

# December Newsletter



## Children's FRIEND



## Playground UPGRADE!



In 2016, LISC (Local Initiatives Support Corporation) invited licensed Rhode Island child care centers to compete for a "Playground Intervention Grant" to receive a playground design from Studio MLA in Boston and up to \$5,000 to implement the design. Children's Friend applied for and received one of the three grants for our Hartford Center.

Other than a group of planters dedicated to a beloved teacher who passed away in 2016, the Hartford Center playground was a blank slate of fenced in asphalt. It was the perfect setting for a creative new playground design.

Studio MLA came up with a great design incorporating natural elements and engaging play spaces that could be



created for \$5,000 or less. However, implementing the design while staying within budget would require serious people power.

Enter the Blue Cross Blue Shield Blue Angels, who provided the people power! Amanda Meldonian, Child Development Supervisor at Hartford "volunteered" her dad, Dennis Meldonian, of Meldonian Construction, to serve as Construction Manager on the project.

On September 15<sup>th</sup>, a very hot Friday, the Blue Angel volunteers painted bike tracks, created wall murals, built planters and storage benches, and installed play panels for music and art activities.

We are very grateful to LISC, Blue Cross, Studio MLA, and Dennis Meldonian for this magical transformation. The kids absolutely love their new play space!



Visit [cfsri.org/playground.html](http://cfsri.org/playground.html) for a video of the first moment our kids saw their new playground!



# Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

The holiday season has arrived here at Children's Friend as we prepare for our annual **Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive**. It's

an exciting time of year for children and families as they celebrate the wonders of the season.

For parents who have lost a job, are underemployed, or who struggle to make ends meet each month, the holidays can be a time of stress and frustration. When a parent can't afford even the basics of everyday living, holiday gifts for their children are out of their reach. No one wants to disappoint their children.

In this newsletter, you'll read many wonderful stories of community participation and support. We are able to live our mission to serve our most vulnerable children and families everyday thanks to your support. I ask for your help once again this holiday.

Please keep our most vulnerable families and children in mind as you gather with your own family and friends to celebrate this holiday season.

By providing a warm coat, book, toy, or a pair of boots for a child in need, you are sharing the joy and happiness

of the season. You are helping to make lifelong memories for families by spreading hope and joy. Many donors tell us that their involvement with our **Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive** is their favorite holiday tradition!

There are many ways to support the **Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive**. To sponsor a family, please call the **Spirit of Giving** Holiday Hotline at 401.276.4346 or visit us online at [spiritofgivingdrive.org](http://spiritofgivingdrive.org), and we will match you with a family.

If you'd like to help in other ways, we accept monetary donations and/or gift cards that we can use to purchase gifts and clothing for the children. You can also volunteer your time for the Holiday Drive - many volunteers are needed to check-in and sort gifts, and prepare them for delivery.

Thank you for all that you do for Rhode Island children and families in need. Your support makes a great impact in the lives of our families. Happy holidays from our family here at Children's Friend.

David Caprio

President and Chief Executive Officer



## 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Investing in Our Children Luncheon

On October 18<sup>th</sup>, Children's Friend honored The Providence Journal for their commitment to vulnerable children and families at our **15<sup>th</sup> Annual Investing in Our Children Luncheon**.

For over twenty-five years The Providence Journal has supported the capital needs of our agency, helped to build family support centers; sponsored families during our annual Holiday Drive; and donated essential dollars for family-centered services. Most recently, they have become a partner in our **Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive**. This partnership has led to significant growth in the Holiday Drive, allowing us to serve over 1,528 families during the 2016 holiday season. We congratulate The Providence Journal for their long history of investing in Rhode Island children.

Our annual luncheon also serves as an opportunity to celebrate the impact of our mission. This year we recognized the important role fathers play in the lives of their children with a short video featuring a father who participated in our Dad's Job Training program. This twelve-week program offers participating fathers a chance to gain valuable educational and vocational skills which enable them to find full time employment and improve the economic security of their families.

The video focused on one of the fathers in the program, who, as a former felon, struggled to find employment and support his family. The skills he developed through the program have increased his career prospects and given him hope for his future. The entire room of 250 attendees rose to their feet with a standing ovation for his moving story. **(To see this inspiring video, visit us online at [cfsri.org/marcstory.html](http://cfsri.org/marcstory.html).)**

Thanks to the participation and generous support of hundreds of individuals and corporate sponsors the **2017 Investing in Our Children Luncheon** was our most successful. Over \$138,000 has been raised to support the work of Children's Friend. Thank you to our sponsors, attendees, and donors who helped make the afternoon such a successful and meaningful event.



David Caprio, President and Chief Executive Officer, Children's Friend; Janet Hasson, President and Publisher, The Providence Journal; William J. Allen, Chairman of the Board, Children's Friend.



You can make an immediate difference in the life of a child by becoming a Holiday Drive sponsor. Fill out our quick, easy online sponsorship form at [spiritofgivingdrive.org](http://spiritofgivingdrive.org).

Or you may contact Johanna Corcoran, Holiday Drive coordinator, by calling our Holiday Drive Hotline at 401.276.4346 or email [holidaydrive@cfsri.org](mailto:holidaydrive@cfsri.org).

### Invest in Our Most Vulnerable Children

Making a planned gift is a wonderful way to ensure that Children's Friend and its mission to improve the well-being and healthy development of Rhode Island's most vulnerable young children is secure in perpetuity.

For more information, please contact Stacy Couto, Vice President External Affairs, at 401.276.4306 or [scouto@cfsri.org](mailto:scouto@cfsri.org).

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## PROVIDENCE PLACE

### During the Month of December!

For the second year in a row, Providence Place is helping us spread hope and joy during the holiday season.

As you go about your holiday shopping, you'll see donation boxes for the **Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive** placed throughout the mall and in participating mall stores. But that's not all, you can also find us with Santa on level 1!

Volunteers and staff from Children's Friend will be manning gift wrapping tables at Providence Place, right next to Santa. From now until December 24<sup>th</sup>, we will be there every day to handle your gift wrapping for you. Stop by and say hi, we'll be waiting!



## Tufts Health Plan, Spreading Hope and Joy

One way we serve our families during the holidays is to provide baby kits to help cover their basic necessities. The lack of clean and dry diapers for infants and toddlers presents a risk to their health and well-being.

Thanks to Tufts Health Plan, 150 baby bags fully stocked with necessities and an age appropriate book or toy, are waiting to become gifts for families involved in the Children's Friend **Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive** this year.

Staff at Tufts Health Plan worked with our Development team to purchase supplies for the baby bags. Volunteers from Tufts Health Plan spent two days at Children's Friend assembling them.

We are excited to have these wonderful baby bags for our families, and we owe it all to Tufts Health Plan. Thank you, Tufts Health Plan, for helping us spread hope and joy this holiday season!