

# AMADEUSZ ANNUAL REPORT

**2023**

# Quick OVERVIEW

Amadeusz is a charitable organization that has been operating in Toronto since 2009.

**Mission:** Amadeusz supports young people who are incarcerated to create positive change in their lives through access to education, community programs and supports, mentorship and exceptional care.

**Vision:** Amadeusz's vision is to create a future with equitable access to education and community supports.

## **Staff:**

Director of Operations: Joyce Chua

Director of Education: Megan MacDonald

Director of Prosper: Sheena Blake Brown

Education Case Workers: Harsha Momi, Jenny Ma, Nikita Lafleur, Emilia Gorny

Prosper Case Worker: Shaneka Raynor

Prosper Peer Mentor: Abdi Dayr

Research Assistant: Emilia Gorny

## **Board of Directors:**

Chair: Sonya Aslan

Secretary & Policy Development: Annie Ayn

Treasurer: Ayman Barr

Human Resources: Aysha Watson

Outreach & Partnership Development: Ricardo Dawson

# A Message from THE DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS & BOARD CHAIR

We are filled with immense gratitude for the impact and progress we continue to make at Amadeusz. It fills me with complete joy as we reflect on the achievements we made in 2023.

Our commitment to providing equitable access to education remains steadfast. The Amadeusz Education Program supported a total of 280 program participants and an additional 691 individuals, totalling 971 people served. This includes 269 high school courses completed, 1178.33 PLAR credits completed, 73 OSSDs completed, 3 GED exams completed, 21 Mind Sets Programs completed, 85 post-secondary courses completed, and 2 post-secondary programs completed. A heartfelt thank you to Megan Macdonald, our Director of Education, for your dedication, support, and amazing leadership. A huge thank you to our education case workers as well for their commitment to supporting our participants on their educational journeys.

Amadeusz's Prosper also continues to grow and thrive, supporting a total of 63 participants. We extend our gratitude to Sheena Blake Brown, the Director of Prosper, for consistently bringing knowledge, love, and wisdom to the team and our participants. We extend our deepest appreciation to the Prosper team, for supporting our participants in many ways, such as providing access to basic necessities and essential support, making connections to community resources, and being a supportive, caring system for our participants.

In 2023, we were honoured to receive the Toronto Community Champion Award,

celebrating our dedication to community service at the Toronto Reference Library. We were further acknowledged by the Etobicoke York Community Council. Amadeusz was also privileged to be part of the first-ever Catapult Gathering hosted by the Rideau Hall Foundation in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This incredible event allowed us to connect with other like-minded organizations from across Canada that are doing similar work in the education field. Additionally, Amadeusz also had the opportunity to speak at a Lunch & Learn event, "Transforming Trajectories – Empowering Black Youth Impacted by the Cycle of the Criminal Justice System", hosted by the Youth Justice Transformation Lab. The conversation was held virtually and in-person at the Ontario Court of Justice, where one of our participants in custody co-facilitated the event with us.

Furthermore, Amadeusz published a research article in the Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, Volume 23, Issue 1, titled "Experiences of Learners Who Are Incarcerated With Accessing Educational Opportunities in Ontario, Canada" by Dr. Ardavan Eizadirad and Tina-Nadia Gopal Chambers.

A special acknowledgment goes to our Board of Directors for their strategic leadership and to Grace Kosir, our Director of Finance, whose careful stewardship has been instrumental in ensuring our financial growth and accountability.

Looking ahead, we remain enthusiastic and committed to providing love, support, and exceptional care to those we serve.

Joyce Chua  
Director of Operations

Ayman Barr  
Board Chair

# PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Amadeusz offers a variety of programs and supports with a focus on education, community support, research and case management.

## Education Program

The Amadeusz education program supports young people aged 18 to 35 in working towards their educational goals. The goal of this program is to provide young people who are incarcerated with the opportunity, resources, and support to complete their high school education, and to explore, prepare for, and attend post-secondary schooling.

### Education Program Pathways

#### ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL DIPLOMA COMPLETION

The OSSD programming stream provides participants access to high school credit courses through our various partnerships. Participants are given access to PLAR assessments and print-based high school credit courses that help them work towards obtaining their OSSD.

