



Ruckus
Roots

IMPACT REPORT

2020



WWW.RUCKUSROOTS.ORG

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"I appreciate RuckusRoots!

Thanks for not giving up on us and bringing some light during this difficult time!"

*-Mike Goldstein, Principal
Eucalyptus Elementary School*

Dear Ruckus-Raiser,

2020 was a year we will not soon forget. Globally, it produced challenges unlike any we've seen before. As a nation, it brought us together and then it tore us apart. In our cities, our communities, our families and even our individual households, we experienced loss, fear, exhaustion and division.

What can we do in times like these? We can do our best. Sometimes our best is putting on pants. For a while in 2020, that's where the bar resided for a lot of us. Eventually though, and especially when your community needs you, it's time to pivot, adapt and move forward -hopefully with pants on. I can proudly say that's what RuckusRoots accomplished this year. We kept going in a way that ensured our programs were accessible to as many people as possible during an unprecedented global pandemic. I'm grateful for your support in helping us through this year, and for all we learned along the way.

One of the biggest lessons we took to heart from 2020 is *intersectionality*. This year showed us in no uncertain terms the connections that exists between racial, social, environmental and economic justice –and it became clear that our work lies at the intersection of these issues. Like legs on a table, when one is broken, the stability of the whole suffers. Grassroots efforts to empower vulnerable communities is how we can strengthen all four legs of that table.

From no-contact art supply deliveries to families in need, to creating a whole new online category of programming, we worked hard to continue to support our communities through art and sustainability this year. Most importantly, 2020 highlighted the essential need for inclusion of, co-creation with, and equity for BIPOC communities. We have learned many lessons about how to maintain equity despite geographic, economic, and other barriers to participation - and have made significant changes internally and externally to ensure representation, inclusion and access.

Small arts organizations like ours are essential for filling in the cracks that larger organizations often miss. We can be the most adept at providing programming where it is overlooked and needed most. In 2020, despite the challenges, we had 714 direct participants in our programs, reached 452 youth and our total audience was over 2,000 people! Most of our constituents are from communities like South and East Los Angeles and are likely not engaged in other, larger arts programs throughout the city. We believe that the more we can reach these vulnerable citizens with creative, quality arts experiences, the more empowered our communities will be. We believe that work like ours is essential for creating and maintaining a diverse and equitable vision of Los Angeles. Thank you for believing with us.



Christine Spehar
Executive Director



Mission Statement:

RuckusRoots is a Los Angeles-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that believes art plays a crucial role in fostering social, economic and environmental justice. Our mission is to grow stronger, more equitable communities by co-creating artistic opportunities with underrepresented Los Angeles residents. Through collaborative programs and online offerings, we strive to uncover and confront challenges facing communities through creativity, connection and engagement.



OUR PLEDGE:
Intersectional Sustainability

We will stand with communities of color in order to protect the Planet and all living beings on it.

We will not ignore the connections that exist between environmentalism and social justice.

We will work to use our privilege to advocate for communities of color in spaces where these connections are lacking, ignored or silenced.

We will proactively continue to learn about the relationship between eco and social injustices that communities of color face without minimizing, degrading or generalizing.

We will respect the boundaries of our BIPOC friends and allies with consideration for their emotional labor.

We will openly share our learnings and knowledge with others in our community and our field.

We will take proactive steps within our organization to amplify the voices of those in the BIPOC community.



We are constantly deepening our understanding of the connections that exist between sustainability, creativity, race, economics, gender and place-based justice. This year, we ensured our governance documents and practices reflect this commitment, with a revised Mission Statement, a Pledge to Intersectional Sustainability and a revised Statement of Cultural Equity and Inclusion, which you can view at ruckusroots.org/goals.

