YEAR IN REVIEW

2021-2022

Creating opportunities through education
**A YEAR OF GROWTH, PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY**

As I reflect back on this past year, one word comes to mind more than any other: community. Community encompasses many things: togetherness, fellowship, support, strength, connections, and belonging. Individually these words are compelling but unified they are powerful.

For over 50 years The Community Group has created a shared sense of community within the staff, families, and students of our organization, but this year this word has taken on a new meaning as we have leaned on our partners throughout the city. Lawrence is truly a unique place - something that I remember each time I see our nonprofit and city partners come together to tackle our shared problems with collaboration and determination. Throughout COVID, TCG has collaborated with nonprofit, municipal, and philanthropic partners to address challenges related to mental health, housing, health, education and child care.

We rely on community partnerships to expand the opportunities available to students in our after school and vacation program, Community Kids Place (CKP). CKP students participate in yoga, cooking, dance, boating, STEM exploration, art, and music - experiences that they would not otherwise get inside a classroom. Collaboration is also helping us to grow our workforce: this year TCG piloted a community-wide child care teacher training and mentoring program. This program is helping to recruit and develop a new group of excellent early childhood education teachers - and also providing leadership opportunities for our existing teachers.

These are just a few community partnership examples. By committing to these and many other partnerships, TCG has been able to help meet the needs of children, families, and staff throughout the pandemic.

We believe that none of us can be successful unless we lift another up. In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. "Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, What are you doing for others?"

I am grateful for everyone within our network who make this work possible: thank you to our families, students, educators, staff, collaborators, members of our Board of Trustees and funders. Thank you for your commitment and support of TCG and the Lawrence community.

Maria Gonzalez Moeller, CEO

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TCG’s CEO, Maria Gonzalez Moeller, served as a member of the Special Commission on Early Education and Care Economic Review for the Massachusetts Legislature. The Commission’s task was to review how child care programming is funded in the Commonwealth and to make recommendations for potential legislative changes in funding and related policies. As part of her work with the Commission, Maria hosted a legislative visit at Community Day Early Learning Center this past fall to help legislators understand the impact, the potential, and the challenges of the child care field. TCG has always been at the forefront of advocacy for child care, and we are proud to have had the opportunity to share our on-the-ground knowledge of the field and our community with the Massachusetts Legislature.

On June 15, 2022, Mayor Brian DePeña and the city of Lawrence granted TCG an additional $1.5 million in scholarship funds, adding to the already $4.4 million previously committed to this program. With these additional funds, 279 Lawrence children are able to continue receiving high quality child care and early education in programs licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care.

The objectives of this program are to provide:

- Child care licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care;
- Improved child care access for working families;
- Parent fees closer to the national affordability standard;
- Support for the economic infrastructure in Lawrence; and
- Stability for early education providers in the region.

Lawrence Leads Program

Last summer, TCG’s CEO, Maria Gonzalez Moeller, completed the Lawrence LEADS Executive Leadership Program through the Lawrence Partnership. This program brought together 70 distinguished participants from Lawrence, Lowell and Haverhill to be part of an eight-month fellowship program designed and delivered by Harvard Business School. Maria was excited to be part of a group of collaborators in a program that was structured to bring about systemic change at the community and regional level. They were awarded $15,000 to establish the Lawrence Welcome Center. The Welcome Center will connect Lawrence residents to information and services in the city. The members are currently hard at work launching the center.

Lawrence Mayor’s Scholarship Fund

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The Mayor’s Scholarship Fund allows working Lawrence families to access affordable, licensed child care while they wait for eligibility for state child care subsidies or when they are not able to access other subsidies due to income restrictions or barriers beyond their control. Most licensed child care providers throughout the city accept scholarship funds as payment, so that families can choose the provider that best meets their needs.

