



Annual Report for 2013

The Mission of Elementz

Where “Street Art meets Street Smart”, Elementz is an urban oasis of hope and a catalyst of change for Cincinnati’s inner-city youth. A thriving urban arts center that fosters talent, ignites potential and inspires possibilities, Elementz has been working with urban teens for twelve years, encouraging self-discovery, creative expression and individual passion. Supported by community stakeholders from various ethnicities, backgrounds and careers, **we**



believe in the power of music, poetry and art to positively impact our youth.

Background and History

Founded in 2002 by a group of OTR residents concerned about youth on the street, Elementz is an organization **dedicated to working with inner-city marginalized youth.** These youth predominately exist outside the mainstream of the community due to economic circumstances or family dysfunction, and lack the expected social-emotional skills necessary to succeed in school and life. Many of these inner-city teens may lack strong



family and adult support and are easily drawn to alternatives that are offered openly in low-income neighborhoods including petty theft, drugs, guns and violence.

Elementz draws inner-city teens into its center at 1100 Race Street (Central Parkway and Race) with a diverse offering of culturally-relevant art forms in the areas of music, dance and poetry. Elementz also employs arts instructors who have both **credibility in their art form within the arts community, and street credibility with the youth.** This means that Elementz has been able to attract a large group of this target population who find the center relevant and supportive, particularly as they go through their teen years.



What Happens in the Center

Once in the center, youth are challenged to find an art form that allows them to be creative, learn to work as a team, and to set and achieve personal goals. They learn to appreciate the art style they have selected, and eventually to write, compose or choreograph their own personal works. Elementz places high value on having the youth perform their work in public, as this gives them **a connection with the wider community and breaks down some of the barriers** that exist for those who are isolated in low-income neighborhoods.



Evolution of the Program

Since its founding, Elementz has been focused on teaching community engagement and leadership skills to inner-city teens. For the first four years Elementz provided class and activities that helped teens develop leadership skills and to accept civic responsibility. During this time the organization leaders continued to poll the youth to develop programming most relevant to them.

In 2006, At the request of the youth, Elementz began to strengthen its focus on the arts. Since this change in focus, Elementz has worked with **more than 1400 teens and young adults** and currently has about **250 local youth who participate regularly** in its programs. We see from **45-80 youth in our center each evening** we are open, 60% of whom attend once a week or more.



In 2011, Elementz began a program to identify how inner-city teens connected to supportive adults and how Elementz could affect an improvement. The average teen comes to our center reporting 2-4 adults in their supportive circle and annual measurements since show that the number of supportive adults **doubles every year** in our program on the average.



In 2013, Elementz added a focus on helping teens build the social skills that will help them succeed in school. National studies show that for inner-city teens who can improve their social and emotional skills through arts programming, they will **improve school achievement scores by 11-17%**. In 2013, Elementz began measuring progress on social skills for each member weekly.

Outcomes for At-Risk Teens

Most of our teens, like teens everywhere, don't go on to become professional artists, but the skills they learn through the arts, (working as a team, setting personal goals, developing their creative side), help them improve school achievement and put many on a track to college. When Elementz opened its doors in 2002, the majority of teens in the center were high school dropouts, and of the group of dropouts that were part of Elementz in those first five years, 50% went on to get their GED. Since those early years, new teens who came to Elementz have been encouraged to stay in school and by 2012, our high school dropout rate was **ZERO**. In 2012 and 2013 **100% of our high school seniors graduated** and 50% went on to enroll in college.

Community Impact:

In the low-income neighborhoods we serve, poverty and crime are prevalent and children are exposed to neighborhood violence on a regular basis. In addition, low income stress families, putting many teens on the streets without constructive activities after school hours. **Most teens do not want to participate in gang or drug activity**, but are looking for a supportive community. They will choose a community like Elementz if it is available to them as an alternative for the offerings of the street culture. Taking kids out of the street culture during their teen years **stops the cycle of school drop-outs, incarceration and unemployment**.

Outsiders View our Program

The Elementz program approach is highlighted in the Harvard study, "Engaging Older Youth: Program and City-Level Strategies to Support Sustained Participation in Out-of-School Time"¹. According to this study, "youth from lower-income families and neighborhoods have fewer out-of-school time opportunities than their more privileged peers, and many low-income and minority families report unmet need for high-quality and accessible programming." The report

¹ 2010, Harvard Family Research Project, Page 35.



goes on to conclude “**Out-of-school time programs have the potential to support graduation and postsecondary success...particularly in urban areas**”².

