

"Breakthrough": A Collaborative Community Mural, Created by Artist Makayla Binter & Local Students.



the arts empowerment project

2025

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Report

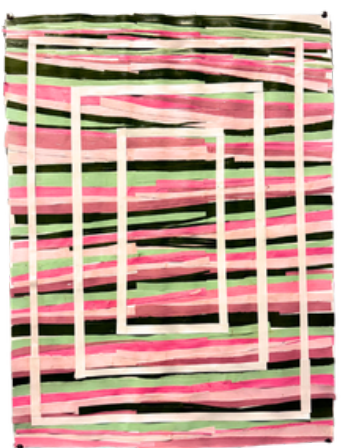


Image: Student Artwork from the 2025 Arts Residency Gallery.

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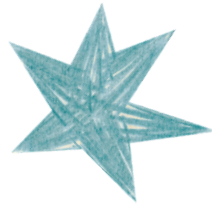
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LETTER FROM OUR FOUNDER

Dear Friends and Supporters:

As we continue to grow and strengthen our organization, we are reminded each day of what matters most—the young people we serve and their need to feel connected, hopeful, inspired, and secure. Because of your generosity and belief in our mission, we are able to provide meaningful programs, workshops, and outreach experiences that nurture creativity and build confidence. Every smile, every breakthrough moment, and every meaningful connection is a direct reflection of your investment in our work and in our youth.

I am proud to share that since we launched our pilot program with 25 students in 2014, your investment in our organization has led to our ability to impact the lives of over 4,000 children and teens, providing them with the resources and experiences they need to remain engaged, hopeful, and resilient as they look to build a brighter tomorrow. Last year, over 986 individual students enjoyed over 5,563 hours of program classes, with over 373 students enrolled in our flagship programs and over 613 students engaged through our outreach programs.

The philosophy that the arts are an essential tool to build life skills and bring resilience to our youth is and will continue to be the driving force behind The Arts Empowerment Project's core mission. With support from donors, volunteers, and friends like you, The Arts Empowerment Project will continue prioritizing the participation of our community's most vulnerable children in transformative arts experiences designed to heal, inspire, and provide positive self-expression, social-emotional learning, and access to new opportunities.

As we look ahead, we do so with deep gratitude and renewed purpose. Because of you, we are not only sustaining our programs—we are expanding our reach and deepening our impact. Thank you for standing with us, for believing in our mission, and for investing in the potential of every child we serve. Together, we are creating brighter futures—one child, one experience, and one moment of inspiration at a time.

Gratefully yours,

Natalie Frazier Allen, J.D.
Founder | CEO

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

WHAT WE DO

The Arts Empowerment Project offers high-quality arts programming and social emotional development for at-risk children facing adversity. The programs integrate art instruction with life-skills development including communication, self-esteem, decision making, and more.

WHY IT MATTERS

Participation in arts and positive pro-social activities has been shown to contribute to academic achievement and to mitigate the effects of childhood trauma, as demonstrated by an independent study of TAEP's pilot program by the UNC-Charlotte School of Social Work.



Images: Community Mural At Facts & Snacks: Exploring The Art Of Healing 2025.

3x

Students with access to the arts in high school are **THREE TIMES** more likely to earn a bachelor's degree than students without arts experience (17% vs. 5%)

4x

Students with weekly exposure to the arts are **FOUR TIMES** more likely to be recognized in school for academic achievement

5x

Students with little or no arts education are **FIVE TIMES** more likely to drop out of high school than students with high arts involvement

