



ECAT
ERIE CENTER FOR
ARTS & TECHNOLOGY

ANNUAL REPORT

20
23

Mission

The Erie Center for Arts & Technology (ECAT) is a community-based educational arts and career training facility that inspires, educates and empowers people of all ages with adult job training and creative youth programs.

How We Do It:

Workforce Programs

Our tuition-free training programs are informed by industry needs.

- Construction Trades Training
- Clinical Medical Assistant

Coming 2024

Upcoming programs, facilitated by UPMC with support from ECAT:

- Freedom House
- Sterile Processing Technician

Arts Programs

Our no-cost programs provide a safe, welcoming environment explore the arts.

- Teen Afterschool
- Scratch Collaborative
- Adult Classes
- Art Shows
- Creative Educators Book Club

Coming 2024

- Teen Career program

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HEAR FROM OUR DIRECTORS

A conversation with **Kate Neubert-Lechner**, Workforce Program Director and **Jude Shingle**, Arts Program Director

What do you want students to experience when they begin a program at ECAT?

KNL: I want students to feel support and understanding, that this is a different program than they've been in before, and that they're poised to achieve the goals they've set for graduation.

JS: When our teens enroll in a program I want them to feel it's safe, creative, and challenging. To believe that ECAT is a place they can be themselves and a place they can see themselves growing - that's the most important part.

Why is it important for our programs to be tuition-free?

KNL: We see a lot of our students struggling to make ends meet for themselves and their families.

They don't necessarily have the income to pay for education, which is often the reason they haven't gone into training already. Having to leave a program, completed or not, shackled with debt is a burden. That's also why our Student Support Fund is so important, it helps with financial hardships that prevent them from actively participating in school.

JS: As families look at their limited resources, it can be hard to invest those in extra-curricular activities. Also, arts are expensive. Supplies are expensive. Finding capable arts instructors is expensive. If we charged for these programs, we'd be limiting it to the folks with the most financial resources.

I believe that having access to a way to express yourself is human dignity. It's a human right. ECAT interprets access as more than giving really basic art supplies to express yourself, our programs give materials students can do complex things with. We should all have that opportunity.



What are some things you'd like to say about ECAT's programming by this time next year?

KNL: I'd like to say that we are answering industry needs and expanding our programming accordingly. That we are getting support to expand our capacity for enrolling students; when we see 68 students apply for 20 spots, or 75 students apply for 15-20 spots, it's hard to turn them away. We want to accommodate more of our students. And increase our capacity to support our students to increase retention in our programs.

JS: I'd love to have completed 6 student-led community-based arts projects through the Teen Career program we're launching in this upcoming arts season.

How can our community support ECAT to help us reach those 2024 goals?

KNL: We are a nonprofit, we don't charge for our programs, and therefore don't have the sustained revenue streams other educational institutions have - so monetary support is paramount. Give to the program, sponsor a student, donate to the Support Fund.

JS: It's expensive to run high-quality programs. For businesses, donating through the Educational Improvement Tax Credit program makes the greatest impact.

Read the full interviews in the New Year on our website: erecat.org

AFTERSCHOOL ARTS

A teen artist lets you experience ECAT through their eyes.



El

, grade 11, goes to Collegiate Academy during the day, and spends Tuesdays and Thursdays afterschool at ECAT. This semester she's enrolled in Cosplay Prop Making and Ceramics: Color. In the past she has taken painting, sculpture, and many more ceramics classes. You can usually find El with her friend Aiva, another longtime ECAT student.

Step into El's shoes as she comes to ECAT:

“I'm always very excited to come to class!! I look forward to working on my project and seeing the teachers and my friends. I love being greeted by Jessie and Jude, they are always very welcoming and I love talking with them about my week or the projects. They're also very funny too! Everyone is very, very sweet and caring and probably some of the nicest people I've met.

At ECAT, we teach tangible skills but also create a safe space to learn intangible skills. Tell us about a time you learned or practiced an intangible skill at ECAT.

I've definitely learned patience. Art takes time! An example of a time I had to be patient was when I was in my prop making class, and I had to constantly let things dry and I had to always sand foam or paint, and it was very irritating because I just wanted to get it completed. But then I realized that if I slow down and take more time on it, it'll turn out better, which is exactly what happened!

What does being part of the ECAT community mean to you?

ECAT is a wonderful place, basically heaven on earth! I look forward every single week to my class, and I wish I could just live there to be honest. I've never had a single bad experience at the studio. If I could reverse time and become a freshman again and take classes forever, I absolutely would. I cannot emphasize enough about how much I love and adore ECAT. It truly has changed my life!!

