



**FIRSTLINE SCHOOLS**  
EDUCATION FOR LIFE  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2012-2013**



# DEAR FRIEND OF FIRSTLINE,

In 1992, working with a group of parents who were dissatisfied with the educational options then available for their children, we founded James Lewis Extension, later New Orleans Charter Middle School (NOCMS), to create a high quality open admission public middle school. At that time, and up until 2005, New Orleans families had three choices: private and parochial schools that charged tuition, selective public schools, or open admissions public schools, most of which were significantly underperforming their peers around the state, and collectively ranked as the second lowest performing district in the state and among the worst in the country.

We founded NOCMS as an alternative to these choices, a place where academic excellence, enriching activities and character development could be made available to all families. To us, NOCMS was close to an ideal school, consistently beating state and local performance metrics, and placing students in the selective high schools that would allow them access to opportunities for future success.

In 2005, we expanded our program to include Green Charter School, and then lost NOCMS and so much more to Hurricane Katrina. When our core staff returned to New Orleans and opened Green in January 2006, we knew only that we needed to bring back hope, community and excellence to New Orleans public education. We could not have envisioned, eight years ago, the enormous and positive changes that have come to our school system, through investment, innovation, belief and hard work.

Today in New Orleans, the entire notion of a school system has been revitalized. Families and students have choices among a great variety of high quality public open-enrollment schools, schools where academic growth is a constant, and whose performance is in some cases meeting and exceeding state averages, as well as selective and private school performance. FirstLine is proud to be part of this nationally-recognized movement in education; for the 8th consecutive year, every FirstLine School has shown academic performance growth.

We still have a very long way to go and much work ahead to create the schools that we know are possible for the young people of this city. We continue to believe that faith in the potential of all young people, innovation, and collaboration will help us to better serve our families. We continue to believe that New Orleans can be the first city in America where every child goes to a great school.

Best,



Jay Altman, Chief Executive Officer



Gregory St. Etienne, Chair, Board of Directors

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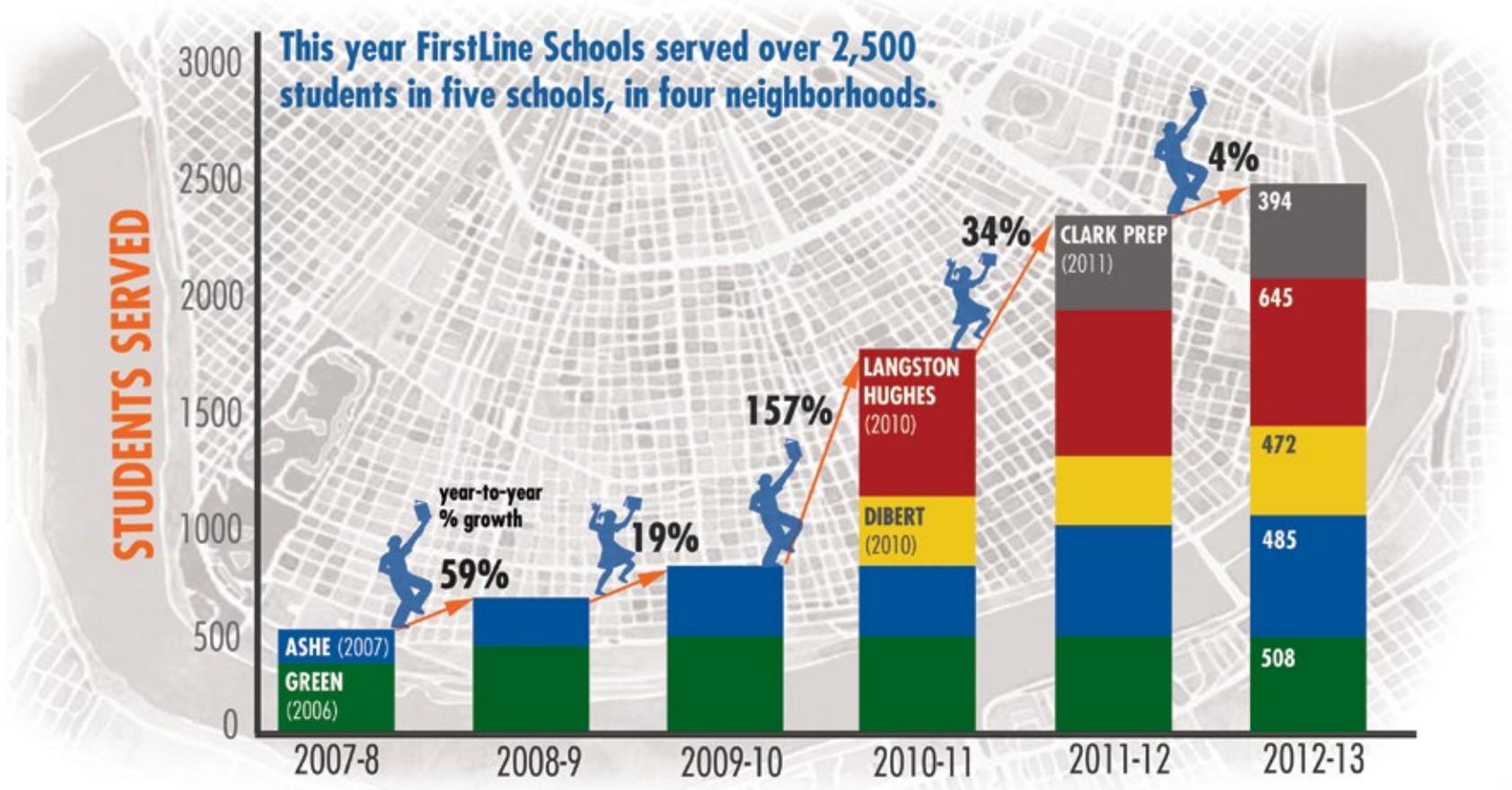
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# OUR SCHOOLS

