

Auset Muhammad

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

BRONZEVILLE FENCING ACADEMY

FOCUS.FORTITUDE.FAMILY

It's the driving factor behind what we do. Our community is the authentic ground on which we stand, together we're just stronger.

Since 2016, the Academy's mission has been to provide and mobilize services to meet the existing needs of at-risk and underserved youth in the community; contributing to the personal growth of its participants through the development of character-building exercises and tools that promote self-respect, academic excellence and positive social skills and behaviors.

2022 was a breakthrough year in many ways. The Academy works at holistically driven, youth-centric initiatives designed to restructure the way the communities we serve, see the future. Making sure our programs are youth-friendly and inclusive. An evaluation of programming shows we understood the assignment; pre- and post-pandemic retention rates show that 92% of our youth return for all four sessions, winter, spring, summer, and fall. 65% of youth maintained and/or achieved an improvement in their reading and math grades and, 70% of youth maintained and/or achieved enhancement in social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development.

We navigated a post-pandemic financial crisis, making robust adjustments to our strategic plan-operational steps and investments necessary for the Academy to fully execute our *focused* approach to program delivery and performance. We implemented key initiatives directing all our resources to the mission of driving our young people towards sustainable success. These

initiatives are a significant investment in our youth, *adding upwards of \$100 thousand* to the Academy's program expenses and requiring a 5% growth in our staff in the coming year.*

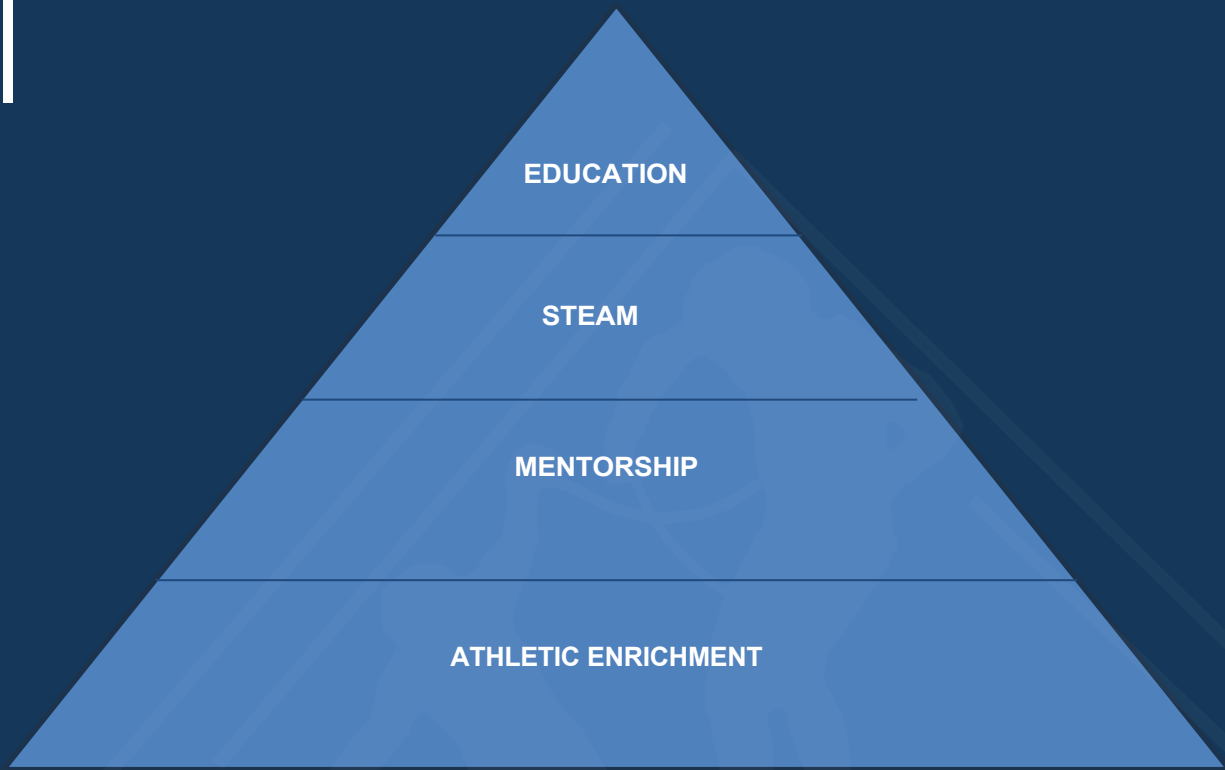
We also gained insight into our unique qualities: our wrap-around approach to youth-building; an aptitude for community engagement; the *fortitude* to lead; and the determination to get results. It's a dedicated method that helps youth flourish, even as they face many obstacles.

