Beyond the Bars 2023-24 Impact Report

Continue reading

2023-24 Year In Review

Ensuring Accessibilty to Musical Spaces and Communities Throughout Philadelphia

BTB started as a program once a week for youth in jail and has since branched out to build and run 45 music labs throughout the city. This past year we were able to offer more programs than ever to more students than ever and worked to meet youth wherever they were at. Learn about how programs have been going and where we have met our youth.

Continue reading

Supporting the Next Generation of Leaders with our Student Teacher Program

This past year we saw our students grow to new heights as leaders as our student teacher program expanded to serve more than 35 amazing young leaders in growing to be teachers and mentors for younger youth. Learn more about what our incredible student teachers and leaders were up to this past year and some of the exciting new developments.

Continue reading

Working Collaboratively in Planning Philadelphia's First Philly Youth Music Fest

The youth in our city are incredible leaders and agents for change but are consistently reflected in a poor light. This past year we worked with over 15 amazing community based arts orgs to celebrate the amazing work and artistry of the youth in our city at Philadelphia's First Philly Youth Music Fest. Learn more about how it came together and how it went!

Continue reading

Fighting for Equitable Investment through Advocacy with Congress in Washington D.C

Our youth's leadership was not contained to our programs - youth leaders in our program advocated across our city, our state, and even nationally for the need to support investing resources into our communities and into the positive Adolescent Development CYD spaces. Learn more about our students' conversations with Congress.

Continue reading

Opening the Khalia Robinson Studio in honor of her impact on our community

This past year was full of incredible triumphs; sadly, also with several tragedies of losing loved ones in our community. With the tragic passing of one of our founding board members and leaders, Khalia Robinson, we were grateful to work with her amazing family and open up the Khalia Robinson Studio to honor the incredible work that she has done in our community and the lasting impact that will continue to have.

Continue reading

Running an Ecosystem of Support for Youth Impacted by Violence and Divestment

Systemic problems require systemic solutions. We are deeply grateful to be partnered with over 50 amazing community based partners who work to help build our Ecosystem of Support model. Learn more about how we use music as a medium to meet youth where they are at and bring them into a larger community of support.

Continue reading

Thank you for helping to make 2023-24 an incredible year.

In our 9th year as an organization we continue to be amazed by the power of our youth. Whether it was advocating to Congress in DC, planning our city's first ever "Philly Youth Music Fest" with over 15 other orgs, recording with the Eagles, performing sold out shows or teaching younger students throughout the city our youth showed their incredible leadership all year. Read below to see the ways in which BTB has grown this past year from the hard work of our partners and our community based teachers

Continue to the next page

Ensuring Accessible Musical Spaces Across the City

"I had been looking for a community that could help me grow towards my goals when I found BTB. Through the positive experiences and opportunities there it made me want to reciprocate the same energy and teach others."

Miguel; Student, 17 (an incredibly talented student teacher)

When BTB began as a music program for youth who were incarcerated, it was a well known fact that there was significant divestment in the arts as well as musical spaces throughout the city. As the students we taught in jail showcased their talents and grew as leaders, they frequently told us how much that they wished they had access to our musical program before as they experienced numerous systems and exposures to trauma that affected their adolescence.

We listened to our students and have worked to build and run over 45 musical spaces throughout Philadelphia. These locations include youth shelters, trauma clinics, foster care, rec centers, community hubs, schools, jails, diversion, programs for Immigrants and Refugees, programs for LGBTQIA+ youth, and programs for youth who were impacted by violence or divestment. Wherever youth are, we want to be there to meet them where they are at and use music as a medium to help build up their self expression and self efficacy skills and connect them to a larger community of support.

"Music was always something that I loved to do but I didn't have a place where I could grow in it or feel supported by others until I met BTB. Now I feel surrounded by artists who want to see me succeed and push me to grow."

Student, 18

1,173

Students supported throughout Beyond the Bars programming in the city.

1,057

Program sessions offered to students across Philadelphia.

