



ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023



CHANGING HANDS

I have been involved with Friends of the Environment in many capacities since it was founded in 1988. Since 2017 I have had the privilege of leading a remarkable team through the challenges posed by Hurricane Dorian. Together, we have persevered, rebuilt, and emerged stronger than ever leading to the establishment of the beautiful new Learning Centre.

It is with a mix of emotions that I have decided to step down from my current role as Executive Director, but I am thrilled to continue to contribute to FRIENDS as Development Director. As we look towards the future, I am excited that Olivia Patterson-Maura, also involved with FRIENDS from the beginning, will take on the role as Executive Director bringing her expertise in environmental education and science. My deepest gratitude to each and every one of you for your support over the years and we look forward to continuing to collaborate with you all who share a common goal of continuing to protect the beautiful environment of The Bahamas.



CHA BOYCE

Outgoing Executive Director

I am honoured to be following in Cha's footsteps, and grateful to be able to count her as a much valued team member. Cha's steadfast guidance and perseverance have helped bring us through Hurricane Dorian to where we are today. I look forward to partnering with you all to harness the new energy of FRIENDS to do some amazing things for conservation and environmental education in Abaco.

Having benefitted from FRIENDS' programs as a student, I have worked throughout my time at FRIENDS to ensure others receive similar opportunities and that we work to close gaps and remove barriers to participation for students across Abaco. Community involvement and awareness is key. Let's work together to support a sustainable future for Abaco.



OLIVIA PATTERSON MAURA

Incoming Executive Director



WHO WE ARE

VISION

We are an island community that is living sustainably and proud to be stewards of our rich biodiversity

MISSION

To preserve the environment of Abaco, The Bahamas through education, conservation, and research facilitation.

STAFF



L-R: Olivia Patterson Maura – Executive Director
Lianna Burrows – Deputy Director
Cha Boyce – Development Director
Ruth Albury – Administrative Coordinator
Lyndeisha Curry – Outreach Coordinator
Danielle Evans – Campus Administrator
Lorenz Carter – Interim Education Officer



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Wynsome Ferguson, President
Jim Richard, Vice President
Charlotte Dunn, Treasurer
David Knowles, Secretary
Diane Claridge, Director

Joy Chaplin, Director
Reg Patterson, Director
Justin Higgs, Director
Jeremie Saunders, Director
Michelle Bailey, Director

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

REACHED 2042 STUDENTS

More than doubling our reach from last year!



HOSTED 6 FULL WEEKS OF SUMMER CAMP



Reaching communities of Marsh Harbour, Sandy Point, Crossing Rocks, and Cooper's Town

HOSTED THE LARGEST ABACO SCIENCE FAIR EVER

Engaging over 400 students and community members across Abaco with the theme "The Bush: The true value of Bahamian terrestrial ecosystems".



GRAND OPENING

Wrapped up the Learning Centre Capital Campaign and opened the building.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

It's been about four years since we can say we've had a "normal" year. Gratefully, we wrapped up the Rebuild Campaign and opened the Learning Centre in May. While this concluded our capital activities, we then began new operations of a larger facility and the process of re-initiating in house programs. In 2023 we also hired an additional staff member to help fill some gaps that resulted from our growth. This brought us to six full time staff for 2023. Some of the grants we received in 2023 carry on to 2024, so we will have more upcoming related expenses for those.

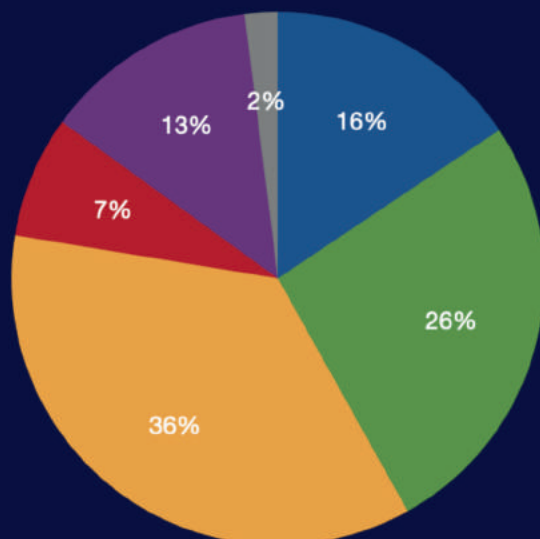
Rebuild Campaign income for 2023 was \$491,289.74 and expenditures to complete the building were \$823,176.71, and were accounted for separately from the operational budget below (see following page for full Rebuild Campaign budget).



