



Healing Meals

COMMUNITY PROJECT

Youth Program 2025 Impact Report

LOVE & GRATITUDE

WHO'S BEING NOURISHED

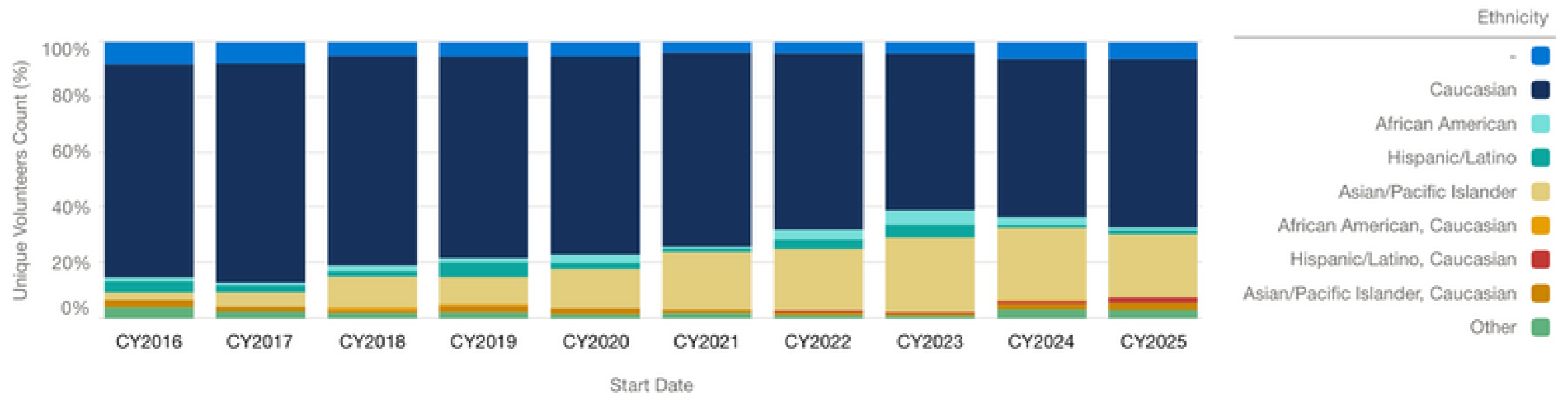


Healing Meals Youth by Numbers

Total number of youth volunteers since inception: 785

Total hours volunteered since inception: 31,000

Youth Volunteers by Year by ethnicity



[View Report \(Youth Volunteers by Year by ethnicity\)](#)

As of Oct 13, 2025, 3:59 PM



54

Chef Coat Recipients
(volunteered 100+ hours)



145

Blue Apron Recipients
(volunteered 50+ hours)



Program Overview

Healing Meals Community Project Youth Program:



- Prepares youth to seek and find **their own fulfilling, productive place in the world** and support them in **becoming active, engaged citizens of a community.**
- Elevates an understanding about **how food impacts overall health.**
- Provides **tools and strategies** for health and wellness.
- Provides **social connections** that promote a sense of wellbeing.



- Youth often have limited opportunities to develop the skills needed to cope with everyday life.
- Constant flow of unfiltered information through electronic media is overwhelming and causes heightened anxiety.
- Youth are not often supported with good nutrition and wellness practices.
- Youth often lack connections and a sense of purpose, diminishing an overall sense of wellbeing.