2,114

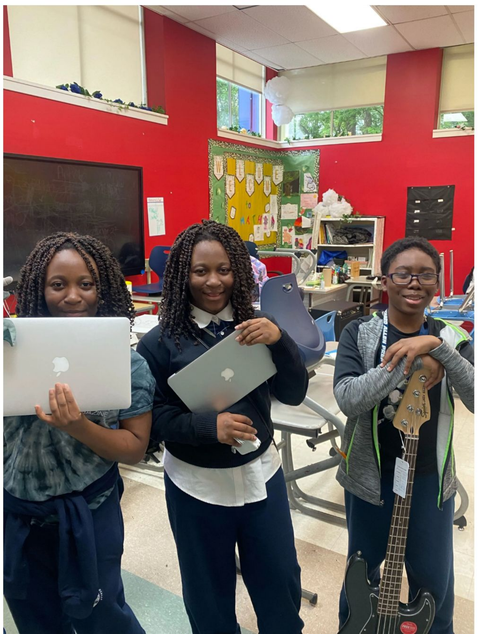
Hours of Programming offered by Trauma Informed Teaching Artists to students throughout the city.

101

Instruments and Macbooks distributed and earned by students in BTB programming this past year to help support their growth in learning.

52

Mobile Workshops Offered to partners across the city who did not have music labs to support students in their programming; these workshops further connected these students to our larger network of musical programming.



Supporting the Next Generation of Leaders in our Student Teacher Program

Our Student Teacher Program is a key component of Beyond the Bars' commitment to fostering youth leadership and empowerment. We work with students across all our programs, helping them develop both as artists and leaders, and equipping them with the skills to teach using trauma-informed practices, social-emotional learning (SEL), conflict de-escalation, and peer mediation. Music becomes more than just an art form - it is used as a tool for self-expression, personal growth, and community connection.

The program features an extensive summer training where students are paid to learn not only how to deepen their artistry, but also how to become effective educators. Through this training, they gain valuable experience in learning methodologies of teaching, building resilience, and creating safe, supportive learning environments for younger students. They study how to handle classroom dynamics, resolve conflicts, and address the emotional and social needs of their peers, all while using music to inspire and guide.

This past year, we successfully graduated over 30 new student teachers and leaders, who have since gone on to thrive in teaching and mentoring younger youth throughout the city. These young educators are now leaders in their communities, using their skills to uplift others and continue the cycle of mentorship and support that they received.

The Student Teacher Program not only benefits the student teachers but also strengthens the entire Beyond the Bars community by creating a sustainable model of youth-driven leadership and artistic education. This approach helps students build self-efficacy and equips them to be change-makers in their neighborhoods.

"Seeing students being able to express themselves through music and accomplish goals knowing that I had helped them is one of my greatest joys and proudest moments."

Isaiah, 19 (former student teacher, current adult teacher.)

791

Students Taught By Teachers who graduated from the Student Teacher Program.

35

Student Teachers and Student Leaders who graduated our Summer Training Program.

16

Adult Staff who were former students in Beyond the Bars Student Teacher cohorts.

Aquil is my favorite teacher because he understands where I'm coming from, and makes everyone feel comfortable while helping us grow and making us laugh."

Destiny, 17 (describing being taught by Aquil, a graduate of the student teacher program)

100%

of new student teachers have expressed a growth in self confidence in their leadership abilities.

93%

of students taught by the new cohort of students have expressed enjoyment of their teaching.

Based on the success of our Student Teacher Program, Beyond the Bars was named 1 of 15 organizations to be selected by JEVS and the city of Philadelphia to run year-round paid career training programming!

$121,210

Paid to those who completed the Student Teacher Program to teach and mentor younger youth.

38

Program Sites activated and taught at by Student Teachers.

Philadelphia's First Ever Philly Youth Music Fest

We worked together with over 15 amazing community-based music orgs to plan a festival highlighting the talents of all of our city's youth!

