

Connections For Children: Stronger than Ever After 40 Years

ANNUAL REPORT 2015



LETTERS TO OUR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

Making a Difference for 40 Years

How swiftly time flies! When I first joined Connections For Children we were about to celebrate our 25th anniversary. It's hard to believe that this year we mark another milestone – four decades since Connections For Children (CFC) was founded as one of the first child care resource and referral agencies in California.

Since then, CFC has helped tens of thousands of families meet their needs for child care and early education. Today, CFC is without rival as the go-to child care expert in the West Side and South Bay communities of Los Angeles County.

Annually, CFC helps more than 3,000 families of all income levels obtain quality child care arrangements that best suit their needs. CFC's child care specialists offer free referrals and parent education, as well as resources in all aspects of child and family development. We also administer publicly-funded financial aid programs for low-income working families.

What's more, through intensive coaching and mentoring services, CFC has helped hundreds of child care providers to build sustainable programs that support children's wellbeing, health and early learning.

We continue to grow. CFC recently joined the



Patti Oblath

Metro West Early Head Start Child Care Partnership to coach a network of family child care providers that will serve some of the most vulnerable children, infants and toddlers in the Palms and Mar Vista neighborhoods.

No wonder that CFC is a trusted resource! We thank our supporters and look forward to a future of continued excellence in working with parents, children and child care providers.

Patti Oblath
Executive Director



Iao Katagiri
Photos by Diane Baldwin

What an honor it is to start my term as Board president of Connections For Children as we celebrate 40 years! As it did when I joined the CFC board several years ago, CFC works every day to provide high-quality, accessible services for children — from birth through early childhood — and their families.

I came to Los Angeles and began my career at the RAND Corporation only a few months before CFC was founded, so the anniversary has very personal significance for me. Professionally, RAND's policy research agenda has included early childhood education for two decades. I have had access to the growing body of research that documents the clear impact of early education interventions on emotional and cognitive development, educational achievement, future employability and health throughout one's lifetime.

CFC uses that research as the foundation for developing and refining innovative programs that make a difference for the children, families and educators throughout our community. CFC is at the forefront in working to build the quality of early childhood educational experiences to help ensure each child reaches his or her full potential.

Early childhood programs help individual children and families, and they are also a smart investment in the economic vitality, health and wellbeing of our nation.

We are grateful for the support of so many in our community who have helped us to reach this extraordinary milestone and to continue to serve our children and families!

Iao Katagiri
President of the Board

The 2015 Annual Report
is dedicated to
LAURIE ROZET
1927 – 2015
Founding Executive Director
Connections For Children

Our Mission:
**To build
a stronger
future for
children,
families and
communities
through high
quality child
care resources,
education and
guidance.**



Proven and Cost-effective Services

With 40 years of service and counting, Connections For Children (CFC) is still as fresh and relevant as when it was started by a group of passionate founders who saw the need for quality and affordable child care in the community. More and more studies tell us that early childhood education has lasting value not just for individuals but for our society. That's why our commitment is stronger than ever to help parents by making sure young children get not only the care they need, but also develop the language skills that will make them strong readers and open the door to brighter futures.

CHILD CARE REFERRALS:

All parents in our service area — no matter their income level — are welcome at CFC, where they will be guided towards safe, experienced and quality licensed day care that meets their families' individual needs and values.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:

We help eligible low-income parents to obtain affordable quality child care for infants and toddlers as well as preschool and school-age children up to 12 years old. This frees parents to stay in the workforce and seek better earning opportunities through continued education.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Child care providers of all experience levels are invited to take advantage of our educational training, resources and expertise. We help them to learn the latest child care methods in order to provide the best care possible. We also coach them in how to build on their professional successes by improving their businesses.



