

# 2019-2020 Annual Report



GRADES *of*   
**green**

Grades of Green inspires and empowers kids and the broader school community to care for the environment.

To date, we've inspired 600,000+ students in 47 states and 27 countries to change the world for the greener.



Dear Friends,

I would never have imagined my first year as Executive Director of Grades of Green closing with a pandemic taking hold, stay at home orders in place and the cancellation of our largest revenue source, our annual gala, Verte. Yet I still can't help but be full of gratitude, hope and excitement for the future, just as I was on my first day of leading this extraordinary organization.

Our fiscal year 2019–2020 brought inconceivable obstacles but also great opportunities. Grades of Green's staff, board and benefactors rose up together to find a way to support our students and their projects, fund the organization and develop a strong, new, innovative program focusing on climate change – a looming and long-lasting crisis unlike any we have ever had to navigate.

The passion and dedication of our students to make their communities and the world greener and cleaner did not waiver nor did our commitment to their efforts. We were and are in awe of them and are so proud to share some of their stories and successes throughout this report.

The new Climate Solutions Campaign was developed and elevated to include leadership training, advocacy skill building and a commitment to include environmental justice in every phase of programming. We began an environmental justice initiative to identify schools in the most environmentally impacted communities and develop resources and methodology to reach those students who are most in need of our free programs to make long lasting impacts in their schools and neighborhoods. Our staff and board made a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and instituted monthly trainings as we expanded our board and advisory committee to more closely represent the students we serve.

As many non-profits were forced to shut down or severely curtail their much-needed services, Grades of Green was able to weather the financial storm through the generosity of our Board of Directors, corporate, foundation and city partners, loyal individual donors and a timely PPP loan, which we are thrilled to report was recently converted to a grant.

My gratitude runs deep for the tireless work of our staff and the commitment of our ardent supporters. In a year of the unthinkable, by working together we imagined and created a more just, robust and impactful program.

We are motivated to continue expanding our pathway of programming to empower and inspire more students across the globe to find their passions and turn them into environmental action! Many thanks for your support and belief in Grades of Green's mission and in the students who are taking the lead to ensure a brighter and greener future.

Sincerely,

*Kim Siehl*

Kim Siehl  
Executive Director



# The Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic

In March 2020, the Coronavirus Pandemic, threw every aspect of our programming and funding into disarray, yet Grades of Green's staff and community never wavered from their dedication and commitment to empowering our students to make their communities and futures more sustainable.

We have been humbled with the outpouring of support, innovation, and flexibility that our students, staff, board, partners and benefactors have displayed. We're happy to report that by working together, Grades of Green made it through with a healthy bottom line and the most robust programs we have ever offered!

## Impact on Student Projects

When the pandemic hit, our student Eco-Leaders were on the verge of taking action by implementing their environmental projects within their schools and communities. With schools closed and gatherings no longer viable, many student teams had to re-envision their projects and impact goals. Grades of Green quickly adjusted the Climate Solutions Campaign, providing students with additional mentorship, guidance, resources and time so they could continue pursuing environmental change from home.

It was inspirational to see our students rise to the challenge and adapt so quickly by turning to online advocacy and continue their projects without losing momentum. They presented virtually at city council meeting, held online trainings and inspired their communities to tackle zero-waste projects at home. All told, 76% of our teams finished the Campaign despite all the challenges they faced!

## Financial Impact

In response to the pandemic, our annual gala Verte was cancelled creating a planned revenue loss of \$290,000 approximately one-third of our yearly operating budget. This loss placed severe financial stress on our organization (detailed on page 20). Gratefully, with the support of our partners, board and the generosity of our most ardent donors, we overcame the loss and kept our programs fully funded through a PPP loan, hosting a silent auction and throwing innovative (and fun!) virtual fundraising events.

**76%**

COMPLETION RATE

**Despite the pandemic,  
76% of our student  
teams adjusted  
their projects and  
finished the program!**





# Investing in our Students



While many nonprofits were forced to pull back on services or shut their doors due to the Coronavirus pandemic, Grades of Green chose to boldly step up to the challenge and invest in our students by improving and expanding our programming.

