

WHY DO WE CONNECT?

FRIENDS CENTER FOR CHILDREN
REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY
2018 - 2019



Produced by Friends Center for Children

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Photography: Ian Christmann

A young boy and girl are sitting together, laughing joyfully. The boy is on the left, wearing a green hoodie with a white and blue beetle graphic. The girl is on the right, wearing a red and blue patterned vest over a blue shirt. They are both looking at each other and laughing. The background is a wooden play structure.

**“ALONE
WE CAN DO
SO LITTLE;
TOGETHER
WE CAN DO
SO MUCH.”**

- Helen Keller

REFLECTIONS FROM THE DIRECTOR



Allyx Schiavone
Executive Director

I am reminded each day how lucky I am to be a part of the Friends Center community. Morning smiles, a three-year-old's hug, the sound of singing or laughter bouncing down the hallways. These are all wonderful ways to start a day! These moments, small gestures of joy and love, help to counterbalance some of the vitriol that seems to surround us.

During the 2018-2019 year, we focused on the theme of connections and relationships. We learned what it means to us, and what it takes, to be connected to and with one another and the community around us. Out of this exploration, we realized that, in order to be truly connected, we needed to deeply consider the insecurity faced by many of our friends — uncertainty shaped by uncontrollable circumstances such as race, gender, cultural identity, sexual identity, age, to name a few. Because of this deep consideration, we have decided to head into this new year focused on the idea of “perspectives.”

Throughout the year, we will explore how perspectives shape our thinking, our intentions, our policies and systems, and our actions. We believe there is a link between the ability to understand one another's perspective and empathy. We know that empathy allows us to be in relationship with friends who are different from us, which brings us back to our current celebration of the connections that help us thrive.

Thank you for sharing in my personal, and our collective, growth and work. I remain grateful and humbled by the opportunity to work alongside such an amazing group of educators, children, families, volunteers, interns, board members, donors and community partners. My connections with each of you are imperative to my personal and professional life.

This past year has been especially rewarding and productive for Friends Center. Our Fair Haven facility was filled to capacity and we have planned a new facility on Blake Street in New Haven.

We extend our profound thanks to our devoted and skilled teachers and staff, to caring parents and to our community partners. They are the front line of our mission as they nurture and develop the 103 children in our East Grand location, and fill our building with warmth and laughter.

We also extend appreciation to all the Board members, and especially to the Scalability Task Force led by Orlando Yarborough for the hard work and perseverance that has turned our vision of a second site in New Haven into a reality.

We are grateful to the many people who support Friends Center: volunteers from the Friends Meeting of New Haven; parents and grandparents; board members; individual donors; the Quaker Advisory Council; local businesses, corporations and foundations; and New Haven and State agency funders. Friends Center could not thrive without your trust, your guidance and your support. Thank you!

We want to extend a special thanks to our Executive Director, Allyx Schiavone. As we are entering into our 10th year of her inspired leadership, we are grateful for her passion for social justice and for her profound commitment to New Haven and the wellbeing of its kids and families. As we start a new chapter to extend our mission to new neighborhoods we also want to reflect on our past. Thank you, Allyx.

“We are excited to expand Friends Center for Children into the West Rock neighborhood of New Haven. We continue to be committed to serving children and families from all socio-economic backgrounds and will continue to strive for ethnic diversity that reflects the City. I am thrilled to be a part of the Friends Center scalability committee.”

THOUGHTS FROM THE BOARD CLERK



Robert J. Harrity Jr.
Board Clerk



Orlando Yarborough III
Scalability Task Force



VALUES HELP US CONNECT

We believe in the values set forth by and founded upon Quaker principles: equality, peace, community, simplicity, truth and stewardship. We believe these values to be an integral part of our daily lives. They are universal and steadfast, fortifying the human spirit and improving the human condition.

As a values-based program, Friends Center for Children strives to maintain best practices in early childhood education by nurturing the whole child and bringing together curriculum, teachers, parents and the larger community within a supportive, inspirational environment.

We welcome and encourage the uniqueness of each individual who passes through our doors; they give depth to our program and broaden our reach. We seek to have a positive impact on the crucial issues of early childhood education that is lasting and far-reaching. Through demonstrating our commitment to every child's potential, we are dedicated to affirming the Quaker principles upon which we are founded.

Using a collaborative approach, we envision a time when all children are well-equipped to succeed in a culture that fosters acceptance of our common humanity.

