

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Analysis & Report by SEED IMPACT

EK&C



MISSION

At Extreme Kids & Crew (EKC), we cultivate welcoming, accessible spaces where young disabled people and their crews create a supportive community through the arts, play, and conversation.

Through arts and play-based programming, young people discover their talents and forge friendships. Our family education and advocacy services equip parents and caregivers with the knowledge and emotional resources they need to advocate for their children and themselves.

VISION

EKC seeks to show people that disability is not to be feared, pitied, or mindlessly exalted, but understood to be an inherent part of life. We will achieve this by establishing and maintaining creative community centers for the disability community.

STRATEGIC VISION

EKC will be the NYC community hub for young disabled people and their crews by expanding equitable opportunities regardless of disability, race, ethnicity, income inequality, or gender identity.

RACIAL EQUITY STATEMENT

EKC believes that every child has the right to play and make art as it holds meaning to them, that every family has the right to accurate information and support, and that every employee has the right to a workplace that embraces a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion. To see our complete statement, go to extremekidsandcrew.org/racial-equity-inclusion.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

We follow in the footsteps of the disability activist and organizers who came before us, who brought forth a simple mantra: Nothing about us without us. We cannot be an effective organization that advocates for our families without centering them in our work and lifting them up as the best representatives for themselves. While it is easy to fall into the trap of paternalism and condescension, we strive to set ourselves apart by serving as the connective tissue between our families – merely a conduit for the collective power that they wield.



LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I have been spending a lot of time thinking about what Extreme Kids & Crew means to me. I see it as a vibrant, eclectic, inclusive, irreverent Space to Be. We at EKC suffer no fools, even while we're being foolish. We love to play, laugh and cry. OK, maybe we don't love to cry, but it happens sometimes—and I've never been part of an organization that so willingly holds me up when I feel I cannot get up on my own.

I am incredibly thankful to Eliza Factor, our founder, for starting something I didn't have the wherewithal to start myself, and for giving me the opportunity to run with this beautiful idea. I'm thankful for the Powerful Parents group for always being supportive and real. I'm thankful for EKC's staff for always having a sense of humor and kindness, and for being willing to take chances and try new things. I'm thankful for our board of directors and our many individual and institutional donors for being incredibly supportive. More than anything, I am thankful for the many participants that join us every day and have helped create what EKC is today. I'm humbled by the many people working behind the scenes—and by all of the kids, teens, and caregivers who have jumped in to make EKC their own.

Over the last 11 years, I've had the absolute pleasure of watching the kids at EKC become teens, and of working with their Crew to fight for their rights. I have been honored to share laughter—like seriously deep belly laughter—with program participants who have become dear friends, and with caregivers who have supported their kids and one another through times we could have not imagined only a few short years ago.

Through 2020 and 2021, we found ourselves deep in the pandemic. While it was scary and unnerving, I am incredibly proud of what we were able to accomplish.

While overall participation numbers declined due to the COVID-19 pandemic and our resulting departure from our Red Hook Brooklyn, South Bronx and Ridgewood spaces, we increased our impact on the young people attending by placing greater emphasis on their social-emotional growth.

Prior to the pandemic, much of our work was centered on unstructured, drop-in programming, which made it difficult to track social-emotional growth among participants due to less consistent week-to-week attendance by families. Adjusting our model has centered cohorts of young people, allowing them to get to know one another over time, and grow both as individuals and a peer community. Social-emotional gains were significant, as evidenced by the outcome data compiled with our evaluation partner, SEED Impact.

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In 2021, we grew our teens and after-school programming, offering online and in-person social groups. Clubs afford participants the opportunity to immerse themselves in an activity that interests them and further develop their social skills, on their terms, in a supportive, strength-based, human-centered environment. Clubs have been a huge hit and continue to grow and expand, along with participants' interests.

We tiptoed back into in-person programming in the summer of 2021, with a series of a park and playground get-togethers, from Brooklyn to the Bronx, and by fall we were welcomed back into PS 15 to facilitate our beloved, in-person Extreme After School program.

In sum, we have used these rapidly changing, uncertain times to engage deeply with our core constituents, and we have offered new programs to meet their needs with stability and creativity.

We have your backs. Thanks for having ours. Keep laughing, playing, making art in any way that holds meaning for you. Never, ever stop hollering at all those who need to hear us.

Thank you, Crew, thank you. Onward we go. In love and light, we persevere!

