

# TasteWise Kids Annual Report



**2024**

TASTEWISEKIDS.ORG



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## GREETINGS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR!

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2024 was a year of reflection, connection, and the deepening of community roots and positive impact. It was also a year of assessment and evaluation, as we restructured our programs and organizational structure to be more efficient, mindful, and focused. We are very grateful for everyone in the community who has continued to support our work, including but not limited to volunteers, businesses, schools, chefs, farms, and community partners. Positive change flows easier when we come together with our diversity in talent, skills, and creative solutions to challenges.

TasteWise Kids now has four core programs which provide inclusive opportunities and experiences for family members of all ages, and which can be adapted for each of the unique communities in which we work. TWK implements the long standing Days of Taste program of the American Institute of Food and Wine, Food Story Time for young learners, Every Day is Earth Day which emphasizes environmental stewardship as a necessary part of a healthy food cycle, and Exploring Foods, an adaptable family focused program. Together, these programs bring us to our partner schools multiple times throughout the year, deepening impact and partnership.

Our programs provide laughter, joy, and learning with the hope of equipping the next generation with the skills and knowledge necessary to continue to build healthy, strong, resilient communities, and to find solutions to the many challenges that exist surrounding equitable access to nutritious food. Thank you for all the many ways in which you support the work of TasteWise Kids. We would not be able to do what we do without each of you.

*~ Salina Duncan*

# MISSION + VISION

**TasteWise Kids  
inspires kids to  
explore and  
experience the  
world of food  
and its sources.**



We work with local chefs, farmers, and other food professionals to teach our students about where their food comes from, help them to explore their own sense of taste, and to discover the value of fresh food from multiple perspectives:

- Health and nutrition
- Agriculture and environmental stewardship
- Career Awareness/Development
- Culinary - preparing food to individual taste preference
- Social aspects of eating with friends and family

**We believe every kid  
deserves to:**

- **Know where their food comes from**
- **Have the skills to prepare their own food**
- **Be empowered to make their own informed food choices**

## DEI Statement

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We cultivate a culture of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) by being intentional about how we build our staff and volunteers, who we invite as food professional experts, and the content we develop and share with our students.

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# GUIDING VALUES

We focus on creating a supportive environment to educate students about healthy food choices, food preparation and inspire future leaders.



## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**Our programming and partnerships prioritize DEI.**

Educational programs reflect the diversity of our students, including multi-lingual materials.

We partner with local small businesses, including BIPOC, minority, and women owned businesses.

We focus on offering programs to Title 1 and under resourced communities.



## ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

**We have a strong appreciation of the lands that feed us.**

Partner farmers teach students how to be good stewards of the earth, including topics such as composting and organic farming.

We have developed a program, Every Day is Earth Day, which bring the food cycle full circle, emphasizing a healthy environment as crucial component of growing healthy food. We are striving to reduce waste in our daily programs.



## GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITY

**All of our Board and staff embrace our values.**

We are committed to: An inclusive, fun and creative culture, while building and encouraging a healthy relationship to food that supports health and wellness.

Each year, board members review and sign an annual commitment letter & conflict of interest agreement. All board members and staff complete an onboarding training.

# PROGRAMS + IMPACT

## 1 DAYS OF TASTE

- 1,030 Take Home Salad Kits from 14 schools were enjoyed by approximately 4,120 family members
- 3 session discovery-based program that introduced 1,010 4th graders at 14 different schools to the basic elements of taste
- Kids go on a taste exploration and learn how to balance various flavors for good nutrition and taste.
- Kids take a tour of a working farm to see how food is grown.
- Kids work with a chef to make a salad and vinaigrette.

## 2 FOOD STORY TIME

- We had reading time for 508 preschool and lower elementary age children at 16 locations, integrating 3 focus areas:
  - literacy skills,
  - developing enjoyment of reading and listening to stories, and
  - developing food literacy knowledge.
- Each story is followed by a related hands-on food focused activity to help integrate these skills.

## 3 EXPLORING FOODS

- 22 students in the PAL program for young adults at Augusta Fells Savage High School participate in monthly life skills and cooking sessions, which integrate kitchen skills and highlight seasonal nutritional ingredients.
- 60 students and 10 parents received a Valentine's Day Exploring Foods program featuring Fruit 3 Ways at Robert W. Coleman Elementary School
- This intergenerational family kitchen skills series is customized to each community.

