



“youth can walk
around trouble

“if there is some

place to walk to

and someone to walk with

Former Gang Member

Deep Center Annual Report

2020 - 2021
Savannah, Georgia



Deep Center's 2020-2021 Story

Supporting the Right to Thrive

More than 75% of Deep's youth participants grow up in low-resource neighborhoods. Research shows strong links between poverty, trauma, and hampered learning capacities. Pre-pandemic, a quarter of Chatham County's public middle-school students failed to meet state-minimum writing standards, a learning gap that has only increased in the last 18 months.

The impacts of COVID-19 continue to press on Deep's community—working-class families of color—in especially serious ways, from disproportionately high infection and death rates in working-class Black neighborhoods, to limited access to mental health care, to acute learning loss.

If not quickly remediated, the increased learning deficits and trauma related to COVID-19 will only further leave behind the low-income youth of color served by Deep.

But Deep is working to fill the gap. Deep is helping our youth gain the academic, intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and ultimately economic benefits of increased learning capacities, as demonstrated by our evidence-based evaluation data.

Despite the unparalleled challenges of 2020-2021, Deep met and exceeded all of our programmatic goals in the last year. Deep's programming has increased, not decreased or slowed down—all because of the terrible need that the pandemic has created in the communities we serve. These achievements underscore our organization's fiscal and operational health, as well as the critical role our services play in our young people's lives.

Your support this year made it possible for Deep Center to:

- ✓ Engage Savannah's highest-need youth in recovering from the learning, mental health, and developmental losses wrought by the pandemic.
- ✓ Partner with an intergenerational cohort of adult allies, community leaders, and youth-service professionals to build a Savannah that is healthier and safer for all youth and families.

Deep Center's Annual Impact

1,554 youth

engaged in arts education, literacy, and leadership learning experiences.

1,741 adults

engaged in professional development, creative placemaking, arts education, and literacy learning towards building a restorative community.

4,446 hours

of high-quality, intensive, evidence-based, and evaluation-tracked programming provided to youth and adult community members.





Our Mission

Deep Center's mission is to empower Savannah's young people to thrive as learners, community leaders, and agents of change.

Through creative writing, cultural production, and art, Deep creates platforms for the city's youth and the village of support around them, including their families and adult allies, to share stories, engage in debates, and make Savannah a more just and equitable place.

Our work is trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and promotes a roots-cause model of youth and community development on three parallel tracks:

- Direct Service
- Narrative Change
- Systems Change



Impact Partners

Regional and National Partners

Arnold Ventures (Houston, TX)
Berkeley Law Policy Advocacy Clinic, (Berkeley, CA)
University of Georgia, Dr. Kevin Burke (Athens, GA)
Debt Free Justice Campaign
Forward Promise, an initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (Philadelphia, PA)
Fund Georgia's Future (Atlanta, GA)
Georgia Appleseed (Atlanta, GA)
Georgia Budget and Policy Institute (Atlanta, GA)
Georgia Southern University, Drs. Peggy Shannon-Baker and Sabrina Ross (Statesboro, GA)
Highlander Research and Education Center (New Market, TN)
Justice Reform Partnership (Atlanta, GA)
Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (Washington, D.C.)
National Writing Project (Berkeley, CA)
Public Welfare Foundation (Washington, D.C.)
Sapelo Foundation (Savannah, GA)
The Southern Center for Human Rights (Atlanta, GA)
Southern Economic Advancement Project (Atlanta, GA)
Step Up Savannah (Savannah, GA)
Vera Institute for Justice (New York, NY)
Voices for Georgia's Children (Atlanta, GA)

