

COMMUNITY FORGE 2018 IMPACT REPORT



Mission of Organization

To grow an inclusive Community Space dedicated to creating opportunities for Wilkinsburg by supporting small business, promoting learning, contributing to neighborhood wellbeing, and cultivating regional partnerships.



Community Forge

The first year of Community Forge was an incredible showing of how a combination of vision and passion can go a long way.

To Our Community and Stakeholders,



I'm extremely proud and honored to provide the results from our first year in operation through this report. Since before we re-opened the Johnston Elementary School as Community Forge, a primary value we stood for is that relationships are first. We work hard to build off of deep, trusting relationships with our stakeholders in the community and around Pittsburgh. A major part of that is transparency. To that end, we have opened our books fully to our tenants to allow them to understand our budget and we work with open budgets on our youth program projects alongside the youth in them. Now, with the release of this report, we hope to fulfill our part in a transparent relationship with the

stakeholders around Pittsburgh who have shown interest in our project.

The first year of Community Forge was an incredible showing of how a combination of vision and passion can go a long way. Started by a group of young leaders with roots around Pittsburgh, we found Wilkinsburg residents and youth to be eager to see the Johnston School and their community catalyzed by inclusive opportunities for youth and local business. Through our first year we ran over 100 events, most of which were free to our community, worked with over 150 youth through ours and our partners programs, became home to 28 small businesses, artists, and entrepreneurs, and received the attention of national organizations

such as the Brookings Institute. We are home to 75% black-owned or lead organizations and 50% woman-owned or lead organizations. All of these successes have been built on over 10,000 hours of volunteer work from our leadership and incredible partnerships with our in-house tenants and neighborhood residents.

We hope that you'll read through this report and get to understand our organizational identity and the immense opportunity for good happening through our activities. Community Forge looks toward 2019 and beyond to systematize our programmatic supports and incubate the people and organizations we have come to know and love. We hope to see our organization to be a place for our local residents to access the resources they need to build their ideas and careers while being a place of love and enjoyment. Similarly, we hope to see our regional partners eager to break down silos of conversation and opportunity by linking into Community Forge toward a vision of unity, equity, and mutual benefit.

I'm eager to see what we can all grow together.

Yours in community love and passion,

Mike Skirpan



Community Forge
1256 Franklin Ave
Wilkinsburg, PA 15221



Visit Us Online
www.forge.community
fb.com/CommunityForgePGH



Building Hours
Mon - Fri 8AM - 9PM
Sat - Sun 10AM - 5PM



Mission of Organization:

"To grow an inclusive Community Space dedicated to creating opportunities for Wilkinsburg by supporting small business, promoting learning, contributing to neighborhood wellbeing, and cultivating regional partnerships."

Community Forge was formed in January 2017 with the purpose of revitalizing the recently closed Johnston Elementary School in Wilkinsburg as a community asset, incubating people, programs, and opportunities in the community. Starting with a partnership between Pittsburgh Learning Commons and Xpogo, a group of eight young adults with roots in Pittsburgh and backgrounds ranging from Ph.D. Scientists to Educators to Extreme Sports Athletes purchased the building from the Wilkinsburg school board in July 2017. We have since brought community members onboard as board members, staff, and volunteers.

Community Forge opened doors in January 2018 and is now home to artists, educators, and entrepreneurs looking to grow their efforts, run community events, and provide new and unique programs to the Wilkinsburg community. As an organization, we are building programs and creating inclusive, locally-oriented opportunity geared toward Wilkinsburg residents and the East Pittsburgh region. Our primary focus areas include youth enrichment, community wellbeing, and small business support.

Our organizational structure consists of our Board of Directors (4 members and our Executive Director) and five core Committees (finance, tenants, renovations, communications, and programs).



TIMELINE



- July 2017**
Bought the building
- August 2017**
First Community BBQ
- December 2017**
Gained Occupancy on 1st and 2nd floor
- January 2018**
Hosted Mayor Garrett's Inauguration Party and welcomed first tenants
- February-May 2018**
Started first after-school experience with neighborhood youth
- March 2018**
Hosted Mac & Cheese Cook-off with Wilkinsburg Youth Project (WYP) and Launch Wilkinsburg event with New Sun Rising
- June - August 2018**
First summer with 120 kids served in programs by Pittsburgh Learning Commons, Legacy Arts, WYP, K-Theatre and Dance, and The Entertainment Consortium
- September 2018**
Reached 20 tenants and started Youth Advisory Council
- October 2018**
Hired first full time staff member
- November 2018**
Received first funding from Kaboom to develop playground
- January 2019**
Got occupancy on 3rd floor

