



"I'm an alum of my
high school, Chicago
Scholars, and of
Middlebury College—
but my favorite place
to be an alum of is
Marwen."

Marwen

Impact Report • 2024



Marwen

Executive Director Letter

A Year of Inspiration and Community

As 2024 came to a close, we took time to reflect on the art, connections, and experiences that left a lasting mark on our community. We're deeply grateful to everyone who believes in the power of art to shape lives—young people, families, colleagues, Board members, and donors alike.

At Marwen, we see firsthand how art fuels a young person's skills, nourishes their soul, and shapes their identity. Our students are not only citizens of Chicago, but citizens of the world. Especially now, as complex conversations around culture are shifting, Marwen believes that access and equity go hand in hand. We are steadfast in embracing diversity and inclusion and addressing the needs of our community. The stories shared here offer just a glimpse into the courses, outreach, and programs that propel Marwen's mission forward. Each moment reflects what's possible when creativity and community come together—and every achievement is made possible by your unwavering support and trust.

Welcoming Young People At Marwen, there are no fees—just a space for young people from across Chicago to make art, build friendships, and learn together, all while growing in confidence and potential. This year, we welcomed almost 800 unique students into our 68 courses, each artist bringing their own way of seeing. Many students enrolled in multiple courses, stretching their creativity across mediums as varied as animation, sculpture, and zine printing. Every term culminated in an exhibition celebrating student work, our galleries buzzing with conversation, laughter and pride.

Opening Pathways to the Future Marwen's Pathway programs continued to provide students with tools to pursue sustainable creative lives. This year, our team facilitated 60 sessions, offered 10 workshops, and hosted College and Career events, a Summer Family Festival, and a Third Spaces panel discussion. We provided the community with voter registration information and made sure students and families understood how skills learned in art class translate to other fields. From internships and portfolio-building classes to financial aid guidance and resume coaching, each offering was crafted to empower young artists as they transitioned to higher education or the workforce—giving them the confidence to pursue their goals and shape a thriving path forward.

Connecting Across Chicago Building on that energy, Marwen's presence extended far beyond our building. We partnered with the Art Institute and the MCA for teen events and returned to the One of a Kind Show and the Millennium Park Art Market to introduce new audiences to our courses. We worked with our friends at Wrigley Field to welcome the DNC to Chicago and partnered with CreativeMornings to gather artists from across the city for connection and collaboration. Our team visited schools, attended neighborhood festivals, and appeared on WGN to innovatively expand Marwen's reach—all while contributing to the vibrant pulse of Chicago's cultural life.

Celebrating Student Work Adding another milestone this year, we published a book! *The People You Meet at Marwen* is a collection of speed drawings created by our students over the past decade. Showcasing their talents, the book reflects how our classes prioritize discovery over perfection and encourages young artists to find their unique voice.

Building for Tomorrow Last, strengthening our leadership team, Marwen established an Associate Board composed of corporate, nonprofit, and civic leaders—including Marwen alumni. This board supports Marwen's mission through community building and fundraising, while fostering professional growth among its members. In tandem, we relaunched our Program Committee from which we've gained insights on growing enrollment and deepening student experience.

Carrying the spirit of inspiration and belonging, we step into 2025 energized by the young artists who make Marwen what it is. Their creativity shapes not only their own futures, but also the community we're building together. Many thanks to our supporters for joining us on this journey. The best is yet to come.

With Gratitude,

Akilah Halley, Executive Director

Highlights

from Our Year



Increasing Enrollment

This past year we focused on increasing enrollment in order to improve Marwen's sustainability, reach, and student experience. Fuller classes strengthen peer learning and let help our values of joy, creativity, access, equity, and community shine. In addition, more students equals more lives transformed! We've been able to boost enrollment year over year and will continue to build upon these efforts in 2025.

Planning for Change

In 2024, Marwen's Youth Pathways team guided students and families through transitions to high school, college, and the workforce. In addition to mapping skills learned in our courses to related careers and higher education, workshops like Portfolio Day, Visual Poetry, Intro to Publishing, and our College & Career Fair gave students opportunities to engage with new networks and connect their creativity to future possibilities.

Fundraising

Art Fair 2024 was our most successful auction to date, raising over \$120,000 in sponsorship and auction sales. More than 300 people attended and 267 pieces of art were sold, with every young artist selling at least one work. Marwen gives 75% of a sale directly to the artists, ensuring they benefit directly from the night's success. This year also marked the launch of our Associate Board, whose efforts—along with the incredible support of our Board and sponsors—made a significant impact.

Preparing for the Future

This is a significant moment in time for Marwen. In the face of shifting cultural discussions and an ever-evolving fundraising landscape, we remain centered by the power of our mission and community. To ensure access to art for generations to come, we're investing boldly in the future by:

- Expanding course offerings to include 5th graders.
- Relaunching our Artward Bound program at Taliesin in Wisconsin.
- Strengthening our fundraising base through cultivation events and increased outreach.
- Relaunching the Family Advisory Committee.



