

SOUTHERN SMOKE FOUNDATION

From Crisis to Care: SSF's Safety Net in Action

2025 YEAR-END REPORT



January 2026

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Thank You

A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends and Supporters,

Southern Smoke Foundation was built on a simple but powerful idea: that food and beverage industry workers deserve care and support when life takes an unexpected turn. In 2025, that belief guided everything we did, and the impact was extraordinary.

This year, we provided \$1,551,487 in emergency relief funding through 918 grants to food and beverage workers facing unforeseen crisis. The greatest need we saw was in health and medical emergencies, which accounted for \$625,967 in funding alone. Behind every number is a real person—a cook, server, bartender, sommelier, farmer—able to focus on healing or stability because this community showed up for them.

Our Behind You mental health program continued to grow in both reach and depth. In 2025, we provided access to 3,696 counseling sessions through our university partnerships, and 149 individuals completed the program. We were proud to expand Behind You into two new states—Florida, in partnership with Florida Tech, and Michigan, with the Michigan School of Psychology—bringing no-cost mental health care to even more members of our industry.

The scope of our work continues to build. Since 2017, Southern Smoke Foundation has distributed over \$15.6 million in emergency relief funding through over 6,000 grants, reinforcing our long-term commitment to being there for food and beverage workers when they need it most.

None of this would be possible without the generosity and belief of our supporters. In 2025, that belief showed up in record-breaking ways. We raised more than \$5.5 million, the largest annual total since the COVID-19 pandemic. Our signature events reached new heights: Decanted raised \$1.2 million, with 78%—\$1,025,000—going directly to our mission, and Southern Smoke Festival raised \$1.8 million, the most ever raised in a single day in our history.

Our annual events in Napa with Live Fire at Farmstead and Southern Smoke Symposium in New Orleans created opportunities to gather, learn, and strengthen our community across the country.

Every milestone in this report is the result of incredible partners, donors, chefs, beverage pros, volunteers, clinicians, advocates, and the tireless SSF staff who believe that caring for this industry is essential. Thank you for making this work possible and for standing with us.

We are proud of what we accomplished together in 2025, and we look forward to building on this momentum in 2026.



LINDSEY BROWN
Executive Director

WHO WE ARE

Mission

Southern Smoke Foundation supports members of the food and beverage industry in crisis nationwide through emergency relief funding and access to mental health services. We are the safety net and helping hand for all individuals working in the American food chain, providing funds directly to people dealing with unforeseen crises and offering accessibility to mental health services to F+B workers in 12 states and Washington, D.C, and growing.

Community

Each SSF event is designed to both raise funds for the organization and also build community within the food and beverage industry. Our goal is to ensure that anyone in the F+B industry who participates in our events walks away with a clear understanding of the work we do on a national level, the ways we can support them and their teams, and a genuine sense of being valued for the work they do every day.

These events are an opportunity to celebrate the industry alongside peers, which is why we’ve built such strong support across the country. This nationwide engagement gives our partners meaningful access to F+B decision-makers from coast to coast.

Impact

\$15,601,090

funds distributed since 2017

10,218

no-cost counseling sessions provided since 2020

\$1,551,487

funds distributed in 2025

3,696

no-cost counseling sessions provided in 2025

How We Help



Emergency Relief Fund: Helping workers in crisis

Over the years, our nonprofit’s funds have helped individuals and families meet essential needs, including groceries, clothing, and medications, to preventing car repossessions and covering rent. We’ve also provided support to individuals experiencing losses from natural disasters, wage or household interruptions, and other unforeseen hardships.



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

Through our mental health program, Behind You, we provide access to no-cost mental health counseling for F+B workers in California, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington, D.C.

PROGRAMS TEAM DISPATCH: A YEAR IN SERVICE

2025 marked an incredible year of service for Southern Smoke Foundation. In a time of continued need, we proudly **distributed \$1,551,487** nationwide in emergency relief funds (ERF) to 918 food and beverage workers and **provided access to more than 3,600 no-cost counseling sessions** across all states offering the Behind You program, bringing critical support directly to food and beverage workers and the communities they call home.

In 2025, awareness and community-building were central to our work. Southern Smoke Foundation expanded visibility of our mission through live events (**across 11 states** and virtually), media outreach, and SSF Pre-Shifts: briefings with food and beverage teams hosted both onsite at workplaces and virtually. Pre-Shifts created space for education, conversation, and connection, ensuring workers clearly understood how and when to access support.

To reduce barriers and increase accessibility, we distributed **2,200 workplace flyers** and **84,350 information cards** nationwide. Each piece includes discreet QR codes linking directly to our applications, making support private, immediate, and easy to access.

