

About Southern Smoke

OUR MISSION

We raise funds for charitable purposes, principally for support and assistance for those in the food and beverage community and their suppliers.

OUR VALUES

Respect

We embrace inclusivity and diversity operationally and in stewardship. We treat all people with dignity and offer assistance without judgment. We conduct our business professionally and transparently.

Impact

We seek to help with conviction and boldness. We believe in the importance of a safety net that stretches across the country. We operate with a minimal overhead to maximize the amount of aid that we can provide.

Collaboration

We celebrate partners who cherish high-level work for the most good. We foster a culture of teamwork where everyone has an equal voice. We encourage new ideas from both within and outside our organization.

Passion

We are driven daily to help food and beverage workers in crisis nationwide. We love the food and beverage industry and believe its ultimate success is in the health and happiness of its workers. We think critically about the mental health of individuals, hoping to create a new standard for free care.

2021 In Review

TOTAL FUNDS DISTRIBUTED IN 2021

\$3,604,331

\$1.3 MILLION

Distributed from our Emergency Relief Fund to individuals in the food and beverage industry nationwide.

\$1.8 MILLION

Distributed from our Chicago Restaurant Workers Relief Fund to individuals in the food and beverage industry in Chicago.

NATURAL DISASTERS

\$160,967 Distributed
112 Cases awarded

HURRICANE IDA

\$112,417 Distributed
89 Cases awarded

TEXAS WINTER STORM

\$48,550 Distributed
23 Cases awarded

Major Media Spotlights & Milestones

GOOD MORNING AMERICA

Our founder Chris Shepherd was featured on Good Morning America, discussing a collaboration with Shake Shack benefitting Southern Smoke.

ROBB REPORT BEST OF THE BEST

In June, luxury magazine Robb Report named us one of the Best of the Best for 2021.

GUIDESTAR

We are now certified gold on GuideStar and solidifying our status on Charity Navigator.

TASTE OF THE SOUTH

Taste of the South named us one of the Taste 50 for 2021, among those born in the South and in the food and beverage industry inspiring and thriving.

OPEN TABLE

Our Executive Director Kathryn Lott spoke with OpenTable about how the pandemic has affected the mental health of restaurant workers nationwide.

Programs & Initiatives

MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

Since beginning our partnership with Mental Health America of Houston, the University of Houston, and Memorial Hermann Behavioral Health Services, to provide free mental healthcare to food and beverage workers and their children, we have helped more than 90 people get assistance. We're broadening the program and pledge, by partnering with other institutes of higher education, to be in all 50 states within five years.

STEP

We partnered with The Roots Fund to grant annual scholarship funding to support individuals of the BIPOC community seeking high-quality education in all aspects of wine. So far, STEP (Study, Taste, Educate, Prosper) has benefitted more than 80 students nationwide.

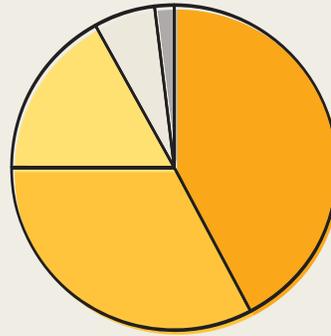
FRESH

We worked with The Hay Center in Houston to launch FRESH - Furthering Readiness and Empowering Students through Hospitality. For this program, culinary notables Willet Feng, of Burger Chan; Keisha Griggs, of ATE Kitchen; Terry Pepper, of Shake Shack; and Erin Smith, of Feges BBQ; spoke with current and former foster youth about life skills while putting on a yummy cooking demonstration. Over 50 youth, ages 14-16, participated in the program.

By the Numbers

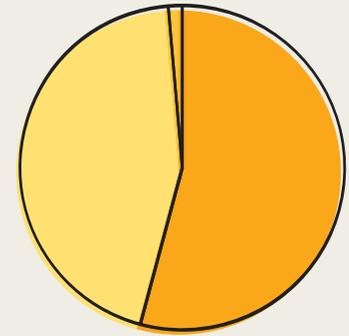
Southern Smoke serves a diverse population of Americans because our food and beverage industry is incredibly diverse.

By gender, our awardees are majority male. By race, black and latinx individuals comprise more than half of our total awardees. And consider the impact of COVID-19: More than half of our awardees were unemployed at the time they applied for crisis relief. Nationwide, the food and beverage industry is still feeling an enormous weight. Our job continues, more vital than ever.



RACE

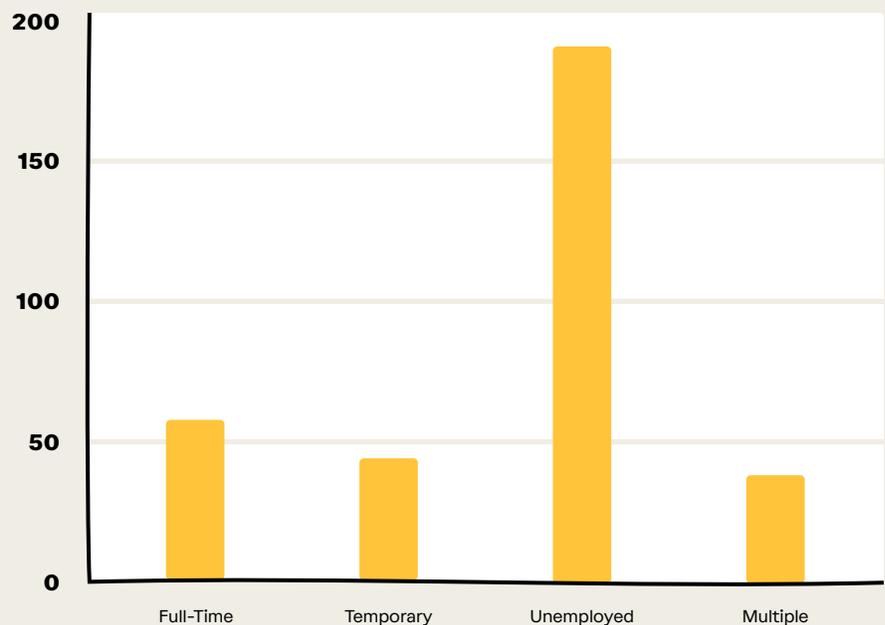
- Latinx: 41.3%
- White: 32%
- Black: 16.3%
- Other: 6%
- Native american: 1.8%



