

2020-21
ANNUAL REPORT

QUALITY

CARING



FUN



SAFETY

WONDERSPRING
EARLY EDUCATION



OUR CORE VALUES

Safety, Quality, Caring, Fun





OUR MISSION

Wonderspring helps families thrive by providing safe, convenient, and high-quality learning opportunities and care for children in Greater Philadelphia.



OUR VISION

For all children and their families to have equitable access to high quality Early Childhood Education and Out-of-School-Time programs that engage families, are led by trusted professionals, and have a measurable impact on children's health, development, school readiness and lifelong success.

Dear Friends of Wonderspring,

I clearly remember the day in March of 2020 when Wonderspring was forced to close its doors because of COVID-19. Little did we know then that more than a year later we'd still be dealing with the challenges of the pandemic.



ZAKIYYAH BOONE
CEO

Throughout the past year, each passing day has brought a seemingly new set of challenges. For families, these challenges ranged from how do we talk to our children about the pandemic to how do we keep our children engaged, to how do I go back to work when my child's school is virtual? At the same time, we as an organization grappled with questions about how to continue to provide quality care while ensuring the safety of children, families, and staff.

I could not be prouder that at every step of the way, Wonderspring has risen to the challenge to meet the needs of the children and families we serve.

At the onset of the pandemic, we pulled together a team of leaders to identify what families needed and the best ways we could meet those needs. Knowing that many parents were experiencing job loss and financial hardship, we compiled a list of available resources such as food banks, financial assistance programs, online learning tools and activities, and articles by noted experts about how to talk to children about COVID-19. To ensure children remained engaged in learning, our teachers connected with children and families regularly through Zoom classes, email, phone, and even drive-by visits, providing daily lesson plans and activities.

Through it all, we continued to pay our teachers and staff because we know that they are the special sauce that makes Wonderspring the incredible place it is.

When after three months we were finally able to open our doors, we realized that parents of school-age children were desperate for care because their children's schools were virtual, and they had to return to work. Once again, our staff stepped up to the plate and developed an entirely new program offering school-age academic assistance and care for virtual learners.

At the same time, we remained steadfastly committed to our vision of expanding access to high-quality early education and care to all children and busily prepared for the opening of a brand new center at New Market West.

As you read through these pages, I hope you will catch glimpses of what makes Wonderspring the wonderful place it is. We see it every day in the passion, commitment and resilience of our staff, on the happy faces of our children, and in the appreciation expressed by the families we serve.

We are so grateful for the ongoing support of our families, donors, and community partners. It is because of you that we can achieve our mission of helping children and families to thrive.

Warmly,
Zakiyyah Boone
CEO

Though 2020-2021 has been one of the hardest years for Wonderspring over the more than half-century of our history, we emerge from the pandemic with financial strength, a fantastic management team, and a tight-knit and skilled board of directors. We are also imbued with a renewed sense of purpose. The pandemic brought into sharp focus the true need for and value of quality child care as families tried to work and educate their children at the same time in their own homes, and struggled to do either well. It clarified the tremendous impact that our teachers, who love and educate the children entrusted to our care—the true superpower of Wonderspring—have on our children, families, and communities.



SURGE GHOSH
BOARD PRESIDENT



NINA SPIZER
BOARD VICE PRESIDENT

The summer of 2020 also raised awareness about the countless ways racial injustice and inequity infect our nation. The events of the past year have spurred Wonderspring to take a more intentional approach to advance diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the organization in order to create an environment where all children, staff, and families feel welcome and respected. Our work in this arena has reinforced the critical role high-quality early education plays in helping to bridge economic, social, and racial inequity and the importance of expanding access to quality education and care.

We want to thank Wonderspring's dedicated and professional board of directors for leading the organization through an extremely tumultuous year. Their commitment to enabling Wonderspring to fulfill its mission of ensuring access to high-quality early education and care to all children is unwavering.

Wonderspring also benefited from a significant boost on our management team at the start of the pandemic when we selected Zakiyyah Boone as the new CEO. Zakiyyah is everyone's favorite leader, with infectious high energy and a heart of gold. She has expertly and confidently led Wonderspring through the challenges of the last year. Zakiyyah will be the critical ingredient in charting our course for the future, refining the organization's strategic focus, and ensuring our long-term financial health. Because of her work, and that of her fantastic team, Wonderspring is poised for continued growth in its mission delivery in the coming year.

SURGE GHOSH
Board President

NINA SPIZER
Board Vice President



EXPANDING ACCESS WITH A BRAND NEW CENTER

After months of anticipation, Wonderspring opened the doors of New Market West—a gorgeous brand-new center in West Philadelphia. To celebrate the momentous occasion, Wonderspring joined with elected officials and community partners at a festive celebratory ribbon-cutting ceremony.