2015: By the Numbers

	2015	40 -Year Totals*
Helping families:		
• Requests for child care information, referrals and other resources	3,331	165,000
• Families securing financial assistance	977	24,000
• Parents and other caregivers participating in Family Time	213	2,500
Focusing on early education:		
• Children benefiting from financial aid	1,431	35,000
• Children enjoying and learning in Family Time	277	6,250
Caregiver education and development:		
• Training sessions offered	131	2,800
• Hours of individual coaching provided	1,528	37,500
• Early educators receiving training, technical assistance and coaching	811	20,000
• Child care programs working with CFC to attain better scores in quality ratings	47	750
Pumping up the local economy:		
• Dollars contributed back through payments for child care	\$5,163,225	\$185,000,000

* Rounded

Innovative Programs Make the Difference

Connections For Children makes the difference through a wide range of core services that address the individual needs of children and their families as well as the early child care educators in our community.

WHERE THE STORY BEGINS

Early literacy skills unlock the key to future learning. Where The Story Begins, CFC's reading readiness initiative, targets the most vulnerable children in our community. Guided by CFC's early literacy specialists, child care providers and parents work in small groups with children, talking and reading as a way to build the vocabulary that accelerates learning to read and write.

NUTRITION AND ACTIVITY

Children's physical wellbeing is a vital element of healthy development. With an eye toward checking the epidemic of early childhood obesity, CFC works in partnership with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and Let's Move West LA to ensure that child care providers know about wholesome food choices, portion sizes and active movement indoors and outside.

EARLY HEAD START

CFC recently launched Metro-West Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership. Working with Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services, CFC's staff coaches home-based child care providers who care for infants and children up to age four. With its emphasis on social and emotional development, as well as school readiness, the program helps providers recognize and respond to the needs of each child in their care.

FAMILY TIME

Sometimes playtime in the park is the best way to learn new things. One of CFC's longest-running programs, Family Time, meets weekly in a casual park setting where children get to play and parents and caregivers get to be part of the fun. For children, it's often a first taste of preschool. For parents and caregivers, it's a place where they can feel comfortable asking for resources and tips.

COACHING CAREGIVERS

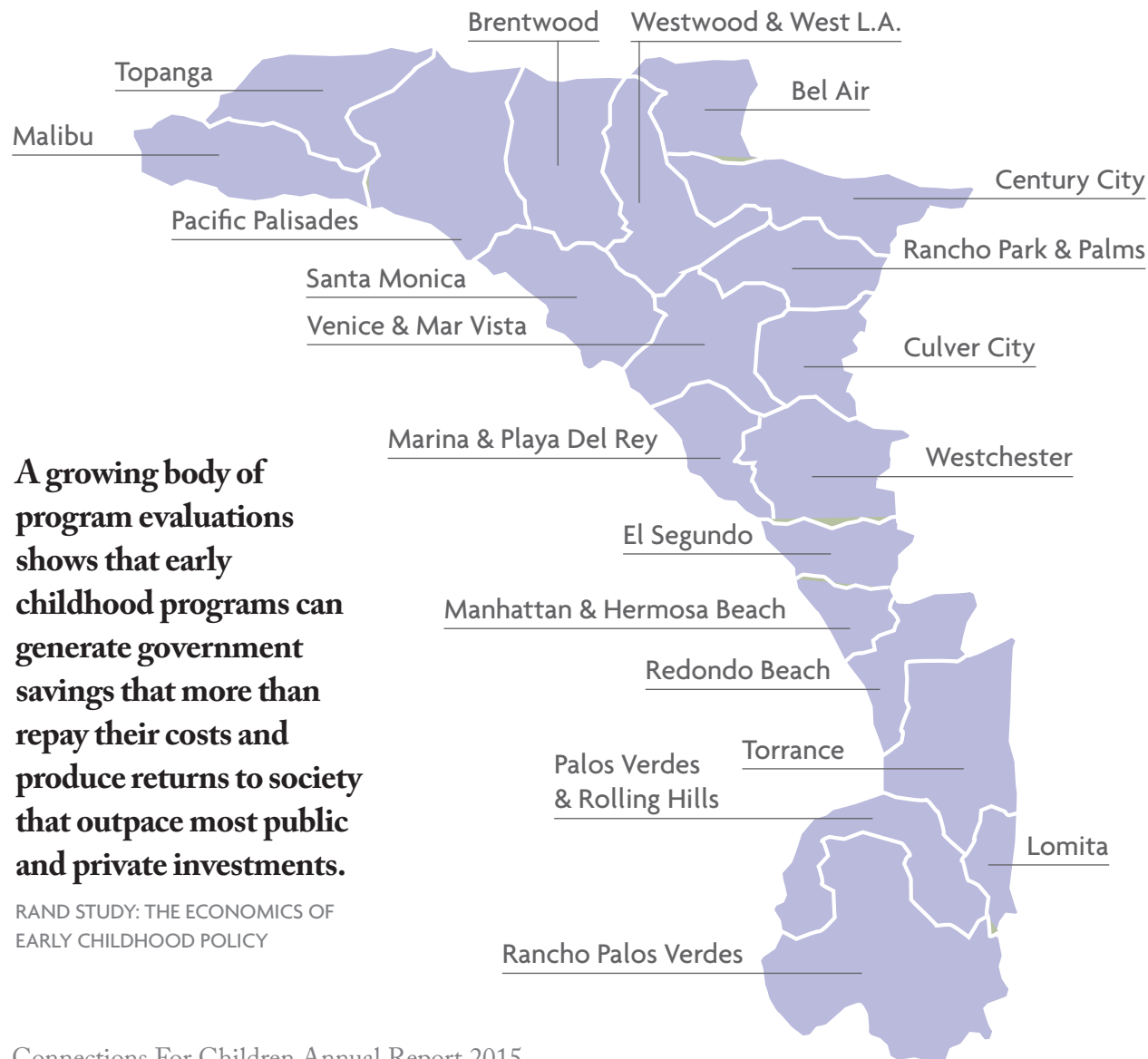
The Gateways for Early Educators program, now in its fifth year, is showing outstanding results in assisting child care practitioners in developing their career pathways and improving the quality of care they provide. Training and intensive coaching prepare caregivers to better engage children in the play and activity that build communication skills and general knowledge for the future.

