

**SOUTHERN  
SMOKE  
FOUNDATION**



# Service Beyond the Kitchen

**2024 YEAR-END REPORT**

*January 2025*

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Thank You

# A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we reflect on 2024, it is with immense pride and gratitude that I share the remarkable strides Southern Smoke Foundation has made this year. Together, we have strengthened our commitment to the food and beverage community, providing critical support and resources when they were needed most.

This year, we granted an astounding \$2.7 million directly to food and beverage workers in crisis. These funds provided relief to those impacted by natural disasters such as Hurricanes Helene, Milton, and Beryl, the derecho storm in Houston, the Ruidoso fires, and the Maui fires. Beyond these emergencies, we supported individuals facing medical challenges, domestic violence situations, eviction threats, and more. Each grant represents a life touched, a burden eased, and a future made a little brighter.

We also expanded our Behind You mental health program to five additional states and Washington, D.C., bringing our total coverage to 10 states and the District. This growth reflects our ongoing commitment to prioritizing mental health and ensuring more individuals have access to the support they need.

Last spring, we proudly acquired Pay It Forward, a Charleston-based nonprofit that provided crisis relief microgrants for the food and beverage industry. Since the acquisition, we have retained a case manager based in Charleston, and South Carolina has become one of our top-funded states. We remain committed to serving this community and making the people involved in Pay It Forward—staff, supporters and previous recipients—proud.

2024 marked the debut of Southern Smoke Decanted, an extraordinary event featuring more than 50 winemakers participating in a vintner's tasting and live auction. Thanks to your generosity, we raised an incredible \$700,000 in our first year. Additionally, the Southern Smoke Festival at Discovery Green brought together 70 chefs, wine bars, beverage professionals, live music, and our first-ever demo stage, raising \$1.5 million to further our mission.

Your unwavering support helped us raise more than \$5 million this year—a testament to the power of our community. We took Southern Smoke on the road with fundraisers and industry roundtables in Austin, Napa, Chicago, and Houston.

In New Orleans, we hosted our inaugural symposium, gathering incredible industry leaders to share insights with a packed audience. We also launched the Southern Smoke Bottle Club, bringing allocated bottles to a like-minded community of supporters.

None of this would have been possible without the dedication of our staff, partners, board members, and industry advocates. Your passion and commitment fuel our mission and inspire us to reach new heights. As we look ahead to 2025, we are excited to build on this momentum. We will continue strengthening our partnerships, executing successful events, and providing even greater support to the industry we love. Together, we can create a future where no food and beverage worker faces crisis alone.

Thank you for being an essential part of the Southern Smoke family. Your support changes lives, and we are deeply grateful.

With heartfelt thanks,



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'LB'.

**LINDSEY BROWN**  
*Executive Director*



# OUR MISSION

Southern Smoke Foundation supports members of the food and beverage industry nationwide through emergency relief funding and access to mental health services.



## Emergency Relief Fund: Helping workers in crisis

The Emergency Relief Fund distributes money to F+B workers in crisis nationwide during and after natural disasters, accidents, medical emergencies, loss of wages, mental health crises, and other unforeseen events.

# \$14,029,054

**FUNDS DISTRIBUTED SINCE 2017**

# \$2.7 MILLION

**FUNDS DISTRIBUTED IN 2024**



## Behind You: A no-cost mental health initiative for F+B workers

Through our university affiliate program, we grant our partner universities funds that allow for supervised graduate-level clinicians to offer no-cost counseling services to members of our industry in California, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington D.C. Those who live outside of service states are encouraged to apply for financial assistance for mental health services through the Emergency Relief Fund.