## 4 EVERYDAY IS EARTH DAY

- For lower elementary students, we read a compost themed story, followed by a vermicompost lesson and exploration session. Kids learn the full cycle of food from the earth where it grows, to the table, and back again.
- Upper elementary students are introduced to urban garden design, working in groups to imagine creative urban garden spaces with their neighborhoods in mind.
- 475 students at 4 schools planted seeds to take home. We discussed how edible plants can be grown and harvested right in a window, and in small or vertical spaces.



# THE IMPACT



**Govans Elementary**



**Federal Hill Preparatory School**



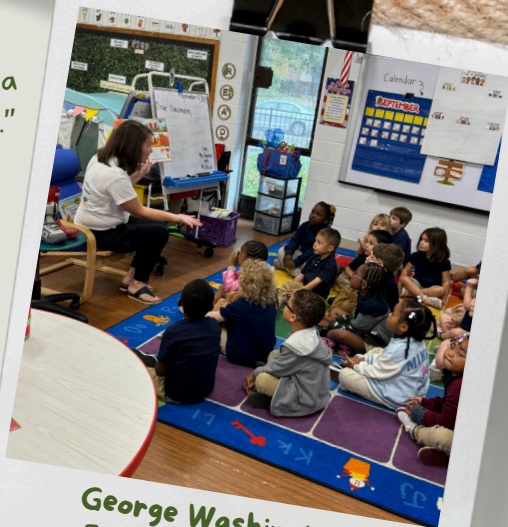
**Margaret Brent Elementary School**

## Student Thoughts

"Going to the farm was fun because it was close to our school. I did not know a farm was close to our school in the city."  
~student

"I learned that tomatoes are a fruit because they have seeds and I ate a lot of tomatoes." ~student

"My students get so much out of the farm field trip each year. A highlight is getting them outside and in nature." ~ teacher



**George Washington Elementary School**



**Kids Can Cook Franciscan Center Event**

"My grandmother always says I should try a salad. Now I like them and can't wait to tell her." ~student

# ENGAGEMENT + EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



Our annual fundraiser, **Flavors of Maryland**, was a celebration of all that we do and support at Taste Wise Kids. We were honored to partner with 6 local chefs, as well as several restaurants and farms. Guests enjoyed cocktails, conversation, and delicious bites that highlighted Maryland's Fall harvest. We were honored to have so many local chefs and farmers attend the event as guests. Their attendance speaks to the dedication our community has to our mission and work.



In collaboration with **Jack and Jill and FireBird Farm**, TWK helped guide a Farm to Table Chopped challenge for middle school students. Students were given tools to cook with, produce from the farm, and a mystery ingredient. Working in teams, students created a variety of dishes. Our staff and guest chef helped guide cooking techniques and explain flavor profiles.



In partnership with **Fox 45**, Taste Wise Kids recorded a news segment for Back to School Readiness. The news segment aired three times on several stations at the start of the school year. We provided examples of healthy breakfast and lunch options and discussed the importance of fueling children properly to be ready to learn.

# ENGAGEMENT + EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

We led the Kid's Corner at the **Ekiben** Community Night.

TWK led two worm composting workshops with the **Department of Public Works** at the Urban Oasis Earth Day event and at the EcoLoop Food Waste Reduction event.

**Chef Jerry Edwards** and **Chef's Expressions** hosted a Wine Supper in August benefiting our programming. Chef Jerry has been volunteering for and supporting Days of Taste since it's start in Maryland.

**College Bound Workshop-** TWK created and delivered a College Dorm Room Chef workshop for the College Bound Foundation. Incoming freshmen participated in a week-long college preparation conference at Goucher University. TWK attended one day of the conference and hosted 28 students in the workshop. Attendees had hands-on experience making healthy and nutritious breakfast and lunch options with ingredients that would be accessible to college students.

We proudly continue our partnership with the **32nd Street Market**. TWK hosted a pop-up table. Families went on a food scavenger hunt around the market and were invited to read a food story with us.



