



Dear Ruckus-Raiser,

Recently, I was reminded of RuckusRoots' founding belief:

***Art has the power to inspire positive change and plays a crucial role in fostering social, economic and environmental justice for all.***

As our organization grows and our communities evolve, this belief is what I continue to come back to, asking myself, "Is this still true?"

Every time, my answer is yes. The art we make is multifaceted, but art is at the core of everything we do at RuckusRoots. The reason for this is that art changes lives. And if we want to build stronger, more sustainable Los Angeles communities, art is one of the most powerful tools we have to create positive and lasting change. In response to the pandemic, most of our programming took place in garden spaces in 2022, which offered a wonderful synergy with our arts and environmental focus.

2022 was a monumental year for RuckusRoots. Highlights include:

- A 200-foot native plants mural in Sun Valley
- Hiring a new programs coordinator and expanding our South LA team
- Graduating 15 systems-impacted youth in our art, urban gardening and entrepreneurial internship, The Rebel Garden Project
- Winning the 2022 LA 2050 Grant Challenge to make Los Angeles a better place to live by the year 2050
- Breaking ground on a native plants and art garden in Hawthorne, CA

A new SRI Education report that shows only 11% of California public schools currently meet the statewide mandate for arts education. RuckusRoots is dedicated to continuing to fill that void, and to rewriting the story of our communities and our planet through art. Thank you for supporting our work and being a part of our ruckus-raising community!



**Christine Spehar**  
Founder & Executive Director



# WHY WE'RE HERE



## THE MISSION:

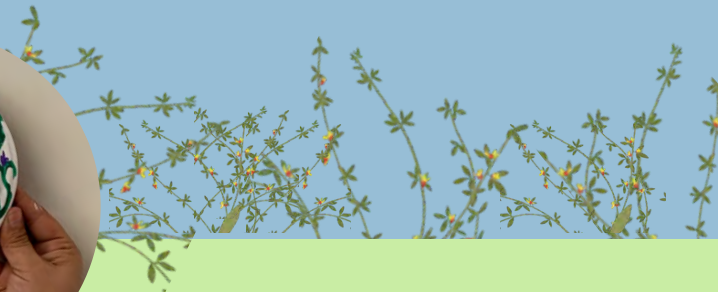
**RuckusRoots' mission is to create art programs that cultivate environmental awareness and action in under-represented communities. Our goal is to foster inspired, empowered and engaged citizens through interactive art-making.**

## THE WHY:

The arts have always been at the forefront of monumental societal shifts, building empathy, understanding and bridging the gap between problem and solution. But, accessible artistic programming is lacking in the communities we serve and simultaneously, these communities are disproportionately and negatively impacted by environmental injustices like litter, pollution and a lack of green spaces. Our programs offer art-making as an essential tool for addressing these injustices.

## THE HOW:

We collaborate with local artists, communities and schools to create accessible programs that build interdisciplinary arts skills, uncovering and confronting environmental issues that impact the community.



### Our Ongoing Goals:

1. Co-create arts programming in communities where it is needed and wanted
2. Use art to bring awareness to social and environmental challenges confronting communities.
3. Amplify the voices of marginalized groups
4. Share resources with local artists from the communities where we work
5. Utilize found, recycled or natural materials in artworks whenever possible, encouraging art as a sustainable lifestyle practice.

# OUR TEAM

## LEADERSHIP & STAFF



**Christine Spehar**  
Executive Director



**Allegra Bick-Maurischat**  
Program Director



**Yesenia Morales**  
Project Coordinator



**Blaze Bautista**  
Program Assistant

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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University of Wisconsin  
OshKosh, Dir. of Sustainability



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Hawthorne, CA  
Master Gardener



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Secretary  
Carlson Baker Arts  
Los Angeles, CA  
Team Lead