"Marwen's a special place with amazing opportunities. I meet alum in my professional life all the time...it's an incredible network!"



marwen

By the Numbers

Our values shape every decision. From how we design and teach courses to how we steward every contribution, we're always evaluating, revising, and moving forward. Since our founding, more than 16,000 students have participated in over 1,500 courses, plus 200 internships provided along the way. The 2024 numbers below add precision to who's involved in our story and what Marwen offers.



1359

Young people enrolled in courses and spring break workshops



772

Number of unique students



79

Courses and spring break workshops offered



230

Course and spring break workshop hours provided



60

College and Career counseling sessions provided



10

Pathways workshops offered



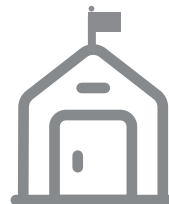
78%

Young people from low-income families



88%

Young people who identify as BIPOC



88%

Young people in public school



8%

Young people homeschooled



“You guys were sooo helpful and patient and you’re really good at making an environment where people can interact and form friendships.”



Marwen

Financial Statements

2024

ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 564,042
Accounts receivable and prepaid expenses	314,883
Contributions receivable, net	2,135
Investments	12,114,981
Other assets, net	97,639
Property and equipment, net	7,230,401
Total assets	\$ 20,324,081

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

LIABILITIES

Accounts payable	\$ 79,125
Other liabilities, net	(189,049)
Bonds payable	3,717,870
Total liabilities	\$ 3,607,947

NET ASSETS

Without donor restrictions	\$ 16,451,155
With donor restrictions	264,979
Total net assets	\$ 16,716,134

Total liabilities and net assets

\$ 20,324,081

FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2024.

The financial information presented above is derived from Marwen's audited financial statements. This information is a summary and does not include all disclosures required by accounting principles accepted in the United States. As a result, it does not purport to present Marwen's entire financial conditions or results of operations.

Marwen

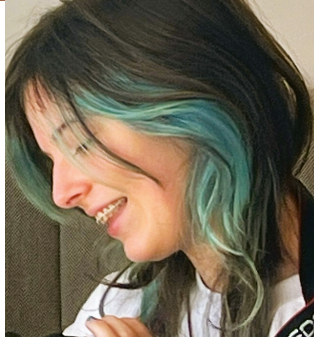
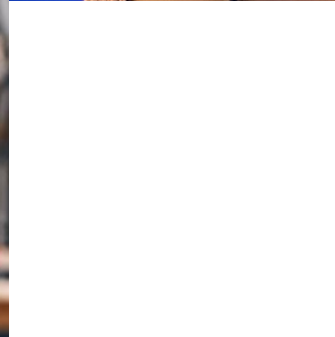
"Marwen, keep doing what you're doing because it really does make a difference."

—Marwen Student



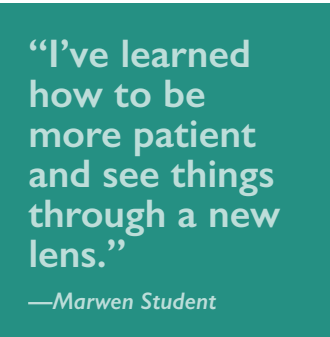
"Every time I walk in the door and go up those stairs at Marwen, I feel better."

—Marwen Student



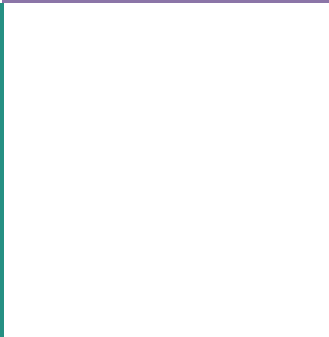
"I feel like I'm among people who see the beauty in everything and it's very welcoming."

—Marwen Student



"I've learned how to be more patient and see things through a new lens."

—Marwen Student



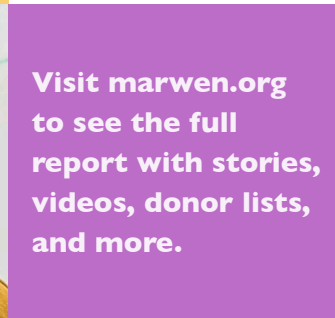
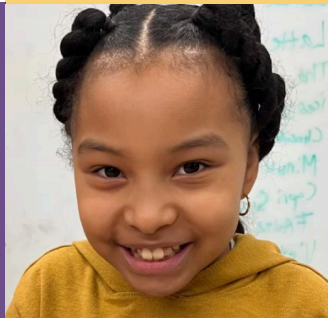
"I have it in me to become an artist."

—Marwen Student



"The teachers are super supportive and positive! I didn't know I could do all the things I've done during my journey."

—Marwen Student



Visit marwen.org to see the full report with stories, videos, donor lists, and more.