Ekiben Community Event



College Bound Event



32nd St Farmer's Market

# VOLUNTEER SUMMARY

In 2024, our dedicated volunteers and board members generously donated a total of 455 hours to TasteWise Kids. They supported the Days of Taste program as Chefs, Farmers, and classroom assistants, assembled activity bags for Weekend Backpacks, and provided invaluable help during TWK events and more. Volunteers are crucial to the success of our programs. The commitment and effort of our volunteers is instrumental in ensuring the continuity and success of our initiatives.



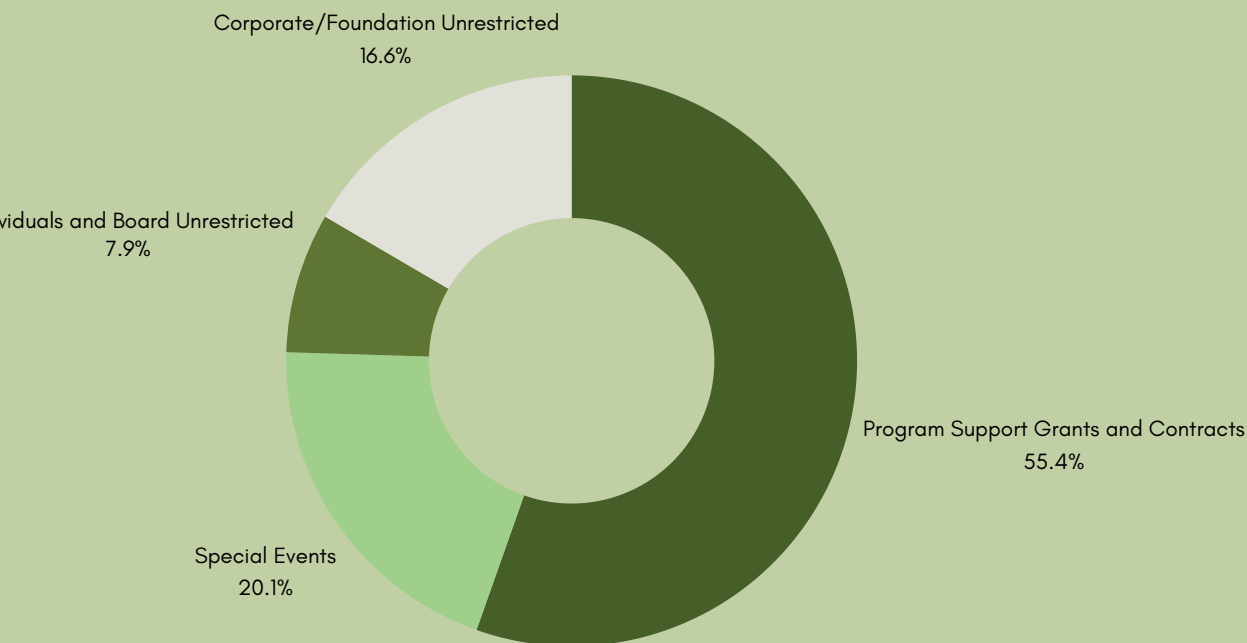
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## Weekend Backpack Activity Bags