2025
IMPACT
BY THE
NUMBERS

986

STUDENTS
SERVED



5,563

Total Student
Contact Hours



1,469

Cumulative
Student Attendance



184

Total
Sessions



106

Total
Volunteers



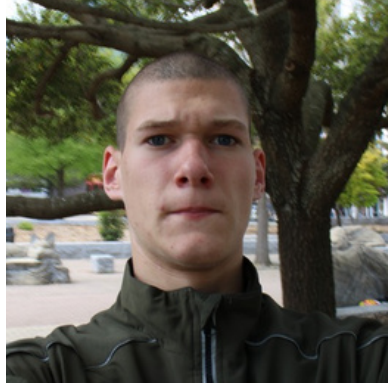
26

Community
Partners



37

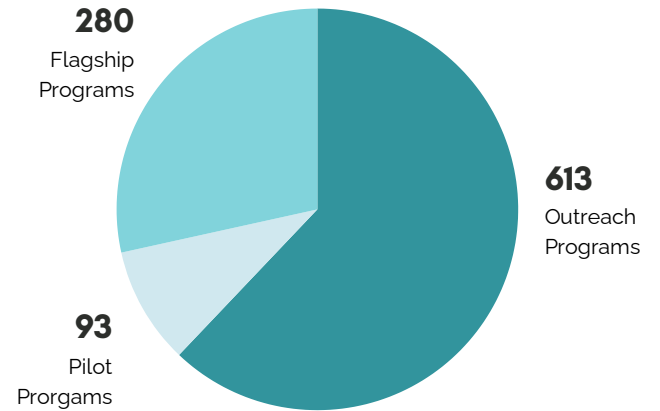
Program
Facilitators



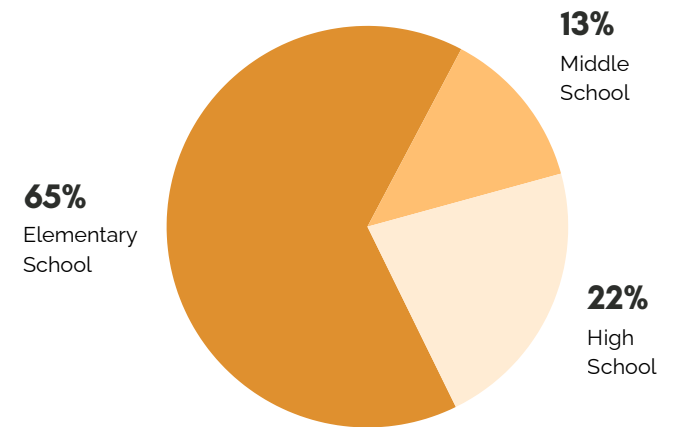
986 Students Served Breakdown



By All Programs & Outreach



By Grade Level



OVERVIEW

“Our programs are designed to build a community that gives every child arts experiences that broaden horizons, foster resilience, and build essential life skills.”



PROGRAMS

Grades 3 - 12 (Pilot Program)

Arts Residency

A youth residency program that provides mentorship and classes with professional artists. Participants develop essential skills for various artistic careers. It covers interests in visual, digital, and performing arts, culminating in a group exhibit of participants' works.

Grades 6 - 12

Culinary Arts

Led by professional chefs, this camp teaches court-involved teens about healthy eating and cooking skills. Participants explore career opportunities in the culinary arts.

Grades 6 - 12

Encounters: Life Skills

This program promotes positive choices, self-awareness, and character development through art-making and discussions led by educators and guest artists.

Grades K - 5

Free Arts

Students develop social and emotional skills through art, with opportunities to learn from local artists.

Grades 6 - 12

Promoting Peace + Justice (PP+J)

At-risk teens come together with local law enforcement to challenge stereotypes, discuss community violence and promote social justice through collaborative art.

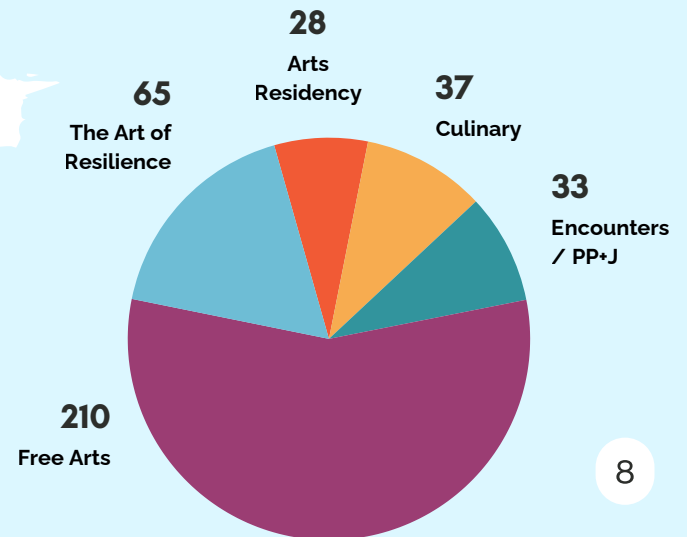
Grades 6 - 12 (Pilot Program)

The Art of Resilience

Evidence based substance abuse prevention and resilience development program through the arts and workshops led by trained health educators.

373

Students Served By Program



OUTREACH

For Grades K - 12

Arts Access

This initiative connects youth to meaningful arts experiences through tuition sponsorship for various activities. Participants engage with multiple arts organizations for interactive learning.

Art Vocation Artist & Career Fair

This event immerses students in creativity and exploration by showcasing a diverse range of artists and entrepreneurs. Activities will encourage students to discover various creative fields and gain inspiration for their future endeavors.

