



 *calmer*
CHOICE

ANNUAL
REPORT
2022 - 2023



When Calmer Choice started, other kids weren't nice to me. Now some of my classmates talk and play with me. I've learned that there are kind people in the world.

- 5th grade student



OUR TEAM

Staff Members



Adam Burnett
Interim Executive Director



Sarah Manion
Chief Program Officer



Stephanie Goley
Mindfulness Coach



L. Forest Malatesta
Lead Facilitator



Jennifer Perrin
District Coordinator



Liliana Bejarano-Cryer
Instructor



Carolyn DeCristofano
Instructor



Poppy Kennedy
Instructor



Sue Costello
Instructor



Paul Melville
Facilitator



Song Sutthimaitree
Instructor



Sasa Christakis
Instructor

Board of Directors



Sue Curran
Board Chair



Sabrina Kane
Secretary



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Treasurer



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Kelli Grew



Shaelyn Hegarty



Alexandra Liimatainen



Manny Marrero



Laura Newstead



Peggy Wolman



Patty Fater



Anne D. LeClaire

A LETTER FROM OUR INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When I was brought on last year to support Calmer Choice as Interim Executive Director, I knew that this was an organization working to move forward after covid and the transition of its founder. As a community leader, I was aware that the social-emotional services being provided were critically important to our community. As a parent myself, I also understood unequivocally that now is a moment that children need the kind of support Calmer Choice provides.



But what I did not know then, and what I am still learning now, is the level of extraordinary dedication and passion that exists at this organization. This team demonstrates a profound commitment to advancing the mission of Calmer Choice, the mission of realizing a world where children lead lives of kindness and compassion towards themselves and others. This is a team - and an organization - that practices what it preaches.

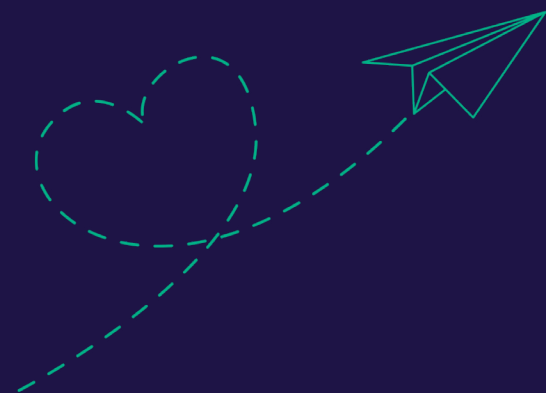
Organizational Resilience in Action

Early on in 2023, the leadership structure that helped Calmer Choice successfully transition from our Founder and friend Fiona Jensen shifted. Our second CEO stepped down, followed shortly thereafter by the COO. The organization, and all its moving parts, was being successfully led by many, including our incredible Board of Directors, our devoted set of instructors, our Chief Program Officer and our Chief Engagement Officer, who also moved on from Calmer Choice in the Spring. This level of change and transition could have thrown another organization off course. But with the commitment of an incredible Programs Team, there was no question that we would continue.

Departures... with gratitude

Our staff and members of the Board of Directors are the heart of our organization.

We wish to express our deep gratitude to those whose paths take them beyond Calmer Choice. The gifts we received from your presence, dedication, and belief in our mission will remain and continue to shape us for years to come. Thank you.



As we stepped into 2024, we did so with much to celebrate. Throughout our administrative transition, we centered and focused on our school and community partners, ensuring we maintained and deepened our community relationships. This allowed us to seamlessly deliver on all of our program commitments. In fact, under the leadership of our Chief Program Officer Sarah Manion, we launched a new Program Model with new services to offer enhanced mindfulness-based education and professional development to teachers, parents, and service providers.

Introducing our New Executive Director

Being present with Calmer Choice as an Interim Executive Director has been an honor. I have learned so much about the importance of mindfulness, and how this practice can help us all to better navigate life's challenges. Sarah once told me that mindfulness is the practice of responding to what is before us. What is before Calmer Choice is an immense opportunity to grow, cultivate, and expand on the work it has done since day one. That is why I am thrilled to announce that Sarah Manion will be promoted to Executive Director of Calmer Choice effective January 1st, 2024. I know that Sarah's deep mindfulness practice, professional acumen, and profound commitment to this organization is what we need to carry us forward.

