

## Looking Ahead – The Next Five Years at Children's Institute

Children's Institute is pleased to present our new mission and vision statements. As part of our five year strategic planning process, we engaged McArdle Burkhardt LLC to work with our board, staff members, and community representatives to lay the groundwork for the next five years.

We've seen a tremendous amount of change over the past five years due to rising competition for funding, pressure on schools and non-profit organizations' budgets, and the increasingly complex and evolving needs of many children today. Our new strategic plan recognizes these challenges and helps us focus on both today's environment and future opportunities. Executive Director Dirk Hightower recently stated in our Community Update, ***"These past few years have been challenging for our country, state, businesses, and families. During economic and political uncertainty, challenges increase for all. How we, as individuals and organizations address challenges, will create our future."***

It was determined that we needed mission and vision statements that would better help people understand how Children's Institute serves the needs of children.

### Our new mission is:

**Children's Institute equips and supports those who work with children to ensure the success of every child.**

Through our understanding of child development, extensive research, and cutting edge evaluation tools, we develop and promote effective prevention and early intervention programs, materials, and best practices for children, families, schools, and communities. Our work with teachers and mental health and child care professionals focuses on the programs and services that children need as part of a healthy development into adulthood.

Our new vision for Children's Institute shows a commitment to children here in Rochester as well as throughout the state and country.

### Our new vision is:

**By 2020, we will positively impact the social and emotional health of one million children.**

Children's Institute partners with community agencies and schools to strengthen the social and emotional health of children in a variety of different ways. We assist with the implementation of evidence-based prevention and early intervention programs; provide a range of trainings, assessments, and services to support those who work with children; and conduct research and evaluation to continuously improve efforts that support children's positive growth and development.

Children's Institute's new strategic plan gives us the framework to expand our reach over the next five years, supporting our view that communities are only as healthy as their children.



## A Note from the Director

With our latest strategic framework adopted and in process, we are looking ahead to the next five years with measured optimism. Our plan lays the groundwork to reach our vision of “positively impacting the social and emotional health of one million children by 2020.” We plan to focus our efforts with existing programs while looking for opportunities in areas like early screening and interventions, universal pre-kindergarten, charter schools, and out-of-school time programs. Our optimism is measured, however, by the growing and complex needs of the children we serve and the reduction of funding available to address these needs. To name a few of the challenges we face with young children:

- Results from multiple studies estimate that approximately 10-20 percent of young children suffer from emotional and behavioral challenges that impair their ability to learn, with the incidence among economically disadvantaged young children being two or three times as high as their more affluent peers.<sup>1</sup>
- Studies show that at least half of the educational achievement gaps between poor and non-poor children already exist at kindergarten entry.<sup>2</sup>

These statistics illustrate the amount of work ahead to change the outcomes for our children and show how we must begin at a very early age to help prepare them for school and beyond. But identifying who is in need and what will be the most effective intervention is critical.

Thanks to funding from the Children’s Success Fund of the Rochester Area



Community Foundation, Children’s Institute will soon be starting a ground-breaking research study with a local school district. Today, school districts have tremendous amounts of data that can be used to proactively improve outcomes of the children they serve. The overall purpose of this project is to look at what key indicators early in a child’s life will most likely predict a 10th grader’s success in school. This research will then help school professionals identify younger students in need of intervention and what services are mostly likely to succeed. We anticipate that this pilot project, if successful, will lead towards offering such services to other districts nationwide.

To positively impact the social and emotional health of one million children by 2020 is a challenge. We continue to be grateful for the support we receive from this community and the partnerships we have that help us meet this challenge. Children need our help in learning how to adapt to an ever-changing world.

—A. DIRK HIGHTOWER, PH.D.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## “How Can I Help?”

Children’s Institute’s staff members often hear this offer and are grateful for the community support that we receive throughout the year. We know that some of you like to donate to a specific cause or to provide money to purchase a needed item. Below are some of the items on our wish list as well as other ways you can support Children’s Institute.

- \$25 donation or gift card from Target or Wegmans will help us with supplies for training classes.
- \$50 donation will allow us to purchase toys for our Primary Project training classes.
- \$100 donation will help Children’s Institute reach out to schools and child care centers across New York State that would benefit from our programs and services.
- \$500 donation will help pay 50 respondents in a national research project involving an online parent survey.
- \$1000 will support 13 scholarships for child care workers to attend a training session on managing difficult behaviors in the preschool classroom (impacting approximately 200 children).
- \$2500 donation will allow us to hire one graduate student next summer to assist in research efforts and provide valuable experience in their career field.

### Other ways you can help:

- Instead of birthday or holiday gifts, consider asking family and friends to make a donation to Children’s Institute in your honor. This can be done quickly and easily via our website, or by mail.
- Donate your unused airline miles to cover travel to national conferences.
- Recommend Children’s Institute as a receiving charity for your company’s sponsorship of an employee “dress down/jeans day.”
- Hold a third party fundraiser with the proceeds to benefit Children’s Institute.
- Consider Children’s Institute if your group is looking for a holiday project.