Location: Toronto South Detention Centre, Toronto East Detention Centre.

#### HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY COMPLETION

The GED programming stream provides support in working through GED-specific content in order to prepare participants to write the GED exam and obtain their high school equivalency certificate. Amadeusz, in partnership with the Independent Learning Centre, runs GED examination sessions multiple times a year at each institution.

Location: Toronto South Detention Centre, Toronto East Detention Centre, Vanier Centre for Women.

#### POST-SECONDARY PROGRAM

The post-secondary programming stream facilitates access to post-secondary college and university courses through our various partnerships with post-secondary institutions. This allows participants the opportunity to work towards post-secondary certificates through access to print-based courses, or complete courses that can be transferred to their preexisting post-secondary education.

Location: Toronto South Detention Centre, Toronto East Detention Centre.

# PROGRAMS & SERVICES

## Prosper

Using intensive case management, case workers work with young people aged 18 to 29 with firearm-related charges to create and execute an individualized plan of support based on their needs and goals. Case workers work with young people throughout incarceration and coordinate existing systems to support their transition to the community. The goal of this is to reduce the young person's involvement in future violence and crime.

Location: Prosper case workers facilitate continued support through transfers to varying institutions. Case workers also continue to provide support after a participant's release into the community.

## Research

Amadeusz engages in research initiatives that are closely aligned with our mission and vision. You can explore our research publications by visiting our website at [www.amadeusz.ca/research/](http://www.amadeusz.ca/research/).

# 2023 STATISTICS

## Education Program

338	269	1178.33	280
High School Courses Registered	High School Courses Completed	PLAR Credits Completed	Total Participants
73	3	21	691
OSSDs Completed	GED Exams Completed	Mind Sets Program Completed	Total Additional People Served
83	85	2	971
Post-Secondary Courses Registered	Post-Secondary Courses Completed	Post-Secondary Program Completed	Total Serviced

## Prosper

**100%** of participants received emotional support

**100%** of participants needing support with family received phone calls, check-ins and warm referrals

**100%** of participants needing support with purchasing food have been provided food gift cards (including family members)

**13** participants received support with finding meaningful work

**6** participants received support with obtaining their identifications

**11** participants received support with technology (i.e., computer or phone)

**16** participants received support for court (support letters and case worker's presence at court)

**1** participant in custody has completed all his taxes from 2015 to 2022

**1** participant in community completed all his taxes from 2018 to 2022

**1** participant in custody graduated from high school

**2** participants are attending college full-time

**9** participants are working on college courses (2 of whom are incarcerated)

**1** participant in custody received work for 10 hours a week at the rate of \$25 per hour

**1** participant in custody got paid to facilitate a workshop about how the current justice system affects young, Black individuals

**5** participants have been released and are living well in community

2023  
HIGHLIGHTS

### Toronto Community Champion Award

Amadeusz was one of the recipients of the Toronto Community Champion Award. The award ceremony took place on March 20th, 2023, at the Bram & Bluma Appel Salon in the Toronto Reference Library. Amadeusz was further acknowledged by the Etobicoke York Community Council and the Etobicoke Guardian newspaper.

[Read the full article here.](#)



### Catapult Gathering

Amadeusz was honoured to be a part of the first-ever Catapult Gathering hosted by the Rideau Hall Foundation, which took place in Winnipeg, Manitoba between November 7th to November 9th, 2023. A special thank you to Ikem Opara, Leandre Naweji, and all members of the Catapult Canada community for hosting this gathering!

### Lunch & Learn

On December 12th, 2023, Amadeusz spoke at a Lunch & Learn event, "Transforming Trajectories – Empowering Black Youth Impacted by the Cycle of the Criminal Justice System", hosted by the Youth Justice Transformation Lab. The event was held both virtually and in-person at the Ontario Court of Justice, where one of our participants in custody co-facilitated the event with us. The session was accredited by the Law Society of Ontario for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) professionalism hours.

[Watch the full event here.](#)



# 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

## Graduation Ceremonies

In 2023, Amadeusz celebrated the graduation of 56 program participants in four (4) in-person ceremonies at the Toronto South Detention Centre (TSDC) and Toronto East Detention Centre (TEDC). Among them, 52 graduates achieved their Ontario Secondary School Diplomas (OSSD), and four (4) completed the Addictions Work: Professional Practice Skills certificate program through Centennial College. The ceremonies included speeches, cap-and-gown photos, special meals, personalized cards, and more.

