

A Message from the Executive Director: Debbie Green Is Quality Sustainable?

“Quality” is the current buzzword in most conversations about increasing access to early learning experiences before a child enters kindergarten. Research shows that children enrolled in high-quality early childhood programs are strongly associated with positive developmental outcomes. At PIC, we have known this for a long time.

However, research also suggests that the benefits of pre-k take effect only if students are in high-quality centers. Enrolling more children in mediocre or low-quality programs will simply help no one.

We know that high-quality programs make a difference, yet currently only about 15 percent of spaces in Philadelphia programs meet this level, as measured by Pennsylvania’s statewide system for rating and improving programs known as Keystone STARS.

While reaching the designation of a “high quality” program is not easy, it is even more difficult to sustain that quality. While we have done so at PIC for 38 years, it takes significant understanding and commitment by our Board of Directors and all of our staff.

What else does it take?

1. Staff members who are loving and caring individuals, while at the same time educated in the field of early childhood. We need teachers who understand that research and practice continually change, and who see their work as a “profession,” as opposed to a job—a very *big distinction*.

2. A commitment is needed to designate a very large percentage of the operating budget to salaries and benefits that are above the national (and local) norm. Early childhood teachers are among those in the lowest paying professions in the country. We need to advocate to increase salaries in order to attract and retain the best folks for this important work.



3. Recognition that government subsidies for low-income families fall far short of covering the full cost of care. This gap increases as quality goes up. Current reimbursement rates leave a revenue gap of 25%-50% for high-quality providers. High quality providers make a commitment to serve families of all-income levels and yet, we need to continually advocate for raising reimbursement rates to move closer to the actual cost of care.

4. When families are involved in the life of the program, everyone benefits. Parents understand more about their child’s experience and development; teachers provide better care for children; and programs gain the skills and insights of families.

5. Classroom environments, curriculum, and activities that take into account all that is now known about how children best grow and learn. This includes everything from developmentally appropriate practices, connecting children with nature, well equipped and intentionally pleasing classroom environments, and an underlying understanding and respect for the capabilities of all children.

As PIC’s experience indicates, achieving and then sustaining high quality is not easy, but it is surely worth it. Our children—all children—deserve the effort.

Debbie



Your Invitation to ArtStart 2016

from ArtStart Chair Mary Beth Fedirko

As an early childhood educator, I look forward to welcoming a new group of preschool students into my classroom every fall. In addition to returning to my own classroom this year, I am also the proud mom of a PIC Peanut, and Chair of this year’s ArtStart fundraiser. This year, I have so much to look forward to.

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A Message from the Board President: Leah Finnegan



I've been involved with PIC for well over a decade, beginning when my older son Max, who is now entering 8th grade, started in the Bumblebee classroom at 18 months of age. His younger brother, David, a 5th grader, began as a Caterpillar a few years later and both boys were Rainbows, Fireflies, Roadrunners, Summer Campers, and After Schoolers.

Although the boys are no longer at PIC, I've remained actively involved and am beginning my second year as Board President. My volunteering began by taking home laundry to fulfill my PPP. However, as I began to appreciate the uniqueness of the PIC community, I decided to get more involved, becoming a Room Parent, hosting neighborhood potlucks, and joining the Parent Involvement Committee. In 2011, I joined the PIC Board of Directors and later became the Treasurer and Vice President before taking on the Board President role.

I'm pleased to be working with a dedicated group of parents, alumni, community members, and administration to help PIC achieve its mission of enabling children to grow and learn in a safe, stimulating, loving environment. I'm excited by the energy and vision of PIC's Executive Director, Deb Green, and look forward to continued partnering between PIC administration and the Board.

As I reflect on what makes PIC the special place it is, the idea of "community" always comes to mind. One of PIC's most special and anticipated events, our ArtStart fundraiser, takes place on October 20th and is a wonderful opportunity to participate and help build that community. Please plan to join me and your PIC friends old and new for an evening filled of food, fun, art, and auction.

