



Offering Free After-School Programming for Students in Grades 6-12

A Message from the Executive Director

I have been blessed to be the Executive Director at the Armory Youth Project (AYP) for almost two years. During this time my focus has been on developing a strategic plan to offer free after school programs and support for youth in grades 6-12. As we do this, we have been focused on the four pillars of the AYP mission statement which is to “provide a safe environment where young people can build community and be encouraged in their educational, emotional, physical, and Christian spiritual development.”



We have expanded our programs this year to include Disc Golf, Cooking Matters with MSU, dances and Be the Influence, a program designed as a peer support and advocacy group, to name just a few. Our programs allow us to help our students develop in so many ways from how to run a business with Junior Achievement to how to grow their own food in our garden with the Garden Club and then how to prepare meals in our kitchen. They learn to work in teams, enhance their life skills, and gain valuable experiences from working with a variety of community members. Together, we are making a positive impact on kids!

Our goal was to create an energized environment where students and adults are able to work and grow together and to add to the community programs and not compete. As a member of the Human Services Collaborative Board (HSCB) in Manistee, I am able to collaborate with service organizations throughout our community and identify unique opportunities for our youth. When we show our love for the kids and love for the AYP mission, the excitement helps us grow! We are expanding our reach to new youth as well as continuing to serve our regular attendees. By the end of October, we had nearly 2200 youth in attendance in one or more of our programs.

People remark on our success, and it is true. It is exciting to see the plan come to fruition. We have been so fortunate to see the progress in action and how we are earning the right to build relationships with our kids. What many people don't know is all the hard work by staff and volunteers that is required to be successful. There were over 450 volunteer check-ins since January. The volunteers help in so many ways to deliver on our mission to serve the county's youth.

Of course, none of this is possible without funding as we are a non-profit. Part of my focus for fundraising is to reach as many revenue sources as possible to implement our strategy and deliver on our mission. We have received several grants over the past two years (Minger Family Endowment Fund Grant, 100 Women Who Care, Knizacky Insurance Agency of Farm Bureau Insurance of Michigan, Revenue Sharing, House of Flavors Protein Foundation and more). We also offer adult programs for a small fee that help fund youth programs while also fulfilling a community need for space. In a compassionate community such as Manistee we all benefit when we work together to serve our youth. It truly does take a village and we are thankful for the great staff, volunteers and donors we have that help make what we do possible.

Our youth at the AYP are awesome kids who are developing critical life skills on a daily basis. I encourage the community to come and learn more about how you can contribute to our youth's success. Whether you want to volunteer or support our ongoing operations through donations, we can help make a difference in the lives of our youth. After several years of fine-tuning, we have determined that we need an ongoing budget of \$200,000 per year to be successful. **We are blessed to share that through your donations and pledges, our \$75,000 matching grant has been fully utilized. Great news...our donor has graciously offered a new matching grant up to \$25,000 through year-end. We appreciate any support you can give to take advantage of this dollar-for-dollar match. Please donate at www.armoryyouthproject.com/donate.**

For more information, contact me at director@armoryyouthproject.com.

Arny Najciechowski



Wishing you a Blessed Christmas and a Healthy New Year!



“The Armory is a non-profit organization where kids can learn new skills that they might not be able to learn at home. It's a place where kids can help the community and make new friends.”

Kayleigh
 Student
 7th Grade

The Armory is a safe place for teens to hang out, have fun, and be supported.

Our vision is to create a flourishing youth culture in Manistee County where every person feels valued, finds a pathway to opportunity, and has the tools to realize a more promising future. For more information, please contact us on the website at: armoryyouthproject.com

“I think the Armory is a great place because they have a lot of programs and activities that you can learn from. It’s also really fun and the staff and volunteers are amazing people who have helped me through this. I just want to say that I enjoy going to the Armory almost every day and learning new things. However the most important thing I have learned at the Armory is communication skills, problem solving, and overall just being kind. They also provide things that most families don’t have such as toiletries, food, and just everyday items. Other than that the main people I would like to thank and think of are our donors that have provided us with everything that we have at the Armory. I am very thankful and appreciative that we have people that care and make sure the place has opportunities.”

Madeline
Student, 8th grade



AYP Year-to-Date Stats

Look how we have grown! The following are some highlights through October 31, 2021.

Registrations – AYP registered 646 students to include Covid-19 safety guidelines which protect our youth, staff and volunteers.

Student Visits – 2184 student visits.

Meals – Served 1638 student meals thanks to the generous food donations by the Little River Casino Resort.

2021 Programs Offered – We have offered 352 programs designed to help our students develop basic life skills and talents including Late Start Mondays, Creative Crafting, Garden Club, Tik Tok Tuesday, Jazzercise, Geo Caching, Archery Tag, Self Defense, Cooking Class, Empower, Art, Music with Joe, Fish On!, Thrilling Grilling, SEEDS Venture Outdoors, Disc Golf, Safe Sitter Certification, Student Volunteer Certification, Intern opportunities and three clinics including Basketball, Soccer and Volleyball.

