A Message from our Executive Director

Dear Friend of the Camden Children’s Garden,

It is my pleasure to share with you our 2015 Impact Report. So many exciting things are happening here at the Camden Children’s Garden. Our annual admission revenue and attendance numbers continue to climb and guest satisfaction is at its highest in years. We are confident that our new partnerships and operational changes will continue to see positive results.

During the 2015 calendar year, the Camden City Garden Club has invested over $150,000 in improvements to our facility. The improvements were made possible through grant dollars, grassroots fundraising efforts and leveraging community resources under our “Building a Brighter Future” Campaign. This campaign was launched in early spring, 2015. We are pleased to present an Impact Report where you will see highlights of all the improvements we have made to date. In addition, we have included information about the state of our community programming which continues to grow.

Looking forward to 2016 and 2017, we are working to create an improved experience for the next generation of children and their families. In order to meet the needs of today’s family, we are committed to working diligently to refresh and revitalize our exhibits and the overall appearance of the Camden Children’s Garden. With growing attendance rates and a need for more programmable spaces, we will look to create new infrastructure to accommodate our guests, especially during inclement weather conditions. These spaces will create operational revenue which will contribute to the stabilization the organization’s long term financial sustainability.

With this task come challenges, such as the lack of capital improvement dollars and the need to add additional staff members to accommodate this expansion and to look to the future. Camden Children’s Garden will continue to pursue grants and private funds to invest in the facility and staff.

Over the last 31 years, times and conditions have changed, but our mission hasn’t wavered. We remain a leader in community gardening, environmental educational programming, and youth workplace readiness in the City of Camden. Our waterfront attraction remains a staple in the Delaware Valley, serving thousands of families annually. None of this would be possible without the continued support of our members and supporters. We invite you to join us on this mission to take Camden Children’s Garden to the next level as we welcome new generations to discover the natural world.

Michael Devlin
Executive Director
Camden Children’s Garden
Capital Improvements

In 2015, we launched “Building a Brighter Future”, a campaign to invest in the future of the Camden Children’s Garden. This led to the investment of over $150,000 worth of improvements to the attraction to enhance aesthetics and the overall guest experience.
2015 Improvement Projects

-Aquarium Gate Box Office Repairs – (Completed)
-Bulletin Board Station & Informational Signage – (Completed)
-Green House Mural Project – (Completed)
-Installation of Nature Station – (Completed)
-Installation of New Literacy Garden Concept – (Completed)
-Installation of Fence Artwork – (Completed)
-KaBoom! Playground Project – (Completed)
-Model Train Exhibits Restoration – (In Progress)
-New Potting Shed – Farm to Food to Family Exhibit – (Completed)
-New Ben Franklin Concept – History of Camden Exhibit – (Completed)
-Park Paint Project – Repainted all Exhibits/Stops/Concrete Walkways – (Completed)
-Park Bench Replacement – (Completed)
-Pergola Installation – (Completed)
-Railroad Tie Replacement Project – Arrow River Train Amusement Ride – (Completed)
-Replacement of all Educational Signage – (In Progress)
-Tree House Railings Replaced / Structural Enhancements – (Completed)
-Violet Plaza Drainage Improvements & Sprayground Installation – (Completed)
-Watershed Educational Exhibits – (Completed)
Aquarium Box Office Improvements
Bulletin Board & Informational Signage
Installation of Nature Station Exhibit

Installation of Fence Artwork
Installation of Chalk Boards

Installation of Watershed Conservation Educational Exhibit
Installation of Watershed Conservation Educational Exhibit

Tree House Railing Replacement & Structural Enhancements
Installation of Literacy Garden & Outdoor Book Libraries

Park Paint Project
Pergola Installation Project
Park Paint Project

Potting Shed – Farm to Food to Family Exhibit
Park Paint Project

Educational/Exhibit Signage Replacement Project
(In Progress)
Plaza Drainage Improvements & Sprayground Project
Plaza Drainage Improvements & Sprayground Project
Community Partnerships

Camden Children’s Garden has worked to leverage resources and create meaningful partnerships that allow us to fulfill our mission in the community and achieve our goals as a staple waterfront attraction for families to discover the natural world.
Boscov’s Department Store

Camden Children’s Garden has created a promotional partnership with Boscov Stores to further enhance our marketing efforts in the South Jersey region. Promotions have included in store activities such as make and take crafts and fun giveaways.

