



## 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



*Invest in a student & strengthen our community.*

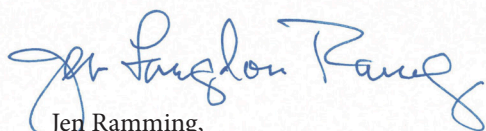
# FROM OUR CHAIR AND DIRECTOR

When you support OpenDoors of Asheville, you strengthen our community. OpenDoors then expands its impacts to strengthen other communities when our college graduates of color go on to lead in their chosen fields.

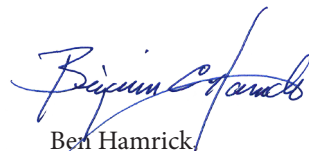
Improving access to best-in-class education is how we accomplish our outcomes, and the “whatever it takes” whole-child approach has been the heart and soul of our work since our inception in 2009. We are grateful that our students continue to meet with huge success, despite a pandemic and amidst the racial and economic turmoil of 2020. This next year will be our first to have college graduates, and our three oldest students are applying to graduate school, all in human health and service fields. We are incredibly proud of our students and firmly believe that when we intensively invest in youth, they in turn, invest in themselves and break the cycle of poverty for generations to come.

OpenDoors Staff and Board recently came to consensus when refining our mission statement, which is no small feat with a diverse and passionate group of experts. We feel we hit the mark when we chose “To strengthen community by eliminating the race-based achievement gap for students through education.” We did this to emphasize why we do what we do and clarify whom we serve. We are honored to work intensively with a roster of 90 students of color and their families, supporting their critical educational, enrichment, and resource needs, while also working to eliminate barriers that create racial and economic divides. Our vision is a community in which all students thrive, and we are thrilled to have you with us on this rewarding journey!

With much hope and gratitude,



Jen Ramming,  
Executive Director



Ben Hamrick,  
Board Chair





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*Photo courtesy of The Gow School*

# J A H E I M J O H N S O N

High School senior,  
The Gow School  
in New York,  
Student Body  
President,  
Dorm RA,  
lacrosse player,  
master of  
public speaking,  
and currently  
studying  
Archetypal Literary  
theory.

Jaheim pictured at OpenDoors'  
2013 Dig the Du off-road Duathlon



“We first got to know Jaheim in the 4th grade. He loved to watch CNN and had much curiosity about the world. However, he was struggling in school, reading was an uphill battle, and his mom wanted something different for him. We placed him in a Best-Fit school for 6th grade, provided a full Psycho-Educational assessment, and with individualized support for his learning profile, he made A/B honor roll by 8th grade.”

-- OpenDoors Volunteer TeamLeader



# MISSION

Our mission is to strengthen community by eliminating the race-based achievement gap for students through education.

# VISION

We envision a community in which all students thrive.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## **We value education and believe that...**

when students are appropriately resourced, inspired and respected, they become active, engaged, lifelong learners who are college and/or career ready. Students experiencing poverty can focus on their academic pursuits and overcome challenges with success if they have year-round academic support and equitable opportunities.

## **We value enrichment and believe that...**

opportunities beyond the classroom increase students ability to discover their “spark” and actualize their potential. Providing students access to a broad range of experiences enables them to acquire social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills necessary for classroom and career-growth.

## **We value an engaged community and believe that...**

when we invest in our children they, in-turn, invest in themselves and strengthen our community. Children growing up under-resourced thrive when we build connections between diverse individuals, families, neighborhoods, groups, and organizations.

## **We value equity and inclusion and believe that...**

these concepts are the center of our work. We recognize there is deep and wide systemic change that must happen to dismantle social and economic injustices. We believe that racism is one of the most pressing issues of our time, and that by advancing racial equity in education, we are confronting other discrimination-based injustices.



# WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST

"In Asheville  
71.8% of the 3,100  
**public housing residents**  
are African Americans."

Urban News, 2019



"The stresses of poverty —  
such as crowded conditions,  
financial worry, and lack of  
adequate child care —  
lead to **impaired learning ability**  
in children from  
impoverished backgrounds."

National Institute of Health 2012

"Black students received  
**68% of suspensions**  
in Asheville City Schools,  
even though  
total Black enrollment  
stood at around 20%."

Asheville Citizen Times, 2020



"**Bachelor's degree holders**  
have lower rates  
of unemployment  
and earn nearly double  
what those with only  
a high school diploma earn."

Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019

*"Black students in Asheville are facing*  
**THE 5TH WORST ACHIEVEMENT GAP**  
*in the nation."*

Carolina Public Press, 2019





# 2019/20 OPENDOORS HIGHLIGHTS



22 distinct  
k-12 schools,  
private, public & charter



90+ students  
45+ guardians  
served in program



500+ hours of  
one-on-one  
tutoring



8 first generation  
college students thriving  
in 7 different colleges



3000+ hours of  
volunteer  
service



93 weeks  
of summer camp,  
day & overnight





# ACADEMICS

*Education is the prow of our ship, and our students are our highest priority.*

## **Best-Fit School Placements and Academic Advocacy**

Supporting students, kindergarten through college, means much more than helping them get better grades. We work with parents and schools to ensure all students have the stability, resource, equity, and inclusion they need to thrive and meet their ultimate potential. Sometimes this means moving a student to a smaller school, or perhaps even a boarding school. We work as a team with

teachers and administrators at each school to determine the most effective ways to support individual students so they can thrive.

parents and teachers, our tutors help lift struggling students and strengthen their academic foundations.



*Photo courtesy of Eric Howard*

*OpenDoors has provided more than 500 hours of one-on-one tutoring in 19/20.*

## **Tutoring**

OpenDoors provides supplemental one-on-one longterm tutoring to close the race-based achievement gap. This may come in the form of homework helpers, subject-specific assistance, or in many cases, professional Orton-Gillingham trained tutors. In collaboration with

## **Assessments**

Comprehensive Psycho-Educational assessments allow our students a deeper understanding of the intricacies of the way they learn, their strengths, and their areas for growth. Research shows that under-resourced children's neurology is profoundly affected in the areas of language development, vocabulary, and executive functioning-- which is the ability to plan, remember details, and pay attention. Differences like these are reversible through intensive interventions,



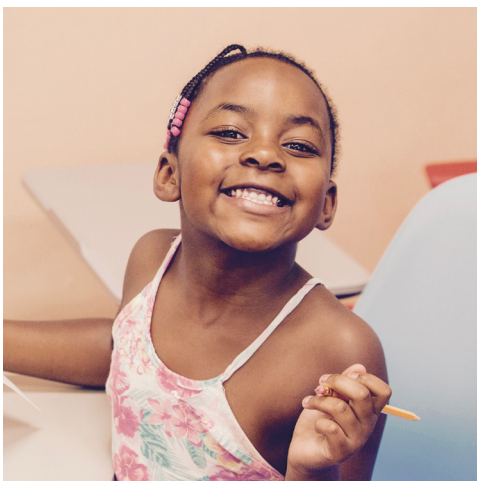
# ACADEMICS

and once identified, we can ensure students get equitable access to resources, accommodations, and tools designed prescriptively for their developing brains.

*Community partners have donated 22 comprehensive educational assessments leading to diagnoses for our most complex learners.*

## **Saturday Math Club**

On Saturdays throughout the school year, and in partnership with Asheville School, OpenDoors provides math tutoring and enrichment for students and parent volunteers. They receive support for current



school work along with supplemental instruction to strengthen their math foundations. In addition, students are exposed to a diverse group of international teens, an inspiring school campus, a warm lunch, and advanced high school math instruction.

## **Remote Learning @OpenDoors**

Due to COVID-19, 🦠 students began virtual learning in March 2020. For under-resourced students, learning independently at home became an additional challenge, intensifying the race-based opportunity gap. In response, we have opened our doors to create a safe learning environment with a ratio of six students to two staff in our own Remote Learning Pod. With transportation provided by our staff, students are able to show up and log in to their classes with guidance in time management, homework and classwork assignments, physical activity, and social skills; along with receiving a healthy lunch donated by local restaurants. Since mid-September, our students have earned higher grades, more

accolades from teachers, and report feeling happier about school.



*“Education is often referred to as the great equalizer: It can open the door to jobs, resources, and skills that a family needs to not just survive, but thrive.”*

*-ConcernUSA*





# ENRICHMENT



## Summer Camp

Research shows that summer camp enriches children's lives through expanded social networks, opportunities for safe risk taking, connections with nature, exposure to art and sports, team building, and much more. Typically, affluent kids are 5 times more likely to go to camp than their peers experiencing poverty. Research also shows that even traditional summer camps can help prevent summer academic slide by keeping kids engaged, happy, safe, and well-fed. All of our OpenDoors students get to experience a minimum of 1-2 weeks of camp every summer! Additionally, as our students age up, they are often asked to become peer mentors, volunteers, and CITs with many of our camp partners, increasing their employability.

