



Hydroponic Venture Project

EIN: 93-1405024

Press Kit 2026

Media and Partner Information

April 2026

About the Hydroponic Venture Project

The Hydroponic Venture Project (HVP) is a Chicago student-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit that brings indoor hydroponic growing systems and a hands-on food-education curriculum to under-resourced schools. Founded in 2022 at Walter Payton College Prep, HVP pairs a Rise Gardens three-tier tower with a standards-aligned curriculum, teacher training, and culinary workshops so students grow their own fresh produce, learn where food comes from, and carry that knowledge home.

To date, HVP has served 22 schools, reached over 3,173 students, harvested 2,049 pounds of fresh produce, and saved 72,893 gallons of water compared with soil-based farming. The organization is built on a \$1,750 fund-a-school model that covers the system, one year of seeds and nutrients, a culinary workshop catalog, teacher resources, and ongoing program support.

Fact sheet

Legal name	The Hydroponic Venture Project, Inc.
Tax status	501(c)(3) public charity
EIN	93-1405024
State of incorporation	Illinois
Founded	2022, at Walter Payton College Prep
Headquarters	Chicago, Illinois
Founder and President	Kai Fogelson
Mission	To provide a pathway for youth education and engagement by bringing indoor hydroponic growing systems to Chicago Public Schools and local communities.
Tagline	The Future of Food Education
Fund-a-school tier	\$1,750 per school, fully funded install plus one year of operating support
Website	hydroponicventure.com

Instagram	@hydroponicventureproject
Press contact	hydroponicventure@gmail.com

Impact to date

Cumulative program outcomes, April 2026. Numbers are verified against internal install logs and partner reports.

Schools served	Students reached	Pounds of produce	Gallons of water saved
22	3,173+	2,049	72,893

Water savings are calculated against the water needed to produce an equivalent yield in soil-based farming. Produce is harvested directly by students and either eaten in classroom workshops, taken home, or donated to community partners.



A recent HVP classroom harvest: a mix of leafy greens, herbs, and peppers grown by students.

How HVP works

Three steps, repeatable across any Chicago school.

01 Install

HVP identifies a Chicago school partner, installs a Rise Gardens three-tier vertical hydroponic system in a classroom, and provides one year of seeds, nutrients, and technical support.

02 Teach

Teachers receive a standards-aligned food-education curriculum covering plant science, nutrition, culinary fundamentals, and food-systems literacy. HVP staff co-deliver workshops with chefs and nutritionists.

03 Harvest

Students grow, harvest, cook, and eat produce inside their classroom. Every harvest feeds back into the school community through tasting sessions, family events, and donations to local food partners.



Ribbon cutting at Lara Academy, one of 22 HVP school partners.

Leadership



Founder Kai Fogelson at the 2024 Pilot Light Feed Your Mind Gala.

Kai Fogelson, Founder and President

Kai Fogelson founded HVP in 2022 as a high school senior at Walter Payton College Prep and has led the organization as it grew from a single classroom install to 22 schools across Chicago. He is a student at the University of Michigan Ross School of Business, focused on finance, and has been recognized as the inaugural Young Changemaker Honoree at the 2024 Pilot Light Chefs Feed Your Mind Gala.

Kai leads fundraising, strategy, and school partnerships, and works alongside a 13-person leadership team including Vice Presidents of Communications and Operations, a Secretary, two Directors of Finance, and directors across curriculum, installs, digital design, and partnerships. Extended leadership bios are available at hydroponicventure.com/team.

Founder quote

“Motivated by love for delicious food that is also healthy, I saw an opportunity to serve the greater community after being impressed by the year-round output and small carbon footprint of vertical farming systems.”

Kai Fogelson, Founder and President, HVP

Teacher quote

“HVP has changed how my students think about food. They are not just reading about plants in a textbook, they are watching greens grow, harvesting them, and eating what they raised themselves. It is the most engaged I have seen them.”

Jenny Croitoru, Teacher, Ward Elementary

Partners and supporters

HVP works with nonprofit, corporate, and community partners across Chicago to deliver programming, fund installs, and expand reach.



HVP team and partners at the 2025 Chicago Community Trust Young Leaders Fund gala.

Aetna Better Health of Illinois

Founding funder of HVP's urban-farming programming, 2023 to present. Aetna's investment has underwritten multiple school installs across the South and West Sides.

Pilot Light

National chef-led food-education nonprofit. Pilot Light and HVP collaborate on chef-in-classroom workshops and recognized Kai as the 2024 Young Changemaker Honoree.

Gardeneers

Chicago garden-education nonprofit. Partner on curriculum integration and shared-school programming.

Intonation Music

Chicago youth music nonprofit. Co-programming partner for student events combining food and music education.

The Evolved Network

Nonprofit ecosystem partner supporting operational capacity and cross-organization collaboration.

