

CONCRETE SAFARIS

ANNUAL REPORT 2013





February 1, 2014

Dear Friends and Supporters,

2013 was a year of tremendous growth for Concrete Safaris and its 7- to-12-year-olds. The organization carried out more than 25,000 hours of outdoor play amongst over 1,500 neighborhood children across three key programs - City Surfers, Green Exercise Days, and JungleGym 2013. Program participation increased across the board thanks to improved training programs, deeper parent involvement, the addition of high-energy, college-educated program assistants, and — of course — word-of-mouth from returning students and teachers about the strength of our outdoor, educational programs.

To better quantify our unique work, the organization conducted its first major evaluation of which the results are enclosed. What these facts and figures tell us is that children not only want to eat nutritiously and play outdoors, but they also want to learn and share basic community health principles. Their self-esteem grows as they lead workshops in gardens, parks, and streets. They become agents of the change and community betterment as their friends and families gravitate towards the fun and adventure we are all experiencing here at Concrete Safaris. Transforming underutilized, outdoor spaces into healthy places with and for kids increases their physical activity and environmental awareness. Both the literature on youth empowerment and Concrete Safaris' theory-to-practice approach amply demonstrate those points.

In 2014, Concrete Safaris will embark on robust strategic and geographic expansion, which will broaden its reach in Upper Manhattan. We invite you to be a part of the journey!

Beans + Butterflies,

Mac Levine
Founding Executive Director

All my best,

Michael J. Hagan
Chairman of the Board



STAFF & BOARD

In 2013, the organizational theme was People Power. In addition to mobilizing over 1,500 children to play and learn outdoors, Concrete Safaris expanded its board of directors from 4 to 8 members, developed an Advisory Committee of 7 members, increased staff from 3 to 5 employees, and maintained volunteer participation at over 500 individuals.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mandy DeRoche, Company Secretary; Associate, Seward & Kissel

Yasmine Elkatsha, Healthy Living Advocate

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Vanessa Hefa, Third Grade NYC Public School Teacher

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Richard H. Mead, Treasurer of the Company; Retired

Michelle Ramos-Lopez, MPH, Program Manager, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Sharon "Mac" Levine, MPH, Founder & Executive Director of the Company

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Genevieve Andre, Parent

Elizabeth Bradley, President, The Balto Group

Sandra Gittens, Retired Principal, PS 102

Liz Hopfan, Executive Director, Free Arts NYC

Malisa Mccreedy, AICP

Adolfo Sanders, Parent

STAFF

Mac Levine, Executive Director

Patrick Kelly, Cycling and Fitness Program Assistant

Tifani Peguero, Community Organizing and Nutrition Program Assistant

Bryan Vitale, Outdoor Education Director

Aya Yamamoto, Garden Program Assistant

MEDIA CREDITS

Photos: Bryan Vitale and the City Surfers • Report Design: Liz Roberts

CITY SURFERS

City Surfers is a 5-day-a-week after school and summer program at PS 102 and 2-day-a-week after school and summer program at Washington Community Center. This educational, camp-style program includes cycling and bike route design, game playing and design, gardening and design, cooking/nutrition, science, fishing (included in field trips), and swimming.

“ Concrete Safaris helped me improve to eat healthy and do exercise. It helped my family to eat healthy and to go outside. ”

-Boy, Age 12, 5th Grade

City Surfers was granted permission by the NYC Housing Authority to replicate its Washington Houses' gardens on property at Jefferson Houses. The program received major support from The Levitt Foundation and The Coca-Cola Foundation. Between January and April, City Surfers conducted neighborhood surveys to learn what their neighbors wanted to eat and how they wanted the gardens to look. Then, the children designed Jefferson Gardens. In May, City Surfers broke ground. There are now over 30 raised garden beds in which the children planted and harvested potatoes, okra, basil, peppers, onions, leeks, cabbage, cilantro, parsley, chinese cabbage, collards, beets, lettuce, and tomatoes. Students learned how to cook healthy meals twice-a-month and provided nutritious dishes for their families, including pickled beans, pesto, salads, and more.