A special thanks to Katie Bakes (Instagram: [@KatieBakesTO](https://www.instagram.com/KatieBakesTO)) for donating cookies for all the graduates!

## Amadeusz Scholarship

The Amadeusz Scholarship is designed to offer support to individuals in the community, who have been released from incarceration and are working towards reaching their post-secondary education goals.

In 2023, Amadeusz awarded a total of \$20,000 in scholarship funds to seven young people. Thank you, Catapult, for funding this initiative!

Visit [www.amadeusz.ca/scholarship](http://www.amadeusz.ca/scholarship) for the full scholarship report.

## Urban Hero Award

Sheena Blake Brown, Director of Prosper, received the Urban Hero Award.

[Read the full article here.](#)

## Published Article

In 2023, Amadeusz published “Experiences of Learners Who Are Incarcerated With Accessing Educational Opportunities in Ontario, Canada (2023)” in the Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice (Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 31-45).

Visit [www.amadeusz.ca/research/](http://www.amadeusz.ca/research/) to read all of our past publications.





# 2023 AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

## AMADEUSZ Statement of Financial Position

As at December 31	2023	2022
	\$	\$
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	486,767	352,030
Accounts receivable (Note 3)	8,725	7,911
Prepaid expenses	4,981	3,232
	<u>500,473</u>	<u>363,173</u>
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>		
<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities (Note 4)	39,384	32,527
Deferred contributions (Note 5)	315,391	189,896
	<u>354,775</u>	<u>222,423</u>
<b>Net assets</b>		
General fund - unrestricted	-	-
Reserve fund - internally restricted	145,698	140,750
	<u>145,698</u>	<u>140,750</u>
	<u>500,473</u>	<u>363,173</u>

See accompanying notes

Approved on behalf of the board:

 Director

 Director

# 2023 AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

## AMADEUSZ

### Statement of Revenue and Expenditures

For the year ended December 31	2023	2022
	\$	\$
<b>Revenue</b>		
Municipal	297,203	322,104
Provincial	18,432	10,073
United Way	139,180	50,000
Foundations	272,371	236,668
Corporations and banks	102,124	86,066
Donation and fundraising	6,623	105,961
Other agencies	-	20,525
Membership fees	20	10
	<u>835,953</u>	<u>831,407</u>
<b>Expenditures</b>		
Salaries and benefits	553,865	502,792
Program related expenses	195,232	221,384
Professional fees	36,243	35,632
Office and general	25,413	33,487
Rent	12,700	13,720
Insurance	5,579	2,628
Telephone	1,781	2,997
Advertising and promotion	126	1,663
Fundraising expenses	-	525
Bank charges	66	70
	<u>831,005</u>	<u>814,898</u>
<b>Excess of revenue over expenditures</b>	<b>4,948</b>	<b>16,509</b>

See accompanying notes

"I was always down on myself and believed I couldn't do things but I have since been much more confident and capable of doing anything I set my mind on."

Education Program Participant

"I can truly say that because of the consistent support from Sheena and others at Amadeusz, since my release in February 2022, I have found a job and housing... I must say that I believe that Prosper support helped my transition back into society after 6 years of being inside."

Prosper Participant

"There was a time that I was about to quit my participation in the program, but the Amadeusz teachers gave me a little push to accomplish my program which I did thanks to them, and I felt very proud of myself for that. Experiencing that gave me more confidence in myself."

Education Program Participant

"The Prosper and Amadeusz programs have been a major support system through the entire time my partner was incarcerated and also when he was released. Because of Amadeusz's constant support, he was able to finish his GED and even enrol and complete a number of college courses. Amadeusz has been our backbone through incarceration and during his transition back to everyday life. The support we receive has helped us in so many ways, from mental health support to financial support to just having a community of people to lean on during some very difficult times. Without Amadeusz I'm not sure where we would be on our journey. I'm so thankful for everyone there and the major roles they play as individuals. They have made some of the hardest times feel lighter and have given us the courage and motivation to keep going. Our situation is often ignored or looked down on by society but everyone at Amadeusz has been such a backbone and has helped us in ways I didn't think was possible. Thank you for being our light at the end of the tunnel!"