“We have poured so much love and hard work into creating a center that is beautiful, safe, and functional and we couldn’t be more thrilled to begin serving the children and families of West Philadelphia,” said Wonderspring CEO Zakiyyah Boone.

Advancing Wonderspring’s goal of increasing access to high-quality care for all children, the new center is part of a neighborhood transformation development project, which brings a myriad of resources to the neighborhood including primary health care, support for previously homeless single-parent families, and behavioral health services. ”As Wonderspring works to meet the needs of children and families, we look forward to developing more strategic partnerships with organizations within the community,” said Boone.

Philadelphia City Councilman, Curtis Jones lauded the new center noting that New Market West represents the transformation of land that was once an abandoned gas station to a high-quality education center for our children. “But this is even more than an educational center,” he said. “It is an economic development project because, without reliable childcare, parents cannot return to work.”



"We have poured so much love and hard work into creating a center that is beautiful, safe, and functional and we couldn't be more thrilled to begin serving the children and families of West Philadelphia"

– ZAKIYYAH BOONE, *Wonderspring CEO*

Wonderspring New Market West will ultimately serve up to 123 infants through school-age children and create 30 jobs. The center features inviting classrooms and a beautiful outdoor learning space outfitted with playthings that ignite imagination and promote open-ended play and learning. "Our focus is on sparking the creativity and wonder in children and this center offers the perfect environment for children to tap into their natural curiosity and develop a lifelong love of learning," said Boone.

Sean Perkins, Chief of Early Childhood Education for the City of Philadelphia, concurred. "This is where deductive reasoning, executive function, negotiation skills, literacy, and empathy begins," he said. "This is the location where our current leaders—teachers and staff—provide instruction and playful learning to our next generation of leaders."









NURTURING CHILDREN'S SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Among the many things that set Wonderspring apart as a high-quality provider of early education is our intentional focus on nurturing the social and emotional health of the children we serve. In a year when many families have experienced amplified levels of trauma and stress, helping children to talk about their feelings and develop strategies for coping has never been more important.

Social-emotional health has been found to significantly affect a child's overall development, learning and wellbeing. A study by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that emphasis on social-emotional learning (SEL) in preschool can enable children to thrive academically, mentally, and physically in kindergarten and through adulthood.

At Wonderspring, promoting the social and emotional health of the children we serve is a top priority and is infused in every part of the day. Grants from William Penn Foundation and PNC Foundation have enabled Wonderspring to purchase and implement the Second Step Social-Emotional Curriculum at all its centers. Utilizing weekly themes, songs, activities, puppets, and posters, Second Step helps children better understand, manage and express emotions and empathy, develop positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. All Wonderspring teachers have been trained on the Second Step Curriculum and receive ongoing technical assistance to help them integrate the program into their classroom routines.



According to Director of Quality Monica Stanoch, the curriculum has yielded impressive results. Teachers report they are better able to handle challenging behaviors and utilize positive behavior management strategies. They also note that the children are better able to identify their feelings and utilize a variety of calming techniques for their minds and bodies.

"When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming and scary."

– FRED ROGERS

Angela Giuliani, a Pre-K teacher at the Narberth center, is extremely enthusiastic about the curriculum. "It has improved the overall tone of the classroom," she says. "The children are more empathetic because it helps them recognize the feelings of their friends and makes them think about ways they can help. They love role-playing with the puppets and using the puppets to talk through problems. It gives them the confidence that they know the answers and our positive feedback for implementing what they learn reinforces that confidence."

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

WONDERSPRING CELEBRATES THE WIDE ARRAY OF CULTURE, ETHNICITY, HISTORY AND EXPERIENCE OF OUR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND STAFF. WE BELIEVE THAT OUR ORGANIZATION IS STRENGTHENED AND ENRICHED BY OUR DIVERSITY. WE AIM TO CREATE AN INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNING AND WORKING WHERE EVERYONE FEELS WELCOMED, VALUED AND RESPECTED.



As a nonprofit striving to ensure access to high-quality learning and care to all children, Wonderspring is intentionally working to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in our services to children and families as well as our employment practices.

This year, with the support of the William Penn Foundation and Temple University's Diversifying Early Education Leadership program (DEEL@Temple), Diversity Fellow Sophia Ezomoghene is helping Wonderspring develop strategies to achieve the following goals:

Nurture a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion where all children, staff and families feel welcome.

Support teaching practices that acknowledge and respect multiple cultures, languages and practices in the classroom.

Proactively recruit and develop the talents of ethnically diverse persons for administrative and leadership positions.