# 6,400+

**SESSIONS PROVIDED SINCE 2020**

# 2,100+

**SESSIONS PROVIDED IN 2024**

# EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND



# 2024 OVERVIEW

## \$2.7M \*

Total funds distributed in 2024  
\*Includes both Emergency Relief and Disaster Relief

## \$2,695

Average Grant Amount

## 1,956

Individuals Granted

### MOST COMMON NEEDS

Groceries | Utilities | Mortgage/Rent  
Car Payments | Medical Expenses

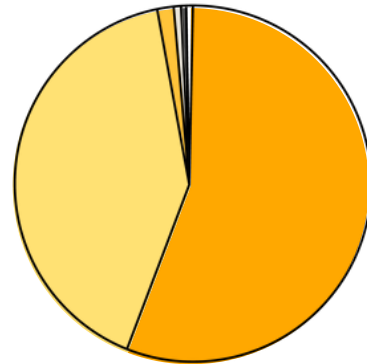
### TOP REPORTED CRISES

Natural Disaster | Medical Diagnosis  
Change of Circumstance | Accident  
Temporary and Permanent Closures

### TOP FUNDED POSITIONS

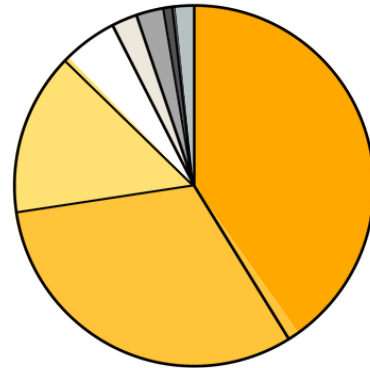
Server | Cook | Bartender  
Manager | Chef

### GENDER BREAKDOWN



- Female: 55.76%
- Male: 41.3%
- Non-Binary: 1.5%
- Prefer not to answer: 0.67%
- Trans Man: 0.44%
- Trans Woman: 0.33%