AT RISK POPULATIONS SERVED BY COMMUNITY FORCE: RACIAL OR ETHNIC MINORITIES, WOMEN, UNEMPLOYED OR LOW-INCOME ADULTS, ADOLESCENTS (10-18)

COLLABORATED WITH
OVER 50
LOCAL AND NATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS

COMMUNITY FORCE FOUNDERS
HAVE VOLUNTEERED
10,000+
TOTAL HOURS SINCE THE BUILDING
OPENED IN JANUARY 2018

7 WORK TRADE
AGREEMENTS WITH LOCAL
ARTISTS THROUGHOUT 2018

ARTISTS VOLUNTEER WORK TO
REDUCE THEIR RENT BY 50-100%

ALL COMMUNITY FORCE FOUNDERS
AND STAFF VOLUNTEER TIME FOR
YOUTH IN THE COMMUNITY

\$43,000
IN GRANTS AND DONATIONS

75% OF OUR BUILDING
RENOVATIONS ARE
DO IT YOURSELF

OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HAS
VOLUNTEERED 40-60 HOURS PER
WEEK SINCE AUGUST OF 2017

OUR TENANT TEAM PROVIDES 20
VOLUNTEER HOURS A WEEK TO
SUPPORT OUR TENANT BUSINESS

65%
OF TENANTS
SUBSIDIZED RENT

35%
FULL PAYING
TENANTS

Tenants

Community Forge is shaped by the amazing organizations and individuals who have found their home here. Tenants are organizations or individuals with unique access privileges to Community Forge's facilities. To become a Tenant, an interested party must expressly affirm the above-stated mission of Community Forge, and may be required to clarify how their work helps Community Forge achieve its mission. Each classroom is rented out to social organizations and individuals that align with our mission. In addition to offering full classrooms for occupancy, individuals can grab a coworking desk, coworking mini-office, or a hot desk to satisfy their business needs.

Many of our tenants offer unique programs and services ranging from afterschool theatre for youth to steelpan lessons to mobile blood testing to a mastering & recording studio.

Tenant List		Coworking Tenants	Artists
Barrels to Beethoven	K-Theatre and Dance Complex	15208 Productionz	Arvid Tomayko
Democratic Socialists of America	Official Entertainment	GoPhelb LLC	Ayana Sade
EastBurg Avengers Athletic Club	Pittsburgh Learning Commons	House of Greens and Beans	Dalia Shevin
The Entertainment Consortium	Sunday Assembly	Kine Hearts Magazine	Ella Mason
Great Commission and Advanced Placement	Treelady Studios	KJSnyder LTD	Gene Thompson
Global Human Performance	Working for Kids	Opening Doors for Youth and Families	Latrice Phoenix
Gwen's Girls		Pittsburgh Housing Development Association	Nathan Byrne
			Vanessa Adams
			Shane Pilster



We are committed to meeting the demonstrated financial need of organizations and community members seeking to become a Tenant at Community Forge. Over half of our current Tenants have subsidized rent. We utilize work-trade agreements with local artists and entrepreneurs, providing them with a rent subsidy in exchange for volunteer hours each month. In 2018 we had work trade agreements with 7 local artists and entrepreneurs lowering their rent down to as low as \$0 a month.



Wilkinsburg Community

Our Tenants are committed to giving back to the Wilkinsburg community through their programs and services.



Opening Doors to Youth & Families

Michael Johnson is CEO of Opening Doors to Youth & Families, a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving families in Allegheny County. Michael runs the organization in his coworking mini office on the second floor of the building. The organization provides after-school programs, mentoring programs, TV show screenings, as well as a wide variety of social services.

“

We're a help center. We try to help youth and families with any issues they have in life. We partner with a bunch of different agencies. If we can't help them here we're able to put them in touch with other organizations that can. It helps the community that everything is located in one place. I try to make it a one-stop shop for referrals and offer a wide variety of services. It's good for people in Wilkinsburg to be able to come here and get these services instead of going to East Liberty or the Northside.”

-Michael Johnson



Global Human Performance

Donald Robinson founded Global Human Performance gym in 2017. Donald provides high level sport performance coaching for athletes and teams. He specializes in 1 on 1 personal training as well as small group training. Since moving into the building in October of 2018, Donald has repeatedly volunteered his time to the greater Wilkinsburg community. Every Sunday 15 teenagers on juvenile parole get dropped off at Community Forge to work out with Donald and help around the building. Half of the kids spend the first hour working out with Donald, the other half works with our staff on various projects around the building, and then the groups switch. These volunteer efforts are common among Tenants at Community Forge.