**Scott Froschauer**  
The Word On the Street  
Los Angeles, CA  
Artist



**Nino Alicea**  
Ricky Martin Productions  
Los Angeles, CA  
Art Director

## PROGRAM & WORKSHOP FACILITATORS



**Sara Reihani**  
Garden Magic - Ecology



**Allegra Bick-Maurischat**  
Garden Magic - Art + Mural Direction



**Kimble DeLeon**  
The Rebel Garden Project



**Erica Montelongo**  
The Rebel Garden Project



**Jahzara Halliday**  
The Rebel Garden Project



**Stephanie Leah**  
Pop-up Workshops



**Alex Carstens**  
Pop-up Workshops

# OUR COLLABORATORS

## Collaborator Testimonial:

*"RuckusRoots is a cheerful, organized, heart-lead team that is spearheading fundamentally crucial work.*

*Artistic expression is not a luxury but rather a necessary practice for building hope, resiliency and ultimately for knowing the self. Having collaborated on a mural project together, I have seen how authentically passionate they are about equitable art and environmental education and I truly admire them for it."*

*Sofia Laçin, Studio Tutto*



## COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS & HOST SITES:

FEAST for All

Hungry Gardens Urban Farm

The Youth Justice Coalition

Studio Tutto

Art + Contraptions

Corazon De Sur Centro

Imperfect Foods

Tustin Memorial Academy

Eucalyptus Elementary School

Free L.A High School

Mes Amis Restaurant



## Collaborator Impact Story:

*"My name is Erica Montelongo, born and raised in South Central, Los Angeles. I am one of the founders and caretakers of Rebel Garden at Chuco's Justice Center.*

*Rebel Garden started in 2019 with three small crates, and now contains raised beds, a greenhouse, and a curriculum for students at FREE L.A High School through our collaboration with RuckusRoots.*

*Having the power to be self-sustaining even in limited spaces is crucial to our autonomy as a black and brown community; we have been disconnected from our gardening/farming practices, and stewardship of our lands. Our goal is to create a garden where community members can learn to grow/ harvest food and also utilize the space for healing."*

*Erica Montelongo, Co-Founder of The Rebel Garden*





# BY THE NUMBERS

To date, we've serviced more than  
**19** UNIQUE NEIGHBORHOODS

and communities across the city of Los Angeles.

**< 25000**

pieces of trash converted into original artworks to date

over hours of in-person programming since 2018

**1500**

**4979**

direct participants across all age groups since 2018

students served over the past five years

**2158**



In 2022, our audience grew by 25%!

**3546**

2021 Audience

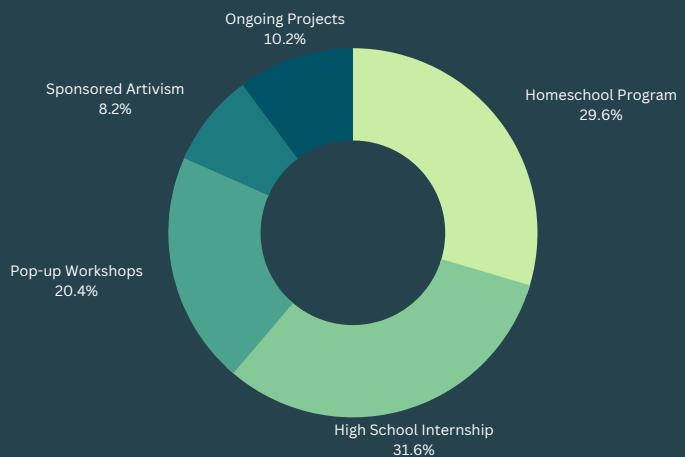
**4422**

2022 Audience

# program participants (2022): **744**

# youth served (2022): **401**

## 2022 PROGRAM BREAKDOWN:



In addition to our primary service area centered in the city of Los Angeles, we've also expanded our reach in recent years to include full-scale programs, pop-up workshops & consulting services in:

Compton, CA \* Hawthorne, CA \* Sun Valley, CA \* Santa Ana, CA \* Hollister, CA

# OUR PROGRAMMATIC WORK

As part of an ongoing strategy to deepen our organization's connection with our L.A community and beyond, we've recently diversified our offerings to include:

- Pop-up style workshops
- Homeschool programs
- Fiscally sponsored events
- Internships
- Consulting Services



**In 2022, our programs provided custom-tailored opportunities for Angelenos of all ages to connect with the arts in nature and outdoor settings.**

We re-committed to offering programs that cultivate the arts in, for and about nature. We partnered with local artists, community leaders and host sites to increase our capacity for accessible, low-cost, outdoor opportunities to learn, make, connect and grow.



