

Find Community.  
Be Yourself.



2023

Fiscal Year

July 2022 - June 2023

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**

# ON A MISSION

Five years ago in Mobile, Alabama, a group of community leaders and volunteers came together to create a peer support group for LGBTQ+ teens. Over time, the effort unearthed broader issues facing LGBTQ+ youth in our area, underscoring the need for a project that could adequately respond to those issues.

Today, we are a rapidly expanding grassroots effort led by educators and artists, professionals and gig workers, people of different cultural and economic backgrounds, all committed to the work of making Southwest Alabama a place where LGBTQ+ youth have the opportunity to lead thriving lives.

We are proud to provide a glimpse of what Prism United has accomplished over the last half-decade in the following pages of our first-ever annual report.



Prism United responds to the comprehensive needs of LGBTQ+ youth in Southwest Alabama. Specifically, Prism works to mitigate the psychological, socio-economic, and academic disadvantages caused by repression and victimization.



# A LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR

As a teenager, I shared the lived experience of so many other closeted LGBTQ+ young people. I struggled with anxiety and depression. I self-isolated for fear that my peers could tell I was gay. When I couldn't handle the self-loathing any longer, I dropped my classes at the University of South Alabama, quit my job, and contemplated suicide.

And then, I came out of the closet and found friends who loved me for exactly who I was. Being seen and accepted changed my life. I re-enrolled at USA and graduated with honors, found a new job, and (most importantly) moved through the world with a capacity for joy—a feeling that seemed impossible for years prior.

In the midst of that liberating season, I told my roommate: "If I could do anything meaningful with my life, I'd create a support group for LGBTQ+ high-schoolers."

This summer marks a half-decade since Prism United launched its first program. For five years, I've watched teens come through the doors of our gathering spaces wearing that same shame, anxiety, and hopelessness that I felt so many years ago. For five years, I've watched those same kids rediscover the laughter, self-confidence, and freedom of finding a community who loves them for exactly who they are.

If you are a part of the Prism family, whether a staff member, volunteer, board member, sustaining member, collaborator, or program participant—thank you for being a part of this transformative project. Thank you for being the living heartbeat of Prism United. Thank you for creating the space that so many of us needed when we were kids. Shame is a powerful force but not as powerful as belonging. You are the living proof.

Deepest gratitude,  
Corey Harvard (he/him), Executive Director



“

Shame is a powerful force  
but not as powerful as belonging.  
You are the living proof.

”

# 13

gatherings per month  
across our core programs

# 150+

LGBTQ+ youth and their  
parents supported at our  
program gatherings

# 1000+

individuals educated through  
LGBTQ+ Cultural  
Competency training at  
colleges, clinics, workplaces,  
and other nonprofits

# 100+

attendees at Prism Prom and  
the Jack O'Lantern Jubilee, the  
biggest LGBTQ+ youth bashes  
in Southwest Alabama

# 40

hours of free therapy  
sessions to LGBTQ+  
youth through the  
Prism Healing Fund

## IMPACTING THE COMMUNITY

Prism United is the only effort of its kind on the Alabama Gulf Coast. We serve LGBTQ+ youth by providing facilitated gatherings and special events for teens, preteens, and those who love them and by connecting them with LGBTQ-competent mental health providers and other critical resources.

We also actively collaborate with the greater community to raise awareness and educate on issues that impact LGBTQ+ youth through our outreach efforts, partnerships, and community engagement. To create a safer, more supportive community for LGBTQ+ youth, we bring cultural competency training to students, educators, clinicians, employers, and anyone else who will listen.

Through these programs and services, we strive to provide a holistic support system that enhances the mental health and overall well-being of LGBTQ+ youth in our community. With the unwavering support of our dedicated volunteers, donors, and partners, we aspire to be a beacon of hope and acceptance for all LGBTQ+ youth, empowering them to live their lives authentically and with pride.



# PIONEERING INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

Prism offers a meticulously designed program suite tailored to the needs of LGBTQ+ youth and their families. Central to our program design is the incorporation of engaging activity-based curricula. Utilizing creative mediums such as art, music, poetry, and literature, our curricula serve a dual purpose: enhancing self-esteem and imparting crucial knowledge in areas such as LGBTQ+ history, healthy relationship cultivation, HIV/STI prevention, community building, leadership, intersectionality, and essential psychological coping skills.

