

CONCRETE SAFARIS

Youth Transforming The World Starting In Their Own Backyards



Annual Report 2021

Letter from the ED & Chair

Friends,

Living through a second year of pandemic-related restrictions and hardships, the children and youth in East Harlem and beyond were dedicated more than ever to being active outdoors, exploring their neighborhood, and engaging with their friends and community. Concrete Safaris was right by their sides to provide them with opportunities to thrive. Throughout 2021, the children and youth in Concrete Safaris' programming developed their skills and confidence by riding bikes, taking photographs of their experiences and showcasing their work in a Photo Expo, learning how to grow food for themselves and community members in Concrete Safaris' gardens, advocating for the services they and their community need, and beautifying their neighborhood by planting a Streetscape along Second Avenue. Over 200 youth also secured paid internships in the Outdoor Leadership Academy, and Concrete Safaris served as a work and training site for youth and adults aiming to beautify the city. In the fall, after school re-opened for the first time since schools closed in March 2020.

As we move into 2022, the children and youth in East Harlem will have even more opportunities to lead healthy lives and shape their environment. It will be an incredible 15-Year Anniversary, and you are invited to be a part of the adventures!

In Health,

Mac Levine, MPH
Founding Executive Director

Michael Woolley
Board Chair

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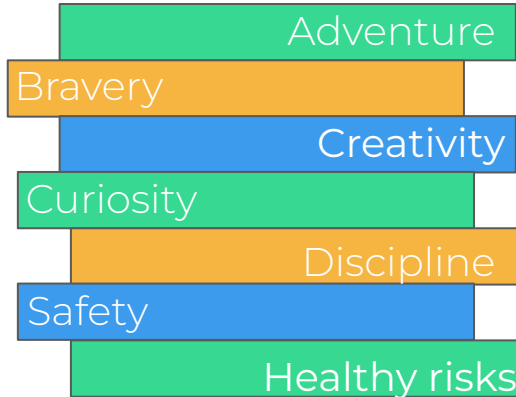
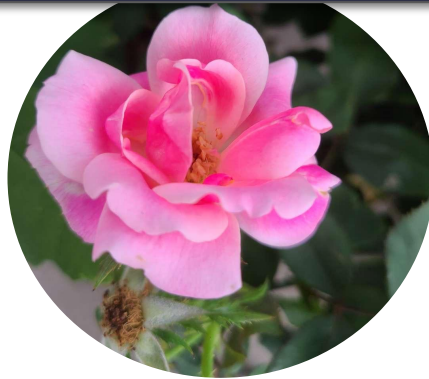
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Our Mission



To prepare youth in East Harlem and beyond to lead healthy lives and shape their environment through outdoor education, play, exploration, and community engagement.

Shared Values



Why Concrete Safaris?



Young people do not play outdoors as often as they once did. Three barriers preventing children and youth in East Harlem from playing outside on a regular basis are fear of perceived or real violence, lack of supervision, and supplies with which to play.

1 GREEN EXERCISE DAYS



Our garden-based field trip program, was on pause in 2021. Instead, local residents and volunteers participated in our Adopt-A-Bed program, growing food for themselves and the community while beautifying our gardens at Jefferson and Washington Houses. The gardens and people who love them also attracted a tight group of volunteers that came to assist with whatever was needed.

2 CITY SURFERS



Concrete Safaris' after-school program's primary goal is to improve the health and fitness of East Harlem children. In September 2021, the program returned to serving 72 children in-person for 15 hours each week, Monday – Friday, from PS 57 in East Harlem for the first time since March 2020.

3 OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



Nearly 300 youth (ages 14 – 24) interned in the Outdoor Leadership Academy in 2021, participating in a 6-to-12-week Gardening, Outdoor Play, or Health Promotion program. In the summer and fall, youth and adults joined as part of the City Cleanup Corps.

4 JUNGLEGYM



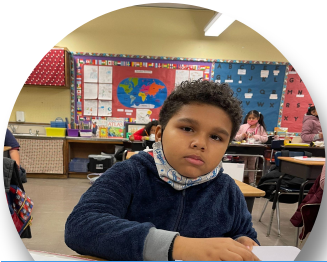
JungleGym 2021 was an opportunity for community members to play outside at a social distance on East 106th Street between Lexington and Third Avenues for two dates in July and August.

CITY SURFERS

Concrete Safaris' after-school program's primary goal is to improve the health and fitness of East Harlem children. After a year and a half stuck inside their homes and with no after school programs at their school, 2nd – 5th graders were ready to get back to “normal.” In September 2021, City Surfers reopened and once again children gardened, cycled, took photos, and went on field trips and nature adventures. Of course, getting to make new friends and meet new instructors that took them outside was the best part!

