

# 2023

## Annual Report

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Project Adventure



**Project Adventure**

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# Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends of PA:

2023 was a year full of twists and turns. As the world starts to find its balance post-Covid, many of us in the nonprofit world have found ourselves doing a complicated dance.

Necessity is truly the mother of invention. During the Covid crisis we built new programs, like our school-based Therapeutic Support Groups and a Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum for afterschool programs. Using adventure as a tool for healing and growth, PA stepped up to fill a gap in mental health supports in our local communities (see “Our Impact,” below, to learn how successful those have been!). It’s been an exciting few years, finding new ways to use proven tools in a changing world.

Partnerships that were grown during Covid - with districts like Gloucester and Beverly, MA, and with organizations like the YMCA and the Cabot Theatre - are still going strong. But 2023 marked a return to the “old days” of bootstrap fundraising, budget squeezes, and scraping by. We have adjusted accordingly, and even in the face of those squeezes, we continue to grow. But oh, how I dream of a world where our social services are fully funded, where our attention can go 100% to the people who need it!

In the face of all this change, our supporters have stepped up. Our Un-Gala Fundraiser in 2023 was a booming success, our grants doubled, and donations from individuals increased by 30% over previous years.

There’s more to be done, but as usual, we don’t shy away from a challenge! Theologian Frederick Buechner once wrote that your vocation is “where your deep gladness and the world’s deep need meet” and I think that’s true for PA. We know how to build joy, connection, healing, and growth, and the world is calling for that right now. I believe that with ingenuity and new supporters, we can meet that need in increasing ways every year!

Thank you, as always, for your support,



Caitlin McCormick Small  
Executive Director & CEO



*Caitlin McCormick Small with PA board members Chris Dorman, Courtney Schoon, James Jandl, and Scott Beyer, at the 2023 Un-Gala Fundraiser.*

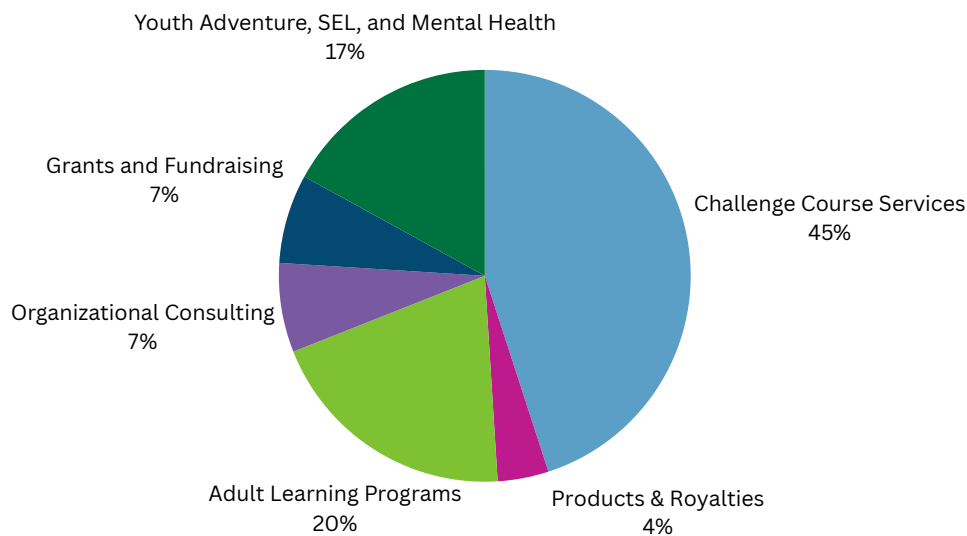
## Did You Know?

The unofficial mascot of Project Adventure is the rubber chicken! A symbol of playfulness, fun, and nontraditional tools being surprisingly effective (break out a rubber chicken in a corporate boardroom and watch how fast the dynamics change!), the rubber chicken shows up in our curriculum, all around PA’s offices, and even on some of our gear. It also helps to ensure that we don’t take ourselves too seriously.

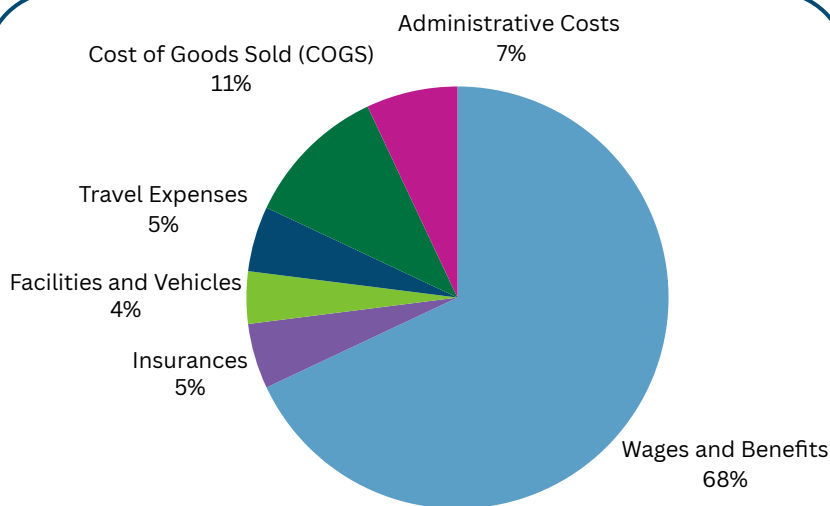


# 2023 Financials

Project Adventure's finances continued to hold stable in 2023. With our board of directors, we made the decision to use some of our resources, particularly from a very strong 2022, to invest in growth, including new technology (a new CRM and computer upgrades) and consulting support for our development program and our strategic plan. We also added key positions (a Director of Education & Training, Senior Manager of Development, and Senior Manager of Operations) as well as additional facilitators that have brought new capacity to our organization, allowing us to both serve more people and refine and develop our programming and curriculum.