Our highly qualified and trained facilitators lead these innovative programs with unwavering dedication. Their commitment ensures that consistent and reliable support is available year-round, guaranteeing that LGBTQ+ youth and their families have access to a comprehensive and empowering support system.

## PRISM TEENS

Prism Teens hosts gatherings in Mobile and on the Eastern Shore featuring artistic, therapeutic, and educational activities for LGBTQ+ youth and allies ages 14-18. Special guests like poets, musicians, and community organizers enrich the experience for attendees. We also offer a secure Discord server for private text-based peer conversations. Throughout the year, we bring free HIV/STI testing and education to the youth room.

## PRISM PRETEENS

Prism Preteens gatherings feature a guided curriculum focused on virtues like courage, justice, and wisdom, fostering self-esteem and strategies for self-regulation. During sessions, there are breaks for play and socializing. Participants receive locally-designed virtue badges upon each unit's completion.



## PRISM FAMILIES

Prism Families offers a monthly support group creating a safe and non-judgmental environment for family members of LGBTQ+ youth to connect, receive peer support, and gain insights into LGBTQ+ matters. Since the genesis of the program in 2019, we've invited a number of special guests including LGBTQ-competent medical professionals and legal experts to answer questions about trans adolescent care and the rights of LGBTQ+ youth in the classroom.

## LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

The Prism Youth Leadership Initiative is a transformative program dedicated to empowering LGBTQ+ youth ages 14-18. Through a participant-centered and inclusive leadership model, young individuals gain essential advocacy skills. By creating a safe and accepting environment, the initiative aims to empower LGBTQ+ youth to lead positive change, shaping a more inclusive and accepting future for themselves and their community.



# BUILDING RESILIENCE: YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

The **Prism Healing Fund** is a vital initiative that directly supports the mental health and well-being of underserved LGBTQ+ individuals in our community. This fund provides free therapy sessions with affirming therapists for those who may otherwise be unable to afford essential mental health services.



The Prism Healing Fund stands as a powerful testament to the life-changing impact that targeted support can have on vulnerable individuals within the LGBTQ+ community.

By offering free therapy sessions and covering essential costs, the Prism Healing Fund has become a lifeline of emotional support to those who may otherwise feel isolated and abandoned.

In this first year that the Healing Fund has been available, it has covered over **40 hours** of therapy for members of our community.

The stories that have emerged from this initiative are testimonies of transformation, from individuals burdened by thoughts of despair to empowered individuals on a journey to self-discovery and renewed purpose. As the Healing Fund continues to thrive, it symbolizes a community's commitment to nurturing the well-being of its members and creating a lasting legacy of compassion and healing.

By addressing mental health needs head-on, this fund has catalyzed vital conversations about the significance of emotional well-being within the LGBTQ+ community. It has contributed to a larger narrative that emphasizes the importance of destigmatizing mental health struggles and cultivating an environment where seeking help is encouraged and normalized.

Special thanks to our partners:



# CHAMPIONING VISIBILITY & CULTURAL COMPETENCY

## SOUTHWEST ALABAMA INCLUSION PROJECT



In March 2023, we introduced the survey tool for the Southwest Alabama Inclusion Project (SAIP). This joint initiative, which had its initial launch a year prior in March 2022, is being steered by a team of dedicated academics and involves the active participation of 30 community organizations and businesses. Together, we aim to conduct the region's inaugural comprehensive community needs assessment focusing on LGBTQ+ populations in Southwest Alabama.

The project's objective is to execute a visible and high-participation data collection campaign, concentrating on LGBTQ+ current and former residents. This endeavor will offer valuable insights that inform decisions of local NGOs, steer community priorities, and support future funding appeals. The data collected will represent individuals spanning 10 counties in Alabama.

