

2025
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2026

Impact Report

for the 1818 Community
Engagement Grant Program



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1818 Community Engagement Grant Program

The 1818 Community Engagement Grant Program celebrates the over 200-year history of Saint Louis University giving back to the community. Each year, eighteen grants of \$1,800 each are given to selected applicants to make a positive impact in the local community in partnership with at least one nonprofit organization.

The 2025-2026 cycle marked the eighth year of the program, with 56 applications submitted by students and faculty from across campus.

2025-2026: By The Numbers

3100+

INDIVIDUALS IN THE ST. LOUIS AREA IMPACTED BY A GRANT

48

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS IN THE ST. LOUIS AREA ASSISTED

300+

SLU STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF PARTICIPANTS

28

PARTICIPATING CAMPUS GROUPS AND DEPARTMENTS



BRIGHTROOTS PROJECT: FINDING OUR STORIES

Provided preventative social-emotional wellness strategies to at-risk youth.

Community Partners: DOORWAYS Housing and Kids Enjoy Exercise Now (K.E.E.N.)

- 32 youth participated in weekly activities and exercises related to mental well-being and social-emotional behavior.
- Parents reported that their children were able to deal with their frustration better and also were pleased to see their children engage in discussion about coping strategies.
- Community partners described how a safe, respectful, and fun environment was created.



BRIDGING THE LANGUAGE GAP IN OVARIAN CANCER AWARENESS IN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Increased ovarian cancer awareness and promote early detection and screening among underserved immigrant communities.

Community Partners: St. Louis Ovarian Cancer Awareness, Christian Friends of New Americans, Immigrant & Refugee Ministry, and Casa de Salud

- Series of workshops with partner organizations where over 150 individuals received education on ovarian cancer awareness.
- Participants engaged in discussions and demonstrated improved understanding of symptoms, risk factors, and early detection.
- Informational packets and website created in seven different languages that will be given to immigrant populations throughout the St. Louis area.



CUDDLEREX: COMFORT COMPANIONS FOR PEDIATRIC CARE

Child-friendly medical accessory project designed to bring comfort and joy to pediatric patients during hospital stays.

Community Partner: SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital

- 45 CuddleRex comfort kits assembled distributed to 45 pediatric patients and their families in collaboration with the Cardinal Glennon Children's Foundation & Child Life Department.
- Model was designed for seamless integration into clinical workflows while maintaining a personalized, meaningful experience for each child.
- Preliminary observations suggest that CuddleRex enhances patient engagement, reduces visible distress, and promotes emotional comfort.



EMPOWERING SURVIVORS: MENSTRUAL EQUITY IN RECOVERY

Provided education, advocacy and menstrual hygiene kits to domestic violence survivors.

Community Partner: The Women's Safe House

- 500+ menstrual hygiene kits prepared and distributed to survivors at the Women's Safe House.
- Survivors also participated in educational activities designed to raise awareness on accessibility of menstrual products and resources available to them.



FRUIT TRUCK FRIDAYS

Addressed the food deserts surrounding children in East St. Louis school district 189, providing fresh fruit each week.

Community Partners: Alpha Kappa Alpha, Pearls of Power, Dierbergs Markets, James Avant Elementary School and Community Lifeline

- 329 students at James Avant Elementary School received select fresh fruits and vegetables, empowering them to make nutritious choices while reducing barriers to access.
- Program also incorporated nutrition education, community engagement, and health promotion, aligning with public health and preventative care goals.
- Community events also were held, where an additional 597 community members received fresh fruit.



GOOD NEIGHBOR ARTS ENGAGEMENT

Designed and implemented culturally accessible activities specifically targeting underserved communities in CAM's immediate neighborhood.

Community Partner: Contemporary Art Museum St Louis

- 300+ community members participated in multiple community art events held at the CAM, ranging from visual art to various performances.
- Events bridged gap between campus and community, with 78% of participants indicating this was their first time visiting the museum.
- 86% of participants reported feeling a stronger sense of belonging to the community after their attendance at one or more of the events.



IMMIGRANT HEALTH OUTREACH COLLECTIVE

Addressed healthcare access challenges faced by Asian immigrant communities in St. Louis through flu vaccines, breast cancer screenings, and more.

Community Partners: IFM Community Medicine, Resurrection of Our Lord and Language Access Multicultural People

- 33 people screened for HBV with 12 people requiring either further work-up and treatment or vaccination.
- Local community events were also held for participants to receive assistance with obtaining access to Medicaid, as well as healthcare products such as pill organizers and blood pressure kits.



LOVE SHOULDN'T HURT

Raises community awareness around domestic violence, specifically for queer/LGBTQ+ relationships, and provide resources to victims.

