



IMPACT REPORT 2021





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A Message From Our Executive Director

The past two years have presented challenges for our community and for the world at large. While advances in vaccines allowed for some semblance of normalcy during the summer of 2021, the Omicron variant brought a new wave of cases and a sense that we are not fully out of the woods. It is with a renewed sense of urgency around our values of community, social impact, and the transformative power of education that we enter 2022.

With this 2021 impact report, we invite you to witness our accomplishments which, with your continued support, have allowed us to expand our mission of building stronger communities through creative programming. On the grassroots level, NECS remains focused on a simple truth: that investing in the next generation of leaders offers a beacon of hope. Since our founding in 2013, we have been guided by the philosophy that each child, like a mine rich in gems, contains gifts and talents to be uncovered through an education that recognizes their nobility and innate potential.

Thank you to the parents, teachers, donors, foundations, and community partners that continue to invest in the growth and development of NECS alongside our youth. Thank you to the children that participate in our programs, joyfully daring to challenge themselves and realize their promise.

With hope and gratitude,

Ridvan Foxhall
Founder and Executive Director



The Year In Review

In the first quarter of 2021, we were meeting virtually in response to COVID-19 protocols. Though challenging, we managed to produce our first virtual theatrical production which attracted over 200 viewers and received rave reviews from audience members and donors. We brought after-school virtual arts and STEM programs to the Peekskill City School District (PCSD) and were invited to provide therapeutic theatre programs at The Children's Village in Dobbs Ferry.

In the spring, we were blessed and thankful to offer in person classes once again. By the end of the summer, we had served well over 300 students. Our programs included art, drama, dance, and nature-immersion. We also introduced documentary filmmaking into our offering. Momentum from the summer continued through the fall with NECS programs running in the PCSD, at two local churches, and the Peekskill Be First Boxing gym on the Hudson riverfront.

Despite constraints to our capacity to fully meet in person, NECS' collaborations grew and our team expanded. We connected with many of you on social media through a newly crafted brand aesthetic we developed during lockdown. We hired social media experts to assist in outreach endeavors and honed a grant writing and fundraising strategy that allowed us to surpass our anticipated 2021 revenue.

In August, we moved from our physical location where we previously hosted NECS programs, opting instead to open an administrative office in town and transition towards a model of providing programs directly in the community. This enabled NECS to become more lean, redirecting funds toward retaining talent and broadening our capacity to engage in partnership programs.

Leaving our location at Paramount East has ultimately opened doors for our organization. Local houses of worship and community centers have offered us space to hold classes, and the school district has invited us back to offer more after-school programs in the elementary, middle, and high schools. As a result, we are able to reach more children and youth in the community than ever before.

Our amazing community of supporters gave more than ever, especially during our second annual Virtual Benefit. In addition, we were able to secure generous grants from several foundations, deepening our relationships with them for future funding.

As we wrap up a year that has seen a host of challenges and victories, we step into 2022 inspired and with renewed hope, even more emboldened by our mission to build stronger communities through creative programming.

2021 By The Numbers

27 teaching artists and educators (5 under age 30) trained in Culturally-Responsive Teaching, Positive Discipline, and Restorative Justice practices



35
programs offered in 2021



274
individual, corporate, and foundation donors chose to support NECS



600+
children and youth participated in NECS programs



Over \$41K
saved through volunteered time and talent



100%
of students indicating need received financial support



360+ community members entertained and educated through NECS' Children's Theatre Collaborative

\$37,410
offered in scholarships, discounts, and subsidies (14% increase from 2020)



Program Highlights

WINTER

NECS' Children's Theatre Collaborative (CTC) showcased a virtual preview production in February that attracted roughly 200 viewers from around the world. The students continued to meet through the winter and spring of 2021 to stage a final performance of **Melanin Magic** during Peekskill's Juneteenth celebration.

SPRING

In the spring, NECS resumed in person programs at the PCSD including STEM with Microsoft, nature connection activities, visual arts, theatre for elementary school children, and **My Brother's Keeper** (MBK) leadership workshops for boys, as well as art and drama at the middle school.

Our EmpowerEd Young Women's leadership program continued to meet virtually through June, while the EmpowerEd Girls program for middle school girls met both virtually and in person to engage in community service.