Since our survey tool launched, the survey has successfully engaged over 500 participants and helped to create visibility on a broad scale within Southwest Alabama. This exceptional effort recently earned the leaders of the project well-deserved recognition at the 2023 Mobile Community Health Leadership Awards Luncheon. The Mobile Medical Museum annually presents these awards to commend local leaders in education, awareness, and action addressing Mobile's most pressing community health issues. Results of the survey will be reported in the Fall of 2023. **Learn more [www.alabamainclusionproject.org](http://www.alabamainclusionproject.org).**

## LGBTQ+ CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING

Prism's LGBTQ+ Cultural Competency training actively cultivates understanding and awareness of the issues LGBTQ+ individuals face in their professional and personal lives. By developing cultural competency, this training mitigates cultural misunderstandings, enhances communication, and establishes inclusive, equitable environments for all participants.

Prism has successfully conducted trainings in a range of settings, including academic institutions, places of worship, and mental health service providers in the Mobile area, including within the following organizations:

- University of South Alabama
- Spring Hill College
- Lifelines Counseling
- Penelope House
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Alabama
- United Way of Southwest Alabama
- US Attorney's Office, Southern District of AL





# EMPOWERING VOICES WITH SELF-ADVOCACY

At Prism, we envision a future where, despite the challenges they face, LGBTQ+ youth are equipped with the skills and resilience to advocate for themselves, playing a transformative role in building a more inclusive and equitable society. This vision takes shape through collaborations with like-minded LGBTQ-focused groups like the Magic City Acceptance Center in Birmingham. Together, we've organized impactful marches at the Alabama State Capitol to protest against recent anti-trans bills and drag bans. The *Rally for Queer & Trans Youth Autonomy* on Trans Day of Visibility in March and *Drag Me to the Capitol* in May showcased the energy and power of young LGBTQ+ voices while also reflecting our commitment to empowering youth with the skills for self-advocacy, fostering self-expression and enabling them to proactively shape their individual destinies and stories.

Our advocacy has extended into other civic spheres, resonating within Mobile City Council meetings and across local businesses, organizations, and academic institutions. We're also active within the local LGBTQ+ community, speaking most recently at the Alabama Queer Town Hall. This innovative initiative aspires to cultivate meaningful dialogues and community engagement by addressing pressing subjects such as the legislative campaign against LGBTQ+ rights, equitable healthcare access, and the preservation of queer joy.



These diverse threads of community engagement, collaboration, and outreach intertwine to form a cohesive narrative of empowerment. Through our persistent advocacy efforts, we demonstrate our dedication to amplifying marginalized voices and nurturing a more inclusive future for Alabama's LGBTQ+ community.

We envision a future where despite the challenges they face, LGBTQ+ youth are equipped with the skills and resilience to advocate for themselves, playing a transformative role in building a more inclusive and equitable society.





“

I am thankful my daughter could dress the way that made her feel comfortable and I am thankful for the acceptance she felt. She hasn't stopped smiling and talking about it.

”

—Prism Parent on Prism Prom 2023

# ORGANIZING STANDOUT EVENTS

Prism's annual events, including **Prism Prom** and the **Jack O' Lantern Jubilee**, create crucial spaces where young individuals can find a sense of belonging, foster empowerment, and revel in a safe and celebratory atmosphere. These unique events provide a valuable respite from the challenges often encountered by LGBTQ+ youth, allowing them a unique opportunity to interact with peers who share similar experiences and identities. Both Prism Prom and the Jack O' Lantern Jubilee hold regional significance, attracting not only local attendees but also LGBTQ+ youth from other states and across the Gulf Coast.



**Color Fairhope With Pride (CFWP)** is not just an annual celebration; it's a powerful statement of unity and support for the LGBTQ+ community on the Eastern Shore. It's a gathering where LGBTQ+ youth and adults can witness the unwavering support that surrounds them year-round. Through the generous contributions of businesses, communities, and organizations as sponsors, auction item donors, and booth hosts, CFWP sends a clear message: you are not alone, and you belong here. This year's event, which attracted over 700 attendees, demonstrates the strength of our community's commitment to inclusivity and acceptance.