Phase 1

The Need for Narrative Change and Celebration

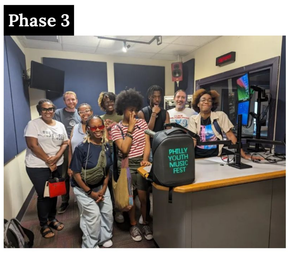
The youth in our city are incredibly talented, compassionate, brilliant and committed to impacting positive change. Despite this, there are constantly negative narratives surrounding our city's young people. Additionally, with the amount of trauma that has been experienced by our communities, we wanted to create a yearly celebration that would highlight the general *amazingness* of our young people, and give them a platform to be shown as the talented artists and forces for good that they are.

Phase 2

The Incredible Creative Youth Development Orgs in Philadelphia

Philadelphia is home to so many incredible organizations that do profound work everyday all across the city. Our city's history of music and the communal education of it from our artists is rich – and it can be seen in the impactful musical nonprofits throughout our neighborhoods. We could not be more grateful for the opportunity to build and organize with incredible orgs and leaders to launch a citywide celebration that highlighted not just one org, but all of them and their youth.

Phase 3



Community Planning and Collaboration with Parks and Recreation and Department of Creative Economy

Over 15 community-based arts orgs planned for months to create a musical festival that would highlight all the young artists of Philadelphia and create an experience that would center their talent and voices. We were not alone in our work: we were deeply grateful to work with Parks and Recreation and the Department of Creative Communities to help make the festival a reality. Through the support of the Department of Creative Economy, we were able to pay stipends to student performers, as well as fund catering and media coverage for the event.

Phase 4

The Philadelphia Inquirer

SIGN IN

OPINION

Even in the darkest of days, community is our superpower

While we're worrying about the next political nightmare around the corner, it's easy to forget that we need to celebrate local stories of hope and unity.

Alize Jones, a songwriting instructor at Beyond the Bars, talks and teaches students during a songwriting session at Beyond the Bars' summer student teacher program at the Comm... **Read more**

Alia Ippolito / Staff Photographer

Media tour with students

Students from various organizations came together and promoted the event throughout the city. Students were interviewed on 88.5 WXPN, and had stories written by publications such as the Inquirer, as we worked to create the narrative change that we wanted to see regarding the way our city views our youth.

Phase 5

The Beautiful Day That Occurred

On July 13th over 70 young artists performed representing over 15 organizations. Thanks to incredible orgs such as Revive Media, BluesBabe, Immortal Vision Studio, Philly Sound Exchange, WeLovePhilly, FamFrequency, and 5Shorts there was no shortage of youth led activities happening throughout the venue. Whether it was podcasting and interviewing youth artists and famous artists such as Chill Moody, doing the videography and photography and activation stations, having outdoor jam sessions, doing online media, youth and community based orgs ensured that the young artists who were gracing the stage received the festival experience that highlighted them as artists and showed the talents of our youth.

Phase 6

What's Next

This inagural year is just the start as we will work together with the amazing orgs of the city to ensure that the Philly Youth Music Fest becomes an institution in the city that is a celebrating that our youth deserve and works to put forth the narrative that showcases their incredible leadership.

Advocating for Investment in Our Communities in D.C.

"Youth in our city need programs that are there for them and not just help them grow towards their goals but also help them figure out what they want next. There needs to be funding to ensure that no young person is forgotten about."

Shilynn (Student Teacher Graduate)

Youth voice guides everything that BTB has ever done. Dating back to when we started in 2015, we recognized the incredible leadership that our youth had and the postive impact that their voices made. We built 45 labs through their guidance, we started our student teacher program through their advocacy, and we improved our curriculum and resource connection based on their directives. Dubbed the Student Steering Committee, it is pivotal in Beyond the Bars' operation and decision-making process.

We were incredibly excited when we were asked to go to Washington D.C. to advocate to Congress for the need to invest in our communities. This connection was facilitated through the National Youth Employment Coalition in conjunction with the Lewis Prize. Through the leadership of our incredible alum leaders Isaiah and Shilynn, we were able to advocate for the need to not just support BTB, but many other community-based Adolescent-Friendly programs nationwide. They additionally organized with young leaders from across the country as they worked together to amplify each others' work. They both did an incredible job and received high praise from each person they spoke with, and we could not be more excited to see the continue impact that they will make.

