

# Letter From The Executive Director & Chair



March 15, 2016

Dear Friends,

2015 was an exciting and exploratory year for the children and youth participating in Concrete Safaris' programs. It was also an exciting year for our operations, where the capacity of our staff and board branched in many new directions – as this expanded Annual Report shows.

In this report, you will learn about the adventures of the children enrolled in Concrete Safaris' City Surfers after-school program – explorations in our gardens, on the neighboring bike paths, and on field trips around the city. You will also read about our Green Exercise Days where hundreds of volunteers and thousands of children came together throughout the year to learn about gardening and healthy living. Our obstacle race, JungleGym, last June was full of smiles and abundant exercise. Our Outdoor Leadership Academy for local teens got off the ground in 2015 and looks to be an important component of East Harlem's environmental health job training opportunities.

In 2016, Concrete Safaris invites you to grow healthy leaders and environmental advocates outdoors in East Harlem and beyond – join us!

Much appreciated,

Mac Levine

Founding Executive Director

Sincerely,

Mandy DeRoche

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### > WHAT WE BELIEVE

succeed.



Respect, Responsibility
We respect ourselves, each other,
the land, all living things within the
land, and our personal and group
belongings. We take responsibility
for our personal and group actions.

# Fun, Friendship We love to have fun outside every day! We are friends through good and bad, helping each other

Safety
We practice safety and are aware
that what we do impacts those
around us.



entitlement.

# > HOW WE ENGAGE OUTDOORS





Concrete Safaris is a place where children and youth experience environmental health on multiple levels: as individuals, in their community, and on a policy level.

### > MEET THE TEAM





Mac Levine
Executive Director

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



Christopher Hartsfield
Outdoor Play Coordinator

Mr. Chris manages all cycling and fitness programming, including our annual obstacle race and active living fair, JungleGym. He also directs staff and internship training.



Nia Padilla
Garden Program Coordinator

Ms. Nia oversees all garden programming and is the main contact for Green Exercise Days and Garden Volunteer Sessions.



Dainer Clark
Health Promotion Specialist

Mr. Dainer is responsible for health promotion workshops, social media, and outreach.

### > MEET THE TEAM

#### Board of Directors & Officers

Chair Mandy DeRoche, Assistant Attorney General, Environmental Protection Bureau, Office of the New York State Attorney General

*Treasurer* Richard H. Mead, Retired Officer, Federal Reserve Bank of New York Jill Bentley, MPA

Mac Levine, MPH, Executive Director

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

Kate D. Seib, Senior Attorney, Litigation Department, Goodwin Procter

Rahul Sharma, Analyst, Investment Banking Division, Goldman Sachs & Co.

### Advisory Board

Leslie Boden, MSUP, Community Health Planning Consultant Elizabeth Bradley, Director, Partnerships & Business Development, The Foundation Center Sandra Gittens, Retired Principal, PS 102

Vanessa Hefa, Third Grade NYC Public School Teacher

Liz Hopfan, Executive Director, Free Arts NYC

Gary Lynn, Executive Director, Morgan Stanley

Malisa McCreedy, AICP, Transportation Division Manager, City of Portland, Oregon

### > JungleGym Committee 2015

Ysabelle\* Fllen Andres Jayden\* Joseph\* Justin\* Peterson\* Yacquelin\* Eboi Cooper Trish\* Rowan\* Nevsaliz\* Jeny Ortiz Cardena Samantha\* Carlos\* Kevin\* \*Last names are removed Josue\* Heaven\* Christopher\* for members under 18



## > FOUR KEY PROGRAMS



**City Surfers** 

**JungleGym** 

**Green Exercise Days** 

Outdoor Leadership Academy



### **City Surfers After School**

Concrete Safaris' after-school program's primary goal is to improve the health and fitness of East Harlem children. It currently engages fifty children for 17.5 hours each week at PS 83 and PS 182 in East Harlem.



### JungleGym Obstacle Race

Through this annual obstacle race, held in East Harlem's Jefferson Park and across 3 city blocks, elementary school children transform outdoor spaces not traditionally used for play. Children participate in race design, construction, promotion, fundraising, volunteerism, and healthy competition.