City of Camden Department of Human Services

Camden Children’s Garden teamed up with the City of Camden to offer a variety of programming to city residents and waterfront visitors. In 2015, we hosted a Mother Daughter Tea Party, Spring Break Celebration, and the Movies in the Garden Series.

District Council Collaborative Board – (DCCB)

The District Council Collaborative Board is a non-profit organization based in the City of Camden. Its purpose is to promote public safety and improve quality of life. The organization boosts over 120 partners citywide ranging from businesses, city government, faith based communities, nonprofits, police, and residents. Camden Children’s Garden has worked in partnership with the DCCB to host numerous community events such as the Annual Camden Holiday Parade, Spring Celebration, and Fall Festival which has engaged thousands. The DCCB plays an instrumental role in promoting the Camden Children’s Garden’s Pay What You Wish Admission Days and works to connect the community with our numerous educational programs. In April 2015, Camden Children’s Garden and DCCB applied to KaBoom! for a playground grant. We received the grant and began construction in June 2015.

Garden State Discovery Museum

The Camden Children’s Garden and Garden State Discovery Museum have partnered to offer a Combo Membership that allows patrons to visit both attractions for one price. Working together, we do cross promotional marketing in order to expose both sites to a larger audience. In addition, we share educational programming services that allow both attractions to offer unique events.

WHYY Philadelphia / PBS Kids

Since 2014, Camden Children’s Garden has partnered with WHYY Philadelphia to offer numerous events that work to encourage community engagement and bring families together. Through this dynamic effort, we have hosted several PBS Kids character appearance days. In 2015, we wrote a grant together to secure funding from the Fred Rogers Company to become a national host site for Be My Neighbor Day. Inspired by Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood, the first new show from The Fred Rogers Company since Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood, the national event was created to foster a strong sense of community in a neighborhood that is undergoing economic revitalization and development. In addition to events, we offer WHYY members park discounts and other special perks. Our work with WHYY Philadelphia is ongoing and continues to expand each year.
Since 2013, Camden Children’s Garden has partnered with Rutgers-Camden Center for the Arts, Rutgers University Camden- Office of Civic Engagement, and the Rutgers-Camden Ignite Program to engage the Camden community and its students in arts programming around horticulture.

Over the past two years, Rutgers-Camden worked with Camden Children’s Garden on the Philadelphia Flower Show exhibits. Through the Rutgers-Camden Ignite Program, over 100 Camden City School District students were paired with professional artists who worked on fence posts that were featured in the Camden Children’s Garden exhibit. Following the Philadelphia Flower Show, the artwork was featured in an exhibit at the Stedman Gallery in Downtown Camden as apart of the Camden 3rd Thursday Art Crawl. A special reception was held to celebrate the students who participated in the program. Following the Stedman exhibit, the artwork was permanently installed at Camden Children’s Garden.

In 2014, Rutgers University-Camden students worked to create new park signage and spent an entire year working on our new greenhouse mural using techniques implemented by the City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program. In addition, employees from Rutgers-Center for the Arts and university students work with Camden Children’s Garden on a regular basis to provide arts programming for visitors through participating in our special events.
Rutgers-Camden Center for the Arts
Signage Improvements
Community Based Programs

In 2015, Camden Children’s Garden continued to provide educational opportunities for city residents and guests at our waterfront attraction.

The Grow Lab and Camden Sprouts STEM Education Program are going strong in schools throughout the Camden City School District. The Sprouts & Seedlings & Girl Scouts programming held monthly at our attraction has seen record attendance levels this year. The Youth Employment Program continues to serve Camden youth through providing horticultural experiences and workplace readiness. In the fall of 2015, the “Camden Grows” USDA Entrepreneurial Gardening Program concluded, having served over 30 adults over a period of three years.
Grow Lab Program

For over 30 years, the Grow Lab Science and Nutrition Education Program has introduced students in the Camden City School District to nutrition science and health education through hands-on workshops. In order to increase exposure to healthy foods, each participating class works to maintain either a school garden on-site or a Grow Lab indoor gardening unit in their classroom. Each lesson concludes with a healthy snack. All lessons are designed to meet New Jersey State Educational Standards, as well as Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards. During the 2015 school year, over 1,200 Camden City School District students participated in this program.

