



2023



**Upcycle
Bikes™**

Annual
Impact
Report



President's Message

In the spring of 2022, I began fixing donated bikes on behalf of Bethany Christian Services. At the time, a large influx of Afghan refugees to our area needed basic transportation support to get from their apartments to their initial job placements. Their commute was only a few miles, so a functional bike proved to be a vital tool in support of their new life and new opportunities during an incredibly challenging time in their lives. The refugees loved the bikes, and despite a language barrier, their gratitude and joy were infectious. As a recreational cyclist and a tinkerer seeking a new way to impact my community, I was hooked!

The need from the refugees arriving in the Grand Rapids area clearly was large, but was basic transportation an even broader need? Sure enough, community organizations and leaders across our region told me that transportation was either *a* top or *the* top challenge facing their clients. Thanks to strong community encouragement and a group of talented and passionate individuals, Upcycle Bikes was born in August 2022.

Today we provide affordable access to community resources for clients of 16 different distribution partners. Our riders include refugees, the unhoused, women re-entering the workforce, parolees, and those recovering from domestic abuse, addiction, and mental health challenges. In all cases, Upcycle Bikes provides a vital tool to severely financially constrained individuals across the greater Grand Rapids area.

Thanks to our talented and passionate staff, volunteers, donors, and champions, we impacted over 500 individuals in 2023. We have provided them with increased independence, opportunity, self-confidence, relief, and joy. We see it every time we hand over a “new” bike that is both functional and safe.

Please join us in 2024 as we expand our reach and our impact, one bike at a time.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Armbruster".

Rick Armbruster
President and Founder



Vision

Upcycle Bikes strives to cultivate a community accessible for all.



Mission

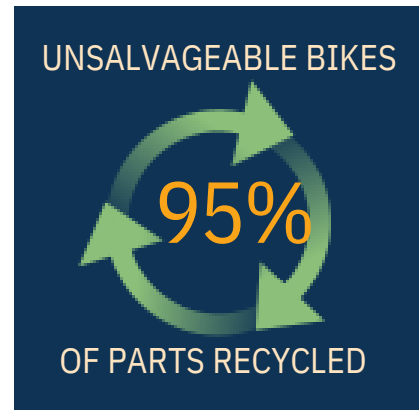
Upcycle Bikes refurbishes and donates adult bikes to provide an affordable and accessible transportation resource for financially constrained individuals. Our bikes enhance our riders' individual independence and their connections to community.

2023 Impact



In 2023 we planned to grow our organizational capabilities and capacities to expand our impact to a diverse set of populations, and we greatly exceeded all of our goals. We are incredibly grateful for all our community partners, supporters, and volunteers. We're proud that together we realized tremendous growth as an organization and built a foundation on which to build future impact.

2023 By the Numbers

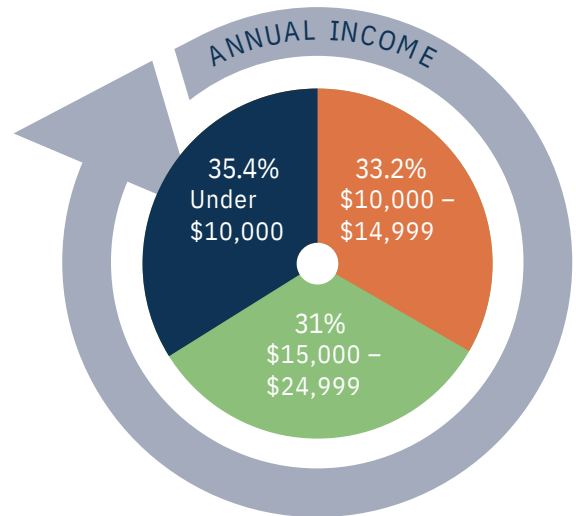
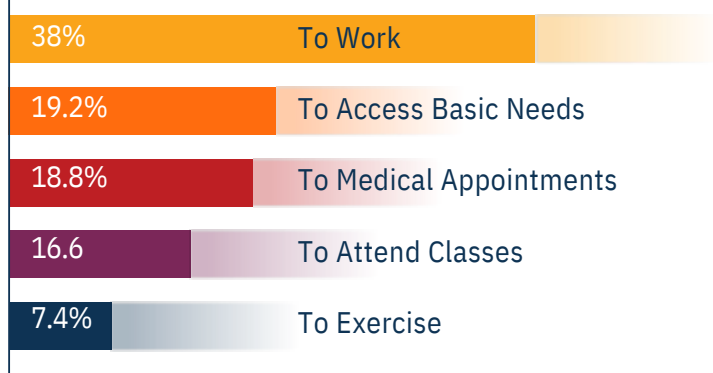