OUTPUTS	IMPACT
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INPUTS		OUTPUTS		IMPACTS & OUTCOMES	
Investment	Activities	Annual Outputs	Short Term Impacts	Long Term Outcomes	
• Staff resource • Volunteer time • Mentor training • Kitchen facility & equipment • Gardens • Food & packaging • Wellness Curriculum • Volunteer recognition • Environmental education	• Learning to cook in a safe, clean kitchen • Learning that real, whole food is medicine • Working in teams to prepare meals • Learning about organic food and gardening through guided experimentation • Connecting to clients with kind notes • Growing, tending, and harvesting organic produce • Creating a welcoming, electronic-free space	• 4,000+ handwritten notes • 40,000+ healthy, organic meals prepared and delivered (<u>200,00K meals</u> since 2016) • 200 lbs. organic produce grown • 30 Blue Aprons & 10 Chef coats • 178 youth matched with 30 adult mentors • Since 2026: 770+ youth volunteers 53 chef coats 170 Blue aprons	* Improved self confidence * Ability to work with diverse people * Ability to work in teams * Competence in the kitchen * Increased sense of empathy and compassion * Elevated sense of purpose * Understanding the organic seed to table journey * Understanding the impact of their own daily nutritional and wellness practices * Increased courage to try new things	• Youth will seek and find their own fulfilling, productive place in the community as active, engaged citizens. • Youth have an elevated understanding about how food impacts overall health. • Youth will employ tools and tactics for health and wellness. • Youth will foster social connections that promote a sense of wellbeing.	
↑↓ FACTORS ↑↓					
Assumptions			External Influences		
• Volunteers are highly appreciated and treated well. • Clients are nourished with love. • Meals are made from high-quality, organic ingredients that are essential to the healing process. • Diversity, equity, and inclusion is incorporated into a loving and welcoming environment.			• Program funding is competitive. • Parents/caregivers support is essential. • Transportation can be challenging. • Youth have demanding schedules.		

OUR LOGIC MODEL IN ACTION

The 2025 findings confirm that our **Youth Development Logic Model** is thriving in real life. Cooking, mentoring, and service experiences continue to build:

- **Confidence and leadership**
- **Collaboration and teamwork**
- **Empathy and compassion**
- **Healthy habits and wellness awareness**

Youth voices and quantitative data together show that Healing Meals is **more than a volunteer program**—it's a community where young people grow into compassionate leaders ready to create lasting change.

We empower youth by:

- Building **confidence** through mentorship and **hands-on learning**
- Teaching **healthy cooking** and nutrition habits
- Inspiring **compassion** and service to others
- Fostering **empathy** and **connection** across communities
- Promoting **wellness** and **sustainable food practices**

The Healing Meals Kitchen Team oversees the day-to-day youth activities including:

- **Culinary oversight**
- **Community Circle with wellness education**
- **Preparing meals**
- **Writing client notes**
- **Fostering community**
- **Supporting Adult Mentors**



The Healing Meals Kitchen Garden, managed by Andy, supports youth education on topics such as:

- **Organic gardening**
- **Farm-to-table food production**
- **Composting**
- **Importance of pollinators**
- **Chicken management**





Blue Apron Youth have **volunteered for 50+ hours.**

- In the Youth Development Committee, they receive **leadership training** and practice through **group learning, mentoring and peer-developed activities** to help **grow and sustain Healing Meals' mission.**
- They are invited to **apply to** become a **Board Member** (non-voting).
- In the kitchen, they take **leadership roles** during shifts.
- They help **welcome and orient new youth volunteers**, offering peer support and guidance during their first kitchen shifts.



Survey Overview: Developmental Relationships Study

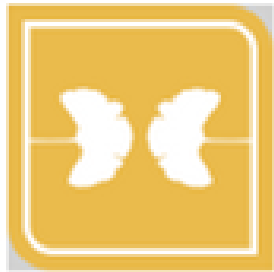
In the summer of 2025, Healing Meals partnered with The Search Institute to conduct a youth development survey rooted in their **Developmental Relationships Framework**.

The survey was sent to 248 youth volunteers who volunteered in the 2024-2025 academic year. Over 140 youth volunteers completed the survey, with a response rate of 56%.

The purpose of this survey was to:

- Deepen understanding of the social and emotional growth fostered through Healing Meals.
- Measure the strength of developmental relationships between youth, staff, and adult mentors.
- Identify how participation impacts the youth's development.

