

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



**WATER  
WALKERS**





## A MESSAGE FROM 2023 CEO CLINT BANDY

Dear Friend,

As I reflect on the progress of Water Walkers in 2023, three observations stand out:

- The growth our kids experienced personally and academically;
- The impact of our programs as we implemented all five Program Pillars for a full year;
- The support of more donors and funders than we've ever had before.

Of course, none of those accomplishments are possible without committed Board Members, volunteers, and staff. They each share their heart—as well as their time and talents—to influence our students. Their skills and devotion elevate all aspects of our service. I am deeply thankful for each one.

The “exclamation point” on a memorable year came in September when the Nashville Public Education Foundation presented us with their *Thomas J. Sherrard Inspiring Innovation Award!* We were thankful to be recognized for providing innovative ways to make a difference for Nashville’s students. This honor validated all of our hard work and perseverance since 2016.

I am thankful to have served as CEO in 2023. We continued building on a strong foundation. We positioned ourselves for more growth in 2024 and beyond. That included implementing a transition we’ve been aiming for since 2022... handing the CEO reigns to Archie Davis, II. Archie’s talent, experience, and local connections will lead us to the next level.

I am staying on board and using my strengths as Chief Operating Officer. This allows me to spend more time with the kids and lead all watersports activities—where my heart is. I am as excited about our future as I have ever been!

As you read this Annual Report, we hope you, too, are able to celebrate the accomplishments and growth. Thank you for believing in us and continuing to support us!

Gratefully,

Clint Bandy  
Founder  
CEO (2022-2023)  
COO (2024)



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

**We welcomed Thomas Kinnard to our Board in 2023!** A lifelong Nashvillian, Thomas has filled various roles with Ingram Industries since 2006. He currently works as the Assistant Vice President, Commercial – Ingram Infrastructure Group.

He is also active in Greater Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, serving on the Trustee Board. Thomas previously spent seven years on the board of Salama Urban Ministries, a nonprofit that has served the Edgehill community for 40 years.

He began serving as our Board Chair in January, 2024.

He shared why he chose to help Water Walkers:

*I grew up in the 12 South/Edgehill Community. My evenings and summers there were spent playing baseball and basketball, both organized and unorganized. I have lifelong friendships that were fostered in this community.*

*I believe we are supposed to walk through life with one hand reaching up to achieve goals and success, and another hand reaching back to pull those behind us as we climb.*

*I joined this organization to extend that hand of assistance to kids living the same existence that developed me. I see myself and my friends in the eyes of these children, and it engenders a great responsibility to help them achieve what might have seemed out of reach because of their circumstances.*

*The work Water Walkers executes to enrich the academic lives of the children we serve is nothing short of phenomenal. The care each child receives through the five pillars of holistic programming speaks to specific areas of need that all children require as foundational for lifelong, healthy success. The curiosity ignited when the children are exposed to activities that are out of the norm for many in their social circles spurs a fascination with the environment and a connection with Mother Nature.*

*I am so proud to be a Water Walker. I am grateful to serve in a capacity that furthers the mission of empowering children with the tools needed to make a positive impact on their own communities--like this neighborhood gave me when I once roamed these streets at their ages.*



Our name is a reference to both our love of watersports and the belief that anything is possible. We set our goals and standards high, and we want to inspire ourselves and others to dream big, believe in possibility, and accomplish incredible things.

## VISION

We believe in a world where there are no barriers between under-resourced urban communities and the transformative power of outdoor adventure.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Water Walkers uses the transformative power of watersports, outdoor adventure, and education to equip and inspire at-risk youth in Nashville to become confident and empowered leaders who are ready to walk on the rough waters of life.

## CORE VALUES



Seek Adventure



Persevere, Together



Never Stop Learning (Stay Humble)



Do the Impossible



Be Respectful



Share the Stoke!



Be Consistent

## VOLUNTEERS

Water Walkers depends on volunteers to fulfill its vision and mission. For those who have given time to work with the kids, we are grateful. Your connections made an impression. The kids are better because of your involvement.

