



ACE - The Association of  
Community Employment  
Programs for the Homeless



# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



ACE is a place where lives turn around. 18 years ago, ACE helped me get back on my feet. Today, I want to tell everyone working hard—never give up, have faith, and know that ACE will always have your back when you are ready.

**ACE Graduate, 2007**

**Frank**

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# Dear Friends,

Homelessness in the U.S. increased by 18.1% in 2024. However, many experts believe this figure is an undercount, as the annual count occurs on a single night in January, when many people experiencing homelessness seek shelter in cars or other places not meant for human habitation.

Cities across the country continue to struggle with the development of affordable housing, while some communities have enacted stricter laws banning tents and sleeping in public spaces. National Housing Project Director Shamus Roller told *USA Today*, “Housing affordability is worsening and affecting more people across the country, so it is no surprise that more individuals are falling through the cracks.” He further noted, “The underlying conditions driving homelessness are not improving.”

Despite these challenges, ACE remains committed to breaking the cycle of homelessness by helping individuals secure and maintain employment. Our mission, unchanged for 32 years, continues to drive our work:

“Founded in 1992, ACE empowers individuals with histories of homelessness by providing the skills needed to obtain full-time employment and achieve long-term economic independence. ACE offers adult education, industry-specific certifications, paid work experience, job placement assistance, individualized counseling, financial coaching, and a range of wraparound services. Upon securing employment, participants graduate from ACE’s training program and enter our lifelong Aftercare Program, which supports job retention, wage growth, and the transition to independence.”

At ACE’s May 2024 graduation, 13 alumni who graduated between 1999 and 2014 and have over 10 years of sustained employment were honored with the ACE Excellence Award. They shared powerful stories of climbing the career ladder, earning college degrees while working, starting their own businesses, setting examples for their children, reclaiming their families, building savings, taking vacations they once only dreamed of, and finding ways to give back.

Among the honorees, one now works as a case manager at the Administration for Children’s Services, and two are counselors at substance use treatment programs who currently refer clients to ACE.

On a personal note, I extend my deepest gratitude to all ACE supporters.

With appreciation,

Henry Buhl



Chairman and Founder

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# About ACE



ACE Graduation, May 2024

## OUR STORY

ACE — The Association of Community Employment Programs for the Homeless — began in 1992 as a neighborhood effort to help unhoused New Yorkers find work and regain independence. What started in SoHo has grown into a citywide workforce development organization, serving thousands through job training, education, and long-term support.

For over 32 years, ACE's core program has helped individuals secure employment, build independence, and break the cycle of homelessness and poverty.

To date, over 3,700 New Yorkers have overcome extreme barriers to reach their goals of self-sufficiency and a stable future.

## OUR MISSION

ACE works alongside New Yorkers who have histories of homelessness, incarceration, and addiction, to help them reach their goals of full-time employment, economic independence, and family reunification.

ACE empowers New Yorkers through three progressively phased programs: (1) our job-readiness training and work experience program, Project Comeback, (2) our job retention, career growth, and lifetime aftercare program, Project Stay, and (3) ACE's Supported Employment Program, which is offered to the individuals with the greatest barriers to employment.

# Lessons in Resilience

From overcoming life's toughest challenges to building lasting careers, ACE graduates share their journeys and advice.

## Building a Stronger Future



Chris has always had a strong work ethic, starting his first job at the age of 15. However, his addiction made it difficult for him to move forward. With his mother's encouragement, he completed rehab and joined ACE, ready to rebuild his life.

He threw himself into training, earning OSHA-30, Site Safety Training, and scaffolding certifications to break into construction. *"The more certifications I get, the more opportunities I have,"* Chris says. *"They give me the upper hand when I walk into an interview."* He is now an apprentice at Union Local 731 and credits ACE with helping him build discipline, confidence, and a clear path to financial stability. Chris cites the support of his ACE case managers for helping him navigate the many challenges he encountered in his vocational journey.

## A New Beginning



For years, Anne struggled to keep a steady job and doubted that real change was possible. *"I used to be a naysayer,"* she admits. *"I didn't believe ACE could actually help me get a job."* But in June 2024, everything changed. She landed a full-time job as a Security Guard for the MTA, right near her own apartment in the Bronx.

Getting there was not easy. Earning her Security Guard license took longer than expected and, at times, she worried it would all fall apart. But her case manager never let her give up.

