Greetings!

PLTI-KC has been working diligently to support and train our community of parents, and we're so excited to share with you how far we've come this year! Thanks to our coalition, we're better equipped to prepare and propel parent leaders to create a more welcoming Kansas City by supporting children and parents. This year’s annual report includes first-hand accounts from our parent leaders as they share their advocacy journey and what’s next. There are also details about parent-leader demographics, our 2022 outcomes, and the impact of parent community projects across Kansas City.

Improving the lives and futures of children is still our top priority. Parent leaders performed more than 165 civic actions in 2022! Parent leaders shared their expertise and experiences with policy makers and media outlets to address issues that impact children. As part of their advocacy, parent leaders also joined decision-making tables, pursued additional certifications, and launched community projects. With PLTI-KC's support, parent leader Dacia Martin created a business plan and used it to acquire grant funding from the Shumaker Family Foundation for her community project: UrbnHub.

We’ve continued connecting parent leaders directly with civic leaders to advocate for children. In 2022, our parent leaders had the opportunity to participate in various virtual and in-person meetings with Missouri representatives, Kansas City, Missouri city council members, and leaders of other child-centered organizations. Early care and education (ECE) advocacy was a focus for 2022, and PLTI-KC will continue to build up our parent power to help them advocate for more funding and support in this area.

PLTI-KC parent leader outcomes stand out across the nation! Our cohort members made significant progress across the board according to the pre and post-survey conducted by the NYU Metro Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools. PLTI-KC parent leaders surpassed the national average of PLTI sites across the country in all four civic outcome areas and increased their participation in seven civic behaviors while completing the PLTI program.

We can't thank you enough. Thank you to our funders and supporters for helping PLTI-KC provide parents with the tools and training they need to take collective action to solve problems that affect themselves, their families, and their communities. In addition, PLTI-KC is proud to be an affiliate of the National Parent Leadership Institute, which has been building parent power for 30 years.

We look forward to an even more impactful 2023 as we continue to build parent capacity and opportunities.

Sincerely,

Julie Holland,
Founder & Director
Thank you TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Hall Family Foundation

Health Forward Foundation

Kids Win Missouri

Sherman Family Foundation

United Way of Greater Kansas City

Herblock

The Herb Block Foundation

Building a Community of Readers

Children’s Mercy Kansas City 125 Years and Growing

Black Community Fund

Children’s Trust Fund

RevEd

Rivolución Educativa

Community Capital Fund

Parent Leadership Training Institute-Kansas City is a sponsored project of Community Capital Fund (CCF)
When parents are engaged in participatory democracy, child outcomes improve.

Parents are assets and experts on issues affecting children.

Nurturing Community. PLTI-KC fosters a nurturing community built through deep and meaningful relationships that supports parents and their advocacy efforts.

Stronger through Diversity. The diversity of our community fosters understanding, accountability, and inclusion. PLTI-KC brings together parents across differences (e.g., race, zip code, age, culture).

Parents’ Agenda is Our Agenda. PLTI-KC is nonpartisan. We don’t tell parents which children’s issues they should care about or advocate for; they tell us.

Two-Generational for Lasting Change: The civic activism of PLTI-KC parent leaders influences their children & grandchildren, who become leaders and advocates in their own right.

Our communities and our democracy are strengthened when parents are equipped with the leadership skills needed to maximize child outcomes at home, in school, in their neighborhood, and in public policy. The program includes the following:

- A 21-week leadership and civics course (transportation, childcare, and meals provided) with nationally trained facilitators.
- A framework for parents to develop community projects.
- Individualized coaching and community connections to advance parents' civic leadership during the program and after graduation.

“PLTI-KC is a coalition of individuals with common interests that work together by gathering resources for a specific goal. Throughout this program, I’ve become more self-aware of the way I show up in certain spaces. I’ve gained a sense of purpose and I’ve gained lifelong friends.”

Cathy Cowan

PLTI-KC is an affiliate of the National Parent Leadership Institute, a family civics initiative created by the Connecticut Commission on Children
Each year, PLTI-KC selects a cohort of up to 25 parents and supports a growing alumni network. The cohort builds up parent power by creating a safe space where parent leaders from diverse backgrounds can share experiences and insights to prepare them for the next step in their advocacy journeys.

