

It takes **all** of us.



# Annual Report



JULY 1, 2020 - JUNE 30, 2021

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# Leadership Letter



To Our Affinity Partners:

In the Fall of 2020, as a new organizational leader with very little information about the ongoing pandemic, or if students and staff would be allowed back in schools, I had a significant decision to make: did we close down, furlough staff and wait for greater certainty? Or did we use every ounce of creativity, innovation, and grit to find a safe way for relationships to continue thriving?

## Meeting A Community Need for Additional Social Emotional Support

The data coming out was bleak and consistent: students reported feeling unsafe, disconnected, and were experiencing high levels of depression and anxiety. Particularly, people of color and those at a financial disadvantage were taking the brunt of the pandemic consequences, with little or no access to resources to mitigate these effects, and no end in sight. **If there was ever a time when students needed extra healthy adult relationships, equity-based barrier reduction support, and social-emotional learning, leadership skill building, and academic support, the time was now.** So we built, tested, implemented, and refined what is now an entirely new model for providing virtual, hybrid, and in-person mentoring options to our mentoring matches.

## Feedback we received from parents, mentors, mentees, and partners:

- "Affinity has helped my daughter to trust others at school." Parent of Mentee
- "You are the best mentor I could ever ask for; you inspired me to keep moving in my journey." Mentee
- "You always help me to do my homework, and you make me happy, and you're my friend." Mentee
- "I think about what matters in our world, which is relationships [...] Affinity staff witness firsthand the things that families in our communities need today." GRPS Board President
- "Every time we talk about my school subjects, he wants me to keep on learning and pay attention to my classes." Mentee
- "I needed this reminder of how important being a mentor to her is, and how proud I am of her." Mentor

## We channeled that creativity, innovation to accomplish an incredible amount this past year, including:

- Launching a new Mission and Vision
- Developing a new [3 Year Strategic Plan](#)
- Moving into our [new headquarters](#) at the Goei Center to be near those we partner with
- Launching our first annual [Community Listening Project](#)
- Creating our first ever [Middle School Mentoring Steering Committee](#)
- Launching [Cuentos y Comida](#), a bilingual community fundraising event with city-wide watch parties
- Coordinating a virtual [Mentor Appreciation Night](#) and Better Together Fundraiser
- Adding a new Office Coordinator position and hiring a [new team member](#)
- Expanding and diversifying our [board of directors](#)
- Giving all staff raises
- Increasing overall cash flow and financial sustainability

The Affinity team and board is a group of the most dedicated, creative, caring humans I have ever had the joy of working with. Our mentees and families are brave, considerate, and resourceful. Our mentors are flexible, caring, and ever-learning. Our partners are dedicated, thoughtful, and hard-working. I am so grateful for the opportunity to be in this space learning and growing alongside them, and personally invite you to join us in old and new ways.

Sincerely,

Cassandra Kiger  
Executive Director, Affinity Mentoring  
[affinitymentoring.org](http://affinitymentoring.org)

It takes **all** of us.

# Who We Are

## Growth is a Process

We want to know who we are and be consistent enough to be recognizable, but also be open to change, listen well, and recognize when we are being moved into the next phase of ourselves as an organization. We know that Affinity, as well as our community, has been changing rapidly, and we are no longer the small, new, but beautiful organization that grew out of the missions department of Mars Hill Bible Church. We decided it was important to review our mission statement to ensure that it accurately represents what we are doing and the vision we have for Affinity in the future.

