

SEATTLE CHILDREN'S
PLAYGARDEN
A Garden for Everyone

2020
Annual Report





The PlayGarden's mission is to provide children of all abilities a safe, accessible and adventurous place to play.

Staff

Sophie Barnett-Dyer, Lead Teacher
Asher Brown, Program Assistant
Elizabeth Bullard, Executive Director
Hannah Gallagher, Inclusive Programs Director
Rachel Harrison, Administrator
Nicole Ijeoma, Preschool Program Assistant
Annie Jones, Program Assistant and Camp Counselor
Michaela McCarthy, Program Assistant
Mica Rood, Preschool Teaching Assistant

Board of Directors

Susan Moore, Seattle Central College (Chair)
Patrick Henry, Seattle Indian Health Board (Treasurer)
Paul Kraegel, Urban Ecologist & Parent Advocate (Secretary)
Steve Barker
Chuck Cowan, University of Washington School of Medicine
Burnley Danner, Harborview Medical Center
Erica Finsness MPH & Parent Advocate
Kathleen Lehman, Psychologist
Zoë Maddox, Human Rights Watch

Seattle Children's PlayGarden
1745 24th Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98144

206.325.5576 childrensplaygarden.org



Dear Friends of the PlayGarden,

2020 was difficult for everyone, but it was especially hard on children with disabilities. We all had to dig deep to find ways to cope with the stress and to find joy. I took refuge in the vegetable garden where I was inspired to make a garden full of treasures for the kids. I started early and worked late. I slowed down, watched the birds, bees and the flowers blossoming. The garden seemed lovelier and more productive than ever. Hummingbirds flitted about and stellar jays nested in the caterpillar hedge - I even made friends with the wild rabbits living in the rainwater cistern. But, sadly, there were no camp kids to wreak the usual havoc. A ray of light appeared as summer came to an end and we cautiously, carefully opened our preschool program, reducing our roster by half. What a joy it was to see River, a basket hooked onto her wheelchair, peeling back the pod of a scarlet runner bean.

As we came up on the 10th anniversary of PlayGarden preschool our teaching staff reflected on how much we have learned about including children with disabilities in outdoor programs and decided to write a book. The teaching staff met regularly online to write *Inclusive Preschool Through the Seasons: Lessons and Stories from 10 Years of a Nature Based Preschool*. The book will be out in early 2021 and filled with helpful tips and strategies for making sure ALL kids have equal access to quality outdoor education. We also launched an exciting new learning hub on our website and installed many of the features of our Pathway for Play project. We hope you will visit both in this new year. Thank you all for supporting the PlayGarden and we'll see you in the garden.

Elizabeth Bullard
Executive Director



PlayGarden preschool during the pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has created extreme hardships and challenges for all families and schools, but no one group has been affected more than children with disabilities. Preschool aged children in general and special education students in particular have difficulty accessing and benefiting from online learning. Many children who, previous to Covid-19, received speech, physical, and occupation therapy, as well as educational service critical to their development were left with no services at all. In March of 2020, the PlayGarden preschool program followed the Stay at Home order issued by Governor Inslee. Since that time our staff has conducted online learning and individual parent coaching. In July we conducted a survey of families on how their children were doing and in what circumstances they would send their children back to school. The responses were heartbreaking but not surprising. Nearly all of the families with a child with a disability reported regression of skills and concerns about their child's development and lack of socialization.

The PlayGarden Board of Directors and staff met several times to develop a plan on how we could serve our families. The decision was made to continue preschool once the Stay at Home order was lifted. Our main concerns were the safety of the children and staff. Utilizing information from Seattle-King County Public Health and expertise from local pediatricians on our board, we adapted our program in several ways.

As our preschool program is located on our one-acre site and class takes place outdoors approximately 70% of the time, we were well-positioned to resume in-person class with a reduction in class size from fifteen to eight children per day. Students are enrolled in morning or afternoon pods and attend two or three days per week. We have instituted a wide range of safety measures including the use of masks for teachers, increased

cleaning procedures, drop off at the gate, and a commitment by families to pay careful attention to and report on the health of all members of their household and to practice social distancing when out of school.

Thanks to our generous supporters and the Blue Rose Foundation we were able to bring our staff back to work and offer families in need financial assistance. Preschool remained open through the fall and once again the PlayGarden came alive with busy, curious and playful preschoolers.



“Thank you so much for all of the time and effort put into this!! I don’t know what I would do without this incredible service you provide. You are Romeo’s only in-person support and it has made this quarantine exponentially more bearable. Zoom preschool simply can’t hold a candle to what you all are doing for our community and I feel blessed every day I send him off to the warm embrace of PlayGarden. Thank you thank you thank you.”

