



20
23



CHICAGO
DEBATES

ANNUAL
IMPACT
REPORT



CHICAGODEBATES.ORG

A DEEPER IMPACT AND INVESTMENT

To our community of supporters,

2023 was a year of resilient transformation and growth, marked by a steadfast commitment to excellence and equity amidst a backdrop of challenges. Through changes in leadership, changing funding landscapes, and staff capacity challenges, our community has demonstrated remarkable resilience and collaboration.

The introduction of Debate en Español represented a leap towards broader inclusivity, breaking new ground by welcoming a broader array of voices into the discourse of debate. Similarly, the implementation of the Public Forum debate format at the middle school level has not only enriched our programming but has also continued to show promising growth into 2024.

Our expansion efforts have been notably successful, with over 15 new schools joining our ranks, thanks to the dedication of our team and the fresh energy infused by our new board and associate board members. Their participation has been pivotal, revitalizing our mission and propelling our vision forward.

This year required us to lean heavily on our foundational values of excellence, collaboration, and solution-orientation. These values have guided us through the challenges and have set a strong foundation for the future. As we look ahead, we are filled with optimism. The initiatives we've embarked on are just the beginning of what promises to be a bright and impactful future for Chicago Debates.

Our journey thus far underscores the transformative power of debate. It is a tool for change, empowering young minds and fostering a more informed, engaged, and equitable world. We are grateful for the continued support of our staff, volunteers, supporters, and the incredible debaters we serve. Together, we are not just debating; we are shaping the future.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to advance the educational achievement, community contributions, and life success of Chicago's youth through the transformative power of academic debate.

OUR VISION

We envision a world in which Chicago youth are empowered to find their voice, succeed in college and career, and become leaders in their community.



Anthony Bolden
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Eli Kay-Oliphant
CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OUR PROGRAM MODEL

A DEEPER IMPACT

FOR STUDENTS

POLICY, PUBLIC FORUM, DEBATE EN ESPAÑOL, SPECIALTY DEBATES, SPEECH, CHICAGO DEBATES SUMMER INSTITUTE

Students get to compete in 4-6 competitions through the year, seasonal speech competitions, and opportunities to network with legal career professionals. Chicago Debates brings programming for all seasons!



FOR EDUCATORS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CREDIT, CURRICULA, ON-SITE ASSISTANCE, RESOURCES

Our coaches are the pivot point in our children's lives! They help debaters to find their voice, empowering the next generation of fierce civic advocates. Chicago Debates provide both financial and pedagogical support. No prior experience necessary. As a national debate hub, our educators also benefit from a robust coaches' community.

FOR SCHOOLS & DISTRICTS

TOURNAMENTS, & CLOSING ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

Competitive debate increases matriculation rates and boosts literacy. As a trusted partner with Chicago Public Schools for over 25 years, our administrative support ensures tournaments reach all corners of the city, so that all students can have access to this trajectory-shifting activity.



PROGRAM IMPACT



1,487

Students Served

104

Schools Served

80%

Title I Schools

46

Tournaments

1,030

Hours of Coach
Training & Support

107

Coaches

STUDENTS SAID DEBATE:

95%

Increased their interest in
politics and community
engagement

84%

Strengthened their
academic performance

95%

Improve debate skills

94%

Improved reading skills

92%

Will help them be
successful in college

94%

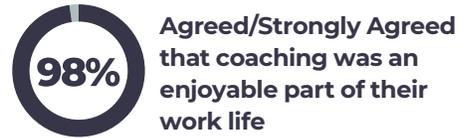
Improved critical
thinking and
communication skills