Warmly,



Caitlin M. Cassaro, Executive Director



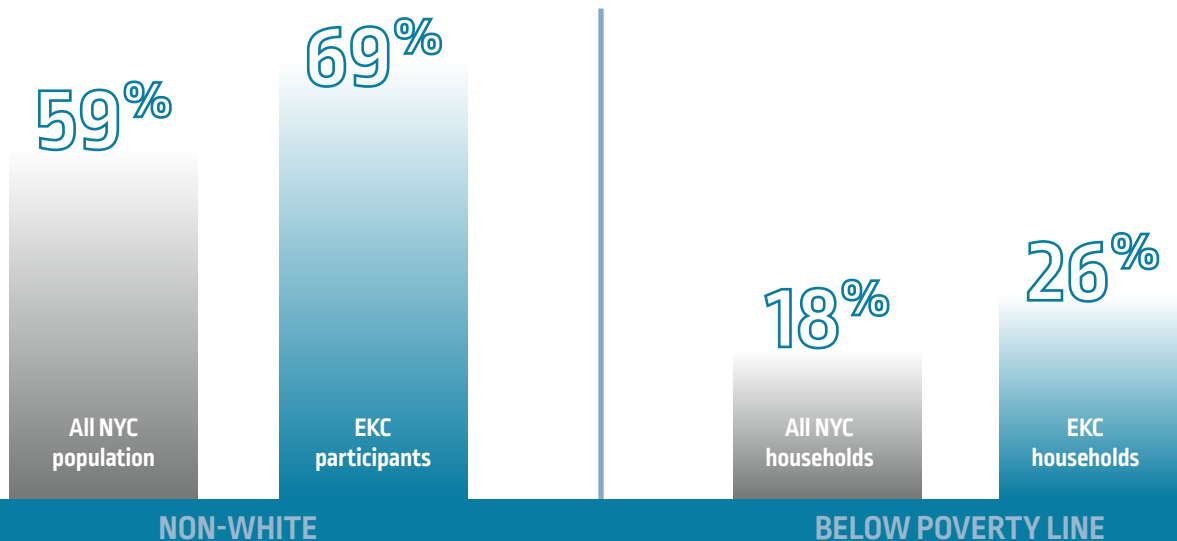


WHO WE SERVE

EKC serves a racially and economically diverse community, as shown below in 2021:

- 69 percent of our participants were non-white, compared with 59 percent citywide.
- 26 percent of our households were living below the poverty line, compared with 18 percent citywide.

TOTAL 2021 PARTICIPANTS SERVED: 250



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 Extreme Kids impact.

Our Extreme Kids team began by clarifying a shared vision for each of our outcome targets:

- **Out-of-School Time Youth:** Disabled young people feel heard and valued as members of their schools, and communities.
- **Youth Club Participants:** Lifelong friendships are forged, as well as growing confidence to navigate social situations at school, at work, and in the community.
- **Family Event Participants:** 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.

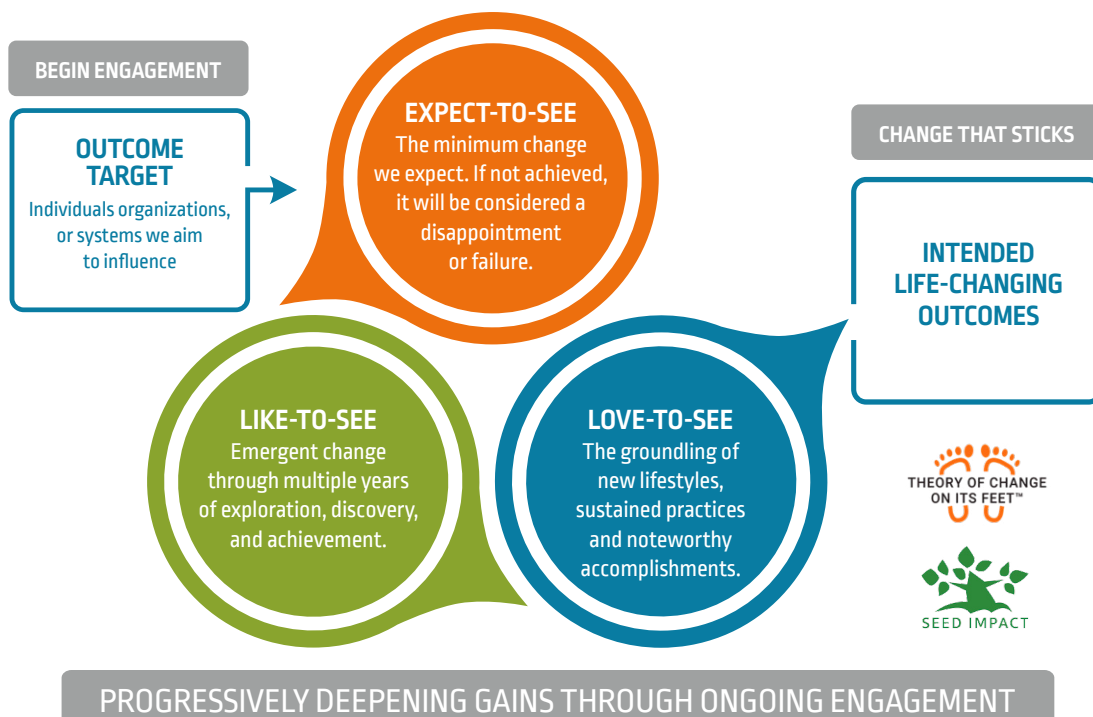
We then translated these impact statements into operational results measures. For each outcome target, clear criteria were set to indicate three progressive stages of participant achievement (from Expect-to-See to Like-to-See to Love-to-See). Encouraging more participants to advance through these stages, year to year, greatly increases the likelihood that our long-range, life-changing, and systems-changing outcomes can be attained.

