

extreme kids  
& crew



A SPACE TO BE



Analysis & Report by SEED IMPACT



“

*Every child with a disability is different, so that's why it's so important for everyone to have a safe place to play and be themselves. I'm so happy to be involved with an organization that could not only maintain itself during COVID but developed new, creative virtual programming based on the community's needs.*

– EKC Parent

2022  
ANNUAL  
REPORT

Dear EKC community:

My first two months as Executive Director at Extreme Kids & Crew have been full of excitement and learning. I feel privileged to partner with our vibrant community to create brave spaces where differences are welcomed and celebrated.

I've worked diligently with our passionate staff, community partners, and the board, led by our new chair Christian Bergeron, to craft a vision for our future. I am thrilled about what we've come up with.

In this annual report for 2022, you'll see how our participants have engaged with and grown in our programs. The report highlights the socio-emotional growth of our youth and our unique community partnerships. These partnerships have helped us create and deliver transformational programs.

Going forward we are committed to expanding programs in terms of participant demographics, geography, and age range while continuing to foster a judgment-free environment where neurodivergent young people can develop socio-emotionally and find their own meaning through play.

Historically, EKC has made all programs free. However, to support the growth of our programs and make them more sustainable, we will transition to a tiered pricing structure in the summer of 2023. We understand that this change will be challenging for some families. However, we are committed to ensuring that every youth continues to have access to our programs, regardless of their ability to pay. These fees will enable us to continue offering high-quality, high-engagement arts and play programs tailored to our participants' needs and interests and facilitated by expert staff and community partners.

I look forward to getting to know you and working together to create a sustainable foundation for our work while maintaining our core values of equity and inclusion.

In Partnership,

Lovisa



## WHO WE ARE

Extreme Kids & Crew (EKC) is a welcoming space where young neurodivergent people, their friends, and their families socialize, create, and play. We strive to become the NYC community hub for young neurodivergent people, young people with disabilities, and their crews by expanding equitable opportunities regardless of disability, race, ethnicity, income inequality, or gender identity.

In a city with limited, affordable disability-centered programs and few opportunities for families of children with disabilities to connect with other families, EKC fills a very particular need. EKC does not require proof of diagnosis, dues or long-term commitments. Its programs are open to all. Families are valued, and their enjoyment is paramount.

Whether in-person or online, EKC programs are based wholly on the input and feedback of participating children, teens, and their families. Music, art, and play are integral to building connections and providing channels for self-expression, creativity, and fun experiences for the whole family.

## WHAT WE BELIEVE

We follow in the footsteps of the disability activists and organizers who came before us, who brought forth a simple mantra: “Nothing about us without us.”

Neurodivergent young people and their families inform and define every aspect of our programming. We seek to amplify the voices of our community and act as a conduit for the collective power of those voices.

EKC believes every child has the right to play and make art as it holds meaning to them; every family has the right to accurate information and support, and every employee has the right to a workplace that embraces a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

## WHO WE SERVE

In 2022, the economic and racial diversity of EKC’s 582 participants were:

### NON-WHITE

EKC Community

64%

Citywide

60%

[Source: United States Census Bureau, 2021]

### BELOW POVERTY LINE

EKC Community

25%

Citywide

19%

[Source: NYC Mayor’s Office for Economic Opportunity, 2019]

“

*Honestly, I love that there is a space where our son fits in. I think it’s important for him to have a space where he’s not outcasted, and kids accept him for who he is. Having spaces where he’s just accepted is incredibly important for his social development. I think it’s also probably one of the reasons his speech grew so much.*

– EKC Parent



# LETTER FROM 2022 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CAITLIN CASSARO

I joined Extreme Kids & Crew 12 years ago as a member. I brought my family to a new play space in Brooklyn. I immediately felt at home, even relaxed, something I had forgotten was a thing. My kids ran, rolled, screamed, fought loudly, dramatically melted down, and had a lot of fun. No one batted an eye. Caregivers shared ideas and resources, laughed, and someone even told me to stop apologizing for my son, who ran into this and ran over that.