“In today’s economy, when having both parents in the workforce is an economic necessity for many families, we need affordable, high-quality child care more than ever. It’s not a nice-to-have — it’s a must-have. So it’s time we stop treating child care as a side issue, or as a women’s issue, and treat it like the national economic priority that it is for all of us.”

PRESIDENT OBAMA, STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS, JANUARY 20, 2015

Our Service Area

We embrace 12% of Los Angeles' population



A growing body of program evaluations shows that early childhood programs can generate government savings that more than repay their costs and produce returns to society that outpace most public and private investments.

RAND STUDY: THE ECONOMICS OF
EARLY CHILDHOOD POLICY



Making Connections: 40 Years of Service

From its beginnings, Connections For Children has been at the forefront in recognizing the vital importance of supporting families in providing early childhood experiences for children that cultivate the seeds to success in school and in life.

Today, Connections For Children has more than 35 employees and serves more than 3,000 children every year. Its service area extends from Malibu to Palos Verdes Peninsula and encompasses 14 cities in the Westside and South Bay. Further advancing its mission, current Executive Director Patti Oblath has launched innovative programs that address early literacy and childhood obesity, as well as trainings that arm child care providers with the most effective teaching tools and methods.

GRASSROOTS BEGINNINGS

CFC started as a volunteer grassroots effort in 1975 at a time when women were beginning to enter the workforce in greater numbers. But parents had few resources to turn to in order to make sure that their children were not only properly cared for but also fully nourished in a way that enhanced their chances to learn and grow.

There from the beginning was a small group of visionary leaders, including Ida Bucher, Betsy

Hiteshew, Laurie Rozet and June Solnit Sale.

These founders at first created Child Care Information Services, which operated as a project of Family Services of Santa Monica. Real estate developer Doug Pardee made a significant donation to boost this new program.

Rozet became its first executive director, volunteering her time and working out of a tiny backroom at Family Services with a staff of just two volunteers.

