



CONCRETE SAFARIS

Annual Report

2024

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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.



Outdoor Leadership Academy - Kids & Youth

2nd - 5th graders learned soft and hard leadership skills by completing independent and group activities in gardening, outdoor play, and photography at OLA - Kids. OLA - Youth Interns (ages 14 - 24) participated for 6-to-12-weeks in Gardening, Outdoor Play, Health Promotion or Outdoor Photo Cohorts.



JungleGym

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

Green Exercise Days, our garden-based field trip program, returned in Spring 2024 to serve over 200 children from local schools.



PlacemakingCorps

PlacemakingCorps, a Public Health AmeriCorps grantee, educated local children and youth in environmental health literacy, partnered with neighbors to create healthier places in the neighborhood, and provided social service referrals to participants and community members.





Outdoor Leadership Academy - Kids (2nd - 5th graders) focus on living a healthy lifestyle and creating new ways to improve neighborhood health by transforming the environment. OLA - Kids gardened, cycled, took photos, and went on field trips and nature adventures throughout 2024.







Outdoor Leadership
Academy - Youth



Gardening, Landscaping, Outdoor Play, Health Promotion, and Outdoor Photography at CS' Outdoor Leadership Academy between January – August 2024. 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.

**306 School-Year and
Summer Interns**

**Youth earned over
\$214,508 in school-year
and summer stipends
or hourly wages**

"This experience has taught me a lot about community engagement. I've been able to come out of my comfort zone talking to new people, promoting the events we've created. It's also been really enlightening to see all the kids in the neighborhood and see how much they want to be active. They're super willing to engage with us and participate in our activities."

-Valerie, OLA-SYEP Intern
Outdoor Play Cohort



"The most valuable skill I have learned would be learning how to water and care for green space. I've always wanted to have my own garden space in my home, and while I can plant, maintenance and upkeep always seemed hard. I now know when and how to properly care for my own garden. I've always had respect for my home, but now that I've worked to maintain part of it, I notice the effort that goes into taking care of a place. I notice more beautification around the community now."

- Jayden, OLA-SYEP Intern
Gardening Cohort

"Through working in health promotion and the SYEP program I learned that urban is a much larger term with many different categories to the urban community. There are so many types of people and many different problems, and experiences that we don't see everyday. Every community has a unique story and every problem has a unique solution."

-Phoenix, OLA-SYEP Intern
Health Promotion Cohort







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 services to meet their health needs.



Janet, Public Health AmeriCorps Member

"Having the experience of speaking in front of a wide variety of interns, and interacting with and supporting the wider public of East Harlem, has set me up to be an integral part of my cohort. I now have more experience and comfortability teaching others about health promotion-medical literacy and other factors that affect their health. By serving in Concrete Safaris' PlacemakingCorps, I've had the opportunity to educate many different types of New Yorkers on their different health risks and concerns which they can now spread to others."



Stanley, Public Health AmeriCorps Member

"I have learned many new ways I can help my community through impacting the youth. Every day we experiment and create new safe play spaces for the local community. I was able to communicate and develop the youth interns in a manner they can understand, and take with them. In order to do this I had to learn how to be an effective leader through active communication and building relationships. When I leave, I will be able to continue to help others within my community, all due to the experiences I had at Concrete Safaris."



"Being a Public Health AmeriCorps Member in the gardens was a lot of responsibility, finding the right way to teach environmental health literacy and placemaking, while serving our interns, was something that took time to learn. But as they began to get the hang of the assignments our days in the garden became a lot of fun. Through lessons in watering and garden measuring I was able to teach my interns how to create and maintain green spaces. Being able to change my methods of teaching, and giving the interns hands on learning opportunities, I felt myself grow as a leader and educator."

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

**20 Public Health
AmeriCorps Members
completed their full terms
and were eligible to
receive a Segal Education
Award.**



"Teaching outdoor photography at Concrete Safaris was a great experience. I got to learn about the Interns' interests, art journeys and their interest for photo, and how they differed to mine. We traveled to different boroughs to practice photographic skills and capture moments from all over the city, discussing placemaking. After I educated and guided the Interns, I was able to curate a show featuring their work of outdoor places. I got to serve the interns and the community at large, we were able to capture a space and learn how to create pictures together."