Local Partners

Chatham County Juvenile Court
Chatham County Parks & Rec at Lake Mayer
City of Savannah Cultural Affairs Commission
City of Savannah Office of The Mayor
Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition
First Presbyterian Church
Forsyth Farmers' Market
Fresh Start Radio
Front Porch Improv Theater
Front Porch Multi-Agency Resource Center
Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia
Healthy Savannah
Hudson Hill Neighborhood Association
Ivory Bay Community Development Corporation
John Delaware Community Center
Live Oak Public Libraries
Pennsylvania Avenue Resource Center
Savannah African Art Museum
Savannah Police Department
Savannah Repertory Theater
Savannah VOICE Festival
Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools
Telfair Museums
Wandering Rootworkers
West Broad Street YMCA

Deep's Youth Programs

Introductory Programs

The Young Author Project and Community Drop-In provided free creative writing and arts workshops for grades 6-12 to help young people: heal, build community, share their stories, amplify their voices, and gain learning and leadership skills.

Block by Block

Block by Block served high school youth who had completed an introductory program and showed a passion for writing and leadership. Guided by two adult teaching artists, youth ages 14-18 conducted community research, discovered Savannah's past and unfolding stories, and connected their personal stories to the narratives of their neighborhood and society at large.

Youth Leadership Team

The Youth Leadership Team (YLT) supported creative writers and leaders ages 14-21 who joined the Action Research Team or the Slam Team. Conducted as a paid internship, the YLT championed its members in providing feedback to staff on programs, engaging in advanced writing on critical community issues, co-facilitating community conversations on issues facing Chatham County, and performing their writing in at least five tailored community settings.

Systems-Impacted Youth

Deep's highest-need youth are systems-impacted — and therefore facing a complex web of challenges. Deep is a full partner in Chatham County Juvenile Court's work to reform the over-sentencing of young people and divert youth from court. This year, Deep partnered with the Front Porch, a multi-agency diversion program, and the Juvenile Court's Work Readiness and Enrichment Program to lead learning intensives for systems-impacted youth. In 2021, Deep hired two full-time life navigators to connect youth and their families to critical social and emotional support so our youth can focus on their learning.

Youth Programs Impact 2020-2021



Deep's programs yielded incredible outcomes for our youth:

- Significant developmental leaps in the internal assets that are foundational to social-emotional skills and learning capacity.
- Improved youth attitudes toward their writing, families, schools, and communities.
- Increased scholastic achievement across the curriculum in multiple subject areas.

Youth Programs Learning Evaluation

49% of youth saw an average increase in their English Language Arts grades of 8%.
(nearly a full letter grade)

79% of all youth saw an increase of 9% in their writing skills, with youth of color increasing 14%.

Court-involved youth saw remarkable gains:

14% increase in Critical Literacy

28% increase in Youth Leadership, Collaboration, and Voice

37% increase in Fearlessness

In 2020-2021, Deep's tuition-free after-school programming increased equity and opportunity for Chatham County's highest-need youth.

518

public-school youth
in intensive
workshop series

4,000

hours of high-quality
literacy, arts education,
and leadership
development learning

80%

were youth of color

75%

received free and reduced lunch

40

public events

9

published books of youth writing
and artwork

21

program sites

25

public school partners

6

community organization collaborations



Lowering Barriers to Learning

Now in its second year, Deep's **Community Drop-In** is a safe and brave space for systems-impacted youth to engage with one another, in community, at their point of passion and joy. Programming is designed to sustain participation over a meaningful period of time so youth grow their skills, learning capacities, and confidence.

To balance the downsides of virtual programming during the pandemic, Deep strengthened engagement at our Title I schools with special evening programming paired with in-person snack drop-off.



Youth Programs Snapshots

Slam Team

Our youth Slam Team partnered with the **Telfair Museums** to present **"Black Prisms,"** an interactive spoken word and audio experience. Sharing their artwork with new and diverse audiences at the Telfair Museums, one of Savannah's finest arts venues, enriched our youth participants' learning and built their confidence. Slam youth artists explored their generational stories, with a focus on shattering the shackles of the past with the power of light, words, and their voice.



Block by Block

Block by Block youth worked with 13 community artists, including choreographers, visual artists, composers, food activists, healers, and farmers from **Wandering Rootworkers**. In addition to exploring health and equity in Savannah, youth envisioned what positive change could look like in their neighborhoods—especially in response to COVID-19—and explored themes around mental health support, medical care, and access to healthy food, which culminated in the development and maintenance of community gardens in two locations.

