

MUSCLE INSPIRES NEW EMPOWERMENT

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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Prepared by

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LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

Dear Reader,

As I reflect on our journey at Muscle Inspires New Empowerment (MINE), there are several emotions that come up: pride, gratitude, determination, and joy. I would like to acknowledge and thank the 23 graduates of our Strength Embodied program to date, as well as our trauma-informed personal trainers, donors, volunteers, and friends. Our survivor clients trusted us to help facilitate their continued journey of healing from the effects of trauma in their bodies. The trust they have placed in us is the most precious responsibility we have. We take what we do and how we execute our program seriously. Hearing from the survivor community, developing leadership roles within our organization, and creating opportunities for peer-to-peer support remain forefront in our minds and shape how we grow as an organization.

For example, we have implemented the following protocols in our Strength Embodied program this year based on feedback from our previous graduates:

- Included a weekly virtual meet up group lead by one of our survivor volunteers to help facilitate a sense of community and allow participants to support each other.
- Introduced Virtual Client Orientation which was instrumental in setting expectations for new clients.
- Asked new clients to populate a Readiness Questionnaire, designed by Jessica Muñoz, LMHC-D, to determine if they were in a place to begin our program or if they needed further resources.

MINE started 2024 recognizing that if we were going to support our signature Strength Embodied program, we would need to make sure we had sufficient infrastructure in place. So we set our goals accordingly. I am proud to share that we have exceeded our own expectations! In the past year:

- 30% of former graduates reported they are still using the tools they learned in Strength Embodied. This is on point with industry standard.
- We enrolled 10 individuals in Strength Embodied program, 9 graduated. 6 of these graduates enrolled in our accountability buddy program. These survivors will help each other stay on task with their journey post-graduation.
- We launched a pilot program for Trauma Informed Fundamentals. This 4-hour live workshop prepared our personal trainers to work with the survivor community.
- We grew our professional network and supported our community by attending several local demonstrations such as the Bride March, Storm the Steps, Day One's Fundraiser, and New York - Presbyterian's Capacity Building Conference.
- We received our first grant from The Annabelle Foundation.
- We added 2 new members to our board.
- We implemented a monthly newsletter.
- We raised over \$25,000 during our Rep Max Challenge fundraiser.
- We implemented a virtual support program with one of our trauma-informed coaches who offered 30-minute sessions to answer graduates' questions about their program and health/wellness generalities.

We are standing at the verge of being able to court corporate sponsorship and larger grant opportunities. Each of you reading this has made our success possible and each of you has direct contact to our organization. This makes our goals and how we conduct our program very personal. I thank each of you for the role you have played. Here's to all of us in 2025!

Yours in Strength,



MINE'S TIMELINE

When people ask how MINE came to be, there are two key parts to the answer: why we serve survivors of gender-based violence, and the concept behind how we run our program.

The roots of our Strength Embodied program trace back to my first job at a local gym in Columbia, South Carolina. My role was to guide new members through a series of three sessions, teaching them not only how to use the equipment, but also how to set themselves up properly, modify and evaluate their programs, understand basic gym etiquette, and track their progress. These foundational skills — helping others to conduct their own workout routine safely and effectively — are the same principles we apply today in our Strength Embodied program. We work with survivors of gender-based violence to teach them these essential tools so they can build strength, autonomy, and confidence in the gym and beyond.

As a certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist, I began working primarily with women over 40. Many of my clients shared how empowering it felt to lift weights and claim space in their bodies and in the gym. The strength they discovered in their own bodies was transformative. This experience inspired me to create a space for women to come together and lift, free from judgment or expectation. In 2017, Women of Iron was born – a weightlifting event designed to help women build strength and community. Because of these events, I witnessed firsthand the power of community in fostering long-term engagement with fitness, and I knew it could be applied to our work with survivors. I believed that in a structured environment, survivors could learn the skills they need to process trauma, reclaim autonomy, and find a supportive community.