Students were responsible for public speaking in front of their peers on a daily basis. City Surfers were selected to speak at the Just Food 2013 Conference and taught educators about youth empowerment gardening, receiving rave reviews. During bi-monthly Saturday volunteer sessions, students co-led groups of adult and child volunteers in all garden maintenance activities. During Green Exercise Days, students taught their classmates and volunteers how to plant herbs, vegetables, and fruits.

The fitness component of after school and summer programming included cycling adventures around Randall's Island and Central Park. City Surfers learned how to design bicycle routes using NYC maps and the newly installed bike lanes on First and Second Avenues, for which they advocated in 2011-12.



CITY SURFERS STATS

- **2012-13 school year:** City Surfers' High Attenders achieved **3,890** hours of total physical activity, burning **1,089,021** calories.
- **October - December, 2013-2014 school year:** In just three months HIGH ATTENDERS have accumulated a total of **2,335** hours of total physical activity, burning **248,279** calories.

- City Surfers' participation rates **increased by 50%** in 2013.

- In March, City Surfers taught **15** adult educators about growing food with children at the 2013 Just Food Conference.

- City Surfers designed, managed, and installed **three educational gardens in two public housing developments** as we expanded from Washington Houses to Jefferson Houses, both in East Harlem.



- City Surfers harvested **over 500 lbs. of crops**, which were shared with Concrete Safaris' families and neighbors.
- The children wanted to donate excess produce to the hungry, so **two trucks of produce went to New York Common Pantry**, New York City's largest community-based food pantry.
- Every child in our summer City Surfers program tried **100%** of the vegetables, herbs, and fruits they grew at Mad Fun Farm and Jefferson Gardens.
- Concrete Safaris **increased our fleet of bicycles by 30%** so that our growing 5th graders could continue to ride safely as we design safe bike routes for our neighbors.

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF CITY SURFERS TO OUR FAMILIES?

"It's INVALUABLE. The commitment to teaching children about health & wellness, healthy food and lifestyles is wonderful & I applaud Concrete Safaris' mission!"

-Cathy Finlay

"To expose my child to activities that she would not be able to do."

-Genevieve Andre

"Muy bueno para mi hija." [City Surfers is] Very good for my daughter."

-Francisca Nieto

"Eating healthy and [understanding about] responsibilities, respect for others, learning to work as a team, learning new and exciting things."

-Anonymous

"Concrete Safaris' value to Heaven is very Educational, Respectful, Entertaining as well as Big Fun."

-Michael Briscoe

"I think it's great [that] she learns things, keeps her active."

-Marcos Rodriguez

"To help my niece and nephew improve on their skills."

-Jannette Lopez

"My children get to explore and learn about helping their environment."

-Setan Doucoure



During the 2012-2013 school year, EACH CHILD burned, on average:

- 11,087 calories from biking between 120 and 203 miles.

Between October and December of the 2013-2014 school year, EACH CHILD has burned, on average:

- 2,873 calories from biking between 22 and 24 miles.



Green Exercise Days

Green Exercise Days are outdoor, educational, interactive events held during the school day from Earth Day to Thanksgiving in our gardens at Mad Fun Farm (16,000 square feet in Washington Houses at 98th Street and Third Avenue) and Jefferson Gardens (half an acre in

Jefferson Houses at 113th Street and Second Avenue). Activities include: planting herbs, fruits, vegetables, and butterfly plants, shoveling topsoil, raking leaves, and completing fitness circuits. City Surfers led and designed fitness circuits at select Green Exercise Days.



Green Exercise Day STATS:

- Concrete Safaris
 - Reached **1,300** Children, **up 25%** from **2012**
 - Hosted **31** garden, bike and fitness events
 - Partnered with **17** schools & community centers for **85** hours of programming
- Children accumulated a total of **4,133** hours of physical activity through Green Exercise Days
- **480** volunteers donated **1,802.5** hours of time

“I will be healthier by playing more and eating healthier food. I learn to plant food for the people who help us plant and for my family. We can make Concrete Safaris better by give people who don't have food.”