Savannah VOICE Festival

Block by Block's young writers teamed up with composers from the Savannah VOICE Festival to turn their poems into songs. Our youth produced six fully fledged songs complete with sheet music and debuted their songs at live performances of the VOICE Festival.

"The final songs and sheet music were amazing, of course, but what this partnership really gave to our young people was a look at exactly how healing creative expression can be and how far your passions can take you in life," said Director of Youth Programs Ariel Felton. In the dark days of the pandemic, the partnership with Savannah VOICE Festival handed Deep youth a new kind of loudspeaker, which they made use of in powerful ways.



Action Research Team

Youth: Voice Story Power

In April 2021, youth leaders in Deep's Action Research Team (ART) launched **Youth: Voice Story Power**, a virtual community-building workshop in partnership with the **Southern Economic Advancement Project and Stacey Abrams**. **Youth: Voice Story Power** brought together 90 young people from across Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.

Grounding themselves in Deep's core belief of "the people are not the problem; the problem is the problem," Deep youth shared how to re-center narratives away from blaming individuals and instead on the barriers they face. Participants learned how stories were personal AND political because we are all living inside of human-built systems, and how to peel back the layers to find the root causes of issues that most affected their quality of life.

ART youth leader Rush interviewed Stacey Abrams, who described how her stories shape her advocacy. Abrams discussed her brother, who lives with mental illness and—because he's unable to get healthcare—self-medicates.

The only time he's able to receive treatment is when he's incarcerated. She spoke about her famous 2018 run for Georgia governor and how it inspired her to double down on supporting grassroots organizers. These stories, among others, were catalysts for her work, and she encouraged youth participants to tell their stories in the same way.



Programs for Building the Restorative Community



Restorative communities are dedicated to social justice in action by cultivating fellowship and connection. Restorative communities counter people's experience of isolation and alienation by building a trusting, safe space where all participants have a voice and a role, and where our shared humanity as well as our struggles and achievements are recognized.

Fordham University, Graduate School of Social Service



Stories are the fibers of culture, and culture is the fabric of community.

When Deep youth and their families know their stories, and tell them well, they lead the way in creating a safer, healthier, and more equitable Savannah.

In our **Programs for Building a Restorative Community**, Deep leads the personal and community-wide reimagining, transformation, and activation required to build an equitable and just Savannah.

Through innovative partnerships with such institutions as the Vera Institute for Justice, Southern Center for Human Rights, the Chatham County Juvenile Court, the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System, The Front Porch, and Healthy Savannah, Deep is using arts- and writing-based participatory action research to empower youth and community leaders as researchers; to provide actionable data that institutions can use for community development; and to make sure that when policy- and decision-makers have consequential conversations about young people and their communities, youth are at the table and able to share their hearts and minds.

All of Deep's systems-change work begins in our participatory research and creative placemaking workshops, which serve as an incubator to support low-income youth and communities of color in social-change leadership. As Deep's young artists and intergenerational co-learners grow in their agency, leadership skills, and critical systems analysis, they use the knowledge developed to define the priorities and solutions for how Deep advances equitable systems change for our communities.

The success of Deep's policy briefs in gaining a diverse coalition of supporters across the political spectrum is directly linked to our placemaking strategies that connect human stories to critical policy issues, while the residents behind the stories become leaders advancing systems change.