89%

Tournaments were
organized

COACH IMPACT DATA

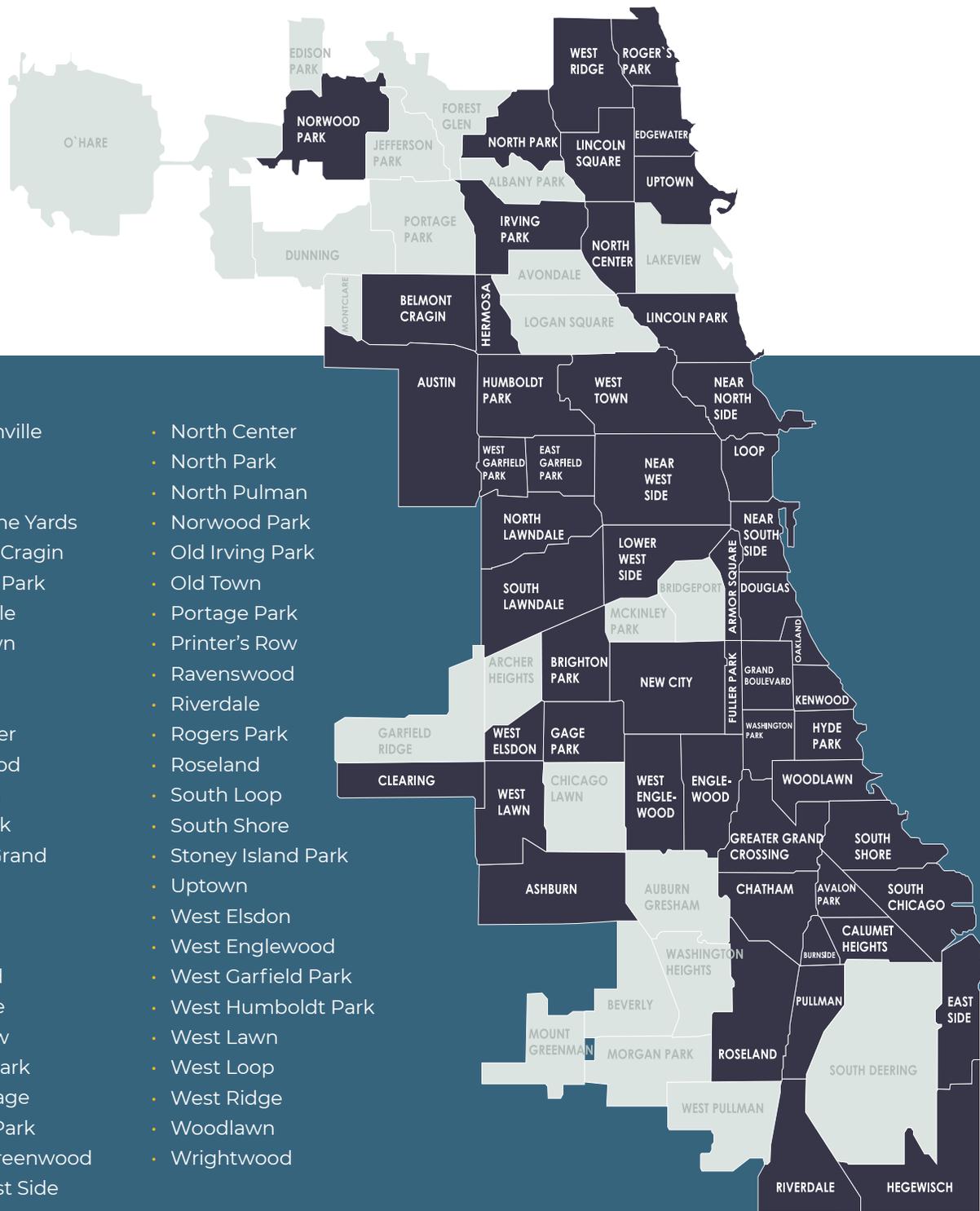
COACHES SAID DEBATE:



SERVING 50+ NEIGHBORHOODS

NEIGHBORHOODS SERVED

- Andersonville
- Ashburn
- Austin
- Back of the Yards
- Belmont Cragin
- Brighton Park
- Bronzeville
- Chinatown
- Clearing
- East Side
- Edgewater
- Englewood
- Evanston
- Gage Park
- Greater Grand Crossing
- Hermosa
- Hillside
- Kenwood
- Lawndale
- Lake View
- Lincoln Park
- Little Village
- Morgan Park
- Mount Greenwood
- Near West Side
- North Center
- North Park
- North Pulman
- Norwood Park
- Old Irving Park
- Old Town
- Portage Park
- Printer's Row
- Ravenswood
- Riverdale
- Rogers Park
- Roseland
- South Loop
- South Shore
- Stony Island Park
- Uptown
- West Elsdon
- West Englewood
- West Humboldt Park
- West Lawn
- West Loop
- West Ridge
- Woodlawn
- Wrightwood



PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS



MIDDLE SCHOOLS

- Audubon School
- Abraham Lincoln Elementary School
- Alexander Graham Bell Elementary School
- A. N. Pritzker Elementary School
- Beasley Academic Center
- Boone Elementary School (Mosaic School of the Fine Arts)
- Catalyst Circle Rock Charter School
- CICS Wrightwood Chicago International Charter School
- Dixon Elementary School
- Edgar Allan Poe Classic Elementary School
- Edward E. Sadlowski Elementary School
- Frazier International Magnet School
- Gary Comer Middle School
- George B. Armstrong School of International Studies
- George Leland STEM School
- Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy
- Harriet Tubman Elementary School
- Helen C. Peirce School of International Studies
- Irene C. Hernández Middle School for the Advancement of the Sciences
- James E. McDade Classical School
- James Hedges Fine and Performing Arts School
- James Wadsworth STEM Elementary School
- Lindblom Math and Science Academy
- John C. Haines Elementary School
- Joshua D. Kershaw Magnet School
- Joyce Kilmer Elementary School
- Keller Regional Gifted Center
- KIPP One Academy
- Leslie Lewis Elementary School
- Manierre Elementary School
- Mark T. Skinner West Elementary School
- McCutcheon Elementary STEAM School
- Mitchell Elementary School
- Murray Language Academy
- Nathan Hale Elementary School
- National Teachers Academy
- O.A. Thorp Scholastic Academy
- Oscar DePriest Elementary School
- Sidney Sawyer Elementary School
- Skinner North Classical School
- South Loop Elementary School
- St. John De La Salle Catholic Academy
- West Park STEAM Academy

HIGH SCHOOLS

- Acero- Major Hector P. Garcia M.D. High School
- Amundsen High School
- Back of the Yards College Preparatory High School
- Catalyst Maria High School
- Chicago Bulls College Prep
- Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences
- Chicago Military Academy Bronzeville
- Chicago Vocational Career Academy
- Corliss Early College STEM High School
- Crane Medical Prep High School
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. College Preparatory High School
- Eric Solorio Academy High School
- Gary Comer College Prep
- George Washington High School
- Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy
- Hansberry College Prep
- John Hancock College Preparatory High School
- Jones College Prep
- Kenwood Academy High School
- Lake View High School
- Lane Tech College Prep High School
- Legal Prep Charter Academy
- Lincoln Park High School
- Lindblom Math and Science Academy
- Little Village Lawndale High School
- Mather High School
- Michele Clark Academic Prep Magnet High School
- Morgan Park High School
- Muchin College Prep
- Northside College Prep
- Phoenix STEM Military Academy
- Pritzker College Prep
- Prosser Career Academy
- Rickover Naval Academy
- Roberto Clemente Community Academy
- Sarah E. Goode STEM Academy
- Schurz High School
- South Shore International
- Stienmetz College Prep High School
- The Noble Academy
- Thomas Kelly College Preparatory
- Von Steuben Metropolitan Science Center
- Walter Payton College Preparatory High School
- Whitney M. Young Magnet High School
- William Howard Taft High School

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

DEBATER OF THE YEAR



DAVID MEDUGA

CHICAGO BULLS COLLEGE PREP

As a Sophomore at Chicago Bulls College Prep, David Meduga joined the new debate team unsure of what to expect. Because neither the students or the coaches had experience in debate, it was a learning experience for everyone involved. **“Even though we weren’t the best at first, it was kind of fun just to learn with everyone and be able to grow with them,”** Meduga said. After three years of debating, David became a leader on his school’s team, even advancing to the Red/Maroon Conference Championship Round and competing in Rockefeller Chapel his senior year. He now studies at Yale, where he uses the confidence and skills that debate has given him every day. When asked what he would say to a student considering joining their debate team, the answer was easy. **“Just join your debate team. There’s no risk. The worst possibility is that you don’t have fun, and the best possibility is that you gain all these different skills like speaking skills, confidence, and critical thinking, or you may meet lifelong friends.”**

2023 CITY CHAMPIONSHIP WINNERS

This tournament brought all our high school conferences together (RCC, Blue/Silver, Red/Maroon) giving less experienced competitors a vision of higher targets, and more experienced competitors a capstone. **86 teams, representing 31 schools were in attendance.** Debaters also received a campus tour by Northwestern’s head coach. **Northside College Prep High School swept in all divisions.**

ALUMNI OF THE YEAR



JOCELYN AGUIRRE

THOMAS KELLY COLLEGE PREPARATORY

Jocelyn was at her freshman year orientation when her life was changed forever. When she was approached about joining the debate team, she attended her first practice. A decade later, she now works at the Chicago Debates office, preparing for tournaments and training volunteers to help students just like her. **“Debate put me in a place where I had to challenge myself, and I’m glad because it helped me a lot in college,”** Aguirre explained. **“It taught me to think of real-time solutions, and to advocate for people to use their voices.”** Jocelyn continues to be a key part of Chicago Debates and demonstrates the best qualities of a Chicago Debates alumni.

