This annual report and this message were written in April of 2020, at a time when our state, our country, and the entire world are battling the unprecedented and devastating impacts of the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic. In these unsettled and uncertain times, we at Children’s Friend debated whether we should cancel or postpone the publishing of this 2019 Annual Report.

Children’s Friend remains on the front lines supporting vulnerable young children and families in this crisis. We have seen first-hand the devastating personal losses, painful health struggles, and crippling economic impacts on those we serve and on our entire community. We cannot and do not ignore the immense toll this is taking on us personally and on our community. We also firmly believe that we will get through this crisis and will march forward in new and different ways to support our youngest and most vulnerable, just as we have done for 186 years.

Our founder, Harriet Ware, once said of our founding “…and was told by such, that the object must be abandoned, that the people were completely savage; that it was an improper place for a female; and that a child eight years old, would turn me out of school. I felt, as you will naturally infer, greatly encouraged, and was determined, at all events, to persevere.” In her spirit of perseverance, we publish this 2019 Annual Report to highlight the many significant accomplishments we achieved; to remind us that working together we can accomplish much and get through anything; and to reinforce that we are always there for our youngest and most vulnerable, especially when they need us most.

The work of Children’s Friend is the work of you. It is your generosity, empathy, caring, and desire to make a positive difference, which is improving the lives of Rhode Island’s youngest and most vulnerable children. Thank you for being Children’s Friend.

Enjoy reading some of the highlights of the Strong Families and Thriving Children that you made possible in 2019.

Stay safe, and as always, thank you!

David Caprio
President and Chief Executive Officer
Children’s Friend, a non-profit organization founded in 1834, is Rhode Island’s oldest child-serving organization, and a leading provider of child welfare, family support, mental health, and child development services.

Our Mission
Children’s Friend is the innovative leader in improving the well-being and healthy development of Rhode Island’s most vulnerable young children.

Our Strategic Priority
Too many of the youngest and most vulnerable children in Rhode Island are experiencing devastating outcomes, including death, as a result of abuse and neglect. As stewards of the resources entrusted to us, Children’s Friend is realigning itself to proactively respond to this crisis.

Our Principles

Family-Centered: Discovering child and family needs and working with families to best meet them. Providing opportunities for families to be meaningfully engaged in the design of services. Being committed to serving families of diverse cultures and lifestyles in a non-biased and non-judgmental way.

Seamless: Coordinating and integrating our services to ensure that families receive the support they need, regardless of point of entry to the agency. When our families face challenges outside our expertise, we partner with other high-quality organizations.

Outcome-Driven: Thoughtfully measuring the impact and effectiveness of our services. Engaging in ongoing learning and innovation to ensure we are offering effective services to children and families. Consistently identifying what we can improve, doing what we can do best, and measuring our self against national benchmarks.

Advocates: Taking a leadership role in educating policymakers and the public on the needs of the youngest and most vulnerable children, even when it means taking risks for the benefit of children.

Stewards: Taking responsibility for growing and sustaining our human and financial capital. Demonstrating respect and cultural sensitivity for our community, staff, and Board.

Children’s Friend is a member of the Child Welfare League of America and is accredited by the Council on Accreditation.
Serving New Communities

The Opening of the Children’s Friend Althea Center

Last fall, Children’s Friend celebrated the grand opening of its new Early Childhood Center of Excellence located at 70 Union Avenue in Providence. This new state-of-the-art facility offers Head Start, Child Care, Family Visiting, mental health, and professional development services. Formerly the Althea Street School and Asa Messer Annex, the Early Childhood Center of Excellence has partnered with West Side Play Space to offer a dedicated play space for families in the neighborhood.

This project started with a dilapidated and unsafe building in the West End of Providence, which was then gutted and refurbished in just over a year. This Center now serves a community that has one of the highest poverty rates in Rhode Island, and has brought a reinvigorated energy and excitement to the community.

A New Partnership with Dorcas International

Just as exciting has been an amazing partnership with Dorcas International Institute where we opened a Head Start classroom at their 220 Elmwood Avenue site in Providence. This partnership allows both Children’s Friend and Dorcas International to serve some of our most vulnerable children and families in an integrated and innovative manner.

A BIG Deal of a Build with the Nordson Corporation and the Nordson Corporation Foundation

In August 2019 the renovations to our Althea Center (Althea) were almost complete. On September 16th over 100 preschool-aged children would start coming to Althea to play, grow, and learn in our classrooms. Yet Althea did not have a playground. The 887 boxes consisting of children’s furniture, books, and learning materials had not been unpacked. There was still so much to do to be ready for the children on Opening Day.

Thankfully, we had a tremendous partner in the Nordson Corporation and the Nordson Corporation Foundation. A grant towards the renovations of the Althea Center was generously provided by the Nordson Corporation Foundation. On August 22nd and August 23rd, more than 30 Nordson Corporation employees, along with Ultiplay Parks & Playgrounds, Inc. (Ultiplay), volunteered for a Big Build. They built our playground from the ground up and helped set up our seven classrooms and our staff workspaces. For two straight days, including one of the hottest that summer at 90°F with 99 percent humidity, Nordson employees dug holes, assembled and installed playground equipment, unpacked countless boxes, and assembled children’s furniture and storage shelves along with Ultiplay and staff of Children’s Friend.

“Nordson employees feel strongly about the philanthropic culture built by our founders,” Joan Szczepanik, Community Relations Manager for the Nordson Corporation Foundation, said. “Nordson believes in giving back to communities where we are located—not to promote our business, but because it’s the right thing to do.”

