



Advocacy Campaigns THAT WORK

Annual Report 2024

A LETTER FROM **OUR BOARD**

Children today face challenges we could have never imagined when this organization was founded 45 years ago.

In this unprecedented election year, the stakes for children are higher than ever. We've been here before – we know how this can turn out. Thankfully we've never stopped pushing for big changes for children that we know will make their lives much better. And going forward we will be re-doubling our efforts to protect kids.

Proudly, in this annual report, we share our successes in making schools better for the nearly one million students in our region and the pre-k programs that reach thousands of young ones. We can point to real progress making children healthier and safer as well.

We're able to tout these achievements because this organization is like no other and our donors are committed to our mission. We've been dedicated and consistent in our values and approach – that has allowed us to unlock impactful, scalable change.

Our determination to forge consensus behind solutions shifts the conversation from just talking about problems to solving them.

Our know-how enables us to tap the goodwill of civic and business leaders, youth-serving organizations, parents, and policy makers and unite them behind big changes for children.

Our longevity makes us a trusted messenger that can be relied on to have the facts, know the risks, and advance policies that are both practical and ambitious.

Now more than ever, kids need Children First to protect them from the hardships they face. Thank you for supporting our work so we're able to continue as the leading advocate for kids in PA. We must put Children First and hold the line against policies that turn back the clock on progress.

Since 1980, we have been knitting together a blanket of support needed to nurture every child. Over the years, we've woven an increasingly sturdy blanket that warms children's hearts, protects their bodies, and comforts their minds. There's more to do, for sure, and with the continued support of youth, caregivers, volunteers, donors, and our terrific staff, we will make that blanket stronger every day.


Javier Suárez, **President**

ADVANCING A STRONG GROUND GAME

A ground game is only as good as its capacity to deliver.
This year, our ground game delivered.

Smart advocacy is intricate work that relies on constructing a sturdy and wide base in every community to succeed. For ten years, we've never stopped recruiting and training thousands of advocates to send a simple and clear message to lawmakers – meet the long-ignored school funding needs of low-income and minority students if you want to stay in office.

The odds against our success were great. Yet we were determined to never give up. We staffed an unwavering statewide coalition that was fueled by local advocates who relentlessly made the case for their students to their state lawmakers. These advocates extracted maximum value from a decisive state court decision on school funding equity and, with our support, strategically exerted the necessary pressure to produce bipartisan consensus for a history-breaking \$1.1 billion school funding increase and a new pattern for school funding that puts low-income students first.

113,890

legislative contacts

1,200

advocates mobilized

108

times we've spoken out



PROTECTING GROUND WE GAINED

67

times we've spoken out

1,000

advocates mobilized

2,546

legislative contacts



There's no disputing that the earliest years of life present the most promise for nurturing healthy, vibrant minds. That's why the state dollars for great pre-k programs that help 67,000 children thrive are so important.

We would have preferred to push, this year, for more funds to meet the needs of the 40% of children still unserved by pre-k. Yet lawmaker interest in pre-k has waned since the pandemic and cuts to pre-k were in the offing.

Together with early learning advocates from across the state, we sounded the alarm and in just three months organized thousands of parents and early learning program staff to send letters, attend public events, and remind their state lawmakers of the benefits of pre-k.

Our advocacy was the reason that state lawmakers shifted from a position of likely cutting pre-k to a \$15 million increase.

**Our experience teaches us that
sometimes the best offensive is a strong defense.**



Children First
IS the voice for
kids and
decisionmakers.
Listen to Us.

DONNA FIELDS
Parent Leader
Children First

What could matter
more than our
children? Investing
in Children First
puts kids at the
TOP of the agenda
where they belong.