Everyone seemed to have a wicked sense of humor, which I loved. I remember crying. I found my people and, in a year's time, the best job in the world. Thank you SO much for allowing me the privilege of being the Executive Director of one of the coolest organizations around over the past ten years. I leave now with my heart full, with community, and knowing that the incredible team—the dedicated staff and amazing new ED, the steadfast board, and the many brilliant kids and their crews—will continue to do the work, play, create, and grow the mission throughout New York City and beyond.

Someone once told me that EKC has a “special sauce,” which my friend had trouble describing. Still, it was just something he knew was there, something that one felt in our spaces, whether those spaces were EKC-dedicated play spaces, at a community event, or online. I will always be proud of our beautiful mix of empathy, creativity, humor, joy, and perhaps a bit of rebellion.

The COVID-19 pandemic showed that EKC's work—to create connection and community—is more important than ever. Our team rose to the occasion, developing new programs and ways of delivering old ones to meet young people and their families where they were and spaces, whether in-person or virtual, that continued to have that “special sauce.” In 2022 our Clubs programs more than doubled in offerings and attendance, allowing for a deeper connection with participants. Clubs—from Gaming to Rock Band—give young people programming they want and the space to be who they are. They also allow a platform for young people to further develop their social emotional skill set. Powerful Parents continued to grow, providing a lifeline to families throughout New York City, sharing resources, friendship, and support. And we moved into our new home with the Brooklyn Children's Museum, opening the door to new possibilities and programming for Extreme Kids and their Crews.

I am inviting you—families, friends, supporters, and partners—to join me in gratitude for Extreme Kid's accomplishments and to celebrate our bright future. During 2022, Extreme Kids board members, staff, funders and partners came together to ensure a firm foundation for the organization's next chapter. I am deeply grateful to this community of caring, and excited for what the future will bring.

2023 brings exciting changes to Extreme Kids and Crew. Christian Bergeron, Board Chair, and a search committee of Board members lead an exhaustive process, resulting in our welcoming Lovisa Brown as Executive Director in February 2023. Lovisa is an arts educator with 15 years of experience igniting marginalized youth and communities to become producers of their narratives, and I am thrilled to welcome her. Our future looks brighter than ever, and with your support Lovisa and the team will lead Extreme Kids to create more opportunities and spaces for families to joyfully come together to play and create, for children and teens to connect in safe and welcoming environments and develop friendships and agency.

Sincerely,



Caitlin M. Cassaro, Executive Director





# OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

The results in this report are based on data collected using SEED Impact's Theory of Change on Its Feet™. This framework guides our visioning, goal-setting, and ongoing assessment of EKC's impact.

Our shared vision for each population:

- **Teen Clubs:** Lifelong friendships are forged, as well as growing confidence to navigate social situations at school, at work, and in the community.
- **Family Programs:** Young people and their families are seen to be valued participants in NYC and are recognized as such.
- **Powerful Parents:** Caregivers use their voice to promote inclusion and equity, and improve policies and services for all disabled people.
- **Out-of-School Time Programs:** Disabled young people feel heard and valued as members of their schools, and communities.