### **Green Exercise Day Field Trips**

More than 8,000 second to fifth grade children have participated in garden-based educational obstacle course field trips, held four times per year (seasonally), that involve gardening, urbanism, outdoor play, and environmental health.

### **Outdoor Leadership Academy Internships**

This year, Concrete Safaris launched a 6 to 20-week internship program for 14- to 24-year-olds. The goals are to expose teenagers to environmental health employment opportunities, develop their leadership skills, and involve them in leading local children in activities.









City Surfers design

raised garden beds for

Jefferson Gardens.









**NYC Landmarks City Surfers visit Belvedere Castle and** other key landmarks in Central Park and around Manhattan.



June - November



hot peppers

# City Surfers: Gardening & Health Promotion



#### **Garden Science**

City Surfers enjoyed lessons in plant structure and function, weed management, life and nutrient cycles, seed dispersal, square foot gardening, design, and more. From watering schedules to planting, weeding, pruning, and composting, City Surfers started mastering the art of gardening in 136 garden plots, 48 of which were installed in 2015.

#### **Health Promotion**

City Surfers spent the winter season developing a healthy messaging campaign to spread the word about making healthy choices in their community. They learned about whole and processed foods, food labels and marketing, and disease prevention. The students created a series of posters to be placed where adults shop for food around East Harlem.



#### Social Science Research

To compile the season's plant list, City Surfers completed community surveys to investigate what their neighbors wanted to eat and which colors they would most enjoy in the gardens. As a result, 2,000 pounds of organic produce were grown based on community needs, distributed free for the children, families, and neighbors, and sold to local businesses.

### **Garden Design**

City Surfers designed garden beds in the shapes of Batman, the 6 Train, Minecraft characters, carrots, and suns. Garlic, basil, cilantro, tomatoes, green beans, peppers, leeks, kale, lettuce, collard greens, bok choy, and broccoli were on the menu. 100% of the City Surfers tasted 100% of what they grew.

# City Surfers: Outdoor Play



Fitness at Concrete Safaris is outdoors and fun.

### **Inspiring Family**

Parents tell us that 82% of their children want to play outside even when they get home, which is a big win for the whole family.



### **Leading the Pack**

The children improved their safety and navigation skills, creating a series of bike rides now available at www.concretesafaris.org in our Active Living ToolKit.

### **Creating Alternative Play Options**

City Surfers also increased their stamina by hiking in the North Woods of Central Park, running around the track in Jefferson Park, and utilizing the playgrounds and open spaces to complete fitness circuits and teambuilding games.

# > City Surfers: Outdoor Play



City Surfers complete an incrementally challenging cycling course once they learn how to ride our fleet of bicycles. Concrete Safaris is the only after school program in Upper Manhattan providing free access to cycling gear 4 or more days per week for children.



# City Surfers: Field Trips



### **Local Trips**

City Surfers did some serious urban exploring in 2015. They completed a scavenger hunt through the Museum of Natural History and built their very own cities after learning about urban planning at The Museum of The City of New York.

### Camping

In May, City Surfers ventured to Floyd Bennett Field in the Rockaways for an overnight camping and hiking trip, with about half of the children sleeping in tents – many of them leaving their parents for the first time in their lives.

### **Outdoors Year-Round**

City Surfers took full advantage of all the snow and ice. Their ice skating trip to Central Park's Lasker Rink was a total blast. They built quite a few snowmen and had a snow-castle competition. Concrete Safaris provides waterproof/windproof jackets and pants, gloves, hats, and scarves so that access and affordability are never a reason not to play outdoors.

# City Surfers: Impact





### of City Surfers

Report that their decision-making skills have improved since starting the program. The children cite eating less candy and junk food, improving behavior, becoming wiser and smarter, becoming more responsible, and listening more.

