



# experimental station

building independent cultural infrastructure

## Investing for Healthy Returns

Through a partnership established in 2010, Experimental Station provided SNAP/Link service for 15 of the City of Chicago's farmers markets. Five are located in some of Chicago's most challenged neighborhoods. Knowing that markets only flourish with strong, ongoing cultivation, Experimental Station has increasingly invested in efforts to build awareness among Link clients that Chicago's farmers markets are also for them.

Each year, the market season starts with on-the-ground promotion. Experimental Station staff speak to community groups and share marketing materials with libraries, churches, parks, schools, food pantries, homeless shelters, community centers, senior homes, and local businesses in areas close to a market. Charged with administering Illinois' Link program, the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) is also a key partner in spreading the word. IDHS case workers learn and share with their clients the benefits of farmers markets, how markets accept Link, and how Link Match incentives are redeemed. IDHS offices also distribute thousands of marketing brochures to their clients throughout the season. Staff also make presentations to senior living facilities associated with Catholic Charities, where Senior WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program vouchers are distributed.

To further heighten Link clients' awareness that they can use their Link benefits at farmers markets and double their value with Link Match, in 2018 Experimental Station increased our investments in program



*Imani in her "helmet of the future," made in the Blackstone art workshop.*

advertising. We placed targeted Link Match ads on CTA trains and buses and, with support from the United States Department of Agriculture, we produced a citywide guide to farmers markets offering Link Match benefits as well as an *Illinois Guide to Farmers Markets* brochure, which was distributed to Link clients across the state. In partnership with CBS Broadcasting, we carried out a 3-week television ad campaign in seven counties in northeastern Illinois and a targeted email and phone ad campaign statewide.

We have been pleased to see the healthy returns on these investments. Many new customers reported coming to Chicago farmers markets after seeing an ad for Link Match on the CTA. Other customers reported finding out about the program through their case workers at IDHS offices or from an event coordinator at their senior building. And then there is the customer who shared her story of changing her diet and losing 60 pounds; having fresh fruits and vegetables available in her neighborhood is enabling her to continue her journey toward a healthier life.

## Gearing Up For the Fall Bike Sale

Our Blackstone team spent the month of September refurbishing bikes for our fall bike sale, held each year on the University of Chicago campus. It was a beautiful thing to see the dedication of so many of our youths to the program—and to see their pride in the expertise they have developed in the shop. For the first time, all of the 88 bikes prepared for the sale were refurbished by our own 'black aprons,' while our 'gray, green, red and purple apron' youths helped to give the bikes that extra dust off or scrub. Thanks to the superb assistance of volunteer and entrepreneur Johnathan Carthon, the sale was by far the most organized and successful that we have had, in terms of planning and commitment from youths and volunteers. The deep involvement of the Blackstone alums (Kevin, Mello, Dantrell, Brandon) also inspired the younger kids, building a wonderful esprit de corps!

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# Letter from the Executive Director

*Dear friend,*

*Experimental Station was founded on an ecosystemic model, with the hope and expectation that if you bring different people and different projects together under the same roof, things will happen. We hoped that, as the projects, relationships, and interactions increased with time, like a biological ecosystem, Experimental Station would become more complex, diverse, interesting, resilient, and—ultimately—stable.*

*Over the past 13 years, we have been both participant in and witness to the creation of a unique social, cultural, and economic ecosystem at 6100 South Blackstone. During that time, we have learned that, while growing in stability, our ecosystem is nevertheless ever-changing, ever-adapting, ever-expanding. New organizations (e.g. City Bureau), new programs (e.g. Link Up Illinois), new initiatives (e.g. Blackstone Bikes' college and career advising and racing team), and countless new relationships have emerged and been formed out of the interactions between those who work, learn, volunteer, perform, come as a guest, or just enjoy coffee under our roof.*

*That you are part of that ecosystem is important to us. While we cannot predict exactly what Experimental Station will be in 13 years, we can say that everyone who comes through our doors, who supports our programs, and who helps us think better about what we do is a valued contributor to the current and future health of our ecosystem.*

*We invite you to learn in these pages about some of what happened under Experimental Station's roof (not to mention hoop house and tents) this past year. We hope that it will inspire you to continue to support our ecosystem in all the ways you can.*

*Sincerely,  
Connie Spreen  
Executive Director*

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## Introducing Rebecca Connie

This August, Experimental Station was delighted to welcome Rebecca Connie as Program Manager of our Blackstone Bicycle Works program. A 5th generation Chicagoan, Rebecca is a rock star! She has worked with youth and young adults in public schools, marginalized communities, and higher education—dedicating her efforts to social justice projects that involved youth-led activism. Rebecca's work centers on Black, Latinx, and Native/NDN youth as well

as LGBTQIA communities. She strives to use education as a tool for activism and communal solidarity. She loves trees, and the quickest way to her heart is to share a jibarito with her!