On the Board

We are grateful to retiring Board members: **Marjorie Arendt, Sonja Claxton, Amy Hillier Fraatz, Monava Jones, and Hien Lu.** *Thank you for your time, talents, and dedication.*

We welcome the following new members to PIC's Board of Directors, elected in May 2016: **Johanna Morales** is the Lead Education Coordinator for the Philadelphia Head Start Partnership, a program of Public Health Management Corporation. As a former Lead Teacher at PIC, she opened the Moonbeams, a newer toddler classroom at the center. **Maya Nayak** serves as the General Counsel of the Philadelphia Board of Ethics. Her son Kieran attends PIC's Early Learning Program. Working at Philadelphia Health Management Corporation **Marla Nesbitt-Laws** provides mental health consultation to teachers who have concerns about the social/emotional development of a child. **Nancy Rimmer** is a trial attorney at the Defender Association of Philadelphia and teaches for Villanova School of Law's clinical program. Her son Colin is enrolled in PIC's Early Learning Program. This fall, her older son Ben heads to kindergarten and will start in PIC's After School Center. **Kate Stanley** is an attorney at Pepper Hamilton LLP, specializing in white collar criminal defense. Her son Max is enrolled in PIC's Early Learning Program. **Jon Staszewski** is Vice President, Financial Planning & Analysis at Thomas Reuters in the Intellectual Property & Science division. His daughter Vera is a PIC alumna, while her younger sister, Nina attends PIC's Early Learning Program.

Meet all the members of PIC's Board of Directors at parentinfantcenter.org.

Designate PIC to receive your gift to the
United Way or Penn's Way Campaign
by using our number: **02671**.

Hooray for Mud Day!



On June 29, PIC's early learners along with children worldwide, celebrated **International Mud Day**. More than a chance to get dirty, the special day is a time for children to connect with nature and enjoy open-ended joyful play. At PIC, teachers and children splashed in puddles, lounged in the mud, and jumped into the spray of water from the hose. Little hands dug into the cool mud, squishing it between fingers. *New this year were mud tattoos!*

PIC on PBS NewsHour

During the spring, Philadelphia made national news over City Council's debate, vote, and ultimate passage of a soft drink beverage tax to help create city-supported high quality pre-k education for Philadelphia's children. As the vote in city council approached, **PBS Newshour** sent a crew to PIC to talk about the urgent need to fund preschool education and the upcoming City Council vote on the beverage tax in Philadelphia. During their visit, they spoke with Executive Director Deb Green and spent time with the Starfish and Peanuts, inside and out. The story aired on May 24 and can be found at pbs.org.



Plant Sale raises \$36,000

PIC's annual spring Plant Sale raised over \$36,000 to support PIC's Tuition Assistance Fund. We are grateful for the efforts of our families, staff, alumni, and friends during pre-sales in April and the week of the sale. We also appreciate our great volunteer crews from **Reed Tech** and **Beneficial Bank** who were back again this year.

Pre-planted flower pots from first-time supplier, **Molenaar Greenhouse**, were a big hit. We welcomed back longtime grower, **Wedgewood Gardens**, who always offer great guidance in plant selection.

We partnered with neighborhood groups this year, including **Greens-grow West**, **Bennett Compost**, **Paws**, and **The Woodlands' Grave Tenders**, who beautified grave beds with marigolds, zinnias, and salvia.

On Saturday, PIC held a butterfly release to remember former Executive Director, **Cindy Roberts** who passed away in February. Cindy lovingly tended the butterfly garden at PIC and worked the Plant Sale for many years. PIC children raised and helped release the butterflies.

We are grateful to everyone who supported this year's event. Money raised is dedicated to providing financial relief to PIC families who struggle with the cost of care.



