



CONCRETE SAFARIS

Annual Report

2025



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

COHORTS

**Outdoor
Play**

**Urban
Gardening &
Landscaping**

**Health
Promotion**

**Outdoor
Photography**

How We Teach & Learn

Daily participating children, ages 7 - 11, are active in all Cohorts.

Weekly or single-day participating children are introduced to one or more Cohorts per program.

14-15-Year-Olds learn to specialize in a particular Cohort.

16-24-Year-Olds learn to specialize in a particular Cohort, and gain exposure to at least one additional Cohort, leading activities for children, youth, and community.



OLA - Youth Interns (ages 14 - 24) participated for 6-to-12-weeks in Gardening, Outdoor Play, Health Promotion, Outdoor Photo, Evaluation, or Outreach Cohorts.



JungleGym is an obstacle challenge and active living fair for all ages. Children, families, and neighbors came to play outside, make art, dance, and spend time outdoors listening to music in this full-block summer event series.



Green Exercise Days, our garden-based field trip program, brought students outdoors to learn about neighborhood health, urban agriculture, and environmental science.



PlacemakingCorps, a Public Health AmeriCorps grantee, educated local children and youth in environmental health literacy and partnered with neighbors to create healthier places in the neighborhood.





Gardening, Landscaping, Outdoor Play, Placemaking, and Photography at CS' Outdoor Leadership Academy between January – August 2025. 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.

233 School-Year and Summer Interns

Youth earned over \$351,045 in wages, living allowances, or stipends

I learned how to maintain a garden by watering and caring for the plants. I also learned how to use different tools, like a hoe, rakes, shovels, and wheelbarrows. It was very educational learning about companion planting and how important it is for certain plants to grow and how certain plants can stunt each other's growth. Gardening has helped me take care of my community and taught me the importance of keeping our environment clean.

-Cassandra OLA-SYEP Intern
Gardening Cohort



"During our workshops, I learned more about money management and how to save money. I enjoyed learning about photography this summer because I am into the arts. Getting to visit places all over the city and learning about historical pictures was very fun. History is my favorite subject. I would say that the environment is very chill and welcoming."

- Jada, OLA-SYEP Intern
Photography Cohort

"My favorite part of this internship was helping with the JungleGym events. I learned to set a good example for the kids. You have to be a good role model. Skills I have gained from being at Concrete Safaris were communication and teamwork. You have to work together with people to solve problems."

- Shawayne, OLA-SYEP Intern
Outdoor Play Cohort







Concrete Safaris hosted two JungleGym events in 2025, featuring a 20-station obstacle course combined with an active living fair, free for all participants. Families enjoyed bounce houses, face painting, arts and crafts, street games, a healthy living fair, and a special appearance by the Bindlestiff Family Cirkus on July 25th and August 15th.

The two JungleGym events attracted over 1,000 participants who got active, played, and celebrated community together.







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 members also connected children, youth and families with referrals for wrap-around service to meet their health needs.



Mehki, Public Health AmeriCorps Member

“I want to give young people the opportunity to see that it’s okay to be a kid and not feel pushed into the streets. I serve in Concrete Safaris’ Placemaking Corps to give back to my community and create positive change in East Harlem. By completing my service hours, I will earn the Segal Education Award, which I plan to put toward my education.”



Ashley, Public Health AmeriCorps Member

“I serve because many children lack access to creative outlets, such as photography. I want to help shape the next generation of leaders and artists by using photography to create positive change and awareness within their communities.”



I learned how to interact with elementary school students by educating their minds on environmental protection agency lessons and topics about public health in the classroom. It's a great feeling of knowing that I made a difference in the East Harlem community as a Public Health AmeriCorps member. Working with other Public Health AmeriCorps members and volunteers in beautifying NYCHA's garden have built my teamwork and communication skills.

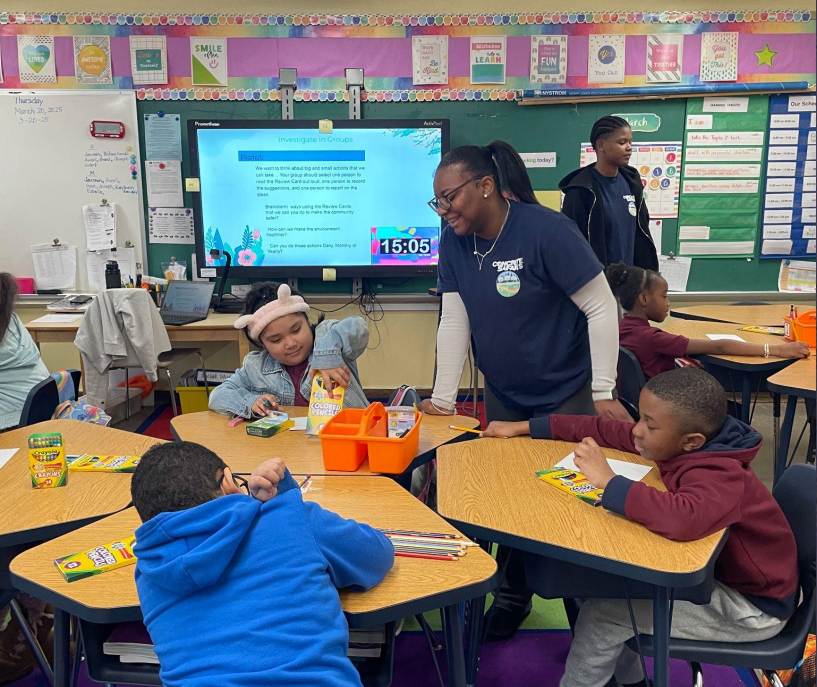
- Joycelyn, Public Health AmeriCorps Member
Environmental Health & Literacy Cohort

21 youth served as AmeriCorps Members



"I serve in Concrete Safaris' PlacemakingCorps because I want to see kids in my neighborhood spending less time in front of screens and more time outdoors. I want to teach them to take healthy risks by learning how to ride a bike, understanding how plants grow, and gaining the skills to help keep our community green."

- Aniyah, Public Health AmeriCorps Member
Environmental Health & Literacy Cohort







This year, Green Exercise Days brought students outdoors to learn about neighborhood health, urban agriculture, and environmental science.

237 elementary school students studied environmental health literacy and garden sciences during Green Exercise Days.





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Schools

City University of New York
City Tech
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
NYC District 4 Public Schools
The Lewis & Clark School

Government

Manhattan Community Board 11
NYC Department of Design & Construction
NYC Department of Health
NYC Department of Transportation
NYC Department of Youth
NYC Housing Authority
NYC Human Resource Administration
NYCSERVICE
NYPD 23rd, 25th & PSA 5 Precincts
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
NYS Office of Children & Family Services
Office of Council Member Diana Ayala
Public Health AmeriCorps

Foundations

The City Gardens Club of NYC
City Parks Foundation
Clif Family Foundation
Concord Group
JGS
The Morrison & Foerster Foundation
The Scripps Family Fund for Education and the Arts

Individuals

354 volunteers donated 1,257 hours in 2025

Non-Profit Organizations

The Association to Benefit Children
Children's Aid Society
Community Association of Progressive Dominicans
El Barrio's Operation Fightback
Harvard Business School Club of New York
New York Cares
PASE
SCAN-Harbor
StreetSquash
Union Settlement Association

Corporations

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Ares Management
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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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