

COLLEGE  
SCHOLARSHIP  
LEADERSHIP  
ACCESS PROGRAM  
(CSLAP)

# Annual Report

JUNE 2020 -  
MAY 2021

Prepared by  
Thomas Ray Garcia  
Founder and  
Executive Director

CSLAP is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit  
that hosts college access  
workshops at high schools  
and provides near-peer  
mentorship for students

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CSLAP

2020-2021

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# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**The 2020-2021 academic year** involved the most important and fulfilling college access work of CSLAP's 8-year history.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, **CSLAP expanded, pivoted, and challenged convention** to uplift the Rio Grande Valley.

This is the year CSLAP **taught college access lessons to over 270 high school students.**

This is the year CSLAP **awarded \$9,600 in scholarships** to 23 high school seniors.

This is the year CSLAP launched the Community Aid Program for Hidalgo County students and residents, **designed to fill in the gaps of existing financial relief programs.**

This is the year CSLAP **partnered with businesses to form innovative internships** for our students to gain leadership skills.

This is the year CSLAP reached new audiences through diverse projects, such as **writing and distributing children's picture books on public speaking.**

And we are just getting started. I greet you at the close of our 2nd year of nonprofit incorporation, **a year of good work.**

***Thomas Ray Garcia***  
***Founder, Executive Director***





# COLLEGE PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS

## PURPOSE

Our College Program teaches lessons on the college application process using the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). From application completion to transition, we focus on all aspects of college admissions.

## OUR WORK

Across our 166 visits to junior & senior classrooms, students:

- Discovered Colleges and Expanded Application Lists
- Completed Apply Texas, Common Application, QuestBridge College Applications
- Wrote Extracurricular and Volunteer Short Descriptions
- Wrote Admissions and Scholarship Essays
- Applied For Financial Aid and Learned Loan Terms
- Enhanced Scholarship Applications: Gates Scholarship, USHLI, Hispanic Scholarship Fund, Stars, VAMOS
- Professionalized Through Self-Advocacy Exercises
- Sharpened Email Writing and Communication Skills
- Learned The Hidden Curriculum: College Transition
- Connected to Rio Grande Valley Professionals & Mentors



# BY THE NUMBERS

## 166

CLASSROOM VISITS

## 271

STUDENTS SERVICED

## 252

NEAR-PEER  
MENTORSHIP  
SESSIONS

102: ESSAY WRITING

79: COLLEGE  
APPLICATION  
GUIDANCE

36: SCHOLARSHIP  
GUIDANCE

35: COLLEGE  
TRANSITION

## 256

ESSAY REVISIONS

# COLLEGE PROGRAM FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS



## Support Network

CSLAP students gain access to **over 400 mentors** from the Rio Grande Valley.

Pictured: Seattle Pacific student **Sofia Alvarez**, who is eating dinner with her **CSLAP mentor Deborah Sandoval** after moving to Seattle, Washington for college.

## Professional Development

CSLAP students receive **special professional opportunities** through partner businesses.

Pictured: UPenn student **Alex Hernandez**, who **interns for New Jersey-based Manolo's Best Farmstand Chili** through a CSLAP partnership.



## Leadership Development

CSLAP students give back to their peers by **mentoring, hosting events, & producing digital content on college admissions.**

Pictured: MIT student **Jabes Gallardo**, who mentors class of 2021 students, produces videos on scholarships, & **spearheads CSLAP Public Speaking.**

Near-peer mentorship is at the core of CSLAP's mission: To uplift the Rio Grande Valley by empowering its young people to give back to their community.

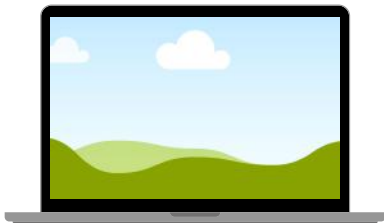
# SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

## PURPOSE

Our Scholarship Program awards direct scholarships to high school seniors in Hidalgo County. Scholarship Program students benefit from ongoing support and mentorship throughout their college journeys.

