



## My thoughts on stepping down as executive director...

### *I believe in leading with values.*

All interactions between Children's Institute and the community need to be upfront, using analysis based on research and evidence, rather than beliefs. I am committed to the content and the process involved in making informed decisions, or what I call the "thinker-doer" method. My goal has always been to exhibit Children's Institute's core values of respect and honesty when working in the community. I have been fortunate to have worked on a wide variety of community and state-wide initiatives and see the immense value of collaboration as a core component to a successful project.

### *Spending more time with my wife, Linda, and family makes this the right time for my decision.*

I also took into account that most of the work done at Children's Institute involves multiple years to bring ideas to fruition. New programs need a champion to see them from start to finish which makes this the right time to step aside. However, I don't plan on slowing down. I will continue to work on changing the systems in place that guide children's social and emotional learning and overall development in my upcoming role as a senior research scientist.

### *Thank you for continuing to be a part of our journey at Children's Institute.*

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

It is the right time for me. After 36 years at Children's Institute and leading this great organization since 1991, it is now time for me to step aside and let someone with a new vision, energy, and time to bring important projects to life, take the helm. This is not my retirement announcement as my plans are to work on social and emotional and whole child health as a senior research scientist at Children's Institute. It's the end of one chapter and the beginning of the next and I'm looking forward to discovering what lies ahead.

*As I look back on my career, some of my favorite memories involve the people I've had the pleasure of working with, both within Children's Institute and across the community.*

There is a sense of purpose and rigor at Children's Institute that was started by Emory Cowen with the commitment to improve the lives of children. I have continued to share his vision and have been blessed to work with so many others that imbue this passion. We rarely work alone but rather with partners in education, health, and human systems which makes learning new things and causing things to happen a daily adventure.

# Children's Institute introduces TRACC



## Training, Resources & Coaching C E N T E R

Children's Institute is excited to present TRACC (Training, Resources & Coaching Center), a collaboration with 13 community organizations to provide high quality training, coaching, resources, and support to child-serving organizations across the greater Rochester region focused on whole child health. With generous initial funding from the Greater Rochester Health Foundation, TRACC's mission is to promote and advance whole child health by building the capacity of adults in child-serving systems through training and coaching.

But, what is whole child health? The whole child health model focuses on all areas of health including, but not limited to, physical, cognitive, and social-emotional by fostering healthy relationships,

creating safe and secure environments and psychological safety, building healthy habits, and teaching skills and competencies. Research has shown that the most effective way to encourage healthy, on-track development for children is by supporting all facets of a child's development across settings: at home, in school, after-school, and across developmental domains: cognitive, physical, and social-emotional.

Launched in early 2018, TRACC has begun its work by strategic planning, developing partnerships, and focusing specifically on supporting eight RCSD schools as they develop comprehensive approaches to addressing whole child health in their buildings. As TRACC grows, it will provide services to early care and education centers as well as Out-of-School Time (OST) providers and eventually will provide training, coaching, and resources to all child-serving agencies in the greater Rochester region.

To kick off our work, TRACC held a summer 2018 training institute titled, "The heart of whole child health—from the inside out." The institute was attended by 82 staff, parents, and administrators from RCSD as well as community-based organizations.

TRACC's vision is that by 2028 all children aged 0-8 in the greater Rochester area will be on track to achieve and maintain their full developmental potential. The Center's long-term goal is to work with many organizations across sectors in order to achieve systematic change.

Children's Institute serves as the managing partner for TRACC. Community partners include: Greater Rochester After School Alliance, Coordinated Care Services, Inc., Ibero-American Action League, Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES, Mt. Hope Family Center, RIT Center for Quality and Applied Statistics, Society for the Protection and Care of Children, St. John Fisher College-Ralph C. Wilson School of Education, St. John Fisher College-Wegmans School of Nursing, The Florence M. Muller Foundation, URMC-Department of Pediatrics, and URMC-Department of Psychiatry."

Watch for more news on training courses and other offerings from TRACC.