*"ACE helped me get my life together,"* Anne says. *"I learned how to manage my money, secure my own place, and rebuild my life."* Looking back, she has one message for her past self and anyone still in the program: *"Keep going, ask for help, and trust the process."*

## Leading by Example



Maritsa knows what it takes to rebuild a life because she has done it herself. Once an ACE participant, she is now ACE's Work Experience Supervisor. She is the first face new participants see when they walk through ACE's doors. She welcomes them with warmth, helps them find their footing, and makes sure they know they are not alone. As a SMART Recovery Coach, she also supports individuals in addiction recovery. *"We are like a family here. Find your passion and believe in yourself,"* she advises.



# Lessons in Resilience

## Finding Stability, One Beat at a Time



For Artie, breaking free from addiction meant finding something new to hold onto. *“Before, it was drugs,”* he shares. *“When you are addicted, you always need something to take its place. After I quit drugs, I turned to music. Music became my escape.”*

In 2023, he joined ACE’s Sanitation Team, working routes in Jackson Heights. His hard work paid off—recently, he moved into his first apartment. After completing Project Stay’s Housing Initiative, part of ACE’s lifelong aftercare program (see page 8-9), he used his incentive funds to buy furniture for his new apartment. He also meets with an ACE financial counselor, helping him to get better at managing his money. *“I used to live paycheck to paycheck and eat out a lot,”* he recalls. *“Now, I track my spending and focus on staying financially stable.”*

With over four years of sobriety, Artie is building toward long-term career success. He has earned industry certifications and discovered a passion for maintenance work, giving him new opportunities for the future. His advice to others: *“The time you have here is important. Use every opportunity you get. Learn to love yourself and discover your true worth.”*

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## A Legacy of Strength and Resilience



For over 20 years, Marion has worked hard to build a stable, independent life. She started as a Home Health Aide, worked her way up to training others, and now serves on the Union board, negotiating contracts and mentoring new workers. But what she is most proud of is the future she helped create for her son.

When she was getting back on her feet, ACE made sure she had the support she needed, helping her set up daycare and even throwing her son a birthday party. *“ACE didn’t just help me—they helped my son, too,”* she says. Now, he is a full-time bus driver with great benefits, and Marion could not be prouder. *“He learned from me—how to work hard and show up. Now, he is out there doing it for himself.”*

Her journey has taken her places she never imagined, including a trip to Hawaii. *“I never thought I would go to Hawaii, but I did that for myself,”* she says. Looking back, she laughs at how doubtful she once was. *“I swore up and down they would never find me a job. I was wrong. ACE opened that door, and I walked through it.”* Her advice? *“Take control of your life. Keep showing up, keep learning, and trust that you can build something better.”*



# 2024 Impact

## EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING



**655 New Yorkers**  
served via direct  
service programs



**92% of Project Comeback  
Graduates**  
received employer-  
sponsored benefits



**104 Project Comeback  
Participants**  
accessed on-site  
legal assistance



**147 New Yorkers**  
placed into employment,  
with an average starting  
wage of \$17.08



**83% of Graduates**  
received a wage increase  
in year one of employment



**117 Project Comeback  
Participants**  
engaged in financial  
literacy training



**10,500 Hours Logged**  
by Project Comeback  
Participants in classroom  
instruction for literacy, math,  
and job preparation



**65% of 2023 Graduates**  
remained employed for  
at least 1 year



**51% of 2023 Graduates**  
secured independent housing,  
to date



**\$795 Saved**  
on average by participants  
via paid work experience  
training



**253 Certifications**  
Earned in industry  
skills training



**100% of Graduates**  
transitioned off public  
assistance

## Supported Employment Program



**2,100+ Block Faces**  
cleaned daily



**1,200,000+ Bags**  
of trash and debris  
collected



**400,000+ Hours**  
of ACE team members  
keeping our city clean  
and beautiful



**13,000,000+ lbs.**  
of trash removed



**10,000 Instances**  
of illegal graffiti and  
postings removed



**165 New Yorkers**  
who have overcome homeless-  
ness, incarceration, or addiction  
are employed full-time by ACE



# Programs

## PROJECT COMEBACK

Project Comeback is ACE's workforce development and vocational rehabilitation program. In Project Comeback, New Yorkers who have experienced homelessness, addiction, incarceration and unemployment obtain the educational, interpersonal, and technical skills they need to secure and retain full-time, permanent employment.

Participants are welcomed to Project Comeback from homeless shelters, substance use treatment centers, and partner housing sites located throughout New York City.

Project Comeback participants maintain a busy schedule that balances two days per week of paid work experience with two days of education and skills training. Our staff provides one-on-one support to meet each participant's needs. Participants graduate Project Comeback upon securing full-time, permanent employment.

### Project Comeback Offers:

#### *Industry Specific Certifications*

in OSHA 30-Hour Construction Safety, 10-Hour Site Safety Training, OSHA 10-Hour General Industry, Flagger, Supported Scaffold User, Janitorial Maintenance, Forklift, Operation, Food Protection, Security Guard, Drivers Licensing, and Certified Peer Recovery Advocate (CRPA).