### Of City Surfers' parents

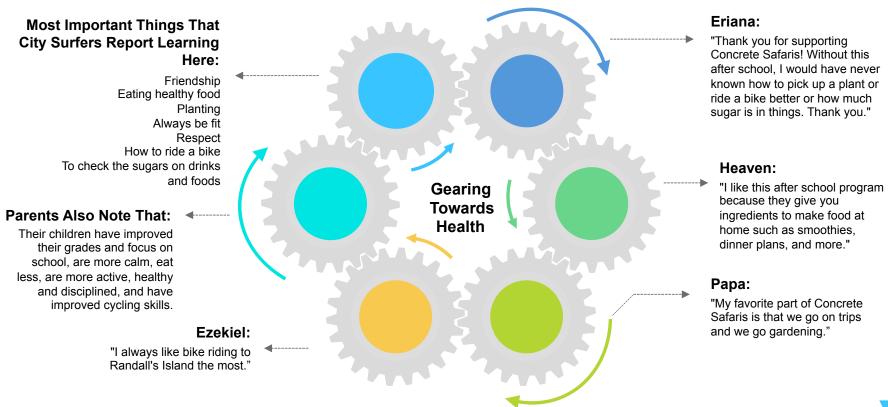
Report that their child(ren) have improved decision-making skills since starting City Surfers. Examples include: "Became more independent," "thinking more healthy," "exercising more", "more confident and mature," "wants me to exercise with her more and shows me how she does it at school," "thinks about things more often and how he will spend his day."

### Of Jefferson Houses residents

Would like to see more Concrete Safaris activities in their development.

### > WHY PARENTS & KIDS ARE INVESTED





### > In Their Own Words



Dear Mac.

I wanted to say thank you for making this program such a success and being compassionate about what kids truly need in their lives.

We would like to start off by telling you a little about J. He is an 8 year old who is very hyper and struggles with his impulses and focusing with his academics. He is a bright loving kid who loves to ask questions and explore the world and can easily be misunderstood for being annoying, impatient, and can seem not to want to accelerate in his academics. When taking the time you will realize he is so much more and all he truly needs is a supportive group to show they care by taking the time to talk to him and understand him aside from his Dad and Mom.

He failed first grade because it was overwhelming for him. We had to transfer him from a charter school, which was too rigorous to a public school where the work became too easy for him. We then transferred him to PS 83. It has been a wonderful experience and even more wonderful that we found Safari. The paper work process was a bit more than what most after school programs require, but well worth every moment. You see when J started going to Safari, he has become a transformed child who eagerly awaits to learn more about health, cooking, riding a bike, gardening, and exercising. He comes home and promotes healthier eating and tells me about how much sugar is in our orange juice and demands we make changes in our eating. He tells us we have to cut back on the fast food and brings vegetables home, which reminds me of the batch of lettuce he brought home straight from their garden they have been working with. He goes to the computer to research what types of meals we can do with the vegetable. He was once a kid who would cry and pout and say "I can't ride a bike, it's too dangerous" and would have plenty of bruises to show for it. Now when he rides his bike, he is one of the smallest but fastest and you can really see how it has built his confidence and self-esteem.

Being a witness of a child transform to a self-reliable kid who understands rules and accomplishments is a key element to being successful. His work ethics has increased. Even more powerful than that, he was taken off his medication and is still doing well in school. Programs like Safari are a true element for kids like J. In order to be successful and prepare children for key elements in life students need to be taught boundaries, compassion, understanding, consistent conversation, and a mutual respect. J is finally on the right path after much sacrifice and attempting to find a program like Safari, where he is likely to do well and continue to build his self-esteem and be a leader. I would recommend Safari Program to any Child that has that energy and need to focus it on hands-on after school activities, its truly a powerful positive outlet that our kids need to stay focus on there education through playing, building, learning team work, and so much more Safari has to offer.

Sincerely, Darlene and Herman, J's Parents



## Green Exercise Days: Field Trips To Our Gardens



Key Partners: NYC Housing Authority, Public Schools 7, 50, 72, 83, 102, 155, 182, & Amber Charter School, Bartlett Tree Experts, Boston Consulting Group, CIT Group, Deloitte & Touche, Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks, Goodwin Procter, Hardware NY, Interpublic Group, J.P. Morgan, Kipling, Kitchen Gardeners International, Merrell, Nautica, Petsky Prunier, PMK-BNC, Rabin Martin.

