



The --- Riverfront Children's Center, Inc.

Dear Friends:

Riverfront is a community of families, staff, volunteers and donors working towards a common vision where all children are safe and receiving the highest quality education; and all families are self-sufficient and succeeding. In 2016 the Center served 173 children, three-months-old through 12-years-old, and their families. Through both public and private support, tuition assistance was provided to 93% of the families served at the Center. Additional supports, such as food, clothing, diapers, mental health services, parenting education and employment referrals, all helped families in need.

Riverfront has maintained its National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation. The Center is continuously looking for ways to enhance learning. The development of a new Peace Garden, which is supported by a Regional Rotarian Grant, and grants from the Rotaries of Groton, Mystic and the Stoningtons, as well as the Groton Parks Foundation, will allow the expansion of outdoor learning opportunities for the children. The groundwork for this project began in October and will continue into the spring of 2017.

In 2016 the Board of Directors completed an organizational assessment, as part of a review of the strategic plan. Thus, the Board approved a restructuring that stepped away from the shared leadership of the Executive Director and Finance Director and moved to an executive director leadership model. In August, Dr. Susan Radway stepped into this role and took the fall months to get to know the staff, children, families, and community partners that together have made Riverfront what it is today.

In August, federal changes to the Care-4-Kids guidelines for childcare subsidies led the state to change the guidelines for enrollment, leaving many families without the necessary childcare support. Riverfront was prepared, using the Scholar Dollars program to help families who had lost their needed subsidy. This unexpected shortfall left Riverfront working to secure additional funds to cover this gap, which will carry over into 2017.

The Board of Directors, staff and volunteers have worked hard this year to maintain the high-quality, early care and education services that Riverfront is best known for. Our doors are always open. Come for a tour, stop for a chat, or call to invite us to come learn more about your vision for the Center and its role in the Southeastern Connecticut community.

Sincerely,

Susan A. Radway Ed.D.
Executive Director

Peter Schultheis
Board Chairperson

MISSION: to provide high-quality, affordable childcare and educational services, while comprehensively nurturing the unique needs of children and their families.

VISION: a community of families, staff, volunteers and donors working towards a common vision where all children are safe and receiving the highest quality education, with all families self-sufficient and succeeding.

PROGRAM AND SERVICES

NURTURING

The addition of a fifth preschool classroom and increased space for the before- and after-school program (completed in late 2015) allowed the center to increase its 2016 capacity by 43 children. The Center **served 173 children; 62% from Groton, 23% from New London and the remainder for surrounding towns in southeastern Connecticut and Rhode Island. The Center represents a diverse background of families; 34% Black, 34% Hispanic, 31% White and 1% Asian. Military families represent 6% of the children enrolled.**



Two-year-olds explore painting with a brush.

Considering the developmental needs of young children and the best way to provide a nurturing environment, 2016 ended with the decision to shift the infant and toddler

classrooms from single-age to mixed-age classrooms. Children entering the program as an infant will now have only one transition prior to moving into the preschool program. For children entering as a one-year-old they will remain with the same teachers and classroom until preschool. This change recognizes the important role attachment and relationships play in the healthy development of young children. Parents also benefit as they develop long-term trusting relationships with their child's teachers. The strongest benefit for this change is improved scores on social, emotional and intellectual rating scales. Teachers are embracing this change, as they too become attached to the children and value their role in nurturing young children.

"I am impressed with the level of focused efforts being made to continuously improve quality." Board Member

DEVELOPING

Riverfront is continually assessing the program and looking for new ways to enhance the services provided. Site Director, Gwen Lakowsky and Curriculum Coordinator, Christy McElroy oversee the classroom programs to assure compliance to licensing and that the Center continues to meet NAEYC accreditation requirements. The connections made with community resources help to expand on the work of the classroom teachers and assist children diagnosed with special needs to make gains in identified areas. Birth to Three and the Early Childhood Classroom Partnership assist children, families and teachers in carrying out individualized education plans for the **23% of children with diagnosed special needs, and the 29% of children diagnosed, or in the process of evaluation, for social-emotional needs.** To assure that all children are developing skills and on track for entry to kindergarten, the Center increased its training and in social-emotional development for teachers and families.