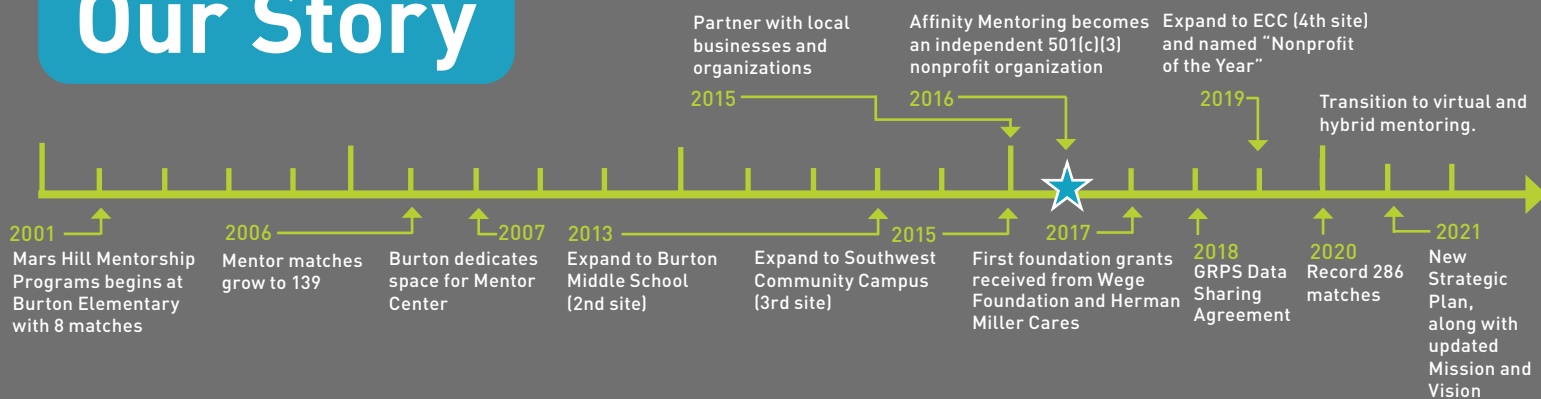
## Mission

Facilitate equitable growth in academics, social emotional skills, and self-esteem through mutually beneficial mentoring relationships. We believe in cultivating a brave space that amplifies the voices of young agents of change in a diverse and inclusive community.

## Vision

Be a leading nonprofit for fostering belonging alongside young people, families, and community.

# Our Story



# Who We Serve

Why is  
**Social Emotional  
Learning (SEL)**  
important in  
education?

**SEL competence shows  
benefits such as:**

- ▶ improved test scores, grades, and attendance
- ▶ positive social behaviors and relationships with peers and adults

Durlak et al., 2011; Farrington et al., 2012; Sklad et al., 2012

**SEL has been found to:**

- ▶ improve achievement
- ▶ increase attitudes toward school
- ▶ reduce depression and stress

Durlak et al., 2011

**Kindergartners stronger  
in SEL are more likely to:**

- ▶ graduate high school
- ▶ earn a college degree
- ▶ obtain stable employment in young adulthood

Jones, Greenberg & Crowley, 2015



## Target Population

- ▶ Kindergarten - 8th grade students
- ▶ Schools with high populations of families who haven't been given access to resources
- ▶ Students that can benefit from additional academic and social-emotional support

## Student Demographics

### Gender

**55%** female  
**31%** male  
**14%** not reported  
Affinity Intake Paperwork, 2020

### Grade/Age

**86%** elementary school students  
**14%** middle school students  
Affinity Intake Paperwork, 2020

### Race/Ethnicity

**96%** People of Color  
78% Latinx | 3% Black | 3% Multi-racial | 12% Other

**4%** White  
MI School Data, 2021

## Mentor Demographics

**66%** female  
**34%** male  
Affinity Intake Paperwork, 2020

**53%** age 20-39  
**35%** age 40-59

**12%** age 60+  
Affinity Intake Paperwork, 2020

**23%** People of Color  
16% Latinx | 3% Black | 3% Multi-racial

**74%** White

**3%** No response  
Affinity Intake Paperwork, 2020

Both staff and board demographics reflect much of the community that we partner alongside at Affinity Mentoring (p. 6), while we also acknowledge we must continue to do extensive work to ensure our mentors more accurately reflect students and families. We have had a 567% increase in mentors of color since 2016, and we have clear steps laid out in our **Strategic Plan** to continue improving these numbers.

