BIRDSEED, INC.

2025

# ANNUAL REPORT 2025

INFORMATION AND UPDATES
ABOUT BIRDSEED



**PREPARED BY:**
**BIRDSEED**

**WWW.BIRDSEED.ORG**



# WORDS FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Two years ago, I shared my personal dream of homeownership, a dream that, for too many families, is deferred by systemic barriers. Today, as I look back on 2025, I am no longer just talking about dreams; I am talking about a proven movement. This year, birdSEED reached a historic milestone: 52 grantees have now crossed the threshold of their own homes. These aren't just transactions; they are the foundations of generational wealth, established without the burden of debt or the complexity of traditional liens.

**Crossing the 50-home milestone:** Through our "no-strings-attached" model, more than 50 grantees have secured their first homes.

**Deepening our roots:** Our presence in the DC and Philadelphia metro areas has solidified. We are partners in these communities' economic mobility.

**The power of the grant:** In 2025 alone, we awarded 31 provisional grants totaling $400,000 in direct capital, a direct counter-measure to the rising costs and interest rates that threaten to push homeownership further out of reach.

**What sets us apart:** Unlike programs that attach silent liens or secondary debt to a property, birdSEED practices trust-based philanthropy. Our Advisory Board of community leaders keeps our process restorative, not restrictive.

**The work ahead:** While we celebrate 50+ home purchases, demand remains staggering. We received a record 728 applications this year. We are actively seeking new strategic partnerships so that by this time next year, birdSEED's impact has grown even larger.

Join the movement. Invest: your donations provide the keys to a new life. Partner: help us reach new neighborhoods and cities. Advocate: help us spread the word that homeownership can, and should, be attainable for all.

Together, we are not just planting seeds; we are witnessing a landscape transform.

Warmly,

**DR. MARLA DEAN**
PRESIDENT, BIRDSEED



# MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER

In the darkest days of the pandemic, I went for a walk under an ironically bright and starry sky. I contemplated my complicity in the persistent and growing racial wealth gap. Real estate and racism go hand in hand. The more I learned, the more I understood, it was my responsibility as a leader in the industry to raise my hand and say, NO! We have a dark past and wrongs to right. That night, I personally committed to wealth redistribution with a simple plan: give down payment grants to first-time homebuyers from historically disadvantaged communities. With a catch.

No strings. Just cash at closing.

In 1995, an $8,300 inheritance helped me buy my own first home. When I closed on that sweet little adobe duplex tucked into a residential alleyway in Tucson, Arizona, my life changed forever. For the better. I grew up with housing insecurity. And owning a home of my own meant I owned my destiny. My inheritance came with no obligations. I did not have to take classes, provide income statements, or years of tax statements. Nobody scrutinized my FICO score or asked if I made too much money to qualify. I didn't wait for months or years to receive it, and I didn't get a call one day letting me know the money ran out. I didn't get 1/10 of the money over ten years. I didn't have to write a report when I spent it. I just enjoyed the abundance of the gift. Burden free.

Lucky me.

Assistance in the form of cash flips the script. Burdens lifted, unleash opportunity for wealth building. The racial wealth gap and lack of access to capital are inextricably linked. That's a discrete, identifiable problem, with a discrete, identifiable solution: cash support.

Our little birdSEED, simply and quickly works on the racial wealth gap, one down payment grant at a time.

No strings. Just cash at closing.

Philanthropy and wealth creation can be in alignment. birdSEED isn't about affordable housing, simple "charity" or covering basic expenses. birdSEED is about wealth creation. The racial wealth gap is a zero sum game. So let's play a different one and unlock resources, given simply so we can simply support first-time homebuyers from historically disadvantaged communities and advance a more just and equitable future. I'm for that.

Yours in trusted, rapid philanthropy,

**LISA WISE**
FOUNDER, BIRDSEED



# A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am honored to share birdSEED's 2025 Annual Report, a year that reinforced the stability of our mission while celebrating our deepest local roots. Since our inception, birdSEED has provided no-strings-attached down payment assistance to first-time homebuyers to help address the racial wealth gap.