LEADERSHIP



Executive Director: Christine Spehar

Programs Director: Allegra Bick-Maurischat

TEACHING ARTISTS:

- Robin Banks
- Allegra Bick-Maurischat
- Teresa Flores
- Julio Muñoz
- Jamia Weir

BOARD:

- NiNo Alicea
- Scott Froschauer
- Tommi Iten
- Danielle Marquez
- Stephanie Spehar

COLLABORATORS:

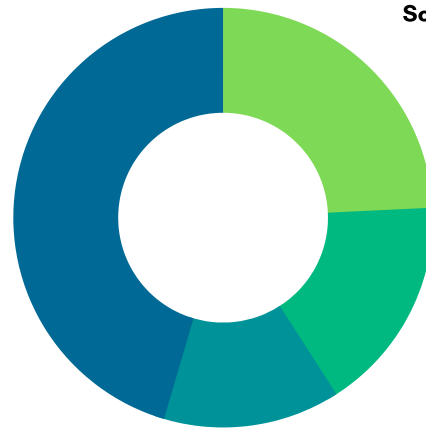
- Teresa Flores
- Scarlett Reyes
- NiNo Alicea
- Mahoganee Amiger
- Rieethaa Dhamne
- Kamilah Sanders
- Isaias Hernandez
- Aura Vasquez



OUR YEAR AT-A-GLANCE



Art Supply Deliveries
45.5%



School Programs
24.2%

Online Community Workshops
16.7%

Online Video Series
13.6%






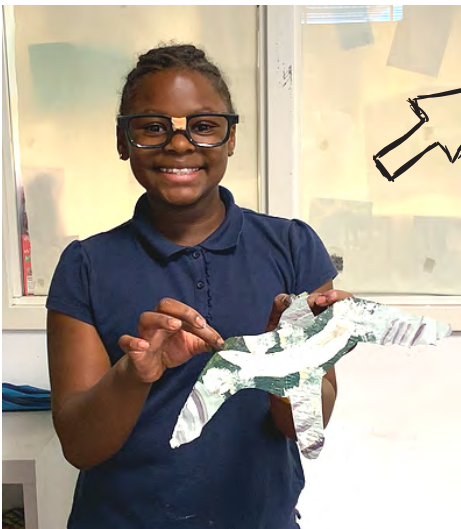
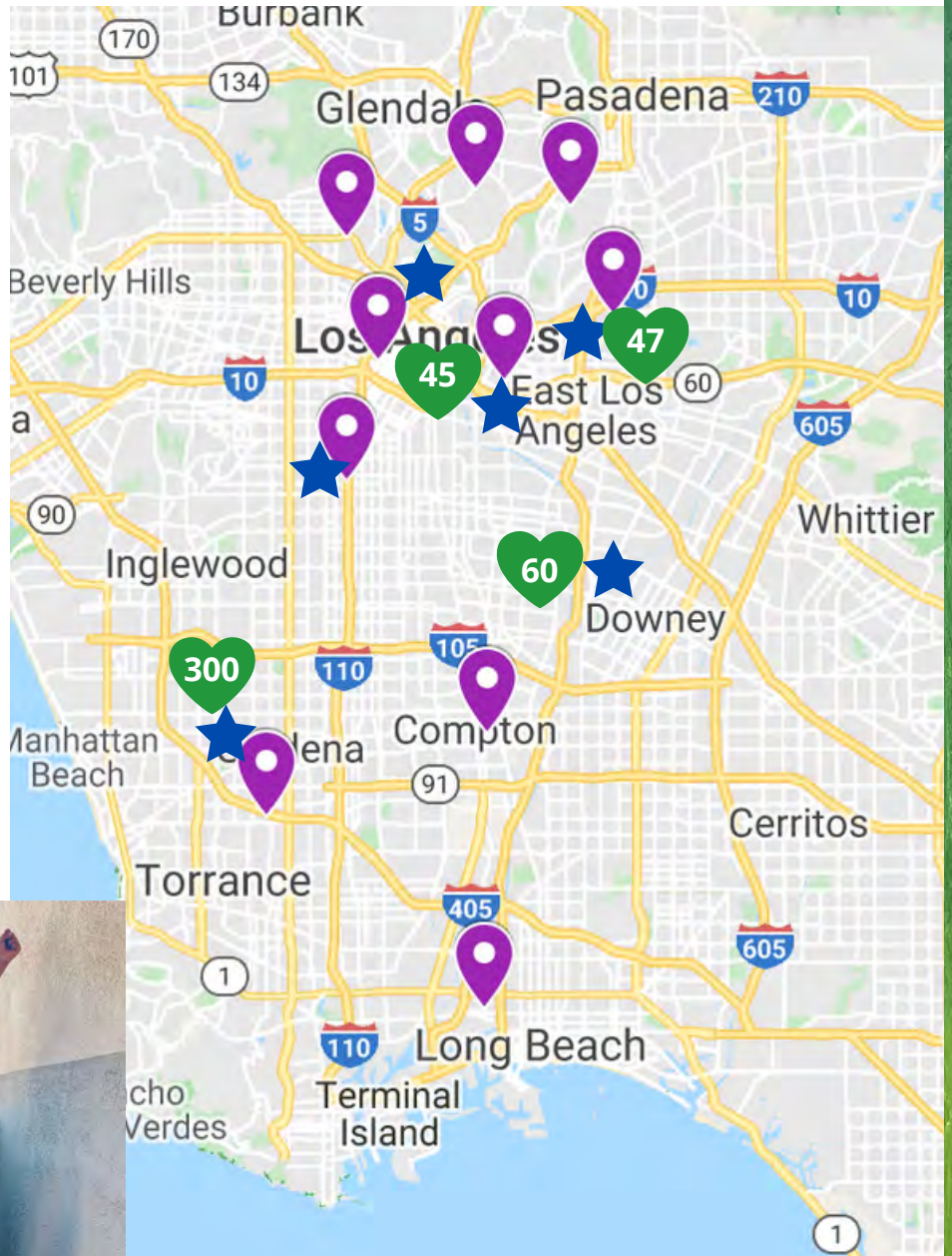
- ✓ We expanded our digital offerings to include live, on-demand, and fully downloadable content.
- ✓ We wrapped up our Wild Art in-school program that reached 150 youth and successfully installed its culminating project - a mural made with over 3,000 repurposed plastic bags.
- ✓ We filmed our first-ever TV series with Hawthorne Community Television.
- ✓ We delivered more than 60 bags stocked with sustainable art supplies to families in need and provided online art workshops to accompany these free supplies.
- ✓ We worked to support, employ and learn from BIPOC artists all over the world and give underrepresented and valuable voices a platform through our channels.