#### *Soft-Skills Training*

that develops interpersonal skills, enhances job-seeking skills, and prepares participants for the transition to self-sufficiency. Our courses and workshops cover topics such as interviewing techniques, how to maintain employment, transitioning off public benefits, researching healthcare options, and creating a housing plan.

#### *Adult Education*

in literacy, math, and computer training. ACE offers a contextualized learning experience focused on vocational themes and crucial daily living skills.

#### *Financial Literacy Curriculum*

focused on savings and spending, banking, and credit that cumulatively prepares ACE participants to efficiently and effectively manage their finances. Participants also receive one-on-one financial coaching and work with staff to open bank accounts, build their credit, and work toward each individual's financial goals.

#### *Paid Work Experience*

that allows participants to enhance their resumes while learning the rules and expectations of the workplace. Work experience opportunities include community beautification projects, and internships at local business.

#### *Job Placement Assistance*

to participants as they work toward securing full-time employment. Participants meet twice weekly with ACE's job developers to review job leads, set up interviews, and share feedback.

#### *Individualized Counseling*

to explore challenges, improve coping skills, strengthen self-esteem, promote healthy decision-making, and receive general support.

#### *Wrap-Around Support*

including on-site legal assistance, on-site financial coaches, substance use recovery resources, a wellness curriculum, and more.

## PROJECT STAY

Project Stay is ACE's life-long aftercare program that helps Project Comeback graduates retain employment, increase their earning power, and complete their transition to self-sufficiency.

### Project Stay Offers:

#### *Monthly Meetings*

where newly employed graduates reflect on their workplace experiences, address challenges, and build skills.





*ACE participants dressed for success on Mock Interview Day*

### *Workshops*

on financial literacy, networking, leadership, business etiquette, conflict resolution, stress management, and work/life balance.

### *Recreational Outings*

that bring graduates together in a positive social setting and reward them for their hard work.

### *Career Building Resources*

including scholarships for continued growth, career mapping assistance, and life-long access to job-placement services.

### *Support*

for graduates as they transition to independence, including access to ACE's Housing Initiative, graduate emergency funds, and other support services.

## **SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS**

For many ACE participants, barriers like extended gaps in employment, histories of homelessness, lack of work experience and training, and substance use disorders stand in the way of full-time employment.

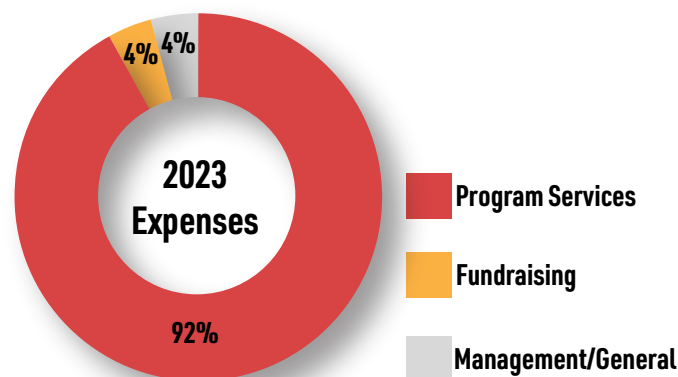
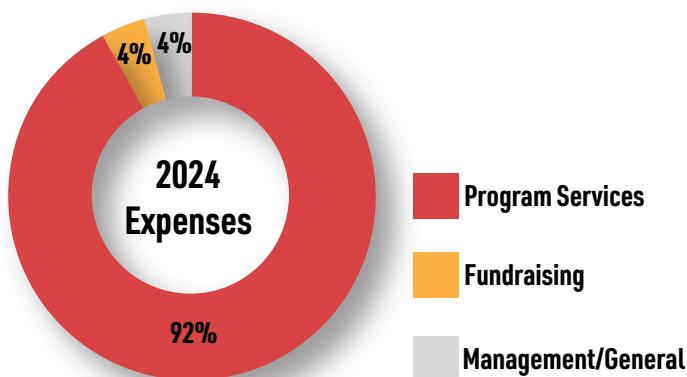
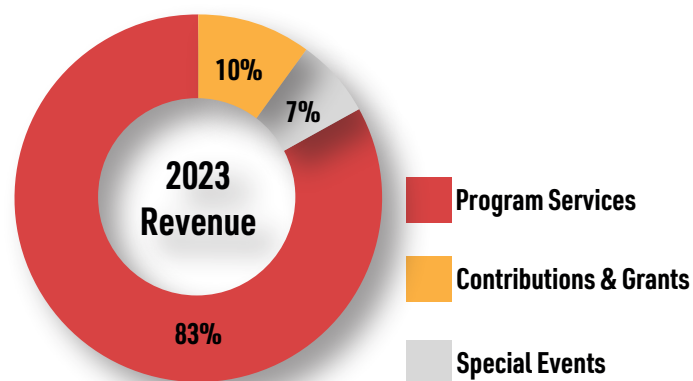
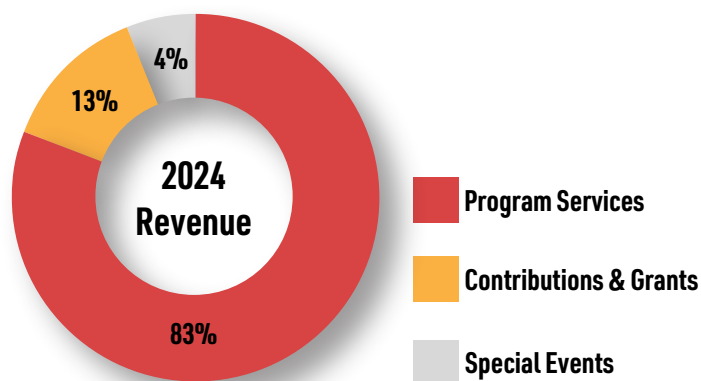
Addressing these issues head-on, ACE developed a supported employment program that provides full-time employment through the ACE Contract Services Team.