PARTNERS:

NYC Public Schools 57 | Office of Council Member Diana Ayala | New York City Department of Youth



LYAM, 3rd grade

“At Concrete Safaris, I learned how to bike ride. In the past I didn't like riding bikes because I wasn't good. I learned how to ride a bike and to be steady.”



MAYA, 5th grade

“Concrete Safaris helps me with my homework. The teacher teaches me to problem-solve, and helps me come up with a better answer. I learned how to bike ride, and how to balance. This program is helping me grow and learn new skills..”



ALFREDO, 2nd grade

“Concrete Safaris helps me with my homework and takes me on trips. Gardening is my favorite because it's easy, and I learn so much. We can plant different things. I like to garden, and we put hay around the plants and make holes to put the seeds in the soil.”

OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Nearly 300 youth (ages 14 – 24) interned for 6-to-12-weeks of Gardening, Landscaping Outdoor Play, Health Promotion, and Outdoor Photography at CS' Outdoor Leadership Academy between January – August 2021. The goals are to expose youth to environmental health employment opportunities, develop their leadership skills, and involve them in leading the community in healthy activities.

Summer youth participated in weekly, 3-hour, career readiness sessions in financial and environmental health literacy, professionalism, leadership, wellness, and other topics.

School year youth participated in weekly, 1-1.5-hour professional development sessions.

Youth were linked to external health, educational, and professional development services on an as-needed basis.

PARTNERS:

Columbia University | Deloitte | El Barrio's Operation Fightback | Getting Out & Staying Out | NYC Department of Youth & Community Development | NYC Housing Authority | NYC Department of Health | Verizon Media | SCOR Reinsurance | Morrison & Foerster



95%
of young people
demonstrated
gains in at least
one Career
Readiness
Capacity.

OUTCOMES:

- 211 Summer Interns
- 40 School Year Interns
- 10,788 Internship hours for 14-15-year-olds that generated nearly \$103,850 in summer stipend income for OLA Interns
- 8,130 Internship hours for individuals, ages 16+ that generated \$121,946 in school-year and summer hourly wages for OLA Interns
- Summer youth participated in weekly, 3-hour, career readiness sessions in financial and environmental health literacy, professionalism, leadership, wellness, and other topics.
- Cleanup Corps Members serving between July and August 2021 earned \$360,508 in wages

COMMUNITY GARDENING



Throughout 2021, a collective of local volunteers adopted raised garden beds, grew food for their households or to distribute to neighbors for free, and built relationships with each other. Mad Fun Farm and Jefferson Gardens were the place that the volunteers went to feel connected, to quell loneliness, to do something meaningful with their time when so much around all of us felt so uncertain. The community gardeners tended their plots multiple days per week. Saturday Garden Volunteer Sessions were held from April - December, and new volunteers found our gardens and returned month after month to support food production and to beautify the spaces.

QUOTES:

"I like working in gardens, and providing food for a community is a bonus"

"An organized and high-impact volunteering event"

"Supporting NYCHA residents in their efforts to improve their quality of living"

GARDEN PROVIDED:

Open Hours, 7-days/week for Community Gardeners & Adopt-A-Bed.

PARTNERS:

- NYC Housing Authority
- Bartlett Tree Experts
- Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice.



JUNGLEGYM

JungleGym 2021, a NYC Open Streets event series, was an opportunity for community members to play outside at a social distance on East 106th Street between Lexington and Third Avenues for two dates in July – August. Children and their families came to play. Local camp groups were not permitted to travel far, so JungleGym became their destination as it was central within East Harlem.



2,000
participants
attended CS' NYC
Open Streets,
located on
106th Street
between
Lexington – Third
Avenues

Partners:

- Community Board 11
- NYC Department of Transportation
- NYPD 23rd Precinct Community Affairs

CITY CLEANUP CORPS



In an effort to support gainful employment for New Yorkers and to ensure that our gardens were flourishing during the pandemic, forty individuals (ages 18+) worked a full-time internship between July and December 2021, with some continuing through June 2022. Their primary role was garden maintenance and the installation of the Streetscape along 2nd Avenue between 112th and 115th Streets.