DON SCHWARTZ
former Health Commissioner
City of Pennsylvania
and donor



Children First gets it right doing the hard work to build **bipartisan support for kids issues.**

MARK CAMPBELL
former Chief of Staff
Governor Tom Ridge

I've seen it firsthand, when Children First leads the charge, **change happens.**

DR. MONICA TAYLOR
Delaware County Council
Chair

Children First leads the pack, putting **Hispanic kids issues on the table.**

JULIO C. NUÑEZ
Pennsylvania Hispanic
School Administrators
Board member



MOVING BOLD IDEAS FORWARD

The COVID pandemic uncovered the depths of despair among youth, and it **also made things worse.**

In fact, 40% of children presenting in an emergency room for attempted suicide had never seen a mental health professional before trying to take their own life. And the pleas for help from caregivers and youth who've knocked on the doors of mental health care systems only to have them slammed in their faces convinced us to act. We learned from caregivers, youth, and mental health practitioners the root causes of lack of access to care and crafted with them an ambitious mental health policy agenda to solve the problem.

The results of our exhaustive research and our ambitious policy agenda are encapsulated in two groundbreaking reports, *Optimizing Medicaid to Improve Child and Youth Mental Health in PA* and *State Examples of Medicaid Optimization for Child and Youth Mental Health in Alignment with Recommendations for PA*. Our insightful research is rallying lawmakers, practitioners, public officials, and caregivers to focus on solutions and remove barriers to mental health services. The hunger for information, conversations, and the focus on actionable, bold, systemic policy change is galvanizing Pennsylvanians in every corner of the state. In just a few short months since the reports have been released, already thousands of Pennsylvanians have read them, attended convenings to discuss them, and enthusiastically shared with their networks.



WINNING IN THE MARGINS

10

times we've spoken out

73

coalition members

209

legislative contacts



When children are sent to live in an institution because of neglect, abuse, or behavioral issues, they face grave risks of **further physical and mental abuse.**

That's why we never stop advocating to end the institutionalizing of children. But until we build the will for that policy, we must remain steadfast in making sure every possible layer of protection is in place for these children.

Thanks to our persistence, lawmakers are increasingly aware that locking up children causes them long-term harm and can make communities less safe because so many children leave institutions worse off than when they went in.

In response to our steady push to protect these children, Pennsylvania House lawmakers passed a bill to create a state level advocate charged with responding to pleas for personal protection from children when they are institutionalized. The House also rallied behind the bill that makes it illegal to chain or shackle children or put them in long-term solitary confinement. These terrific signs of incremental progress set up for making real change.

MOTIVATING & MOBILIZING

Our advocacy is custom-tailored to promptly respond to the **urgent needs of children.**