COACHES SPOTLIGHT

COACH OF THE YEAR



DEVON MCSAGER KENWOOD ACADEMY

Devon McSager used to be required to read through her class syllabus on the first day of school. In an effort to save time, she sped through it, which caught the attention of several debate students in her class. **“I read through it really, really fast and a student approached me and said, oh my gosh, we read really fast in debate and we need a debate coach,”** McSager explained. **“I said, come back to me in a week**

if you can’t find anybody else. And ten years later I am still the debate coach.” Since then, Kenwood Academy has become a force within the league, building a legacy of passionate debaters who found a home on the Kenwood debate team. **“I’ve stayed because the kids are just so amazing that even when I’m feeling burned out at the end of the season, they’re talking about things that very few high schoolers are talking about. So it’s refreshing and it’s enjoyable to have that kind of conversation with students.”** Devon’s commitment to her students and to the league is an inspiration to coaches both new and old.

A DECADE OF DEDICATION

DEDICATION REWARDED



DIANA KRNJACA CHICAGO AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL

When the former debate coach at Chicago Agricultural High School was stepping down in 2014, he immediately recommended his former student teacher-turned coworker, Diana Krnjaca. Her qualifications? Having watched one competitive debate round. **“I started off because I went to a tournament and saw a round and the principal’s like, you know what? I think that’s enough for you to**

be a debate coach.” A decade later, having stepped down from the position in 2023, Diana’s legacy as a coach is cemented in the hundreds of students who found community and confidence in debate. **“I think that debate is the home for the students who feel like they don’t have one,”** Krnjaca said. **“That impact alone is immense. Just knowing that this is gonna shape someone’s life and then give them purpose as well.”** Chicago Debates is proud to work with passionate coaches like Diana, and thanks her for her decade of dedication to her students.

VOLUNTEERS MAKE AN IMPACT

IMPACT DATA

90%

Felt they were making a difference while working with students

93%

Would recommend volunteering to a friend

89%

Volunteer need met

92%

Enjoyed their experience



LINDA MEHARENNA

KINDERGARTEN SUBSTITUTE TEACHER

Linda Meharena volunteered as a table operator and judge for over 60 hours during the tournament season. While serving as a substitute teacher for kindergarteners, she heard about Chicago Debates and has been working with us since! Not having any previous ties to the organization, such as a student, relative, or coach, Linda's continued service and steady excitement in judging is cherished by our team! **"I am amazed when I see the bright and talented students make their case in a well reasoned manner. I believe in the need of a well informed youth that's able to think critically and express opinions rationally even when the opinions may disagree with their own,"** said Linda. **"I think people should consider volunteering and supporting Chicago Debates because the advice and constructive criticism a volunteer is able to offer to the amazing debaters helps them to grow and gain ever increasing confidence in their role as informed critical thinking citizenry in their schools, community, city and state."**



JAYSON LAW

COMMUNITY COACH FOR SOUTH LOOP ELEMENTARY

Jayson Law joined Chicago Debates in 2024 as a Community Coach for South Loop Elementary. With a passion for serving others and ensuring student success, Law joined Chicago Debates as a new volunteer. **"I decided to get involved with Chicago Debates because of the impact policy debate has on its competitors, coaches and judges,"** said Law. **"Competing as a debater does wonders for improving one's public speaking and critical thinking skills. The space encourages learning, so debaters don't have to be afraid to grow from their own mistakes, while still having the opportunity to remain competitive with one another. Above all, the space remains fun! Chicago Debates creates an environment that encourages debaters to take risks, improve, and build relationships with other competitors. The ability to keep a space like that up and running requires a strong community of volunteers, parents and coaches, which Chicago Debates has and will continue to appreciate in the future."**