The men at Guiding Light

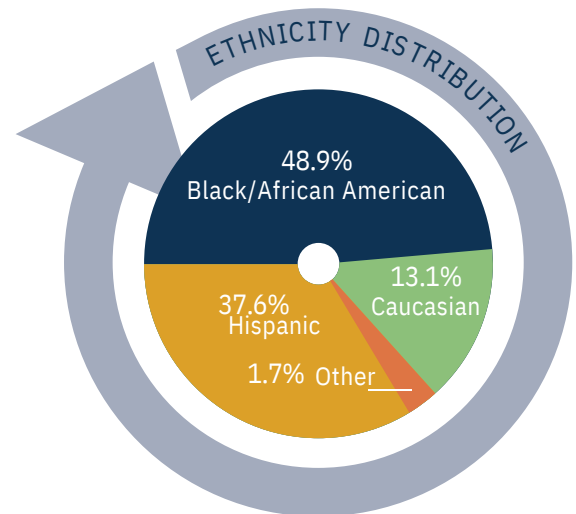
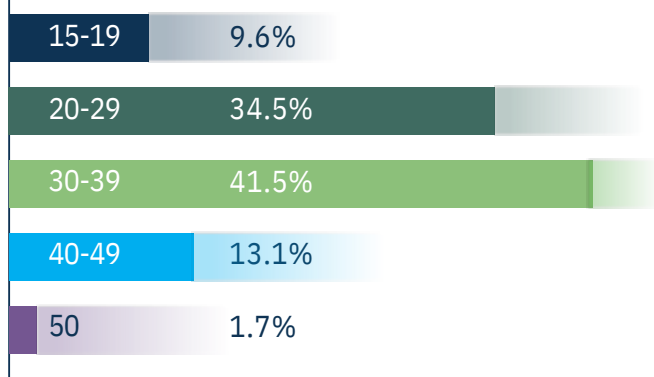
Old bike. New life.

We surveyed our riders and distribution partners to better understand who they are and how they use our bikes. The results validate our mission and motivate us to expand and enhance our efforts.

Primary Bike Use



Age Demographics Profile



Gender Distribution

Men **50 / 50** Women

“One of our clients just bought a car. He was only able to do that because the bike you gave him enabled him to keep his job.”

-Kurt Fritz, Crossroads Bible Church

How We Collect Bikes



We rely on used adult bikes to enable our operations. Bikes come to us from community bike drives, partner drop-off sites, bulk giving, and individual donations.

We received over 700 bikes in 2023. That's more than 700 bikes that did not end up in a landfill! Bike donors love *upcycling* their bikes and giving their old bike a new life and a new purpose.

2023 Bike Drive Hosts

Aquinas College
Cornerstone Church
East Grand Rapids Gaslight Village
Forest Hills FIRST Robotics Team 3357
Progressive AE
REI of Grand Rapids
Rockford Footwear Depot
Steelcase



Most bikes collected at one event:
Rockford Footwear Depot
May 20, 2023

“I was first introduced to Upcycle Bikes in 2022, and I immediately wanted to support their organization. I liked the positive and tangible nature of Upcycle Bike’s mission and their novel approach to supporting members of the Grand Rapids community. We partnered with them on hosting two successful events in 2023 and look forward to hosting events for Upcycle Bikes again in 2024. Wonderful people and great organization. If you partner with Upcycle Bikes, you will find it a rewarding experience.

- Mark Roach, General Manager
Rockford Footwear Depot



Old bike. New life.

How We Collect Bikes



Thank you to all of the community organizations, businesses, and individuals that supported our bike collection efforts this year.

“This was the first mountain bike I ever purchased. I’m happy to be able to pass it on and hope that it provides as much joy to someone else.”

- Dave, Bike Donor



2023 Donation Dropoff Sites

Alger Bikes
Aquinas College
Pedego of Grand Rapids
REI of Grand Rapids
Upcycle Bikes

2023 Bulk Donors

Apartment Complexes
Calvin University
Grand Rapids Police Department
The Rapid
Walker Police Department



“The Fuji hybrid bike I donated belonged to my late father-in-law. Before his passing, he lived on Gun Lake for many years and could often be found riding around the lake daily. Sometimes even twice a day. He was an active man and he would for sure have wanted his bike to continue to be ridden. We hope that his donation will not only make someone else happy, but that it will empower them through the power of bicycles.”

