

extreme kids  
& crew



## A SPACE TO BE

**2013-2014  
annual report**





I feel **isolated** from my friends who have children without any issues, and **SAD** that it is so hard to have playdates because my child always needs so much support.

Parent member

I felt **terrified** and then **frustrated....** Many friends and acquaintances kept insisting that nothing at all was up with my child, as if I was just a neurotic crazy person.

Parent member


**Regretful.** We spent so much time worrying about, testing, evaluating, and discussing our child's development and his progress that we didn't get to just enjoy him as a baby.

Parent member



**Families living with disability are more likely to experience poverty, high stress levels, and social and physical isolation. Parents have enormous responsibilities, are often sleep-deprived and over-scheduled.**

**Many are also burdened with unaffordable medical, educational, and therapeutic costs. Health insurance is often unattainable or inadequate. The language and continually shifting landscape of disability and diagnosis further add to feelings of fear, uncertainty, and frustration.**



**According to the 2010 Census, 1 in 20 school-age children living at home has a disability.**

**In New York City, according to the 2010 American Community Survey, there are an estimated 806,030 people with disabilities, and 15% are children.**





**My son Felix was born with multiple disabilities, including cerebral palsy and autism; my daughters were not. I yearned for a creative space outside of our home where all three of my children would feel welcome**

and at ease, where Miranda could draw, where Happy could climb and jump, where Felix could spin on a platform swing and his earth-shaking whoops would not scare people or cause them to stare. This yearning turned into **Extreme Kids & Crew**. We began in 2011 with concerts, parent meet-ups, family art projects, and the opening of Space No. 1, our first sensory playspace. Over 100 families participated in our first year, and hundreds more have joined us in the years since.

Children come to us with an enormous range of disabilities, some mild, some major. We do not delve deeply into diagnosis. We let the children show us who they are and where they want to go. We trust their parents to help them along by playing with them, making art with them, dancing with them, or simply cuddling on a foof with them, in the company of others. The children and their families have transformed **Extreme Kids** into a freewheeling experiment in art, movement, play, and connection—one that inspires me almost every time I visit. The experience has convinced me that disability is a powerful means of bringing people together, bridging social barriers, and re-igniting thinking and perception in tired adult minds.

Where are we now? Thanks to the Parks Department, P.S. 15 in Red Hook, and Caitlin Cassaro, our executive director, we now have two beautiful sensory play centers with an ever-growing slate of programs for the entire family. Our partnership with the public school is mutually beneficial: The school provides us with space for our operations; we provide them with a top-notch sensory gym. School therapists use our gym during school days; we use it after-school and on weekends. The agreement maximizes use of our sensory equipment and increases the number of children we are able to reach. This year, the board will work on expanding to partnerships with other public schools across all boroughs.

Eliza Factor, Founder and Board President



**I became familiar with Extreme Kids & Crew when my son was diagnosed with neurological dyspraxia. The feelings of fear and isolation my husband and I felt were immense.**

While conducting research online for something that we could take part in as a family, I came across a letter written by Eliza Factor. She spoke openly about how isolating it can be to learn that your child has a disability—how scary, how hard on the family, how hard on the marriage. After reading the letter, I burst into tears and showed up to play that Sunday with not only my son, but also with my husband and my neuro-typical daughter as well. We had, well, fun! That day we became members and one of the hundreds of families creating a community of disability through arts programming, barrier-free open play, and family engagement.

Our mission remains so simple, yet so important and rare: to create spaces where everyone, no matter their ability or disability, feels welcome, can express themselves through art, music, movement and play; or can simply *be*. We look forward to expanding this mission across New York City, by opening **Extreme Kids & Crew** spaces in community public schools that will serve local children with disabilities, along with their families. Together, we'll learn from each other, build a strong community of disability across cultural lines, share resources, and change the public's perception of what it means to be disabled.