## Our Camp Partners

Appalachian Institute of Creative Learning  
Camp Bob  
Camp Good Trouble  
Camp Watia  
Hanger Hall Camps  
Horizons at CDS  
Little Bellas Mtn Biking  
Outward Bound  
Roots and Wings  
UNCA Sports Camps

*OpenDoors provided 53 weeks of summer overnight and day camps for our students in 2019.*

## Academic Summer Experiences

On top of wholesome traditional summer camps, we are also able to secure spots in highly coveted academic summer programs aimed at jumpstarting a student's academic progress and confidence. Oftentimes these interventions can catapult a student several months forward academically, instead of the typical backward summer

slide. Each summer 2 of our students are selected to spend 5 weeks at The Gow Summer program, designed specifically for kids with language based learning differences.

Create a Vision Board	Write a letter to your future self	Practice Gratitude. List 10 things you're grateful for
Make a grocery shopping list for this week	Meditate for 10 minutes with our video	Decorate your OpenDoors Journal
Fill up a bag of litter from your neighborhood	Find an inspiring quote and explain it's meaning	Watch our video on proper form and do 20 push-ups

## COVID-19 🦠 Summer

In light of the pandemic, we created 2 summer programs to provide enrichment for our students while in quarantine. We had our first ever "Out of the Box" summer challenge where students received activity boxes with 20 challenges aimed at learning, creating, reflecting, and stepping outside of the box to compete for prizes. In July, we ran our Summer Arts, Fun, Enrichment (S.A.F.E!) program, which included DJ classes, Hiking, Leadership, NC Glass Center arts, and more.

# ENRICHMENT

## DJ and Recording Arts

On Tuesday afternoons in our @ODA program space, Nex Millen worked with OpenDoors students in a special recording arts workshop. He brings experience and enthusiasm to the art and skillset of Mixing and DJing music. Students learn about transitions, hooks, beats per minute, tempo, loops and much more. After 6 weeks, the kids were able to showcase their new skills at the 2020 Art Affair.



## RiverLink

OpenDoors partners with RiverLink, an environmental awareness program that promotes the economic vitality and educational awareness of the French Broad river and its watershed. Our students



work with environmental educators in hands-on experiments, water-testing, and the identification of a multitude of habitats and creatures. In working with RiverLink, our students gain understanding and appreciation for our local waterways and ecosystems and a love for science.

## PivotPoint

We are lucky to partner with PIVOTPoint WNC for therapeutic wilderness enrichment. Group processing focused on self-reflection, emotional regulation, interpersonal skill building, guided meditations, and action-oriented goal setting are interwoven with challenging outdoor experiences. During a 6 week program, our students trek 5-mile loops, set up shelters, paddle board and raft, and

complete classroom hours diving into the fundamental pillars of growth. We explore the transformative nature of the outdoors and how investment in self can ripple out to family, friends, and community. OpenDoors provided 72 hours of PivotPoint programming in 2020.

## OneNeighborhood Arts

Our OneNeighborhood project brings middle and high school students from surrounding neighborhoods into studios and galleries in downtown Asheville and the vibrant River Arts District for glass blowing, ceramics, painting, screen printing, and more. Partnering with teaching artists, our students experience innovative and experiential learning outside of the typical classroom. While learning the arts, students also navigate how to price, market, and sell their work, and in turn, they take home the proceeds from their hard earned gallery sales.





# SUSTAINABILITY

*To build confidence and resilience for sustainable success, we support students as they gain life skills and resources.*



## **Financial Literacy**

Working in partnership with Nex Millen, First Citizens Bank, and Next-Level Income, we are piloting a financial literacy curriculum for students and their families. This is a multi-step program that includes a gamified money-management class for 7th-10th grade students. Participants



gain understanding of financial vocabulary and practice healthy money management. High school students create and grow their bank account, plan for student loans, and understand credit. Older students receive one-on-one mentorship through college as they navigate potential debt, scholarships, taxes, and home ownership.