DIANNA SCOTECCE
CSCS, Founder

**“SAID SIMPLY, MUSCLE
INSPIRES NEW
EMPOWERMENT.”**

2017

Women of Iron was born

2019

Dianna approached SFF NY
about a potential partnership

2022

MINE was formed as a 501(c)(3)

During our first event, we raffled off items to raise money for a cause. A client introduced me to Sanctuary for Families (SFF), a NYC-based organization dedicated to survivors of intimate partner violence, sex trafficking, and gender-based violence. As we continued to host weightlifting events, we donated the proceeds to SFF, and I had the privilege of visiting one of their facilities. I was deeply moved by the level of care and dedication I saw, but also humbled by how much I didn't know about working with survivors.

It became clear to me that while doctors and lawyers donate their time and services, personal trainers could also make a difference. I had been fortunate to build a career as a personal trainer, but I began asking myself, *"If my clients—who could afford my services—deserved to take care of their bodies, why shouldn't survivors of gender-based violence have the same opportunity?"*

In 2019, I approached Sanctuary for Families (SFF) with the idea for a program, which would incorporate strength training alongside trauma-informed care. I had the knowledge of fitness and weightlifting, but I needed guidance on how to ensure the program was sensitive to the needs of survivors. Through my work with SFF's Survivor Leadership Council, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of trauma and the unique challenges survivors face. With their expertise, we were able to design a program that both empowers and supports participants on their healing journey. We launched our pilot program that year.

During the pandemic I had time to reflect on what I wanted to do with my professional life. The pilot program I collaborated on with SFF left a big impression on me. I decided I wanted to start a nonprofit that would expand on the concepts and the program I created. I reached out to others to help me form MINE. In 2022, we formed an official 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

1 in 4

women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime

1 in 7

men will experience domestic violence in their lifetime

Source:

<https://sanctuaryforfamilies.org/gender-violence/domestic-violence/>

As our community of volunteers, trainers, clients, and donors grow, we are able to improve our program and how we serve survivors of intimate partner violence and human trafficking. We welcome you to learn more and please be a part of our story.



Dianna's mom, Tina (above), at the Women of Iron event.

MUSCLE INSPIRES NEW EMPOWERMENT

OUR APPROACH

MINE is a novel concept and opportunity. Our core belief is that individuals will feel stronger and act with greater strength through participation in resistance training. We help survivors regain agency over their bodies, fortifying themselves physically and emotionally, all while building and participating in a robust and supportive community. Said simply, Muscle Inspires New Empowerment.



MINE offers itself as a new tool for survivors emerging from the silence and isolation of gender-related violence, including physical, emotional, domestic abuse, sex trafficking, and exploitation. Our signature program, Strength Embodied, is unique in that it places the knowledge of weightlifting in the participants' hands. Departing from the traditional paradigm of a participant working indefinitely with a private coach or trainer, our 9-week/18-hour program teaches individuals how to conduct their own weightlifting sessions. This independence is important not only for building self-sufficiency but also because it creates a wholly new opportunity for low-income clients to learn to lift weights safely and correctly.

Our contracted, trauma-informed trainers use private or semi-private sessions to share their knowledge so that clients become active participants in the creation of their own programs; survivors will recognize this dynamic as "sharing power." Working slowly and carefully, each client masters the ability to conduct a full-body workout routine using primarily barbells and dumbbells. Upon graduation from our program, participants retain access to an annual membership at NYC Parks & Recreation center, or a gym of equivalent value, free of charge, for one year.

TRAUMA INFORMED FUNDAMENTALS

OUR CURRICULUM

In an effort to ensure our trainers are ready to work with our survivors clients, we have developed a continuing-education course on the fundamentals of trauma informed coaching. Designed to provide baseline information on becoming trauma informed, this course includes fundamental vocabulary, basic anatomy of trauma, special considerations for working with survivors, best practices, practical coaching skills, and tips to establish communication that allows for the sharing of power between client and instructor. This course is just the beginning. Being trauma informed is much more than just one class; it is a constant commitment to learning how to connect with others and see things through their perspective.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Our course is designed around the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)'s 6 guiding principles of trauma informed care:

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness & Transparency
3. Peer Support
4. Collaboration & Mutuality
5. Empowerment, Voice & Choice
6. Cultural, Historical, & Gender Issues

Pictured below: 2024 Strength Embodied client performing bent over rows



TRAUMA INFORMED CARE MATTERS

The beauty of trauma is that it brings wisdom. Survivors are often acutely aware of their surroundings, great at reading the room and other people's moods. This is a useful skill but it can be exhausting as one walks around hypervigilant and attuned to their surroundings.