31 In-Person Sessions
39 Online Sessions
452 Youth Impacted
348 Artworks Created
714 Total Participants
2287 Total Audience



WHERE WE WORKED

-  past program sites
-  communities served (2020)
-  # youth served (2020)



Along with the constituents who joined us in Los Angeles, we also reached participants from Northern California, the Midwest, the East Coast and even the U.K.

"I think that RuckusRoots offered us an amazing opportunity to enrich our regular lessons with art and eco-education.

Allowing students a chance to learn art techniques and practice them while simultaneously learning about sustainability offered a chance for them to become stewards of the environment and truly make a difference!"

- *Stephanie, Classroom Teacher
Eucalyptus Elementary School*

COVID-19 RESPONSE

From initiating a brand new sector of online offerings, to reaching new communities far and wide, we were able to effectively pivot and provide valuable programming and resources to our constituents. Many of the communities we serve (South and East Los Angeles) were the hardest-hit by the pandemic, and even in a post-pandemic society, we will strive to continue to provide a diverse array of artistic experiences through this format for these citizens. We learned that in-person programming is invaluable, but also that offering a robust and varied schedule of remote learning options is a wonderful way to expand our reach and give people the flexibility they need to be able to access our work. Even when restrictions on in-person gatherings loosen, we intend

to continue to offer online options for those who would like to attend from home.



Beginning in March of 2020, we expanded our digital offerings to include **live, on-demand, and downloadable content, available on Zoom, Instagram Live, Youtube and our website.**



In an assessment of our efforts to create community and connection through art during the pandemic in low income households, our program participants reported a:

64% increase in feelings of connectivity to their community

73% increase in feeling creatively inspired

and

100% felt connected to their creative project and felt the lessons were valuable





WILD ART

Before shelter-in-place rules took effect in Los Angeles, we were able to squeeze in our in-person Wild Art program with 4th graders at Eucalyptus Elementary School in Hawthorne, CA. Later in the year, we completed a mural build and installation on campus, despite school closures. We look forward to students getting to see the mural once they are able to return.