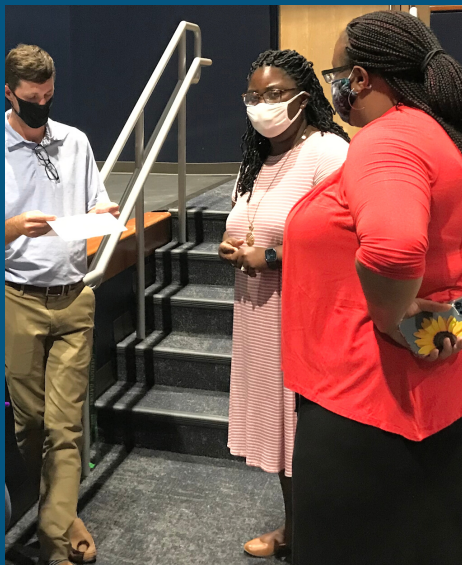
Restorative Community Impact

2020-2021

725

local officials, community allies, and professionals from court, police, schools, and other child-serving institutions

participated in workshops to build understanding, analysis, and collective power for change around the issues most relevant to Deep's youth and families.



63

public events and workshops

146

hours of direct-learning programming and community organizing training

21

program sites

24

public school partners

4

university partners

Leadership for a Restorative Community

In 2020-2021, Deep's youth leaders and staff partnered with our local elected officials, community allies, and court, police, schools, and other child-serving institutions to author the working-class leadership, narrative change, and systems change that will make Savannah and Chatham County true restorative communities.

2021 Policy Brief

Deep published three policy briefs between 2020 and 2021.

Development of these briefs is a year-long process that includes community-based participatory action research, monthly convenings of our youth and partners for dialogue, events designed for community input, and the creation and implementation of advocacy campaigns to realize the recommended reforms.

Civic Leadership

Deep's youth leaders and staff are included on numerous City and County committees designed to envision and create solutions for change, including:

- **The Racial Equity and Leadership Taskforce,**
- **Advocates for Restorative Communities,** focused on re-entry efforts, including mentoring, employment, housing, and policy,
- and **The Behavioral Health Unit Advisory Board,** focused on providing mental and behavioral health support to divert those most vulnerable from the justice system.

Deep Writing Project

This summer, Deep launched the very first National Writing Project site housed outside of a university or college.

Our cohort of nine Savannah-area educators met for 80 hours and worked to find ways to bring equity into their schools and classrooms, forming a lasting bond of solidarity. In the coming year, the Deep Writing Project will grow to support a district-wide cohort of teachers with a demonstrated interest in advancing restorative practices, assets-based youth strategies, and culturally specific critical literacies in their classrooms, schools, and across the district.

Healing Schools

Closing the educational attainment, equity, and opportunity gaps for the most vulnerable student populations in US public schools requires disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline.

Now in its third year and funded in part by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Deep's Healing Schools Initiative engages the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS) and three juvenile court sites in developing a new model of school climate and culture grounded in restorative justice.

Healing Schools is **creating new protocols, policies, and practices to fully humanize young people and enable adults to meet youth where they are in their full stories.**

The initiative engages the entire community of teachers, administrators, students, and staff across 25+ sites via:

- Developing and implementing a training model for adults in SCCPSS, including post-training support and accountability structures, to promote equity, humanization, and healing.
- Identifying and implementing policy reforms to create a restorative school and justice-systems culture for youth.
- Building and strengthening leadership structures for youth, families, and SCCPSS staff to act as healing leaders.

Youth-Led Learning

The youth of Deep's Action Research Team (ART) used their lived experiences as students inside SCCPSS to create an **interactive School-to-Prison Pipeline simulation**. The simulation highlights the need for systemic change in the policies and practices that criminalize young people. This summer, Deep staff ran the simulation for SCCPSS administrators and counselors so they could more viscerally experience what it is like for young people dehumanized by the school-to-prison pipeline.

ART youth leaders also sought a way to share their newfound knowledge with their peers and community members. Inspired by the Freedom Schools of the 1960s, ART youth conceptualized the **912 Freedom School**. 2022 will see the launch of the first 912 Freedom School workshops concurrently with our National Writing Project site. This will allow for unique opportunities for public school students and teachers to act as co-learners while they build understanding, analysis, and collective power for change around issues they experience inside SCCPSS.