# ON THE HORIZON

## LAUNCHING A CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Despite being the second largest city and county in the state, there is a glaring lack of resources, representation, and safe spaces for LGBTQ+ youth in Mobile. As a result, LGBTQ+ youth view Southwest Alabama as a place to escape rather than a place to call home. Our grassroots fundraising effort seeks to change that narrative by establishing a dedicated LGBTQ+ youth center, which will serve as a beacon of support, empowerment, and resilience in Mobile County. We aim to provide wrap-around services to create an ecosystem of support that surrounds and uplifts the youth we serve, including those who are housing insecure.

Over the past few months, our efforts have been buoyed by three grant successes: firstly, the **LGBT+ Housing Initiative Grant**, which empowers us to provide resources such as a washer & dryer, lockers, and care kits to serve unhoused youth in our community; secondly, the **PowerOn Community Tech Grant**, equipping us with printers and computers to support youth in need of technology access; and lastly, the **wayOUT Grant**, a pursuit that began five years ago at our agency's inception. wayOUT's total contribution will be unveiled during a New York gala in September and will serve as the foundational investment for us to secure a permanent building of our own.

## LAUNCHING A LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

As a component of our Youth Leadership Initiative, the Youth Leadership Summit serves as a dynamic platform for LGBTQ+ youth, enabling them to showcase their projects, share personal growth experiences, and engage in meaningful discussions on vital LGBTQ+ topics. It empowers participants to amplify their voices, foster connections, and inspire change within the Prism United community and beyond. This annual summit encourages leadership development and advocacy, reinforcing its commitment to nurturing confident LGBTQ+ leaders.

## EXPANSION TO GULF SHORES

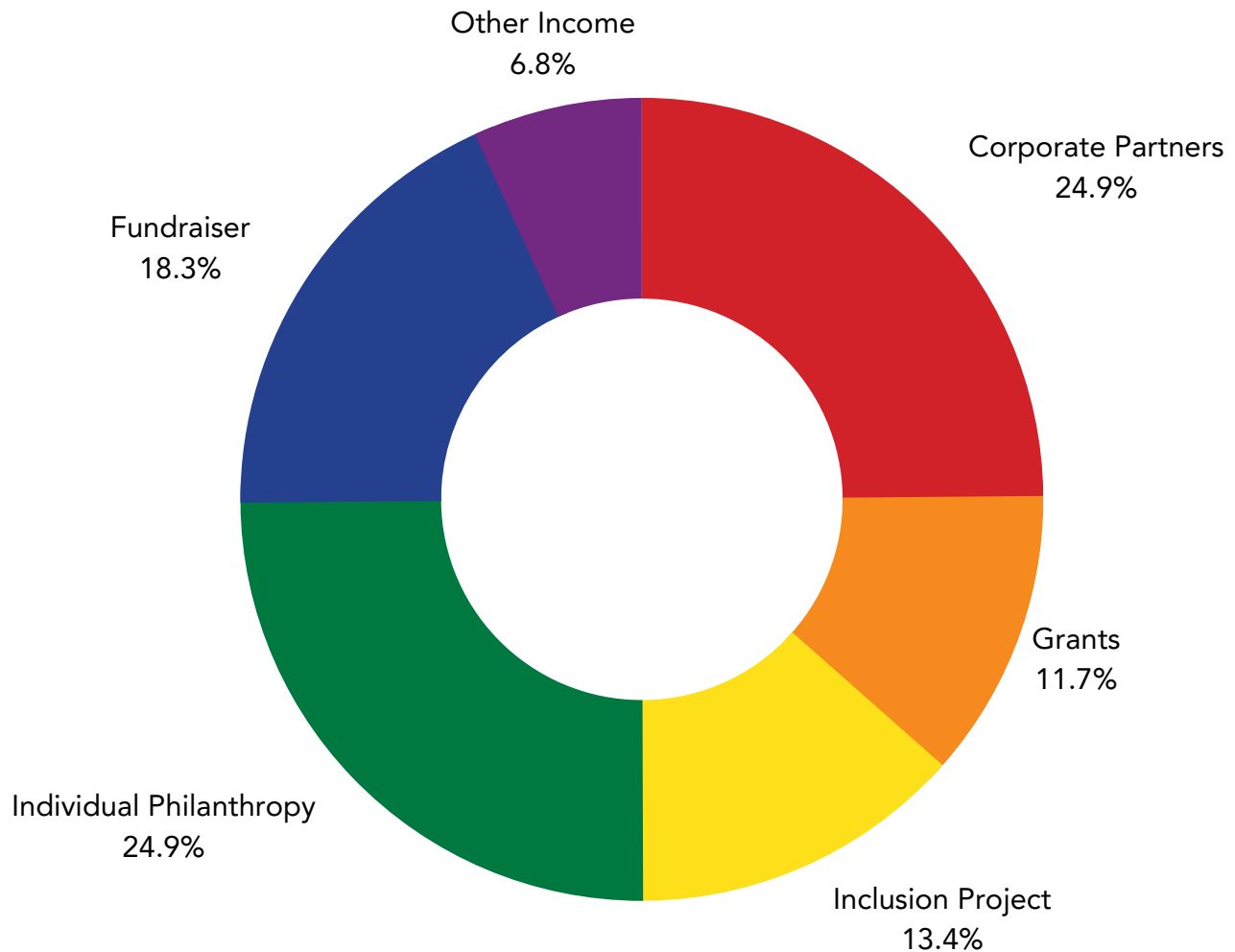
In line with our commitment to broadening our impact, Prism is excited to announce the expansion of our programming and services to Gulf Shores. This expansion allows us to extend our support and empowerment initiatives to LGBTQ+ youth in the Gulf Shores community, ensuring that they have access to the resources, connections, and safe spaces that Prism is dedicated to providing. Through this expansion, we aim to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for LGBTQ+ youth across South Baldwin County.

