



# ANNUAL REPORT



## GRIOT ARTS INC. 2019-2020



CREATE SOME GOOD

# GRIOT ARTS INC.

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This year has been far from what anyone expected. It has been filled with great uncertainty and momentous challenges. In response to these difficult circumstances, however, I have witnessed incredible resilience in our community and a coming together that has enabled Griot Arts to adapt as an organization and stay committed to our vital mission of providing access to opportunities in the arts, education, and workforce development. In March, we moved all our programming online, purchased technology to ensure all students had access to online resources, and implement new initiatives in order to remain connected in mind and spirit with our students during the pandemic. As you will see in the following pages, we have been able to achieve several exciting milestones such as the launch of a student-led podcast and an instrument rental program thanks in large part to our incredible supporters, staff, and volunteers, who have remained strong through these turbulent times.

Through all this, I have also made the tough decision, with my fiancée, to transition out of the position of Executive Director. Serving in this role

has been such a privilege and I am thankful for the opportunity to have worked alongside an incredible staff and group of volunteers. While leadership transitions can sometimes bring anxiety, I am endlessly confident in the future of Griot and our incoming Executive Director. Griot Arts has celebrated remarkable achievements over the years and we are well positioned to continue doing great things moving forward in the Clarksdale community and beyond.

Since its inception, Griot Arts has endeavored to build a community of students that is centered around creativity, compassion, and Christ and to provide a space where students are given a voice to be the storytellers and change-makers of their own community. Almost 10 years since its founding, Griot Arts is stronger and more energized than ever. Despite the challenges that lay ahead, we are ready and committed to serving our students and community.

Thank you,  
*Julian Gallo*  
Julian Gallo  
Executive Director



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# gri·ot

**/grē'ō,'grēō/  
noun**

A member of a class of traveling poets, musicians, and storytellers who maintain a tradition of oral history in parts of West Africa.

## Mission

Our mission is to empower young people in Clarksdale, Mississippi to create positive change in their lives and community by providing access to opportunities in the arts, education, and workforce development in a Christ-centered environment.

## Vision

Our vision is to cultivate creativity and compassion in the lives of young people within the greater community. We work to see our community flourish, with its people having an ever-growing relationship with God, one another, and the created world. We promote the social well-being and development of our students, encouraging them to realize their God-given brilliance. We hope that all people are drawn to our fellowship, as we joyfully welcome all people into our family regardless of religious belief.

