

# FY2016

## SOHO FULL STEAM AHEAD



soho

SPACE OF HER OWN  
CREATIVE MENTORSHIP

## OUR HISTORY

Space of Her Own, Inc. values all youth and believes that one-to-one mentoring coupled with opportunities for identifying strengths, thinking creatively, mastering social and academic skills and helping others, SOHO's youth will soar to bright futures.

The first Space of Her Own (SOHO) program began in 2002 in a unique public/private partnership between the City of Alexandria's Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court Service Unit (CSU) and The Art League. SOHO was designed to address key developmental asset deficiencies among Alexandria's youth by providing: positive adult role models who value youth and provide long-term one-on-one mentoring, quality afterschool arts programming, engaging life skill and self-esteem building activities, and leadership and community service opportunities.

SOHO's primary goal was to curb the increase in female juvenile delinquency in the City, particularly among youth from low-income households who lack positive adult role models. Girls generally came before the court for truancy, fighting, shoplifting and running away from home. Linda Odell, Director of Crime Prevention Programs for the CSU, knew that a program for high risk girls needed to be highly engaging and that mentoring would be key. An informal survey showed that 97% of Alexandria middle school aged-girls were interested in art. At the time, the HGTV program Trading Spaces was hugely popular and a frequent conversation piece among women at events Linda attended. When she read an article about Oprah Winfrey teaming up with designer Todd Oldham and renovating the bedrooms of two wealthy suburban girls, Linda thought that less fortunate girls in Alexandria would love to have their rooms renovated in the same style -- and the concept for Space of Her Own was born.

Linda approached multiple nonprofits in Alexandria, but it wasn't until she connected with The Art League's Development Director, Alice Merrill, that she found a creative and enthusiastic partner. The two began collaborating with the Court Service Unit and The Art League to design and build a program that would inspire and engage youth in visual arts and essential life skills lessons. Initially an intervention program for court-involved high school aged girls, Linda and Alice saw that mentors had an even greater impact on more impressionable younger girls, so Space of Her Own transitioned into preventative mentoring, working with 5th grade girls.

The initial group of volunteer SOHO mentors were friends or acquaintances of Linda. Their ages and backgrounds were diverse, as were their careers and experiences with kids. What they all had in common was an interest in getting involved in the community and helping kids to be successful. The group meetings and creative arts activities offered by SOHO provided an additional hook for mentors. Effective mentors are reliable, fun and upbeat, roll with the punches and can easily develop rapport with others. Each year new mentors are recruited through word-of-mouth and informational sessions that are advertised on-line and posted in local businesses.

In 2010, Space of Her Own, Inc. attained nonprofit 501 (c) (3) status. As the City of Alexandria identified the need to increase access to opportunities for social and emotional development for at-risk youth, SOHO expanded its reach to involve seven schools in Northern Virginia and piloted a brother program, Space of His Own. The SOHO Club provides follow-up services and activities for mentors and youth during their middle school years.

Each Space of Her Own site serves up to twelve new youth annually. SOHO's creative mentoring helps close the achievement gap by addressing cultural challenges, economic disparity and other risk factors. SOHO has served 283 girls and boys since its inception, and in the past six years, 98% of SOHO youth have stayed out of the juvenile court system. More, 100% have demonstrated dramatic improvements in visual arts, social skills and healthy decision making, as measured by pre and post-tests and qualitative assessments.

SOHO and its staff have been recognized by the Virginia Juvenile Justice Association Alexandria's NAACP and Commission for Women, Living Legends of Alexandria and Alexandria City Public Schools. SOHO has been highlighted in Alexandria's multi-year recognition as one of the 100 Best Communities for Young People.

## SOHO MAKING A DIFFERENCE



### ABOUT SOHO



SOHO's creative mentoring helps vulnerable 5th grade children succeed in all areas of their lives. Matched with volunteer adult mentors, boys and girls experience the visual arts as a means for self-expression and confidence-building. Additionally, they learn healthy eating habits, and develop effective communication skills. As a result, they attend school more regularly and their academic progress improves as they become more generous and active participants in their lives. Through hands-on learning, youth develop practical arts, carpentry and design skills. While they and their mentors build lamps, shelves and other items for their bedrooms, they learn life skills and healthy ways of interacting and collaborating with others. The first year of the program culminates in a bedroom makeover, giving each child a personalized space of his or her own, which encourages creativity, conveys a sense of value and worth, and gives a daily reminder of his/her circle of support and care. SOHO has a lasting impact by fostering one-to-one mentoring relationships and skill-building throughout the middle school years.