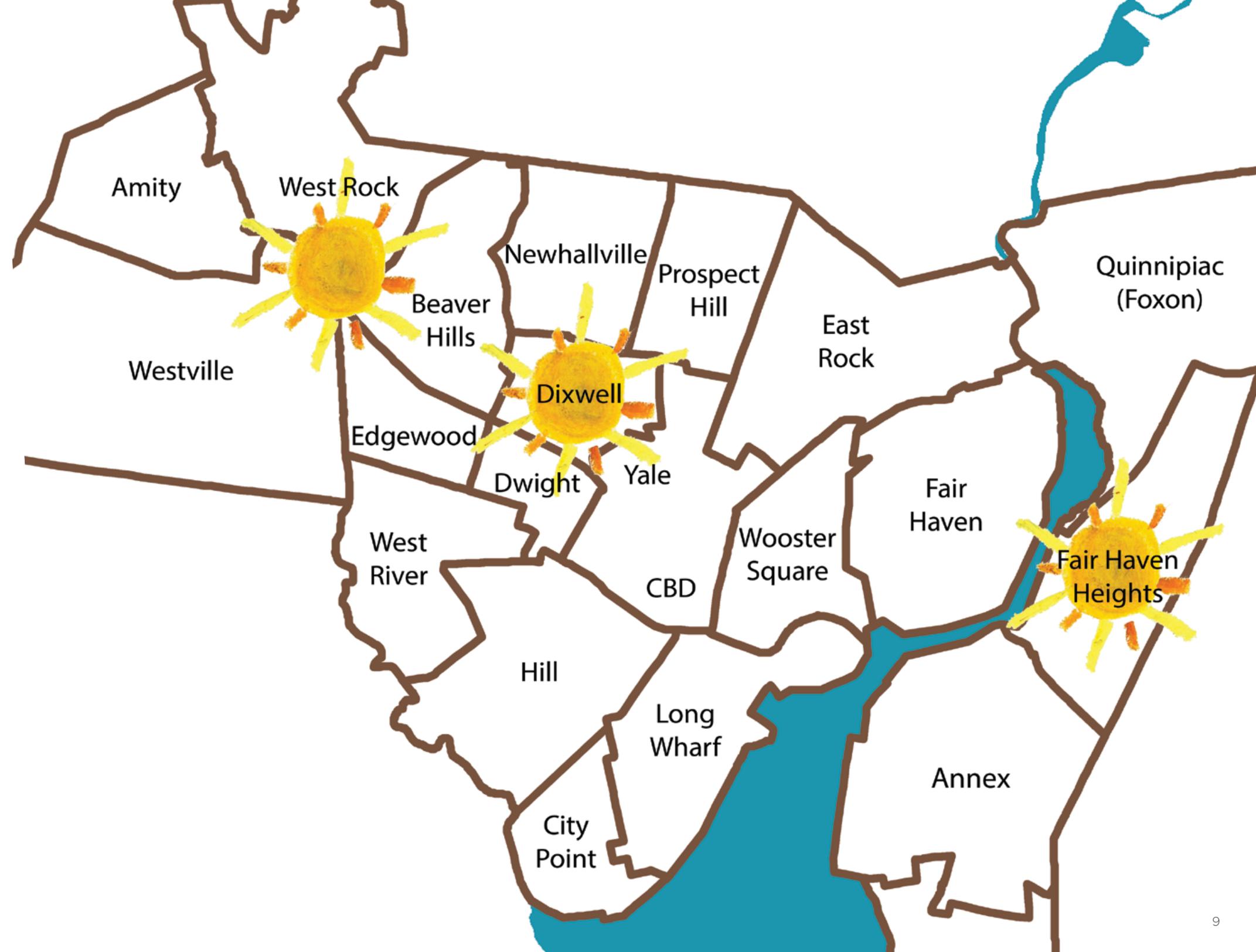
EXPANDING OUR CONNECTIONS

Spurred by New Haven's overwhelming need for more access to high-quality early childhood education, and knowing the difference that this type of care can make in the life of a child, Friends Center is expanding its program into new neighborhoods. In fact, our current and planned expansions span the map of New Haven.

