



those nerdy girls  
Annual Report 2023 ♀

# 20 23

BY THE  
NUMBERS



**5,000**

VOLUNTEER HOURS



**\$45,000**

FUNDS RAISED



**500,000**

PEOPLE REACHED



**20,000**

NEW FOLLOWERS



## A Note from Executive Director

**Sara Gorman, PhD, MPH**

### **2023 was definitely a year to remember for Those Nerdy Girls.**

In our fourth year going strong, we raised over \$45K and won a prestigious award from the Interdisciplinary Association for Population Health Sciences (IAPHS). We grew our paid Substack subscribers by 20% (from 271 to 338). We gained 4,092 new followers on Threads, BlueSky, and TikTok. We saw around 9% growth on both LinkedIn and Instagram. We welcomed 5 new writers and 3 new members of our social media team. As the general public shifts its focus from COVID-19, there is still tremendous demand for clear, trustworthy communication about a variety of other health topics. Those Nerdy Girls is poised to meet that need, and we have established several new content areas to broaden our scope.

Looking into our future, we must focus on sustainability, a major project for 2024. We will also prioritize diversifying our writer base, as we know there is a scarcity of science communicators, especially in Black and Latinx communities. It is urgent, especially against a backdrop of waning trust, that these communities get health information from people who look like them and who they can trust. Those Nerdy Girls will work to be part of the solution.

We are so grateful for our amazing volunteers, who have collectively spent upwards of 5,760 hours working for us over the past year. Every single post takes 5-7 hours from inception to posting. We are likewise very grateful for our Board of Directors, who work overtime to guide us and promote our mission to their networks. They are some of our greatest cheerleaders. We are ever thankful for our generous donors, who continue to sustain us and make all this work possible. Last but certainly not least, we thank all our readers for continuing to put their trust in us as their source for practical, factual health information. Without you, we would not be. We express our deepest gratitude to all of you.

“

### **From Our Readers...**

*“I am in awe of what you have built and the mission you seek to accomplish.”*

*“You are all doing amazing work, and countless people are grateful beyond words for each of you.  
THANK YOU!”*



# Our Top Activities and Accomplishments in 2023

**This was a year of many changes for Those Nerdy Girls as our team grew and our mission expanded. We also had numerous accomplishments, including publication of new papers and significant fundraising success. Below is more detail on these arenas and more.**

## **Leadership transition**

In October 2023, Sara Gorman, PhD, MPH took over as Executive Director from Ashley Z. Ritter, APRN, PhD., who served as CEO for more than two years. Dr. Gorman has a background in public health and psychology and is an expert on misinformation, science denial, and science and health communication. She has many years of experience in nonprofit management with a variety of nonprofits, including Critica, which she founded in 2017. Critica is a research nonprofit that focuses on improving public understanding of science, counteracting harmful health misinformation, and increasing the use of scientific evidence in public policy. Dr. Gorman has published many papers and two books (one forthcoming in September 2024) about the psychology of science denial, trust in the healthcare system, and other related topics. Dr. Gorman happily took the helm in October 2023 as part-time Executive Director and is greatly enjoying the role.

## Expansion into other content areas

As the COVID-19 pandemic recedes from public attention, Those Nerdy Girls' content has expanded to other important health topics. Based on the relevance of the topic and team expertise we plan to focus on several core areas above.

Our team now operates in "squads," each of which is dedicated to a single health topic. Every writer belongs to one squad and focuses

most of their writing on that topic. There is still flexibility for our writers to write about other timely health topics outside these areas, and writers are encouraged to collaborate across squads. This expansion allows us to be agile in responding to our readers' needs, which include many health concerns in addition to an ongoing need for information about COVID-19.



