



Community Update & Coterie Awards



Children's Institute welcomes Rochester City School District attendees

L to R: Patty Kaiser, Administrative Assistant, RCSD; Deborah Johnson, Director of National Services; Donna DePeters, Board President; Audrey Cummings, Director of Social Work, Primary Project, and the Homeless Program, RCSD; Dirk Hightower, Executive Director; Lynn Smith, Social Worker.

Last October, Children's Institute hosted our biennial Community Update and Coterie Awards. The Coterie is a special group of individuals whose contributions to Children's Institute is ongoing and significant, whether it be through intellectual property, financial property, volunteerism, or a combination of the above.

As part of the Community Update, Donna DePeters, President of the Board of Directors, opened the discussion and welcomed attendees. Executive Director Dirk Hightower followed and spoke on the status of key programs at Children's Institute, as well as the organization's next steps. Lauri Brugger (pictured above), Director of Community Partnerships, gave the main presentation on the social and emotional health of New York State's youngest children.

COTERIE MEMBERS

- 2001 Mary L. Consler
Eleanor Eksten
Thomas R. Frey
Kenneth F. Harris
Kathleen E. Leary
James Starkweather
- 2003 William G. Haffey
Roger J. Robach
- 2005 Ann Farie
Richard Huxley
Barbara Purvis
- 2007 Primary Project Child Associates
1957-2007
- 2009 Andrew Doniger, MD
Donna Fielding
Robert Silver
- 2011 The Community Foundation
Eleonore Hanson Herman
- 2013 David Broadbent
Audrey Cummings
Sharon DeVita

2013 Coterie Inductees Include:



David Broadbent, a longtime member of the board of directors (1993-2012) and Board President from 2008-2010.

Sharon DeVita, a 30+ year employee of Children's Institute who served a variety of roles in her tenure and has an unparalleled commitment to children's issues.



Audrey Cummings, Director of Social Work, Primary Project, and the Homeless Program in the Rochester City School District. She became familiar with Children's Institute's Primary Project in 1996 as a school social worker at Adlai E. Stevenson School #29 and continues to work with us today.

A Note from the Director

“Why is it so hard to make changes?”

It can be easy to recommend changes to other people or organizations, but it is much more difficult to make changes when they involve oneself. On the other hand, an opposing, but still popular thought is that “change is inevitable and you have to evolve to stay relevant.” In a world of change, you cannot stand still and expect that you will continue to be as effective as you have always been.

As we look for new ways to improve our community, Children’s Institute is part of the culture of change that is happening right now in Rochester. This newsletter features interviews with three of our partners – the Rochester Area Community Foundation, the Primary Project program at Geneseo, NY Elementary School, and the United Way of Greater Rochester. These organizations highlight the benefits of using the skills within each agency to work together for the success of children in our community. It is truly a team effort amongst people who are looking for the best options with proven outcomes to address issues affecting children.

Children’s Institute is a part of the changing discussions in Albany. With the Governor’s new focus on early education and universal pre-kindergarten, I have met extensively with lawmakers to position Children’s Institute as the choice for a NYS Center for Social and Emotional Development and Learning. This center would serve NYS schools and community-based organizations that work with children and youth. It would provide professional development opportunities for teachers and other professionals across the state, translate current research into viable programs, and conduct high-quality evaluations using a state-of-the-art tracking system to determine what programs work best for children. I have found that lawmakers’ knowledge on the importance of children’s social and emotional health on academic performance continues to grow as research shows how important this is to a child’s success in life.

Children’s Institute is also looking internally to see what changes may be in order for us to grow and take advantage of the opportunities that lie ahead. We have begun



work on our new strategic plan which will guide our efforts over the coming years. New staff and board members have come aboard and provide us with a fresh perspective and energy, our website is being updated to offer more information and options for customers and donors, and Children’s Institute’s latest annual report received many accolades throughout the community as we continue to increase awareness of our work.

I am grateful for the support of all our partners and donors. You help foster the changes that make a difference in children’s lives. Thank you.