On the east side, we've grown our main center to full capacity. On the west side, near the Beaver Hills neighborhood, we recently launched a satellite program that brings high-quality early childhood education to 34 children and their families. In a building shared with Elm City Montessori School, Friends Center Blake Street offers two infant/toddler classrooms, one preschool classroom, an emotional wellbeing lounge, four executive offices, and nine teachers.

In the northwest, plans progress for a new center on Dixwell Avenue, one that will nearly double Friends Center's overall reach and capacity. We also remain committed to another expansion opportunity with the Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church.

For all of our existing and upcoming expansions, we know that successful growth depends on strong and strategic connections. Fueled by generous donors and great partners — such as Elm City Montessori, Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church and ConnCorp — we look forward to bringing high-quality early childhood care and education experiences to children in the West Rock and Dixwell areas of New Haven.



REACHING ALL NEW HAVEN CHILDREN

New Haven Children's Ideal Learning District (NH ChILD) is a vision, a movement, an imperative that relies deeply on connections — one where educators, organizations, municipalities, families and community members all work together to give all 15,000 children in New Haven, ages 0 – 8, access to high-quality early learning experiences called "Ideal Learning."

As a champion of ideal learning and equity in access to it, Friends Center has helped lead the charge towards making NH ChILD a reality. Empowered by the expertise and contributions of early childhood leaders, advisors, and donors — including a million dollar gift from a Stones Throw Foundation — the work is well under way.

This spring, NH ChILD hired Dr. Wendy Waithe Simmons as its first Executive Director. Dr. Simmons is a psychologist and educator with more than 25 years of experience in service to children and families. "I believe that all children deserve to have multiple pathways toward success. I am proud to be a part of an organization that values equity, community, collaboration, and children and their families. I will work diligently to ensure that every child in New Haven has access to high quality early learning experiences. I understand that when



children have a strong start in life, they can dream big dreams. They can follow their passions and interests — no matter where they may lead. I am thrilled to have a role in making that a reality."

NH ChILD invites collaboration among all stakeholders within the New Haven community to develop shared solutions bringing high-quality early care and education to all children in New Haven.

Working with the Office of the Mayor, New Haven Public Schools, Yale School of Medicine, Bank Street College of Education, New Haven Housing Authority, United Way and many other partners, NH ChILD has set a bold agenda:

- Access to sufficient high quality infant/toddler and preschool spaces to meet family demand;
- Simplify the ECE application process to a single point of entry;
- Design a sustainable public funding source so that families pay what they can afford;
- Promote family engagement; and
- Develop continuous professional learning experiences and ECE career pathways for educators.

WHY DO WE CONNECT?

From before our first breath, we are connected; dependent on umbilical cords and blood ties. As we grow, these connections expand. “Bonds of friendship” develop. We may become “attached at the hip,” “band together,” or embark on “joint ventures.” Psychologists, sociologists, and philosophers have proclaimed the critical importance of relationships to our health, development and overall wellbeing. But when it comes to what we do here at Friends Center for Children, why do connections matter so much? Connections educate us; they empower, inspire and engage us; they help us to understand and embrace each other and the world around us. It is no coincidence that these very verbs activate our mission: educate children, empower families, inspire teachers, engage community, embrace diversity.

Connections are the common thread in our commitment to high-quality early childhood education. Throughout all aspects of our program — from our values-based curriculum and comprehensive emotional wellbeing program, to our parent workshops and community events — we work to strengthen and support the relationships that are critical to learning and life.



EDUCATE CHILDREN

Ten-month old Carter lies in the arms of Maria, the head teacher of his infant/toddler pod at Friends Center. After an energetic time of songs, drums and shakers, then snack and a bottle, Carter begins to settle his body in readiness for morning nap. He stares up at Maria, who meets his gaze. Carter smiles. Maria smiles back. Carter giggles and wrinkles his nose. His teacher mimics the expression and then opens and shuts her eyes. Carter giggles again and closes his own eyes, then opens them wide. Maria whispers “sleep tight.” Carter babbles back, “seep, seep.”

Brain experts call it “serve and return,” and indeed it functions much like a game of tennis or ping pong. A child offers a word, action, expression or cue. A caregiver engages and responds. With these back and forth interactions — whether it be eye contact, touch, singing, games — new neural connections form and build the architecture and capacity of a child’s developing brain, creating a solid brain foundation for all future development, learning and even health.

These interactions are also an important aspect in the attachment of a child and caregiver. At Friends Center we know that all future learning and exploration is deeply impacted by a child’s first relationships. We believe that children thrive, both socially and academically, when they feel safe, secure and loved.