150 students participated with our Teaching Artist, Julio Muñoz
30 hours of programming received per student.

By combining visual arts skills with sustainability and wildlife education, Wild Art provides young artists with a platform to creatively express themselves, connect to nature in L.A and take an active role in their community. By providing students with a comprehensive introduction to local wildlife and conservation issues, we see this unique program as the first step in forming engaged, creative citizens and stewards of the environment.



3 in 4 students demonstrated an *improved understanding of color theory, painting techniques and design concepts* after participating in our Wild Art program.

100% of classroom teachers agreed that Wild Art *laid the foundation for their students to act as responsible citizens and effective changemakers later in life.*

WILD ART CONT'D

The 4th graders at Eucalyptus Elementary School began working with artist mentor, Julio Muñoz, to learn artistic skills such as color theory, composition and still life drawing. They also received education from wildlife expert and biologist Miguel Ordeñana of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, who taught students about the vast array of wildlife living in Los Angeles, and how their actions can help protect it. The students then combined these lessons by creating their own wildlife-inspired artwork on a sustainable substrate – a canvas made of fused plastic bags. These student-made canvases recycled nearly 3,000 plastic bags, thereby keeping these harmful plastics out of local habitats/landfills. Additionally, each student artwork is an homage to one of four threatened local species; the Steelhead trout, the Monarch butterfly, the Peregrine falcon and the Mountain Lion – conservation in action!



PRE & POST TESTS REVEALED:

- 38% Increase in visual art skills
- 34% Increase in knowledge of wildlife
- 35% Increase in knowledge of recycling
- 44% Increase in change-making skills

Once the pandemic began, RuckusRoots leaders were tasked with completing the murals in a safely distanced, outdoor environment. We delivered and installed the murals on campus, for students and teachers to enjoy once they come back to school.

Julio and the RuckusRoots team also put a video together to remind students of lessons they learned during the program and to give students a virtual tour of the murals.



4000 plastic bags diverted from landfills, rivers and the ocean.
200 recycled, wildlife-themed artworks created!

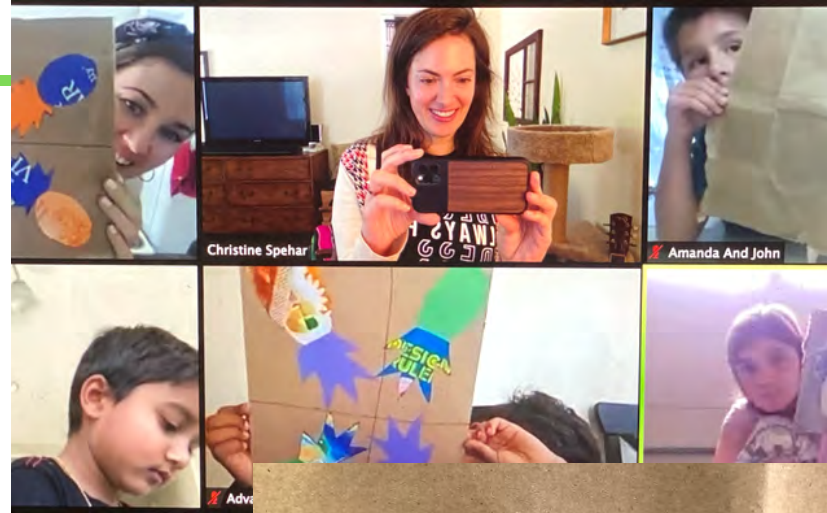
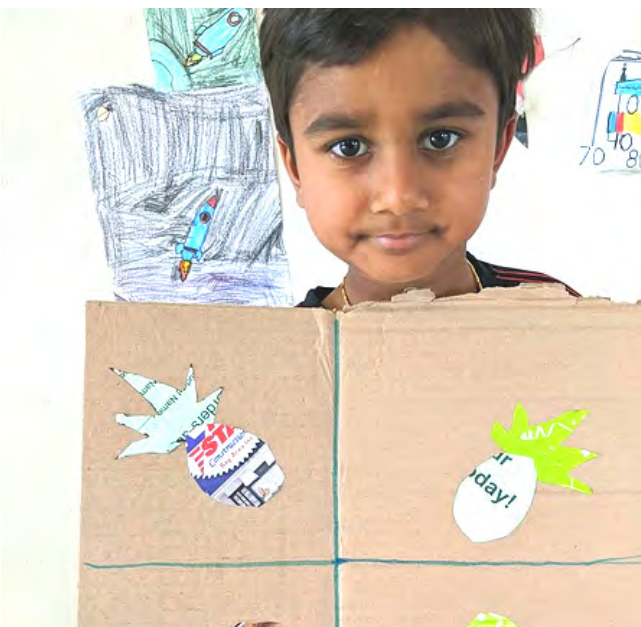


FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In 2020, we began a collaboration with FEAST (Food, Education, Access, Support, Together), a Los Angeles-based organization working to solve the systemic wellness issues of food insecurity and food-based education.

Through a pilot collaboration with FEAST in the early months of 2020, we offered seasonal produce-themed arts activities for youth held at FEAST's Mercado La Paloma location in South Central L.A. These workshops centered on collaging with food packaging for school-aged children and took place concurrently with the adults' cooking classes. This solution allowed more adults to attend the cooking classes and engaged both children and adults in complementary lessons that taught the same healthy eating themes.

With the onset of the pandemic, we transitioned to offering our art classes online, with a chef from FEAST providing a brief tutorial and recipe at each lesson. We followed up the classes with detailed emails and recipes for parents.

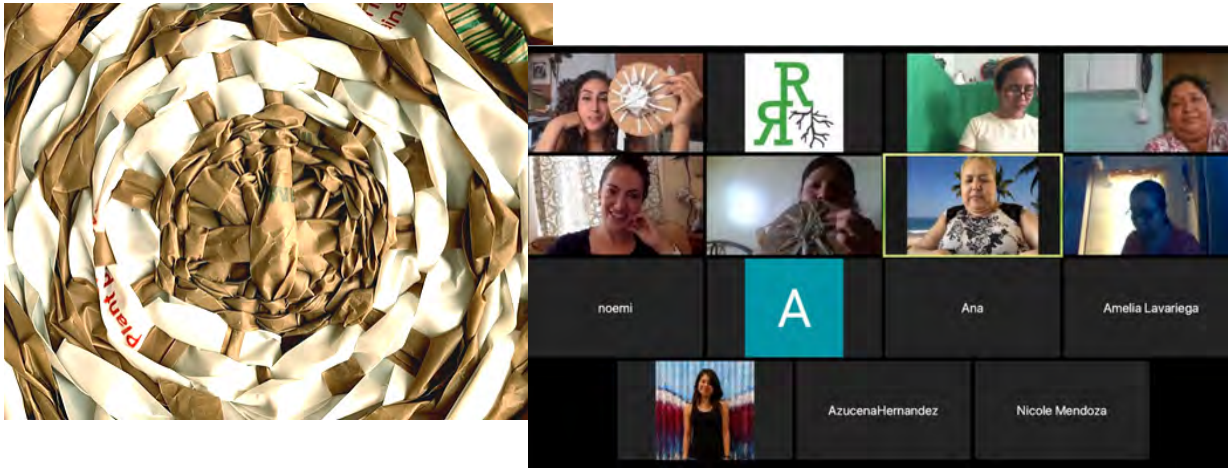


Allegra taught different collaging techniques to participants using recycled food packaging as material inspiration. Each week, we had local vegan chef, Carmen Karlsgodt, come on to chat with us about a seasonal fruit or vegetable and share a recipe using that item for the participants to try at home with their families. We then focused our creative project for the day using that same fruit or veggie as our inspiration!

120 kids and parents participated in our very first Zoom workshop series creating beautiful collages

350 items of trash that would otherwise have ended up in landfills were used!

To make creating with us at home even easier, we designed downloadable coloring book pages inspired by artwork from Food for Thought classes. Each of these Harvest-of-the-Month calendars includes a coloring page and the recipe of the month! You can access these on our website at ruckusroots.org/downloadable to print out your own copy.