We thank these **Board Members** who voluntarily served during 2023:

- Tara Ariola (Treasurer)
- Amber Bandy (Secretary)
- Janice Bandy (Co-Chair)
- Alex Bertelli
- Cindy Collins
- Tre Dunn
- Greta Gaines
- Lindsey Hargis
- Lawrence Johnson
- Mia Keller
- Thomas Kinnard
- Bob Lafferty
- Emmit Martin
- Bryson McCarley
- Greg Morgan (Chair)
- Elizabeth Moss-Evans
- Vincent Phamvan
- Larry Ritchie
- Karina Rovey
- Mark Steiner
- Brandon Taylor
- Mike Turney
- Leslie Wall
- Marcus Whybrew



We appreciate the **Volunteers** from the following groups who contributed their time and talents:

- 1 from Alliance Berstein
- 4 from Belmont University
- 4 from Blessed Revelation
- 2 from First Horizon
- 4 from Greater Bethel AME Church
- 14 from Legacy School of Ministry
- 1 from Lipscomb University
- 2 from Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc.
- 2 from Pinnacle Bank
- 2 from Silicon Ranch
- 4 from State Farm Insurance
- 20 from United Talent Agency
- 1 from University School of Nashville
- 2 from Vanderbilt University

We are thankful for the individual volunteer service provided by **Mackenzie Burke** and **Chandler Bell!**

“WATER WALKERS HAS GIVEN ME REAL OPPORTUNITIES IN LIFE TO BECOME WHATEVER I WOULD LIKE TO BECOME. I TOLD WATER WALKERS THAT I WANTED TO BE A REAL ESTATE MOGUL AND THEY IMMEDIATELY INTRODUCED ME TO A REAL ESTATE MENTOR AND REAL ESTATE DEVELOPER. IT HAS BEEN FUN, EXCITING AND INTERESTING TO LEARN ABOUT REAL ESTATE IN NASHVILLE, TN.”

HASSAN (A WATER WALKER SINCE 2016)





## ACHIEVEMENTS

### RECEIVED “INSPIRING INNOVATION AWARD”

The Nashville Public Education Foundation (NPEF) hosted its annual Public Schools Hall of Fame Luncheon on September 27 at the Music City Center. With over 700 in attendance, the Foundation honored several local educators, community leaders, and organizations for their work and contributions to better the lives of Nashville’s students.

Water Walkers was awarded the Thomas J. Sherrard Inspiring Innovation Award! This award is given to an organization or program that exemplifies NPEF’s commitment to bold, innovative strategies that make a difference for Nashville’s students and families.



### NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

#### Named Community Partner with Nashville Soccer Club

Includes coaches and players providing soccer clinics for our kids on the new pitch built by NSC near the neighborhood we serve!

#### Initiated Boat Rental Program

A new social entrepreneurship program benefitting Water Walkers ... using assets we already have – our boats!

#### Established Partnership with Camp YI (Youth Incorporated)

This opportunity opens the door to fulfill a dream to develop a one-of-a-kind watersports and outdoor adventure camp!

#### Unveiled Our New Website!

Totally revised the site to highlight our five Pillars of Programming.

#### Achieved a Record Year for Fundraising

Applied for 28 grants (the most ever in one year). Awarded 13 grants totalling \$148,750. Eleven were first-time grant donors.

#### Hosted a Music & Art Mixer at The Forge in October and raised \$60,000!

#### Hired a Program Assistant to help us expand our programming.



## KEY OUTCOMES IN THE FIVE PILLARS OF PROGRAMMING



### OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

- 45 Outdoor Adventure Activities offered throughout the year.
- With a brand new wake boat, our summer watersports program featured boating and wakeboarding on Percy Priest Lake! During 20 days of outings, 35 unique kids participated.
- Thanks to a new partnership with Hadley Park Regional Center (where we get to use their indoor pool year round), kids enjoyed free swim lessons on Saturdays.
- 30 kids participated in two summer days of Aquatic Ecology Field Trips.
- Hiked to a waterfall on the Fiery Gizzard Trail near Tracy City, TN.