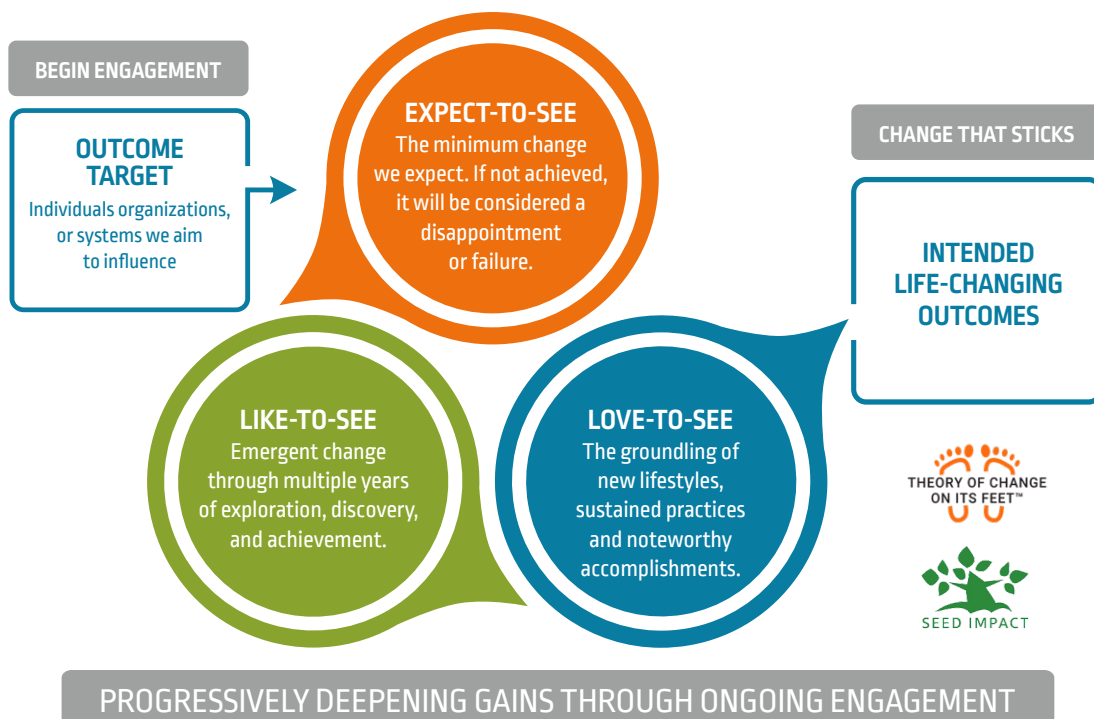
EKC defines progressive stages of achievement (from Expect-to-See to Like-to-See to Love-to-See) for each population. Short-term goals are aligned with our long-term vision for social impact. Encouraging ever more participants to advance through these stages year-to-year greatly increases the likelihood that our long-range, life-changing, and systems-changing outcomes can be attained.

**4**

**OUTCOME TARGETS**

1. Teen Clubs
2. Family Programs
3. Powerful Parents
4. Out-of-School Time Programs

## THEORY OF CHANGE ON ITS FEET™ MODEL



Diligent attention to this framework ensures that day-to-day activities are aligned with our theory of change targeting our vision for long-term social impact.

# 1. TEEN CLUBS PARTICIPANT RESULTS

For pre-teens and teens, who are often marginalized, weekends and time after school can be tough. Our Clubs offer kids with autism, ADHD, and other disabilities safe, engaging opportunities to fill these hours with fun and friendship.

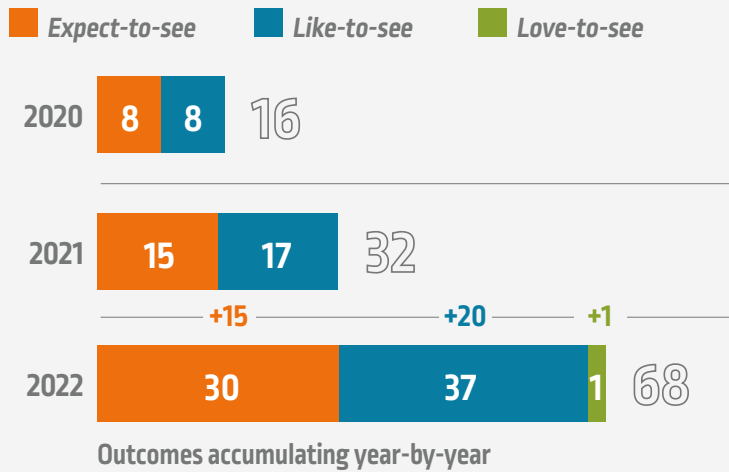
- All of our Clubs are 100 percent informed by the interests and passions of our kids
- Our staff are expert facilitators of programs for kids with disabilities
- We partner with organizations with deep knowledge of Club activities - art, performance, gaming, and more

This combination is our secret sauce that keeps young people joyfully engaged in our programming throughout the year.