#### Gardening

Green Exercise Day participants harvest the bring them home to their





### Environmental Health

Children take a break from raking for our compost to play in the leaves, jumping into leaves for the first time.

#### **Urbanism**

Children and volunteers out what they want to eat and plant crops.





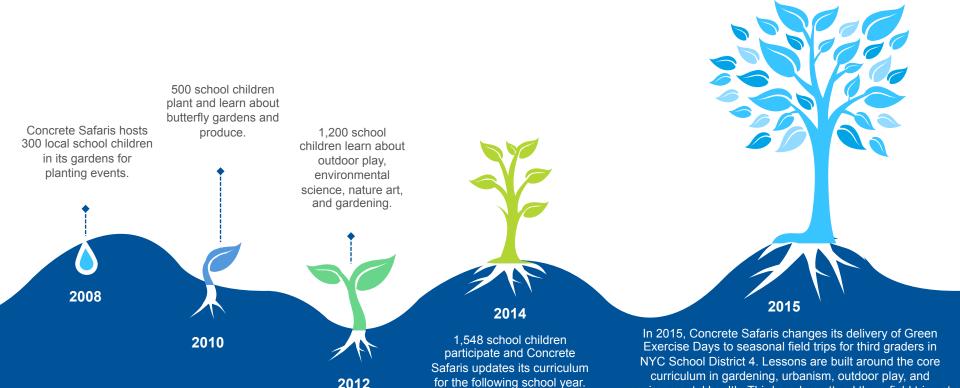
### **Outdoor Play**

Children learn to lead their peers in fitness circuits and outdoor play activities.

# > Green Exercise Days: Field Trips To Our Gardens



environmental health. Third graders attend three field trips at Mad Fun Farm or Jefferson Houses for over 2,100 site visits.



# JungleGym 2015: Annual Obstacle Race



Active Living Achievements: 3 City Blocks & 4 Courts Utilized for Fitness, 180 Racers, 220 Spectators

Key Partners: NYC Department of Transportation's Weekend Walks, NYC Parks, and the NYPD's 23rd and 25th Precincts Community Affairs













# JungleGym 2015: Annual Obstacle Race





### The Race is On....

With smiles on their faces, 180 East Harlem children and their families raced in JungleGym 2015, while 220 people cheered. Staff, board members, parents, and volunteers created a fun-filled day of adventure, challenge and high-fives. Parents and children ran the 20-obstacle race, with feats designed by the City Surfers, over three blocks, ending up at the Jefferson Park basketball courts.



### Preparation

In the winter, City Surfers mapped the JungleGym race course for June 2015. They designed obstacles, measured streets, created rules and expectations for the day, and helped design a logo. By spring, after City Surfers program students had written, practiced, and presented their speeches for the Community Board 11 Permits Committee, they got permission to close the three city streets used for JungleGym on Saturday, June 27<sup>th</sup>.



#### We made it. Phew!

In addition to the race, an activities fair offered opportunities to paint a mural with the Harlem ART Collective and play team sports like Stickball in the nearby courts of Thomas Jefferson Park. Attendees explored demos by the Lower East Side Ecology Center & Randall's Island Urban Farm. Race finishers earned a medal, a goodie bag, a t-shirt, and a complimentary slice of organic pizza from Neapolitan Express's food truck.

# Outdoor Leadership Academy: Internships











# Outdoor Leadership Academy: Internships



Key Partners: El Barrio's Operation Fightback, Getting Out & Staying Out, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, NYC Department of Youth & Community Development, NYS Office of the District Attorney, NYC Housing Authority, NYC Department of Health

### **Meeting Youth Needs**

Concrete Safaris piloted the Outdoor Leadership Academy, its first official internship program, in 2015. Twenty-one 14-to-15-yearsolds worked in three groups on gardening, outdoor play, and entrepreneurship for 15 hours per week over 6 weeks.



