

Non-Profits of the Year 2023

LIBERTY'S KITCHEN

Liberty's Kitchen is working to change perceptions about young people. "Through our Youth Leadership Council, an alumni led program," Executive Director Bernadette Lucas said, "we aim to build a more youth-centric organization, create positive opportunities for alumni and participants, and change the narratives surrounding young people in New Orleans."

For 15 years, Liberty's Kitchen has supported unemployed or underemployed youth through comprehensive workforce training and wrap-around case management services. The organization connects young people to employment while working with them to increase their earning potential and career options.

"Liberty's Kitchen was founded across the street from Orleans Parish Prison in 2008 as a counterpoint to the cycle of poverty, trauma, and incarceration disproportionately impacting youth of color," Lucas explained. "We interrupt this cycle by offering pathways for youth to create and achieve their vision of success." Liberty's Kitchen has since supported over 1,000 young people on the road to self-sufficiency.

Liberty's Kitchen reached a major milestone in 2014 when the organization broadened the scope of its program as well as its physical footprint.



"The expansion to serving all youth between the ages of 16-24 and the move to the Refresh Project on Broad Street allowed us to increase the number of youth we serve and have a greater impact on the community," added Lucas.

In 2023, Liberty's Kitchen implemented a three-year plan to strengthen its programming, including the reopening of its café which had closed during the pandemic, as well as establish long-term strategies to support sustainability and growth.

"Watching a young person change from their first week of orientation training to mastering a skill in the kitchen to graduating from the program is truly inspirational," Lucas said. "It is a life-changing moment that starts a ripple of effect of change for themselves and their families."