On February 19th, 2026 an email sent to Daisy CHAIN community members, including employees and clients, abruptly announced that the organization's last day of operations would be February 20th— giving employees and clients less than 48 hours notice of the termination of employment and doula services. The email vaguely cited a difficult financial climate as the reason for the closure, and the entire staff of more than 20 employees were laid off as a result.

Daisy CHAIN was a 501(c)3 nonprofit founded in 2012 that provided free pregnancy, lactation, parenting support and doula care from both professionals and peers with the aim of "increasing equitable access to high quality, person-centered, cultural and trauma-informed services that improve reproductive and parenting experiences and immediate and lifelong health outcomes," according to their website.

The decision to close comes from Daisy CHAIN's board following the departure of co-founder and executive director Jaclyn Mahoney at the end of 2025. Her departure coincided with financial and cultural challenges that complicated the transition for those inheriting the reigns. This autopsy of Daisy CHAIN's final years —meant to dissect the conditions that led to its closure and help understand why social service nonprofits collapse— is the result of conversations with Jaclyn Mahoney, former board members, leadership team members, and staff.

A Recent History: Changes at Daisy CHAIN

Daisy CHAIN staff and leadership all agreed that the organization —which began as a small, volunteer-powered nonprofit— had grown rapidly following the COVID-19 pandemic with the help of emergency relief government funding, Measure 110, and several other large grants awarded at that time. The funds that allowed for Daisy CHAIN's COVID increase in staffing has decreased substantially as the grant landscape became increasingly competitive.

Amidst the organization’s changing fiscal circumstances, Mahoney announced her plan to move home to California to tend to familial obligations in February 2024 and later moved in June 2024. Mahoney, heeding the advice of mentors and nonprofit consultants, created a 6-9 month transition plan to find a new executive director.

A year later, in January 2025, the board vetoed Mahoney’s slow transition plan and neglected to implement any alternative proposed by consultants. This occurred despite a consultant determining that the board was overly reliant on Mahoney as the executive director. At this point, Mahoney had been working remotely in California for six months, and was eager to find a replacement –or even just a co-director– to help with the transition. In July that year, after the board had stalled on searching for and hiring a candidate, Mahoney announced her official departure would be December 31st, 2025. Rather than find a replacement in time, in December the board instead nominated Daisy CHAIN’s human resources team lead to be the interim ED following Mahoney’s departure– leaving Mahoney with only three weeks to train her successor.

Mahoney states she was as stunned as everyone else in the Daisy CHAIN community when she received the email announcing its closure. The exact reasons for the nonprofit’s closure remain unclear even to its founder, let alone its many employees.

Dissonant Times reached out to the board for comment on the specific financial circumstances they say justified closing, and board President Jillian Drewes declined to comment beyond the email circulated at the end of February. Questions remain over why the board and those with institutional power over Daisy CHAIN’s financial situation did not try other fundraising avenues before closing on such short notice, leaving employees and clients scrambling.

“I share in the frustration and the heartache…I want to know what happened," Mahoney said. The loss of Daisy CHAIN is close to home for her– Daisy was her stillborn daughter's name and Mahoney's inspiration for starting an organization to help other mothers through their pregnancies and post-partum.

"I think my baby Daisy was done sharing her magic," Mahoney said of the closure.

More Money, More Problems: The Financial Landscape and Workplace Culture

Following the closure, a memo was published by the Eugene Revolutionary Women's Committee wherein former staff alleged that Mahoney negligently failed to set up Daisy CHAIN with a qualified new executive director to take her place, further stating that,

> *"not only did Jaclyn Mahoney know about and attempt to conceal the financial situation the organization was truly in, she actively participated in it's [sic] sabotage, targeted staff who challenged her, and aimed to greedily squeeze as much money from the sinking ship as she could before abandoning it." – Eugene Revolutionary Women's Committee on Instagram.*

According to Pro Publica, financial data from the most recently available year showed that in 2024, the organization's total revenue was $2,483,788. The vast majority of the organization's 2024 revenue came from donations and grants. Most of the expenses went towards salaries and wages for staff, with Mahoney's salary comprising 4.6% of total expenses.

A former member of the leadership team, who for fear of retaliation has asked to go only by Penny, gave more insight on the financial circumstances she learned about in early 2026, and what made continued operation untenable. Regarding the worker's memo, she denies that there was any financial mismanagement or profit skimming, stating that the finance manager performed her role with the utmost integrity. Those privy to the books instead blame human error in communication and strategy that snowballed and became too difficult to overcome. The consensus gleaned through testimonies from former staff show that Daisy CHAIN succumbed to the kinds of hardships many small nonprofits confront as federal funding for social services is mangled by the Trump regime.