Recording with the Philadelphia Eagles And Performing All Over Philadelphia

"Performing really helped me start to believe in myself as an artist. I used to doubt myself a lot and still do sometimes but when I hear the crowd cheering after I perform it really helps me to think I can make some good music."

Student, 16

The youth in our city are incredibly talented artists and make some of the most creative music you will ever hear. One of the main goals of BTB is to help build self-efficacy skills in our students, so that they realize how talented and capable that they are. Performing and recording all across the city is one way that we focus on helping our students be celebrated by our communities, further fostering a belief in their own artistic voices.

This past year we had the honor of being featured in three songs on the Philadelphia Eagles' album, "A Philly Special Christmas", alongside some of the most talented musicians in our city. Our students got to meet some of their idols while recording amazing music for a great cause. The students also recorded their own original songs in prestigious locations such as at 88.5 WXPN, which hosted BTB's own private studio recording session; and Good Day Philadelphia hosted BTB on a live session.

In addition, our students performed all over the city in locations such as City Hall (where we were chosen by CHOP to play an event honoring victims of gun violence), World Cafe Live, Ortliebs, Underground Arts, and CEC, just to name a few. At each of these shows, our students showcased outstanding talent and drive, and were celebrated by their large audiences.

"I was nervous to perform but after I did it for the first time and realized people had my back I was really excited to get back on stage and can't wait for my next show"

Student, 15

250+

Songs Recorded

By having 45 labs across the city, students have no shortage of ability to write and record their own original music.

12

Shows Performed throughout the city

We always work to have culminating shows throughout our programs for students to be celebrated for the hard work that they have put in. Students have performed in venues all across the city as they were celebrated by our community.

DAILY VIEWS | VOICES

She was 'always trying to help people'

Khalia used music to help break cycle of violence: Studio continues her mission

BY HELEN UBIÑAS

Kasim Brisbon's face was illuminated by the pink neon sign on the wall that bore his mother's name.

Family and friends — and friends who had become family — traveled near and far just weeks before Christmas to squeeze into a first-floor room inside the Community Education Center in West Philadelphia.

It was a bittersweet moment, but one in which Brisbon, 23, could not help but rejoice.

"She would have loved this," he said.

This is the newly dedicated Khalia Robinson studio — which bears a sign as radiant as the woman he and others were there to honor.

Robinson, 44, was a founding board member of Beyond the Bars, a community and career planning nonprofit that uses music to help young people escape cycles of violence and incarceration.

In May, the brutality Robinson hoped to protect others from cut her life short when she was caught in the cross fire of a shooting in North Philly. Police have so far arrested one man in connection with the Memorial Day weekend killing that left Brisbon and his two siblings, Trinidad Robinson, 16, and Danielle Wood, 13, without their mother.

When I called Matthew Kerr, one of the cofounders of Beyond the Bars, to talk about Robinson, something about the stories he told about her felt familiar. Only later did I realize why. In 2018, I spoke to Robinson about her role in helping a student she was working with through another city nonprofit, Mighty Writers, get a full scholarship to Harvard University. Her dedication to him and other young people left an impression.

Kerr wasn't surprised. Robinson's impact ran deep, especially in West Philadelphia, where she grew up and where she hoped to one day start her own music nonprofit.

Robinson's mother, Katherine Croom, recalled that even as a young girl there was rarely an instrument her daughter couldn't pick up and play. When Robinson wasn't making music, she was dreaming of helping others make it.

"She was always trying to help people," Croom said. "She was always that way. She wanted to make things better."

Kerr and cofounder Christopher Thornton said Robinson brought that spirit to Beyond the Bars a year after they founded the organization in 2015. On paper, they said, Robinson was a board member, but that didn't fully capture how she supported and coached two young men run a healthy community-based and student-driven organization.

"When we first started Beyond the Bars, we didn't know what we were doing," Kerr told those gathered for the dedication ceremony. "Khalia came in and said, 'Here's all the different ways that we can be impacting change, all the different ways that we can be working to get music to young people.' Today we have 45 music labs. None of that would have existed without Khalia's vision."