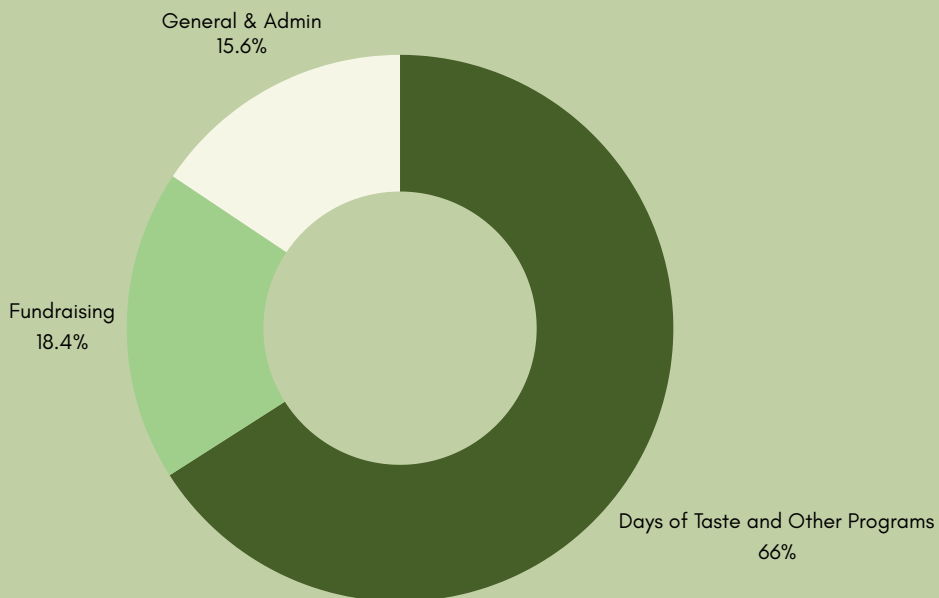
- 1100 bags received by 800 students.
- 55 middle and high school students from Western High School and the Boys and Girls Club of Carroll County volunteered to assemble the activity bags and earned service learning hours.
- TWK and Weekend Backpacks have been partnering for 3 years to bring fun food literacy activities and simple recipe tips to children and family.

# 2024 Financials

## 2024 Revenue- \$211,000



## 2024 Expenses- \$163,000



## 2024 Summary

TasteWise Kids grew in 2024 and had the largest year of programming post-covid. Both revenues and expenses increased compared to 2023. In addition, the organization was able to modestly grow its cash reserves, which provides the organization a more stable future. The ending net assets for 2024 were approximately \$93,000. TasteWise Kids is committed to growing its programs to advance its mission to inspire kids to explore and experience the world of food and its sources.



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

TasteWise Kids is committed to diversity and inclusion for its board, staff, volunteers, and community. The Board assesses member composition and promotes diversity and inclusion for board recruitment, programs, decision-making and operations by considering and respecting diversity of skills, experiences and demographics to ensure that all voices are valued and heard.



## **AMBER PERRY | Board President**

Amber (she/her) joined the TasteWise Kids board in 2021 and now acts as President of the board. She is Vice President, Regulatory Strategy & Services for Pepco Holdings, Inc. Amber and her family live in Silver Spring, MD and love food festivals, traveling, and tennis. A true foodie, Amber is always looking for new, creative ways to elevate her favorite vegetable: Brussels sprouts.



## **NEAL CROWLEY | Board Vice President**

Neal (he/him) joined the TasteWise Kids Board of Directors in 2020. He is Director of Global Insurance Management at Franklin Templeton. He enjoys being active, traveling, cooking, discovering new foods, and listening to music. His favorite vegetable is a nod to his southern upbringing: collard greens!



## **Michael Abboud | Treasurer**

Michael Abboud (he/him) MBA, PMP, joined the board of TasteWise Kids in 2018. He is the Program Manager of the Eastern Region for Mesa Associates, Inc. Michael has also been actively involved as a coach for the Bel Air Terps and the Baltimore Lutheran Saints youth sports programs. His passion for food developed early in his childhood at his family's restaurant in Bel Air, MD. He now lives in Harford County, MD with his wife and two daughters. As a family, they enjoy being outdoors, cooking wonderful meals, and traveling to new destinations. Michael's favorite vegetable is sweet potato.



## **DAVID + TONYA THOMAS**

Chefs David Thomas (he/him) and Tonya Thomas (she/her) both joined the board of TasteWise Kids in 2021. Together they have served at the James Beard House, appeared on The Today Show, and more. Chef David Thomas was crowned Food Network's Chopped Grand Champion in 2020. The chefs are currently part of a group working to establish the Muloma Heritage Center in St. Helena Island, SC.



## **Kimberly Barker | Board Secretary**

Kimberly (she/her) serves as the board secretary for TasteWise Kids. She is Director of Marketing Operations at M&T Bank and a faculty member of the American Bankers Association School of Bank Marketing and Management. Tomato is her favorite vegetable—even though she knows it's a fruit!



## **RUSSELL JOYNER**

Russell (he/him) joined the board of TasteWise Kids in 2022. He is an Executive Partner with Gartner providing strategic advisory work for mid-sized enterprises. Russell and his wife live in Crofton, MD and enjoy travelling, spending time with family and discovering new local restaurants in Annapolis and Baltimore. Russell's favorite vegetables are spinach and brussels sprouts.