The Gardening Cohort maintained gardens in Washington and Jefferson Houses and led community-centered workshops on gardening and composting. They helped build and fill with topsoil 7 raised garden beds and nurtured tomatoes, okra, beans, kale, oregano, parsley, cilantro, eggplant, and cucumbers.

The Entrepreneurship Cohort learned basic business skills by selling the basil maintained by the gardening cohort. Calling their enterprise "Basil-cally Fresh," Outdoor Leadership Academy Interns reached out to local restaurants, visited farmers' markets with the plan to sell, and eventually sold all 1,400 bunches of basil to local pizza company Neapolitan Express.

The Outdoor Play Cohort led bike-riding training sessions and PlayStreet obstacle stations at weekly events throughout the summer for over 600 children, fixed 40 Concrete Safaris' children's bicycles, and inventoried our storage rooms.

### **Impact**

An end-of-program survey revealed that 75% of the participants felt that they had improved their ability to and interest in running their own businesses in the future.

The program will serve youth yearround beginning in 2016.



To Workforce Development in The Fields of Environment

& Health

**Bridging the Gap** 

### > IN THEIR OWN WORDS





### Yahaira & Melody

Interns

"When we visited the NYC Department of Transportation, it made me think about being an engineer in the future. The internship also taught me that I don't like to work outdoors. I didn't think I'd make friends, but I did."

-Yahaira

"The internship taught me a lot more than I expected. It has made me value school more and, career-wise, it has taught me that there are so many opportunities out there for me. It has also opened my mind to possible career choices. I now know I can push myself and do quality work that I thought I could not achieve before [this internship]."

-Melody



### Adam

Intern

"When I was younger I always wanted to be my own boss. When I heard about what Concrete Safaris had to offer. it grabbed my attention, making me feel like this would be a really great choice for me. Growing up I realized that it's better to make your own choices than letting other people make them for you. The first couple of weeks of working at Concrete Safaris made me realize that I still want to be my own boss. Seeing how hard the staff work shows that they must have really worked hard to get to where they are. I feel that I am ready to take on all of the hard work for my future."



Steve

Intern

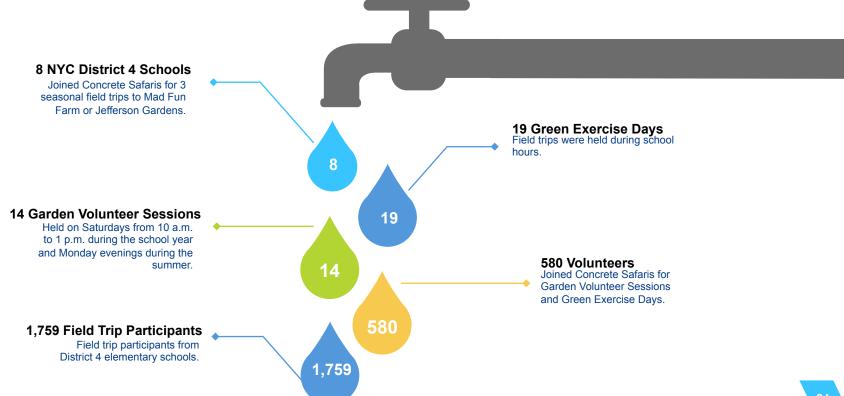
"This internship helped me to a high degree. I wanted to know what it takes to be a gardener and now I know. I have finally experienced what it is like to work."

### Partner list:

- El Barrio's Operation Fightback
- Getting Out & Staying Out
- City-as-School

## > HOW OUR GARDENS GROW





### > WHO EATS THE PRODUCE WE GROW



### Friends, Family, Neighbors

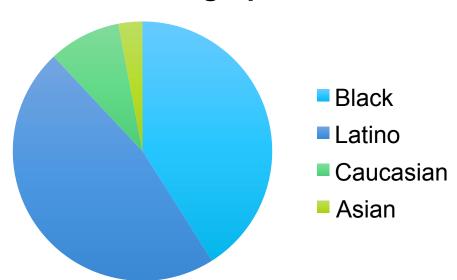
By transforming the built environment in Jefferson and Washington Houses with gardens, City Surfers after school students and Green Exercise Day field trip participants improved access and affordability of organic vegetables, herbs, and fruits right in their backyards, and also brought produce home to their families. All children reported that they prepared and ate soups, salads, beans & rice, and chicken with the vegetables and herbs. Others in the community are increasingly joining Concrete Safaris' gardening and composting efforts by bringing bags with them to the gardens and harvesting produce for the day's meals.