Thornton said both he and Kerr were "honored by the care and love" Robinson shared with Beyond the Bars. But they were also endlessly impressed with the work she did in the community.

"It felt important to honor her legacy and share love with her and her family and everyone who knew her and was touched by her work and her presence," Thornton said.

Among those were best friends Huriya Edens and Netta Sayles, who came from Connecticut for the event. They laughed when they thought of what Robinson, who was more like a sister, might have said if she were there to see the studio: "Oh, you shouldn't have..."

"She was always so humble," Edens said.

The three would often talk about growing older together, Sayles said.

But now only two are left behind.

"We talk about her all the time," Sayles said.

As celebratory as the night was, it was clear that those who knew and loved Robinson were still reeling from her death, and might be for a long time.

As her brother, Dwayne Croom, took in the gathering, he said it has eased his family's pain a little to know that Robinson was so appreciated. That she will be remembered.

"It's like a knife to the heart," he said. "Our family has never experienced a loss like this. This... this makes you stop in your tracks and wonder: How do we handle this? How do we move forward?"

There are no easy answers, of course. No one path to healing.

But those who knew and loved Khalia Robinson are certain of one thing: Any road to healing will be full of music, just as she would have wanted.

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NotesFromHel

Khalia Robinson's mother, Katherine Croom, and son, Kasim Brisbon (right), react during the Khalia Robinson studio dedication. Khalia Robinson was killed in May by a stray bullet from a shooting in North Philly. (Kazbekh Robertson / Staff Photographer)

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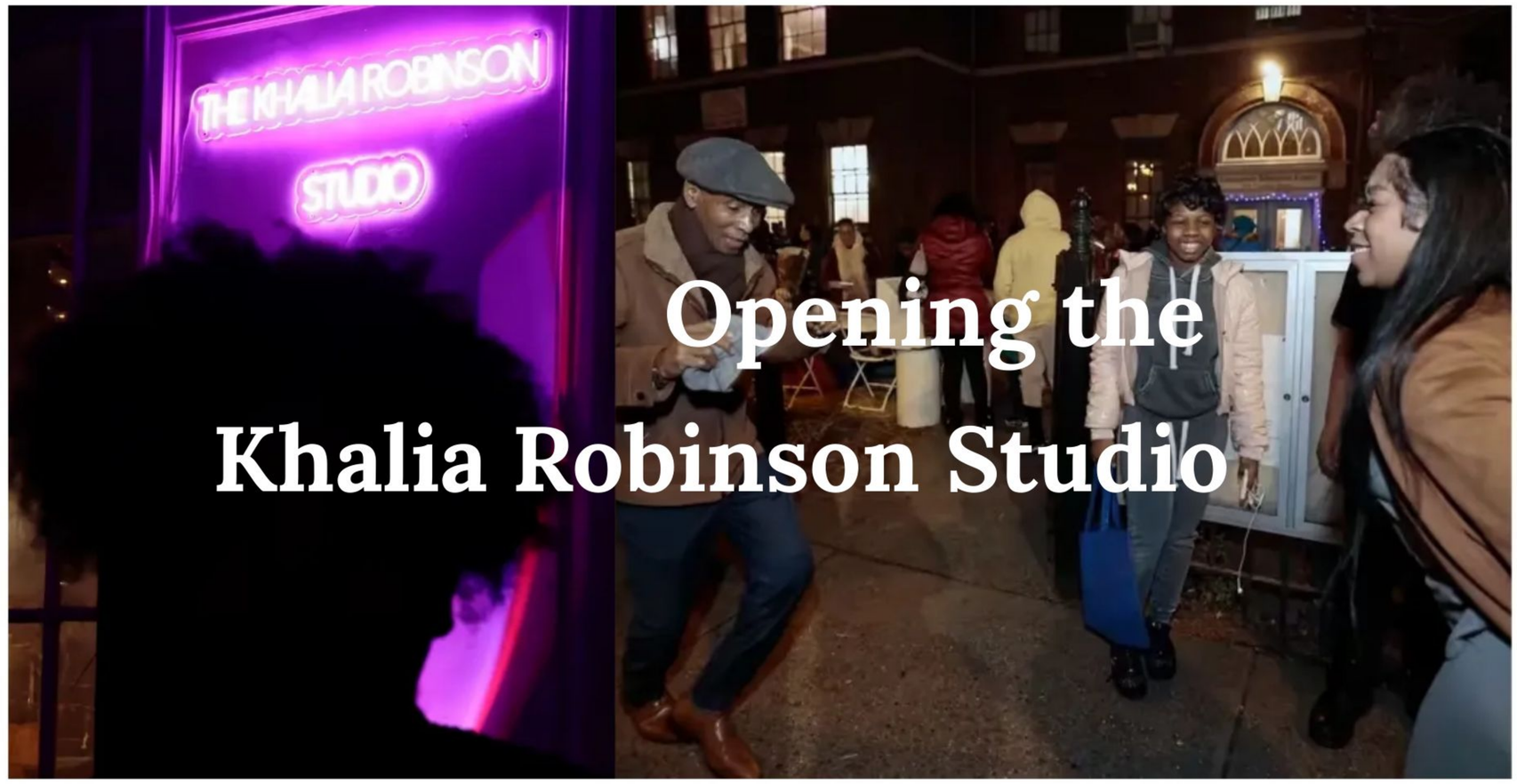