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



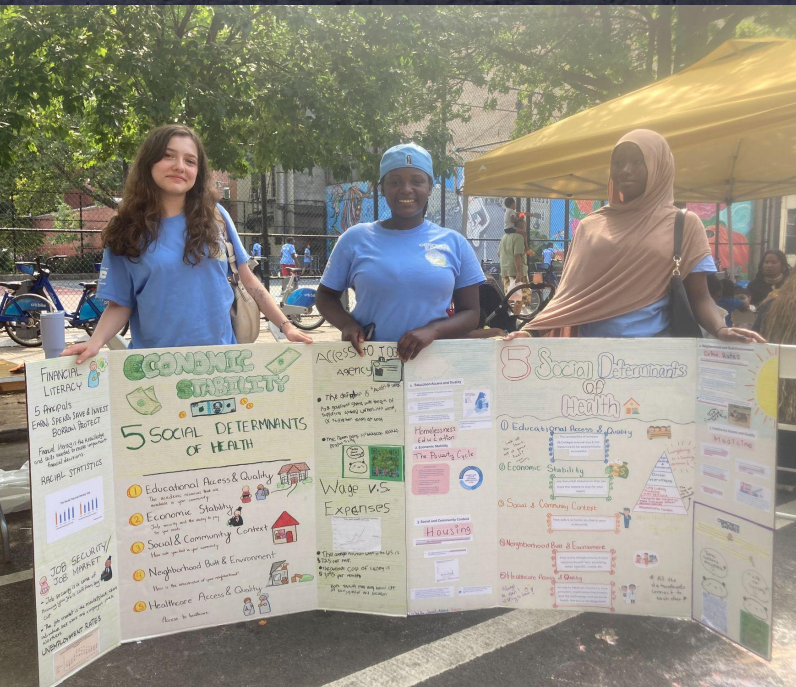
"Teaching our interns how to connect with people helped me and them grow. As I guided them, I had the chance to strengthen my own communication and leadership skills.

Being a cohort lead showed me how important it is to listen and rely on others to get a job done. Each lesson helped create future health advocates, eager to help their own neighborhoods."

Yahaira, Public Health AmeriCorps Member
Outreach & Referrals Cohort



Public Health AmeriCorps members also taught 14-15-year-old interns in the Health Promotion Cohort at Concrete Safaris' OLA - Youth about the Social Determinants of Health (Education, Economy, Community, Housing, Healthcare) and how to survey neighbors to help them access wrap-around health and medical services.



"While being apart of the PlacemakingCorps I grew and helped East Harlem grow. It was a challenge to bridge gaps between local community members and essential healthcare resources, but I really enjoyed it. In this role, you not only develop leadership skills but also deepen your understanding of the unique needs within your community. Every referral you make has the potential to change lives. While apart of the Outreach & Referrals Cohort, I was able to help build healthier communities."

Samantha, Public Health AmeriCorps Member
Outreach & Referrals Cohort



CONCRETE SAFARIS
WORK OUT YOUR
ADVENTURE

**PlacemakingCorps
improved the SEL (Social
and Emotional Learning) of
Public Health AmeriCorps
Members through Youth
Leadership In Action**



PEER BONDS

93% of Public Health AmeriCorps Members believed that PlacemakingCorps created opportunities for young people to work together and help one another

CHALLENGE GROWTH

93% of Members felt that PlacemakingCorps expressed often to young people that you expected them to try hard and do their best

EXPAND INTERESTS

86% of Members were ensured that young people have the opportunity to engage in activities they like to do here

SHARE POWER

93% of Members believed that PlacemakingCorps created opportunities for young people to make choices and have a voice







Green Exercise Days, our garden-based field trip program, returned in Spring and Fall 2024 to serve over 200 students from local elementary schools.

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







JungleGym 2024 was 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.

Hundreds of participants attended JungleGym, located on East 106th and 116th Streets between Lexington – Third Avenues.