## Why invest in our students during this difficult time?

Our climate is in crisis. It is our responsibility to prepare the next generation to deal with the most difficult environmental challenges that lie ahead. With that in mind, we doubled down and created our most robust and innovative program to date—The Climate Solutions Campaign.

We conducted a thorough evaluation of our existing Campaigns, including feedback from our staff, students, educators and volunteer consultants from the University of Southern California's Los Angeles Community Impact Services. In response to our students' needs and experts' recommendations, we:

- Redesigned our campaign to focus on the climate crisis. Inspired by the many calls to action during the summer of 2020 and the need for social justice advocacy, we expanded our focus on Environmental Justice throughout all five phases.
- Extended the timeline from one semester to the entire school year.
- Added multiple student engagement webinars.
- Developed an online, interactive Guidebook to lead our students to make powerful environmental impacts while gaining skills they need to become the next generation of Eco-Leaders.
- And we didn't stop there! We added a specialized teacher training, including webinars and the opportunity to earn a stipend upon leading a student team through the Campaign.

# 561

STUDENTS CURRENTLY  
PARTICIPATING IN  
THE CLIMATE  
SOLUTIONS CAMPAIGN

## The outcome? The new Climate Solutions Campaign launched in the fall of 2020!

The work of the 2019–2020 fiscal year came to fruition with the launch of the Climate Solutions Campaign which has proven to be the most expansive, impactful program that we have developed! It has been met with overwhelming enthusiasm from students, teachers and schools across the globe, with 561 students registered, organized into 91 teams in 11 countries.

# The Program Pathway

In addition to the Climate Solutions Campaign, Grades of Green developed a pathway of programming to reach students of all ages and backgrounds. Our unique Pathway will guide students to develop a passion for the environment, a commitment to environmental justice, and the leadership skills they needed to turn their passion into impactful action.

**LAUNCH Projects:** Interactive, educational and flight-ready projects to spark an interest in the environment and make real change in their communities. These projects will be designed to fit seamlessly into teachers' lesson plans and provide parents with engaging ways to take action with their children.

*Habit Change*

**The RISE Campaigns:** Immersive, year-long programs for middle and high school students to dive deep into an environmental issue and make long-lasting impacts within their communities. They develop a solution, design a project plan, including marketing and social media while learning leadership skills to advocate for environmental change.

*Advocacy & Habit Change*

**SOAR Leadership Academy:** Partnering with business leaders mentoring our most dedicated high school students as they complete powerful environmental service and advocacy projects within their communities, gain real-world experience and learn how to incorporate their passion for the environment into their career goals.

*Leadership*

**UPLIFT School District Partners:** Working directly with school districts, providing programs and support for an entire community of students to magnify our impact. Environmental justice will be addressed by identifying and engaging all schools and students in districts that are under-resourced and faced with the most challenging environmental issues.

*Partnership*

## Global Impact

For years, Grades of Green has been both fortunate and honored to connect students around the world to support one another and learn from each other's diverse backgrounds and unique environmental challenges. In the future, we will continue to expand our global reach as we learn from our international students and partners to develop projects and appropriate solutions that are more relevant to the issues in each team's part of the world.

# The RISE Campaigns

The RISE Campaigns are Grades of Green's flagship program in which we guide middle and high school student teams to make long-lasting impacts in their communities by advocating for environmental change and developing leadership skills. During the 2019-2020 fiscal year, we led students through two campaigns: the fall 2019 Water Campaign and the spring 2020 Waste Campaign.

## How do the Campaigns Work?

Grades of Green Program Advisors are paired with student teams around the world to provide students with expert advice on how to plan and execute their projects. Teams of an average of 10 students, led by a teacher or parent, dive into our program's materials which include educational resources, videos, research, worksheets, and multimedia. These materials guide students through the following steps with the goal of teaching them to understand environmental issues and create a solution to implement in their school and/or community.

- **Research:** Their first assignment? Learn! The fall 2019 Water Campaign focused on water conservation, plastic pollution's effect on watershed and ocean wildlife, in addition to other water related issues. The spring 2020 Waste Campaign focused on the impact waste and single-use plastic has on the environment, the current state of recycling and how we can reduce and reuse different types of waste.
- **Create a Solution:** With the support of their Grades of Green Program Advisor, students develop a solution to an issue and create a plan to make environmental impacts. Students identify who they want to engage, what change they want to make, and how they are going to make that change.
- **Take Action:** Students then put their plan into action and record their environmental impact and outcomes of their advocacy efforts in their community.
- **Report Results:** Students collect and submit information about their project, advocacy materials, and impact metrics to a panel of expert judges.
- **Earn Eco-Grants:** Judges select teams with the most powerful impact and inspirational outcomes to receive Eco-Grants of up to \$1,000 to continue and expand the impact of their projects!