Our Programs

We present a wide range of opportunities for teens to realize and develop their creative skills and we use art forms that the inner-city youth find relevant. This includes hip hop (family-friendly only), R&B and some contemporary music styles. Our specific programs are:

Voices of Freedom: Poetry and Spoken Word

Studio Kre8v: Hip Hop and Street Dance Competitive Dance Teams

GS Girlz: Teen Girls Step Team

Beat Lounge: Beats, Digital Music, Song-writing, Rapping, Recording

Learn to Reign: DJ Training

STARS: Advanced training for serious musicians and singers in R&B style



Staff and Volunteers:

We have two full-time employees: Tom Kent, who is our Executive Director, and Abdullah Powell, who is our Creative Director. Tom is a retired business executive and before coming to Elementz sat on funding committees at ArtsWave, GCF’s Weathering the Economic Storm and Christ Church Cathedral’s Grants Committee. Abdullah is a graduate of UC’s College Conservatory of Music with a major in electronic media.

We have five part-time instructors and three teaching volunteers.

² Ibid, Executive Summary, Page x.



1100 Race Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202

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Collaborations:

We are a collaborative organization that works with a very diverse set of organizations. Our collaborations increase our capacity to bring experiences to the youth we serve and also help us build exposure across traditional lines of race and class. Our collaborations in 2013 include:

Taft Museum: Duncanson Artist Series

Cincinnati Symphony: Music Hall Performances for Schools

Cincinnati Ballet: Provided Choreography for King Arthur's Camelot.

Cincinnati BoyChoir: Joint Holiday Concert

YMCA: After School Arts Program for SCPA Elementary children

UC Center for Hope and Justice Education: Workshops for Teachers

Christ Church Cathedral: Speakers for Community Forum Series

Temple Shalom: Urban Arts training for children and adults

Quick Facts

Average Number of inner-city Youth Active in Program at any given time: **180**

Change in High School Dropout Rate for Members since 2002: **70% to 0%** (0% achieved in 2012)



Total inner-City Youth Served since 2002: **2,756**



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Public attendance at Elementz concerts, events and workshops in 2013: **23,000**

Average Cost per Member for One Year in Program: **\$700** (Average cost per year for incarceration in Ohio \$25,000)

Number of Volunteer Hours Contributed in 2013: **2,285** (27,431 since 2002)

Recognition

Award for Community Service 2010: Celebration of Black Music Event

The Cincinnati Enquirer October 2011: Creative Director Abdullah Powell named an “Emerging African-American Leader to Watch”

The Cincinnati Enquirer December 2013: Creative Director Abdullah Powell named one of the ten major influences on the Arts in Cincinnati in 2013

Elementz Board of Directors:

Peter Block, President (Author, Business Consultant)

Diane Jordan Grizzard, Vice-President (Organizational Learning Consultant)

Brian D. Ross, (Owner, BD Ross Financial Group)

Fred Neurohr, Secretary (Customer Insights Manager, Wellpoint)

Elle Morris (VP & General Manager, LPK)

Tom Hagerty (Owner, AdRogues.com)

Tysonn Betts, Treasurer (Assoc. Design Director, The Procter & Gamble Company)

Judge Fanon A. Rucker (Hamilton County Municipal Court)

Dr. Art Shriberg, (Professor of Management, Xavier University)

Tonya C. Warren (VP, USBank)