When asked how they heard about our Emergency Relief Fund and Behind You mental health program, most applicants cited job, friend, and social media, confirming that word of mouth from trusted sources is making an impact!

Southern Smoke Foundation also created intentional spaces for industry leaders to come together at Southern Smoke Festival and through our annual Symposium, to connect, reflect, and lead. From our Festival talent-exclusive Industry Breakfast, which gathered more than 100 chefs for candid conversations on the state of the industry and mental health, to a full day of panels and dialogue in New Orleans addressing the most pressing challenges facing food and beverage professionals and secrets from the pros from AI to scalability, these gatherings fostered collaboration, shared learning, and practical tools for action. Together, they strengthened leadership, advanced honest conversations around well-being, and helped build a more resilient industry from the inside out.

Since our founding, Southern Smoke Foundation has distributed more than \$15.6 million in emergency relief grants nationwide and provided access to over 10,218 no-cost counseling sessions for food and beverage workers across California, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington, D.C.

These milestones reflect more than numbers. They represent stability restored, care delivered, and lives supported during moments of profound need.

As we look ahead, our commitment remains unwavering: to stand behind the people who power our industry, to strengthen pathways to care, and to ensure that no food and beverage worker faces crisis alone.

EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND



2025 OVERVIEW

\$1,551,487

Emergency Relief Funds Distributed
in 2025

918

Individuals Granted

\$192,000

Total Natural Disaster Funds
distributed (Hurricanes Helene and
Milton, LA Fires, and Texas Hill Country
Floods)

\$42,500

Total Large-Scale Crisis Funds
distributed (New Orleans NYE
Tragedy and Richmond Water Crisis)

***All outcomes on this page do not
include Natural Disaster or Large-Scale
Crisis.**

\$2,634

Average Emergency Relief Grant

13.8

Awardees Average Number of Years In F+B

TOP FUNDED CRISES

Health/Medical Crisis: \$625,967

Loss of Wages: \$85,966

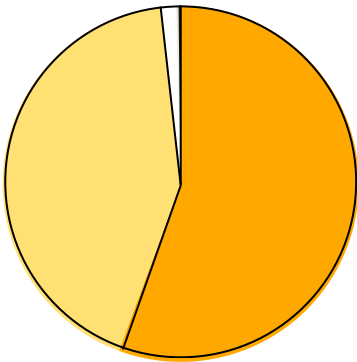
Multiple Crises: \$74,250

Restaurant Closure: \$70,145

TOP FUNDED POSITIONS

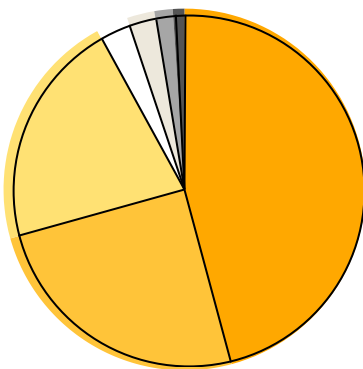
Server | Manager | Cook
Bartender | Chef

GENDER BREAKDOWN



● Female: 55.6% ● Male: 42.5%
● Prefer not to answer: 0.2%
○ Trans Woman: 0.2% ○ Non-Binary: 1.4%

RACE BREAKDOWN



● White: 45.79%
● Black/African American: 24.85%
● Hispanic/Latino: 21.36% ○ Asian: 2.87%
● Other: 2.46% ● Prefer not to answer: 1.64%
● American Indian/Native American: 1.03%

“I was completely freaking out about my finances after breaking my ankle and needing two surgeries. A simple step into water at a waterpark and I went down! I had already lost my car, rent and bills were piling up even more and I couldn't afford my physical therapy due to paying out of pocket. I was so happy to be given the recommendation to reach out to Southern Smoke for potential help. The process was quick and easy. I have recommended SSF to many of my peers.”

CAFE MANAGER/SUPERVISOR, 15 YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY, TEXAS