## Bike Shop Business, A Tool For Learning

Blackstone Bicycle Works is a youth education program in the form of a real, full-service bike shop. While more challenging to manage than a simple classroom, Blackstone enables young people from Chicago's underserved South Side neighborhoods to learn bike mechanics, job skills, problem solving, and customer service with real bikes and real customers.

Almost a third of our youths have been with the bike shop for 3-10 years. As they learn, they earn hours (to spend on bikes and accessories) and advance through a series of colored apron levels—gray aprons indicate beginners, while black aprons signify mechanic mastery (with

green, red, and blue in between).

With the active participation of our youths and the valued patronage of our customers, this year Blackstone earned approximately 25% of its annual budget through sales of refurbished bikes and bicycle repairs. Revenues from sales and repairs help us to keep the business operating, but, most importantly, also make it possible for our youths to learn how to work with customers, operate a point-of-sale system, enter and remove inventory, handle money, process credit cards, and much more—all marketable skills that they will take with them as they seek future employment.



*The Market's food education takes kids outside of their food comfort zones. Here, Carnegie 3rd graders are pretending they're not excited about the growth of their oyster mushrooms that they have been regularly spritzing!*



## Feeding Our Community One Saturday at a Time

For 11 years, our 61st Street Farmers Market has been a source for locally and sustainably grown foods on Chicago's South Side. That adds up to 360 Saturdays of healthy and delicious fruits, vegetables, meats, fish, eggs, cheeses, baked goods, preserved and prepared foods, flowers, and more—brought to 61st and Blackstone by over 30 farmers and food artisans each year. Operating weekly from May to December and monthly from January through April, the 61st Street Farmers Market is one of the few year-round markets in the city. It is also the only market in Illinois that has matched SNAP/Link purchases since 2009, ensuring that the foods we sell are accessible to all.

The farmers and vendors selling at the Market are a curated crew, selected for the quality of their products and the types of products they sell. And, as the Market customer base has grown from 150 per week in 2008 to over 1,300 per week in 2018, we have been able to attract new vendors who see opportunity at 61st Street and diversify the products at our market.

As we strive to ensure that our South Side community has access to the freshest and healthiest foods year after year, Saturday after Saturday, we have been extremely grateful for the fidelity of both our loyal customers and our farmers. The Market succeeds only because there are farmers willing to sell at our market and because there is a dedicated community that supports it.

*Market volunteer RJ Gitter finally relaxing after sharing his cooking creativity with Market customers in a three hour marathon kimchi pancake chef demonstration.*

# We Link Match!

Since 2009, Experimental Station has made the fresh and healthy foods sold at Illinois farmers markets both accessible and affordable for SNAP/Link clients—by doubling the value of their Link benefits. Experimental Station’s long-term vision of institutionalizing these ‘nutrition incentives’ in Illinois took a step forward again in 2018, as the Illinois state legislature removed a sunset date on the Healthy Local Food Incentives Fund, making it an ongoing state-funded program.

Creation of the Fund has been an Experimental Station effort for the past five years. The next step is ensuring that state funding is appropriated. Working with a coalition of health and hunger agencies, we are increasingly optimistic that 2019 will be the year!

To prepare for the eventual appropriation of funds, Experimental Station’s Link Up Illinois program has been strengthening our brand throughout the city and state. Formerly referred to as ‘Double Value Coupons,’ in 2017, we introduced the incentive dollars as Link Match. All of the 80+ Illinois farmers markets receiving Link Up Illinois grants to implement SNAP/Link incentives now issue Link Match coupons.

Further, to enable the future transferability of Link Match coupons across markets, Link Up Illinois piloted a universal Link Match currency in Chicago. Beginning this year, Link customers were able to spend their Link Match dollars at any of the 30 markets across the city supported by Link Up Illinois. Market managers and Link customers have expressed their appreciation and excitement for the program’s flexibility. Customers can now shop and spend their Link Match multiple days of the week at different locations.