Key Focus Areas of the 2025 Survey

Elements	Actions	Definitions
 Express Care Show me that I matter to you.	• Be dependable • Listen • Believe in me • Be warm • Encourage	Be someone I can trust. Really pay attention when we are together. Make me feel known and valued. Show me you enjoy being with me. Praise me for my efforts and achievements.
 Challenge Growth Push me to keep getting better.	• Expect my best • Stretch • Hold me accountable • Reflect on failures	Expect me to live up to my potential. Push me to go further. Insist I take responsibility for my actions. Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks.
 Provide Support Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.	• Navigate • Empower • Advocate • Set boundaries	Guide me through hard situations and systems. Build my confidence to take charge of my life. Stand up for me when I need it. Put limits in place that keep me on track.
 Share Power Treat me with respect and give me a say.	• Respect me • Include me • Collaborate • Let me lead	Take me seriously and treat me fairly. Involve me in decisions that affect me. Work with me to solve problems and reach goals. Create opportunities for me to take action and lead.
 Expand Possibilities Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.	• Inspire • Broaden horizons • Connect	Inspire me to see possibilities for my future. Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places. Introduce me to people who can help me grow.

NOTE: Relationships are, by definition, bidirectional, with each person giving and receiving. So each person in a strong relationship both engages in and experiences each of these actions. However, for the purpose of clarity, this framework is expressed from the perspective of one young person.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2025 RESULTS

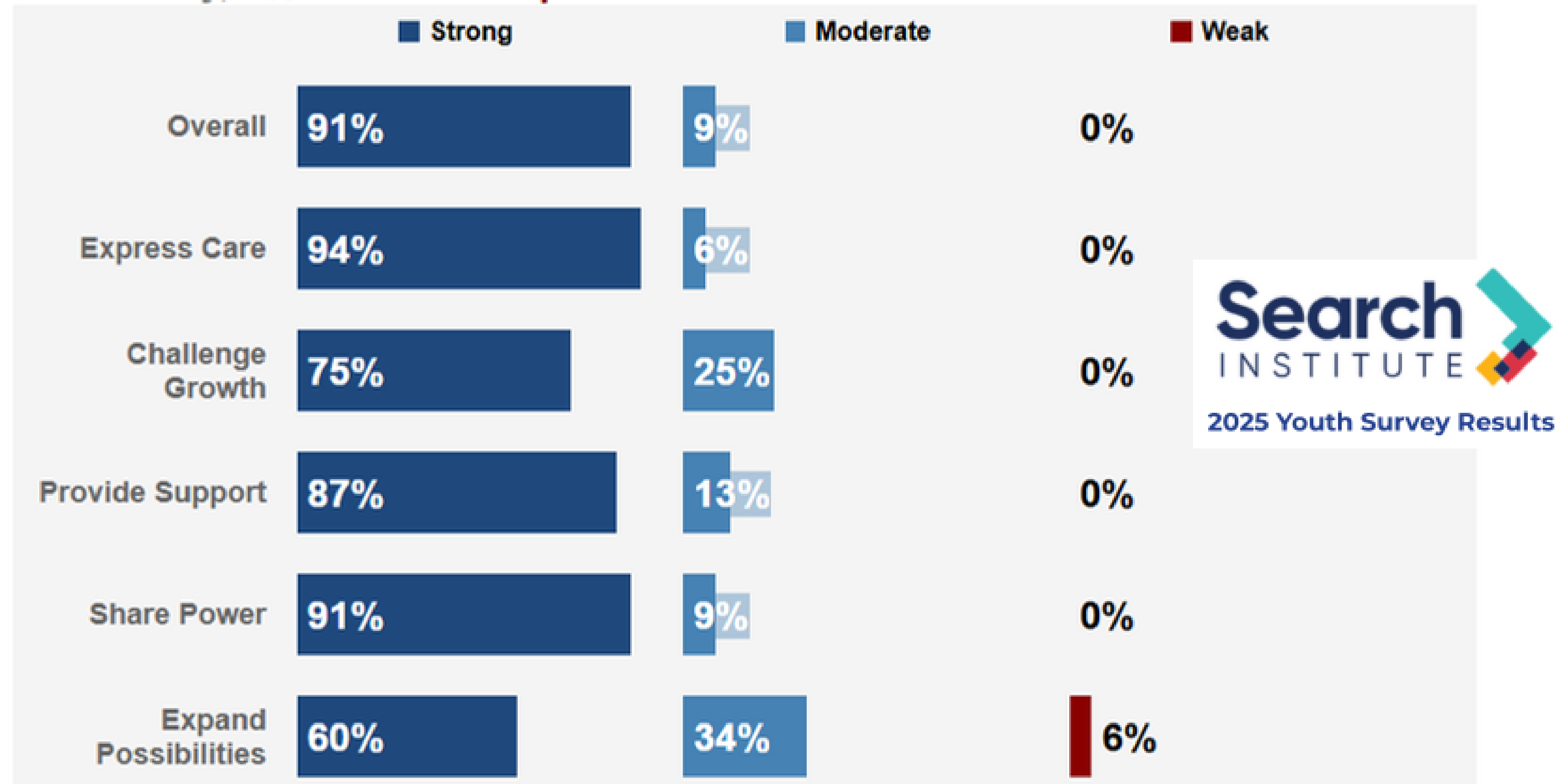
Youth rated their overall Healing Meals experience **95.6 out of 100**, reflecting deep connection and growth.

