



## HIGHLIGHTS OF 2016-2017

- **AMERICAN RED CROSS BABYSITTING COURSE.** Board member, Stephanie Figlioli, facilitated two all-day sessions of the American Red Cross Babysitting Course in October and February. Through games, role-playing, and hands-on practice, junior high students learned how to be effective and competent babysitters. All classes were fully enrolled, impacting 24 children.
- **ANNUAL FUND AND TEACHER TRIBUTES.** This is the 15<sup>th</sup> year of our very successful Teacher Tribute program as part of the Annual Fund campaign. For the fiscal year ending 9/30/16, 292 Teacher Tributes were made. In May 2017, 2,778 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 Joyce, The Alliance's Director of Operations, 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 \$69,692 in the fiscal year ending 9/30/16.
  - We mailed 582 LYBUNT letters in the fall.
  - For the year beginning 10/1/16, the annual appeal has taken in \$37,776, including 43 Teacher Tributes (as of 4-20-17).
  - For the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, the Alliance had a loss of \$12,489. We had projected a loss of \$5,000. The reason for this greater loss was because we did not generate the money we had hoped to from Foundations.
  - As of 4/25/17, ScreenBreak 2017 income was \$12,420. Screen Break expenses were \$7,208, for a net surplus of \$5,212.
  - Our Programs have brought in \$38,771. This is the second year we have hosted the Preschool-Kindergarten Summit, and we were given \$17,500 to cover the cost of speakers. Total program expenses were \$20,100.
  - The Newsletter has revenues of \$5,875 so far this fiscal year, with an additional \$1,200 expected. This is \$4,925 below budget.
  - We received a \$7,500 grant from the Kenilworth United Fund (increased by \$1,500 from previous years).
  - So far this fiscal year, we have received \$6,500 from the Wilmette Optimist Club. Last year they gave us \$1,000, so this is a significant increase.
  - For the first time in our history, we applied to New Trier Township for funding and we were rewarded with a \$5,000 grant.
  - The Alliance has 10 Partners this year.
- **COMMUNICATIONS.** The Alliance uses the web to inform parents and educators about best practices in Early Childhood.
  - **Constant Contact.** Regular email blasts to over 2,200 people build awareness of The Alliance's programs and initiatives (10% increase from last year).
  - **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 645 "likes" or followers (17% 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 approximately 40,000 visits were made to The Alliance's website.
  - **YouTube.** Each school year, new video recordings of in-person events are added to [The Alliance's YouTube channel](#). A total of 12 videos are now accessible for parents, educators, and other individuals to view.
- **CURRENT COMMITTEES.** Annual Meeting & Luncheon, Babysitting, Communications & PR, Directors' Roundtable & Preschool-Kindergarten Summit, Executive, Fund, Fundraising, Let's Play, Networking Breakfast, Networking Dinner, Programs, ScreenBreak, Special Needs Roundtable, and Transition to Kindergarten.
- **CURRENT OFFICERS AND STAFF.** President, Amber Farashahi; Vice-President of Communications, Kate Van Vlack; Vice-President of Programs, Gina Mathews; Vice-President Board Development, Ursula Arsenault and Missy Shinall; Vice-President Evaluation, Shara

Godiwalla; Co-Secretaries, Beth Beeler and Ellen McCue; Treasurer, Deirdre Franklin; Funds Manager, Stephanie Graves; School Representative, Janelle Wood; and Past Presidents, Christie Baker, Cindy Brady, and Tracey McDowell. Executive Director, Liza Sullivan; Executive Director Emeritus and Senior Advisor, Blakely Bundy; Director of Operations, Elizabeth Joyce; and Director of Development, Annie Ross.