*Students from the Kishoka Youth Organization in Kenya held a community bike ride to promote their tree planting event.*



# Water & Waste Campaign Impacts

During this fiscal year's two RISE campaigns, 94 environmental student projects were pursued by a total of 1,129 students! Despite the challenges caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, we were blown away by the impact our students were able to make and the amount of people they reached with their advocacy efforts!



*Student Rylee Goldfarb & Grades of Green won a 2019 SEED Award*

**94**

ENVIRONMENTAL  
STUDENT  
PROJECTS

**68%**

OF STUDENTS  
IDENTIFY AS BLACK,  
INDIGENOUS AND  
PEOPLE OF COLOR

**1,129**

STUDENTS  
ECO-LEADERS  
PARTICIPATED

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT  
COMMUNITY IMPACT

**IMPACT:** 12,611 POUNDS OF PLASTIC DIVERTED  
135,491 ITEMS OF PLASTIC DIVERTED\*  
212,679 GALLONS OF WATER SAVED

**IMPACT:** 43,801 COMMUNITY MEMBERS ENGAGED  
36,375 STUDENTS REACHED  
862 ADVOCACY ACTIONS TAKEN\*\*

\* Plastic items include single-use plastic water bottles, straws, utensils, plastic shopping bags, plastic baggies, produce bags, food packaging, plastic microfibers, etc.

\*\* Advocacy Actions Taken include presentations to school districts, city councils or school assemblies; advocacy letters; posters or signs posted; pledges or petitions signed by the public.



Mary Bragg Elementary



# Meet Our Eco-Leaders

Two-time Eco-Grant winning team at Mary Bragg Elementary in Cerritos, California demonstrated outstanding accomplishments for their work, earning the Best Community Changemaker Award in the 2019 Water Campaign as well as the \$1,000 Eco-Grant Grand Prize for the 2020 Waste Campaign.

*Check out the fun video on our site to see how excited the Mary Bragg students were at winning both awards! [\(click\)](#)*

This team consisted of over fifty 4th and 5th graders who met and collaborated before school to discuss solutions to reduce single-use water bottles in their community. They conducted an educational campaign and presented their findings to their school's PTA, in classrooms and at school assemblies. They also hosted beach clean-ups to spread awareness and provide a way for people to combat plastic pollution.

Seeking to engage more youth in environmental action, the team also launched an advocacy campaign to get Green Teams in all of their district's elementary schools.

With their strong drive and organizational skills, the Bragg team was able to do all of this before the Coronavirus stay-at-home order was enacted in March 2020. While they weren't able to present at their principal's meeting due to their school closing, they continued inspiring others virtually.

**\$1500**

IN ECO-GRANTS  
AWARDED TO  
MARY BRAGG

“

***Our Green Team has created such a movement on our campus, we have many students asking to join our Green Team now and plan on increasing our membership. We've started a movement that will continue for years to come.***

”

S

amantha Torres, an 11th-grade student at Mira Costa High School in Manhattan Beach, won our 2020 Waste Campaign's Best Student Leader award!

Samantha has been involved in Grades of Green since 2012, bringing energy and passion to all of the environmental projects she has taken on! Sam began with Grades of Green Youth Corps Eco Leadership program when she was in 3rd grade, leading environmental education and recycling projects in her community. Since then, she has organized multiple projects in the South Bay to educate her peers on environmental issues such as the benefits of a plant-based diet and marine pollution. She has also led successful beach clean-ups and fought for sustainable local policies by speaking at city council meetings, school board meetings and community forums. She most recently spoke at Manhattan Beach's city council meeting in support of a proposal to switch the city to 100% renewable energy, which ultimately passed.

Sam is the founder and president of the Grades of Green Club at Mira Costa and leads a team of 40 students to take action on environmental issues in the community. She is also a member of the Manhattan Beach Sustainability Youth Council.