GENDER

- Male: 54.2%
- Female: 44.6%
- Non-Binary: 1.2%

Employment Status



Testimonials

Southern Smoke
2021 Year End Report

“Thank you from my heart and soul for the awarded grant. May God bless you and your family as well as all the wonderful members of your committee that made this grant possible. Rest assured every single dollar is going directly to the hotel. Lots of love and new year to all. P.S I start working tomorrow at a Greek restaurant as a cook. God is Amazing..”

SERVER, CHICAGO, IL

“My children and I lost almost everything in the storm. It was beyond devastating. Our house is only a shell of what it once was. We were so grateful to hear what Southern Smoke was doing for the people of Houston. We are blown away by the generosity of this organization. We can't wait to get floors and furniture for our home and replace some of my children's things.”

BARTENDER, HOUSTON, TX

“I cannot express in words how grateful I am for this assistance. I hope to someday build an empire large enough that I can have a very similar foundation in memory of my daughter. She truly was a blessing in this world and to my life. Thank you seems like a weak response for your generosity.”

**RESTAURANT MANAGER,
SHERIDAN, WY**

“I wanted to thank you for all the help and emotional support you gave me. I'm thankful that you took on my case. I hope you are doing well and praying for you and your loved ones. Stay blessed.”

SERVER, CHICAGO, IL

“I just wanted to thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for everything that you did for me regarding the grant. It has not been lost on me how much time and effort it must take and how many documents you must be dealing with on a daily basis. But because of your attention to detail...because of you - I can now pay my rent!!!! I cannot tell you the relief that that brings or how much I appreciate it. There truly are no words. Thank you for making a difference in my life and in the world with the work that you do.”

SERVER, NYC, NY

“First, great news that I'm now housed. Second, which helped get me to the first, is that I'm officially in a salaried role at my job. More though, I want you all to know that what you did for me was truly life-saving on both a literal and psychological level. After years struggling to find any kind of institutional validation or meaningful support, it was really huge to have a group see where I've been, what I've been through, and the fact that I kept trying and also have that translate in to meaningful support. Truly. I can't overstate it.”

SERVER, CHICAGO, IL

No Crisis is Too Big

Early this year, we received an application on behalf of Jeff, a food and beverage worker in Chicago who had suffered tremendous brain injury and whose options for care had greatly diminished. But thanks to his persistent and loving sister and her fast thinking, Jeff's future is far brighter than anyone could have imagined at the time.

When a member of the American food and beverage industry is in crisis, we respond. It doesn't matter how big the request. It doesn't matter how quickly we must help. We respond.

Jeff's story begins in late 2020, when he began to experience complications from viral HSV encephalitis. Because of COVID-19 concerns he chose to avoid the emergency room, and his diagnosis was delayed. Though the virus left, his immune system started to attack his brain. This relapse of autoimmune encephalitis brought temporal lobe damage and a number of effects, including memory loss and the inability to recognize faces.

Jeff's deterioration was swift. Physicians exhausted treatments before suggesting that he be transferred to a nursing home and made comfortable. With few options left, his sister stepped in to find any salvation. She began researching brain injury facilities and, with COVID-19 still raging and restrictions still in place, the best option was in Colorado. But before she could get him there, she needed to transfer him to another medical facility, as his current hospital was attempting to move his guardianship to a third party. In fact, she received notice of this attempt at 4:30 p.m. on a Friday and had the hearing over his guardianship the following Monday.

Even without a lawyer and on short notice, she was able to avoid the third-party guardianship and relocate Jeff to the temporary facility. All the while, she worked to assume guardianship herself and get Jeff to the brain injury facility in Colorado. Time ticked as Jeff's condition worsened. Jeff was accepted for the Colorado brain injury facility, but his sister and family didn't have the \$16,000 to pay for two months of care, \$7,600 to pay for bed-to-bed transport, and \$5,000 to pay for specialist costs before Medicaid would be able to cover daily therapies. That's when she reached out to Southern Smoke to help with the cost of care.

The case was immediately coded as urgent, meaning we dropped everything to determine just how we could help. After our independent committee voted in favor of assisting Jeff, we sent \$42,900 to ensure he received life-saving treatment as soon as possible. We helped with two months of care, the transport of his bed from Illinois to Colorado, and medication and specialist fees before Medicaid.

Jeff is on the road to recovery. In fact, there's hope that he can one day be self-sufficient. His request was larger than most that we receive, and his need was more immediate than most that we receive, but that was no issue. When a member of the American food and beverage industry is in crisis, we simply respond. We take care of our own.