“Working with young children is about developing secure relationships; over the past year the staff has worked on exploring children through the lens of attachment, trauma and best practice. It is been an exciting journey together.” LCSW trainer

The creation of the new Peace Garden will allow for many nature-related lessons, as that project is completed in 2017. A grant through Dennison Pequotsepos Nature Center brought all the preschool classes to the nature center for two visits in Fall 2016. Regular classroom walks to Bill Memorial Library and activities with the Avery-Copp House and Fort Griswold are all local resources that the children enjoy.



A volunteer helps children create a paver for the *Alphabet Walkway* to be installed in the Peace Garden.

Riverfront is an active participant in many area collaboratives and has developed partnerships with businesses and organizations that see the mutual benefit of working together for the betterment of the community. *Children First Groton* and the *New London School Readiness Council* both bring together community providers and organizations all supporting a common goal of helping children birth to eight, and their families, thrive. A partnership with the *United Way* provides networking with other nonprofit social-service organizations, as well as links to needed services for families, such as the Gemma Moran Food Bank.

The relationships that have developed with area groups and clubs has led to monetary support, the donation of goods and volunteers- all important components for the successful operation of Riverfront. From civic

organizations, to church groups and garden clubs, the benefits of the gifts of time and money are seen every day in the faces of the children as they play, learn and develop in spaces that are made possible through the donations of so many supporters.

In November and December, donations of food, toys, clothing and money allowed the Center to provide food baskets for both Thanksgiving and Christmas to 21 families. In addition, toys and clothing were provided for 90 children. This distribution brought tears to the eyes of staff and families. With **59% of the Center families earning less than \$30,000 per year and 64% of the children being raised by a single parent** (the majority single mothers), a holiday celebration is far beyond their means.

EMPOWERING

An increased focus on human services was identified as a 2016 priority. Donations from the 2015 Annual Night of Giving were earmarked for this purpose and, as a result, funds were available to provide counseling services for families and place additional supports in classrooms when needed to address the social-emotional needs of young children. A Clothing Closet, Food Bank and Diaper Bank are available to Center families. They are encouraged to donate when possible and to volunteer to help organize donations. Families and staff work together in a *families helping families* philosophy, helping families feel empowered to give back to others, in whatever way they can. A new partnership with students at Fitch Senior High School will lead to the opening of the Hygiene Closet in March 2017.

Assistance in locating housing (**5 families were considered homeless at one point during 2016**), meeting educational/training needs and job-search skills were also addressed on a one-on-one basis. Throughout 2016 staff made 1,424 contacts to provide the human service supports families needed.



How many hugs a day at the Center? Too many to count!

Staff are supported in reaching their educational goals. **Every classroom has at least one teacher with a degree in Early Childhood Education, with 75% holding a Bachelor's degree or higher;** others are working towards their Associate degree. A local Quality Enhancement grant was used to purchase slots for 20 staff to take online trainings. Recognizing that education and qualified teachers go hand-in-hand, flexibility is given for staff to take courses at local colleges.

The Center works with the Mitchell College Early Childhood Department to bring interns into the Center and as they earn experience move onto the substitute list. In 2016, after an external and internal interview process, Brittany Dishon, a preschool teacher, was promoted to Assistant Director of preschool. Riverfront values education. The top priority is to support staff learning and to promote from within.



From babies in September to toddlers in January. They grow and learn so quickly.

How You Can Help

* Make a monetary donation. Designate it for *Scholar Dollars* tuition, human services, or unrestricted (capital improvements, unbudgeted emergencies, etc.)

* Make a donation of clothing, food, hygiene items, art supplies or books.

CLOTHING CLOSET: Now collecting gently-used snow pants, winter coats and boots

FOOD PANTRY: peanut butter, tuna, beans, fruit, juice, pasta, sauce, mac n cheese, rice

HYGIENE CLOSET: body wash, soap, shampoo, conditioner, tampons, pads, toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, shaving cream, toilet paper, laundry detergent

DIAPER BANK: diapers and wipes

CLASSROOM SUPPLIES: construction paper, pipe cleaners, pom-poms, glitter, white paper plates, coffee filters, q-tips, craft sticks, pony beads, felt square

