

the GROOMING



2018 ANNUAL REPORT



Dear EPEC Friends,

2018 was a year of great expansion and visioning for EPEC. We started the year understaffed, out of space, and with only a vague plan for growth. We ended it with four additional staff members, 3,700 extra square feet, and a clear vision for the future. As I think back on 2018, it feels like the year that EPEC truly came into its own.



Once a dilapidated ambulance barn, our school on Troost has expanded to include the suite next door, which now houses staff offices. Thanks to a generous grant, a fresh coat of blue paint has given the building and the street new life. On most days of the week, our newly expanded parking lot is filled to the brim, with clients, students, staff, and supporters coming and going.

With extra assistance in day to day operations, I have been able to spend significant time this year planning for our future.

We want to continue to find ways to level the playing field for our students, who all have grown up without access to opportunities that many of us take for granted.

Since opening our doors in 2016, we've had many of our highest performing students voice an interest in business ownership. They don't just want to work in a grooming salon—they want to own or manage one. Over the course of 2018, we devised a way to help them do that—our new, high-end Lee's Summit salon that will be opening this spring. In addition to providing us with dependable earned income, it will also give select graduate interns the ability to learn how to run a salon. You can read more about our first interns in the pages ahead.

Just like our students, we are moving from surviving to stabilizing to thriving. It is a rollercoaster of extremes—huge gains one day and what feels like huge losses another. We cannot control the curve balls of life, but we can support each other, push each other, and sometimes pull each other.

Thank you for taking this journey with us.

Natasha Kirsch
Founding CEO

A large, close-up photograph of a young child with bright red, curly hair and blue eyes. The child is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. They are wearing a grey jacket with a red lining. The background is dark and out of focus.

**JUST LIKE OUR
STUDENTS, WE
ARE MOVING FROM
SURVIVING TO
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THRIVING.**



CHRISTINE, SINGLE MOTHER OF TWO AND KC NATIVE, WAS AMONG THE GROOMING PROJECT'S FIRST CLASS OF STUDENTS IN 2016.

Not having had much experience with animals as an adult, she was originally unsure of pursuing a career in grooming. Her kids' needs convinced her to give it a chance. She knew they needed more stability than her part-time jobs in home health and at Taco Bell, neither of which paid a living-wage.

"Once I started the training, I fell in love with grooming immediately. It's calming and relaxing. Dogs are very smart. If you're feeling angry that day, they can feel that. It has made me learn how to adjust my emotions and feelings about what I'm going through in order to put them first."

Christine's calm and empathetic nature has allowed her to have success with even the most anxious of dogs. Working at Fox Hill Veterinary Clinic, she regularly saw clients with dogs who had previously only been able to be groomed after being sedated. "It's important to talk to them and have a gentle hand. They can pick up on any negativity in your voice or in the way you handle them."

Her children can feel that same calmness at home since starting this new phase of life. "My daughter senses that I am happy with my job. She wants to be a groomer, and she wants to get a pet now. A lot of people get upset when they have to go to work, but I don't show any signs of that. I'm calmer at home now because I know everything is taken care of. We're able to have some extra things that we couldn't have before. We have reliable transportation. Going to work, I feel like I'm not working at all.

The dogs are helping me as I'm helping them."

Christine hopes to one day own her own grooming business, something she wouldn't have felt prepared to pursue before the salon internship opportunity presented itself. "I'm excited to learn everything about business ownership. And I would love to one day be able to help my community the way The Grooming Project has helped me."

Meet Christine
at The Salon,
A Grooming Project
in May



THE SALON

A Grooming Project

Meet
Christine and Lindsey
at The Salon in May
1650 SE Blue Parkway
Lee's Summit, MO



THE SALON

A Grooming Project



IN MANY WAYS, LINDSEY MASSOTH IS A POSTER CHILD FOR THE ALL-TOO-COMMON FATE OF FAMILIES CAUGHT IN THE WEB OF THE WORKING POOR.

Her single mom did indeed work, making ends meet with two and three low-wage jobs at a time. But it's difficult to go beyond the basics when you're trying to juggle multiple responsibilities on your own.

