



the
source



2023

Impact Report

20th Anniversary Edition

Source Staff

Alison Freas

Executive Director

Abigail Medina

Resource Navigator

Amanda Villa

Resource Navigator

Amber Smith

Resource Navigator

Anais Perez Villar

Office Manager

Angela Rincones

Program Manager

Carly Shereda

Resource Navigator

Clementina Ingram

Resource Navigator

Erika Gonzalez

Managing Director

Joyce Rohrer

Director of Business and
Community Engagement

Lourdes Jordan

Senior Resource Navigator

Milly Chavez

DHHS Caseworker

Sarah Westoby

Senior Resource Navigator

From Our Director

In 2023, the Source celebrated a significant milestone, marking our 20th Anniversary in September. This occasion prompted reflection on our origins and the impact we have made in many lives over the years. We are fortunate to possess a rich history shaped by local business leaders dedicated to providing job opportunities and comprehensive support for individuals, fostering success within and beyond the workplace.

Our team finds inspiration in collaborating with business leaders who embrace a holistic view of their employees, recognizing the profound impact on lives and families. We firmly believe that businesses can serve as positive forces for good, and we are grateful for the visionary commitment that continue to partner with us today.

Over the past two decades, we've supported nearly 8,000 clients in overcoming barriers and , achieving goals, provided tax return service to the community at large, taught computer literacy and financial courses, aiding in upskilling initiatives, and more. As the original employer resource network, the Source has been replicated in various states, adapting its model to fit unique communities while maintaining the core principles of resource navigation.

While housing and transportation remained persistent top barriers in 2023, an increase in food assistance rose to the top. A reflection of increased grocery costs and reduced state subsidies, our team navigates the complex system to connect clients with the support they need. Mobile "drive-thru" pantries, initiated during the pandemic, have proven to be a low-barrier solution.

The Source has an exceptional team whose dedication is evident daily as they serve, problem- solve, encourage, and coach. While we don't claim to perform miracles, this team truly deserves superhero status for their remarkable efforts.

As we look to 2024, we are:

- Actively investigating the creation of satellite offices across the state, understanding the crucial role of community presence in our ability to support clients.
- Concentrating on enhancing our financial capacity to offer a higher level of support to clients.
- Engaged in efforts to enhance our services and assess impact through program evaluation, as well as capturing the voice of our clients.

The path forward presents challenges, but I have confidence in our team's abilities to navigate and overcome these obstacles!



Alison Freas
Executive Director

2023 Employer Network:

- American Autocoat
- Butterball Farms, Inc.
- Byrne, Inc.
- Cascade Engineering
- Comfort Research
- Corewell Health
- The DECC Company
- Enterprise Tool & Die
- Grand Rapids Foam Technologies
- Haviland Enterprises
- Irwin Seating Co.
- Innovation Strong - Amplify GR
 - 2GEN
 - Building Bridges
 - Naturashield
 - R&R Mechanical
 - Rising Grinds
- Jireh Metal Products
- Lumbermen's Inc.
- MillerKnoll
- Nucraft Furniture Co.
- Richwood Industries
- SoundOff Signal
- Spectrum Industries
- Trinity Health
- Wolverine Coil Spring Co.

The Source
started in 2003
with 8 companies

25
Total
Members

10 yrs
Average length
of Membership

330%
Average Return
on Investment

15%
Utilization Rate
According to our National
Partners, the average
utilization within an
employer is 10-15%.