“Most centers at that time did not enroll infants and toddlers,” Sale said. “Laurie took the leadership in contacting various agencies and grant-givers.” Soon, Sale said, CFC became an important resource in developing innovative programs that supported quality child care.

SEED MONEY HELPS

In 1975, the City of Santa Monica granted seed money to develop child care resource and referral services for areas within the city. At the same time, state legislation created a permanent funding stream.

EXTENDING SERVICES

In 1977, services were extended to communities from Pacific Palisades to Redondo Beach. The new program grew quickly, with

the introduction of Preschool in the Park (now Family Time); training workshops for centers and home-based child care providers; lunchtime chats about quality child care, and a toy library in a van that visited child care sites.

By the early 1980s, the program — now known as Connections For Children — became an independent nonprofit.

Former CFC board member Terry Ogawa, who was Connections For Children’s executive director from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s and later served on the Board of Directors, oversaw tremendous growth in the organization.

“It was a time when employers began to recognize the importance of quality child care, which led to enhanced referral services, parent education and other family-friendly programs,” Ogawa said recently.

LASTING COLLABORATIONS

New educational programs for parents and child care providers were added, and CFC built lasting collaborations with UCLA and Santa Monica and El Camino community colleges, as well as other local agencies committed to quality child care.

In 2001, CFC became one of the first organizations funded by First 5 LA, a leading

early childhood advocate created in 1998 to invest Los Angeles County's allocation of funds from California's Proposition 10 tobacco tax.

A NATIONAL PRIORITY

"Today, the importance of high-quality early learning is a national priority, uniting leaders across the political spectrum," Oblath said. This was demonstrated by the overwhelming bipartisan support in 2014 for reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant and expansion of Early Head Start. "These measures make strong commitments to safe, high-quality early care and education," Oblath said.

For CFC, this has led to an involvement in new direct services with the Metro-West Early Head Start Child Care Partnership and the ability to again serve many more children and families.

As CFC co-founder Hiteshew said: "The future of early childhood education is in the development of universal preschool and a curriculum that addresses the needs of the whole child."

CFC continues to move forward with energy and innovation so that all of our community's children can realize their full potential. Please join us in celebrating our 40th anniversary of service to the Westside and South Bay!

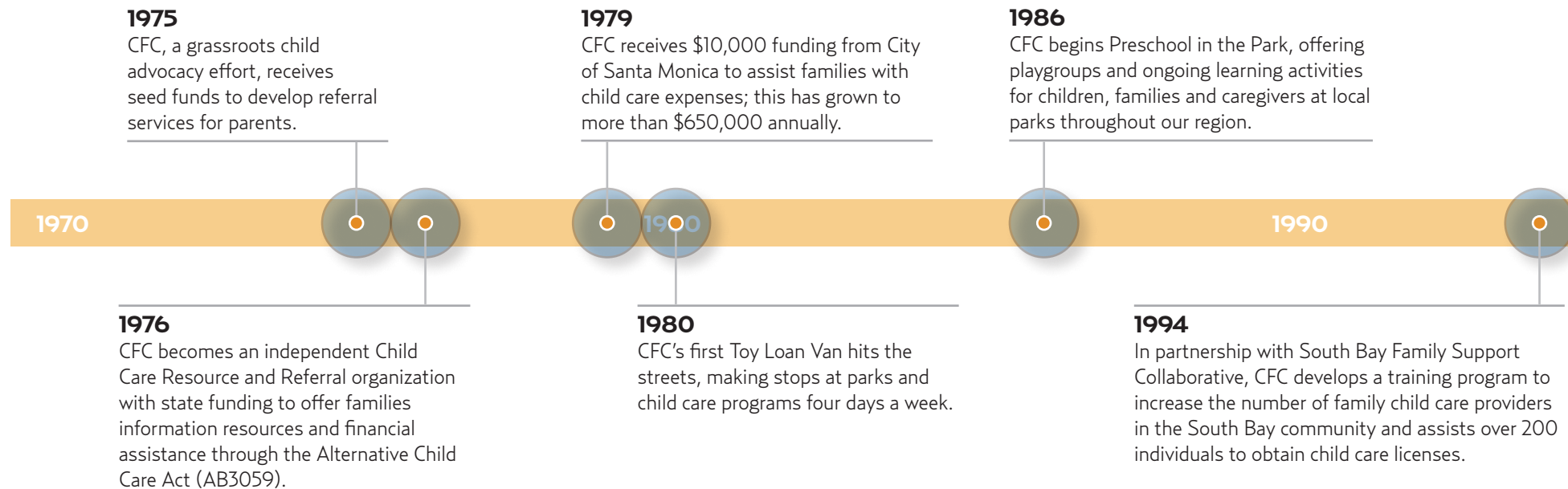
Connections For Children Annual Report 2015