Special thanks to some of our generous partners:





# INCOME



**Corporate Partners:** \$41,514.41

**Grants:** \$19,457.00

**Inclusion Project:** \$22,419.96

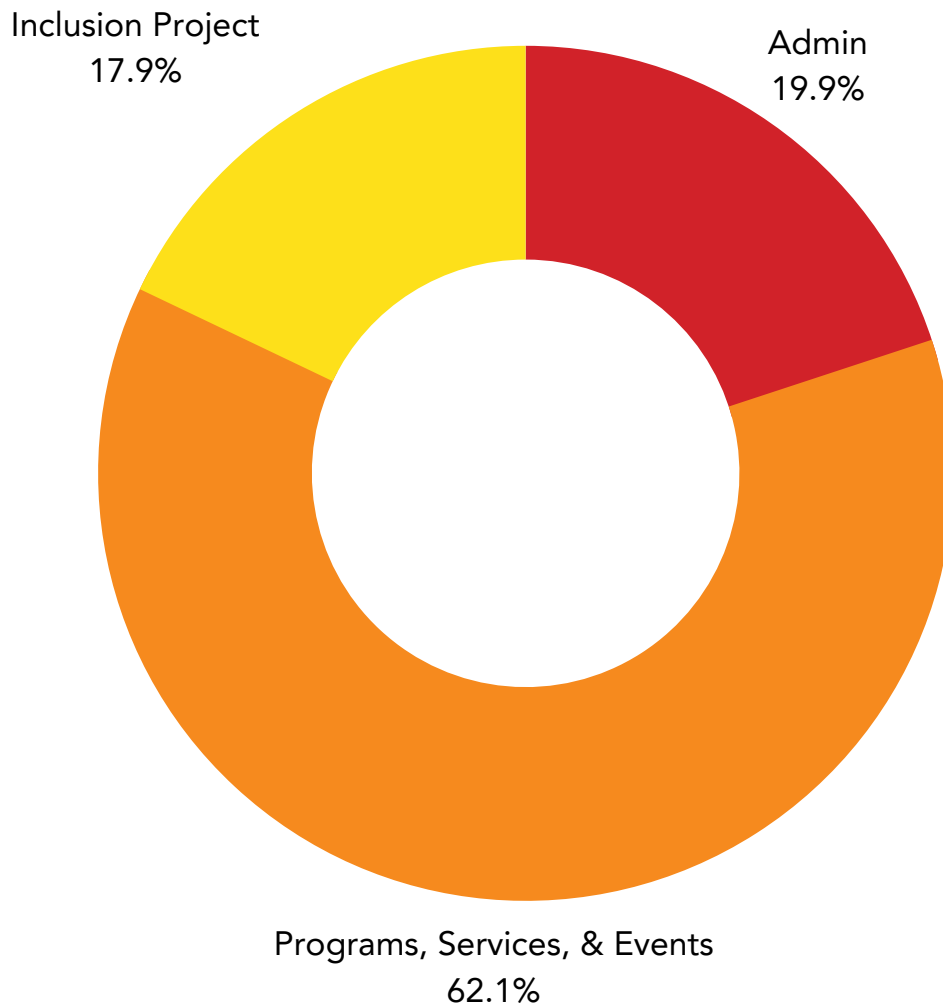
**Individual Philanthropy:** \$41,598.81

