



# CONCRETE SAFARIS

Annual Report

2022



# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR & ED

Dear Readers,

2022 was a year of firsts for the children and youth at Concrete Safaris. Children in Kindergarten through 5th grade went on field trips, learned about gardening and photography, and biked throughout East Harlem and beyond at our first licensed summer camp. Youth had the opportunity to learn about pursuing a career in public and environmental health while supporting the participants in our programming through Concrete Safaris' PlacemakingCorps, one of the first Public Health AmeriCorps grantees selected in New York State and the nation.

In October, Concrete Safaris hosted its first gala, the 15-Year Transformation Celebration, to recognize the incredible dedication and hard work of the youth participants and staff and to expand Concrete Safaris' family of supporters. Of course, the children and youth in Concrete Safaris' programs continued to explore and beautify East Harlem, engage with and advocate for their community, and gain the skills and confidence to develop into future leaders.

We can't wait to see how many "firsts" the children and youth in East Harlem accomplish in 2023 as they transform their world, starting in their own backyards. We invite you to be a part of their adventures!



Michael Wooley,  
Chair, Board of Directors



Mac Levine, MPH  
Founding Executive Director









## Mission and Values

### 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.

### Why Concrete Safaris?

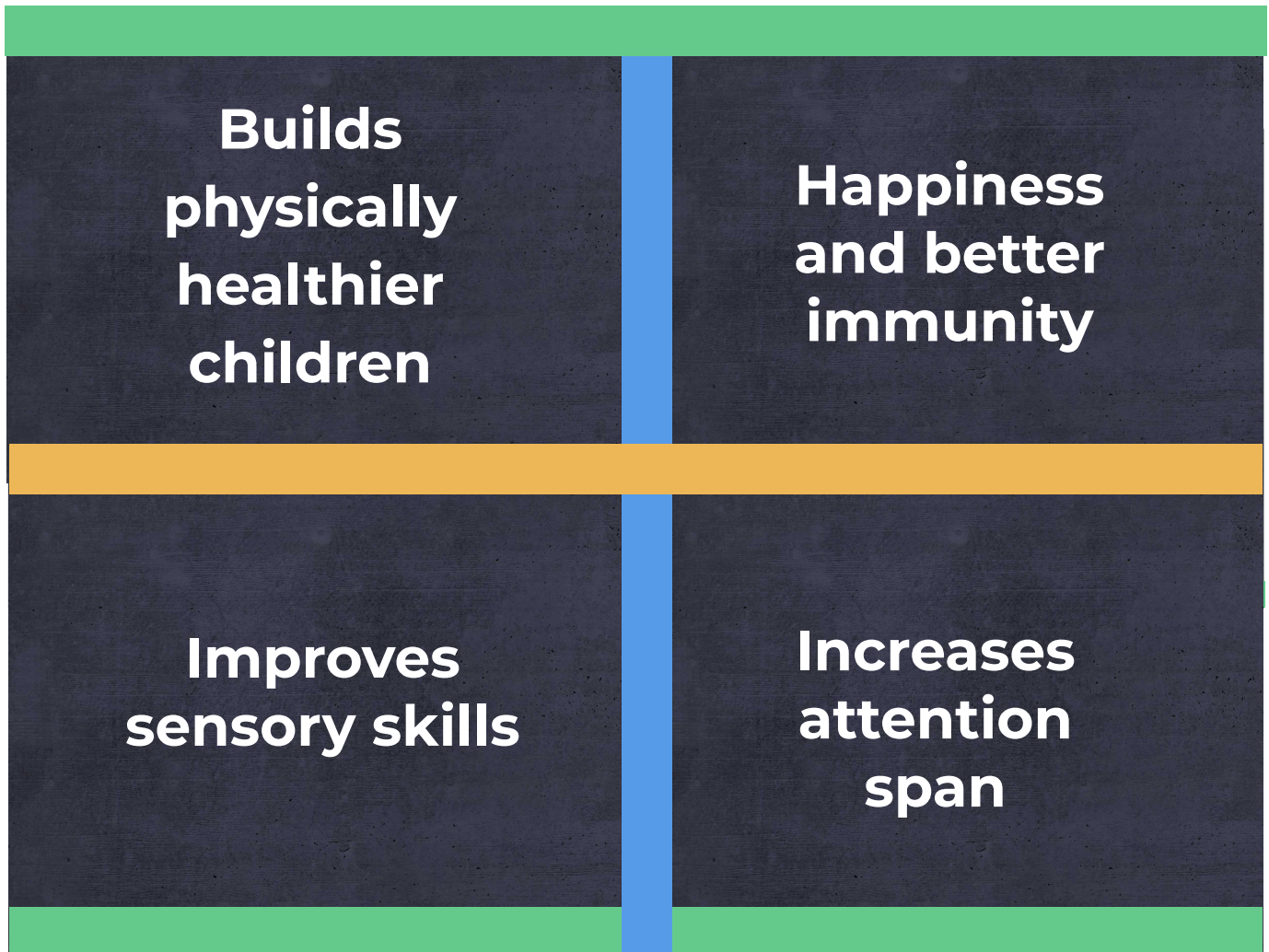
Young people do not play outdoors as often as they once did. Three barriers preventing children and youth in East Harlem from playing outside on a regular basis are fear of perceived or real violence, lack of supervision, and supplies with which to play.