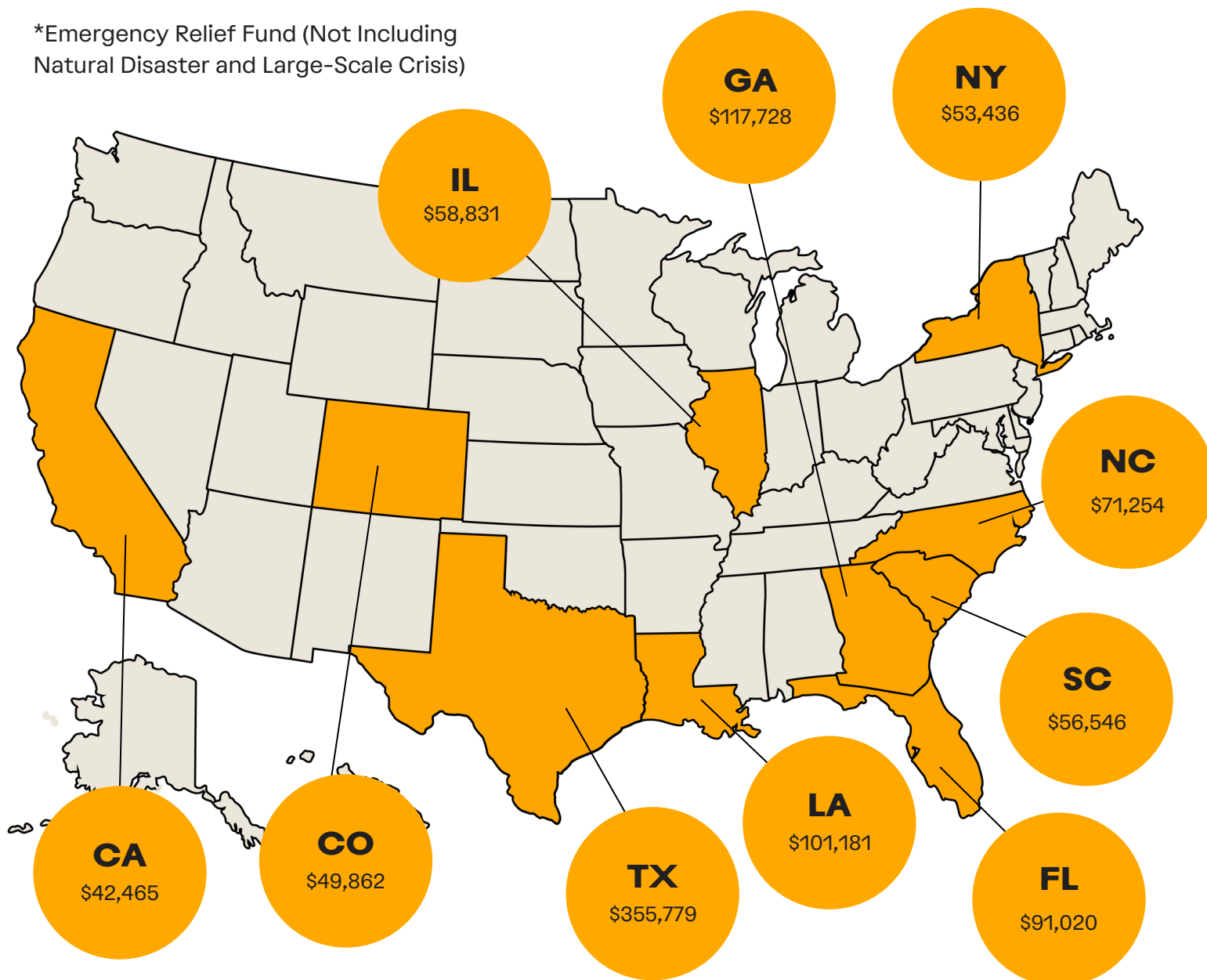


“Southern Smoke Foundation is amazing and so are their workers, they dotted every i and crossed every t. My agent was amazing. I used the funds to relocate to my new house and also to get myself on my feet and get a vehicle. Amazing people. I see nothing y'all need to improve. Y'all are amazing.”

BARTENDER, 4 YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY, LOUISIANA

TOP FUNDED STATES

*Emergency Relief Fund (Not Including Natural Disaster and Large-Scale Crisis)



“You guys came through after my emergency surgery put me behind on my house payment, I really appreciate you taking care of my situation. You got me back on track with my life thank you!”

MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN AT A FINE DINING RESTAURANT WITH 10 YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY, TEXAS

BEHIND YOU

No-Cost Mental
Health Services
for F+B Workers



2025 OVERVIEW

3,696

No-cost counseling sessions provided in 2025

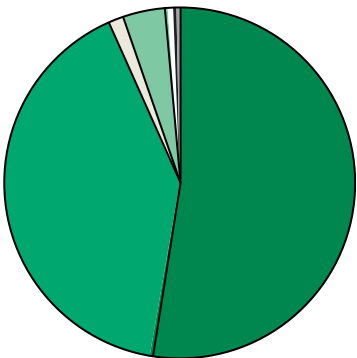
34

Average age of a Behind You client

12

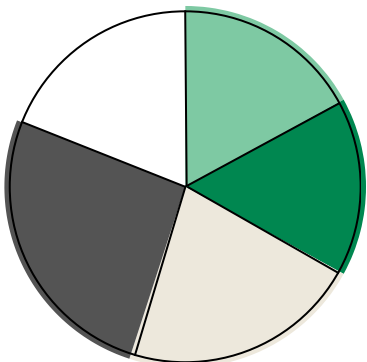
Participants' average number of years in the industry