EKC is the only NYC organization offering these services at no cost to families, ensuring our kids have full, unencumbered access to high-quality programming designed just for them.

In 2022, Clubs were expanded to include virtual gaming clubs for casual and competitive players, a gaming club for girls, art clubs, and in-person clubs such as Rock Band with The Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, Maker Girls, and Dungeons and Dragons.

## TEEN CLUB PARTICIPANTS 2020-2022



In 2022, EKC doubled the number of youth achieving expect-to-see outcomes (shown in orange), as 15 additional youth felt valued and connected with others. Twenty youth progressed to like-to-see (shown in blue). They tried new activities, showed caring and empathy for others, and advocated for themselves. One youth advanced even further in 2022 and was first to reach the love-to-see level (shown in green). This youth assumed a leadership role in planning, executing, and leading activities with staff.

*(continued on next page)*



*EKC has helped my son forge friendships and develop his social skills. Between Teens Crew and special programs at cultural and historical institutions, EKC has eased my concerns about his social development. He gets super excited when he knows he is going to an EKC event. The staff is so caring and meets the young persons at their level. Our society could learn how to be more accepting from EKC!*

— EKC Parent



# 1. TEEN CLUBS PARTICIPANT RESULTS (continued)

## TEEN CLUB TEACHER OBSERVATIONS:

**A Leader Emerges.** Dylan has transitioned from a participant engaging in virtual activities over the years to assisting with curriculum building and helping with some facilitation for our Gaming Crew Club. Many participants seek him out when they need support or if they have questions about an activity. In turn, Dylan reaches out to other participants during sessions to check in, comments supportively on their work, and shows great empathy and friend-building skills.

**Impact of Teens Crew.** Karla began attending teen social groups in 2020 and has continued with these as well as other new clubs. However, the in-person Teens Crew remains her favorite. She contributes meaningfully to

group activities and discussions and doesn't get as distracted by other kids or her own thoughts as in the past. Her ability to show flexible problem-solving and openness to the ideas of others has also grown significantly.

**A Leader in the Making.** Riley started participating in our clubs in October 2022. She participated in our Maker Girls and Rock Band programs and consistently attended and actively participated in every activity. She has displayed the ability to build meaningful relationships with other participants, asking them questions about the activity or their interests, and also contributing interesting ideas to the discussion, and lending a hand when someone needs it.

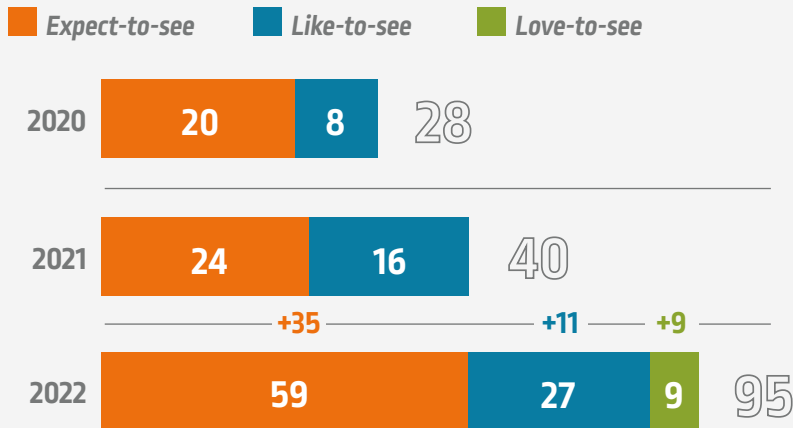




## 2. FAMILY PROGRAMS PARTICIPANT RESULTS

Since 2020, free family programs have provided access to EKC activities and experiences for kids of all abilities and their families. From ice skating to the Farm Museum to a Pirate Show to the Barclay Center for a Nets game, families participate in NYC activities and culture as part of a safe, warm, and supportive community. In 2022, 240 family members attended at least one event.

### FAMILY PROGRAMS PARTICIPANTS 2020-2022



#### Outcomes accumulating year-by-year

As shown in orange, 35 family members reached *expect-to-see* in 2022. They engaged in at least two events, had fun, and showed interest in future events.

