



Ujima

COLLECTIVE WORK
& RESPONSIBILITY

Impact Year 1
2025-2026



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A NEW CHAPTER

For nearly a decade, I have had the privilege of coaching, mentoring, and walking alongside young people in East Knoxville. During those years, I witnessed both the challenges they face and the incredible potential they possess.

Ujima did not emerge overnight. It grew out of years of relationships, lessons learned, and a conviction that we could do more. While this year marked the official launch of Ujima Soccer Academy, the work itself began long before that. In many ways, Year One was not the beginning of the work. It was the beginning of a new chapter.

When I first became involved at Vine Middle School, my goal was simple: to help students who otherwise might not have the opportunity to play soccer. Over time, it became clear that the barriers facing many young people extended far beyond access to sports. Challenges related to transportation, academics, mentorship, and opportunity itself often stood in the way of their success.

Ujima was born from a belief that relationships can change lives and that every young person deserves access to the support, resources, and opportunities they need to thrive.

As I reflect on this first year, I am reminded that our most meaningful successes cannot always be measured by statistics alone. Success is a student who comes to school because they know someone is expecting them. Success is a young person discovering confidence, an older student investing in a younger one, and a community choosing to believe in its children.

The stories in this report belong to the students. They are the reason we do this work. They remind us of a simple truth:

Talent is equally distributed, but opportunity is not.

Thank you to the students, families, educators, volunteers, partners, and donors who made this first year possible. Your investment has already begun to change lives.

The need remains significant, but so does the potential. We are just getting started.

With gratitude,



Jonathan Haskell
Founder & Executive Director



Highlights YEAR ONE



BUILT OUR SCHOOL-BASED MODEL

Partnered with five schools to provide integrated youth development where students already spend their time.



SERVED 150 STUDENTS

Expanded programming across East Knoxville, creating opportunities for students from elementary through high school.



CREATED NEW PATHWAYS

Connected 15 students to competitive club soccer opportunities, including two Austin East players competing in MLS NEXT U16.



Why UJIMA EXISTS

Every young person deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential. Yet for many students in East Knoxville, barriers outside the classroom make that journey more difficult.

The neighborhoods and schools Ujima serves face persistent challenges, including poverty, chronic absenteeism, limited access to extracurricular opportunities, and disparities in academic achievement. While these challenges are complex, they share a common result: too many young people are denied access to the opportunities and support systems that help them thrive.

At Ujima, we believe a simple truth:

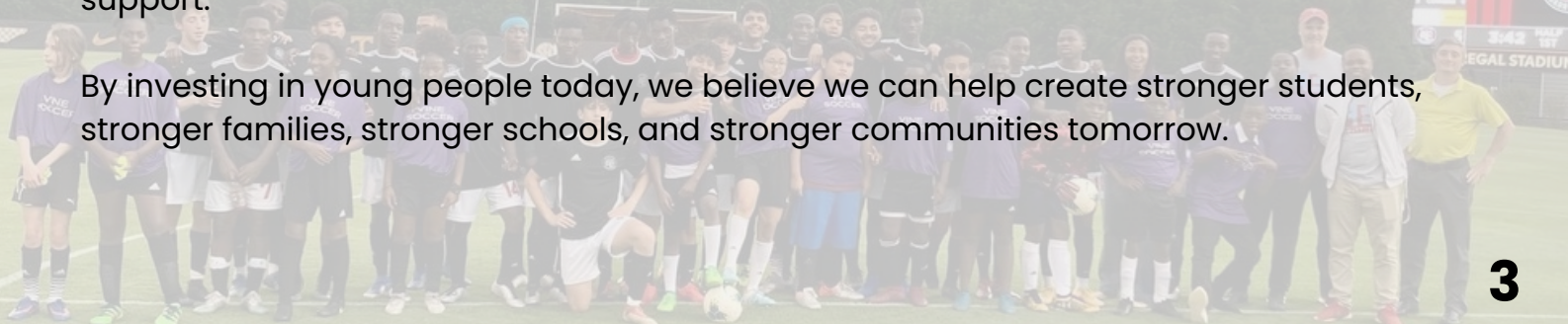
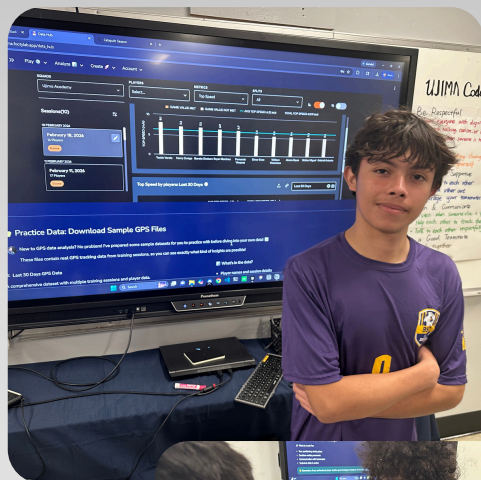
**Talent is equally distributed,
but opportunity is not.**

Our students possess the same intelligence, creativity, leadership potential, and determination as young people anywhere else. What is often missing is access: access to positive role models, academic support, enrichment opportunities, safe spaces, transportation, and caring adults who consistently show up in their lives.