Children featured in photo are not related to the story.

EMPOWER FAMILIES

"It was one of the happiest moments in my life," Tasha said, describing the day of her daughter's birth. But when her daughter turned 18 months, Tasha noticed a difference. Her daughter, who had previously hit every developmental milestone, seemed to be regressing in some of her skills. Tasha found help with the birth to three program, but when her daughter aged-out of the service, the family had nowhere to go.

"I was home with my daughter due to a layoff, but knew that I couldn't give her what she needed day to day to reach her highest potential." Tasha knew her daughter needed a structured learning environment, with other children and professional teachers. She worked hard to find it, but the search only added to the family stress and frustration — with false starts, disappointments accessing programs, and finding out that Head Start funding was temporarily frozen. Without financial stability, Tasha felt that the high-quality care her daughter needed was out of reach. "I felt lost and ashamed. I was letting my daughter down."

When Tasha heard that Friends Center may have openings, she was afraid to hope. "I knew of Friends Center, and the reputation it had in the community. There was no way I could afford it, and didn't want to face another disappointment." Still, she took a chance and made the call.

"That call turned out to be for my family, a quality of life altering event." Her daughter was enrolled at Friends Center, and, within a few weeks, Tasha noticed marked changes in her daughter's vocabulary, ability to organize, and behavior.

"It's difficult to articulate, without being dramatic, just how much my whole family has been uplifted by the experience we are having at Friends Center. I wish every child and family the ability to access this level of care and education regardless of their income."



Family featured in photo is not related to the story.

INSPIRE TEACHERS

“It is not how long it takes that is important, it is getting there.” Katherine Flores, an infant/toddler head teacher at Friends Center, has demonstrated this motto in her life and career. Born in Honduras, at age 11, Katherine came to the U.S. with her mother, to join her father who had immigrated years earlier to give his family a better life.

Katherine quickly adapted to life in New Haven, excelled in her studies, and built friendships and connections. But everything changed when she began searching for colleges. “That’s when I found out I was illegal and it dawned on me that college was not going to be an option. It made me feel different, as if I had done something wrong, even though I had no voice in the choices made for me when I was younger.”

Despite her frustration and fears, Katherine was determined to pursue her education. Assisted by her parents and scholarships, she enrolled in community college and began working toward a degree in Early Childhood. In 2012, the introduction of DACA brought new hope. “I was one of the first ones to get my permit. I finally felt normal again. I had peace and I could see a future where everything was going to work out.”

In 2015, Katherine completed her Bachelor’s degree and joined the Friends Center team. More recently, political shifts have brought Katherine new uncertainty with her DACA permit and worries of being displaced from her home. At Friends Center, we’re standing with Katherine, as we do all our staff, children and families. Our commitment to supporting the wellbeing of every member of our community keeps us connected and strong.



ENGAGE COMMUNITY

Tara had just dropped off her teenage daughter at work, and was heading to Friends Center for her own job as an infant/toddler teacher. Suddenly she heard a bang and flapping in her wheel. A flat tire! Tara knew she couldn't be delayed today. While normally her teaching team could cover the class, a new two-year-old was coming this morning and she had promised to greet the anxious parents at 8 am sharp. Worry crept in and the pressure of the past few weeks — managing hospital visits and care for her mother, recently diagnosed with end-stage cancer— came crashing upon her. Then she remembered. Friends Center's new mentorship program had connected her with Sylvia, a retiree who lived not far from the Center on East Grand Avenue. Sylvia had offered to help Tara with time management and other tasks during this difficult season. Tara immediately gave her a call and, within ten minutes, was in her classroom, with plenty of time to greet her new student, and even a few extra minutes to grab a cup of coffee from the staff room.

For all of us, connections that bring support, encouragement and perspective help us overcome adversity and reach our potential. To help our staff access such empowering relationships, Friends Center recently launched a mentorship initiative, as part of our broader Staff Support Program, to assist when toxic stress weighs too hard on an already stalwart and resilient member of our teaching team.

Mentors are members of the broader New Haven community who offer their time, experience or guidance to assist when a staff member is overburdened or under-resourced. A Friends Center mentor might serve as a financial advisor, occasional child care respite provider, or time management supporter. Sometimes, even just the support of a compassionate listening ear can make all the difference. The mentorship program is a valuable part of Friends Center's network of connections and an important thread in the fabric of the Friends Center community.