**What is your economic situation?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doing Ok</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding it difficult to get by</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just getting by</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living comfortably</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What race and ethnicity do you identify as?**

- 36% Black or African American
- 43% White or Caucasian (Non-Hispanic)
- 1% Arab or Middle Eastern
- 3% Multi-Ethnic/Multi-Racial
- 3% Native, American Indian or Indigenous
- 4% Asian or Pacific Islander
- 10% Latinx or Hispanic

**What generation do you represent?**

- 49% Gen Y or Millennial (Born 1981-1996)
- 42% Gen X (Born 1965-1980)
- 9% Baby Boomer (Born 1946-1964)

**What is your highest level of education?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associates Degree</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or Professional Degree</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma/GED</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Degree/Trade Certification</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What is your gender identity?**

- 87% Cis woman (gender identity matches sex assigned at birth)
- 12% Cis man (gender identity matches sex assigned at birth)
- 1% Genderqueer or Gender non-conforming

**Number of Parent Leaders by zip code**

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Parent leaders performed more than 165 civic actions in 2022.

### Using Their VOICE

- 58 parent leaders shared their expertise and lived experiences to influence policies and media coverage of children’s issues.
- 13 interviewed for news articles or wrote blogs about their advocacy work on children’s issues like early childhood education, health care access, literacy, special education, public safety, or their PLTI-KC community projects.
- 30 testified at public meetings or met with elected officials at the local, state, or national level.
- 7 spoke on national and local panels related to advocacy, early childhood education, food access, and education.
- Interviewed for news articles or wrote blogs about their advocacy work on children’s issues like early childhood education, health care access, literacy, special education, public safety, or their PLTI-KC community projects.
- 16 participate in advisory boards or working groups for national, state or local initiatives.
- 3 serve as leaders on the PTA/PTO of their children’s schools.
- 2 are directors on nonprofit boards.
- 2 are appointed to Missouri state boards or commissions.
- 2 are appointed directors to public charter school boards.

**“PLTI-KC empowered me to put passion into action.”**

Janelle Mathews

Mollee Flores and Danielle Holcomb, KCMO Health Department Community Wellness Ambassadors, at the Women’s Health Fair at Guadalupe Centers, Inc.

Jacob Schwartz at our nation’s Capitol for #UPLANGathering2022 to elevate parents’ voices to federal lawmakers in favor of policies benefitting families and children.
PARENT LEADERS In Action

GROWING THEIR Leadership

33 parent leaders took additional courses, certifications, or trainings to grow their knowledge and skills.

Training topics include community organizing, leadership in civic spaces, mental health first aid, community wellness, nonprofit advocacy, anti-racism in schools, public boards & commissions, and local government engagement.

2 parent leaders graduated with Associates or Master’s.

Pursuing Their PASSIONS

36 parent leaders took significant steps to advance their PLTI-KC community projects on the following issues:

- Voter registration
- Homelessness
- Affordable housing
- Youth mental health
- Foster care
- Community resource access
- Bully prevention
- Street safety
- Language acquisition for Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing children
- Literacy
- Youth mentorship
- Community health

Training topics include community organizing, leadership in civic spaces, mental health first aid, community wellness, nonprofit advocacy, anti-racism in schools, public boards & commissions, and local government engagement.

“Parent leaders graduated with Associates or Master’s.”

Jillian RainingBird meets with U.S. Representative Emanuel Cleaver II to advocate for accessibility and inclusion for children with disabilities. She’s pictured here presenting her book “Just Like Jaelah”.

Estelle Lewis installing a Little Free Library and bench in the Holmes Garden neighborhood. Through a partnership with Lead to Read KC, this Little Free Library will receive new books that match the age and interests of the children in the neighborhood.

“Parent leaders graduated with Associates or Master’s.”

“This connection within my own cohort is the most amazing part of my week that I enjoy the most in a very long time. I have gained more motivation to move forward in a different direction I never saw myself in ten years ago or even five years ago. I am glad to have been a part of this process, it is life changing. PLTI-KC is the people I have been looking for so many years that want to advocate for the better of the marginalized and the under-served. That is worth its weight in gold.”