It is my privilege to stay on in a role that supports Sarah and the team as we continue to strengthen our own capacity for organizational resilience, health, and wellbeing so that we remain present to serve the Cape Cod community and beyond for many years to come.

Adam Burnett

Interim Executive Director

Staff

Emily Smalley
Chief Executive Officer

John Fulone
Chief Operations Officer

Julia Bateman
Chief Outreach Officer

Patty Weinstein Mentorship & Training
Consultant

Board

Nancy Ashworth

David Troutman

Betsy Bowes

PROGRAMMATIC SUCCESSES



KEY EVENTS



Falmouth Road Race
(August 2022)



Seaside LeMans
(September 2022)



Collected & Connected Annual Event
(October 2022)



Instructor Training
(August 2022)

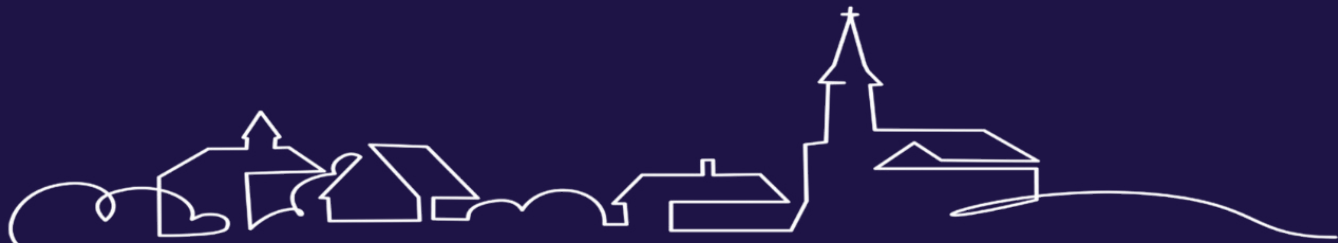


COMMITMENT TO MINDFUL WORK

In the Spring of 2023, the Calmer Choice team worked with Regenerate Change, an external consultant, to identify the elements of internal team culture and values that are needed for organizational success. Together, we identified the need to incorporate our mindfulness practice into our organizational practice. We collaboratively developed the Commitment to Mindful Work to help us identify what this looks like in our everyday work practice.

1. We are **INTENTIONAL** with what we are doing and why we are doing it.
2. We are **MODELS** for what we teach and value.
3. We cultivate our **PERSONAL MINDFULNESS PRACTICE**, and we **PRACTICE TOGETHER**.
4. We are **COMPASSIONATE** towards- and understanding of – each other.
5. Our organization demonstrates **CARE FOR OUR INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING** as staff.
6. We demonstrate **CARE FOR THE WELLBEING OF OUR ORGANIZATION** by tending to our own wellbeing.
7. We establish and practice **HEALTHY BOUNDARIES** for ourselves, our colleagues and our partners.
8. We **OFFER AND ASK FOR HELP** to complete our work and advance our shared goals.
9. We **SUPPORT** each other in continuing to learn, grow, and expand our practice and our work.
10. We **UNDERSTAND OUR ROLE** and **FULLFILL OUR RESPONSIBILITIES** to our organization and team.
11. **JOY, CELEBRATION**, and **REST** are acknowledged as part of our work.

CLASSROOM PROGRAM



3

DISTRICT PARTNERS



10

SCHOOLS SERVED



189

CLASSROOMS SERVED



3,447

STUDENTS SERVED

Districts: Middleboro, Falmouth, DY. Schools include one new partner school (ECMC)

MINDFULNESS COACH

During the 2022-23 school year, Calmer Choice and Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District engaged in a deeper partnership with a new pilot program. In this program, a full-time Calmer Choice staff was assigned as the District Mindfulness Coach. This “coaching” role is similar to other coaches at DY for math, literacy and science. The idea behind this role was for the coach to support the school community beyond our evidence-based 8-week curriculum. The mindfulness coach was able to support students, teachers, and parents throughout the school year in a variety of ways, allowing the seeds of mindfulness to grow and become more a part of the school community. This pilot role was held by Stephanie Goley, an instructor with Calmer Choice since 2015, and former elementary teacher. During this first year, Stephanie was able to build a culture of mindfulness through the relationships she developed in the school community as well as her continuous presence in the schools.