Community Partners: ALIVE, St Louis Anti Violence Project

- Over 100 members of the LGBTQ+ community attended a screening of the film *Rhubarb*, followed by a panel of community experts on domestic violence.
- Nearly 1,000 individuals also participated in a moderated discussion via social media.
- Individuals who participated reported a stronger feeling of community as well as deeper support for the issues of domestic violence among the LGBTQ+ community.



MAKING MEANING: A MIGRATORY GRIEF ART-BASE GROUP

Empowered Latinx immigrants to share their experiences with friends, family, and community through art therapy.

Community Partners: LifeWise STL and Migrantes Unidos

- 16 adults participated in a series of art therapy sessions designed to reduce acculturative stress and improve mental health outcomes by creating a space where participants could explore emotions, experiences, and challenges through painting and symbolism.
- Survey data indicated that participants experienced improvements in emotional expression, stress management, and sense of community belonging.



MAY BOOK PROJECT: ST. LOUIS BOOK DROP

Provide books with AANHPI cultural themes to young readers in order to increase literacy and to facilitate belonging.

Community Partner: Very Asian Foundation

- Donated approximately 250 diverse books to Gotsch Intermediate School, improving student access to inclusive reading materials.
- Approximately 200 students in grades 3–5 participated through an assembly with author Michelle Li, literacy activities, and classroom engagement.
- Students expressed excitement about reading stories where they could see themselves represented.



PLAYGROUND RESTORATION PROJECT FOR GATEWAY 180

Refurbished the playground that is currently unusable at Gateway 180, a shelter that provides support for unhoused families.

Community Partner: Gateway 180 Homeless Services

- Gateway 180, who serves unhoused women and children, was in need of a new playground set as the old one was unusable.
- Students and community were able to install a brand new playground set and added rubber mulch as a safety measure to prevent injuries of the children.

"Thank you for choosing us a great playset and for sharing. This is just what the kiddos need and in time for the warmer weather."

- Kandice Wheelington, Rapid Rehousing Case Manager



PROJECT R.I.S.E. (REBUILDING IN SAINT LOUIS FOR EQUITY): A PARTNERSHIP FOR TORNADO RECOVERY AND HOUSING JUSTICE

Increased SLU's community engagement with North St. Louis neighborhoods impacted by the May 2025 tornado through build days, and direct advocacy.

Community Partner: Habitat For Humanity of St. Louis

- 50+ SLU student volunteers participated in three Habitat for Humanity build days in North St. Louis, assisting with recovery efforts for those whose homes were completely destroyed by the tornado.
- Students also engaged in direct advocacy efforts, that helped support tornado victims through the St. Louis Board of Aldermen, contributing ~ \$13.7 million to tornado-impacted residents.
- An additional \$1,200 for tornado victims was raised through a campus event.



PROJECT TRANSCEND

Provided a comprehensive GED prep program for Black transgender clients of the Community Wellness Project.

Community Partner: Community Wellness Project

- Empowered Black transgender women served by the Community Wellness Project (CWP) to earn their GED credential by providing accessible preparation resources, financial support for testing, and a safe, affirming learning environment that fosters educational attainment, career advancement, and long-term personal growth.
- Project secured an additional \$10,000 grant through a different organization to sustain future efforts.



SEEDS OF GROWTH: OUTDOOR LEARNING & WELLNESS PROGRAM

Provided an outdoor learning and wellness program to low-income students at Halls Ferry Elementary through hands-on activities and education.

Community Partner: Ferguson-Florissant School District

- 400 elementary students were provided an experiential learning environment, incorporating student leadership development and wellness-focused activities.
- Students participated in a variety of outdoor activities including planting a garden, learning about various types of plants, and how experiencing the outdoors can have a positive impact on their mental health.
- School will be continuing the program next year.



SLU - CITY SEWING ROOM DENIM DAY 2026: "STANDING UP AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE"

Provided survivors of sexual violence with information about services available on campus and in the community, as well as a chance to connect via sewing and crafts.

Community Partners: City Sewing Room, St Louis Anti-Violence Project, ALIVE, Safe Connections, Crime Victim Center

- Formal partnership created between SLU and City Sewing Room to allow survivors of sexual violence to engage in sewing and crafts as a way to relieve stress and trauma, as well as bond with other survivors.
- Over 150 people participated in the Denim Day Fashion Show and exhibit to learn more about sexual violence and resources available.
- Pius Library exhibit remains on permanent display for campus and community members.



STAYWELL KITS: EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH AT-HOME HEALTH MONITORING

Provided under-served elderly individuals and refugee families with essential at-home medical monitoring equipment and educational materials.

Community Partners: Christian Friends of New Americans and Restore STL

- Distributed blood pressure cuffs, glucose monitors, pulse oximeters, weigh scales, and multilingual blood pressure notebook to 26 refugee families who otherwise had limited access to preventative healthcare tools.
- Community partners also noted that the educational materials helped bridge language and healthcare literacy barriers for refugee families adjusting to the U.S. healthcare system.