# Mentorship Stories

## Virtual Mentoring Makes Giving Back Possible

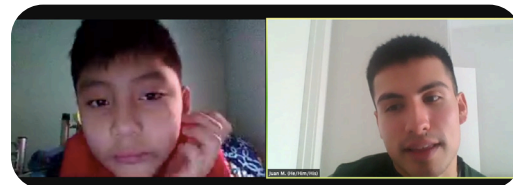
This year I've gotten the opportunity to mentor Byron, a student at Southwest Community Campus. Growing up as a first generation immigrant, where both my parents worked hard to support our family, meant my parents did not have much time to help me navigate school or the workforce. Fortunately, along my journey I had mentors who helped guide me to where I am today.

Although I now live in Chicago, I knew I still wanted to give back to the West Michigan community as this was where most of my mentors were from and holds a special place in my heart. I am thankful for Zoom as it has made mentoring from Chicago a possibility – I am easily able to share my screen and play games virtually. Although we aren't together in person I feel like I am still able to successfully mentor Byron through Zoom.

I appreciate Affinity Mentoring for adapting to these changing times, providing mentors with several resources to be successful virtually, and for making mentoring remotely a possibility!

### Juan Mascorro Guerrero

Mentor at Southwest Community Campus



[Read more mentoring stories on our Blog.](#)

## We asked mentors, "What's your favorite part of mentoring?"

"I love hearing my student laugh at a joke or a funny part in a story. I enjoy listening to my student's reading skills improve and the confidence level increase. It brings a smile to my face when I know my student is enjoying the time we spend together reading, crafting, talking, writing stories or playing literacy games."

"Seeing growth and improvement in Randy's skills. Seeing Randy laugh."

"The warm fuzzy feeling I get after a mentoring session that goes particularly well. I believe my mentee truly enjoys spending time with me and knowing there's someone out there who cares and believes in her besides her family."

"I enjoy hearing my student's reading skills develop as she reads aloud. I liked seeing her get excited about the literacy games we played that helped her build her reading skills. I loved seeing her smiles and hearing her laughter as we had fun together."

"My favorite part of mentoring is being able to help him with anything that he needs and just having fun during our mentoring sessions. I really enjoy reading, helping him with his homework or just playing games."



[Read more about what mentors had to say in our Mentoring Feedback Survey.](#)

## How We Serve

**586%**

increase in  
mentors of color  
since 2016

**19%**

of mentors live in  
mentoring service  
areas

**30+**

community  
partners

### Diversity and Inclusion

We commit to promoting short and long term positive outcomes for students and families in our community by addressing systemic and structural inequities. Therefore it is a priority for leadership and volunteers to reflect the diverse neighborhoods we partner alongside.

- 71% of staff identify as people of color
- 70% of board members identify as people of color
- 23% of mentors identify as people of color

### Equity Based Barrier Reduction (EBBR)

EBBR is the time spent by staff addressing and finding solutions to concerns and issues students and families may have that impede relationship building, educational success, and social-emotional growth and learning ([See EBBR Definition](#)). Program team estimated that 50% of their weekly hours were spent on EBBR related activities during COVID.

### Reinvestment of Dollars Back into Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) Owned Businesses

Castro Motion Graphics | Daddy's Dough | Genesis Consulting | Goei Center | Grounded in Equity | Malamiah Juice Bar | Mija Moments | Mosby's Popcorn | Rising Grinds Cafe | Guelaguetza Designs | Shannon Cohen, Inc | Shead LLC | The Diatribe

## Community Partners

Affinity Mentoring ha sido un maravilloso colaborador para KDL. En el 2021 nuestra organización ofreció pagar a nuestros empleados en su tarifa regular por la hora que dedican a sus pupilos. También ha sido muy bueno el tener la posibilidad de hacerlo en línea, lo que permite conectarnos aun a pesar de restricciones cambiantes.