Governing Board

Laura Longstreet
Lumbermen's, Inc

Gina Triick
Spectrum Industries

Diane Peacock
Wolverine Coil Spring

Becky Ploeg
Comfort Research

2023 Clients & Barriers

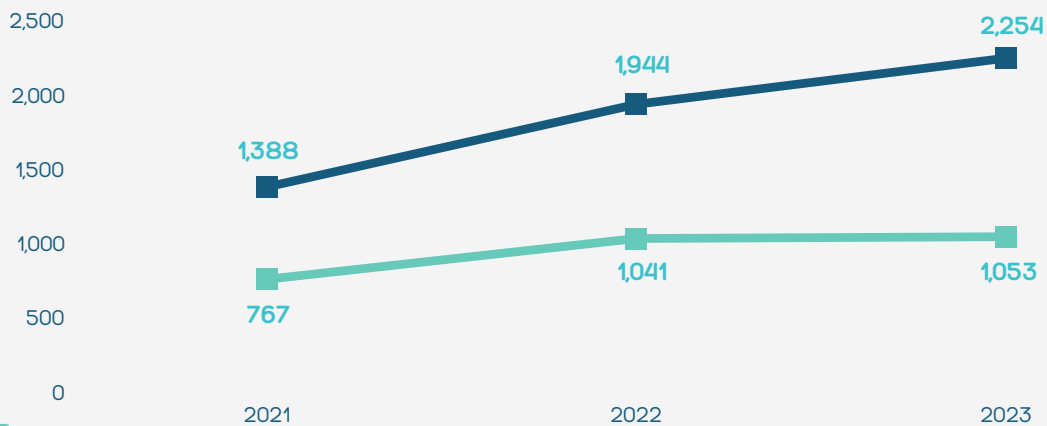
Since 2003,
The Source
has supported
7,919 clients

1,053
Clients Served
642 - New Clients
411 - Repeat Clients*

72%
Retention Rate
72% - New Clients
73% - Repeat Clients*

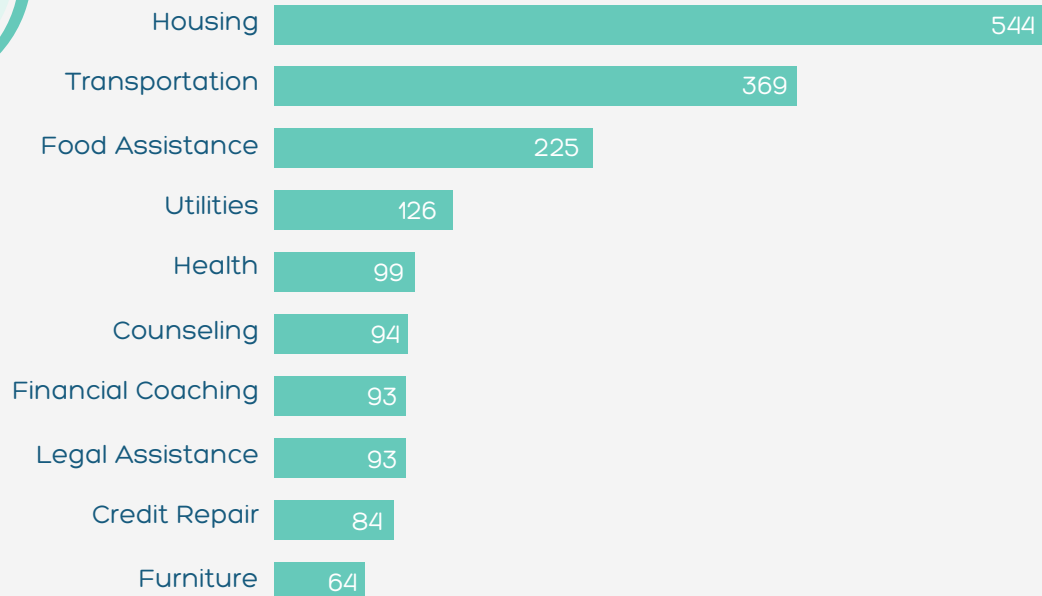
*Have previously engaged with The Source