- **FUND COMMITTEE.** The balance in the Alliance Endowment Fund at 4-30-2017 was \$103,955, down from \$104,805 at 4-30-2016. There were \$1,200 in disbursements from the Fund during the prior year to pay for additional work on our updated logo and the purchase of a website management software program. 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 AND EDUCATIONAL NETWORKING EVENTS 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](http://TheAllianceForEC.org). Over 700 parents participated in our 2016-17 events, all free of cost and open to the public. The year's programs included:
  - **New Parents Club: BYOB (Bring Your Own Baby).** In Fall 2016, The Alliance fostered a new partnership with the Winnetka-Northfield Public Library and Pathways.org, forming a parents' club with babies ages 0-17 months. 9 times throughout the year, caregivers were invited to talk about new books, share helpful tips, and meet new friends. Pathways development experts were available to answer parenting questions.
  - **5 (Dangerous) Things to Empower Your Child: The Importance of Risk-Taking Using Real Problems,** Friday, January 20, 2017. Facilitated by Gever Tulley, the founder of Tinkering School and Brightworks School, and author of *Fifty Dangerous Things (You Should Let Your Children Do)* and *Dangerism!* Gever's work has shown that through play, risk-taking, and solving real problems, children develop responsibility, persistence, and resilience. Hands-on learning experiences strengthen their innate curiosity and desire to learn. Gever shared new ways that children can explore their world and revealed the inevitable, powerful learning that results. A recording of this presentation, can be found on [The Alliance's YouTube Channel](http://TheAlliance'sYouTubeChannel). (163 attendees)
  - **Parents as First Teachers: How to Cultivate the Whole Child,** Thursday, February 9, 2017 (in partnership with the Family Action Network). It's a fact: a parent or caregiver is a young child's first teacher, and what they do *matters*. Daily play and interactions have an enormous impact on a child's development, and it's helpful to learn about best practices for supporting a child's creativity, persistence, resilience, and emotional engagement. As a capstone event to The Alliance's 2017 Preschool-Kindergarten Summit for early childhood educators titled "Cultivating the Whole Child: Building Strong Social Emotional Foundations in Today's World," a panel of many of the Summit's accomplished presenters was convened to offer advice on how parents can build a responsive, supportive, emotionally-connected home environment. A video recording of this session can be found on [The Alliance's YouTube channel](http://TheAlliance'sYouTubechannel). Alexa Burnell of the Wilmette Beacon wrote a summary article of this event entitled, "[Childhood Experts Answer Parental Questions at FAN Panel](http://ChildhoodExpertsAnswerParentalQuestionsatFANPanel)" (February 18, 2017). (250 attendees)
  - **(Webinar) Promoting Executive Function Skills: Help Children Manage Emotions, Stay Organized, and Meet Goals,** presented by Bobbie Vergo, OTD, Tuesday February 21, 2017 (in partnership with Pathways.org). This one-hour session discussed the different skills that make up executive functioning; how kids develop executive function skills; and strategies to promote executive functioning through social interactions. This webinar was a Gateways Registry-Approved Training in Illinois. (Over 120 participants)
  - **(Webinar) Play in the Classroom and at Home: Things to Know,** presented by Samantha Simons, M.S., Tuesday March 7, 2017 (in partnership with Pathways.org). This one-hour course discussed the reduction in playtime in recent years; different types of play and how they promote development; children's play skills by age; alternatives to TV and tips for encouraging different types of play at home and in the classroom. The webinar was a Gateways Registry-Approved Training in Illinois. (Over 100 participants)
  - **Transition to Kindergarten Meeting,** April 27, 2017. Parents of incoming District 36 kindergarten students in 2017-18 and families who are new to the Winnetka Public Schools were invited for a conversation with D36 Administrators and Principals. Parents heard about the rich history of these nationally-recognized schools and how teachers effectively apply the Progressive philosophy in classrooms. They also learned how to partner with schools to support a child's educational journey and the Extended Day Kindergarten program. (46 attendees)
- **FUNDRAISING AND DEVELOPMENT.** One major continued organizational focus has been securing additional annual sponsors, program sponsors, donors, and advertisers. The Alliance's Director of Development Consultant has been beneficial in both implementing the organization's annual development plan, as well as securing operating funds. Five grant applications were submitted this year to the Benevolence Committee of Christ Church, Kenilworth United Fund, New Trier Township, Wilmette Optimist Club Foundation, Winnetka Congregational Church.

- **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 6 Community Play Days included (Note: these events are free and open to the public):
    - **Fort Building**, Saturday, October 1 & Sunday, October 2. 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, February 25. The Alliance's Winter Play Day at Northfield's Clarkson Park featured fort building, marshmallow roasting, a scavenger hunt, and more. Program partners included BackYard Nature Center and the Northfield Park District.
    - **Spring Play Day**, Saturday, April 29. Hosted at Shelton Park in Glencoe, play activities were facilitated by Chicago Botanic Gardens and Kids-In-Sync pediatric therapy, and a story time by Glencoe library closed the event.
    - **Summer Play Days, June 5-7**. During the first days of summer vacation, these annual events serve as an inspiration for parents to make children's play a priority over the summer months. 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. Each day families are encouraged to visit a different park in the New Trier Township.
  - Blakely Bundy and Liza Sullivan contributed a chapter to the book, [\*Playing It Up –With Loose Parts, Playpods, and Adventure Playgrounds\*](#), published by the Alliance for Childhood. This 160-page publication highlights over 20 initiatives that foster child-initiated, creative play led by play activists and leaders from across the U.S. The chapter provides a chronology of the work achieved by The Alliance for Early Childhood's Let's Play Committee since 2009 to restore play as a central activity of childhood in our communities.
- **MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS.** Our current membership consists of 52 schools and organizations in Winnetka, Northfield, Kenilworth, and neighboring communities on the North Shore, reaching over 5,000 children, parents, and educators annually. Our membership levels include: 37 Standard Member schools and organizations, 2 Affiliate schools, and 13 Associate Member schools and organizations. During the 2016-17 school year, Glenview Methodist Preschool joined as a new Associate Member school.
- **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. Eight networking events were scheduled during the school year, impacting over 300 educators.
  - **26<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Networking Breakfast** (September 29, 2016). 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 Winnetka Community Nursery School and 35 people attended. (35 attendees)
  - **Early Childhood Directors Roundtables** (6 sessions, October 2016 through May 2017). 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.
  - **27<sup>th</sup> Annual Networking Dinner** (January 19, 2017). Administrators, teachers, and others dined and listened to a nationally recognized and respected educator in Early Childhood. Gever Tulley, author, TED speaker, and computer scientist, presented "Experience First: Ideas and Lessons From a Decade of Meaningful Hands-On Learning Experiments." Visit The Alliance's website to view [Gever Tulley's presentation and PowerPoint slides](#). (210 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 2016-17 school year, The Alliance engaged over 400 educators through two professional development events including:

- **Preschool-Kindergarten Summit**, Thursday, February 9, 2017. This second 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. This year's theme was "Cultivating the Whole Child: Building Strong Social Emotional Foundations in Today's World." 208 participants attended, representing over 40 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. The keynote address was given by Erika Christakis, MPH, MA, M.Ed., author of *The Importance of Being Little*. National experts 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. For additional information, resources, and videos of the sessions, please visit The Alliance's website: <http://www.theallianceforec.org/preschoolsummit.php>. (208 attendees)
  - **4<sup>th</sup> Annual Inspiring Nature Play: Inside Out Conference**, May 3, 2017 hosted by The Alliance for Early Childhood and the Chicago Botanic Garden. This annual professional development event was geared toward enabling access to developmentally appropriate nature play experiences for early childhood (birth through grade 3). Keynote and internally recognized early childhood technology expert, Chip Donohue, Ph.D., of the Erikson Institute described the role of the adult in helping children navigate the digital age and find a balance between nature and technology. Through interactive workshops (or "playsshops"), 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. The event brought together formal and non-formal educators passionate about engaging young children in nature play and nature-based learning. (205 attendees)
- **SCREENBREAK.** ScreenBreak 2017, our 23<sup>rd</sup> annual event, was held from March 5-11 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 all member schools in Winnetka, Northfield, Kenilworth, Wilmette, Glencoe, Glenview, and Highland Park participated. This year's theme was "Power up Your Imagination," 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.
  - **Events.** The Kick-Off Event featured Laura Doherty and The Heartbeats, and attracted approximately 170 attendees.
  - **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 22<sup>nd</sup> Century Media article entitled, "[The Alliance for Early Childhood's ScreenBreak Gets Kids Active.](#)"
  - **ScreenBreak Guide.** 5,275 copies of the 54-page Guide were produced. Activities and advertisements from 62 local businesses and organizations were featured in the Guide, as well as additional media info and "at home" activity ideas.
  - **Sponsors and Activity Hosts.** We greatly thank the 62 sponsors and activity hosts who have made the 2017 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.
- **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:
  - **Developmental Screenings.** New this year, The Alliance began a partnership with [Pathways Clinic](#) to provide free developmental, play-based screenings for the youngest children in our districts. During this successful pilot, 76 preschoolers were screened, and the specialists provided individualized support to classroom teachers prior to parent-teacher conferences. Next year, we hope to expand this initiative, providing this valuable service to more area preschools.
  - **Everyone Plays at Kohl Children's Museum.** On May 21, The Alliance was thrilled to attend this event which brings children with special needs and their families into the museum to not only enhance their museum experience, but also help connect parents who may feel too overwhelmed to attend a typical day at Kohl Children's Museum.
  - **Facebook Group.** The Special Needs Roundtable has a social media presence on Facebook where we post events and seminars offered locally for children with special needs.
  - **Webinars.** See description above on page 2, section "Educational Lecture Series and Educational Networking Events For Parents."