## Welcome aboard to staff members

**Cate Brechko** joined Children's Institute as an administrative coordinator for TRACC (Training, Resources & Coaching Center). She brings many years of administrative support experience from the healthcare field including sites such as Rochester Regional Inpatient Mental Health Services at St. Mary's Campus, URCM Family Maternity Center at Highland Hospital, and most recently, Rochester Regional Vascular Surgery. Her family includes her husband, three daughters, and a cat named Daisy. Cate enjoys interior decorating, arts and crafts, sewing, and music.

**Dawn Breitung** joined Children's Institute as a senior project coordinator for TRACC (Training, Resources & Coaching Center). She has worked in early childhood, higher education, and in the human service sectors, most recently having worked at ABC Head Start. Her work has always been driven by a desire to better the lives of children and families. Her interests include gardening and tending to her 115-year-old home and enjoying the arts and music culture around Rochester.

**Lynn M. Lubecki**, Ed.D., joined Children's Institute as a research associate/faculty member supporting TRACC and SEL through the lens of early childhood education. Lynn will be supporting the Pyramid Model training and implementation efforts with her colleagues at Children's Institute with over 25 years of experience in early childhood education. Most recently, Lynn served as executive

director of Rochester Childfirst Network, a non-profit organization serving young children in the Greater Rochester Community. Lynn has two grown children, John and Angela, and hosts Lana, an 18-year old exchange student from Beijing.

**Kristin Lynch**, MS, a certified Speech Language Pathologist, enjoys her work as a master observer for RECAP and QUALITYstarsNY, navigator and screener for GROW and as a trainer for RECAP and the SEL Center at Children's Institute. Her prior experience spans from working in integrated and special needs early childhood classrooms to supervising college students as an adjunct professor at SUNY Geneseo. Kristin and her husband, John, recently celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary and are avid supporters of their 11 children and their many and varied activities including Irish dance, volleyball, and basketball.

**Christine Merle**, MPA, joined Children's Institute as a trainer and project coordinator for the SEL Center and RECAP. She comes to us with experience as a classroom teacher, along with years of conducting professional development training. Christine and her husband can usually be found on a field, court, or track, cheering on their two teenage children.

**Caitlin Orbanek** joined Children's Institute as a project coordinator and trainer for the Social and Emotional Learning Center. She has worked with young people and adolescents for almost ten years in many different capacities. Caitlin also contributes to Children's Institute's marketing and content development work. She enjoys running, swimming, sewing, and learning new things.

**David Peelle**, MBA, joined Children's Institute as an information analyst. David's prior career experience includes several years at the Rochester City School District, where he analyzed student data and assembled the annual budget document. He has lived in Rochester since the previous millennium with his wife Baiba. Their family includes a son, daughter-in-law, and grand-daughter in St. Louis.

**Ariana Zimmer** joined Children's Institute as a research assistant II. She is currently working towards getting her Psy.D. in Clinical/School Psychology and is interested in working with children and adolescents. Ariana is excited to be getting married in July, 2019.

### Recent grant funding

*Children's Institute gratefully acknowledges the following organizations:*

#### Brighter Days Foundation

- \$25,000 for Behavioral Supports for Children

#### ESL Foundation

- \$165,000 (over three years) for the Rochester Area Parent Program (RAPP)
- \$150,000 (for two years) for RECAP

#### Greater Rochester Health Foundation

- \$2,600,000 (for three and a half years) for TRACC

#### Rochester Area Community Foundation

- \$30,000 for RECAP
- \$40,000 for Behavioral Supports for Children
- \$10,000 for GROW-Rochester
- \$55,000 for GRASA
- \$30,000 for DESSA assessment tool

#### Rochester's Child (RACF)

- \$25,000 for RECAP

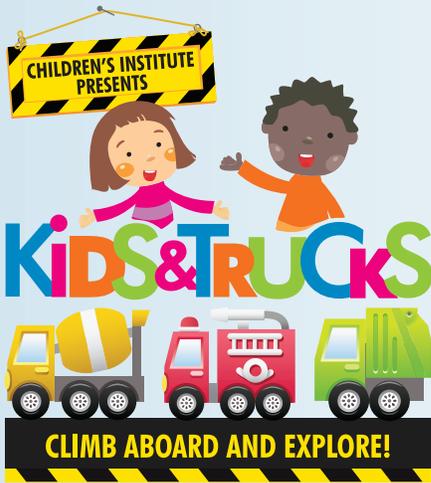
## Spotlight Series: Effective school safety, crisis prevention, and intervention

Children's Institute presented a seminar with experts on balancing physical safety and psychological security as it relates to school safety as well as a multi-tiered systems of support approach to providing interventions following a crisis exposure. Highlights of the PREPaRE workshops, a research-based, evidenced informed school safety and crisis curriculum developed by school professionals for school professionals, were included.