BBD volunteers went to work at PIC

A special thanks to **BBD, LLP**. This summer, as part of their *Week of Service*, we welcomed 11 volunteers to work on tasks that we never have the time or people power to tackle. Thanks to their hard work, our attic was completely cleaned out, the floors were primed and painted, and shelving units now hold toys for imaginative play, aquariums, puzzles, tool kits, and microscopes.

We are happy to welcome enthusiastic corporate volunteer teams. If you have a team that is looking for a project, contact Development Manager Karen Stachelek at kstachelek@parentinfantcenter.org.

How to help: Send your company's volunteer crew. **Make a donation** and ask if your company has a **matching gift program**. Kindly remember us in your **estate planning**. For more information on ways to support PIC, please contact Development Manager Karen Stachelek at 215-222-5480 or via email at kstachelek@parentinfantcenter.org.

Invitation to ArtStart 2016

from ArtStart Chair Mary Beth Fedirko

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Over the past few months I have been working alongside a dedicated committee of PIC parents and staff to bring you an evening destined to be a blockbuster.

On October 20, I invite you to experience an evening of Lights! Camera! Auction! featuring:

- a movie-themed, red carpet experience.
- the premiere of PIC's latest film.
- the paparazzi and a photo booth to capture all the glamour.
- a world-class exhibition of children's art.
- appetizers from **Stephen Starr's** finest restaurants.
- a delicious dinner from **Beijing**, starring Alex Yuen.
- live music from the Philadelphia-based band **City Love**

We find ourselves in a pivotal moment as early childhood education gains the recognition it has long deserved in this country. Early learning teachers and programs like PIC have long known that early childhood education lays the critical foundation for our youngest learners. We also know that every family should and must have access to this experience—and every child has the right to this experience.

Proceeds from ArtStart ease the burden of the cost of high quality care through PIC's tuition assistance program. Your participation will make quality child care more affordable for a family and help us shine the spotlight on PIC and the value of a child's early childhood experience!

Look for an invitation in the mail or download yours from parentinfantcenter.org today.

ways you can help

- ➡ Invite friends and family to join you at **ArtStart 2016**
- ➡ Can't come? **Make a contribution to the event online!**
- ➡ Do you have family, colleagues, or friends that would like to donate? Direct them to parentinfantcenter.org/artstart2016



The Dog Days of THIS Summer

What do you do with a whole lot of summer campers when it is too *hot, hot, hot* to be outside? One favorite activity is bowling. With the benefit of being located in an urban environment, PIC campers also experience rich learning at places like the Franklin Institute, Penn Museum, and the Please Touch Museum. We had a great summer at PIC with lots of time spent indoors and out.



For the Love of Charlotte

In May, current PIC families and staff, alumni families, and former PIC staff came out in droves to congratulate Charlotte Barnes on her retirement. The Stucco building was filled with love as we celebrated her 30 years of dedication to PIC children and families.

Charlotte sat as the guest of honor among all her fans as memories and thoughts of her were shared. She was presented with gifts made by afterschoolers and a plaque acknowledging her dedication to PIC for all these years.



Books to Widen the World

PIC is grateful for the generous grant we received from the **Terri Lynne Lokoff Child Care Foundation** (TLCCF) for a project titled *Widening the World through Children's Literature*. With this award, PIC purchased books that reflect the children and families in our program, especially underrepresented groups, such as Asian, Muslim, and African American families, along with diverse family structures, including children being raised by single parents, grandparents, and LGBT families. We also included books that challenge gender stereotypes.

A Sweet Gift from Metropolitan

PIC is grateful for a generous gift from our friends at the **Metropolitan Bakery & Cafe**. In celebration of Metropolitan's 12th anniversary, owner Jim Lilly and his wife Marcy donated (and personally matched) 12% of their anniversary sales. Jim's daughter is an After School alum (she's now 29!) Jim was a friend and neighbor to former Executive Director Cindy Roberts. In Jim's words, "*PIC is an incredible asset to all of us in West Philly and we're proud to contribute our support and to honor Cindy's dedication.*"