SUMMER

In the summer, we provided a four-week Nature Connection program where participants hiked, farmed at Longhaul Farm in Garrison, NY, and engaged with the Hudson riverfront through nature-related sports such as kayaking and paddle boarding led by HVH2O. We successfully piloted a one-week filmmaking workshop and once again offered our Dance as Activism program.

FALL

In the fall, we kicked off new seasons of CTC with 17 students and our EmpowerEd Girls leadership club with nine participants led by three high school mentors. We debuted our **100cameras x New Era Creative Space** photography workshop with our partner, 100cameras, providing each participant with a camera and a venue to showcase their work. Other new programs included dance for young children, The Virtues of Tennis, and cartooning.

NECS partnered with the PCSD to offer MBK for 4th and 5th grade boys involving drama, nature connection, storytelling, and crafts at two elementary schools, while providing MBK, dance, theatre, spoken word, art, and filmmaking at the middle school.

*This project is made possible with funds from the Statewide Community Regrant, a regrant program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature and administered by ArtsWestchester.





Building Capacity

NECS envisions strong communities that are vibrant, thriving, self-sustaining, and diverse, and where young people are empowered to take on leadership roles in their communities.

In 2021, we lived up to our goal of nurturing the next generation of visionary leaders. We aim to build a pipeline of employment opportunities, knowing the challenges that exist in securing employment for artists, particularly those from underrepresented populations. NECS is proud to have employed six program alumni to share their talents and experiences as teachers. We hired one alumna as our new program director and contracted another as a cartooning and visual arts instructor. In addition, this year's CTC production was led entirely by two NECS program alumnus who, along with the children, wrote the script and composed the music for the entire production.

In addition, we trained seven NECS alumni to assist and lead our programs. Five young women from Peekskill High School (PHS) became mentors for our EmpowerEd Girls program and two recent PHS graduates assisted with our EmpowerEd Young Men program. In 2022, these young men will train with NECS' partner, **A Call To Men**.

Collaborations and Partnerships

In 2021, NECS formed new collaborations as part of an effort to conduct programming directly in the community. These included Peekskill's Church of the Assumption, United Methodist Church of Peekskill, and Peekskill Be First Boxing which generously provided space for our programming. We deepened our relationship with the PCSD, expanding our summer and after-school offerings.

We formed new partnerships with The Children's Village, an organization partnering with families to help Westchester's most vulnerable children, and the **Cortlandt Community Rowing Association** (CCRA) to connect young people with the Hudson riverfront and introduce rowing as an alternative sport.

We also developed funding partnerships that have enabled us to reach new populations and explore additional avenues for social impact. These include 100cameras, Mona Foundation, Sony, **Wayfarer Foundation**, and the **Westchester Community Foundation**.



Spotlights



NECS raised over \$20K during our second Annual Virtual Benefit, which we were able to double thanks to a generous \$20K matching grant.



NECS partnered with 100cameras, whose mission is to work with youth around the world who have had challenging experiences, to process and tell their stories through photography in a way that impacts how they view themselves and their role in their community. For the first time, our young photographers were able to keep the cameras that they trained with.



CREATEACTION

NECS received a generous grant from Sony's CREATE ACTION campaign whose mission is to amplify the efforts of local organizations through funding, storytelling, and collaboration with Sony. Thanks to the Sony grant, NECS will have the technology and funding to add filmmaking to our roster of programming.



NECS joined forces with Mona Foundation which aids grassroots initiatives focused on education and raising the status of women and girls in the US and abroad. Mona believes that universal education and gender equity are the cornerstones of the eradication of poverty, disease, and conflict. The Mona Foundation partnered with NECS to support our EmpowerEd Young Women and Girls leadership programs through donations and by highlighting us during their annual Gala.



Our New Brand

For the past year and a half, the NECS team has worked on clarifying who we are and strategizing for the future. It became clear that we needed to update our branding. At the end of 2021, we introduced our new brand aesthetic with a new logo and branding that better represents NECS' values. There are elements of innovation, symmetry, simplicity, belonging, inclusivity, and diversity, with colors that represent nature, joy, and warmth. In 2022, we will launch NECS' new website.





Plans for 2022

We plan to continue to learn, reflect, and grow as we create new programs and reach more children and youth in Peekskill and beyond. NECS will continue to expand its programming, provide access to children from underserved communities, diversify and train staff, seek out new partnerships, and focus on our mission. In addition, we plan to expand our board and continue to work on the infrastructure required to build a sustainable and impactful organization.





new era creative space