"Today, the importance of high-quality early learning is a national priority."

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PATTI OBLATH



Established Expertise Spanning Four Decades



Child Care at the State and National Levels

1975 – 1976

- The federal government expands eligibility for child care subsidy to include low-income families not receiving welfare. Title XX funds for child care increase.
- California authorizes funding to establish pilot Resource and Referral and Alternative Payment voucher programs, to maximize parental choice and provide more child care at less cost to the state.
- The City of Santa Monica grants seed money to help launch CFC as a Child Care Resource and Referral organization, so it can apply for above funding.

1990 – 1991

- Congress creates the Child Care and Development Block Grant to improve the quality, affordability and accessibility of child care for low-income parents who are working or in some work-related education or activity.
- California implements the Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant, using funding to expand child care and development programs and establish quality improvement projects.

1998

CFC and nine partners contract with the Los Angeles County Department of Social Services to provide child care financial assistance for parents participating in the CalWORKs program.

2003

CFC introduces the popular and innovative Fun Visits program, sending our staff out to child care programs to deliver enrichment activities that educate children while also modeling age-appropriate curriculum development to the providers.

2006

CFC and South Bay Center for Counseling develop the School Readiness program, offering extensive training for South Bay providers.

2013

CFC coaches assist child care programs to meet the high quality rating standards of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge.

2014

CFC steers the Building Blocks for Kindergarten school readiness campaign launched by Santa Monica Cradle to Career together with the City of Santa Monica, the Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District, Santa Monica Public Library and a wide range of community based organizations.

2001

As one of the initial grantees of First 5 LA, CFC launches the Child Care Early Literacy and Accreditation Support programs to help those caring for children to better understand children's language and early literacy development.

2004

CFC and the Santa Monica Child Care and Early Education Task Force secure \$400,000 to provide child care subsidy for the Pico neighborhood as part of the community benefits package of the Hines-Lantana Development Agreement.

2010

CFC and partner agencies launch Gateways for Early Educators, offering professional development, training and coaching.

2012

CFC expands services to families and child care programs in Torrance, Lomita and the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

2015

CFC joins the Metro-West Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership, anchored by Vista Del Mar, to coach a federally-supported network of family child care providers serving some of the youngest and most vulnerable children in the Palms and Mar Vista neighborhoods.

1996 – 1998

- President Clinton signs the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, which changed child care programs for families on welfare.
- California launches California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), the State's new welfare system, establishing new funding for child care services.
- California voters approve Proposition 10, increasing the tax on tobacco products and establishing a system of First 5 funding for various early childhood programs.

2014

- President Obama signs the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, the first reauthorization of the law since 1996.
- \$500 million in Federal funding is set aside for new Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships.

Help – Just When It’s Needed the Most

ALINA: Door opens to a better life

A production accountant at a major studio for the past 15 years, Alina has worked on too many films to count. She has formed a mentorship program for young women coming up in the industry, and she teaches a film accounting course at the community college. Her daughter Keesha graduated from college last year.

But things were definitely not going in a good direction when Keesha was a small child and Alina was trapped in an abusive marriage.

“I knew I had to get out of my marriage before the abuse got worse and hurt my daughter as well,” Alina said.