## Over 90%

of our 2022 programming was held outdoors – and in nature!



### ART IS AT OUR CORE

**Artmaking serves as the primary learning tool in all of our programmatic offerings**

In 2022, we taught:

- Basic color theory
- Collage with recycled materials
- Watercolor + acrylic painting techniques
- Drawing from observation
- 3D clay modeling + painting
- Mural design, gridding + painting
- Guerilla sign painting
- Recycled paper crafting
- Garden design + more!

# THE REBEL GARDEN PROJECT

The Rebel Garden Project is our pilot urban gardening and arts internship for systems-impacted teens and young adults in South Los Angeles.



30

works of  
activist art  
created

12

lessons  
covering  
10 unique topics

In a series of workshops facilitated by master gardener and lead facilitator, Kimble DeLeon and with assistance from Rebel Garden founders & caretakers Jahzara Halliday and Erica Montelongo, FREE LA High School students learned about urban gardening, ecology, and art.

60%

graduation success rate

GARDENING EDUCATION INCLUDED LESSONS ON:

- soil science
- native plant identification
- natural pest control

ART EDUCATION PROJECTS INCLUDED:

- activist sign-painting
- garden beautification
- garden design & more!



50+ hrs

of *Community Listening* sessions  
with South L.A educators,  
activists & artists

These sessions, held with program partners and community stakeholders, helped us identify, design and implement programming and curricula tailored to the wants and needs of the specific population this program serves.



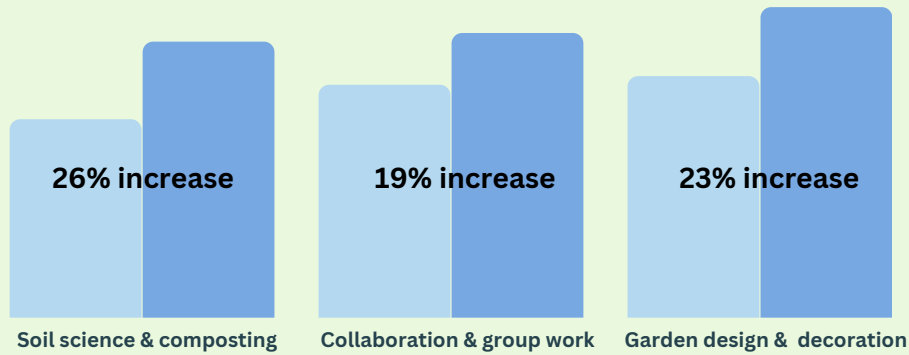
*"I really liked this garden class because back then, there wasn't a garden.*

*Now I see the progress and the growth. It's really fun learning how to garden, and I think eventually I might take it on in my personal life."*

**Andy Dorantes, 2022 intern**



### STUDENT INTERNS SELF-REPORTED CONFIDENCE INCREASES ACROSS CONTENT AREAS:



*"It was a cool experience, for real. It was something different and I liked that."*

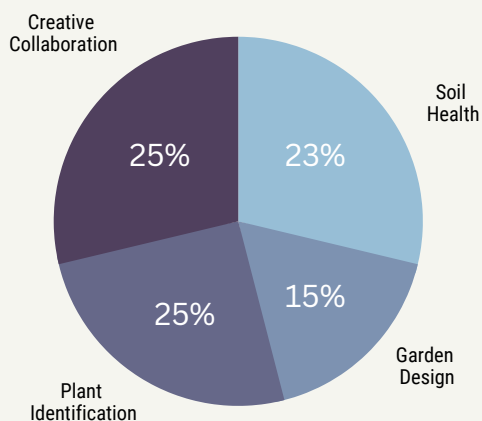
**Ernie Hendricks, 2022 intern**



# GARDEN MAGIC SERIES

By bringing in both artists and a local master gardeners, Garden Magic '22 offered homeschool students an opportunity to be outside, learn in nature and draw connections between native species, pollinators and honor them through art-making on a large scale.

