

2025 Year in Review

Where Learning Connects Communities



What an incredible year 2025 has been for Kalamoo Community Outreach! From serving **83-90 students weekly** in our LEGO Education programs to engaging over **8,900 community members** at major events, we've made significant strides toward our mission to transform Suffolk into a regional STEAM hub.


This report celebrates our collective achievements, honors our dedicated partners, and highlights the transformative impact we're making in our community—one brick, one student, one connection at a time.

Major Community Events

National Night Out Suffolk Obici

Date: August 5, 2025 • **Location:** King's Fork High School • **Attendance:** As many as 8,500 residents

As Lead Organizer for the 12th consecutive year, Cusi coordinated this flagship community safety event that brought together over 100 organizations across healthcare, education, government, and business sectors. Through extraordinary community partnerships, we delivered an event valued at **\$76,293.64**—demonstrating a remarkable **28.03:1 community investment ratio**. For every \$1 in cash spent, our community contributed \$28.03 in value through dedicated partnerships.

 *In recognition of this extraordinary community impact, National Night Out Suffolk Obici was honored by the **Suffolk News-Herald** as **Best of Suffolk 2025 - National Night Out Event**.*

This event has always been Cusi's labor of love—a special evening where we see our community come together in a fun and safe environment. It's a chance for families to interact with our first responders in a positive, welcoming setting, building the trust and connections that make Suffolk stronger.

Key Partnerships:

- **Sentara Health:** 64+ healthcare professionals providing comprehensive health screenings and wellness education (320+ volunteer hours)
- **Suffolk Public Schools:** Back-to-School supply distribution across 12 locations (120 staff hours)
- **City of Suffolk:** 15+ departments providing infrastructure and public safety support
- **Corporate Partners:** 25+ businesses including McDonald's, 7-Eleven, Blue Bell, QVC, State Farm, Priority Mitsubishi, and TowneBank
- **Local Organizations:** The Mount at Suffolk, Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, YMCA, and numerous faith-based and community service organizations



Suffolk Bricktacular & STEAM Event (2nd Annual)

Date: June 28, 2025 • **Location:** 123 N. Main Street (Former SunTrust Bank), Downtown Suffolk • **Attendance:** 400 guests



Our second annual Suffolk Bricktacular

brought families together for a free celebration of creativity and STEAM learning. This year, we moved the event to 123 N. Main Street in the heart of downtown, partnering with the **City of Suffolk**

Economic Development Department and many local businesses to encourage our guests to explore and support Suffolk's vibrant downtown. Through strategic collaboration, we delivered an event valued at **\$7,515-\$8,515** with only \$1,015 in direct cash expenses—demonstrating a **6.4-7.4:1 community investment ratio**.

Economic Impact: We distributed downtown restaurant coupon flyers to all 400 attendees. One local restaurant reported that they **more than doubled their business** on a typical Saturday—demonstrating how Kalamoo events benefit not just education but also our entire community's economic vitality.

Featured Activities & Partners:

- **NASA Langley Research Center:** Led engineering workshops with hands-on projects that students took home
- **Naval Information Warfare Center (NIWC):** Cutting-edge technology demonstrations
- **Suffolk Police CSI Department:** Forensic science demonstrations showing real-world STEM applications
- **Virginia-DC FIRST LEGO League:** Computer stations for hands-on coding and robotics exploration
- **Suffolk-themed LEGO Build Contest** with multiple age categories, celebrating Suffolk landmarks and culture
- **Timothy Roisen Memorial Award:** Honored the local LEGO educator's legacy and dedication to youth education
- Sensory-friendly quiet room for families needing calm, low-stimulation space

Community Support: The event was made possible by 18 dedicated volunteers who contributed 141 hours of service, 17 sponsors and supporters from diverse sectors, and 13+ partner organizations providing interactive demonstrations. Distinguished guests included Sheriff D. Miles, Commonwealth's Attorney N. Pleas, Interim City Manager K. Hughes, and Deputy City Manager Azeez Felder, demonstrating strong city leadership support for STEAM education.

Cost Efficiency: With only \$1,015 in direct expenses for 400 attendees (just \$2.54 per person), this event demonstrated that high-quality, accessible STEAM programming is achievable through strategic community partnerships.

Core Educational Programs

LEGO Education Programs

Our mobile LEGO Education programs served **83-90 students weekly** at two locations, using Virginia SOL and NGSS-approved curriculum. This fall, we introduced the LEGO Education BricQ curriculum, bringing physics concepts to life through hands-on exploration of forces, motion, balance, momentum, and energy transfer.



Program Growth & Evolution: From January to July 2025, we are incredibly thankful for our partnership with **Allonge Dance Academy**, where we hosted two classes a month for our LEGO education program. As demand grew and we needed more space to accommodate more families, we formed a new and critical partnership with **Suffolk Christian Church**. Beginning in September, we started hosting weekly competitive and non-competitive engineering and robotics classes, reaching 83-90 students each week. This expansion reflects the community's strong desire for quality STEAM education and our commitment to meeting that need.