GENDER BREAKDOWN



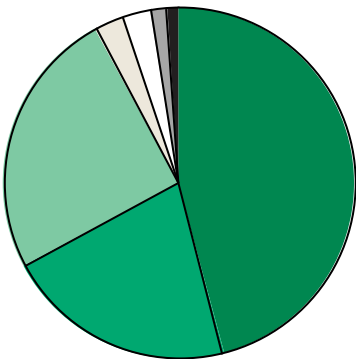
- Female: 52.9%
- Male: 40.7%
- Non-Binary: 4.1%
- Transgender: 1.5%
- Two-spirit: 0.5%
- Other: 0.3%
- Prefer not to answer: 0.3%

POSITION BREAKDOWN



- Bartender: 26%
- Server: 22%
- Cook (incl. line, prep, sous): 19%
- Chef: 16%
- Other: 17%

RACE BREAKDOWN



- White: 45.8%
- Hispanic/Latino: 21.4%
- Black/African American: 24.9%
- Asian: 2.9%
- Other: 2.4%
- Prefer not to answer: 1.6%
- American Indian/Native American: 1%

TOP CLIENT CITIES

Brooklyn, NY
New Orleans, LA
Houston, TX
Austin, TX
Chicago, IL

MOST COMMONLY REPORTED CHALLENGES

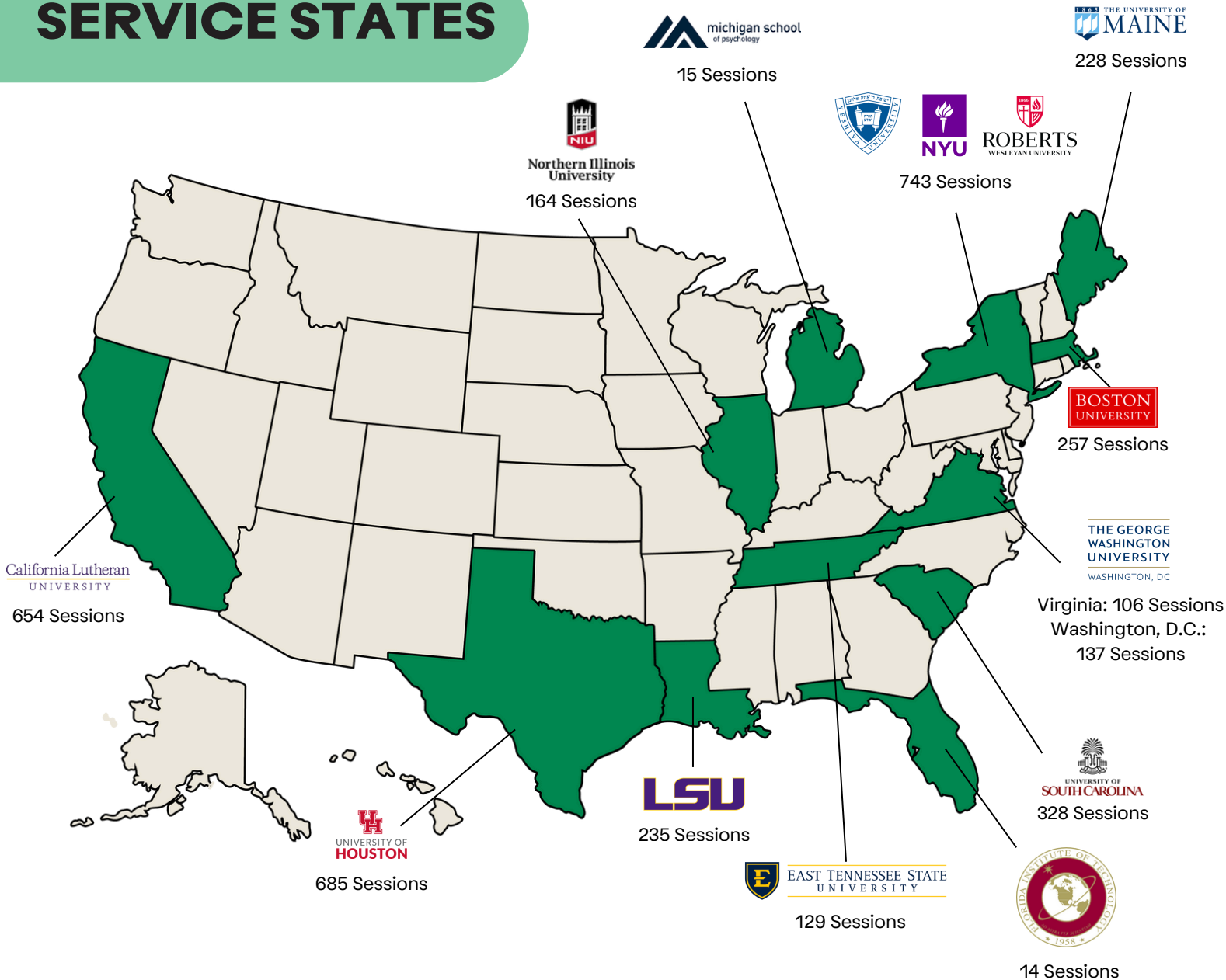
Anxiety & Depression
Work-related Burnout
Relationship Issues
History of trauma
Substance / Alcohol Use