-Boy, Age 10, grade 4



JungleGym 2013

Concrete Safaris hosted its first annual two-day community service event and obstacle course/carnival in Jefferson Houses and Thomas Jefferson Park on September 21-22, 2013. Activities on September 21st included planting, raking, and shoveling. Activities on September 22nd included racing, game playing, and carnival games. Earlier in the summer, children in the City Surfers program scouted Jefferson Park to develop 16-obstacles and a race course for the event.



JG STATS:

Hours of Physical Activity per Child:

2-4 hours, including competing in the race, running around, and gardening

Children:
70 racers, 200 obstacle course and carnival participants

Examples:
www.junglegymrace.com

Jefferson Gardens



May 2013



July 2013



“Concrete Safaris is one of my favorite Project Partners out of all the projects I have ever team led with New York Cares.”
- Monica White, Team Leader



August 2013



DONORS

Adventurous Apple Tree - \$50,000+

Anonymous

Climbing Cornstalk - \$25,000-49,999

Levitt Foundation

Magnificent Mint - \$10,000-24,999

Michelle D. Smith

Deloitte & Touche*

Fund for Public Health in New York

Goldman, Sachs & Co.

Brainy Basil - \$5,000-9,999

AOL*

BlackRock Foundation*

Citizens Committee for New York City*

Michael Hagan

Kezia Hendrix

JP Morgan*

New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene*

New York City Department of Youth & Community Development

Purposeful Potato - \$2,500-4,999

Boston Consulting Group*

CIT Group*

Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks*

Morgan Stanley*

Morrison & Foerster Foundation

Nautica*

Rabin Martin*

Ralph Lauren*

Timberland*#

Keen Kale - \$1,000-2,499

Alcoa Foundation*

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Matt Archer

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Mandy DeRoche

Denis Ladouceur

Nancy A. King

Massey Knakal Charitable Foundation*

Matt Moynihan

Morrison & Foerster

Norcross Wildlife Fund

Ryobi#

Playful Peppers - \$1-999

Anonymous

Children's Museum of the Arts New York#

Cindy Beyer

Kimberly Cebrik

Marty Chapman

Brian Christensen

David Vaughan Investments

David G. DeRoche

Mandy DeRoche

Jesenia Diaz

Yasmine Elkatcha

Fairway Market#

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Giselle Leon

Jennifer Leong

Marya Levine

Virginia Liriano

Marymount School of New York*

Malisa McCreedy

Richard Mead

Michael Mellamphy

Nickelodeon

Amie O'Toole

Tommy O'Toole

Pricewaterhouse Coopers#

Michelle Ramos

Ellen Simon

Stanley Isaacs Community Center

Elaine Saunders

Andreas Turanski

Shannon Voto

Stuart John Welburn

Jack Yoskowitz

***Donated funds and volunteer time #In-kind donation**

COLLABORATORS

After School & Summer Programs + Schools

Key Partners: Public Schools 102 and 146, Union Settlement Association.

Additional partners: Amber Charter School, The Association to Benefit Children, Children's Aid Society, Columbia University, Lower Lab, Marymount School of New York, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York City College of Technology, Public Schools 38, 50, 57, 72, 83, and The Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center.

Government

Community Board 11, Manhattan Borough President's Office, Materials For the Arts, New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, New York City Department of Transportation, New York City Department of Youth & Community Development, New York City Housing Authority, New York City Parks, New York City Police Department, Office of Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito, Office of Senator Jose M. Serrano, New York City Police Auxiliary.

Community-Based Organizations

City Year, Community Resource Exchange, Harlem Community Development Corporation, Harlem River Park Task Force, Lawyers Alliance for NY, Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, New York Cares, New York Common Pantry, and Partnerships for Parks.

Concrete Safaris Income Statement

	2013	2012
Revenues		
Foundation grants	\$105,200	\$41,000
Corporation contributions	53,030	61,132
Government grants	10,500	10,000
Individual contributions*	36,395	37,332
Donated supplies, services and facilities	25,912	24,070
Gain (loss) on sale of assets	(69)	(64)
Total revenues	230,968	173,470
Expenses		
Programs		
City Surfers	116,472	107,422
Green Exercise Days	18,540	17,835
JungleGym	12,428	-
Total programs	147,440	125,257
Management and general	18,746	17,016
Fundraising	16,323	16,729
Total expenses	182,509	159,002
Increase in net assets	\$48,459	\$14,468
Net assets, end of year	\$74,562	\$26,103