A major highlight of this year was a grant from the Health Equity Fund at the Greater Washington Community Foundation. This partnership let us focus 2025 resources on helping Washington, DC residents buy homes in the District. Rooting this funding in health equity recognizes that secure homeownership is a vital "prescription" for the long-term well-being of DC families.

Our momentum was fueled by our first voiceRAISER, and we strengthened our leadership by welcoming new advisory board members from the DC area and Philadelphia.

To our National Board, our advisory board, and our nonprofit partners: thank you. Together, we are proving that housing justice is possible when a community decides to invest in its own neighbors.

## LESLIE HARTMANN CASE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BIRDSEED, INC.

**728**

We received 728 applications for our housing justice grants in 2025, up from 473 in 2024.

**31**

Our advisory board made 31 provisional grant awards in 2025, totaling $400,000.

**240K**

Homebuyers received $240,000 in grants at 23 closings in 2025.






# ORIGIN STORY

Nest DC's commitment to community has always taken flight through service and grants. They started 14 years ago with their time - building playgrounds, planting gardens, and supporting local initiatives. Then, they launched a micro-grant program, fueling bold ideas with minimal strings and a focus on passion. They funded murals, veteran farmers, and programs empowering disadvantaged communities. They knew it was good, but not enough.

The dream of homeownership, a key to wealth and stability, remained out of reach for many neighbors. This inequity, starkly illuminated by the murder of George Floyd, made Nest focus on reparative justice. They wanted to dismantle the historical exclusion and get resources into the hands of community members challenged by the system that created the racial wealth gap.

So, in late 2020, birdSEED's housing justice grant program sprouted from Nest DC's commitment of $215,000 and a collaboration with the Greater Washington Community Foundation. With an advisory board made up of members of the community, birdSEED is working to increase home ownership in the District. In 2022, birdSEED spread its wings as an independent 501(c)3 organization and expanded to Philadelphia.

birdSEED's mission is clear: birdSEED helps close the racial wealth gap by supporting historically disadvantaged communities achieve home ownership. We do this by providing "no strings attached" down payment assistance for first-time homebuyers. It's rapid philanthropy, getting resources to home buyers the day they close on their homes, building wealth and stability one home at a time.

We believe those impacted by systemic barriers to home ownership deserve a chance to build a future in their own home. We invite everyone, regardless of whether they directly caused the problem, to join us in undoing it. Every donation, every voice, helps us plant the seeds of a more equitable future. Together, we can bring equity home.

# JARHONDA & JASON'S ESSAY

Homeownership is a dream many hold near and dear, but for my fiancé and me, it often feels out of reach due to health challenges and financial hurdles. We have been diligently saving and striving toward this goal, yet the reality is that we cannot afford to buy a home in today's market without assistance. Programs like birdSEED are transformative because they not only provide tangible support toward a down payment, but also create a pathway for first-time buyers like us to achieve stability, security, and long-term generational wealth.

Balancing medical expenses and the high costs of housing has made saving for a down payment extremely difficult. Despite these setbacks, we remain determined to achieve the dream of homeownership, but without financial support, that goal continues to feel just beyond our reach.

birdSEED's support would be a game-changer. By reducing the upfront costs of purchasing a home such as the down payment and closing costs it would allow us to finally move forward with confidence. Most importantly, it would give us the security of knowing we can establish a safe and stable home environment where I can focus on my health and where we can build a future together.

As we plan our wedding, the thought of beginning our marriage in a home of our own represents the ultimate foundation for our future. To us, a grant from birdSEED would be more than just financial assistance; it would be a powerful gift of stability, love, and hope.

Ultimately, birdSEED would provide the bridge we need to transition from financial uncertainty to the fulfilling reality of homeownership.