Marisol Ramirez
PLTI-KC parent leaders stand out among PLTI programs across the nation! PLTI-KC’s outcomes are assessed by an independent, outside evaluator, the NYU Metro Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools. Using a pre and post-survey, the program is assessed for its impact on parents' civic skills, engagement, knowledge, and experiences. It is a statistically rigorous survey, containing constructs and weighted questions to measure beliefs or behaviors accurately.

Below are excerpts from the evaluation of PLTI-KC’s fourth cohort of parents compared to all PLTI parent leaders nationally who graduated in 2022.

**Civic Outcomes**
Parent leaders show growth in all four civic outcome areas.

**Civic Behaviors:**
Parent leaders increased their participation in seven civic behaviors over the course of participating in PLTI-KC.
**Outcomes**

**Personal Growth:**
A majority of parents made significant changes in their personal lives.

### National

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>No answer</th>
<th>Haven’t thought about</th>
<th>Have thought about</th>
<th>Have taken steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Running for public office</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting a new group, club or organization in my community</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing or advancing my career</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furthering my education</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making changes in my financial situation</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making changes in my family situation</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making changes in my mental, emotional, or physical health</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocating for my child and for other children</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>72%</td>
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</table>

### PLTI-KC

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Activity</th>
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<th>Have thought about</th>
<th>Have taken steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Running for public office</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting a new group, club or organization in my community</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing or advancing my career</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furthering my education</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making changes in my financial situation</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>82%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making changes in my family situation</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Making changes in my mental, emotional, or physical health</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocating for my child and for other children</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequency (%)
COLLECTIVE ACTION SPOTLIGHT:
Advocating to Improve Early Care and Education

Parent leaders organized many projects in 2022, but one primary focus was early care and education (ECE). Accessing affordable, quality ECE in Missouri has been challenging for parents for decades, and the pandemic only exacerbated the situation. Like so many parents in the city, PLTI-KC’s parent leaders felt this strain. In response, they stepped up when presented with an opportunity to partner with Kids Win Missouri and have their concerns heard by legislators.

Starting in July, PLTI-KC parent leaders Anissa Parra-Grooms, Mariah Roady, and Natasha Bailey joined 20 parents from across Missouri in a year-long ECE initiative. They are learning effective advocacy tactics, providing input on a statewide ECE policy blueprint, and leading efforts to organize other parents for the cause.

In September, the PLTI-KC trio went to the Missouri State Capitol to share their personal stories and build relationships with legislators, which they continued to cultivate through individual conversations over coffee and phone calls in the following months.

In November, Anissa, Mariah, & Natasha (with support from PLTI-KC facilitator Crystal Everett), held an ECE advocacy info session for other Kansas City parents to learn more about the ECE initiative and how they can play a part.

They will hold a listening session in January 2023 so Missouri legislators can hear directly from KC parents about ECE concerns. They already have eight legislators and more than 30 parents committed to attending.

Together with other KC parents they have organized, they will return to the Capitol in March to continue to push legislators to invest more in early care and education.

When we support parent leaders, they can take collective action to improve the lives of their children and all children. PLTI-KC is proud of Anissa, Mariah, and Natasha for being parents who lead.

“The first five years of a child’s life are crucial to their learning and later growth and development. Investing today will help our children grow into well-rounded and balanced adults making a positive impact in our state.”

Anissa Parra-Grooms

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Can you share details about your community project?

My community project was to get the Children’s Mercy Red Card Bullying Prevention Campaign implemented at my child’s school. I did my research; The Red Card program has a comprehensive approach, including curriculum, handouts, and tools for teachers. I collaborated with the Parent-Teacher Organization and developed a relationship with the school counselor so she would be comfortable using this program to address bullying. During one of our PTO meetings, we had a psychiatrist from Children’s Mercy talk about the program to get buy-in from parents. In 2021 the partnership was approved, and now teachers and counselors have tools to talk with the kids about addressing bullying and ensuring they have the right resources.

How did PLTI-KC help you find your voice?

It provided the benefit of connecting with other parents to ask what they are experiencing and strategies they have used to communicate with school administration. I also appreciated having a safe space to vent, and from our conversations, people would give input, and it helped re-energize me when I felt defeated.

How has your PLTI-KC experience helped you become a better advocate?

