ASTEP was conceived to transform the lives of youth using the most powerful tool artists have: their art. Since 2006, ASTEP connects performing and visual artists with underserved youth to awaken their imaginations, foster critical thinking, and help them break the cycle of poverty. In addition, ASTEP offers leadership training for young people seeking to change the world through art.

**MISSION**

**COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

ASTEP partners with schools and community organizations that serve deeply underserved youth and leads arts camps, after-school workshops and classes.

**ASTEP Arts! at Refugee Youth Summer Academy (New York, New York)** - serving newly arrived refugee & asylee youth through a 6-week arts camp in partnership with the International Rescue Committee since 2009

**ASTEP on STAGE! (New York, New York)** - serving youth living with HIV/AIDS, affected by the justice system, living in transitional housing, or affected by unaccompanied minor status through after-school programs in partnership with 8 different community programs since 2013

**Art-In-Action (Homestead, Florida)** - serving youth affected by immigration status through a 4-week arts camp in partnership with enFamilia since 2006

**ASTEP Arts! at Shanti Bhavan (Bangalore, India)** - serving youth affected by the caste system through 2-week semi-annual art camps in partnership with the Shanti Bhavan Children’s Project since 2007

**ASTEP Arts! through Teach for India (throughout India)** - serving youth affected by extreme poverty and their Teaching Fellows throughout the year, in partnership since 2013

**artsINSIDEOUT (Johannesburg, South Africa)** - serving youth and mother’s living with HIV/AIDS through a 2-week arts camp in partnership with Nkosi’s Haven since 2011

**ASTEP Leaders Network** - through Workshops, ASTEP Chapters, and the annual Artist as Citizen Conference in NYC, ASTEP engages young artists in the diverse ways they can strengthen communities and empower individuals through the arts.
2018 ASTEP Programs

LET'S TALK NUMBERS

In 2018 alone, 205 Volunteer Teaching Artists joined forces with ASTEP.

92 ASTEP on STAGE! Teaching Artists
53 Volunteers supporting the Artist As Citizen Conference & ASTEP Leader’s Network
37 Teaching Artists at international arts camps
21 Teaching Artists at summer programs in the US

3,735 young people around the world spent time in an ASTEP Classroom.

2,835 children living in New York City
354 children living abroad
546 young people around the United States

9,680 hours of time were donated by ASTEP Volunteer Teaching Artists.

Based on the US average, each volunteer hour is worth $24.69. That means our Teaching Artists contributed a total value of $239,000 to the students ASTEP serves.
"You can teach them to paint," a voice inside quietly guided me.

It was art that had saved me too. I was in a performing arts program when I heard the news that my brother had been killed back home in Central America in 2015. Gun violence. In living color, I witnessed the violence through surveillance footage that still replays in my mind.

I looked down at the faces of the children fleeing the same fear. Twenty of them, staring up at me. Strangers to one another, sleeping miles away from home. Their reality felt like a hidden secret. This was May 2017: Children migrating to the U.S. alone had not yet received national coverage or become a topic of conversation. Little did I know that a year later, many would be forcibly separated from their parents.

I only learned about the migrant children through an email from my arts program, Revolución Latina: "Looking for talented, Spanish-speaking artists to volunteer to bring the magic of the arts to unaccompanied minors. PLEASE READ THIS! WE NEED TO HELP!"

They were working with another organization, Artists Striving to End Poverty (ASTEP), and it was a call to action, so I said: "Sign me up."

For my first lesson, I didn’t know what to expect. These children were in a new country, with a different language, without their parents. For some, it was the first time they had ever set foot in a classroom. I wanted to remind them that they are brave. The lesson would be to paint themselves as superheroes and to choose a superpower.

Today, pictures, articles and recordings of minors separated from their parents at the border are driving the story. Where are their voices among the chaos?

This month, in my most recent class, I opened a big box of markers and they stampeded to take their choice of colors. One boy grabbed them with such fervor, as if this was his one and only chance to have markers. He became emotional when I asked him to share. I took a breath, looked into his eyes, and I understood. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to share. These markers represented something. There was safety in the number of markers. If a marker was taken away, his sense of security diminished.