Program Locations:

Day	Location	Students Served
Mondays	Suffolk Christian Church	28 students (9 on competitive teams, 19 in STEAM club); all homeschoolers with full parent participation
Wednesdays	God's Homeschool Warriors Co-op	26 students
Thursdays	Suffolk Christian Church	29 students (11 on competitive teams, 18 in STEAM club); blend of homeschool, private, and public school students with full parent participation

Family Engagement Through Participation: One key to keeping our LEGO programs free is our parent participation model—and families have embraced it wholeheartedly! While we offered a \$75-per-month drop-off option, not a single family chose it. Instead, an average of 12 parents volunteer at each 1.5-hour session, creating powerful multi-generational learning experiences. The joy on students' faces as they work alongside their parents reminds us that this model not only makes our programs sustainable—it strengthens the bonds between parents, children, and our entire community.

Program Evolution: As we've grown, we've learned the importance of naming programs that immediately communicate what we do. We're rebranding our programs in 2026 so that the names themselves clearly reflect that we use rigorous SOL and NGSS-approved LEGO Education curriculum—not just free play with bricks. Our new names will make it instantly clear that we're delivering professional STEAM education and robotics programming.

Key Support: One of our biggest supporters and sponsors is the **North Suffolk Rotary Club**, led by President Cameron Harper. Their commitment has been instrumental in supporting both our LEGO Education clubs and competitive FIRST robotics teams. In a memorable presentation, they came out and presented Kalamoo with a generous gift that has helped us expand our reach and serve more students throughout Suffolk.

FIRST Robotics Competitive Teams

Kalamoo operates **four FIRST robotics teams**, providing 28 students with advanced engineering and programming experience supported by 12 dedicated coaches and mentors. Our teams participated in the FIRST LEGO League Challenge in Newport News, where 26 teams competed—**Kalamoo's three teams were the only ones representing Suffolk, Virginia**. Our vision is to build up robotics participation in Suffolk to the point where we can host our own local meets right here in our city, making it even easier for Suffolk students to compete and showcase their talents.



Our Teams:

Team Name	Competition Level	Achievement
Robo Diggers	FIRST LEGO League	Advancing to State Championship (Jan 10, 2026)
Discovery	FIRST LEGO League	Strong performance at regional competition
Spade and Sherds Artifact Diggers	FIRST LEGO League	Strong performance at regional competition
Great Dismal Robotics	FIRST Tech Challenge	First competition (Jan 10, 2026)

We're incredibly proud of all our teams! Each team demonstrated strong performance, solid scores, and represented Suffolk with distinction. The advancement of our Robo Diggers to the state competition is a tremendous achievement for the entire Kalamoo robotics program. January 10th will be an exciting day as both Robo Diggers compete at State and Great Dismal Robotics participates in their first-ever meet—two major milestones for Suffolk!

Summer STEM with Suffolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority

Through our partnership with Suffolk Parks and Recreation and the Suffolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (SRHA), we brought hands-on science directly to **95 children across 3 neighborhoods** throughout the summer. Our mobile programming eliminates transportation barriers by bringing quality STEAM education to communities where it's needed most.

This year's theme was —*the Science of Bubbles*—transformed everyday play into engaging lessons about chemistry, geometry, and engineering design. Children eagerly anticipated each weekly session, often inviting their neighbors to join the discovery. This successful program exemplifies our commitment to making STEAM education accessible in all Suffolk neighborhoods.

Leadership Development

Cusi has participated in multiple leadership development cohorts and training programs in 2025, including support from the **Obici Healthcare Foundation**. These experiences have strengthened Kalamoo's organizational capacity, expanded our network of community partnerships, and enhanced our ability to deliver sustainable, high-quality programming.

Looking Ahead to 2026

As we celebrate 2025's achievements, we're excited about what's ahead:

- **Kalamoo Robotics Academy & LEGO Education Lab** at Suffolk Christian Church on Monday mornings and Thursday evenings
- **Easter Arts Outreach (New):** An Easter play bringing together churches and organizations for an arts-focused community celebration
- **The Mount Partnership (Expanded STEAM Outreach & New to Hillpoint Area):** Expanding LEGO Robotics and Clubs to The Mount at Suffolk's new facility
- **Suffolk Earth & Arts Festival:** Comprehensive Kids Zone with activity stations including LEGO builds, face painting, robot art, 3D printing, and Young Entrepreneurs marketplace
- **3rd Annual Suffolk Bricktacular:** Our signature STEAM event returning in June 2026
- **Program Rebranding:** Introducing new program names that immediately communicate the depth and quality of our STEAM education offerings
- **Python Programming (New & Expanded Educational Classes):** Teaching our team students Python programming, which is allowed in FIRST LEGO League competitions, to advance their coding skills and competitive capabilities
- **Kalamoo Mobile Science Lab, including Bubbles Program:** Expanding our successful Science of Bubbles program to reach even more neighborhoods and community events, bringing hands-on chemistry, physics, and engineering lessons to families across Suffolk
- **Continued Partnerships:** Finding new ways to team up and partner with like-minded organizations committed to bringing quality STEAM education to all Suffolk families