“

***Much of my leadership can be attributed to Grades of Green...they've given me such a great platform to take action in my community.***

”

8

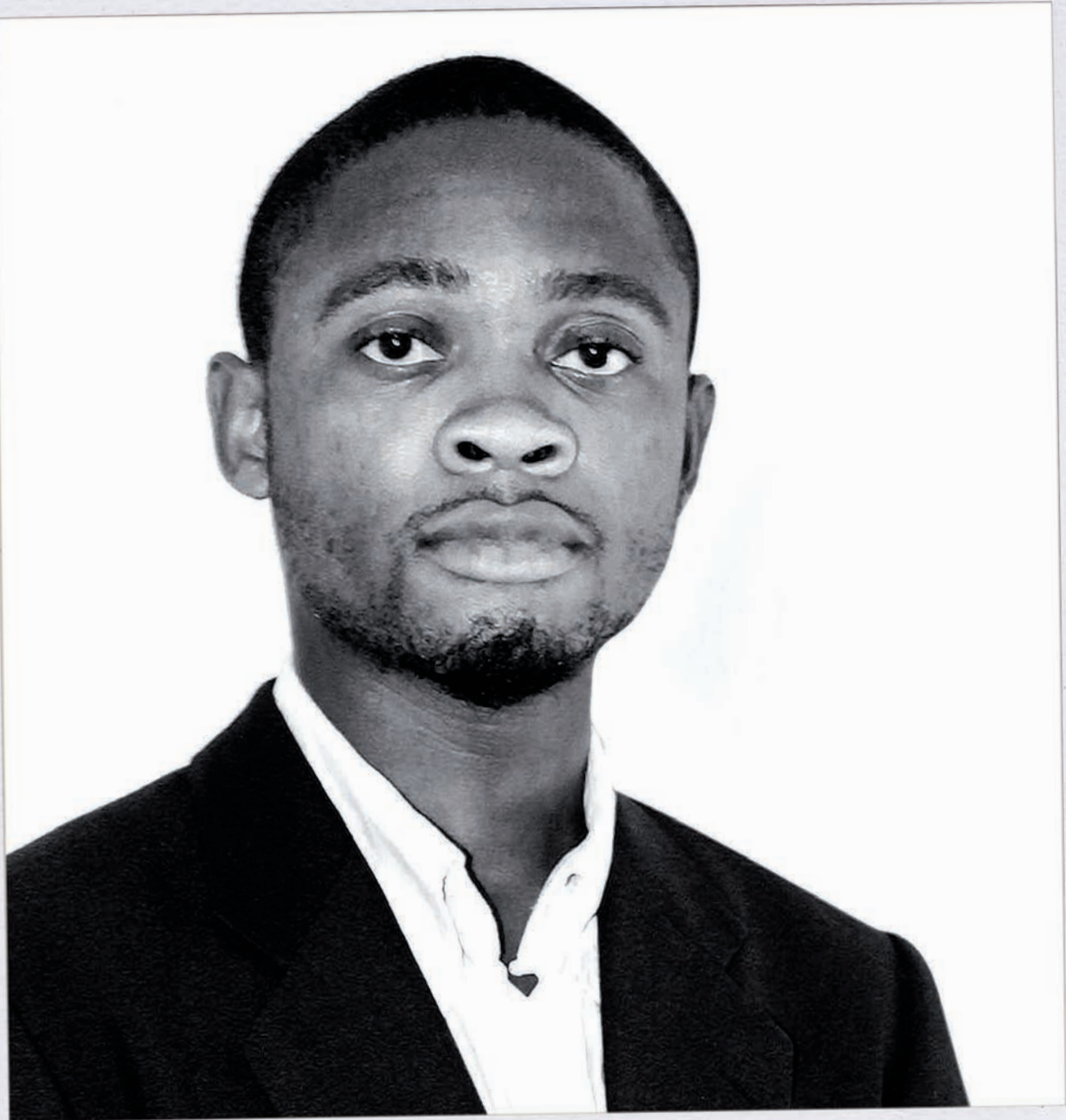
YEARS WITH GRADES  
OF GREEN



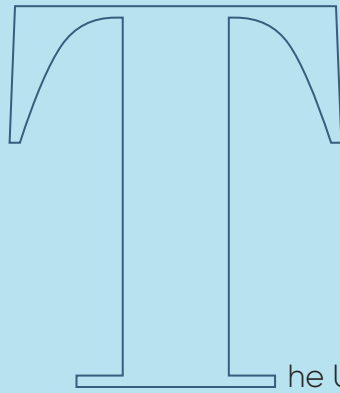


Samantha T.





