Message from the Executive Director

At the conclusion of last year’s annual report, we looked ahead to 2018 with the hope of launching some new initiatives: our first book, our first Effie Center After Hours location at a middle school, our first summer camp for teens and our first physical space. We also pledged to extend our digital influence and build upon our foundation of services designed to meet our organizational objectives and diversify our income. With God working through each of you, we reached all of these goals but one. Our dream of bringing to life Austin’s first 24/7 space dedicated to helping others grow personally, professionally and spiritually, has not found the support it needs just yet.

There were plenty of accomplishments to celebrate in 2018. Financially, we grew our income by 20% from the previous year and retained 58% of our individual donors. Digitally, we grew our social media following 11%. Physically, we experienced a 12% growth rate by serving 1,007 unique individuals. These are modest numbers, yet ones we are very proud of considering we are still predominantly a volunteer led organization with only two full time staff members. It can be especially difficult to calculate the financial efficiency of non profits but for comparison sake, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Central Texas (BBBS) is currently attempting to raise $25,000 in an effort to match 20 more kids with mentors. That’s approximately $1,250 per mentee. We will enter into 2019 with a goal of raising $30,000 to start 200 teens on a leadership development path that will put them in front of mentors for years. That’s approximately $150 per mentee. While BBBS is a great organization doing amazing things, comparisons like this highlight one of the many reasons why we believe what we are building will redefine the way mentoring and discipleship is done.

As far as our aforementioned accomplishments, our book received visibility on a national stage thru Focus on the Family’s daily podcast and conferences such as the National Youth Workers Convention in St. Louis. Our After Hours launch at Hopewell Middle school served 10% of the student body on opening day and 23% by the end of the year! Our first camp brought in 75 at-risk teens, generated an amazing story you will read about in this report, and opened the door for us to reproduce the camp in other parts of the US as well as a partnership with a local county judge! We even launched our first podcast which debuted on iTunes and Spotify in the spring entitled Church Misfit.

Regarding our day to day operations, much of our time went to recruiting and training volunteers to keep up with the number of students we were serving through After Hours. We brought to life a new program called Equinox, which expanded the breadth of our young adult community outreach. Seeds were planted in preparation for a 24/7 center, content was created to train, encourage and empower, and our paid services took a significant step forward.

Several years ago it might have been difficult to explain what it is that we do at Catalyst and how all the moving parts are designed to work together. Now, however, we receive messages like the one below frequently. It’s ongoing confirmation that we are on the right track and that there is a hunger for something new when it comes to how we go about leading others personally, professionally and
spiritually. Everything continues to steadily align for us and we believe that the only thing holding us back from really taking off is the lack of a physical space to center our community around.

In this report, we will dive into some of the details behind our developments as well as a story of one teen that was saved from a planned suicide thanks to a volunteer at our camp. We will conclude with a look at 2019 and what we need to continue to build upon this mission. Eight years have passed since myself and a few high school interns dreamt up this crazy idea we called Catalyst. The excitement of bringing this to life has not faded and while the journey has not been easy, stories of the lives impacted along the way have kept us going.

Thank you for taking the time to review our progress and support this work. Your partnership is such a blessing.

Joe Elliott
Executive Director
Financials

While 2018 was a record setting year for income and donations, we feel we were not able to give much attention to our fundraising efforts overall. In 2017, we raised $136,263 from 50 donors for an average gift size of $227/month with a 42% donor retention rate from the previous year. In 2018, we raised $138,413 from 46 donors for an average gift size of $250/month and a 58% donor retention. Donations sizes ranged from $25 to $70,000.

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In addition to individual contributions, we received over $25,000 in funding from our new partnership with Williamson County Juvenile Services. We were awarded a $5,000 grant from the Future Fund through the Greater Round Rock Community Foundation. Took in $4,000 for Catalyst Services and had recurring contributions for the Effie Center and a few corporate donors. We did not have any matching grants or donations in 2018 which, in years past, has been a positive catalyst for us to raise funds.

Our increase in expenses was largely due to the opening of the Effie Center After Hours program at Hopewell Middle School. We also had increased spending in areas related to building out Catalyst Services. For 2019, we will expect to see a further increase in admin costs as we look to hire additional staff to keep up with our growing student base. Additional effort and strategies will also be placed on fundraising initiatives with planned events occurring quarterly.