While most ACE participants secure employment with outside employers, this program offers those who face the greatest obstacles opportunities to build work experience while continuing to engage closely with ACE staff.

With the partnership of The New York City Council, The New York State Senate, and The New York State Assembly, ACE's Supported Employment Program provided neighborhood beautification services in all five boroughs in 2024.

The goal of this program, however, goes beyond keeping New York City's neighborhoods clean. ACE invests in the long-term success of our Contract Services Team, offering:

- » 401K matching plan
- » Access to subsidized health insurance
- » Access to lifelong aftercare support and vocational growth opportunities via Project Stay programming
- » Access to industry-specific certifications
- » Employment retention support
- » Growth opportunities
- » Holiday pay



REVENUE	2024	2023	EXPENSES	2024	2023
Program Services	\$ 8,105,937	\$ 8,107,902	Program Services	\$ 8,815,497	\$ 8,876,767
Contributions & Grants Without Restrictions	\$ 1,006,390	\$ 1,003,812	Management/General	\$ 418,344	\$ 374,442
Contributions & Grants With Restrictions	\$ 282,071	\$ 0	Fundraising	\$ 420,390	\$ 392,382
Special Events (Net Income)	\$ 626,637	\$ 640,282	Total Expenses	\$ 9,654,231	\$ 9,643,591
Investment Income	\$ 16,419	\$ 15,903	Change in Net Assets Without Restrictions	\$ 101,152	\$ 124,308
Total Revenue Without Restrictions	\$ 9,755,383	\$ 9,767,899	Change in Net Assets With Restrictions	\$ 282,071	\$ 0
Total Revenue With Restrictions	\$10,037,454	\$ 9,767,899	Total Change in Net Assets	\$ 383,223	\$ 124,308

# Our Team

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 Thomas Lee, Director of Contract Services  
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 Leo Gil, Government Contract Manager  
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 Emmanuel Fernandez, Job Developer  
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 Nadra Hussein-Sagaff, Aftercare Coordinator  
 Bridget Sarabia, Case Manager  
 Emma Dingeldein, Case Manager  
 Daniel Zilberman, Case Manager  
 Claire Kenyon, Case Manager  
 Jacqueline Amhi, Senior Crew Supervisor  
 Paul Manzi, Senior Crew Supervisor  
 Kremlin Gil, Senior Crew Supervisor  
 Brian Barnknow, Crew Supervisor  
 Jamil Martin, Field Supervisor  
 Cory Weimar, Field Supervisor

Jesus Ortiz, Field Supervisor  
 Michael McKenzie, Field Supervisor  
 Elbert Copeland, Quality Control Officer  
 Herbert Hodge, Quality Control Officer  
 Latricia Mercer, Quality Control Officer  
 Thane West, Quality Control Officer  
 Kyle McDaniel, Quality Control Officer  
 Maritsa Cosme, Work Experience Supervisor  
 Lorna Laidlaw, Front Office Associate

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ACE Sanitation Team with New York State Senator Jessica Ramos





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Platinum  
Transparency  
2024

**Candid.**

We act with integrity!  
We've earned a



+ FOUR-STAR RATING +  
from

Charity Navigator