### EDUCATION

- During the year, we grew from 22 students to 37 in our Education Program—a 68% increase in participants from 2022!
- Switched to IXL Educational Software
- Expanded our tutoring program to accommodate more students, thanks to Greater Bethel Church offering classroom space (in addition to the space we already use at Belmont Church).
- Spring semester: *100% of new students met the goal of advancing one full grade level in reading skills within 12 weeks of entering our literacy program.*
- Returning students - during 2023
  - Math: avg. improvement of 1.68 grade levels
  - Reading: avg. improvement of 1.58 grade levels
- New students – over their first 16-week period
  - Math: avg. improvement of 1.01 grade level
  - Reading: avg. improvement of 0.93 grade level
- Volunteers from First Horizon, Pinnacle, and Silicon Ranch helped teach financial literacy classes using Junior Achievement’s curriculum.



### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- We grew the Leadership Development Program to five teens and expanded their training by showing them the inner workings of Water Walkers and giving them the opportunity to be involved in program planning and implementation.



### BASIC NEEDS

- We met basic needs weekly when boxes of food worth about \$60 were delivered to 35 families (after starting the year with 25).
- **Strong Tower Bible Church** joined **Watson Grove Baptist Church** as a program partner.
- Distributed 85 Hygiene Packs during Q2.
- Continued feeding hot, nutritious meals daily (M-F) to kids who participated in the tutoring program and provided new clothes for children as they started the school year.



### WELLNESS

- Many students reported feeling less stressed when using breathing techniques and coping skills learned during the Mental Wellness program.
- 100% of group counseling participants reported something positive about the sessions.





## FINANCIALS

<b>Total Revenue:</b> <b>329,447.30</b>	<b>Total Expenses:</b> <b>\$322,569.03</b>
<b>Total other Revenue – Boat rentals:</b> <b>\$6,334.14</b>	<b>Total Other Expenditures – Boat Rentals:</b> <b>\$1,713.55</b>
<b>Net Operating Revenue:</b> <b>\$6,878.27</b>	<b>Net Other Revenue:</b> <b>\$4,620.59</b>
<b>Total Net Revenue for 2023:</b> <b>\$11,498.86</b>	

“IT’S AN HONOR TO BE IN POSITION TO GIVE FREELY TO THOSE IN NEED. I FEEL THAT IT IS MY HUMANITARIAN DUTY.”

MICHAEL PRUDE (MEMBER OF THE GROUNDSWELL MONTHLY GIVING PROGRAM)

## DONORS

To each of you who contributed to Water Walkers, we express our sincere gratitude. Since every gift makes a difference, your involvement touched each child we served. Thank you for believing in our mission and making it possible for us to inspire and equip more young people.

### UP TO \$250

Carmen Davis  
 Connie Du  
 Michael Prude  
 Elizabeth Manning  
 Karen Olsen  
 Karina Rovey  
 Elliott Rushing  
 Jordan Thiessen  
 Marcus Whybrew  
 Lindsey Whisler  
 Bilal Zahoor

### \$250-\$999

Kristin Bandy  
 Clint Bandy  
 Annelie Dahlstein  
 Rebecca Lyford  
 David Lenser  
 Craig Hinkle  
 Lindsey Hargis  
 John McFadden  
 Moore Shoemaker

Greater Bethel AME  
 Church Youth Dept.

### \$1,000-\$4,999

Bobby Bandy  
 Janice Bandy  
 Cindy Collins  
 Madeline Enderle  
 Greta Gaines  
 Terry Harris  
 Mia Keller  
 Thomas Kinnard  
 Bob Lafferty  
 Hanna Manning  
 Emmitt Martin  
 Suzanne Matherly  
 Greg Morgan  
 Elizabeth Moss-Evans  
 Joe Ozenne  
 Chuck Petrey  
 Vincent Phamvan  
 Pizzuti Company

Larry Ritchie  
 School Seed Foundation  
 Tyler Schmidt  
 Mark Steiner  
 Maureen Taylor  
 Jacob Torrez

### \$5,000+

Amber Bandy  
 Community Foundation  
 of Middle Tennessee  
 Delek Fund for Hope  
 First Horizon Foundation  
 Ingram Charities  
 Mary Lafferty  
 Pinnacle Bank  
 Memorial Foundation  
 Nashville Mayor’s Office  
 Nashville Soccer Club  
 Nissan Neighbors  
 Ryan Tannehill  
 Jena Beth Walker  
 Leslie Wall



## PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE BY STRENGTHENING OUR LEADERSHIP

As the Board of Directors evaluated the organization's progress and developed goals during Q4 of 2023, the Board determined a key to future growth was to adjust the leadership structure. With input and full support from Founder and "interim" CEO Clint Bandy, the Board approved Archie Davis, II as the new Chief Executive Officer of Water Walkers, beginning January 1, 2024!