Total Clients & Barriers for Past Three Years



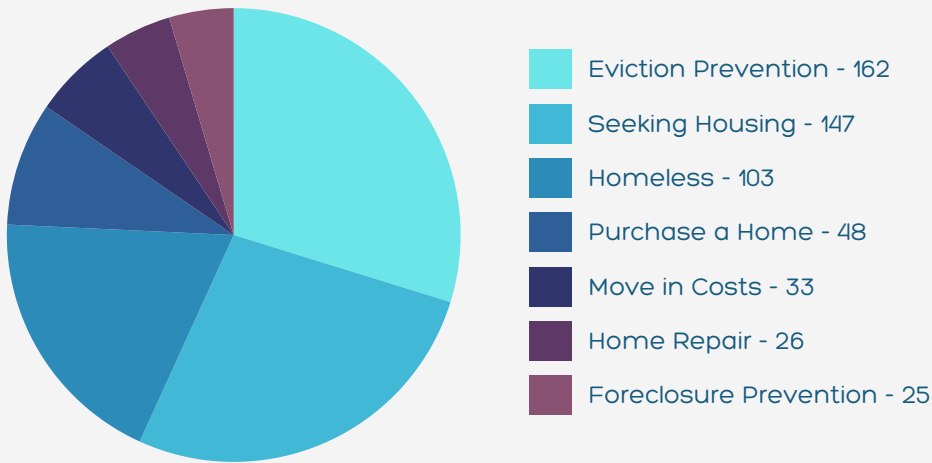
Since 2003,
The Source
has assisted
with 14,103
barriers

Top 10 Barriers in 2023

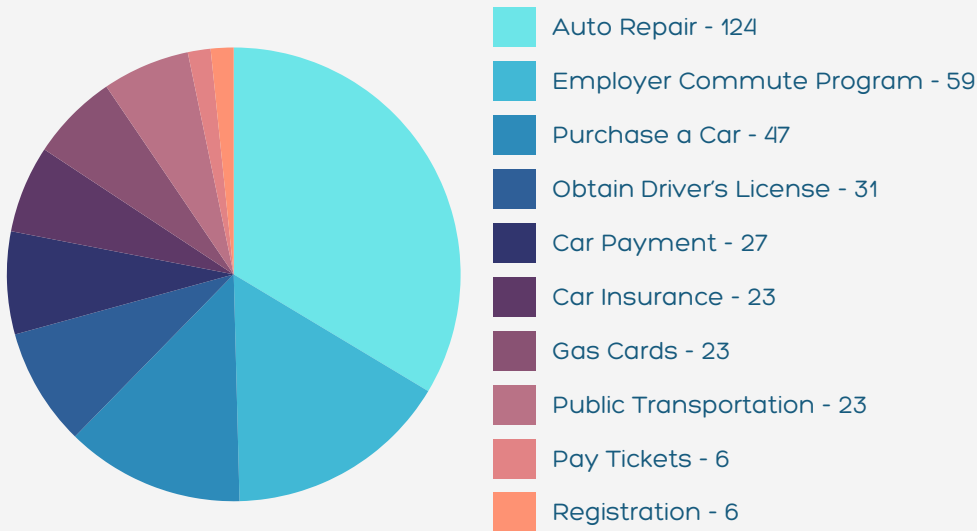


Other barriers assisted with in 2023: unemployment, clothing, taxes, debt, personal items, child care, education, medical financial support, employee benefits, employment, immigration, financial classes, retirement, child support, translation, vital documents, adult / elder care, domestic violence, garnishments, career coaching, parenting / pregnancy, student loans, literacy, adoption / foster care, student loan debt relief, substance abuse, and accommodations.