[Affinity Mentoring has been a wonderful partner for KDL. In 2021 our organization offered to pay our employees at their regular rate for the hour they dedicate to their pupils. It has also been great to have the ability to do it online, allowing us to connect even despite changing restrictions.]



### Sara Proaño

Community Engagement Manager at Kent District Library and ECC Mentor

[Read Sara's full article in El Vocero.](#)

### Affinity Mentoring's Community Partners + Sponsors 2020-2021

Amway  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of MI  
Butterball Farms  
ChoiceOne Bank  
COM 616  
DWH LLC  
Eastern Floral  
Edward Jones - Sheri Postema  
Godfrey-Lee Public Schools  
Goei Center  
Gordon Food Service

Grand Rapids Community Foundation  
Grand Valley State University  
Greater Wyoming Area Community Resource Alliance  
Grand Rapids Chamber  
Grand Rapids Public Schools  
Independent Bank  
Kawasaki Engines  
Kennari Consulting  
Kent District Library  
Kent County Mentoring Collaborative  
Kent School Services Network

Miracle Law  
Molina Healthcare  
Mars Hill Bible Church  
Rivertown Finance  
Supporting Act Counseling  
Spectrum Health  
Steelcase Foundation  
Tech Defenders  
The Wege Foundation  
WM Hispanic Chamber  
Wyoming Community Foundation

[Learn more about Community Partnerships.](#)

# Impact and Outcomes

**97%**

program  
retention

## Program Evaluation

Based on the data from the [2020-2021 Community Listening Project](#) and [Mentoring Feedback Survey](#) we have included accurate and varied data as a key factor in our decision making processes in our [2021-2023 Strategic Plan](#).

**As we have taken the past year to confirm and refine what this new data process will be, we have included the following:**

- Student voices and needs
- Community/partner voices and needs
- Accurate longitudinal and year-to-year comparative data
- Quantitative and qualitative data
- Studying data points to improve our programming
- Supplementing school partners work, not overlapping it

**140**

virtual and  
hybrid matches

facilitated drop off of

**15**

hotspots from KDL to  
families and students  
in need

## Data Collection

With this in mind, our yearly data collection and presentation process will be entirely in effect beginning this 2021-2022 mentoring year. The data from each of these will strictly follow all rules and laws around confidentiality, including FERPA and HIPAA laws, but will be made appropriately public on our website under our [Reports](#) page.

# Community and People Matter



Gary has been amazing for our Liam. Liam is autistic and struggles with daily tasks but when he's with Gary none of that matters. Gary always encourages Liam even through frustrations. He kept in contact with us when the first shutdown happened in 2020. We sent photos back and forth. He not only lifted Liam up but he lifted mom and dad up as well. He always does it with a smile on his face and joy in his heart. Gary has been dubbed Grandpa Gary to Liam and he'll say he respects Gary and loves him for loving him.

**Jessica Horn**

Parent of ECC Mentee, Liam Horn



I know each of you are very dedicated and passionate about the work that you do, which can oftentimes be under appreciated. Communities often show what is most important to them by where they put their money; I value the work that you do every day and believe it is of utmost importance. I want to take this time to say thank you; thank you for your hard work. Thank you for always being willing to learn and grow.

**Anonymous**

Community Member and Donor

It takes **all** of us.

# Our Team

## Program Team



**Keyla Araujo**  
ECC Site Coordinator



**Rocio Moreno**  
Burton Site Coordinator



**Angela Reyna**  
Program Assistant



**Monica Zavala**  
SWCC Site Coordinator

## Administrative Team



**Holly Hetherington**  
Office Coordinator



**Rachel Humphreys**  
Development and  
Communications Director



**Cassandra Kiger**  
Executive Director

## Promotions and Equitable Pay Increase

Organizationally, we have made equitable pay and financial security for staff members a clear and immediate goal within our newly released [Strategic Plan](#). We are making strides towards this goal with a second set of pay raises given to staff members beginning this new fiscal year, ensuring that no staff member is paid less than \$18 per hour and staff have access to benefits for themselves and their families. The work done at Affinity Mentoring, currently by women of color and queer women, is important and valued in our community, and should be compensated as such. Starting July 1, 2021 Affinity added two new positions and promoted team members; Angela Reyna was promoted to Lee Middle School Site Coordinator and Rocio Moreno was promoted to Program Director. This restructuring creates opportunities for upward mobility and professional development within the organization, increasing overall sustainability and employee retention.