Family featured in photo is not related to the story.

EMBRACE DIVERSITY

Last spring, Friends Center received an important email. Not one announcing a donation or celebrating a child's milestone — both of which are greatly appreciated — but rather one of concern related to a book. The book, called "purple," published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is part of a series on color. Each page displayed a painting with the featured color and a sentence describing the scene.

In reading it to her daughter, one of our parents noticed that, of the six pages containing human forms, all were caucasian except one. She also noticed a disparity in the descriptions of the paintings. She reached out to Friends Center with her concerns.

"I was a little shocked reading it, and then I felt a wave of pain and empathy for what our children are up against, especially our children of color. I imagine the author or publisher meant no ill, but a child reading the book sees that all the people are white except for the workers, who are black or brown. And that when white people are seen engaging in a productive activity (for example, a woman folding laundry), they are described as people ("man" or "woman" or "girls"), however when black or brown people do so, they are labeled 'workers.'"

For Friends Center, the mother's concern prompted a deeper examination of books donated to our center, and became a valuable tool for teacher training on recognizing the subtle but sometimes pernicious messages that children can absorb.

Equally important to this family and to Friends Center is maintaining open discussion space and encouraging the dialogue it takes for a diverse community to truly flourish. Honest conversations can reveal and challenge our biases and mindsets, ultimately allowing us to find new depths of understanding and connection.



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ACCREDITATION

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) — the world’s largest organization of early childhood professionals — promotes high-quality early learning for all young children, birth through age 8. Their accreditation is the benchmark for quality in early learning programs. NAEYC-accredited programs “are exceptionally well equipped and meticulously measured for indicators of quality in the classroom and beyond.”

To earn accreditation, programs must meet the criteria in ten standards created based on research on the development of young children, with input from experts and educators from around the country.

In our latest evaluation, Friends Center for Children achieved 100% + in all ten strands, including the RELATIONSHIP strand, which focuses on the connections within the early childhood community. According to NAEYC, the relationship strand indicates a program where:

- Children and adults feel welcome when they visit.
- Teachers help new children adjust to the environment and make friends with other children
- Teaching staff engage in warm, friendly conversations with the children and encourage and recognize children’s work and accomplishments.
- Children are encouraged to play and work together.
- Teachers help children resolve conflicts by identifying feelings, describing problems, and trying alternative solutions.



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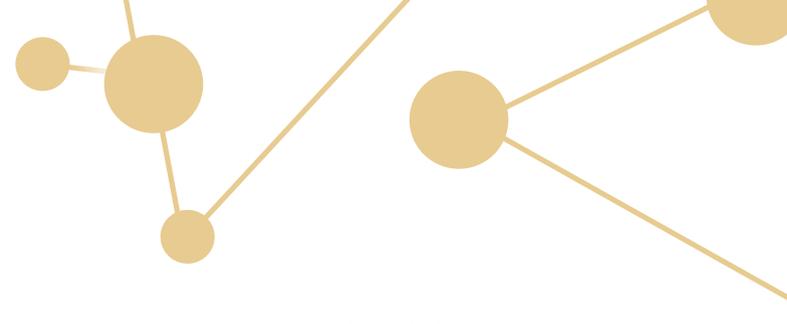
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- Mela & Scott Waters ●
- Joan Weigle ●
- Betty & James Whitney ●
- Jessica & Paul Wolfer ●
- Kristen & Scot Wrocklage ●
- Joshua Wyatt ●
- Jessica Yambao ●
- Rashele & Orlando Yarborough III ●
- Jing Yeh ●
- Jennifer & Mark Youngblood ●
- Peggy & Ronnie Youngblood ●
- Joan & Carl Youngman ●
- Jazmin Zandes ●
- Patricia Doukas & John Zandy ●
- Anonymous (13)
- Alfresco Landscape & Design LLC ●
- Aniello Pizza and Italian Restaurant ●