Eleven family members reached the *like-to-see* level (blue) by participating in at least three events and drawing on a repertoire of creative activities to expand their children's confidence, creativity, and self-expression.

For the first time in EKC's history, nine family members progressed to achieve *love-to-see* outcomes in 2022. They participated in four or more events and exhibited confidence in accessing a broad range of resources outside of EKC.



*Thank you for all the time you guys invested in our children. This program was done very nicely. I appreciate how you worked on helping the children socialize and introduce themselves while engaging in subjects they love.*

— EKC Parent



### EVENT HIGHLIGHT:

**Emotional Disturbance: How A Controversial IEP Designation Fails Black Boys.** In New York City public schools, Black students are more than twice as likely to be classified as having an Emotional Disturbance compared to their peers. In March 2022, 111 people — both Extreme Kids families and New York parents and advocates — attended a panel discussion facilitated by EKC with disability self-advocates and experts. Heather Clarke, CEO of The Learning Advocate,

moderated a panel that included Kenya Martinez, Kim Kaiser, and Timotheus Gordon. The panelists broke down the meaning, stigma, and harm of the emotional disturbance designation and addressed systemic racism. Participants discussed how this “Emotional Disturbance” classification negatively impacts the social and educational outcomes of Black students and what educators and power brokers can do to combat anti-Blackness and ableism in the classroom.

\*Note: Names throughout this report are fictitious to protect youth and family anonymity.

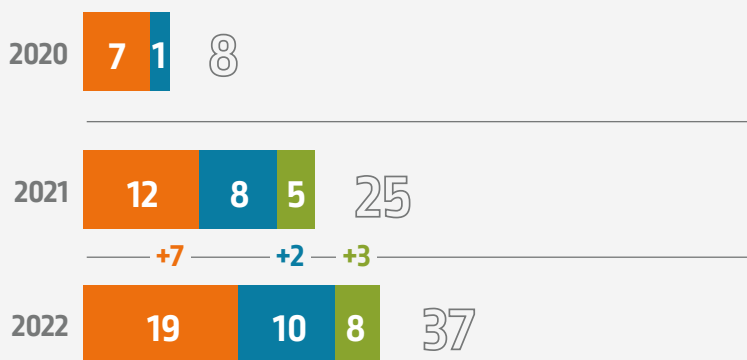
### 3. POWERFUL PARENTS RESULTS

Powerful Parents, a virtual get-together, is a weekly advocacy coaching and support group designed to provide a supportive space for caregivers raising and loving neurodivergent children in a complicated world. Topics are decided on by participants and have included: understanding and working with “difficult” behaviors, friendship, navigating the NYC school system, accessing publicly funded systems and services, IEP meeting planning, and living at the intersection of race and disability.

Powerful Parents is facilitated by Kate Lynch. Kate is the parent of an amazing atypical kid. Since 2002, she has taught parents yoga and meditation and cultivated community. She is the author of the upcoming book *Atypical Kids, Mindful Parents*. Her neurodivergent family lives in a magical land called Brooklyn.

#### POWERFUL PARENTS 2020-2022

■ *Expect-to-see*   
 ■ *Like-to-see*   
 ■ *Love-to-see*



#### Outcomes accumulating year-by-year

As shown in orange, seven parents reached *expect-to-see* (shown in orange) by engaging and connecting with other parents and learning useful information.

Two parents advanced to *like-to-see* (shown in blue) by feeling part of a community and effectively advocating for their children and themselves in and out of school.

Three parents advanced even farther, reaching the *love-to-see* level (shown in green) by applying knowledge, skills, and confidence gained to advocate for others in and out of school.

#### STAFF OBSERVATIONS:

**Parent Shares Wealth of Experience.** Leslie has been a participant in Powerful Parents since 2020 and often co-facilitates the group. She serves on the PTA and School Leadership team of two schools – bringing her perspective and knowledge to these communities. She has Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) experience and can go into homes and connect with families. She has also helped families find preschool special education programs.