## Awards and Recognition

- **Angela Reyna** | 2021 Michigan Works! Beverly A. Drake Essential Service Award Recipient
- **Monica Zavala** | 2020 MPWRD Influential Awards Leader Honoree
- **Affinity Mentoring** | 2020 GRYP Mentor Organization of the Year

[Read staff bios.](#)

# Board of Directors



## Officers



**John Robinson, President**  
Head Start for Kent Co.



**Adam Russo, Vice President**  
COM 616



**Ben Borisch, Treasurer**  
DWH, LLC



**Malaina Weldy, Secretary**  
Warner Norcross + Judd

## Directors



**Jatnna Abreu**  
Amway



**Frank Acosta**  
Independent Bank



**Marcia Boyce**  
Attorney



**Veronica Bradford**  
Spectrum Health



**Abigail Bruins**  
Canopy Resources



**Mia Jankowiak**  
Grand Rapids Chamber



**Jason Loepp**  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of MI



**Christine Mwangi**  
Kent District Library

## Board Infrastructure and Capacity Building

Affinity contracted with Kennari Consulting through funding from the Nonprofit Technical Assistance Fund (NPTA). Kennari conducted a Fundraising Operational Assessment that reviewed Board Involvement, Infrastructure for Philanthropy, and Philanthropic Practice. Kennari provided a summary report including priorities for moving forward and recommendations on fundraising strategies to improve future philanthropic outcomes. The next 10 months included weekly fundraising counsel to provide direction and feedback. This process helped strengthen the board to support Affinity through:

- An executive director transition (previous ED Laura Ward resigned in May 2020)
- Creation of board committees (Governance Committee, Executive Committee, and Finance Committee)
- Development of a [3 Year Strategic Plan](#)
- Formalized board recruitment processes and diversification

[Read board bios and committee descriptions.](#)

# Growth and Sustainability

We are dedicated to building a diverse and sustainable advancement plan. Over the past five years since we officially became an independent 501(c)(3) we have greatly diversified our revenue and organizational sustainability. Despite being in a pandemic, we have seen steady increased giving at the individual and corporate level since 2016.

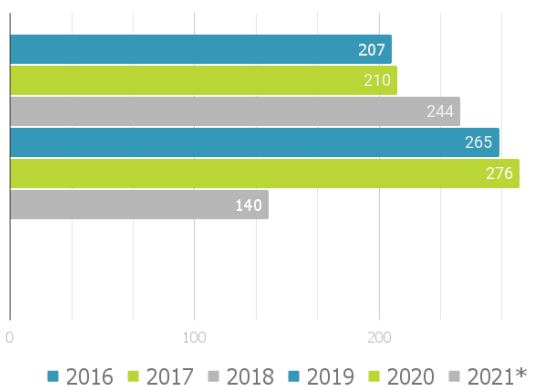
**↑ 354% INCREASE**  
in corporate donations

**↑ 33% INCREASE**  
in individual donations

**↑ 671% INCREASE**  
in year end giving

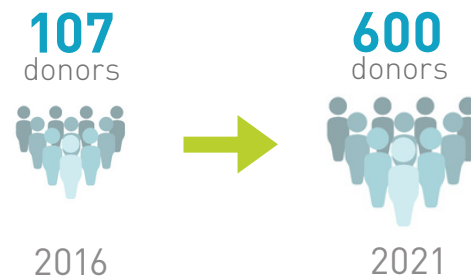
## Mentor Matches

Due to the global pandemic, mentoring transitioned to a virtual platform\* in 2020 which was more costly and time intensive for the team to facilitate.