THROUGH LINES/TALLERES DE LINEAS

Our second program with FEAST constituents was called Through Lines, and took place at the height of the pandemic in Summer/Fall of 2020. For this program, we expanded our offering by not only providing free online recycled art classes, but also adding contactless art supply deliveries for families in need. We delivered 60 art supply bags to potential participants in East and South L.A. Recipients were already part of FEAST's free grocery delivery program, so we included our art supplies into their existing delivery schedule.

Led by East L.A.-based artist, Teresa Flores and her assistant, Scarlett Reyes, program participants learned to repurpose plastic waste from food packaging through a variety of creative techniques, such as weaving and sculpture. They then explored their own ideas, processes and materials to create unique and personal works of meaning. It was so amazing to see what this group came up with week after week!



60 art supply deliveries to local families through our partnership with FEAST for All.

70 unique recycled artworks created.



100% of participants reported that they...

- a) cared about what they learned in our classes, and
- b) felt connected to the artworks created

"This workshop inspired me
to persevere creatively,
believe in the power of
making art, and to manage
the stress of the situation we
are living in today.

My children are always excited to
see what I am going to do in class,
and they also love helping me
gather materials to make the
projects.

I am always excited to think about
what we're going to in the next
workshop each week!"

- *Angeles, Program Participant*
East Los Angeles

THROUGH LINES VIRTUAL EXHIBITION

In lieu of an in-person culminating event, we created an online exhibit with our Through Lines artists, who proudly displayed their one-of-a-kind artworks in a virtual creative space.



FEATURED COMMUNITY ARTISTS:
LUZ GONZALEZ / ARACELY LOPEZ / ANGELES LOYOLA / SCARLETT REYES / TERESA FLORES



"RuckusRoots inspired me to do these crafts.

They they gave us ideas so that we can do many things in this time that we are living in. We have to keep our minds occupied with other things to distract ourselves. How beautiful to look for ideas that you can use to clean the environment and be creative.

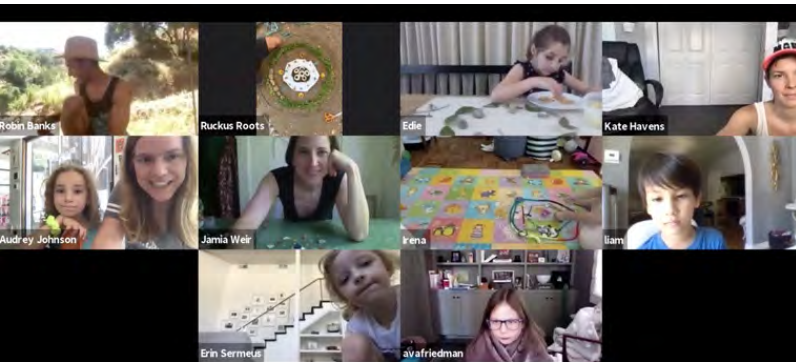
We can help the atmosphere clean itself by using the plastic to make art and also clean the ocean, as these plastic bags we use in art class do not go to the garbage. As you can see, my pieces are made with pure plastic bags and egg cartons."

-Luz Gonzalez

5 types of waste were used to create artworks: plastic bags, cardboard, egg cartons, junk mail and paper.



FRIDAYS WITH FRIENDS



We had folks log in our first online residency program from all over the country! From Boston to Northern California, Wisconsin to SoCal - Fridays with Friends reached families both near and far.



Fridays with Friends was an online artist residency program featuring a new local artist each week, with a new theme and "how-to" art class. Featured artists included Jamia Weir, Robin Banks and Julio Muñoz.

Instructional activities ranged from plarn-making (plastic yarn), to nature mandalas and collage self portraits. Classes took place via Zoom every Friday from April 3 - May 2, 2020.

ARTIVISM W/ ALLEGRA

LEARN TO MAKE:

Recycled Paper Flowers



One of our first responses to the onset of the global pandemic, this was a six-episode series that was launched in March of 2020. Teaching artist Allegra led community crafts live on Instagram, as well as producing demo videos for folks to participate on-demand.