**Medicaid Waivers Advocate.** Kimberlee made two presentations to the group on accessing Medicaid Waiver services. Further, she has helped some families navigate the process, which can be daunting. During the year, she planned outings, parties, and other activities for families. Beyond Powerful Parents, she has decided to help other families throughout the city, encouraging them to start the process early and get more needed resources for their children.

“

*Extreme Kids and Crew is amazing. As a parent, I learned so much about my boy. He enjoyed signing in, listening to videos, using his speech device to answer questions about himself, music sessions, and all the active activities.”*

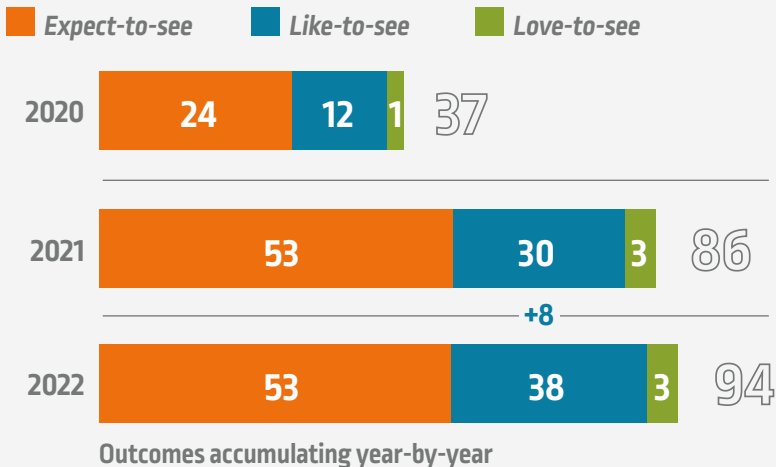
– EKC Parent



## 4. OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS

After School and Summer Camp programs have operated both in-person and virtually through 2022 as access to safe spaces changed in response to COVID-19. Built on a foundation of creative expression, imaginative play, and social emotional learning (SEL), EKC provided arts and play programs for children ages six and up with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Participants made friends, built confidence in their abilities, and had fun.

### OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME YOUTH 2020-2022



As shown in orange, 53 participants achieved *expect-to-see* outcomes since 2020. They felt valued, included, and understood by the EKC community. Further, 38 youth, including eight in 2022, reached the *like-to-see* level (shown in blue). They made friends, showed empathy, and developed positive self-worth and identity. Three of the older youth further progressed to achieve *love-to-see* outcomes (shown in green). They successfully advocated for themselves and others at home, in school, or in the community.

### AFTER SCHOOL PARENT OBSERVATIONS:

**A Shy Person Speaks Out.** “Noah loves the program and the gym. He talked a lot about the after-school program throughout the year with me, and I can tell that this program is really important to him. He struggles with a lot of emotions and what he is thinking, and to see him talk about something he loves so passionately was great because sometimes he can be very shy and won’t mention many things he enjoys with me. He tells me that your program allows him to play with different toys and do different activities that his regular classes don’t always do.”

**Impact on Home Life.** “Extreme Kids has been a wonderful addition to my life and Henry’s. I appreciate that you all let his personality shine in your programs. He loves to go to the after-school program and always talks about it with other family members and me. The program has helped grow his independence and confidence in school and at home. Before, Henry would have serious tantrums and shut down easily; however, over the school year, he learned how to talk through his emotions and feelings. He also willingly helps me with house chores, which he did before, but always complained about it. Now, he asks me if he can help out, which has been great for our relationship.”