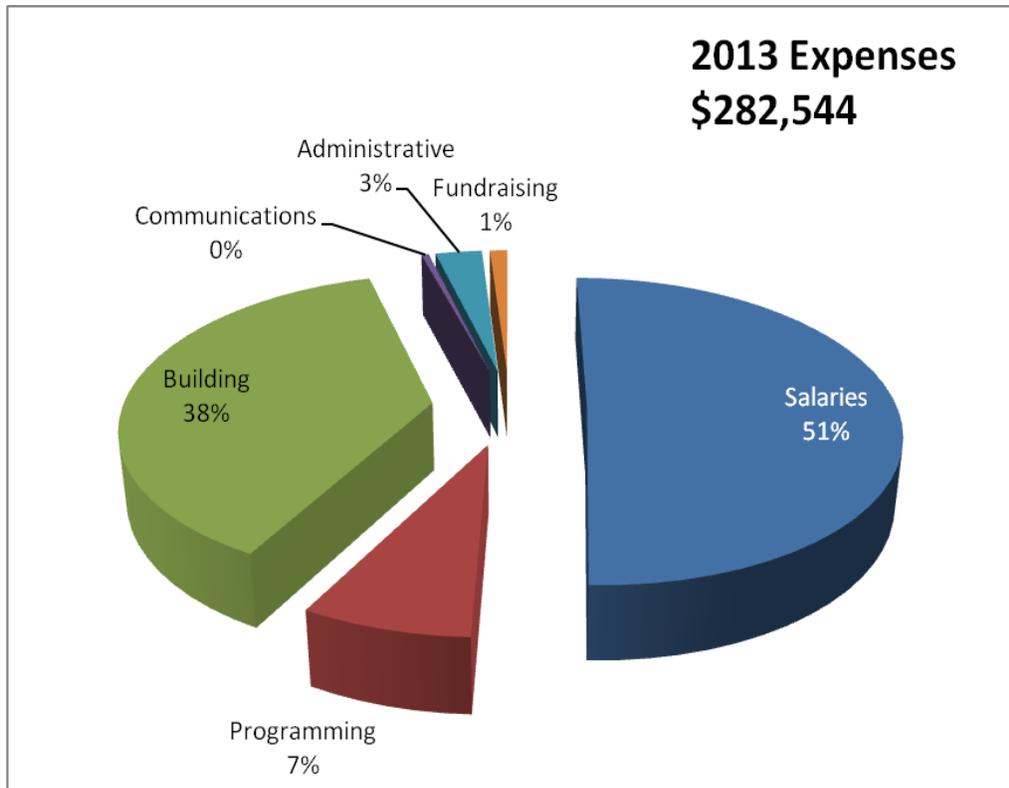
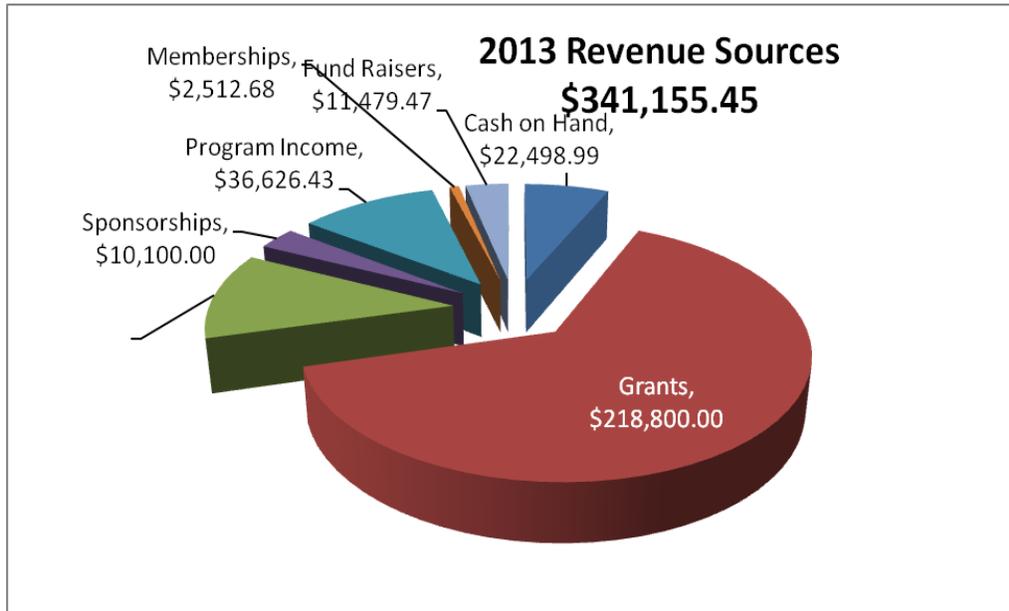
Amanda Gray (Program Manager, African-American Chamber)

Abdullah Powell (Creative Director, Elementz)

Tom Kent (Executive Director, Elementz)



Financials:





Major Contributors to Elementz:

Elementz has had wide community support, particularly from public and private community foundations, including the following:

Ohio Arts Council
Greater Cincinnati Foundation
P&G Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation
Purdy Foundation
ArtsWave
Haile/US Bank Foundation
Crosset Family Fund
Toyota
Dater Foundation
Wohlgemuth Herschede Foundation
US Bank Foundation

Sponsors

Tri-Health (Studio Kre8ve Dance Team)
P&G (Workshop)
Children Inc (Workshop)
Saalam Community (Workshop)
University of Cincinnati (Workshop)

Friends of Elementz (Donors)

Wendy Adams
Tysonn Betts
Sue Blaney
Peter Block
John Bloomstrom
Steven J. Bowling
Timothy & Tiffany Brennan
Jennifer Brenner
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Ryan and Rachael O'Malley
Wendy and Ryan Orner
Danielle Pekalski
Abdullah Powell
Barbara Rohrer



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Nick & Melissa Shaver
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Zeeshan Tayeb
Hal & Shirley Verbarg
Tonya C. Warren
Aubrey Wells
Erin Wisecup
Mary and Jerry Wright