## OUR WORK

The 23 scholarships awarded to our CSLAP Scholars are designed to address 3 key areas of college transition to reduce roadblocks to college enrollment.



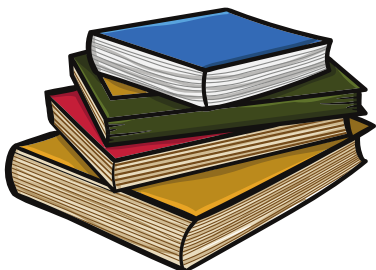
### Technology

Ensuring students own a laptop before arriving to college



### Travel

Subsidizing students' travel expenses to up-state and out-of-state colleges



### Educational Expenses

Covering pre-semester expenses such as textbooks

## BY THE NUMBERS

23

SCHOLARSHIP  
AWARDEES

21: PELL GRANT-  
ELIGIBLE

15: TOP 10% OF  
GRADUATING CLASS

8

HIGH SCHOOLS

\$9,600

SCHOLARSHIP  
AWARDS

\$8,500: DIRECT  
SCHOLARSHIPS

\$1,100: MICROSOFT

SURFACE LAPTOP

GO DEVICES



# SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM STUDENTS

## CSLAP Impact Scholarship

Awarded to 10 CSLAP students who have made an impact on their community through service and leadership

Vanguard Rembrandt Secondary



Ocirema Leal



Jorge Martinez



Natalia Martinez



Megan Mendoza



Kimberly Vazquez

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## CSLAP Impact Scholarship

Awarded to 10 CSLAP students who have made an impact on their community through service and leadership

Vanguard Mozart Secondary



Estefani Cruz



Delilah De la Garza



Samantha Olivares



Esperanza Mireles



Miguelangel Sanchez

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## Thomas Ray Garcia Eagle Fly Free Scholarship

Awarded to 2 CSLAP students who are attending a college or university outside the Rio Grande Valley



Bryan Cantu  
Vanguard Rembrandt Secondary



Shaila Lerma  
Vanguard Mozart Secondary

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## CSLAP-Ruiz Erectors Star Caller Scholarship

Awarded to 3 Hidalgo County seniors who demonstrate hard work toward their dream career



Alondra Flores  
Nikki Rowe High School



Bianca Mora  
PSJA T-STEM ECHS



Bryan Morin  
Vanguard Rembrandt Secondary



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## CSLAP-Ruiz Erectors Iron Forged Scholarship

Awarded to 6 Hidalgo County seniors who demonstrate resilience in overcoming obstacles on the path to college



Arturo Cantu Jr.  
PSJA Memorial ECHS



Melissa Garza  
PSJA Memorial ECHS



Natalie Martinez  
IDEA Weslaco Pike College Prep



Heaven Pena  
Donna North High School



Karla Vasquez  
Donna North High School



Ana Villicana  
PSJA Memorial ECHS



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## Hector Ruiz Superstar Scholarship

Awarded to 2 Hidalgo County seniors who demonstrate resilience in their academic career



