2025-26

ANNUAL REPORT

PROJECT FRIENDSHIP
empowering youth through mentoring

building a legacy

Building a LASTING FOUNDATION

together

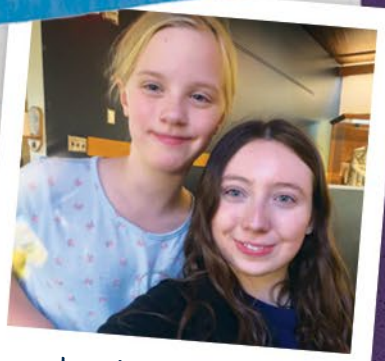
Every strong structure begins with a solid foundation built by many hands.

Since 1965, Project Friendship has been building one relationship at a time – creating a foundation of **confidence, belonging, and opportunity** for thousands of Northfield youth.

Today, we're proudly laying another kind of foundation. **Thanks to an anonymous gift of $50,000, Project Friendship established its very first endowment** this year through Northfield Shares. While this generous gift will help strengthen our organization today, its true purpose reaches far beyond this year – or even this generation. Imagine a future where Project Friendship's endowment is large enough to sustain our mission through its earnings alone. Imagine knowing that decades from now, children in Northfield will still experience the encouragement, friendship, and guidance of a caring college mentor because of gifts made today.

That's the future we're constructing, and **like every lasting foundation, it begins one gift at a time.**

We invite you to help build something that will stand strong for generations.



building confidence



building support systems

Leave a Legacy That Lasts

One of the most meaningful gifts you can make is one that continues long after you're gone.

By including Project Friendship in your estate plans or will, you **become part of a legacy that ensures future generations of Northfield youth will always have access to a caring mentor.** Whether your gift is large or small, it becomes another brick in a foundation that will support children for decades to come. Together, we can build something that lasts well into the future.

Flip to page 3 to learn more about Legacy Giving.

confidence, character, + connections

A Foundation of GENEROSITY

Building a strong future begins with meeting today's needs.

Every week, Project Friendship mentors and mentees meet to learn, laugh, explore, and grow together. Behind every one of these moments are the **essential expenses that make mentoring possible** – training, supplies, technology, and countless other behind-the-scenes details that create safe, meaningful relationships.

While our new endowment is an exciting investment in the future, **our annual donors make today's mentoring possible.** One gift helps build tomorrow; the other changes lives today; and both are essential to creating a strong foundation.

- As you consider your ***year-end giving,*** we hope you'll support our annual appeal through a **one-time or monthly gift.**
- If you're thinking about the ***legacy*** you'd like to leave, we invite you to consider including Project Friendship in your **estate plans.**

Together, these gifts ensure that Project Friendship remains strong – not only for today's youth, but for generations still to come.



building opportunity



building belonging

A Foundation of EXCELLENCE

Excellence doesn't happen by chance – it's built through preparation, investment, and a commitment to continual growth.

This year, Project Friendship was honored to receive a **$120,000 Increasing College Access and Participation (ICAP) Grant** from the Minnesota Office of Higher Education. This competitive grant will provide **$60,000 annually over the next two years** and will help us invest in enhanced mentor training, expanded college- and career-readiness opportunities, intentional goal setting, and extra support for mentees in grades 6–12.

This grant is much more than just an investment in Project Friendship. It's also **recognition that one caring mentor can help change the trajectory of a child's life.** Our mentors aren't just volunteers but also role models, advocates, and leaders.



building character

A Foundation of Friendship

Every Wednesday afternoon, a fourth grader named Leo can't wait to get to Carleton College to see his mentor, Gus.

Like many new mentor-mentee matches, their friendship began simply. They tossed a football, talked about school, wandered campus, and slowly got to know each other. But then **they discovered something special: a bridge tucked away in the Carleton Arboretum.**

Together, **Gus and Leo crafted wooden swords at the Carleton Maker Space and created an imaginary world** where a fierce troll lives beneath the bridge. Each week, they race through the Arboretum, swords in hand, determined to protect the kingdom from the troll waiting below.

Each of their adventures builds Leo's confidence, trust, and the kind of friendship every child deserves. And for Gus? For an hour every week, he gets to set aside college responsibilities and become a kid again – running through the woods, battling fictitious trolls, and remembering the joy of imagination.

That's **the beauty of mentoring**: it isn't one person giving while another receives, but it's instead **two lives growing stronger through friendship.** Sometimes, all it takes is a bridge, two wooden swords, and an imaginary troll.