Events

100+
TOTAL BOOKINGS

60+
PUBLIC EVENTS

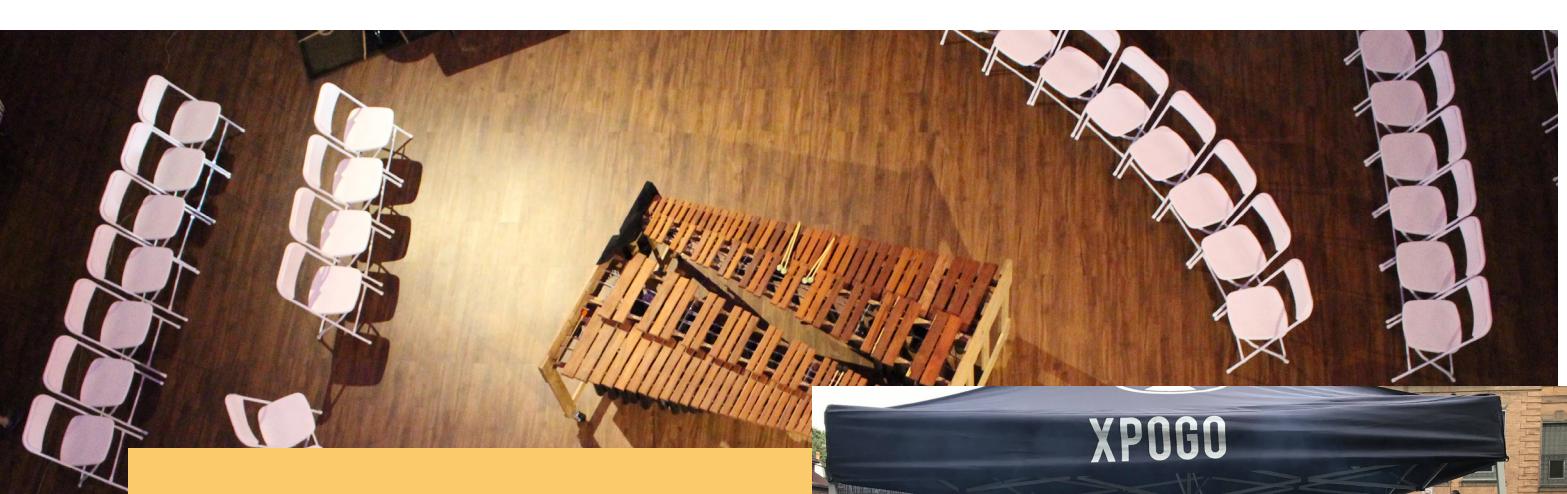
Community Forge is proud to host a wide range of public events, many of which are free or reduced price for Wilkinsburg residents. Since we opened in January 2018, our demand has outpaced our limited staff capacity. In September 2018, we put a hold on all new external bookings until February 2019. We continued to host public events that were scheduled beforehand and from current tenant organizations.

Past events run by community organizations and Community Forge have included: Mac n' Cheese cook-off, Halloween Party, Annual Back to School BBQ, SunFest music and art celebration, Holiday Toy Drive, community documentary screenings, teach in sessions, and much more.

MARITA INAUGURATION RECEPTION

Shortly after the building opened in January, Community Forge hosted a community reception celebrating Mayor Marita Garrett's historic inauguration. The election of the first Black female mayor of Wilkinsburg, along with the grand reopening of the Johnston Elementary School building, had the community in the mood to celebrate. The event was open to the public.





2ND ANNUAL BACK TO SCHOOL BBQ

In partnership with Lost but Not Forgotten and livefromthecity (Jordan Howard), Community Forge hosted our Annual Back to School BBQ alongside SunFest on August 18th. Community members enjoyed free BBQ, picked up some free back to school gear for the young ones, and saw work made by artists from around Pittsburgh. The event was open to the public. Over 200 people stopped by the event throughout the day.



HALLOWEEN FAMILY FUN NIGHT

Community Forge hosted a free Halloween get-together for families on October 27th. There were games, spooky craft tables, a costume photo booth in the kitchen, free food and candy, and a haunted room. Community Forge partnered with the Wilkinsburg Youth Project and Big Whip Riders to host this event. The event was open to the public. Over 150 community members attended the event.