MENTAL HEALTH



AGING



REPRODUCTIVE  
HEALTH



DATA LITERACY



INFECTIOUS  
DISEASE

## Fundraising

More specific information about income and funds raised in 2023 will be provided in the "Fundraising Plan" section, but here we highlight some key accomplishments. In 2023, we secured multiple contracts to produce content and moderate panels for the COVID Vaccine Equity and Education Project (CVEEP), amounting to a total of \$10,000 in income. We continue discussions with Reservoir Media, the parent company of CVEEP, about ways we can partner further and provide health communication services. We reached 338 paid subscribers on Substack, bringing us close to \$17,000 of yearly revenue from that source. During our Giving Tuesday campaign, we raised over \$18,000 in just a few days, surpassing our goal amount by over 60%. During this campaign, we also secured an additional \$14,000/year in new recurring donations. At year-end, we secured an additional \$7,000. Total donations for 2023 amounted to \$42,397. These donations are game-changing for Those Nerdy Girls. They allow us to continue to make our content free for over 150,000 readers in search of helpful, sometimes lifesaving health information.

In addition to receiving financial donations from fundraising, we also received in-kind support in the form of our volunteers' hours. Our volunteer writers contributed 5,760 hours in total to

**In 2023 we reached 338 paid subscribers on Substack, bringing us close to \$17,000 of yearly revenue from that source.**

Opposite from left: Nerdy Girls together at their retreat in Maryland in October; Former CEO Ashley Ritter and current Executive Director Sara Gorman enjoying some time together.



**From Our Readers...**

*“I am immensely grateful for this page and all of you who helped guide us through such scary times — you were/are a light in the darkness. Thank you so much for everything you did and continue to do.”*

Opposite, from top left: Nerdy Girls relax at a long weekend retreat in Maryland in October 2023. Founders Malia Jones and Ashley Ritter present findings from the TNG Impact Survey at the International Association for Population Health Science (IAPHS) conference in October. A contingent of Nerdy Girls at the IAPHS conference. Slide announcing TNG as the winner of the Ida B. Wells Award. A Nerdy Girls contingent poses for a photo shoot in Maryland.

the project in 2023. Our COO, Gretchen Peterson, contributed 960 volunteer hours, our Editor-in-Chief Jenn Dowd contributed 480 volunteer hours, our former CEO and current CFO Ashley Ritter contributed 480 volunteer hours, and our Director of Research Malia Jones contributed 360 volunteer hours. Our fiscal sponsor, NewCourtland, contributed in-kind accounting and legal support, and our very engaged Board of Directors also contributed in-kind support advising on various legal, organizational, and financial matters. Our strategy consultant and volunteer grant writer contributed 60 hours.

We are endlessly grateful to our volunteers, Board of Directors, and fiscal sponsor. Without them, this operation would not run. The value they contribute is immeasurable.

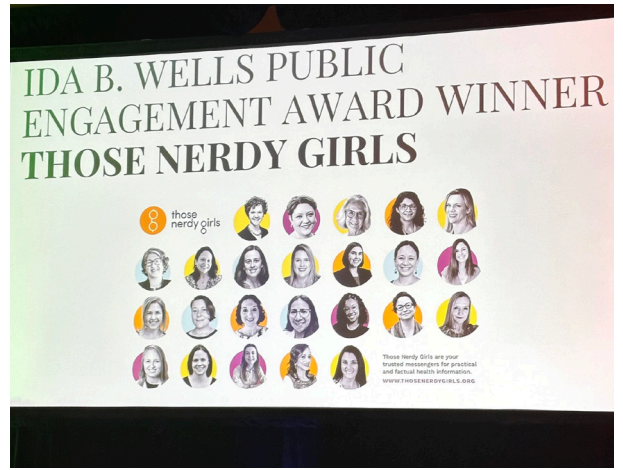
**IAPHS Award and Maryland Gathering**

In October 2023, Those Nerdy Girls was honored with a prestigious award, the Ida B. Wells Award for Public Engagement, by IAPHS. The award recognizes outstanding contributions in the translation of population health sciences into the service of the public good. To qualify for the award, applicants must demonstrate: (1) that they are addressing a meaningful and significant population health issue; (2) that they are highly collaborative; (3) that they prioritize clear and effective communication; and (4) that their work has demonstrated impact. Malia Jones accepted the award, which was presented by Ida Wells’ grandson, on Those Nerdy Girls’ behalf. You can read a copy of her acceptance speech [here](#).