44
parents trained

110
hours of training

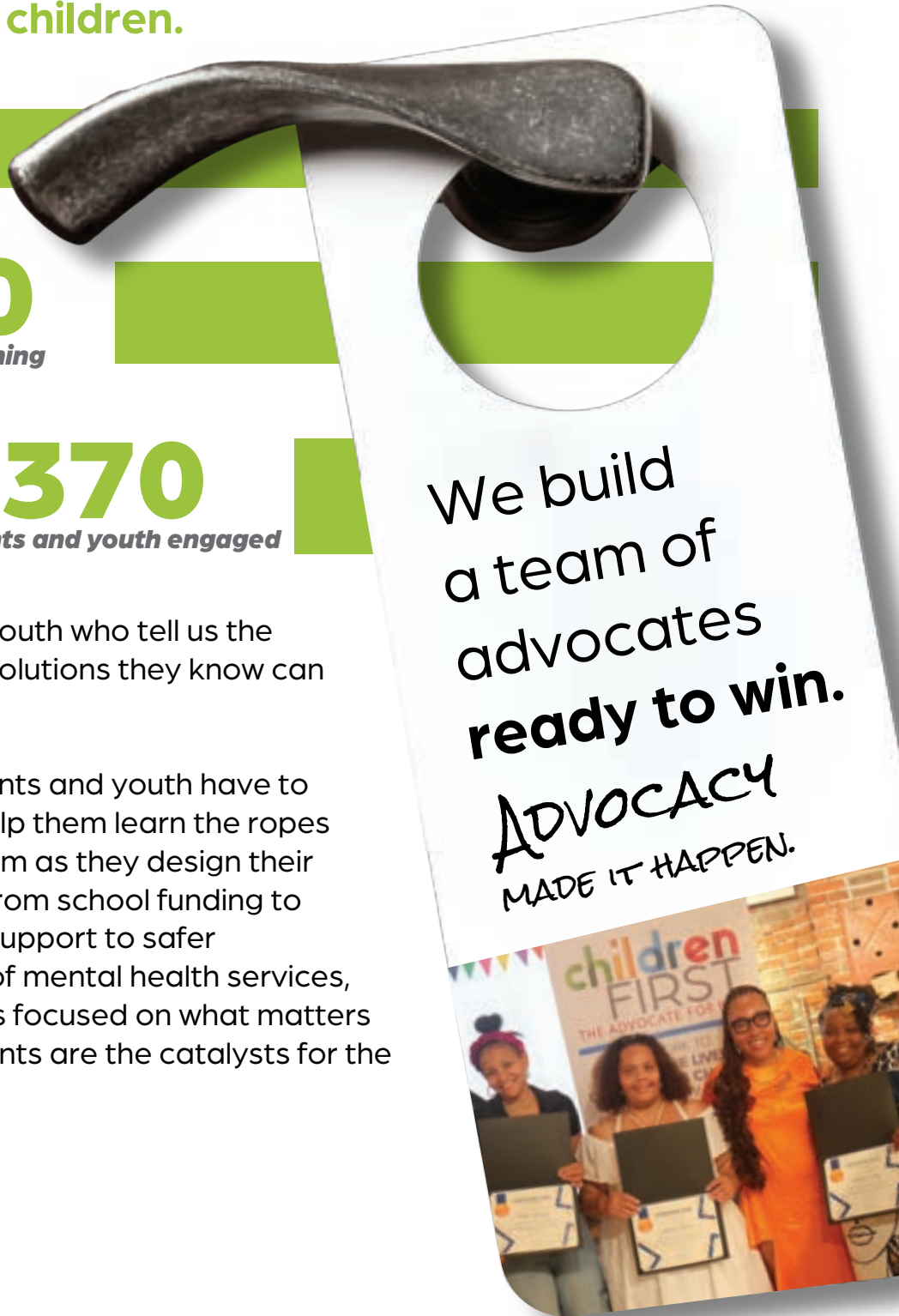
370
parents and youth engaged

We listen to caregivers and youth who tell us the struggles they face and the solutions they know can make a difference.

We don't just hear what parents and youth have to say; we invest in them. We help them learn the ropes of advocacy and support them as they design their own advocacy campaigns. From school funding to better early developmental support to safer communities and a full suite of mental health services, caregivers and youth keep us focused on what matters most. Together, with us, parents are the catalysts for the change children need.

We build
a team of
advocates
ready to win.

ADVOCACY
MADE IT HAPPEN.