In addition to supplying us with some incredible volunteer-power, the Nordson Corporation purchased all the equipment for our outside play area—a balance beam, a variety of musical panels, a sunshade, climbers, tubes, and more. Together, with the expertise of Ultiplay, our staff designed an outdoor play space that brings learning to the outdoors where the children can run, balance, ride, and play music.
Lending a Helping Hand
The Importance of Home Visits for Vulnerable Families

During a regular family home visit, Veronique, a Family Advocate, heard the stress and strain in Mary’s* voice. Veronique had been working with the family for a while now and had built a strong relationship with Mary. Something was definitely off during this visit. Veronique made a note to call and check in after the visit. Later over the phone, Mary was distraught, as she filled Veronique in on what was happening with the family. Mary was completely unaware that her husband was delinquent in paying the rent. Their landlord recently evicted the family, and her husband just abandoned the family. A victim of domestic violence and suddenly alone, Mary had nowhere to turn.

Because of her desperate situation, Veronique immediately began assisting Mary with completing the necessary forms for Child Care services so that she could start an employment search immediately. Veronique also helped Mary apply for food stamps assistance. Within two days, Veronique helped Mary attain employment as a cashier at a local supermarket.

Veronique then referred Mary to Sojourner House in Providence, where a caseworker submitted a referral for a 12-day stay at a hotel, since Mary had only five days to vacate her apartment.

Mary, however, was able to find a family friend to stay with temporarily. The caseworker at Sojourner House then referred Mary to the Providence Housing Authority in the hopes of receiving an emergency housing voucher for a permanent solution.

After one month, Mary received a one-year voucher for a two-bedroom apartment. Veronique then met with Mary at Sojourner House to assist in completing an application for a furniture voucher, which is given primarily to domestic violence recipients. Also, Veronique secured funds from the Children’s Friend Emergency Crisis Fund for the family, as well as gift cards to Target and Walmart to help them settle in quickly. She was also able to purchase a warm coat, gloves, and boots, which Mary’s three and a half-year-old daughter needed so desperately.

Thanks to Children’s Friend, Mary’s circumstances have changed dramatically from desperation to hopefulness. Mary now has a roof over her head, and once she finds an apartment and a lease is signed, she’ll finally be able to settle.

Mary takes comfort in knowing that her daughter is now happy socializing with her classmates, where she learns every day and receives a healthy breakfast, snack, and lunch in a safe and caring environment.

*The names of the children and families we serve have been changed to protect privacy and confidentiality.
Improving the Quality of Services
The Child and Adult Care Food Program

We all know that proper nutrition is critically important for a child’s physical and mental development. Eating nutritious foods influences cognitive development and academic performance in children. Conversely, under-nutrition will negatively affect children resulting in less energy and less interest in learning.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides nutritious meals and snacks served to infants and children in participating child care centers, daycare homes, and adult day care centers. The meals follow the United States Department of Agriculture nutrition standards with breakfast consisting of milk, fruits or vegetables, grains, or meat component three times a week.

Meals for lunch and dinner need milk, grains, meat, or other proteins, fruits, and vegetables. Snacks are also provided, which include two different servings from five components, including milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, or meat or other proteins.

Since 1987, Children’s Friend is proud to be a CACFP sponsor, which serves 180 licensed home child care providers throughout Rhode Island. As a sponsoring organization, Children’s Friend offers training and monitoring, so child care homes can better educate and provide the appropriate care for children. Training includes information on topics such as autism, child abuse and neglect, state regulations, taxes, CPR, first aid, and nutrition. Technical assistance is also offered, which focuses on healthy environments, curriculum, lead inspection, and insurance.

Lucia Santiago is the Director of Nutrition Services for the Child and Adult Care Food Program at Children’s Friend. She is responsible for overseeing the program within all of the Children’s Friend sites as well as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) at Children’s Friend. Lucia agrees with the expression, “Healthy isn’t a goal. It’s a way of living.” She credits the Child and Adult Care Food Program with helping to build a better and healthier generation.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program helps to make the cost of daycare more affordable for many low-income families since parents do not have to prepare meals for their children. “The program allows us to provide proper nutrition and enhances the children’s experience in a caring and nurturing environment,” states Ruth Maille, owner of Stumbling Blocks, a licensed child care home. Ruth is grateful for the subsidy she receives from this federal program because it not only helps her to provide delicious meals, but also instills within the children the importance of proper nutrition.
Research shows that when Dads are actively and positively involved with their children, their children have a much better chance of having academic and life success. Similarly, when Dads contribute to the financial stability of the family, the entire family has a better chance of enjoying positive life outcomes. While that may seem logical to most, for many men who grew up in poverty, they have had few positive role models. The concept of being “a good Dad” or a “family support” proves elusive. That’s why the Dads Job Training Program aims to make a critical change in the life paths of our families we serve. By providing participating Dads with highly marketable job training skills, as well as fathering and life support, they learn the skills needed to become a positive role model for their children. The program works.

Dads complete an intensive three-month paid job training program that lays a foundation for work in the fields of environmental services, carpentry, and metal-working. They receive certifications from Groundwork Rhode Island, a leader in environmental services, the Amos House Carpentry Program, Ocean State Forklift for forklift operations, and the Steel Yard for its Weld to Work program. At the same time, they receive soft-skills training on subjects like resume writing and interviewing skills. All job training includes wrap-around reflective workshops led by a male counselor on what it means to be a father and how to embrace and enhance their relationships with their children. “Now, every day, I get up early to go to work, and my boy, who is two, gets up early with me to go to school. It feels great to be someone he can look up to,” said Eugene Johnson, a recent graduate.