DEMONSTRATED KNOWLEDGE INCREASE BY CURRICULUM TOPIC



**100%**

of participants' parents reported their children came away with a deeper understanding of mural design & mural painting

**66%**

of participants (ages 5-12) came away from the program showing increased knowledge of native plants & insects

At host site Hungry Gardens Urban Farm in Sun Valley, we led a group of youth through ecology lessons focused on pollinators, native plants and their vital role in local ecosystems. We then solidified those lessons through a collaborative, immersive mural-painting experience.





# OUR MURAL AT THE FARM

Hand-painted by our Garden Magic students, staff, volunteers over the span of 3 weeks, the mural features many of the plants and pollinators students learned about in their lessons.

The mural was designed by L.A.-based public art duo Studio Tutto, as a pilot-test of their *Mural Kits* concept.



**OUR LARGEST MURAL TO-DATE,**  
this 200-ft artwork  
now beautifies the space at Hungry Gardens Urban Farm!

# POP-UP WORKSHOPS

Our public programs unite all demographics and age groups in artmaking and civic engagement, providing opportunities to take direct action in local communities.

Over  
**200**  
works of art  
created

**90% of participants**  
reported feeling more  
**connected to community**  
after our workshops

**27+**  
hours of  
**FREE, MULTIGENERATIONAL**  
community art-making



- **"Plant Your Food"** w/ Stephanie Leah (collaboration w/ [Imperfect Foods](#))
- **Earth-friendly Art-Making** w/ Stephanie Leah (collaboration w/ [Tustin Memorial Academy Garden](#))
- **Magic of Mushrooms** Workshop (collaboration w/ [Hungry Gardens Urban Farm](#))
- **Native Bees and Pollinators** Workshop (collaboration w/ [Hungry Gardens Urban Farm](#))
- **"Garden Play Day" Olla Making** w/ [FEAST for All](#), [Feed Our Soul](#) & [Urban Soul Farmer's Club](#)



**We more than DOUBLED**  
our roster of community partners  
& collaborators through these  
pop-up workshops in 2022!



an estimated  
**800+**  
**students**

will have access to  
this on-campus art  
and learning garden  
annually

approximately  
**25,000**  
gallons of water  
will be saved  
each year!

**COMPLETE**  
**in 2023,**  
this will be the  
**FIRST & ONLY**  
native plant school garden  
in the city of Hawthorne!

Our forthcoming native garden will provide students with a beautiful, safe and nurturing connection to nature, while serving as an outdoor classroom for Eucalyptus teachers and RuckusRoots facilitators to engage students with hands-on opportunities for sustainable art-making and garden caretaking.

We've already begun re-wilding this 750 sq-ft lawn through removal of a non-native Eucalyptus tree, grass removal, and by adding mulch and top soil to prep the ground for planting spring '23!



# THE EUCALYPTUS ELEMENTARY ART & LEARNING GARDEN

CLOSING THE "NATURE GAP"

This project will help alleviate the need for accessible, natural space for youth and also create an outdoor space for future arts programming by RuckusRoots.

# SPONSORED ARTIVISM EVENTS

We've made it part of our working model to empower and share resources with local Angelenos, artists and leaders working within their communities as a part of our commitment to provide more equitable arts access to our city's more vulnerable communities.