Soccer became our starting point because it creates connection. It builds trust, develops confidence, and brings young people together around a common purpose. But soccer was never the destination. It was the doorway.

Founded on the principle of collective work and responsibility, Ujima equips students for success on and off the field through a holistic approach to youth development that combines athletics, education, mentorship, leadership development, and community support.

By investing in young people today, we believe we can help create stronger students, stronger families, stronger schools, and stronger communities tomorrow.



Why SCHOOLS?

Students do not experience their lives in separate categories.

Academic challenges affect confidence. Transportation barriers affect attendance. A lack of belonging affects engagement. Physical activity affects health and well-being.

Too often, support systems are fragmented, requiring young people and families to navigate multiple programs in multiple locations.

Ujima takes a different approach.

By partnering directly with schools, we are able to meet students where they already are and build support around their daily lives. Soccer, mentoring, academic support, leadership development, STEM education, and community resources are not separate programs. They are interconnected parts of a single effort to help young people thrive.

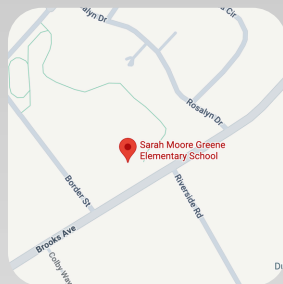
Schools are where young people spend their lives, but schools can't meet every need alone. Ujima brings long-term relationships, opportunity, and community directly into that environment and stays with students as they grow.



Green Magnet



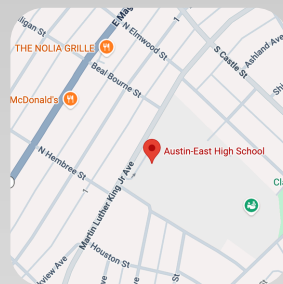
Spring Hill



Sarah Moore Greene



Vine Middle



Austin East High



"At Vine Middle, Ujima has become one of our flagship afterschool programs and consistently serves more students than any other program we offer after school."

Kyle Pickell
United Way Community School
Site Coordinator

Our approach

MISSION



Through the principle of collective work and responsibility, Ujima equips students for success, on and off the field.

Our holistic model of youth development is built around four interconnected components:

- **Soccer Training.** Soccer is the foundation of our work. Through regular training, competition, and mentorship, students develop teamwork, discipline, respect, leadership, and resilience. More importantly, soccer creates the relationships that make deeper growth possible.
- **Academic Enrichment.** Ujima helps students develop the skills, habits, and confidence necessary for success in the classroom. Through partnerships with schools, educators, universities, and community organizations, students gain access to academic support, enrichment opportunities, and experiences that broaden their understanding of what is possible for their future.
- **Mental Health & Well-Being.** Students thrive when they feel safe, supported, and connected. Ujima works to foster belonging, build confidence, and connect students with caring adults and community resources that support their emotional health and overall well-being.
- **Leadership Development.** The students we work with today will be the adults shaping our neighborhood over the next 10 years. Ujima creates opportunities for students to hear from leaders that look like them, to mentor younger peers, to serve their communities, and grow into positive influences within their schools, families, and neighborhoods.

Together, these four pillars help create pathways to opportunity while equipping students with the tools they need to succeed both on and off the field.



Year 1 BY THE NUMBERS

Building a School-Based Model

5 School partners: Green Magnet, Sarah Moore Greene, Spring Hill, Vine, Austin-East

Investing in Students

318 Hours of programming

62 Days of after-school programming

2,976 Healthy snacks provided

100 + Weekend grocery bags distributed

Expanding Access

150 Students served

15 Students connected to competitive club soccer*

2 Austin East players competing in MLS Next U16

Strengthening the Community

496 Volunteer hours contributed

10 Competitive matches played

Year One was about more than numbers.

It was about building a school-based model that meets students where they are, creating pathways to opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach, and surrounding young people with the relationships and resources they need to thrive.

Together, students, families, educators, volunteers, and community partners helped transform a vision into reality. The numbers on this page represent the first chapter of that story.

**Students from Vine Middle School and Austin East High School are now participating with four different clubs across Knoxville (One Knox, Emerald, AYSO, and USA North) including two students competing in MLS NEXT U16, the highest level of youth soccer in the United States.*

“Ujima has given our students something special to anticipate each Friday, bringing excitement, positive energy, and opportunities to grow both socially and emotionally.”