Most Dads obtain employment soon after graduating from either the summer or winter program. Kandakai Duncan, another recent graduate, is working for the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council as a result of his work with Groundwork Rhode Island. “This program changed my life, teaching me how to provide for my family and be a better Dad for the long term,” he said.

Many of the Dads who have participated in the program did not have fathers present to serve as role models for themselves. “My father was very young and was never there for me,” said Brad Johnson, a graduate of the program from 2017. “But because of this program, I learned how important it was to my kids’ development to be involved.” Johnson is currently employed in a high-wage job at Electric Boat as part of the X-ray welding crew. “Now I can provide for my family, and that makes me feel great. My wife is going to nursing school, and she doesn’t have to work while she’s in school because I can support our family. We wouldn’t be where we are now without the Dads program.”

All the Dads have nothing but good things to say about Susan Grant, who manages the program. “Susan will always be in my heart,” said Johnson. “She’s like a mom. She just wants the best for you. You can tell it’s coming right from her heart.” Grant credits the men for becoming like brothers and lifting each other. “We all became friends, but we didn’t start that way,” said Jeris Stephen, a recent graduate. “But Susan was so great. If someone isn’t motivated or pulling their weight, she helps solve problems. She’s one of the reasons it’s such a great program.”

Children’s Friend is grateful to the The Kathy and Brian MacLean Fund at the Rhode Island Foundation and the MetLife Foundation for their support of this vital program. Without their investment in the lives of our fathers, none of this would be possible.
Infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities were provided therapy and educational services.

Expectant mothers and families with newborns received home visiting services to promote and strengthen positive parent-child relationships, promote positive growth and development in children, and build strengths of families and their protective factors.

Children were placed in high quality, bilingual childcare services.

Vulnerable children and their family members received child and family development services, including education, health, nutrition, social services, and other supports.

Substance affected families participated in intensive home-based services designed to help parents overcome addiction while safely parenting their children.

Families participated in a nutritious program that provides healthy foods, nutrition education, and referrals to doctors, dentists, and other community services.

Nutritious meals were provided to children in our programs.

At-risk families received high fidelity wrap around services.

Families received home-based outreach services intended to promote the health and well-being of mothers and their newborn children.

Families received home visits by a registered nurse including prenatal and parenting education, developmental screenings, social supports, as well as support for educational and professional goals for the client.

Children and families received individual & family counseling services addressing issues of loss, parent-child conflict, school and behavioral issues, etc.

Children and families received concurrent permanency planning services, foster care placement, and adoption services – including children with special needs.
Children’s Friend would like to thank the individuals, businesses, foundations, and organizations that help to support our mission each day. Your generosity ensures that the most vulnerable, young children receive the highest quality programs and services. Your investment in our children and families is most appreciated.

Children’s Friend takes great care in acknowledging our many donors who appear on the following pages. These lists have been carefully prepared. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of our donor list.

Please accept our sincerest apology should you feel as though your name has omitted or incorrectly listed. If you feel as though an oversight has occurred, please notify Stacy Couto, Chief of Philanthropy, by calling (401) 276-4306 or by e-mail at scouto@cfsri.org.

We truly appreciate our wonderful donors for their unwavering generosity in support of our mission.

Thank You!
Donor Spotlight
Daniel T. Quinn

Many thanks to Dan and the many donors who have made our mission a priority for the future. We, along with future generations of Rhode Islanders, are grateful to the members of the Harriet Ware Society for their vision and generosity:

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Lillian Barton
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Martha Shepard
Laura B. Sims
Charlotte Lumb Swift
Imogene Watson

Planned Giving
Daniel T. Quinn: One of the Harriet Ware Society’s Newest Members

I was fortunate to have two loving parents as a child. Both of my parents were teachers, so I grew up with my brother and sister in a typical middle-class environment. We always had plenty of food and new clothes to start the school year, and we would go skiing in the winter and camping in the summer. After I went to college, I entered the corporate world, where I worked with people who all seemed to come from similar backgrounds as myself.

I had the opportunity to come to Children’s Friend as Chief Financial Officer. At the time, I considered it just a job, but there is something magical about the organization. The longer you are here, the more you learn what Children’s Friend is all about. And while I have since built my own company, my connection with the organization has only grown over time.

A lot changed for me when I worked internally with a team of staff to create a plan to distribute our emergency assistance funding. Ultimately, I ended up distributing these funds. It was then and there that I had a front-row seat into the work that Children’s Friend was doing day in and day out.

While I thought the transactions would occur mechanically, I couldn’t have been further from the truth. I learned that our Family Advocates have to tell the story that goes along with the emergency assistance request. I have to say, the stories that I would hear were too often heartbreaking. I looked back on what I thought was a typical upbringing and realized just how lucky I was.

As we built the organizational budget each year, one thing was apparent. The level-funding from state and federal contracts was not sufficient to carry on the agency’s important work. Children’s Friend is very fortunate to have an endowment that covers both administrative expenses, as well as any shortfalls in program funding.

To me, this is an example of Children’s Friend putting their money where their mouth is. Children’s Friend enjoys a rich history that dates back to 1834. The agency has become one of the most influential voices advocating for necessary resources for vulnerable children and families in our community.

