

VICTIMS FIRST

ANNUAL REPORT

JANUARY 1, 2022 - DECEMBER 31, 2022

Who We Are

VictimsFirst is a network of surviving victims of mass casualty crime and trusted supporters who have first-hand experiences of the problems and re-victimization that accompany these acts when there is a lack of coordinated effort and/or understanding of what survivors need. In 2021, we officially applied to become a 501(c)(3) to better serve victims of mass casualty crimes.

Our Mission

The mission of VictimsFirst is to support, empower, and protect victims of mass casualty crime through rapid response, financial assistance, community preparedness education, as well as care support and advocacy for policies that help all victims/survivors.

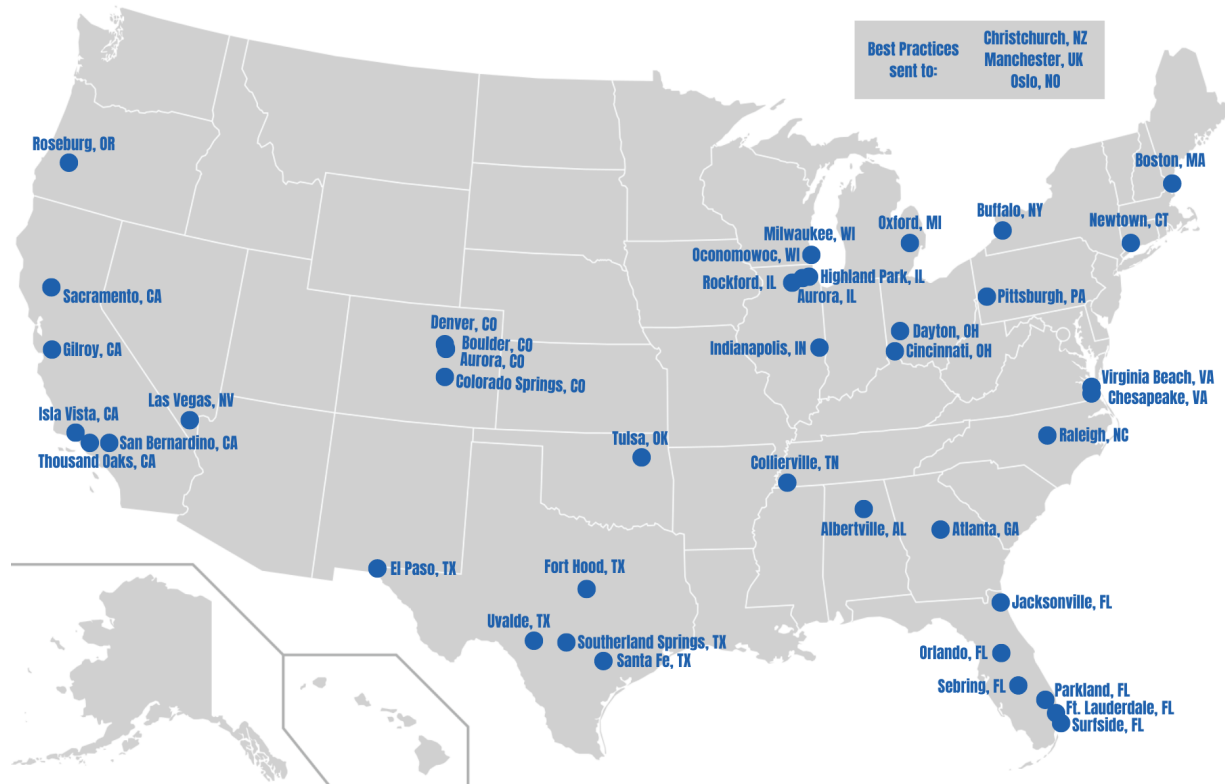
What We Do



Our History

Since 2012, we have responded to over 40 incidents of mass violence, including mass shootings.