“One thing every donor should know is that these sessions provide essential mental health care for many of our clients who would not otherwise be able to access this care due to limited financial resources or limited opportunities to access therapy in their communities. Through the support of the Southern Smoke Foundation, our clinical team is able to offer therapy sessions at flexible hours and via telehealth to increase accessibility and meet food and beverage service workers where they're at. There also aren't many other organizations out there that provide support for up to twenty free therapy sessions, and this generosity allows us the time we need to develop a strong therapeutic relationship with clients, address the multiple compounding stressors that clients often face, and provide quality care that's more likely to make a lasting change.”

**DR. JOHN VINCENT, UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
(FOUNDING BEHIND YOU UNIVERSITY PARTNER)**



SERVICE STATES



“It’s great free therapy, once a week, with someone who is really taking the time to listen and provide feedback. Being that they’re students does not make them less professional, only more relatable.”

BARTENDER, 8 YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY, VIRGINIA

BEHIND YOU: SCALING ACCESS, DEEPENING IMPACT

Behind You was intentionally built to grow without compromising care. Through a turnkey program model and strong partnerships with accredited universities, the program expands into two to three new states each year while continuing to serve workers in existing states. This approach ensures consistent, high-quality, and clinically sound mental health care delivered sustainably and with integrity. By design, Behind You can scale nationwide without sacrificing confidentiality, clinical excellence, or the industry-specific support food and beverage workers need.

Program Growth: Demand Meets Impact

In just five years, Behind You has surpassed a major milestone: delivering more than 10,000 no-cost counseling sessions to food and beverage workers. This growth reflects both rising demand and sustained engagement from clients who often face long-standing barriers to mental health care.

10,000 hours of therapy delivered are equivalent to 333 full-time (30-hour) workweeks, or 6.4 years of dedicated care.

Year over year, the data tells a clear story:

- Session counts increased by at least 30% every year since 2023
- Referrals and completed sessions grew consistently alongside applications, demonstrating strong follow-through and motivation among participants
- The number of university partners more than tripled since 2020, enabling expanded geographic reach and increased capacity

As the program matured, so did its outcomes. In July 2023, Behind You formalized a program structure of up to 20 sessions or 6 months of care, enabling deeper therapeutic relationships and measurable completion rates. Since then, 268 clients have successfully completed the program, either by attending all 20 sessions or collaboratively concluding therapy early after meeting their goals. Completion rates increased each year, underscoring both client commitment and program effectiveness.

Notably, most clients who completed treatment attended 19–24 sessions on average, reflecting meaningful engagement rather than a short-term intervention. In some cases, additional sessions were provided, based on clinical judgment, to support continuity of care during clinician transitions, prioritizing client well-being over rigid limits.

Program Value: Who We Reach and Why It Matters

Behind You is not merely filling gaps. It is expanding access to mental health care for workers who have long faced barriers to support.

Among clients served in 2024 and 2025:

34% had never accessed counseling before

24% had not returned to therapy in more than five years, citing barriers such as cost, time constraints, and limited clinician availability

By offering both in-person and telehealth options, Behind You meets workers where they are, removing barriers of time, distance, and access to care. Care is confidential, employment is verified, and every client is supported by a multi-layered clinical team, including a student clinician, licensed supervisor, and university clinical director.

The impact extends beyond the no-cost period. Nearly one in three clients (30%) continued therapy on a sliding-scale basis after completing the program, demonstrating sustained engagement and long-term benefit.