**Fundraisers:** \$30,549.97

**Other Income:** \$11,409.20

Over the years, we have worked rigorously to develop a diversity of revenue streams so that Prism can grow into an organization that is both financially sustainable and resilient. Since the onset of the pandemic, individual donations have made up the greatest bulk of our income. We're proud to belong to a community that believes in our work.

# EXPENSES



**Admin:** \$35,167.93  
**Programs, Services, & Events:** \$109,588.69  
**Inclusion Project** \$31,584.89

In our previous ('21-22) fiscal year, we raised a whopping \$50k more than we spent, positioning us to make big moves in our organizational growth. Our biggest move: expanding from a staff of one to three employees. Paired with the crucial support of our contract workers and volunteers, this growth in our capacity is allowing us to rise to the daunting challenges of this moment.



# SUSTAINING DONORS

The impact of sustaining donors on Prism's mission is immeasurable, and we want to extend our deepest gratitude to each and every one of you. Your unwavering commitment to supporting LGBTQ+ youth empowerment has enabled us to create meaningful and lasting change in our community.

Your consistent contributions provide the foundation that allows us to offer vital programs, organize impactful events, and foster safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTQ+ youth.

Alysandria Embergale  
Angela Pinkston  
Bernie & Catherine Dorrough  
Brittany Petersen  
Brooke & Chris Thistlethwaite  
Cal Gunnarsson  
Chenele Chapman  
Dan Van Nostrand  
Daniel Cook  
Daniel McGhee  
Darly M Luellen  
Diane Davis  
Franklin Trimm & Robert Koch  
Jason Pritchett  
Judy Van Nostrand

Kate Flukinger  
Krista & Nancy Henken-Presnall  
Linda Coogan  
Lisa & Ben Harvard  
Lisa Walker  
Margaret & Harvie Jordan  
Marya Taylor  
Michael Tyner  
Michelle Parvinrouh  
Natalie Fox & Leah Nichols  
Plia Preston  
Rhoda Vanderhart & Tom Herder  
Sarah Commiskey  
Tara McCook & Jay Mehta  
Will & Dina Marble

Join us in continuing to  
make a difference in the  
lives of LGBTQ+ youth!  
Become a sustaining donor  
by visiting our website:

[www.prismunited.org/give](http://www.prismunited.org/give)



# PARTNERS

Partnerships are integral to the success of Prism. Collaborating with like-minded organizations amplifies the impact of our organization by pooling resources, expertise, and networks to create a stronger and more holistic support ecosystem. Partnerships infuse our programs with diverse perspectives, innovative approaches, and shared commitment to fostering empowerment and growth for LGBTQ+ youth.

Our partnerships not only enhance Prism's ability to deliver transformative programs and services but also represent a united endeavor to bring lasting positive change to the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals in Southwest Alabama.



**AIRBUS**



Alabama Power  
Foundation



Lifelines Counseling Services  
*Take the First Step.*



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**RHODA VANDERHART, Coordinating Officer**



**CHENELE CHAPMAN, Administrative Officer**



**KRISTON SEIBER, Finance Officer**



**DAN VAN NOSTRAND, Records Officer**



**MARGARET JORDAN, Member**



**ANTONIO BRITO, Member**



# Questions? Contact Us:



(251) 219-8441



info@prismunited.org



www.prismunited.org