PARTNERS

Schools

City University of New York
NYC District 4 Public Schools 7, 57, and 102
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
The Lewis & Clark School
Trevor Day School

Government

AmeriCorps
Manhattan Community Board 11
New York County District Attorney's Office
NYC Department of Health
NYC Department of Youth
NYC Housing Authority
NYC Human Resource Administration
NYCServive
NYPD 23rd, 25th, & PSA 5 Precincts
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
NYS Office of Children & Family Services
Office of Council Member Diana Ayala

Foundations

City Parks Foundation
Clif Family Foundation
Concord Group
Joy of Giving Something
The Morrison & Foerster Foundation
The Pinkerton Foundation
The Scripps Family Fund for Education and the Arts

Individuals

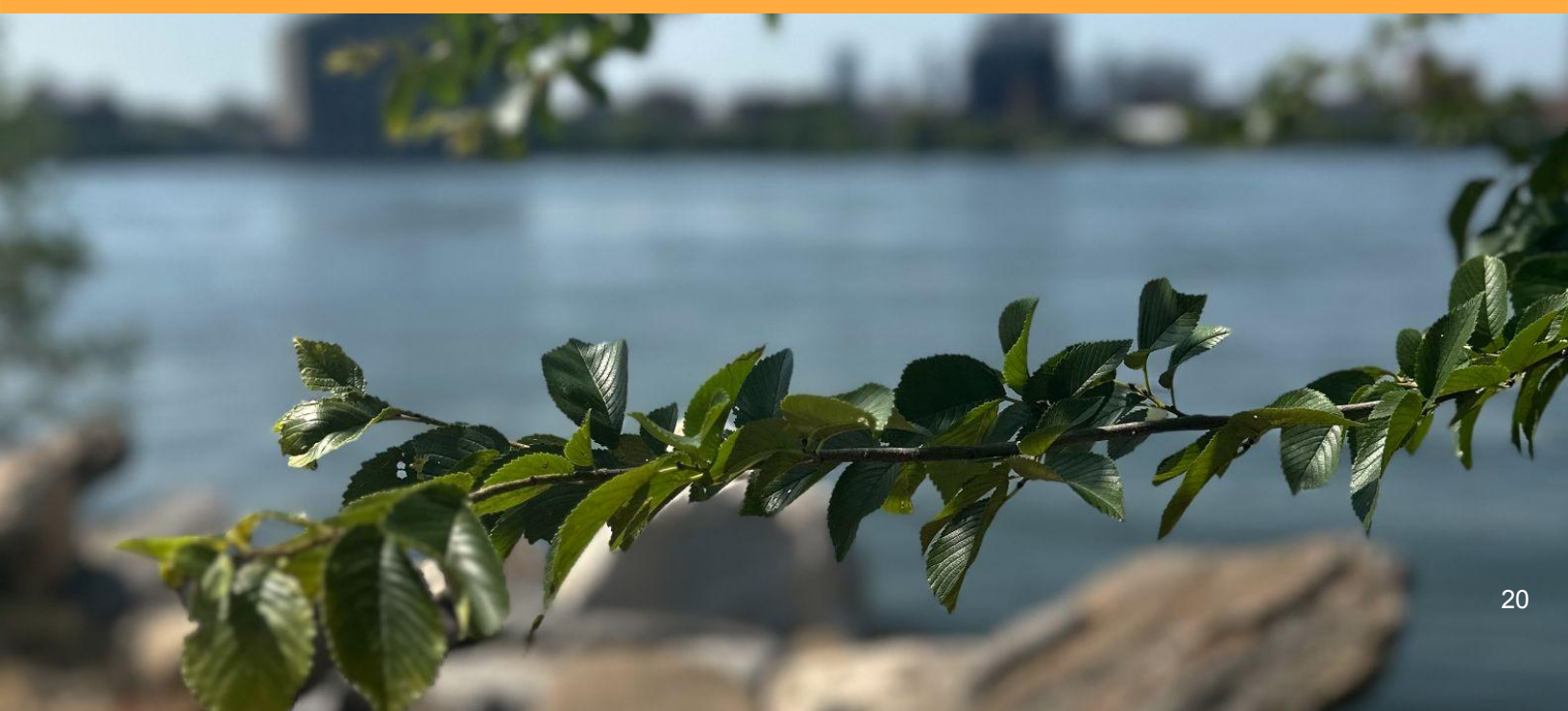
527 volunteers donated their time in 2024

Non-Profit Organizations

Boys' Club
Children's Aid Society
City-As-School
Community Assoc. of Progressive Dominicans
El Barrio's Operation Fightback
Getting Out & Staying Out
New York Cares
Partnership for After School Education
Police Athletic League
The Door
SCAN-Harbor
StreetSquash
Union Settlement Association

Corporations

Abacus Federal Savings Bank
Blumenfeld Development Group, Ltd.
Con Edison
JP Morgan Chase & Co.
PricewaterhouseCoopers
Seward & Kissel
West Monroe Partners



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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