This fact may help explain why, despite Link sales at farmers markets decreasing from last year and customers reporting cut or reduced



*Top: Link Up Illinois’ Link Match campaign hit the CTA for the third year in a row!*

*Center: Carbondale’s Neighborhood Food Co-op joined Bloomington’s Green Top Grocery Co-op as the first co-ops to offer Link Match, thanks to Link Up Illinois!*

*Bottom: Once again, our seasoned team comprised of Keith, William, Zaneta, George, and Corey successfully brought SNAP acceptance to the City of Chicago’s farmers markets and launched our universal Link Match currency pilot!*

benefits, redemption rates for the Link Match incentive increased. This suggests that, as Link customers have less to spend on a monthly basis, Link

Match has become even more important in filling that gap.



## Good As Gold

Experimental Station is so grateful to the many college students and community members who have become instrumental in supporting our programs through volunteer, work study, or internship roles.

Some of our community volunteers have made extraordinary efforts to support and enrich our Blackstone Bicycle Works program. Deb Stevens is a mother and a triathlete who over the past two years has helped with everything from bike instruction and homework help to themed baking activities at holidays and stitching up our iconic color aprons. Besides mentoring young people in the program, local entrepreneur Johnathan Carthon helped us plan and execute our big annual bike sale and led a career exploration experience over the summer. Rin Yunis developed an original engineering workshop for our summer program, instilling in our youths the skills of designing and building solutions to problems.

Work Study is a federal program that pays college students to work with us, typically 2-3 times per week. Andy DeBoer, who is with us for his second year as he completes his social work master's degree, has assisted in every part of the program, including grant writing and data entry. Adam Phillips, who went from dedicated volunteer to dedicated Work Study employee this past summer, has been instrumental in supporting our racing team and has shared his own developing bike skills with our youths.

This summer an incredible crew of interns helped make the Summer Program great and memorable: Jalen Jiang, Martin Roland, and Supreme Hinton as full time paid interns through University of Chicago's Odyssey program, Samantha Berryhill through Northwestern's Engage Chicago program, and Tatum McCormick as an independent intern. They facilitated bike rides to the pool and beach, developed original programming such as Business Club, created

## 61st Street Farmers Market By the Numbers

While surveys can be so annoying to take, they are (hopefully) valuable tools for those who receive the information we provide. The 61st Street Farmers Market surveys are no exception. Besides providing information that guides our decisions, what our customers tell us can also inspire.

One Saturday, every October, the 61st Street Farmers Market carries out its annual customer survey. The Market is generously supported in this effort by Martha Van Haitsma, Co-Director of the University of Chicago Survey Lab. From the survey, we learn who shops at the Market, why they do so, how much they typically spend, and whether they benefit from the Market's educational efforts.

In 2017, we learned that 42% of the 520 Market customers responding to the survey had come to the Market 10 (of 22) times so far that season, that 18% of customers had been coming since the Market's inception in 2008, and that 89% come to the Market to purchase fruits and vegetables (the #1 reason). These

numbers are important to us, as customer fidelity is what will enable the Market to grow, while knowing why customers are coming helps us to know what to offer them. We also loved to learn that over 74% of our customers consume more fruits and vegetables, as a result of shopping at the Market!

In 2017, with the support of Dr. Chelsea Singleton, researcher at the University of Illinois at Chicago, the Market also implemented an expanded survey of our Link customers, to find out about the impact of the availability of Link Match on their food purchasing choices and health. We learned that 95% of the 77 Link customers surveyed came to purchase fruits and vegetables, 91% had increased their fruit and vegetable intake since shopping at the Market, and 96% reported that Link Match was important in their decision to shop at the Market. The big takeaway: 73% of those surveyed felt that coming to the Market positively affected their overall health.

We are inspired!



a bike-part installation with artist Alice Smith Jones, and orchestrated a fantastic end of summer bash for the bike shop with food, dancing, awards, and presentations.



*Left: Adam Phillips, a work study employee, with Amanda Berry, volunteer extraordinaire, and Blackstone youth at the end of summer block party. Right: Andy DeBoer (center) with DJ Fish (left) and a youth making ziploc ice cream!*

## Beyond Earn-A-Bike

Since its inception in 1994, Blackstone Bicycle Works has enabled hundreds of South Side youth to own a bike. 25 hours of learning and working in the shop will earn them a bike, lock, and helmet. The fact is, however, that a third of our youths have been at Blackstone for 3 or more years (some as many as 10!)—long beyond the time it took to earn that first bike. What is it that keeps them coming back?