**Featured speaker: Todd A. Savage**, Ph.D., NCSP, professor of school psychology, Department of Counseling and School Psychology, College of Education & Professional Studies, University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

**Panelist: Eva J. Thomas**, M.S.Ed., principal, School #57 Early Childhood School, Rochester, NY.





## Kids & Trucks 2018

This year's event was held on September 29 & 30 at Frontier Field. Over 3,000 people attended and had a fun day as they explored 40+ vehicles. Over \$22,000 was raised which will support Children's Institute programs for children. A big thank you our sponsors, ticket fund donors, raffle prize contributors, volunteers, and supporters who made the event successful. Watch for news on our 2019 Kids & Trucks, coming next September!



250 family passes given to City of Rochester Rec Centers, GROW-Rochester families, Willow Center, Mary's Place, URM Department of Pediatrics, RMAPI Community Advisory, RCSD Schools #5 & #17, and Ibero-American Action League.



New vehicles this year: Huge tractor, tandem semi, and tow truck.



Special "guests": Rochester Lego User Group, Spike, Giant Fireman, Doodlebugs Character, and Happy Harold.

# A big THANK YOU to our 2018 event sponsors

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 Wendy at Work

## SPECIAL GUESTS

Doodlebugs! Childcare Centers  
 Rochester Lego User Group  
 Several truck characters  
 Spike from the Red Wings

# SEL Center: Recap of the last two years and looking forward



In August 2016, Children's Institute launched a new division, the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Center that builds upon the organization's 60-year history of research on and practical support for the social and emotional well-being of children. Now concluding its second year of operation, the SEL Center addresses a growing interest in and need for research and capacity building related to SEL as a core component of children's development and education. The center aims to facilitate a transformation in settings where children and youth grow, learn, and play, so that all adults intentionally foster the social and emotional skills young people need to be successful.

## What we have accomplished in our first two years

- Developed a comprehensive district-wide SEL implementation/consultation model that has now been implemented in three districts in the Rochester region and will take place in 8 Rochester City School District elementary schools during the 2018-19 school year. The model includes a comprehensive needs assessment, development of a 3 to 5 year implementation plan based on needs assessment data, consultation for the superintendent and building-level administrators, and training for staff.
- Created a 6-part virtual SEL training series to build internal capacity in schools to deliver training on SEL practices to staff. Each module focuses on a different SEL competency and includes training videos and a facilitator's guide with detailed instructions on how to lead the training, all handouts and materials, and training tips and tricks. The modules are designed to be paired with on-site training and consultation from SEL Center staff as part of a capacity-building approach.
- Developed an SEL practices observational assessment tool and associated coaching model to help teachers understand how to incorporate social and emotional teaching practices into their

everyday lessons and interactions with students. The tool was developed using lessons learned from 60 years of helping teachers implement social and emotional learning practices and from our extensive experience creating coaching models based on multiple observational assessments including the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), Environmental Rating Scales (ERS), and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). The instrument is currently drafted and will be tested in 2-3 districts in early 2019.

- Worked with the Greater Rochester After-School Alliance (GRASA) and ROC the Future to develop a community-wide framework for SEL in Out-of-School Time (OST) programs. Through a community-wide process we identified priorities, developed a definition of SEL for our OST community, and created a list of potential action steps for providers to take. The framework has been launched by GRASA as part of their ongoing work to build an OST network in Rochester.
- Launched a Professional Learning Community (PLC) for school leaders focused on SEL. The PLC is meeting throughout the 2018-19 school year and includes 20 individuals from six local school districts and charter schools.
- Trained nearly 1,000 teachers, mental health professionals, OST workers, principals, superintendents, parent advocates, and other child-serving professionals on social and emotional learning practices, programs, resources, and supports.