- Eric, Bike Donor

Old bike. New life.

How We Refurbish Bikes



Upcycle Bikes and our small staff rely heavily on volunteer support to facilitate our efforts. Our refurbishment team possesses both broad and deep skill sets, a willingness to collaborate and learn, a passion for tinkering, and a desire to give back while having fun. Our emphasis on safety and functionality guides our efforts. Freedom, dignity, and agency are core values that we consistently consider with each bike we refurbish.

“Cycling and outreach are both passions of mine, so volunteering at Upcycle Bikes provides the opportunity to do both. The knowledge I have gained and the friends I have made are an added bonus!”

- Linda Thompson-Poeder

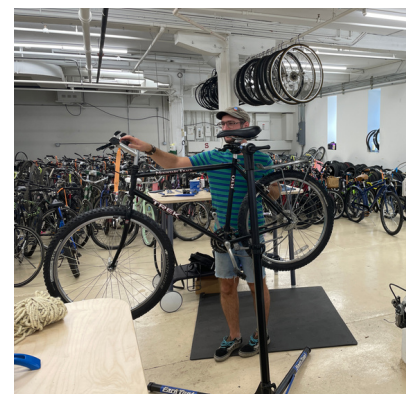


“I volunteer at Upcycle Bikes because its rewarding to help the community, and it’s just plain fun! I’ve personally been in a position of only having my bike as a primary form of transportation, and I have friends in the same situation now. Supporting Upcycle Bikes is how I recognize and impact the challenges others have.”

- Andrew Wood

“As a cycling enthusiast, I found Upcycle Bikes’ vision compelling. Working as a volunteer mechanic is a small way to give back and to help others who have a significant need. It’s a privilege to be able to spread the love and value of bikes through this initiative.”

- Jeff McDonald



Old bike. New life.

Refurbishing used bikes is more than just a hobby for our staff and volunteers. It's a passion with a purpose. We spend a lot of time evaluating, cleaning, upgrading, and testing each of the bikes that come through our shop. We often take our work to an extreme, but it's worth the effort.



“This might be the coolest bike you’ve ever seen. Yes, it’s a 10+ year old Diamondback, and when I started working on it it was a mess. But someone cared enough to make the effort to get this bike to us instead of leaving it to finish rotting away in the back of the barn or in a landfill.

Upcycle Bikes’ donors provided the means to have shifters, cables, grips, brake levers, and other bits upgraded. Someone donated the sweet Continental tire I mounted on the front wheel, since the original one was long gone. Our friends at Pedego hooked us up with a bunch of brand-new saddles. The original one on this bike was no longer rump-worthy! When I discovered that the chainrings were bent beyond repair, I grabbed a fancy Coda crankset provided by another kind and generous member of our Grand Rapids community - just right!

This somewhat ordinary bike has now transcended its humble origins and stands ready and able to provide some fortunate rider with solid and safe transportation. This bike will soon find a new home with a recent immigrant needing a way to get to work, someone who has recently escaped a terrible living situation, or just someone that needs a break and a way to get around.

It’s true that it does take a village, and ours is really sweet!”

- Mike Clark, Upcycle Bikes’ Bike Whisperer



Thanks to Mike and his meticulous efforts, this bike now helps a young adult at the Grand Rapids Center for Community Transformation’s YouthBuild program. He can now get back and forth to GED classes and to an apprenticeship placement.

We are fortunate to live in a community with numerous social organizations who collaboratively provide resources where they are most in need. In 2023, we partnered with 16 of these organizations. Upcycle Bikes provided bikes to refugees, the unhoused, women re-entering the workforce, parolees, and those recovering from domestic abuse, addiction, and mental health challenges. We take pride in the network we have developed, and we thank all of our distribution partners for their support, trust, collaboration, and friendship this past year.

2023 Distribution Partners

AYA Youth Collective	Mel Trotter Ministries
Bethany Christian Services	Michigan Department of Corrections
CarePortal	Puertas Abiertas
Crossroads Bible Church	The Right Door for Hope, Recovery, and Wellness
Family Promise	Safe Haven Ministries
Friends of Grand Rapids Parks	Samaritas
Guiding Light	Steepletown Neighborhood Services
HELP Pregnancy Aid	Women's Resource Center

The idea for Upcycle Bikes grew out of my work with Bethany Christian Services in 2022. This relationship provided the foundation for both Upcycle Bike's mission and our distribution model. By building and leveraging relationships with other community organizations, Upcycle Bikes is able to make a larger and more targeted impact quickly."