“

*EKC gives families and participants a welcoming space where everyone can be themselves, learn new things, connect with others, and always have fun. It is a tremendous community resource that meets people where they are and offers something unique by helping participants grow and be in a place where everyone is valued.*

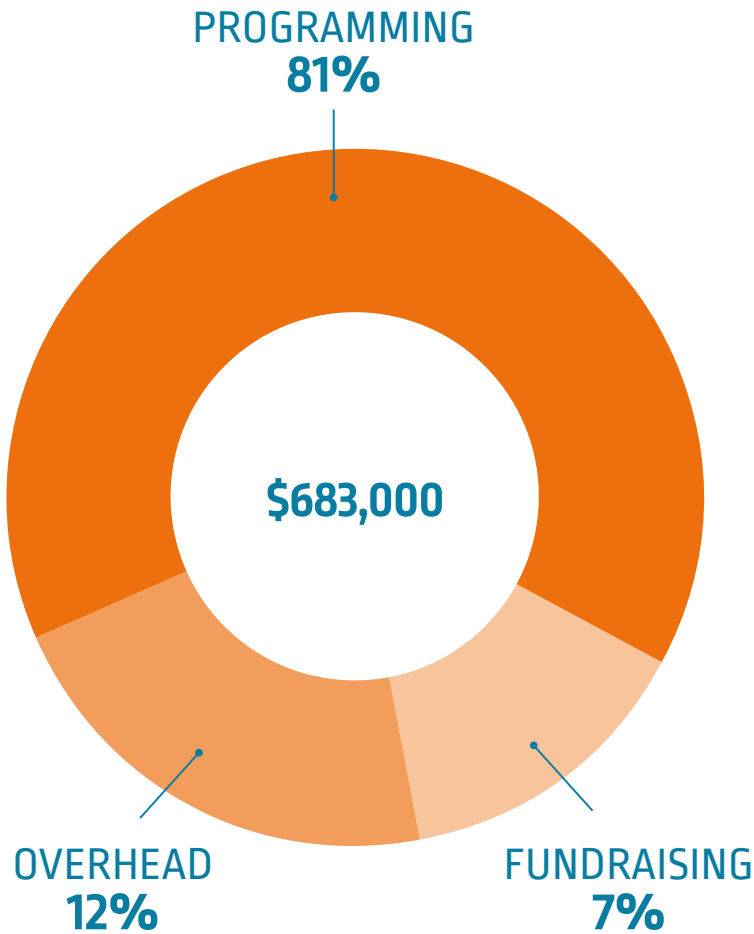
– EKC Funder



# FINANCIALS

## JANUARY — DECEMBER 2022

Incorporated in 2010, Extreme Kids and Crew INC is a 501(c)3 organization



### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Total Assets .....	<b>\$247,786</b>
Total Liabilities .....	<b>\$15,674</b>
Total Net Assets .....	<b>\$232,112</b>

“

*Our family has grown up with EKC. I don't know who we would be without the non-judgmental support and joy we have found in this community. We started in the ball pit, and now my son LIVES for Gaming Crew!*