STREETSCAPE BEFORE

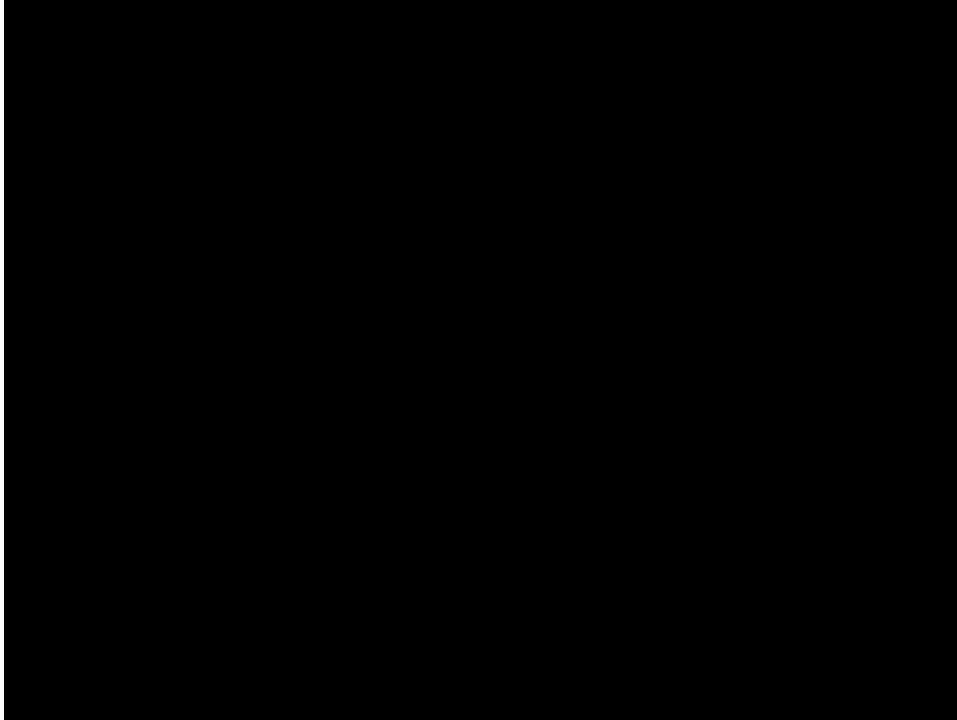


CONCRETE SAFARIS

STREETSCAPE AFTER

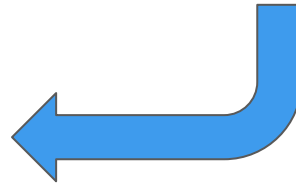


YOUTH PHOTO EXPO SUMMER 2021



The Virtual Photo Expo at Concrete Safaris is hosted by Youth Interns enrolled in the Outdoor Leadership Academy - SYEP. During COVID-19's "Summer of Recovery" 2021, forty 14-15-year-olds photographed and commented on their surroundings for six weeks in July and August.

**CLICK TO WATCH THE 2021
PHOTO EXPO**



STAFF



Founding Executive Director

Mac Levine

Ms. Mac manages operations and leads the team with her strong vision of experiential education power to help children grow as healthy leaders



Garden Cohort Leader

Anthony Chaney



Education Coordinator

Christina Castanon



Outdoor Play Educator

Luis Garcia



Photography Educator

Edward Lopez



Health Promotion Lead

Heavenly Evangelista



Group Leader

Sumaya Maniram



Programs Director

Christopher Hartsfield

Mr. Chris directs all four programs, ensuring that participants and volunteers learn, play, explore, and socialize safely in the great outdoors of East Harlem.