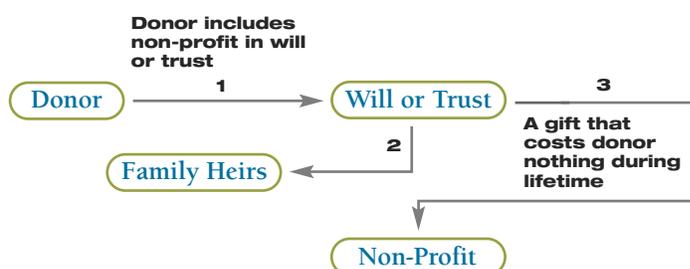
–A. DIRK HIGHTOWER, PH.D.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Benefits of Planned Giving

A planned gift is one of the simplest ways to make a sizable donation to Children’s Institute without having a current impact on your finances. The benefits of funding a planned gift can make charitable giving very attractive to both the donor and charity by maximizing the gift and helping to minimize its impact on the donor’s estate.

One of the most popular ways to make a charitable gift through your will is with a bequest of a specific dollar amount or a percentage of your estate. We invite you to consider naming Children’s Institute as a recipient in your will, after providing for your loved ones. Such a gift may allow you to make a larger gift than might otherwise be possible while creating a lasting legacy, which will benefit the organization in the future.

We encourage you to think about how you might provide support to Children’s Institute through such a gift and we welcome the opportunity to work with you. For more information on donating to Children’s Institute through planned giving or other gifts, please contact Cindy Harper at (585) 295-1000, ext. 237 or charper@childrensinstitute.net.



Did You Know?

During the 2012-2013 Fiscal Year:

- Children’s Institute programs and assessments reached approximately 14,353 children in New York State.
- RECAP, our community-wide pre-k assessment program, evaluated 59 sites and 2,210 pre-k students.
- Primary Project, our longest-running program, is implemented in 132 schools in 56 districts in New York State alone.

Partnerships & Connections

Over the past 40+ years, Children's Institute has worked with many partners in our community. We view our collaborative work as a key aspect in addressing issues affecting children. Program development and evaluations at Children's Institute often begin with a diverse group coming together to highlight an issue and work to identify possible solutions. This painstaking work often requires an extended time commitment upfront and a willingness to look at issues from many different perspectives, as the issues affecting today's children are complex and the needs are great. There is a lot of give and take in any partnership, and Children's Institute is fortunate to work with

many community agencies whose goals, like our own, are to improve the lives of children.

Below are interviews with three of our partners: the Rochester Area Community Foundation, the Primary Project program at Geneseo, NY Elementary School, and the United Way of Greater Rochester. These interviews highlight the collaborative work that is being done here in the Greater Rochester, NY community and showcase the work of which we are proud to be a part.

Rochester Area Community Foundation

Jennifer Leonard, President and CEO and Mairéad Hartmann, Program Officer

For more than twenty-five years, the Rochester Area Community Foundation (RACF) has worked with various community organizations to improve the quality of early childhood educational programs and to increase the access that Rochester families have to these programs. RACF and Children's Institute have been partners for many years and have worked alongside other community groups to increase awareness of the issues, determine priorities, and develop strategies for addressing those needs. RACF works with non-profit organizations that use public policy research, evaluation tools, public awareness campaigns, and training with the goal of improving the lives of Rochester's children.

Jennifer Leonard, President and CEO of RACF, shared that when looking for those who will help the foundation achieve the goals outlined in its Early Childhood initiative, RACF's goal is to find a partner who is interested in "giving our region's children the best start possible." RACF looks for organizations like Children's Institute that know how to advocate for change using the research and data collected from

current programs. The foundation uses this data to make a strong case for what types of programs work for young children. Leonard mentioned that "the staff and leaders at Children's Institute are completely trustworthy and have enormous integrity. They do what they say they are going to do. I have confidence that they have the best interest of children in all their work."