### RACE BREAKDOWN

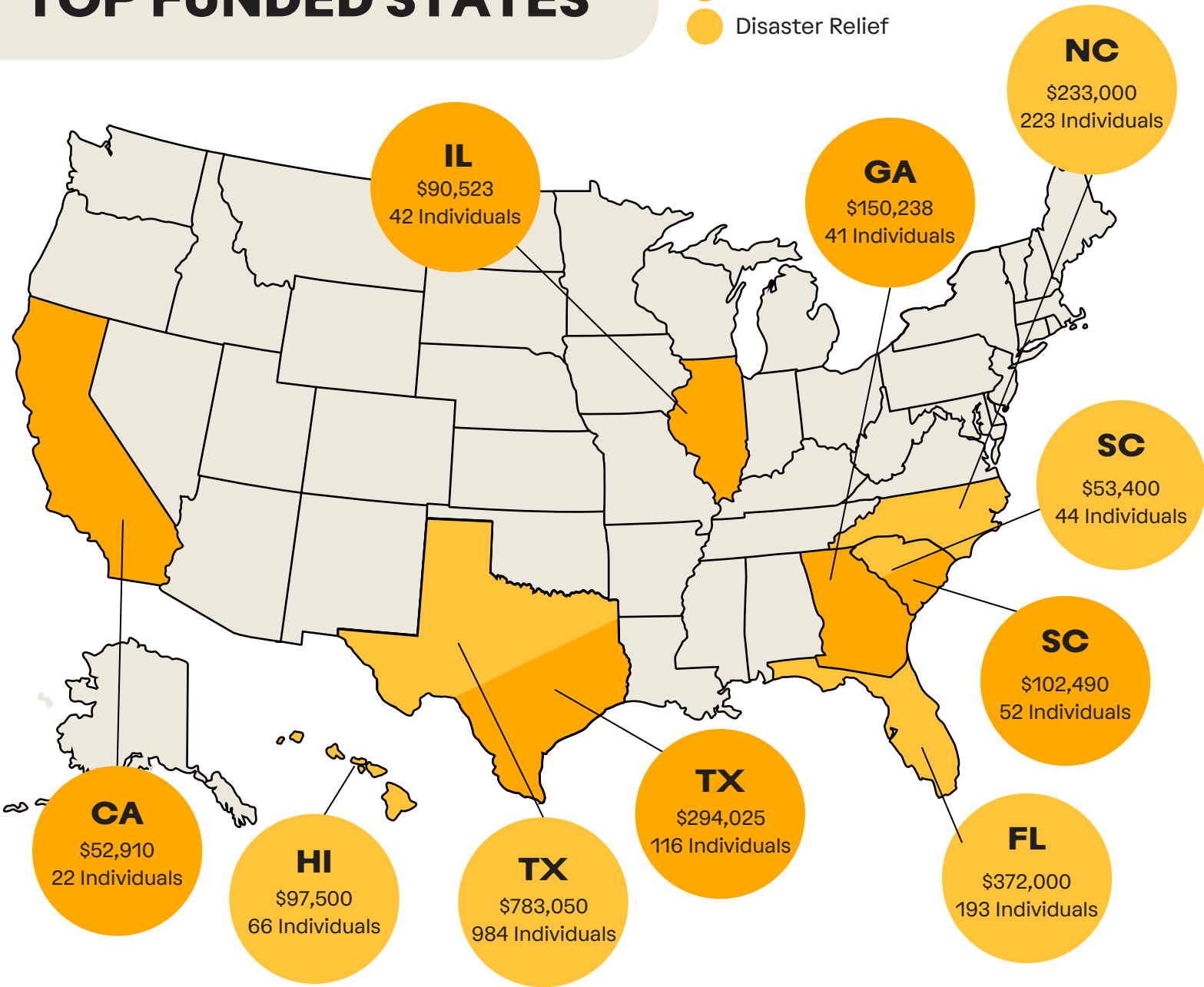


- White: 40.57%
- Hispanic/Latino: 32.87%
- Black/African American: 15.12%
- Asian: 4.74%
- Other: 2.51%
- Prefer not to answer: 2.46%
- Pacific Islander: 1.6%
- American Indian/Native American: 1.12%



# TOP FUNDED STATES

- Emergency Relief Fund
- Disaster Relief



“I just want to thank you guys so much. My God is awesome. Thank you so much. You have been nothing but a blessing to me and I really appreciate you/ You just don’t understand how your kind words and just a listening ear have helped me so much.

**FAST FOOD CREW MEMBER & TRAINER, TX**



“I just received the funds in my bank account and want to express my deepest gratitude for the help. Your support has been invaluable, and I am incredibly grateful for everything you’ve done. Your willingness to lend a hand and go above and beyond has made a significant impact on my life, and I will never forget the kindness. Thank you so much for your time and effort. Mahalo nui loa.”

## **COOK, HI**



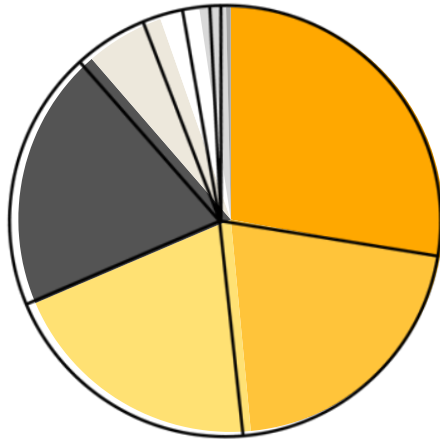
# 2024 NATURAL DISASTER RELIEF



This year, we responded to an unprecedented number of natural disasters—Hurricanes Helene and Milton, Hurricane Beryl and the Houston derecho storm, fires in Ruidoso, NM, and the continued effects of the fires in Maui.

**IN 2024, SOUTHERN SMOKE FOUNDATION GRANTED \$1.7 MILLION+ TO FOOD AND BEVERAGE WORKERS IN CRISIS DUE TO NATURAL DISASTER, A 447% INCREASE FROM 2023.**

## DISASTERS FUNDED



- Hurricane Beryl: 27.79%
- Hurricane Helene: 20.74%
- Hurricanes Helene + Milton: 20.52%
- Houston derecho: 20.02%
- Maui Fires: 5.96%
- Ruidoso Fires: 3.02%
- Other: 1.6%
- Hurricane Milton: 0.35%



