



# Reflections from The Well

2024-2025 Annual Report | The Walnut Hills Edition



True Body Cambodia, 2025. Young women from Harpswell experience the True Body Project.

**In 2005, 13 teen girls came together to explore their inner and outer worlds in the first True Body Project. We reached out to a few of them to hear what that summer meant to them.**

**True Body teens in Eden Park, 2005.** From L-R, Juliette Rawe, JaHe Woody, Camilla North, Ciera Brooks, Mandy Teemley, Esther Freeman, Samantha Robinson, Laura Pearce, Ramsey Rosenberg, Kathryn Wendeln, Clare Rettig, Jess Nolte (DeLisio), Erin Baumann.



“True Body Project was my first job at 14, but little did I know that it would become the foundation for my entire adulthood. That beautiful experience taught me that my voice is my strength and that genuine empowerment comes from within. The creative expression and movement practices we learned in True Body have become quintessential in establishing balance for me as I navigate my career as a Surgical Robotics Engineer and my artistic endeavors as a photographer and videographer. In the chaos of the world, **I often return to those roots via swimming, cycling, and strength training as a method of active mindfulness and to reignite the flame of self-determination I first kindled in True Body.** True Body Project sowed the seeds of creative expression and movement, which have become the roots of my womanhood and a vital compass in my life.”

-Ciera Brooks

“I was 16 when I participated in the inaugural True Body Project. I still carry the values it instilled in me to this day, the core three being 1. My story matters, 2. Hearing the stories of others, especially those from different circumstances, is a gift and 3. My worth is not defined by my physical appearance. With the rise of social media paired with a dramatic increase in cosmetic procedures over the last 20 years, not the mention the adverse geo-political climate, I fear deeply for the safety and self esteem of our young people. This is why **I feel passionately about the importance of programs like True Body Project. We must continue to foster spaces for kids and young adults to connect and be seen and heard for who they truly are.** True Body Project does just that!”

-Jess DeLisio

“**A summer job, turned into adolescent awakening, turned into 20 years of seeking spaces, people, moments, and movement which would emulate even partially what 2005 meant for me and my cohort of apprentice-peers.** Every day was a new somatic experience, churning up the chaos of creation inside us all. As our work evolved into one, incredible, collaborative achievement, we saw the end of the summer draw close. I went on to be involved in various other iterations of True Body, never forgetting the teens of 2005 who were so briefly but impactfully a part of my life. The chaos of creation is still churning within us, uniting us wherever our True Bodies may be.”

-Ramsey Rosenberg



**We believe in breathing.**

**We believe in coming into our own by expressing ourselves.**

**We believe in defining ourselves, not letting others define us.**

**We believe an unkind word to one person wounds us all.**

**We believe that every voice has worth.**

**We believe in the truth.**

Excerpt from the True Body Constitution, created by summer campers, 2007.



Dear Friends,

Two of our programs are celebrating major milestones. True Body Project, the first program of The Well, turned 20 this year. Mindful Music Moments turns 10 in 2026. As we continue to measure our impact in numbers, we are also taking time this year to celebrate what these programs mean to those who experience them.

Our Roots

Well before youth mental health reached a crisis state, The Well’s programs understood that youth need time and space to process their thoughts and emotions in community with others. They need adults who have the capacity to listen and support their growth. Which means that the adults serving youth (or other adults), also need help. They need old/new tools and resources — creative writing, movement, mindfulness, art-making, play— to find “language” to meet the ever-changing, complicated moments of being human.

Our Growth

These are difficult, even perilous times for many nonprofit organizations and individuals. For that reason, we are even prouder of our growth and impact. Even though our history is deep with 20 years of programmatic experience, we are a relatively new nonprofit. Since 2019, our budget has grown nearly 300% thanks to the support of the community and our “well-invested” partners. We’ve been careful to make sure \$0.95 of every dollar goes to programs and people. Now we stand ready to deepen our well for the future.



True Body teens in 2005.

Our Vision

We envision a Well World. To us that means a place where youth and adults are empowered and prepared to have agency over their mental and emotional well-being and to have support when they need it. We envision a world where the arts, especially participatory arts, are acknowledged and supported as wise medicine for these times.

Our Ask

Get to know us. Support us through friendship and connection. Ask how we can help you or your organization. And if you can, give. We know there are many worthy and important causes that you care about. We want to become one of them.

Learn, Give, Connect



Mindfully,

Kelly Barber, Board President & Stacy Sims, Executive Director and Founder



- 1: Joy in movement with Cambodian friends in Phnom Penh.
- 2: A third-grade student at Monroe Elementary listens to Mindful Music Moments.
- 3: Participants in a dinner event at The Well choose collage materials.