I've met so many amazing people, developed new skills, got better at things I already knew, and am getting my name out in the art community. I want to pursue an art career with the help of ECAT!!! I would also eventually love to come back and teach at ECAT, or be an assistant to a teacher. ☺☺



CONSTRUCTION TRADES: CREATING STRONG FUTURES

Learn how our tuition-free workforce program is changing lives.

Casey and Cassaundra Shaw, siblings from Erie, are enrolled in our Construction Trades Training program. They are determined, have goals for financial security, and plan to improve our city with their new skills, all while navigating parenthood and a challenging economy.

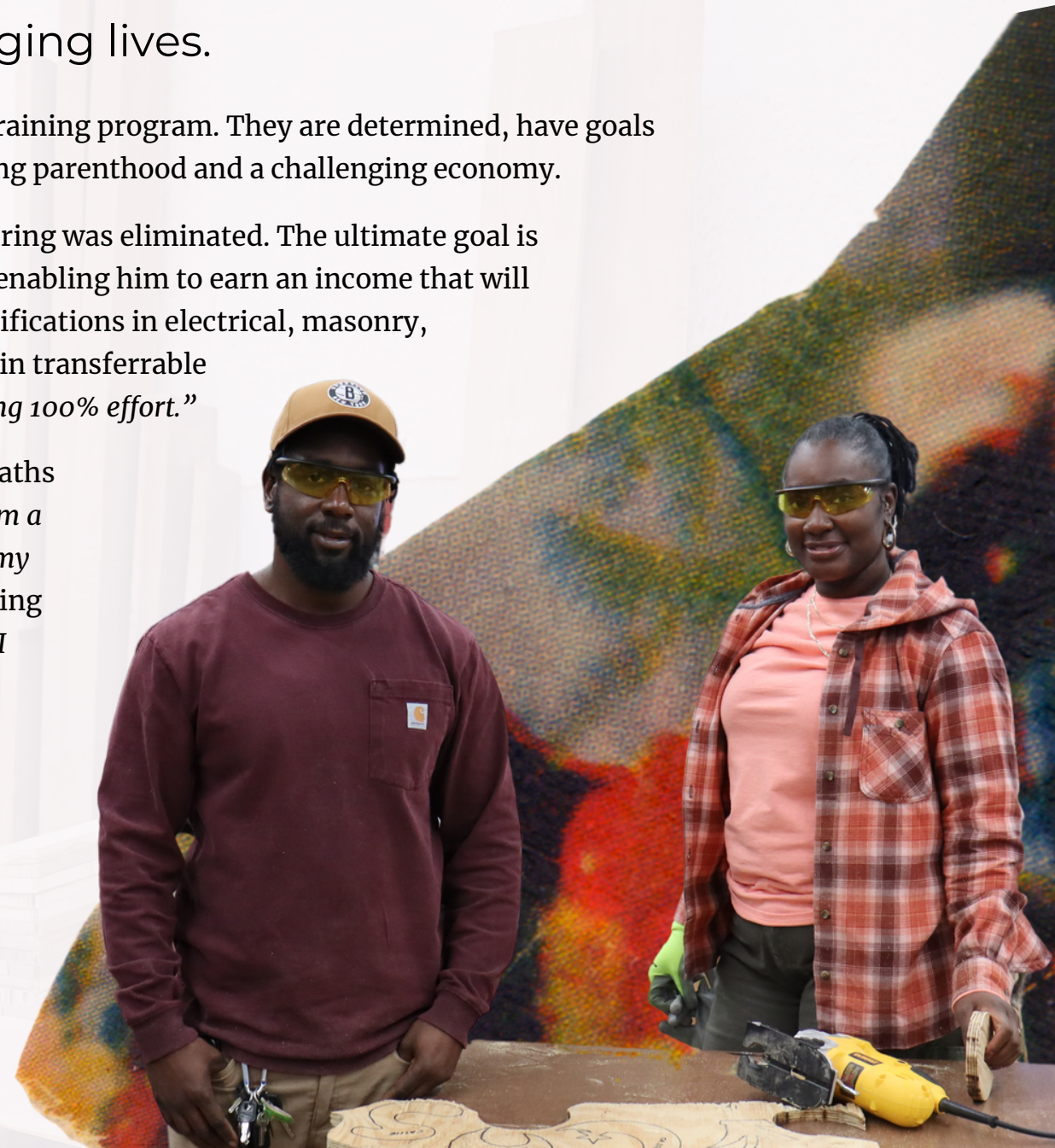
Casey came to our program with a long-term plan for his career after his job in manufacturing was eliminated. The ultimate goal is property ownership. Casey is determined to be a homeowner and aspires to be a landlord, enabling him to earn an income that will support his family. After completing the program, Casey will be equipped with NCCER certifications in electrical, masonry, plumbing, and carpentry and can maintain properties himself. Casey's is eager to skill up in transferrable skills, like communication, and is striving for excellence in hard skills training - *"I'm giving 100% effort."*