# BEHIND YOU

No-Cost Mental  
Health Services  
for F+B Workers



# 2024 OVERVIEW

## 2,100 +

No-cost counseling sessions provided in 2024

## 12

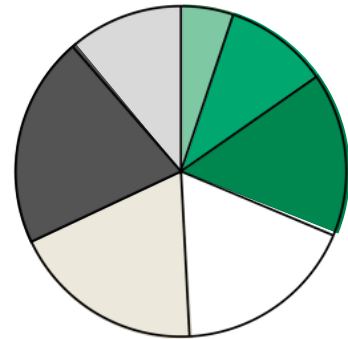
Participants' average number of years in the industry

### TOP CHALLENGES

- Complex post-traumatic stress disorder
- Anxiety and depression
- Work-related burnout
- After-work substance misuse
- Relationship issues

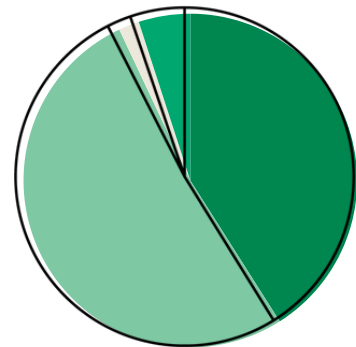


### TOP POSITIONS



- Bartender: 21%
- Manager/Supervisor: 19%
- Server: 18%
- Chef: 16%
- Other: 11%
- Cook: 10%
- Owner: 5%