## Shared Values



# WHY OUTDOOR PLAY IS VITAL



## NATURE DEFICIT DISORDER

The idea that human beings, especially children, are spending less time outdoors, and the belief that this change results in a wide range of behavioral problems.



"During this summer, I learned the importance of not taking the ordinary for granted. Living in NYC for almost my entire life has made the city feel less compelling, and photographing it seemed dull. However, throughout the various photography trips, I realized that there are still lots of hidden gems in NYC!"

-Sheng



"During the summer of 2022, I had the opportunity to grow as a creative person in Concrete Safaris. My teacher, Mr. Julian, expanded my understanding of photography and how it's not about the timing of the photo, but the beautiful moment it captures."

- Arisbeth

"Going out this summer to take pictures has encouraged me to learn more about traveling and the different parts of New York City. This summer, I got to meet a new friend and got to make cool memories with them."

- Hev







City Surfers After School and Summer Camp's primary goal is to improve the health and fitness of East Harlem children.



Nearly 300 youth (ages 14 – 24) interned at the Outdoor Leadership Academy, participating in a 6-to-12-week Gardening, Landscaping, Outdoor Play, or Outdoor Photo Cohort.



Green Exercise Days, our garden-based field trip program, returned in Fall 2022 to serve over 200 children per week from local schools.



JungleGym 2022 was an opportunity for community members to play outside at a social distance on East 116th and 106th Streets between Lexington and Third Avenues for two dates in July – August.









# City Surfers

Concrete Safaris' after-school program's primary goal is to improve the health and fitness of East Harlem children. City Surfers gardened, cycled, took photos, and went on field trips and nature adventures throughout 2022, as this 10-month after school expanded into our first 6-week, licensed summer camp.



Carmel, 4th Grade

"When I am home, I usually don't get to play outside. Everytime we went outside for gardening or photography I felt like I was learning something new and having the opportunity to learn something with people around that are going to experience it with me."



Prince, 2nd Grade

"When I first got there, I was excited and I thought it was going to be very fun. But when I found out we were going to go bike riding, I was a little scared because I didn't know how to ride a bike. But then I really liked it because Mr. Renny taught me how to ride a bike for the first time. I liked paying outside a lot during the summer."

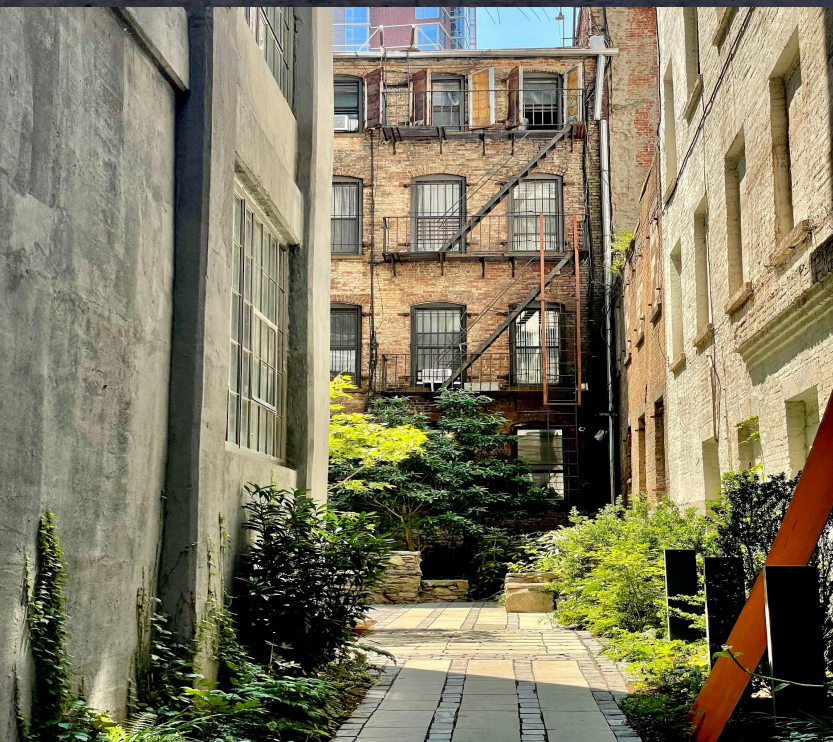






"Photography was fun because we got to learn about all the different components there are in order to take a good photo. We also learned how to edit our photos to make the image more vibrant."