Mairéad Hartmann, Program Officer at RACF, commented that many community groups have come together to work towards improving the quality of early childhood education programs. This effort was driven by the large scope of issues and the complexity of making changes that will improve outcomes in a child's life. She said everyone – including researchers at Children's Institute as well as members representing the city, county, and other community organizations – was willing to come together to ask questions and share their perspectives. They looked to the data to determine priorities and confirm what is most effective when considering what will

improve a child's chances for success in school and beyond.

Hartmann also talked about the need to invest in programs with flexible partners that can demonstrate they are pursuing agreed-upon standards of program quality. She said that assessments like those provided by Children's Institute's RECAP program, a community-wide assessment for pre-k classrooms, are critical components for advancing program quality. She also spoke about how, in the future, funding decisions will be even more "data

driven," because this provides real intelligence insights into community-based programs and shows how they can be replicated throughout the region.

Because all the data needs to be easily communicated to a variety of constituencies, Hartmann noted her appreciation for the staff at Children's Institute because they are able to explain statistics in everyday terms. Jennifer Leonard agreed: "We feel so fortunate

that Children's Institute is a national-class organization that also directly works serving Rochester."

"The staff and leaders at Children's Institute are completely trustworthy and have enormous integrity. They do what they say they are going to do. I have confidence that they have the best interest of children in all their work."

– JENNIFER LEONARD
PRESIDENT AND CEO, RACF

Geneseo, NY Elementary School

Beki Kaye, Elementary Counselor

Children's Institute's work on early childhood issues began in Rochester over fifty years ago. Since that time, it has developed many programs and initiatives that our partners can use in their work with children. Today, our programs can be found not only in New York State, but also in ten states across the nation and several countries around the world. One of these programs, Primary Project, is both the longest-running and most widely implemented. In New York State alone, there are 136 schools in 55 districts who have partnered with Children's Institute to offer Primary Project in the 2013-2014 school year. One of those schools is Geneseo Elementary in Geneseo, NY. The school first began Primary Project late last year and is now finishing their first semester. Beki Kaye, a counselor at the school, has seen the impact on the children who are participating and shared her story with us.

Primary Project is a school-based early intervention and prevention program for children in kindergarten through third grade who have mild to moderate difficulties adjusting to school. This includes children who may be shy, anxious, withdrawn, defiant, moody, having trouble engaging other peers in positive relationships, exhibiting mild physical aggression, or who are generally experiencing school as unpleasant. Children selected to participate in Primary Project have individual play sessions with an adult Child Associate and are typically seen once a week for 30-40 minutes, usually for half of the school year.

"Primary Project has been a very positive experience at Geneseo Elementary School," Kaye shared. She talked about the reaction that occurred shortly after the roll-out of Primary Project in Geneseo, saying that one of the second grade teachers came up to her, exclaiming, "I can't believe the change in my student after just a few sessions in the Primary Project room!" Kaye said all the teachers were excited about the program and wanted the students they had identified to have access to Primary Project.

"Primary Project has been a very positive experience at Geneseo Elementary School."

—BEKI KAYE
ELEMENTARY COUNSELOR,
GENESEO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Kaye also spoke about the changes she has seen in the children. She said that students who were normally quiet or withdrawn would light up when they saw Child Associate Pam Hammond come into their classroom. "They would excitedly ask if it was their turn to go," she said. The students are happy to go to their individual play session, and they talk about it with their teacher and the other students.

Kaye noted that because Geneseo Elementary is just completing its first semester of Primary Project, she does not yet have any parent feedback. However, both she and the teachers have seen a positive change in students' behavior. She shared that the children

are excited and happy to participate and really look forward to their next session in the playroom.

United Way of Greater Rochester

Patricia Leo, Director of Community Investment and Elizabeth Ramsay Marchese, Manager of Community Investment Evaluation

The United Way of Greater Rochester has been committed to improving our community for over 95 years. As one of Rochester's largest charities and community problem solvers, they have funded and participated in numerous partnerships and projects to bring positive change to our area.

In order to make sure the donations they receive are making as much impact as possible, United Way requires its programs to provide reports on effectiveness. "In today's environment, we don't have the luxury of funding 'nice' programs that might work," said Patricia Leo, Director of

Community Investment at United Way. "We look for programs that allow us to say to people, 'this will offer you a better chance to succeed.'" She shared that today's

donors are demanding more accountability and want United Way to use research to make informed decisions about a program's effectiveness and sustainability.