Academy volunteers and interns provided 395 hours of service helping us carryout our [mission](#) in the communities we serve. As an enrichment organization, the Academy partners with other youth-centric groups to offer our students opportunities in Education, STEAM, Mentorship-Workforce Development, and Athletics.

We are honored to be a resource in our student's success stories and a contributor to community wellbeing. In FY22 we served 400+ youth in our programs at our main campus, and partner sites, the Chicago Park District and Chicago Public Schools. Our annual report illustrates examples of resilience, relationship building, dedicated volunteers, and innovative programming. We are delighted with what we've accomplished but know that these milestones couldn't happen without our stakeholders – you the donors, supporters, and volunteers. Your assistance remains crucial for the Academy to continue providing life-affirming programs to youth in the community. On behalf of our board, volunteers, and the youth we serve, thank you for being part of our extended *family*

**Projected*

HOLISTIC APPROACH



Bronzeville Fencing Academy has been an engine of change since 2016. We invest our entire budget in the communities we serve.

Education

We elevate our youth with literacy activities that engage at both primary and secondary education levels.

STEAM

We elevate our youth with science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics activities that engage creativity and critical thinking skills.

Mentorship

We elevate our youth with mentoring activities that promote character, leadership, and productive life skills.

Athletic Enrichment

We elevate our youth with athletic activities that promote health and wellness as a simple yet powerful form of self-care.

18

Communities

413

Student-Athletes

The Power of Focus.

She was only six years old when Mom enrolled her at the local park afterschool program. Even at such a tender age and with six elder brothers, this student-athlete is no stranger to combat sports. A student of chess, piano and swimming but none stuck quite like fencing. She quickly adapted to the basics of the sport and decided very early on, that she would dedicate every waking moment to the pursuit of excellence in the sport of fencing.

An honors student consistently on the dean's list, she's managed to balance schoolwork and a very robust athletic training schedule – 15+ hours per week not including tournament days -- Saturday and Sunday. She learned early on to schedule and divide her time proportionally so that all responsibilities are handled in a timely fashion. This self-directed student-athlete set the bar high for an 8th grader. See, she's determined to excel in the sport at the high school but especially, the collegiate level – NCAA Division I.

Extraordinary ambitions set her apart from peers, so this student-athlete recognizes that she'll be forced to prioritize her downtime to successfully stay the course. This student implements daily practical habits and drills. She rarely misses a lesson and thankfully, Mom has invested her time and energy to ensuring that she is always present.

This path is not for the faint-of-heart and is generally, the path least travelled. It takes an extraordinary amount of physical, mental, and spiritual resources to have the self-control, restraint, and maturity to not only begin this journey but to stand firm. It's an admirable quality in one so young.

Since 2020, she's volunteered and interned with the Academy in our Park District and Summer Camp programs and, has all the qualities necessary to be an Academy mentor. She's reliable, understands the importance of teamwork, and is truly passionate about teaching the younger students. She embodies the spirit of *pouring into others*, connecting with youth passing on to them the encouragement, strength of character, and motivation to strive for excellence.

We've had the best of times capturing her growth and can't wait to see where it takes her.

Listen [here](#) to the *power of focus* in her own words.



FORTITUDE

The Power of Fortitude.

At some point in our lives, we all suffer bouts of emotional distress, insecurity, and just plain uneasiness in our very own skin. And being a pre-teen only exacerbates this sensitivity but as we grow, we recognize that it's all natural, and it just takes a bit of encouragement from some of the least likely spaces. And that's where the Academy slides through in the lives of our youth -- standing in the gap. Safeguarding a safe space for our youth to emote and express their opinions in a world that often marginalizes them.