OUTCOME TARGETS

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1. Out-of-School Time Youth
2. Youth Club Participants
3. Family Event Participants
4. Powerful Parents

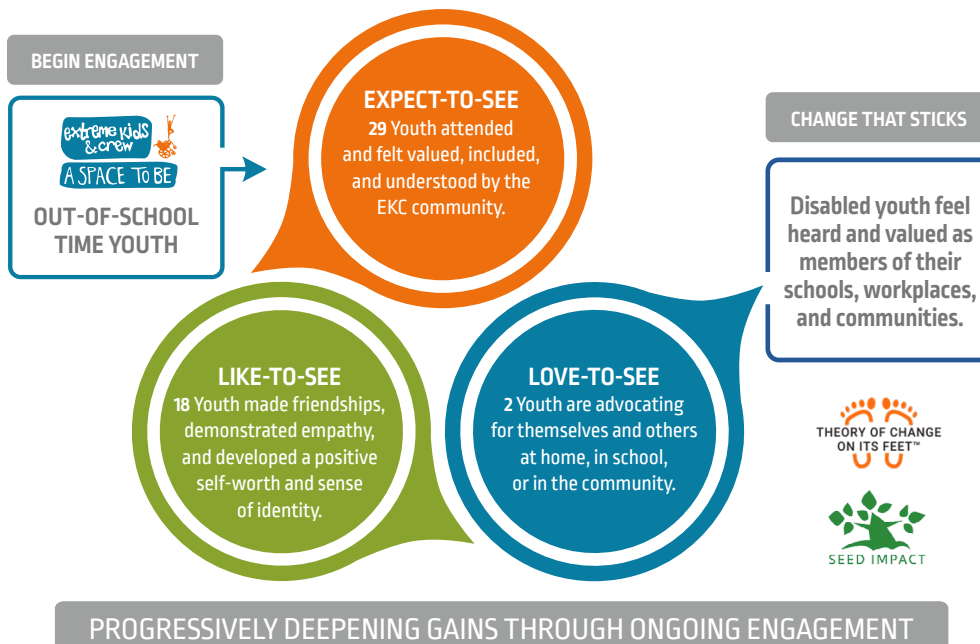
THEORY OF CHANGE ON ITS FEET™ MODEL



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 OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME YOUTH

After-School and summer camp with Extreme Kids & Crew is an arts and play program for children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), age six and up. Activities are built on a foundation of creative expression, imaginative play, and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). Participants make friends, build confidence in their abilities, and have fun.



“
Before Extreme Kids and Crew, my son was terribly shy and didn't make efforts to create friendships. This program really helped with his social skills, and he now has two close friends from school that he frequently texts and occasionally goes to the park with after school. I am forever grateful to you and your team and the overall program. I can't thank you enough!

– EKC Parent

Forty-nine youth participated in out-of-school time and summer programming in 2021. Of these, 20 youth (41 percent) were observed by staff to be making significant gains during the year. As examples:

Our Math Whiz. Kevin has been with Extreme Kids for many years. Throughout 2021, he continued to share a deep sense of belonging to Extreme Kids and even declared that he would “work as an Extreme Kids teacher when he’s a grown-up.” He is very into math and constantly explains equations to other students. He has formed many friendships and, while he has his ups and down with some participants, he is the most requested to join in games and groups. He is also a confident self-advocate and proud of his Chinese heritage.

