

MY PROJECT USA ANNUAL REPORT



2018



MYPROJECTUSA.ORG

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614-905-0977 | INFO@MYPROJECTUSA.ORG

ABOUT MY PROJECT USA

MY Project USA is a 501 (C) (3) organization, registered in the State of Ohio and tax exempted by IRS. We registered in Ohio on October 28, 2014. We launched our organization in public on March 1st, 2015. We are located at 3036 Sullivant Ave. Columbus 43204.

In this very short time, MY Project USA has already been recognized as one of the most active youth empowerment organizations in the City of Columbus. We are endorsed by Columbus City Council Members, Mayor Andrew Ginther of City of Columbus, Mayor Nan Whaley of the City of Dayton, and Ohio State Representative Adam Miller. We work collaboratively with The Boy Scouts of America, YMCA, United Way of Central Ohio, Columbus Police Department, Mid Ohio Food Bank, Homeland Security Department and many interfaith and other community organizations. We have launched programs in Dayton also at the request of Dayton Muslim community and the City of Dayton.

What We Do:

We are focused on protecting and empowering our youth by addressing hunger, poverty, human trafficking, drugs, gangs, bullying, violence, radicalization and others social issues that are facing the American youth, specially in refugee and other poor communities. We have launched several programs to protect and empower these underserved youth and families. We aim to empower them by creating opportunities for them to become productive citizens and strong community leaders of the USA. It is a national initiative. The west-side of Columbus is our pilot program area.

How To Donate:

Donate Online:
MYProjectUSA.org/donors

Donate Via Check:
Please write a check to MY
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Questions:

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In 2018, Our Youth Emerged As Leaders & Advocates!!!

This Is How We Protect & Empower Our Youth!



Dear Community,

As the Founder and the Executive Director of My Project USA, it's an honor to present to you the 2018 Annual Report of the organization. I am so very proud and humbled by the outstanding progress we made in so many different areas, especially in addressing the violence in the Wedgewood Village Apartment on the westside of Columbus, OH, and fostering several youth as leaders and advocates for their own communities. MY Project USA has been helping the Wedgewood Community since 2015 through various services. This has been our pilot neighborhood because of the large number of children that reside here and the challenges their families face everyday.

Almost two years ago, I dropped every thing else to protect and empower the kids and families in Wedgewood. That enabled me to work with so many awesome youth and adults that have been helping us to turn a violence-ridden neighborhood into a stable, safe, soccer community.

I am glad that I did that and I am so pleased with the outcome. I want to thank and congratulate each and every partner, volunteers, donor and community member, young and old, boys and girls, for their role in bringing us to this day. Thank You.

Congratulations to MY Project USA youth leaders: Coach Siyat Mohamed, Samira Mohamud, Isha Hussein, Asha Bakari and Fadumo Mohamed for their hard work in the neighborhood and uplifting their Wedgewood community through their advocacy at the Columbus City Council earlier last year.

Thank you to the Columbus City Council, especially Council President Pro Tem Michael Stinziano and Councilmember Elizabeth Brown for their full support in turning this community for better. Thank you so very much.

Thank you to Commander Scott Hyland for his services to this community. Thank you to James Fogler of Wedgewood Administration for supporting our programs. Thank you to Russ Harris for his leadership in building a professional soccer program for our kids at Wedgewood. Thank You.

As we celebrate our progress today, we also renew our commitment to the Wedgewood children and families and other similar neighborhoods across Columbus, Dayton and Beyond. We will do everything possible in our capacity to protect and empower you.

Our community is Bound to Rise.