- Max



"This summer I learned how to be a tourist in my own city."

- Anushka

"My experience this summer has been great. I've learned a lot about photography and I've had so much fun exploring new neighborhoods. I feel like I have definitely grown as a photographer and I've definitely had a great time learning, and hopefully will continue to learn."

-Heaven







# Outdoor Leadership Academy

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.

## Outcomes

- **268 Summer Interns**
- **83 School Year Interns**
- **17,062 internship hours for 14-15 year olds that generated nearly \$102,600 in summer stipend income for OLA interns**
- **6,872 internship hours for individuals 16+ that generated \$103,081 in school-year and summer hourly wages**









# Green Exercise Days

Green Exercise Days, our garden-based field trip program, returned in Fall 2022 to serve over 200 students per week from local elementary schools.



Children in the 2nd - 5th grades studied environmental health literacy and garden sciences. They also learned how to design new places within our gardens at Jefferson and Washington Houses in East Harlem.









# JungleGym

JungleGym 2022 was an opportunity for community members to play outside and view child and youth photo expos for two dates in July – August. Children, families, and neighbors came to play, make art, dance, and view the exhibition.



Hundreds of participants attended CS' NYC Open Streets, located on 116<sup>th</sup> Street between Lexington – Third Avenues.



# Streetscapes on First and Third Avenues 2022



## Program Description

Twenty participating youth began installation of Streetscapes along First and Third Avenues between 112<sup>th</sup> and 115<sup>th</sup> Streets. They learned how to landscape the grounds adjacent to the gate along the sidewalk, which has both a lot of foot traffic and a history of gun-violence. Programming was offered in Jefferson Houses between First and Third Avenues and 112<sup>th</sup> and 115<sup>th</sup> Streets, Mondays – Fridays throughout the season.



## Successes

Breaking ground on First and Third Avenue Streetscapes was years in the making, after a prior installation of a Second Avenue Streetscape, and we were so grateful to finally make it happen for the youth participants and Jefferson Houses residents. At the start of the project, the participating youth did not all know that the places where they were planting new life and creating visual change were the sites of shootings that led to fatalities. Feedback from the youth and local residents was very positive, and the youth were able to complete 100 resident surveys for ideas on how to make the project flourish over time.



"Photography is the story I fail to put into words. Throughout the summer I have grown and learned a lot about taking photos. We learned about everything from shadows and highlights to sharpness and black point. In photography, beauty can be seen in all things."

- Deandra



"I came into this program with limited photographic expertise, but I've since learned more about taking photos, editing photos, and new sites in NYC."

- Kadean



"This summer has been great so far. I've been to many places I haven't been to before and got the chance to explore the outdoors more."

-Thedral







# PlacemakingCorps

PlacemakingCorps, a Public Health AmeriCorps grantee, opened in Fall 2022 with the goals of educating local children and youth in environmental health literacy and creating healthy places in their neighborhood.

PlacemakingCorps also helped connect children, youth and families with referrals for wrap-around service to meet their health needs.



Ivan, Public Health AmeriCorps Member

“A few weeks into our program, a student in the fifth grade was showing disinterest and having a slow start learning about photography. During the next few weeks, I helped him learn how to use a camera effectively and what kind of photos he can take. The student became more engaged and interested during our photography lessons. Now, he is one of the best at taking photos in our program and he is able to do it without much direction.”