FROM HOLLY,
Our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

This year has reminded me that **the strongest things we build are often the things we cannot see:** a child's confidence, a mentor's commitment, a family's hope, and a community's belief that all youth deserve someone in their corner cheering them on. Those are the foundations Project Friendship has been building since 1965.

This year, we took another exciting step by **establishing our very first endowment.** Thanks to an anonymous gift, we have begun building a financial foundation that we hope will sustain Project Friendship for generations to come. It's an investment not only in today's children, but in children we will never meet.

As Executive Director, I often think about what Project Friendship will look like in another 60 years. I hope future leaders will look back at this moment and say, *"This was when the community decided Project Friendship would always be here."* That future is possible because of people like you.

Thank you for believing that every child deserves a mentor, every mentor deserves support, and every generation deserves the opportunity to build on the foundation we leave behind.

With gratitude,
Holly Schoenbauer

2025-26 FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

REVENUE

Grants	$107,184
Individual Gifts	$104,166
Other	$12,000
Investments	$3,478
Total revenue	**$226,828**

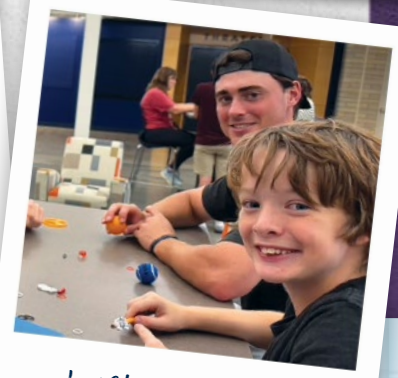
EXPENSES

Programs	$135,494
General, Administration, & Fundraising	$29,824
Total expenses	**$165,318**

For details, reference our ***EIN# 41-1565496***



building connections



building the future

Join us in building A STRONG FOUNDATION

This year we had 347 mentor-mentee pairs who met for a total of 7,125 hours – two new records for Project Friendship! That's *a lot* of laughing, bonding, and growing ... but it's *also* a lot of supplies, training, and support. We rely on our community *(that's you!)* to help us ensure we have solid footing, both now and in the future.

Ready to add another brick to our foundation?

You can give securely online:

Annual Giving *(through a one-time or recurring monthly gift)* supports today's needs by funding weekly mentor meetings, match support, family engagement, training for mentors and staff, and activities and special events for our youth.

Visit **ProjectFriendshipMentoring.org/donate** to donate online. You can also explore memorial gifts, corporate matching, in-kind donations, and more.

Legacy Giving *(through estate plans or a will)* protects tomorrow's needs by growing our endowment fund, strengthening our future programming, and helping to ensure that Project Friendship has lasting stability for future generations of youth.

Visit **NorthfieldShares.fcsuite.com/erp/donate** and type ***Project Friendship Fiscal Agency Fund*** in the "Search Funds" field to leave your legacy.

Or, you can mail a check to: Project Friendship | 1651 Jefferson Parkway | Northfield, MN 55057

Questions about donation options? E-mail Holly@ProjectFriendshipMentoring.org

PROJECT FRIENDSHIP
empowering youth through mentoring

1651 Jefferson Parkway
Northfield, MN 55057

ProjectFriendshipMentoring.org
(507) 301-7705



ANNUAL REPORT *inside!*

Project Friendship's 2025-26 SUCCESSES AT A GLANCE

number of YOUTH MENTEES by grade

35 in grades K-3	124 in grades 4 & 5
139 in grades 6-8	49 in grades 9-12

24 partners in our community offered exciting opportunities to our mentor-mentee pairs. To each of our generous local partners, ***we thank you!***

347 TOTAL MATCHES throughout the year

up from 330 the previous year

... our 12th consecutive year of growth!

246 *mentors from* **CARLETON COLLEGE**

210 *mentors from* **ST. OLAF COLLEGE**

Celebrating Our ICAP Grant!

We received a **$120,000 grant**, with $60,000 awarded per year, for two years. **This grant helps to support:**

- College & career readiness
- Enhanced mentor training
- Goal setting & academic success
- Family engagement
- Expanded support for grades 6–12
- Historically underserved students

Flip to page 2 *to learn more about our ICAP Grant!*

Our matches met **IN PERSON** for mentoring for a grand total of

7,125 *hours*

... 345 more hours than last year!