For example, one of the ways United Way seeks to help children succeed is in partnering with Children's Institute for data collection and evaluation resources. United Way faced a difficult challenge in determining the best method for collecting data from a wide range of community groups with different reporting systems. Leo said her "aha!" moment came when Children's Institute Executive Director Dirk Hightower told her that he had a solution to this dilemma – The COMET® System, a web-based data collection system. United Way currently uses COMET to track data on program outcomes and effectiveness, resulting in a tremendous amount of insight into what efforts lead to success. Leo shared that there are many other companies that provide the evaluation and tools that Children's Institute offers, but United Way feels it gets more from this partnership, such as researchers who care about the Rochester community and can walk United Way through the process step-by-step.

Leo stated that United Way values working with Children's Institute because the staff is highly intelligent, knowledgeable, and passionate about issues affecting children. "Children's Institute can make the data 'talk' to the people who work on children's issues to determine future strategies," she said. Elizabeth Ramsay Marchese, Manager

of Community Investment Evaluation, commented that she frequently works with the researchers at Children's Institute to review the collected data and present the results in an accessible, easy-to-understand format.

Leo said she could see Children's Institute becoming the "go-to" center for

early education research. She sees opportunities in Children's Institute's future to highlight what programs are the most effective in helping children succeed.

"Children's Institute can make the data 'talk' to the people who work on children's issues to determine future strategies."

—PATRICIA LEO
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY
INVESTMENT, UNITED WAY

Welcome Aboard

Board members



Doug Mabon, MBA, joined the Board of Directors of Children's Institute. Doug received his BA from Lafayette College and his MBA in Finance from Wharton. He is currently a broker with Business Brokers New York LLC, a middle market M&A business consulting and brokerage firm. Doug is a volunteer mentor and past chapter chairperson with the Greater Rochester Chapter of SCORE, Counselors to America's Small Business. He is a member of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Work Group of the Finger Lakes Regional Council and a past chairperson of the Audit Committee at ESL Federal Credit Union.



R. Mohan Menon, ME, MBA, joined the Board of Directors of Children's Institute. Mohan has a BE in Mechanical Engineering from Madras University in India and an ME in Industrial Engineering and Computer Science from Texas A&M. He also received an MBA in Finance from Texas and completed an Executive Education in Negotiations at Harvard Business School. Mohan has 30 years of experience with Xerox Corporation, including positions within IT, Manufacturing, Engineering Services, Internal Audit, Software Development, and Sales.



Robert Ulliman, M.Ed., joined the Board of Directors of Children's Institute. Rob graduated from Nazareth College and received his Masters in Education there. He completed a graduate program in School Administration and Supervision from Canisius College in Buffalo. Rob currently holds the position of Director of Planning within the Office of Deputy Superintendent of Administration for the Rochester City School District. Rob is a member of the Association of Supervisors and Administrators (ASAR) and the School Administrators Association of New York State (SAANYS).

Staff members



Kathleen Embt has joined Children's Institute as Data Control Clerk. Kathy graduated from Rochester Institute of Technology with an undergraduate degree in Applied Math. After college, she traveled extensively – going to England many times to see her future husband in graduate school and visiting over 20 other countries, including Morocco, Finland, and Malta. Most recently, Kathy worked as a Data Control Clerk at URMC in the Department of Psychiatry. In the past, she has volunteered at Scottsville Pet Adoption and the Brighton Food Cupboard. Currently, she enjoys spending time at home with her three dogs.



Children's Institute has welcomed **Cindy Harper**, MBA, as a Senior Development Manager. Cindy graduated from the College of Wooster with a degree in English and received an MBA from the Simon School of Business at the University of Rochester. Previously, Cindy was the Executive Director of Cameron Community Ministries, located in one of Rochester's highest areas of poverty. Her work history also includes ten years at Citibank Student Loan Corp, in a variety of management roles. Cindy volunteers with many local non-profit organizations including Budding Blossom Girl Development Group at School #54, Children Awaiting Parents, First Presbyterian Church, Pittsford Cheerleading, RGHA, and United Way of Greater Rochester's Women's Leadership Circle. Cindy lives in Pittsford with her husband and three children and enjoys traveling and watching University of Wisconsin and Penn State sports (where her two sons attend college).