*Forbi P. & the University of Buea Team,  
Cameroon, Africa*



The University of Buea team in Buea, Cameroon, received our 2019 International Changemakers award for their advocacy work to help their school transition to cleaner forms of waste management.

**\$500**

ECO-GRANT  
AWARDED TO HELP  
ORGANIZE A  
RECYCLING PROGRAM  
FOR THE UNIVERSITY'S  
13,000 STUDENTS

Led by Eco-Leader Forbi Perise, The University of Buea team joined the 2020 Waste Campaign to advocate for the end of open trash burning on their school campus. Forbi is the President of the Environmental Science Student Association, where he and other students are passionate about fighting against plastic pollution and building community awareness about environmental issues. For their award winning 2020 Waste Campaign project, Forbi and his teammates encouraged their university administration to seek out trash collection services and trash bin sites. During this process, they worked to create a university recycling program while educating high school students about waste issues occurring in their community.



***The Grades of Green Waste Campaign is important to us because we have an enormous plastic pollution problem... we also have an issue of littering due to insufficient trash bins on campus, and in addition to this the waste is burned in open pits around campus...Our goal is to put in place a waste diversion and reduction program on campus by engaging the entire campus community in contributing to a tangible sustainability goal.***



**Grades of Green was proud to nominate Forbi to be a panelist to speak to the United Nations as part of their annual World Oceans Day global virtual event. We're so excited that he was selected! His presentation to the UN about his team's work in Cameroon was so powerful. Watch his presentation, here! Forbi continues his work as the African Regional Representative for the Sustainable Ocean Alliance and with the Grades of Green Campaigns.**

# B

eatrice connected with Grades of Green as a junior at Whitney High School, in Cerritos, CA. As her passion for the environment grew, so did her involvement in Grades of Green. In her senior year, Beatrice was inspired to take on the mounting crisis of plastic pollution in her community's local waterways and enrolled her school's Eco-Club in our 2019 Water Campaign. Under Beatrice's leadership, the Eco-Club developed a highly innovative project that constructed a massive eight foot tall wave sculpture built from plastic bottles collected from their high school and community. The sculpture titled "There is No Sea in Disposable" was displayed at the Subaru Pacific Dealership in Hawthorne, CA, and drew attention to the issue of marine plastic pollution.

**\$5,500**

SCHOLARSHIP  
DUE IN PART TO  
GRADES OF GREEN  
PROJECT

**Beatrice was recently honored as a 2020 Undergraduate Scholarship Winner by the Women's Transportation Seminar, which awards outstanding women who demonstrate leadership and impact in the transportation and sustainability industries. We hope her project, and the glowing letter of recommendation our Program Advisor, Cathy, wrote helped Beatrice win!**







Beatrice O.

# Climate Corps Fellow

From fall 2019 through summer 2020, we partnered with the award-winning Climate Corps program to bring on an amazing full-time Fellow to be a part of the Grades of Green team. Climate Corps provides professional development opportunities for emerging leaders through the implementation of sustainability and resiliency projects with local governments, nonprofits and for profit businesses. Host organizations receive the support of qualified, passionate Fellows, who gain real-world expertise and insight working on environmental and sustainability projects.

Grades of Green hosted Helen Lu as a Climate Corps Fellow and she supported our student teams as a Program Advisor.

## Projects:

- Helen served as the Program Advisor to dozens of student groups, leading them to successfully complete our two RISE Campaign programs.
- Helen was instrumental in project managing the creation of the Climate Solutions Campaign.
- To support the creation of the Climate Solutions Campaign, Helen managed the evaluation of the RISE Campaign program by the University of Southern California's Los Angeles Community Impact services group.
- Helen helped us test, implement, troubleshoot and oversee an online learning management system to engage our students during the 2020 Waste Campaign.

We were so impressed and grateful for Helen's hard work and dedication as a part of our team that we renewed our partnership with Climate Corps and expect two new Fellows for the 2020-2021 year.



