

Riverfront's mission is supported through the donation of money, time and service. The contributions from businesses, donors, grants, partners, sponsors and volunteers are critical to our success. Together you contributed \$313,923.50 to support children and families!

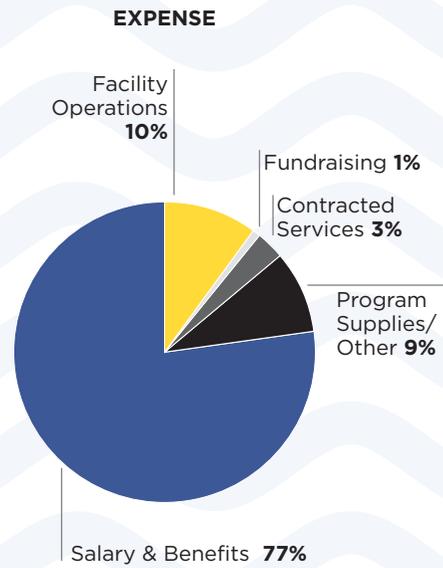
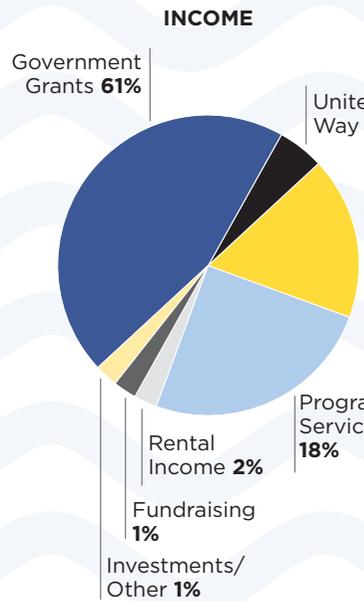
THANK YOU!

2021 BOARD LIST

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GRANTS and MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS

Accelerate CT	14,085
Anonymous	15,000
Joan Butler	1,000
Brownington Foundation	5,000
Chamber of Commerce of E. CT	2,500
Charter Oak Federal Credit Union	2,000
Chelsea Groton Foundation	4,500
Community Foundation of E. CT (Neighbors for Neighbors)	10,000
Community Foundation of E. CT	20,000
Dime Bank Foundation	3,000
EFSP- United Way	4,000
Bruce Kolowsky	2,500
Gildersleeve/White Fund	2,000
Groton Education Fund	5,000
Groton Elks #2163	2,500
Groton Utilities	3,900
Kiwanis Club of New London	500
Ledyard Rotary Foundation	1,000
Liberty Bank Foundation	5,000
Edward and Mary Lord Foundation	20,000
Mystic Woman's Club	1,000
Mystic Rotary Club	1,000
Neighborhood Assistance Act Grant/ Groton Utilities	56,116
Noank Baptist Church	1,350
People's United Community Foundation	2,500
David Schulz and Karen Stone	2,500
TOTAL	187,951



The Riverfront Children's Center, Inc.
476 Thames Street, Groton, CT 06340



THE RIVERFRONT CHILDREN'S CENTER

Annual Report 2021

“The lack of affordable childcare is pushing millions of Americans out of the workforce and is making it harder for employers to fill job openings.”

— JOE COURTNEY, U.S. CONGRESSMAN

Letter from Executive Director

Working through COVID has revealed the critical role of childcare and the need, across the nation, to recognize early childhood education and care as an essential service, with pay for teachers commensurate with their education and experience. In 2021 Riverfront continued to follow the guidance of the Office of Early Childhood, CDC and Ledge Light Health District and remained open while reducing classroom size, cohorting children and requiring adults, as well as children preschool and older, to wear masks. The need to occasionally quarantine classrooms created an added burden to parents. Families were not charged when classrooms were closed, impacting the center's revenue.



on track in developing social-emotional, literacy, and early numeracy skills, with intervention assistance available when needed. We are so proud of the children and families who persevered with us through cohorting, distancing, masking, and other adaptations to stay healthy and keep our classrooms productive.

Despite these challenges, Riverfront continued to provide high-quality, affordable early care and education for families, all while keeping children and staff safe. Dedicated teachers supported each other during this stressful year, stayed the course, and continued the focus on creating normal learning experiences for children in non-normal times. Assessments showed children were

As a steadfast supporter of families with babies and young children, Riverfront earned The New London Day's 2021 Readers Choice Award for Best Childcare Provider. We invite you to support Riverfront's mission to nurture the unique needs of children and their families through affordable, high-quality education and care.

Dr. Sue

THRIVING THROUGH ADVERSITY

2021 was not a typical year, but Riverfront achieved notable success despite the challenges. Long established healthy habits, like handwashing and sanitizing, proved valuable in the fight against COVID and allowed the center to remain open and increase enrollment throughout the year. Communication through masks was tricky, but we learned new ways to smile with our eyes, listen more carefully, and speak more clearly. Our standards remained high as our attention turned to our physical plant. An extensive exterior paint job, a newly paved parking lot, and an environmental assessment identified ways to increase energy efficiency with upgraded insulation, and outdoor LED lighting boosted our families' safety. Through the stewardship of our board of directors, we thrived through what could have been a crippling year. Families rely on the consistent, affordable programs we offer – it was never acceptable to let them down. Public outcry around the nation underscored the

“**Supportive, responsive relationships with caring adults early in life can prevent or reverse the damaging effects of toxic stress on children.**”



desperate state of childcare. Lack of accessibility, affordability, and equity for families with young children are reaching crisis levels throughout the country. These are the cornerstones of Riverfront's existence. With all support systems under strain due to the pandemic, including healthcare, childcare, and the supply chain, Riverfront Children's Center has remained a steadfast resource to working parents from all over the region. Nullifying barriers to early childhood education and care has been at the forefront of our work for decades. Through many partnerships and collaborations, Riverfront has solidified its place as an irreplaceable resource for working parents in Southeastern Connecticut.