Opportunity. Over the years, Blackstone has adapted to the needs of our youths and has provided an ever-growing number of opportunities for them to become master mechanics, wage-earners, leaders, teachers, bike racers, and even college students. Blackstone now offers Junior Summer Internships for 11-15 year olds, Senior Internships for 16-19 year olds, apprenticeships for 16-24 year olds, externships in other Chicago shops, a cyclocross racing team and other recreational activities, art workshops, bike physics and engineering workshops, college and career advising, and even college scholarships.



Above: Thanks to the generosity of Mary and John Douglas of Seattle, WA, we sent Dantrell (left) and Maalik (right) to take a 2-week professionalization course at the United Bicycle Institute in Portland, Oregon!



Top: Taking a break during our 50 mile overnight camping trip to the Indiana Dunes with Out Our Front Door!  
Center: Youth Instructor Nana with shop youth.

Right: Members of our cyclocross racing team proudly showing off their new jerseys!  
Below: Learning aerodynamic design by building water powered bottle rockets in a bike physics workshop, taught by University of Chicago physics graduate students Mike van der Naald and Colin Scheibner.



# JPT Gardeners Bring It Home

As part of 61st Street Farmers Market's food education program, 2018 saw a continued partnership with the Jackson Park Terrace (JPT) community and a very successful season at the hoop house, located on the JPT property. JPT residents not only tended their own community garden beds and learned from our Head Gardener, Brendon Stutzman, how to deal with nasty pests and such, residents also harvested and took home each Saturday 10-15 bags of fresh produce grown in the hoop.



The Market also organized two gatherings where Chef Ramona Ramsey demonstrated a variety of recipes using ingredients grown on site. JPT residents enjoyed tasting seasonal dishes and learning how to prepare them.

In our annual survey, we heard from the JPT community that by learning to garden, they are able to save money, increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables, improve their health, and spend more time with family!



*Above: Youth enjoying harvesting at the Jackson Park Terrace hoop house.*

*Left: Chef Ramona demonstrating how to use ingredients grown in the hoop house to make fresh and healthy meals!*

*Bottom left: Market Manager Wendy, bike shop Youth Services Coordinator DJ, and HR and Finance Administrator Madeline enjoying a blender bike smoothie!*

*Bottom right: Youth at our Sprout Station!*

# Cultivating Young Sprouts

From day one, food education has been central to the mission of our 61st Street Farmers Market. Believing that a lifetime of good health starts at the tenderest ages, for the past six years the Market has provided a robust garden-to-table curriculum for 2nd, 3rd, and 4th graders at Carnegie Elementary School. While 2nd graders are learning about the food groups in the classroom; 3rd graders are planting, tending, and harvesting dozens of crops in the hoop house; and 4th graders are turning those vegetables into delicious dishes in the Experimental Station kitchen.

And we love to discover what they have learned! One 4th grade cook reported learning about root vegetables, another that beets can be eaten raw, and many reported learning that fruits and vegetables are good for you, while two others were excited about having tried baked "collyflower" and "delacata sasquatch."

In August, for the first time, the Market's Sprout Station offered targeted learning activities for even younger eaters. One Saturday, three-year olds (and their adults) had fun drinking fruit smoothies they helped make with our new blender bike.



# Arts and Events at the Experimental Station

## Rooting to This Site

The building at 6100 S. Blackstone is the central resource that enables the collaborative, life-giving activity of Experimental Station. While it has long provided an important, community-based location for groups to host public and private events, over the last few years, Experimental Station has increasingly developed arts and cultural programming rooted to the site with the help of Assistant Director, Matthew Searle. Matthew has striven to develop and organize our public events in ways that connect with and reflect the people and activity within the building, as well as the surrounding neighborhoods. 2018 saw a doubling of the number of free events for the public compared to 2017, an increase in in-house developed programming, and

greater representation of underrepresented and emerging Black artists.

Hosting artists through residencies provides great opportunities to integrate artists into the life of the building, promoting occasions for valuable exchange.

The French Consulate connected us with the French-Belgian artist, **Peggy Pierrot**, who was with us over the course of three months. Peggy spent time conversing with the many people involved in the building, which directly informed her “mind-mapping” and other writing about Chicago that she presented through open studios and over shared meals.

Director, playwright, and teaching artist, **Carla Stillwell**, a South Shore native, used her month-long residency in July to incubate an origi-

nal theater piece about the historic and contemporary violence against the Black body.