In the press

Selected coverage and recognition of HVP's work across Chicago Public Schools and in the national food-education community, 2023 to 2025.

Pilot Light Chefs, Young Changemaker Honoree, November 2024

Kai Fogelson named inaugural Young Changemaker Honoree at the Pilot Light Chefs Feed Your Mind Gala on November 1, 2024, recognizing HVP's work in food education across Chicago Public Schools.

<https://pilotlightchefs.org/calendarevents/feed-your-mind-gala-2024-feed-your-mind/>

IREM Foundation, Impact Story, September 2025

Feature profile documenting HVP's Drummond Elementary install funded by the Elaina's Sustainability Grant: approximately 90 students in grades 4 to 6 produced 150 pounds of fresh produce while learning nutrition and food education.

<https://www.iremfoundation.org/impact-stories/impact-stories/2025/09/hydroponic-venture-project>

Chicago Community Trust, Young Leaders Fund, August 2025

HVP named among 16 grantee organizations selected by the Chicago Community Trust's Young Leaders Fund, which awarded \$100,000 in community-based grants.

<https://www.cct.org/stories/young-leaders-fund-awards-100000-in-community-based-grants/>

Aetna Better Health of Illinois / CVS Health, October 2023

HVP named among 10 organizations supported in Aetna Better Health of Illinois's \$235,000 urban-farming grant portfolio.

<https://www.cvshealth.com/news/health-equity/aetna-provides-over-235k-to-support-urban-farming-in-greater-chicago.html>

Boilerplate language

Pre-approved language for press use. Please credit as “The Hydroponic Venture Project” on first reference and “HVP” on subsequent mentions.

Short (25 words)

The Hydroponic Venture Project (HVP) is a Chicago student-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit that installs indoor hydroponic systems and food-education curriculum in under-resourced schools.

Standard (50 words)

The Hydroponic Venture Project (HVP) is a Chicago student-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit founded in 2022 that brings indoor hydroponic growing systems and hands-on food education to under-resourced schools. HVP has served 22 schools, reached over 3,173 students, and harvested 2,049 pounds of fresh produce with 72,893 gallons of water saved.

Long (100 words)

The Hydroponic Venture Project (HVP) is a Chicago student-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit that brings indoor hydroponic growing systems and a hands-on food-education curriculum to under-resourced schools. Founded in 2022 at Walter Payton College Prep, HVP pairs a three-tier vertical hydroponic tower with standards-aligned curriculum, teacher training, and chef-led culinary workshops. Students grow their own fresh produce, learn where food comes from, and carry that knowledge home to their families. To date, HVP has served 22 schools, reached over 3,173 students, harvested 2,049 pounds of fresh produce, and saved 72,893 gallons of water.

Quick FAQ

Who founded HVP and when?

Kai Fogelson founded HVP in 2022 while a senior at Walter Payton College Prep in Chicago.

What does HVP actually deliver to a school?

A Rise Gardens three-tier vertical hydroponic system, one year of seeds and nutrients, a standards-aligned food-education curriculum, teacher training, a culinary workshop catalog, and ongoing technical support, for \$1,750 per school.

How many schools does HVP work with?

22 Chicago schools to date, spanning elementary, middle, and high school, across neighborhoods including Back of the Yards, Kenwood, Armour Square, and the South Side.

Is HVP a 501(c)(3)?

Yes. HVP is an Illinois 501(c)(3) public charity, EIN 93-1405024. All donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

How is HVP funded?

A mix of foundation grants, corporate partnerships, and individual donors. Core funders include Aetna Better Health of Illinois, the Chicago Community Trust Young Leaders Fund, and the IREM Foundation.

How can a school join the program?

Schools can start the conversation at hydroponicventure.com/programs or email hydroponicventure@gmail.com. Onboarding begins with a discovery call before any site visit.

Media contact

Primary contact	Kai Fogelson, Founder and President
Email	hydroponicventure@gmail.com
Website	hydroponicventure.com
Instagram	@hydroponicventureproject
Response time	Within 48 hours on weekdays

For interview requests, school visits, or high-resolution imagery beyond what is included in this kit, please email directly. HVP can arrange classroom visits, on-site install photography, and interviews with the founder, program leadership, and participating teachers on request.

Also available in this press kit

Companion assets live alongside this PDF in the press kit folder on hydroponicventure.com. All items are cleared for editorial use with attribution to the Hydroponic Venture Project. Email hydroponicventure@gmail.com to request the full press photo package.

- Logo pack: color, white-on-black, and white-on-transparent, all in high-resolution PNG
- Short, standard, and long boilerplate paragraphs as plain text files for copy-paste
- Press photo package: install ribbon cuttings, student harvest and cooking imagery, founder portraits, and team and gala photography, all with releases on file
- One-pager with current impact numbers, updated quarterly