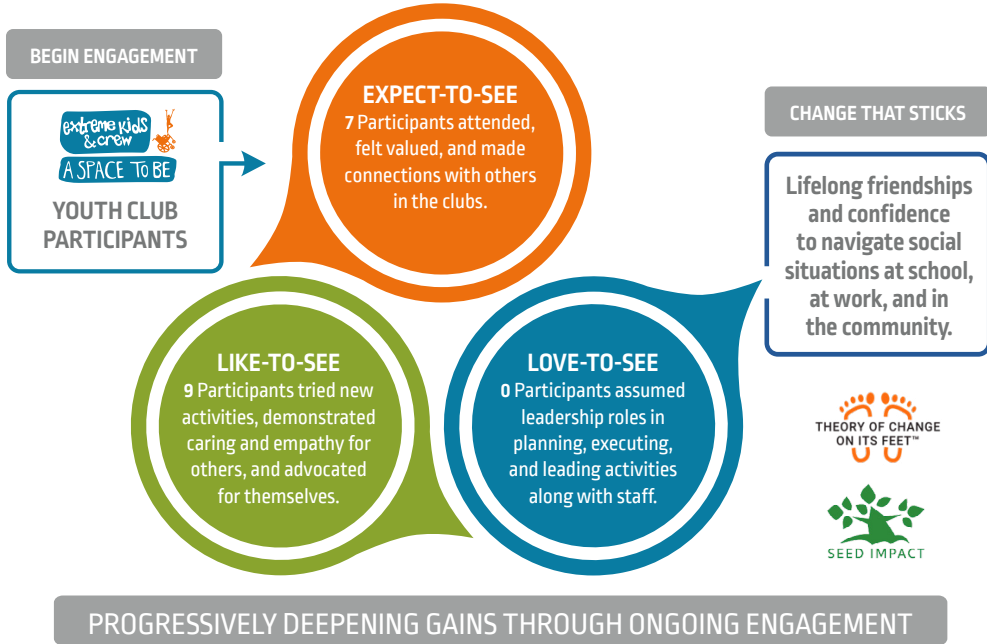
Ready to Help Others. Giselle was happy to come every day and freely shared things that happened in her life with the Extreme Kids staff. She exhibited pride in her art and other accomplishments. Additionally, Giselle has a strong sense of right and wrong and doesn’t let others dictate that for her. She began to form friendships with her peers during the year and often invited others to play with her. Giselle demonstrated being a great advocate for both herself and others in after-school. She made sure her voice was heard, and when others needed assistance, she would help.

Enforcing the Chat Space. Riley became increasingly confident during virtual after-school in sharing his artwork and communicating verbally. He displayed many moments where he celebrated another participant’s success, reflecting growth in empathy and friendship building. He expressed appreciation for other participants’ work via the Zoom chat, and even served as an enforcer of the chat space by requesting participants to stop “chat spamming.”

Empathy for Others. Joe was with us for both virtual after-school and virtual summer school. He exhibited acceptance, compassion, and belonging in Extreme Kids by asking staff how they were every time he logged on. Joe really enjoyed displaying and talking about his artwork. He experimented with using the chat and emoji signals to celebrate other kids’ work with a heart or thumbs up. His improvement in these social-emotional areas was consistent throughout the year.

2 YOUTH CLUB PARTICIPANTS

Extreme Kids Clubs are online and in-person social groups. Participants enjoy exploring their special interests with like-minded peers. They immerse themselves in an activity that interests them, make new friends, and receive the benefits of social/emotional learning.



“
My son rarely asks about activities, and the fact that he has asked a couple times about the gaming crew means a lot.
– EKC Parent

In 2021, our inaugural Clubs year, Extreme Kids offered multi-week clubs in art, music, improvisation, gaming, and teen bonding. Sixteen young people were frequent participants, of whom nine (56 percent) were most engaged. As examples:

The Power of Gaming. Ian was with us in virtual after-school in 2021 and began attending Gaming Crew in the fall. Compared to the previous year, Ian showed far more confidence in his ability to connect with other participants. Ian would usually ask other participants or staff questions about their game experiences, and he would often volunteer things that he enjoyed about the game. These were illustrative of behaviors that Ian did not display with his peers in virtual summer school or other program activities.