## Values



*hope for  
our future*



*change makers  
in our community*

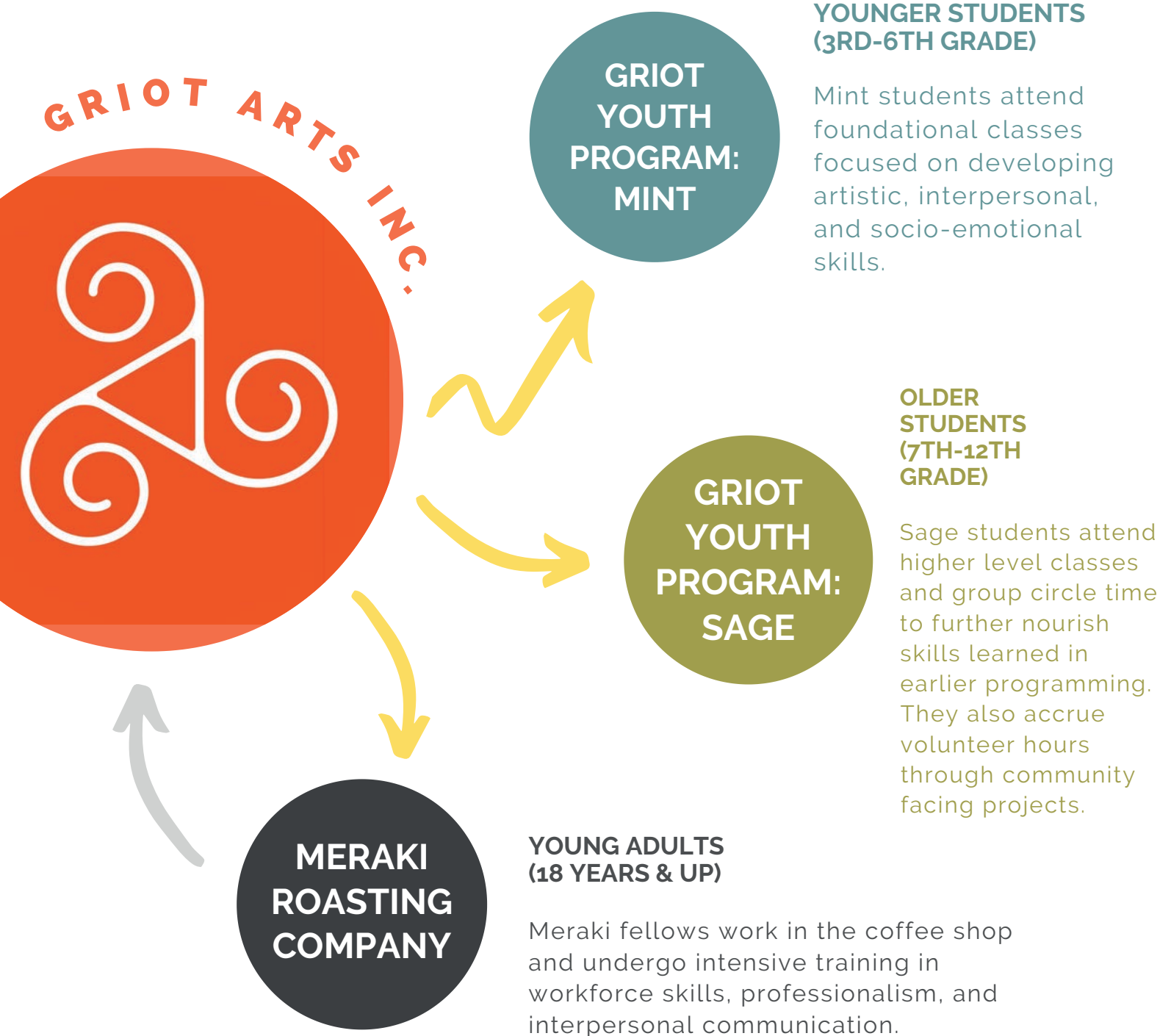


*service to  
others*



*love for our  
neighbors*

# GRIOT ARTS ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



**GRIOT ARTS INC. IS A NONPROFIT, WHICH INCLUDES OUR YOUTH PROGRAMS (MINT & SAGE), AND A WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN OUR COFFEE SHOP, MERAKI.**

# Griot Board of Directors

**Chris Campos** *President*  
Marketing Consultant

**Dudley Barnes** *Vice President*  
Financial Advisor and Branch Manager,  
Barnes & Pettey Financial Advisors, LLC

**Lois McMurchy** *Secretary*  
Former School Administrator, and Director  
of the Delta Bridge Project

**Chanda Peay** *Treasurer*  
CPA, Walters and Balducci PLLC

**Joey Young** *Director*  
Local artist and small business owner

**Mary Martha Bobo** *Director*  
Long term mentor

**Emily Cooper** *Director*  
Long term volunteer, retired dietician

**Cali Noland** *Director*  
Founder of Griot Arts

**Hayden Hall** *Director*  
Local artist and chef

**Teresa Jones** *Director*  
Director of Business Development and  
Government Affairs, J5 GBL, LLC

**Aallyah Wright** *Director*  
Author at Mississippi Today

# Griot Staff

**Julian Gallo**  
Executive Director

**Benjamin Lewis**  
Workforce Development Director

**Katie Steinour**  
GYP Arts Director

**Glenda Ross**  
Griot Mint Director

**Taylor Cargile**  
Business Coordinator

**Emily Goodwin**  
Communications Coordinator

**Casandra Banks**  
Education Coordinator

**Dotterra Lofton**  
Americorps VISTA Intern

**T'Keyah Burnett**  
Intern



# New Team Members



**Isabella Dallas**  
***GYP Arts Director***

Isabella Dallas is our new youth program Arts Director. She is very excited to be a part of the Griot family. She is originally from Central Illinois where she spent time working in childcare, doing things like: leading after school programs, summer camps, and classroom instruction. Her experience in the arts includes directing and choreographing. She has studied Special Education, Fine Arts, Secondary Education and Nonprofit Leadership. She is passionate about positive change, impacting lives through the arts. Her core belief is that each student not only has a voice that deserves to be heard, but needs to be heard.