Prosper Participant's Significant Other

"This program has increased my self-esteem, taught me strong core values, and given me the tools that are instrumental in turning my life around and given me a new outlook on life as well."

Education Program Participant

"Whether highschool or post-secondary, Amadeusz has team members who will guide you toward your goals. They are compassionate and will help you succeed."

Education Program Participant

# Our IMPACT

"It has been amazing and helpful to work with Sheena from Amadeusz. Her consistent support from inside the prison walls to the outside has been solid as a rock and has helped me cope with the challenges of re-integrating back into society and continue to pursue my goals that she also helped me set while I was incarcerated. Sheena's helping hand and resources has helped me find structure in my life."

Prosper Participant

"Amadeusz has an amazing support team really good staff, and actually takes the time to work with you from the start to end and they never give up on you."

Education Program Participant



"I'm forever grateful for the compassion and the support that I and my family have received for my brother. You have gone above and beyond helping him achieve his goals and accomplishments. When I got the news that he graduated I was filled with joy. This has all been a positive and inspiring experience. I'm thankful for your caring heart and productive work ethic. Working with you also feels like being part of a new family. You are truly making a positive difference in his life and helping families. This is the support we've always needed."

Prosper Participant's Family Member



# OUR IMPACT

Written by an Education Program Participant

## A SHORT STORY~

Title: A Different Kind of Heroes

In this story I'm gonna talk about a hero, and not your regular Hollywood cinematic hero with the cape and spandex underwear.

This hero is also not an individual hero, it's a group of heroes, a team who goes around on a daily basis, or weekly basis to check in on the lives of the troubled. Troubled men who need a little bit of motivation and kindness to get to where they long to be in life.

These heroes aren't men either, with strong muscles and washboard-abs. Maybe ones to save cats from trees but not fighting super villains. But, they be a group of crime fighting females who have goals to change the world they live in little by little, step by step, day by day or week by week. These heroes go by the name of Amadeusz. A group of 5 or more travelling the city to spread education to those who need it and want it, helping and encouraging many who lost or never had the opportunity to finish high school or even enroll in college courses. But there's pressure on them, they're like Santa Claus trying to deliver as many gifts to the whole world in just a single night. Nobody's perfect but they sure aspire to be, never hesitating to hand a pencil or eraser to those without. They remind me of school councillors who sit and listen to your daily rant when you have nobody else worth talking to. They send letters of progress to lawyers and always make sure they let you know your doing great work and to keep it up.

The best part about this team of heroes, is no matter what they may be going through on days they don't get to see you, on the days they do see you they always have a big smile and are always ready to get right to the hard work. I look at these women like heroes because they do the difficult work that makes huge changes in people's crazy lives. They show you that not only do they help get your crazy life back on the right track, but they care about the process it takes and not just the outcome of all the work that has to be done in order to achieve greatness. Thanks to all the great teachers out there.

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# OUR IMPACT

Written by Program Participants

A letter to the old me would be don't let other people or classes define who you are. Even if I was an attempt to set you up for success, don't think that people are out there to catch you. Just how I have failed my Grade 11 chemistry class, don't let others determine why you got to be less of them. If you put your mind to it you can achieve anything you want in life. You are the person that lives your life.

The main reason what lead myself to partake in pursuing the college diploma course while incarcerated is because to engage in higher further education to benefit me to reintegrate back to society once released. In addition to taking this course I hope to help others that are in the same position as me. Having an outlet to be apart of the education system brings me hope that one day I will be able to manage a career that would help supply this growing economy.

I got this card for you to say thank you and let you know how much I appreciate you and everything you have done for me. You have made it a great process for me getting my education and overall made my time in jail much better. I have enjoyed and looked forward to seeing you every week. When I leave I will miss you dearly and I will try my best to keep in contact.