Iris Ambuehl  
PSJA ECHS



Angel Garcia  
PSJA ECHS

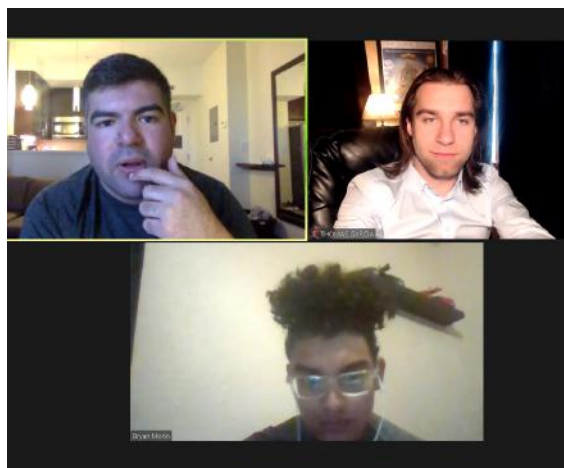


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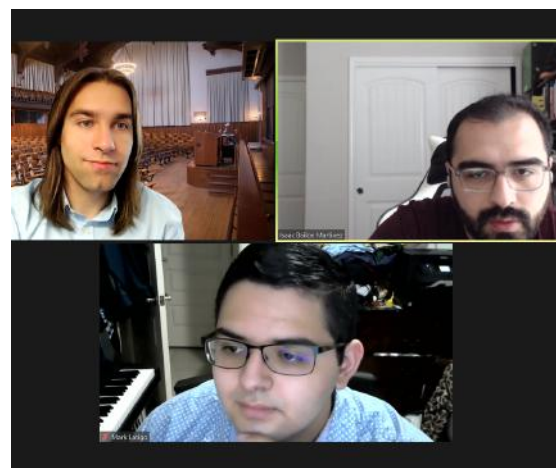
# LEADERSHIP PROGRAM: BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

CSLAP provides students a diverse range of opportunities for leadership development and professional growth beyond the scope of our lessons and workshops.



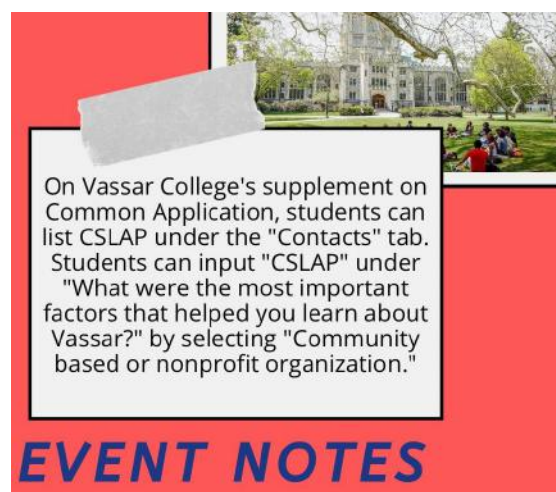
## NEAR-PEER MENTORSHIP

College and career professionals supplementing lessons and workshops



## PARTNERSHIPS

National organizations and colleges providing opportunities for students



## INTERNSHIPS

CSLAP partner businesses offering internships to high school graduates and college students





# LEADERSHIP PROGRAM: BUILDING COMMUNITY

CSLAP's impact expands beyond the classroom to ensure high school students from all backgrounds develop the leadership and professional skills to succeed in college.



## THE PEOPLE

Working with community partners like ARISE Adelante and IDRA to **increase digital literacy skills to bilingual families.**

## THE PROJECTS

Developing projects such as **writing and distributing over 2000 paperbacks** of a children's picture book on public speaking.



## THE BIG PICTURE

**Drawing national attention** to our college access work in the Rio Grande Valley to uplift our students and community.



# COMMUNITY AID PROGRAM: IMPACT

CSLAP's Community Aid Program **filled in the gaps left by local, state, and federal programs** that left our applicants ineligible to apply for financial relief.

CSLAP Community Aid **fundraised over \$12,000** to help Hidalgo County students and residents with technology & Wi-Fi, rent/housing, food, and other emergency expenses.

On the right, a small sample of the people we impacted.



From the bottom of my heart, I am thankful for CSLAP. COVID 19 has really affected my family financially and left us with making difficult decisions.

This is helping me get through the semester with everything I need to be successful.

**Jazmine R.**  
Rio Grande Valley student in the  
St. Edward's University  
College Assistance Migrant Program

- **A PSJA ISD teacher** who needed a laptop immediately to begin the academic year.
- **A college student** facing homelessness during campus shutdowns.
- **A migrant student** deemed ineligible by other college and state programs struggling to purchase food.
- **An unemployed father** needing an internet plan for his daughters to attend high school and college.