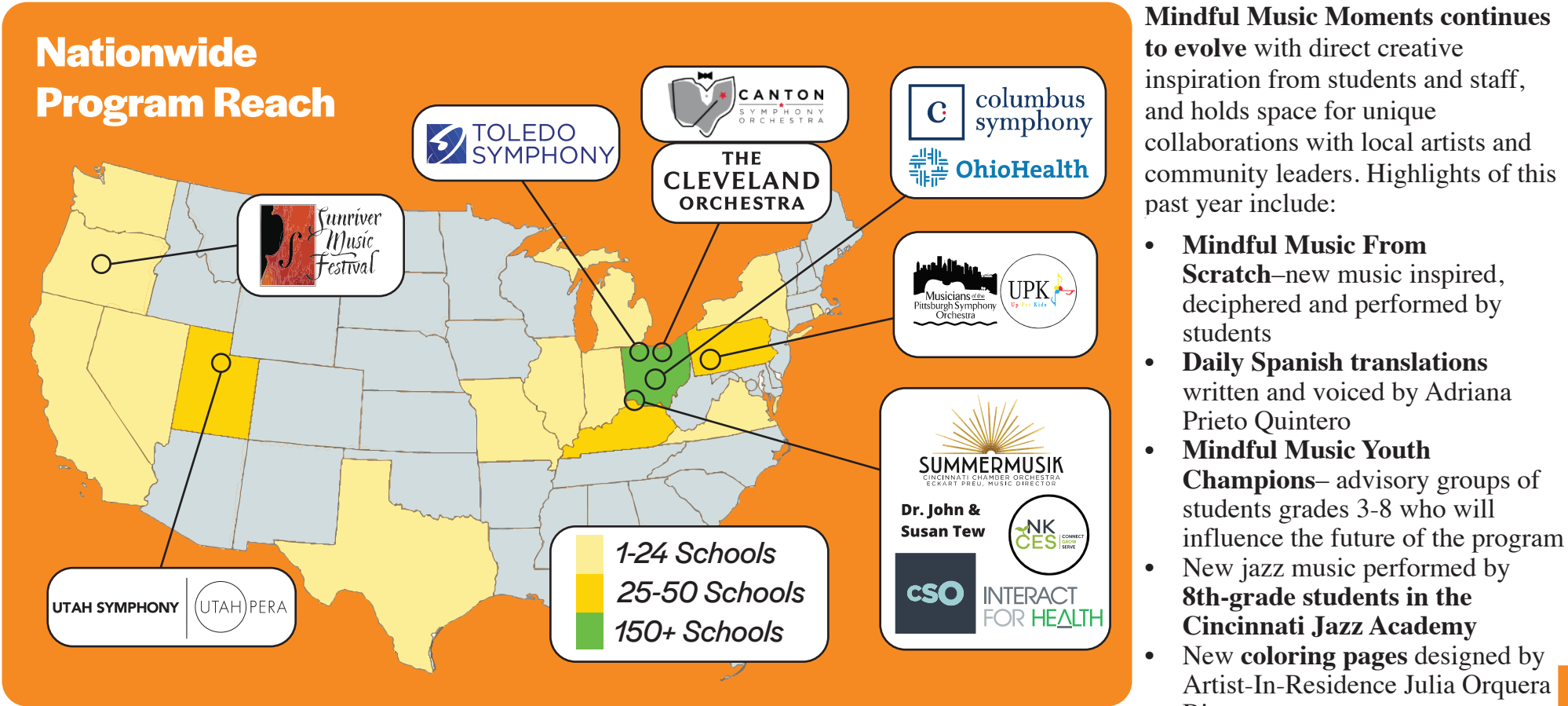
MINDFULMUSICMOMENTS™

created by THE WELL

The Well’s signature program is celebrating 10 years of daily calm, focus, and world-class music in schools and workplaces. In partnership with performing arts, education and community organizations, Mindful Music Moments served over 300 schools and social service groups—over 114,000 PreK-12 students and educators—nationwide this past school year.



Students at Summit Elementary listen to Mindful Music Moments to begin each music class.