**Dr. Casandra Banks Winters**  
***Education Coordinator***

Casandra loves to inspire children to be the best they can be in and out of the classroom. She has served as a teacher for 13 years, and as an administrator for 9 years. Her extensive work experience involves working with students of every age group, from Early Head Start, to vocational school. Casandra grew up in Shaw, MS, after which she obtained a Bachelor, Master, and Specialist Degree of Elementary Education from Delta State University. She later attended Jackson State University, where she received a Doctorate of Administration and Supervision. Casandra is currently the Griot Education Coordinator, as well as a test administrator for the Evaluation and Training Institute.



**Laurel Keller**  
***Meraki Fellows  
Supervisor***

Laurel is originally from Charlotte, NC. She moved to Birmingham, AL for college and lived there for 5 years while obtaining an undergraduate degree in Human Development and Family Studies and a Masters in Social Work. She has experience working in schools, hospitals, and case management, and is now a LMSW. Laurel just married her college sweetheart in June, whereupon they moved to Clarksdale, MS. In Clarksdale, she will work alongside Griot to provide therapy interventions for our students and fellows, while pursuing her clinical licensure.



# Griot Youth Program

59

students attended Mint and Sage programming in the 2019-2020 school year



108

hours spent in arts classes per student

13

classes & group times offered weekly

83%

attendance

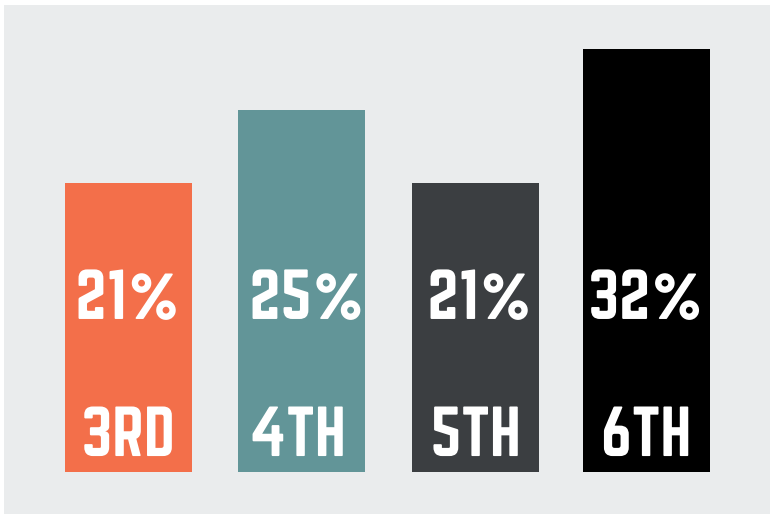
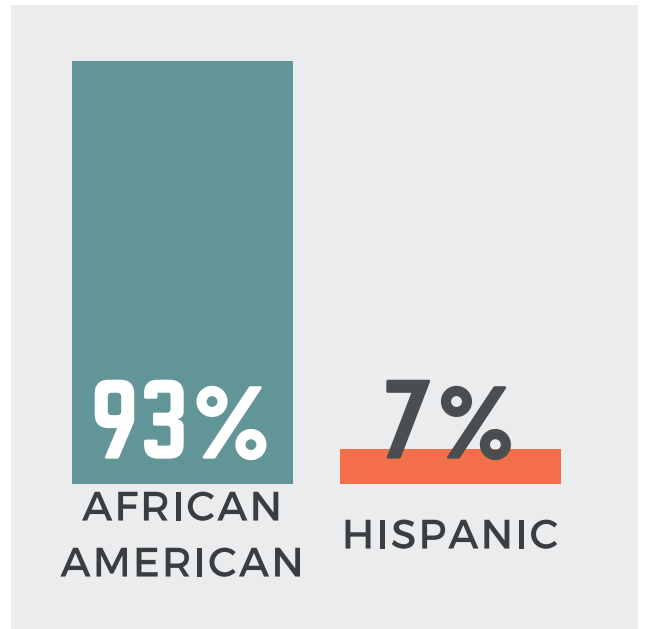
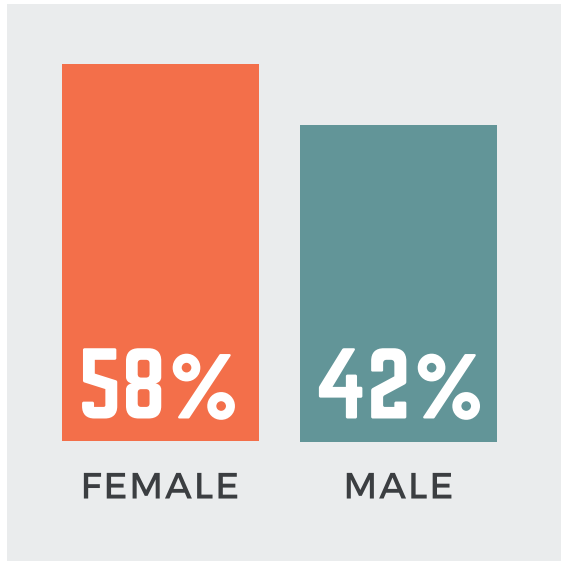
Griot Youth Program serves 3rd-12th grade students in the Clarkdale area. We operate under the "4 C's" - creativity, community, compassion, and Christ. This can be seen in our after school arts classes, academic mentorships, community projects, and weekly bible studies. Students are paired with academic & faith mentors, and enjoy educational reward trips and specialty workshops.