For more information, or if you have other ideas, please contact Cindy Harper, Sr. Development Manager at (585) 295-1000, ext. 237 or charper@childrensinstitute.net.

<sup>1</sup> Knitzer, J. (2001). Building services and systems to support the healthy emotional development of young children: An action guide for policymakers. New York, New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, V. & Burkham, D. (2002). Inequality at the starting gate: Social background differences in achievement as children begin school. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute. www.epinet.org.



## Children's Institute

**Mission:** To equip and support those who work with children to ensure the success of every child.

The Primary Project **program** uses play to address children's school adjustment issues and is now in many schools here in Rochester and across the country.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) consultation **services** are offered to schools and other child serving agencies for implementing, maintaining, and improving your social and emotional educational efforts.

RECAP is a community-wide **assessment** for pre-kindergarten classrooms that gathers and analyzes data on early childhood programs to improve practices and outcomes.

Our highly skilled facilitators can deliver professional development **training** to meet your needs.

Children's Institute is working with a local school district on a **research** study to determine what key indicators will most likely predict a 10th grader's success in school.

**To learn more about all of our offerings, visit [www.childrensinstitute.net](http://www.childrensinstitute.net).**

## Staff Updates

**Amy Baker** retired from Children's Institute completing many years of service on projects serving young children and child care providers. She contributed decades of experience working with families, family childcare providers, and center-based staff – helping them meet the needs of infants, toddlers, and young children. Amy made significant contributions to our community as a lead author and staff person on our federally funded

Early Education Professional Development Grant and is one of the developers and providers of our Stage of Change Approach to Professional Development for Early Educators. With Amy's local, regional, and national work – including authorship of published books, articles, and presentations – we look forward to using Amy's talents as a consultant for Children's Institute in the future.

Congratulations to COMET Product Manager **Teale Fox** and her husband as they welcome their new baby boy.

Congratulations to Systems Administrator **Jonathan Richwalder** on receiving his MBA degree from the Simon Business School at the University of Rochester.

**Allison Skillman** started as receptionist in 2012 and was promoted to Grants Support Assistant until she recently left Children's Institute to get married. Allison and her new husband now live in Ohio and we wish them all the best.



In May, we lost our beloved colleague, **Gary Lazenby**. Diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, Gary passed, surrounded by his loving family, just two weeks later.

Gary joined Children's Institute in spring of 2004 as part of our U.S. Department of Education's School-Aged Childhood Character research grant. Gary's role was to support the implementation of PATHS (Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies), a social and emotional learning program, in local urban and

suburban elementary schools. At that time, Gary was the newly retired principal of Indian Landing Elementary in Penfield where he served for fourteen years. From that vantage point, and from his previous twenty-two years as an elementary school teacher, Gary understood the critical importance of social and emotional learning to children's overall well-being and development, as well as to their academic success.

Gary was our agency's lead for PATHS for a decade. He developed into a highly respected leader and national trainer for the program. Gary consulted

and collaborated with numerous city schools throughout his tenure in PATHS to improve the social, emotional, and academic outcomes for young children. Among colleagues at Children's Institute, Gary was known to live what he preached. He was an active listener, a problem solver, and a generous co-worker who would place his own tasks on hold to support others. Gary's presence at Children's Institute felt huge, but his absence feels bigger. Children's Institute honors our friend and colleague who cared so passionately about supporting children's social and emotional learning.

# Partnerships & Connections

A continuing series highlighting our partners and the collaborative work that is being done here in the Greater Rochester, NY community and showcasing the work of which we are proud to be a part.

## Partnering with Greater Rochester Health Foundation to Address Childhood Obesity

Children's Institute and Greater Rochester Health Foundation have partnered since 2007 to address childhood obesity in our community. The Health Foundation identified this growing health issue and developed a series of targets and strategies with the goal of promoting healthy eating and physical activity among children in child care centers, schools, and other settings in and around Rochester.

"Our work to positively impact healthy weight in children in the City of Rochester involves a multi-pronged approach: surrounding children with physical activity and nutrition throughout their day, in multiple locations; engaging the clinical community; advocating for policy changes; and continuing to increase awareness of the 5•2•1•0 messages," said Bonnie DeVinney, Vice President and Chief Program Officer of the Health Foundation. "Evaluating this strategy is crucial, and requires the ability to understand how the tactics fit together to help us reach our goal. Children's Institute understands what needs to be measured and what testing instruments are available to measure effectiveness, and is nimble enough to modify measurement as needed."

In 2013, the Health Foundation awarded funding for programs in eight Rochester City School District (RCSD) elementary schools to increase access to healthy food choices for students and their families, and to create more opportunities for physical activity. Children's Institute's ongoing role is to assess the impact of these changes and track them on an individual, school, and community level. Teachers and other school personnel received Action Based Learning training to incorporate physical activity into their students' learning throughout the day. Schools became focused on instituting daily recess; and students were offered healthy meals

*"In 2012, more than one third of children and adolescents were overweight or obese."*

Ogden, C.L., Carroll, M.D., Kit, B.K., & Flegal, K.M. (2014). Prevalence of childhood and adult obesity in the United States, 2011-2012. *Journal of the American Medical Association*; 311(8), 806-814.

and snacks while learning about the importance of good nutrition.