Catalyst Teen Center explores new frontiers

For years now, we have had the privilege of bringing our Purpose Project curriculum to churches and schools who have welcomed our approach to mentoring and discipleship. In 2018, we were able to bring our message of hope and purpose to the most challenged teens in Central Texas.

It started in March with our new strategic partnership with Williamson County Juvenile Services (Wilco). Wilco provided $20,000 in funding to help us launch our 3rd Effie Center After Hours location at Hopewell Middle School, widely considered one of the most challenged schools in the district. When we signed in 10% of the entire school on opening day, we knew we were on to something. Not only did the teens come back the next week, they also brought
friends! We finished the semester with an 80% retention rate and closed the year by connecting with 244 students (23% of the entire school)!

The success of the launch led to invites for us to bring the Purpose Project Workshop into The Round Rock Opportunity Center (the district's alternative school), and to teens incarcerated in the Juvenile Detention Facility. These were Austin’s most troubled teens with family backgrounds and histories that were tragic enough to pierce anyone’s heart. They met us with reluctant, uninterested attitudes at first. Slouched in their chairs, arms crossed, eyes refusing to make contact with us, deep sighs of boredom as they assumed this was just going to be another thing they had to sit through. By the end of the workshop, things were radically different. Not only did they engage with us, they opened up about their life experiences, asked questions about their unique design, smiles and even pockets of laughter began to break out. They talked about their dreams and hopes for the future with us, even asked us how they could connect with us when they “got out”.

With the help of generous partners, we were able to scholarship over 50 students to our first, Throat Punch Normal (TPN) retreat later that summer. We spent 27 hours helping teens unlock how their unique design was made to impact the world. Here is one story from one of our small group leaders at the retreat who was able to intervene in one young girl’s life just before she had planned to commit suicide.
Dear Catalyst Supporters,

I had the privilege of serving at the Throat Punch Normal Retreat as a small group leader for the high school girls and they could not have been more diverse. For example, one of my girls was home schooled and lived in India for two years while the girl sitting next to her was living in Austin with her aunt because her home environment was abusive. Her parents neglected to provide basic necessities such as food, water, and shelter.

We started off easy the first night by asking them what they like to do for fun and their answers were all over from hanging out with friends to ice skating in hopes of auditioning for Disney on Ice. Next we asked them to describe their life experiences and how they have had a positive or negative impact. You could feel the room shift as I watched their eyes begin to look down with hesitance as to who would be going first. Only a couple of girls shared their story and the difficulties they have faced. A few shut down completely. One of them, in full sass and attitude, told me she would not be talking about any of her life experiences because it was too hard to talk about. I assured all of them that they did not have to share anything they were uncomfortable with and that this was a safe place.

Throughout the retreat we walked through their gifts, passions, and life experiences and they began to see how they were wired using the Purpose Project methodology in Throat Punch Normal. We pieced it all together to give a whole picture of their potential to achieve incredible dreams. (Yes, even the young lady who started off saying that she was not going to discuss any of her past.) At the last session, she shared that her dream was to become a leader in Nigeria to bring light to injustices that occur there and show the world all her home country has to offer. Talk about big dreams and she definitely has what it takes to achieve it!
This sweet girl, who was living here with her Aunt, did not understand why we were asking them to discuss their dreams and passions and why what they have been through was impactful and could affect them later on. You see, she had never been in a safe environment where someone cared about her in that way. She would come home at 4AM when she was living with her parents and they wouldn’t say a word to her about where she had been or what a 14 year old girl like herself was doing out that late. She had felt it was all hopeless and she tried to take her own life without any of her family members knowing.

Each girl in my group had a similar story of devastating events where they felt like they did not belong and shouldn’t be here. Multiple stories of suicide attempts, hard home lives, and a lot of confusion about why they feel the way they do, struggle with the things they do, and figuring out what actually makes them happy verses what were habits they developed to numb it all. I was able to witness these girls give comfort to one another and to say things like “I see this in you and yeah, me too. You have a gift with compassion, or listening, etc.” The encouraged each other in their talents and helped dream of the possibilities for their futures. They may have all entered this camp extremely opposite from one another but they left with a deeper understanding and appreciation for their differences. They left seeing a more hopeful picture of the world we all live in and most importantly that they belong in it!