*JaRhonda and her fiancé Jason wrote this essay as part of their application.*

*birdSEED supported their purchase with a $20,000 no-strings grant that never needs to be repaid. They bought in Ward 5 and will start their married life in their hometown of Washington, DC.*

# OUR FIRST VOICERAISER

On May 20, 2025, supporters gathered at The Mark at the Laundry, 1328 Florida Avenue NW in Washington, DC, for birdSEED's first voiceRAISER, a housing justice fundraiser.

We set a goal of $50,000. Thanks to 84 generous supporters, we raised $54,831 for no-strings-attached down payment grants for first-time homebuyers.

Guests also met fellow nonprofits doing great work in our community: DASH, DC Affordable Law Firm, Yachad and Washington Housing Conservancy.

The Nest Award for Housing Justice

At the voiceRAISER, Gabby Majewski of DC Affordable Law Firm accepted the Nest Award for Housing Justice, presented by birdSEED grantee Glendella Boone.

DCALF worked with Glendella to get her to closing when a death affected the home she was buying. Partners like DCALF make it possible for our grantees to cross the finish line and into their new homes.

Thank you to everyone who came, gave and cheered us on.



*birdSEED grantee Kyaira performing at the voiceRAISER, with birdSEED chair Marla Dean and DJ Ben Pitler in the background.*

BIRDSEED

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

YEAR 2025

**52 homes and counting: we passed 50 home purchases since our first grants in 2021.**

**$1 million milestone: birdSEED has now awarded $1,155,000 in provisional grants.**

**23 home closings in 2025: $240,000 in no-strings grants at 15 closings in the DC area and 8 in the Philadelphia area. At year end, 29 grantees were still searching for homes.**

**Record demand: 728 applications across two grant rounds; our advisory board provisionally awarded $400,000 to 31 applicants.**

**Investing in DC residents: a grant from the Health Equity Fund at the Greater Washington Community Foundation let us offer more support to DC residents buying in DC.**

**Our first voiceRAISER raised $54,831 from 84 supporters.**

**Nine new advisory board members, including grantees Meghan Palmer and Jaq "Jingle" Masters.**

**121 donors gave $419,074 to birdSEED in 2025.**




*Suntia at her closing*




*Vonyce at her closing*




*Nyki with his new keys*

# BIRDSEED ADVISORY BOARD

Rhonda Anderson
Onyinyechi Anyanwu
Kayla Baker
Harrison Beacher
Rahsaan Bernard
Terinee Bonds
Natasha Bonhomme
Asila Calhoun
Harry Christian, III
Benjamin Cyprien
Natalie Dallard
Jeff David
Marla Dean
Verne Dixon
Lateefah Durant
Zachi Elias
LaToya Fowler
Jennifer Green
Ebony Harris
Charlie Hopkins
Fred Hill
Ayesha Hudson
Sarah Jung
Pavan Khoobchandani
Lydia La Motta
Grace Langham
André Robert Lee
Julie Lopez
Diego Mariscal
Jaq Masters
Jonathan McNair
Paola Moya
Koube Ngaaje
Meghan Palmer
Lupi Quinteros-Grady
Radha Rajkotia
Greg Reaves
Joanna Shin
Asmara Sium
Leslie Smallwood-Lewis
Alicia Sokol
Craig Strent
Steph Witko Toler
Tatiana Torres
Ruby Taylor
Ashlee Traynham
Torrence S. Traynham
Terry Upshur
Veronica Vivas
Larry Waddell
Stacie Whisonant
Tiffani Whittaker
Kenneth B. Wilson, Jr.
lisa wise

# BIRDSEED NATIONAL BOARD

Jeff David
Marla Dean
Pavan Khoobchandani
André Robert Lee
Jonathan McNair
lisa wise

**500+**

**VOLUNTEER HOURS**



Our national board, advisory board and volunteers gave more than 500 hours to birdSEED in 2025.