The University Partner Model: Quality at Scale

Behind You's impact is powered by a growing network of accredited university partners. Graduate clinicians deliver evidence-based care under licensed supervision, while university teams manage intake, clinical fit, and care coordination.

This model enables Southern Smoke Foundation to scale responsibly, uphold rigorous clinical standards, and expand access without increasing financial barriers for clients.

As one founding partner shared, the ability to offer up to twenty free sessions is transformative, creating the time and trust necessary to address complex, compounding stressors and deliver care that leads to lasting change.

“More often than not, Southern Smoke clients are seeking our [mental health] services because of their job and the anxiety and stress that comes with it. The long hours and demands of the job are affecting home life and their relationships. Many are doing this for themselves so they can stay within the food & beverage industry.”

**KIM CHESLA,
CAL LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY CLINIC OPERATIONS MANAGER**

VOICES FROM THE INDUSTRY

Behind the numbers are real people: bartenders, chefs, managers, and servers who describe Behind You as accessible, nonjudgmental, and life-changing. Clients consistently report feeling seen, heard, and respected, often for the first time in a therapeutic setting. For many, this program reframed what mental health care could be: practical, human, and tailored to their lived experience in a demanding industry.

From first-time therapy participants to long-time industry veterans, Behind You is helping workers build resilience, navigate transitions, and find stability amid chaos, proving that when mental health care is accessible, people show up and do the work.

“I’m very grateful for Southern Smoke and their ability to help me through a stressful transition in my life. It has been absolutely essential for my success up to this point.”

BARTENDER, 15 YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY, ILLINOIS

“Accessible therapy that doesn’t feel intimidating. Hugely beneficial.”

MANAGER, 15 YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY, NEW YORK

“Extremely helpful and insightful. I felt seen, heard, and respected.”

MANAGER, 20 YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY, SOUTH CAROLINA

“I liked that my clinician tailored my experience to me, even giving me worksheets with examples and space for me to fill in my thoughts as we talked through different things.”

MANAGER, 11 YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY, WASHINGTON, D.C.

“One thing every donor should know is how easy it is to collaborate with SSF to deepen the training and work with this community that truly needs and deserves strong mental healthcare.”

**DR. A. JORDAN WRIGHT, NYU, DIRECTOR, PHD PROGRAM IN
CLINICAL/COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY**



FUNDRAISING AND EVENTS

\$5.5M

Total amount raised in 2025

FUNDRAISING BREAKDOWN

- \$3,333,470 | Event Revenue
- \$795,951 | Restricted Contributions
- \$787,644 | Unrestricted Contributions
- \$330,865 | Third Party Fundraisers
- \$179,376 | Interest
- \$142,951 | Other Revenue/Grants



2025 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:

BEHIND YOU CLASSIC

Cary, NC | 3.10.25

Hosted by Matt Fern and Sam Ratto, the first annual Behind You Classic golf tournament raised over \$35,000 to support the expansion of our Behind You program in North Carolina.

HOT LUCK LIVE FOOD AND MUSIC

Austin, TX | 5.22.25-5.25.25

Hosted by Aaron Franklin, with proceeds going to Southern Smoke Foundation.

RESPECT THE ROSÉ

Houston, TX | 5.17.25

We welcomed guests to Brennan's of Houston for a '80s prom-themed bash benefitting Southern Smoke Foundation.

FOOD & WINE CLASSIC IN ASPEN

Aspen, CO | 6.20.25-6.22.25

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

SERVING CHANGE: CULTIVATING BALANCE IN THE FOOD AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRY

Napa, CA | 7.25.25

We hosted an industry breakfast at Farmstead's Garden Lounge & Cafe in Napa with our Cal Lutheran University partner and key industry professionals.

FARMSTEAD LIVE FIRE X SOUTHERN SMOKE FOUNDATION

Napa, CA | 7.25.25

Eight California-based chefs teamed up for an unforgettable evening of delicious food cooked over live fire benefitting SSF at Long Meadow Ranch.

MIDDAY MASTERCLASS

Houston, TX | 8.11.25

SSF hosted a Midday Masterclass at United Way of Greater Houston, featuring experts in law, insurance, supply chains, meteorology, and restaurant management.

NOW MORE THAN EVER: HOW THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION IS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE INDUSTRY

New York, NY | 9.8.25

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

ELIJAH CRAIG OLD FASHIONED WEEK

Nationwide | 10.10.25-10.19.25

Southern Smoke Foundation was the charity beneficiary of Elijah Craig Old Fashioned Week 2025.

