

2014 Annual Report



Community Empowerment Fund

CEF Family,

Spend some time at our Durham or Chapel Hill CEF office; attend an Opportunity Class; see the CEF community rally in moments of celebration and challenge; witness laughter, storytelling and impromptu singing at a CEF gathering...And you'll get a taste of the CEF "secret sauce." The sauce? Well, that's what we call that unwavering shared belief in people and their potential—the tenacity and dedication of our members, advocates, community volunteers and supporters. It's this sauce that makes all that we were able to accomplish together in 2014 possible.

—Sherry Kinlaw & Stephanie Barnes-Simms, CEF Board Co-Chairs

This year in Chapel Hill, we ramped up support for our over 600 members and 200 active advocates. We built specialized training programs for Advocates and finely tuned systems to more quickly match members to the right services. We incorporated trainings for volunteers on power, privilege and oppression in both cities, encouraging advocates to contextualize their experience in terms of social and political systems. In 2014 CEF helped to convene a coalition of organizations to address the challenges faced by families receiving Housing Choice Vouchers in Orange County. CEF stepped up as the direct-service advocate for these families and worked to re-house dozens of families in homes that fit their needs.

—Matt Kauffmann, Advocate Program Coordinator

This year in Durham, we built a whole new level of capacity to support our growing base of over 200 members. We formalized our pilot financial coaching training into a semester-long academic course at Duke University to train all Durham advocates, and grew our volunteer coordination to fully harness the power of our committed team of over 50 advocates. Working closely with five shelters throughout Durham to integrate our financial coaching and matched savings accounts with their programs, we developed the partnerships and infrastructure to specialize in building financial capability.

—Janet Xiao & Anne Yeung, Durham Program Coordinators

In 2014, 132 CEF members saved \$135,233 towards personal goals, for a total of over \$300,000 saved since the program began in 2010. They built personal savings towards everything from moving out of the shelter to purchasing personal transportation to creating a rainy-day fund. This year we doubled the participants in our Renter's Savings IDA program, offering more low-income renters a 50% match on dollars invested towards their emergency fund.

—Alex Biggers, Savings Program Coordinator

In 2014, Opportunity Classes added a whole new level of member ownership into the "sauce". Rolling out an Alumni Ambassador program, members who attend more than 20 sessions and achieve personal goals are recognized for their success and their ongoing contribution to the class. Their participation in the discussion section of each class has created a one-of-a-kind experience—members sharing and supporting each other. In our 12-week series, we continue to fold-in relevant curriculum to meet people where they are, introducing new courses related to finances in ways that are meaningful no matter where your starting point may be.

—Mike Wood, Opportunity Class Leader

CEF is now five years old, and every year that we grow we work to refine the recipe for our "secret sauce." The essence remains the same, and yet still somewhat a mystery—embedded in the relationships and collaborative work of our members and advocates. But each year, we as an organization continue to learn, grow and change together with all the unique members, advocates, partners, supporters, friends (and you!) who make up the CEF family. Thank you for caring for this community and for CEF, and making all the results shared through this report possible. We appreciate you!