Facts & Snacks: Exploring the Art of Healing

For this special TAEP Event, we align ourselves with National Childhood Abuse Prevention Month (April) along with the Charlotte SHOUT festival to spread awareness through dialogue, performances and valuable statistics.

HeART Packs

HeART Packs provides at-risk children with art care packages that include supplies and snacks, fostering creativity and positive self-expression.

Mural Project

The “Breakthrough” mural is a collaborative community project, Created by Artist Makayla Binter & Local Students. The mural celebrates mental health, hope, and resilience. This project was in partnership with the SOC Collaborative of Mecklenburg, TYM, Alliance Health and the West Charlotte Rec Center.

Other Outreach Initiatives In Community Partnerships

- Freedom Fighting Missionaries
- Thompson Child & Family (TC&F) Gratitude Festival
- YWCA Block Party

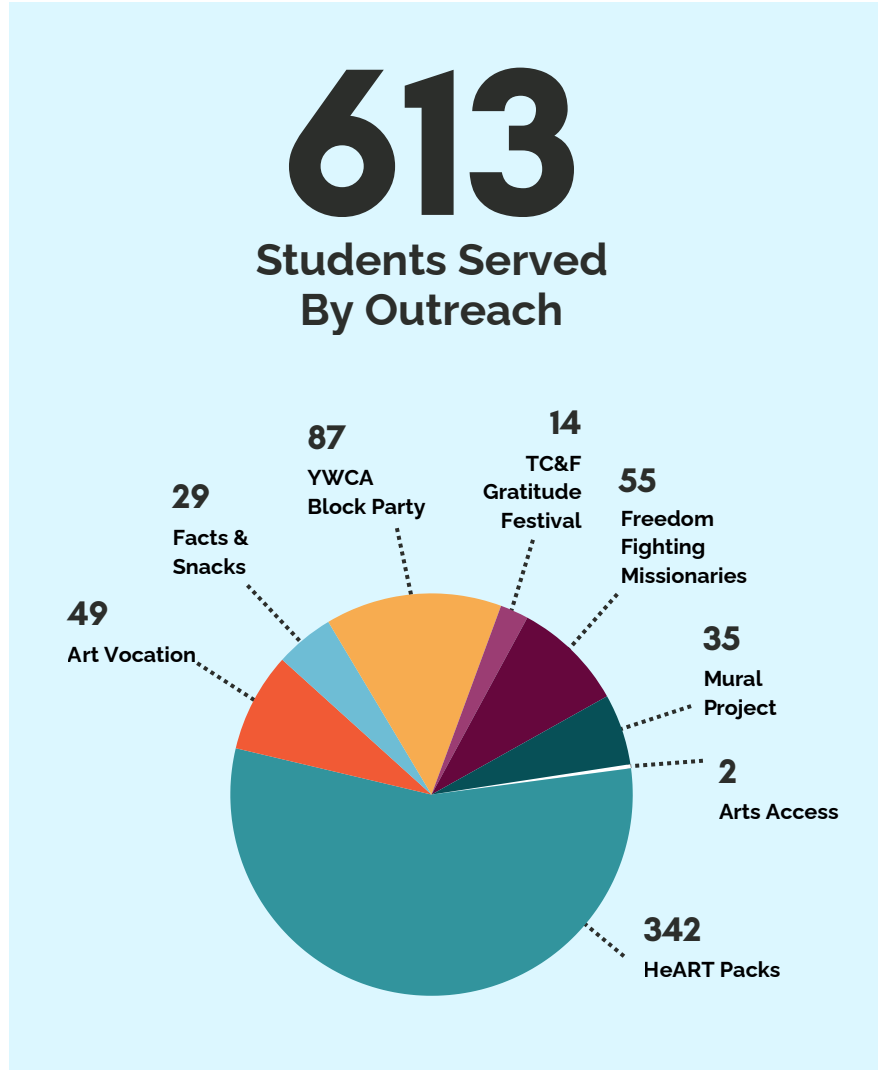


Image 1: HeART Packs

Image 2,3: “Breakthrough”: A Collaborative Community Mural, Created by Artist Makayla Binter & Local Students.