Housing Barrier Breakdown

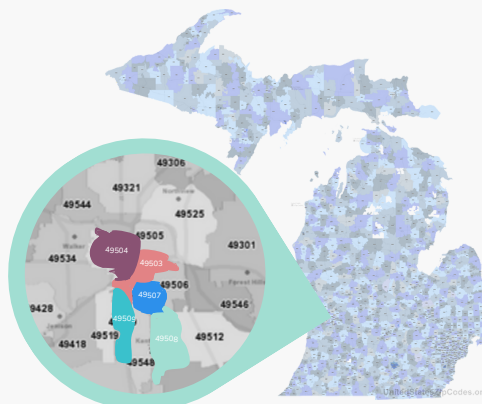


Transportation Barrier Breakdown



Top 5 Zip Codes Served in 2023

- 49507 - 59
- 49503 - 27
- 49508 - 25
- 49504 - 20
- 49509 - 19



Client Demographics

 580 Females

 473 Males

424 Black

381 White

177 Hispanic / Latino

39 Two or More

14 Other

14 Asian

4 American Indian

165 Previously Incarcerated

\$19.17/hr*

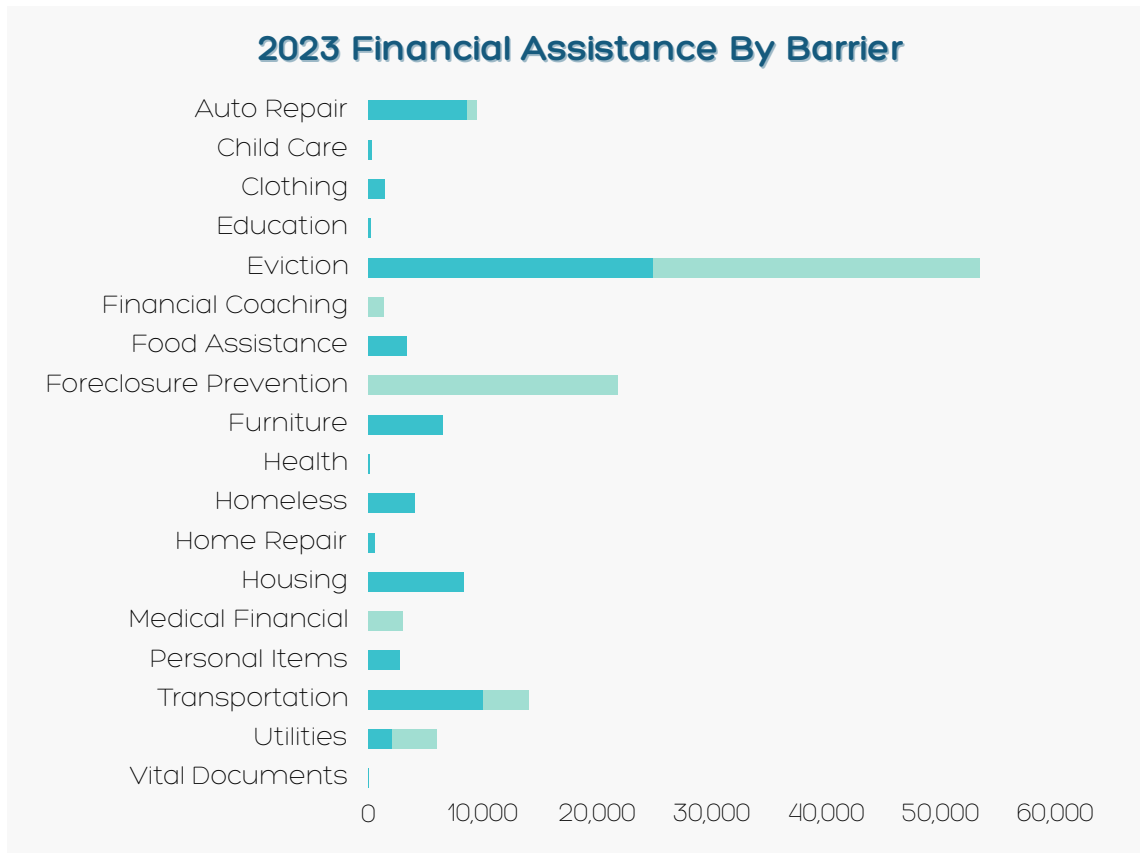
Average wage of new client

\$2.39 increase from 2022

*self-reported at initial assessment

2023 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

In June 2018, The Source began tracking financial support and savings to clients. Since then, the Source has connected clients with over \$1.9M in financial support and an additional \$187k in savings.