1

MINDFULNESS
COACH

31

TEACHERS
RECEIVING
COACHING

245

TEACHERS
ATTENDING
PRACTICE
SESSIONS

8

PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
SESSIONS

All Coach programming is the first of its kind. Designed, developed, and implemented by Stephanie Goley.

“The real beauty of the Mindfulness Coach role is the ability to be on hand as a resource when needed. The contacts and supports I make informally in the hallway cannot be underestimated. The mere fact that I am present in the building means teachers, admin, students and occasionally parents, see me. You begin to become part of the staff and culture of the school. I can send numerous emails, notices, announcements, etc. and not get close to the response I get from being face-to-face with teachers. In the last month, I’ve been consulted on two students needing extra support and an aide shared that she used 5 finger breathing before her wedding when she was panicking (I was invited into her classroom outside of our regular programming to introduce some concepts). My experience thus far supports the need to have more coaches on site in schools if we want to go deeper in the culture of the school and move the needle.”



– Stephanie Goley

CULTIVATING MINDFUL SCHOOL CULTURE

Snapshot of the Impacts/Activities of the Mindfulness Coach Pilot:

- Acknowledgment of the importance of mindfulness in education by creating the District's first ever Mindfulness Coach
- Broad integration with the school community including inclusion on the Coaching Team (math, literacy, science), PBIS Team (Positive Behavior Intervention System), and DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) Committee
- Enhanced the visibility of mindfulness by being present at School Open Houses, delivering collaborative lessons with the Science Coach, and attending District professional development offerings
- Created and distributed a monthly Mindfulness Newsletter to teachers and staff
- Developed a Mindfulness Coaching Menu for teachers
- Developed the 'Calmer Choice Spinner', a classroom tool for teachers and students with mindfulness strategies incorporated
- Led an 8-week Educator Course for 21 teachers which culminated in increased attendance at teacher practice sessions and an increase in teacher requests for one-on-one mindfulness coaching
- Developed 9 "Add-on Lessons" for teachers as a way to extend the integration of mindfulness into the classroom beyond the standard 8-Week Calmer Choice Classroom Program
- Implemented 'Mindful May' at one elementary school, focusing on teacher self care.
- Developed a Calmer Choice Classroom Visitor Program to enable board, donor, and potential staff to observe our programming in action
- Piloted a Mindfulness Circle for Middle Schoolers at DY Middle School's after school program