2025 By the Numbers

83-90 Students served weekly in LEGO Education programs	8,900+ Community members reached through major events
4 FIRST robotics teams representing Suffolk	95 Children reached through summer SRHA partnership
100+ Partner organizations at National Night Out	28:1 Community investment ratio (NNO)
3 Weekly program locations across Suffolk	100% Parent participation rate in our programs

Volunteer Impact

At the heart of Kalamoo's success is an extraordinary community of volunteers who give their time, talents, and passion to make our programs possible. In 2025, our volunteers contributed an estimated **6,020+ hours** to serving Suffolk's children and families.

This volunteer support comes in two powerful forms: **in-kind professional contributions** where partner organizations released employees to volunteer during work hours, and **general community volunteers** who donated their personal time. Both represent a deep commitment to Suffolk's children and families.

In-Kind Professional Contributions (Employer-Sponsored Volunteer Time):

Organization	Hours
Sentara Health <i>64+ healthcare professionals at NNO Suffolk Obici</i>	320+
Suffolk Public Schools <i>24 staff members at NNO Suffolk Obici Back-to-School event</i>	120
City of Suffolk & Other Partners <i>QVC, corporate sponsors, and community organizations</i>	356+
SUBTOTAL: In-Kind Professional Contributions	796+



General Community Volunteers (KalamoOVERs):

Volunteer Category	Hours
Admin & Core Program Leadership <i>Cusi, Brittany, Catherine</i>	3,820
LEGO Education Parent Volunteers <i>Average 12 parents per session</i>	540
FIRST LEGO League Team Mentors <i>6 mentors across 3 teams</i>	468
FIRST Tech Challenge Mentors <i>5 mentors</i>	260
Suffolk Bricktacular Volunteers <i>18 dedicated KalamoOVERs</i>	141
SUBTOTAL: General Community Volunteers	5,229
TOTAL 2025 VOLUNTEER HOURS	6,025+

Sustaining Our Mission

Kalamoo Community Outreach is committed to keeping our core programs free for families—but sustainability requires creativity. We've developed several fee-based services that generate income while extending our impact:

Bubble Science Experiences (Mobile Science Lab): The same hands-on Bubble Science program we offer free through our SRHA partnership is available for hire at community events, birthday parties, and organizational gatherings. Families love the interactive learning, and the fees help fund our free programming.

Event Support Services: Before our STEAM education focus, we built expertise in team-building activities and concessions. We continue to offer these services for a fee, bringing fun and community connection to gatherings across the region.

Feather Flag Visibility: Our colorful feather flags have become a signature at community events. We rent flags to organizations seeking visibility, and we also partner with fellow nonprofits to support their outreaches—often at no cost—because lifting each other up is what community is all about.

This blend of earned revenue, grants, and donations allows us to stay true to our mission: ensuring that every child in Suffolk has access to inspiring STEAM education, regardless of their family's financial circumstances.

Partner With Us

The success of 2025 was made possible by generous partners who believe in Kalamoo's mission. As we expand our programs in 2026, we invite you to join us in transforming Suffolk into a regional STEAM hub where every child has access to high-quality hands-on learning.

Ways to Support:

- **Program Sponsorships:** Support specific programs like our FIRST Robotics teams, weekly LEGO Education classes, or summer SRHA outreach
- **Equipment & Materials:** Help us purchase LEGO Education kits, robotics equipment, or laptops for programming classes
- **Event Partnerships:** Sponsor our Suffolk Bricktacular, participate in National Night Out, or support our Earth & Arts Festival - some or ALL our activities
- **Volunteer Expertise:** Share your skills as a mentor, coach, or instructor to help guide our students
- **In-Kind Contributions:** Provide facility space, printing services, supplies, or other resources that support our mission

Your Impact:

Every contribution—whether financial, in-kind, or volunteer time—directly impacts students' lives. Your support helps us:

- Keep programs free or low-cost for families
- Reach underserved neighborhoods through mobile programming
- Provide advanced robotics opportunities for Suffolk students
- Build a community where learning connects families across all backgrounds

Ready to make a difference? Contact Cusi at cusi@kalamoo.org to explore partnership opportunities. Together, we can ensure every Suffolk child has the chance to discover their potential through STEAM education.

Our Gratitude

None of this would be possible without our incredible community of partners, volunteers, parents, mentors, and supporters. You've invested countless hours, shared your expertise, opened your facilities, and believed in our mission. Together, we're not just building with LEGO bricks—we're building confidence, critical thinking skills, and a community of lifelong learners.

Thank you for being part of Kalamoo's journey in 2025. We can't wait to see what we'll accomplish together in 2026!

With warmest appreciation,

Cusi Hamlin

CEO & Founder

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