Together, we made:

Leaf-Rubbing Thank-You Cards

Collaged "Rainbow Window Trails"

Home Tye-Dyed T-shirts

No-Sew Face Masks

Recycled Paper Flower Bouquets

Handpainted Postcards

Our experimental IGTV series reach resulted in a record number of views on Instagram and helped us expand our social media presence by almost **35%**





INTERSECTIONS

Intersections was designed to allow viewers a peek inside the lives and work of the people within the intersectional environmentalism movement via virtual studio tours and candid dialogue with Executive Director, Christine Spehar. This digital program was held on IGTV and directly addressed creativity, sustainability and social justice while providing less-visible voices in the eco-movement an opportunity to share their work with a broader audience.

We spoke with seven incredibly inspiring BIPOC folks – from community organizers, visual artists, musicians, sustainable chefs, environmental educators and other professionals – and we took away so much from these conversations.



Highlights included:

Isaias Hernandez, @queerbrownvegan (L.A native, environmental educator and zero-waste advocate) spoke to us about racial, social and eco-justice – and how we can all dig in deeper to the “why” behind movements like zero-waste living and #plasticfreejuly.

Rieetha Dhamne, @zanzaneet (Indian-born, indigenous cooking blogger and sustainability activist) gave us a kitchen tour and shared how traditional Indian practices can be used to enhance our connection to the precious planet.

Mahogane Amiger, @mahoganeeamiger (South Carolina-based recording artist, activist and founder of @responsibleartistry) shared her wonderful music with us and spoke to us about her approach to artistry as a form of revolution.

Aura Vasquez, @auravasquezofficial (Columbian-born immigrant, eco-advocate and community organizer) discussed the power of sharing our stories, the power of personal connection in creating real social change.





ART-AT-HOME YOUTUBE SERIES

In October, we filmed a three-episode series broadcast on Hawthorne Community Television - now available on YouTube!



EARTH DAY 2020

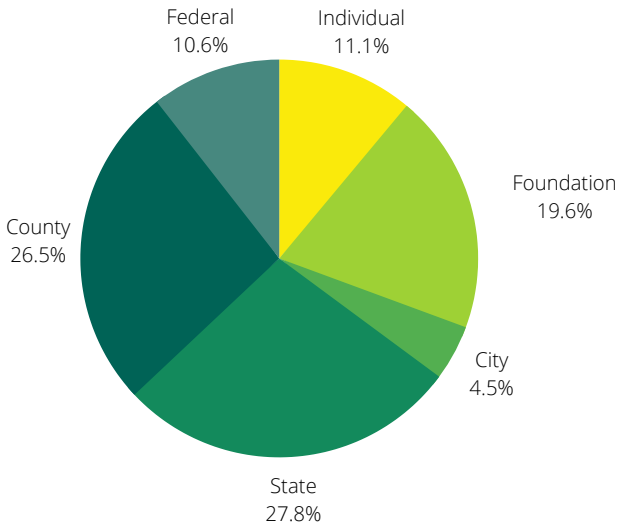


Earth Day was different this year as in-person gatherings were cancelled due to COVID. We were grateful to be invited to participate in an online celebration through our partners, University of Wisconsin, OshKosh.

Our Founder and Executive Director, Christine Spehar, gave a talk highlighting the connection between art, sustainability and "slowing down" during the pandemic. We followed this up with a workshop led by artist and Programs Director, Allegra Bick-Maurischat - who provided a live, hands-on tutorial for creating plantable, recycled paper that you can create, plant and sprout living seeds from at home! The PDF- instructions for this activity are available to download at ruckusroots.org/our-programs/downloadable.