100%

of our seniors graduated and are employed

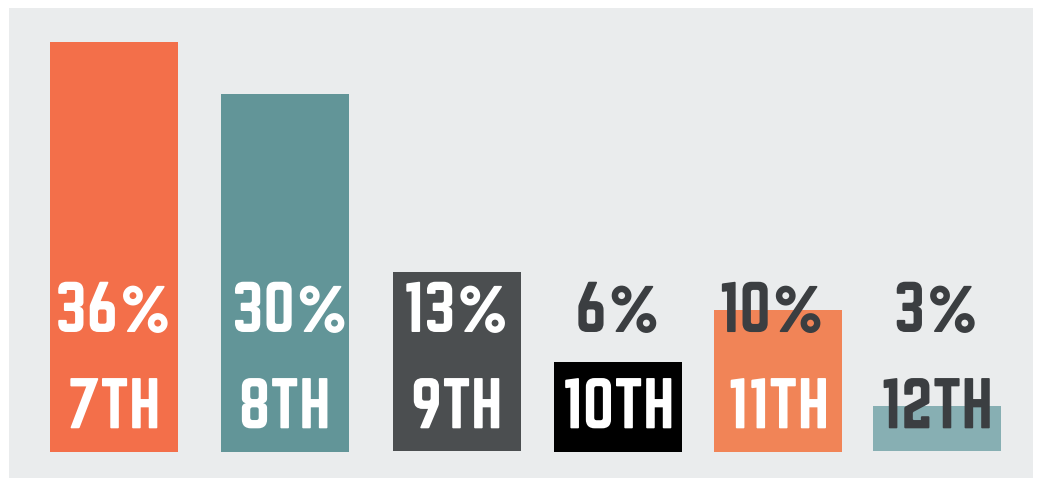


# GYP Demographics



 **SAGE**

**MINT** 





# Student & parent Impressions

90%

of parents surveyed feel their child is more confident in being themselves after being a part of griot

"I enjoy learning different types of art. I also enjoy meeting and fellowship with people of different backgrounds and interest. They also taught spiritual values."  
-Griot student

"I am excited to do the program because it is fun. I can also keep doing the things I love to do like theater. It will also help improve in life and make me a better person. It will help me help other people and with things I don't understand at school. That is why I am excited about Griot."  
-Griot student

92%

of students surveyed agree that Griot has helped them become a better communicator & more effectively share ideas with others.