Top themes from youth reflections:

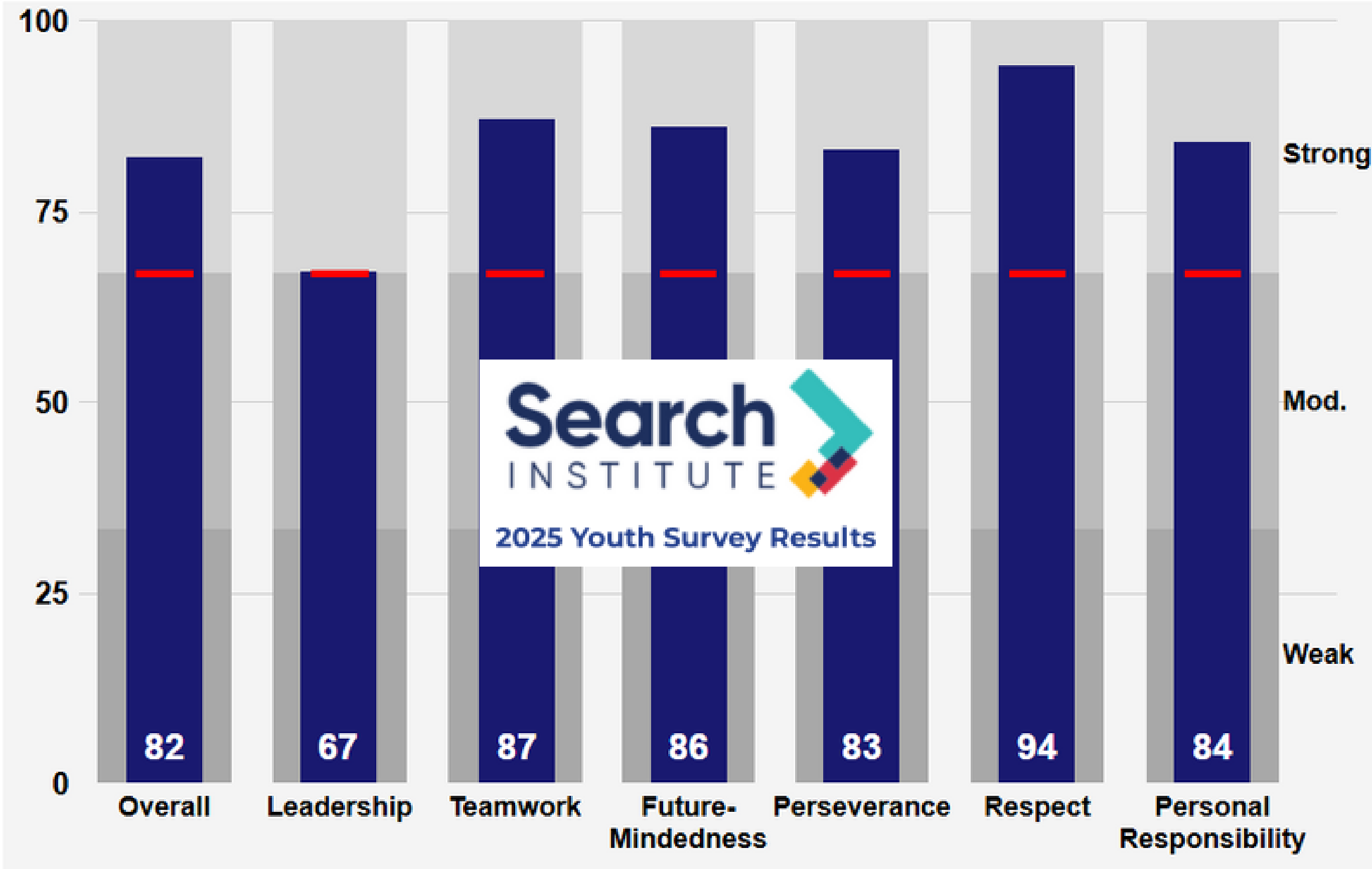
- A **welcoming and respectful community** where every person feels they belong.
- **Personal growth** in cooking, collaboration, and confidence working with others.
- **Meaningful impact**—seeing firsthand how their work supports families in need.
- A sense of **joy and fulfillment**, with many describing Healing Meals as “a fun and supportive space.”