Casey's sister, Cassaundra, applied after hearing about the opportunity to change career paths without taking on debt. She embraces her identity as a non-traditional student, saying *"I'm a non-traditional person all around... Thankfully I was able to go back to high school and obtain my diploma, but I would like for [my kid's] situation to be much more smooth."* Cassaundra is setting the example for her kids that pursuing a postsecondary education can happen at any age *"I want them to see that I am going to school, even though it's later in life."*

Whether entering the workforce for the first time or changing careers, our program is designed to help students achieve their goals regardless of life's challenges. Honestly, Cassaundra said it best:


“ There is going to be adversity, no matter what stage, no matter what age. Just keep going. ”

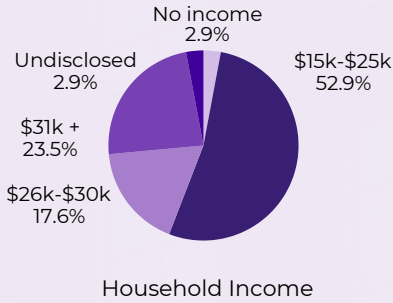
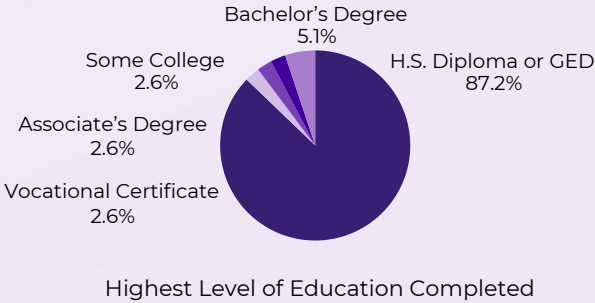
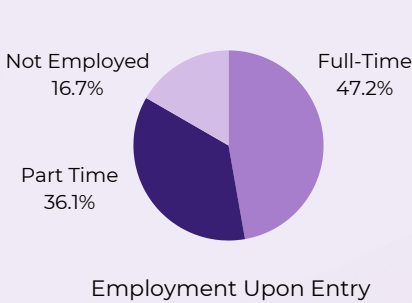
ECAT will be here, ready with training and support systems to ensure student success.



PROGRAMS BY THE NUMBERS:

Career Training Programs: Construction Trades & Clinical Medical Assistant • 2023-24 cohorts began Sept. 2023

 **31**
Students Enrolled




\$10,200
Distributed from our Student Support Fund to students experiencing financial hardship.

Arts Programs • January - May, September - December art seasons

 **170**
Teen Afterschool Participants

\$2,565
Artwork Sales Supporting Artists

16 Teaching Artists Employed

 **5** Creative Educators Book Club meetings

$\frac{1}{48}$ ECAT joined the prestigious Scratch Education Collaborative as 1 of 48 global partners in the 2023-2025 cohort.

3 Teaching Artists Trained to Facilitate Scratch's equity-centered creative computing programs.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

NEW: Steamrolled Relief Block Mural

Local artists Ashley Pastore, owner of Grounded Printshop, Alex Anthes, and Doug Eberhardt carved MDF board to create large “stamps”. The stamps were pressed onto polytab, a canvas-like material, using a steamroller. The imagery was inspired by the native plants on Presque Isle and takes on a quilt-like appearance on the East Ave side of ECAT Wayne. We thank the artists and Erie Arts & Culture for collaborating to bring us this stunning piece of artwork.

The mural was featured on Hello, Print Friend, a podcast dedicated to celebrating and amplifying contemporary printmaking and its culture. [Listen here!](#)



CEO of the Year

We were proud to celebrate ECAT’s first Executive Director, Daria Devlin, the 2023 honoree of The Nonprofit Excellence Awards: “CEO of the Year.” Daria has accomplished incredible things at ECAT, including raising our capital stack, overseeing the renovation of the ECAT Wayne building, supervising the launch of our core programs, and ensuring organization and program sustainability.



East Ave Market

This summer we launched a produce market in response to our community’s request for fresh, affordable produce. Our pay-what-you-can model made fruits and vegetables available to over 203 of our neighbors.