We teach our trainers to meet the client first. This includes basic hospitality, such as meeting clients outside at the door and walking them to the front desk or changing area. During the initial session, trainers are assessing and discussing their client's comfort level. Our trainers are teaching more than just reps and sets. Being a coach is a powerful relationship and relationships can have a therapeutic effect. When trainers are aware of how they interact with survivor clients (including body language, tone of voice, and choice of words) it has a profound effect on the physical and physiological goals of the client. Our coaches are providing somatic work which effects the whole person.

OUR TRAINERS

MINE prides itself on pairing survivors with best-in-class personal trainers. We rigorously vet coaches via a phone screening and in-person interview to ensure they meet our standards.

REQUIREMENTS

- * Minimum 3 years' experience delivering in-person personal training.
- * Must possess a CPR/AED certification, liability insurance, and references.
- * Must possess a national-level certification from a reputable organization such as the American Council on Exercise (ACE), National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM), or International Sports Sciences Association (ISSA).
- * Must have their own physical activity readiness questionnaire, new client history form, policies and procedures documented.
- * Must attend MINE's signature Trauma Informed Fundamentals course or provide proof of attendance from another trauma informed course.
- * Must be available to attend MINE's new trainer orientation and Strength Embodied graduation ceremony.
- * Must see themselves as an educator and empathic human.

62.5%

of Strength Embodied graduates reported they could pick up heavy objects after graduation, compared to 25% before starting the program

77%

of clients were able to use stairs without limitation upon completion of Strength Embodied



Coach Keri Harvey (above) performing a bench press.



Dianna (bottom right) and three of the 2023 Strength Embodied coaches, (left to right) Daniel, Kevin, and Jeana.

STRENGTH EMBODIED SUCCESS STORIES

"As a survivor who was retraumatized and felt betrayed by systems designed to help, strength training has been very therapeutic because it's the one place where my hard work pays me and only me. The gym is justice for me and that is very rewarding when I felt cheated by so many systems. No one can take the work I put in at the gym. I love this life changing program."

- Jessica, 2023 Strength Embodied Graduate



"I now feel comfortable in pushing myself. I can push myself or not - I know when I am ready."

- Anonymous, 2024 Strength Embodied Graduate

"I discovered how amazing it is to not overdo things in the gym. I was always going too fast and doing too much because I wanted to stack up with others. By moving slowly with control, I felt power and control in my body."

- Anonymous, 2024 Strength Embodied Graduate

"Through his support and expertise, [my trainer] not only helped me build physical strength but also taught me how to strengthen my mind and spirit. Slowly, I started to feel like a superhero again, like someone had removed the kryptonite holding me back."

- Anonymous, 2024 Strength Embodied Graduate

23

total Strength Embodied
graduates

77%

of clients reported higher
independence upon graduation

"At the age of thirty-three, I became a licensed medical physician which came with new responsibilities that required growth and evolution. During this time, I was introduced to the Strength Embodied program, which was not only a game changer for me but for others who were new to the gym space. This program taught me so much about the gym and myself, even though I have been working out since age fifteen. I am a female in a male-dominated professional space, but it feels even better to also be a female in the gym showing up for myself with confidence. "

- Tunisha, 2024 Strength Embodied Graduate

MEET OUR BOARD

Our team has over 60 years of combined experience in the health and fitness industry. We have worked at many fitness levels with those who live in different communities. We understand how knowledge of self-care and access to a training facility should be a right for all, not limited to the few with access and means.



**FRANCINE
DELGADO-LUGO**
MS, CSCS, Board Chair

Francine is a Co-Founder of FORM Fitness Brooklyn, an inclusive strength training gym that specializes in 1-on-1 Training. She has been a Certified Personal Trainer with the National Council on Strength and Fitness for more than a decade, and holds specialty certificates with USA Weightlifting, Precision Nutrition, and CrossFit.