—Maggie West, Program Coordinator, Jon Young, Operations Coordinator

Stephanie Barnes-Simms

Sherry Kinlaw

Janet Xiao

Mike Wood

Maggie West

Sherry Kinlaw

Janet Xiao

Alex Biggers

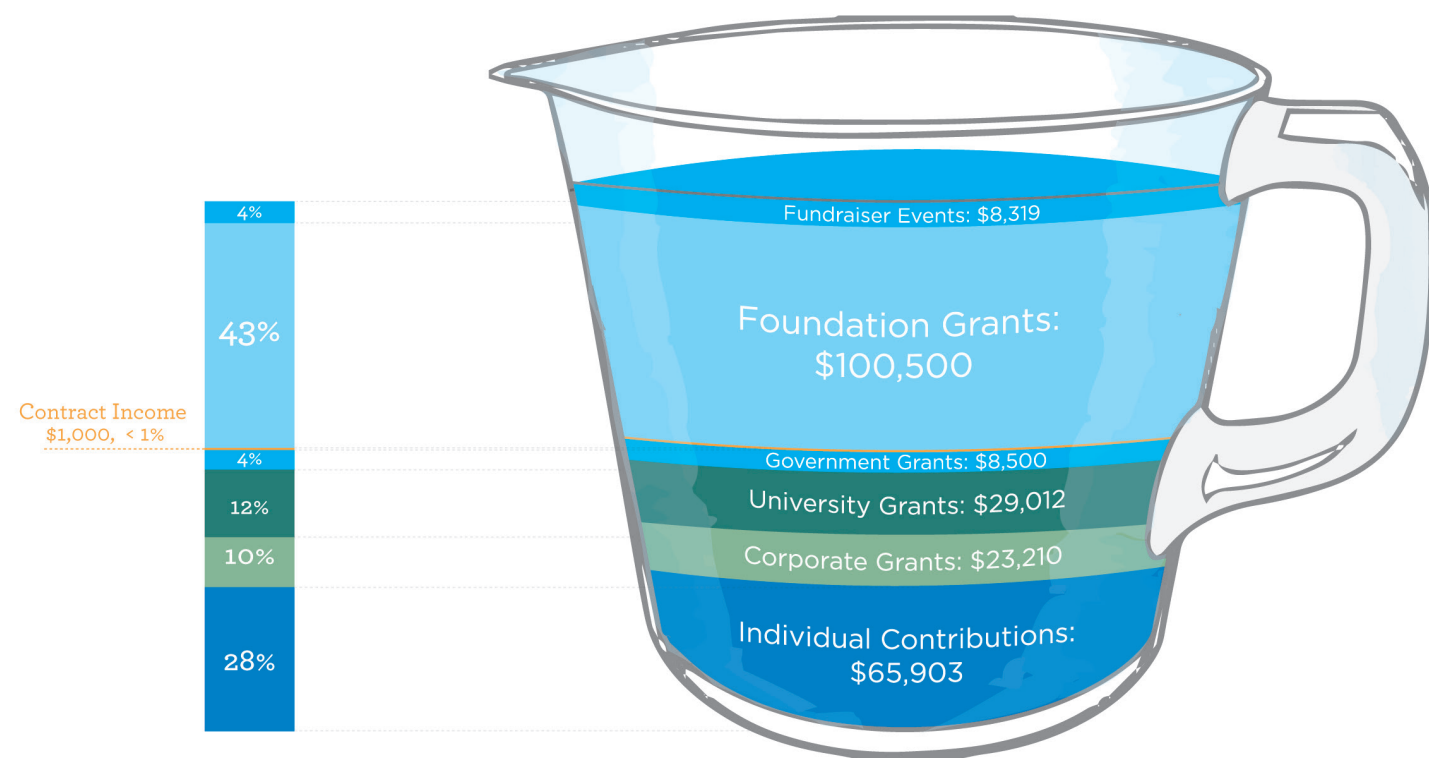
Jonathan

“ Be fearless. Love everyone.
I think that's CEF's motto! ”

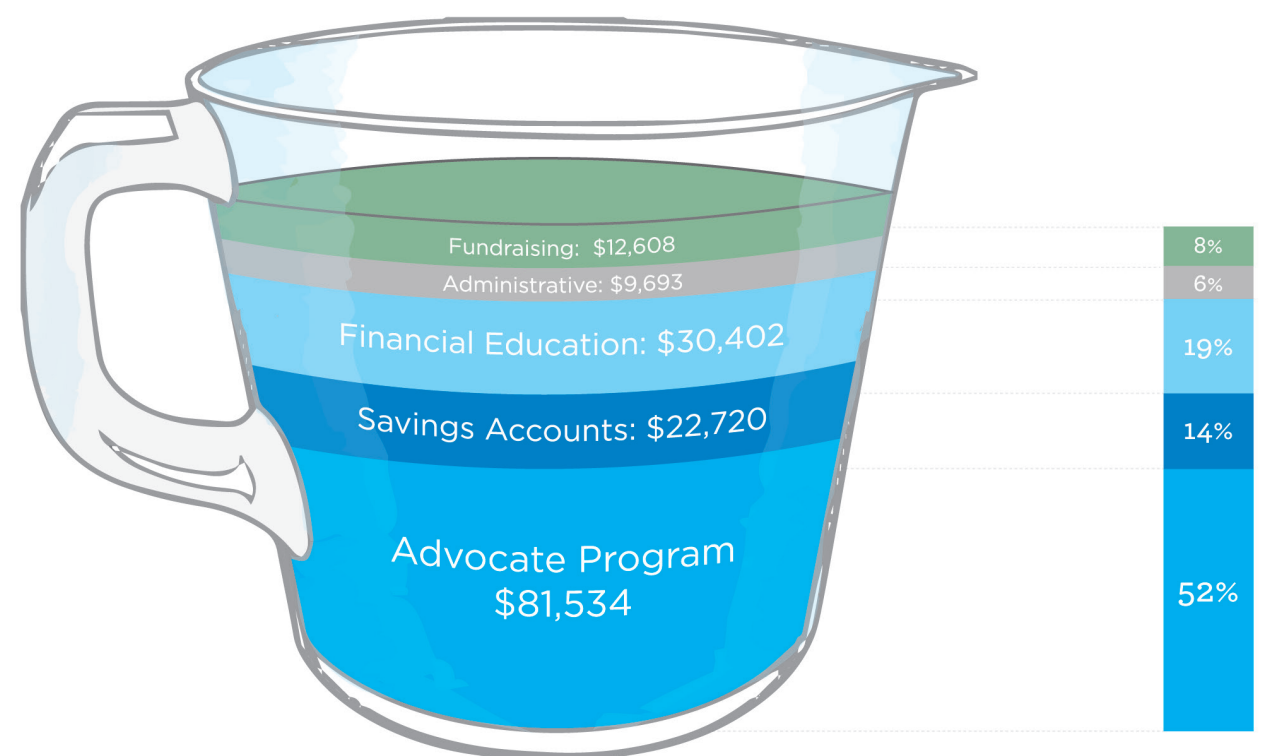
— Stephanie, CEF Board Member



Napoleon and his Advocate Danielle celebrate graduating from CEF and UNC respectively at our Spring Graduation Ceremony



\$236,444.....revenue



expenses.....\$156,957

2014 Recipe:

530 MEMBERS
288 ADVOCATES

work side-by-side
with

for a total of

18,858 HOURS

build relationships and secure:

valued at \$434,043!