100%

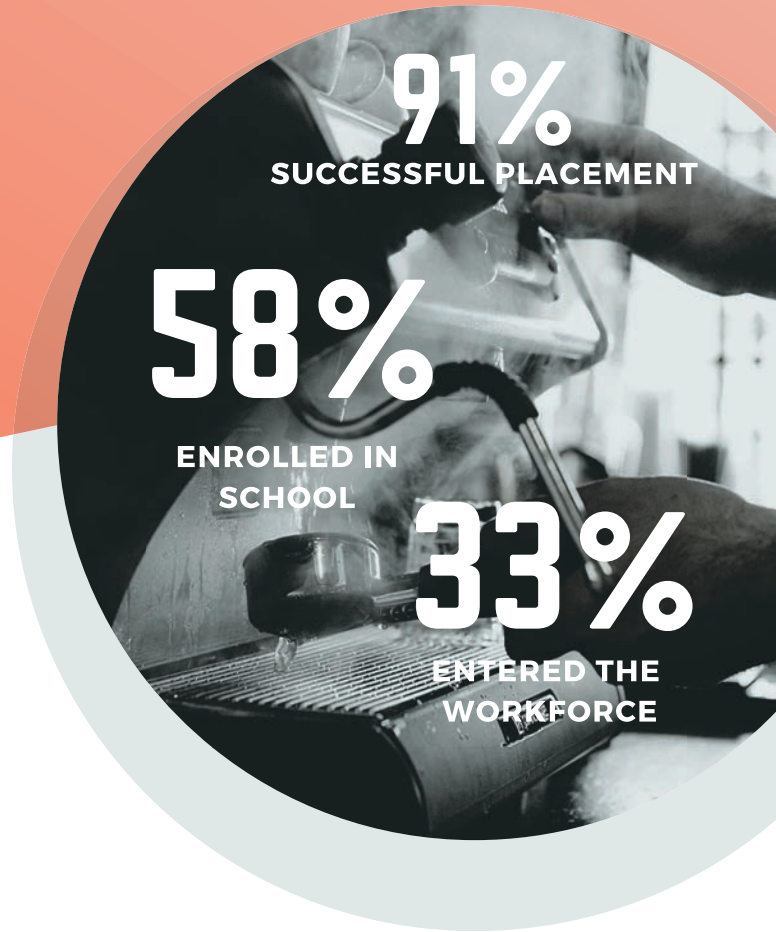
of parents surveyed would recommend Griot to other families and students



# Meraki

# 3,857

the combined total number of practical learning hours in which fellows have received real time feedback and served the community