Caitlin Cassaro, Executive Director







**The families I serve are fortunate to have a partner in Extreme Kids & Crew. The organization supports and offers services that enrich the lives of my students and their families, providing them with opportunities for increased and improved social and emotional development.**

**Julie Cavanaugh,  
Special Education Teacher, P.S. 15**

## Special Report

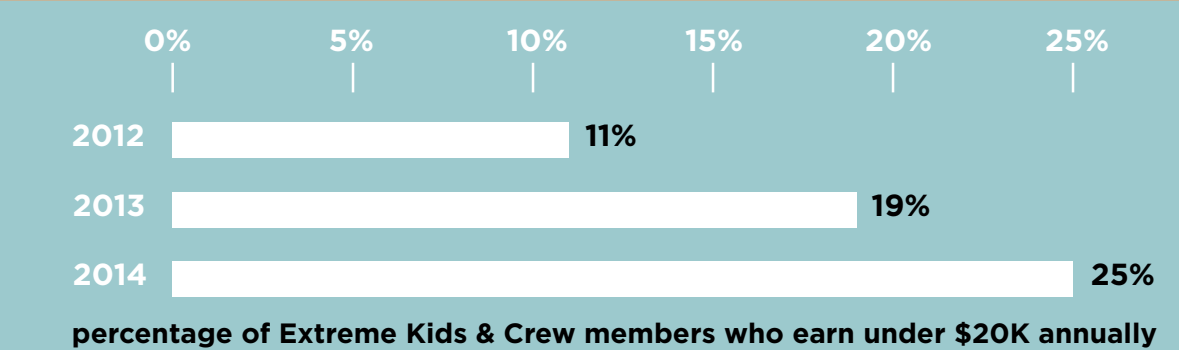
In the fall of 2013, Extreme Kids & Crew embarked on a space-sharing experiment with a Title One elementary school in Red Hook, Brooklyn, at P.S. 15, where 34% of the students have special needs.

Extreme Kids & Crew funded, designed and installed a top-notch sensory gym in a big, sunny room in P.S. 15 that upwards of 60 students use during school days. The equipment provides a great range of possibilities for occupational, physical and play therapies. P.S. 15 faculty credit the gym for an increase in motor skills, strength, agility and flexibility in their students. The parents have also reported seeing a big improvement in climbing and gross motor skills.

After school and on the weekends, the gym is expanded into AMP Space, the home-base of Extreme Kids & Crew's art, movement and play program. AMP Space attracts families not only from P.S. 15

and Red Hook, but from every neighborhood in Brooklyn, and all five boroughs of New York City. Families from different classes and cultures mingle easily, brought together by their children's disabilities. Parents share stories, frustrations, and information while helping a daughter make a puppet, or watch a son make an unlikely alliance in the ball pit, or enjoy a free concert. In its first three months, AMP Space received 693 visits.

The principal, special education teachers, therapists and parents of P.S. 15 highly value AMP Space. Based on the success of this model, Extreme Kids & Crew is working with the Department of Education to partner with another Title One school in Queens. Having another Extreme Kids & Crew art, movement and play program in a different borough, inside a school that also caters to children with special needs, will allow us to reach even more New Yorkers where they live.