Miss Fashionista was looking for just that type of space when she found the Academy. Her previous foray into the fencing world was rebuffed and covert shades of inequality sorely challenged her parents' efforts to find a program. Proverbs says, *a man's gift makes room for him* and while we abhor the mishandling of her gifts, we are glad she found favor with us.

A creative at heart, this student-athlete is naturally athletic, instinctual, and swift on her feet. After only a short tenure with her weapon of choice, she marshaled her talent and began performing well at local and regional tournaments but stifled her instincts so as not to offend her peers-opponents. Experiencing the highs and lows of competition, our student-athlete is developing a healthy mindset to deal with the stress of competition and is accepting that, minimizing her greatness so that others don't feel insecure is a disservice to self.

At age seven, she co-created a toddlers

clothing line with a flair for sass that was featured on the *Today Show* and other nationally syndicated news programs. So, it's no surprise that her talents gained her entry into a world-renowned immersive fashion camp after her summer national debut.

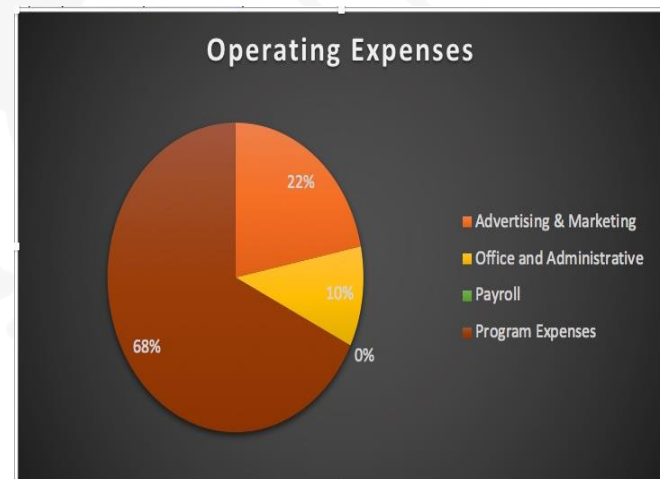
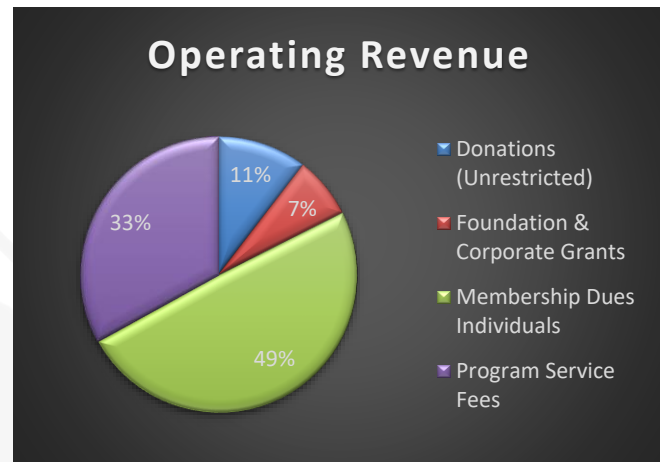
Whether fencing or designing, this student-athlete is learning to broaden her horizons here at the Academy and we can't wait to see the finished product.

Listen [here](#) as she embraces the *power of fortitude* on her path to greatness.



STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

ITEM	REVENUE	Amount
4000	Donations (Unrestricted)	\$7,235
4200	Foundation & Corporate Grants	\$5,000
4900	Membership Dues Individuals	\$34,282
5000	Program Service Fees	\$22,966
4100	Special Events	--
4800	Other Governmental Fees & Grants	--
5100	Investment Revenue	--
5200	Miscellaneous	--
TOTAL REVENUE		\$69,483
Advertising & Marketing		7,802.10
Office and Administrative		10,170.92
Payroll		--
Program Expenses		51,088.59
TOTAL DIRECT EXPENSES		\$69,062
Admin & FR Costs/Total Expense (%)		15%
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$69,062
SURPLUS OR (DEFICIT)		\$422



FAMILY

The Power of Family.