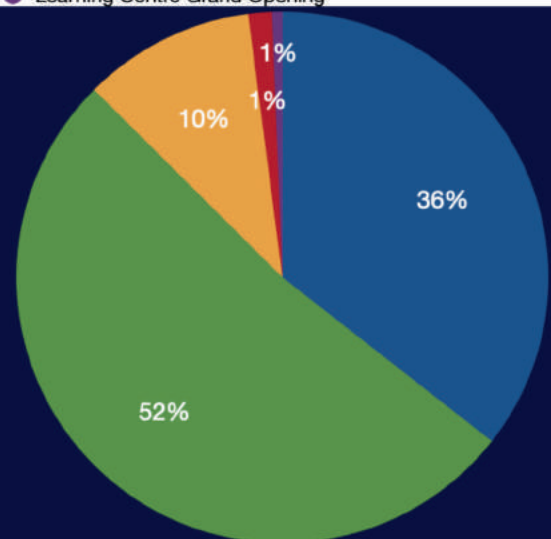
FIGURE 1. 2023 OPERATIONAL BUDGET

Income - \$814,682.14 (left), and Expenditures - \$512,207.19 (right)

● Contributions ● Grants ● Events and Merchandise
● Learning Centre ● Kenyon Centre ● Other



● Operations ● Programs ● Merchandise
● Fundraising/Development ● Learning Centre Grand Opening



REBUILD CAMPAIGN

Post-Dorian, FRIENDS took on an ambitious campaign to rebuild. The goal was to build a sustainable purpose-built facility that would encompass the growth of the organization and fill some gaps in the community. The campaign officially began in late 2020, picking up pace as recovery progressed on the island and we made it through those difficult early days of the COVID pandemic. This campaign owes its success to our dedicated team and all of you who put your trust in us! Virtual Reef Balls, grants, matching campaigns, individual and business contributions, fundraising dinners and auctions, and the dedication of Learning Centre spaces all helped us meet our goal. With the opening of the Learning Centre in May 2023 we have officially closed the "rebuild phase"! However, we're not done: we are working to help realize the potential of the Learning Centre through its many functional spaces, and have embarked on a campaign to build out the natural history exhibit in the Exploratorium. Stay tuned!