*"I came to school mad but after listening to Mindful Music my body felt calmer and so did my mind. I realized that what I was mad about didn't matter and that we were about to have fun making music in class today again."*

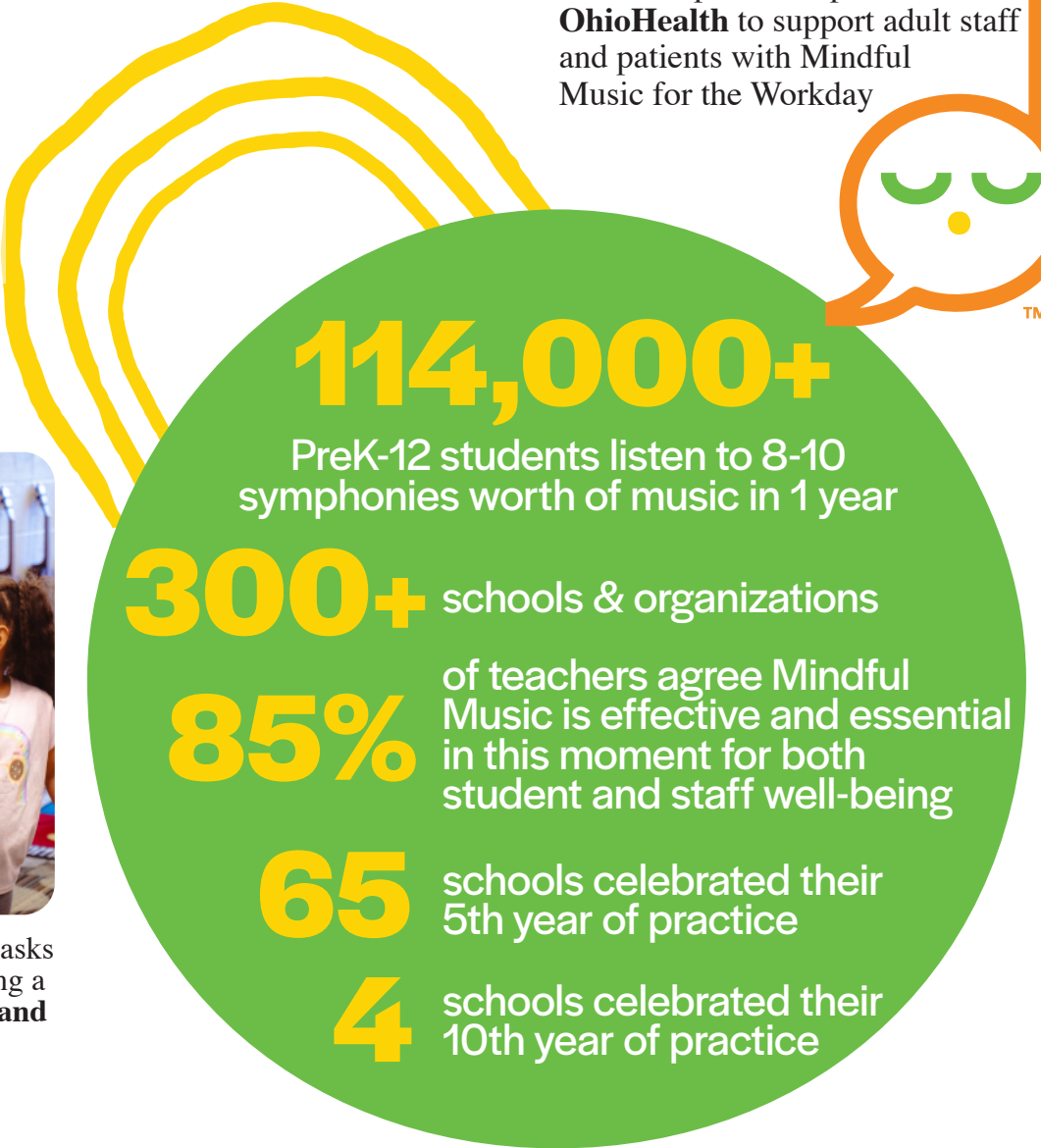
-Elementary Student, Cleveland, 2025



Musicians from Mindful Music partner, Summermusik, perform and lead a workshop for 40 students at Academy of World Languages in Cincinnati.

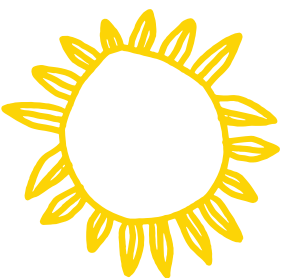


Program Director Bryce Kessler asks students to “feel the music” during a special workshop about music and emotions.





# 24/25 In Pictures



In 2025, The Well packed up its Camp Washington offices, then co-worked at MORTAR, before moving into its new Walnut Hills space while still creating memorable events for 5,271 people.



1: Viola student Zamar Deering records student-inspired music for **Mindful Music From Scratch** with Director Joe Bricker at Legacy Soundworks Studio.