In Solidarity with Youth & Families,

Zerqa Abid,
Founder & Executive Director

MY Project USA 2018 Annual Report

#MYPROJECTISUSA

1.7 million Meals & Snacks delivered

45,000+ Community Service Hours Contributed

70,000+ Individuals Served

10,000+ Gifts, Coats, Other Basic Supplies Passed

2,000+ Volunteers & Youth Activists Engaged

350+ Muslim Youth Leaders Trained

78 Youth and Adults Trained & Employed

75 Youth Became League Soccer Players

16 Soccer Players became Champions at Mid Ohio Select Soccer League

20 Social Services Projects Launched



2015-2018









#MYPROJECTISUSA

YEAR 2018 IN PROGRAMS

WE LAUNCHED & GREW:

- ✓ MY Family Pantry
- ✓ MY Soup Kitchen
- ✓ MY Helpline Services
- ✓ Hilltop Tigers Soccer Teams
- ✓ Wedgewood Kids Club
- ✓ Wedgewood Girls Club
- ✓ Wedgewood Reading Warriors
- ✓ Wedgewood Boy Scouts Program
- ✓ Wedgewood Parents ESL Classes
- ✓ Wedgewood Youth Leaders Programs
- ✓ MY Deah's Warehouse & Store
- ✓ MY Project USA Dayton Chapter













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IN 2018 MY PROJECT USA:

- ✓ Participated In March For Our Lives
- ✓ Participated in Women's March Ohio
- ✓ Organized See Something Say Something Campaign
- ✓ Co-organized Hilliard United Against Hate Rally
- ✓ Co-organized Hilltop Unity March: Stop The Hate & Violence
- ✓ Organized Clean Building & Neighborhood Initiatives
- ✓ Participated in South Central Hilltop Spruce Up
- ✓ Organized Wedgewood Festivals & Cook Outs
- ✓ Exhibited at Ohio TEOSL Conference
- ✓ Co-organized Columbus Feed the Hungry 2018
- ✓ Organized Three Big Tables
- ✓ Engaged hundreds of activists, community leaders, public officials & community members at different forums
- ✓ Trained and Empowered 100+ youth through different programs and initiatives in Columbus & Dayton




FOOD INSECURITY

Hungry Children Are Easy Prey!

MY Family Pantry & MY Soup Kitchen Provide Nutritious Uncooked Food, Hot Meals, Fruits and Vegetables Throughout the Year

About 1.7 Million Meals & Snacks are Being Distributed to About 70,000 Clients Since 2015

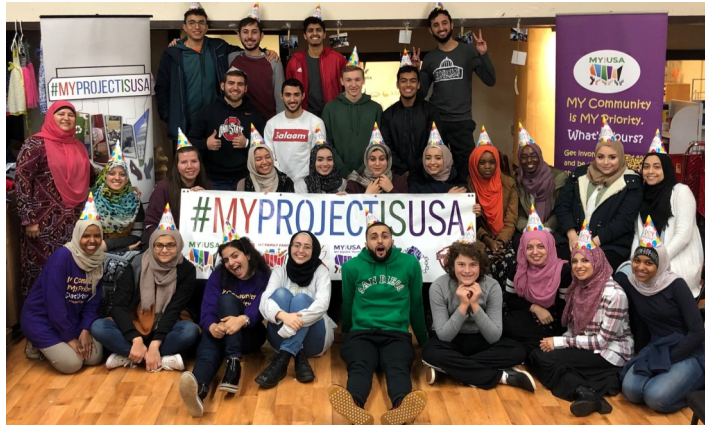
Hungry children are easy prey. Studies have shown and we have witnessed first hands that children in low-income and poverty struck communities are at high risk

in terms of being involved with drugs, pimps and gangs. MY Family Pantry and MY Soup Kitchens are two extensions of MY Project USA that work to solve the undeniable problem through the medium of nutritious food. Both initiatives

are run by our youth leaders.

We think beyond the soup bowls. Our holistic mission is to keep these families, their children and communities safe and secure. We're combating food insecurity by providing healthy foods and are working on expanding this mission by implementing a new legal aid clinic and offering health screenings during pantry days. We are the only food pantry in the area that operates every single weekend because our focus is on making meaningful impact.