In 2022, we helped sponsor the following events in South Central L.A.:

- **Corazon de Sur Centro Halloween Event**
- **Corazon de Sur Centro Open Mic**
- **Corazon de Sur Centro Holiday Event**

**150 FAMILIES SERVED**

**OVER 200**  
attendees  
aged 0 - 90 yrs!

**MORE THAN 150 TOYS**  
supplied for toy drive

**9 HOURS OF**  
**OUTDOOR ART, MUSIC,**  
& community-centered  
service offerings



**150**

**packages of art supplies**  
provided for at-home creativity!



## **ABOUT CORAZON DE SUR CENTRO:**

Corazon de Sur Centro is a BIPOC led grassroots organization whose mission is to provide a safe space to unite and uplift community-oriented artists and entrepreneurs in South Central, promote healing through art and self-expression, and sustain the culture already established in the neighborhood. Corazon de Sur Centro was founded upon the values of providing a space for the Community of South Central to come together, break bread, build community and heal one another.

## ABOUT OUR FIRST CLIENT:

James Peterson is an artist and sculptor based in Los Angeles.

A self-proclaimed materials and processes geek influenced by nature, geometry and the development of organic matter, James merges art and technology with sustainable resources and practices whenever possible.



**New this year, we now offer community engagement consulting services for public artists!**

**In this work, we connect public agencies, community groups, educators and other stakeholders, helping to devise frameworks that empower and support artists in shaping today's changing environments.**

*The result? More dynamic, engaging, culturally sensitive and responsive public art for communities to enjoy!*

Here's what we do:

- Survey creation, dissemination, data collection and analysis
- Social media strategy, content creation & management
- Community outreach, event coordination & engagement in support of under-represented stakeholders, including original caretakers of the land.



# FOR PUBLIC ARTISTS

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## A VISUAL ODE TO HOLLISTER'S HEARTLAND

Our first collaboration in community engagement with James Peterson is inspired by Hollister's landscape, agricultural history, and the communal effort of tending to and harvesting from the land, 'WOVEN' is a geometric sculpture that interlaces painted aluminum panels to create a beautiful interplay of color, light and shadows. WOVEN will be complete and ready to view in 2023!

## 2022 FUNDERS



Perenchio  
Foundation



Goldhirsh  
Foundation



Sony Pictures  
Entertainment



The Wonderful  
Company



Los Angeles Dept.  
Cultural Affairs



National  
Philanthropic Trust



Monat  
Gratitude Grant



L.A County Dept.  
Arts and Culture



California  
Arts Council

# OUR PARTNERS

## 2022 DONORS

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Susie S.  
The Wonderful Company  
Tom R.  
Tommi I.  
Travis H.  
Vicky P.

8.5%

Number of individual  
donors increased

20%

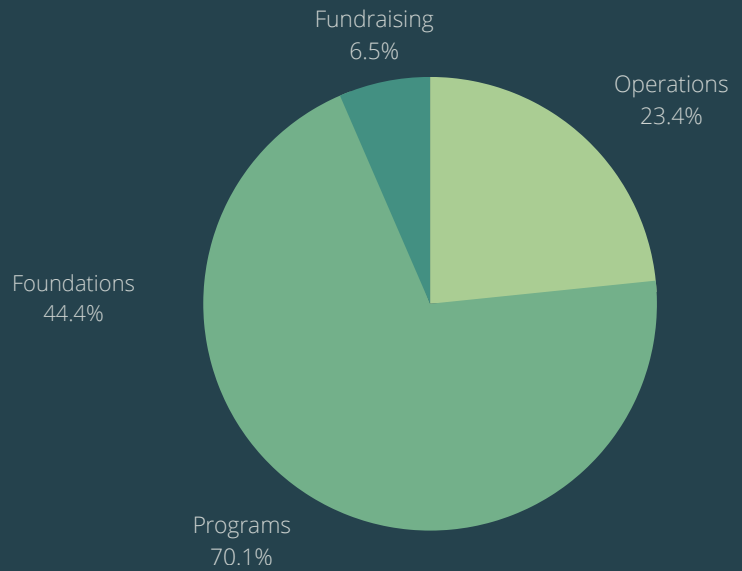
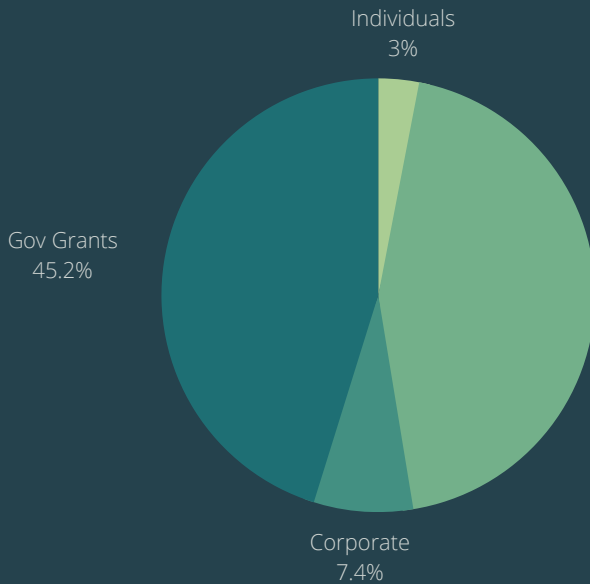
Amount raised by  
individual donors  
increased by