Photo: Living Legends of Alexandria/Nina Tisara



# BUILDING OUR STEAM

Heartfelt thanks go to SOHO's Amazing Program Managers: David Brown, Angela Lee, Colleen Noetzli, Emily Sampson & Jennifer Tutuska

## BETTER OUTCOMES

SOHO is always evolving and improving, thanks to qualitative input from SOHO kids, mentors, program managers and other volunteers. We will be enhancing our art & carpentry projects, increasing parent engagement, and hiring a new part-time staff member to manage and expand our SOHO Club and serve over 100 mentors and mentees during their middle school years. As an added safety precaution, mentors will receive child physical and sexual abuse prevention training, "Stewards of Children: Darkness to Light." SOHO, Inc. will continue to improve upon its data collection and evaluation measures.

*Space of Her Own, Inc. was awarded full membership with the Virginia Mentoring Partnership after participating in a national Quality Based Mentoring improvement project, based on best practices as outlined by MENTOR, the National Mentoring Partnership. Funded by the William T. Grant Foundation and conducted by Brown and Portland Universities, SOHO is one of only 10 mentor programs in Virginia to have successfully completed this process.*

## IMPROVED SELF-ESTEEM, CONFIDENCE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Marymount University's Nonprofit Resource Center, in Partnership with the Arlington Community Foundation, evaluated SOHO's life skills curriculum, which continues to be tweaked to meet the needs of SOHO's kids.

*In the past 12 months, just one SOHO participant has become court-involved. She and her mother are receiving intensive counseling and support. None of the Space of His Own boys have become court involved.*

## STEAM ANCHOR PROJECTS

Ashley Snyder, SOHO's Curriculum Development Consultant, served as project leader and worked with a variety of volunteer experts to build six art & carpentry projects that infuse skill building in the areas of science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM). Special thanks go to Ashley, Matthew Cupples, Amy Creed, Kevin Grim, Mike Kelly, Kelly Organek, Tom Tuttle, Evan Waksler, and to the Alexandria Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court Service Unit, and Women in Science and Engineering at the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office. Lesson plans align with Virginia Department of Education standards for Math, Science and Art.

*Future SOHO kids will build palette bookshelves, bookend lamps, shadow boxes and alarmed valuables boxes. They will make portraits using positive/negative space and upcycled found objects. The Art League will provide photography and clay animation classes.*

## MORE MENTORS!

Sponsored by the Virginia Mentoring Partnership, AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer extraordinaire, Lily Rowny, spearheaded mentor recruitment for the City of Alexandria, meeting with 75 prospective volunteers and referring them to one or more of Alexandria's twelve mentoring programs, including Space of Her Own and Space of His Own. Lily gave presentations, conducted interviews, called references and facilitated background checks. Lily also planned and executed special events, including a fall SOHO fiesta, a January National Mentoring Month event, Mentoring Monday with Fox 5 News and a boating event in celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Alexandria Mentoring Partnership. Lily made incredible contributions to all aspects of SOHO, from providing administrative support to leading activities for youth.

*"Rebecca has brought so much more to my life than I had ever imagined. We have a very strong bond that I plan to cherish for life."*  
-Elodie, SOHO Mentor

# SOHO SPOTLIGHT

*\*Names have been changed and photos are of SOHO youth, but not of the youth described in the stories*

## SPACE OF HER OWN

Bianca was struggling. She wasn't doing well in school, had few friends and lacked supervision and guidance at home. Her parents and brother worked multiple low-wage jobs to make ends meet. During her first month in SOHO, Bianca's brother was brutally murdered. Her school provided emergency services and counseling, and when Bianca requested that the tragedy not be discussed at SOHO, the other girls and mentors embraced her as they honored her request, making SOHO a safe space where she was able to make new friends, learn, create, build and have fun. She and her mentor, Priscilla, developed a strong bond and enjoyed learning and working together. With the loss of her brother and his income, Bianca's parents could not afford their rent and moved to a small one-bedroom apartment where Bianca had to share their bedroom. Priscilla consulted with the family and designed a personalized, private space for Bianca. Priscilla convinced a seller on Craigslist to donate a loft bed with built-in desk and dresser. She hung curtains around the bed for privacy. The projects Bianca and Priscilla made together in SOHO personalized the space. Bianca's first year with SOHO left her with a beautiful Space of Her Own, a place to study, reflect, dream and imagine a bright future. She has developed a solid bond with her mentor, Priscilla that will last for years to come.