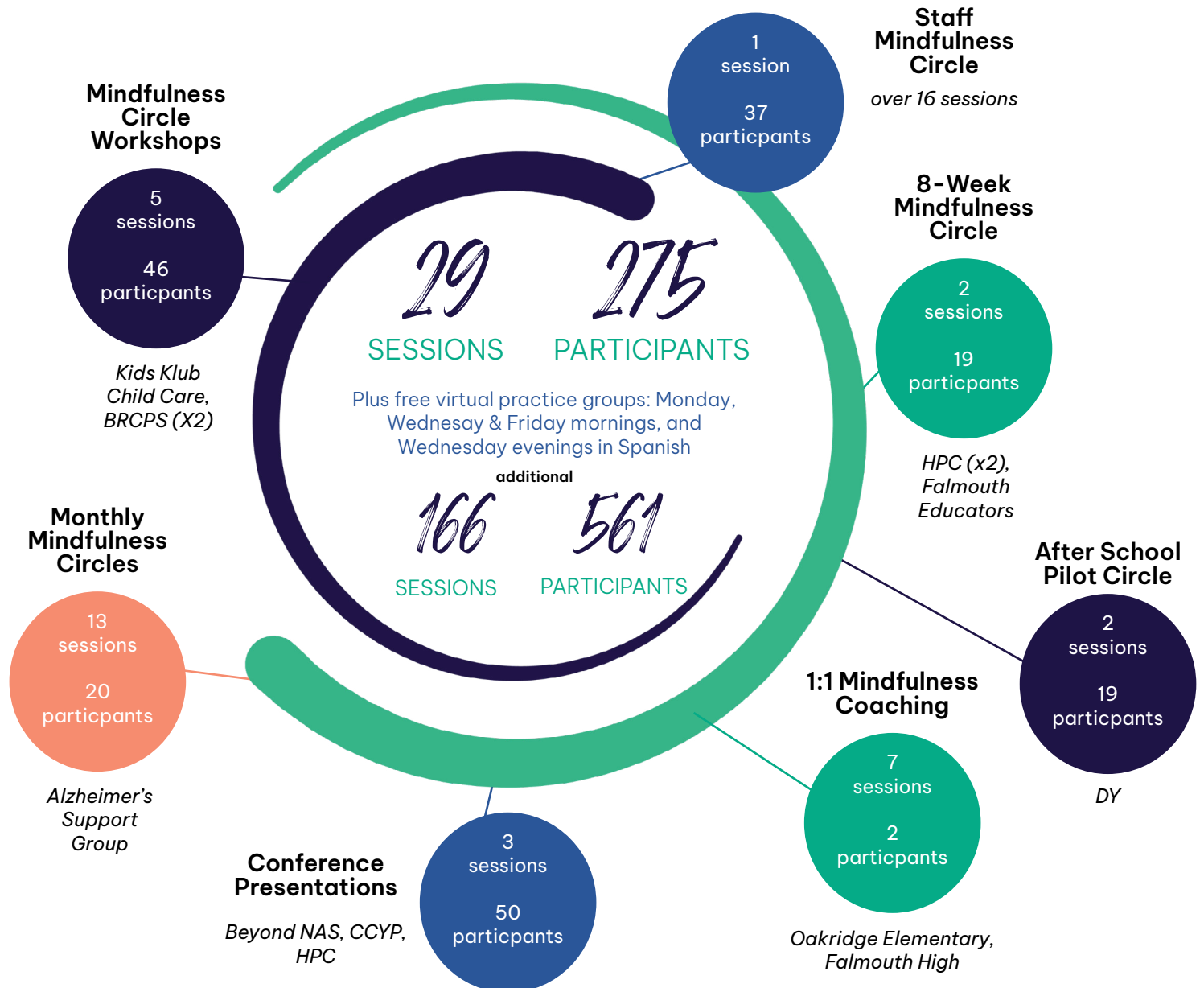
MINDFULNESS CIRCLES & MENTORSHIP

What is a Mindfulness Circle?

Led by a trained Calmer Choice facilitator, Mindfulness Circles help groups explore mindfulness through guided and silent practice, shared inquiry, and engaged participation. The approach is both simple enough for a beginner and rich enough for the established mindfulness practitioner.

The format of these circles offers space to facilitate connection, foster understanding, and build community through this shared learning and practice of mindfulness. Circles can be adapted for multiple programming schedules as an 8-week program, workshop or full-day immersive experience.

Mindfulness Circles are available for any formal or informal community or parent group, at the corporate level, in an education setting as a professional development opportunity, and more.



INSTRUCTOR TRAINING

In August 2022, we held a 13-day intensive instructor training course to expand the capacity of our team with two new hires. Current staff also participated in this training to create a solid alignment and sense of collective ownership of our new Program Model.

New instructor Spotlights

Sue Costello



I am so grateful to be in my second year as an instructor for Calmer Choice. When I moved to the Cape after spending my career in Boston, I was looking for meaningful part-time work. I had taught mindfulness in the Boston

Public Schools in my role as a clinical social worker and was thrilled to find Calmer Choice.



I am aware of the enormous stressors many children and families live with. Mindfulness offers students strategies, skills and a framework for understanding how our bodies and brains respond to stress. I'm heartened when children say that they teach their families what they learn. In a second grade classroom- when we were paying attention to our breath using breathing sticks (beads on pipe cleaner)- a child said he was going to give his breathing stick to his dad to use at work because his dad yells a lot at home because his job is stressful. In another classroom a student said her mom noticed and reminded her when her "guard dog" (amygdala) was activated at dinner time. The student did five finger breathing to reset her amygdala and make a good choice.

One of my favorite parts of being an instructor is at the beginning of each lesson when I ask students to share if they practiced any kind of mindfulness since I saw them last. Their hands shoot up and they share times when they've been scared, angry or frustrated and how they've used a mindfulness technique to help them work with their feelings.