Archie served as our Program Director since February, 2022 and did an outstanding job. With over 20 years of leadership experience in local companies, MNPS, and nonprofits, we are blessed to have someone of his caliber on our team.



### A Message from new CEO, Archie Davis, II

As we reflect on the accomplishments of 2023 and anticipate continued growth in 2024, I'm excited about the future of Water Walkers! While adapting to changing circumstances, we commit to keep building on these core principles:

- Remain focused on empowering youth and families residing in low-income areas, particularly those within the governmental housing communities of Nashville.
- Support individuals facing significant challenges daily.
- Maintain our dedication to accessibility. We proudly offer our programs free of charge to all participants, ensuring that financial barriers do not impede access to vital resources and opportunities.
- Meet the diverse needs of our participants through our comprehensive Five Pillars of Programming.
- Provide a structured curriculum which fosters essential skills and knowledge in literacy, mathematics proficiency, financial literacy, and environmental stewardship.

As we march forward in our mission to make a meaningful difference in young lives, we invite you to join us in our journey. Together, we can inspire positive change, empower individuals, and build a brighter future for our community. We eagerly anticipate the opportunity to partner with you in the pursuit of our shared goals.

## BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE BY EXPANDING OPERATIONS

We believe Water Walkers' future is bright! As we look ahead, we are exploring the following opportunities for 2025:

### BUILD THE WORLD'S BIGGEST WATERSPORTS CAMP

If you have followed us for very long, you know we have discovered how linking recreation and education generates positive results ... year after year. The confidence and competence the students learn during watersports and outdoor activities gives them more confidence and competence in the classroom.

While our original vision focused on one neighborhood, our dream has always been to serve more at-risk children and teens throughout Nashville. Thanks to a new partnership with a local camp, the door is opening for that dream to come true.

*Water Walkers has been granted access to 73 acres of waterfront property on Percy Priest Lake to fulfill the dream of developing the biggest and best educational watersports camp in the world!*

Imagine 50,000 kids getting to participate in the following camp experiences every year!

- Watersports – boating, swimming, canoeing, obstacle course
- Zip Lines and a Ropes Course
- Hiking Trails
- Education Center for teaching conservation

But there's a challenge ... This dream is too big for one organization. If you want to learn more, contact Archie Davis, II, at [archie@waterwalkerstn.org](mailto:archie@waterwalkerstn.org).

### EXPAND TO ANOTHER NEIGHBORHOOD

We've learned a lot in eight years about how to serve at-risk youth with our unique program. Based on the lessons learned and successful outcomes, we are exploring opportunities to duplicate our system in another neighborhood. In fact, we've been actively recruited to implement our program in other areas of Nashville, namely zip codes 37013, 37208, and 37210.

We are communicating with foundations, charities, and corporations to discuss the best ways to make that happen.





As you can tell from this report, 2023 was another memorable year for Water Walkers!

We continue to provide new, fun learning opportunities to help kids grow academically and personally. As a result, they are inspired to step forward as empowered, educated leaders ready to walk on the rough waters of life.

But we can't do that without you.

Your support creates the waves to carry these kids into a brighter future.

Whether it's your time, talent, or treasure, your gift today changes a young life tomorrow!

### **VOLUNTEER**

- Tutor a child in reading or math one day a week.
- Be a mentor or teach a life-skills session as part of the Leadership Development program.
- Assist during an outdoor adventure activity.
- Serve as a Board Member.

### **DONATE**

- Join the Groundswell, our monthly giving program.
- Provide a donation to support the Program Pillar of your choice.
- Attend a fundraising event.



**WATER  
WALKERS**

**CONTACT US IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS  
OR NEED MORE INFORMATION:**

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