## SPACE OF HIS OWN

Marcus is an outspoken, lively, athletic and competitive 5th grader with great leadership potential. After he joined the Space of His Own mentoring program, his incarcerated mother couldn't care for him and his foster care placement became untenable. He was placed in yet another home, 26 miles away and nearly an hour from Alexandria. Marcus barely knew the social worker who was to help him move, so Marcus's mentor, Robert, went along and helped him get settled in his new home. The following day, Marcus called Rob to say that the cab that was supposed to shuttle him from his school in Alexandria to his new home hadn't shown up. Robert left work and drove Marcus himself. Without a mentor, Marcus would have gone through this incredibly tough week feeling alone. But Marcus has Robert, who he can count on and trust. Through these tumultuous changes, Robert has been patient and dependable. He is always available for a long walk or to toss a football. Marcus calls Robert every morning before school and every evening before he goes to bed. Robert is the only adult in Marcus' day-to-day life who is not paid to be there.





# FINANCIAL INFORMATION

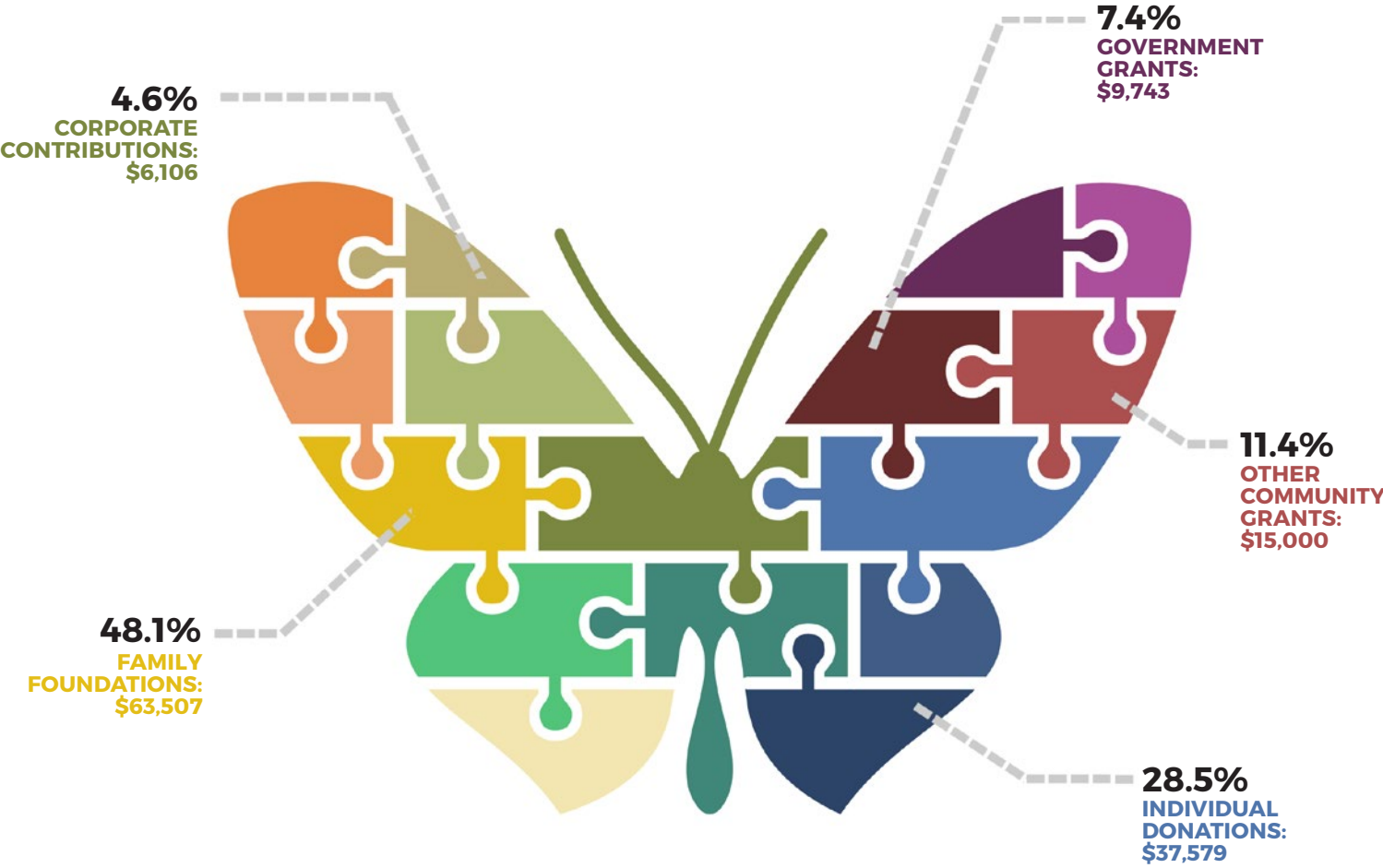
JULY 1, 2015 - JUNE 30, 2016

## IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

SOHO’s mentors collectively donated over 10,700 hours of their time this year and worked with shoestring budgets. SOHO’s preteen participants generally come from minority and immigrant families, live in low-income, subsidized housing and face persistent instability in their lives. Some share a makeshift bedroom with multiple family members, and in some cases entire families share one bedroom. Many lack their own beds and/or sleep on the floor. Most lack storage space and use trash bags or cardboard boxes to hold their clothes and other belongings. Once girls are matched with a mentor, SOHO provides the pair with \$300 as well as a new mattress and box spring to build a dream bedroom. as well as a new mattress and box spring. In addition to what SOHO provides, mentors rely on donations from friends, colleagues, family members and community organizations, which include bunk beds, loft beds, dressers, desks, shelves and bedding. Each youth completes the first program year with a one-to-one mentor relationship, a unique, personalized Space of His Own or Space of Her Own, and the dignity that every child deserves.

## PROGRAM INCOME

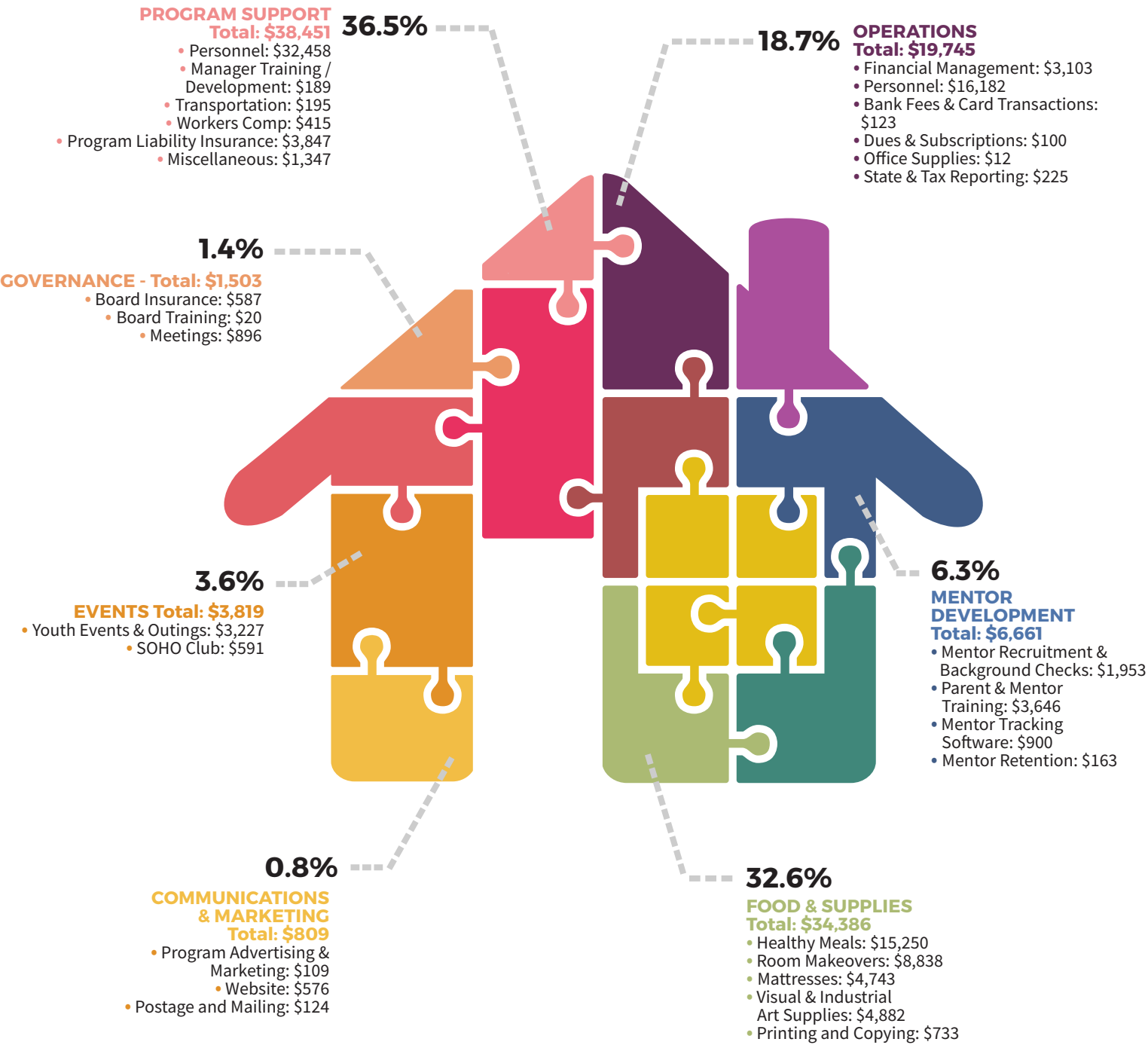
Total Income for Space of Her Own 2015-2016 Fiscal Year: \$131,935