145 JOBS
90 HOMES

expand financial, employment, and housing skill-sets for:

166 ATTENDEES

→ of CEF Opportunity Class

with: **132 ACCOUNTS**

SAVE \$135,233

building assets & savings habits



a more stable & secure future!

Jasper proudly displaying his awards for exceptional service at UNC's dining hall: "I got 3 out of 5 of the awards in less than a year. They say these other two are hard to get, but I'm going to get them!"



JASPER

Jasper has a great deal to be proud of. "Today I have my own apartment, I have transportation, I have a job, I'm on the board for IFC... And I have a great job. I'm a cook for UNC."

Jasper came to Chapel Hill in January 2014. Born and raised in Kinston, Jasper left his hometown to shake addiction. "I was about 14 when I started down that road of drugs and alcohol." Now at the age of 55, he is feeling "grateful and blessed," and clean and sober for over a year. He shares, "I just think that if I had kept going, I wouldn't be on this earth right now."

He joined CEF just a week after moving to town, and says, "I met my best friend, one of my best friends, his name is Sam." Sam was paired with Jasper as his Advocate, and "Just hung in there with me from day one, we're like glue... I always think about him, and say 'How's your mom?,' and he says the same thing to me. He's just like family to me now."

"When we first started it was mainly job-hunting. We would put in applications for 4, 5, 6 jobs every time we met. My motivation was always to work in the kitchen. I just set my mind on getting a job at UNC. And fortunately it happened."

Working with CEF, "Another one of the things I learned is how to save my money. When I put down the drugs and alcohol, I realized I needed to always have a nest egg. And CEF taught me that." Just a couple of months after moving out of the shelter, Jasper was hit by a car on his scooter. The accident broke his foot and he was unable to work for over a month. Fortunately, Jasper had that "nest egg" he built through CEF and didn't miss a single bill payment during his recuperation.

Above all, Jasper is most proud of his newly trusting relationship with his 91-year old mother. Jasper goes home often to visit his family, sharing "It's fortunate that today they see a new me, a better me, an improved me. I am grateful that at that age, [my mom] gets to see me this way."

What's next for Jasper? "One day I want to own something, my own place, you know. It's alright to rent, but this ain't the final stop here. I want a yard, I want a dog."

MS. DENISE

Home health was the vocation for Denise Rush. Her upbringing shaped her to care for the elderly in ways that afford them dignity, but finding work with benefits and regular hours had been a long-standing struggle. Denise moved her family into the shelter following an accident on black ice that caused her to lose her job and home.

Each week in the Genesis Home living room, Denise and her advocate Quinn Holmquist, a Duke student from Charlotte, NC, met to complete job applications. Their perseverance paid off when Denise was offered two positions, but they came with challenges: "People don't know that you have to go through a lot to be a [Certified Nursing Assistant]." She worked 50-75 hour weeks, and spent time and gas driving to clients' homes, which was uncompensated by her employer.

Denise's kids worried, "Mom, we haven't seen you for a week." Even Quinn grew anxious over her lack of sleep. "So I started saying 'no' to the hours. My employer's attitude was, 'How dare you not want to work all these hours?' They sent me an email saying, 'Your services are no longer needed.'" Fortunately, Denise and Quinn had been applying to better-paying jobs. Shortly after her dismissal, Denise called Quinn, exclaiming, "Duke called me!" She had received an offer for a salaried CNA position at Duke Hospital, with benefits and consistent hours that made it a keeper.

Denise's experiences have given her a powerful voice in Raise Up for 15, a national movement campaigning for a \$15 minimum wage. She has given speeches in Durham, Chicago, and Atlanta, and was featured in the New York Times. "My mentality is that we come together and pull each other up. That's how I was raised growing up in the Caribbean - there is unity." At Raise Up for 15 events, she has met college professors who live out of their cars, and civil rights activists who marched alongside Dr. King. "Back then, their working conditions were horrible, and because they fought, conditions improved."

While Quinn was studying abroad in Haiti and Peru, they texted each other using WhatsApp. "Ms. Denise used Google Translate to send me text messages in Haitian Creole while I was in Haiti, and in Spanish when I got to Peru. That was really cool. She also sent me emoticons of mangoes, and told me to eat a lot of them." 🥭🥭



2014 — Denise at Genesis Home, a family shelter, with her Advocate Quinn.



2015 — Denise standing in front of her new home!

“I think things that are unreachable become reachable with CEF.”

— Tony, CEF Member



Tim celebrates graduating from CEF's Opportunity Class and getting a job!

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