# 2025 INDIVIDUAL DONORS

Donna Afshar
Maxine E Arnsdorf
Stephanie Bailey
Kate Bartkiewicz
Sara Benson
Jenny Bilfield
Maiava Blackwell
Terinee Bonds
Natasha Bonhomme
Gaile Browne
Asila Calhoun
Leslie and Scott Case
Luis Clavijo
Hallie Cohen
Cameron Cohen
Greg Curtis
Cindy Daniel
Jeff David
Frank Demarais
Verne Dixon
Ryne Duffy
Caitlin Duffy
Shannon and Mitchell Eger
Naomi Fainchtein
Ariane Gauchat
Nina and Sol Glasner
Elizabeth Goldberg and Andy Palumbo
Gary Goodweather
Marlon Griffith
Mary Ann Hartmann
Dan Hartmann
Chris Hartmann
Abigail Harwell
William Hegwood
Marco Henderson
Catherine Hildum
Christine Hill
Linda Hurwitz
Sarah Jung
Sharon Katz
Melissa Kopolow
Alyson Krokosky
Michelle L'Heureux
Regan Lamb
Ingrid Langham
Andre Lee
Nicky Lehming
Ariel Levinson-Waldman
Amanda Long
Amy Madigan
Matthew Mai
Gabby & Matt Majewski
Diego Mariscal
Ericka McGowan
Jonathan McNair
Jane Meacham
Akiva Meiselman
Tami Mohney
Shannon Murphy
Brendan Mysliwiec
Koube Ngaaje
Irina Novoselsky and Dan Schuster
Molly O'Reilly-Pol
Michele Odems
Folasade Ogunmokun
Meghan Palmer
Don Plank
April Robertson
Natalia Rodriguez
Maria Rodriguez
John Rothchild
Ashley Sands
David Scavo
Alison Scimeca
Hallie Sebastian
Art Shulman
Asmara Sium
Jenn Smira
Lisa Smock
Beatrice Rocca Stein
Traci Tait
Tracy Taylor
Judith Thomas
Veronica Vivas
Aaron Warren
Tiffani Whittaker
Nancy Wilson
lisa wise
John P. Wise & Marylsabel Azrael
Anonymous

**JOIN THIS LIST BY CLICKING HERE**

**EIN**

**86-3971267**

**728**

applications in two 2025 grant rounds (spring and fall)

**31**

provisional grants awarded, totaling $400,000

98% of the applications we received in 2025 (711 of 728) met our grant eligibility criteria. With more funding we would be able to award many more grants to applicants who meet our requirements.

# 2025 DONOR ORGANIZATIONS

A1M Solutions
Amalgamated Bank
Be Dynamic Fund
Birdwatch
Coalition Properties Group
DC Affordable Law Firm
Ecoverde
Gloria's Maid Services
Greater Washington Community Foundation
Greenspring Construction Services
Health Equity Fund
Homeside Mortgage
James D Silbert and Elizabeth Horton Charitable Fund
Momentum Title
MOYA Design Partners, LLC
Nature/Nurture Foundation
The Nelson Harlow Fund
Nest DC
Open Horizon
Otto/Whalley Family Foundation
PayPal Giving Fund
PBG Consulting
The Rankin Giving Fund
Sharing DC
Smith Holdings Group, LLC
Spur Local Inc.
Tammy Dowley-Blackman Group, LLC
Uncle Chip's
Upward Mindset
Wealth Insight Partners
Yachad

Our applicants hear about birdSEED from a wide variety of sources.

# HOW APPLICANTS HEARD ABOUT BIRDSEED




# APPLICATION REVIEW

Every application is scored by our volunteer advisory board on the impact a grant would have and the applicant's readiness to buy. The board looks at:

- length of residence in the DMV or Philadelphia area
- income and level of education
- whether the applicant is first in their family to buy, a returning citizen, 55+ or from a historically disadvantaged community
- barriers, including discrimination or a disability, that have affected their ability to buy
- their plan to manage financial obligations and home repairs
- whether buying lets them stay in the area or keep a home in the family
- impact on safety, security and access to resources
- steps taken in the home buying process, and their personal essay

Top-scoring applicants are interviewed by board members, who ask everyone the same ten questions. Scores are averaged, and grants go to the highest-scoring applicants.