SOUTHERN SMOKE FOUNDATION NEW ORLEANS SYMPOSIUM

New Orleans, LA | 11.17.25

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

SOUTHERN SMOKE FESTIVAL

PRESENTED BY **Sysco**

Southern Smoke Festival 2025 raised \$1.8 million to support our Emergency Relief Fund and Behind You programs.

On October 4, 2025, more than 3,500 attendees brought their appetites to Discovery Green in Downtown Houston for a day of eating, drinking, and throwing down for a great cause.

Highlights included welcoming the 2025 class of Food & Wine Best New Chefs, watching demos from top chefs at the YETI Culinary Stage emceed by Brad Leone, and enjoying exclusive bites and sips in the air-conditioned Lexus VIP area.

3,500

Attendees

5,300

Glasses of Wine

5,100

Cocktails

70,000+

Bites



\$1.8 MILLION
RAISED AT SOUTHERN SMOKE FESTIVAL
2025



The second annual Southern Smoke Decanted raised \$1.2 million for food and beverage workers in crisis nationwide.

Wine lovers and SSF supporters came together at the historic Eldorado Ballroom on March 29, 2025 for a vintner's tasting and seated live auction.

All seven of Houston's Michelin-starred chefs served up bites while guests enjoyed tastings from over 45 vintners from around the world. Auction highlights included wine country weekends, a luxury escape to the Big Apple, and lots (and lots!) of collectable wines.

45
Vintners

7
Chefs

26
Epic live and silent auction lots

250
Guests

\$1.2 MILLION
RAISED AT SOUTHERN SMOKE DECANTED
2025



The Southern Smoke Symposium isn't just another industry conference — it's a day built by and for the food and beverage community.

Southern Smoke Symposium in New Orleans highlights conversations designed to dig into the real challenges facing our industry today, from scaling with soul to navigating modern media, mastering new technologies, and staying ahead in a constantly changing economy.

This event fosters reflection, collaboration, and innovation within the local and national F+B community.

4

Panels

16

Panelists

171

Attendees





In its second year, the Southern Smoke Bottle Club has continued to bring members together over a shared love for fine wines and spirits.

This year, we expanded our reach through a partnership with Seelbach’s, allowing members to receive their bottles in most states and opening the club up to a national audience.

From virtual tastings and happy hours to our members-only holiday party, the Southern Smoke Bottle club continues to be one of the most fun and rewarding ways to connect with community and give back while drinking well.

2025 ALLOCATIONS



RARE CHARACTER
SINGLE BARREL



HIRSCH VINEYARDS
PINOT NOIR



HIGH WIRE DISTILLING
JIMMY RED BOURBON



MAJOR MEDIA SPOTLIGHTS

In 2025, we worked with the team at Foxglove Communications to bring our most pressing stories to life. From mental health spotlights to impact interviews, Southern Smoke Foundation leads the conversation on food and beverage worker health and wellbeing.

OBSERVER

2025 Nightlife
& Dining
Power Index

RESY BLOG

How to Address
Employee Mental
Health When You're
Already Swamped

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Houston's Southern
Smoke backs free
mental health care for
hospitality workers
nationwide

**WINE
ENTHUSIAST**

How Hospitality Industry
Leaders Are Normalizing
and Prioritizing Mental
Health

FORBES

Enjoy One-Of-A-Kind
Ultra-Premium Spirits
For A Good Cause

**CHERRY
BOMBE**

The 2025
Cherry Bombe
Power List

**FOOD & WINE'S
TINFOIL SWANS
PODCAST**

Chris Shepherd's
Two-Word Question
Might Save Your Life

**SOUTHERN
LIVING**

Texas-Based Southern
Smoke Foundation
Achieves Record-
Breaking Fundraiser To
Support Hospitality
Workers

OPENTABLE

Notes From the Table:
The Prep We Don't
Talk About Enough

ANNUAL PARTNERS

The following partners raise funds and awareness for our mission year after year. With their help, Southern Smoke Foundation has the resources and backing needed to provide meaningful relief to food and beverage workers across the country.