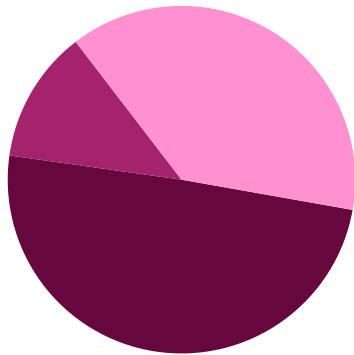
2025

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Total Expenses

\$362,381

\$44,762
Fundraising Expenses



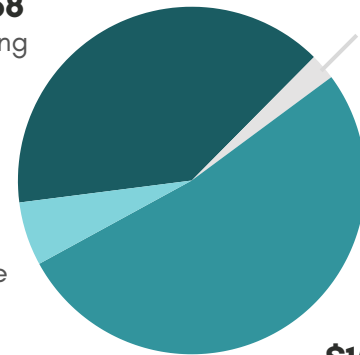
\$138,453
Program Expenses

\$179,166
General Expenses

Total Revenue

\$354,709

\$148,268
Fundraising

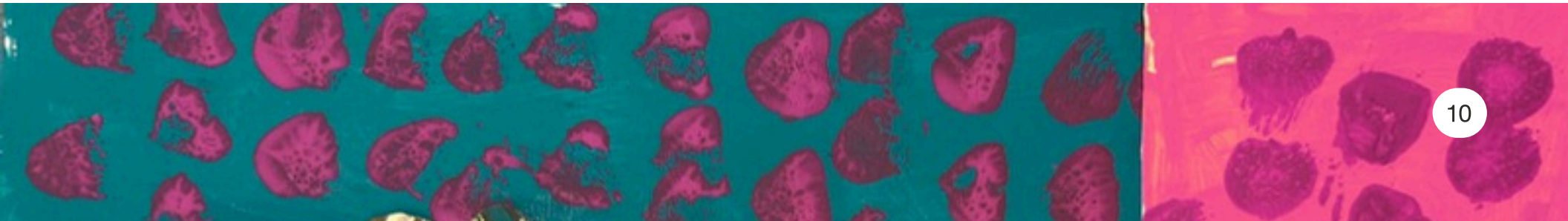


\$47,065
Contributions

\$2,324
Other Revenue

\$157,052
Grants

***\$7,673**



2025

SHINE FUNDRAISER

NYLA GARDNER

NORTH WEST SCHOOL OF THE ARTS STUDENT
NEW AMERICAN IDOL CONTESTANT



The performing and visual arts continue to serve as a powerful pathway for at-risk youth to stay connected and discover inspiration, hope, and healing during unprecedented challenges. Through creative expression, our students are invited to “let the light in”—awakening possibility and illuminating their inner strength. As they nurture creativity, they shine more brightly, growing in confidence, building resilience, and becoming beacons of hope in their communities. Our philosophy that the arts are an essential tool for building life skills and strengthening resilience remains the driving force behind our mission. Our Annual SHINE Fundraiser allows us to continue our commitment to the children we serve while recognizing those dedicated to expanding opportunities for youth and families across the Charlotte area. Thanks to the generous support of our donors and sponsors in 2025, we raised over \$148k. We are grateful to everyone who helped make this sold-out event a success.

Raised over

\$148k

in contributions

“LET
THE
LIGHT
IN”

Shine

FUNDRAISER

10·1·25

HOST COMMITTEE

Kobi and Ron Brinson
 Katie and Michael Caldwell
 Nina and James Jackson
 Helen and Marcus Kimbrough
 Adrienne and Bruce McDonald
 Kaitlin Powers and Michael Coletta
 Charlotte and John Wickham
 Carolyn Zimmerman and Tom McGinnis

Thank You



Shine

2025 EVENT

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Kaitlin Powers & Michael Coletta



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Jennifer and William Davis-Martin

Joseph Penna

Bridget Long & Joe Chuba



OUR TEAM

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Melissa Vrana
Carolyn Zimmerman

2025 STAFF

Natalie Frazier Allen - Founder & CEO
Crystal Durham - Program Coordinator
Ava Powchak - Interim, Program Coordinator
Brenda Ramos - Graphic Designer, Arts and Outreach Facilitator

2025 INTERNS

Aniya Holloman
Emily Iley
Terrique Morris



Image: YWCA Student Artwork from the Free Arts Program, 2025.



the arts empowerment project

COMMUNITY **IMPACT** REPORT

CULTUREBLOCKS

FOUNDATION FOR
THE CAROLINAS

FOUNDATION FOR
Black Philanthropy



a community partnership with



CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG
LIBRARY



North
Carolina
Arts
Council
*Fifty years
of leadership*



SOCIAL VENTURE
PARTNERS
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for the **ARTS**
arts.gov

Funding provided, in part, by the ASC Culture Blocks.

Funding also provided, in part, by a grant from South Arts in partnership with the National Endowment For The Arts.



theartsempowermentproject.org

Headquarters located at VAPA | 700 N. Tryon St, Charlotte, NC



SCAN THE QR CODE
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