The debut of this work launched a month-long series called Visualizing Racial Justice. Each event in the series featured an examination of racism through a different art form with an accompanying facilitated public conversation. The series included a dance performance by Boston’s **beheard.world**, a book reading by police torture survivor **Ronald Kitchen**, a photography exhibit on resiliency with the **Torture Justice Center** and **Civic Projects**, and a screening of **Brittany Hogan’s** Tinted Lens documentary about the Black experience in the US.



*Left: beheard.world’s dance and spoken word production “Invisible: Imprints of Racism.”*

*Top right: Peggy Pierrot, artist/journalist-in-residence over the summer.*

*Bottom right: Community celebration for the Resiliency photo exhibit with Torture Justice Center and Civic Projects*



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## Bike Shop Art Show

In May we held our second annual Bike Shop Art Show, culminating another year of figuring out what it means to have a collaborative youth arts workshop within a bicycle repair shop. We were fortunate again to have teaching artist **Tita Thomas** and the support of the non-profit group **South Side In Focus** over the school year.

Two intertwined threads emerged—an exploration of the unique culture and aesthetics of our shop and South Side cycling, as well as an investigation of the retail space through design.

We created “Bike Helmets of the Future” and a 10’ painted banner that pronounces “Buy a bike, it will make you happy.” The show also featured collaborations between guest artists and youths: 80’ backdrops printed by riding bikes as paint brushes with **Faheem Majeed**; “Exploding Bike Shop” cardboard and bike part installation with **Dorian Sylvain**; panoramic photographs and video taken by bike with NY glitch artist group **LoVid**; and photographs of life in the shop by **David Johnson**. In all of these collaborations, we navigated issues ranging from aesthetics to budgets.



*Our exploding bike shop installation with youth artists and teaching artists Dorian Sylvain and Tita Thomas!*

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## The Artist Entrepreneur

Over the past year the Experimental Station supported a number of young adults in their 20’s who blend roles as artist and entrepreneur by developing businesses that support and promote their artistic vision and altruistic agendas.

**Brittany Hogan** created a documentary film about the Black experience in the U.S. and produced a parallel line of shirts and hats with messages like “Black Not Broken” and “Every Day Black: Every Day Brilliant, Strong, Powerful” that echo and promote the film’s messages.

**Ayo Merch**, whose brand is ‘Walking Canvas,’ sees the streetwear

he creates as his mobile art gallery. Along with his partner, **Rico Suave**, Ayo is also invested in supporting a community of makers by organizing events and promoting collaborations.

The dual role of artist and entrepreneur empowers the maker to be self-sufficient, allowing them to make and distribute their ideas on their own terms.

In 2019 we plan to host a streetwear conference, and the third annual Bike Shop Art Show will take the form of a pop-up shop, featuring collaborations for sale and allowing youths to earn commissions on their work.



*Youths serving dinner at the Bike Shop Art Show that they helped organize and staff!*



# The Intersections of Art, Environmentalism, and the Neighborhood

William Hill, neighbor, artist, curator, and ‘horticulturalist,’ said “I want to do a show about environmental concerns.” Bill, now in his 70’s, had already created a gallery and sculpture garden around his home and developed art-infused green spaces around Woodlawn, which he calls the Dorchester Botanical Garden and the Woodlawn Botanical Nature Center. His “environmental concerns” inspired a two-month long series investigating the intersections of natural and social environments, with a lens on our immediate neighborhood. Co-curator and artist, **Alpha Bruton**, created a hanging installation, while artist group **Cream Co.** set up a plant-based installation in Experimental Station’s entryway and led a project called “Plant Your

Fears” through our farmers market.

Teaching and intergenerational exchange had a strong presence in the project, demonstrating its importance in a strong neighborhood ecosystem. Artist **Gerald Sanders** included the work of the adults he teaches in his home studio in his painting and drawing exhibition in William Hill’s gallery. **Rhonda Gholston** and fellow teachers at Hyde Park Academy High School engaged 150 students to create endangered animal paper mâché sculptures that are disintegrating over two months in Bill’s garden. **Alice Smith-Jones**, a retired school teacher, volunteered each week over the summer to work with our bike shop youths to create otherworldly sculptures out of bike parts that were then mounted to the

bike shop fence.