With my roommate leaving and having to take on the burden of supplying myself with the necessities I no longer had, CSLAP was there to help me with extra funds for food and other things I needed.

Thank you so much!

**Anysa V.**  
Rio Grande Valley student in the  
St. Edward's University  
College Assistance Migrant Program



# COMMUNITY AID PROGRAM: GROWTH

## Expanded mentor network

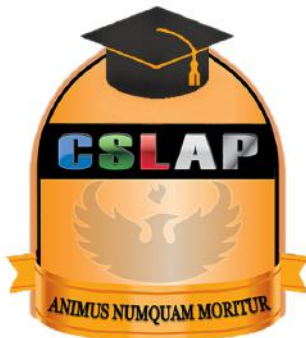
Our college applicants often expressed a strong desire to mentor our students.

## Expanded partner network

Our outreach efforts resulted in newfound relationships with programs like St. Edward's University CAMP.

## Expanded programming

Our work sparked innovative partnerships that enabled applicants to intern at partner businesses.



Thank you to CSLAP and their sponsors for helping my family and I with our internet bill. When the pandemic started, being there for my single mother and younger siblings became my top priority. It has been difficult to stay afloat with the lack of good paying jobs, so being selected for this aid was greatly appreciated. This aid will help my siblings and I continue our virtual learning with no issues and help me continue to find better opportunities to support my family and I. On behalf of my mother and siblings, thank you!

**Stacey M.**  
Rio Grande Valley student in the  
St. Edward's University  
College Assistance Migrant Program

These three indirect outcomes of our Community Aid Program have **expanded our nonprofit operations.**

As a direct result of our efforts to uplift our community, **CSLAP grew to impact more high school and college students,** furthering our mission of increasing college enrollment and graduation rates throughout Hidalgo County.



With the assistance of CSLAP and their sponsors, I am able to pay for next month's rent and continue with my college education. I am very grateful for their help during a time of high need. Thank you for not only offering assistance to me but to others in our community as well.

CSLAP, you are doing an amazing job in making a difference!

**Valeria C.**  
Rio Grande Valley student in the  
St. Edward's University  
College Assistance Migrant Program

# STUDENT TESTIMONIES



## ***Bryan Cantu, Texas A&M University '25***

With the help of CSLAP, I have been able to **connect with different mentors** like Thomas Ray Garcia and Gerardo Garza who **provided me with their insights on the college admissions process**, as well as **the motivation to apply to prestigious institutions**. I am deeply grateful to CSLAP for **making me a better writer** and for providing me the opportunity to expand my network.



## ***Daniela Salinas, UTRGV '25***

The mentors at CSLAP have **an amazing academic record** as well as **a passion of service** to others with their time, energy, and knowledge. After being introduced to Yesenia Delgado, we talked about the campus life and quality education of each school. She provided **very helpful information to help me decide which school is best for me**.



## ***Anna Silva-Saldana, Texas A&M University '25***

CSLAP has **guided me throughout the process of applying to several universities** and has given me the opportunity to have mentors at reach. **Their mentorship has provided me with knowledge and leadership qualities** that will be a great asset in my prospective major. Thank you for your guidance!



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## ***Isaac Bailon-Martinez, UTRGV '16***

I am a **medical student** at the Sam Houston State University College of Osteopathic Medicine. I am also a former **public health and prevention specialist** at the Texas Department of State Health Services.



## ***Benito Garza, Texas A&M University '21***

I am a **Forbes Under 30 Scholar** and **founder** of the Hispanic Business Scholars Network. I am also an **Investment Banking Career Edge Fellow** at Sponsors for Educational Opportunity (SEO).



## ***Cristian Mercado, UTRGV '19***

I am a **biomedical lab specialist** who has conducted research on diabetic retinopathy at UTRGV and interned at the DHR Health Institute for Research and Development. I am also a former **leader for United for College Success** at South Texas College.