I have learned not to be timid and just say what I think — what do I have to lose — but it’s equal parts not being afraid to say what I think but also being quiet when I need to be and listening. I’ve gotten to know so many more parents and other kids and seen other people thrive again, and this has been a huge benefit of being involved and has helped me want to stay engaged.

How do you see your child leaning into advocacy?

My son plays soccer through Sporting Brookside, and his school does not have elementary recreational sports. There have been some conversations about creating a soccer program at the school, so I asked my son what he thought about it and he knows I’m on the PTO so his response was “Just stand up mom and talk about it at the next PTO meeting!” It took me off guard in a good way but he’s right, why wait? So that showed me that he’s already picking up on how using his voice works.

“Find your people. Find other people who are going to back you up.”
What have you learned from the relationships you formed in PLTI-KC?
You could have told me it was a community beforehand, but I don’t think I quite got it until the end when I saw that we were really building relationships. Even in a small class, someone would have an answer for you.

How would you encourage other parents to take on leadership roles?
Even if you don’t know or are uncomfortable with the situation, just show up. It’s just showing up and learning and asking questions. I know asking questions can be intimidating, so it’s just being present and pushing your comfort zone. Maybe that’s just asking one question, and later that will evolve into a handful of questions, and someday you’ll be answering questions for others.

How has your advocacy created more visibility for early care and education (ECE) efforts?
Through PLTI-KC, I learned about a year-long ECE advocacy initiative for parent leaders with Kids Win Missouri. This advocacy work lit a fire within me to do more, and from my PLTI-KC connections, I learned about and landed a development position with EarlystART. When speaking with potential funders, I’ll often introduce myself and share how I got here—through my advocacy journey. I’m not just someone here writing reports; I’m also living this journey.

What are your long-term hopes?
It won’t be immediate, but I would like to see a time where there is plentiful, quality, and affordable early care and education. It’s no longer the common thought that preschool starts at four but instead people realize that their childcare system can be an early care and education system. I accepted a long time ago that the work I am doing today would not directly benefit my daughter, but hopefully, it will benefit her children. My daughter is in a good place, but I’m hoping, in ten years, every child will have that opportunity to be in an early education program.

“Even if you don’t know or are uncomfortable with the situation, just show up.”
Can you share more about your PLTI-KC community project: LEAD-K?

LEAD-K is an initiative that addresses early language deprivation in deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) children. A child's early years, specifically ages 0-5, are the most important years for brain development. Research shows that responsive communication and connection stimulate that development. Unfortunately, many DHH children miss out on this crucial development because their families do not have the proper information and tools to communicate and connect with their children. LEAD-K is a legislative solution that would require the State of Missouri to provide parents with information about language milestones for DHH children and assessments to measure their early language acquisition in English, American Sign Language, or both. These milestones and assessments would identify and address language deprivation before DHH children enter school so they can be on the same track as their hearing peers.

For over six months, I have collaborated with the Missouri Commission for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing, the Missouri Association of the Deaf, and Missouri state legislators to introduce bills for LEAD-K. I'm pleased that Representative Jerome Barnes and Senator Greg Razer pre-filed the LEAD-K bills, HB 106 and SB 340, for the 2023 legislative session. I will continue to advocate for its successful passage into law.

What tools have you gained from PLTI-KC to help with the LEAD-K initiative?

PLTI-KC has so many useful classes and discussion topics. I learned the skills to encourage other parents to be advocates for their children. Other parents can take the knowledge I've shared from PLTI-KC to the schools to advocate for their children. PLTI-KC helped me see how the political system and Missouri’s governmental structure impact the allocation of funds and how powerful decisions are made. I didn't quite realize how powerful the board of education was and how they worked with legislators to ensure Missouri students get the best education they can. PLTI-KC is so resourceful and sensitive to different cultures. My cohort was able to approach the subject of language deprivation or cultural suppression as it related to Native American culture. We also discussed barriers experienced by Black and other minority communities and roadblocks faced by those with disabilities.

How can hearing allies best support the LEAD-K bill?

Well, PLTI-KC is one ally, and it’s a hearing group! I will be reaching out to other non-profit organizations that have hearing members who are in support of our initiative. The Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation Department sees the struggles that deaf people have completing their post-secondary education and maintaining employment, so they will be heavily involved. We may be able to pull in some speech and language specialists and some audiologists as well.