Growing Independence. Adam attended both Music Crew and Improv Crew in 2021. Earlier in the year, most of his successful days occurred when a caregiver or teacher was present to help him access materials. However, as the year progressed, Adam was a more active participant during club sessions. He would ask questions related to the topic, engage in the activity, and initiate independent work.

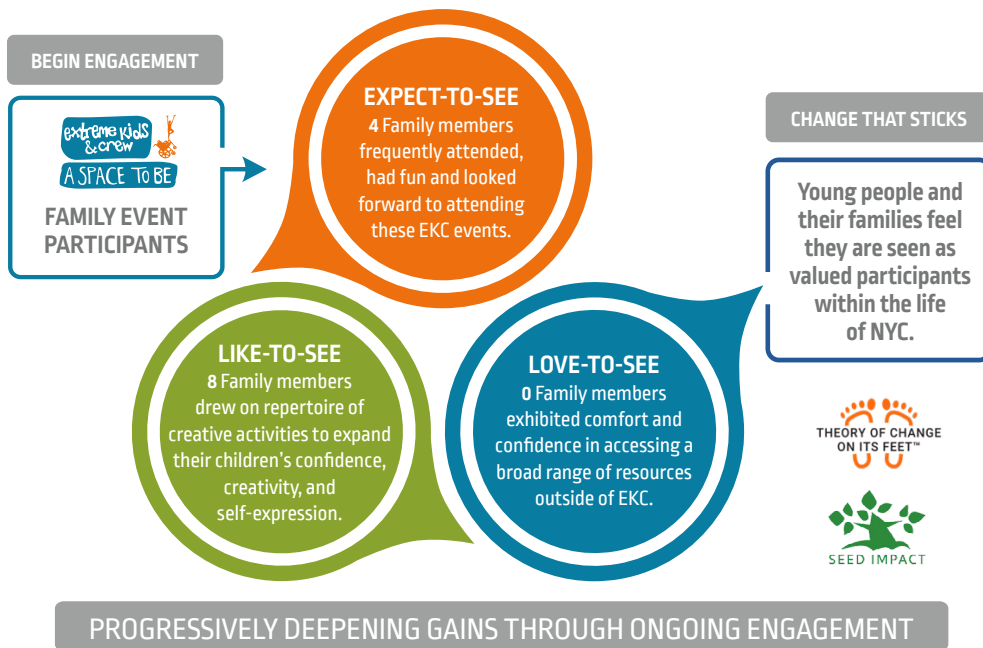
Our Welcome Ambassador. Cooper is a long-time member of Extreme Kids with great empathy and friend-building skills. Throughout 2021, he was our most

consistent attendee in clubs and brought a positive, active presence. He would always log on to the session and say hello to everyone and wish them well, and whenever another participant had to leave early, Cooper would send them a goodbye message. He required less external praise before sharing his artwork, thoughts, and opinions. He was more forthcoming in making requests or sharing his needs with facilitators and peers.

Our Gaming Guru. Ryan’s attendance at Extreme Kids significantly increased when he discovered two clubs that truly captured his interest. First, he enjoyed the opportunities provided through Gaming Crew and Improv to interact with participants closer to his age. As a knowledgeable gamer, he frequently took time to drop a “nugget” of information to the group to allow them to advance with a game. This interaction opened him to more conversations and friendship-building with peers. It led to him extending an invitation to another Gaming Crew member to join in video gameplay outside the program.

3 FAMILY EVENT PARTICIPANTS

Extreme Kids offers special events for neurodiverse young people and their families every season by partnering with other organizations and institutions. Public outings, in-person or virtual, can be daunting for families of children with disabilities due to prevalent ableism — whether well-intentioned or not. We counter this with events where families can have fun and learn new things without judgment, pity, or others trying to “fix” their children.



There were six virtual events in 2021, including movie nights and a costume contest with a total attendance of 119 family members. Twelve family members were the most regular participants, of whom eight (67 percent) were observed by staff to have gained the most through these events. As examples:

Connecting with Peers on Equal Terms. Amanda has become one of our most consistently seen kiddos in all of our programs. She often talks about how much she enjoys being at Extreme Kids, is always engaged, and always seems to have fun. One challenge in 2021 was her inability to connect on equal terms with other participants. A lot of times, she seemed to be demanding things from other participants and giving them unwanted advice. By the end of the year, she had learned to transition these interactions into back-and-forth conversations and questions.

A Model Participant. Sophia is one of our older youth participants. She would primarily attend our virtual events and programs in 2021 and was always engaged and friendly with other participants in the group. Whenever Extreme Kids announced an arts-focused activity, Sophia would invariably participate and serve as a model for the other participants.