2023 Source Client Funds

Auto Repair	\$8651
Child Care	\$274
Clothing	\$1,409
Education	\$250
Eviction	\$24,874
Financial	\$0
Food Assistance	\$3,359
Foreclosure Prevention	\$0
Furniture	\$6,500
Health	\$100
Homeless	\$4,077
Home Repair	\$588
Housing	\$8,320
Medical Financial	\$0
Personal Items	\$2,730
Transportation	\$10,015
Utilities	\$2,081
Vital Documents	\$10
Total	\$73,238

2023 Community Funding

Auto Repair	\$800
Child Care	\$0
Clothing	\$0
Education	\$0
Eviction	\$28,485
Financial	\$1,318
Food Assistance	\$0
Foreclosure Prevention	\$21,794
Furniture	\$0
Health	\$0
Homeless	\$0
Home Repair	\$0
Housing	\$0
Medical Financial	\$3,000
Personal Items	\$0
Transportation	\$4,000
Utilities	\$3,879
Vital Documents	\$0
Total	\$63,276

2023 Savings for Clients

\$49,923.56

Savings for Clients represents the value of financial resources leveraged from other community organizations to meet a client's need. Examples of savings for clients are: donated furniture, utility assistance through DHHS, etc.

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in 2023

\$17,000

since 2012 when the program started

\$314,333

member companies that participate

13

21%

of cases in 2023
resulted in
financial assistance

VITA Tax Site Since 2005

This brings a critical resource to our clients and community members through volunteer tax preparers by helping individuals and families maximize their tax returns so they keep more of their hard-earned money. This also saves them money in the process as the average cost for basic tax preparation is \$200.

2022 Tax Season
Highlights:

- **511** returns prepared
- **312** employees of member companies
- **\$112,420** in savings of preparation services

Since 2005,
The Source
has completed
7,000 tax returns

Brandon* was notified by their HR leader that a garnishment was going to begin for unpaid cell phones. They wanted to pay off the garnishment instead of having it taken out of their check. The Resource Navigator assisted Brandon in applying for an AAC Bridge Loan and they were approved. Brandon was able to pay for the garnishment in full, therefore, it never had to be taken out of their check each week. Brandon does not have much of a credit history and by paying back this loan will increase their credit score too!

*Name has been changed to maintain confidentiality

2023 Supportive Grants

Wege New Hire Grant

In July 2022, the Source received a two-year, \$40,000 grant from the Wege Foundation to support newly hired employees in their first 180 days on the job. This funding has been used to help with transportation and housing to stabilize employees and remove barriers so employees can retain their job beyond the new hire period.

Wege Grant Highlights:

Total clients assisted to date: **73**

Top Barriers Assisted:

- Auto Repair / Transportation - 28
- Housing / Homeless - 27
- Eviction Prevention - 17

The Source team has helped clients:

- Get clothes for their new job
- Find an apartment that were previously homeless
- Prevent eviction
- Keep their car on the road legally with registration or insurance
- Get to work by bus or uber/lyft

The Source follows up with clients who received funds from this grant at 6 months post Source interaction to better understand the impact of the support to their employment. To date, **88%** of grant recipients have maintained their job.

What's being said about the Wege Grant:

"I will forever be grateful to the Source for assisting me with my eviction. I was facing medical issues that caused me to miss work. When I fell behind in rent, the Source provided the support I needed to get back on track. The Resource Navigator I worked with was very pleasant and helped me tremendously! Thank you!"

Alisha*

"Over the past two years, the Source was able to provide crucial support to seven of our newest employees through the Wege Foundation's New Hire Grant. This support encompassed addressing their auto repair needs, assisting with car payments, and preventing potential evictions. The combination of these grants and the dedicated efforts of the Source staff has empowered our new employees to overcome the obstacles that could have otherwise jeopardized their employment with Byrne Electrical Specialists."

