STORY OF IMPACT
BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR YOUTH ON THE WEST SIDE

Imagine not being able to leave your house because of gun violence in your community. This is the reality that faced 17-year-old Zaire and her two sisters, who were being cared for by their grandmother while their mother battled multiple sclerosis.

Thankfully, they were able to go to school because that's where Zaire discovered BUILD (Broader Urban Involvement and Leadership Development), a youth development and anti-violence nonprofit in Austin. The West Side neighborhood is one of United Way of Metro Chicago's Neighborhood Networks driving transformation and growth in the historically disinvested community.

Supported by United Way, BUILD creates safe spaces for students like Zaire to find their passions, get creative, and mold their bright futures. BUILD's summer art program "changed my life," Zaire said. "I discovered my own love for art. I learned art could help me process everything going on at home. Most importantly, I found a safe place—a place that became a door to my own future."

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>
> **ZAIRE**

Zaire went from being bullied at school to joining a Girls 2 Women program at BUILD where she was empowered to express herself and accepted for who she is, surrounded by positive and supportive peers. She also joined other BUILD programs, like the youth council, and is volunteering in her community. She's currently enrolled at Columbia College Chicago, studying creative writing and illustration.

"I don't know what my life would have been like if I had not brought home that [BUILD] flier," Zaire says. "But I understand now that's what BUILD does. It can start with something that seems small, like an art class, but it ends up giving you everything you need."

JOIN US!

Donate today and help build a stronger, more equitable Chicago region where all our neighbors can thrive.

October 24, 2024