## Individual Donations

We invest in cultivating meaningful relationships with our stakeholders. We've seen a significant increase in individual contributions and match sponsorships.



## Cuentos y Comida

In an effort to continue to diversity funding and involve the community we serve in important aspects of our growth, we launched a new fundraiser "Cuentos y Comida" (Stories and Sustenance in English). This community fundraiser involved 10 virtual and in-person watch parties across the city that tuned in for a bilingual (English/Spanish) program!

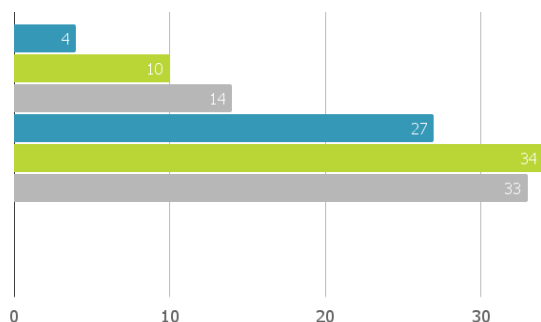
Guests received goodie bags with treats and swag from local BIPOC owned businesses. Our goal was to raise \$10,000 and we raised over \$15,000!



## Community Partners

We cultivate partnerships with local schools, nonprofits, corporations, and small businesses in four main categories: advocates, sustainers, champions, and innovators.

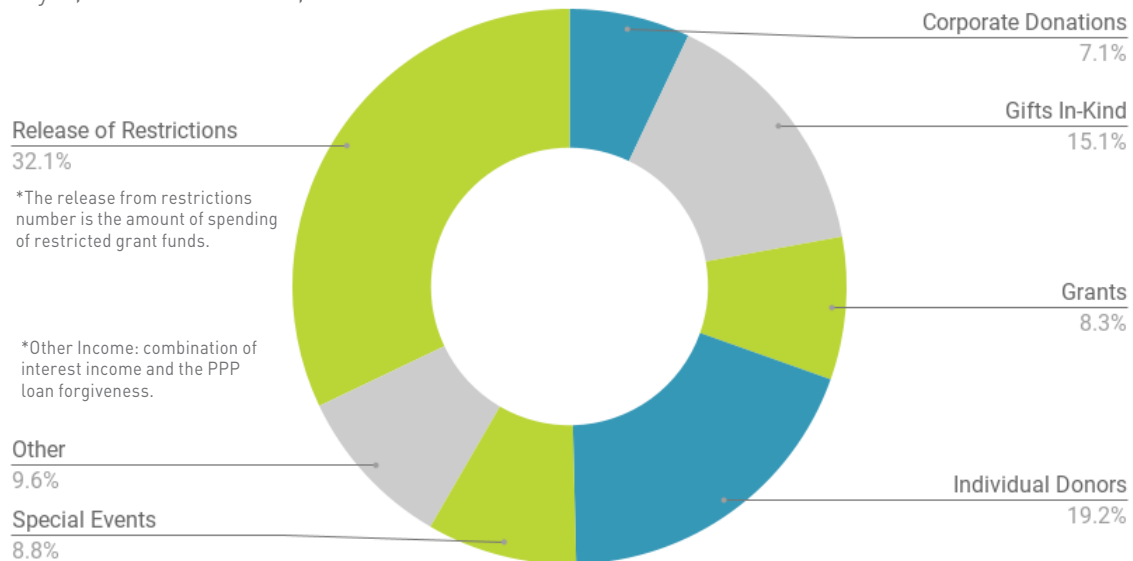
[Learn more about Community Partnerships.](#)