We value the many voices and perspectives of our staff, families and stakeholders and will seek input throughout the Wonderspring community as we work toward these goals.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES



Wonderspring represents growth for my family. With the benefit of two amazing, advocating superheroes who disguise themselves as teachers, my 5-year-old with an IEP has blossomed. And, my previously shy and anxious 3-year old now happily waves goodbye to me at drop-off. When I reflect on their growth, I know we made the right choice in selecting Wonderspring.

– **NATASHA BOSTON,** *Wynnewood Parent*



My daughter, Aziza, had been attending an early childhood center that closed at the onset of the pandemic, a week before I gave birth to my son Zayd. We were drowning. Aziza was used to structure at school, and we were all adjusting with a new baby. After six months at home, we reached out to Wonderspring because of their stellar reputation. It was nerve-wracking sending her to school in the middle of a pandemic, but the staff really worked to make us comfortable. I especially appreciated the daily reports they sent home, which allowed us to talk to her about her day. The minute she started at Wonderspring, you could see a spark in her emerge—her language development exploded, and she woke up every day so excited about going to school. She has developed such close bonds with her classmates and teachers. Knowing she is loved by her teachers, developing a lifelong love of learning, all while having fun with her friends, gave us the confidence to enroll Zayd in April.

– **SALMA KHAN,** *Powelton Village Parent*



The teachers see each child as an individual. They meet them where they are and help them grow. When my daughter was in pre-K, her teacher saw she was picking up on sight words and enjoying reading so she created a list of sight words that Kerrington could hang on her door. Kerrington looked at that list every day. She still does, but now she's reading it to her younger brother.

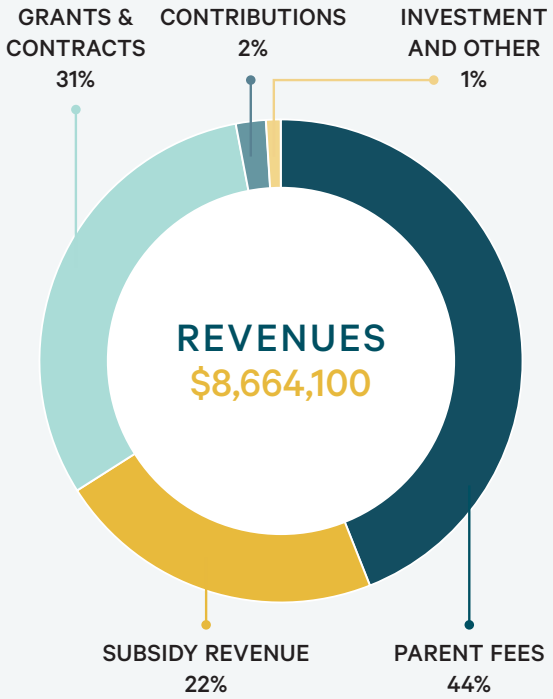
– **NIKKI SUNNEN,** *Narberth parent*

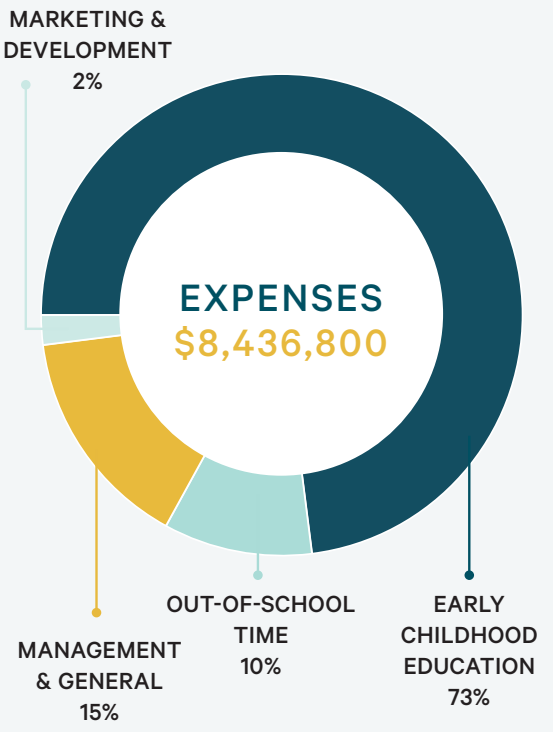
Our five-year-old granddaughter started at Wonderspring when she was 12 weeks old and Wonderspring has played an important role in helping to shape her character. She has a great enthusiasm and zest for life. Most importantly, she is also a kind, caring child and we believe that the staff at Wonderspring helped to instill those qualities."

– **SUE AND ROB KETTELL,** *Narberth grandparents*

FINANCIALS

Data below derived from Wonderspring's audited financial statements for the year ending June 30, 2020





$227,300 SURPLUS

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