After accepting the award at the IAPHS conference in Baltimore, Those Nerdy Girls spent a long weekend in Stevensville, Maryland, the first opportunity to meet in person for much of the group. We celebrated our wonderful successes, bonded as a strong, collaborative team, and planned our strategy for what comes next.

**Social Media**

It has been an exciting year for TNG’s social media. We are thrilled to have met our objectives for 2023, while also enhancing and promoting the two TNG donation campaigns we ran this year.



## Updated Mission, Vision, and Values

As Those Nerdly Girls shifted its focus to respond to our community’s needs, we also wanted to revisit our mission, vision, and values. In the fall of 2023, we went through an iterative process with input from the Executive Committee, a Strategic Planning Working Group comprised of a group of contributing writers, and the Board of Directors. The results of this process are as follows:

We have a shorter tagline for social media and quick sound bytes:  
**“Your trusted messengers for practical, factual health information.”**

### Mission

Those Nerdly Girls helps our readers make better health decisions by providing practical and factual health information. As trusted messengers, we build readers’ confidence in navigating health information and sharing their knowledge with others.

### Vision

We envision a world in which everyone has the tools and confidence to make evidence-informed health decisions.

## Our Values



### CURIOSITY

We actively look for chances to learn and improve our knowledge about science, society, and the world around us.



### HUMILITY

We approach our work from a position of humility, always taking constructive feedback and striving to improve our work.



### IMPARTIALITY

We strive to deliver our message without bias or inclination toward any specific group or political, religious, or other ideologies.



### COLLEGIALITY

We strive to work with our “competitors,” not against them.



### EMPATHY

We write from a position of empathy, always thinking carefully and considerately about what our readers are facing and feeling



### EQUITY

We are committed to lifting up the voices of women in science.



### RESPECT

We respect all of our readers and never use a condescending tone. We treat each other with compassion and dignity at all times.



### MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

We value interdisciplinarity and different perspectives. We actively seek out the opinions of others in different fields to help inform and improve our work.





# Our 2023 Objectives & Results


**Increase engagement, especially on Instagram.** We have achieved that with consistent posting of slides, stories, reels, videos, and reader polls, and also via sharing posts from accounts we trust.

**Mark our presence on all social media platforms.** We created a TikTok account, joined Threads and BlueSky, and kept circulating our work on X and LinkedIn.

**Make the Nerdy Girls more accessible to our readers,** allowing our audience to get to know us better. We started the short video series “Meet Those Nerdy Girls.” We also put together videos where we answer readers’ questions and also post photos of NGs receiving their Covid and flu shots, masking (in situations where necessary), or testing with rapid tests.

**Push Substack** via linking to it in our stories and posts or encouraging people to subscribe. We also regularly use Substack to remind readers about our shop and all the NG swag available for purchase, which has likely contributed to increased sales.

## Our Followers in 2023

 **Substack**  
20% growth

 **Threads**  
4,274 followers

 **Facebook**  
111k followers

 **TikTok**  
66 followers

 **BlueSky**  
128 followers

 **LinkedIn**  
29% growth

 **Instagram**  
8.8% growth

## Research

We advanced several research projects in 2023, including new publications and conference presentations. Here are some of the highlights:

### Published Peer-Reviewed Papers:

- Golos et al., “Dear Pandemic: A Topic Modeling Analysis of COVID-19 Information Needs”: This paper employed topic modeling analysis to explore the evolving COVID-19 information needs of an online audience from August 2020 to August 2021. It provides critical insights for future digital health information campaigns and science communication strategies.
- Piltch-Loeb et al., “What Were the Information Voids?”: A qualitative analysis of 3,806 questions from Dear Pandemic readers, conducted between August 2020–August 2021. This study identifies key themes in public information needs and aims to fill gaps in COVID-19 information dissemination.

### Conference Presentation:

- Jones et al., “Results from a reader impact assessment of Dear Pandemic”: Presented at the IAPHS conference in October 2023 in Annapolis, MD. The presentation showcased the impact assessment of Dear Pandemic readers conducted in 2022.