In 2018, we have also launched My Soup Kitchen In Dayton. We are hoping to start a weekly pantry in Dayton very soon.



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Ohio State students dedicate a semester to serving in Columbus nonprofits



Derek Goodman (right), a second-year in food, agriculture and biological engineering, unpacks produce to distribute to members of the Village community at the Columbus of Service site, a MY Project USA food pantry. Credit: Courtesy of Derek Goodman



17th Annual South Central Hilltop Neighborhood Clean Up!

MY Project USA Youth Joined Hilltop Community Leaders & Organizations

On May 5th, 2018, our youth joined our neighbors at the 17th Annual South Central Hilltop Neighborhood Cleanup event organized by the legendary Hilltop leader Lisa Boggs. Our Hilltop Tigers Soccer Team along with Coach Siyat Mo-

hamed, Khadija Ibrahim and Zerqa Abid teamed up with our beloved Commander

Scott Hyland of Columbus Division of Police to clean up Sullivant Ave and the alleys



parallel to it.

This was the very first time all of our soccer players joined their neighbors in any community service project outside their own Wedgewood community. They did a great job and are willing to do more. We are so very proud

of our youth. They are our present and our future. We are committed to Protect and Empower them.

In 2018, Youth Organized Several Spruce Up Days In Wedgewood

One of the initiatives launched by the Wedgewood Youth Leaders in 2017 was Clean Building Initiative. In addition they also planned to have a community spruce up day once a month. Throughout the year of 2018, several spruce ups were organized in the Wedgewood. Spring spruce up was on Sunday, May 29th. Youth did a wonderful job and we were super proud of the Boy Scouts troops and packs stepping up and helping with this initiative! They went all over the

neighborhood and inside the building and collected trash for two hours. The Fall Spruce Up day was on Sunday October 15th. Several other organizations joined hands to support our youth. These kids want to see their neighborhood clean and they are willing to step up and do the work it takes and we commend them for their hard work and dedication. Because of them, Wedgewood is a greatly improved neighborhood!



MY Project USA Served 150+ Youths In 2018 Through Weekly Programs! Wedgewood Youth Leaders Excelled Beyond Expectations!

Weekly Meetings, Trainings & Programs Paid Off



In 2018, more than 150 children were served on weekly basis through different programs in Wedgewood. These are the children at the high-risk of drugs and gangs violence, therefore we make sure that we take care of them with a holistic approach. In addition to helping them with their home work and reading skills, we also helped them and their families with basic needs, food and any other issues they might have had.



BOY SCOUTS: On Mondays we were at the Wedgewood Middle School with our Boy Scout troops. From 3:30-6:30pm, the first three hours we had movie time and homework help and the last hour we had our scouting meeting. On Friday, we were at Eakin Elementary School with our Boy Scouts. From 3:30-6pm, the first two and a half hours we offered homework help and educational game stations and the last hour we had our scouting meeting.



WEDGEWOOD READING WARRIORS

On Tuesdays, we were at the Wedgewood rental office with our Wedgewood Reading Warriors. This is a program that was started by our very own Samira Mohamud and Wedgewood Youth Leaders two years ago to help many kids who are locked out of their homes after school.



GIRLS CLUBS: Eakin Girls Club Meetings for elementary school girls are on Friday at Eakin Elementary. We are there from 3:30-6pm, the first two and a half hours we have homework help and educational game stations and the last hour we have our scouting meeting.



On Friday night, we are at the Wedgewood office from 6:30-8pm with our Wedgewood Youth Leaders and girls 14+ for **Girls' Night**. During this hour



and a half, we bond with our amazing girls and have heart to heart venting sessions.