Francine has a B.A. in Public Policy and Women's Studies from Hamilton College and an M.S. in Urban Policy from Milano Graduate School at New School University. She is a member of SELF Magazine's Future of Fitness Advisory Board, and a frequent contributor to the publication.



**ANDREW
SCHAEFFER**
CSCS, USAW, Treasurer

Andrew has been a personal trainer and strength and conditioning coach in NYC for over 10 years. He ran track and cross country throughout high school and college. After living abroad for several years, he fell in love with teaching. His experiences as an athlete and teacher informs his approach to health and fitness coaching, which is focused on educating as much as delivering a workout.

Besides working with individuals in the gym, Andrew can be found delivering strength and conditioning programs to professional performers, presenting at conferences, or with his head in a book, pursuing a master's degree in mental health counseling.



CAROLYN APPEL
MA, CSCS, Secretary

With a background in competitive tennis, Carolyn has built a career on her passion for fitness and athletics over her two decades in the fitness industry. She received her master's degree in Motor Learning and Control from Columbia University and can be found speaking at national and regional conferences for IDEA, NSCA, and ACSM.

As the Chief Content Officer for ProNatal Fitness, Carolyn has co-authored 6 online courses for coaches, including ProNatal's signature course, The ProNatal Fitness Pre & Postnatal Fitness Certification.

MEET OUR BOARD



**RESHARD
RIGGINS**

Co-Executive Director

Reshard is a veteran in the field of human and community services, with more than 30 years' experience working in varying capacities serving vulnerable communities such as demographics of HIV+, substance use disorder/recovery, developmentally disabled, and the homeless.

She is a Masters of Public Administration graduate of Baruch College with a specialization in Nonprofit Management and Public Policy as a United Way Fellow through their Nonprofit Leadership Development program. She has a strong track record of achievements within New York's nonprofit sector.



RACHEL LEVINE

Director

Rachel has almost 20 years of experience working at various New York City government agencies, including the Department of Homeless Services, the NYC Office of Management and Budget, and the Human Resources Administration.

After working at the the CUNY School of Professional Studies as Associate Dean for Administration and Finance, Rachel transitioned into the nonprofit sector. She served as COO for The Door, a unique youth development organization, Broome Street Academy, an affiliated charter school, and University Settlement, the nation's oldest settlement house. In 2022, she became Executive Director of Nazareth Housing.



**SAVANNAH
SCHEPP**

MBA, Director

As a professional strongwoman and elite level powerlifter, Savannah has over a decade of experience competing in strength sports. During COVID, after years spent coaching clients in-person and virtually, she pursued a career in the tech sector.

She holds a BA in English and International MBA in Strategic Management from the University of South Carolina. She is proficient at leveraging analytical data to drive lean innovation and portfolio management. She is confident interpreting large data sets, with demonstrated ability to implement change with clients in real-time.



**MICHELLE
PETRAZZUOLO**

MSHRM, Director

Michelle has been working in human capital for over 20 years. She has created and augmented business infrastructure and strategy that centers around innovation and inclusivity for hundreds of clients.

