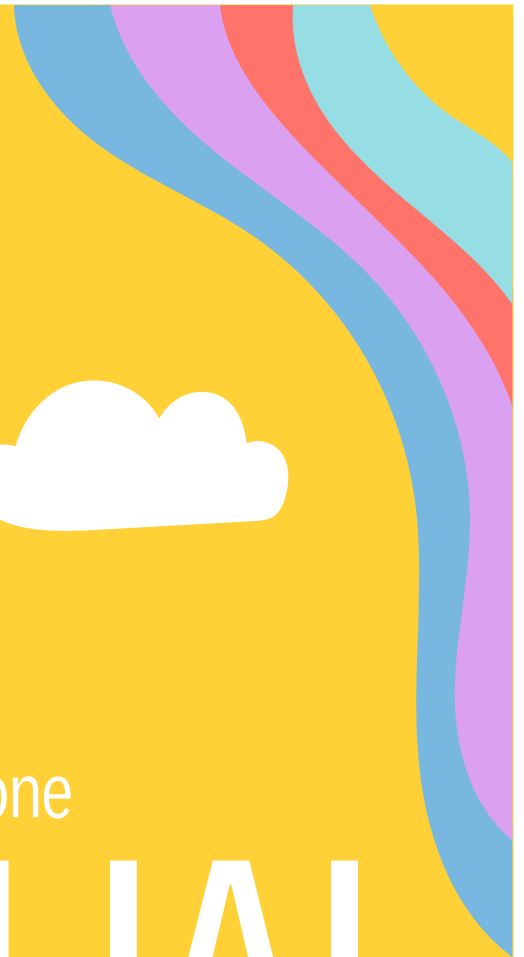


NZ\*22

neutral zone

# ANNUAL REPORT



Dear Friends,

Every day our Circle grows by a chair (or three) as teens return or new teens join for the first time. Sometimes, teens invite their friends. That's the ultimate sign that they're invested in what they're doing at Neutral Zone.

That's our secret sauce — the genuine youth excitement and passion that breathes life into our youth-driven center (finger snaps to John Weiss, our previous Executive Director for the expression). That's the necessary ingredient that makes NZ a deeply meaningful place for teens in our community.

After a difficult past two years, NZ has re-emerged. In September 2022, we relaunched our drop-in space and eighteen after school programs. In October, we hosted our first indoor concert since February 2020 for over 150 teens, which featured an exhilarating light show courtesy of our artists-in-residence. Our Youth-Driven Spaces Consulting is bringing NZ's blend of youth-driven, restorative practice to educators at Eastern Michigan University and 40 organizations in metro Detroit. And our Future Corps program, a ten-year intervention to support low income youth to successfully transition to adulthood, grew to include a new partnership at the University of Michigan as well as an expansion of our current role with Michigan Works! Southeast.

We convened our community of teens, staff and board to talk about our core values, develop goals and finalize a five-year strategic plan that our Board of Directors approved in May 2022. The plan takes our community on a sustainable journey that aligns with our values and explores avenues for growth. We are excited to share this plan with you in our report and welcome conversations with our community as we progress.

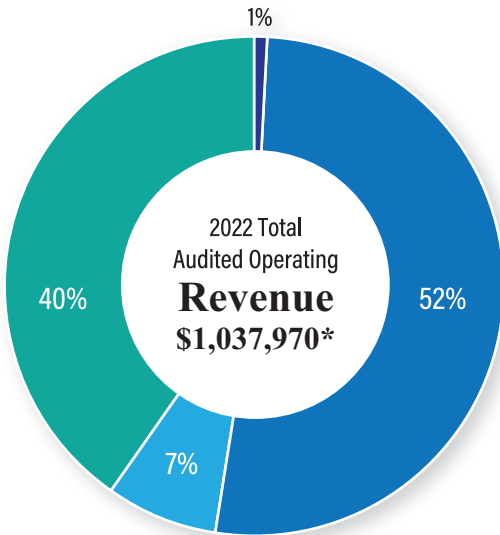
At the heart of our center, we are a community space where youth and adults meet to support, uplift and partner with teens on their journey to successful adulthood. With you, we imagined NZ in 1998, built it over the years, carried it through the pandemic, and have now set plans for future generations. On October 14th, 2023, the Neutral Zone will celebrate with all of you our 25th Anniversary. Please mark your calendars to join us.