Opening the Khalia Robinson Studio

This past year we tragically lost one of our founding board members, Khalia Robinson, to gun violence. She was a tremendous force for good in our community who helped build BTB from the ground up. She left lasting imprints not just on BTB, but on so many orgs throughout West Philadelphia where she was constantly fighting for and supporting young people.

BTB would not be what it is today without her, and we wanted to honor the lasting legacy that she will have on our community. As a result, we opened the Khalia Robinson Studio. Located at the CEC, students will be able to be their creative selves forever, thanks to her leadership. We hosted a dedication event at the studio, attended by her amazing family and members of the community who she touched. As our students performed, we all shared stories of the remarkable person she was and how her legacy will live on because of the deep impacts that she has had on so many.

Running our Ecosystem of Support

The BTB Ecosystem of Support Model

- Invitational Programs

-Transition Team/Resource Connection

-Receiver Programs

-Student Teacher Program

The youth that we taught when we first started teaching in jail discussed the numerous systems that had failed them growing up and how they experienced challenges such as homelessness or food scarcity and educational divestment without support. The problems that our youth faced were systemic and they frequently discussed feeling isolated by the barriers that they were encountering.

Systemic problems require systemic solutions. As a result, BTB does not work alone: we partner with over 70 community-based partners that do incredible work that we do not. Together, we build an Ecosystem of Support Model where we work to meet youth wherever they are at (shelters, diversion, foster care), use music as a means of building up their self expression and self efficacy skills, and then we connect them to a larger community of support where they can have their resource needs met and be empowered as leaders.

95%

of Tenured Students express a growth in self-expression and self-efficacy skills.

90%

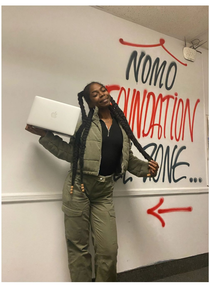
of Tenured Students express that their resource needs are either being met or being worked towards being met.

45

Music Labs Run Across Philadelphia
These labs are located in shelters, trauma clinics, foster care, rec centers, community hubs, programs for LGBTQIA+ youth, and programs for Immigrants and Refugees.

79

Community Partners that we work alongside to support students throughout Philadelphia
By being partnered with organizations that provide resources that we do not, we can work collaboratively to ensure that youth have access to anything that they need as they work towards their goals.