# OUR SUPPORTERS



Thank you to **Amber Bazan, Elizabeth De Los Reyes, Yesenia Delgado, Reymundo Elvira, Adolfo Garcia, Gerardo Garza, Erick Garza, Jonathan Garza-Cantu, Amanda Gonzalez, Nestor Gonzalez, Oscar Gonzalez, Eric Guajardo, Ramiro Leal-Cavazos, Anissa Nicole, Paulino Ramirez, Deborah Sandoval, Joseph Schmidt, Ana Vielma,** and all other CSLAP mentors who assisted students, hosted events, and served on committees.

Thank you to our advisory committee members **Matt Eventoff, Aurelio Montemayor,** and **Nicholas Slack** for dedicating your time and energy to uplifting our organization.

Thank you to **all our donors** across our three funds for sustaining our work.



# OUR PARTNERS



Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, CSLAP formed and reaffirmed its partnerships with the following entities this academic year:

Our school partners enabled us to **conduct classroom instruction and provide one-on-one mentorship for over 270 high school juniors and seniors.**

We went above and beyond to ensure all our students were college ready and connected.

Business partners **Manolo's Best Farmstand Chili** and **Ruiz Erectors LLC** formed internships for CSLAP students, for whom we **mentored and hosted professionalization workshops.**

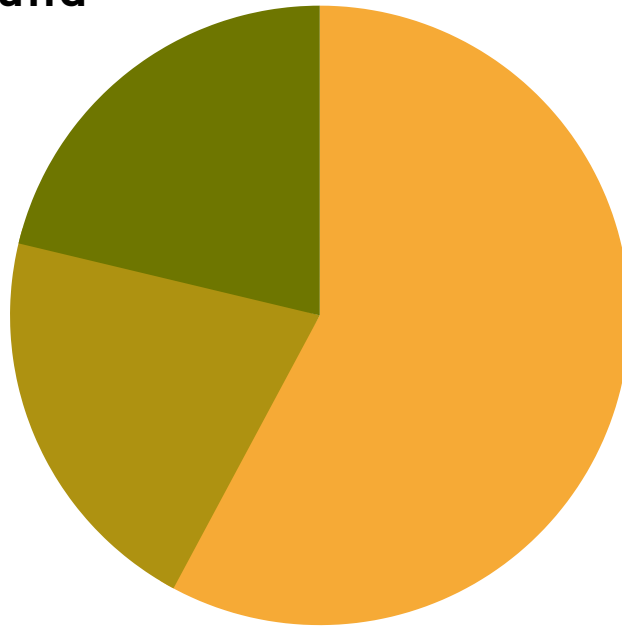
Nonprofit partners **ARISE Adelante** and **Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA)** enhanced our **outreach and operating efforts on closing the digital divide.**