Wedgewood Youth Leaders:

We are super proud of some of the youth in Wedgewood for all of their hard work they have put into their community, making it a more safe, clean and prosperous environment in 2018. These amazing group of individuals are the Wedgewood leaders and their efforts should be admired. They rose up from being just a teenager to the community leaders and organizers in their crime-ridden and underserved neighborhood. They took the roles of tutors, teachers, mentors, big sisters/ big brothers organizers, advocates, and Boy Scout Leaders. They attended meetings, workshops and job trainings at MY Deah's store and warehouse. They took little kids under their wings and tried to organize parents to kick off a social change movement in the community. May God always protect, guide and bless them and their families abundantly. Because of these talented and incredible individuals, we have a bright future, God willing. Thank you for your service, Samira Mohamud, Isha Hussein, Maian Osman, Fadumo Mohamed, Zeinab Abdi, Asha Bakari, Amina Aden, Yusuf Mohamed, Abdikadir Hassan and Mano Ali. **YOU ARE THE FUTURE!!!**



Wedgewood Rise From Gang & Violence To Soccer Championship!

MY Project USA's Hilltop Tigers Become The Pride Of The Community

Coach Siyat Mohamed started the Hilltop Tigers Team in 2017. Thanks to Bayan Shalash for raising initial money at the Hilliard City Schools, we spent about \$2000 on our first team to play indoor soccer in winter 2017. This experience was wonderful. More parents came forward and asked the same for their children. Our young advocates were convinced that the soccer would be the program to engage and save their community in so many ways. That's what they communicated to the Councilmembers.

Columbus City Council approved a grant to fund a soccer/sports program for the youth of the Wedgewood community.

Our Executive Director Zerqa Abid proposed to the property owners to transform the vacant parcels on the property into proper soccer fields. This would help engage hundreds of children without being worried about transporting them to any other recreation center. Property owners agreed to the proposal. Russ Harris, a community leaders, stepped up to lead the newly formed Soccer Advisory Board of MY Project USA.

While we sorted through the logistics of building a soccer field, we decided to take our teams to the Mid-Ohio Select Soccer League tournament in fall 2018. About 50 kids from Wedgewood played in four differ-

ent teams in the MOSSL league. All teams played phenomenal games, but the U13 team actually won the championship.

The entire community is thrilled by this great achievement and positive development in their community.

My Project USA created an opportunity for Wedgewood youth to participate in a highly competitive soccer league based in the central part of Ohio. In this travel soccer league players come from community soccer clubs. Most of these clubs are organized in relatively affluent communities.

The goal was to create a pathway to higher competition for the youth of the Wedgewood community. As the grant

from the city council is implemented, a regulation soccer field and practice areas will be established on the Wedgewood property. The program seeks to involve hundreds of Wedgewood youth in positive sports and wellness programing.

This is part of a much larger program intended to engage hundreds of Wedgewood youth in organized physical and wellness



activities. We hope to have a regulation soccer field, volley ball areas and obstacle courses available in the spring. These sports and wellness programs are part of a much bigger alliance of city and community partners working to improve opportunities for Wedgewood youth.

Team Building and Community Awareness

All of the soccer players learned to play together as a team. They focused on collaboration and communication to accomplish a greater goal. They learned individual responsibility in terms of what their position on the field had to contribute for the team to be successful.

Tangible proof of the programs value came in terms of individual kids volunteering that

they were choosing soccer and this opportunity instead of being involved in gangs, drugs and community violence. They not only recognized that they were making an explicit choice, but they communicated it frequently.

Each time the teams would return from games, kids and adults would gather round the teams to learn about their success. The

positive demonstration effect of this early component of the soccer program is evident throughout the community.

In 2019, My Project USA will build on this initial success to attract more children of all ages into the soccer/sports and wellness programs.

Wedgewood Festivals, Monthly Cook Outs & Music!

MY Project USA Has Created A Space For Youth & Families In Wedgewood To Have Fun While Lifting Their Neighborhood Up

In 2018, MY Project USA took another step in engaging the Wedgewood youth



and families. We started festivals and monthly cook outs to celebrate our community and achievements as we lift this neighborhood up.