**ROBERT HOFFMANN**

Robert (he/him) joined the board of TasteWise Kids in 2023 after serving a year on the TasteWise Kids Communications Committee. Currently he is the Corporate Director of Digital Marketing with Live! Casino & Hotel. Robert and his girlfriend live in Bluffton, SC and enjoy travelling, hiking, playing pickleball and spending time with family and their dog Ruby. Robert’s favorite vegetables are asparagus and acorn squash.



**NATALIE ESTELLE**

Natalie (she/her), our newest Board Member, is a College and Career consultant and a Baltimore City Public Schools Visual Arts Teacher with over 20+ years of experience in graphic design, marketing in various industries, food photography and education. She has experience in running a non-profit organization in addition to being a published author. She brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in the culinary space and we are excited to welcome her aboard. Her favorite vegetables are English cucumbers and potatoes.

# STAFF TEAM



**SALINA DUNCAN | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Salina (she/her) serves as the Executive Director and the Program Manager of our Days of Taste program. She is a community health educator with a focus on providing nutritious food options and nature-based experiences to youth. Salina lived in Guatemala for 10 years, where she worked with small nonprofits to provide basic health and educational resources to communities with limited access. There she was introduced to the healing properties of plants and the knowledge of a diverse community of healers. She is grateful that Taste Wise Kids brings together some of her favorite things- local farms, local food, environmental stewardship, and hands-on learning. Salina lives in Westminster, MD with her children, Lucy and Jimmy.



**JULIE EUGENIO | COMMUNITY PROGRAMS MANAGER**

Julie (she/her) brings TWK programs to life through the creative development and delivery of in-person programs throughout Baltimore and the surrounding counties. Julie is a former Howard County teacher, and the mother of three boys. She understands the importance of teaching children about healthy food choices and food sources. Julie is active in her South Baltimore community, and in her down time enjoys spending quality time with her family.



**ZAINA KAZI | COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST**

Zaina (she/her) was the Summer 2024 Program Management Intern and now is the Communications Specialist. She is a student at the Smith School of Business, studying Information Systems and Operations Management. In addition, she is minoring in Technology Entrepreneurship and Corporate Innovation. Zaina is passionate about food and loves cooking and baking in her free time. She is excited to bring new content to TasteWise Kids' social media platforms and website!

# SUPPORTERS + PARTNERS

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## Sponsors:

- [Pompeian Olive Oil](#)
- [United Healthcare Community Plan](#)
- [M&T Bank](#)
- [Fells Point Wholesale Meats](#)
- [Live! Casino & Hotel](#)
- [Kramon & Graham Attorneys at Law](#)
- [KBST&M](#)
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- [32nd Street Farmers Market](#)
- [BIC Educational Foundation](#)
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- [Johns Hopkins Health Systems](#)
- [Kiwanis Club of Ellicott City](#)
- [South Baltimore Gateway Partnership](#)
- [United Way of Central Maryland](#)
- [Weinberg Foundation](#)
- [Domino Sugar](#)
- [Atlas Restaurant Group](#)
- [Engel Law Group](#)
- [T.Rowe Price](#)
- [The Blanket Fort Foundation](#)

## Days of Taste Host Farms:

- [The 6th Branch](#)
- [Filbert Street Community Garden](#)
- [Free Town Farm](#)
- [Great Kids Farm](#)
- [Baltimore County Agricultural Center](#)

## Days of Taste Chefs:

- Rey Eugenio- Heritage Kitchen
- Jesse Sandlin
- Carlos Raba
- Amanda Mack
- Heather Smith
- Davon Pulliam

## Days of Taste Schools:

### **Baltimore City**

- Dickey Hill
- Govans
- Charles Carroll Barrister
- Southwest Baltimore Charter
- Federal Hill Preparatory School
- Hazelwood
- Patterson Park
- Commodore John Rogers
- Margaret Brent
- Southwest Baltimore Charter
- George Washington
- Hazelwood

### **Baltimore County**

- Owings Mills

### **Howard**

- Talbott Springs
- Guilford

**THANK  
YOU**

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