## Where we are going next

In the next two years, the SEL Center plans to continue to develop its work with OST providers, schools and districts, and early childhood professionals. Some specific projects we hope to take on include:

- Test the reliability and validity of the SEL Practices Observational Assessment Tool and begin to use the tool widely with school districts across the region as part of ongoing coaching services.

- Expand our SEL practices work to coaches and other sports program leaders by offering training on evidence-based positive youth development approaches including how to foster the development of cognitive, social-emotional, and personal skills necessary for young athletes to flourish.

- Develop and test the concept of SEL micro-learning modules for OST staff and school day teachers. We hope to create a series of 15-minute video training modules that introduce teachers and OST staff to individual SEL practices for their classrooms or programs. This micro-learning could be paired with onsite training or coaching for improved effectiveness.

- Expand our SEL leader series into a regional SEL learning collaborative for district teams. The SEL Center has worked closely with the New York State Education Department (NYSED) as part of the School Climate Task Force to develop the recently released SEL benchmarks describing what students should know and be able to do in terms of social and emotional skills across different age levels. In order to support districts as they begin to implement SEL, the SEL Center hopes to implement a regional learning collaborative for superintendents and their leadership teams focused on systemic, district-wide SEL implementation.

**New York**  
Pyramid Model  
**State**



*Promoting Social & Emotional Competence in New York's Young Children*

**SEL Center at Children's Institute presents**

**Winter/Spring Pyramid Model  
Professional Development Series  
Starting in January, 2019**

**For details and registration, visit  
[www.childrensstitute.net/sel-center/  
training/nys\\_pyramid\\_model](http://www.childrensstitute.net/sel-center/training/nys_pyramid_model)**

# Children's Institute welcomes board members



**Daniel H. Draper** joined the board of directors at Children's Institute. Dan received a BS in Mechanical Engineering from Michigan Technological University and then moved to Rochester to join Eastman Kodak. Over the next 28 years he held a number of domestic and international technical, marketing, and general management positions. Since retiring from Kodak he has been a consultant serving a number of firms and not-for-profits both locally and around the globe. For the past nine years he has dedicated much of his time to Children's Institute where he's provided guidance to the staff and been influential in the formation of COMET Informatics, LLC as well as having served as president of COMET's board and currently as treasurer. Married for 48 years, Dan and his wife Mary enjoy spending time with their children and grandchildren who live in Maine and Montana.



**Melissa M. Ghera**, Ph.D., joined the board of directors at Children's Institute. Melissa earned her Ph.D. in Human Development from the University of Maryland. She is associate professor and chair of the Department of Psychology at St. John Fisher College, where she has been on faculty since 2007. She has written journal articles and given national presentations on her original research focus of child temperament in the investigation of child socio-emotional development. Upon entering higher education administration, Melissa's focus shifted to student success - specifically, what can we learn from students who do not persist through college about how we can better serve student's needs. Her emergent area of interest is infusing mindfulness and contemplative practices in classroom and educational settings to help students succeed in college.



**Mira Greenland** joined the board of directors at Children's Institute. Mira received her BS degree from the University of Connecticut and has been working in the talent acquisition space for fifteen years. While earning a decade's worth of recruiting experience at Green Hills Software in Santa Barbara, CA, Greenland operated at various levels of HR management including serving as director of technical recruiting and director of corporate well being and solving corporate-wide HR problems in collaboration with the CEO for the leading software company. As senior vice president of strategic accounts at CareerArc, Greenland shares her passion for providing companies and HR professionals the proper tools to compete in modern recruitment.