FOOD&WINE

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

1507 Magazine Operator, LLC	Hot Luck, LLC	Monteverde Restaurant
a.kitchen+bar dc	Houston Area Lexus Dealers	Murrill Foundation, Inc.
Alaska Seafood	Houston Hospitality Alliance	Natalie & Steve Mohtashami
Alicynn & Kevin Fink	Huckberry Inc	Nestle USA
Amanda McMillian & Benjamin Holloway	IMA Inc.	New Orleans and Company
The Andrew Michael Foundation	Impact Assets	Ogan Family Charitable Fund
Angie & Zach Matula	The Indigo Road Hospitality Group	On the Border
The Applegate Family	Intuit Legal	OpenTable, Inc.
Ashley Watt & Carrie Lee	JCC Management DBA Carrabbas	OTG Concessions Management LLC
Athletic Brewing	Jennifer Saville	Pam Nelson
Autumn Rich, Texas Wildcatters	Jessica & Michael Sznepstajler	Pappas Restaurants, Inc.
Bailey & Peter McCarthy	Jhett Nelson	Patricia & Richard Bartoskewitz
Barb & Brook F. Minx	John Quinn	Patrick Diamond
Bari & David Fishel	Jordan & Dylan Seff	Patti Eldridge & Tracy Scott
BB's Cafe Services LP	Justins House Of Bourbon	Paul Manuel
Beaufort Wine and Food Weekend Inc	Karen & Kevin McCarthy	Paws Up
Benjamin & Jennifer Fink	The Kaminski Family	PM Cheng, LLC
Billy Strings	Katami	Red Boat Fish Sauce DBA Viet Phu Inc.
Boz Partners, LLC	Kelly Hogan	Relly Foods
Brandi Montgomery & Dr. Kevin Gee	Kim & Mark Lowes	Republic National Distributing Company LLC
Bristow Holdings Inc.	Koko Head Cafe	Resy and American Express
Brown-Forman Corporation	Kristy & Chris Bradshaw	The Reynolds and Reynolds Company
Campari America	Kyle Armand	The Robert M Sinskey Foundation
Carmen Rivera	Lalo	Richard Bruskoff
Carrie & Sverre Brandsberg-Dahl	Laura & Jeff Kaplan	Rocket Farm Restaurants
Certified Angus Beef	Liberty Events LLC	Sarah Kaplan
Christine Stewart	Linda Baddour & Jessica Willetts	Silver Eagle Distributors
Christopher Walsh	Drs. Lisa & Stan Duchman	Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP
Chubo Knives LLC	Lisette & Brett Mossman	Slang AI
Christine & Cody Nath	Local Boys Do Good DBA euphoria	Stacy & Luis Gomar
Collegiate Mentorship Association	Long Meadow Ranch	Stephen Stayer
Cristina & Morgan Lunt	Lorri White	Steven Ladobruk
Dean Bunce	LW Wyomng Investment LLC	Stone Garden Group
DoorDash	Made In Cookware	The Sye Fund
Drink Louie Louie	Ma Der Lao Kitchen	Sysco Corporation
Drs. Elsa & James Humphries Jr.	Maggy & Sean Britton	T.J. Shushereba
Erin & Kyle Cummings	Margaret Mellon Hitchcock Foundation	Talya Arbisser & Joel Gluskin
EsterEv Restaurant	Mari Mena & Petter Pettersen	Tex Orleans Food Company
Feges BBQ Spring Branch, L.P.	Drs. Maria Berdayes-Bowles & Jameson Bowles	Tilit NYC
Fond du Lac Area Foundation	Mark Santos	Tito's
Fort Worth Food and Wine Foundation	Martins Barbecue, LLC	TJ Farnsworth
Fortune Fish and Gourmet	Matt Monday	TripleSeat
Forvis Mazars Foundation	McGuire Moorman Hospitality LLC	U.S. Charitable Gift Trust
Frank Stagg	Mcllhenny Company DBA Tabasco	Vanessa & Chuck Ames
French Truck	The Meredith Corporation Foundation	Victoria Gutierrez and Nick Pierce
Goodnight Hospitality	Messermeister, Inc.	Vinson & Elkins L.L.P.
Heather & Max Bulk	Michael Delaney	Visit Fort Worth
Heaven Hill Inc.	Mike Lowenberg / Lowenberg Law Firm, PLLC	Walker Weston
H-E-B	Mise	The Walsh Family
Hector Torres	Mitchell George & Stanley Curtis, Jr.	Walter Finger
Henry Medina	MKTG	YETI
	Monica & John Isgren	

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

BOARD

Chris Shepherd
Founding Director and
Honorary Chairman

June Rodil, MS
Vice President

Benjamin Fink
Chairman, Finance
Committee

Vanessa Ames
Member

Aaron Franklin
Member

Sarah Grueneberg
Member

Cherif Mbodji
Member

Toni Tipton-Martin
Member

Dr. Kevin Gee
President

Leighann Bakunas
Secretary

Petter Pettersen
Immediate Past President

Jennifer Boyer Duncan
Member

Kaitlyn Goalen
Member

Victoria Gutierrez
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 2026, 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.