* includes donated securities

PRESS

New Yorkers for Parks Newsletter, March 4, 2013

<http://www.ny4p.org/partnerships/meet-a-new-yorker-for-parks-mac-levine>



Meet a New Yorker for Parks

Mac Levine

March 5, 2013

The key to Mac Levine's success isn't that she knows what's best for the children of East Harlem. It's that she knows how to get them to tell her what's best for themselves. She doesn't dictate to children of the Washington Houses what to plant in their 15,000-square foot garden – they decide. In fact, they are the ones who decided they wanted the garden in the first place.

That's a lesson she learned in 2007, when there was little interest in the urban youth hiking program she tried to organize.

"I quickly realized that if they were going to have ownership, they were going to have to be the primary decision-makers," she said.

Levine's desire to work with children began when she was a teenage volunteer at Coalition for the Homeless.

"There was a little girl in the program, couldn't have been more than 6-years-old. Every day her mom filled her milk bottle with alcohol. She would tell her 'mom, I need milk!' I kind of let it. I knew then that I was going to start a nonprofit."

When her hiking program didn't take off, Levine spent hours in meetings at community centers and settlement houses throughout Upper Manhattan, where she knew obesity and poverty rates were high. The most common suggestion: work with the Union Settlement Association in East Harlem.

She founded Concrete Safaris and formed a partnership with the Settlement, a mainstay in the community for more than a century, and perched in on public housing developments, most of which are far from sizable, accessible parkland.

"These are neighborhoods where a lot of people don't spend much time outside," she said. "In so many of the developments, there's all this green, but it's fenced off."

Concrete Safaris took off in earnest in 2008, growing to more than 300 children, aged 7 to 11, by the end of the year. Since then, she has expanded her network to include several schools in the area, along with the Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center and the Association to Benefit Children. The program now works with P.S. 102 five days a week and has served more than 3,000 children since its inception.

It was the children that drove the program's growth. Levine remembers a nine-year-old organizing a survey for her peers to determine the after-school and summer program's curriculum, which today also includes biking, swimming and public speaking.

Perhaps few elements of the job bring Levine greater satisfaction than when a child no older than 11 learns a gardening curriculum well enough to teach it to classmates – and sometimes even to adult volunteers.

Learning from a peer, she says, helps get them more engaged, and quickly.

"When you watch a kid go from knowing nothing to running up to you or their parents with excitement because they are excelling, to me that's perhaps the most rewarding part of my job."

This model is now well-known at the Washington Houses, where, with the support of the New York City Housing Authority's Garden and Greening Program, the garden flourishes with a migratory butterfly space and a wide variety of flowers, fruits and vegetables – all selected by the children.

The garden is available to surrounding residents and has even adapted to shifting demographics in the neighborhood. As more Chinese residents move into the area, the children have introduced Chinese cabbage and four varieties of hot peppers into the mix.

That organic adaptation reflects the tailored approach Concrete Safaris takes in different locations. For example, Levine is able to recruit children more informally and spontaneously at Jefferson Houses, a bustling community with vibrant street life, than at Washington Houses, where there is less mingling in common spaces.

"What's good for one development – even though the issues are the same – might not necessarily be good for the other," she said. "Each location we go to needs to be approached in a different way."

It's with this sort of thoughtful approach that Levine is building the program at Jefferson, where children are moving ahead with their own garden, approved last year.

Local leaders and experts say Levine has done a great deal to transform the way hundreds of children think about their open space.

"Concrete Safaris highlights how existing open space, in this case NYCHA grounds, can be optimally used to provide fun and educational programs for inner city children right in their backyard," said Maida Galvez, an Associate Professor of Preventive Medicine and Pediatrics at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. "I can't say enough good things about what she is doing for East Harlem children."

Galvez is currently working on a joint research project with NY4P that examines the relationship between access to open space and children's health in East Harlem. The first report of the project, the *East Harlem Open Space Index*, was released by NY4P last fall.