Giving to Children’s Friend has been an easy decision; it is a responsible organization that is doing a tremendous amount of good in the community where we all work and live. I also feel that investing dollars in young children has the added benefit of having the most significant impact on someone’s life, which appeals to the accountant/pragmatist in me.
Tribute Gifts

Children's Friend regularly receives donations from individuals and families in honor of someone who has made a positive impact within our community. In addition, contributions are also received in memory of a loved one who has passed away. This is a wonderful way to honor their memory, while having a positive impact on the lives of our children and families. Children's Friend would like to thank our tribute donors for their generosity in honoring those who unselfishly gave back to improve and advance the lives of others.

Sponsor Spotlight: Lyndalu Piernunzi

Lyndalu Piernunzi's passion for giving to those in need was born when she witnessed her father providing free care to his patients who could not pay for visits.

Her grandfather died when her father was age seven, requiring him to be the head of the family of five. He was sent to an orphanage in Tennessee – a farm to pick cotton to earn money to support the family as his mother could not provide for the four children. Eventually, he and his brother were reunited with their family, where Lyndalu's father continued to be the sole provider. He joined the Air Force, went to 12 years of medical school, and became a specialized surgeon. Lyndalu learned of Children's Friend when she was searching for a way to continue her father's legacy of giving to those in need. She has been doing an Adopt-a-Family Holiday Drive. She realized that she had found what she was looking for and coordinated her first Holiday Drive in 1999 at MetLife with their blessing sponsoring 26 families. In 2019, that number grew to over 70 families!

Over the past twenty years, Lyndalu has advocated for Children's Friend with the Senior Officers of MetLife in Rhode Island as well as the Global Group of Senior Managers resulting in an ongoing relationship of support and sponsorships. MetLife has opened its doors for foster parent recruitment, volunteered at events, donated to program-specific needs, and held school supply drives. MetLife’s generosity has grown over the years to be a Platinum sponsor for the 2019 Annual Investing in Our Children Luncheon. MetLife and Lyndalu continue to be a consistent presence at Children’s Friend. What began as a very personal search grew into a corporate relationship that has provided help to many families and children.

“I was drawn to the incredible impact this agency has made for countless years to so many children and families. Everything they do resonates with me and brings back fond and loving memories of my father, and his relentless efforts to be kind, pay it forward, and to count your blessings.”
Holiday Drive

For over two decades, the Children’s Friend Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive has helped families in need by providing, toys, games, books, and warm clothing for the winter months. With help from our unbelievably generous supporters and volunteers, our 2019 Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive set a new record of serving more than 1,700 families and approximately 5,000 children. Children’s Friend thanks all those who helped to make our Holiday Drive such a tremendous success by bringing hope and joy to our children and families at such a special time of year.
Holiday Drive Spotlight

Matthew’s Wish

Three years ago, a young man with Down syndrome had one selfless wish - to host a holiday toy drive for needy families. In just three weeks, the entire community rallied with Matthew Thayer to deliver 464 toys to families.

Due to the enormous success, and the heartfelt commitment of the community, all those involved were inspired to create a non-profit organization named Matthew's Wish. The organization collects toys throughout the year through various fundraising and awareness campaigns. To date, Matthew’s Wish has donated over 5,000 toys to various organizations throughout Rhode Island. This year, Children’s Friend was the grand recipient of hundreds of toys.

Matthew, along with his Dad and President of Matthew's Wish, Tim Thayer, and Todd Kinsey, a dedicated volunteer and friend, arrived at Children’s Friend bright and early with huge smiles on their faces. Carts and carts full of toys were filled, all while Matthew’s excitement never left his face. When asked why they had chosen Children’s Friend to donate toys to, the answer was simple: “They do amazing things all year long, and we felt compelled to help them,” says President Tim Thayer.

Matthew is a kind, compassionate young man who truly understands the power of giving. He may speak in a voice almost as soft as a whisper, but his energy and compassion are as loud as thunder.

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<th>Holiday Drive Stats</th>
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<td><strong>510</strong> Volunteers</td>
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<td><strong>1,725</strong> Families Served</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5,405</strong> Children Supported</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>22,110</strong> Toys, books, and games donated</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>27,025</strong> Coats, pajamas and articles of warm clothing distributed</td>
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Holiday Drive Volunteer Spotlight

Guercy Carrié

Guercy Carrié could spend his vacation traveling to a warm, tropical climate relaxing on a white sand beach. Or, he could smell the clean ocean air while aboard a cruise ship to the Caribbean. A thrilling ride on a rollercoaster at a theme park in Florida sounds exciting, too.

Without a doubt, all three of these getaway options would undoubtedly provide him with cherished memories of a fantastic vacation. However, Guercy would much rather remember his vacation week in December when he volunteers for the Children’s Friend annual Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive.

Thanks to the generous support of our many individual, community, and corporate sponsors, the 22nd annual Holiday Drive was a tremendous success by breaking last year’s record of serving over 1,700 families participating in Children’s Friend programs. For those experiencing difficult times, the Holiday Drive provides thousands of gifts, including articles of warm clothing, toys, books, and games to those who have little and struggle with basic needs and necessities.

In 2012, Guercy first became involved with the Holiday Drive while he was employed as an Internal Auditor for Citizens Bank. Now an Audit Manager/Assistant Vice President, he joins several groups of employees at Citizens Bank that volunteer every year for this most worthy cause. “I liked the experience so much that I wanted to do more to help children and families in need,” he said. In 2014, Guercy decided to increase his volunteer hours so he could do even more to help underprivileged families during the holiday season.