Since opening Green Charter School in 2006 after Katrina, the FirstLine Schools network has grown consistently in academic performance, geographic reach and number of students served. Last year, FirstLine served over 2,500 New Orleans students.

- 2006: SAMUEL J. GREEN CHARTER SCHOOL K-8 | Uptown**
- 2007: ARTHUR ASHE CHARTER SCHOOL K-8 | Lake Park, Gentilly**
- 2010: JOHN DIBERT COMMUNITY SCHOOL PK-8 | Mid-City**
- 2010: LANGSTON HUGHES ACADEMY PK-8 | Gentilly**
- 2011: JOSEPH S. CLARK PREP HIGH SCHOOL 9-12 | Tremé**





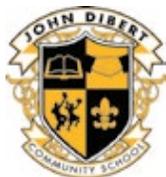
# ACADEMIC RESULTS

While we still have a long way to go to reach our goal of all students being on track for college and career readiness, our schools have continued to show strong academic gains for the eighth straight year in terms of students performing at or above their expected grade level.

## FirstLine K-8 Schools



Ashe scholars saw 17% growth in math, with 82% of students performing at basic or above, compared to the state average of 70%.



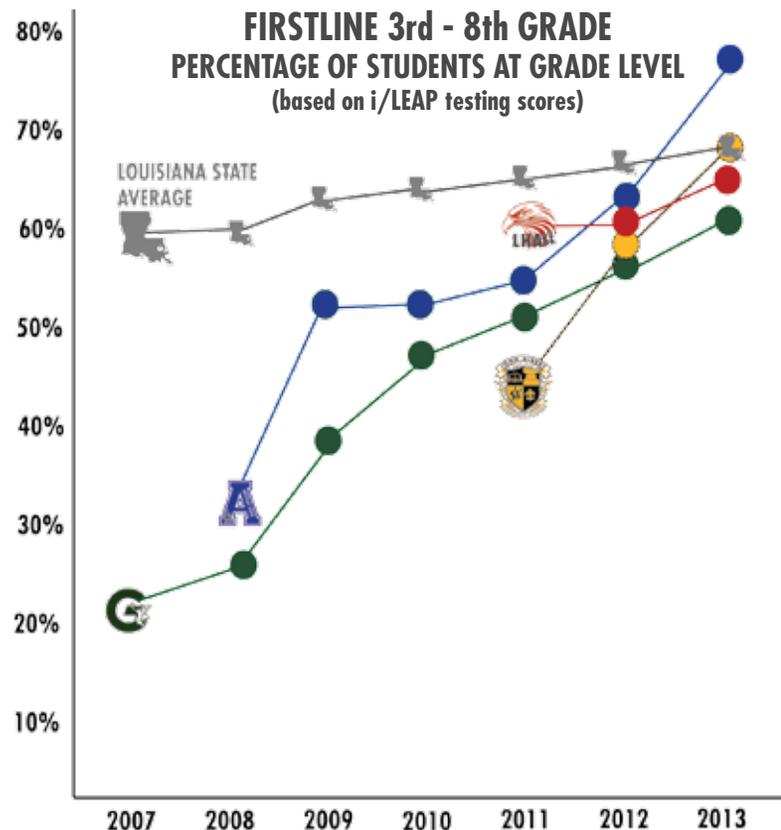
In the 2012-13 school year, Dibert increased the number of student performing at basic or above by 17%, up to 84% overall.



In its 8th straight year of growth, Green saw an increase in students performing at grade level or above across all subjects, including English, math, science and social studies.



LHA 8th graders achieved a 30% increase in math, with 74% of students performing at basic or above.

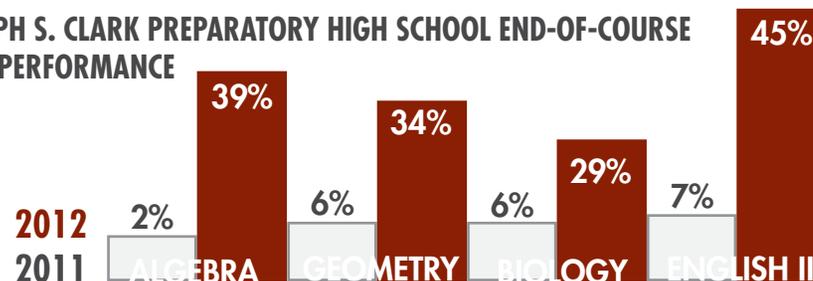


## FirstLine High School



The RSD named Clark Prep one of the "most improved" high schools, showing more than 10% growth of students performing at good or above.

### JOSEPH S. CLARK PREPARATORY HIGH SCHOOL END-OF-COURSE TEST PERFORMANCE



Librarian



Puzzle captain



Electrician

Block captain



Dramatic Play captain



Library



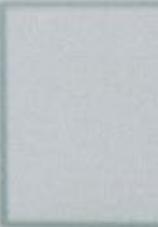
PROXYHEAN

File Edit View Insert Tools Help Math Do Now 9-9 (4)

Count. Write the number.



What's a number





Edible

Edible Schoolyard

# HOW WE'RE DOING IT

## Improving School Culture

We focus first on creating a school culture that is nurturing, orderly, and aspirational. Each school team crafts their culture around a shared set of values that adults and students live by to create common expectations for how people learn and work together, with social norms that facilitate teaching and learning. We believe in providing students with a rich variety of experiences that nurture character, health, and active citizenship. We also believe that families should be active partners in the education of their children and strive to create schools that are warm and welcoming with plenty of opportunities for family involvement.