more than

# 5,742

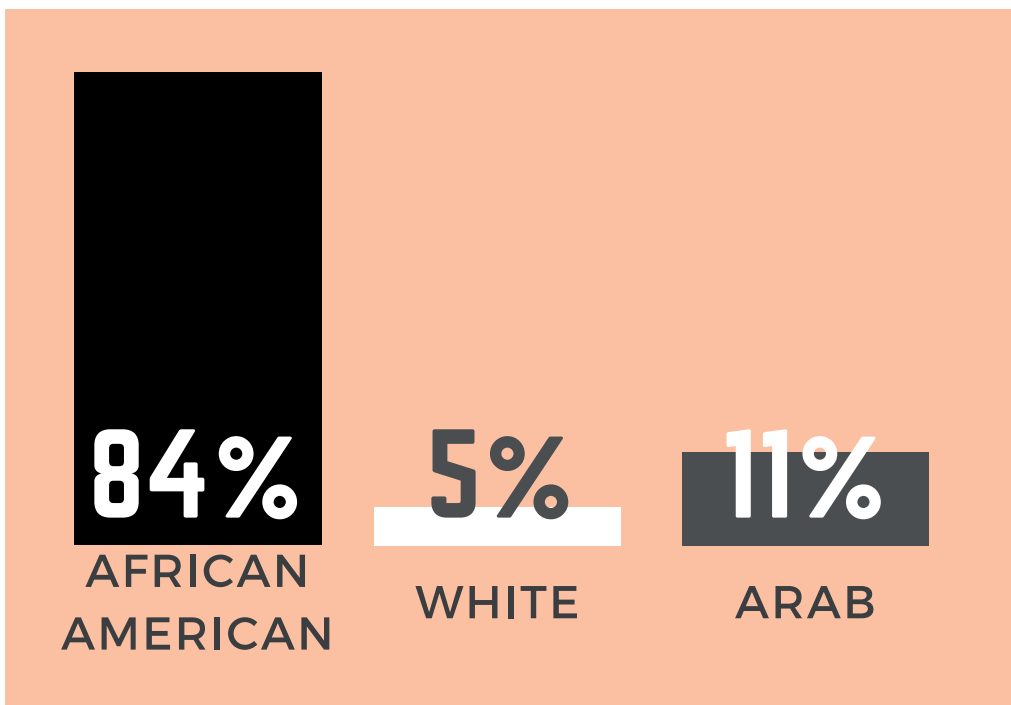
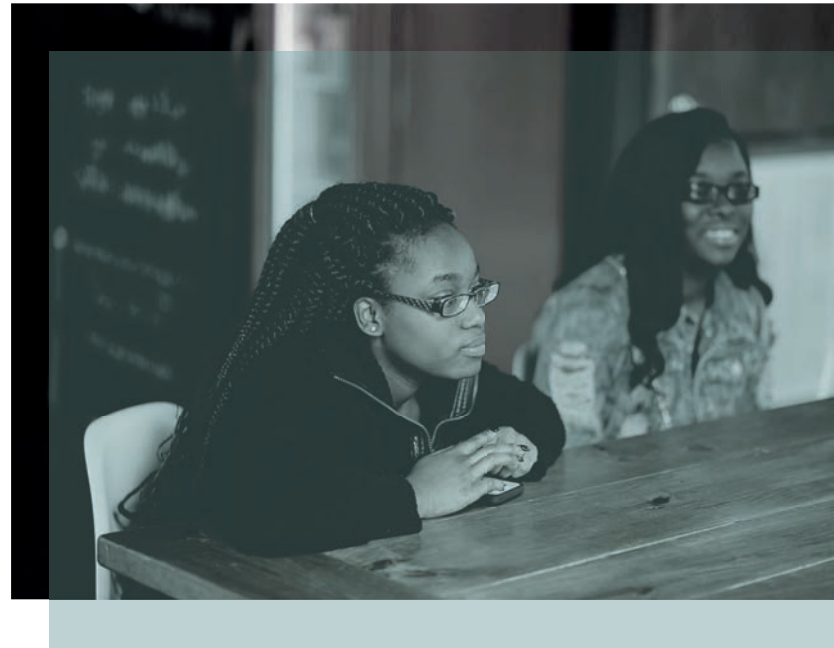
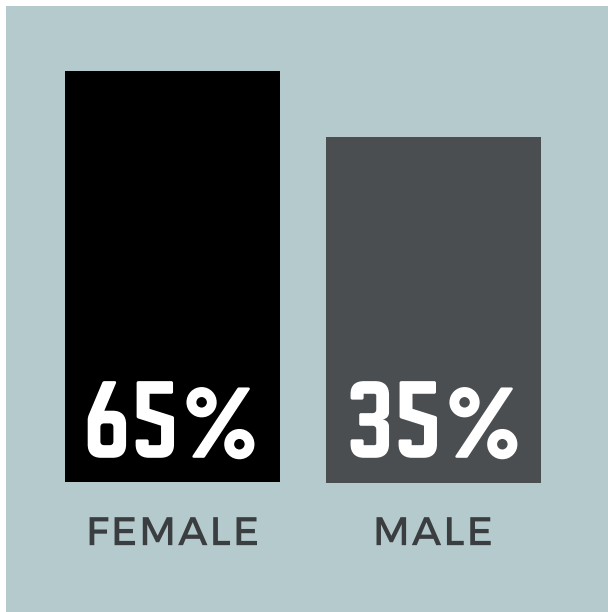
orders to a unique 1,151 customers



# 232

the number of hours students have spent developing social and emotional skills


# Meraki Demographics



# Student Highlights


Over the past year, Griot Arts was able to accomplish several major goals. At the beginning of 2020, Griot launched its very own, student-led podcast! This podcast was designed to give students the opportunity to explore the history of the blues and the heritage of their community. Five podcasts have been published to date and they have been downloaded over 250 times! You can find these podcasts on all major streaming services, so go take a listen to hear from our students first hand! Griot also completed its first ever student-led documentary film, which premiered at the 2020 Clarksdale Film Festival. In the process of making this film, local filmmaker, Nolan Dean, worked with students on both visual and oral storytelling skills as he guided them through an exploration of the Blues in Clarksdale, MS.

In June, Griot Arts also launched an instrument rental program! With a grant provided by Teach For America Greater Delta Region, we were able to purchase 20 additional instruments for our students to use exclusively at home. By providing rental instruments free of charge, this program created a very affordable option for students who wanted to continue cultivating their creative skills outside of our program hours.




**Berklee College of Music**


A current student and Griot alumnus (Kendal and Zephaniah) attended the prestigious Berklee College of Music 5 week summer intensive training.




Sage student Kendal Mosley (stage name KenKenStar) used the Griot recording studio to record her popular single "Rude Dude," now available on Spotify.




In October, students participated in a "story telling boot camp" with professional storyteller, David Rodwin. Students were able to choose a personal story, hone storytelling techniques, and perform it at a community event.