Overall, **91%** of youth had strong experiences of developmental relationships. Conversely, **0%** had weak experiences.



Youth generally reported experiencing **strong** levels of Character Strengths.





SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL IMPACT

Youth Outcomes Aligned with Our Program Goals:

- Over **90%** of youth reported feeling *more confident communicating and collaborating* with others.
- Over **85%** shared that volunteering helped them *develop empathy and compassion* for people in crisis.
- Over **80%** indicated they *take more initiative and feel trusted to lead*.
- Nearly all participants described Healing Meals as a place where they “*feel accepted and valued for who they are.*”

Hi Christina!

I hope you are having a
fabulously fantastic day! I
love volunteering at
Healing Meals, especially on
Tuesdays, because so many
of my HM friends are
there. What's your favorite
day of the week? Anyway,
I hope your food is delicious
and you are enjoying the
chilly weather!

XO XO,

Katherine

DEVELOPMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS IN ACTION

Healing Meals youth describe the kitchen as a place of both **purpose and connection**—where adults model kindness, respect, and leadership, and youth rise to meet that standard.

Youth reflections include:

- “I think Healing Meals is a great place to have fun, learn about food, and be an active participant in our community.”
- “I’ve learned so many skills for life after high school—teamwork, cooking, leadership.”
- “It’s meaningful to see the impact we’re making on people’s lives.”

These reflections mirror the **Search Institute’s five elements** and affirm that Healing Meals’ mentorship model is cultivating **confidence, empathy, and lifelong wellness**.

**What our
Youth say
about
*Community
& Belonging***

“The community is so welcoming and respectful — I love everyone there!”

“Healing Meals is a place like no other. Every time I leave, I have a smile on my face.”

“It’s such a supportive environment. You always walk out feeling better than when you walked in.”

**What our
Youth say
about
*Purpose &
Impact***

“It’s meaningful to see the impact we’re making. You can really feel how much it helps families.”

“Healing Meals is a great place for doing something that truly matters for our community.”

“When I volunteer here, I can actually see the difference we make:
it’s all
hands-on.”



“I’ve learned so much about cooking, teamwork, and communication.”

“Healing Meals taught me skills that will help me for the rest of my life.”

“Every shift, I feel more confident and capable — it’s an amazing learning space.”

**What our
Youth say
about
*Growth
& Skills***

“Such a fun space to be in!”

“I’ve met so many new friends —
it’s a great environment.”

“It’s joyful, meaningful, and
full of kindness.”

What our
Youth say
about
*Joy &
Connection*

**What our
Youth say
about
*Leadership &
Confidence***

“I’ve grown more confident in my leadership and my voice.”

“It’s helped me learn how to take initiative and step up.”

“Being trusted to help others makes me feel proud of myself.”





www.HealingMealsProject.org

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