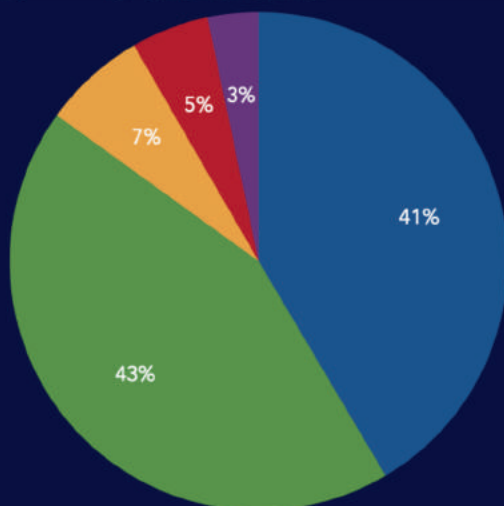


FIGURE 2. LEARNING CENTRE REBUILD CAMPAIGN

The Learning Centre Rebuild Campaign totaled \$2,330,483.92

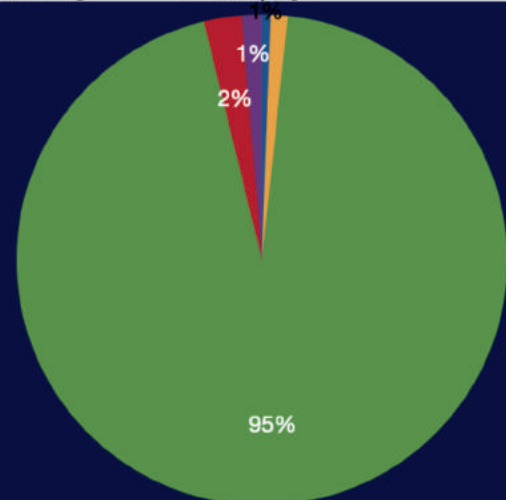
Campaign Income

Contributions Grants Business Contributions
Events Contents Insurance



Campaign Expenses

Site Preparation Pre-construction Construction
Outfitting Campaign



WELCOME BACK



The Learning Centre Opens: May 11, 2023

After nearly four years of recovery following Hurricane Dorian, the FRIENDS Campus was put back to rights and the Learning Centre formally opened this May. The rebuild project required a great deal of thought and planning as well as an intensive capital campaign. It truly was a community effort, and all who contributed their feedback, time, or funds should be proud!

The Learning Centre is now home to FRIENDS' staff offices and in-house programs. We are also proud to share that our partners at the Bahamas National Trust and Perry Institute for Marine Science are renting office space in the building. We are grateful to have them on site and working with FRIENDS on common goals for conservation in Abaco.

ALL THE FIRSTS



FINALLY IN ACTION, OUR LEARNING CENTRE SAW THE FIRST DAY OF SUMMER CAMP, FIRST BOARD MEETING, FIRST COMMUNITY FILM PREMIERE, AND MORE...



KEYSTONE PROGRAMS

Since our education program began, our goal has been to reach as many students as we can, but also to cultivate relationships with students and guide them in environmental education and ambassadorship throughout their school career, and beyond. Our core in-house programs provide that structure for consistency and build upon past experiences to support and encourage students.

After school clubs ran for 20 weeks this year, reaching an average of 34 students per week between our four clubs: Sea Beans (ages 3-6), Eco-Scouts (ages 7-9), Advanced Eco-Scouts (ages 10-12) and Island Investigators (ages 13-17). Advanced Eco-Scouts was a new addition in September as we wanted to better accommodate the learning styles of the various age groups.



Summer Camps were held in four communities across Abaco, offering seven sessions encompassing activities for ages 3-17. We also hired two summer interns and hosted three teaching assistants who gained valuable leadership experience.

Thank you to SC Bootle High School, Crossing Rocks Primary, and JA Pinder Primary for hosting us during our traveling camps!



SCHOOL OUTREACH

We guided 636 students on 73 field trips highlighting important ecosystems including mangroves, coral reefs, pine forests and blue holes.

We gave 79 presentations to local and visiting schools, reaching 1,337 students.



Student entries earn points for originality, presentation, attention to the theme, and other criteria.

Science Fair Off the Charts!

Theme:

The Bush: The True Value of Bahamian Terrestrial Forests

11 schools

400 attendees

Representing communities across Abaco

Guest Speaker: Scott Johnson, Wild Bahamas

Sponsored by:



BEP FOUNDATION

Tropix

CONSERVATION PROJECTS



Our conservation projects are still related to Dorian impacts (and beyond) with a large focus on mangrove restoration through the Northern Bahamas Mangrove Restoration Project and community cleanups, including the Great Elbow Cay Cleanup and International Coastal Cleanup Day.



If you would like to participate in or support the mangrove restoration project, please contact us!

FRANK KENYON CENTRE

In 2023, the Frank Kenyon Centre housed **355 people** from **17 organisations and institutions**. Kenyon Centre guests contributed time and knowledge to mangrove restoration, stony coral tissue loss disease research, land bird surveys, environmental education, and various community outreach and Dorian recovery projects.