Assistant Group Leader

Duquan London



Assistant Group Leader

Julio Pagan



Group Leader

Yasmin Simmons



Assistant Group Leader

Nya Rashad



Group Leader

Nicole Rainey



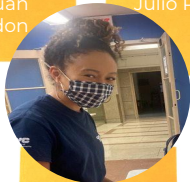
Assistant Group Leader

Jonah herren-Lock



Fiscal Manager

Tony Zisa



Photography Educator

Danielle Barrizo-Whitney



Volunteer Project Coordinator

Alexis Tovar



Assistant Group Leader

Renny Rodriguez

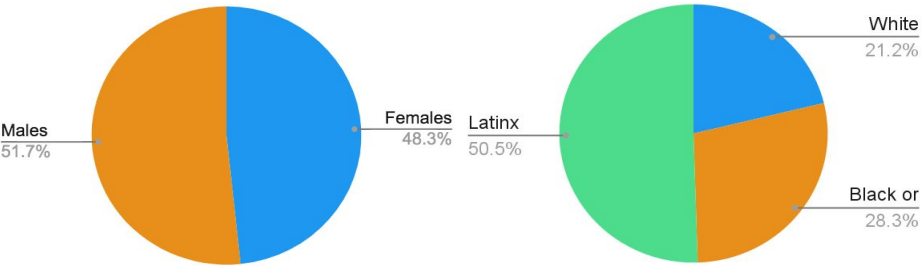


Garden Leader

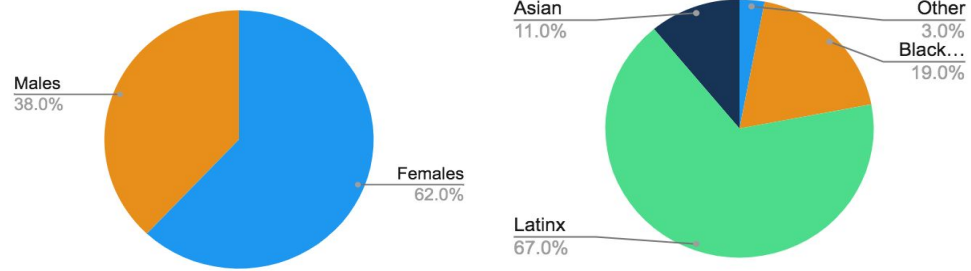
Luis Otero

DEMOGRAPHICS

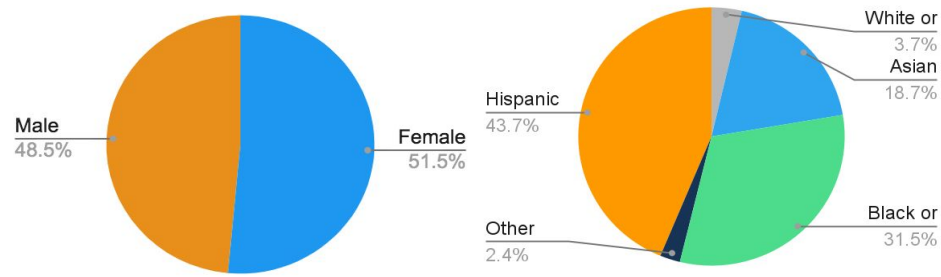
STAFF:



CITY SURFERS:



OLA INTERN:



PARTNERS

Schools

Public School 57, Harvard Business School Club of New York, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, Silberman School of Social Work's Community Navigators

Government

Manhattan Community Board 11
Fund for Public Health NYC
Manhattan Borough President's Office
NYC Department of Health
NYC Department of Transportation
NYC Department of Youth
NYC Housing Authority
NYPD 23rd, 25th, & PSA 5 Precincts
NYCServise
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
NY County Office of the District Attorney
Office of NYS Assemblyman Robert Rodriguez
Office of Council Member Diana Ayala.

Foundations

First Cornerstone Foundation
Lily Auchincloss Foundation
Mayor's Fund to Advance NYC
The Morrison & Foerster Foundation
New York State Health Foundation

Individuals

273 volunteers donated their time in 2021

Non-Profit Organizations

The Association to Benefit Children
Children's Aid Society
East Harlem Human Services Consortium
Open Architecture / New York
El Barrio's Operation Fightback
Exalt
Getting Out & Staying Out
Partnership for Afterschool Education
SCAN-Harbor
Union Settlement Association.

Corporations

Deloitte
The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America
HQ Capital
Intuit
L+M Development Partners
Microsoft Philanthropies
Murphy Burnham & Buttrick Architects
Oath
Refinitiv
SCOR Reinsurance Company
Seward & Kissel
Blumenfeld Development Group Ltd
Verizon Media



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- Ysabel Abreu, Community Liaison, Manhattan Borough President's Office
- Christopher Consalvo, Manager, Government and Community Affairs, Mount Sinai Health System
- Daniela Morales, Project Associate, John Snow Inc.

ADVISORS

- Leslie Boden, MSUP, Community Health Planning Consultant
- Natalie Chacin, Digital Marketing Manager, O.N.S
- Lauren Harness, AIA, LEED Green Associate, Associate Project Manager, About the Work
- Gloria Lau, Senior Landscape Architect, Stantec
- Malisa McCreedy, AICP, Director of Transportation & Mobility, City of Gainesville, Florida
- Michelle Ramos-Lopez, MPH, Program Manager, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
- Perry Sheffield, MD, MPH, Assistant Professor, Departments of Pediatrics and Preventive Medicine, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai



CONCRETE SAFARIS



GET INVOLVED

Concrete Safaris, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, operates thanks to the generosity of individuals, corporations, government, and foundations.

Make a 100% tax-deductible donation in support of youth transforming the world starting in their own backyards.

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