Helen Lu



***I was able to try things I never thought I'd be able to, things that were outside of my comfort zone. But I felt like I could succeed because of everyone's support.***



**CLIMATE  
CORPS**

A PROGRAM OF SEI



# Sony Green Pitch Challenge

Grades of Green, with the support of Sony Pictures A Greener World, awarded three winning student teams with Eco-Grants worth a combined \$2,000 as part of the Sony Green Pitch Challenge.

**\$2,000**

ECO-GRANT FUNDING  
TO TAKE STUDENTS  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
SOLUTIONS TO THE  
NEXT LEVEL

The competition challenged 1st- to 12th-grade students to pitch innovative solutions for environmental problems that they are passionate about. More than 30 student teams overcame the challenges caused by the coronavirus and collaborated from home to produce and submit truly inspiring pitch videos.

The Grand Prize-winning team from Whitney High School in Cerritos won a \$1,000 Eco-Grant for their pitch video focused on educating elementary schools about plastic pollution. The Eco-Grant funds were used by the students to implement their environmental solution and advance their education.





# LA Kings Challenge



In partnership with the LA Kings, Grades of Green launched the #LAKingsGreen Challenge in April 2020 to encourage the reuse and repurposing of household “waste” into something treasured.

What’s one piece of trash that you can turn into treasure in your home? We challenged kids and families to find a fun, surprising way to reuse something from home that normally gets thrown away. The first 50 eligible participants who posted a picture of their child with their repurposed item were rewarded with a pair of tickets to an LA Kings 2020–2021 preseason home game at STAPLES Center. Talk about a win-win!

From old t-shirts turned into bags and coffee cans into planters, the creativity of our community was really impressive! We loved seeing the engagement from our community and students who strive to make their lives greener at home.

# 100

LA KINGS TICKETS  
AWARDED TO  
PARTICIPANTS



Upcycled Planter



Upcycled Birdhouse

# LA Sanitation & Environment Bingo Challenge

During April 2020, Grades of Green partnered with LA Sanitation & Environment (LASAN) to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day by challenging Los Angeles families to a fun game of sustainable bingo.

Participants downloaded a free, digital bingo card filled with great ways for families to reduce their waste footprint. From placing a recycling bin in the bathroom to turning leftovers into a new meal, families worked together with their children to complete three tasks listed in a row on their bingo card. After posting a picture of the completed card and photos of their projects on social media, participants were entered to win a visit from an LASAN collection truck at their child's next party. This unique partnership was a fun way that Grades of Green and LASAN worked together to help families take action while staying safe during the pandemic.

This unique partnership was a fun way that Grades of Green and LASAN helped families take action while staying safe during the pandemic.

“  
**Everyone who knows us,  
knows we have the MOST  
garbage truck loving kiddo in  
town. So thank you @lacitysan  
and @gradesofgreen for  
hosting this special  
#lasanbingo for us to do  
during our quarantine!  
Brady's dreams would come  
true to have a REAL  
#lasanitation #TrashTruck  
at his next birthday party!!!**  
- Olivia H.