An accompanying event series for Environmental Concerns featured ‘sound walks’ of the neighborhood with sound artist **Norman Long**, a screening of WTTW’s Earthkeeping series with South Side Projections, and an intergenerational conversation between **Kahari Black** and art collector **Patric McCoy** about the intersections of environmentalism, art, and the neighborhood. We wrapped up the series with an experimental performance featuring the lowering of a 16’ chainsaw sculpture by artists **Erik Peterson** and **Bryan Saner**, fresh baked bread and homemade spreads, sonic atmosphere by **Angel Bat Dawid**, and a group procession out to the street.



*Top left: Artist and ‘Environmental Concerns’ collaborator William Hill.*

*Top right: The ceremonial lowering of the continuous chainsaw.*

*Bottom Left: Patric McCoy explaining to Kahari Black how he became an art collector.*

*Bottom Right: Norman Long leading a soundwalk in Woodlawn, ending in William Hill’s garden.*





Top left: A group photo following a collaborative sound walk public newsroom between City Bureau, the Experimental Station, the Smart Museum, Norman Long, and the Third Coast International Audio Festival!  
 Top right: Our new space, home to Civic Projects and City Bureau!  
 Center: Enjoying Blackstone Summer Block Party, organized by Youth for Black Lives.  
 Bottom Left: We hosted WHPK's 50th anniversary show. Here is the South Side Weekly Radio team!  
 Bottom Right: Welcome reception for Rwandan-born French artist Dorothee Munyaneza, a 2019 artist-in-residence.



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# Experimental Station Business Incubation

Experimental Station's **Small Business Incubation** program provides discounted rents, technological and administrative assistance, and a broad network of relationships to a number of fledgling non-profits and small businesses each year. In 2018, we provided discounted rent for office and retail space to the Invisible Institute, City Bureau, South Side Weekly, Build Coffee, and Civic Projects, as well as fiscal sponsorship to City Bureau, South Side Weekly, and 90 Days 90 Voices.

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## Build Coffee

Build Coffee continues to offer caffeination and a welcoming public space to the Experimental Station and its friends and visitors. Now in its second year, Build hosts weekly events and offers an ever-expanding menu of drinks and light meals—a soup of the day (chili, french onion, carrot ginger!) and a caramel apple cider join the shop's menu as seasonal fare this winter.

Head over early in the morning for a rush of eager kids from Carnegie Elementary next door, or stop by in the afternoon or early evening to commune with a quieter room of Experimental Station regulars and to browse the shop's unique collection of books and local zines for sale.

Build's catering operation has grown over the past year, and now ranges from coffee and breakfast

to charcuterie and crudité platters, with delivery across Hyde Park and Woodlawn. This fall and winter, Build is launching its Meal-Based Residency Program, which will formalize the ongoing gallery aspect of the shop and offer resident artists free meals and drinks as they show their work and program events in the space. Stay up to date on their various happenings at [buildcoffee.org](http://buildcoffee.org)!

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## Civic Projects

Civic Projects is a hybrid architecture practice that takes a collaborative approach to design. They recently worked with the Experimental Station to build out a remaining corner of the building, which is now used as their shared office space with City Bureau. As a collective practice, they've been busy hosting workshops

and exhibitions, and working as part of the Obama Presidential Center Museum Design Team.

Through their partnership with the Chicago Torture Justice Center, they hosted Resilience for Justice & Healing, a summer photography exhibit and workshop series that captured the strength of local residents.

## City Bureau

In 2018 City Bureau was awarded a million dollar grant from the MacArthur Foundation as part of the Jack Fuller Legacy Initiative, helping them hire three new staff members. They also launched their editor office hours where Editorial Director Bettina Chang hangs out in Build Coffee and takes questions on pitching, reporting, writing, and anything else.

In June, City Bureau reported on Illinois' criminal justice system: who it leaves behind, a restorative justice court in North Lawndale, and on the closing of another.

This year City Bureau helped Mississippi Today host their first Public Newsroom in Cleveland, MS and led a workshop in Detroit, MI, in collaboration with WDET and Citizen Detroit. In Detroit they've been exploring the civic tech, municipal, community, and media landscapes to understand how they can make their Documenters program work in the Motor City.

This year also saw City Bureau's first Public Newsroom curators, Rayshauna Gray and Daniel Kay Hertz, who together orchestrated three November workshops honoring Chicago's historical and cultural legacy.