BROADENING THE MESSAGE

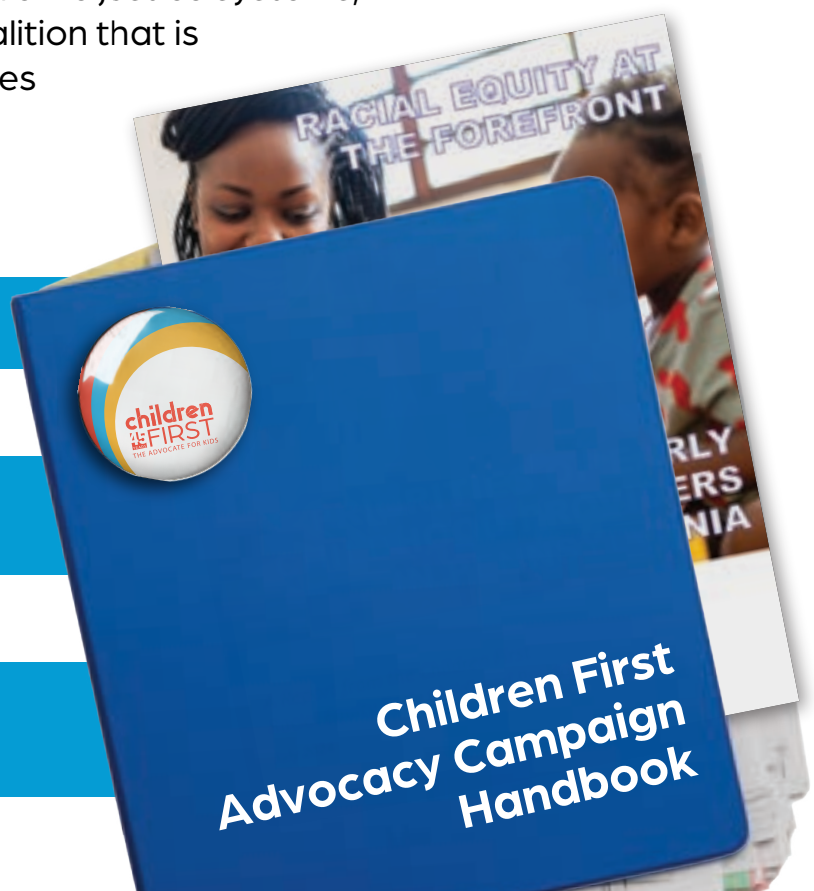
We were founded in 1980 to respond to the abuse and threat that Black children faced from **then-Mayor Frank Rizzo**.

With more than four decades of experience challenging inequality, we know that only by addressing centuries of laws and policies that institutionalize racial inequality can we mend the harms of the past and spur progress for children.

Our Racial Equity Early Childhood Education Provider Council delved into the early learning gaps between children of color and their white counterparts. Together, we're demanding action to solve these disparities.

To end the practices that result in far too many Black and Hispanic children being expelled from early learning and child care programs, together with parents we are making headway to create new requirements that support stronger early intervention and child development supports so that all children thrive in these programs.

To combat racially biased practices in juvenile justice systems, we helped form the PA Youth Safety Coalition that is advancing reforms to end racial disparities and make our communities safer.



WORKING THE INSIDE GAME

Career Related **Learning Wins**

When we learned that high school students were sidelined from attending high school trade or skills programs because the state was decades behind on investing in these programs, we crafted a winning strategy to move things in the right direction. We quietly met with key senators we knew shared our goal of giving more high school students the chance to learn real world skills before they graduate and gave them the information they needed to win support from their colleagues for more resources.

The result: \$30 million more for these schools, the largest increase for technical high school education in a quarter of century.



Paid Family Leave **Measure Advances**

We used that same political prowess to persuade lawmakers to vote for the Family Care Act, a bill that provides paid family and medical leave for working parents. Without fanfare, we connected lawmakers to businesses eager to see their employees have this benefit and to young parents hoping to stay in Pennsylvania, have children and remain employed. One by one, we build a coalition of Republicans and Democrats who voted yes on Paid Leave making Pennsylvania the first state where a Republican-controlled committee passed Paid Leave readying it for a vote on the Senate floor.

This work is not over. Our expertise in the inside game makes it possible for us to enact great laws that change the lives of children for the better.

Understanding the landscape in Harrisburg and maintaining relationships that keep us at the table when policies that impact children are being crafted is what we do. This work takes time and real connections. Staying true to our mission allows Children First to invest the time to advance policies and elevate the issues at the right moment to change outcomes.