Camden Sprouts STEM Education

The Camden Sprouts STEM Environmental Science Program was designed to introduce 4th-8th grade students in the Camden City School District to environmental issues and critical thinking through inquiry-based workshops, and hands-on opportunities with professional-grade science equipment. In order to increase student interest in STEM related fields, especially environmental science, each participating class will work to maintain either a school garden or an indoor gardening unit within the classroom. The Camden Sprouts STEM Environmental Science Program currently engages over 200 students in science in meaningful ways during the 2015 school year throughout the Camden City School District.
Camden Grows USDA Entrepreneurial Community Gardening Program

“Camden Grows” is a unique strategic partnership with the Camden City Garden Club, The Food Security Advisory Board of Camden, NJ and the Center for Environmental Transformation. It is a comprehensive initiative designed to address the need for a more sustainable food system over three years in Camden, NJ by providing greater access to healthy food through building 21 new community gardens, adding to our inventory of 115 current gardens affecting 10% of our population, additionally, 6 gardens will be transformed into urban farms. The program will create greater demand for healthy food through free monthly nutrition education program to residents.

The program works to educate 30 adults and 21 youth entrepreneurial skills in the food production and distribution industry as agri-business entrepreneurs. This one year training will enable them to provide healthy food for Camden residents while earning income for themselves and their families.

Sprouts & Seedlings

The Sprouts and Seedlings Program is held monthly at Camden Children’s Garden for children ages 2-5 and their caregivers. These engaging garden-themed programs nurture children’s growth in a supportive, natural setting. Classes focus on a monthly theme and include circle time, hands-on activities, healthy snacks, story time, nature crafts, guided garden explorations, and a ride on our train or carousel. This education program serves over 120 children annually.

Girl Scouts of Central & Southern New Jersey Partnership

Since 2013, the Camden Children’s Garden & Girl Scouts of Central & Southern New Jersey have partnered together to host an annual Spring Journey Festival. This fun hands-on event has served over a 1,000 area scouts engaging them in activities around conservation, gardening and the natural environment. In addition to the annual festival, Camden Children’s Garden hosts badge workshops and other customized journey activities on a regular basis for a small fee.
Community Gardening Program

Established in 1985, the Community Gardening Program helps residents of the City of Camden and members of the Garden Club maintain community garden and greening sites throughout the City of Camden. The Camden City Garden Club (CCGC) assists members with cleaning vacant, city-owned lots and transforming them into beautiful and productive community gardens, growing fresh and nutritious fruits and vegetables. The Club provides tools, plants and seeds, while members provide the sweat equity. Members receive planting and gardening information and can participate in demonstrations, and periodic workshops. The Club also assists members and Camden residents with community greening projects and planting trees throughout the neighborhoods of the City of Camden.
On April 13, 2015, Camden Children’s Garden partnered with the Campbell Soup Foundation to host Make a Difference Day. Employees from the Campbell Soup Company’s V-8 Juice Division worked with staff on cleaning up and mulching the Camden Children’s Garden flower beds to prepare the park for opening season.
Jersey Cares Day

On May 2, 2015, Camden Children’s Garden participated in the annual Jersey Cares Day. This event works to bring over 2,500 volunteers from across New Jersey together to unite for the common goal of revitalizing and beautifying communities throughout the state. Camden Children’s Garden worked in partnership with Boy Scouts of America - South Jersey Division, DaVita Dialysis, and Prudential.
Kroc Center Garden Project

On April 13, 2015, Camden Children’s Garden partnered with the Ray & Joan Kroc Center of Camden, Campbell’s Soup Company Executive Leadership Team, & Campbell CEO Denise Morrison to construct raised bed gardens at the new facility located in East Camden. The fresh fruits and vegetables harvested from this location by volunteers will be sourced into the Kroc Center’s Subaru Choice Pantry which provides food security for local residents. The daylong event ended with a special presentation from Campbell’s Kitchen Top Chefs who demonstrated making easy recipes using ingredients planted in the newly established gardens.