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## 90 Days, 90 Voices

This February, 90 Days, 90 Voices celebrated their first birthday and marked the one-year anniversary of the Muslim Ban with a Moth-style reading in Oak Park. Then in June, they partnered with StoryCorps to answer the question, "Is Chicago a sanctuary city?" After collecting interviews with immigrants, they joined StoryCorps to produce a public event at the Chicago Cultural Center that featured live stories, conversations, and music.

Also this summer, they launched "La Vida de La Villita: The Life of Little Village." The product of six months of reporting, they produced a 25-page issue of The South Side Weekly all about

undocumented immigrants in Little Village and held a bilingual public discussion about the issue at a popular ice cream shop in the neighborhood.

This fall they began their latest reporting project and their first in-depth investigations into the immigration system: Asylum City. For this project, they are working with asylum seekers in the Chicagoland area to tell their stories. Now that they've met their kickstarter fundraising goal of 10,000, they expect to start publishing stories for the series before the year's end and aim to publish their first full-length graphic novel in 2019!

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## South Side Weekly

In 2018, the South Side Weekly continued their mission of publishing journalism and other work dedicated to supporting cultural and civic engagement on the South Side—including their sixth annual Best of the South Side issue and in-depth features on subjects ranging from Lake Michigan surfers fighting industrial pollution, Woodlawn farmers struggling to keep their plots at gardens run by the First Presbyterian Church, students and community activists pushing back against the University of Chicago Police Department, and a three-part series on the history and future of bail reform in the city.

2018 has been a year of growth and change for the Weekly. They elected Adam Przybyl as their sev-

enth Editor-in-Chief. Since the election, Adam has been working on initiatives to improve Weekly editorial processes, training, and development. Additionally, they welcomed three new members of their board of directors: Acclaimed author and journalist Ben Austen, photographer and community organizer Tonika Johnson (named one of the Chicagoans of the Year by Chicago Magazine in 2017), and StoryArts co-founder Bess Cohen, who is also their esteemed former executive editor.

The Weekly applied for and were awarded their first project grant from Illinois Humanities. The SSW Radio team, lead by Erisa Apanaku, used the funds to produce a multi-part audio documentary se-

ries on the closure of Robeson High School in Englewood and its impact on the community, its students, and its alumni. The ongoing audio and visual archive of Robeson stories can be experienced at [robeson.southsideweekly.com](http://robeson.southsideweekly.com).

This year the Weekly saw a record number of new contributors. To help meet the demand, the Weekly will be rolling out a series of weekly workshops that are free and open to the public in early 2019. They'll be focusing on teaching fundamental skills like how to edit, fact-check, craft a pitch, interview, scriptwrite for radio, structure a story, analyze public data, and more, all taught or organized by Weekly staff and funded by reader support.



*Bike-a-Bee's Jana Kinsman offering some honey comb from our building's smallest tenants, the bees in our garden! You can find their honey for sale at our 61st Street Farmers Market!*

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## Invisible Institute

Now in its seventh year, the Invisible Institute's Youth/Police Project remains an invaluable source of insights that inform our work across programs.

In May, the documentary on the Laquan McDonald case that the Invisible Institute co-produced—*The Blue Wall*—premiered at the Hot Docs Film Festival in Toronto. The documentary will be released in 2019.

In August, the Invisible Institute launched the Citizens Police Data Project 2.0 ([cpdp.co](http://cpdp.co)). This expanded data set is roughly four times the size of the first version of CPDP (from 2015) and allows new forms of analysis by adding data sets, such as officer-involved shootings, use of force histories, and lawsuit settlements. The reboot was published alongside a series of articles in *The Intercept*, an ongoing online magazine called "The Chicago Police Files."

Data analysis made possible by the Citizens Police Data Project was also central to the arguments made in *Campbell v. Chicago*, the class action lawsuit that catalyzed the process of executing a consent decree to

govern the process of police reform in Chicago.

Jamie Kalven's "Code of Silence" investigation, published in 2016 and updated in 2017 in *The Intercept*, has contributed to the exonerations of more than forty individuals, precipitated the firing of the executive director of homeland security for Cook County, and prompted several official investigations, including one by the U. S. Department of Justice.

The Invisible Institute's wrongful conviction unit continues to advance the process of digitizing an archive of prisoner letters in order to identify patterns of alleged police misconduct.

In partnership with the Pozen Family Center for Human Rights at the University of Chicago, the Invisible Institute is curating the archive of police torture in Chicago donated by the People's Law Office.

The Invisible Institute recently published the 74th installment of *The View From The Ground*—a weekly round-up of criminal justice news. Sign up at [invisible.institute/the-view-from-the-ground](http://invisible.institute/the-view-from-the-ground).