Guercy, or “G” as his friends refer to him, looks forward with anticipation to that special week in December when he helps to ensure that Rhode Island’s most vulnerable children have presents under the tree. Whether it’s checking in, sorting, or bagging gifts, stocking shelves in the Children’s Friend holiday room, or helping to organize hundreds of bags of warm clothing and toys to be delivered by family advocates, Guercy shares his time in gratitude for all his many blessings.

Stacy Couto, Chief of Philanthropy at Children’s Friend, comments, “G is such a tremendous help to our staff during this hectic time of the year.” She adds, “We are thrilled that he so generously gives of his time to help us provide for families who are struggling and cannot afford warm clothing or gifts for their children during the holidays.”

Ask this perennial volunteer about his inspiration, and he will respond, “My mother always welcomed the less fortunate in her home with an open heart and instilled within me the spirit of volunteerism.”

Guercy reflects on this rewarding opportunity to give back and recalls a quote by Albert Schweitzer, a theologian, organist, writer, humanitarian, philosopher, and physician who once said, “Wherever you turn, you can find someone who needs you. Even if it is a little thing, do something for which there is no pay but the privilege of doing it. Remember, you don’t live in the world all of your own.”
In 2019, we concluded a phenomenal two-year Nutritional Education Program designed to combat childhood obesity supported by Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island (BCBSRI). Our nutritional education program included gardening inside and outside of our classrooms and providing starter vegetable plants for families to start a garden at home. The program also included in-classroom cooking demonstrations, providing families with age-appropriate, child-friendly cookbooks, and cooking demonstration recipes and food to replicate dishes at home. The program also included hosting pop-up farmers’ markets.

The reach of our Nutritional Education Program was incredible. Every child in our Head Start, Pre-K and Child Care programs, as well as their family members, benefited. It spanned all of our centers located in Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls that provide Head Start, Pre-K, and Child Care services in more than 60 classrooms. In all, this program impacted over 6,800 children, their parents, and other family members.

Our goal for the Nutritional Education Program was to increase access, exposure, and integration of healthy foods to the children and their families. Our Child Development and Nutrition staff collaborated to provide nutrition education in our classrooms, identify and link families to our Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and devise fun and engaging recipes to try in the classrooms. The children loved making and eating Easy Peasy Extra Cheesy Quesadilla in class and Banana Bites at home. More than 90 percent of families reported making the recipes at home.

Beyond this essential funding, our Nutritional Education Program would not have been possible without a tremendous amount of collaboration between our staff, the community, and volunteers, including those from BCBSRI and other companies. On the days we distributed the recipes from the cooking demonstrations, cookbooks, and food to replicate the dishes at home, we needed a lot of help with logistics.

During these events, all ingredients needed for the recipes were purchased. Over 1,000 bags were then assembled for the families to take home. The Banana Bites recipe alone included over 1,000 boxes of cereal, bunches of bananas, jars of sunny butter, and jars of applesauce. We would have never been able to create and distribute these bags to the families without everyone’s help!

Our children, parents, teachers, and nutritionists, as well as volunteers, thoroughly enjoyed the program! Many parents commented about their surprise in seeing their children eating and liking healthy foods. As a result, families began feeding their children healthy foods like broccoli, chickpeas, cucumbers, and others that they were reluctant to serve at home before.

Most importantly, we see changes in rates for childhood overweight and obesity. A few years back, only 44 percent of the children in our Head Start, Pre-K, and Child Care programs were maintaining a healthy weight. At the end of our nutrition program, 64 percent of the children in the programs had a healthy weight. Thank you, BCBSRI, for helping us to make a difference in children’s health!
Since 1834, Children’s Friend has improved the well-being and healthy development of vulnerable young children within our community. This long history of serving at-risk children and their families would not have been possible without our dedicated and caring employees. With over 450 employees, 16 locations, and 25+ programs, as well as administrative, financial, fundraising, transportation, and custodial departments, the highly-skilled and diverse staff at Children’s Friend has made an incredible impact in the lives of those we serve. On behalf of those who turn to us in their time of need, we would like to acknowledge and thank all our valuable employees for their continued good work and dedication.
Cooking Up Summer Fun
Board Members Volunteer Time and Talent!

Once again this year, over 300 preschoolers and child development staff were treated to a cookout lunch, dished up by the Children’s Friend Board of Directors, and presented with table service during our Summer Learning and Enrichment Program.

“It’s amazing to see the smiles on kids’ faces when they realize they are treated to a restaurant-like experience,” says Board Member Eva C. Hulse-Avila. “And they are so polite.”

“I grew up in a neighborhood where sharing food together was an act of love and a demonstration of appreciation for every person,” says Rosa E. De Castillo, Board Member. “Serving food to staff recognizes that they are appreciated not just for the job they perform, but for their resiliency, love, and dedication to those they serve.”

Children and staff alike enjoyed all the usual cookout favorites, and of course, watermelon for dessert. “The barbecue always brings a warm smile to my face in recognition of the dedicated staff and the fantastic work they do daily to enrich the lives of the kids”, says John D. Cregan, Board Member. “I brought my daughter to the cookout. She loved interacting with the kids and staff, and it was a wonderful experience for her.”

“I bring my grandchildren with me each year,” says Hulse-Avila. “I want them to understand the value of giving back and showing appreciation, and volunteering at the cookouts is an excellent way to learn that.”