Joining in Song. Julian participated in several of our family programs in 2021, together with his twin brother. He always expressed excitement at being in both virtual and in-person programs. Julian would shy away from activities that didn't resonate with him in the past. This year, Julian participated a lot more, interacting with both staff and peers. There was a great moment during one of our first post-pandemic, in-person events when he sang together with a younger participant to make the latter feel more comfortable in the moment.

Turning On His Camera. Fabian attended many of our virtual family programs in 2021. In the past, he was engaged in using the Zoom chat to ask questions and greet staff and other participants. However, he kept his camera off and was a silent observer. Fabian's confidence grew significantly in 2021 as he decided to turn on his camera and show more of himself during Zoom calls.

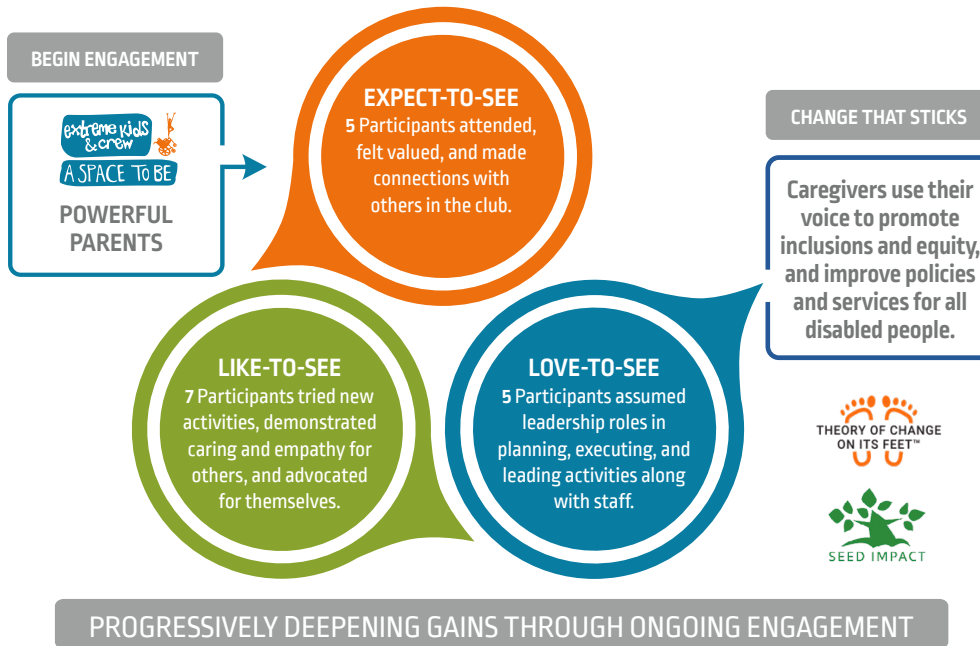
“

What makes Extreme Kids and Crew so unique is seeing how the kids and caregivers react when they come to our programs. The way their faces light up with curiosity and excitement is something I haven't seen in many spaces and organizations I have worked with in the past. That feeling when a child yells, 'I love Extreme Kids!' When a caregiver tells me, 'Thank you for having this space. We have been searching for a space for my child for so long. 'These are just some of the reasons why Extreme Kids & Crew is so special.

*— Christian Peralta,
Program Manager*

4 POWERFUL PARENTS

This virtual get-together is a weekly advocacy coaching and support group designed to provide a supportive space for caregivers raising and loving neurodiverse children and teens in a complicated world. Participants decided on topics which have included: understanding and working with “difficult” behaviors, COVID-19 resources and support, IEP meeting planning, and living at the intersection of race and disability.



“
Over the last 10 years they have provided our family with friendship and a non-judgmental space to play and create. They are a trusted provider of resources and have inspired and fostered pride in my son’s disabled identities.

My work as board chair is very important to me because I know first-hand what EKC offers to families throughout NYC.

– Vanessa Connelly,
Board Chair

Extreme Kids & Crew’s Executive Director, Caitlin Cassaro, facilitated the Powerful Parents group. In 2021, 17 women attended at least a few sessions, of whom 12 (70 percent) were most actively engaged. Feedback received:

Venting without Judgment. “I used to take my son to Extreme Kids. While he was playing, all the parents would gather to vent. After COVID, we started meeting via Zoom, and this group has helped me so much, especially during COVID. Caitlin is a great host and is very patient. We use this platform to be very open to vent without any judgment. We give each other support, ideas, and suggestions on coping with the challenges we are facing with our special needs child. I am so happy to have this amazing circle of support.”