Song Sutthimaitree



I have been practicing mindfulness for several years, and I notice the benefits of practicing, such as being able to recognize how to deal with my emotions and how to be present in the moment. If it is possible to share mindfulness with others, one day they will be able to implement the practice in their lives. As part of the Calmer Choice instructional team for a year, I realized I was not alone in my path as an instructor. There is always support and check-ins from everyone in the organization which I have never experienced in my previous work. I feel graceful being in the mindfulness workplace at Calmer Choice, so I feel comfortable sharing what I think.



Fortunately, as an instructor, I go to school and share the mindfulness school program with the students. I was surprised when one of the students shared with me their experience: The student told me that she used five-finger breathing when she got upset. Hearing directly from the student is valuable feedback that shows how mindfulness practice works.

Interested in becoming an instructor?

We take pride in providing quality evidence-based mindfulness education to our schools, and know that this requires the commitment and investment of trained and qualified mindfulness educators.

Our instructors are all paid part-time employees of Calmer Choice. If you are interested in learning more about the instructor role and how to join our team, please visit:

calmerchoice.org/programs/teaching-calmer-choice



Shape Your Legacy with Planned Giving

Incorporating giving into your estate plan offers the opportunity to build your legacy and invest in the future of Calmer Choice.

Perhaps the simplest way to make a gift to Calmer Choice is to leave a bequest in your trust or will. A bequest can be a sum of money or a specific asset. These gifts are deeply meaningful to us as an organization.

If you are interested in learning more, please reach out to us.

A SPECIAL NOTE OF GRATITUDE

Calmer Choice offers the following remembrance for Mary. E. O'Connell, whose generous bequest has had a transformational impact on our organization. We extend an additional thank you to the open-heartedness of Mary's family who provided this remembrance.

A life well lived

Mary was born in Arlington, MA. After retirement she lived full time on her beloved Cape Cod in her West Yarmouth home.

From her earliest memories Mary longed to be a teacher, in an era when only sons were sent to college. This influenced her choice to become a nun in a Catholic teaching order. She got the education she needed to reach her goal and taught as a nun for many years. After she left the convent, Mary taught in the Lexington Public Schools until she retired.



Sober in Alcoholics Anonymous for many years, Mary helped countless newcomers to AA. Getting into recovery was life changing for Mary and fueled her spiritual life.

Mary had a way of attracting all sorts of people and often took them under her wing. She had a piercing intelligence, read widely and loved to talk politics. She was spunky and was known to challenge the order of things. Mary was a mentor to many and encouraged them to never give up and to be the best they could possibly be.

One of the women she mentored became an accomplished, published writer. She credited Mary with her eventual success with this poem:

Mary

*As Mary goes about her day the Angels breathe a sigh
Help is surely needed when they hear the humans cry
It takes a special person who can aid them in their work
Someone who can comfort in a world that's gone berserk*

*As Mary goes about her day she makes the Angels smile
The time she spends on others is truly most worth while
She sees what others often miss in every living soul
The sad and lonely people marked by life's daily toll*

*As Mary goes about her day the Angels are content
With her empathy for others, her time each day is spent
Spreading words of encouragement or just a simple hug
To the lonely souls who need them
It gives their hearts a tug*

*As Mary goes about her day the Angels start to sing
As they see some spirits lifted and the happiness she brings
By spending time with others, as a mentor or a friend
Giving freely of herself from each day's beginning to its end*