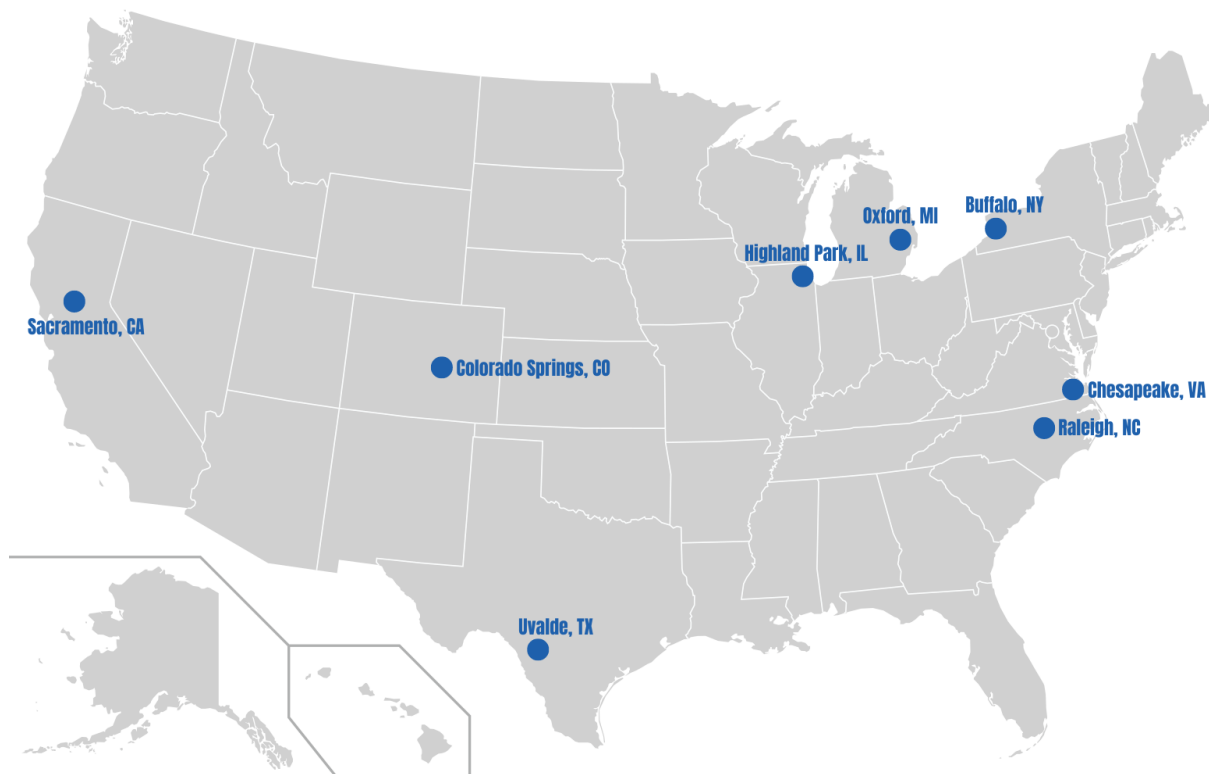
Our holistic approach to responding to the incidents of mass violence has included: (1) providing direct financial assistance to the survivors and victims' families of mass violence, (2) providing and/or securing direct non-monetary assistance, such as home renovations for accessibility, mental health support, specialized medical resources, and support animals; (3) initiating location-specific centralized victims' funds where 100% of the donations go directly to victims/survivors; (4) educate communities on how to respond using trauma-informed methods that put victims/survivors first; (5) advocating for victims rights; and (6) bird dogging nonprofits and fundraisers to prevent re-victimization.



Year-In-Review

In the past year, we responded to 7 mass shootings, including the (1) mass shooting in Sacramento, CA, (2) Tops' market shooting in Buffalo, NY, the (3) Robb Elementary School shooting in Uvalde, TX, the (4) Highland Park, IL Fourth of July Parade shooting; the (5) Club Q shooting in Colorado Springs, (6) collected funds for the victims of the Chesapeake, VA Walmart shooting and (7) sent Best Practices to Raleigh, NC where five people were murdered and three others were injured.

In 2022, we also continued to assist with the mass shooting that occurred on November 30, 2021 at the Oxford High School in Oxford, Michigan to ensure victims/survivors received 100% of the donations intended for them.