**we  
create**

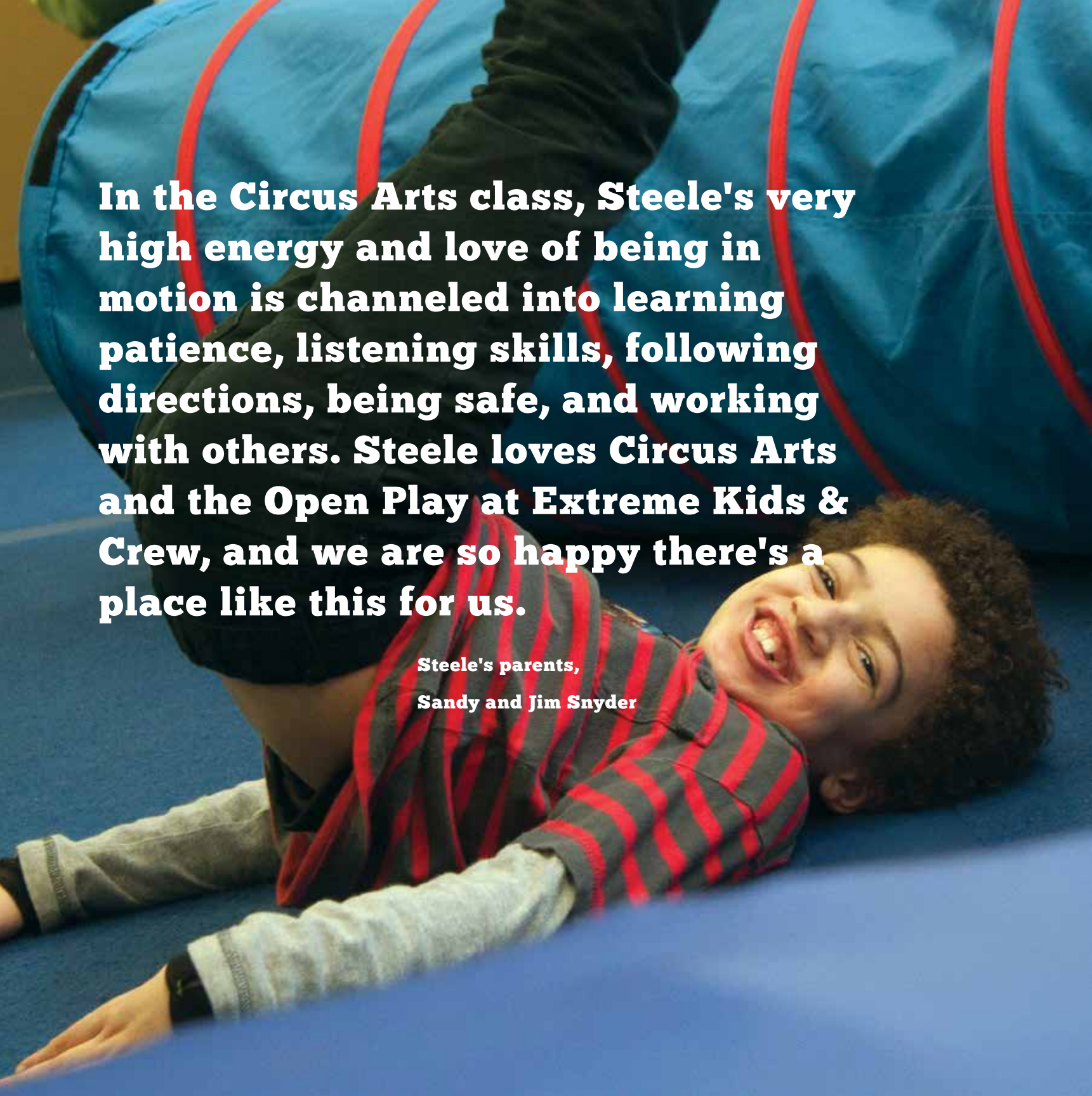
**40%**  
member  
increase in  
2013

**2,000**  
visits in  
2013

**100%**  
membership  
increase in  
2014

**3,800**  
visits in  
2014





**In the Circus Arts class, Steele's very high energy and love of being in motion is channeled into learning patience, listening skills, following directions, being safe, and working with others. Steele loves Circus Arts and the Open Play at Extreme Kids & Crew, and we are so happy there's a place like this for us.**