“Seeing the kids smiling, sharing, and enjoying a good meal with their peers and teachers makes my heart rejoice,” says DeCastillo. “And it demonstrates the value of the Children’s Friend community within our greater communities.”
Dedicated Leadership
Introducing Our Leadership Team

Simply put, leadership is the art of motivating people towards achieving a common goal. At Children’s Friend, we are fortunate for the exceptional leadership provided by our Board of Directors and Head Start Policy Council. Through their helpful guidance and counsel, our organization remains steadfast in our mission to improve the well-being and healthy development of Rhode Island’s most vulnerable young children.

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Policy Council Spotlight: Sorhenis Lee
From Head Start Parent to Children’s Friend Staff

Sorhenis Lee is excited about her new position as a Family Engagement Specialist at Children’s Friend. She is responsible for building relationships by keeping the lines of communication open between parents of Head Start students and Children’s Friend. Her duties also include supporting teachers and providing parents with information about available educational resources.

Her dream of working for Children’s Friend began in 2016 when she enrolled her son, Aaron, in the Head Start program. Soon thereafter, Sorhenis attended her first Parent Committee meeting and began sharing her time by volunteering in the classroom. She enjoyed the time she spent learning about the Head Start program and was thrilled that she had a more active role in her son’s first classroom learning experience.

Sorhenis wanted to learn more about the Policy Council at Children’s Friend and began to attend monthly meetings. With a background in finance and banking, she was elected and served a two-year term as Treasurer of the Head Start Policy Council.

As Treasurer, her responsibilities included administering the Parent Activity Fund and submitting a monthly report of all transactions at each Policy Council meeting.

Looking back, Sorhenis Lee is grateful that she was able to get involved with the Head Start Policy Council at Children’s Friend.

She encourages other parents to become even greater participants in their child’s early education. “The Policy Council helps parents and families grow by acquiring interpersonal, professional, and family-oriented skills.”

Sorhenis affirms, “Getting involved in your child’s life is so important for their health and well-being.”

Head Start Policy Council

Chairman
Naomi Stanley
Parent at Dexter Center

Vice Chairman
Ana Echavarria
Parent at Althea Center

Treasurer
Natalia Mustafa
Parent at Hartford Center

Secretary
Quilvania Estevez
Parent at Friendship Center

Members
Rut Albornoz
Erika Aldana
Yuric Ardon
Lorry Boss
Sokpha Chea
Michel Dasilva
Ismael DosSantos
Patricia Janvier
Helen Lincoln
Paula Mizzoni
Yraida Peralta
Janette Perez
Evelyn Romero
Yarimar Tapia
Judy Tolentino
Inilda Vaz

Community Representatives
Mary Cram
Children’s Friend
Board Member
Sharleene Owusu
Parent

From Head Start Parent to Children’s Friend Staff
Volunteer at Children’s Friend

Do you have some free time and would like to give back to the community?

If so, we want YOU! Volunteers are needed and welcomed throughout the year at Children’s Friend.

We offer many ways you can get involved. Volunteer opportunities include joining a committee, reading in our classrooms, chaperoning a summer field trip; or holding a donation drive for diapers, wipes, school supplies, and books.

If you are interested in volunteering, taking a tour of one of our centers, or would like to learn more about Children’s Friend, please contact Stacy Couto, Chief of Philanthropy, at (401) 276-4306, or at scouto@cfsri.org.

Wise Stewardship of Resources

Thanks to a long history of committed individuals invested in our community, Children’s Friend is fortunate to provide a level of excellence in services and supports even when funding at the local, state, and federal levels is limited.

Disciplined spending allows Children’s Friend to offer high quality services and expert staff when our families need us the most. This is accomplished thanks to wise stewardship of our resources and a “spending rule” that holds our annual spending to 5.2% of the rolling 3-year market value average of the endowment. Support families today and invest in the future of the organization.

You can earmark donations to the endowment by contacting Stacy Couto, Chief of Philanthropy, at 401-276-4306 or scouto@cfsri.org.
Volunteer Army: Year Two
The Office of Strategic Management
Implementing Children’s Friend Strategic Priority

In 2018, Children’s Friend began the year with a new strategic priority: to better serve the youngest and most vulnerable kids in Rhode Island, especially those at highest risk for devastating outcomes. Through the deep commitment and involvement of countless staff members, families, and agency leadership, Children’s Friend is undergoing a transformation in many areas of our work. This transformation builds on our long history and track record of high-quality service in order to further increase the impact we are making in our communities.

Over the past two years, Children’s Friend’s leadership and the Office of Strategy Management have worked with a wide-reaching, staff-led “Volunteer Army” to engage some of our biggest challenges and opportunities. From 2018-2019, eight Armies worked on priorities ranging from improving our data collection to increasing our advocacy capacity; they were charged with thinking outside the box and coming up with creative solutions, and they were given the permission to get messy and even make mistakes!

By June of 2019, five of those Armies had completed their work. Over the summer, they refined their recommendations, and by fall, Volunteer Army leaders and the Executive Team were able to make concrete decisions about how to move the agency forward. Major changes in the areas of innovation, branding, organizational culture, data utilization, and advocacy are underway, with much more to come. We work hard on this transformation because we believe in the potential of the families we serve – and our own potential to improve our impact.

As the world changes around us, we are transforming and adapting so we can meet families “where they are at.” Our commitment to the most vulnerable kids and families is unshakable – so too our commitment to improve every single day.