2022 Fundraising Snapshot

We collected a total of \$8,802,555.77, 100% of which has gone directly to victims through our location-specific shooting fundraising efforts. That included interest:

Buffalo: \$250,357.00

Uvalde: \$7,600,048.43

Highland Park: \$937,218.65

Chesapeake: \$1,598.36

Colorado Springs: As of 12/31/2022, we collected another \$9,384.45 for the Club Q mass shooting victims in Colorado Springs, CO. Those donations came from GoFundMe and through designated donations directly to VictimsFirst. 100% of those donations—along with those that we continue to collect in 2023 until the fund is closed—will go Directly to victims and will be administered and distributed through the National Compassion Fund in early 2023, as we combined efforts with the Good Judy Garage GoFundMe fundraiser.

2022 Mass Shooting Response Summary

Sacramento

On April 3, 2022, six people were murdered and others wounded/injured in a mass shooting in the California state Capitol. With \$13,333.33 in designated funds for the Sacramento victim base, we worked with the Sacramento D.A.'s office to get funds directly to the families of those murdered. We helped financially beyond this amount as well (see below).

In addition, we helped find disability resources for one of the victims who was badly injured and kept the family from going homeless.

Buffalo

After the mass shooting on May 14, 2022 in Buffalo, NY where 10 people were murdered and three others were wounded/injured at Tops' Market, VictimsFirst collected \$243,640.56 to go Directly to victims/survivors of that tragedy. Those funds were granted to the National Compassion Fund, which became the administrator for the Centralized Victim's Fund called the Buffalo 5/14 Survivors Fund.

We thank the City of Buffalo for establishing a Centralized Victims' Fund.

We also sent our Best Practices to the community to help them navigate in the best interests of victims. In addition, we gave immediate financial assistance to victims and survivors and surviving families of the deceased. We also worked with AT&T Wireless for its direct-to-text donation campaign as well as bird-dogged fundraisers to ensure that those stating that they were collecting for the victims actually went Directly to the victims.

Board member Tiara Parker served as a victims advocate on the steering committee for the Buffalo 5/14 Survivors Fund, answering questions and sharing her experience as a wounded survivor and family of the deceased from the Orlando nightclub shooting in 2016 so that others could understand the trauma and what is needed to move forward.

Uvalde

After the mass shooting in Uvalde, TX on May 24, 2022 where 19 children and two teachers were murdered and 17 others were injured, we sent our Best Practices to officials and then began immediately collecting funds to protect them for the victims and survivors. We ended with a total of \$7,600,48.43 which went Directly to victims/survivors of the Robb Elementary School Shooting. Those funds were held in a separate bank account and 100% of what was collected, including interest, was granted to the National Compassion Fund, which administered the Centralized Victims Fund called the Uvalde Together We Rise Fund.

We thank everyone who participated in the Uvalde Together We Rise Fund.

100% of every penny collected was then distributed Directly to the victims' families and survivors of the school shooting. Those receiving funds were families of the deceased, those wounded (shot), those injured, those in imminent danger of death (in the direct line of fire), and those present during the shooting.

We also assisted with immediate financial needs for victims' families and survivors and found both mental health services and other medical specialists for some of the victims. When asked, we stood before the Uvalde City Council meeting to inquire about local funds.

In addition, we collected the names of all fundraisers and nonprofits that claimed to collect on behalf of the victims and made sure that they all followed through on delivering funds Directly to victims. We also informed authorities when we came across possible scams trying to exploit those suffering.

President Anita Busch and Board Members Paola Bautista and Javier Nava volunteered their time in Uvalde as well as volunteer Melissa Holmes. All of them also helped victims and survivors with whatever was needed, which included helping to secure housing and gainful employment for some families. In addition, they spoke up as the voices of victims on the Together We Rise Fund steering committee so that the community would understand what their victims and survivors were experiencing and how to truly assist without re-victimizing those most directly impacted.

Busch, Bautista and Holmes were on the ground in Uvalde four times with a fifth trip planned for 2023. Nava worked closely with the National Compassion Fund on applications and getting those needing extra help assisted with resources and sending families who needed some extra help to us. We were able to assist two families from becoming homeless.

We are still helping families in Uvalde, financially and otherwise.

Highland Park

In Highland Park, IL, a gunman opened fire at a Fourth of July parade and murdered seven people and wounded/injured 48 people. We collected a total of \$927,218.65 for those victims. We also assisted all families who needed it with immediate financial assistance while fighting tooth and nail for victims/survivors (including those in the line of fire) to receive 100% of the donations collected. That victim advocacy fell on deaf ears.