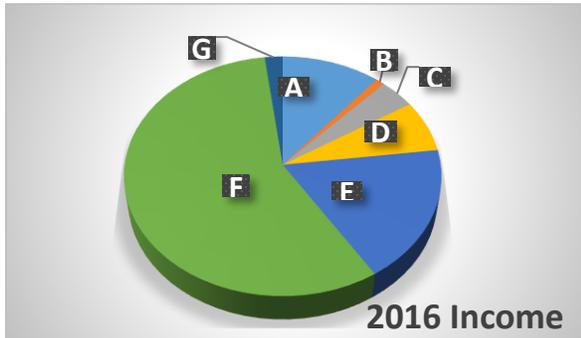
CHILDREN'S BOOKS: new or gently-used story books for children, ages infant through 12. Books are rotated weekly in and out of the classrooms, as well as available through a lending library and book giveaway cart.

The families we serve depend on quality and affordable care. The staff anticipates the needs of the children and families, then looks to fill it before it becomes an insurmountable obstacle. They are the example of what can happen when a team of people are fully invested in the success of an organization and those it serves.

Board Member

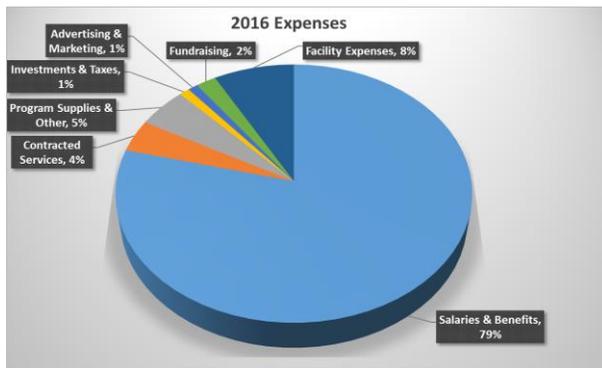
FINANCIAL SUMMARY

INCOME



INCOME SOURCE	PERCENT
A. United Way	11%
B. Bond	1%
C. Fundraising	4%
D. Private Grants, Contributions	7%
E. Parents (Tuition)	18%
F. State Contracts & Grants	57%
G. Rental	2%

EXPENSES



EXPENSE CATEGORY	PERCENT
Salary & Benefits	79%
Contractual Services	4%
Program Supplies/Other	5%
Investments/Taxes	1%
Advertising/Marketing	1%
Fundraising	2%
Facility Operations	8%

RIVERFRONT IS GRATEFUL FOR EACH AND EVERY DONOR, SPONSOR, PARTNER and VOLUNTEER THAT SUPPORTS OUR MISSION THROUGH THE DONATION OF MONEY, TIME AND SERVICE.

2016 GRANTS

Bodenwein Benevolent Fund	\$1,500
Chelsea Groton Foundation	\$2,000
Community Foundation of Eastern CT	\$19,000
Anonymous Donor through Foundation	\$15,000
Dime Bank Foundation, Inc.	\$2,500
Eastern CT Chamber of Commerce	\$2,000
Eastern CT Association of Realtors, Inc.	\$150
Frank Loomis Palmer Fund	\$20,000
George and Grace Long Foundation	\$2,000
Liberty Bank Foundation	\$5,000
The Brownington Foundation	\$29,000
The Charles B. Allyn Foundation, Inc.	\$1,300
United Way	\$145,754
WalMart Foundation	\$750

Donations from businesses, organizations, civic groups and faith-based groups \$12,390

Donations from C-52 members, individuals and events \$22,615



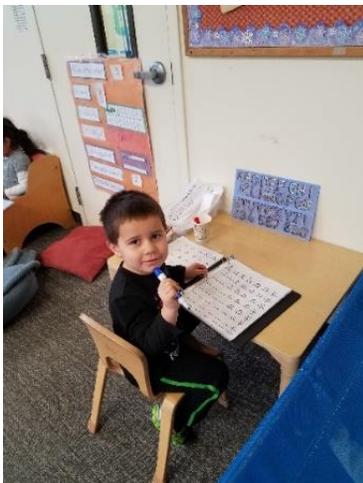
Books are everywhere at the Center. Children have quiet reading time; teacher's read aloud; children

choose books from the book cart to take home and start their own reading libraries.