But to set things right she first had to find child care for Keesha.

“I heard about Connections For Children from a neighbor who had witnessed the tension whenever my husband was around,” she said. CFC helped her find good child care that was subsidized so that she could afford it.

“With the huge expense of child care now covered, I could leave my husband, get an apartment for my child and me and start over,” Alina said. “Looking back, I think my situation was much more dangerous for us than even I had known.”

Talking of her current job, her surroundings and the success of her daughter, Alina added: “Connections gave me a key to open the door to all this. It wouldn’t have happened had I not had help from CFC.”

MANNY: Help is on the home-front

Manny came to Connections For Children one day in 2013 after he and his three kids — then aged two, five and eight — stopped by to pick up free children’s books from CFC’s table at a community fair. Manny, who works in fast food, learned in talking to CFC staff that his family might qualify for subsidized child care services. At the time, he and his wife Anna, who takes the bus every day to her job as a nanny, lived with his brother and parents. Both Anna and Manny have irregular work schedules that keep them on the job early mornings and late nights.

“CFC helped us find a child care provider that also offers extended hours,” Manny said. “Now when we are both working at the same time, the kids are safe and get help with their homework.”

Last year when Manny came to the office to renew child care for his kids, he shared his hopes that someday his family would live in a house

that was less crowded. His case specialist had just received notices about affordable housing that would soon be available. She helped Manny complete and submit an application.

A few months later the case specialist received a call from Manny inviting her to visit him and his family in their brand new, three-bedroom home a few blocks from where they had previously lived. With child care still nearby and the children’s school across the street, Manny and Anna are able to give their children a life that a few years ago seemed out of reach.

JENNIFER: Next stop is a college diploma

Jennifer, a single mom who came to CFC three years ago, credits the assistance she receives with making a significant difference in both her life and her now four-year-old daughter’s. After beginning her studies at Santa Monica College, Jennifer is now a fulltime student at USC studying business management with an emphasis on finance. She expects to graduate in spring 2017.

“I still have a little ways to go,” Jennifer said, “but CFC’s help has allowed me the opportunity to attend school fulltime and to be diligent with my class schedule and keep on track to attain my

goals. I'm very excited about the future."

About child care for her daughter Emma, Jennifer says, "It's still the biggest expense in my budget. But Emma is attending a great, local, accredited preschool that is wonderfully enriching — a great environment for kids.

"I know that being in this program will most certainly ensure that she is ready for kindergarten next year! I would never have been able to give her this without the substantial help from CFC."

SUZANNE: Son thrives, so does mom

When Suzanne arrived in Los Angeles 22 years ago with her two-year-old toddler Justin, she was in dire financial straits. She had no family, no husband and no support. "I was in the quandary that so many single parents — and these days couples, too — face. I did not want welfare. I needed to work — I wanted to work! But how would I possibly be able to deal with the daunting cost of child care? It was a nightmare situation."

It was not until someone told Suzanne about Connections For Children that her life changed in wonderful ways. "I applied for the program, got on the waiting list and crossed my fingers. A few months later I got the call that there was a spot



for me in the program. I was going to be able to get help with almost all of my child care costs! To this struggling, frightened single mom, it was the best news that I could get. My son started his preschool, and I went to work."

Suzanne, the author of several inspirational books for children and adults, says that her "life has changed dramatically since that day so long ago."

Her son is now 24 and off on his own. "Because of the help from Connections, he thrived, making friends and learning interesting new things every day," Suzanne said. "Quite literally CFC saved my life. It was that ray of hope and help that bridged the gap between barely surviving and enjoying a happy home!"

(Note: The names of these participants have been changed to protect their privacy.)