WIC Baby Shower
Thanks to Tufts Health Plan

Baby showers represent a new beginning. Last summer, twenty-six expecting mothers gathered alongside the Children’s Friend WIC team and different community groups for a baby shower to celebrate and support these soon to be moms and their new beginnings. With the help and generous support from Tufts Health Plan, all of the moms were able to take home baby bags filled with the most needed items; diapers, wipes, receiving blankets, and other essential safety equipment, otherwise out of reach for these moms in need. All of the moms were very grateful and ecstatic about the gifts, food, information, and raffles, and left prepared for the new lives they were about to bring into the world. This Baby Shower meant so much to them… many of the moms had never received gifts before or celebrated an important event.

“I really enjoyed my time with the Volunteer Army the first time around! I feel we made some change within our agency, and we brought awareness to the community through training and by using social media in creative ways. I believe the work we did and are doing now can really make change! I am excited to see what is next.”

Charlotte Patterson
Head Start Teacher Assistant
Thriving Families
Supporting Permanency for Children through the Adoption Support and Preservation Program

Children’s Friend works from a family-centered approach, focusing on each family’s strengths to improve overall family functioning.

Savannah loved her family, community, and her parents, who adopted her at birth through Children’s Friend. As she approached her teen years, she started to have more questions and frequently wondered about herself. Where did she come from, and how did she fit into the world? Who were her birth parents, and why did they choose to place her for adoption? Savannah and her family turned to Children’s Friend for support. The family had participated in the Adoption Support and Preservation Program (ASAP) over the years and they knew they could get the help Savannah needed.

The ASAP program provides confidential counseling and support for pre- and post-adoptive families and their children. The primary goal is to promote permanent homes for the children by preventing adoption disruption or dissolution through increasing parenting skills and improving child behavior. Some of the issues that families face range from grief and loss, attachment, identity formation, connecting with or searching for their birth family, or school related issues.

Services frequently focus on helping a young child cope with previous trauma or trust issues and supporting adoptive parents through the child’s behavioral reactions to trauma. Often, children like Savannah struggle with their identity formation. Services include individual and family counseling, case management, referrals and linkages, and therapeutic groups for children and their parents. A typical group session begins with dinner for the families, followed by a separate parent support group and children’s group therapy to allow for open discussions.

Working through the program, Savannah was able to locate and reconnect with her birth mother. With many of her questions answered, Savannah gained a new sense of wholeness and now has additional people to love and support her into her adult life.
Partner Profile
Gotta Have Sole – New Shoes Make a Real Difference

The power of a brand new pair of shoes is immeasurable. Proper footwear improves mood, reduces stress, prevents injuries, and allows for better play. A new pair of shoes makes you feel valued. This was the case for a lot of the children that Children’s Friend services through the hard work and generosity of Nicholas Lowinger, his mom Lori Lowinger, and Gotta Have Sole.

Gotta Have Sole started in 2010 when Nicholas chose to donate new footwear to homeless children for his Bar Mitzvah. Nicholas’ work did not stop there. Almost a decade later, Gotta Have Sole has now donated new footwear and socks to 100,000 children across the country.

This past July, all of the students enrolled in the Summer Learning Enrichment Program were thrilled to receive new sneakers, hand-delivered by Nicholas and Lori. Nicholas helped each child out of their old shoes and into their new ones, then giving each child a moment in the spotlight to show off their new sneakers. Every child wore a smile from ear to ear, as well as Nicholas, Lori, and the Children’s Staff in attendance.

The strong partnership between Gotta Have Sole and Children’s Friend has grown considerably beyond that day in July. Gotta Have Sole has provided Children’s Friend with many pairs of shoes used to help students with back to school in September, boots for the winter, and sandals for the summer. Nicholas and Lori believe that shoes are more than just a way to get from point A to point B. Shoes can actually be the key to opening up opportunities. Children need footwear to go to school to get an education, which will hopefully help them step out of poverty.

Foster Heroes
Introducing Our Foster Parent Heroes

All children deserve safe and loving homes. Children’s Friend is grateful for our dedicated Foster Parent Heroes, who provide stable and loving care to children in need of temporary places to live. Our diverse Foster Parent Heroes care for children throughout the State, ensuring their needs, from the tall to the small, are met day and night. Thank you to our Foster Parent Heroes, who all make a tremendous difference in the lives of our most vulnerable young children.

Cassie and Mike Affonso
Kellen and Hakeem Alabi
Megan and Jeff Bain
Shayna Banile
Lori Basile
Kelli and Lee Barber
Sydney and David Bledsoe
Kristine Boavida
Tamara and Nathan Bonds
Krystin and Paul Breau
Thea and Michael Brennan
Amy and Stephan Brock
Belinda Brothers
Brenda and Alfred Carnevale
Sheri Casali
Megan and Ryan Coolan
Erica Crossman
Bethany Dansereau
Laurie and John Dickinson
Julie and Richard Dore
Kim Drape
Rebecca and Dean Duffy
Tammy Eaton
Erica and Stephen Emond
Eugenia and Cliff Ferrera
Stephanie and Barkley Finsterbush
Jaime and Mike Flynn
Shirley Fraciselli
and Alex Miller
Amy and Tyler Fontaine
Adrienne Goss and Lester Bryant
Kristy Griffiths
Annette Harman and Michael Kerr
Jessica Hatch
Seth and Shannon Hobson
Sarah Howie
Eben and Marc Hutchinson
Colleen and Matthew Johns
Ngina Johnson
Brittany Kanderzki
and Ed Mason
Margaret Keesa and Jaime Borch
Janet and Brian Lacroix
Brian and Patty Lamothe
Norkis Latigue
Maureen Lawrence
Lisa and Scott Listentell
Kathleen Mahoney
Anthony and Shauna Martins-Torres
Tammy and Lee Martin
Lisa and Dino Messina
Stacy and Julio Murga
Dana and Colin Murray-Borelli
Laura Napolitano
Sara and John Natazla
Lauren and Tyler Nobis
Gina and Timothy O’Donnell
Crystal and Luis Pacheco
Elizabeth and Alberto Palmieri
Krystal and Anthony Pezza
Stephanie and Matthew Plan
Jennifer and Bethane Rado
Alison and Jeffrey Riese
Christie and Corey Richworth
Robert Rocchio and Arthur Taylor
Marissa and Eric Schaumberg
Karen Scotti
Korina and Ken Short
Deb and Tim Steven
Jose Tavares
Cherylanne Turgeon
Becky Wallace
Jay Weldencroft and Tiago Costa
Ashley and Zachary Yoakum