There was no Centralized Victims' Fund set up in Highland Park.

Through a contract and legal assistance, we were able to ensure 100% of what we collected in our Highland Park Victims Fund was given Directly to victims and physically injured survivors through the Highland Park Community Foundation's July 4th Parade Shooting Response Fund. We also made sure that the victims and survivors receiving the funds would be handled properly and that the Highland Park Community Foundation was assisted behind the scenes so they could disburse the funds legally to victims and survivors. We did this to protect the victim base.

Up until the very last moment, we advocated strongly to the Highland Park Community Foundation for survivors who were present and in the line of fire to be included in the final financial distribution of donations, but we were unsuccessful.

The Highland Park Community Foundation devised a protocol that included categories for families of the deceased, those wounded and those injured, but not a category for those present in the line of fire. Instead, their last category was for local area nonprofits which we reminded those in charge, could receive millions in grants from state and federal grants after a mass shooting where victims/survivors could not.

Afterwards, we sent a report to the City of Highland Park of what we experienced first-hand behind the scenes and again to advocate for help for those who survived in the line of fire but were not included in the donation disbursement.

Those survivors who were overlooked and felt re-victimized months later took to social media taking to task the Highland Park Community Foundation's decisions to leave them out.

We also helped victims with other resources for whatever was needed, which included disability resources. David Bilu, one of our board members who helped organize in Parkland after that mass shooting, including to help first responders, worked until the early morning hours with local law enforcement in Highland Park to ensure that victims' privacy. He helped LE remove victims' addresses from the Internet when meal trains were set up for them.

We continue to keep survivors in Highland Park who did not receive funds from the Parade Shooting Response Fund on their feet since they were not provided with financial help through the Highland Park Community Foundation.

Colorado Springs

In Colorado Springs in the early morning of Nov. 20, 2022, five people were murdered and more than 25 were wounded/injured when a gunman opened fire in the LGBTQ+ nightclub Club Q.

Within days, we provided direct financial assistance to victims and survivors of the mass shooting through our [General Victims Fund/National Mass Shooting Victims' Fund](#) and also worked to fulfill other needs by coordinating other resources.

As of December 31, 2022, we were able to help Club Q victims/survivors with a total of \$26,312.68 of emergency financial assistance. In addition, we have also worked behind-the-scenes to ensure other resources are available to victims/survivors, such as included securing mental health access, connecting victims/survivors to legal resources for understanding compensation programs, and providing home remodeling resources to address accessibility needs. We also helped to pay for the urgent transportation needs.

Further, we documented some of this work in our one-month report, which we published on our website on December 22, 2022. Here is some of the work we did:

Our VP Zachary Blair immediately mobilized our network of families to ensure 100% of the funds being donated would go Directly to victims/survivors. That included supporting victims who flew in from across the country to raise their voices against the same nonprofit (the Colorado Healing Fund) which collected donations after the Boulder King Soopers' grocery store shooting and then granted those donations to other local nonprofits and projects around town while victims and survivors received a small sum.

Of the \$6.5 million estimated to have been collected by two major nonprofit organizations in the aftermath of the shooting, it is believed that victims and survivors in Boulder (10 dead, no injured) received anywhere from 46% to 50% of the total donations.

To keep the same thing from happening to the Club Q victims, other survivors of mass shootings from across America joined with local survivors of mass shootings in Colorado to shine a light on this re-victimizing practice that continuously harms mass shooting victims year after year.

On Nov. 27, 2022, we hosted a press conference to expose these practices, which included a doubling of administration fees by the Colorado Healing Fund without any clear explanation as to why their administration costs doubled and without revising their current protocol which limited their administration fee to 5%. After donations poured in from the Boulder shooting, the Colorado Healing Fund also doubled its Executive Director's salary and doled out grants to nonprofits all over town.

We immediately engaged with the affected community and listened to concerns through on-the-ground outreach and have continued to educate the public as well as the victims and survivors on what a true Centralized Victims Fund is, how to recognize it, and how to decipher misleading language. For example, the Colorado Healing Fund uses phrases like "support the victims" instead of "directly to victims." They also claim "100% to victim services" instead of "100% directly to victims." However, 100% directly to victims has not been the Colorado Healing Fund's model, and they can not legally give directly to victims.