## **Transportation and Working Wheels**

OpenDoors students and parents are coached and supported through the driver's permit process all the way to full license and car ownership. We are proud to be a selected partner of Working

Wheels, who transforms donated cars into reliable vehicles for students and families. This community partnership helps provide resources to our parents and youth, which further opens the door to best-in-class education, better employment opportunities, and an improved quality of life.

## **NextSteps Housing**

NextSteps supports our To & Through College Access and Completion program by increasing the safety, stability, and sustainability of our student's housing. Working in partnership with corporate sponsors, real estate investors, donors, and the local non-



# SUSTAINABILITY

profit, WNC Superheroes, OpenDoors families have the opportunity to receive necessary financial support to close the gap between Section 8 Vouchers and the current market rate for housing, moving toward home ownership. By providing this critical resource, more housing options become available to OpenDoors families and students can thrive.

## Employability

Internships allow OpenDoors students to learn about many industries through realtime job experience. Statistics show that student interns have an advantage when securing positions, but also when

it comes to job retention. According to The National Association of Colleges and Employers, the retention rate for interns hired is 71% after one year. Those who were hired without any internship or job experience had a retention rate of only 42.4 %. OpenDoors helps to network living wage employment and/or internships for 100% of eligible students.

## Resource

Sometimes students and parents simply ask us to help fill a need; whether it be Ingles cards for food or gas, school lunches, beds and other basic furniture, school uniforms, transportation, or sports

equipment. OpenDoors coordinates many donations of specific goods and services that help reduce stress and eliminate disparities so that students can focus on schoolwork and succeed.

*We are committed to listen, ask questions, communicate, and collaborate with students, families, community partners, and donors.*

## Our Criteria for Student Selection

We prioritize K-11th grade students most affected by the race based achievement gap, students with learning differences (diagnosed or suspected), and students who are living in subsidized housing, homeless, or designated McKinney-Vento, but we also consider all referrals for students experiencing poverty and in need of educational support.



Photo courtesy of SoulKu

# TO & THROUGH COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP

OpenDoors awards 2 college scholarships each year. Currently, we have 8 'To and Through' college scholars supported by family foundations and individual donors like you. This scholarship encourages and empowers students to apply, attend, and graduate from a 4-year college or university with less than \$15k in debt. Funding can be applied to tuition, books, housing, transportation, food, or all expenses related to living on campus and thriving. In addition to biannual financial support, scholarship recipients receive 1:1 staff coaching, financial mentorship, crisis support, and post-college career counseling.

At this time, 6 of our 8 college scholars have applied to or are planning to apply to graduate school to pursue Master's degrees. From Fall 2019 to Spring 2020, our average college grade point average (GPA) increased by .8%. We are proud of our successful college students, especially during COVID, which shifted their learning off campus, disrupted housing, work, and made classroom support more of a challenge!