Despite leadership’s plans to pause operations in early 2026 to work towards financial sustainability, Penny says, “as we dug deeper into the budget, we noticed the deficit was just too high.” This deficit resulted from losing grants they had expected to be awarded, coupled with a significant loss of insurance revenue. In their financial review, the finance manager discovered that one of their most beneficial insurance contracts had not been renewed, which meant that three months of submitted claims were going to be rejected. This revenue was critical to Daisy CHAIN’s operational overhead.

Laid off staff brought up a lack of transparency on finances and decision-making from executive leadership in recent years. Sources all corroborate that —like many nonprofits— Daisy CHAIN’s leadership was simply not equipped for the massive expansion of staff and programs, and as more responsibility and different funding sources piled on, leadership failed to establish systems that ensured efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

Staff testify to what increasingly became a dysfunctional work environment. They noted patterns where executive leadership often de-prioritized necessary operational and financial tasks; and that despite the leadership’s expressed intentions, they failed to implement systemic changes. Penny recounts that “oftentimes it seemed like they [leadership] were mitigating problems rather than being able to be proactive about the future.”

Staff and leadership all agree that the board had little grasp on Daisy CHAIN's day-to-day workplace culture, including staff and programming needs. Efforts to bridge the gaps between the staff and the board were ineffective, according to both staff and board members. Leadership was too distracted by what they called a "spinning hamster wheel" of problems that often made long term strategy, and cohesion between staff and leadership, an afterthought. Beyond the organization's descent into financial turmoil, the workplace culture was fraught with division and distrust.

"Without clear decision making and a bad workplace culture, it's really just a recipe for disaster– even if our best intentions are put out there. So I think fast growth made it really difficult to focus on those things," said Penny. These growing pains were difficult to overcome, as the organization's foundation itself was too fragile to support rapid change. By February it became clear that Daisy CHAIN lacked the money, and therefore the time, needed to make long overdue changes. At that point, Penny says, the board and interim ED became convinced that dissolution was the most responsible path forward.

Disproportionate Impacts: The Staff and The Clients

Daisy CHAIN workers were left reeling after the announcement that their workplace would close in a matter of days. They had no choice but to call clients scheduled to give birth in just a few weeks and inform them that they could no longer provide service, and that their office phones would be disconnected by the end of the week. In what felt like the blink of an eye, a community of both staff and clients were now figuring out a life without Daisy CHAIN.

The abrupt announcement of the closure felt like the grand finale in a series of blows the staff had taken in recent years. Last March, most employee's hours were decreased and they were enrolled in Oregon's Work Share program. Then, they were informed that Daisy CHAIN was likely to shut its doors by June 2026 if circumstances didn't change. Mahoney's bumpy exit from leadership only created more hardship and uncertainty.

Staff that did not work closely with Mahoney struggled with feeling connected to leadership and couldn't trust that their concerns would be meaningfully addressed. They cited issues ranging from a general lack of transparency to tokenism of employees; and felt overall that Mahoney struggled to delegate and ensure that staff, board, and leadership had an adequate understanding of Daisy CHAIN's many moving parts.

In response to former staff and leadership's reactions to the memo they published, the workers I spoke with clarified that, "it's not an isolated vacuum where she [Mahoney] was the *sole reason* [for the dysfunction and financial strain], but as a person in charge of the organization who had all the information, she absolutely had a duty to make more informed decisions that weren't gonna cause harm to people," said JT, a laid off staff member. They clarified that not everyone who worked at Daisy CHAIN had negative experiences, but are speaking on behalf of those who did.

Johnny, another laid off staff member shared that, "at some point the intentions don't matter anymore if you're harming people and harming the organization. But I will acknowledge that Jaclyn's intentions in starting this organization were beautiful…And also, it was very much time for new leadership."

The staff recall their excitement that their HR manager was appointed interim ED, as she had a reputation as a bridge between staff and leadership in her human resources role. They wish she had more time to turn things around, not just for their employment, but for their clients.

"Obviously, it sucks on a personal level to lose your job, but also, the reality is that this is a huge devastation to the community, because some of the people that we serve were some of the most underrepresented people," JT recalled, sharing how low-income mothers depended on Daisy CHAIN's services, and that there are few organizations able to replicate the low-barrier work they do.