With much appreciation,

Lori Roddy

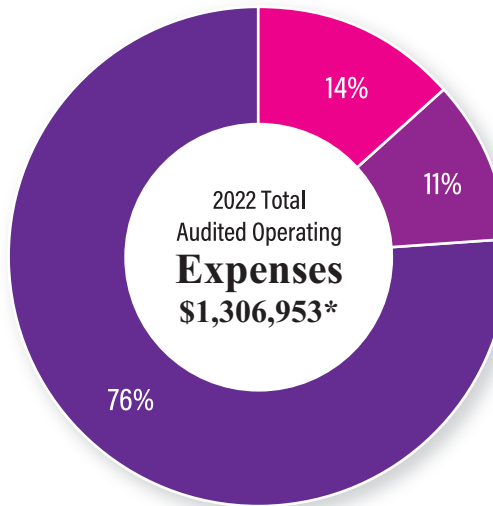
Neutral Zone Executive Director

## Neutral Zone Financial Health, 6/30/2022



\* total revenue does not include a \$149,621 Payroll Protection Program loan (forgiven)

- Earned Revenue: \$9,954**
- Contributions & Grants: \$536,656**  
*(does not include a gift from Mackenzie Scott or a \$149,621 Payroll Protection Program loan)*
- Coaching & Consulting: \$75,517**
- Released Restricted Revenue: \$415,843**  
*This is money given to us, usually a grant, that is earmarked for a future purpose. We report it as income when we "release" it in order to cover expenses funded by the grant.*



\* total expenses include \$101,271 of building depreciation, a non-cash expense

- Administration: \$177,341**
- Development: \$137,711**
- Programs: \$991,901**

### Assets

Neutral Zone has \$5,897,172 in real assets.

Our Operating Reserve has a balance of \$299,445, and the value of our endowment is \$239,745.

The book value of our building is \$2,457,766.

# Program Roundups

Hosted 600+ hours of safe, supportive, creative space for youth to drop in after school and connect to the NZ community. All NZ programs and events are FREE for high-school aged youth.

Offered eight high quality afterschool programs, totaling 575 hours, in music, visual art, literary arts, education, leadership and social justice attended by 150+ youth. Administered six weeks of daily summer programs in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti for 84 youth.

## Artists-in-Residence

Hosted a variety of incredible artists-in-residence and summer visiting artists to offer workshops to teens interested in their fields.

- Improvisational jazz semester-long workshop with Community High School jazz musician Ingrid Racine (staff alumni) along with local artists and alumni Clarence Collins and Evan Hayward
- Healing and amplifying voice with spoken word Detroit-based poet and activist, Joel Fluent, in partnership with Pathways To Success, a program of the Ann Arbor Public Schools
- Summer visiting artists: musician London Beck, visual artist Trevor Stone (staff alumni), rapper and musician Jamall Bufford (staff alumni), print artist Sajeew Visweswaran, and DJ Elliott Sabbagh (teen and staff alumni). Teens also had the chance to work with our resident staff artists & musicians Dani Darling, Ki5, and Hananiah Wiggins

Hosted a **summer juvenile justice program** featuring five half-day workshops with five guest artists in partnership with Washtenaw County Juvenile Detention's Day Treatment Program.



Teen in summer preparing print making screen

## Summer Interns!

This summer, twelve bright, engaging young people led three weekly programs in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti that enriched the lives of 121 eager teens. The interns built their communities, supported artists, and helped the teen participants reflect on their activities each day. Community artists engaged with teen participants in music, photography, visual arts, activism, and perennial favorite, screen printing.



Teens making "eyeballs" as part of a collective installation for an art show "Welcome to My Mind"

## Special Initiatives

**Barbershops:** Young Men of Color hosted a Barbershop Community Event series to bring barbers together with teens for haircuts, dinner and discussion.

**Food truck series:** Brought a Foodies food truck series for five weeks featuring youth artists for free food, music and games for teens.

**Justice, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Youth Initiative:** Engaged a team of 8 youth leaders for workshops and dialogue to lead 3 youth-led equity events.