**2023 Revenue Sources**



**2023 Expenses**

**2023 Total Revenue:** \$3.62 million  
**2023 Total Expenses:** \$3.65 million

**Cash Reserves as of 12/31/23:**  
\$1.3 million

*pre-audit financials*

*"Project Adventure has always been a great partner. We are so grateful that they find resources to support our work together. We couldn't do it otherwise."*

**-Afterschool Leader**



# The Transformative Power of Adventure

## *Impact Stories*

### *Therapeutic Adventure*

Adventure is fun. Adventure is engaging. Adventure is **healing**. That's what our Therapeutic Adventure Programs (TAP) are built on: adventurous experiences that help groups of students laugh, connect, and grow! In the midst of a national youth mental health crisis, PA has created TAP partnerships at multiple local public schools. **In 2023, we facilitated Therapeutic and SEL programs - using adventure to help students build new social skills, connect with peers, and reach their therapeutic goals - at 4 local high schools, 2 local middle schools, 1 early education program, and 3 afterschool programs... reaching more than 600 youth!**



*"At Project Adventure, I got to see what it feels like to really trust someone and try new challenges. I learned to allow people to help me through new things and solve my problems. **I don't have to do it alone.**" - TAP student*

### *Juvenile Justice*



Project Adventure facilitators are masters at helping teams of people work better together, and our collaboration with New York City's Administration of Children's Services (ACS) is a prime example. ACS provides a wide range of services to improve the lives of children and families in the juvenile justice system in NYC. In this multi-year collaboration, PA works with the staff of detention centers and diversion programs, leading retreats to support staff wellness, and facilitating a 6-month fellowship for leaders across the system. The fellowship **helps managers learn new skills, receive peer support, and develop solutions to their problems of practice.** In a big, complex system with a great amount of need, this partnership has been very successful! **We combine adventure methods with nonviolent communication, Restorative Justice, and change theory, in a unique and powerful approach to organizational development for a large urban juvenile justice system.**



# Our Impact

## By the Numbers

Project Adventure's reach is broad. In 2023, we supported:

- 7,901 youth
- 405 challenge courses
- 1,418 adult learners

We reached 8% more youth than in 2022!

"Project Adventure has helped the English Learner Program at Beverly High School by giving students a place in their school day to learn about themselves and one another... [PA] builds their confidence both as English learners and as human beings in our community. It fosters a safe space to take social and emotional risks guided through purposeful activities and lots of FUN!"  
-Beverly High EL Teacher

Surveys of participants in our high-impact TAP programs in 2023 showed...

- 90% of students reported an improvement in their mood or energy
- 74% of students reported a positive or very positive impact on their mental health
- 89% of students reported an improvement in their ability to regulate their emotions
- 84% of students reported increased confidence in connecting with peers

## The Adventure for All Fund



The Adventure for All Fund helps us reduce or eliminate costs to adventure experiences for high-needs communities. In 2023, these funds were used for programs such as Gloucester High School's Anchor and English Learner programs. Both groups were able to come to Project Adventure's challenge course for a day of skill-building and community-building, at no cost to them or their families. Thank you for supporting Adventure for All!

### How You Can Help:

You can make adventure accessible to more kids and adults by contributing to the Adventure For All Fund.

[www.pa.org/donate](http://www.pa.org/donate)

### Why We Give

"With increasing levels of isolation and anxiety in our youth and polarization in our society, the need for PA's services has never been greater. We support Project Adventure financially to help them develop innovative, adventure-based approaches to social emotional learning and expand their impact to students, groups, and communities in need."

Scott and Polly Beyer  
Wenham, Massachusetts

# Thank you to our 2023 Donors

**YOU**  
transformed lives  
& strengthened  
communities

## \$10,000 +

Christopher & Kathy Weld\*  
NiSource Foundation \*  
Scott & Polly Beyer\*\*  
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## \$5,000-\$9,999

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Why I Give

*"Project Adventure is an important memory of my childhood. It helped shape the generous person I am today. PA went above and beyond to help me grow and develop my true nature - which led to my being a team player in life"*

**Wendy Rose  
Gloucester, MA**

This list includes individuals and organizations that provided support in 2023. PA has made every effort to ensure this list is accurate and complete. Please accept our sincere apology if we inadvertently omitted your name.

\* indicates support/participation in our annual Un-Gala \*\* indicates support of Un-Gala and Annual Fund

Cont'd

# Thank you to our 2023 Donors

(Continued)

## Up to \$249

George Putnam III  
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Taron Kinney\*  
Thomas Gerard Cahill  
Tim Budrow\*

*Special thanks to all of our Un-Gala  
auction donors and volunteers who  
helped make the event better than ever!*

## Board of Directors

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