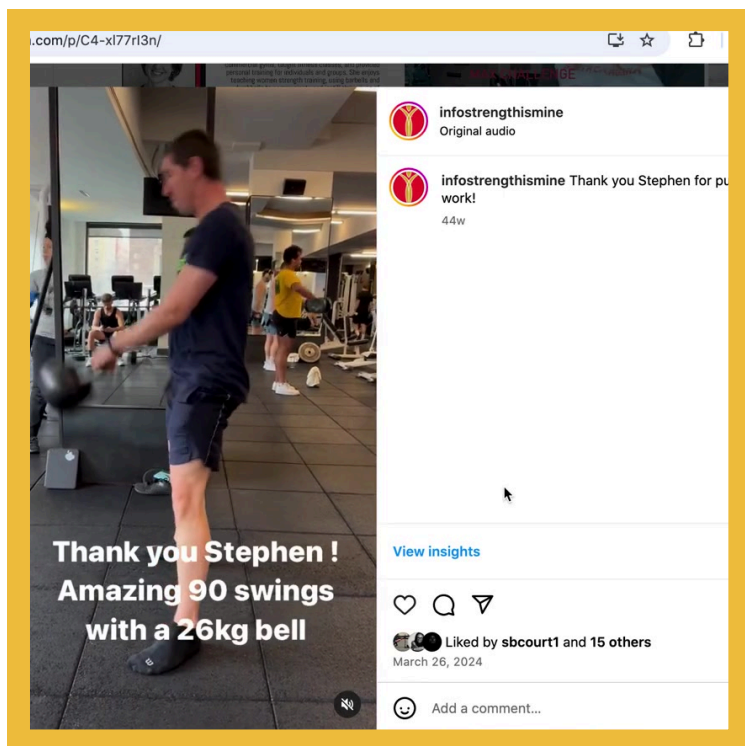
She holds a BA in Psychology and MS in Human Resource Management with Legal Specialization. She i conducts business in Spanish and Italian, and is conversant in French and Korean. She has been most recently selected to speak at the Forum for Workplace Inclusion, Fordham University, and the Rutgers Center for Women in Business. Her advice and expertise has been featured in Forbes, The List, the Art Newspaper and more.

2024 REP MAX CHALLENGE

In 2024, donations raised in our signature fundraiser, the Rep Max Challenge, grew by 168% compared to 2023.

The Rep Max Challenge encourages our community to test their fitness for a good cause. Volunteers can demonstrate their strength by participating as a Fit Friend. Meanwhile, sponsors can select a Fit Friend and make a monetary pledge based on their total reps completed in the challenge. All donations support Strength Embodied.

29 individuals participated as Fit Friends in 2024, compared to just 13 in 2023. 91 individuals donated in 2024 compared to 59 in 2023



THE CHALLENGE

- 1 Fit Friends enter the upper body challenge (max pushups without stopping) or lower body challenge (max kettlebell swings without stopping). Modifications are welcome!



- 2 Fit Friends recruit Sponsors to pledge funds per repetition performed. For example, if a Sponsor pledges \$2 per rep and their Fit Friend performs 50 reps, the Sponsor owes \$100.

- 3 Sponsors register on www.strengthismine.org during the month of March. They receive an email confirmation acknowledging their pledge.
- 4 Fit Friends post their attempts to social media and tag MINE.
- 5 Once Fit Friends post their submission, Donors receive an email from MINE with the total reps performed and a link to fulfill their pledge.

2023

Donations Raised

\$10,101

2024

Donations Raised

\$27,080

2025

Goal to Fundraise

\$35,000

2025 GOALS

* STRENGTH EMBODIED

In 2025, we'd like to enroll 18 survivors in Strength Embodied and see at least 15 graduate. We aim to enroll Strength Embodied 2024 graduates to act as mentors for clients in the 2025 cohort. We hope to double the attendance of our virtual support program and offer 2 different weekly virtual meet ups for current Strength Embodied cohort. Finally, we plan to host 3 live workshops for graduates centered on strength, health, and wellness.

* GROWING OUR TEAM

In 2025, we'd like to establish a paid position to lead our Community Advisory Committee. We'd also like to hire a leader to form our Trauma Informed Mental Health advisory committee. This branch would oversee the final developments of the Trauma Informed Fundamentals course.



Board member Reshard Riggins (left) at the 2024 Storm the Steps rally hosted by Sisters in Purple.

* FUN(D)RAISING

In 2025, we'd like to host quarterly fundraisers and give back to our local community. We'd like to continue partnering with NYC-based businesses and nonprofit organizations. We plan to gain accreditation for our Trauma Informed Fundamentals course and begin advertising it to personal trainers in the New York area seeking continuing education units (CEUs). Finally, in the spirit of transparency, we plan to upload our 2022, 2023, and 2024 taxes on our website (www.strengthismine.org).

Pictured left: Dianna (right) and Nundiah (left) of the New Body Project in Atrium 82 of Brooklyn. MINE thanks Nundiah for being such a gracious partner and donating her space for our 2024 graduation!

CONTACT US

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