



**change
center**

ANNUAL REPORT

2022



A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

My name is Matthew Best, and it has been an absolute privilege to serve as the Executive Director of the Change Center this year. Since starting in March, we have seen an overwhelmingly positive response to the work we've been able to accomplish this year. I owe so much thanks to my predecessor, Dr. Nicole Chandler, for the solid foundation she established for this organization. She helped navigate a global pandemic while ensuring that the Change Center was still able to support and serve young people and the community. To receive her blessing as I accepted this new role means more to me than people may ever know.

I've tried to sum up the work of the Change Center and the impact we have in three simple words: Careers. Community. Collaboration. These words are in no way a deviation from the well-established mission, vision, and values of the Change Center, but they serve to help us more easily tell the story of who we are and what we do. We provide first-time job experience for Knoxville youth as young as fourteen years old. The mentorship and workforce development they receive is second to none, thanks largely to our Director of Operations, Richard Widener. We also see ourselves as an auxiliary community center offering space to community builders in our city that increases their capacity to do great work or host events. Finally, we love connecting other nonprofits and youth-serving organizations so that we can multiply our impact on Knoxville. There are so many people and entities doing essential work that it only makes sense for us to work together to better serve others.

The Change Center was started to be a safe space for kids and young adults, and our commitment to that has never wavered. We provide much-needed recreation at affordable prices and often for free. To do that, we need help from our community to allow us to keep costs low. Would you consider supporting us in our efforts to catalyze positive change in the city of Knoxville? We have so much more in store for 2023. We want to provide even more jobs for young people within our building and with other companies. We also want to be a conduit to employment opportunities and economic development for families at-large via some key partnerships we'll be announcing next year. We would love for you to be a major part of our sustainability as well as our growth and expansion in the coming years! Thanks so much for your commitment to Continue the Change!

Matthew Best



2022 IN REVIEW

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

30

Young people
ages 14-18
employed

108

Community
Meetings
and Events

55

Field Trips

104

Birthday
Parties

80%

first-time
employment

8,849

People
through our
doors

EARLY EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Part-time jobs can be so impactful for teenagers in the inner city. Not only do they have a chance to make some money, but they also have a productive way to spend their time while developing valuable skills. These young people find mentorship, camaraderie, and encouragement that serves them so many more places than just at work.



STAFF STORIES

CJ

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Since my first day at the Change Center, I've always felt welcomed as though I belong there. I sometimes ask to go in on my off days because I truly enjoy being at work. I enjoy all of the tasks, from giving out skates to helping little kids on the rink. I enjoy the opportunities our supervisors share with us beyond work, like encouraging us to attend college access events. I enjoy the equality there! It feels like everyone matters at the Change Center - no matter what you've done before, no matter the school you attend, or your skin color - it feels like I can be myself and no one judges me. Working at the change center was a big change in my life. Our leadership has always made sure I was doing ok outside of work, and at this young age, it's important for me to learn skills to get and keep a job. I won't expect or give anything less in the real world!

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Gaby

“

I started my job as a sophomore at Fulton, following in my friend's footsteps. In this past year, not only has this job expanded my social skills, but I have gained friends, learned responsibilities, and experienced what a proud community can accomplish. This has inspired me to become more involved and caring for my community!

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Deion

The Change Center has impacted my life in a good way by teaching me many skills that will be important for me to carry with me throughout life. I've learned communication skills, which are important on the rink when someone falls or needs help. The Change Center has also taught me to be a leader even when others are not doing the right thing. Our supervisors empower us to hold our co-workers and ourselves accountable. Lastly, the Change Center has taught me time management, which is especially important on the weekends because if I have other obligations, I have to manage my time, organize my day, and notify my supervisor of any conflict. I feel like I am prepared to work and lead in the future.

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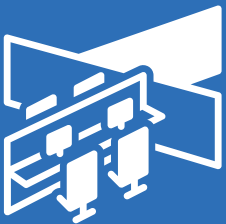
PARTNERSHIP

This year, one way we demonstrated our commitment to collaboration was by entering into a formal partnership with the University of Tennessee for the next five years. With some major help from Tyvi Small, Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Engagement, and the generosity of Chancellor Donde Plowman, UT will be working with the Change Center to increase access to higher education for inner city youth. Faculty and staff of the university have already started hosting events like FAFSA nights, ACT prep sessions, and parent information meetings that will create more opportunities for students to engage in post-secondary education. We are so excited about this partnership as UT can deepen its commitment to the city of Knoxville, and the Change Center can continue its mission to positively affect the outcomes of kids in the community.



50+

Hours of UT Programming at the Change Center since July 2022



10

Departments held at least one event at the Change Center



750

People attended UT sponsored events



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