## PROGRAM EXPENDITURES

Total Expenditures for Space of Her Own 2015-2016 Fiscal Year: \$105,374

**79.1%** SERVICES TO YOUTH - Total: \$83,316  
**20.2%** GOVERNANCE & OPERATIONS - Total: \$21,248  
**0.8%** COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING - Total: \$809



# HOW TO GET INVOLVED



"TRY TO BE A RAINBOW IN SOMEONE'S CLOUD." - MAYA ANGELOU, *LETTER TO MY DAUGHTER*

## JOIN SOHO AS A SPONSOR, FUNDER, MENTOR OR VOLUNTEER

SOHO supporters and their contributions make the personal development of SOHO girls and boys possible. SOHO is privileged to have such dedicated sponsors, mentors, artists, carpenters and guest speakers who help provide youth in need with social, emotional, academic and creative enrichment. The SOHO team extends a warm thank you to all supporters for their immeasurable impact on the lives of our SOHO girls and boys!

When you make a commitment to SOHO, you make a significant difference in the lives of youth most in need. Help a girl realize her potential; show a boy that, with a little encouragement, he is capable of setting life goals and realizing his dreams. **Support SOHO and open up a world of new possibilities.**

## CONTRIBUTE TO SPACE OF HER OWN AND SPACE OF HIS OWN

The majority of contributions to Space of Her Own, Inc. are allocated to provide direct services to program youth. Donate to SOHO, and help transform the lives of our 5th grade boys and girls and continue to support them during their middle school years.

Make your contribution:

- Donate online through SOHO's website, [www.spaceofherown.org/donate](http://www.spaceofherown.org/donate)
- Mail check or money order to Space of Her Own, Inc. 520 King Street, Suite 100, Alexandria VA 22314

## YOUR FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION WILL SUPPORT

- Supplies for life skills activities, arts & carpentry projects
- Nutritious weekly meals
- Room makeovers, including a new mattress, box spring and bedding
- Outings that expose youth to new ideas and opportunities
- Ongoing SOHO Club activities that promote long-term mentor/mentee relationships, academic enrichment and leadership development beyond the initial program year. Outstanding mentor recruitment, training and support
- Recruitment, training and support of outstanding mentors
- Exceptional program management

## SOHO SUPPORTERS MADE IT HAPPEN

ACT for Alexandria & Spring2Action, Alexandria City Public Schools, Alexandria Court Service Unit, Alexandria Mentoring Partnership, Alexandria Seaport Foundation, AmazonSmile, AmeriCorps VISTA, Arlington Community Foundation, Arlington Public Schools, The Art League, City of Alexandria, Corporation for National & Community Service, Crowell & Moring Foundation, Fox 5 (Mentoring Monday), Harry & Zoe Poole Foundation, Holy Cow, Home Depot, IFC Consulting Group, IVAKOTA Foundation, Kids Helping Kids, Marymount University Nonprofit Resource Center, Mason Hirst Foundation, Mentor, Inc., PGAL Architecture, Microsoft Benevity Community Impact Fund, Rotary Club of Alexandria, TrophyMart, UnitedWay DoMore24, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, Virginia Mentoring Partnership, Volunteer Alexandria, Washington Forrest Foundation, and **other generous individuals from throughout the DC Metro Region**

### SPACE OF HER OWN

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