### Current Research Initiatives:

- Qualitative Analysis of 2022 Impact Assessment: Focusing on open-ended responses, this analysis aims to uncover themes regarding what drew readers to Those Nerdy Girls (TNG) and their criticisms.
- Descriptive Report of 2022 Impact Analysis Survey: Preparing a white paper or brief report detailing the quantitative results of the 2022 impact analysis survey.
- Study on COVID-19 Attitudes and TNG Impact: Investigating whether the impact of reading TNG content is influenced by the COVID-19 attitudes prevalent in the readers’ communities, especially relating to mask-wearing and vaccination.
- Randomized Experimental Study on Vaccination Behavior: A groundbreaking study assessing the effect of TNG messages on adult reader vaccination behavior using a randomized experimental design. This approach is novel in the realm of online vaccine promotion campaigns.

# Plans for 2024

Just as we look back with pride on 2023, we are also excited about where 2024 could lead us. We have several priorities in 2024, including:

**Diversifying our writer group** by actively recruiting more women scientists of color to our team. We are looking into partnerships with several historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to help with this recruitment effort.

**Making strides toward sustainability.** Our future depends on our ability to thrive with a solid financial foundation beneath us. This includes building on our existing Substack subscription membership, securing more recurring donations, seeking out grant opportunities, and solidifying our earned revenue stream. To this end, we also plan on developing a standard plain language science communications training workshop that can be utilized by a range of stakeholders.

**Achieving organizational excellence.** Our work depends on our writers. They must feel that writing for Those Nerdy Girls is feasible and sustainable. In 2024, we will do an audit of our existing processes and interview team members to help determine what is working, what pain points exist, and what other support is needed. Retaining our remarkable group of writers will be a key goal here.

**Strategically partnering with other groups in the science communication sphere.** We love working with other groups that are passionate about high-quality science communication, and we recognize that combined forces can be more powerful than the impact of a single organization. To this end, we will identify and partner with key stakeholders in science and health communication and partner with professional societies to bring plain language writing to health professionals and scientists nationally.

# Financial Information

Those Nerdy Girls finished 2023 in a strong financial position, with roughly \$90,000 in the bank account. We project approximately a \$20,000 surplus for 2024. Our projected budget for 2024 appears in the Appendix.

## Fundraising and Sustainability Plan

A key focus in 2024 is making sure Those Nerdy Girls is sustainable. We have devised a fundraising strategy with a goal of raising \$85,000 overall. This is broken down by funding source as follows:

- **Individual giving (including major gifts):** Those Nerdy Girls has a dedicated donor base. We plan on raising \$25,000 from this source through a combination of monthly donations and campaigns (including Giving Tuesday and year-end). We will also work on and implement a major gifts strategy. A major gift for Those Nerdy Girls is anything over \$5,000.
- **Foundation funding:** We have a number of projects that are good candidates for foundation funding, including efforts to diversify our writer base and develop a new podcast. We have a goal of raising \$25,000 through this source in 2024.
- **Substack income:** We have a good base of \$17,000/year of Substack income. We hope to increase this to \$25,000 in 2024. We will do a revamp and re-launch of our Substack early in 2024. We have also been directing people to our Substack rather than Facebook, where we used to drive most of our traffic. This has already resulted in modest increases in both paid and unpaid subscriptions.
- **Earned revenue:** We have already completed some paid projects, including a contract with the World Health Organization and content for the COVID-19 Vaccine Equity and Education Project. We believe we can pursue more opportunities in this arena in 2024 with these partners and others. We hope to bring in \$10,000 from this revenue stream.



Our achievements in 2023 belong to our entire community — donors, volunteers, readers, and partners. We are so proud of the Nerdy Girl community and look forward with eagerness to what 2024 will bring.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your ongoing support. We appreciate you!

Those Nerdy Girls helps our readers make better health decisions by providing practical and factual health information. As trusted messengers, we build readers' confidence in navigating health information and sharing their knowledge with others.