The first event was on Sunday, June 24th, 2018, many Wedgewood kids rose to another height. They had hours and hours of fun with the police officers, community leaders and many service providers from different agencies. About 500 people, mostly youth, attended the festival on the front field of the Wedgewood Village Apartments on the Westside of Columbus. For many of them this was a very first festival ever. They had fun at the bouncy houses, climbing rock, fire truck and a safety house, police boat, helicopter, live performances on the stage and a lot more at other booths. Playing with the police officers was the highlight of the event. The

highlight of the highlights was indeed watching Commander Scott Hyland of Columbus Division of Police dancing on the stage and then serving food from the food booth all day long. This event was organized by MY Project USA in collaboration with the Columbus Police Division, Wedgewood Management, YMCA of Central Ohio and other collaborators. Together we made it a memorable day for hundreds of children.

By God's Grace and your help, we hope to continue uplifting the Wedgewood community. We know we have already turned the tables from the violence to the peace and love in this neighborhood. InshaAllah, we will see more and more good development in this neighborhood and beyond.

Wedgewood: A Model Community

Wedgewood Village Apartments is one of the most under-privileged and underserved neighborhoods on the westside of Columbus. About 2,000 children reside in 59 buildings with 650 apartments. There were 17 shootings and 7 homicides in this community in 2017. Thanks to the efforts of MY Project USA, the Columbus City Council, the Columbus Police Department, and area schools, this last year has been remarkably non-violent.

We adopted Wedgewood community as a pilot neighborhood since the beginning. Over the last three years, My Project USA has been working with families to improve conditions in the community. By training and empowering adults and youth to become community organizers, My Project USA has prepared resident to address the issues of violence and other challenges

themselves.

My Project USA is working in conjunction with City Council to improve the outlook for Wedgewood youth by providing a positive environment of sports, nutrition and wellness programming. By participating in these programs, Wedgewood youth can make a personal choice to reject drugs, gangs and the associated street violence.

Our goal is to make it a model community for other similar communities and neighborhoods. We are not just providing social services here. Instead, we are also helping in building a movement for the residents by the residents. We're not just taking care of their instant needs, instead, we are also providing them with all kinds of resources that would help them get out of this hole of poverty forever. We are securing a bright future for our kids in Wedgewood.



SPECIAL EVENTS

Fasting 5K: In Ramadan 2018, Columbus Community Walked While Fasting To Support MY Project USA



We were awed by the support and generosity of our community in Dublin and Hilliard area last Ramadan. More than 100 people ran/walk to support our Wedgewood youth initiatives. Thanks to the leadership of Dr. Wahida Abaza, Fasting 5K was a great success.



We had moms with babies along with everyone else happily walking in 80 degree temperature while fasting. We had younger children cheering and shooting the walkers with water guns to keep them cool. We had older folks walking side by side with young ones with no complaints of hot weather whatsoever. We had family members and friends from all over the country and elsewhere donating to our cause.



Together, we raised more than ten thousand dollars. Alhamdulillah. All praise is due to God. May He immensely reward each and every participant, volunteer and organizer. Ameen.



MY Project USA Annual Dinner & Awards 2018

Samira Mohamud Won "Deah's Change Maker of The Year Award"

Khadija Ibrahim, Karum Abdulrahman and Dr. Malika Haque Received "Deah's Excellence In Community Service & Leadership Awards"

15 Youth Leaders Received "Deah's Excellence In Community Service Awards"

All Awardees Received Commendation From The Ohio State House of Representatives

State Rep. Adam Miller, Councilmembers Michael Stinziano & Elizabeth Brown Presented Awards to All Winners.



We had a blast at MY Project USA's Annual Dinner 2018 at the Boat House. The room was full of energy, enthusiasm, sincerity, diversity, commitment, a lot of celebrations and praise of God Almighty.