Stephanie Watson
Teacher, Green Magnet

From East Knoxville

TO MLS NEXT

When Michel arrived in Knoxville from Burundi, he faced challenges familiar to many immigrant and refugee students. He was adapting to a new culture, learning a new language, and trying to find his place in an unfamiliar environment.

When he first became involved with our soccer program, he did not have the equipment, experience, or support systems that many young athletes take for granted. Yet he possessed something that could not be measured on a report card or soccer evaluation: determination.

Even when opportunities seemed out of reach, he continued to show up.

Over time, relationships with coaches, teammates, teachers, and mentors helped him grow in confidence and maturity. What began as a chance to play soccer became an opportunity to build community, develop leadership skills, and pursue goals that once seemed impossible.

As a freshman at Austin East High School, Michel earned a starting role on the varsity soccer team and was named to the All-District Team. After Austin East's leading scorer finished the previous season with six goals, Michel scored sixteen goals during his freshman campaign, becoming one of the area's most dangerous attackers.

Today, Michel is also competing on One Knox Youth Club's MLS NEXT U16 squad, the highest level of youth soccer in the United States.

His accomplishments are remarkable, but they are also a reminder of why Ujima exists.

Talent is equally distributed, but opportunity is not.

Michel's story is not the end of the journey. It is a glimpse of what becomes possible when opportunity meets potential.

At Ujima, our goal is not simply to help one student succeed. It is to ensure that every young person has access to the relationships, resources, and opportunities they need to thrive.



-  Burundi to Knoxville
-  Joined One Knox
-  16 Goals as a Freshman
-  All District Team
-  Promoted to MLS Next

What others are seeing

Ujima's impact is best understood through the people who experience it every day: students, families, educators, and community partners.



"Ujima is far more than soccer. Soccer is what initially draws students in, but it is the relationships, the mentorship, and the culture of accountability, leadership, and belonging that keep them engaged. At Vine Middle, Ujima has become one of our flagship after-school programs and consistently serves more students than any other program we offer."

Kyle Pickell, United Way Community Schools Coordinator, Vine Middle

"My favorite thing about Ujima is that they treat everyone the same and don't exclude anyone. I am thankful for the opportunity to play with this team. I wouldn't change a thing."

Gabriel Antonio, Vine Middle Student

"Ujima's consistent presence created a sense of trust & belonging that made a measurable difference in student behavior & school culture. Even more powerful, several of our students chose to continue working with Ujima as they transitioned to middle school, a testament to the meaningful relationships they built."

Windy Clayton - Principal, Sarah Moore Greene Elementary



"I am grateful that my son, Fernando, has had the opportunity to be part of Ujima. He has learned so much and grown tremendously as both a player and a young man."

Oscar Vasquez, Vine Middle Parent



"Ujima has intentionally built genuine relationships with our students, connections that continue to support them as they transition to middle school. For many of our fifth graders, knowing they will see familiar, trusted faces helps ease the uncertainty of that transition and creates a greater sense of confidence and belonging."

Stephanie Watson, Teacher, Green Magnet Academy

What's Next

Year One demonstrated what is possible when students are given access to opportunity, support, and belonging. As we look ahead, our focus is not simply on growth, but on deepening our impact and building a sustainable foundation for the future.

Expand Access

Continue serving students across our current school partners while exploring opportunities to reach additional young people through school-based programming.

Launch Girls Programming

Capitalize on the girls season in the fall to engage them in the holistic mission of Ujima and create ways to sustain momentum once the season ends.

Strengthen Academic and Student Supports

Deepen partnership with the University of Tennessee to help students succeed both on and off the field through academic enrichment, mentorship, and mental health resources.

Increase Transportation Capacity

Reduce one of the most significant barriers to participation by expanding transportation options for students and families.

Build Organizational Capacity

During Year One, Ujima operated as a program of the One Knoxville Collective. As we enter Year Two, we are establishing Ujima as an independent nonprofit organization, creating the foundation for long-term growth, sustainability, and impact.

The need remains significant, but so does the potential. We are just getting started.



Ujima Community

Ujima's name comes from the Swahili principle of collective work and responsibility. Our first year demonstrated the power of that idea in action.

No single organization can meet all of the needs facing young people. Ujima's impact is made possible through partnerships that expand opportunity, strengthen student support, and connect young people with resources both on and off the field.

We are grateful for the organizations, businesses, volunteers, and donors who invested in our students during Year One.