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS	As of May 31, 2024
Cash and Cash Equivalents	2,645,253
Pledges and Other Receivables	2,634,855
Investments	1,759,151
Furniture, Equipment, Leases Net	164,942
Other Assets	13,712
Total Assets	7,217,913

LIABILITIES	As of May 31, 2024
Accounts Payable Accrued Expenses	247,131
Fiscal sponsorships	36,593
Accrued Leases	187,016
Total Liabilities	470,740

NET ASSETS	As of May 31, 2024
Without Donor Restrictions	2,938,806
With Donor Restrictions	3,808,367
Total Net Assets	6,747,173

Total Liabilities and Net Assets	7,217,913
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SOURCES		AS OF MAY 31, 2024
Foundations and Corporations		\$3,501,040
Individual		\$466,496
Government		\$652,590
Special Events		\$224,837
Contracts		\$267,418
United Way of Greater Philadelphia		\$127,235
Other		\$242,251
Total		\$5,481,867

USES		AS OF MAY 31, 2024
Accrued Leases		\$4,498,602
Fiscal Sponsorships		\$342,359
Program Services		\$411,906
Total Net Assets		\$5,252,867



2023-2024

CITIZEN LEADERS

Anonymous
 Carolyn & Tim Adams
 Judy Adamson & Fred Jackes
 Lindsay & Sam Albright
 Majid & Mary Alsayegh
 Saumya Ayyagari
 Rebecca Bien
 Sheldon & Jill Bonovitz
 David Camp & Gwen Borowsky
 Renee Cardwell Hughes
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 David & Rhonda Cohen
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 Phil Fitzgerald
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 Jane Goldblum
 Mary L. Goldman
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 Carole Haas Gravagno
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 Janet Haas
 David Hackett
 Beverly Hahn
 Rosemarie Halt
 Valerie Hamilton
 John Hanger
 Linda Hansell
 Donna Hunt
 Hallam Hurt
 Mary Hurtig
 Kenneth Jarin & Robin Weissman
 Philip Jaurigue
 Victor Keen & Jeanne Ruddy

Chrissy Kind
 Kenneth & Eve Klothen
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 John McFadden & Lisa Kabnick
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 Renee Turchi
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 Reagan Willard
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 Brendan Williams

Wendy Wolf
 Flora Wolf & Laslo Boyd

2023-2024
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 Michael Aladich
 Casey Alrich
 Marnie Anderson
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 Melvina Banti
 Maureen Barden
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 David Cramer
 Shannon Cronin
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 Loree D. Jones-Brown
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 Linda Katz
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 Susan & Robert Kettell
 Sherilynn Kimble
 Deborah Klehr
 Nancy Kleinberg
 Charlie & Susan Koerwer

"As a founding member and corporate and individual supporter, I am so proud of the work Children First has done over the last 45 years. I know my support is used strategically and effectively to further improve the lives of kids in our region."

Richard Frazier

Steven Deshields
 Engelbert Diaz
 Sharon Dietrich
 Julie Drendall
 Sydney Etheredge
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 Cindy Farlino
 Evan Fieldston
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 Leigh Filipoini
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 Ruth Naomi Floyd
 Jamie Forlenza

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 Tamia Harvey-Martin
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 Joseph Henry
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 Christian Holland
 Shirlee Howe

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 Myra Kranzel
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 Andrea Krull
 Muriel Kudera
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 Brian Lang
 Sandra Lang
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 Mary Laver
 Lynette Lazarus
 Doris Leisch
 Meghan Lenahan
 Alex Levin

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 Theodore Lieverman
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 Marion Littman
 Dan Livney
 Patricia Loeb
 Holly Logan
 Beth Logue
 Sim Loh
 Gail Lopez-Henriquez
 Robert Ludwig
 Karyn Lynch
 JLy Lyons
 Susan Mackinney
 Jonathan Macqueen
 Howard & Cirel Magen
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 Elizabeth Manlove
 Joshua Markel
 Phyllis Mason
 David Matthews
 Barbara Mattleman
 Kathryn Maza Courtney
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 Maura McInerney
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 Kyle McMillen
 Felicia McNeill
 Bob McWilliams
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 Sylvia Metzler
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 Trey Miller
 Doriane Miller
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 Jewel Nelson
 Saxon Nelson
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 AJ Nordan
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 Erin Owen
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 Alexis Parks
 Kareem Patterson
 Katie Pearse
 Anjanette Perry
 Rashanda Perryman
 Joe Pilling
 Ceciry Pimentel
 Ralph & Cheryl Pinkus
 Rebecca Prince
 Ann Pron
 Roselyn Purnell
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 Inella Ray
 Donyale Reavis
 Ulises Reyes-Kaura
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 Hershel & Elizabeth Richman
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 John & Ann Riggan
 Dana Riker Jackson
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 Lynne Roberts
 Wendy-Anne Roberts-Johnson
 Delanie Robertson
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 Jacob Rosch
 John Rosecky
 Gerry Rothschild
 Phyllis Rubin
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 Kimberly Sampson
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 Marlena Santoyo
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 Linda Katz Schleifer
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 Staci Scott
 Tyrone Scott
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 Kate Shaw
 Samuel Silver
 Sam Silver