As we all said our goodbyes to one another, they shared how impactful the retreat was for them. Some even told me how they were not looking forward to it when they arrived and that their parents made them come but were so glad they did. Each one said in their own words how the environment we provided made them feel safe to open up to a stranger and that they would never forget this weekend.
I encouraged all of them to reach out if they ever needed anything and gave them my cell phone number. The next day, my husband Zac and I were heading out of town when I got a text from my small group girl who was taken away from her parents and living with her Aunt. She was reaching out because she had decided a while back that on the 2nd of September she was going to commit suicide and take her life. I quickly realized that she was talking about today. She went on to say how she didn’t want to die but she also didn’t want to live. She just wanted to sleep for a long time and maybe wake back up. She planned it all during the church service that day and when she came home she couldn’t find anything strong enough to do the job. That’s when she messaged me.

I quickly began to find out where she was, if she was alone, and who I could get in touch with fast and could get to her. Over the next couple of days, I was able to meet with her and her aunt, find counselors for her to see and set up a weekly time I could grab coffee with her and keep the conversations going. I do not think it was by coincidence that she planned to do this on September 2nd and we met August 31st. It was because people had made themselves available to be present in front of very vulnerable and confused teens. They were interested and invested in their stories and were able to speak truth to them and to expose lies they were believing. They were given tools and resources to use rather than ignore. They were seen, cared for, and given a platform to discover their voice.

And if I’m being honest... they helped me find my voice a little more too.

Kaitlyn

We later discovered that 5 other teens at the camp had confessed to attempting suicide that year. Our hearts were heavy with compassion for adversity and pain these students were enduring. To see them leave the retreat with not just hope, but a plan of action and a new network of support was one of the most exciting moments of our year.
In the fall, the Future Fund with the Greater Round Rock Community Foundation invited us to come and present the mission and work of Catalyst to their philanthropic circle. As a result, we were awarded a $5,000 grant to support our efforts in the schools! A month later we received a call from Justice of the Peace, Edna Staadt’s office, inviting us to bring our workshop to teens in Cedar Park who are at risk of more serious legal ramifications due to drugs, truancy, violence and more. We held our first “court appointed” purpose project workshop for 12 teens in late December. They came in with the same uninterested expressions and attitudes. By the end, they were exchanging phone numbers with our volunteers and willingly taking copies of our book, Throat Punch Normal, to go through at home!

This past year confirmed to us that our message and methodology is desperately needed and that now was the time for us to more aggressively pursue funding and partnerships that will help us continue to build upon these relationships in the future.

**Equinox brings new life to our young adult community**

Austin Lit, the program name for our young adult outreach, has been with us since the beginning. We have met in churches, coffee shops, homes and even bars. Our vision has always been to settle this community into a space it could call home. While we were not able to make enough headway on launching our long awaited 24-7 space, we were blessed to find a community partner with Anderson Terrace. Owner, Shari Arnold, opened up her beautiful venue to our young adult community allowing us to host live music nights, create a reflective environment and do events that inspired personal, professional and spiritual growth.

We developed the concept of Austin Lit into what we began to call Equinox. Our goal was to continue to reach a 20 something demographic that considered itself spiritual but not religious. These Millennials were hungry for community, authenticity and direction. Our design centered around treating Equinox as a hybrid church for those who wanted to grow personally, professionally and spiritually. You can read more about how we did this and what exactly we mean by “hybrid church” at [https://www.catalystcollective.community/equinox/](https://www.catalystcollective.community/equinox/)

By the end of the year, we had 90 members and visitors in the community with a few major wins. The first of which was that we had graduate students who had been a part of our After Hours program at McNeil High School start to plug in to the Equinox community! We were also able to help several young adults find jobs, develop their resumes, publish their first blogs, write their first songs, and use their talents to give back in meaningful ways. We created a digital forum online and saw members encourage, support and pray for one another in times of need. It was a beautiful picture of a very diverse group of people coming together to wrestle with the bigger questions of identity, purpose and belonging.

As we enter into 2019, we plan to offer even more ways that young adults can engage with us at Equinox and take steps to discover and develop their gifts and passions. We have no doubt that this community will take off once we can establish a permanent space.
Catalyst Services extends our impact and earned revenue potential

Catalyst Services is the term we are using to describe the education and earned income side of our mission. Through camps, workshops, success coaching, books and keynote speaking, we are creating new ways to drive income while helping others bring their unique purpose to life.

In January, our book, Throat Punch Normal, went live. We did not have the money to do much marketing for it so we leveraged our social media following to make a more organic push. We tested some paid advertising through Facebook and radio spots on Focus on the Family’s daily podcast. Effort was also put into promoting the book and our services at local church conferences in Texas. In the end, we learned much about what doesn’t work very well and found a few strategies that could pay off big for us in 2019.