### GENDER BREAKDOWN

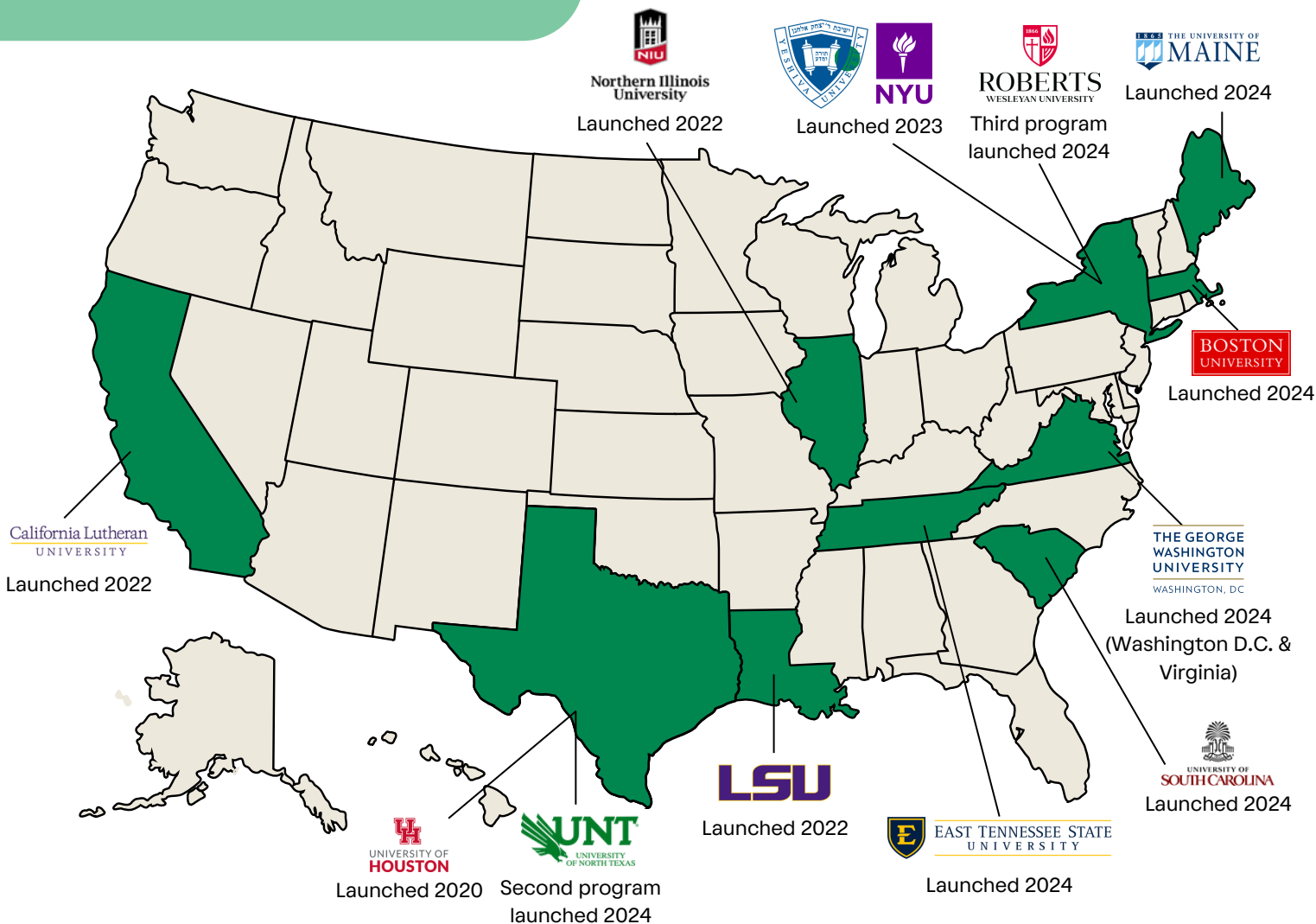


- Female: 52%
- Male: 41%
- Non-Binary: 5%
- Prefer not to answer: 2%

### HIGHLIGHTS

In 2024, SSF launched programs in five new states, Washington, D.C., + expanded in Texas and New York. We also developed the new state-by-state coalition program piloted in North Carolina, launching nationwide in 2025.

# SERVICE STATES



# PROGRAM VALUE

**Accessibility:** Our Behind You program provides access to quality mental health services and prioritizes mental health for individuals who do not typically have the opportunity to put themselves first.

**25%** of our 2024 clients had never accessed counseling before.

**26%** had not returned to counseling in over five years due to barriers like cost, clinician availability, and time constraints.

**Goal Attainment:** Since July 2023, when sessions were capped at 20 sessions or six months of counseling, 108 clients have successfully completed the Behind You program. This number includes clients who attended all 20 sessions and those who reached their therapy goals before completing the full 20 sessions, as agreed upon by both the clients and their clinicians.

# WHY IT WORKS

The Behind You program works and is sustainable for the following reasons:

**Scalability:** Designed to be easily implemented across various states and university partnerships with minimal adjustments, allowing for widespread adoption.

**Streamlined Process:** A turn-key approach simplifies the management and delivery of services, ensuring efficiency and ease of access for clients while providing consistency of care from state to state.

**Structured Support:** Southern Smoke Foundation (SSF) serves as clients' main point of contact, managing referrals and facilitating monthly check-ins to monitor progress.

**Consistent Client Engagement:** Regular communication and support help maintain a positive client experience by promptly addressing concerns.

**Mutual Benefits:** Clinicians gain hands-on experience with a diverse population, enhancing their skills while F+B workers receive comprehensive care from a dedicated team.

**Focus on Mental Health:** This focus addresses critical issues like workplace stress and burnout, which are prevalent in the food and beverage industry, ensuring relevance and urgency.

**Community Connection:** Promotes a safety net of support, fostering a sense of belonging and encouragement among participants.

**Adaptability:** Capable of evolving with the changing needs of clients and the industry landscape, ensuring long-term relevance and impact.

“This program was a really excellent way for me to access the resource of therapy. Especially in New York, and working in the service industry it can be very difficult to find time, funds, and programs that allow therapy to fit into my life. The Southern Smoke program allowed me to get started again in therapy in an accessible and low-stakes way. I now have a connection to a sliding scale therapy program I can continue to use, as well as skills I learned in my 6 months that I can apply going forward.”