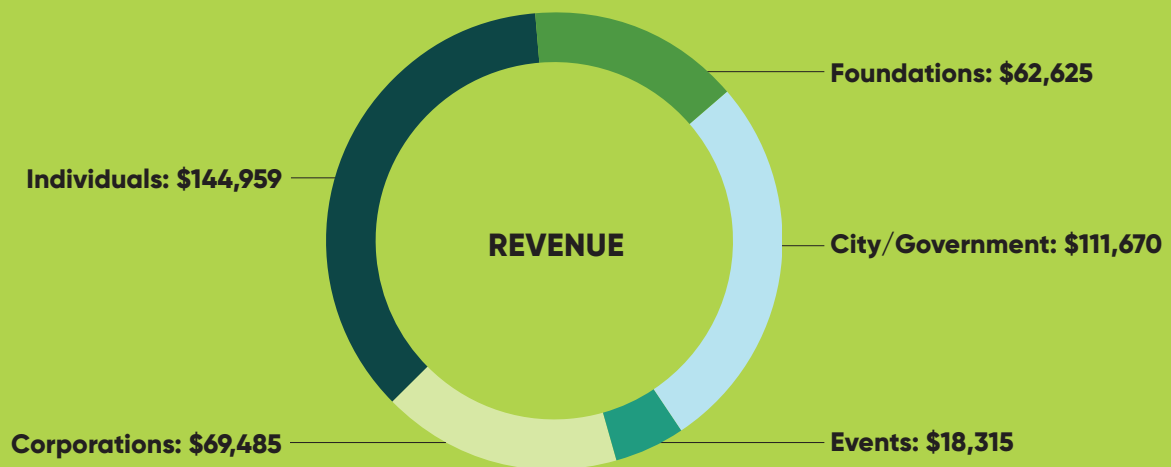
# Financial Summary

**Event Revenue:** Canceling Verte due to the Coronavirus cost Grades of Green upwards of \$290,000.

**PPP Loan:** As soon as we learned about the government's PPP loan program, we jumped at the chance and were awarded \$83,000. Because the loan was not transitioned to a grant during this Fiscal Year, it is reflected as an Expense under the below breakout. The loan was transitioned to a grant in 2021 which will be reflected in the 2020/2021 financials.

## 83%

OF EVERY DOLLAR  
WENT TO PROGRAMS  
SUPPORTING  
STUDENTS AND  
ENVIROMENTAL  
SOLUTIONS





# A Big Thank You to our Partners

## GREEN CHAMPIONS \$40,000+



**LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
SANITATION DISTRICTS**  
*Converting Waste Into Resources*

## GREEN HEROES \$25,000+



City of  
**Santa Monica®**

**Ranae DeSantis**

**Jeff & Tiffany Neu**

# Grades of Green gratefully acknowledges our generous donors

## **GREEN LEADERS \$10,000+**

AEG Community Foundation  
Chrissie & Harrison Clay  
Frank McHugh-O'Donovan Foundation  
Kings Care Foundation  
Shaya & Grant Kirkpatrick  
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors - Fourth District  
Northrop Grumman Waste Management

## **GREEN SUSTAINERS \$5,000+**

Camela Ott & Mark Bell  
Bottle Inn, Martha's & Erin Condren  
CBRE on behalf of Rachel Tornek  
Chivaroli & Associates  
City of Manhattan Beach  
Clif Bar Family Foundation  
Lisa & Stuart Coppedge  
Steven Davis  
Downtown Manhattan Beach Business & Professional Association  
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Robina Riccitiello  
Sony Pictures' A Greener World  
Southern California Edison  
Leslie & Grafton Tanquary

## **GREEN SUPPORTERS \$2,500+**

Kay & Sam Sheth  
David James & Nicole Anderson  
Johnson Ohana Charitable Foundation  
Newman's Own Foundation  
Suzanne & Hugh Kretschmer  
Schlinger Family Foundation

## **GREEN FRIENDS \$1,000+**

David Buckland  
Michael Burke  
Kathie Eckert  
Gelson's Markets  
Grand View Elementary PTA  
William & Anne Hart  
Kellie & Jeff Hepper  
Ellen Hotchkis  
Nadine & Robert Kirkpatrick  
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Kimberly Nelson  
Cynthia O'Rourke  
Kim Siehl  
Smog City Brewing Co.  
Siobhan Ulreich-Power  
Jeff Wilson

## **IN-KIND DONORS**

Special thanks to Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP for their legal support and Woodman Creative for the design services that made this report possible.

# Grades of Green team and board

## OUR FOUNDERS

Shaya Kirkpatrick

Lisa Coppedge

Suzanne Kretschmer

Kim Martin

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David James – Co-Treasurer

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Steven Davis, M.D.

Dawnyell Goolsby

Shaya Kitpatrick – Co-Founder

Priscilla Munoz

Kapil Singh



*Our Founders*



# Get Involved

Want to get involved with Grades of Green and our students? We're constantly on the lookout for volunteers, organizations and businesses who would like to partner with us to empower the next generation of environmental leaders

**We'd love to connect with you!**

**Please email [info@gradesofgreen.org](mailto:info@gradesofgreen.org) or call 310-607-0175.**











1730 East Holly Ave  
El Segundo, CA 90245  
310.607.0175  
[info@gradesofgreen.org](mailto:info@gradesofgreen.org)