The highlight of the year was being able to host two breakout sessions at the annual National Youth Workers Convention in St. Louis in November. Over 3000 student pastors and youth workers were on hand and our mini breakout session was a massive hit! Throat Punch Normal was drawing a ton of interest and the conversations we engaged in seemed to be non-stop.

Our Purpose Project workshop made its way to Houston to help a congregation of 200 dive deeper into how they are uniquely designed and position themselves to be more strategic in their growth and outreach. We spoke at a variety of events from public schools and private businesses to Williamson County’s Annual Employee Retreat with 150 in attendance. We even booked our first gig outside of Texas as Concordia Church in Denver hired us to bring our Throat Punch Normal retreat to their teens in 2019!

Much energy went into figuring out how to present, market and deliver on these services. We expect to see significant growth in this area in the coming year which will bring not only more revenue to fuel our mission, but also continue to develop our brand and reputation.

The Social Reach of the Catalyst Collective

There are still many that don’t realize Generation Z (those born after 1999) is the first digitally native generation in history. They grew up with smart phones, Google, and now, virtual reality. Their lives are lived online through social media platforms. Facebook alone has billions of active users daily. What this means for anyone who desires to influence young people today is that our digital presence must be as big, if not bigger, than our physical presence.
In 2018, we saw growth across all of our social outlets as shown in the chart above. What’s most important is not the numbers themselves, but what they mean for our overall strategy. To be a modern day influence you need multiple touchpoints and that is exactly what these companies allow us to have. Whatever conversation we have in person, whatever teaching we give to a group, is reaffirmed again and again online. Through posts, private messages, pictures and videos we can continue to build a community that physically and digitally exists to bring each person’s unique purpose to life.

As we move forward, expect to see more content delivered through these platforms and more private Facebook groups created to help us mentor and lead others better. Over 50% of our donors and volunteers last year stated they heard about us through a post they saw online. We expect this to grow and are preparing our organization to be at the forefront of how nonprofits and churches are using technology to engage and empower their people.

**Five Strategic Goals for 2019**

This coming year our eye is on expanding our breadth and depth. By putting more emphasis on finding a strategic partner to build out our space and launching our one of a kind mentorship program we are confident we will reach more teens, young adults, future volunteers and donors while providing a pathway for more intense leadership development to those we already serve. These 3 initiatives are how we plan to do it.

1. **Find a strategic partner(s) that can help us acquire a location for our center**

   This will take a large degree of networking and divine intervention. We believe God will move on the heart of one or several potential individuals who will be excited about this vision and generously support it through donating space, land or finances. We are currently in the process of securing our own loan but trying to be patient as well.

   As a first step in this process, we are putting together a short term planning committee to help us research all the costs associated with what we desire to build out. Once this is completed, we will have a thorough blueprint we can share with potential partners who can donate time, talent, land or finances to help us bring our long awaited center to life.

2. **Increase the After Hours volunteer team to provide a foundation for launching a unique mentor program**

   We need twice as many volunteers as we currently have to keep up with the number of students and young adults coming to our programs. There are some creative ideas on the horizon for how we can drive more volunteers and it will come down to our staff
simply putting more focus on this area. Ultimately, we believe that having our own space would solve this issue as it would put us in front of more potential volunteers on a daily basis.

We do not have a name for our mentor program yet but are excited about the blueprint and potential. This mentor program will be a non traditional take on mentor programs and focus on developing students according to their unique design. More details will be released in Q1 of 2019. For now, we must raise an additional $30,000 in order to officially get this off the ground.

3. Increase revenue by 20%

In 2019, we plan to add some new fundraisers and events to drive new donations each quarter. As we highlighted in this report, we believe that our book, workshops, camps, coaching and speaking are a gateway for us to further help others bring their unique purpose to life and also drive revenue we can use to support our local programs. Marketing and networking effort will be placed on conferences that can continue to push our mission and message across the US.

How you can get involved

Our heart wants to say YES to every young person we meet that is looking for guidance, support and counsel. The challenge is we do not have enough staff or volunteers available to connect with the number of young people we are meeting. The greatest gift you could give to the next generation is your effort. Here is how you can join the ground-breaking work Catalyst is doing and experience the development of your own gifts and passions at the same time.