# FINANCES: ALL FUNDS

## Revenues (June 1st, 2020 - May 31st, 2021)

Community Aid Fund  
\$9,901.99

Scholarship Fund  
\$9,734.50



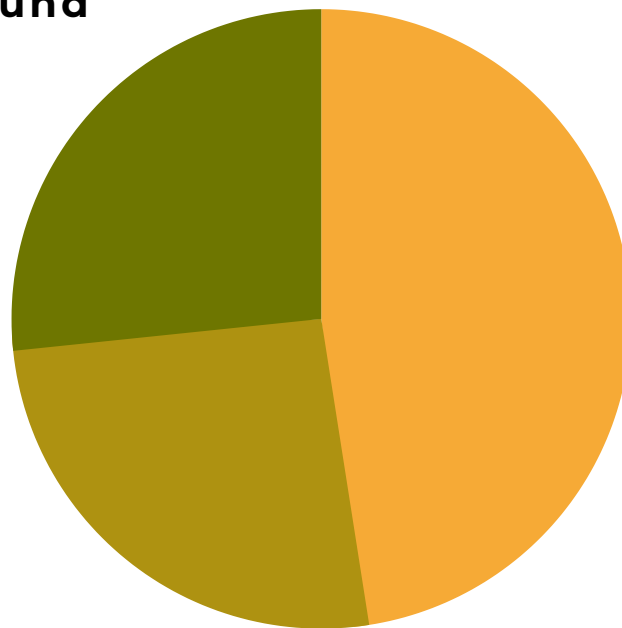
General Fund  
\$26,927.67

Total Revenues: \$46,546.16

## Expenses (June 1st, 2020 - May 31st, 2021)

Community Aid Fund  
\$9,901.99

Scholarship Fund  
\$9,599.98



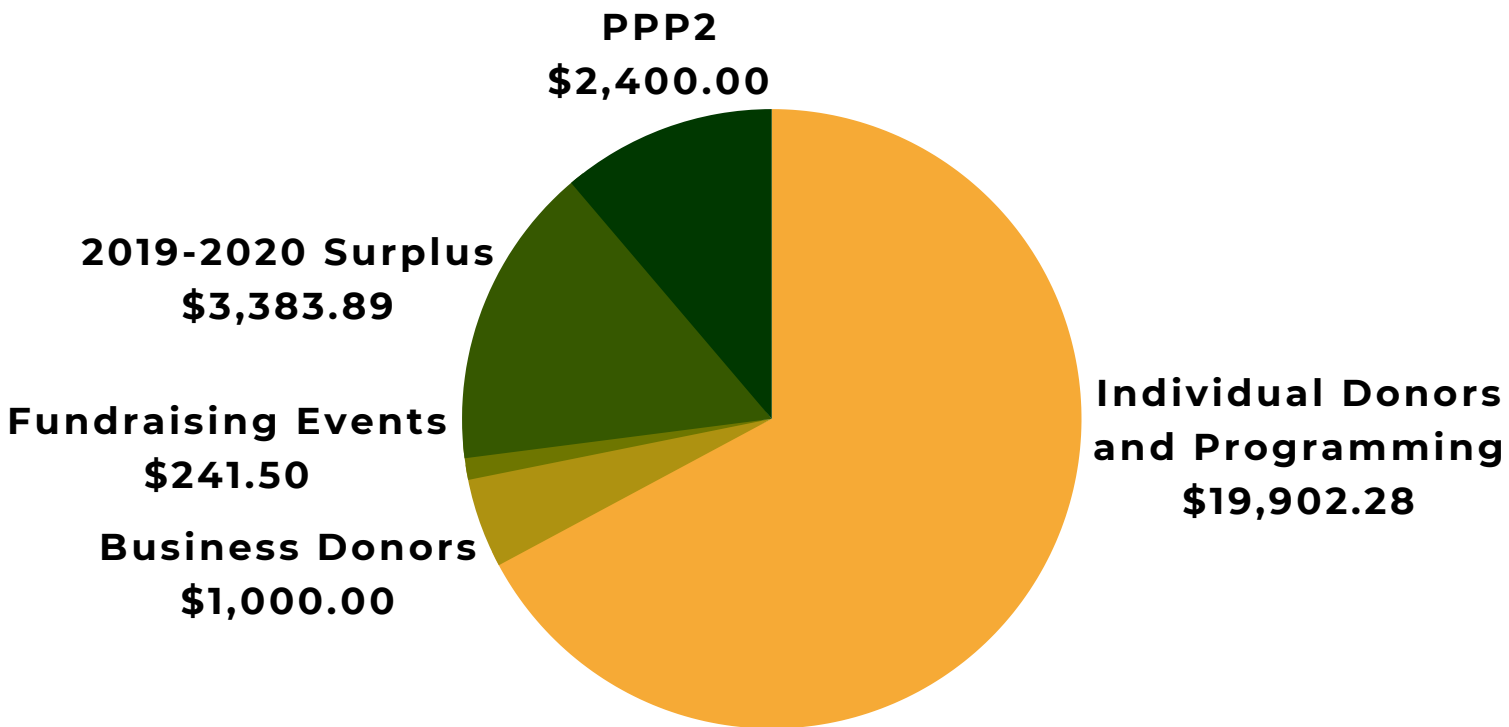
General Fund  
\$17,662.13

Total Expenses: \$37,164.10



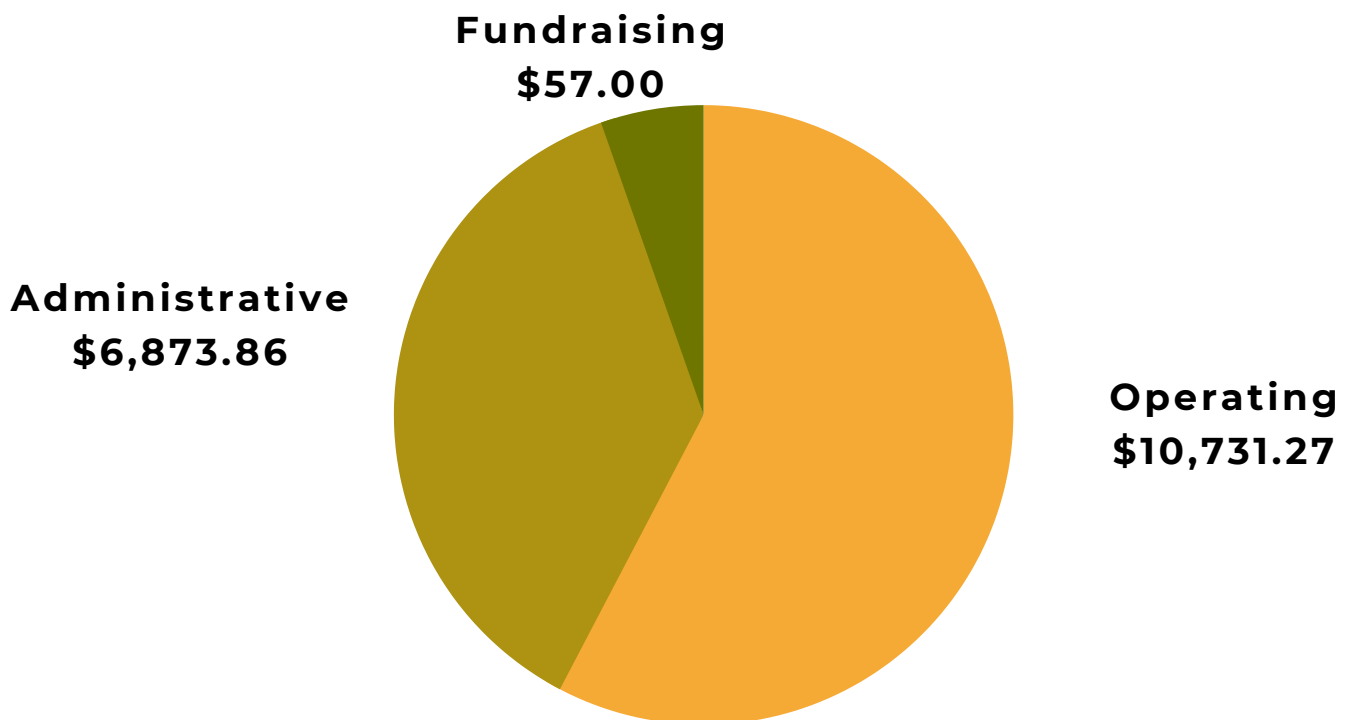
# FINANCES: GENERAL FUND

## Revenues (June 1st, 2020 - May 31st, 2021)



**Total Revenues: \$26,927.67**

## Expenses (June 1st, 2020 - May 31st, 2021)



**Total Expenses: \$17,662.13**

# CSLAP ANNUAL REPORT

JUNE 2020 - MAY 2021

"This world demands the qualities of youth; not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the life of ease."

- Robert F. Kennedy

**WE THANK YOU**  
FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF  
**OUR ORGANIZATION**

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