“My biggest passion is to see an improvement in our educational system. I don’t want it to stay static, and I don’t want it to decline. I don’t want children to be marginalized. They have been marginalized, they have been neglected, and I want to put an end to that.”
Can you tell me about the purpose of the UrbnHub?

The purpose of the UrbnHub is to connect people to opportunities and not just resources. I wanted something the whole family could take advantage of and I had to learn to keep pushing when people said it wasn’t going to go anywhere. I knew that everyone doesn’t fit into one tiny bubble and that the term resources shouldn’t be synonymous with poor. So I kept trying until I came across people who didn’t tell me that I was crazy. I started the UrbnHub when I was stuck in the house during COVID, I thought well what do I have to lose by creating the Facebook group (UrbnHub). Now it has more than 1,800 members! I’ve recently registered as a nonprofit and we’re going from there.

How has PLTI-KC supported your work?

PLTI-KC provided me with an opportunity to get out of my shell. Plus, PLTI-KC allowed me to meet people with different backgrounds and I got to learn what other resources people needed outside of what my original focus for UrbnHub was. Through PLTI-KC’s support, I was also able to pay for my business plan and use that plan to apply for funding from the Shumaker Family Foundation, which I recently won.

What are your hopes for the future?

I would love to have a resource center that isn’t just focused on one thing. So if a person needs to send their child to summer camp or find Christmas gifts, or need help finding a home, I think there is a way to help people find all of those things without complicating the process. It would have to be accessible by bus; If you want families to come, you have to make it accessible for families to get there. I would also like to have a quarterly networking opportunity for organizations to get online and tell people what resources they offer.

“I didn’t know what to expect when I joined PLTI-KC but it was nice to know that it was parents of all kinds of different backgrounds. Everybody had a voice at PLTI-KC, regardless of their finances or education level, or family structure.”
What was your community project for PLTI-KC?

I advocated for a crosswalk to be installed in my neighborhood after my then six-year-old son was hit by a car. He survived and he’s okay. I didn’t start with PLTI-KC until after that happened, but I’m thankful that I was part of PLTI-KC because it was great to have that support while advocating for the crosswalk. Because of my crosswalk request, the city of Leawood, KS developed a crosswalk policy. This new policy has made it easier for another parent I’m supporting to see if her neighborhood can also install a crosswalk.

How would you encourage other parents to take on leadership roles so they can advocate for their children?

I would say if not you, then who? As parents, we have a unique voice, and if we’re not at the table making decisions, then some people who may not have the perspectives you have will be making decisions for you and your family.

What kind of support did you receive from PLTI-KC while advocating for a crosswalk in your neighborhood?

Emotional support was important because that was really traumatic to go through. PLTI-KC connected me to BikeWalkKC and provided advice on how to build a coalition. Being able to have the PLTI-KC community to bounce ideas off of and encourage me when things got challenging was essential. Without them, I don’t think I would have been able to persevere.

How has PLTI-KC helped you think outside of the box when it comes to advocacy?

I have to go back to the value of being around people with different experiences and perspectives that helped me understand the big picture of child advocacy in the metro. I now consider that when making decisions for my own child. The other part is the organizational aspect. It’s one thing to believe in something, but it’s another thing to organize, plan and execute a project, and PLTI-KC prepared me for that.

What are some benefits of building relationships across differences with PLTI-KC parents?

In all transparency, I’m a white woman who lives in Johnson County, Kansas so I valued being able to get outside of my bubble and for all of us to have challenging but purposeful discussions and understand different outlooks. It was invaluable to me because, where I live, it’s almost harder to get different perspectives than people who agree with you. The relational aspect of PLTI-KC was one of the most valuable things for me.

Leah & her husband (fifth & fourth from the left) with their friends and neighbors after Leawood City Council approved the crosswalk in her neighborhood.

“It feels purposeful and motivating to know that I can actually get something done to achieve change for children’s safety.”
PLTI-KC community projects are opportunities for parent leaders to apply what they are learning in class to their passion area. The projects are as diverse as our parent leaders, from growing their knowledge on a particular children's issue to expanding their network and connections to testifying before public officials to launching an entirely new initiative. While diverse, all projects are focused on improving the lives of children.