Cady Cin, HR Generalist
Byrne Electrical

"As a Resource Navigator, having access to funds like the Wege New Hire grant have been crucial in helping new employees find stability. Whether it's helping with a necessary car repair, preventing an eviction, or helping them get into a home when they were previously homeless, the funds have gone a long way in assisting employees so they can retain their employment. These funds help fill the gap between community resources and DHHS benefits for employees and prevent other downstream issues like homelessness, overwhelming debt, and losing their employment."

-Sarah Westoby, Senior Resource Navigator

*Name has been changed to maintain confidentiality

Housing Stability Services Program

The Housing Stability Services (HSS) program provided case management services to families under 80% AMI (average median income) going through evictions, other housing instability situations, or those who were experiencing homelessness. The Source resource navigators helped families find resources and solutions to their housing and utility needs in partnership with the Salvation Army and the Heart of West Michigan United Way.

Highlights:

84 Families Assisted

\$50,000 in Housing Assistance

\$7,000 in Utility Assistance

Wyoming Community Foundation

The Wyoming Community Foundation awarded a \$5,000 grant to the Source to support Wyoming residents experiencing housing instability. These funds helped people who were trying to get into a new rental, behind on their rent, facing eviction, or facing foreclosure. The Source resource navigators helped to identify current needs and identify long terms goals and barriers that needed to be addressed for future success toward housing security.

Highlights:

18 Families Assisted

\$278 - Average Amount of Support

LMCU

Lake Michigan Credit Union awarded a \$5,000 grant to the Source to support clients with barriers getting in their way of sustained employment. The Source resource navigators assisted in navigating through immediate needs, most commonly housing and transportation related.

Highlights:

20 Families Assisted

\$251 - Average Amount of Support

Donna* was struggling to make ends meet one month to be able to pay their utility bill. After reaching out to DHHS and learning they did not qualify for assistance, they called the Source for support. While working with the Resource Navigator on utilities, Donna also experienced their car breaking down requiring a repair. The Resource Navigator was able to put a hold on Donna's utility account to focus on the auto repair first. Thanks to a grant for client funds from Lake Michigan Credit Union, the Resource Navigator was able to pay for a portion of the auto repair significantly reducing the amount owed by Donna.



**the
source**

20th Anniversary Celebration

In September, the Source, joined by several business leaders and community partners, celebrated its 20th Anniversary. We reflected on our history, listened to stories of impact, and recognized the business leaders who not only came together years ago to start the Source, but have remained partners to this day. The Source is grateful for their commitment to the Source and more importantly their employees!



Christina Keller
CEO Cascade Engineering



Fred Mellema
President / Owner,
The DECC Company



Kevin Bassett
CEO Spectrum Industries



Mark Peters
CEO Butterball Farms, Inc.
Author, The SOURCE

Visit our website to view our 20th Anniversary video and photos



Reflecting on 20 Years of Impact

Twenty years ago, The SOURCE was started with an idea that making resources available to stabilize employee's lives would be good for our businesses and create work environments where people knew they were valued. And it worked! What we did not foresee was what an incredible resource The SOURCE would become.

Here at home, in West Michigan, The SOURCE has grown to include 25 member companies with over 12,000 people having access to their services. The incredible people at The SOURCE have cared for almost 8,000 people and interceded in resolving over 14,000 barriers. One of the key learnings has been, no two lives are identical. People - all of us - show up with a unique set of circumstances in our lives and The SOURCE can help with a lot of them.

The SOURCE is an integral part of helping us create work environments where people can thrive. It is there to help people move from instability to stability and find a Trusted Knowledge relationship when things go wrong.

Beyond our community, The SOURCE has been replicated in over 28 states, impacting over 114,000 lives. Today, our world continues to get more complex and less personalized. Now more than ever, we all need trusted and knowledgeable relationships in our lives. The SOURCE is more relevant than ever.