We also have continued to urge full transparency for any nonprofit collecting in the aftermath of the murder and injury of these club-goers. And, as we did in Uvalde and elsewhere, we have continued to be a watchdog on nonprofits and fundraisers. We continue to educate sponsors, donors, and the public so they have a complete understanding of how to get 100% of their donations directly to Club Q victims in a way that is ethical, equitable, and transparent.

On December 4, 2022, we hosted a second press conference on ZOOM with even more mass shooting families from across the nation to support Good Judy Garage in their decision to bring in the National Compassion Fund to ensure that 100% of what was collected in their GoFundMe would actually get to victims directly and equitably in cash payments. A Centralized Fund was established called the Club Q Victims and Survivors Compassion Fund so that 100% of what was collected will go to the victims in an equitable, transparent manner.

Four days later on December 8, 2022, we published an open letter from mass shooting families/victims from across the country to address the misinformation being spread by the Colorado Healing Fund, just as we saw being done in the aftermath of the King Soopers shooting in Boulder on March 22, 2022. We also addressed questions that have arisen surrounding their knowledge of victims compensation/services, their cultural competencies particularly with the LGBT2QIA+ community, and past harms inflicted upon mass shooting victims. This was sent to news/media throughout Colorado to provide a roadmap to holding the Colorado Healing Fund accountable.

You can read this letter here: <https://www.victimfirst.org/post/open-letter-from-mass-shooting-families-survivors-addressing-the-colorado-healing-fund>

Chesapeake, VA

In response to the shooting at the Walmart in Chesapeake, Virginia, on Nov. 22, 2022 which left six dead and several others injured, we started a GoFundMe campaign and collected \$1598.36. 100% of those donations were granted Directly to the victims/ survivors of that shooting via the partnership between The City of Chesapeake and The Planning Council, who both vowed to get every penny Directly in cash payments to the victims. We then helped behind the scenes to make sure that The Planning Council had all questions answered.

Emergency Assistance from our General Victims Fund

In addition to the specific amounts above to those victim groups, we have distributed an additional \$206,342.28 in donations directly to mass shooting victims families and survivors of these specific tragedies for emergency assistance in the immediate aftermath of their shooting. That was distributed from our General Victims Fund (that fund will be rebranded the National Mass Shooting Victims' Fund on Jan. 1, 2023).

As of Dec. 31, 2022, the amounts disbursed to date from our General Victims Fund in addition to the amounts above include:

Sacramento: \$21,800.00

Buffalo: \$18,068.76

Uvalde: \$68,485.79

Highland Park: \$36,236.45

Orlando: \$11,753.64

Aurora: \$3,341.53

Vegas: \$1,463.43

Colorado Springs (Club Q): \$30,562.68

Denver (Sol Tribe):** \$14,630.00

**Included in this financial assistance from our General Victims' Fund were victims and survivors of the Dec. 27, 2021 Sol Tribe shooting, where Alicia Cardenas, Daniel Schofield (Dano Blair), Alyssa Maldonado, and Jimmy Maldonado were murdered and others suffered injuries.

This assistance came after being informed by the Bread and Roses' mutual aid network in Denver of a significant need by victims/survivors of that shooting. We were informed that these victims/survivors' families and those injured received little to no help from the local nonprofits. With the help and leadership of the Bread and Roses, we were able to assist them. As of December 31, 2022, we have disbursed an additional \$14,630.00 to Sol Tribe victims/survivors to pay for basic living expenses, rent, medical bills, and other emergency needs that have not been covered through any other programs or by any other nonprofit over the past year.

Other Activities and Awards

June 9, 2022 to year's end: VictimsFirst was invited to take part in panel discussions, webinars and to speak to companies directly. For instance, we were invited to participate in a national Panel Discussion hosted by Oppenheim about what happens in the aftermath of mass shootings. We were invited by individual companies, such as Microsoft and CapGemini, whose employees wanted to learn directly from the first-hand experience of mass shooting victims and survivors and the resources that are and aren't available.

