab

Music Education Labs is an introductory class focused on music theory and piano technique including a masterclass style vocal technique workshop. This weekly program is offered at The People Concern's Studio 526.



*Stephanie Meyers leading instruction
at Music Education Labs at Studio 526*

AVERAGE WEEKLY
ATTENDANCE:

8

Music Education Lab

“ *The partnership between Studio 526 and Urban Voices Project (UVP) is genuinely one of the most inspiring collaborations we have. UVP brings musical instruction to our community in a way that beautifully complements and enhances our mission at Studio 526. Music and art are two sides of the same coin, and UVP fills a need that we couldn't fulfill alone. Their team brings an exceptional mix of talent, warmth, and care, and they create a nurturing space that resonates deeply with our clients. From powerful singing sessions to newly introduced bass guitar lessons, UVP provides creative, joyful, and healing experiences that our clients embrace wholeheartedly.* ”

Alice Corona

The People's Concern
Arts Program Manager (Studio 526)

Music Education Lab

“

I've been attending the Music Education Labs for a little over a year, and my experience has been positive overall. I feel that the Music Education Lab has deepened my understanding of how music works, and I find myself processing what I learned and have a deeper appreciation of the music I like. I would describe this program as a low barrier way to learn music and nurture your musical talent. It provides the much needed accessible enrichment in the community.

Jaiye Kamson

Participant

”



Leeav Sofer facilitating Music Education Labs at Studio 526

Music Education Lab



Adam Levy leading Bass Guitar Labs at Studio 526

Music Education Lab has been supplemented with Bass Lab, a beginner-friendly bass guitar jam session led by Adam Levy.

Music Education Lab

“

Bass Lab is about how bass play makes you feel good and makes people around you feel good. It's real easy to do this on the bass. In the way that music is a universal language, within music, bass playing is almost universally the same.

This is totally different from any other type of teaching I've done. Bass Labs are geared toward experiencing what it feels like and why it feels good to play bass. We learn to play some simple things on the bass to groove out to. At the end of the six weeks, we have a little recital and everybody else gets to see how good it feels to play bass. Seeing that blows my mind with happiness.

”

Adam Levy

Bass Labs Instructor

Music Wellness Lab

AVERAGE WEEKLY ATTENDANCE: 9

Using music to address the mind and body, Music Wellness Lab encourages regulation and relaxation. The program has been offered on Zoom since 2020, bringing access to people where they are at. Since June, Music Wellness is now offered at Central Library in partnership with Rhythm & Truth, a Southern California based music & art therapy organization.



Sarai Benitez, Bhawna Nathu, and Iron Donato at Central Library Music Wellness Labs

Music Wellness Lab

“ *I enjoy being able to sing and express myself really freely. We have moments where for ten minutes we're just expressing with no guidance; that feeds my soul. When I lead the group with drumming, I really like getting to see those who may have not been loud at the beginning, blossom and show that expression by the end of the session. Music Wellness Lab is the place for the community to reconnect with each other and express the innate concept of music. Music is primal and is in all of us. This is the space to explore music as well as explore yourself. There is no one specific thing we're all experiencing at the same time. Where the group is needing to go, that's where we're going.*

Sarai Benitez Music Wellness Facilitator with Rhythm & Truth

I have found it incredibly enriching. Very therapeutic. I didn't know what to expect when I came into the class. It's something that I look forward to every week. It has helped me stay calm. I was always interested in music. It fostered my interest even further. Now I find myself listening to more music at home, attending concerts. That was how I was when I was young, and it was something I rediscovered coming to Music Wellness. ”

Bhawna Nathu Participant & LAPL Patron

Performance Ensemble

2024 has been a huge year for UVP's Performance Ensemble. We performed at the HLTH Conference in Las Vegas and returned to out-of-state concerts with a program at Congregation Ner-Tamid in Henderson. The Choir had the honor of being invited by Hilda Solis to sing out at the LA County Board of Supervisors meeting in July, performed at the Grand Ave Arts: All Access Festival, and at the Harbor Connects Day of Thanks Celebration!



*LA County Board
of Supervisors Meeting*



Conspiracy of Love Conference



HLTH Conference in Las Vegas

Performance Ensemble

“*UVP Performance Ensemble has taught me more than ever that singing comes from the heart. Every time the UVP choir performs, it's with heart and soul, with purpose and meaning. UVP choir members are the ambassadors of UVP- they really reflect the work we do and with their music communicate the need to humanize homelessness, and to show how singing mentally improves us as individuals and as a group of people. What I love is the diversity of the choir. Anyone and everyone is welcome to come and sing! Some of our choir members are trained musicians, some are not. Some have experience singing, some do not. That's what makes it so special is the fact we have everyone singing, because anyone can sing.*”

Kei Riggins

Choir Coordinator

Performance Ensemble

22

3

33

Choir Members

Band Members

Performances

10s OF THOUSANDS OF AUDIENCE MEMBERS



UVP Choir performing at HLTH Conference in Las Vegas



New members, Alex and Amiyoko, receiving UVP choir t-shirts



Rehearsing at the UVP Choir Retreat at The Pico Union Project



UVP Choir with Supervisor Hilda Solis

Events

- *Programs*
- *Events*
- *10 Years*



C'mon Sing!