# 2025 revenue: $425,418

- Corporate and foundation grants $258,042 61%
- Individual donations $107,080 25%
- voiceRAISER donations, sponsorships and event income $53,757 13%
- In-kind donations $5,470 1%
- Investment income $1,069 <1%



*Homebuyers received $240,000 at 2025 closings: $200,000 from birdSEED, Inc. and $40,000 from our fund at the Greater Washington Community Foundation. The expense line below counts wires sent during the year, so it differs: two January 2025 closings were wired in late 2024, and a $10,000 wire sent in November 2025 was returned in 2026.*

# 2025 expenses: $206,275



- Grants to homebuyers $190,000 92%
- Administration $16,275 8%

At year end, birdSEED, Inc. held $410,481 in net assets, and another $123,162 remained in our Greater Washington Community Foundation fund for future grants.

Source: birdSEED, Inc. Form 990 for 2025.




# 92%

92% of birdSEED's 2025 spending went directly to grants for homebuyers.

# 10%

10% of our 2025 grantees reported a disability; among all applicants it was 18%.

# 100%

In 2025 birdSEED had no paid staff. Our boards and volunteers gave more than 500 hours to make our grants possible.

# 77%

77% of our 2025 grantees were the first in their family to buy a home.

# 13%

4 of our 31 grantees in 2025 identified as Hispanic or Latinx.

# 97%

30 of our 31 grantees in 2025 identified as Black or African American.

# 2025 AWARDEE LOCATIONS

Washington, DC area 20 grants $310,000

Philadelphia area 11 grants $90,000

Total 31 grants $400,000

# 2025 PURCHASE LOCATIONS

Philadelphia 8

Prince George's County, MD 7

Montgomery County, MD 3

Washington, DC (Wards 5 and 8) 3

Charles County, MD 1

Fairfax County, VA 1

Total 23 homes

# GRANT ELIGIBILITY

- Grants range from $5,000 to $20,000 and never need to be repaid.
- Applicants must have a combined household income of $150,000 or less.
- Applicants must be first-time homebuyers (and if married, their spouse must not own or have ever owned a home).
- The home must be the applicant's primary residence.
- DC area: buy in DC; Montgomery or Prince George's County, MD; Arlington or Fairfax County, VA; or Alexandria or Falls Church, VA, after at least three years living in DC, MD and/or VA.
- Philadelphia area: buy in Philadelphia or nearby counties after at least three years living in the region.
- Grants are paid to the title company at closing and can be paired with programs like HPAP or Turn the Key.
- Grantees have 120 days to use the award, with extensions case by case.




## APPLY ONLINE AT WWW.BIRDSEED.ORG

# 2026 AND BEYOND

## Our board is focused on expanding our team and collaborating with other organizations. Our goals include:

**Expand our team:** Build the capacity to give every applicant and donor personal support.

**Collaborate with other organizations:** Partner with nonprofits that share our vision, including homebuyer education events and webinars.

**Double the impact again:** Grow the number of grants awarded, especially in DC and Philadelphia neighborhoods with the greatest barriers to homeownership.

**Secure major funding:** Win a major foundation or corporate grant for long-term sustainability.

**Grow our boards:** Recruit high-impact national board members and expand our community advisory board.

**Build community:** Host fundraisers and reparative-justice conversations in DC and Philadelphia.

**Grow our recurring circle:** Expand our monthly donors for predictable funding of future grant rounds.

**Stay radically transparent:** Keep giving no-strings grants straight to homebuyers on closing day.

**We need you! Join us by donating today.**