**DAVID RODWIN, WINNER OF STORYTELLING COMPETITION "THE MOYL" PRESENTS:**  
★★★★★  
**STORY TELLING BOOT CAMP**



Griot Blues, a student made documentary on the history of Blues in Clarksdale, can be found on YouTube by visiting the Griot Youth Program channel.



Instrument rentals during quarantine.



# Our Financials

## SUPPORT & REVENUE 2019/2020

CONTRIBUTIONS	\$242,134.00
GRANTS	\$306,702.00

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TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE	\$548,836.00
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## EXPENSES

PERSONNEL	\$162,064.00
PROGRAM SERVICES & OPERATIONS	\$115,146.00

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TOTAL EXPENSES	\$277,210.00
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## INCREASE IN NET ASSETS

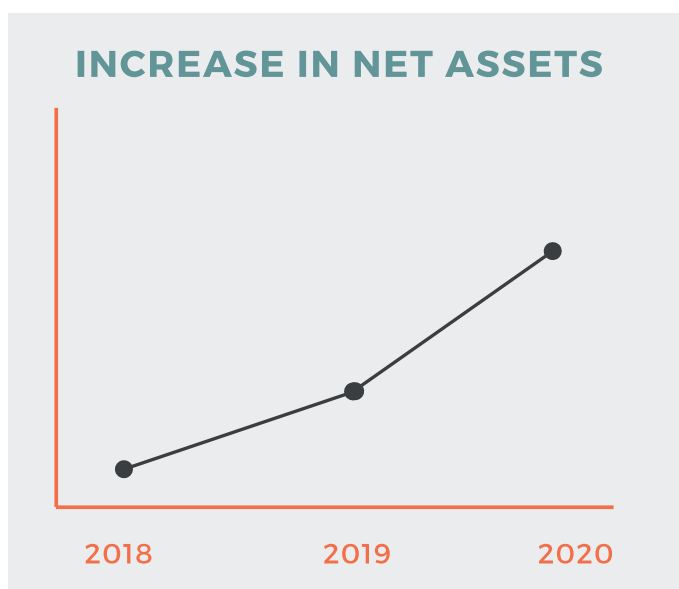
NET ASSETS AS OF JULY 31, 2018	\$26,426.00
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NET ASSETS AS OF JULY 31, 2019	\$104,211.00
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NET ASSETS AS OF JULY 31, 2020	\$273,932.00
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Griot was also able to accomplish several operational and finance goals. For the first time, Griot has built and maintained a reserve fund equalling 20% of our annual operating budget. The creation and maintenance of this reserve fund is a critical step in ensuring the financial stability of our organization. We have also completed the development of a new CRM donor management system that will allow us to better manage, cultivate, and steward our donor base. We have also renewed our board's commitment to fundraising, and updated our giving policy to reflect our goal of 100% board giving.



# A WORD TO OUR DONORS

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Griot Arts is incredibly thankful for its funders, partners, and board members whose support makes our programming possible. In December, Griot Arts received a two-year grant from the Walton Family Foundation in support of both our after school arts program and the Meraki job training program. This grant was used to support our incredible teaching artists and our Meraki fellows, among several other key areas of our programming. We also received grants from the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi and the Maddox Foundation for the purpose of strengthening the academic component of our program and to provide technology to our students so they can learn remotely. With the support of these foundations, we were able to bring former Principal and Educator, Cassandra Winters onto staff. She brings over twenty years of educational experience to our team and we are thrilled to be working alongside her to serve our students. Additionally, we received a generous operating grant from the Mississippi Arts Commission (MAC).

MAC has been an incredible advocate for Griot Arts for over five years and we are proud to continue partnering with them to provide arts education to students in our community. Lastly, we are excited to continue our partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Clarksdale's roots go deep and are rich with creativity and musical history. Our project with the NEA has been to connect our students with this history and to have them experience it for themselves through the arts. Private foundation and corporate grants include Phil Hardin Foundation, Classics For Kids Foundation, Teach For America Greater Delta Region, Community Foundation of West North Carolina, Bob and Marie Gallo Foundation, Community Foundation of East Central Illinois, and the Pinkerton Foundation.

More than ever, as we move forward we commit to grow our Christ-like community and encourage our students to be their best, creative selves as they use their voices to positively shape their community.