Sharing our Highs and Lows. “Like everything I’ve experienced with Extreme Kids, Powerful Parents strikes a magical balance between setting a lovely tone, imposing a bit of structure, and leaving a wide-open space for all kinds of personalities/ ideas/ stories to shine. Whatever happens each week—and it varies—I’m grateful to be with an accepting, listening, empathizing group that understands the amazing highs and the very, very lows of raising our extraordinary kids.”

Feeling Seen and Heard. “I love Powerful Parents because it is a fundamentally kind space, and because it is real and the other parents have been there/done that and are always willing to share their wisdom and experience, or just help you hold yours. That helps a lot. I would always leave a session feeling seen and like the challenges were just a little bit more manageable.”

An Invaluable Resource. “Extreme Kids & Crew’s Powerful Parents group has been an amazing source of support since I joined virtually at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. As a mother of three sons with Autism Spectrum Disorder (who all enjoy the Extreme Kids programming for kids!), this weekly meet-up has been something I truly look forward to. I have formed new friendships, and learned about different special needs resources, and it’s been a great platform for exchanging ideas with the other families. This safe space has been a place where I have been uplifted, encouraged, and supported in so many ways.”

FELIX AWARDS 2021 RECIPIENTS

CONGRATULATIONS TO ELIZA AND JASON

The Felix Awards honor artists, writers, thinkers, dancers, actors, and other individuals in the arts who have helped move public perception of disability away from fear, loathing, or mindless admiration, and toward a more nuanced grasp of the multiplicity of being and the diversity of experience. [Enjoy this video](#) about the Extreme Kids award in 2021.

Eliza is a novelist, memoirist, and founder of Extreme Kids & Crew. Eliza dreamt up the idea for Extreme Kids with the intention of creating space for children with all sorts of disabilities to be who they are, and for families to connect with each other and their children.

Jason is a tax lawyer, partner at Cleary Gottlieb, and husband to Eliza. Jason is a wonderful father to their three kids and a tirelessly generous and brilliant advisor.

Currently they are developing Lonely Worm Farm, an inclusive arts and agriculture program in the Hudson Valley.





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

Jeremy Abarno Consulting

Emily Antoniadis, Senior Grant
Writer & Fundraising Consultant

Bank of India

Blondie's Treehouse

Brooklyn Community Foundation

Brooklyn Conservatory of Music

The Caruso Foundation

Principal Julie Cavanagh and our
PS 15 Family

Compass

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Family Foundation

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SMPS Family Fund

South Wind Foundation

Spark Youth NYC

Two Trees

Van Brunt Stillhouse

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

Walentas Foundation

The Warburg Pincus Foundation

Youth INC

**AND ALL THE AMAZING INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE DONATED THEIR TIME AND MONEY TO KEEP
EXTREME KIDS & CREW GOING STRONG.**

OUR STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS

2021 STAFF

Alex Bazeley, Communications Manager

Diana Baron-Moore, Head Teacher

Caitlin M. Cassaro, Executive Director

Sony Dueñas, Administrative Coordinator

Kali Greenberg, Program Coordinator

Christopher Lares, Part-time Program Facilitator

Nicole Nicholson, Director of Program Operations

Christian Peralta, Program Manager

Sherri Poall, Part-time Program Facilitator

Leigh Reid, Sr. Director of Communications & Development

Michelle Secunda, Out-of-School Time Manager

2021 BOARD MEMBERS

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

Vanessa Connelly - (Board President), Real Estate Salesperson at Corcoran

Edinardo 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

Jen Sellar - (Vice Chair), Board Vice President & Secretary, Digital Assets Manager, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)