Under the day-to-day direction of Marjorie Allan, Senior Project Coordinator, Children's Institute is using an array of measures to evaluate effects on the students and their teachers, families, and schools. Each child's body mass index (BMI) is calculated at the beginning and end of the school year to determine change over time. Recess periods are observed by our researchers to measure activity levels and duration. Surveys are done by both students and parents about knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes regarding healthy eating and physical activity. Students wear pedometers at the beginning and end of the school year to provide a snapshot measure of daily activity during the school day. Cafeteria observations are conducted to see what foods are selected and/or thrown out and students' opinions are obtained through open-ended interviews. Participating schools complete monthly summaries of program activity. School administrators meet with Children's Institute researchers to describe their school's recess policies.

"Children's Institute's knowledge of RCSD is critical to our successful evaluation of the Childhood Healthy Weight strategy," DeVinney said. "The staff of Children's Institute – from its leadership under Dirk Hightower to its on-the-ground team of evaluators – has been instrumental in the first year of this initiative."

During this first year of the Health Foundation's programming, six additional elementary schools are serving as comparison sites, allowing Children's Institute to collect information about their students (BMI, pedometer counts) and their schools (recess and cafeteria observations and policies). Measures from these six schools and the funded schools will be compared for differences.

This program requires strong support from the superintendent, school principals, and the RCSD Director of Health, Physical Education, and Athletics. Key collaborators include pediatricians from Golisano Children's Hospital, the Health Kids Initiative of Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency, and parent groups. The 2013-2014 school year was the first of the three-year program evaluation; results will be available through the Health Foundation's website at [www.thegrhf.org](http://www.thegrhf.org).

Children's Institute recognizes the importance of our partnership with Greater Rochester Health Foundation and their efforts to provide evidence-based solutions to the growing problem of childhood obesity. We look forward to continuing to provide evaluation services as the Health Foundation focuses on the health and wellness of the Rochester community. Bonnie DeVinney agrees: "We look forward to working with Children's Institute over the next two years to measure the impact of the Childhood Healthy Weight strategy."

## Primary Project Across New York State

Children's Institute is pleased to announce funding for eight new schools in six districts to implement Primary Project beginning this fall. The districts include:

- Discovery Charter School (Rochester)
- Freeport Public Schools
- Nyack Public Schools
- South Seneca Central School District
- Sullivan West Central School District
- The Renaissance Charter School (Jackson Heights)

These districts successfully completed a competitive process, including submission of a letter of intent and a full proposal. It is anticipated that funding

will be for three years with a maximum of \$15,000 for up to two schools per district for the first year with complete transition to local funding after three years.

Coordinators from each of the awardees participated in an online meeting in June to help prepare them for program start-up in September. Some of the topics covered during the meeting included training, data collection, playroom set up, hiring child associates, consultation, and their consultant for next year.; They were also mailed the DVD, *Creating Connections*, which can be used to introduce the program to staff and other stakeholders. Using the DVD, along with other communication tools, can help



ensure that the program becomes integrated into the school's structure of programs that help children adjust to and become successful in school.

Children's Institute is committed to helping all participants successfully implement and sustain Primary Project with fidelity. **Congratulations to our new districts!**



*The Rochester City School District Primary Project program held an end of the year celebration. The gathering included social workers and child associates to celebrate the year's accomplishments and also to honor Audrey Cummings who retired at the end of June. A great time was had by all!*



## Children's Institute's 2012-2013 Annual Report has won an American Inhouse Design Award from Graphic Design USA.

This award recognizes the outstanding work and talent of in-house designers across the country. This year, more than 4,000 entries were submitted, with only the top 15 percent warranting a Certificate of Excellence. Our thanks to everyone who made this report a success!

### 2012-2013 Annual Report

Designer: Mary Maiolo

Writers/editors: Lorraine Woerner-MacGowan, Allison Skillman

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A. Dirk Hightower, Deborah Johnson, Guillermo Montes

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**A dedicated team from Children's Institute** participated in the United Way of Greater Rochester's Day of Caring. Our staff members did a great job with yard work at Rochester Childfirst Network (RCN), a longtime community partner of Children's Institute and the third oldest child care center in the United States. RCN is one of Rochester's leaders in early education, child care, community outreach, and national advocacy for children and their caregivers.



L to R top: Jon Richwalder and Terry Hartmann; L to R bottom: Lauri Brugger, Mary Jo Strassell, Arlene Bobin, Cindy Harper, Lynn Smith, Mary Maiolo, and Moria Story.

## Website update

Children's Institute's website has a new look – we've added more information about our programs, services, and training! We've also added a safe, secure way to donate online as well as purchase our assessment measures and resource materials via the website. New training classes are being added throughout the year with easy, online registrations so check back frequently. Visit our updated website at [www.childrens institute.net](http://www.childrens institute.net).

## Subscribe to our newsletter

Would you prefer to receive this newsletter via e-mail? Send your name and address to [support@childrens institute.net](mailto:support@childrens institute.net) and we will update your records. You can go green and keep current with the latest news from Children's Institute!



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## News & Views

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