-Rick Armbruster, Upcycle Bikes Founder



Selected Distribution Partner Profiles



Clients: Refugees

2023 Impact: 188 bikes provided

“Upcycle Bikes’ donations allow refugees to go to work, school, tutoring classes, and other activities without relying on the bus or volunteers for transportation. We are so thankful for Upcycle Bikes for providing quality, safe bikes for our clients.”

-Michelle Roub
National Community
Engagement Manager



Clients: Youth in crisis

2023 Impact: 77 bikes provided

“Our partnership with Upcycle Bikes has greatly impacted our members’ ability to get to school and work and to connect with resources in our community. AYA is incredibly grateful for the work of Upcycle Bikes and their willingness to collaborate with us on this resource. We look forward to continuing our partnership to meet the needs of youth in our community.”

-Andy Allen
Vice President
of Advancement



Selected Distribution Partner Profiles



Clients: New Americans
2023 Impact: 73 bikes provided

“Delivering bikes to clients and seeing their smiles is a joyous event! Our clients have overcome unspeakable traumas, and starting life in a new place has many challenges. Upcycle Bikes has been able to ease the adjustment process for them, and this is a blessing. We will continue to work together to help New Americans have greater opportunities to learn, contribute, explore, and find more freedom in motion!”

-Brittany Schlosser
Matching Grant Supervisor



PUERTAS ABIERTAS

Clients: Latina Women
2023 Impact: 30 bikes provided

“When women come out of violent situations, they often have nothing but the clothes they’re wearing and do not have a means of transportation for daily activities. That makes the path to recovery difficult. Upcycle Bikes helped to provide a solution with their bikes! These bikes are a major step toward freedom for our clients, and it was a joy to give each one away to women we know will use and appreciate them.”

-Andrea Inostroza
Executive Director and Founder



A bike provides freedom, independence, self-reliance, and self-confidence. A bike offers new opportunities, new perspectives, and new engagements. And, most importantly, a bike can provide all of these things to a much more diverse and equitable group of people than a car. This is the power of the bike. And this is what Upcycle Bikes wants to harness and share.

We need your help to continue our efforts and expand our impact into 2024.



Please consider a donation to support our mission and become an ambassador for Upcycle Bikes.

Scan the QR code or visit www.upcyclebikes.org to show your support for a transportation solution in our community.



Your donations will fund expenses such as these:

Parts

Brake levers
Cables
Chains
Grips
Pedals
Shifters

Supplies

Brushes
Grease
Lube
Rags
Soap
Solvents

Tools

Bike stands
Pumps
Screwdrivers
Specialty tools
Work benches
Wrenches

Support Items

Bike Helmets
Bike Locks
Mechanic time
Office Supplies
Shop space
Trailer

Thank You to Our Donors



The growth and impact of Upcycle Bikes would not be possible without the support of so many organizations and individuals across greater Grand Rapids.

Thank you to all those who supported us in 2023!

Organizational Donors

BAI Foundation
Cascade Community Foundation
Fifth Third Bank
Freedom in Motion
Grand Rapids Community Foundation
Grand Rapids Marathon
Holland 100
League of American Bicyclists
Nonprofit Technical Assistance Fund for Kent County
Priority Health
Rockford Footwear Depot
Rotary Club of Grand Rapids Charities Foundation
Steelcase Changemakers
Trails.com

Sponsors

Bethany Christian Services
Bohnsack & Associates
Jerry and Suzanne Callahan
Dow
Grand Rapids Children's Museum
Tim and Ping Liang
Northern Trust
Pedego of Grand Rapids
REI of Grand Rapids
Velocity USA
Via Design
Rick and Sonja Yeates

In-Kind Donors

Alger Bikes
Biked
City Built Brewing
CKO Kickboxing
Freewheeler Bike Shop
Garage Bar & Grill
Grand Rapids Children's Museum
Groundhog Day Marathon
Meijer
Olives
Pedego of Grand Rapids
Reed's Lake Resolution Run
REI of Grand Rapids
Rockford Footwear Depot
Salon Re
Steelcase
StretchLab
Tri del Sol
Tris4Health
VanBelkum Companies
Velocity USA
Wines for Humanity

Individuals

And a special thank you to the 75+ individual donors that supported Upcycle Bikes with a financial contribution. We appreciate every one of you!

Visit upcyclebikes.org/donors for a complete list.





Board of Directors

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Old Bike. New Life.

For more information:
upcyclebikes.org