**Steele's parents,  
Sandy and Jim Snyder**

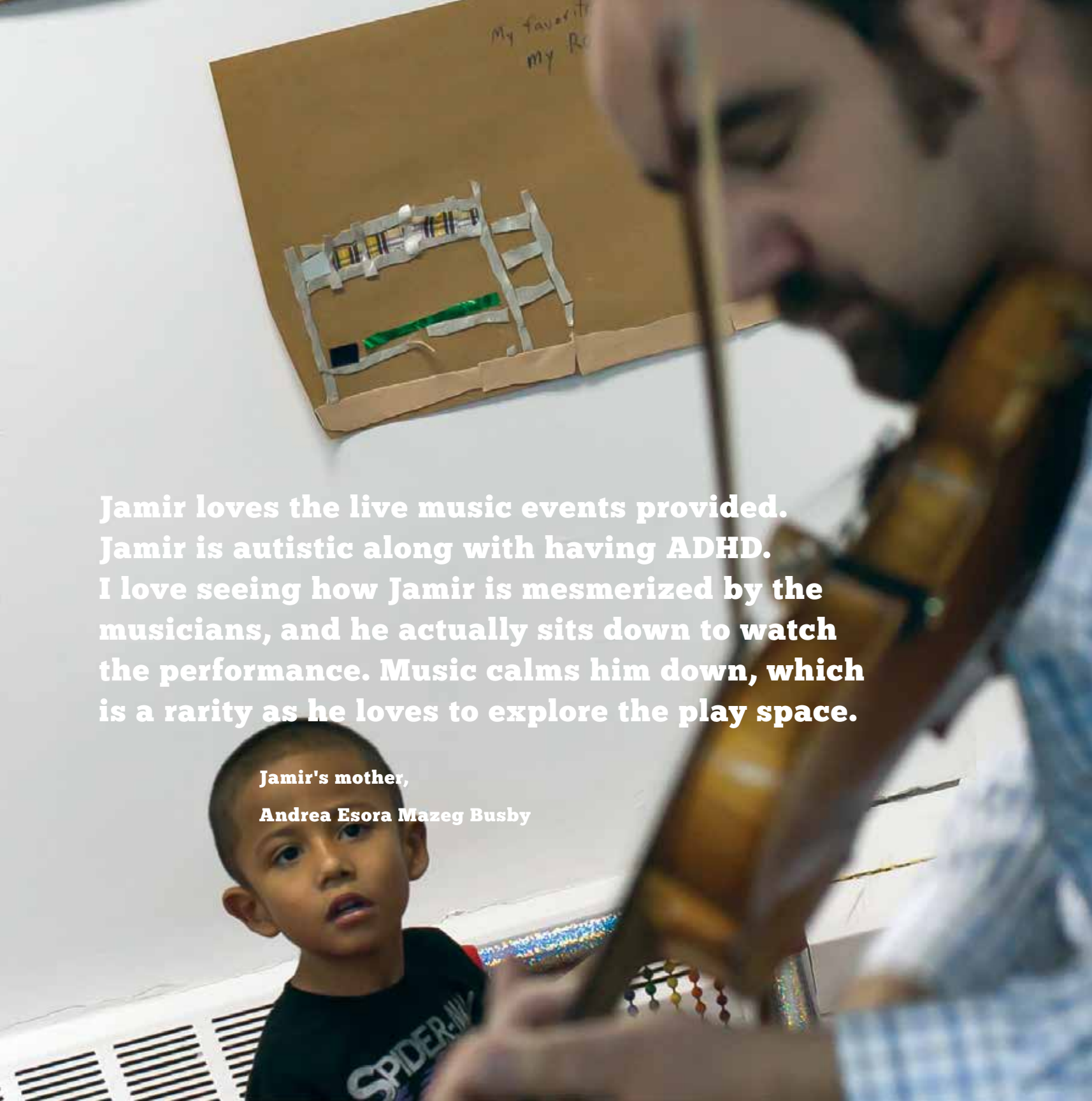


**Every day we experience the powerful impact that our arts and play programming has on children with disabilities. Families from all five boroughs travel to our spaces in Brooklyn to participate in our free monthly music and art events, partnership programs, and regularly scheduled classes.**