Sara Shouse - Attorney, Sidley Austin LLP

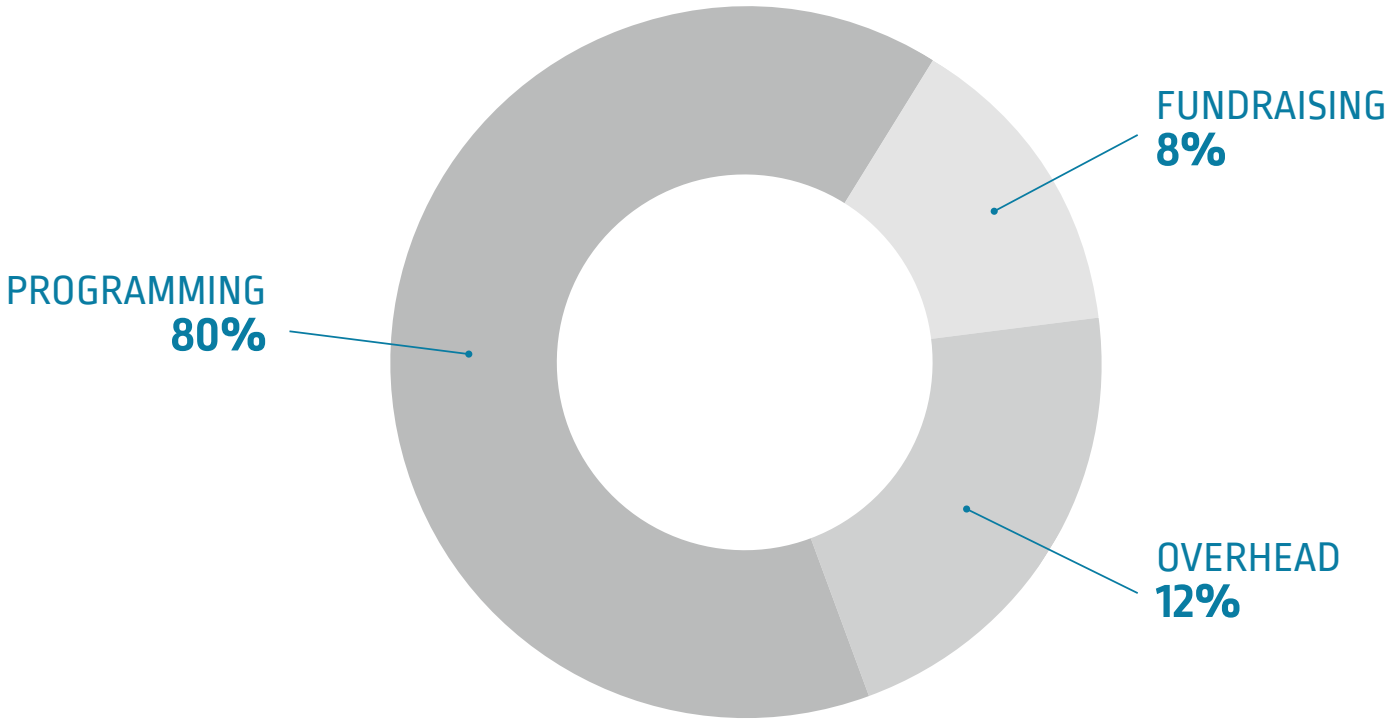
Amy Stone - VP, Shared Services Analytics at AccentCare, Inc.

Kelly Symons — SVP, Data Management & Governance, Mastercard

FINANCIALS

2021 EXPENDITURES

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



Total Assets**\$441,476**
Total Liabilities**\$22,159**
Total Net Assets**\$419,315**

Total Revenue**\$619,148**
Total Expenses**\$640,644**
Change in Net Assets.....**(\$21,496)**



I want to say that Extreme Kids and Crew is a really good place, because it allows kids who have disabilities like me and Summer, who knows so much about so many things, and I enjoy being around him. It also allows kids to express themselves and to have fun!

– Teen Participant



“ *Extreme Kids and Crew did exactly what it was set to do, provide support to a family like us, who were experiencing stress in the face of loss when we first had our son's diagnosis of autism. We have been participating with Extreme Kids and Crew since my son was three years-old, now he is thirteen. This organization has been a safe haven -with a sensory gym and programming for the full family. I especially appreciate the perspective of creating community and supporting one another.*

Now I'm part of the Board of Directors, in this capacity, I feel empowered to speak up, shake the fear or shame and face it all. I've learned with Extreme Kids and Crew that being Extreme is worth being proud of!!

– EKC Board Member

“ *It's been a great experience. I know that when I go to the space, I know it will improve my social skills. I know that If I have any trouble with anything, I know there are people I trust that will be able to help me.*

– Teen Participant



“ *It is a wonderfully fulfilling experience serving on the Extreme Kids & Crew board. Fellow board members are engaging, supportive and collaborative. As for EKC, I'm the parent of children with special needs and I personally know the importance and hurdles with feeling included and welcomed. EKC is doing a phenomenal job bringing in person and virtual programming to young people, establishing a true sense of belonging and celebrating our crew as they are.*

– EKC Board Member



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