On Oct. 12, 2022: VictimsFirst was invited to attend the Annual National Conference for Growing Community Foundations that took place in Witchita, KS for CEOs. There, our President Anita Busch presented specific steps for preparedness and the importance of a Centralized Victims Fund. She presented suggestions that every community in the nation could legally take to ensure a rapid, transparent and ethical response after mass shootings/mass casualty crimes in a manner that would not re-victimize the victim base.

On Oct. 26, 2022: VictimsFirst was named one of the *21 Leaders of the 21 Century* for our "unstoppable courage" (<https://womensenews.org/21-leaders-for-the-21st-century/>). A number of board members – Las Vegas shooting survivor Amanda Bean and Orlando nightclub shooting survivors Tiara Parker and Javi Nava – flew to New York to accept this prestigious award. Ms. Bean also participated in a Q&A panel discussion to discuss issues pertinent to mass shooting victims.

Past recipients of this award have included Former Prime Minister of Ireland Patricia Robinson, NYS Governor Kathy Hochul, NYS Attorney General Letitia James, Author and activist Eve Ensler, Black Voices Matter Founder LaTosha Brown, LGBTQ Rights activist Edie Windsor.

In Memoriam

Finally, we want to remember the 64 loved ones who were murdered in these mass shootings, as well as the over [44,000 more whose lives were tragically taken from gun violence](#) in the United States in 2022.

Oxford (2021)

Madiyson Baldwin, 17
Tate Myre, 16
Justin Shilling, 17
Hana St. Juliana, 14

Sacramento

Johntaya "JoJo" Alexander, 21, of Elk Grove
Melinda Davis, 57, unhoused
DeVazia Turner, 29, of Carmichael
Yamile Martinez-Andrade, 21, of Selma
Sergio Harris, 38, of North Highlands
Joshua Hoye-Luchessi, 32, of Salinas

Buffalo

Roberta A. Drury of Buffalo, 32
Margus D. Morrison of Buffalo, 52
Andre Mackneil of Auburn, 53
Aaron Salter of Lockport, 55
Geraldine Talley of Buffalo, 62
Celestine Chaney of Buffalo, 65
Heyward Patterson of Buffalo, 67
Katherine Massey of Buffalo, 72
Pearl Young of Buffalo, 77
Ruth Whitfield of Buffalo, 86

Uvalde

Makenna Lee Elrod, 10
Layla Salazar, 11
Maranda Mathis, 11
Nevaeh Bravo, 10
Jose Manuel Flores Jr., 10
Xavier Lopez, 10
Tess Marie Mata, 10
Rojelio Torres, 10
Eliahna "Ellie" Amyah Garcia, 9
Eliahna A. Torres, 10
Annabell Guadalupe Rodriguez, 10
Jackie Cazares, 9
Uziah Garcia, 10
Jayce Carmelo Luevanos, 10
Maite Yuleana Rodriguez, 10
Jailah Nicole Silguero, 10
Irma Garcia, 48
Eva Mireles, 44
Amerie Jo Garza, 10
Alexandria "Lexi" Aniyah Rubio, 10
Alithia Ramirez, 10

Highland Park

Katherine Goldstein, 64, of Highland Park
Irina McCarthy, 35 and her husband Kevin McCarthy, 37, of Highland Park
Stephen Straus, 88, of Highland Park
Jacquelyn "Jacki" Sundheim, 63, of Highland Park
Nicolas Toledo-Zaragoza, 78, of Morelos, Mexico
Eduardo Uvaldo, 69, of Waukegan

Colorado Springs

Kelly Loving: She/Her, 40
Daniel Aston: He/Him, 28
Derrick Rump: He/Him, 38
Ashley Paugh: She/Her, 35
Raymond Green Vance: He/Him, 22

Chesapeake

Lorenzo Gamble, 43, of Chesapeake
Randy Blevins, 70, of Chesapeake
Brian Pendleton, 38 of Chesapeake
Kellie Pyle, 52, of Chesapeake
Tyneka Johnson, 22, of Portsmouth
Fernando Chavez-Barron, 16, of Chesapeake

Raleigh

Nicole Connors, 52
Susan Karnatz, 49
Mary Marshall, 35
off-duty police officer Gabriel Torres, 29
and the suspect's older brother, 16-year-old James Thompson