### > REPRESENTING WHO WE SERVE



### Staff & Intern Demographics



Of our staff and interns are People of Color who grew up in public housing projects at or below the poverty line. Nationally, only 12.4% non-profit employees are People of Color.

Concrete Safaris primarily serves children and youth from low-income households of Latino, African-American, Chinese, and Mixed Race descent. The organization is creating meaningful employment opportunities and job training in the environmental health field for underrepresented populations. In 2015, Concrete Safaris employed 3 full-time and 1 part-time employees and hosted 29 interns from partnering organizations.

## > PUBLICATIONS & HONORS



#### Academia

Concrete Safaris' first academic poster, presented at the NYS Pediatric Advocacy Conference in March 2015, demonstrated achievements through City Surfers.

#### **Publications**

Mount Sinai evaluators and Executive Director Mac Levine will publish a study in the International Journal of Child Health & Human Development in September 2016 and in the forthcoming book Environmental Health Disparities: Costs & Benefits of Breaking the Cycle by Nova Publishers. An additional article will follow in 2017.

#### Growth

Concrete Safaris was accepted to Youth I.N.C.'s Board Advancement program, which will help the organization's board raise its profile and performance over 15-months in 2016/17.

#### Health Action Center

With 7 staff members as of early 2016, Concrete Safaris is thrilled to have been invited to join the New York City Department of Health's East Harlem Neighborhood Health Action Center on East 115<sup>th</sup> Street as an Active Living Program provider and tenant. Collaborating with the DOH, clinical providers, preventive services, and community-based health organizations, Concrete Safaris will be able to impact change on a neighborhood scale and in Upper Manhattan as we grow.

### A Model for Urban Ag

Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer's 2015 Report "How Our Gardens Grow: Strategies For Expanding Urban Agriculture," states: "The city should work to encourage similar collaborations between nonprofits and urban farming programs [like Concrete Safaris' partnerships with schools and the NYC Housing Authority] to increase the benefit of these programs."

# > TEAM CONCRETE SAFARIS





Team Concrete Safaris Tackles the 2015 Panasonic NYC Triathlon

Congratulations to all Team Concrete Safaris racers for finishing the 2015 NYC Triathlon and for placing. Concrete Safaris is so grateful for the athletic determination and fundraising efforts of these fine individuals! Go Team Go!

Board Chair Mandy DeRoche and relay partner Meredith Freimer Anderson won first in their Division on Sunday, July 19th, at the NYC Triathlon.

Team Captain Dave Adler earned 87th rank out of 350 finishers in his Division.

Joe Coleman, Matthew Archer, and Ben Adler rocked out the positivity through the finish line.

# > 2015 PARTNERS



#### After school & Summer Programs + Schools

Key Partners: PS 83, 182, and Union Settlement Association. Additional partners: Amber Charter School, The Association to Benefit Children, Cada Paso, Children's Aid Society, Columbia University, The Ella Baker School, Harlem RBI, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, Lower Lab, Marymount School of New York, New York City College of Technology, New York University, Public Schools 7, 38, 50, 57, 72, 96, 101, 102.

#### Government

Community Board 11, FDNY, Manhattan Borough President's Office, Materials For the Arts, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, NYC Department of Transportation, NYC Department of Youth & Community Development, NYC Housing Authority, NYC Parks and Recreation, NYPD, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, NYS Office of the District Attorney, Office of Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito, Office of Senator Jose M. Serrano.

#### **Foundations**

Anonymous, Levitt Foundation, Norcross Wildlife Foundation, and The Pinkerton Foundation.