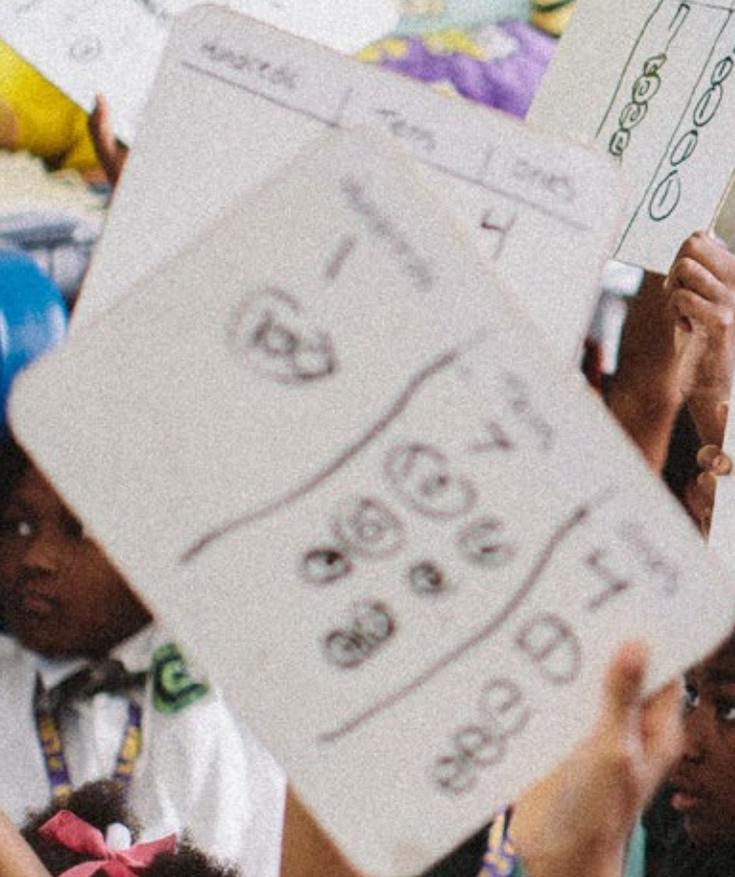
Led by our Edible Schoolyard New Orleans team, we are now focusing more on student and staff wellness across our schools. In addition to promoting healthy eating habits and sharing our garden and kitchen through activities with our families, we are increasing our attention to physical fitness for both students and staff.

## On-going Improvement of Teaching

At FirstLine Schools, we believe that our job is to support teachers, leaders, and staff to do great work. Through regular professional development opportunities, frequent feedback, and a collaborative working environment, teachers continually work to improve their skillfulness.

Teachers in FirstLine's schools join a network of colleagues who are constantly working together towards a goal of increasing student achievement while creating a variety of experiences to serve the whole child and nurture a lifelong love of learning. Throughout the year, teachers participate in:

- Regular classroom observation and feedback, from teachers and leaders
- Weekly school-based professional development, and monthly job-alike professional development across schools
- Quarterly network-wide professional development days
- Visits to high-performing schools in New Orleans and other cities around the country



# HOW WE'RE DOING IT

## Personalizing Learning

Given the range of students' interests and needs, we have embarked on a long-term initiative to increase personalized learning for each student. FirstLine's Personalized Learning Project aims to improve student achievement by significantly increasing differentiated learning support for students. By increasing computer-assisted instruction in the school day and thus freeing up teachers to work with individuals and small groups of students based on their needs, this project allows students to work at their own pace and skill level, benefitting both high-achieving and high-need students, while providing real-time assessment data to teachers daily. FirstLine's Personalized Learning Project, which had originally piloted at Ashe and Clark Prep, expanded to Langston Hughes Academy in 2012-2013 with plans to expand to Green and Dibert in 2013-2014.





# THE WHOLE CHILD

**“the 3-dimensional child lives in a 3-dimensional world”**

In the words of a Green parent, FirstLine understands that “the three-dimensional child lives in a three-dimensional world.” Though we are exceptionally proud of our academic improvement and know that we still have much more work ahead in this area, we are also committed to nurturing the whole child. In addition to our academic programming, FirstLine’s teachers and leaders offer families a rich variety of experiences that are developmentally appropriate and enriching.

## **Grade level experiences**

Grade level teams create developmentally appropriate experiences that are fun, engaging, and connect students to the world outside of school, beyond their neighborhoods, and sometimes beyond the city. From 10th grade college tours and 8th grade Power Ties career-exploration to 5th grade outdoor canoeing and orienteering experiences, from 7th grade ESYNOLA Iron Chef to 3rd grade market-to-table day, students at FirstLine Schools connect their learning to engaging, fun, real-world experiences that prepare them to go out and explore the world with confidence.