Deah's Awards Ceremony was a big hit. Our audience was amazed by the dedication, hard work and the quality of our youth leaders. They were inspired by the words of the elected officials and the winners that spoke on the stage. Our brightest star Samira Mohamud and our legendary community service model, Dr. Malika Haque received

standing ovations from the audience.

It was truly an evening of inspirations and renewal of the commitment to our mission of Protecting and Empowering Our Youth and Families.



SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

MY Deah's Store & Warehouse Follow Goodwill Stores Model

Your Donations Create Jobs & Security For Youth & Families

In order to become financially independent, MY Project USA opened a thrift store, MY Deah's, from the very beginning. In 2017, we also rented a warehouse to build a used-clothes and shoes container business. Over the last years, both store and warehouse have served as the training ground and work place for refugee youth and adults. We have employed survivors of sex-

trafficking, domestic violence, former fellows and other vulnerable community members that need more support to begin on their journey toward financial stability.

In the last four years about 80 youth and adults have been trained and employed at MY Deah's. We have now started selling containers too and we hope to grow this number in 2019.



ADULT EDUCATION

In 2018, We Empowered 16 Adults Through ESL Classes

US Citizenship Prep Courses Were Also Offered For Adults

In 2018, we offered ESL classes for adults in the Wedgewood community. We started with four students. Over time, we increased our attendance to 16 adults. 13 were Somali Bantu, 3 were Somali. Of the 16, 14 were women and 2 were men. We completed a full seven units of instruction, and had one student successfully pass the U.S. Citizenship test.

The population of Wedgewood Apartments is almost entirely Somali Bantu. This group is persecuted within Somalia. As a result, education is extremely limited in the Bantu Adults coming to

the United States. This program sought to rectify this inequity.

The class utilized a premier curriculum for adult ESL that is being utilized in tutoring classes across the country.

There were seven units in the curriculum. Within each unit, our focus would consist of four parts: reading, writing, listening and speaking. A variety of activities were

planned that enabled attendees to hone skills in each of these four domains. Over time, we established a rotation station in which we would engage in whole group instruction first, then break into small

groups to practice the skill just learned with partners and teacher assistance. Folders and materials were provided to each attendee, and additional practice was provided at the end of class to be completed at home.

A formal summative assessment was provided at the end of each unit.

The students were able to complete these tasks with some assistance at a 100% success rate.

Students reported that they were able to listen to co-workers with a higher comprehension of the communication. Students also reported that they were able to discuss issues with their doctor more easily after the medical unit.



US Citizenship Test Prep

Per the community request, we also started Citizenship test prep classes. The goal of the citizenship unit was not to improve skills in communication, but rather to pass the U.S. Citizenship test.

During the Citizenship unit, one of our attendees scheduled his exam with the department of State. Additional practice was provided to this student, and on several occasions teacher met with him one-on-one to ensure the material was covered at his specific English level. He passed the test and is now a naturalized citizen.

At MY Project USA Your Money Goes a Long Way!