*Photo courtesy of Eric Howard*



S H A W N T E L L  
S M A R T

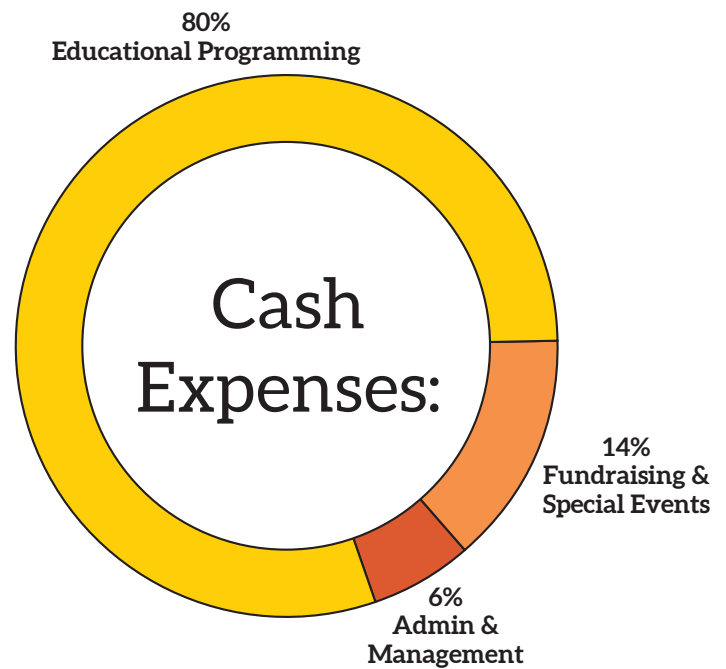
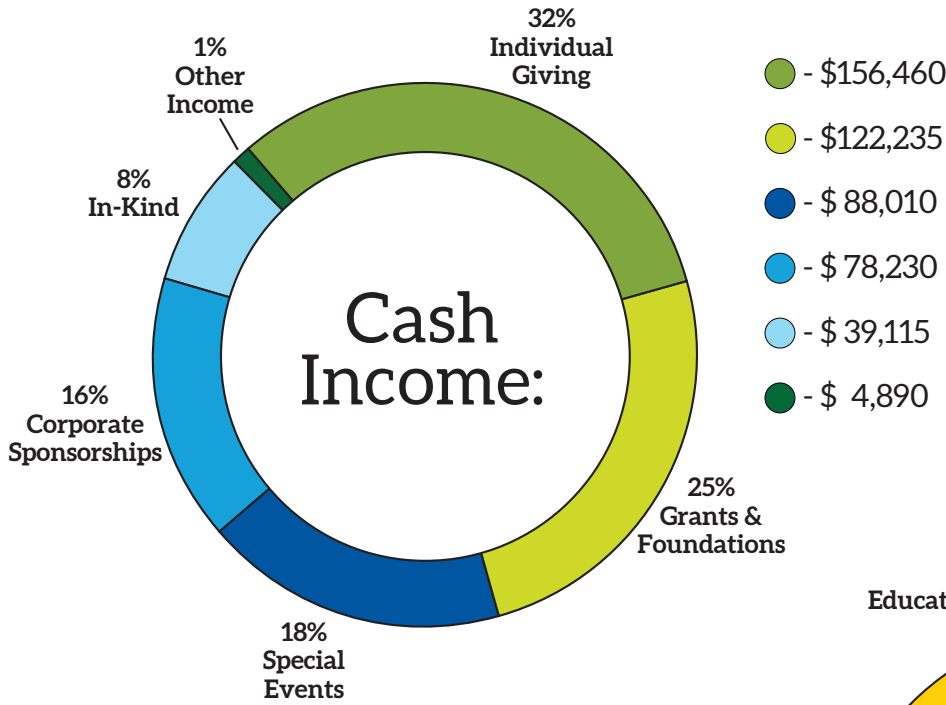
Sophomore,  
Barton College  
in Wilson, NC  
majoring in  
Criminal Justice/  
Sociology.

Pictured in elementary and  
in 2019 at AHS graduation.



# 2019 TOTAL FINANCIAL FOOTPRINT

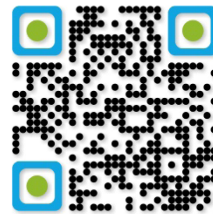
$$\begin{array}{rcccl}
 \$488,940 & + & \$433,368 & = & \$922,309 \\
 \text{Cash} & & \text{*Other Contributions} & & \text{Total Budget}
 \end{array}$$



\*Other Contributions:

We count on our many community partners to offer resources for free or at a much reduced cost, and as a result, OpenDoors Financial Footprint is almost twice the size of our bank account. Our staff works diligently to make sure students have the resources they need to be successful. This in-kind support includes scholarships, test and application fee waivers, transportation, Psych-Ed assessments, and much more. These items do not show up on in our 990, but our students reap the benefits of these “free” resources each and every day.

# OpenDoors ELEVATION FUND



Members of the Elevation Fund are recognized as committed individuals and businesses who invest more than \$1,000 each year in OpenDoors. In addition, donors who make multi-year pledges allow us the ability to plan and implement long-term educational interventions, resulting in greater outcomes and success for our students.

**Our community of support is growing everyday. For the most up-to-date listing of our donors, please scan our QR code above or visit our website under the Community tab to learn more.**