“Riverfront provides a happy, healthy environment for children to learn and grow. So many opportunities are offered to children and their families who might otherwise have few choices. I know my support makes a difference.” C-52 donor

DEVELOPMENT

In late December, Kersten Elenteny was hired as the new Development Coordinator. After a review of current files and technology, she has begun to seek out funds to bring internet access and ipads to the classrooms, with the software and email accounts necessary for teacher-parent communication. Developing a brand image is a top priority, as Kersten looks at the rollout of reorganized donor recruitment. Donor software is being purchased to aid in tracking both donor giving and grants. Kersten has grantwriting, as well as fund development experience. Looking towards 2017 her work will support the goal of diversifying funding streams. For a minimum donation of \$52 per week you can support Riverfront by becoming a C-52 member. Call the Center or contact kersten.elenteny@riverfrontchildren.org for more information.



A writing station is available for children to practice writing.

OUTCOMES

84% of the budget (teacher salary/benefits and supplies) goes directly to the care and education of the children. What is the result?

* Because of affordable tuition rates and tuition scholarships, 140 families were able to work and support their family.

Using the Ages and Stages Questionnaires developmental rating scale (three months-36 months) and Connecticut Preschool Curricular and Assessment Frameworks (ages three- to five years-old), teachers and parents were able to regularly assess the development of the children.

* As a result of individualized lesson plans and school-home partnerships:

-91% of children ages three months to three-years-old met 90% or more of their gross-motor, fine-motor, problem-solving and personal-social skills milestones; and

-98-100% of three- to five-year-old children met 90% or more of the cognitive, creative expression and physical performance standards; and

-90% of three-to five-year-old children met 90% or more of the personal-social performance standards.

* As a result of screening and early interventions, seven children were identified and received services from Birth to Three.

* As a result of high quality education, 27 five year olds were prepared to enter kindergarten in August 2016.

RIVERFRONT CHILDREN'S CENTER, INC

476 Thames Street
Groton, CT 06340

Phone: 860-445-8151 Fax: 860-445-4099

www.riverfrontchildren.org

Riverfront values the diversity of experiences that the administration and teachers bring to the center. Their commitment to the children is evident by the 115 years of service at the Center.

Executive Director: Susan A. Radway Ed.D; 5 mo.

Finance Director: Susan Corrice MS; 20 yrs.

Development Coordinator: Kersten Elenteny BA; 1/17

Site Director: Gwen Lakowsky BA; 3 yrs.

Curriculum Coordinator: Christy McElroy M.Ed. 5 yrs.

Administrative Assistant: Kathleen Lawyea; 1 mo.

CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Julie Allen MS	6 years
Amanda Brown BS	6 years
Michaela Chilcote	4 months
Megan Crowley BA	1 year
Brittany Dishon BS	3 years
Pam Dugas Vars BA	6 years
Ashley Gotham BS	6 months
Karen Hakenjos CDA	15 years
Elizabeth Hawthorne CDA	3 years
Sarah Holman BS	2 years
Shanin Masucci	1 year
Jennifer Matteson BS	2 years
Julie Monroe CDA	12 years
Stacey Pride BS	2 years
Kheeyshia Steele	1 month
Jessica Tejada	3 years
Heather Todd BS	5 months
Tina Viola BS	1 year
Andre Yano BFA	15 years
Michele Zamagni AS	5 years
Bette Ziembe BA	5 years

Teachers without degrees are all working towards associate and bachelor degrees. All teachers are required to document 20 hours of continuing education each year.

What's Next

* Create more outdoor learning spaces.

Fencing the large grass area will allow for safe and fun outdoor family events, as well as longer outdoor learning time.

* Develop a coordinated physical activity and nutrition unit.

A reorganization of the kitchen area will allow for preschool cooking lessons and parent workshops to take place. Four teachers have been trained in the *I Am Moving, I Am Learning* curriculum and will be sharing indoor and outdoor physical activity lessons to all the teachers. Lessons will also incorporate the growing and harvesting of vegetables from the gardens.

* Diversify Funding.

More than 50% of the Center's income is from contracts and grants from the State.

* Explore options for expansion,

in order to address the growing need for affordable early care and education, as indicated by a **wait list of more than 200 children.**

*Increase partnerships and links to resources that can assist the Center and families. What is the connection between what you do and the mission of the Center? Give a call and let's talk



Preschoolers prepare for a walk at Dennison Pequotsepos Nature Center to look for animal habitats.