FUNDING SNAPSHOT

2020 Revenue: \$70,232

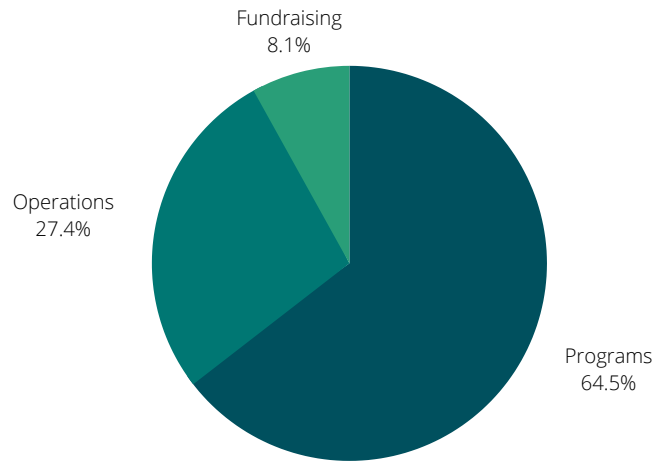
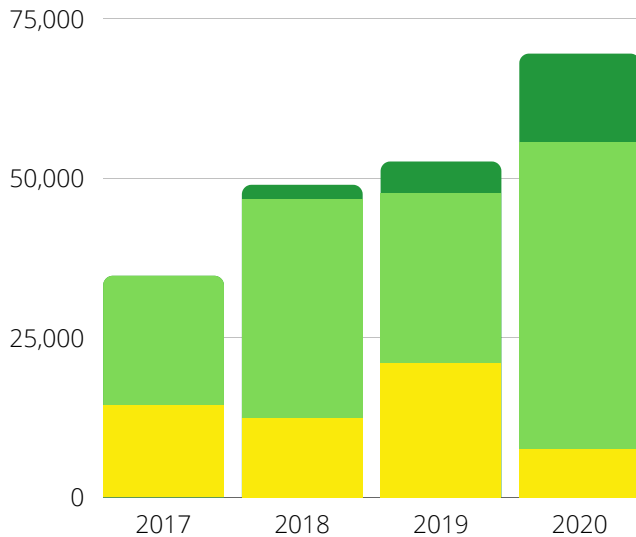


THE NUMBERS:

Individual Donors	90
Government Funders	4
Foundation Funders	2
Revenue Increase 2019-2020	25%

REVENUE TRENDS:

- Individual Donations
- Corporate and Government Grants
- Foundations and Earned Income



2020 Expenses: \$62,536

"Great program!
The teaching artist was so friendly
and engaging.

These classes really added to my
daughter's creative repertoire and
later, I could see her adding things
she learned in the classes to projects
she was doing on her own. "

- *Gabriel, Parent of Participant*
Food for Thought, Fridays with Friends,
Artivism with Allegra

GET TO KNOW OUR DONORS



Our end of year online fundraiser
raised

\$7891

from December 1st - 31st, 2020,
thanks to these amazing donors:

Jen B
Gerry S.
Eugenia C.
James W.
Summer B.
Ruby R.
Danielle G.
Peter B.
Ainnie W.
Marianne M.
Irma J.
Ramon F.
Travis H.
Anne. E.
Sarah B.
Mary C.
Rebekkah W.
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Michelle M.
Garen M.
Seirra S.
Gevork M.
Frederic D.
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Gabriel C.
Charlotte D.

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Barbie D.
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Errol N.
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Mary and Gerry H.
Mike and Kathy R.
Steve H.
Jesus G.
Bill W.
Monica P.
Cathy R
Jessica G
Susie S.
Jim F.
Allegra B.
Christine S.

MEET OUR PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

Our programs are made possible through contributions from funders and collaboration with program partners. Thank you to those who worked with and supported us in 2020!



The California Arts Council
The Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs
The Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture
The California Community Foundation
The NIA Gilbert Fund
FEAST for All, Los Angeles
University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh
Eucalyptus Elementary School
Hawthorne Community Television
The Museum of Natural History



We are so grateful for all of the support we received this year, and are able to go into 2021 feeling both inspired and awed by the resilience and innovation of the Angelenos we meet through our work. Onwards and upwards, as we like to say! Here's to a new year of empowering communities, deepening connections and making sustainable creative experiences accessible to all!



LOOKING AHEAD...

In the coming year, RuckusRoots will ensure low-income families have access to high-quality, sustainable arts experiences by expanding our online offerings and continuing the art supply delivery program we implemented in 2020. We look forward to deepening our relationships with the City of Hawthorne, Eucalyptus Elementary School, FEAST, and residents of South and East Los Angeles. We are also excited about a potential collaboration with an open space partner in South L.A.



STAY UP-TO-DATE
with everything we're planning for 2021...



...and don't forget to sign up for our newsletter!



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UNVEILING THE CREATIVE SIDE OF SUSTAINABILITY

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