**7,000**

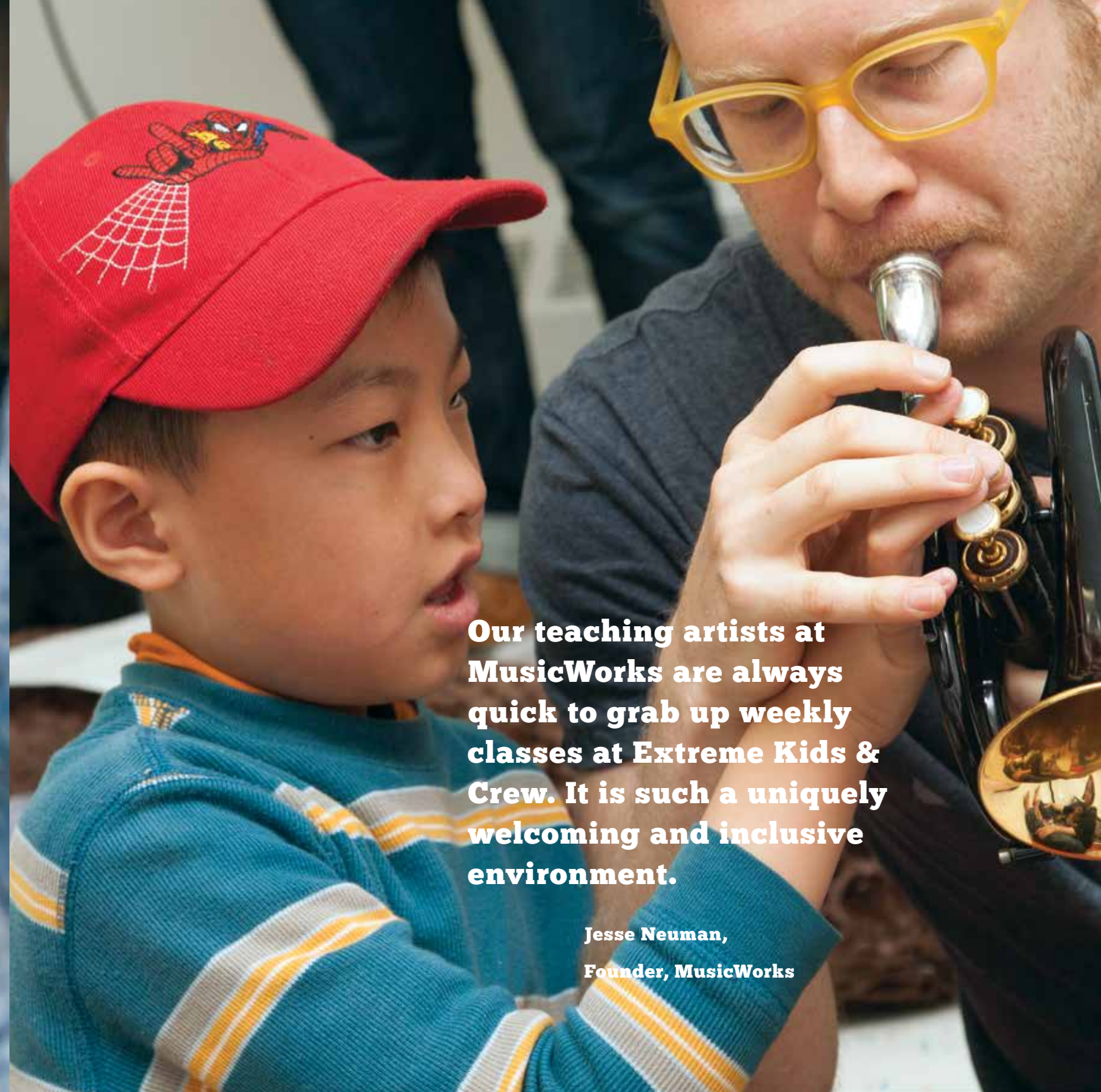
**visits since 2011**





**Jamir loves the live music events provided. Jamir is autistic along with having ADHD. I love seeing how Jamir is mesmerized by the musicians, and he actually sits down to watch the performance. Music calms him down, which is a rarity as he loves to explore the play space.**

**Jamir's mother,  
Andrea Esora Mazeg Busby**



**Our teaching artists at MusicWorks are always quick to grab up weekly classes at Extreme Kids & Crew. It is such a uniquely welcoming and inclusive environment.**


**Jesse Neuman,  
Founder, MusicWorks**





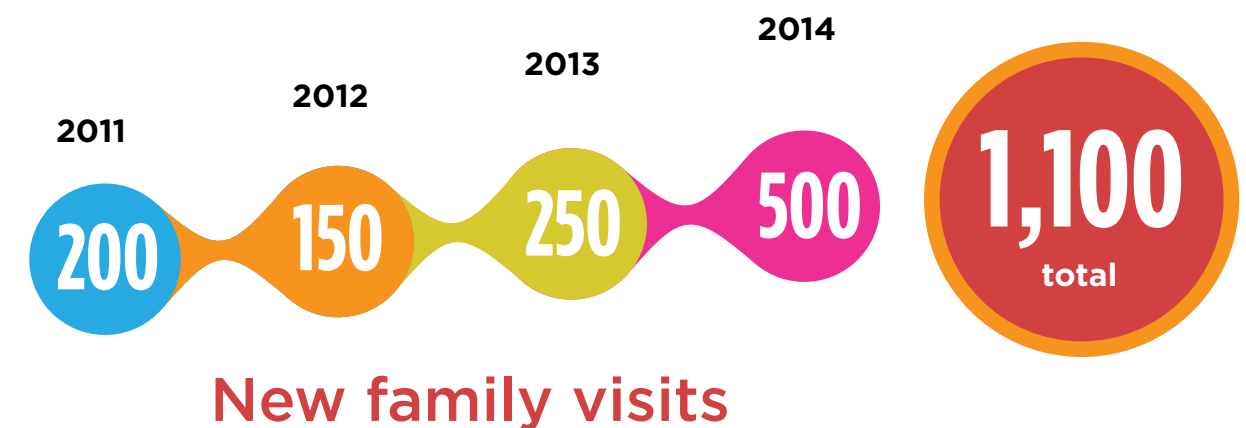
**we  
play**

**During Open Play, children, parents and volunteers explore, make-believe, and connect. Behaviors are not the focus. Children are celebrated as they are, within the bounds of safety. The atmosphere created is one of deep acceptance that allows children to build self-confidence while they are having fun. The program appeals to both children with disabilities and their siblings.**