TOY DRIVE AND GIVEAWAY

Community Forge hosted a free pre-holiday celebration and toy giveaway in late December. Families were able to take home gifts for their children and enjoy food together. Community Forge partnered with Lost but Not Forgotten Outreach and Big Whip Riders co-hosting this community event for Wilkinsburg.





Programs

20+
YOUTH PROGRAMS

150+
YOUTH ENGAGED

Our programs are a key way Community Forge aims to meet its mission to support arts, learning, neighborhood wellness, and youth empowerment in Wilkinsburg. In a little over a year of operation, Community Forge has built relationships with over 150 kids through its partners and programs.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT = VOICE

Youth empowerment means not only making programs for youth but giving youth the power to take on leadership and make decisions, especially on issues pertinent to them.

YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Community Forge Youth Advisory Council is a team of youth who are decision-makers at Community Forge. Currently, they lead our playground development efforts, give advice on programs, and are helping develop and run youth events. We currently have 6 members: Antonie Smith, Bryan Finch, Charles Johnson, Chris Davis, Na'Caira Amhurst, and Zariah Harper.



After helping out with the Halloween Family Fun Night event Community Forge staff members took the Youth Advisory Council to Scarehouse.



YOUTH ARTS COMMISSION

Community Forge gathered a Youth Arts Commission to hire a local artist to design a piece to go up in the atrium. A group of three high school students first came together to write the call for art. Then they interviewed 6 different local artists. From those interviews, they selected the artist they thought would produce the best piece. Ashanti Josey, the artist selected, was paid \$1000 to create a commission based off of descriptions provided by the youth. The youth got to give input on the color scheme and overall themes of the painting. The youth met with Ashanti as the painting was being created. Once the painting was complete, the youth on the commission installed the picture in the atrium.



ARTIST RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Activate the Arts is a residency program to support artists in the development of their work and connect them to new opportunities through our space in Wilkinsburg. Resident artists gain a \$500 stipend, 4 professional development workshops, free admission to all Community Forge events, discounted event space, and a hot desk space in our coworking office. The program culminated in an artist showcase event at Community Forge in December. Funded by New Sun Rising, the program was designed and led by Leigh Soloman Pugliano and Ariel Beach-Westmoreland.

Participants in Artist Residency Program: Nathan Bryne, Latrice Phoenix, Ayana Sade, Dalia Shevin





Photo by Shamus Fatzinger

Looking Ahead into 2019

We are currently in the process of securing funding and partnerships to support our key programs. These ideas were seeded by a community needs assessment and conversations with our internal stakeholders. We have developed their design and trajectory by interviewing locals, consulting experts, and studying national models that have been successful for excellence in learning, culture, and business development.

Our current outlook for programs includes:

- ▶ **An in-house incubation and support program for entrepreneurs, artists, and small businesses**
- ▶ **An After School Learning Consortium for our youth in partnership with Pittsburgh Learning Commons**
- ▶ **Workforce development to support our community getting equitable access to the booming technology industry.**
- ▶ **Starting a Circles Wilkinsburg chapter to develop the on-the-ground resources to support families seeking to move out of poverty.**



**PLEASE CONTACT US AT
HELLO@FORGE.COMMUNITY
IF ANY OF THESE INITIATIVES
MAY BE OF INTEREST TO YOU
OR YOUR ORGANIZATION.**

Beyond these core programs, we want to continue to be a platform for public arts and a vibrant community life, bringing cultural events to our community. We further intend to continue to be a space for communities to meet and hold important dialogues that break down the silos that separate us. As time goes, we plan to rehabilitate our facilities. The near-term improvement project focus is to develop our playground to be a beautiful public asset to our youth and families.

GET INVOLVED

SUSTAINING A COMMUNITY SPACE TAKES A VILLAGE

To serve our youth, families, artists, local businesses, and to offer our space as a facility for social action and community togetherness, your financial support and labor are needed. Your dollars and labor will go directly to supporting free community programming, beautifying our grounds for all to enjoy, and subsidizing community service organizations.

**Visit our website to make a one-time donation, or to set up a monthly recurring donation
www.forge.community/support**

Host your event or program at Community Forge

Move your business here and become a Tenant at Community Forge

Join our Builder or Supporter membership programs to get directly involved with Community Forge



Founding Members

Michael Skirpan
Travis Alvarez
Patrick Cooper
Nick Ryan
Jackie Cameron
Ariel Beach-Westmoreland
Micha Gorelick
Magdalene Moy

Board

Tammy Thompson
Michael Skirpan
Travis Alvarez
Nick Ryan

Staff

Angel Perry
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