L-R: Lyford Cay International School Students explore Sawmill Sink blue hole and test water samples at the FKC Lab, Bonefish and Tarpon Trust and Project Healing Waters planting mangroves, and Liquid Legacy facilitating community projects.

"Thank you so much for everything - we had such a good time and made so many wonderful memories.

Everything from jumping in the blue holes to enjoying the stars has been amazing - thank you and the '24 senior class loved it!"

"A great staff with an incredibly welcoming attitude. Loved the mangrove lazy river activity and learning more about mangroves in the presentation!"

"Loved the accommodations here. Perfect for our size group and so welcoming and well stocked and comfortable. Bless you!" - Beth, Columbia S.C



Camp Quotes



Tell us about your favourite part of camp:

Sea Beans Camp (ages 3-6): "Going to the beach!" *L.M, age 6*; "When we swim and learn about stuff." *T.L., age 6*, "Seeing Ducky the whale!" – *S.S. age 5*

Ecosystems camp (ages 7-9): "My favourite day was visiting the coral reef because I got to face a really big fear and see coral."

Conservation camp (ages 10-12): "My favourite part was visiting Mermaid's Reef because I like to see the fish and visiting the blue hole because the water is fresh and we got to jump" – *S.C., age 9*

Sandy Point Camp: "The mangroves because I get to see all type of fishes and a bunch of cool things" – *C.L., age 8*



SPECIAL EVENTS

The Combustion Music / Hope Town Music Festival has evolved into an important fundraiser for FRIENDS, Every Child Counts and Hope Town Volunteer Fire Rescue. Through collaborative efforts and with the invaluable support of everyone involved – sponsors, community members, venues and festival attendees – we are thrilled to announce that over \$300,000 was raised in 2023! Each of the three charities received \$100,000 towards annual operations. The festival also benefits the entire island by increasing commerce during a typically slow time of year. We hold a great appreciation for all of the incredible musicians who thoughtfully volunteer their time and talent, and especially to Chris Farren of Combustion Music for his dedicated efforts in spearheading the festival!

FRIENDS extends a sincere thank you to all who play a part in this success, and look forward to the 2024 festival!



Thanks to Sara and Tim Hale for hosting the welcome party!



Save the Date: December 6-8, 2024

IN RECOGNITION

GRANTS AND PROJECT PARTNERS

A special thank you to funders and collaborators who were part of active programs in 2023.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Abaco Club on Winding Bay | Center for Disaster Philanthropy | McPike-Zima Foundation |
| August A. Busch III Charitable Trust | Combustion Music Hope Town Music Festival | Moore Bahamas Foundation |
| Bahamas Department of Agriculture | Cruise Abaco | Ocean Conservancy |
| Bahamas Mangrove Alliance | The Delphi Club | Perry Institute for Marine Science |
| Bahamas Marine Mammal Research Organisation | Devereux Ocean Foundation | Royal Marsh Harbour Yacht Club |
| Bahamas National Trust | Engineered Electric Services | Sol Relief |
| Bahamas Protected Areas Fund | Global Giving | The Nature Conservancy - Bahamas Country Program |
| BEP Foundation | Hope Town Zero Waste | UNDP GEF SGP |
| Bonefish and Tarpon Trust | Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation | Water Mission |
| BREEF | Lyford Cay Foundation | Waterkeepers Bahamas |
| | MANG | Yellow Dog Community Conservation Foundation |

FOUNDATIONS AND INDIVIDUAL DONORS

Thank you to the many foundations and individual donors who supported our work in 2023.





GET INVOLVED

Volunteer - Support - Partner

Support

There are many ways to support through time, in-kind services, and direct donations. Shop our merch online at RedBubble, or buy locally in Abaco.

Partner

Are you an organization or entity working in conservation, or education and outreach? We'd love to discuss ways to combine resources for the greater good. Please reach out to our staff!

Follow Us!

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[@friendsoftheenvironment](#)



www.friendsoftheenvironment.org