Georgia Miller, MBA, has joined Children's Institute as a Financial Analyst. Georgia received both her undergraduate degree in Finance and her MBA in Management from St. John Fisher College. Prior to joining Children's Institute, Georgia worked as a staff accountant for 11 years in the Psychiatric Department at URMC. Georgia is

originally from Kingston, Jamaica and has extended family both in Rochester and Jamaica. When not at work, Georgia enjoys going to the gym.



Children's Institute has welcomed **Mary Jo Strassell** as the front desk receptionist. Mary Jo graduated from SUNY Fredonia with an undergraduate degree in Elementary and Special Education. While teaching early-childhood, elementary, and secondary students for over ten years, her passion for literacy and language development emerged. Recently, she has volunteered with immigrants and refugees as a teacher of English as a Second Language in Portland, Oregon. Currently, she tutors students in secondary subject areas. In her free time, she bikes, hikes, and reads books.

Fellow

Jeff Kaczorowski, MD, has joined Children's Institute as a William T. Grant Foundation Fellow (September 2013-August 2015). Jeff, a nationally recognized pediatrician and child advocate with expertise in evidence-based medicine and community health, is President and Chief Children's Advocate for The Children's Agenda.

Interns

Children's Institute welcomed interns, **Edward Vuong** and **Ross Hamilton**. Both are fourth-year medical students from the University of Rochester who will be working on Greater Rochester Health Foundation's Healthy Weight Initiative, a partnership between Rochester City School District, the Greater Rochester Health Foundation, and Children's Institute.

Melissa Accorso and **Kathryn Buettner** also joined as interns. Melissa Accorso, an undergraduate student at St. John Fisher College double-majoring in Mathematics and Statistics, is helping analyze nationally representative data sets as part of her statistics field experience. Kathryn Buettner, an undergraduate student majoring in Psychology at Roberts Wesleyan College, will be assisting the research department by reviewing the literature on emotional intelligence and academic success.



Join us in congratulating Deborah Johnson, Director of National Services, on receiving the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) 2014 Presidential Award in recognition of her collaboration, advocacy, and leadership on behalf of NASP.

L to R: Deborah B. Johnson, Ed.D., and Sally A. Baas, Ed.D., President, NASP

In the News

10/24/13: Children's Institute's Community Update was featured on WHEC Channel 10's evening news.

12/17/2013: Online article entitled "Boys Town Primary Project Program Fosters Growth in Freedom Shores Elementary Youth," was posted on the school district of Palm Beach County's website. Portions of this article were then featured in an article in the Star Tribune (1/13/2014).

12/18/2013: "United Way of Greater Rochester Holds First-Ever Impact Briefing." Executive Director Dirk Hightower spoke about the partnership between Children's Institute, United Way, and the Rochester City School District that evaluates the effectiveness of its afterschool programs.

2/10/2014: Director of Community Partnerships Lauri Brugger was featured in the Democrat and Chronicle "Woman to Watch" series. "It all comes together," Brugger said. "The courses I took in policy, education, and psychology all contribute to the package I brought to Children's Institute."

2/11/2014: Amy Gee was featured on WHAM Channel 13's Bright Spot for her work with the HUGS (Help Us Give Smiles) organization that performs reconstructive

ear surgeries for children in Ecuador, Guatemala, and Vietnam.

2/24/2014: Deborah Johnson, Director of National Services, received the 2014 Presidential Award from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).

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Coming soon at www.childrensinstitute.net

We're updating our website and will be adding many new features, including the ability to donate online! Soon, you will be able to support Children's Institute through our safe, secure website and ensure that funding for our proven programs continues. Stay tuned for announcements as the new features become available.



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News & Views

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