- Romeo’s mom, Amy

Launched! Our Online Learning Hub

We launched the [online learning hub](#) this year! The hub is a place where people anywhere can learn about inclusion by reading our inclusion toolkit, interacting with our blog, exploring the lessons on inclusion, visiting the resource library, and signing up for workshops and trainings. The hub is funded by Seattle and King County Public Health in partnership with the Best Start for Kids initiative and will be expanding in 2021, so come click around and check out lessons like “[The Power of Repeat After Me Songs](#)” and “[How to Talk to Kids About Disability](#)”.



In 2020, PlayGarden staff led seven different inclusion workshops and trained over 366 people affiliated with local, national and international youth organizations including:

Hilltop Children’s Center	Seattle Children’s Hospital
Seattle Waldorf School	Seattle Public Schools
Human Rights Watch	Activities for All Abilities
SANCA Circus Arts	McMahan Consulting
The Meridian School	Girls on the Run
Tiny Trees Preschool	Pike Market Preschool
Parent Advocate at the Arc of King County	Rainier Avenue Church
Seattle Audubon	City of Shoreline Parks and Recreation
Nature Nuts	



Stroll down our Pathway for Play

This year the PlayGarden was proud to welcome our community members to with our newly installed Pathway for Play features. Our new dandelion sculpures, kiosk, wavy walkway, and pebble chime by Trippin all contribute the the magic of a visit to the PlayGarden. Thank you to our artists and builders Stephen Hirt, Andy Sheffer, Trimpin, MIG/Portico, and Gary Merlino Construction for bringing it all to life and to our generous donors for believing in our vision.

Welcome, Kathleen Lehman and Steve Barker to our board,



Kathleen Lehman is a Psychologist at the University of Washington's Center on Human Development and Disabilities and a Self-Advocate Faculty member for the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities program. Welcome, Kathleen!



Steve Barker is a parent advocate and facilities manager. He is a member of the International Facilities Management Association and the American Society for Industrial Security. Welcome, Steve!

and thank you, Mia Santos Hermann!

The PlayGarden attracts the very best of folks. In the summer of 2016 Mia Santos Hermann discovered the PlayGarden while on an outing with her family. What a fortuitous day that was for us! Mia eagerly jumped in as a volunteer in our preschool program and quickly expressed interest in doing even more for the PlayGarden. She joined the Board of Directors in just a few short weeks and spent the next several years supporting, advocating, advising and leading the PlayGarden. In the photo below she is covered in kids and it is no wonder. Her love for kids, and their love for her, shines brightly. Thank you, Mia for bringing such talent and expertise to the PlayGarden.



Budget & Funding

Thanks to our generous donors, the PlayGarden conducted two successful fundraising campaigns in what was a challenging financial year for many. Our Spring Play + Learn + Grow Luncheon went virtual, raising \$94,000 for... and our [Winter Big-Littles campaign](#) featuring profiles of some of our longtime kids and families raised \$55,000. A special thanks to our luncheon sponsors, Seattle Children's Hospital, University Business Center, and Bergman Draper Oslund Udo.

