



EASTERN STATE PENITENTIARY 2020

A Special Report for our Supporters

136

Virtual Group Tours hosted

63,000

Viewers who tuned
in to our virtual
Searchlight Series

15,000

Square feet of new concrete

38

Nights of
Night Tours

102

Artifacts shared
during Artifacts
After Dark

1

NEW Tour Launch
Point completed

300

Member buttons
distributed to
on-site visitors

By the Numbers...

**EASTERN STATE
PENITENTIARY**

2020

As Eastern State began 2020, we were looking forward to another historic year, full of firsts. **Our year-to-date attendance through March was up 32% over a record breaking 2019.** Construction for the first phase of our planned visitor center was in full swing.

What actually happened this year was unexpected and entirely unprecedented. There were many firsts – but none that we had anticipated.

For the first time since Eastern State opened as a museum, our site was closed to the public more than it was open. For the first time in 30 years, we did not host *Terror Behind the Walls*, our iconic fall fundraiser. For the first time ever, we were forced to lay off and furlough staff and tap into our carefully saved cash reserves.

These have been, and continue to be, trying times. As 2021 dawned, our doors remained closed and our revenue losses grew daily. **Despite the relentless challenges of 2020, and indeed because of them, it remains clear to all of us that society still needs civic spaces where we can connect with each other to address pressing and complex issues.**

The mission of Eastern State is part of this essential work, and so, thanks to you we continued to host meaningful conversations on contemporary corrections issues and highlight the devastating impact of the pandemic on currently incarcerated people. We also offered behind-the-scenes access to members and donors, and connected with you virtually. As I reflect back on this year of challenges, I am incredibly proud of all we accomplished despite many hurdles—with your encouragement and support.



It was the BEST I've seen ... and I've seen many.

Perfect!

Phenomenal!

It was almost like we were there in person.



With your help, we launched new virtual programming, all for free. **Instead of in-person tours, we made space for important conversations online.** Our guides led live virtual tours exploring history through topics

like mental illness and prison labor. National thought leaders examined criminal justice today during regular installments of The Searchlight Series; and, via our new video series Prisons and the Pandemic, we kept you up to date on the disproportionately destructive effects of COVID-19 inside prisons and jails.

We couldn't welcome the thousands of school students that usually join us each year; instead, to help teachers scrambling to provide educational content, we introduced virtual group tours. Our engaging educators offered thoughtful explorations of Eastern State's past and discussions about the future of criminal justice reform to online classrooms everywhere from New York City to Chicago and even as far away as Hong Kong.

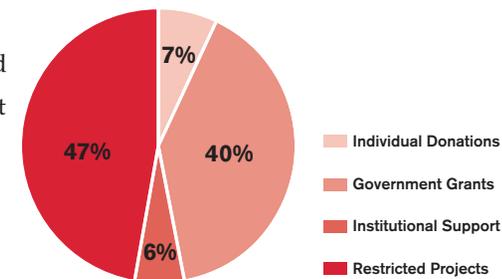
In the fall, we launched Night Tours, a new on-site program. As the watchful searchlight swept the site from the historic central guard tower, visitors explored the cellblocks after dark. We revisited Hidden Lives Illuminated, our 2019 film series featuring works created by incarcerated artists, sharing this and other films in the form of large scale projections onto Eastern State's iconic stone walls.

These successes were only possible because our Board of Directors, leadership donors, and members rallied around us in extraordinary ways. Our Members have remained loyal,

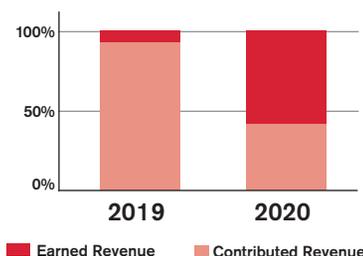
renewing their member ships even while the site remained closed. Our Board provided sound governance for a singular moment and regularly asked what more they could do to help.

We are grateful for solid leadership and philanthropic support, but **we must acknowledge that none of these successes lessen the profound financial impact that 2020 had on Eastern State Penitentiary.**

Sources of Giving in 2020

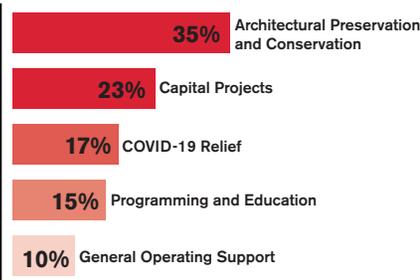


Contributed Revenue's Importance to ESPHS's Bottom Line Grew in 2020



Earned revenue from tickets and sales were critical sources of revenue. In 2019 we welcomed 310,000+ daytime visitors of which 80% were tourists, but tourism is not expected to bounce back for several years. Your support alongside many other donors, members, key contributors will remain critical in 2021.

2020 Donation Allocations



Even when the world seemed bleak, there were silver linings. **I am proud that we were able to complete the first phase of our planned visitor center project during closure.** In mid-August, Members first returned for the very first on-site visits starting at our new Tour Launch Point under hazy skies and a bright, full rainbow. With new safety guidelines in place, we welcomed nearly 35,000 daytime visitors to Eastern State from August,



when we first reopened, through November, when City ordinances mandated a second round of museum closures city-wide.

As we continue to adapt to a changing world, we'll be here for you, though the ways we connect may look different. Eastern State's

commitment to convene and foster important conversations remains the same – whether we are exploring history together in the cellblocks or discussing the future of criminal justice reform through social media. We know you'll be here for us, too.

We look forward to the promise of the coming months and we are eager to once again welcome you to the site that means so much to all of us. While we have many challenges ahead of us, we are confident we will succeed with your continued support. Thank you for your generosity, your commitment, and your belief in the mission and vision of Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site. See you online and in Eastern State's historic cellblocks again very soon.

Sincerely,

Sara Jane (Sally) Elk
President and CEO

In Memoriam



Thomas 'Reem' Cotton

1966 – 2020

Thomas 'Reem' Cotton joined Eastern State as the Supervisor of Education and Community Engagement in June 2019. Reem came to us with extensive teaching experience through the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program. He served as an advisor to Eastern State during the development of The Big Graph and Prisons Today and was described by friends and family as a brilliant legal scholar. Reem greeted everyone who passed his desk; his kindness was contagious, and it made our office a brighter place to work. His life was cut short due to complications from COVID-19. However, his influence on our programs will continue to be felt for years to come as we continue to build on the work he began, helping us weigh the ethics and format of our Returning Citizen Tour Guide Program, which launched in 2016. The program, which is ongoing, employs formerly incarcerated people as Eastern State educators.



Our Mission

Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site interprets the legacy of American criminal justice reform, from the nation's founding through to the present day, within the long-abandoned cellblocks of the nation's most historic prison.

Cover Photo: *Greg Benson*