# CHRISTOPHER COWIE

*Education Program Participant*



My name is Christopher Cowie and I am 25 years old. I have always had an interest in learning, gaining knowledge, and expanding my horizons. I had dreams of becoming a lawyer since elementary school. I graduated high school with an 85%+ average and enrolled at York University in September of 2017 in a Bachelor of Arts Political Science Program. I maintained good grades while at York, and was scheduled to complete my degree in December 2021. However, my life took a sudden and drastic turn in fall of 2021.

In September of 2021, I was arrested and held at the Toronto South Detention Centre (TSDC) facing serious charges. For the first year of my journey while incarcerated, I was denied bail twice and a plea deal that would have seen me released sometime in 2022 also collapsed. However, it was around summer of 2022 when I found a new purpose, motivation and drive through education while incarcerated. In July of 2022, representatives from the Amadeusz program attended our unit in the Toronto South Detention Centre. I was informed that as someone who had already graduated high school, there was an opportunity to explore post-secondary educational opportunities through Amadeusz.

I was extremely interested and the Amadeusz team was polite, helpful, forthcoming and resourceful. I registered in the Addictions Counselling program through Amadeusz with an intended start date of October 2022 for the certificate program. Unfortunately, the initial start date was delayed due to a lack of student enrollment. Nonetheless, I began my studies with Amadeusz's addictions counselling program a couple of months later in January 2023. With no internet to guide me, no ChatGPT to write up my reports and essays, and a lack of consistent quiet time to stay focused, I persevered. With the help of Amadeusz staff, especially Harsha who was handling my program work, I hunkered down and got to work. I finished all of my courses by March 2024, just over a year after starting the certificate program. I was finally released from the Toronto East Detention Centre in July 2024, and received my certificate in person at the Amadeusz office several weeks ago.

As a graduate of the Amadeusz program, having received a college certificate for addictions counselling, I can confirm that Amadeusz provides a life-changing opportunity. At my darkest hours while recently incarcerated in the Toronto jail system, Amadeusz gave me a renewed sense of purpose. Acquiring a college certificate while incarcerated was a very challenging, engaging, and inspiring experience that helped keep me productive. The staff were excellent, especially the staff at the Toronto South Detention and East Detention. Amadeusz provides excellent opportunities for the community, and staff serve their purpose with professionalism and dedication.

With my new certificate, and also having been automatically graduated from York U with a three year equivalent Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science, I have many opportunities ahead of me. Despite having to navigate a criminal record, I remain positive, hopeful, and optimistic looking to the future. I would love to start a career in the field of social work, addictions work, or maybe even a job drafting policies for both areas! I cannot thank Amadeusz and their excellent staff for all the guidance and help they've provided along the way. Thank you Amadeusz for helping me see a light in the darkness!



# WARREN ABBEY

*Prosper Participant*

First of all, I am genuinely honored to be one of the participants asked to share their experiences with Amadeusz, a truly inspiring organization that's making a powerful difference in the lives of so many people. Amadeusz is built on a simple but profound belief: that no one is defined solely by their past mistakes and that each person has the potential for growth, for change, and for a brighter future. And education is the bridge to that future.

I first became a participant while incarcerated. They helped me in facilitating a way to get back on track with my education and helped me to successfully complete a college course which was a bridge for bigger and brighter things.

Since my release, their help didn't stop. They continued to offer support in so many ways that I'd take up too much of your time enumerating.

Yet, one of the most valuable things Amadeusz offers is genuine care. Their support isn't about checking boxes or fulfilling quotas like some organizations and societies; it's about real relationships and the belief that each person they work with has a future worth fighting for. In a world that often judges, dismisses, or stigmatizes those who have been incarcerated, Amadeusz stands out as a source of compassion, empowerment, and, above all, acceptance.



I share my story because it's not unique. There are countless individuals just like me who have been transformed by this organization and by people like Sheena and those at project Prosper. This is why Amadeusz exists: to empower, to support, and to provide second chances. They're not just providing education; they're restoring hope.

I am super grateful for the support Amadeusz has provided. Without them I'm not sure where I'd be.

# CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

Amadeusz extends its sincere gratitude to our 2023 funders for their generous support, which has been instrumental in advancing our mission. We also deeply appreciate our donors, partners, and advocates, whose belief in our programs and services enables us to continue making a meaningful impact. Most importantly, we thank the individuals we serve — our participants — who remain the heart and driving force behind all that we do.