The workers are now eager to renew their work through establishing their own practices. Johnny and five other members of Daisy CHAIN's lactation team are starting a group lactation practice called Empowered Lactation and plan to begin offering services soon. Music program team lead Kelani Larsen is continuing her work uniting childcare and music with her Baby Pop music program. It's clear that the work Daisy CHAIN did will endure beyond the nonprofit itself. Daisy CHAIN staff will be updating their Instagram account, @formerdcworkers with next steps and ways to support.

Staff I spoke with expressed gratitude for the training they received through their work at Daisy CHAIN, including lactation, peer support, and doula work. Nearly everyone expressed plans or desire to continue their careers in maternity support. More than just continuing to support new parents, staff have continued to support each other through a difficult time. Nearly everyone who's been laid off has stayed in touch: coordinating potlucks, financial support, moving help, or just planning for what's next.

> *"I'm excited to see what people do. I'm really, really grateful that we still have this community, because it was scary to think that that was something we were losing. There is, of course, an aspect of community that was lost especially because of the way that our community was involved with clients… but like this part of it [the staff's peer support system] we get to we still have. It's really sweet."*
> *—Johnny*

Autopsy Results: The Pitfalls of Nonprofits

Audre Lorde once said that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master’s house,” a phrase I often hear when discussing the shortcomings of the 501(c)3 nonprofit system. Nonprofits that depend on government funding, grants from wealthy and powerful foundations, and other capitalist purse-strings are precariously beholden to ever-shifting policy and elite interests. Because of this, critics of the nonprofit industrial complex* argue that nonprofits are incapable of transforming the systems that necessitate their very existence. By participating in a capitalist political economy via their donors and leadership structures, oftentimes nonprofits replicate the very forms of harm and exploitation that created the need for whatever social service it offers in the first place.

Within this system, many small nonprofits lack the material sustainability to persist through unexpected hardship, despite how desperately their services are needed. Looking around at the state of nonprofit healthcare in Lane County, is it any surprise that Daisy CHAIN fell victim to the same tsunami of budgetary mismanagement and cultural dysfunction that wiped out programs such as White Bird’s Front Rooms and CAHOOTS? It’s also a curious pattern that both Daisy CHAIN and White Bird’s flagship programs were closed shortly after employees became vocal against exploitation, mismanagement, and began exploring unionization.

While Daisy CHAIN’s ED Jaclyn Mahoney’s intentions appear more innocuous than Jeremy Gates’, former ED of White Bird, there still exist legitimate critiques of hierarchical leadership models in small nonprofits wherein a passionate executive director (and/or founders) is a linchpin to the operation. This, coupled with an ill-equipped and detached board of directors, Mahoney herself admitted the risks associated with her departure and, for many reasons, those risks unfortunately were not successfully navigated by leadership.

Projects are weakest when institutional knowledge is siloed to a few individuals with the most experience and power. In this sense, a project’s sustainability and resilience rests not only on financial circumstance but also on how equipped people within its network are to take on various roles. Sheltering vital operational knowledge within hierarchical roles often results in the failure to delegate tasks and share information, which weakens an organization’s adaptability for when leadership inevitably changes. More lateral decision-making can foster resilience and overall organizational well-being, making it easier to weather an unfavorable economy or set of policies. Without a look into Daisy CHAIN’s books and board meeting minutes, there are still some unknowns on the specific circumstances that led to the closure of a vital community organization. But certainly what can be diagnosed is that Daisy CHAIN succumbed to the same pitfalls that are epidemic in the nonprofit system.

The sudden closure of Daisy CHAIN as described here can serve as a warning to other organizations that lack the kinds of resilience that spelled this nonprofit’s downfall. While employees, clients, and the community at large mourn its sudden end, many lives and future generations have been bettered because of Daisy CHAIN’s mission. Reproductive health justice is an idea and movement that transcends the bounds of any one nonprofit, one that will prevail regardless of grants, boards, and other bureaucracies.

Contribute to former Daisy CHAIN workers in need at their GoFundMe: https://gofund.me/dfab1f662

*The non-profit industrial complex is defined by Dr. Dylan Rodriguez as “a set of symbiotic relationships that link political and financial technologies of state and owning class control with surveillance over public political ideology, including and especially emergent in progressive and leftist social movements.” He argues that the “NPIC manages and controls dissent by incorporating it into the state apparatus.” (The Revolution Will Not Be Funded, pg. 8-9)