There are two groups of children in the program: Unaccompanied minors who came to the border alone, and children who have been separated from their parents while they were seeking asylum.

In the case of the unaccompanied minors, why would a parent make the difficult decision to send their child north, alone? Why would the child be safer without them? Because their survival is at stake. Home, due to circumstances out of their control, isn’t safe. Gangs, violence, abuse, drugs. There are many reasons. Each child has his or her own unique story.
When I first met the children, when I looked into their faces, I saw home. It felt like I knew them. One boy, in particular, caught my eye. He was from a small village where an indigenous community lives near my hometown. It was as if I had spotted a unicorn: I had never seen someone from that village here in the U.S.

I went around the room, trying to give as much individual attention as I could, and watched them create magic. I saw inspiration and focus. At their request, I put on some music and it turned into a celebration. I heard laughter and singing. There was art and there was joy.

For this hour, the kids were children. Children who didn’t have to think about survival. I saw relief. The purpose of the journey north is to seek protection. Unknown to them, they face their biggest fear at our doorstep. The U.S. border. How would you feel if your child was taken from you?

Art increases their resilience and shelters hope. At the end of each lesson, the children usually ask for more supplies so they can continue doing art on their own. In one of my favorite lessons, we made dream catchers, a physical and tangible manifestation of their dreams. Yarn, feathers, glue, markers and hand coordination kept them very busy. Some were skilled at weaving beautiful patterns with the yarn. I observed them teaching one another.

When it was time to go, one boy asked for more yarn because he wanted to make bracelets. These children have amazing skills and talents that deserve to be nurtured. When you provide them with these materials, they come alive and go beyond. I was amazed at their focus, especially the younger children. They were committed to the task and wanted to do it well.

They asked what I thought and I told them I saw great beauty in their dreams and their dream catchers. I asked them to write down their hopes and dreams on a piece of paper. I hope that I can see my family soon. I hope to be with my mom again. My dad. I dream of becoming a veterinarian. I hope everything will be okay. Some read them out loud. Others preferred to keep them private. I told them to put their dream catchers by their beds, and to hold tight to their dreams.

One child I taught is 17 years old. I can’t help but worry what might happen to him when he turns 18 and no longer qualifies for this care. I am sure he asks himself the same question. He is a talented poet, with much potential. I can only imagine the great things he will accomplish if he is given a chance to survive.

The youngest child in the program is 3 years old. To know that a 3-year-old child traveled alone, unprotected, and endured a long journey to cross the border is hard to fathom.

They already have superpowers. But in that first class, once they began to draw, they found more. One girl drew herself with wings, bright oranges and yellows and blues, so she could fly. A boy could make himself invisible. Another had big muscles and was very strong. Some included their friends in their drawings.

In another class, I came to learn that the majority of the children didn’t know how to draw a heart. As I went around the room individually teaching them how to outline one of the most beautiful shapes I know, I felt the symbolism of this experience. With a little push and encouragement, the boy with the markers filled the page with hearts and felt a sense of accomplishment.

If at this time there are current challenges families are facing to be reunited with their children, there are actions that we can take to help. Your support and contribution will have an immediate impact on their daily lives.
### 2018 Financials

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<th>Support and Revenue</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2017</th>
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<td>Contributions and</td>
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<td>In-kind contributions</td>
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<td>Special events</td>
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<td>Investment Income</td>
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<td><strong>Total support and</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
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<td>Salaries</td>
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<td>Payroll</td>
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<td>Travel</td>
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<td>Volunteer student</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td><strong>Total expense</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,049,092</strong></td>
<td><strong>767,934</strong></td>
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- Fundraising: 35%
- Program Services: 46%
- Management + General: 19%
WHO TO THANK?

ASTEP BOARD OF DIRECTORS
CHAIR: Thomas FitzGerald | Senior Managing Director, Macquarie Capital (USA)
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