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 Greg & Elise Thomas
 Susan Thompson
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 Margret Trotzky
 Hin Wing Tse
 Walter Tsou
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 Elliot Weinbaum
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 Marlene Weinstein
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 Ken Wesler
 Dwayne Wharton
 Mazz Whitaker
 Paul Whitson
 Julia Wilder
 Scott Wilds
 Sherita Williams
 Sarah Winters
 Carol Wong
 Amos Wright
 Mary Beth Yarish
 Robyn Younger
 Gerald Zahorchak

2023-2024 BUSINESS AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORTERS

American Friends Service Committee
 AmeriHealth Caritas
 Black Child Development Institute
 Brightside Academy, Inc
 Brinker, Simpson & Company
 Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
 Clear Point Communications
 Comcast NBC Universal
 Community Behavioral Health
 Cozen O'Connor
 Creedon Management Associates

Delaware Valley Reg. Eco. Dev. Auth.
 Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott, LLC
 Fox Rothschild LLP
 GSL Public Strategies
 Hanglely Aronchick Segal Pudlin & Schiller
 Health Partners Plans
 Holman Enterprises
 Independence Blue Cross Foundation
 Independence Foundation
 Independent Order of Odd Fellows #37
 Kate & Co.
 Keystone Family Health Plan
 Perryman Construction

Philadelphia Federation of Teachers
 Philadelphia Flyers
 PK Financial Group
 PNC
 Project HOME
 Public Health Management Corp.
 Reinvestment Fund
 S. Fineman, Krekstein & Harris, P.C.
 S.R. Wojdak & Associates, LP
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 Schweiger Dermatology Group
 TD Bank
 Temple University Health System
 United Way of Greater Phil. and S. N.J.
 Vanguard

"I am inspired by the dedication of this organization to make a lasting difference, and as a donor, I believe in the transformative power of supporting an organization that actively works to create a brighter, more equitable future for our children. Together, we can ensure that the next generation grows up in a world where their potential is nurtured and their well-being is prioritized."