Community Partners



Education Partners



Training Partners



Funding Partners

United Way of Greater Knoxville
City of Knoxville
Lawson Family Foundation
Volunteer Rotary Club

Ted Russell Foundation
First Horizon Foundation
SmartBank

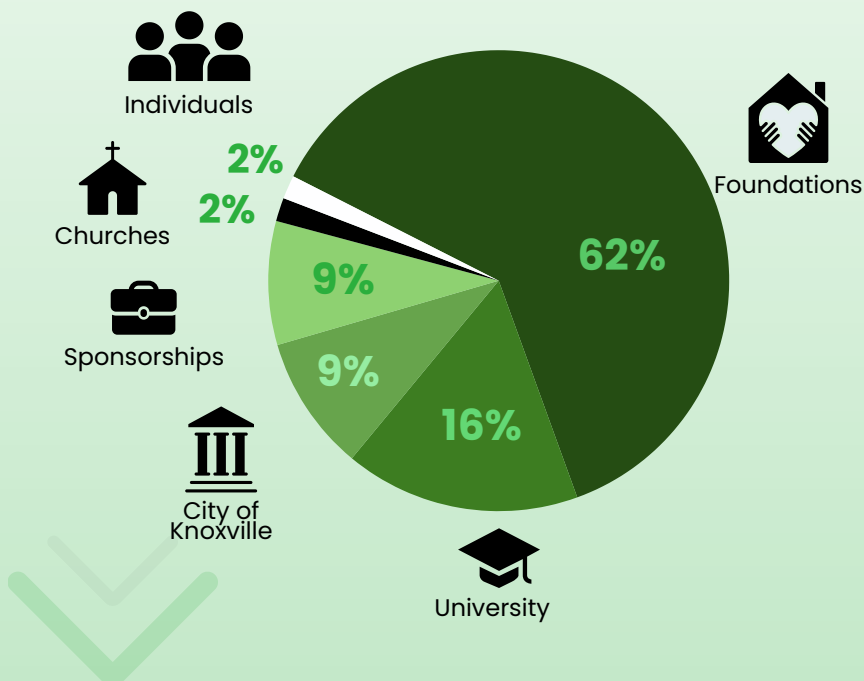
Dick's House of Sport
St. John's Cathedral
Trinity Health Foundation

Financial STEWARDSHIP

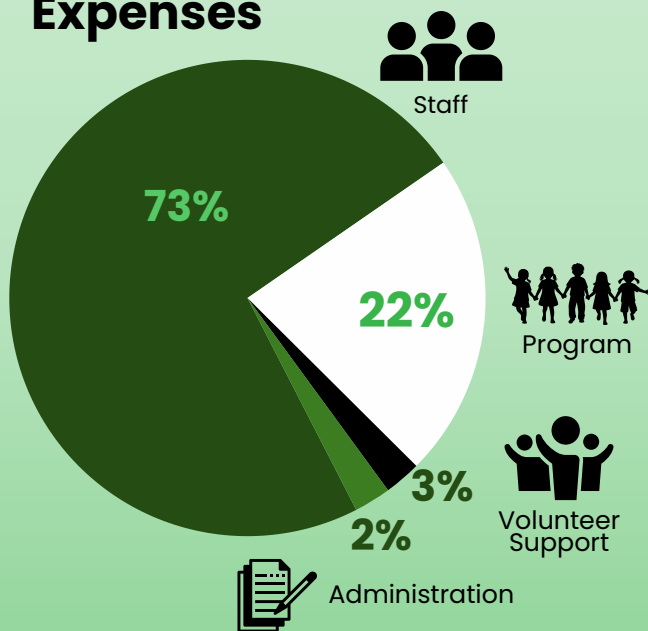
Ujima is committed to using resources responsibly and strategically to maximize impact for students and families.

During our first year, investments supported direct student programming, transportation, educational partnerships, equipment, healthy snacks, and the personnel necessary to coordinate and sustain services across five schools.

Revenue



Expenses



As a young organization, we remain focused on building a strong foundation while ensuring that resources are directed toward the students and communities we serve.

We are grateful for the donors, foundations, businesses, and community partners whose generosity made Year One possible.

Beyond the Budget:

496 volunteer hours year 1 represents more than \$15,500 in contributed time and expertise

Thank you!



One year ago, Ujima began a new chapter as a pilot initiative within the One Knoxville Collective. Together, students, families, educators, community partners, volunteers, and donors helped transform that vision into reality.

Because of your support, students found belonging. New opportunities were created. Relationships were formed. And young people across East Knoxville were reminded that their future is full of possibility.

As we enter Year Two, Ujima is taking another important step forward. We are transitioning from a pilot program to an independent organization, building on the momentum of our first year and strengthening our capacity to serve students for years to come.

Every day, our students remind us of a simple truth:

Talent is equally distributed, but opportunity is not.

Together, we can continue closing that gap by expanding access to the relationships, resources, and opportunities that help young people thrive.

Thank you for believing in our students.

Thank you for believing in our community.

Thank you for believing in the power of collective work and responsibility. The first chapter has been written. The next chapter begins now.

Founded on the principle of collective work and responsibility, Ujima equips students for success on and off the field.





Ujima

COLLECTIVE WORK & RESPONSIBILITY

VINE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Join the movement!



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