**BARTENDER, NY**

# FUNDRAISING AND EVENTS

## \$5M

Total amount raised in 2024

### FUNDRAISING BREAKDOWN

- \$2,472,785 | Event Revenue
- \$1,027,392 | Unrestricted Contributions
- \$930,922 | Restricted Contributions
- \$337,796 | Other Revenue/Grants
- \$123,333 | Third Party Fundraisers
- \$96,906 | Interest



# 2024 EVENTS



We bring the party wherever we go, working with our outstanding partners to help raise awareness of our mission. Here's how we've done that over the past year:

## **HOT LUCK LIVE FOOD AND MUSIC**

*Austin, TX | 5.23.24-5.26.24*

Hosted by Aaron Franklin, with proceeds going to Southern Smoke Foundation. SSF hosted an industry roundtable during the weekend.

## **RESPECT THE ROSÉ**

*Houston, TX | 5.30.24*

We welcomed guests to Brennan's of Houston for a Kentucky Derby-themed bash benefitting Southern Smoke Foundation.

## **41ST ANNUAL FOOD & WINE CLASSIC IN ASPEN**

*Aspen, CO | 6.14.24-6.16.24*

Southern Smoke Foundation was a beneficiary of Food & Wine's epic weekend in the mountains.

## **VINES & VISION INDUSTRY ROUNDTABLE**

*Napa, CA | 7.24.24*

We hosted an industry roundtable at Robert Mondavi's Arch & Tower in Napa with our Cal Lutheran University partner and top wine professionals.

## **FARMSTEAD LIVE FIRE X SOUTHERN SMOKE FOUNDATION**

*Napa, CA | 7.26.24*

Eight chefs from across the country teamed up for an unforgettable evening of delicious food cooked over live fire benefitting SSF at Long Meadow Ranch.

## **NAVIGATING THE STORM INDUSTRY ROUNDTABLE**

*Houston, TX | 8.26.24*

SSF hosted an industry roundtable at United Way of Greater Houston, focusing on the state of the industry and resources available to create a healthier workplace.

## **NAVIGATING RESILIENCE IN THE FOOD AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRY**

*New York, NY | 9.9.24*

We hosted an industry roundtable at Tilit HQ in New York, moderated by Food & Wine's Hunter Lewis.

## **ELIJAH CRAIG OLD FASHIONED WEEK**

*Nationwide | 10.11.24-10.20.24*

Southern Smoke Foundation was the charity beneficiary of Elijah Craig Old Fashioned Week 2024.

## **SOUTHERN SMOKE FOUNDATION NEW ORLEANS SYMPOSIUM**

*New Orleans, LA | 11.4.24*

We hosted a one day industry symposium, presented by OpenTable, at the Hotel Saint Vincent.



# SOUTHERN SMOKE FESTIVAL

PRESENTED BY ALASKA SEAFOOD

SSF24 was our biggest fundraising event yet, raising \$1.5 million for food and beverage workers in crisis nationwide.

On October 4, 2024, more than 4,000 attendees filed into Discovery Green in Downtown Houston for a day of eating, drinking, and throwing down for a great cause. This year, we introduced the YETI Culinary Demo Stage emceed by Brad Leone.

Over 70 of America’s top chefs and bartenders brought their A-game, dazzling us with their amazing bites and sips.

**4,000**

Attendees

**5,200**

Glasses of Wine

**4,900**

Cocktails

**70,000**

Bites



**\$1.5 MILLION**  
**RAISED AT SOUTHERN SMOKE FESTIVAL 2024**



PRESENTED BY LEXUS

The inaugural Southern Smoke Decanted raised \$700,000 for food and beverage workers in crisis nationwide.

Wine lovers and SSF supporters came together at the historic El Dorado Ballroom on April 20, 2024 for a vintner's tasting and seated live auction.

Seven of Houston's best chefs served up bites while guests enjoyed tastings from over 50 vintners from around the world. Auction highlights included a dinner with Gail Simmons, epic travel weekends, and lots (and lots!) of hard-to-get wines.

**50+**  
Vintners

**7**  
Chefs

**20**  
Epic auction lots

**250**  
Guests

**\$700,000**

**RAISED AT SOUTHERN SMOKE DECANTED 2024**



“I like many thing about Southern Smoke. It gives out cash when people need it the most. Its application for the emergency grants is straightforward. There are no fancy hoops or major delays. Southern Smoke also provides mental health services to food and beverage workers. Under the best of circumstances, their work is hard and health care benefits are a luxury. After a crisis like Helene, mental health support can make the difference between falling through the cracks and rebounding.”