In addition to providing produce, we were also committed to supporting urban agriculture; \$1,009.50 went directly to local farmers. We thank our community for donating produce, Erie Food Co-op for donating seed packets, and Hamot Health Foundation, our program sponsor, for their commitment to supporting the health of our neighbors.



Ada Lawrence Community Room

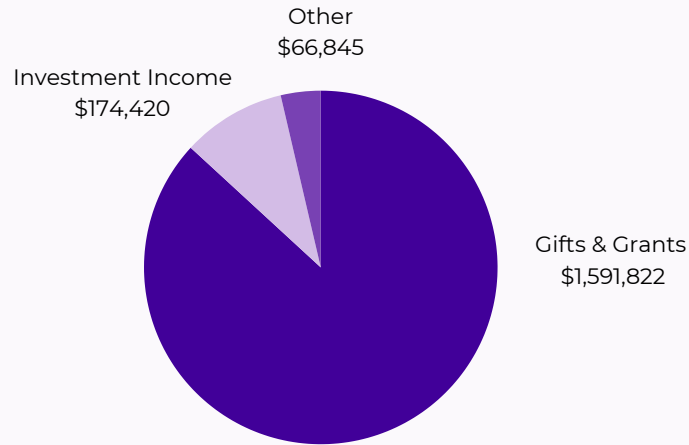
ECAT was thrilled to accept three pieces of artwork on long-term loan from the Erie Art Museum. The pieces from George D. Green, an Abstract Illusionist, reflect the vibrancy of our Eastside community. The pieces are located in the Ada Lawrence Community Room, a multi-purpose space that accommodates hundreds of reservations each year.

2022 FINANCIALS

Erie Center for Arts & Technology (Operating Entity)

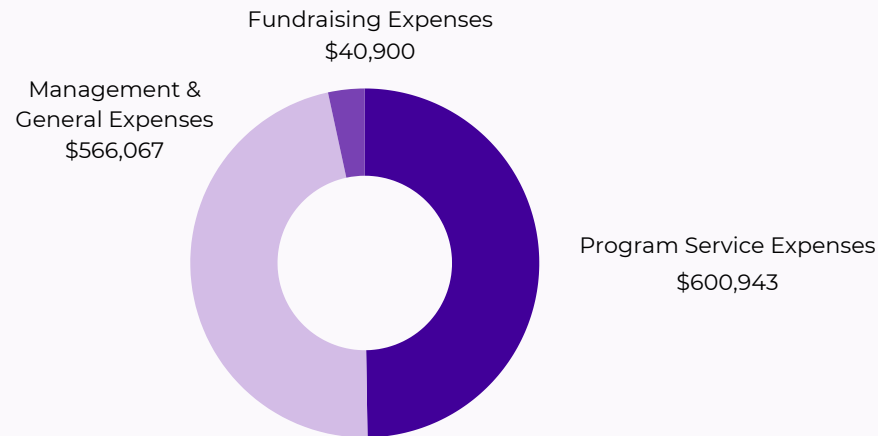
2022 Revenue

Total: \$1,833,087



2022 Expenses

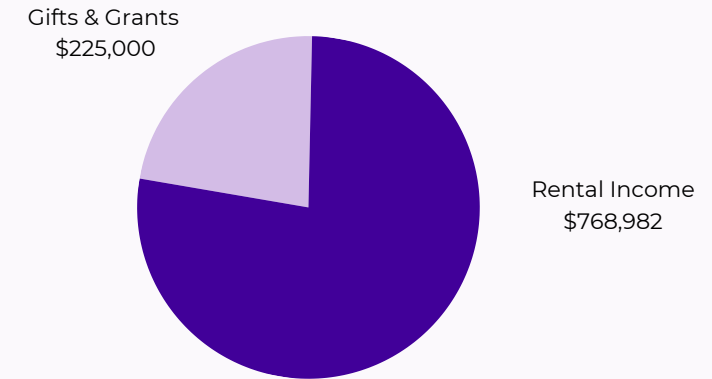
Total: \$1,207,910



ECAT Wayne (Building Entity)