Restorative Community Milestones

Policy Briefs

- 2022: Bound Up in Each Other
- 2021: Building a Restorative Community
- 2020: Our Stories Are the Evidence

Civic & Local Institutions

- adopted recommendations from Deep's Policy Briefs
- adopted restorative language and are implementing restorative policies

Issue Advocacy

Fines and fees; bail and bond reform; abolishing wealth-based detention; equitable education funding; state and local legislation toolkits; raise the age; data transparency.

205 Savannah-Chatham County Public School System education professionals and Savannah Police Department members attended Deep's youth-created School-to-Prison Pipeline Simulation.

5 Deep youth leaders and staff have served on local government taskforces.

Piloted Deep's Healing Schools restorative practices model at Hubert Middle School, School of Liberal Studies at Savannah High School, and Building Bridges Academy.

- Trained 65 education professionals.
- Led to the adoption of restorative practices throughout the school day.

Collaborated on district-wide working groups with SCCPSS staff focused on increasing restorative policies and practices.

- Deep youth leaders advocated for a shift in behavioral policy across the district, leading to policies that consider the first-person expressed needs of SCCPSS youth.
- Deep staff led cross-division collaboration to improve trauma-informed and healing-centered practices in SCCPSS Restorative Practices Working Group.

Organizational Health

Deep Center is financially strong for a nonprofit our size, and despite the financial challenges of COVID-19, we were able to **add four new full-time staff roles** this year.

We have no outstanding debt and have over ten months of operating funds available with an additional eight months of committed funds. However, issues related to increased income inequality, affordable housing, and poverty—which have only intensified during the pandemic—mean that there are growing needs to meet in our communities.

Our board's robust governance structures include a give-get policy, term limits, active committees for governance and finance, officer rotation, and strong financial controls developed in consultation with an accredited auditor, in conjunction with a conflict-of-interest policy. Deep's board approves the budget prior to the fiscal year and revisits the budget mid-year, and the Finance Committee tracks and reports on expenses monthly.

Audited FY 2020 Expenses	\$1,086,198
Audited FY 2020 Income	\$1,306,739
Projected to end FY 2021 with expenses in line with our committed income	\$1,580,000

Sources of Income

- 56% Institutional Funders
- 29% Gov't & Public Funds
- 8% Corporate & United Way
- 6% Individual Donors
- 1% Earned Income

Organizational Equity, Justice, and Reflection

Deep Center is dedicated to equity and justice and to embodying the world we strive to create.

- Minority-majority board, 70% people of color.
- Deep's population served is 80% youth of color.
- Deep's staff is 63% people of color, 40% of staff identify as LGBTQ, and one staff member is disabled.

At the height of the national race-equity crisis of 2020, Deep Center resolved to intentionally ensure we are reflecting our values internally for race, class, gender, and equity. We are partnering with an external facilitator to conduct this organizational reflection and internal transformation, which will inform our Summer 2022 strategic planning process.

Institutional Donors and Partners

Annie E. Casey Foundation, Book Lady Bookstore, Brighter Day Natural Foods, Charleys Kids Foundation, Chatham County Board of Commissioners, Chatham County Juvenile Courts, Chatham Foundation, City of Savannah, Courtney Knight Gaines Foundation, Don Callahan Real Estate Group, Dollar General Afterschool Literacy Award, Downtown Neighborhood Association, Focus Lab, Ford Foundation, Forsyth Farmers' Market/Farm Truck 912, Forward Promise, Foxy Loxy, Front Porch Multi Agency Resource Center, Georgia Council for the Arts, Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation, Hawkins Project, Heising-Simons Foundation, The Hodge Foundation, Johanna Anderson Trueblood Foundation, John G. Kennedy Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, Literary Arts Emergency Relief Fund, Live Oak Public Libraries, Louisa Porter Fund, Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, Moves With a Purpose Real Estate Team, National Endowment For the Arts, National Public Education Support Fund, Pennsylvania Avenue Resource Center (PARC), The Poetry Foundation, Public Welfare Foundation, Publix Super Markets Charities, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Sapelo Foundation, Savannah Chatham County Public School System, Savannah Community Foundation, Savannah Yoga Center, Sentient Bean, E. Shaver Bookseller, Skidaway Abigails, Southern Center for Human Rights, St. Thomas Episcopal Church Thrift Store, Starbucks Foundation: Neighborhood Grants Fund, Starland Yard, Susan W. Thompson Charitable Fund, Suwyn Family Foundation, Telfair Museums: Jepson Center for the Arts, Two Tides Brewing Company, United Way of the Coastal Empire, Vera Institute of Justice, Walt Disney Company Foundation, Wells Fargo, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, World's Largest Shamrock, Inc

