Youth Transforming The World
Starting In Their Own Backyards

2020
Friends,

2020 brought unimaginable loss and disruption to the East Harlem community, and around the world. 2020 also revealed the resiliency of our community, including the incredible children and youth that pushed for services for themselves and their families, and the employees and volunteers that never stopped working to serve the youth and their families outdoors in East Harlem at Concrete Safaris.

Throughout the year, children and youth adapted to the ever-changing challenges facing them and their families, and benefited from CS’ outdoor programming, resources, and community by: growing, consuming, and distributing organic produce along with hand sanitizer and masks to their families and neighbors; navigating virtual classrooms; walking, biking, and playing at a social distance on Open Streets; helping their families to care for the sick and organize funerals; securing referrals for wrap-around services; establishing a Youth Council to advocate for the services they and their community needed, registering voters, and distributing Thanksgiving food packages and holiday gifts; taking on paid internships in outdoor play, gardening, and health media at our Outdoor Leadership Academy - SYEP; and supporting an Adopt-A-Bed program at our community gardens so local residents could get outside, socialize, and grow their own food. Every action taken was driven by the 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.

Moving forward, young people and their families are preparing for an in-person and hybrid programs, elements of the Strategic Roadmap to strengthen our year-round education to workforce pipeline ensuring that youth have hands-on opportunities to shape the physical environment where they live. We invite you to be a part of these adventures!

In Health,

Mac Levine, MPH
Founding Executive Director

Michael Woolley
Chair, Board of Directors
Our 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.
Concrete Safaris’ 4 Key Programs

1. City Surfers

CS’ after-school program’s primary goal is to improve the health and fitness of East Harlem children. It pivoted from engaging 72 children for 15 hours each week from PS 57 and PS 182 in East Harlem to a virtual format through June 2020.

2. Outdoor Leadership Academy

This year, over 200 youth (ages 14 – 24) participated in a 5 to 12-week internship program. The goals are to expose youth to environmental health employment opportunities, develop their leadership skills, and involve them in leading local children in healthy activities.

3. Green Exercise Days

Local residents and volunteers participated in our inaugural Adopt-A-Bed program, growing food for themselves and the community while beautifying our gardens at Jefferson and Washington Houses.

4. NYC Open Streets

This was an opportunity for community members and essential workers to walk, skate, scoot, and bike at a social distance on East 115th Street between Park and Third Avenues from May – August 2020.
“We go gardening which I like best of all because we plant and work as a team which helps us with our social skills.”
- Granville

“What I like about after school is that we go outside every day and do exercise. My favorite thing to do is gardening because we get to learn a lot of things about plants and how it grows. We also get homework help and learn from my mistakes. When I heard about this program I told my parents to sign up QUICK!!!!”
- Nakiya

“I like Concrete Safaris because we could see our friends more, do homework here so we won’t have to at home and we could go places. I love like bike riding”
- Jashey

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 held an exhibition, and went on field trips and nature adventures until the last day of in-person school in NYC on March 16th. They joined virtual after school through June, doing fitness, gardening and science, and leadership workshops. Of course, getting to see their friends and instructors was the best part!

What it’s all about:

Partners:
- NYC Public Schools 57 and 182
- Office of Council Member Diana Ayala
- NYC Department of Health
- New York City Department of Youth
- New York State Health Foundation
What it’s all about:
This year, 206 youth (ages 14 – 24) participated in a 5- to 12-week program during summer and school year internships. The goals were to expose teenagers to environmental health employment opportunities, develop their leadership skills, and involve them in leading local children in healthy activities. Summer youth participated in weekly, 3-hour, career readiness sessions in financial literacy, professionalism, leadership, other topics, family planning. 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.

Our Partners:
- 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
- Guardian Life Insurance Company
- Verizon Media
- SCOR Reinsurance
- Morrison & Foerster
- Deloitte
- Wilson Daniels

Outcomes:
- 7,245 Internship hours for 14-15-year-olds that generated $44,700 in summer stipend income for OLA Interns
- 112 Summer Interns
- 9 School Year Interns
- 36 Professional development sessions in financial literacy, professionalism, leadership, other topics, family planning

74% of young people reported leaving the program with good or great Career/Workforce knowledge.

95% of young people demonstrated gains in at least one Career Readiness Capacity.
In May 2020, our team returned to the gardens to prepare them for community use.

East Harlem was declared a COVID hotspot, and many residents stayed inside to avoid contracting the virus. Schools were not in session so students were not visiting the gardens with their classes. Companies had canceled in-person volunteerism for the season. Plus, some of CS' usual online partners were not posting our volunteers opportunities for fear of liability issues. CS posted volunteer opportunities on its social media, website, and e-newsletter, as well as Eventbrite. Staff spread informational postcards in residential buildings and to passersby.

Pretty soon, neighbors joined CS' first Adopt-a-Bed program, growing food for their households or to distribute to neighbors for free.

Community gardeners began tending their plots up to 7-days per week.

One youth loved to water the whole of Mad Fun Farm, and made it his mission to show up every weekday for a few hours to do so.

In September, Saturday Garden Volunteer Sessions returned, and new volunteers found our gardens and returned month after month to support the food production and beautify the spaces.
What volunteer gardeners have to say about gardening during COVID-19...