This innovative program is now serving as a model for other cities and towns in Massachusetts.
THE COMMUNITY GROUP

CHILD CARE CIRCUIT
Child care referrals, voucher management, and parent and provider services for Northeast Region of MA

- 53 Communities Served
- $90 million in child care vouchers managed
- 2,000+ child care centers/providers served

CHILD CARE

Early Education & Care
- 4 Program Centers
- 600+ infants-Kindergarten
- 60+ home-based Family Child Care educators

Community Kids Place
- 11 sites throughout Lawrence and Methuen, MA
- 300+ families served

TRAINING
• Online & in-person trainings benefitting 2,000 educators
• As StrongStart Northeast PD Center (PDC), facilitated 460+ trainings/PLCs to 5,000+ educators since 2019
• In a partnership with Urban College, supported 150+ aspiring teachers to complete child care courses
• Piloted innovative, paid child care mentoring programs

COMMUNITY DAY CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
• CDCPS-Prospect
• CDCPS-Gateway
• CDCPS-Webster
• 1,200 Students enrolled by lottery
• Grades K1-8
• 185 days with extended day
• 4-week summer academic program & daily afterschool & vacation programs
Community partnerships allow TCG to expand opportunities for Lawrence families and offer innovative child care and learning options that enrich the lives of our students.

Mass Audubon Society

Mass Audubon offers a wide variety of fun and educational nature-based programs for students enrolled in the TCG Community Kids Place Program (CKP). CKP students actively engage with hands on learning tools such as animal fossils, binoculars, and sketch pads as they discover the wonders of the natural world. The program expands students’ knowledge of environmental science concepts and vocabulary while providing an opportunity for students to practice inquiry-based approaches to learning.

Lawrence Police Department

The Community Kids Place enrichment team, in partnership with the Lawrence Police Department Division of Community Policing, developed a comprehensive pilot program tailored to the needs and interests of our students and focused on building community between local law enforcement and students.

The program, S.M.A.R.T. (Self Motivation, Actions, Respect, and Team) Community Cadets ran for ten week sessions, one at the South Lawrence East and another at the Tarbox. Each week focused on a specific topic.

Examples of weekly topics included:

- Internet Safety
- Drone Demonstration
- Fire and Ice Safety
- Canine Team
- Caring for Our Community
- Forensic Science
Early Head Start

Early Head Start Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) parent Endri Mercedes enrolled her daughter in the EHS Childcare Partnership program at Lawrence High School. Endri worked with an EHS-CCP Family Service Worker to identify and articulate her needs and goals through the Parent Needs and Interest Assessment survey.

With support from her Family Service Worker, Endri was able to access clothing resources through the local agency Community Giving Tree, and entered a local housing lottery program that secured her affordable housing. Endri then connected with Project Home Again, a local nonprofit partner that helps community members obtain furniture and household goods. Endri is thriving in her new home!

Family Connections

Through a highly effective partnership with the Lawrence Area Department of Children and Families (DCF), Family Connections brings together siblings living in separate foster care homes every other Saturday for 3 hours of fun-filled activities.

Siblings ages 5-16 spent up to 60 hours together throughout the 20-session September - June program.

Participants, foster families, and DCF staff report strong positive impacts on emotional well-being, self concept, and sibling relationships.

In the nicer weather, participants also enjoy outdoor field trips to farms, parks, community events, and theme parks.

Teacher Training Pipeline:

In 2021, TCG launched a pilot Child Care Mentoring Program to build a pipeline of trained and committed child care teachers in our region.

In 2022, we expanded the pilot to 21 teachers-in-training and partnered with multiple child care agencies in Lawrence to place, support and mentor these teachers in their classrooms.

TCG supports teachers-in-training as they complete child development courses and a paid 9-month practicum with trained, compensated mentor teachers at classrooms in partnering child care agencies.
Thank you to all the TCG employees and friends who donated 155 coats towards the TCG Annual Coat Drive for Kids. Your generosity supplied winter coats for students across our programs. The estimated value of this collective donation is approximately $6,000.
THE MISSION OF THE COMMUNITY GROUP IS TO CREATE, MANAGE, AND NURTURE HIGH QUALITY PROGRAMS FOCUSED ON EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES THAT SUPPORT FAMILIES

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