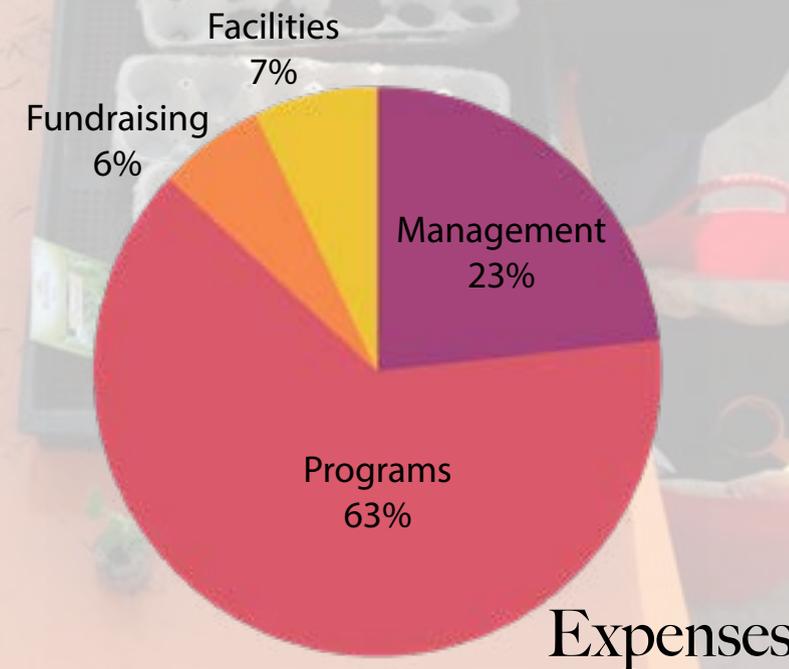
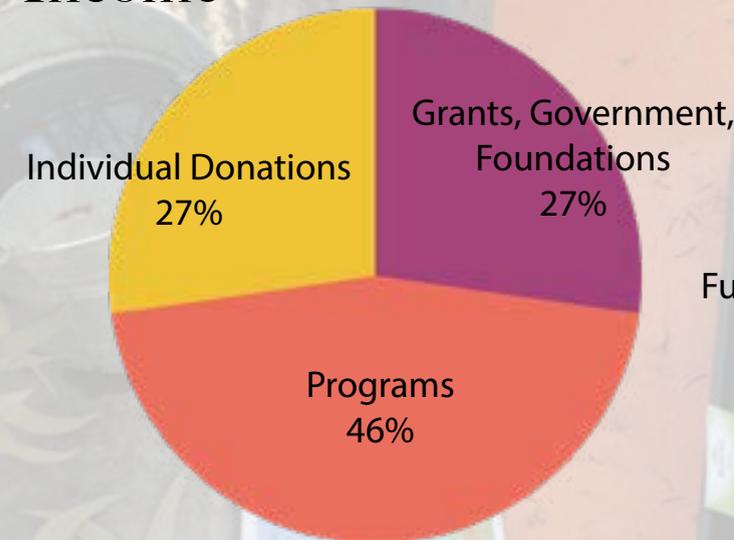
The PlayGarden received substantial public support from the city of Seattle, King County, and the State of Washington in 2020. Ongoing operational support came from the King County Public Health Best Start for Kids initiative, private foundations, individuals, and fees for summer camp and preschool. We would like to give a special thanks to:

Adobe Matching Gift Program
Bergman Draper Oslund, PLLC
Boeing
Brooks Powers Group
Catherine Holmes Wilkins Foundation
Community Health Plan of WA
Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden
Fallsapart Productions, Inc.
Gertrude and Eldon Sallee Foundation
Glaser Foundation
Haggard Childcare Resources

Heising-Simons Fund
Isaac Alhadeff Foundation
Jordan Fund
Microsoft
Northwest Horticultural Society
Public Health Seattle King County
Ravenna Gardens
Seattle Children's Hospital
Seattle Foundation
Seattle Garden Club
Sitchin Foundation Inc.

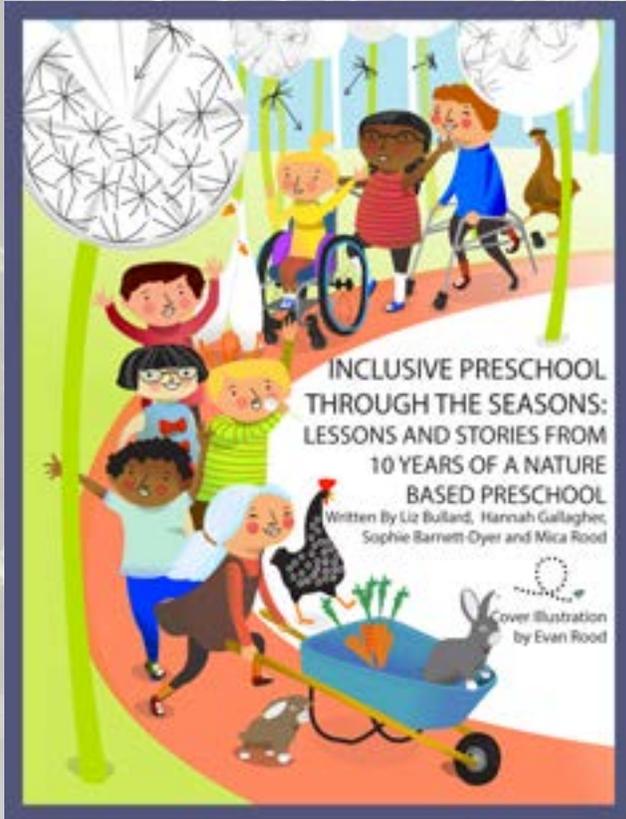
The Cobb Foundation
The Norcliffe Foundation
The University Business Center
Three Point Oh
Union Bank
United Way of King County
Uresco Construction Materials
The State of Washington
Seattle Dept. of Neighborhoods
King County Parks & Recreation

Income



Expenses

Coming in 2021!



Inclusive Preschool Through the Seasons Lessons and Stories from Ten Years of a Nature Based Preschool

Because all children with disabilities should be able to attend nature-based outdoor preschools.

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