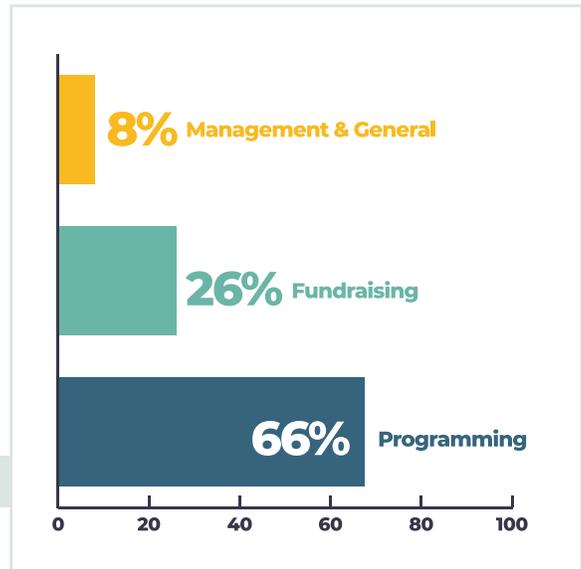
FINANCIAL SPOTLIGHT

Statement of Financial Position

Total Current Assets	\$684,398
Current Liabilities	\$51,688
Total Net Assets	\$632,710

Statement of Activities

REVENUE	
Total Revenue	\$1,271,144
EXPENSES	
Total Expenses	\$1,575,757
Net Revenue	\$(304,613)



OUR PATH FORWARD

Participation Goals



PRIORITY #1

Sustaining Our Impact

After more than 25 years of service, we are keenly aware of the challenges we face to not only survive another 25 years but thrive for another 25 years. As a result, we will continue making strategic financial and operational adjustments to ensure the organization can maximize its efforts throughout the City of Chicago.

PRIORITY #2

Strengthening New Program Offerings

During the pandemic, the organization embraced a number of new programmatic initiatives. We will seek to ensure these new program offerings are as thoroughly supported as our flagship Policy Debate program has been throughout the years, ensuring we live out our value of excellence in all we do.

PRIORITY #3

Cultivating New Partnerships

Considering the significant impact we have had in the lives of 20,000 Chicago Public Schools students and the schools they attend, we will seek to find new corporate and community partners who are equally committed to the success of Chicago youth.

PRIORITY #4

Strategically Expanding Our Capacity

As demand for debate grows, we will invest in expanding our staff and volunteer capacity. Our success hinges on our guarantee that all program participants have access to the same high-quality programming.

YOU MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

THANKS TO YOU!

Thanks to your commitment, we were able to award Title I students sponsorships to our annual Debate Summer Camp, add new Chicago Public Schools debate teams to our program, offer additional coach and staff support, and so much more! We could not have done these things without YOU!

We appreciate all donations - large or small! Our staff has made every effort to ensure all donations are accurately reflected. However, errors occasionally occur. Please accept our apologies for any inadvertent omission, misspelling or incorrect listing. Please contact our Development team to allow us an opportunity to update our records. Note: FY23 is July 1, 2022- June 30, 2023

Champion Debater Level \$50,000+

BASCOM

Varsity Debater Level \$20,000+

Allstate Insurance Company
Elizabeth Morse Genius
Charitable Trust
Fifth Third Bank
McDermott Will & Emery
W.P. and H.B. White
Foundation

Junior Varsity Debater Level \$10,000+

The Albert Pick, Jr. Fund
Amber Thomas
The Andrew and Alice Fischer
Charitable Trust
Eli Kay-Oliphant
Health Care Service
Corporation
Helen Brach Foundation
John Hammond
Kirkland & Ellis
Maurice R. and Meta G. Gross
Foundation
White & Case LLP

Novice Debater Level \$5,000+

Amit Bindra
The Chicago Community Trust
David Gobberdiel
David Nadig

Elainea Jackson
Erika Gilliam-Booker
Faegre Baker Daniels
Jason Tinsley
Kathryn Bjorklund
Leo Smith
Matt Reedy
Mitchell, Williams, Selig, Gates
& Woodyard, PLLC
Nordstrom
Rich Berg
Sam Nandi
Steans Family Foundation