Want to help?

Curious About Foster Care? Want to Help?

There are still many children in Rhode Island who need foster homes. Please consider partnering with us to ensure that every Foster Care child experiences stable upbringings where they receive love and support. These children need our help more than ever.

Do you think you would be a great Foster Parent?

If so, please call Children’s Friend and learn more about the steps involved in becoming a Foster Parent. Heather Ashworth, our Foster Care Recruiter, is available to talk to you about your decision and the special joy that you will experience when you help a child in need. You can reach Heather at hashworth@cfsri.org, or by calling (401) 276-4371. Thank you!

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You Make a Difference
Make a Recurring Monthly Contribution

Your recurring gift ensures that our families are provided with the resources and support they need throughout the year. Through your monthly contribution, you enable Children's Friend to continue our mission to help our most vulnerable young children.

With just a couple of clicks, you can make a positive impact in the life of someone less fortunate.

Please take a moment to visit our website at childrensfriendri.org and simply click the “Make a Donation” button at the top of the page. Choose the “Make a Recurring Gift” option, indicate the amount of your monthly contribution, then designate your gift, and provide your credit card information. Your monthly gift will be automatically charged to your credit card each month. You can make changes to your gift at any time.

All this wonderful work would not be possible if not for the outstanding generosity of our donors – you truly make a difference in someone’s life! We sincerely thank you on behalf of all those we serve.

Income Statement

2019 REVENUE
- Contracts $24,349,282
- Fee for Service $4,874,563
- Investment Income (losses) $964,420
- Contributions/Grants $1,094,527
- Donated Goods, Services, Facilities $682,938
- Other Income $9,944
- **Total Operating Revenue** $31,975,674

2019 EXPENSES
- Early Intervention $1,756,783
- Family Counseling $362,574
- Family Support $19,200,289
- Family Preservation $3,190,424
- Health & Nutrition Services $6,164,018
- **Total Program Expenses** $30,674,088
- Administration $497,036
- Development/Fundraising $658,133
- **Total Operating Expenses** $31,829,257

Your Investment Has A Great Impact on the Families We Serve

We are proud to report that 100% of your gift supports direct services provided by Children’s Friend. Our endowment provides our agency with long-term financial security. That means 100% of gifts received from our many donors make real and positive impacts on the lives of our children. Your donation supports services, not fundraising or administrative expenses.

Please accept our heartfelt thanks and gratitude for investing in the lives of our most vulnerable young children.
**Broaden Your Impact!**  
**Matching Gifts**

You can substantially increase the value of your gift to Children’s Friend. Please inquire if your employer offers a Matching Gift Program to encourage employees to contribute to charitable organizations. Most of these programs will match contributions dollar-for-dollar while some will even double or triple the amount of your gift. Some companies even provide matching funds to support employee volunteer hours.

A sincere thank you to the following companies for matching the charitable gifts or volunteer time donated by their employees to Children’s Friend:

- AbbVie Employee Engagement Fund
- Amica Companies Foundation
- Bank of America Charitable Foundation
- Benjamin Moore & Company Bright Funds Foundation
- Citizens Charitable Foundation
- Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund
- FM Global Foundation
- Gilbane Building Company
- Liberty Mutual Insurance Company
- Microsoft Corporation
- National Grid US Community Giving
- New York Life Insurance Company
- The Benevity Community Impact Fund
- The Gap Foundation
- The Walt Disney Company Foundation
- Verizon Foundation
- Workday, Inc.

**Contracts That Generate Revenue**

- City of Pawtucket
- City of Providence
- Family Service of Rhode Island
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation
- Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families
- Rhode Island Department of Education
- Rhode Island Department of Health
- Rhode Island Department of Human Services
- Rhode Island Foundation
- US Department of Health and Human Services
- US Department of Justice
- United Way of Rhode Island

**A Breakdown Of Those We Served**

**RACE**
- White: 50%
- Hispanic/Latino: 61%
- Black or African American: 23%
- Client Declined to Provide: 4%
- Unknown: 7%
- Multiracial: 13%
- Non-Hispanic/Latino: 37%

**ETHNICITY**
- Hispanic/Latino: 61%
- Non-Hispanic/Latino: 37%
- Unknown: 2%

**AGE**
- 0-9: 76%
- 10-19: 3%
- 20+: 21%

**GENDER**
- Female: 60%
- Male: 40%
- Under 100%: 91%
- Between 100-175%: 5%
- Over 175%: 4%

The agency’s audited financial statements are available upon request. For more information, please contact Stacy Couto, Chief of Philanthropy, at 401.276.4306 or scouto@cfsri.org.

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