## **In-school and Afterschool Enrichment**

School at FirstLine continues after the completion of the academic day. Every FirstLine school offers enrichment classes throughout the school day, as well as robust afterschool enrichment programs with athletics, arts and leadership development opportunities. At Clark Prep, our high school students can choose from a full slate of varsity athletics programs in addition to band, drill team, and arts programming. Our K-8 schools participate in the citywide Charter School Athletic League, founded in part by FirstLine coaching staff.



# EDIBLE SCHOOLYARD NOLA

The 2012-2013 school year continued the growth of Edible Schoolyard New Orleans (ESYNOLA) across all five of our schools, as the ESYNOLA team continued to support a healthy approach to how we all eat, learn and live. As Ashe students began their first year in their brand new campus, ESYNOLA staff and students were thrilled to move into their first custom-designed kitchen and garden classrooms, developed through a collaborative planning process in the design of the new school. We are currently planting the seeds to fill out our one-acre garden plot at Ashe, and fundraising to add additional features to the campus gardens across the network, including outdoor classrooms, a community walking path, and small orchards.

ESYNOLA provided programming in all five FirstLine Sschools this past year, from garden science classes and food ABCs at our elementary schools, to afterschool culinary club and student menu planning and design at Clark Prep. Through the ESYNOLA network-wide Wellness Initiative, we have been offering cooking classes for parents, exercise classes for staff, and promoting more exercise for students across our schools.





# FINANCIALS

**FirstLine is a publicly audited nonprofit. We have adopted strict budgeting policies and stringent internal controls to ensure proper stewardship of our assets.**

As a Charter Management Organization (CMO), FirstLine operates five charter schools, chartered through the Recovery School District. Our public, open-admission schools receive the same per-student public funding as other public schools in Louisiana.

All of our schools are considered Title 1 schools. Title 1 is the federal program that enables access to special support funding for schools where 40% or more of the population receives free or reduced lunch. At FirstLine, 96% of our students receive free or reduced lunch.

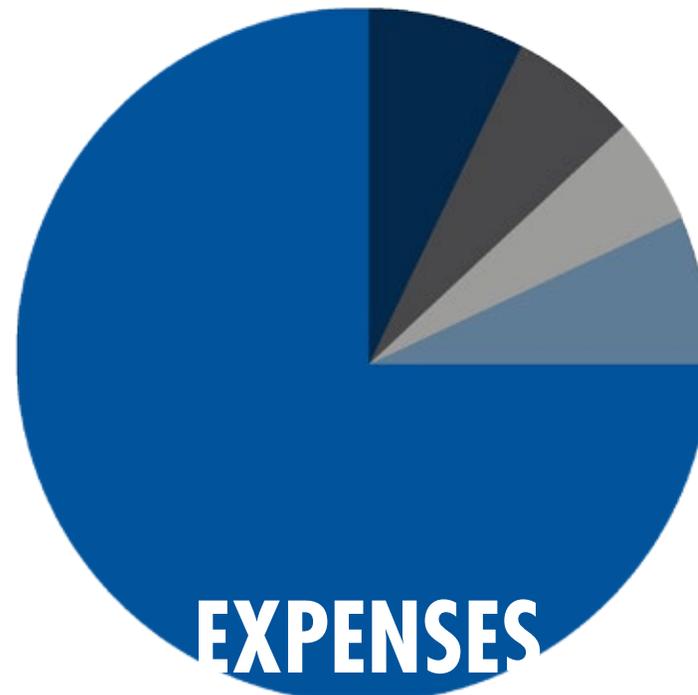
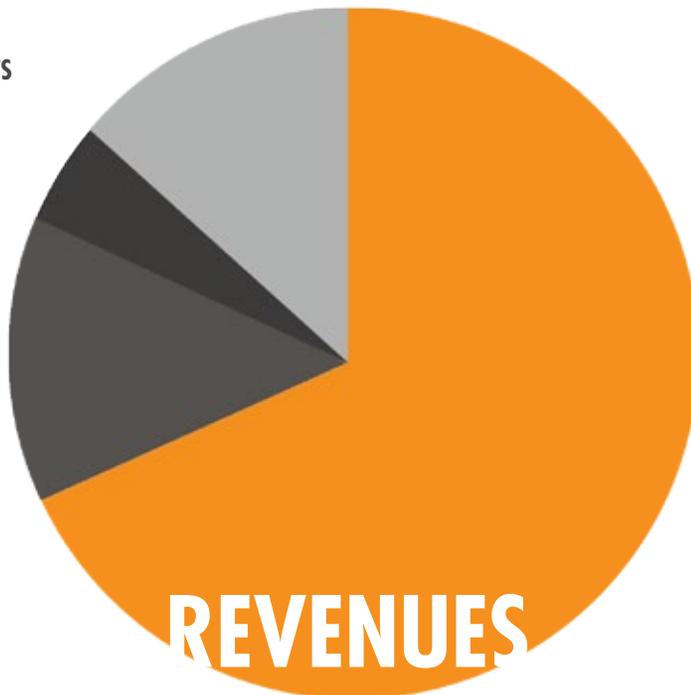
As a nonprofit CMO with an independent board of directors, FirstLine Schools has been successful with development and fundraising to support initiatives that we know will benefit our students but would not be possible within the limitations of state and federal public school funding.