**TRESSIE MCMILLAN COTTOM**

The New York Times

## Major Media Spotlights

**GRAVY  
PODCAST**

Where There’s  
(Southern) Smoke,  
There’s Help for  
Restaurant  
Workers

**LAIST**

Food Worker Mental  
Health—How the  
Community is Helping  
its Own

**EATER  
HOUSTON**

Chef Chris Shepherd’s  
Southern Smoke  
Foundation Set to Double  
Its Aid to Restaurant  
Workers This Year

**THE LOCAL  
PALATE**

10 Southern  
Innovators  
Changing the  
Game

**FOOD & WINE**

Southern Smoke  
Foundation’s Mental  
Health Program for  
F&B Workers Is  
Expanding to  
Additional States

**SAN FRANCISCO  
CHRONICLE**

Work in the food  
industry? Here’s  
how to access  
mental health  
services – for free

**THE NEW  
YORK TIMES**

How to Help Those  
Still Devastated by  
Hurricane Helene



**SFA FILMS: SOUTHERN SMOKE FOUNDATION BY ETHAN PAYNE**

# OUR PARTNERS

Your generosity directly impacts our industry, oftentimes by allowing your neighbors to keep the lights on, afford life-saving medications, or simply buy basic necessities like clothing. Without you, none of this would be possible. We're so happy to have you with us.

## \$5,000 OR MORE

Alaska Seafood  
 Amanda Mcmillian & Benjamin Holloway  
 Amy Yang  
 Andres and Beatriz Reiner  
 Anonymous  
 Bacchanal  
 Barry Taylor  
 Ben & Meredith Marshall  
 Benjamin & Jennifer Fink  
 Benjy Levit  
 Birdcall Holdings  
 BOK Financial  
 Brandi Montgomery & Dr. Kevin Gee  
 Brook F. Minx  
 Brugal  
 Campari  
 Carrie & Sverre Brandsberg-Dahl  
 Caturra Partners  
 Celebrity Family Feud Season 10  
 Central Market  
 Chelsea Powell  
 China Poblano  
 Chris & Kristy Bradshaw/Bristow Group Inc.  
 Chubby Fish LLC  
 Chuck and Vanessa Ames  
 Cody & Christine Nath  
 Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico  
 Crown Royal  
 Cruise  
 Culinary Agents  
 Dan's Processing Center, Inc.  
 Daniel Bellware  
 Daniel Brown  
 Dr. David Ho  
 David Miner  
 DoorDash  
 Duke Energy - South Carolina  
 Durham Fundraiser for Asheville  
 Dylan & Jordan Seff  
 Elijah Craig  
 Erin & Kyle Cummings  
 Euphoria  
 Favor  
 Feges BBQ  
 Footprint Foundation  
 Fort Worth Food & Wine Foundation  
 Four Seasons Hotel Houston  
 French Truck Coffee  
 Gee Eye Care  
 Global Giving  
 Gulf Coast Community Foundation  
 Heaven Hill Distillery

H-E-B  
 Herb Leventer  
 High Wire Distilling Hat Trick Campaign  
 Holy City Hospitality Fund  
 Homebase  
 Houston Hospitality Alliance  
 Houston Texans Foundation  
 Huckberry Inc  
 Husk Charleston  
 Iilly  
 IMA Inc.  
 Dr. Jameson Bowles & Dr. Maria Berdayes-Bowles  
 J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines  
 Jeff Chanchaleune  
 Jeff & Laura Kaplan  
 Jeffrey & Mindy Crawford  
 Jeffrey Kovach  
 Jennifer Boyer  
 Jhett Nelson  
 Justins House of Bourbon  
 Katami  
 Karen & Kevin McCarthy  
 Keith Yandell  
 Khalil Postell  
 Kingfisher  
 Laura Summerville Restaurant Romo  
 Lexus  
 Drs. Lisa & Stan Duchman  
 LD Systems  
 Louie Louie  
 Luca  
 Lynne Larson & Brett Pardue  
 Manatee Community Foundation  
 Manesh Patel  
 Margaret Mellon Hitchcock Foundation  
 Mark & Heidi Davis  
 Marriott International  
 Martins Barbecue, LLC  
 Matt Leicht  
 Matthew Kahn  
 MML Hospitality  
 Meet the Needs Charleston  
 Megan & Walker Weston  
 Memorial Hermann  
 Ment'or  
 Meredith Operations Corporation  
 Mirta Seijo  
 Mise  
 Momofuku  
 Monteverde Restaurant  
 Morgan Gentry  
 Murrill Foundation  
 Nestle USA