## Individuals \$1000+

Marla and Joel Adams  
Anonymous  
Robert Bach  
Nicole and Matt Baker  
Connie and Jason Bergman  
Kellye and Alan Bradshaw  
Kristin and Ross Britton  
Gladys Brooks  
Alexandra and Nathan Brown  
Lauren and Andrew Brunk  
Shelagh and Bill Byrne  
Lindsay and Rob Carter  
Dee Cash  
Leslie and Daniel Casse  
Jill and Chris Champlin  
Andrew Crompton  
Katherine Dadachanji  
Jacqueline and Lakota Denton  
Molly and Steele Dewey  
Kristan and Eddie Dewey  
Joya and Michael Distefano  
Carol and Spencer Duin  
Shelley and Jeff Eatherly  
Bridget and Rick Eckerd  
Nur and Doug Edwards  
Michelle and Paul Farago  
Catherine and Will Gay  
Marissa and Darren Green  
Margie Green  
Bonnie and Ben Hamrick  
Chyrisse and Pete Hannan  
Ashley Helgeson  
Carolyn Herbst  
Molly and Dan Hitchcock  
Cathy and Brooks Hooper  
Jennifer and Ted Hull  
Miranda Hunter  
Nicki and Bobby Ingle  
Cecil Jividen  
Himanshu Karvir and Swati Patel  
Ken Keeler  
Chrissy and Ed Kizer  
Mark Kobin  
Susan Kosma  
Michelle Kotara  
Kenn Kotara  
Theresa and Gary Landwirth  
Jean and Jack Langdon  
Nancy and Tom Maher

Elizabeth and Chris Mailander  
Matthew Martin  
Joy and Roy Martina  
Jenny Mathews  
Lisa and David May  
Sue and Ray McClinton  
Lizzy and Oscar Montes  
Patty and Tommy Norman  
Kendall and Jim Oliver  
Tom Oreck  
Sasha and Matt Osada  
Robin and John Oswald  
Lisa Perez  
Stacy and Jim Philip  
Kaye and Todd Phillips  
Dosty and Alex Quarrier  
Ronna and Robert Resnick  
Suzanne and Mike Rose  
Julie and JR Rose  
Laurie and David Serfas  
Annie and Red Smith  
Cameron Stone  
Hilary and Croft Thomas  
Elizabeth Tindall  
Odie and Rad Von Werssowetz  
Jennifer and Steve Ware  
Molly and David Webb  
Ellen Williams and Tom Milton  
Roxanne and Steve Wilmans  
Anne Winner  
Dianne and David Worley  
Diana Wortham

## Corporate Sponsors \$1000+

Ananda Hair Studio  
Asheville Eye Associates  
Baird Financial Group  
Bette Boutique  
Blueridge Pediatric Dentistry  
Budweiser of Asheville  
Dewey Property Advisors  
Diamond Brand Outdoors  
First Citizen's Bank  
Green Man Brewing Company  
Harmony Motors  
Henco Reprographics

Hunter Automotive  
Ingles Markets  
Johnson, Price, Sprinkle  
Lexington Avenue Glassworks  
Marthaler Jewelers  
McGuire, Wood, and Bissette  
McKibbon-Pollay  
Mission Health  
Mosaic Realty  
Osada Construction  
Pack's Tavern  
Range Urgent Care  
Samsel Architects, PA  
Sola Salon Studios  
Spruce Street Tap  
SoulKu  
The Gow School  
The Local Barber and Tap  
Thomas P. Waters  
Foundation  
Tilden White and Associates  
Vickery Family Medicine  
Wickles Pickles  
WNC Veterinary Hospital  
Woolworth Walk

Vu Partners

## Corporate Sponsors \$500+

Black Orthodontics  
Jade Mountain Builders  
Marks Family Dentistry  
PFA Architects  
Scout Boutique  
Simply Home  
Turner and Scott

## Corporate Sponsors \$250+

Archetype Brewing  
Home Trust Bank

## Awarded Grants

Community Foundation of WNC-  
People in Need Grant, 2020  
Dogwood Health Trust ION Grant, 2020  
Emergency and Disaster Reponse Fund, 2020  
First Congregational United Church of Christ, 2020  
Pisgah Investments Foundation, 2020  
Skyland United Methodist Church, 2020  
Southern Vision Alliance, 2019, 2020  
TD Charitable Foundation, 2019, 2020  
Trinity Episcopal Church, 2019, 2020  
United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County 2020  
United Way Worldwide, 2020  
Wells Fargo Foundation, 2019, 2020  
WNC Bridge Foundation, 2020