# FISCAL REPORT

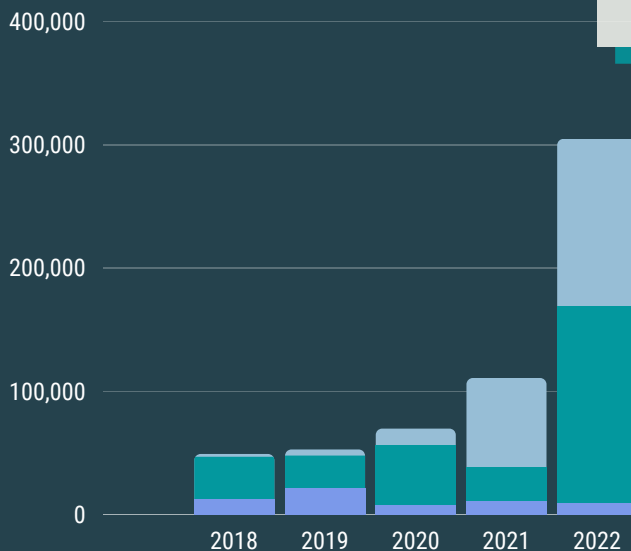
2022 Revenue: **\$303,446**

2022 Expenses: **\$128,621**



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

<b>Individual Donors</b>	67
<b>Government Funders</b>	3
<b>Foundation Funders</b>	5
<b>Corporate Funders</b>	3
<b>Revenue Increase 2021-2022</b>	170%



RuckusRoots was  
**1 of 37**  
 winners out of  
**500+ applicants**  
 to win the LA2050 Grants  
Challenge funded by the  
 Goldhirsh Foundation!

# LOOKING AHEAD

Some of our goals for 2023 and the coming years include:

## 1 EXPAND OUR CAPACITY

In 2023 we are committed to deepening the resilience, knowledge and leadership skills of our current team through professional development opportunities that will help us strengthen our foundation and elevate our capacity to better serve our communities.

Executive coaching, strategic planning, capacity-building and DEI trainings are all vital parts of this goal.

## 3 SUPPORT MORE ARTISTS

Discovering, supporting and collaborating with local artists is a cornerstone of RuckusRoots approach, and one of the most inspiring parts of the work we do!

In 2023 we commit to supporting more local creatives through teaching artist positions and through our community engagement consulting work.

## 2 GROW OUR TEAM

In 2023 we are looking to expand our Board of Directors and staff with individuals who demonstrate a strong commitment to our cause and both reflect and amplify the voices of the communities we serve.

These team members will be able to guide and assist RuckusRoots in its growth, while maintaining relationships we've built with partners and collaborators in service of the integrity of our programs and mission. A clear understanding of, and commitment to, advancing arts equity and environmental justice is essential.





# Ruckus Roots

ARTivism for people and the planet.

[www.ruckusroots.org](http://www.ruckusroots.org)