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Board of Education President, Dr. Joe Buck
Building Bridges Academy Principal, Mr.
Bernard Bodison
Hubert Middle School Principal, Mr. Brian
Dotson
School of Liberal Studies at Savannah
High School Principal, Dr. Gequetta
Jenkins
And all the incredible administrators,
teachers, and education professionals of
SCCPSS.

Chatham County Juvenile Court

Front Porch Multi-Agency Resource Center
Hon. Thomas L. Cole
Hon. Roxanne E. Formey
Hon. Linda Kramer
Patricia Merritt, Court Administrator
Alisha Markle, Deputy Court Administrator
Barbara Davis, Deputy Court Administrator

Chatham County Superior Court

Hon. Lisa Colbert

School and Community Partners and Sites

Drop-In

John Delaware Community Center
1815 Lincoln St, Savannah, GA 31401

Pennsylvania Avenue Resource Center
425 Pennsylvania Avenue, Savannah, GA 31404

West Broad Street YMCA
1110 May Street, Savannah, GA 31401

Front Porch
Multi-agency Resource Center
2203 Abercorn Street, Savannah, GA 31401

Young Author Project

Charles Ellis Montessori Academy
220 E 49th St, Savannah, GA 31405

Coastal Middle School
4595 US-80, Savannah, GA 31410

DeRenne Middle School
1009 Clinch St, Savannah, GA 31405

Garrison School for the Arts
649 W Jones St, Savannah, GA 31401

Godley Station School
2135 Benton Blvd, Pooler, GA 31322

Groves High School
100 Priscilla D. Thomas Way, Savannah, GA 31408

Hesse Elementary School
9116 Whitfield Avenue, Savannah, GA 31406

Hubert Middle School
768 Grant St, Savannah, GA 31401

Isle of Hope School
100 Parkersburg Road, Savannah, GA 31406

Sol C. Johnson High School
3012 Sunset Boulevard, Savannah, GA 31404

Mercer Middle School
201 Rommel Avenue, Savannah, GA 31408

Myers Middle School
2025 East 52nd Street, Savannah, GA 31404

Oglethorpe Charter School
7202 Central Ave, Savannah, GA 31406

Savannah-Chatham E-Learning Academy
208 Bull Street, Savannah, GA 31401

Southwest Middle School
6030 Ogeechee Rd, Savannah, GA 31419

STEM Academy at Bartlett
207 E Montgomery Cross Rd, Savannah, GA 31406

West Chatham Middle School
800 Pine Barren Rd, Pooler, GA 31322

Block by Block

West Broad Street YMCA
1110 May Street, Savannah, GA 31401

Hudson Hill Community Garden
202 W Lathrop Ave, Savannah, GA 31415

Youth Leadership Team

Deep Center
2002 Bull Street, Savannah, GA 31401

Front Porch Improv Theater
210 W. Victory Dr, Savannah, GA 31405

Savannah African Art Museum
201 E. 37th St, Savannah, GA 31401

Lake Mayer
1850 East Montgomery Cross Road,
Savannah, GA 31406

Savannah Repertory Theater
402 East Broughton St, Savannah, GA 31401



Thank you to Deep Center's
staff and volunteer
writing fellows who make
our impact **possible.**



Thank You to Our Board of Directors

whose partnership enriches and supports this work in countless ways.

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Deep Center
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