While her mom held things together, Lindsey seemed set to follow the same exhausting path. Kicked out of school at 15 and pregnant at 16, she worked a succession of temporary jobs that appeared to be her future. Always a dog lover, she had been applying for dog bathing jobs at grooming salons when she discovered The Grooming Project through her mom, who had seen a segment about it on the local news.

Now 24 and still with the father of eight-year-old daughter Lylah, she admits her past was a "roller coaster," but she's proud of having earned her GED and completing the program at The Grooming Project in 2017. Since then she has been a full-time groomer for Dog Pawz in Leawood.

"I wanted a stable job with a set schedule," she says. But she found that and so much more. "Every day is different. I can move around and I don't get tired of it."

And "everybody who knows me knows how much I love dogs," she adds.

Chosen as one of the most promising graduates of The Grooming Project, Lindsey will be one of the first two interns working at the salon. She plans to relocate to Lee's Summit from Gladstone to start a new life with her young family. "I want to do the salon intern program so that I can open my own business for my family to always have something. Everyone believes in me so that makes me believe in myself."

Financials

Overview of our students:

- **66% are homeless**
- 44% have subsidized housing through government funding
- 28% are in recovery from alcohol or drugs
- 20% have felonies

Services we provide

- Training in professional grooming
- Case management: housing, childcare, dentist, optometrist, transportation, child welfare, SNAP, healthcare, legal issues, mental health and medical referrals
- Mock interview/resume/job placement
- Soft skills: discipline, self-motivation, employment retention training, parenting, budgeting
- Help with securing the proper job placement based on childcare, travel, temperament and needed salary
- Help with communication and conflict in their new jobs
- Budgeting and support to students; navigating their way off of welfare; coaching in how to support themselves with earned income
- Court advocate
- Support groups for all graduates

2018 Outcomes

- 20/27 students* graduated or completed the core 6-month training program.
- **100% job placement** within 60 days of graduation.
- 72% of graduates have retained employment.
- Our students groomed **3,278 dogs** at The Grooming Project for a total of **\$77,338** in earned revenue.
- 60% of 2017 graduates are off public assistance and able to support their families.

*Students funded in 2018 but graduated in early 2019 will still be counted in the year they were funded as long as the majority of their time was spent in that funding year."

New Partnerships

Housing

In 2018, EPEC developed a unique partnership with **Neighborhoods of Hope**, a housing development initiative started by Catholic Charities. This spring, Neighborhoods of Hope will break ground on a six-unit, dorm-style home for our homeless single mothers and their children. This building will be only two blocks away from our school and will solve many problems our students face when beginning our program.



The dorms will allow mothers who have been separated from their children due to unstable or unsafe living situations to reunite and live together under one roof. Additionally, because reliable transportation can be a barrier for many of our students, the proximity of the dorms to the school will reduce absences and time spent on public transportation. Stabilizing a family's housing and simplifying their transportation needs will help prepare them for success in our program. We hope that this partnership will serve as a prototype for other workforce development programs.

IHAC



A new partnership with the **Institute for Human-Animal Connection (IHAC)** based in the University of Denver's Graduate School of Social Work will allow us to learn the extent to which the daily contact with animals affects our students' outcomes. IHAC conducts research with leading national and international organizations and academic collaborators with the goal of raising the health and welfare of both people and animals, realizing that the two are deeply connected.