There are many ways to make a difference including:

Catalyst Board of Directors - We meet 8 times a year, typically on Sundays from 2pm to 4pm CST. A wide range of skills are desired including legal services, marketing, admin, small business management, fundraising and more.

Catalyst Advisory Board - You can also be a non voting member of our board and enjoy the same level of impact as a traditional board member

Effie Center After Hours Volunteer - Working with teens is easier than you think. Even if you are unsure about how you might be effective 1:1 with them, you can always support the program by helping us with check in, concessions, scheduling free classes, teaching free classes and so much more.
**Content Creator** - Maybe your gift is writing or teaching? We are looking for individuals interested in contributing to our blog, joining us on podcasts and helping us create videos. Topics can range from personal, professional or spiritual insights and encouragement.

**Digital Champion** - We are looking for individuals who actively promote and share our content online. You can help us extend our reach with simple likes and comments that will put our message in front of those who follow you as well!

**Equinox Volunteer** - Do you have a passion to serve young adults in our community? Equinox is looking for musicians, artists, mentors and those willing to cook a meal once a month for a community of Millennials with so much potential but few champions in their life.

You probably have a skill or talent that can really move our mission forward but you don’t realize it yet. We would love to hear from you! Click the “Get Involved” tab on our website and let’s start a conversation about where your gift and passions intersect our needs as a mission driven community.

**Become a financial partner**

We enter 2019 with a short term goal to raise $30,000 in new donations in order to launch our much anticipated mentor program. Our goal is to send 200 teens through this journey of self discovery by the end of the year. You can learn more and begin your partnership today at [https://www.catalystcollective.community/sponsors/](https://www.catalystcollective.community/sponsors/)

For those that enjoy donating in other ways, we created an Amazon Wish List and became registered as an Amazon Charitable Organization. If you shop online, all you need to do is go to [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com) and search for “Catalyst Teen Center”. Amazon will then donate a percentage of everything you purchase back to us!

If you prefer more conventional methods, Donations by mail may be sent to:

Catalyst Teen Center  
2006 Hoffman Ct  
Cedar Park, TX 78613

A special thank you to some of our key corporate partners and Board of Directors that helped make 2018 amazing!
Catalyst Board of Directors:

Evan Blache, Chairman
Andrea Austin, Vice Chairman
Julie Bickley, Secretary
Alex Ream, Treasurer
Marvin Kelly, Board Member
Benjamin Redic, Board Member
Eric Mejia, Board Member
Cindy Anderson, Board Member

Wendell Williams, Board Member
Kaitlyn Tinney, Advisory Board
2018 Strategic Partners & Award Winners

Social Media Ambassador - Eric Mejia
Spiritual Ambassador - Stephanie McMurray
Iron Man Award - Marvin & Jackie Kelly, James Mako
Rookie of Year - David Valdez
Class Champion Award - Joe Grubbs, Lynda Garinger
Community Catalyst - Williamson County Juvenile Svcs
Volunteer of the Year Award - Kaitlyn Tinney
Final Thought

If you were to ask us what it means to be a community designed to bring someone’s unique purpose to life, we would likely stumble trying to express in words the beauty and miracles we see each year. It begins by establishing a safe, neutral environment where all feel welcome to share their story. Then it develops as space is provided for all to express their thoughts, emotions and talents. A mutual connection and trust is then realized when you are consistently met with respect from people who genuinely want to know you. Relationships are moved to deeper levels as personal, professional and spiritual goals are challenged and pathways to develop are at your fingertips.

Before long you find yourself desiring to learn more about what is at the core of this community that has supported and blessed you so much. You might not agree with their religious views but you can’t deny the power of what you have experienced through their love. It inspires you to question things like purpose, identity and belonging. You wonder if maybe you have spent much of your life experiencing a broken form of Christianity and that perhaps this community is allowing you to experience parts of God you never thought were real. For the first time in a long time, you begin to open yourself up to new thoughts about God, purpose, and the way you have been made to make a difference in the world.

A community designed to bring your unique purpose to life is carefully, patiently, bringing out the best in you. No matter what heartache comes your way, you are comforted because you are not alone. It is still an imperfect experience but so much better than what you thought was possible. If Jesus is anywhere behind this community, you reason, then maybe it’s worth reevaluating your theology and asking yourself if there is more to this life than you had originally assumed.

That’s when you discover that your journey is only just beginning. The best is yet to come.