New Orleans & Company  
 NICO Oysters & Seafood Restaurant  
 Oakwood Pizza Box  
 OpenTable, Inc.  
 Pappas Restaurants, Inc.  
 Patrick Diamond  
 Peterson Family Fund  
 Petter Pettersen & Mari Mena  
 Pitt Street Brewing Company  
 Prime 131  
 Raleigh Restaurant Fundraiser for Asheville  
 Reily Foods  
 Resy  
 Rob & Kim Tegtmeier  
 Robert Mondavi Winery  
 Robert Mosher  
 Rosie Cannonball  
 Sarah Kaplan  
 Sara Stayer  
 Seabird  
 Sean & Maggie Britton  
 Shell Energy  
 Shelley McPhatter  
 Silver Eagle  
 Stanley Curtis & Mitchell George  
 Stephanie Canas  
 Stetson Faust Family Charitable Fund  
 Sysco Nourishing Neighbors  
 Tabasco  
 Table 22  
 Tazza Kitchen & Conejo Restaurants  
 Tegan Passalacqua  
 Teremana  
 Thaan Charcoal  
 The Indigo Road Hospitality Group  
 The Reynolds and Reynolds Company  
 The Robert M Sinskey Foundation  
 The Roots Fund  
 The Will and Jada Smith Family Foundation  
 Tito's Handmade Vodka  
 Tom Hetherington  
 Tracy Scott & Patricia Eldridge  
 Truth BBQ  
 Turkey and the Wolf  
 Victoria Gutierrez & Nick Pierce  
 Vinson & Elkins L.L.P.  
 Visit North Carolina  
 Warby Parker Inc.  
 Weldon Granger  
 Wolf/Subzero  
 World Class  
 Yeti

# LEADERSHIP



We are incredibly grateful for the leadership and expertise the following individuals bring to the table.

## LEADERSHIP

**Lindsey Brown**  
Executive Director

**Cris Tang**  
Chief Financial Officer

**Catarina Bill**  
Chief Mission Officer

**Caroline Nabors**  
Director of Development  
and Marketing

**Matthew Pridgen**  
Director of Operations

## 2024 BOARD

**Chris Shepherd**  
Founding Director and  
Honorary Chairman

**June Rodil, MS**  
Vice President

**Benjamin Fink**  
Chairman, Finance  
Committee

**Chree Boydston**  
Member

**Aaron Franklin**  
Member

**Cherif Mbodji**  
Member

**Toni Tipton-Martin**  
Member

**Dr. Kevin Gee**  
President

**Leighann Bakunas**  
Secretary

**Petter Pettersen**  
Immediate Past President

**Ikimi Dubose-Woodson**  
Member

**Kaitlyn Goalen**  
Member

**Erin Smith**  
Member

# THANK YOU!

As a crisis relief organization, we are continuously humbled by the brave spirit of food and beverage workers nationwide surviving through the worst of times. Natural disasters like hurricanes and wildfires, accidents and unexpected emergencies, have all threatened the lives and livelihoods of individuals in the food and beverage industry, and yet all we see are courage and strength.

For 2025, we're determined to help even more individuals in the food and beverage industry nationwide. Remember, no crisis is too big and no challenge is too great for us. We're also excited to forge new partnerships nationwide as we seek to make the greatest impact. On behalf of Southern Smoke Foundation and the Board of Directors, thank you helping support the nation's food and beverage industry.