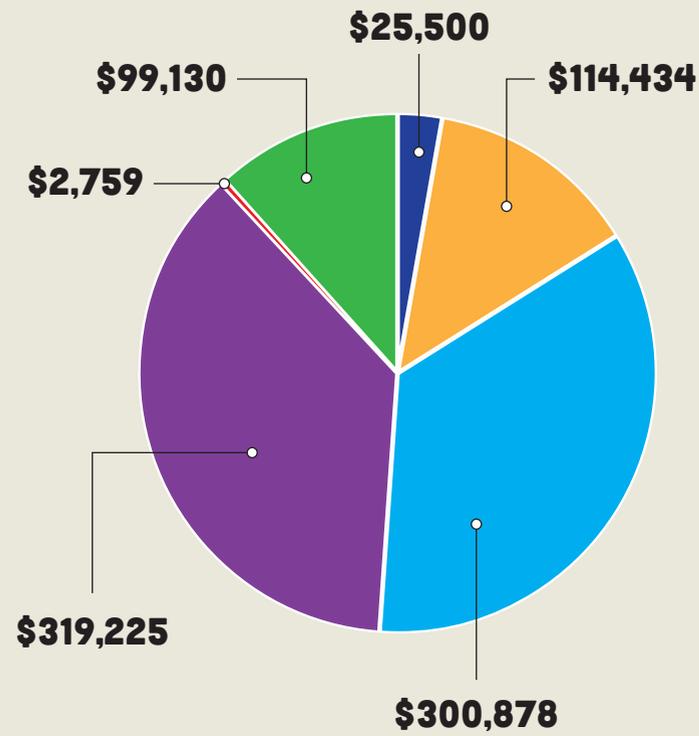
Located at the intersection of human and animal welfare, The Grooming Project is aligned with this cutting-edge movement of 'humane interventions' that incorporate the mutually beneficial components of the human-animal bond. Consequently, IHAC will conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the impacts of The Grooming Project on student and family outcomes.

Findings from this program evaluation will inform the development of a comprehensive research agenda, including a social-economic impact study, which will be critical to improving our current program, as well as expanding our model at the local and national levels.

Dental Program

Thanks to the time and effort of **Dr. Randolph Oliver, Dr. Don Keith, and Linda Keith**, EPEC now has a partnership with 21 local dentists who have offered to provide free dental care to our students. In only a few short months, 15 of our students have received extensive dental care, many requiring multiple visits. Most of our students have never had the opportunity to receive regular dental care. Many have dealt with lingering pain and illnesses due to their poor oral health for many years.

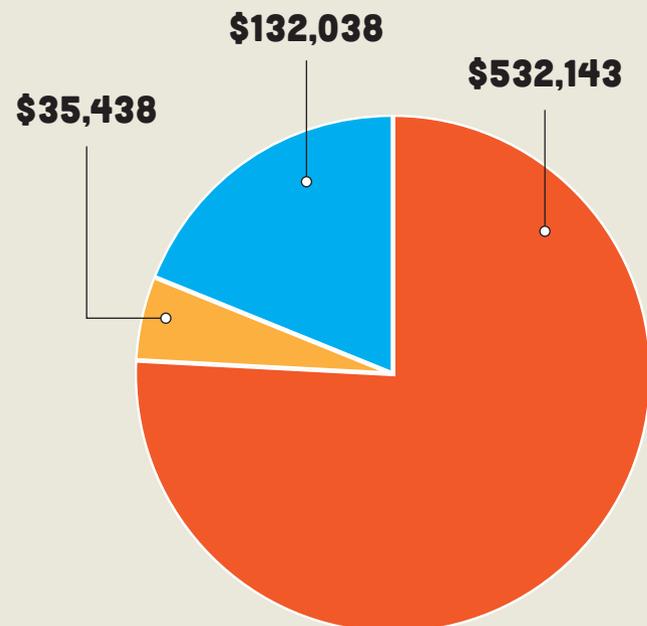
Financials



2018 Income = \$861,926

Federal funding	25,500
Individual donations	114,434
Annual Fundraiser	300,878
Grants	319,225
Other	2,759
Earned Income	99,130

* Rounded to nearest 1,000



2018 Expenses = \$699,619

Program Expenses	532,143
Admin. Expenses	35,438
Fundraising Expenses	132,038

* Rounded to nearest 1,000

SAVE THE DATE:
SEPTEMBER 14, 2019

The Grand Ballroom
Honorary Hosts:
Becky Blades and Terry Garberg

ONE PIEC
Gala

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Printing: MEDIAHEAD!



5829 Troost Ave. Suite B
Kansas City, MO 64110-3143

TheGroomingProject.org

816.214.5376