2: Summer youth apprentice Max Rush created "Make Your Mark," for the Purple People Bridge during the **America's River Roots Festival**.

3: Events Manager Patrick Raneses ties a bracelet on an **Inclusion Seekers Summit** participant, where The Well produced an experience for the closing event.

4: True Body Summer ArtWorks Apprentices working on films, music and more for the **America's River Roots Festival**.

5: Program Director Sarah Mackenzie leads a group of high school students through a goal-setting meditation for **The Well's Job Readiness Training** with Talbert House.

**5,271**  
Total Attendees

**137**  
Total Events

**128**  
Free or Low-Cost Events





1: Families explore the wonder of space at the **Cincinnati Museum Center with The Well.**

2: A moment of presence and connection at a **Beauty of Presence** dinner held in Walnut Hills.

3: The Well's staff takes a mindful pause before starting their days with **City Silence.**

4: A Summit Elementary student hears the quiet buzzing of a tuning fork during a **Mindful Music Workshop.**

5: Artist Maria Seda-Reeder leads a **Mindful Astrology workshop** at **MORTAR Cincinnati.**



6: Friends gather at **King Pigeon** during The Well's neighborhood listening event in May. (L-R) Pam Kravetz, Christian A. Drye (See Drye), Stacy Sims, Heather Britt, and CJ Pierce.

7: Cambodian youth draw a new galaxy together as a part of **The Well's international program** for service learning.

8: Two students at St. Cecilia School feel the vibrations on the back of the cello during a **Mindful Music Workshop** with Program Director Bryce Kessler.

9: **'Music and Mind'** panel hosted by soprano and Arts & Health advocate Renée Fleming during Cincinnati May Festival. (L-R) Stacy Sims, Donna Dirksing Doran, Betsey Nuseibeh, Renée Fleming and Dr. Sian Cotton.





# MINDFUL POETRY MOMENTS™

created by THE WELL

" Poetry is happening. Love is happening in the poem, always in the present tense. That's why poetry always makes us brothers and sisters. Poetry reminds us that we are siblings in creation. "

- Manuel Iris, Mindful Poetry Moments 2025 Curator



## Highlights

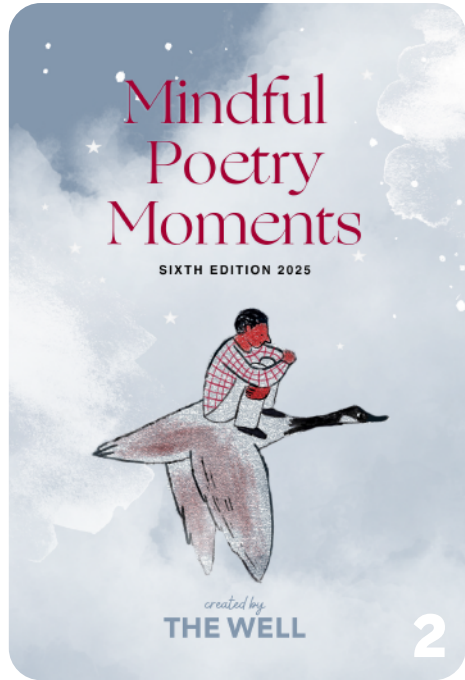
- 175** student poems published
- 120** % increase in overall published poetry compared to 2024
- 107** poems published by local Ohio poets
-  submissions were received from 6 countries: US, UK, Canada, Indonesia, Germany, & Pakistan

Audio and video content offered in **Spanish** for the first time

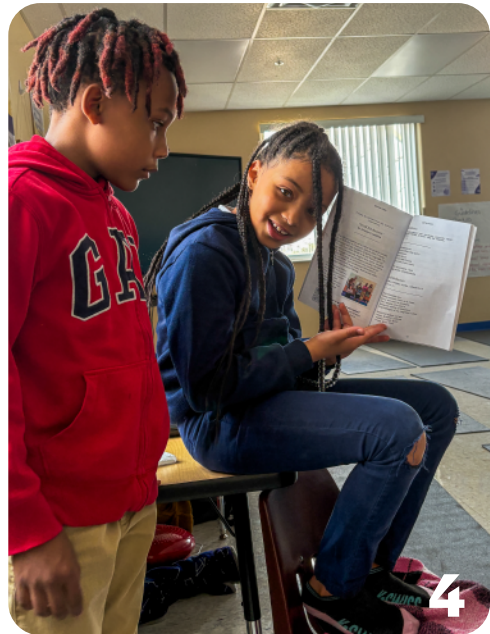
**Mindful Poetry Moments published over 175 student poems in its sixth annual poetry anthology, continuing to grow its international community of poetry-lovers old and new.**

During April, National Poetry Month, students and adults receive free daily audio and video poetry journeys in English or Spanish with writing prompts to inspire poetry-enthusiasts of all ages to meditate, listen, write and share their work.