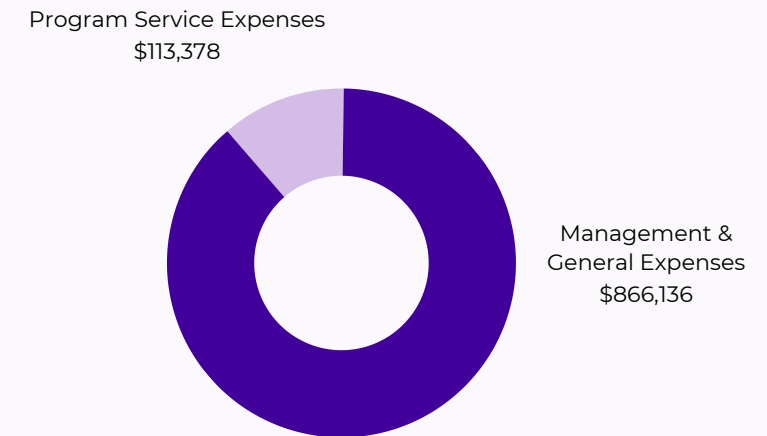
2022 Revenue

Total: \$993,982



2022 Expenses

Total: \$979,514



MEET THE TEAM

Workforce Programs



Kate Neubert-Lechner
Workforce Programs Director
kate@eriecat.org



Danielle Romeo-Smith
Clinical Medical
Assistant Instructor
danielle@eriecat.org



Courtney Wyatt
Construction Trades
Program Supervisor
courtney.wyatt@eriecat.org



Mike Trippi
Construction Trades Instructor
mtrippi@eriesd.org

Arts Programs



Jude Shingle
Arts Programs Director
jude@eriecat.org



Jessie Simmons
Arts Programs Coordinator
jessie@eriecat.org

Teaching Artists:

Alex Strasser	Jackson Surma
Anna Hartvigson	Ja'Leesa Williams
Annie Schmitt	Jay Nowacinski
Ashley Pastore	Jayna Deniziak
Caelin McDaniel	Jessie Simmons
Calie Maloney	Marquis Wallace
Emily Guadoso	Max Blumish
Ethan Hayden	Raiden Kubiak

Community



Daria Devlin
Executive Director
daria@eriecat.org



Hannah Moran
Marketing, Communications,
and Special Projects
hannah@eriecat.org



Drevell Showers
Community Outreach Coordinator
drevell@eriecat.org



Tamika Craig
Building Manager
tamika@eriecat.org



Jamaine Gambill
Building Custodian
jamaine@eriecat.org



ECAT BOARD

We are grateful to our board members for their dedication and guidance:

Board of Directors

Brenda Sandberg, Chair

Highmark Health & Allegheny Health Network

Laura Guncheon, Vice-Chair

Master Project Manager, Erie Insurance

Paul Wojcik, Treasurer

PNC Bank

Sarah Holland, Secretary

Knox Law Firm

Board Members

Charles “Boo” Hagerty

Hamot Health Foundation

Thomas C. Hoffman, II

Knox Law Firm

Caesar Westbrook

Erie School District

Heather McBrier

Coldwell Banker Select

Danny Jones

GECAC

Gary Clark

Reed Manufacturing Corporation

Jill Crable

DiPaolo Student Success Center

Linda Graff

Erie School Board

2023 New Members

This year we welcomed one new member to our Board:

Gus Paliouras

New York Lunch

2024 Upcoming Members

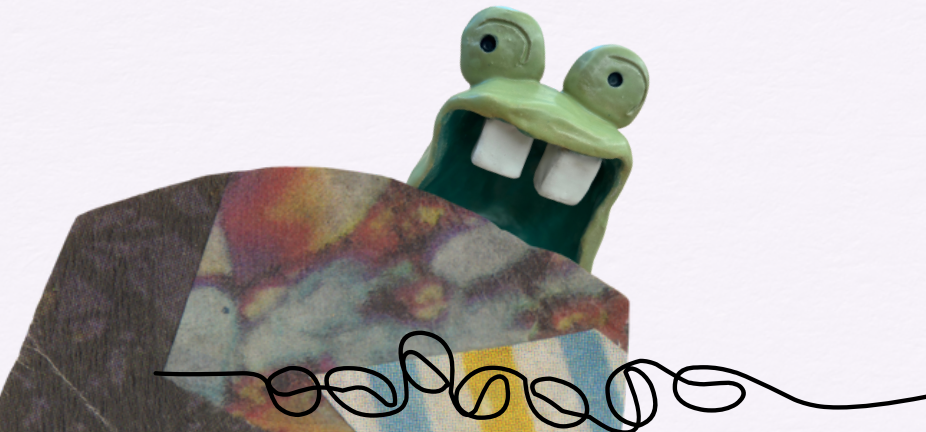
We look forward to welcoming our newest board members in January 2024:

Marquis Wallace

Anansi Collaborations

Darrell Cook

The Empowered Life Community
Development Corporation





THANK YOU

From the entire ECAT staff, board, and students we serve, thank you for supporting our mission in 2023.

STAY IN TOUCH in 2024

Follow our social media to hear the latest news about new programs and partnerships, enrollment opportunities, and events! And join our newsletter at eriecat.org/contact