Finally, I am grateful for the business community and leaders who first said "yes". Like all start-ups, it was a risk. I am also grateful for the larger employers like Corewell Health and Herman Miller that have joined us for the journey and the many leaders across the country in for-profit, non-profit and government roles that have inquired about The SOURCE and have replicated it in their communities.

Cheers.

Mark Peters

CEO Butterball Farms, Inc.

Author, The SOURCE



The Salmoran Family



Photo provided by Salmoran Family

Asking for help is not easy but most success stories are filled with people who helped along the way. When Joyce from The Source met Juan about ten years ago it was apparent he was a hard worker. But he was facing some obstacles he could not overcome alone.

“The way I was raised in Mexico, **you really did not ask anyone for help or trust anyone but family**, Juan shares. And the people I knew were struggling as much as I was to provide basic needs for their families like food and water. Joyce and all of The Source staff, some who even spoke Spanish, always encouraged me. More than encouragement, they offered solutions and help. We were renting an apartment and dreamed of home ownership but didn't qualify for a traditional mortgage. Joyce connected us to home ownership classes at ICCF and a matching savings program through the AAC Credit Union. The education and savings opened up a door for a Rural Development home loan. Sable Homes was willing to build our family a beautiful, entry level home within budget. We couldn't believe it!

Our house is more than we ever imagined or dreamed of and our mortgage and utility payments are almost \$500 less per month than our rent was. Our rural home is not on the bus line and we needed more reliable transportation. I was spending a lot of time repairing our older vehicles. Eventually, the repair costs would exceed the value. Joyce shared information about a grant that would increase our budget enough to purchase a more reliable vehicle.

The Source also connected me to GRCC M-TEC construction classes that helped me become a more successful and confident business owner. I wasn't comfortable in classrooms and prefer to work with my hands. Now I know I can learn and have taken several other classes to help grow my business and improve myself.

Erika at The Source took a chance on me and my business partner, Edgar, hiring us to paint their former offices. I'm pretty sure that was our first commercial painting job working as our own company. Erika and Joyce were also willing to be professional references to help us get more jobs.

“When I met Juan he was a single parent working 60+ hours a week for \$10/hr to make ends meet. When pay increases didn't come, we took a leap of faith starting Casa Pintura | Precision Painting with our brother-in-law, Edgar, in 2016.”

-Jodie Salmoran

It's not always easy to ask for help. But what an incredible difference it can make!

The best part about meeting Joyce, the other staff and connecting with The Source is I am able to help more people now. For example, I was able to help paint the new Source offices to show appreciation for all of their support.”

The Salmoran's story highlights the positive transformation that can occur when you take on that first barrier of asking for help, and the superpower of the Source to connect clients to the specific community resources that will help their situation.



Photo from: Source Staff

“Juan is...able to spend more time with his family which is priceless. Because of Joyce, Erika and The Source he knows there are trustworthy people who care and want to help so he is willing to reach out more.”

- Jodie Salmoran

Casa Pintura | Precision Painting



Juan and Edgar also look forward to giving back more as employers.

“Like most businesses, it has been hard to attract, train and retain crew members but we are in the final phases of establishing an apprenticeship program designed to reward our employees for their hard work and skill advancement. We are creating opportunities we did not have and are owners who care about our employees, their families and the quality of their lives - the same way The Source does.”

-Juan Salmoran

To find out more about Casa Pintura | Precision Painting
Visit: www.casapintura.com, call Juan at (616) 929-2956, or
email: juan@casapintura.com



Photo provided by MeKonnen

MeKonnen

MeKonnen's transformative journey began in 2009 when he first sought assistance from the Source for tax preparation. Little did he know that this initial encounter would mark the beginning of an empowering trajectory, where the Source became a trusted and knowledgeable resource in various aspects of his life.