**ONE-TIME  
GOVERNMENT GRANTS  
18%**

**PRIVATE GRANTS  
& CONTRIBUTIONS  
2%**

**FEDERAL PROGRAM  
PUBLIC FUNDS  
13%**

**STATE AND LOCAL  
PUBLIC FUNDS  
67%**



**SHARED SERVICES  
7%**

**FOOD SERVICE  
5%**

**STUDENT  
TRANSPORTATION  
7%**

**PLANT &  
FACILITIES  
6%**

**EDUCATIONAL  
PROGRAM  
75%**

# UPWARD, ONWARD

FirstLine Schools is always looking forward – to the possibilities of our scholars, to the development of our staff, to the opportunities to improve our schools. In the 2013-2014 school year, we are looking forward to continuing our legacy of growth and innovation to better support students and families in New Orleans.

## NOLA TECH @ CLARK PREP

NOLA Career and Technical Program (NOLA Tech), piloting in the 2013-14 school year, will offer a new pathway to Clark Prep students interested in pursuing a career directly after high school graduation. Through a partnership with Delgado Community College City Park Campus, NOLA Tech will provide students the opportunity to earn a high school diploma and technical certificate in a career field at the same time. Students who do not yet qualify for Delgado will participate in an apprenticeship program where they will spend part of their week in a job site placement, gaining hands-on work experience while developing technical skills.

## TEACHER CAREER PATHWAYS

Teaching is hard, specialized work, and when teachers are great, everyone benefits from keeping them in the classroom over many years. To improve student achievement and teacher retention, FirstLine is creating teaching career pathways that allow for constant professional growth and career advancement to incentivize teachers to stay in education and create careers in the classroom.



# ONWARD, UPWARD

## FIRSTLINE COMMON CURRICULUM

Harnessing the collective expertise of our teaching staff across schools, and actualizing our value of collaboration, FirstLine teachers and academic leaders are working together to create a shared curriculum across our schools. This will allow teachers to share the work of creating a rigorous and engaging curriculum and to leverage the skills of our curriculum leaders, so that all teachers can focus on relationships, instruction and assessment. This common curriculum aligns to the Common Core State Standards.





# DONORS & SUPPORTERS

Closing the  
funding gap

## *Foundations and Corporations*

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Share Our Strength  
Sisters of St. Francis  
Patrick F. Taylor Foundation  
Think Through Learning, Inc.  
Whole Foods Whole Kids Foundation  
The Mary Freeman Wisdom Foundation  
Wisner Fund  
Zemurray Foundation

## *Individuals*

George and Allison Freeman  
Alison Hartman  
Hunter and Catherine Pierson

**You can help too! Learn more at [www.firstlineschools.org/get-involved](http://www.firstlineschools.org/get-involved)**





Langston Hughes  
Academy

Photography by Maile Lani Photography | Design by True Story Design

# THANK YOU

To the volunteers and community partners  
who make this work possible.

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Youth Run NOLA



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