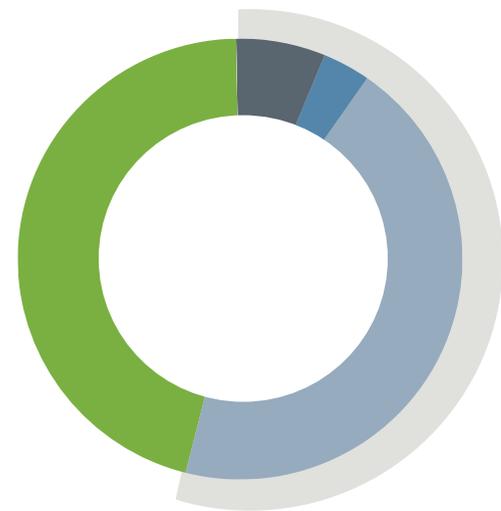
- Blue State Coffee ●
- Chabaso ●
- Cheney and Company ●
- CitySeed / Sanctuary Kitchen ●
- Connecticut Children's Museum ●
- David Thompson Architects ●
- Elite Property Services, Inc. ●
- Est Est Est Pizza & Restaurant ●
- Evan's Toy Shoppe ●
- Gaylord Hospital Inc. ●
- GHP ●
- Grand Vin ●
- Ian Christmann Photography ●
- Jitter Bus ●
- Kidcity Children's Museum ●
- Koffee ●
- LEAP ●
- National Roofing Co., Inc ●
- Neighborhood Music School ●
- Nero Inc. ●
- Network for Good ●
- New Haven Museum ●
- NH Child ●
- Nica's Market ●
- Nicholson Associates Insurance ●
- Parrett, Porto, Parese, & Colwell, P.C. ●
- Patriquin Architects ●
- Peabody Museum ●
- Rascal's Gym ●
- Salesforce.org ●
- Superior Autobody, Inc ●
- T.M. Byxbee Company, P.C. ●
- The Devil's Gear Bikeshop ●
- TM Technology Systems ●
- Trader Joe's ●
- TYCO ●
- Webster Bank ●
- Whitneyville Food Center ●
- Wilson Maturo Motors ●
- Wolfski's ●



Friends Center invites supporters to make a provision in their wills, trusts or retirement plans to ensure the wellbeing of Friends Center for Children in perpetuity. We encourage you to look ahead to what your generous philanthropy can/will do to provide the highest quality early childhood education for New Haven's most vulnerable and promising young citizens.

FY 2019 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Contributions



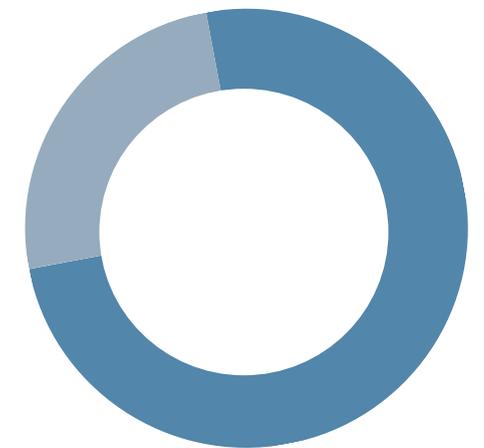
● Financial Aid	\$ 26,675
● Mark R. Kravitz Fund	\$ 14,275
● Unrestricted	\$ 181,850
● Total Annual Fund	\$ 222,800
● Expansion Campaign	\$ 188,108
Total	\$ 410,908

Operating Revenue



● Care4kids	\$ 142,163
● New Haven Day Care	\$ 248,554
● School Readiness	\$ 414,218
● Total Government Grants	\$ 804,935
● Contributions	\$ 222,800
● Tuition	\$ 721,528
● Grants	\$ 138,048
Total	\$ 1,887,311

Operating Expenses



● Salaries and Benefits	\$ 1,414,548
● Other Operating Expenses	\$ 473,144
Total	\$ 1,887,692

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ivory Blount
RN, Clinical Program Manager
Yale New Haven Hospital

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Past principal of DickinsonGroup

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SeeClickFix

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Wiggin and Dana LLP

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Linda Miller*
Greg Moschetti*

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Program (AVP) and Prisoner Visitation Services (PVS)

Allyx Schiavone
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Drew Smith
Director, Friends Council on Education

Michael F. Wajda
Member, Goshen Friends Meeting; Former Development Director, Friends
General Conference



*New Haven Friends Meeting



**“WHATEVER AFFECTS
ONE DIRECTLY,
AFFECTS ALL
INDIRECTLY.”**

- Martin Luther King Jr.



FRIENDS CENTER FOR CHILDREN
227 East Grand Avenue New Haven, CT 06513
www.FriendsCenterforChildren.org
203.468.1966