# Grants, Individual Donors, and Foundation Support

December 2017 - November 2018

## \$300,000+

USDA Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives (FINI) Program

## \$75,000 - \$150,000

Anonymous Foundation  
City of Chicago  
The Chicago Community Trust  
The Greer Foundation

## \$15,000 - \$30,000

Albert Pick Jr. Fund  
Anonymous Foundation  
Clifford & LaVonne Graese Foundation  
Harper Court Arts Council

Illinois Department of Agriculture  
Kanter Family Foundation  
Polk Bros. Foundation

## \$5,000 - \$14,999

American Hospital Association  
Anonymous Donor  
Anonymous Donor  
Anonymous Foundation  
BMO Harris Bank  
Conagra Brands Foundation  
Susan Crown Exchange  
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## Support Our Work

It is only with the financial support of our community that Experimental Station is able to do all that we do. Both our stability and agility are ensured by the gifts of our generous donors. We thank you for your past support and hope that you will continue to support us as we go forward.

Experimental Station is not only supported by financial gifts, but also the gift of time. We are deeply grateful for our volunteers, especially at our 61st Street Farmers Market and Blackstone Bicycle Works. Thank you for your hard work! If you would like to volunteer, learn more at [experimentalstation.org/get-involved](http://experimentalstation.org/get-involved).

Many supporters have also given to Blackstone Bicycle Works in the form of in-kind donations. Whether it be a bike, parts, after school supplies, or even gear for our cyclocross team, your generosity has not gone unnoticed. Thank you for helping the bike shop continue!



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## Giving Challenge

As the end of the year draws near, please consider making a tax-deductible gift to Experimental Station to support our programs. You can do so at [experimentalstation.org/donate](http://experimentalstation.org/donate), or via check to Experimental Station. **Thanks to a matching pledge from a strong supporter, your end-of-year gift will be doubled!**

[DONATE HERE](#)

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## On the Horizon in 2019

With the tremendous growth, over the past several years, of the programs and businesses housed under our roof, Experimental Station is space challenged. In 2019, we aim to move ahead on an expansion to provide more room for Blackstone Bicycle Works to serve both our youths and customers. We will keep you posted....

Besides working to institutionalize Link Match statewide by bringing the Healthy Local Food

Incentives Fund to life, Link Up Illinois will continue to expand Link Match to food cooperatives, our first foray into brick-and-mortar retail. The great results we saw in 2018 at food co-ops offering Link Match in Bloomington and Carbondale were inspiring. In 2019, expect to see the Dill Pickle Food Co-op (Chicago) and Sugar Beet Food Co-op (Oak Park) offering Link Match to their Link customers!



**experimental  
station**  
6100 S Blackstone Avenue  
Chicago Illinois 60637 USA  
[www.experimentalstation.org](http://www.experimentalstation.org)

## our mission

The Experimental Station is an independent, not-for-profit incubator of innovative cultural projects and small-scale enterprises. It seeks to maintain a diverse and interdisciplinary balance of participants and activities. Areas of primary interest include, but are not limited to, art, ecology, food culture, cultural criticism, independent publishing, and alternative models of education.

In addition to the Experimental Station's own range of programs, its facilities provide essential resources enabling new, vulnerable initiatives to stabilize and flourish. These resources include: workspaces at discounted rents, information networks, tools and technical support.

## support and donation

Please consider helping us build the Experimental Station into a more sustainable operation by making a financial contribution. More information and a credit card donation form can be found online at: [www.experimentalstation.org](http://www.experimentalstation.org).

Blackstone Bicycle Works accepts donations of used bicycles, parts, equipment, and tools. Drop off any donations at the shop during normal business hours: 1-6 PM, Tuesday-Friday; 12-5 PM, Saturday.

Volunteers are vital to the success of our programs. If you are interested in supporting our programs as a volunteer, contact us at [info@experimentalstation.org](mailto:info@experimentalstation.org).

## visit the station

The Experimental Station is located at 6100 S Blackstone Ave, in the Woodlawn neighborhood, south of Hyde Park and the University of Chicago. We are located near Metra stations and CTA #2, #6, #59 buses. The building is wheelchair accessible. For more information contact us at:

773-241-6044  
[info@experimentalstation.org](mailto:info@experimentalstation.org)  
[www.experimentalstation.org](http://www.experimentalstation.org)