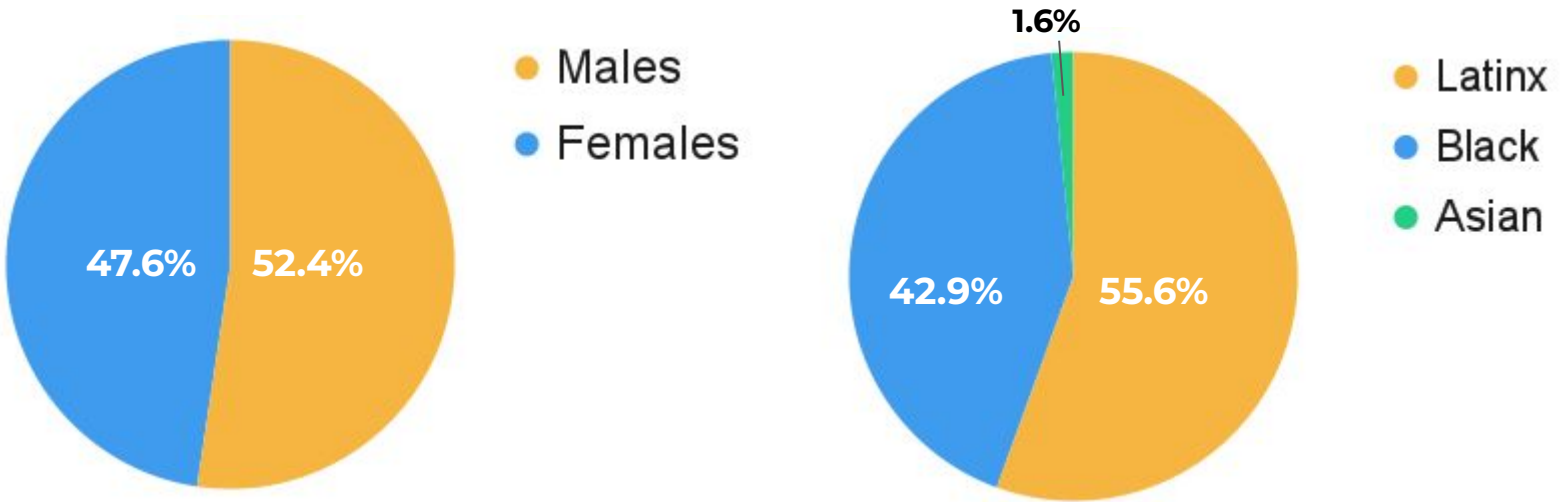




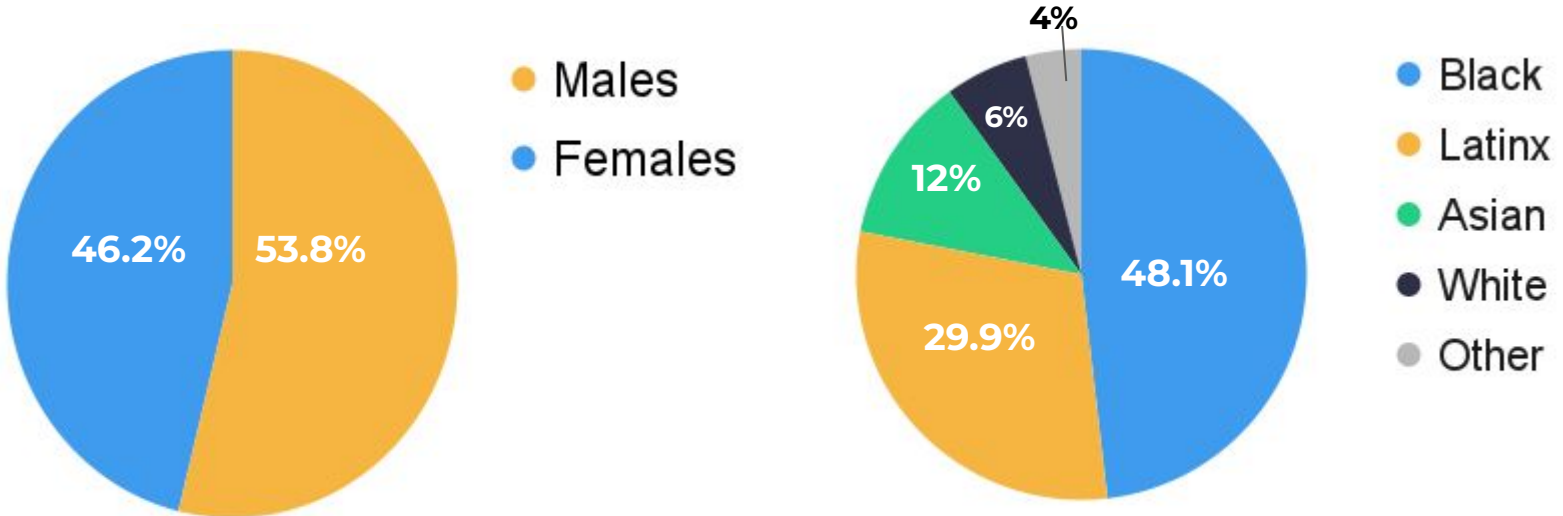


# 2022 DEMOGRAPHICS

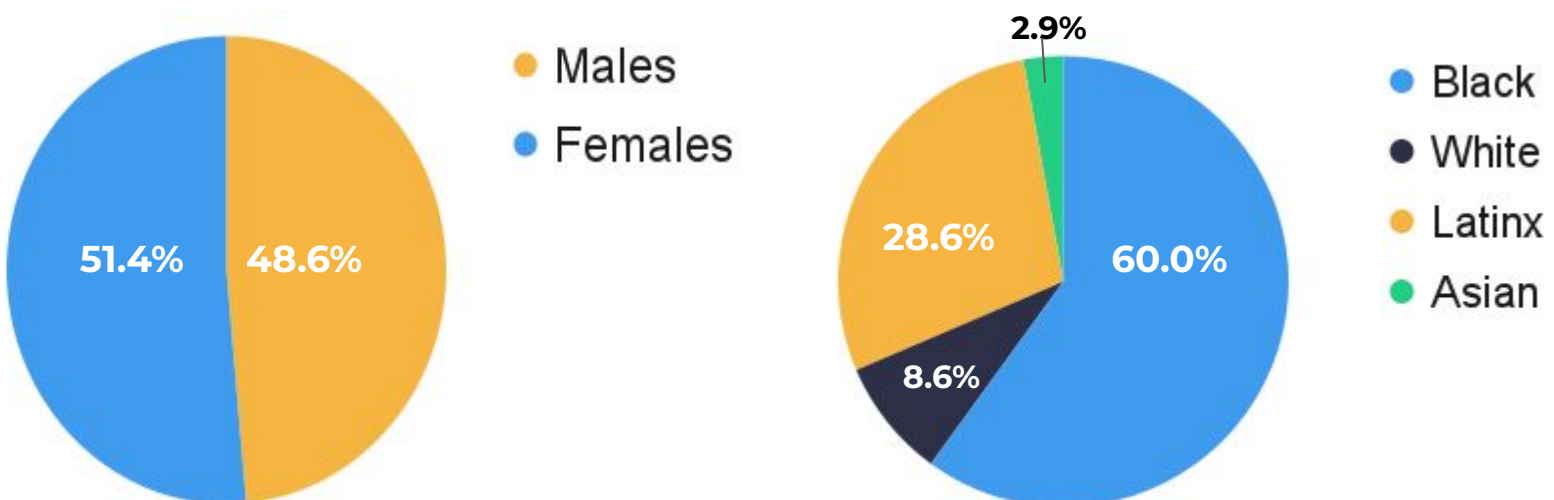
## City Surfers:



## OLA Interns:



## Staff:









# PARTNERS

## Schools

NYC District 4 Public Schools 7, 57, and 102  
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai  
Silberman School of Social Work

## Government

AmeriCorps  
Manhattan Community Board 11  
Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice  
NYC Department of Health  
NYC Department of Transportation  
NYC Department of Youth  
NYC Housing Authority  
NYC Human Resource Administration  
NYC Office of Neighborhood Safety  
NYCServive  
NYPD 23<sup>rd</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> & PSA 5 Precincts  
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
Office of NYS Assemblyman Robert Rodriguez  
Office of Council Member Diana Ayala

## Foundations

The City Gardens Club of NYC  
City Parks Foundation  
First Cornerstone Foundation  
Joy of Giving Something  
Mayor's Fund to Advance NYC  
The Morrison & Foerster Foundation  
The Pinkerton Foundation  
The Scripps Family Fund for Education and the Arts

## Individuals

527 volunteers donated their time in 2022

## Non-Profit Organizations

The Association to Benefit Children  
Association of Legal Administrators - NYC Chapter  
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 After School Education  
Police Athletic League  
The Riverside Church of New York City  
Roots of Success  
SCAN-Harbor  
Union Settlement Association  
Urban Upbound  
Zeta Phi Beta

## Corporations

Davis Wright Tremaine  
CP Capital  
Seward & Kissel  
Blumenfeld Development Group, Ltd.  
PricewaterhouseCoopers  
Universal Television  
West Monroe





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Community Health Planning Consultant

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### **Lauren Harness, AIA**

LEED Green Associate, Associate Project Manager, About the Work

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Built Environment Program Manager, Blue Zones

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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.

## Contact Us

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All photos were taken by children and youth enrolled at Concrete Safaris.