— Marcia Macfarland

DONOR ROLL

\$100,000+

Mary E. O'Connell

\$50,000-99,999

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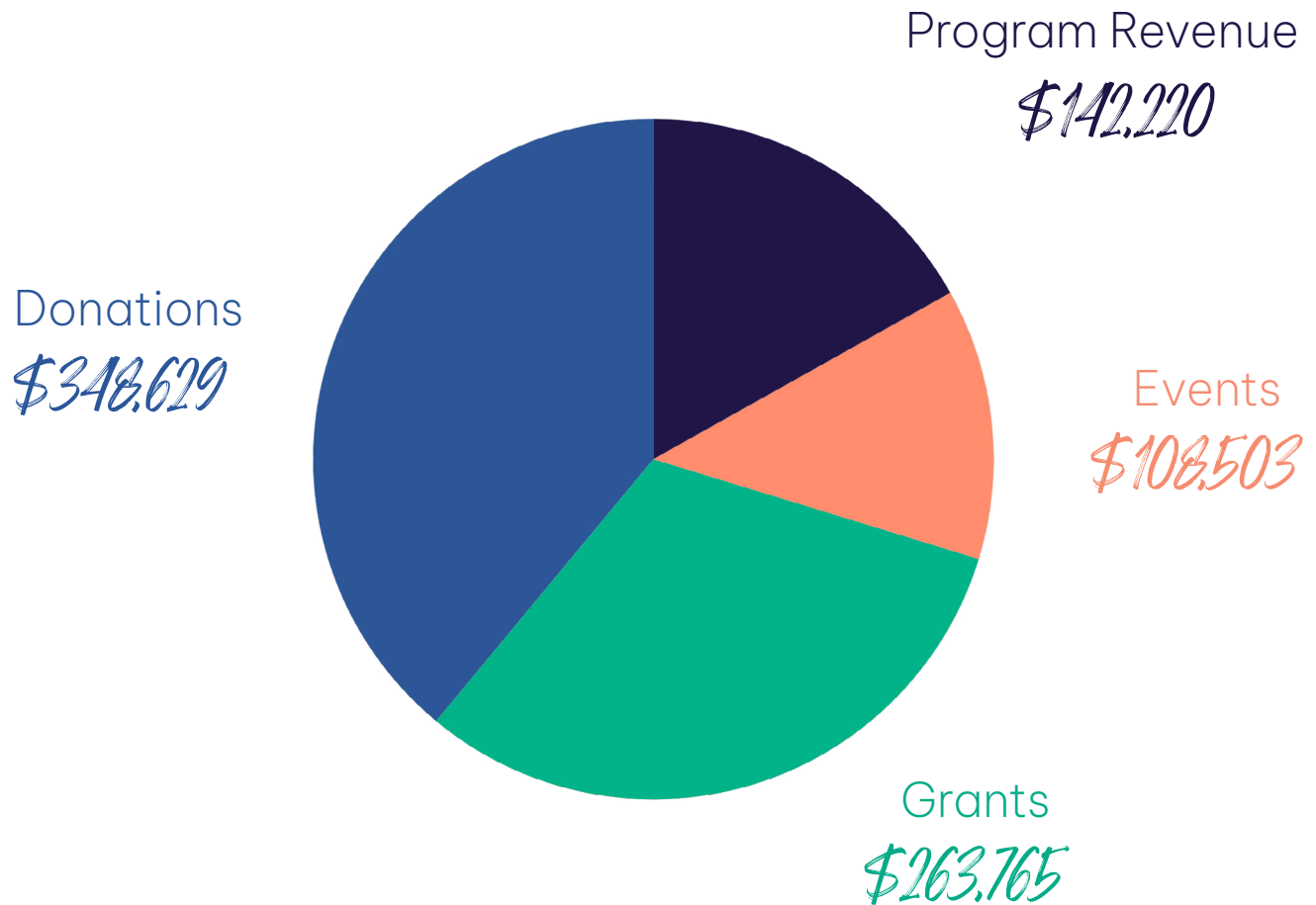
PP

My daughter LOVES your Calmer Choice lessons! She has anxiety and it's been something she's been learning to manage since she was really little. I think she is now starting to understand the power she has to calm her body. She loves the breathing with a stuffy on her belly - it was the first thing she showed me when she got home the other day!

Today she was so excited to bring home her "breathing stick" and was using it to take calming breaths. It makes me smile so big :) Thank you for doing such wonderful, IMPORTANT work with these little kiddos.

- From a parent

FINANCIALS



Become a Donor!

Donations from individuals and businesses as well as grants and fundraising events support our vital services. Your generosity multiplies the efforts of our dedicated team, impacting the lives of students, teachers, and community members each year.

We have options for automatic, monthly gifts through our Champion program. You can also support our efforts by participating in our seasonal fundraising appeals.

Please visit calmerchoice.org for more details.

PP

*Thank you for your dedication,
passion, compassion, and love!*



live life mindfully

23F West Bay Road
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calmerchoice.org