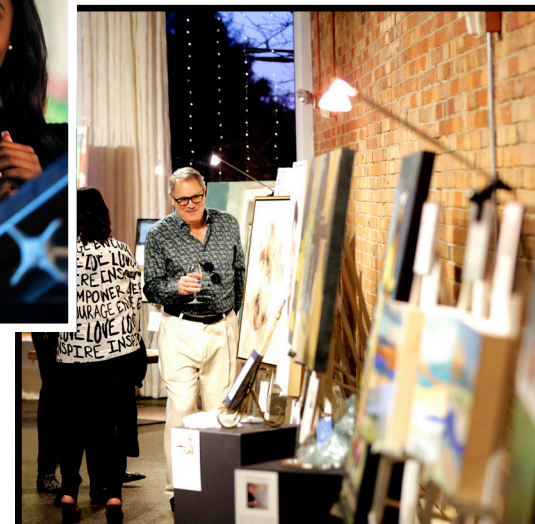
# Look 2020

PRESENTED BY:  
FIRST  
CITIZENS  
BANK

# OPEN DOORS ART AFFAIR

February 29, 2020, on the eve of COVID-19, OpenDoors hosted its 11th annual Art Affair at The Venue in Downtown Asheville. With more than 400 supporters in attendance, the **Art Affair raised over \$250,000**, making this a record-breaking year. We awarded 4-year college scholarships to two OpenDoors seniors, recognized local jewelry company, Soulku as our Laureate of the Year, and celebrated all of our local donating artists, community partners, and volunteers who made this evening possible.

*"We were extremely fortunate to have had the Art Affair this year and also to exceed our financial goals. The timing and success of the event guaranteed the availability of critical operating and program support to keep our students on track, working towards completing high school and college. With the funds raised, OpenDoors is able to cover additional costs of learning during the pandemic, guaranteeing our students' needs are met."* --Nicki Ingle, Event Chair



Photos courtesy of Renato Rolo and Robbie Francis





Partnering with Connor Mailander, a local high school student, OpenDoors was able to raise over **\$100,000** for Asheville students.

Photo courtesy of Ben Carland

## Connor's 100 Miles

In the midst of the pandemic, Connor Mailander decided to make a difference for local students most affected by the race-based achievement gap. At 6:30 am on June 19th Connor began his 100-mile run from the Ingles parking lot in Mills River. After 36 hours, and only 3 hours of sleep, Connor completed 104 miles of mountainous terrain, raising more than \$100,000 for OpenDoors students. Connor faced his challenge with the same determination and tenacity we find in our own students who are working hard to break through the barriers that come with generational poverty and systemic racism.

*“OpenDoors helps kids. They support low-income kids and help to try to break the education barrier. To me it seems they are really invested in the kids’ lives, and they make sure every step of the way they have somebody who is there for them and wants to help them. Education truly is the real ultra-marathon!”*

*-Connor Mailander, 17 years old*



# MEET OUR TEAM



Jen Langdon Ramming  
Executive Director



Megan Martell  
Director of Program Excellence



Kelsey Simmons  
Program Coordinator



Renay Winston  
People Resource Director



Dosty Quarrier  
Development Director



Nancy Abernethy  
Communications Coordinator  
& Education Liaison



Courtney Hamner  
Director of Finance



Tia Searles  
Program Assistant



Melissa Moses  
Office Manager



Matthew Johnson  
Development Assistant

*“As a long time volunteer and supporter of OD, I’ve had an opportunity to work closely with their amazing staff. I am so impressed with their passion, competence, and commitment to social justice for the community and the families they work so closely with. And they do all that with a joy and upbeat enthusiasm that is absolutely inspiring.”*

*--Gary Landwirth*



290 Haywood Road, Suite 204  
Asheville, NC 28806

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**BEN HAMRICK**, Board Chair  
*CEO of Johnson Price Sprinkle PA*

**MARTIN MOORE**, Vice Board Chair  
*Attorney, Van Winkle Law Firm*

**ROBERT MCARTHUR**, Treasurer  
*CFO/COO, Asheville School*

**DOUG EDWARDS**  
*Assistant District Attorney*

**MARISSA GREEN**  
*Community volunteer,  
Former 3rd Grade teacher*

**JASMINE MIDDLETON**, Secretary  
*Legal Assistant, District Attorney's Office*

**NICOLE CUSH**  
*Principal at SILSA, Asheville City Schools*

**CANDY SHIVERS**  
*Community Volunteer*

**SEAN VERVAIN**  
*Director of Student Support Services  
and Cultural Equity,  
Invest Collegiate Imagine School*

*Our mission is to strengthen community  
by eliminating the race-based achievement gap  
for students through education.*



**OPENDOORSASHEVILLE.ORG**

**828.239.8811**