**Extreme Kids is a safe place where my daughter Ocean can be herself, play, and meet other kids who don't think she is weird or different. Her sister loves to join her simply because it is fun!**

**Ocean's mother, Limor Cohen**







**As parents of this extraordinary and extreme kid, we welcome the relative calm of being at the Extreme Kids spaces where our son's behavior isn't the focus of everyone's attention and we can hang without judgments.**

**Jack's parents,  
Lori Podvesker  
and Lynn Hoffard**




**What we love about AMP Space is it allows Aaron to flop around, crawl, and we don't have to worry about him hurting himself. He and his brother Zach light up when we enter the space.**

**Zach and Aaron's father,  
Scott Thomas**






**we  
connect**



**Harry has cerebral palsy, sensory integration dysfunction and autism spectrum disorder. Although Harry is very social, his usual behavior makes it difficult for people to connect with him. At Extreme Kids, Harry can be himself and find folks who celebrate differences.**

**Harry's mother, Michele Muller**





**Our family attends almost every music event at Extreme Kids. Hugo, who is non-verbal, seems to come alive around music. He is almost always up front dancing along, his face filled with pure joy. We love having a place where we belong. Hugo can get his freak on and everyone appreciates his enthusiasm.**

**Hugo's parents, Jen and Peter Sellar**

The following is a sample of our programming. For a complete list of programs, classes and events, visit

**[extremekidsandcrew.org](http://extremekidsandcrew.org)**

## **After School Art, Movement & Music**

is a drop-off program specifically developed for children with Individual Education Plans (I.E.P.s) who attend our partner school, P.S. 15. This free program offers constructive playtime in our sensory gym and homework assistance, as well as music, dance and fine arts instruction. This specialized program allows caregivers more time to work or care for other children at home, while their child with disabilities is in a safe, appropriate space.

## **Audra Rox and Music For Aardvarks**

explores music through song and gesture, dance and movement, rhythm training, and instrument play; using music that celebrates the lives of our younger children who are up growing up in an urban environment.

## **Family Yoga & Movement with Jolene Festa**

is a special place where families and their children of all abilities can come together as a community for the purpose of wellness, connection, and fun. "Together we will grow physically, emotionally and socially in a safe, fun, playful environment."—Jolene "Mama Jo" Festa

## **Monthly Music & Art**

provides musical performances and art workshops during which children of all abilities and their families can relax, take part in a collaborative art project and enjoy a performance by local musicians.

## **MusicWorks with Jesse Neuman & Friends**

is a weekly interactive music experience that brings out the best in children with disabilities through music in a fun, accepting environment. MusicWorks helps increase a child's confidence, focus, and learning through playing instruments, singing, and improvisation.



**We are continuously energized by the families who enliven our playspaces and express themselves through our arts programming. It is the enthusiasm of these thousands of parents, children with disabilities and their siblings that spurs us on.**

**Because many of New York City's approximately 121,000 families raising children with disabilities face significant transportation challenges, we want to open up more playspaces throughout the five boroughs, making it easier for more families to take part.**

**With assistance from the Department of Education, we will be locating satellite centers within community public schools, giving these schools the benefits of our sensory gyms, and extending our arts and play programming to their neighborhoods.**

**Our goal is to situate playspaces in underserved neighborhoods, or where families may have difficulty traveling from. Please join us in making Extreme Kids & Crew available to families who may not otherwise be able to create, play and connect with one another.**



**we  
dream**





**One of the best parts of working with Extreme Kids & Crew is that we work together to make the best experience possible for everyone involved. The staff is extremely supportive. Their assistance, knowledge, and understanding of the population are enormously helpful in navigating the space and program. It is truly a partnership and we feel very much a part of Extreme Kids & Crew.**