Our Partners

Food Support Partners
- Philabundance
- TCRC
- Double Trellis

Shelter Support Partners
- Covenant House
- Stenton Family Manor
- YSI
- Cornerstone/Eddie's House

Mental Health Support Partners
- Akea's Heart
- Children's Crisis Treatment Center
- Joseph J Peters Institute

Recreation Centers
- Athletic Recreation Center
- Sayre Recreation Center
- Smith Recreation Center
- Cione Recreation Center
- Disilvestro Recreation Center
- Wright Recreation Center
- Penrose Recreation Center

Libraries
- Lucien Blackwell Library
- McPhearson Library

Justice Related Supports
- Youth Arts and Self Empowerment Project
- Youth Sentencing and Reentry Project
- Educators 4 Education
- Collective Climb
- PAAN
- PhillyConnect
- Unmask
- PowerCorps

Our Partners

Mentoring/Career Pathways/Community Support Partners
- YEAH Philly
- The ECO Foundation
- NOMO
- Frontline Dads
- WeLovePhilly
- Philly Youth Basketball
- RideFree
- Big Picture Alliance
- The Block Gives Back
- Uptown Theater
- YMCA
- Heights
- Afterschool All Stars
- Treehouse Books

School Partners
- Belmont Charter High School
- Mastery Gratz
- Mastery Pickett
- Mastery Thomas
- Mastery Frederick Douglass
- Mastery Hardy Williams
- Richard Allen School
- Young Scholars
- William Dick School
- Bartram High School
- Murrell Dobbins High School
-Ben Franklin High School
- Vaux High School
- Community College of Philadelphia

Programs for LGBTQIA+ Youth
- The Attic Youth Center
- galaei

Our Partners

Additional Arts Partners
- FamFrequency
- BluesBabe
- Power of Paint
- Musicopia
- The Village of Arts and Humanities
- How Dope are You
- Project 440
- 5 Shorts
- DayOneNotDayTwo
- MadBeatz

Social Services Partners
- Achieving Independence Center
- Philadelphia Housing Authority
- The Wardrobe
- CHOP
- Latino Behavioral Health Coalition

Programs for Youth Who Are Immigrants
- AFAHO
- Cambodian Association of Greater Philadelphia
- Juntos

Governmental/Citywide Partners
- Department of Creative Communities
- Office of Policy and Strategic Initiatives for Criminal Justice & Public Safety, City of Philadelphia
- JEVS Supportive Services
-Parks and Recreation
- DA's Office of Diversion

BTB was recognized by both the City of Philadelphia Community Expansion Grant and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency for its work in Anti-Violence, and recently received a Greater Philadelphia Social Innovation Award for our work.

$1,115,000

Raised through the generosity of our amazing community of funders, sponsors and partners to support young leaders across Philadelphia
BTB could not do the work that we do without the compassion of our whole community. Words cannot express our gratitude.

38

Foundations, Corporations and Government Entities supporting our amazing youth
Our ecosystem does not just consist of community based orgs, but also the many amazing supporters of our work who help make it possible. Without each org we would not be able to have the impact that we do.

Our Funders

- The Lewis Prize
- The Hive @Springpoint Partners
- William Penn Foundation
- Philadelphia's Community Expansion Grant
- GSK Impact Award
- DA's Office of Forfeiture
- Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency
- Hamilton Family Charitable Trust
- M Knight Shyamalan Foundation
- Benoliel Family Foundation
- Philadelphia Foundation
- Seybert Foundation

Our Funders

- Philadelphia Eagles
- Nelson Foundation
- Patricia Kind Family Foundation
- Vanguard
- Bread and Roses Community Fund
- Innovation Lab
- Philadelphia Cultural Fund
- Philly Music Fest
- Pettus Foundation
- Feis Fund
- JEVS
- Pincus Foundation
- Kensington Community Fund

Our Funders

- Allen Hilles Fund
- Presser Foundation
- PECO Powers the Arts
- Sheila Fortune Foundation
- Connelly Foundation
- PYN
- New Earth Foundation
- D'Addario Foundation
- Alston Beech Foundation
- Henrietta Tower Wurts
- Philanthropy Lab
- Independence Foundation

Thank you for making such an incredible year possible! We can't wait to build together in 2024-25!