Community Service Program – Our youth are participating in a program for local Veterans that includes students painting six mini pantries that are continuously restocked with canned goods by students.

Volunteer Support – Volunteers assisted our staff contributing 450 volunteer days. We couldn’t achieve our mission without volunteer and donor support. Learn more at armoryyouthproject.com.

We invite you to tour the facility by contacting the executive director at 231-299-1205 or email director@armoryyouthproject.com.



Music with Joe



Manistee County Veterans Administration (MCVA) Mini Food Pantries



Disc Golf



Spirit of the Woods Garden Club

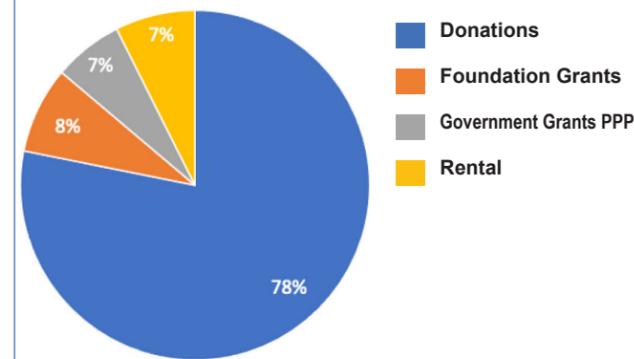
How is the Armory Youth Project doing financially?

In the Executive Director’s letter, you will see that the Armory is doing exactly what it set out to do when it opened. It was designed to meet the needs of our youth and that great work continues today. We are confident that after-school programming remains a key part of the solution by providing a safe environment during the high-risk hours between 2-6 pm.

Our challenge is to continue to grow and diversify our funding to support the growth in attendance, program offerings and cost of operations. Our target budget of \$200,000 per year requires us to be efficient yet allows us to be impactful.

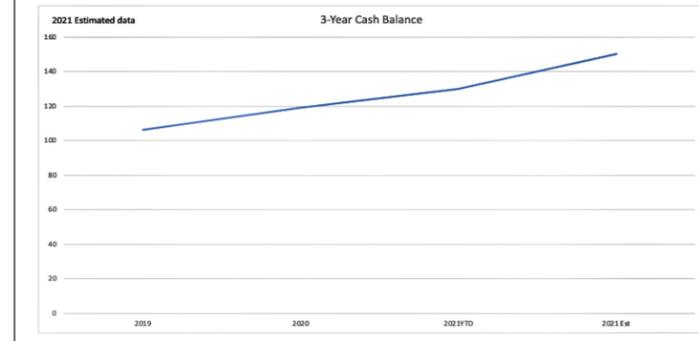
It is only through the generosity of our local community that we are able to host, educate, and entertain students during these critical after-school hours and sometimes evenings and weekends. The Armory continues to diversify its funding sources including local and private grants and rental income. We benefitted from a small government provision as a part of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as Exhibit 1: 2021 Sources of Funds shows, we rely heavily on our local community for grants and private donations, which together account for nearly 90% of our funding.

Exhibit 1: 2021 Sources of Funds



Our cash balance has remained at or above \$100,000 since our formation providing for the necessary emergency funds which is consistent with our plan. We estimate our cash balance at the end of 2021 to be approximately \$150,000. See Exhibit 2: 3-Year Cash Balance

Exhibit 2: 3-Year Cash Balance

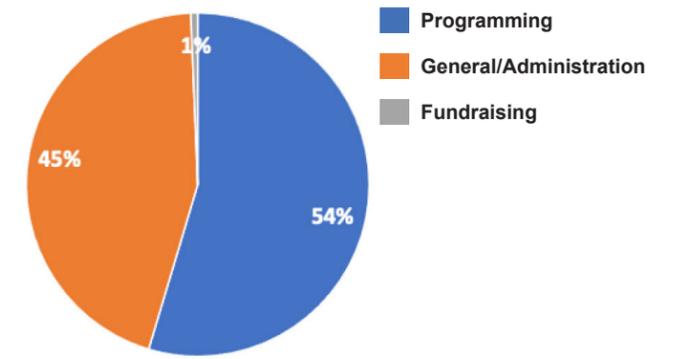


Our operating budget needs are fairly simple – we have the costs of payroll, building and programs. Our building is a great asset, but it is aging, so we continue to seek selective capital improvement projects to reduce our occupancy costs. With Manistee County Community Foundation (MCCF) support, we have made some good investments with LED lighting in the gym and upgrading our HVAC control system. These improvements have reduced our overall electrical and heating costs by close to 30%. We are extremely thankful for the support of MCCF grants and our donors for these investments. See Exhibit 3: 2021 Uses of Funds

Overall, the Armory is healthy, and we are truly making a difference in our youth’s lives. We are growing and working to operate as efficiently as possible. Our continued success is tied directly to the great support we are blessed with from our community. Thanks to all those who support the Armory. If you are interested to contribute, you may donate online at:

<https://www.armoryyouthproject.com/donate>
Email Amy at director@armoryyouthproject.com or call 231-299-1205.

Exhibit 3: 2021 Uses of Funds



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