Something extraordinary happens when we spend so much time with our youth. We get unfettered access to who they are – I mean really, there whole authentic beings. It's like peeling back the skin on an onion, each discovery more revealing than the last. And that's what happens here at the Academy, our student-athletes embark upon self-discovery, and in the process, begin to recognize something about who they really are. It's such a unique feeling knowing that here at the Academy, they can *BE* without worry of censure or ridicule. That this space is whatever they need it to be in that moment in time. So family isn't just about genetics but finding the people you resonate with. Our student-athletes hail from diverse cultures and socio-economic backgrounds but when they find us, it's on a level playing field. Recognition of the cognitive dissonance permeating the broader world becomes clear and they gain first-hand knowledge about others. Joyfully embracing the fact that our diverse experiences are valuable for all.

Affectionately known as one of the *Brothers Three*, this student-athlete comes to us via our park district program and has grown to embody the spirit of camaraderie and dedication to the sport. And it's a spirit that's kept on climbing in the seven years he's been at the Academy. We work to inspire a passion for learning, no pressure, or prerequisites, just fun. Fervent about his weapon, constructive advice and criticism are his

fortification. He consumes every tidbit of information and instantly applies it to the situation at hand. This student is particularly astute at catching his missteps as they occur which can be challenging in the heat of battle. Just an overall practical listener resolved to find the best strategy in the moment.

This brother's maturity makes him quick to acknowledge the opponent's skill-level and with a discipline of respect for the sport, a balance of expectations, and the perspective that dedication and hard work will prevail – an Academy standard -- his humility and resilience will carry him far. While fencing is largely an individual sport, it is the behavior you model on the strip, that defines the type of human you want to be.

Listen [here](#) to the *Brothers Three* as the *power of family* keeps them moving upward and forward.



YOU MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

We thank all our donors and supporters. We are particularly grateful to our community stakeholders who diligently work to keep youth programming in the community.

The uniqueness of the Academy's programs and impact to the youth we serve, is immeasurable and so we welcome any support from you in continuing these valuable programs that positively influence the youth in our community.

Your generosity is a testimony to their potential.

Foundation, Organization, and Corporate Donors

\$5,000 and below

Guy A. and N. Kay Arboit Charitable Trust

Individual Donors

\$999 and below

Shirley Amico

Cedric Graves

Sean Armstead and Family

Michael Sklovsky and Family

Christopher Jones, CMJ Tech

Edward Schrank and Family

Zaid-Abdul Aleem and Family

Joel Herrera and Family

Ann McNamara and Family

Natasha Jenkins and Family

April Roberson and Family

Lizette Williams and Family

Henry Cash and Family

Gifts in Kind

Fernando Delgado

Maria Armstead

Bakhyt Abdikulov

Henry Cash

Jason Burns

Kenneth Anderson

Orlando Lewis

Greg Gulik

Reaction Chicago

Wanhao Chi

Myla Patterson-Smith, PhD.

Carlette Piggott

Shenita Johnson Garrard, Esq.

Siegliende Lim-Siewert

Eva Chow, PharmD.

BOARDS

Bronzeville Fencing Academy's leadership team builds upon our focus that all children deserve an excellent foundation that meets their individual needs. Our team is composed of dedicated and experienced professionals advocating on behalf of youth in underserved communities. Our team has a passion for making a difference in the lives of our youth.

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Kenneth Rogers

Owner, Head Coach

Fresh Start Sports & Mentoring, Inc.

Benny Lee

Founder & CEO

*National Alliance for the Empowerment
of the Formerly Incarcerated (NAEFI)*

BRONZEVILLE FENCING ACADEMY

Students enter the Academy's enrichment program through the after-school programs at our Partner sites. Students come to the after-school program from throughout the Chicago-land area.

Services provided through the program include the following.

- Academic enrichment, support, and tutoring.
- Mentorship to enhance and optimize the student's ability to use principles in several disciplines to understand and develop solutions to a diverse range of problems, and the ability to analyze and manage multiple sources of information.
- Athletic enrichment in the Olympic sport of Fencing.
- Performance driven coaching to enhance the student's footwork and accuracy; motor, distance, and timing; strength and agility; tactical and decision making; and individual teamwork skills.
- An alternative safe-haven during after- school hours.