Rookie Debater Level \$1,000+

Abigail Van Hook
Arne Duncan
Benjamin Cohen
Brian Donlan
Cindy Stuyvesant
Cynthia Nadig
David Nadig
Douglas J Bacon
Elisa Davis
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George Good
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Debate Leagues
New Frontiers Foundation
Origami Risk
Palmerseheim & Mathew LLP
Prinz Law Firm
Rachel Haig
Richard W. Sullivan
Robert Hernquist
Sandy Zunker Brown
Schiff Hardin
Shandice Sluch
Stacey Wilson
Stanley Pierson
Tania White
Tiffany Higgins
Toinette Gunn
Walter & Karla Goldschmidt
Foundation
Zanette Sanders

Scrimmage Debater Level \$5-\$999

Aaron Hersh
Adam Moreland
Aditi Singh
Alicia Lascelles
Alicia St. Clair
Alvin Barnes
Ameya Avasare
Ana Bittner
Andre Frieden
Andrew Arsht
Andrew Glubisz

Andrew Hammond
Angela Whiteside Smith
Ann Peter
Annette Sorich
Ansley Schrimpf
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Barrington Lopez
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Benjamin Taylor
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Beth Gallagher
Beth Niestat
Bijan Poustinchian
Bradley Gluszewski
Brandi Barnes
Brandon Freud
Brenda McGlohon Mitchell
Brendan Kim
Brenna Ram
Brian Haussmann
Brian Manuel
Brian Shanahan
Briana Mezuk Ratliff
Bryan Hsueh
Carlos Penikis
Carlos R. Cardenas
Carmen Halsell

YOU MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

THANKS TO YOU!

Carol Anne Been
Caroline Spinali
Charles Cammack
Charles Smith
Cherise Ledet
Chris Nybo
Chris Wheat
Christa Miller
Christine Uhrich
Christopher Alexander
Christopher Mair
Christopher Parente
Christopher Pedersen
Cindy Stuyvesant
Cindy Talmadge
Claudia Lopez
Colin Cunningham
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Dale Hammond
Dan Foley
Daniel Charles
Daniel Seara
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Euler Bropleh
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Heather Nadig
Heidi Good
Heidi Steele
Hillary Dale
Hopson Preis
Hugo Luna
Husam Haj
Ian Burns

Ian Scott
Indeed Inc
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J.D. Sanford
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Jhanelle Thompson
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John Powell
Johnathan Duffie
Jonathan Glover
JonTia Pegues
Jordan Katz
Jordan Soliday
Joseph Deegan
Jovan Kangrga
Judge Carl Boyd
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Justin Kirk
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Kurt Hilgendorf
Kylah Eatman
Laura Feldman
Laurel Keys
Laurel Tompos
Lauryn Trautmann
Lawrence Hamilton
Lee Quinn
Leslie Lynn
Lindsay Weinstein

Madeline Witte
Madison Mohns
Margaret Suchan-Pickert
Marge Strong
Maria Schiopu
Marianne and Sam Oliva
Marissa Higgs
Marissa Pomerantz
Mark Barnes
Mark Hammond
Mark Reid
Mary Ann Sanders
Matt Boston
Matt Jason Fisher
Matt Kriege
Matthew Harms
Matthew Stannard
Matthew Whipple
Megan Soliday
Melanie M. Jackson
Michael Dickler
Michael Kramer
Michael McLaughlin
Michael Roston
Michael Wimsatt
Michele Coleman Mayes
Mike & Eileen Winter
Mitchell Weinstein
Mobashir Mohammad
Monique-Jolicia Johnson
Natae Eaves
Natalie Bennie
Neil Bouhan
Nicholas Joseph
Nicholas Ryan
Nick Greiner
Nicole Welling
Nilesh Dagli
Nina Ruvinsky
Olivia Gelder
Onica Matsika Schmidt
Pamela Shanahan
Pasha Varizi
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A LEGACY OF IMPACT

GET INVOLVED!

To volunteer at one of our tournaments, visit chicago.debates.org/volunteer or contact Jocelyn Aguirre, Volunteer Manager, at jaguirre@chicagodebates.org for more information. We offer resources to help you introduce Chicago Debates to your network, from hosting a Game Night, Virtual Trivia Challenge, or other fun opportunities! **For more information, please contact our Executive Director, Anthony Bolden at abolden@chicagodebates.org.**

DONATE

If you'd like to support Chicago students and ensure that they continue to have access to the transformative activity of debate, please DONATE at www.chicagodebates.org/donate or contact our Development Team at development@chicagodebates.org for more information.



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