# Financials

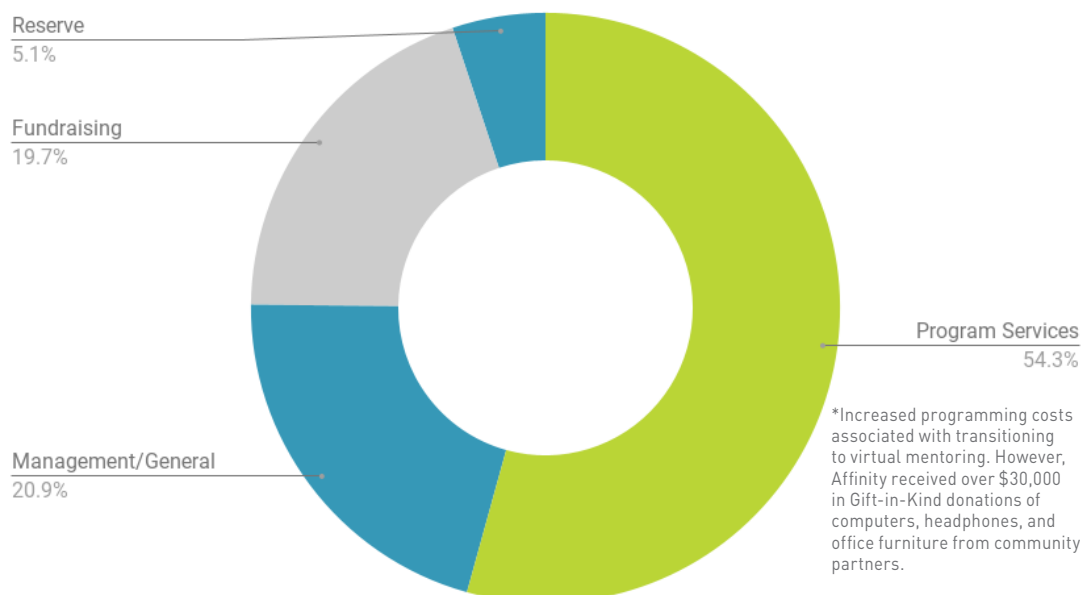
## Revenue | \$481,126

July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021



## Expenditures | \$481,126

July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021



It takes **all** of us.

## Connect With Us



### Email

info@affinitymentoring.org



### Call

616.209.8435



### Support Affinity Mentoring

- **Donate Online**

[affinitymentoring.org/donate/](https://affinitymentoring.org/donate/)

- **Mail a check to:**

Affinity Mentoring  
PO Box 888317  
3970 S Greenbrooke Dr SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49588



Follow Us on Social



## 2020-21 Locations



### Burton Elementary + Middle School

2133 Buchanan Ave SW | Grand Rapids, MI 49507  
616.819.2262 | burton@affinitymentoring.org



### Godfrey-Lee Early Childhood Center

961 Joosten St SW | Wyoming, MI 49509  
616.241.4722 x 1336 | glecc@affinitymentoring.org



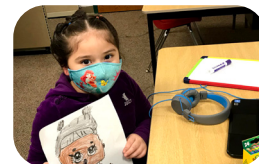
### Southwest Community Campus

801 Oakland Ave SW | Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616.819.6799 | swcc@affinitymentoring.org



### Administrative Office - Goei Center

818 Butterworth St SW | Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
616.209.8435 | info@affinitymentoring.org



# Celebrate

## Mentor Appreciation Night Award Winners

**Push-through Award:** Candy Wilkes Scheper, Burton Elementary Mentor

**Push-through Award:** Larry Whipple, Burton Middle School Mentor

**Go for the G.O.L.D Award:** Gary Evey, Godfrey-Lee ECC Mentor

**Soar High Award:** Mike Krupp, SWCC Mentor

**Longevity Award:** Debbie Schuhman, Burton Elementary Mentor

**Priceless Partner Award:** Kent District Library

**Ripple Effect Award (individual):** Sergio Cira-Reyes, SWCC Mentor and CYC Host

**Ripple Effect Award (organization):** Carol Paine-McGovern and KSSN, Community Partner

**Lukaart Legacy Award:** Karina Zarate, SWCC Mentor and CYC Host

[Watch Full Event Video.](#)



## References

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