On Sunday, April 28, Skid Row and UVP artists and community members joined partners including Grand Performances, Skid Row Museum, Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles, and Angel City Chorale for our third annual C'mon, Sing! Festival. We transformed Downtown LA into a vibrant musical celebration, uniting housed and unhoused communities through the power of song. Stages were set with bands, singers, songleaders, and volunteers on 5th & San Pedro in Skid Row, Historic Downtown Farmers' Market, Japanese Village Plaza in Little Tokyo, La Plaza in El Pueblo de Los Angeles, and Grand Performances at California Plaza in Bunker Hill. At each site, artists and volunteers invited community members and passersby to sing along and share in open mic performances.



Musicians, volunteers, and community members join together from all pop-up stages for the Event Finale at the California Plaza with Grand Performances to cap off the day.

C'mon Sing!



5

Stages Across DTLA

1450

Individuals Engaged

155

Staff, Volunteers & Artists

C'mon Sing!



Musicians and community members join together at UVP's pop-up stage on 5th & San Pedro in Skid Row.

Community members take the mic, dance, and sing along at UVP's pop-up stage at La Plaza in El Pueblo de Los Angeles.

Coffeehouse

Coffeehouse 2024 was held at Inner City Arts' Rosenthal Theatre. Nineteen UVP choir members and program participants each performed songs that highlighted their singular voices. Eight weeks of coaching with four teaching arts preceded the event. Lessons took place at our partner sites Studio 526 and Creating Justice LA.



UVP Performance Choir performs together to close the event.

19

Participants

4

Teaching Artists

6

Band Members

152

Vocal Lessons

90

Audience Members

Coffeehouse

“ *I have experienced Coffeehouse two years in a row. Preparing for Coffeehouse is half the fun. We usually make plans and song lists to perform a couple months in advance. The Coffeehouse program has had a lasting impact on my ability to realize how music can be a bridge to bring people together. This ideal has affected my thinking personally and how I now prepare my artistic expression. I believe that the Coffeehouse program is a symbol of the power of what inner faith and mutual cooperation can do when we work together for mutual goals.* ”

Christopher J Ewing

Choir Member

Coffeehouse



Deejha Marie



Christopher J



PB K Ande



Kerlyn

A Holiday Called Home

Held on December 21 at the Terasaki Budokan Plaza in Little Tokyo, A Holiday Called Home is a community driven music and arts festival conceptualized entirely by UVP choir members and participants. With live music, art showcases, winter crafts from local organizations, free food, and activities for all ages, the event transformed Downtown Los Angeles into a winter celebration bringing together artists of the Skid Row and Little Tokyo communities.

200

*Sleeping Bags
Distributed*

250+

*Individuals
Served*

150

*Healthcare
Engagements*



*East LA Taiko Productions lead
drumming workshop*



UVP Performance Ensemble closes the event

10 Years

• Programs • Events • 10 Years



10 THE URBAN VOICES PROJECT

10 Years of UVP

2014 - *FOUNDING*

In August 2014, Leeav Sofer (Colburn) and Christopher Mack (Wesley) met and began forming what would become the UVP performance choir.

2014 - *FIRST PERFORMANCE*

In October of 2014, the performance choir gave their first concert at the annual Wesley Health Center Gala.

2018 - *NON-PROFIT STATUS*

In October 2018, Urban Voices Project was officially granted status as a 501c3 organization. In the same year, UVP's weekly programming was established.

2020 - *PANDEMIC PIVOT*

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Urban Voices Project maintained its programming and shifted to virtual and hybrid offerings that continued to serve the community.

2024 - *STAFF & PROGRAM GROWTH*

Through program expansion at the LA Public Library and in Orange County, UVP has been able to serve a larger community. The addition of 3 new staff members helped make this, and future growth, possible.

Staff Growth



Quinn Soltesz

Development Associate

In the Development Associate role, Quinn works to strengthen relationships with donors, community members, and stakeholders who have a vested interest in the mission of Urban Voices Project through outreach, events, and collaboration with the Programming team.



Kei Riggins

Choir Coordinator

As a Choir Coordinator, Kei is here to serve the UVP Choir by booking the choir, overseeing the logistics of rehearsals/gigs and being the liaison for choir, UVP staff, and all those interested in UVP Choir and their powerful performances. She comes from a musical background and has been blessed to work with people from all over the world in different capacities.



Carlos Mayorga

Program Associate

As a Program Associate, Carlos Mayorga is responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating all of UVP's Programs. He graduated from UCLA in 2022, and has a background in Dance, specifically focusing on Street Dance styles of movement.



10 YEARS

THE URBAN VOICES PROJECT

Of Showing Up & Singing Out