2015 Choice Food Pantry Numbers

1,379 Cases
600 Individual Families Served
2,614 Bags of Food Distributed
Men: 657
Women: 1,478
Children: 1,528
Senior Citizens: 601
Neighborhood Center
Urban Farm Project

On October 11, 2015, Camden Children’s Garden, Garden State Discovery Museum, Neighborhood Center, and Congregation M’Kor Shalom held a dedication ceremony to celebrate the completion of the Neighborhood Center’s Urban Farm Project in South Camden. The food produced from the urban farm goes to the center’s Community Kitchen Program which provides meals for around 300 city residents daily and serves over 50,000 annually.

In its first year, the Neighborhood Center Urban Farm crop yielded over 3,000lbs of fresh food which assisted the Neighborhood Center’s Community Kitchen Program with sourcing healthy fresh foods for city residents. The food harvested was incorporated into the center’s daily menu which helped to defray costs. This partnership has enabled Camden Children’s Garden to address food security in a meaningful way through providing access to quality fresh foods.

2015 Crop Yield
616lbs. of Eggplant
415lbs. of Zucchini
345lbs. of Squash
300lbs of Peppers
234lbs. of Broccoli, Lettuce, Kale, and Spinach
294lbs of Tomatoes
100lbs. of Strawberries

In addition, the Urban Farm yielded a harvest of Apples, Beans, Blueberries, Herbs, Leeks, Onions, and Potatoes throughout the growing season.
**Awards & Accolades**

Camden Children’s Garden Executive Director Michael Devlin & Director of Education, Valerie Frick receive the Campbell Soup Foundation’s Lifetime Achievement Award in October 2015.

Philadelphia Magazine selects Camden Children’s Garden as the site of their 2016 Wedding Edition. The whimsical day long photo shoot was held in September 2015. The special edition is set to be released in late December.

Camden Children’s Garden named Top Regional Attraction for Halloween Fun by Philadelphia Inquirer & Mommy Poppins.

Camden Children’s Garden is named one of the Top 10 Most Romantic Spots in South Jersey by the Courier Post.

**Guest Experience**

Camden Children’s Garden receives high accolades from Trip Advisor & Yelp. Since 2013, the attraction staff has worked to improve guest relations in all aspects of operations. Camden Children’s Garden has successfully reached a four star rating of “Excellent” regarding visitor experience. In addition, several indicators that measure guest experience such as Groupon continue to report high levels of guest satisfaction. Our average score as a facility continues to hold strong at 89% over an eleven month period.
The Camden City Garden Club, operator of the Camden Children’s Garden participated in the Annual Philadelphia Flower Show, the world’s largest flower show. It was held on February 28th thru March 8th at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in Philadelphia, PA. The exhibit theme “Showtime New Jersey” featured a historical reference to Camden’s rich history as the home of the first Drive in Movie Theatre to align with the show’s overall theme “Lights! Camera! Bloom! Celebrate the Movies”.

The Camden Children’s Garden exhibit is a fruit and vegetable community garden that is home to Garden Fairies who have built their houses with recycling memorabilia from Hollywood movies. The interactive exhibit references child friendly movies with a Jersey Connection. Several local celebrities were featured in the exhibit to include, Kelly Ripa of Berlin, Bruce Willis of Penns Grove, Tasha Smith of Camden, Bruce Springsteen of Asbury Park, Danny DeVito of Neptune and Steven Spielberg who grew up in the Haddonfield area as well as depression era child star Jimmy Lydon of Bergenfield.

In partnership with Rutgers-Camden Center for the Arts Ignite Program and the Camden City School District, city children participated in designing the exhibit alongside professional artists through painting theme related Picket Fences which will be returned to Camden after the Flower Show and used in a new permanent exhibit. The faerie houses and other design elements were constructed by city youth under the Camden City Garden Club’s Youth Employment Program. As an award winning exhibitor in the Philadelphia Flower Show since 1997, the Camden City Garden Club continued its legacy as a crowd favorite through interactive education and a message of environmental sustainability.