In a forthcoming report, Mount Sinai researchers will analyze the relationship between East Harlem's open space resources and the health and obesity rates of 200 neighborhood children. NY4P hopes to identify strategies for incorporating the study's findings into actual park and open space planning, encouraging design of spaces that promotes active recreation.

Levine is doing her part to address one of the recommendations of last fall's report – maximize public use of existing open space, including within Housing Authority developments. We're hopeful that other local stakeholders, armed with our research, will join that push.

If funding were available, Levine would consider expanding her program to other parts of the city. But right now her focus remains East Harlem, where she sees the community's open space resources – however unconventional – as a true lifeline. And she's developed a strong network of volunteers who will, true to the Concrete Safaris model, chart their own course.

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New York

AWARDS

- Livin La Vida Loca Farm, our newest children's garden at Jefferson Houses, was the **2013 Vegetable Garden, Third Prize – Manhattan, Winner** at the 50th Anniversary City Wide NYCHA Garden & Greening Program Competition.
- Founder & Executive Director Mac Levine won the **2013 John and Kathleen Gorman Public Health Humanitarian Award at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health.** The award is "for a student who has demonstrated excellence in commitment to the humane care of individuals and communities, and in advancing consideration of human rights and values in health care and prevention."

DATA: CITY SURFERS

During the 2012-2013 school year, participants accumulated a total of:

1,067 hours of biking (and biked a total of 4101 miles)
635 hours of fitness
1,514 hours of field trips
215 hours of rugby
414 hours of swimming
1,091 hours of gardening
4,940 hours of total physical activity

During the 2012-2013 school year, EACH CHILD got, on average:

31 hours of biking (SD=21.9, N=34) and biked a total of 120 miles (SD=90.8, N=34)
18 hours of fitness (SD=15.3, N=34)
44 hours of field trips (SD=31.3, N=34)
6 hours of rugby (SD=5.6, N=34)
12 hours of swimming (SD=9.3, N=34)
32 hours of gardening (SD=23.5, N=34)
145 hours of total physical activity (SD=101.7, N=34)

During the 2012-2013 school year, HIGH ATTENDERS accumulated a total of:

834 hours of biking (and biked a total of 3260 miles)
498 hours of fitness
1,202 hours of field trips
164 hours of rugby
338 hours of swimming
852 hours of gardening
3,890 hours of total physical activity

During the 2012-2013 school year, EACH HIGH ATTENDER got, on average:

52 hours of biking (SD=11.9, N=16) and biked a total of 203 miles (SD=53.3, N=16)
31 hours of fitness (SD=11.5, N=16)
75 hours of field trips (SD=14.4, N=16)
10 hours of rugby (SD=4.3, N=16)
21 hours of swimming (SD=4.3, N=16)
53 hours of gardening (SD=15., N=16)
243 hours of total physical activity (SD=51.16, N=16)

From October - December of the 2013-2014 school year, participants accumulated a total of:

439 hours of biking (and biked a total of 740 miles)
292 hours of gardening
184 hours of games and team building
755 hours of field trips
2,412 hours of total physical activity

From October - December of the 2013-2014 school year, EACH CHILD has gotten, on average:

13 hours of biking (SD=4.0, N=33) and biked a total of 22 miles (SD=21.1, N=33)
8 hours of gardening (SD=2.4, N=33)
5 hours of games and team building (SD=1.9, N=33)
22 hours of field trips (SD=8.3, N=33)
73 hours of total physical activity (SD=32.2, N=33)

From October - December of the 2013-2014 school year, HIGH ATTENDERS have accumulated a total of:

419 hours of biking (and biked a total of 716 miles)
280 hours of gardening
178 hours of games and team building
740 hours of field trips
2,335 hours of total physical activity

From October - December of the 2013-2014 school year, EACH HIGH ATTENDER has gotten, on average:

14 hours of biking (SD=2.4, N=29) and biked a total of 24 miles (SD=21.5, N=29)
9 hours of gardening (SD=1.1, N=29)
6 hours of games and team building (SD=1.1, N=29)
25 hours of field trips (SD=4.5, N=29)
80 hours of total physical activity (SD=26.7, N=29)

During the 2012-2013 school year, participants burned a combined total of:

376,970 calories from biking
211,932 calories from fitness
251,896 calories from field trips
700,32 calories from rugby
175,241 calories from swimming
181,624 calories from gardening
1,267,697 calories from total physical activity

During the 2012-2013 school year, EACH CHILD burned, on average:

11,087 calories from biking (SD=8,344.5, N=34)
6,233 calories from fitness (SD=5,445.1, N=34)
7,408 calories from field trips (SD=5,758.1, N=34)
2,059 calories from rugby (SD=2,013.2, N=34)
5,154 calories from swimming (SD=4,430.5, N=34)
5,341 calories from gardening (SD=4,233.6, N=34)
37,285 calories from total physical activity (SD=28,720.4, N=34)

During the 2012-2013 school year, HIGH ATTENDERS burned a combined total of:

318,614 calories from biking
180,757 calories from fitness
219,403 calories from field trips
57,267 calories from rugby
157,553 calories from swimming
155,425 calories from gardening
1,089,021 calories from total physical activity

During the 2012-2013 school year, EACH HIGH ATTENDER burned, on average:

19,913 calories from biking (SD=6,791.9, N=16)
1,129 calories from fitness (SD=5,930.7, N=16)
1,371 calories from field trips (SD=5,502.8, N=16)
3,579 calories from rugby (SD=2,034.1, N=16)
9,847 calories from swimming (SD=4,445.9, N=16)
9,714 calories from gardening (SD=4,297.3, N=16)
68,063 calories from total physical activity (SD=26,663.4, N=16)

So far, during the 2013-2014 school year, participants have burned a combined total of:

94,827 calories from biking
38,552 calories from gardening
24,682 calories from games and team building
98,891 calories from field trips
256,953 calories from total physical activity

So far, during the 2013-2014 school year, EACH CHILD has burned, on average:

2,873 calories from biking (SD=1112.3, N=33)
1,168 calories from gardening (SD=442.1, N=33)
747 calories from games and team building (SD=357.9, N=33)
2,996 calories from field trips (SD=1246.2, N=33)
7,786 calories from total physical activity (SD=2927.5, N=33)

So far, during the 2013-2014 school year, HIGH ATTENDERS have burned a combined total of:

90,468 calories from biking
37,037 calories from gardening
23,894 calories from games and team building
96,879 calories from field trips
248,279 calories from total physical activity

So far, during the 2013-2014 school year, EACH HIGH ATTENDER has burned, on average:

3,119 calories from biking (SD=906.4, N=29)
1,277 calories from gardening (SD=344.3, N=29)
823 calories from games and team building (SD=307.7, N=29)
3,340 calories from field trips (SD=878.8, N=29)
8,561 calories from total physical activity (SD=2,155.8, N=29)

Analysis conducted by Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health MPH Candidate Rachel Bavley under supervision from Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Pediatrician Maida P. Galvez, MD, MPH, and Pediatric Environmental Health Fellow Cappy Collins, MD.



Vision

Concrete Safaris has empowered children living in and around East Harlem's public housing projects to become healthy leaders through outdoor exercise and education programs since 2008. In East Harlem, children suffer from high rates of poor health, such as obesity and asthma, and from low socioeconomics. Healthy choices are limited due to a lack of safe places to play and learn outdoors. Concrete Safaris teaches disadvantaged children who are not traditionally considered leaders or equals in the decision-making process to alter the environment where they live in order to increase physical activity levels and healthy lifestyle options.

Elementary school children, ages 7-12, are encouraged to be proactive decision-makers in Concrete Safaris' neighborhood health interventions involving outdoor play and healthy placemaking. The children research and create bold ideas in temporary and long-term, outdoor spaces. They have grown gardens for affordable organic food, designed games for PlayStreets, and organized active community events in underutilized housing and park spaces. They have invited and led thousands of their friends, families, and neighbors to make East Harlem a cleaner, greener, safer neighborhood. They have also advocated for their environmental health needs, meeting with elected officials and government entities to urge construction of bike lanes and the expansion of Concrete Safaris' gardens.

Concrete Safaris believes that when children learn how to alter the physical world around them by navigating New York City's infrastructure, they become confident, experienced, and effective leaders at an early age, committed to their health and environment for the rest of their lives.

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