I came to the United States with the hope of building a better life for my family. Shortly after joining Vi-Chem, a founding member of the Source, in 2009, I started what became a decade-long partnership with the Source, seeking guidance and support in various facets of my life.

"My initial interaction at the Source was for tax preparation, establishing a connection with Erika, a tax preparer and Source staff member. Subsequently, I returned to participate in computer and financial classes. The Source supported me in my transfer from GRCC to GVSU. Concurrently, I began working on the application to move from a permanent resident to a citizen, which would allow me to facilitate the reunion of my family in the United States.

With my family here, my focus shifted to my children's education and citizenship; and securing more permanent housing. The Source provided invaluable assistance in navigating the U.S. K-12 education system, facilitating my children's enrollment in school, guiding us through the citizenship process, and aiding in the application for a Habitat for Humanity home.

While my family relocated, I temporarily paused my education but later resumed, thanks to support from the Source through the Spark and MOVE Up grants from the Kellogg Foundation. Encouraged by my HR leader, I pursued and completed my bachelor's degree. The Source, with the grant's assistance, provided me with a laptop for school and offered tuition support. They even accompanied me to campus to meet with an academic advisor.



Photo provided by MeKonnen

Today, I am working in the field of occupational health & safety, proudly celebrating 11 years as the owner of the Habitat House the Source aided me in securing in 2013. My eldest son is in his fourth year at Wayne State University, my second son is in his second year of college, and my third son is graduating high school this year. As an immigrant navigating a new culture, the Source, along with my former employer Vi-Chem, GRCC and GVSU staff, **helped create a sense of community that made me feel at home.** This sense of belonging fueled my confidence, propelling me forward even during challenging times. I am immensely grateful to the Source for helping me achieve all that I have"



Photo provided by MeKonnen

Beyond his remarkable journey in the United States, MeKonnen remains deeply connected to his roots. In his native country, he is revered as a leader and influencer, having authored three books in his native language (2012, 2019, 2022). Additionally, his YouTube channel boasts over 53k subscribers, reflecting his continued impact and influence.

MeKonnen's story not only highlights his personal achievements but also exemplifies the impact of the Source in aiding to remove barriers to employment and career advancement. This is achieved through having consistent, continued support with someone to turn to when you are not quite sure how to navigate the situation. The Source walks alongside clients to work with them through navigating life's challenges.

Staff Milestones

As the Source celebrated its 20th anniversary, there were several team members that also celebrated service milestones!

Reflecting on their years at the Source



"When I think about these last 15 years at the Source, the thing that I value the most is all the people I met - coworkers, leadership, employers, and clients. Each connection has provided rich learning experiences that have helped shape me into the person and leader I am today. I am eternally grateful for all those interactions that help me continuously grow and work to become a better version of myself."

Erika Gonzalez, Managing Director, 15 years of service

"I will always remember, with a smile, teaching "Catching Onto Computers" classes at the old office. It was challenging and so fun getting to know the students and explaining the parts of the computer and Microsoft Word."

Joyce Rohrer, Director of Business & Community Partnerships, 16 years of service



The Source's partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services has added significant value all these years. We are extremely fortunate to have Milly be our DHHS caseworker. She goes above and beyond for her clients every day, and engages with our team of resource navigators to be sure clients have access to all the supports they need. Milly celebrated 20 years with the Source (contracted) and 30 years with the State of Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Congratulations Milly!

I have enjoyed working at the Source all these years - supporting clients, engaging with HR leaders at the partner companies, and partnering directly with the Source team to help people.

Milly Chavez, DHHS Case Manager, 20 years of service at The Source

Also, celebrating milestone service anniversaries with the Source in 2023:

Lourdes Jordan, Senior Resource Navigator, 5 years

Angela Rincones, Program Manager, 5 years

Sarah Westoby, Senior Resource Navigator, 5 years



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Photos Taken By: Bryan Esler Photo, Alex Kahwa Photography, and The Source Staff

Thank You To Our Partners:

