



HIGHLIGHTS OF 2015-2016

- **AMERICAN RED CROSS BABYSITTING COURSE.** Board member, Stephanie Figlioli, taught three all-day sessions of the American Red Cross Babysitting Course for junior high students in November, January, and April. All classes were fully enrolled.
- **ANNUAL FUND AND TEACHER TRIBUTES.** This is the 14th year of our very successful Teacher Tribute program as part of the Annual Fund campaign. For the fiscal year ending 9/30/15, 239 Teacher Tributes were made. In May 2016, 2,782 annual appeal letters were sent out, with every letter personalized by board members and staff. Letters were sent to Board, Advisory Board, Former Board, Presidents' Council, Sustainer, and Emeritus Board members; every Member, Associate and Affiliate Member School and Organization; and the parents of every member school plus all recent donors to the Alliance. This year our letter outlined a choice of five different funds into which a donation can be made: Teacher Tribute, Blakely Bundy, Steve Adams, ScreenBreak and unrestricted. Libby continues to lead this vital effort, finding new ways to streamline and improve the process each year. The highlights of the Alliance's financial results for the past year include:
 - The annual campaign and Bundy Fund took a combined total of \$73,399 in the fiscal year ending 9/30/15.
 - We mailed 545 LYBUNT letters in the fall.
 - For the year beginning 10/1/15, the annual appeal has taken in \$27,082, including 50 Teacher Tributes (as of 4-15-16). This is higher than last year.
 - For the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, the Alliance had a loss of \$12,536. We had projected a loss of \$8,000. The reason for this loss was that approximately \$15,000 of expected donations went into the Blakely Bundy Fund rather than the annual campaign. The Bundy Fund is separate from our normal income.
 - As of 4/25/16, ScreenBreak 2016 income was \$15,533. Screen Break expenses were \$9817, for a net surplus of \$5716.
 - Our Programs have brought in \$26,614, with another \$1700 expected. This is the first year we have hosted the Preschool-Kindergarten Summit, and we were given \$10,000 to cover the cost of speakers. Total program expenses were \$20,681.
 - The Newsletter has revenues of \$9800 so far this fiscal year, with an additional \$325 expected. This is very close to last year's amount.
 - We received a \$6,000 grant from the Kenilworth United Fund.
 - The Alliance has 12 Partners this year.
- **BIENNIAL PRESCHOOL SURVEY.** The 2016 Biennial Preschool Survey included three categories of questions regarding: 1) Program Information, 2) Salaries and Benefits for Teachers, and 3) Salaries and Benefits for Directors. Participants included stand-alone Standard, Affiliate, and Associate Alliance Member preschools. The survey was conducted anonymously on Survey Monkey between December, 2015 and January, 2016. Results were distributed to participants in March, 2016. Fourteen of fifteen schools completed the survey (93% response rate).
- **COMMUNICATIONS.** The Alliance uses the web to inform parents and educators about best practices in Early Childhood.
 - **Constant Contact.** Regular email blasts to over 2,000 people build awareness of The Alliance's programs and initiatives (33% increase from last year). We sent 20 Constant Contact emails between August 1 and May 1.
 - **Facebook.** On The Alliance's Facebook page are notifications of upcoming programs, documentation of previous events (photos, descriptions), and links to current articles on child development. The Alliance's Facebook page currently has nearly 550 "likes" or followers (37.5% increase from last year).
 - **TheAllianceForEC.org,** the official website, is filled with information and news for parents and educators. Archived are past issues of *Early Childhood*, a library of articles organized by topic, and videos of past lectures. Also included is current information on preschools, elementary schools, child-care programs, after-school programs, extracurricular activities, and summer camps. This year over 40,000 visits were made to The Alliance's website.
 - **YouTube.** A new YouTube channel was created this year, featuring videos of the Preschool-Kindergarten Summit breakout sessions, the Summit Synopsis, and interviews of Summit attendees.

- **CURRENT COMMITTEES.** Annual Meeting & Luncheon, Babysitting, Communications & PR, Directors' Roundtable & Preschool-Kindergarten Articulation, Executive, Fund, Fundraising, Let's Play, Multiples, Networking Breakfast, Networking Dinner, Programs, ScreenBreak, Special Needs Roundtable, Transition to Kindergarten, and Twins and Multiples Roundtable.
- **CURRENT OFFICERS AND STAFF.** President, Christie Baker; Vice-President of Communications, Kate Van Vlack; Vice-President of Programs, Gina Mathews; Co- Vice-Presidents of ScreenBreak, Ursula Arsenault, Erin Charchut, Missy Shinall; Secretary, Beth Beeler; Treasurer, Deirdre Franklin; Fund Chair, Stephanie Graves; and Past Presidents, Cindy Brady and Tracey McDowell. Executive Director, Liza Sullivan; Executive Director Emeritus and Senior Advisor, Blakely Bundy; Director of Operations, Elizabeth Joyce; and Project Manager of Fundraising, Amy Blesi.
- **FUND COMMITTEE.** The balance in the Alliance Endowment Fund at 4-30-2016 was \$104,804.88, down from \$109,505.46 at 4-30-2015. There were \$5,021.59 in disbursements from the Fund during the prior year to cover a new laptop computer for the Director of Operations and the redesign of development materials, the newsletter and the ScreenBreak Guide. Investment income earned on the Fund remains minimal due to continuing historically low Interest rates on the risk-free CDs in which the Fund is invested.
- **EDUCATIONAL LECTURE SERIES FOR PARENTS.** Nationally respected researchers, authors and Early Childhood leaders are brought in annually to speak on a variety of important issues. Parents receive articles prior to the events. A discussion follows the speaker, and the parents have access to supplemental articles on TheAllianceForEC.org. Over 1,000 parents participated in our 2015-16 workshop series. The year's programs included:
 - **Thirty Million Words: Building a child's brain**, September 17, 2015. Dana Suskind M.D. Founder and Director, Thirty Million Words Initiative, The University of Chicago. (215 attendees)
 - **Sensory Needs in Preschool and the Early Elementary Years**, November 10, 2015. Lindsey Moyer, MS, OTR/L and Elizabeth Mackay MOT, OTR/L, North Shore Pediatric Therapy. (500 participants, live webinar)
 - **Parenting in the 21st Century: What research from the Gesell Institute of Child Development tells us is most important**, January 22, 2016. Marcy Guddemi, PhD. Former President and CEO of the Gesell Institute of Child Development on the Yale campus. (40 attendees)
 - **Importance of Being Little**, April 19, 2016. Erika Christakis, MPH, MA, M.Ed. Lecturer, Yale University's Child Study Center. (235 attendees)
 - **Transition to Kindergarten Meeting**, April 28, 2016. Parents of incoming kindergarten students and families who are new to District 36 learn about the District's history and approaches, as well as what to expect during the kindergarten year. Trisha Kocanda, District 36 Superintendent and Daniel Ryan, Principal of Hubbard Woods School introduced the District's play-based kindergarten philosophy. (34 adults, 5 children)
- **FUNDRAISING AND DEVELOPMENT.** One major continued organizational focus has been securing additional annual sponsors, program sponsors, donors, and advertisers. The Alliance's Project Manager for Fundraising has been beneficial in both implementing the organization's annual development plan, as well as securing operating funds. Four grant applications were submitted this year to the Kenilworth United Fund, Benevolence Committee of Christ Church, Wilmette Optimist Club Foundation, and a family foundation.
- **LET'S PLAY!** The Alliance for Early Childhood's initiative to encourage children to engage in creative, imaginative, and enriching free play. Play is an activity that is: 1) child-initiated, 2) child-directed, and 3) intrinsically motivating. Play is an essential activity of childhood and an integral part of every child's healthy development, growth, and learning across all ages, domains, and cultures. This year's events included:
 - **First Days of Summer Park-A-Day Challenge**, Monday, June 6 through Thursday, June 9. Organized by the Let's Play Committee, The Alliance's annual Park-A-Day Challenge is scheduled from 9a.m.-12p.m. during the first days of summer vacation, serving as an inspiration for parents to make children's play a priority over the summer months. Each day families are encouraged to visit a different park in the New Trier Township, including Vattmann Park, Wilmette; Crow Island Woods Park, Winnetka; Clarkson Park, Northfield; and Townley Field, Kenilworth. From 9a.m.-11:30a.m., over 20 different community partners facilitated open-ended play activities based on a daily theme. At 11:30 a.m., the town's library offered a storytime in the park. On these days, parks feel transformed with several families joining together for free, themed public celebrations of child-directed play, facilitated by adults ready to support free play.
 - **Fort Building**, Friday, October 9 & Saturday, October 10. In partnership with the Winnetka Park District and Tinkering School Chicago, children used simple natural materials to build amazing forts. Imaginations came to life as families worked and played in this creative, project focused environment.
 - **Winter Play Day**, Saturday, January 30. Over 150 children and parents attended The Alliance's new Winter Play Day, featuring fort building, ice painting, marshmallow roasting, a scavenger hunt, and more. Program partners included

BackYard Nature Center, Chicago Botanic Garden, and Emily Oaks Nature Center. The *Winnetka Current* ran a story about the event entitled, "The Great Outdoors."

- **MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS.** Our current membership consists of 51 schools and organizations in Winnetka, Northfield, Kenilworth, and neighboring communities on the North Shore, reaching over 5,000 children and their families annually. Our membership levels include: 37 Standard Member schools and organizations, 2 Affiliate schools, and 12 Associate Member schools and organizations. During the 2015-16 school year, Chicago Botanic Garden Nature Preschool (Glencoe) joined as a new Associate Member school.
- **NAEYC.** In November, at the annual meeting of the National Association for the Education of Young Children in Orlando, Florida, Blakely Bundy and Liza Sullivan presented a session entitled, "Promoting Play in a Race to Nowhere World: The Alliance For Early Childhood's Successful Initiative to Encourage Child-Directed Free Play in Affluent, Competitive, and Overscheduled Communities." This presentation, attended by 300 national early childhood educators, described The Alliance's journey over the past five years to provide play resources for its youngest children.
- **NETWORKING EVENTS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS.** The Alliance's foundational commitment is to the young children in our community. For this reason, we bring together neighborhood early childhood educators to discuss Early Childhood issues among themselves. Nine networking events were scheduled during the school year, impacting over 300 educators.
 - **24th Annual Fall Networking Breakfast** (October 8, 2015). Leaders of The Alliance member schools and organizations meet in a small group setting to talk with colleagues in a small group setting and hear about The Alliance's programs for the upcoming school year. This year's event was hosted at St. Francis Xavier (Wilmette) and 28 people attended.
 - **Preschool Directors Roundtables** (7 sessions, October 2015 through May 2016). Local preschool directors convened in order to talk with one another about matters of common concern. Participants toured others' schools, and discussed different Early Childhood philosophies. During the year, the group met at the French School, Glencoe Park District, Harkness House for Children, Winnetka Community Nursery School, Winnetka Covenant Preschool, Winnetka Public School Nursery, and for a Dutch treat lunch in May.
 - **26th Annual Networking Dinner** (January 22, 2016). Administrators, teachers, and others dined and listened to a nationally recognized and respected educator in Early Childhood. Marcy Guddemi, PhD., the former President and CEO of the Gesell Institute of Child Development on the Yale campus, presented "Gesell Institute Confirms" Development Matters!" Visit The Alliance's website to see [Dr. Guddemi's Power Point presentation](#). (183 attendees)
- **NEWSLETTER.** In October and April, over 4,000 copies of The Alliance's 16-page, biannual *Early Childhood* newsletter were distributed through our member schools and organizations, to a small subscription base, and at local libraries, businesses, pediatricians' offices, and other local venues. Both editions contained the latest information and advice about young children from both local and national experts, as well as a community calendar.
- **PAT WROCLAWSKI COLLECTION.** The collection continues to be a popular choice for families with young children at the Winnetka Public Library. This year 11 books were purchased for the collection during the ScreenBreak Book and Toy Fair.
- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCES.** Because strong schools and successful community programs depend on commitment, knowledge, and innovation, The Alliance underwrites a series of professional development experiences for area teachers, administrators, and other local professionals. Leading these workshops are experts in Early Childhood. In the 2015-16 school year, The Alliance engaged over 350 educators through two professional development events including:
 - **Preschool-Kindergarten Summit**, Thursday, February 11, 2016. This inaugural Summit hosted at the Chicago Botanic Garden brought together preschool and kindergarten teachers and administrators from schools across the New Trier Township and North Shore, as well as parents, community members, and early childhood advocates. 173 participants attended, representing over 50 schools and organizations. The purpose of the Summit was to learn the latest research relevant to young children in the preschool and kindergarten years and foster greater alignment and common understanding of developmentally appropriate practice in area schools. National experts will shared research-based best practices in early childhood curriculum, as well as engaged our community in a dialogue about how adults can work together to appropriately support early childhood education. One week following the Summit, a Summit Synopsis was hosted online to continue the conversation. Media coverage included the Winnetka Talk article, "[Local Early Childhood Educators Agree That Play is Essential in Classrooms](#)" and the Winnetka Current piece, "[Alliance for Early Childhood Hosts Inaugural Summit](#)." For additional information and resources from the Summit, please visit The Alliance's website: <http://www.theallianceforec.org/preschoolsummit.php>. (173 attendees)
 - **3rd Annual Inspiring Nature Play: Climbing Higher Conference**, May 4, 2016 hosted by The Alliance for Early Childhood and the Chicago Botanic Garden. The event brought together formal and non-formal educators passionate about engaging young children in nature play and nature-based learning. Keynote speaker was long-time nature

education advocate, Katie Slivovsky, Exhibit Development Director at Chicago Children’s Museum. Through interactive workshops (or “playshops”), participants learned the benefits children receive from nature play, how nature play fulfills curriculum and program goals, ways to integrate nature play into programs, and resources for inspiring parents to make more time for family nature play (205 attendees)

- **SCREENBREAK.** ScreenBreak 2016, our 22nd annual event, was held from March 6-12 with free events for area families and children of varying ages. The Screen-Break Committee led the organization of this beloved community-wide event. Children in 31 schools in Winnetka, Northfield, Kenilworth, Wilmette, Glencoe, and Highland Park participated. This year's theme was "Think Outside the Box," and families were encouraged to participate by setting their own rules about limiting screen usage during the week, ranging from no screens (“cold turkey”) to a defined reduced use.
 - **Drawing Contest.** Over 70 entries were received this year. Workshops to encourage drawing entries were held at the Winnetka, Northfield, and Wilmette libraries. Framed drawings and ribbons were distributed as prizes. Framing was donated by Will Frame It.
 - **Events.** The Kick-Off Event featured a trick dog act, “Popeye and Sailor,” and attracted approximately 400 attendees. Drawing contest winners were honored and attendees were eligible to win exciting prizes through a raffle.
 - **Publicity.** Kiosk signs and lamp post banners were hung in Winnetka, and banners were posted in Northfield and Kenilworth. Flyers and posters were displayed at businesses in all participating communities. There was local press about the initiative, including a 22nd Century Media article entitled, “[Families Enjoy Unplugging During ScreenBreak Week.](#)”
 - **ScreenBreak Guide.** 4,610 copies of the 64-page Guide were produced. Activities and advertisements from 69 local businesses and organizations were featured in the Guide, as well as additional media info, “at home” activity ideas, and an article by Ann Gadzikowski, Ph.D. entitled, “Blocks for Breakfast? How to Serve a Balanced Diet of Play and Learning.”
 - **Sponsors and Activity Hosts.** We greatly thank the 69 sponsors and activity hosts who have made the 2016 ScreenBreak possible. Each year the ScreenBreak Week brings together families to enjoy tech-free time, as well as to patronize exceptional businesses and organizations within the community. We are grateful to all sponsors, donors, and hosts who create this special North Shore tradition.
 - **Wristbands.** Wristbands were given to elementary and middle school kids, as well as preschoolers. A card on the back of the Guide could be used if a wristband was lost. Parents could order a “ScreenBreak Kit” for \$10, which included a Guide and wristband. Libby Joyce handled this distribution. We made \$85 on the sale of kits this year.
- **SPECIAL NEEDS ROUNDTABLE.** It is often a difficult time when parents and teachers suspect that a child may have special needs and/or when a child is first diagnosed with special needs. The mission of the Special Needs Roundtable is to help and support both parents and teachers in those first years by providing information and facilitating communication among parents, teachers, special needs professionals, and other support systems. This year’s events included:
 - **Parent Mentoring Program.** During the 2015-16 school year, the Special Needs Roundtable launched a new mentor program for parents who may have a child with a recent diagnosis and are looking for advice and someone to serve as a friend/sounding board. The main goal is to have mentors with knowledge in a certain area (e.g. ADHD, autism, sensory issues) “matched” with someone seeking advice in that area. Parents newer to the Special Needs arena would then have a go-to person, someone to talk to, or meet with face-to-face. 7 attendees joined the first networking “meet up” hosted on Feb. 24, 2016. Additionally, the Committee formed a new Facebook group and worked to update The Alliance’s Special Needs website.
 - **Webinar.** In November, the Special Needs Roundtable hosted a webinar for over 500 parents and educators entitled, “[Sensory Needs in Preschool and the Early Elementary Years,](#)” facilitated in partnership with North Shore Pediatric Therapy.
 - **Park-A-Day Challenge.** New this year, the Committee continued to broaden the special needs community presence by including local clinics in the Park-A-Day Challenge.
- **TWINS AND MULTIPLES ROUNDTABLE.** This team develops initiatives to support parents and teachers of twins and multiples, such as play dates for twins and multiples, newsletter articles, and/or educational presentations. In February, a wine & cheese party was held for mothers of multiples hosted by The Roundtable Chair, Deirdre Franklin. Seventeen adults attended. Some participants were not familiar with The Alliance, so this event was a great introduction to the organization and the supports provided to parents.