Inspired by the poems curated by former Cincinnati Poet Laureate Manuel Iris – including selections by Wisława Szymborska, Derek Walcott, Mary Oliver and Manuel Iris himself – The Well received its largest amount of poetry submissions in the program’s history, including the greatest number student poetry sent from across the country.



- 1: Mindful Poetry Moments 2025 Curator Manuel Iris giving opening remarks at The Well’s Book Launch in August.
- 2: Cover image for Mindful Poetry Moments, Sixth Edition, 2025. Illustration by Mónica Andino.
- 3: Cincinnati poet Gifted Johnson-Wilkinson reading her poem “Frontier” at the 2025 Book Launch. Her poem was inspired by “Among The Multitudes” by Wisława Szymborska.
- 4: Students from Imagine Bella Academy of Excellence in Cleveland see their published poems for the first time.



## Youth Poems

### Flowers of Golden Rays

*In a vast blanket of green  
Bundles of golden sunflowers sway  
To the tender touch of the warm summer breeze  
How gently its petals of golden rays  
Welcome you like open arms*

-Sarah Zhou, Grade 11  
Boston, MA

### My Name Is A Song

*My name is a song  
A beautiful tune where every word bounces off the next  
Like the breeze on a hot summer day  
Or the sun on a cool fall afternoon  
It is always there even when I have nothing left  
No one can take it away  
Everyone has their own  
No one should feel bad about their name  
Because they are each special in their own way  
My name is a song and it is my favorite one*

-Faye Szydlowsky, Grade 4  
Seattle, WA



# MYTRUESELF™

created by THE WELL



## Creating cohesion for workforce development, education, and belonging.

The My True SELF curriculum was created as an extension of The Well’s award-winning True Body Project, which brings trauma informed, research-backed practices into schools and youth programs. My True SELF is able to extend the True Body Project framework to fit within the constraints of time, budget or additional needs of our participants. Aligned with the CASEL framework, it integrates mindfulness, movement and expressive arts to support emotional well-being, brain development and stress regulation.

Student in Cambodia engages in an expressive art activity.



Above: Staff from the **Talbert House** pose for a group picture after their second of two staff wellness sessions. They wrote personal mantras on whiteboard squares to serve as a reminder of what brings them joy.

Below: Hughes Highschool **Project Connect** students gather for a photo with facilitators Charli Littleton & Elan Schwartz after a My True SELF session filled with mindfulness practices and creative activities.



## By The Numbers

2,692

Individuals participated in The Well’s in-person arts & wellness programming

1,487

Youth Participants

215

Community & Youth-focused Arts & Mindfulness sessions

42

Independent artists and facilitators employed to share, create, or teach art



# Looking Ahead

**The Well works at the intersection of arts and wellness, providing programs, practices and connection to schools, workplaces and communities.**

As we continue to grow our services and impact, we look forward to providing even more individuals with the tools to navigate their mental and emotional worlds.

Your support is the vital force that allows us to deepen our reach and innovate our programming. By investing in The Well, you are not just funding a program; you are championing a future where everyone has access to the creative and mindful resources needed to thrive. Join us in making this vision a reality and help build a world where well-being is at the heart of every community.



## Revenue

Individual	9,804
Foundations	357,831
Earned Revenue	167,670
Publications	3,401
Events	4,053
Total	\$542,759

## Expenses

Programs	512,173
Administrative	26,956
Total	\$539,129

The work of The Well is supported by many community arts partners, organizations, foundations and generous donors. For a full list, visit [TheWell.World](http://TheWell.World). We are honored to receive general operating support in 2024-2025 from:

**Harry T. Wilks  
Family Foundation**

**Ohio Arts  
COUNCIL**

**Dr. John &  
Susan Tew**

Carol Ann and  
Ralph V. Haile, Jr.  
**FOUNDATION**

**arts  
wave**  
Funding Arts. Fueling Community.

**THE ROSENTHAL FAMILY  
FOUNDATION**

All images courtesy of The Well. With special thanks to photographers Nick Reece, GreenCraft Media, Esther Freeman, Nick Graham/Journal-News, Mark Duc Nyugen and Charlie Balcom. Illustrations courtesy of Lizzy Duquette, above image designed by Bailey Roy.

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Created with love by  
Sarah Mackenzie for The Well

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