#### **Community-Based Organizations**

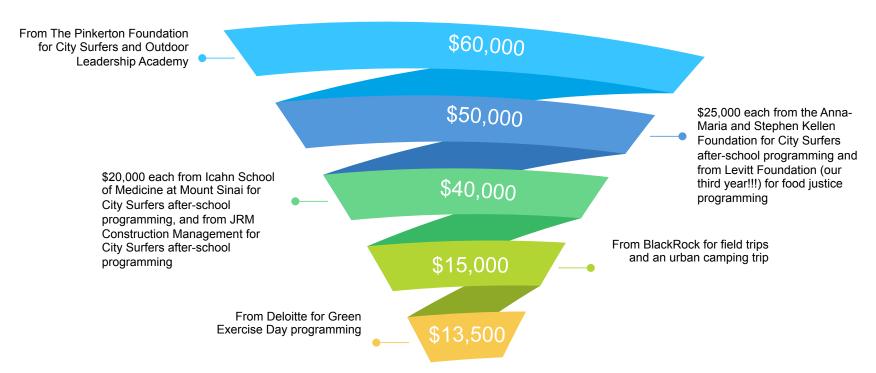
Appalachian Mountain Club's Youth Opportunities Program, El Barrio's Operation Fightback, Getting Out & Staying Out, Harlem RBI, Harvest Home Farmer's Market, Lawyers Alliance for NY, Lower East Side Ecology Center, Mentoring Partnership for NY, Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, National Gardening Association, New York Cares, New York Common Pantry, Partnerships for Parks, Transportation Alternatives, YMCA.

#### Corporations

Bartlett Tree Experts, BlackRock, Boston Consulting Group, CIT, City Parks Foundation, Deloitte & Touche, Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks, Goodwin Procter, Hardware NY, Interpublic Group, J.P. Morgan, JRM Construction Management, Kipling, Kitchen Gardeners International, Merrell, Morrison & Foerster, Nautica, Petsky Prunier, PMK-BNC, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Rabin Martin, Ralph Lauren, Tiago Holdings.

### > BIG WINS - THANK YOU!





<sup>\*</sup>And many more smaller grants and donations.

# Concrete Safaris Statement of Activities



	2015	2014
Revenues		
Foundation grants	\$ 178,600	\$ 59,000
Corporation contributions	47,000	49,381
Government grants	8,000	9,000
Individual contributions	36,374	91,682
In-kind support	46,900	27,623
Total revenues	316,874	236,686
Expenses		
Programs		
City Surfers	130,425	144,770
Green Exercise Days	19,253	28,279
Outdoor Leadership Academy	28,758	-
JungleGym	8,608	23,643
Total programs	187,044	196,692
Management and general	30,803	25,301
Fundraising	17,699	21,367
Total expenses	235,546	243,358
Increase (decrease) in net assets	\$ 81,328	\$ (6,672)
Net assets at end of year	\$ 149,218	\$ 67,890



Our non-profit organization operates thanks to the generosity of individuals like yourself, corporations, government, and foundations.

Make a 100% tax-deductible donation in support of growing healthy leaders and environmental advocates by...

Sending a check to Concrete Safaris 1775 Third Avenue New York, NY 10029

To donate stocks or to make an in-kind donation of fitness, gardening, or office supplies Email mac@concretesafaris.org

> :Donating online www.concretesafaris.org

#### Volunteerism & Sponsorship

Join us for upcoming Garden Volunteer Sessions, which run from March – December 2016. The first date of every month is at Mad Fun Farm (98th Street & Third Avenue) and the second date of every month is at Jefferson Gardens (300 East 115th Street). Go to http://concretesafaris.org/en/events for specific dates and more information.

You can also join us for JungleGym 2016 as a racer, volunteer, or sponsor. Learn more at www.junglegymrace.com.

## > CONTACT US







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### E-mail

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### Website

www.concretesafaris.org www.junglegymrace.com

### Social Media

www.facebook.com/concretesafaris

#### **Credits**

Photos: CS Staff, Melanie Jarzyniecki Words: CS Staff, Darlene & Herman F. Evaluation: Naeemah Ruffin, Cappy Collins