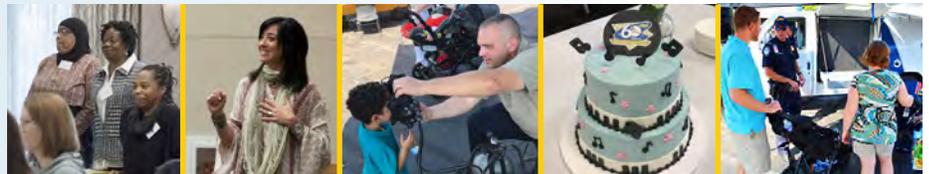


**Ruperto Montero**, MBA, CPA, has joined the board of directors at Children's Institute. Ruperto received a BS in Business Administration and Accounting at the Interamerican University in San Juan, PR, followed by an MBA in Health Science Management at the University of Rochester Simon Business School. He is currently the chief financial officer at Ibero, a social services agency established in 1968 that has divisions focused on children, youth, family, developmental disabilities, and emergency services. Prior to this, Ruperto

worked as a senior accountant at the University of Rochester and Rochester Regional Health System. He has previously been a board member with the Puerto Rican Youth Development and Resource Center in Rochester.



**Todd A. Savage**, Ph.D., NCSP, joined the board of directors at Children's Institute. Todd earned his bachelor degree in psychology from the University of Minnesota and went on to earn master, educational specialist, and doctorate degrees in school psychology from the University of Kentucky, after having completed a pre-doctoral internship in the Omaha (NE) Public Schools. He is a Professor of School Psychology, Department of Counseling and School Psychology, College of Education & Professional Studies, at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls (UWRF). Todd has held several leadership positions in the National Association for School Psychologists (NASP), a 25,000-member strong professional organization, eventually serving as its 47th president during 2015-2016. Throughout his career, Todd has engaged in scholarly and service activities in the areas of culturally-responsive practice; school safety and crisis prevention, preparedness, and intervention; and sexual orientation and gender diversity matters in education. Outside of his career, Todd's greatest source of pride is his family, including his wonderful, teenage son.



## 2017-2018 annual report

Children's Institute has released an 2017-2018 annual report. Visit our website to view highlights from the year, our list of donors, and the financial report.

[www.childrensinstitute.net/donate/annual-reports](http://www.childrensinstitute.net/donate/annual-reports)

## Staff news



Congratulations to **Marjorie J. Allan**, MPH, on her promotion to director of the Center for Continuous Improvement / co-director of TRACC. Marjorie is also completing her Green Belt training in Lean Six Sigma at RIT's Center for Quality and Applied Statistics. As part of her training she will be working with the Children's Institute leadership team and staff to identify ways to maximize the efficiency of our grant application processes. She intends to incorporate Lean Six Sigma tools and methods in the Center for Continuous Improvement and throughout Children's Institute.

Congratulations to **Kathleen M. Embt** on her promotion to information analyst I and COMET Support.

**Jonathan Richwalder**, MBA, Children Institute's sole technology support for the past 8+ years, has accepted a position as an analyst/programmer lead at the

University of Rochester's Medical Center Information Systems Division. Children's Institute is grateful for his service and wishes him all the best in his new position.



Primary Project co-director **Lynn Smith**, LMSW, authored an article titled, "Building Competency in School Psychology Trainees Through the Use of Primary Project" in *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*. The article highlights a qualitative study and examines how students and faculty supervisors perceived their experiences with Primary Project and how their experiences may or may not have aligned with the National Association of School Psychologists practice domains. Implications for practice and future research across all levels of school psychology training are offered. [www.childrensstitute.net/sites/default/files/documents/training-education-professional-psychology\\_article.pdf](http://www.childrensstitute.net/sites/default/files/documents/training-education-professional-psychology_article.pdf)



SEL Center director **Elizabeth Devaney** co-edited a recently released volume, *Social and Emotional Learning in Out-of-School Time: Foundations and Futures*. The book is part of the Information Age Publishing series Issues in Out-of-School Time (OST) and is designed to offer a clear framing of SEL in relation to other related OST concepts and initiatives. This volume: Defines and explains SEL in a variety of out of school contexts; frames social and emotional learning through the lens of high quality youth development practice; shares information about current trends and new developments; and offers recommendations for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers related to SEL in OST settings. Read the book front matter: Table of contents; Foreword by Roger Weissberg and Joe Mahoney; Chapter 1 by Elizabeth Devaney and Deborah Moroney. [www.childrensstitute.net/sites/default/files/documents/SEL-in-OST\\_front-matter.pdf](http://www.childrensstitute.net/sites/default/files/documents/SEL-in-OST_front-matter.pdf)

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### WINTER 2018

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