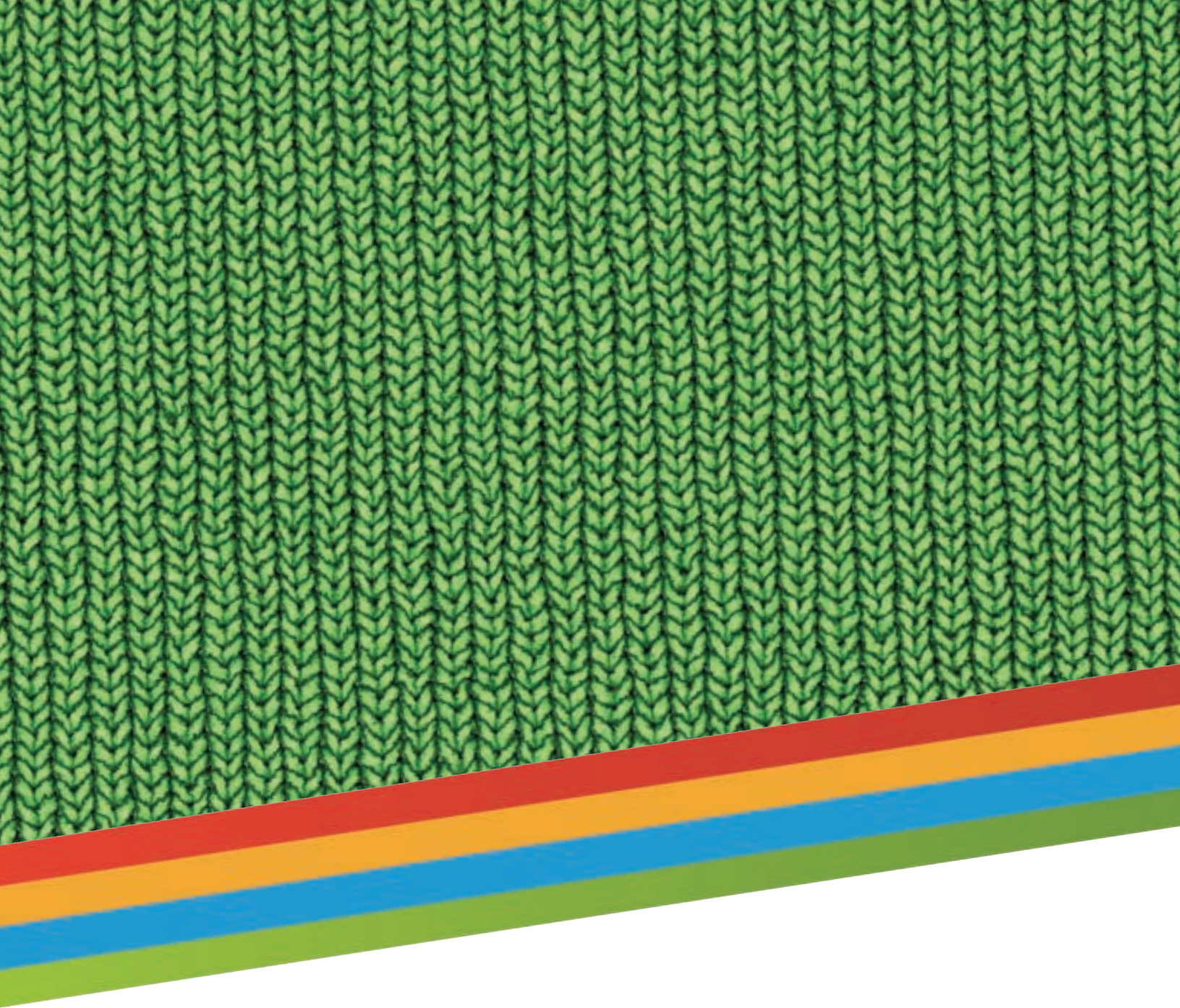
Staci Scott

2023-2024 FOUNDATIONS

AMJ Foundation
 Allen Hilles Fund
 Bellweather Education Partners, Inc.
 CHG Charitable Trust
 Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback Foundation
 Delaware County Interactive Gaming Revenue Authority
 Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation
 Elevate 215
 Elizabeth B. and Arthur E. Roswell Foundation
 Families for Equitable School Funding
 Green Family Foundation

Independence Foundation
 Ivywood Foundation
 Leo Model Foundation
 Marni Sweet Fund for Early Childhood Education of the Philadelphia Foundation
 Marrazzo Family Foundation
 Nararo Foundation
 Neubauer Family Foundation
 Pennsylvania Department of Health
 Philadelphia Foundation
 Philadelphia Health Partnership
 Pincus Family Foundation
 Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation
 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

SpringPoint Partners
 The Delaware County Medical Society Public Health Fund, Inc.
 The Foundation for Delaware County
 The Huron Foundation
 The Grace S. and W. Linton Nelson Foundation
 United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey
 US Department of Education, EIR Program
 van Ameringen Foundation
 Vanguard Strong Start for Kids Program
 Voices for Healthy Kids
 W.K. Kellogg Foundation
 William Penn Foundation



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