What motivates you to volunteer?
“Teaching gardening skills to our children and learning lots of new skills and helping out to make the garden a beautiful place”
“To make our community better and help kids to understand how important is to eat healthy (veggies) and spend time outdoors”

What would you say is the main reason for volunteering with us?
"Supporting NYCHA residents in efforts to improve quality of life"
"I like working in gardens, and providing food for a community is a bonus.”
"It's fun and fulfilling.”

What do you like best about coming to the community gardens?
“The community and the work!”
“An organized and high-impact volunteering event.”
“Working outside, in a garden, with a group of people. The staff are great!”

Gardens provided:
14 Community Garden Volunteer Sessions
Open Hours, 7-days/week for Community Gardeners & Adopt-A-Bed.

Partners:
- NYC Housing Authority
- Bartlett Tree Experts
- Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice
What I like about after school is that we go outside every day and do exercise. My favorite thing to do is gardening because we get to learn a lot of things about plants and how it grows. We also get homework help and learn from my mistakes. When I heard about this program I told my parents to sign up QUICK!!!!

Concrete Safaris hosted the first NYC Open Streets in East Harlem.

These NYC Open Streets were an opportunity for residents and essential workers to walk, skate, scoot, and bike at a social distance at the peak of the pandemic. People of all ages were able to see the sky for the first time in months. Others were delivering food to those afraid to leave their homes. Still others commuted to work and protests around the City.

2,000 participants attended CS’ NYC Open Streets, located on 115th Street between Lexington – Third Avenues.

Partners:
- NYC Department of Transportation,
- NYPD 23rd Precinct Community Affairs
Alumni from the Outdoor Leadership Academy founded the Youth Leadership Council to take action in the community.

**Youth Leadership Council 2020**

Michelle
Marlene
Emily
Redat
Daniel

**Virtual Volunteerism:**

Gardening, career-readiness, strategic planning, marketing, design, evaluations, IT, events – Volunteers answered our calls to action throughout the year.

**Canned Food Drive**

YLC members collected canned foods to distribute to neighbors for Thanksgiving.

**Holiday Toy Drive**

YLC members collected toys to distribute to local children and families in need.

**Voter Registration**

YLC members registered neighbors to vote in the national election.

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_Canned Food Drive_

Please support East Harlem families this Thanksgiving by dropping off canned food donations at:

Concrete Safaris Inc.
158 E. 115th Street, Ste 144
New York, New York 10029
10AM - 5PM

Hosted by Outdoor Leadership Academy
Mac Levine  
Founding 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.

Claire Farnan  
Garden + Project Coordinator  
Ms. Claire educates children, youth, and the community about urban agriculture and food justice at Jefferson Gardens and Mad Fun Farm.

Christopher Hartsfield  
Programs Director  
Mr. Chris manages all four programs, ensuring that children and youth learn, play, and explore safely in the great outdoors of East Harlem.

Phylisha Villanueva  
Education Coordinator  
Ms. Phylli ensures that every participating child, youth, and family has access to educational, professional, and health-based opportunities.

Alexis Tovar  
Volunteer Projects Coordinator  
Mr. Alexis recruits, trains, and supports volunteers.
CONCRETE SAFARIS 2020 DEMOGRAPHICS

Staff:

- 65% Female
- 35% Male

- 47% Black
- 24% Latinx
- 17% White
- 12% Mixed

City Surfers:

- 54% Male
- 48% Female

- 25% Black
- 72% Latinx
- 3% Asian

- 5% No response
- 61% Female
- 34% Male

- 36% Black
- 16% Asian
- 7% Mixed
- 6% Other
- 6% White
OUR PARTNERS

**Schools**

**Government**
Manhattan Community Board 11
Manhattan Borough President’s Office Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City
NYC Department of Health
NYC Department of Transportation
NYC Department of Youth, NYC Housing Authority
NYPD 23rd, 25th, & PSA 5 Precincts
NYCServe
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
NY County Office of the District Attorney
Office of Council Member Diana Ayala
Office of NYS Assemblyman Robert Rodriguez
Office of Senator Serrano

**Foundations**
First Cornerstone Foundation
Lily Auchincloss Foundation
The Morrison & Foerster Foundation
New York State Health Foundation

**Individuals**
273 volunteers donated their time in 2020.

**Non-Profit Organizations**
Exalt
American Institute of Architects, The Association to Benefit Children Children's Aid Society
East Harlem Human Services Consortium Open Architecture / New York
El Barrio’s Operation Fightback
Getting Out & Staying Out
Partnership for After-School Education
SCAN-Harbor
Union Settlement Association.

**Corporations**
Deloitte
HQ Capital
Intuit
L+M Development Partners
Microsoft Philanthropies
Murphy Burnham & Buttrick Architects
Oath
Refinitiv
SCOR Reinsurance Company
Seward & Kissel
Blumenfeld Development Group, Ltd
Verizon Media
Wilson Daniels
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YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL 2020
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Redat
Daniel

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Senior Designer, Verizon Media

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Retired Principal, PS 102

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Perry Sheffield, MD, MPH
Assistant Professor, Departments of Pediatrics and Preventative Medicine, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Ana Lucia Carmelo
Strategy & Operations Consultant, Deloitte

Aman Kapoor
Strategy & Analytics Consultant, Deloitte
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.

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