THE COALITION

Coordinated effort formed in response to the St. Louis City tornado, uniting legal professionals, realtors, insurance experts, and other to provide education, direct legal and claims assistance, and essential resources to families.

Community Partners: Mound City Bar Association, Realtist of Metropolitan St. Louis, and the National African American Insurance Association

- Provided homeowners and tenants with direct support related to insurance claims and legal assistance.
- More than 15,000 Know Your Rights flyers were distributed, over 500 hot meals were provided, and more than 1,000 hygiene kits, clothing items, and baby supplies were delivered to affected families.
- The project also connected residents to FEMA and SBA representatives while helping protect community members from exploitation and displacement.

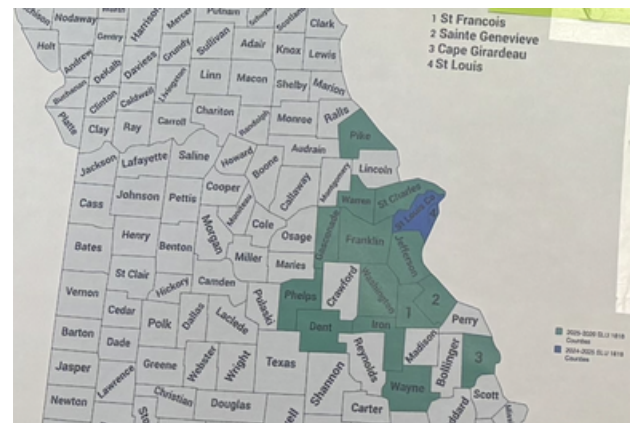


WRONGFUL CONVICTION REVIEW COLLABORATIVE EXPANSION

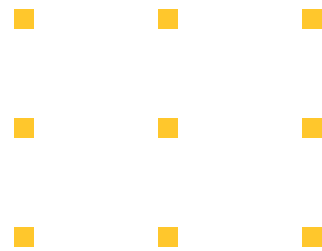
Continued reducing the backlog of wrongful conviction cases in St. Louis by auditing and preparing records in partnership with the Midwest Innocence Project.

Community Partner: Midwest Innocence Project

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Leadership Impact



Student leaders highlighted multiple areas of growth and development gained through the grant process:

“Through this project, I developed my leadership skills in communication, organization, teamwork, and community engagement. I also strengthened my project management skills by coordinating workshop planning, preparing educational materials, and adapting to the needs of two community partner organizations. In addition, I enhanced my confidence in facilitating group discussions, collaborating with team members, and responding to participant questions in real time, which improved my decision-making and adaptability in community-based settings.”

Connections to Systemic Issues of Justice

Many project leaders identified reflection as a vital part of their leadership journey. Through this process, they deepened their awareness of systemic inequities and recognized the integral connection between their work and larger issues of justice including healthcare access, education equity, and barriers to participation. Many also came to understand leadership as a commitment to empowering and amplifying community strengths, prioritizing partnership over imposing solutions.

Project Management and Decision-Making

Project leads shared that they experienced significant growth in managing complex projects with many different stakeholders. They built skills in planning, delegating tasks, troubleshooting issues, and adjusting workflows to handle challenges as they arose. This growth helped them organize resources more effectively and make timely decisions that balanced mission goals with real-world limitations, boosting their confidence in leading meaningful initiatives.

Adaptability and Flexibility in Leadership

Project leaders often faced unexpected challenges that meant they had to adjust plans, roles, and strategies on the fly. Their growth was evident in how quickly they could pivot, welcome creative solutions, and respond with resilience to both logistical and interpersonal hurdles.

Stories of Change



Midwest Innocence Project

"This project helped MIP move from recognizing the need in St. Louis to being positioned to act on it. Through this project and related efforts, nearly every St. Louis-area case in our system has now been touched in some meaningful way – audited, reviewed, updated, or moved forward for records collection. As a result, many St. Louis cases are now better positioned for the next stage of review. SLU's work has been an important part of preparing this group of cases for deeper review and helping MIP pursue additional funding to support a concentrated focus on the St. Louis jurisdiction."

Midwest Innocence Project

"For 40 years Habitat for Humanity Saint Louis has worked alongside engaged partners to work towards a mission of bringing access to affordable housing to anyone in our shared community. We are inspired every day by youth led organizations like the SLU Habitat Campus Chapter who choose to take on challenges like advocacy, volunteerism, fundraising and community connection all while pursuing higher education. Their support and enthusiasm for our mission at Habitat reverberates across our community, and we welcome the opportunity to support more families together."

— Habitat for Humanity St. Louis



"[Athlete] loves attending BrightRoots because they engage her in activities she loves, like assisted/partner yoga poses, and discussions about coping strategies with activities like decorating and putting puzzle pieces together. [Athlete] is so engaged and she is handling her frustration better!"

— Parent of a Kids Enjoy Exercise Now (K.E.E.N) Athlete