– EKC Parent



photo credit—Brooklyn Conservatory of Music



*photo credit—Filip Wolak*

# OUR STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS

## 2022 STAFF

**Alex Bazeley**, Communications Manager

**Caitlin Cassaro**, Executive Director

**Sony Dueñas**, Administrative Coordinator

**Kali Greenberg**, Program Coordinator

**Christian Peralta**, Program Manager

**Leigh Reid**, Sr. Director of Communications & Development

**Michelle Secunda**, Out-of-School Time Manager

**Cristina Nava-Sosa**, Program Associate

## 2022 BOARD MEMBERS

**Christian Bergeron** - Treasurer, Executive Director, and Assistant General Counsel at JPMorgan Chase & Co.

**Vanessa Connelly** - Board President, Vice President of Sales at Brown Harris Stevens Development Marketing

**Edinaldo Figueiredo** - CEO Latin America Private Bank, JPMorgan Chase & Co.

**Meg Harkins** - SVP Marketing, Republic Records

**Jules Herlihy** - Transfer Pricing Director, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

**Shell Lee** - Operations and Supply Chain Expert and Volunteer Firefighter

**Anthony Mulira** - Director, Global Pre-Sales, Real Time Feeds, ICE Data Services

**Modupe Olaye** - Director, Data & Content Acquisition, S&P Dow Jones Indices

**Paras Qureshi** - SVP, Senior Product Manager, Moody's Investors Service

**Nat Rubin** - Licensed Massage Therapist and Occupational Therapist Candidate

**Gisela Sanders-Alcántara** - Producer and Editor for TV/Film, and Media Educator, CUNY TV, and BRIC

**Sara Shouse** - Attorney, Sidley Austin LLP

**Kelly Symons** - SVP, Data Management & Governance, Mastercard

# OUR STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS (continued)

## SENIOR ADVISORY COUNCIL

**Eliza Factor** - Founder, Extreme Kids & Crew, and Board Chair Emeritus

**Jamie Luft** - Dean of Academic Advisement, Origins High School

**Nyasha Manigault** - Senior Director, Finance

**Melissa Morgenlander** - Adjunct Professor of Children and Youth Studies at Brooklyn College

**Eric Nicklas** - Vice President, Quality, Performance, and Compliance, New York Foundling

**Ghita Schwarz** - Senior Staff Attorney at the Center for Constitutional Rights and Author

**Kelly Symons** - SVP, Data Management & Governance, Mastercard

**Micaela Walker** - Archivist

**Patricia Wolff** - Marketing Consultant

**Liz Wollman** - Associate Professor of Music, Baruch College, CUNY

## PROGRAM ADVISORY COUNCIL AND CONSULTANTS

**Emily Antoniadis** - Senior Grant Writer

**Julie Cavanagh** - Principal, P.S. 15

**Rachel Howard** - RiverHouse Consulting

**Steve Stern** - Finance and Operations

**Amy Weber** - Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Speak, Learn, & Play

# A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS, PARTNERS, AND COLLABORATES

Emily Antoniadis, Institutional Giving Consultant

Rose M. Badgeley Residuary Charitable Trust

Bank of India

BEAT Global

Blondie's Treehouse

BoardLead

Brooklyn Children's Museum

Brooklyn Community Foundation

Brooklyn Conservatory of Music

The Brooklyn Strategist

Principal Julie Cavanagh and the Staff and Families of PS 15

Heather Clarke

Cleary Gottlieb

Compass

Cowan Slavin Foundation

Curious Jane

Paul Draper

Dry Dock Wine + Spirits

David Engel Entertainment

Equity Consulting Group

The FAR Fund

The Joseph H. Flom Foundation

Four Corners Translation

Generate Impact

Genesis Inspiration Foundation

Timotheus Gordon, Jr.

Heights Psychology Collective

Rachel Howard, River House Consulting LLC

Hyde & Watson Foundation

INCLUDEnyc

Investors Bank

The Jalopy Theatre and School of Music

Jitasa

JPMorgan Chase

JustWorks

Kentler International Drawing Space

Kim Kaiser

Harrison Kramer

Lawyers Alliance for New York

LeFrak Center at Lakeside

The Magic Pebble Foundation

Kenya Martinez

Maspeth Federal Savings

Mastercard

Meringoff Family Foundation

Morse and Company CPAs

Movers, Not Shakers

New York City Council Member Alexa Avilés, District 38

New York City Council Member Shahana Hanif, District 39

The NYC Department of Youth & Community Development

The New York Community Trust

New York Hall of Science

New York Printing and Graphics

The New York Women's Foundation

NYU Langone

PricewaterhouseCoopers

PS 676

Red Hook Art Project

Ronald McDonald House Charities



Esther and Pedro Rosenblatt Foundation

RSW Foundation

S&P Global

SAORI Arts NYC

SEED Impact

Select Equity Group Foundation

SHARED Brooklyn

SMPS Family Fund

The South Wind Foundation

Space Station Prospect

Spark Youth NYC

The Stephen Colbert Americone Dream Fund

Tea Time Tactics

Tiny Tails to You

Two Trees

Van Brunt Stillhouse

Victor Calise, former Commissioner of the NYC Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities

Walentas Foundation

The Warburg Pincus Foundation

William J. & Dorothy K. O'Neill Foundation





*photo credit—The Color Factory*



**Main Office**

145 Brooklyn Ave,  
Brooklyn, NY 11213

347-410-6050

[info@extremekidsandcrew.org](mailto:info@extremekidsandcrew.org)

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