**Washtenaw County Youth Commission:** Engaged 19 youth across Washtenaw to learn about county government in partnership with Corner Health and 4H Extension to work on youth issues - mental health, anti-racism, juvenile justice, and teen trafficking.

**Evening events:** Hosted 12 free events including open mic nights, music performances, movie nights, and special engagement events.



NZ Board of Directors and Staff after a board meeting



# FUTURECORPS

## Ending generational poverty by creating radical success for young people

It is Friday afternoon; a group of young people have taken over the venue to work on their journals, spinning visions for their futures. They see themselves earning credentials, having a good job, building meaningful relationships, and most of all, finding happiness as fulfilled, competent, engaged adults. It's all we've ever wanted for our youth. Future Corps is how it's happening.

Neutral Zone launched Future Corps in 2019 as a partnership with the City of Ann Arbor. It had one goal: to place low income youth in engaging jobs. That simple idea has blossomed into a ten-year intervention that pairs robust high school academic support, career, and college exploration with first-time work experience.



NZ staff Mike Hale with some of the teens in Future Corps

After high school graduation, Future Corps continues to cocoon young people with support. It offers workforce readiness training, tuition scholarships at Washtenaw Community College, paid employment at the City of Ann Arbor and University of Michigan, mentorship from community members and ongoing coaching, along with critical resource support, if needed.

And the program continues to grow. This year, in partnership with the University of Michigan Poverty Solutions, young people are now able to work in several departments of the University of Michigan. Neutral Zone has just extended its partnership with Michigan Works! to become a youth service provider. That means we can extend the commitment of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act signed by Congress in 2015 that earmarked more resources to address poverty in our communities. Qualifying low income young people will have access to more critical resources for school and work.

So far, 25 young people have signed on to Future Corps. Here's how they reflect on their experiences:

**"Future Corps has done more than I could ever have thought it would. Knowing what I know now, it was probably one of the best decisions I've made in a long time."**

**"I definitely would not be in the mindset that allowed me to go to school for free and work full-time while simultaneously developing myself as a whole without Future Corps, and I'm grateful."**

This is tough, critical, life-transforming work that will help to end generational poverty. We are committed to weaving our supportive community together — government entities, nonprofits, educational institutions, corporations and caring adults — to create radical success for our young people.

## Youth Driven Spaces Shores Up Teens' Personal Wellness

When the Skillman Foundation discovered that the pandemic had eaten away at Detroit youth's sense of personal wellness, they jumped into action. Skillman made grants to organizations already working in the community — including Neutral Zone's Youth Driven Spaces — in order to support youth-led wellness projects.

In September, Neutral Zone brought the grantees together for a two-day summit to help them uplift youth voice and reinforce youth decision-making at the earliest (and all!) stages of program planning. NZ will host monthly skill-building workshops and offer coaching support to help these important community agencies as they work to repair pandemic harm.



Teens at a youth driven convening work on youth-led wellness projects

Neutral Zone relies on our many supporters — from long-time friends to first-time donors — to create a community space where young people and adults meet to support, uplift and partner with teens on their journey to adulthood. **A very warm thank you to all of the community members who make creating a home for teens to discover and grow one of their priorities.** These are supporters who made gifts during the 2022 calendar year.

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# Strategic Plan

Our teens, staff and board have identified strategic goals for 2023.

Through these commitments, we strive to be a community that is **equitable, just** and **makes a positive lasting impact**. Here are some big goals we are excited about for the coming year.

- Revise our mission statement to reflect the organization's growth and change
- Secure six months operating reserve
- Host 25th anniversary celebration in 2023
- Rewrite our anti-discrimination statement
- Create YDS mission, vision, values & equity statement
- Improve building and programming accessibility for disabled youth
- Extend transportation access for teens, especially on the east side of the county
- Launch "Ignite" - teen leadership advisory group

**For details of the NZ 5-Year Strategic Plan, go to:**  
[www.neutral-zone.org/strategic-plan-2022-27](http://www.neutral-zone.org/strategic-plan-2022-27)



Dallis Bryant and Vaishanvi Tummala, teen members of the Board of Directors