Amanda Trout - Implementing Bullying Prevention Program and Enhancing Social-Emotional Supports at Foreign Language Academy

Anissa Parra-Grooms - Northland Early Education Resource Guide

Cathy Cowan - Operation Imagination: Changing Lives One Mind at a Time

Clark & Jill Corogenes - MO LEAD-K Bill: Increase Kindergarten Readiness for Deaf Children

Dacia Martin - UrbnHub: connecting people to great opportunities and quality resources often overlooked or under utilized in the community

Georgia Mueller - Visioneers Disability Navigation Network

Janelle Mathews - Blessings Under Disguise: Supporting Houseless People

Lauren Jenkins - Equity with Charter School Policy

Leah Maugans - Crosswalk Installation - 93rd & Lee Blvd.

Mariah Roady - Accessible high-quality early education and family resources/engagement

Marisol Ramirez - Transparency Accountability for Parents (TAPs), LLC.

Tricia McGhee - Community building & parent power: for elevated outcomes for our latinx children.

“This experience has stretched me in ways that I couldn’t have ever imagined. Through PLTI-KC, I have gained even more confidence as an advocate for ALL children, including my own.”

Lauren Jenkins

Clark & Jill Corogenes meet with Senator Greg Razer (D-MO) and Jessica Ann, Chief of Staff for Senator Lauren Arthur (D-MO) to advocate for deaf and hard-of-hearing children.
Meet our Team

Crystal Everett, Phase II Facilitator. Crystal Everett, born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri, has over a decade of experience in education spaces, holding roles with organizations such as Kansas City, Missouri Public Schools, 20/20 Leadership, and Girl Scouts of NE Kansas & NW Missouri. Crystal earned degrees in Public Relations and Sociology from Drake University and a Masters of Education from Northern Arizona University. In addition to serving as facilitator for PLTI since 2018, Crystal recently released her first children’s book, “Mari and Mommy Move it!”, inspired by her daughter’s and her love for dance.

PaKou Her, Phase I Facilitator. PaKou Her is Principal of Tseng Development Group, a consulting firm that provides lectures, trainings, skills workshops, organizational development, transformational leadership coaching, and grassroots strategy development designed to build racial justice and create systems change. PaKou holds over 25 years of anti-racism organizing experience, a decade of which was as director of the national racial justice training program at Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training. She is currently the director of Influencer Engagement at ParentsTogether where she works to shape policies and culture that help all families thrive.

Julie Holland, Founder & Director. Julie is proud to lead PLTI-KC and support parent leaders on their advocacy journeys. Previously, Julie served as education advisor to Kansas City Mayor Sly James. She has also worked at the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, the Make-A-Wish Foundation, and congressional offices in Oklahoma and Washington, D.C. She holds a BS from Oklahoma State University, MPA from Syracuse University, and a doctorate in law and policy from Northeastern University. She volunteers her time as an appointed commissioner of the Kansas City, Missouri Brownfields Commission, a leader with Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, and a reading mentor with Lead to Read KC.
Meet our Team

Asia Jones, Digital Communications Manager. Asia is passionate about creating engaging content and employs multichannel communication to build up genuine relationships internally and externally. A Kansas City, Missouri native and University of Missouri Journalism School alumna — Asia started this journey in a Fortune 500 company and soon after transitioned to a local government organization where she cultivated communication to boost employee morale. After leaving that position, she started her own content creation business where she now works with small businesses, nonprofits, entrepreneurs and other organizations to enhance their brand connectivity.

Denesha Snell, Phase II Facilitator. Denesha Snell, a Kansas City native, has devoted her career to addressing community issues including parent advocacy, cultural diversity, causes of health disparities, violence prevention and improving relationships with community and civic partners. She holds a BS from Tennessee State University and a Masters of Education from Rockhurst University.

Annie Watson, Phase I Facilitator. Annie Watson is principal associate with School Readiness Consulting. Annie has a wide range of early care and education experience including having served as a classroom teacher, education coach, pedagogical consultant, and nonprofit leader. Annie is an advocate for high-quality early education and learning environments with a passion for intersectional equity and anti-racism work. She specializes in translating a commitment to equity into meaningful outcomes and synthesizing multiple stakeholder perspectives to generate practical solutions that inform program and systems development.