AFFORDABILITY

Riverfront collaborates with local, state, and federal government agencies, public school districts, and generous foundations, corporations, and individuals to ensure that families who request care are subsidized at a rate they can afford. Once government funding has been applied to an individual family's tuition fee, there often remains a significant gap between what a family can afford to pay and the actual cost of education and care. Addressing this gap is imperative to ensure equity in our classrooms, offering each child the same curriculum whether their families earn \$100,000 per year or they are living below the federal poverty level. The solution lies in our Scholar Dollars program. The Scholar Dollars account grows through grants, donations, and fundraisers throughout the year. Annually, over 85% of our families apply for Scholar Dollars to help subsidize their tuition on an ongoing basis, or to help cover tuition if the family bears a short-term financial burden, such as an unexpected

medical payment or a substantial vehicle repair. It is flexible to meet the varying needs of each unique family and keep children enrolled for consistent learning and growth. The success of our Scholar Dollars program directly affects access to our programs for our low-income families. In 2021 we were able to provide scholarship funding to every family that requested assistance, and this is a testament to our supporters who recognize the important role that early childhood education and care plays in a vibrant community. Nutritional supports were also an important part of nurturing our children and families. Over 6,500 pounds of food, including farm to family grocery boxes and fully prepared meals by Ivy's Simply Homemade, was distributed to Riverfront families. Ninety eight adults and 142 children also received generous food baskets to prepare holiday meals, and 71 children received bags of gifts, ensuring that the holidays were indeed festive.

QUALITY PROGRAMS AND STAFF

2021 witnessed innovations in literacy, connecting outside volunteers and teaching resources including online Little Listeners presentations with the Connecticut Storytelling Center and a Read Across America Facebook event. In collaboration with Bill Memorial Library, community volunteers of all ages and backgrounds created videos of themselves reading children's books. During the month of March families from throughout the community and beyond were able to enjoy the daily videos and were exposed to new personalities, dissolving the social barriers imposed by COVID. Lyman Allen



Museum provided monthly deliveries of art lessons and materials for our preschool classrooms in lieu of sending a representative for a live class to meet stringent COVID protocols. Music and motion were safely enjoyed outside at Bill Memorial Library's preschool story hours.

Every teacher at Riverfront completed 53 hours of professional development in 2021 in addition to health and safety trainings. Monthly staff meetings promoted collaboration and teamwork among the classrooms and the administrative team. Each classroom is led by a team of two teachers, one of whom must hold a degree in early childhood education, child psychology, or a related field. Our teachers and staff are fully committed to providing a safe, caring, and stimulating environment where children are encouraged to take risks, use their imaginations, and develop social and emotional skills that will last a lifetime. They track each child's development ensuring that benchmarks are reached, and when they are not, seeking out therapies and additional supports because each child deserves to reach their potential. Individualized education plans in collaboration with Birth-Three and local public-school systems assured that all children were making progress towards individual goals.

KEEP LOOKING UP

2021 was also a year of planning for the future. With the help of an outside consultant, the board of directors completed a SWOT analysis, identified goals, and created a strategic plan to guide the organization into the next decade. The Riverfront/City of Groton Road Race was also brought back, offering a family-friendly fundraiser with healthy outdoor activities including a road race, family walk, and baby crawl. Riverfront depends on the loyal support of our friends in the community and beyond to provide high quality programs that are affordable for all families. Equity and accessibility are vital to fulfilling our mission.

BETTER TOGETHER

During the Week of the Young Child in April, we celebrated our diversity at Riverfront and learned that “families come in all flavors.” A pizza-themed activity allowed children to share their family stories through creating a pizza with toppings that represent the people and pets and values of their family. The week culminated with a Friday night pizza kit so that families could make dinner together and children could share what they learned about their peers. In 2021, Riverfront served children who identify as African American/Black (32%), Hispanic (22%), Caucasian (20%), Asian American (1%), and 25% identify with more than two ethnicities/races.

“**High-quality early learning and care for at risk children from birth through age five provides a 13% return on investment to society.**”

The success of parents and children is co-dependent. Children need high quality early childhood education that prepares them to be lifelong learners. When children receive the education and social-emotional support that they need, they are more likely to reach their potential. Parents of children in high quality early childhood education can pursue higher education, job training, and regular meaningful employment because they are able to plan their schedules around available childcare. Riverfront Children's Center has long recognized the synergy when both child and parent are succeeding and we continue to offer access to our onsite food pantry, our hygiene closet, gently used clothing at no cost, and referrals to social service agencies for assistance with housing, utilities, career planning, and mental health. Participation in high-quality early childhood education has positive effects on high school graduation rates, years of education, adult employment, and the adult labor incomes of participants and their parents. Participants are also less likely to abuse substances and become involved in the judicial system.

Riverfront has been a vital part of the community since 1983 and continues to participate in city wide events, such as the scarecrow display contest, scavenger hunt, and the community wide tag sale.

We look forward to growing our existing relationships and welcoming new partnerships as we serve our region's children and families.

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