MY Project USA Spent \$234,561.67 To Protect & Empower Youth & Families in 2018

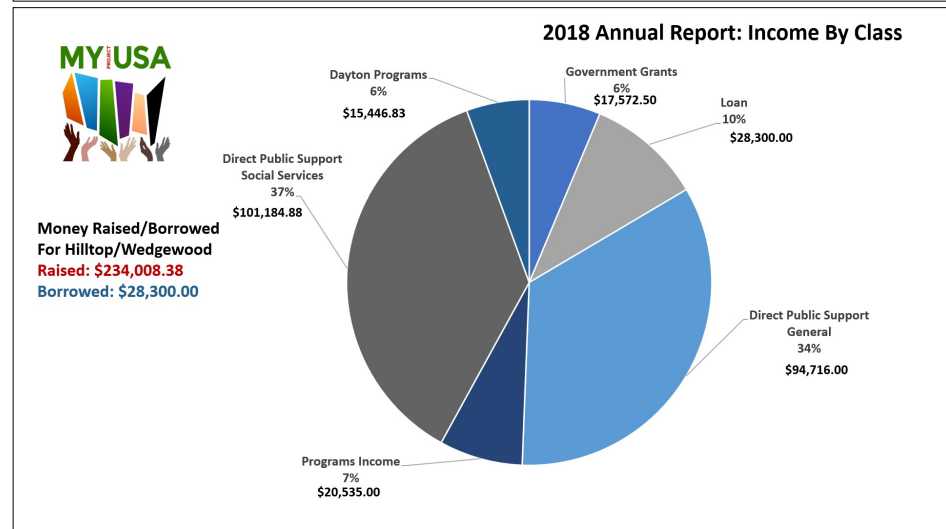
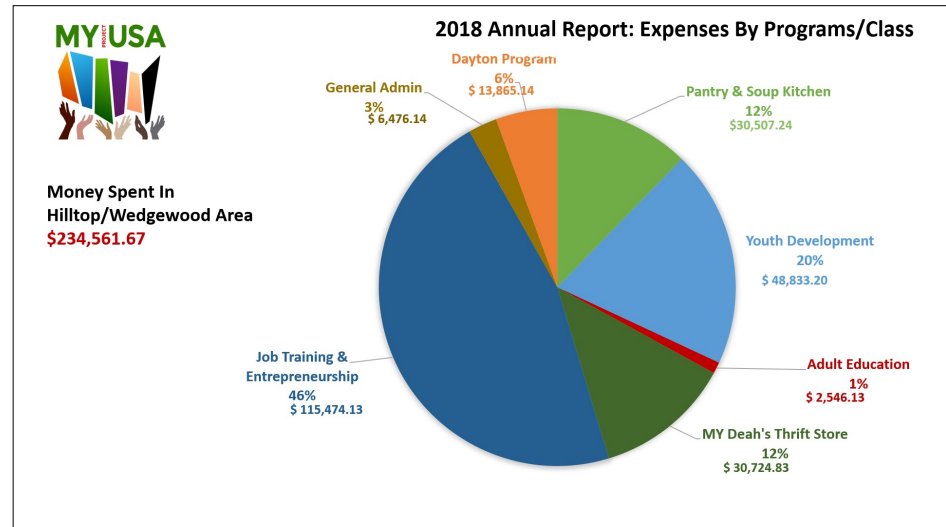
Here is a quick glimpse in our 2018 fiscal report. We take pride in the fact that most of our work has been done either by the volunteers or by the residents of the Hilltop/Wedgewood. All of our board members, including Zerqa Abid, work voluntarily. Only people that are hired and paid by our projects are the youth and parents that we are trying to protect and empower through our work. We were able to support 25 individuals on our payroll as full-time or part-time employees or youth on stipends. We are humbled to be able to support 25 households by creating employment opportunities for them. Our Founder and Executive Director Zerqa Abid works voluntarily. She and her family is a major donor of the organization. She has also done hundred of thousands of dollars worth of work for the organization for free. She has been working 60-70 hours a week for the last four years. Because of her, our expenses associated with administration, parent development and other social services areas are very low. She makes sure that all donations are used wisely.

Our Family Pantry team also works as volunteers. These college students give 5-6 hours every week to serve more than 100 families on Saturday mornings.

Our ESL Teacher Lori Welsh also offered classes for free. Thousands of hours have also been contributed by our community members who cook food and provide other in-kind donations and services. Those values are not listed in this report.

We are grateful to the Columbus City Council for their support to our soccer program.

The main contributors are our community members. Muslim Community members have been very generous to support this cause. We



also have several non-Muslim friends and churches that have supported us by different means. We appreciate all of them. Together, we have made a difference last year. We hope more people would join us this year.

PLEASE DONATE GENEROUSLY

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MY Project USA
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