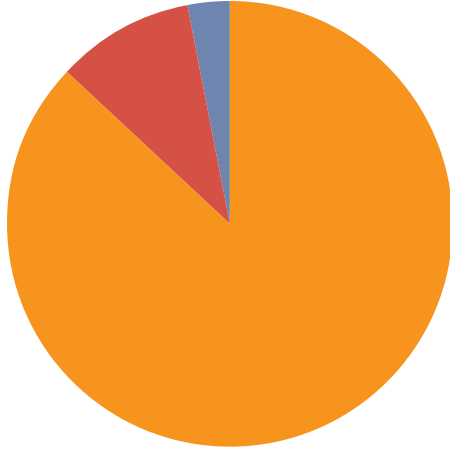
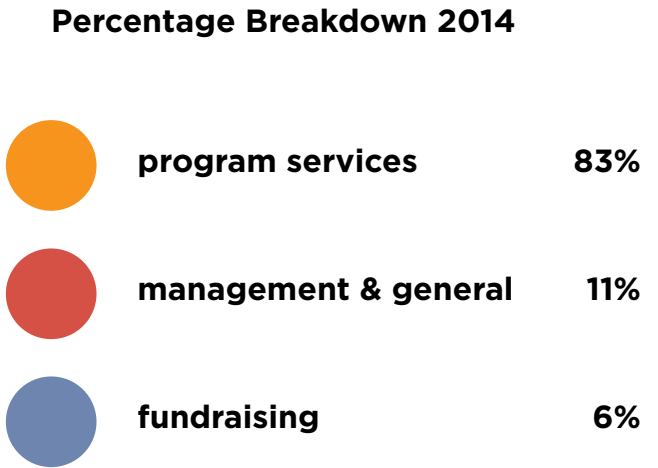
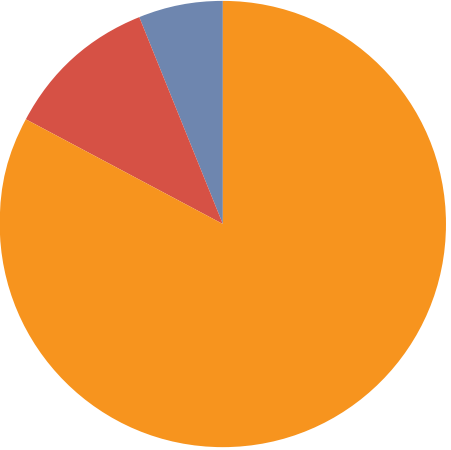
**Pat Hall and Pam Patrick,  
Teaching Artists,  
Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM)**



	Fiscal Year 2012	Fiscal Year 2013	Fiscal Year 2014
<b>Support</b>			
Grants and Contributions	\$69,318	\$152,593	\$272,264
Program Income	15,205	12,580	12,633
In-Kind Legal	–	–	7,135
Special Events	7,960	2,229	5,379
Miscellaneous	50	545	–
Investment Income	5	17	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>92,538</b>	<b>167,964</b>	<b>297,422</b>

<b>Expenses</b>			
Program Services	\$75,634	\$159,919	\$223,674
Management and General	6,809	18,784	29,213
Fundraising and Events	2,628	5,548	17,417
<b>Total</b>	<b>85,071</b>	<b>184,251</b>	<b>270,304</b>

<b>Net Assets</b>			
Total Revenue	\$92,538	\$167,964	\$290,287
Total Expenses	\$85,071	\$184,251	\$263,169





# Thanks to Our Donors and Partners Our Kids Thrived in 2013 and 2014!

Extreme Kids & Crew is a 501(c)(3) organization incorporated in 2011.

We celebrate children of all abilities, promoting socialization and confidence-building through arts-based programming. Our programs work like pebbles dropped into water: children, families, caregivers, and volunteers transform when they participate in classes and open play where everyone comes together to explore, create, play, relax and connect.

There are many ways to make this community of disability thrive!

- Volunteer to be a "Play Partner" to one or more of the many children visiting our spaces
- Donate and financially support the programs the organization offers
- Join a committee and lend your specific talents
- Join the board and be a leader to this growing organization

Please contact us at [info@extremekidsandcrew.org](mailto:info@extremekidsandcrew.org) or (347) 410-6050.

For more information regarding the board of directors, contact Extreme Kids & Crew founder and board president, Eliza Factor, at [elizafactor@extremekidsandcrew.org](mailto:elizafactor@extremekidsandcrew.org).

You may also visit us online at [extremekidsandcrew.org](http://extremekidsandcrew.org)



## Board of Directors

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Brooklyn Children's Museum  
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*All photographs taken at Extreme Kids & Crew locations and events.*





**[extremekidsandcrew.org](http://extremekidsandcrew.org)**