2015 Financial Report

Statement of Activities

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Federal Awards	\$ 2,961,612
State Allocations	2,881,165
Other Grants and Contracts¹	1,905,295
Parent Fees	198,150
Contributions	66,684
Other Revenue	20,651
Total	8,033,557

USES OF REVENUE

Child Care Assistance	6,618,559
General Administrative Costs	544,221
Child Care Referral Services	289,739
Other Child Care Services	216,160
Fundraising Expenses	15,581
Total	7,684,260
Change in Net Assets	349,297
Net Assets Beginning of Year	591,796
Net Assets End of Year	\$ 941,093

¹ Includes local government and private grants and contracts

Statement of Financial Position

ASSETS

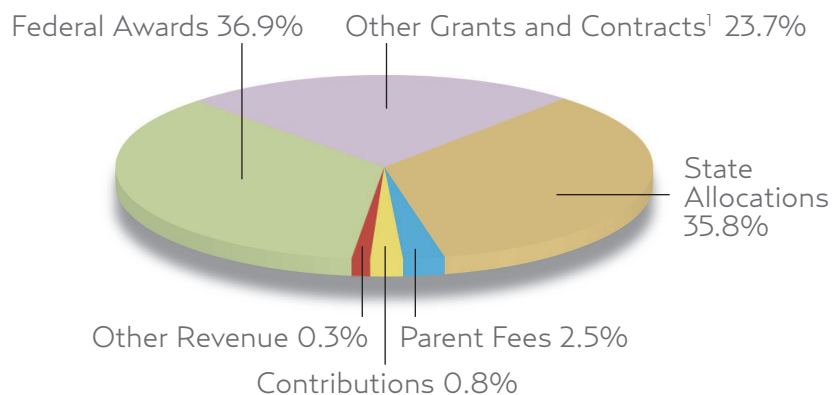
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 630,380
Grants Receivable	570,500
Investments	364,717
Prepaid Expenses	73,110
Fixed Assets	72,373
Deposits	12,577
Total Assets	1,723,657

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

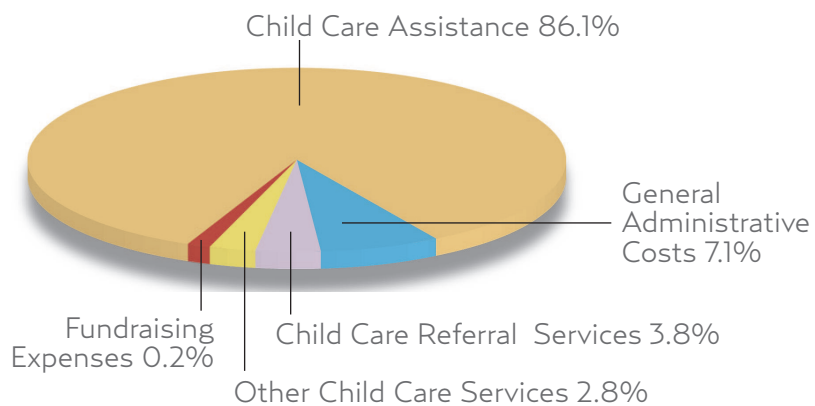
Accounts Payable	642,382
Accrued Expenses	140,182
Total Liabilities	782,564
Net Assets	941,093
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$1,723,657

93% of every dollar was used to provide direct services benefiting the children, families and early childhood educators of our community.

Sources of Revenue Breakdown



Uses of Revenue Breakdown



¹ Includes local government and private grants and contracts



The Connections For Children Team

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Volunteers

Connections For Children is grateful for the involvement of its many volunteers, including the Taproot Foundation, the Holiday Angels Program and all of the many individuals who helped us throughout the year.

Credits

With sincere appreciation to the children and families of Family Time for permission to take their photos.

Special thanks to photographer Mathieu Young for the wonderful images in this Annual Report.



In Appreciation of Our Contributors

PLATINUM CIRCLE

Bonnie Bailer &
Phil Glover
Adri & Robert Butler
Amy J Crowe
Dianne Douglas
& Victor Anderson
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Our Community Partners

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Education of Young
Children – North
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Child Care Aware
of America
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Los Angeles County
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Santa Monica Child
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Education Task Force
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Santa Monica – Malibu
Unified School District
South Bay Center
for Counseling
St. Joseph Center
Taproot Foundation
UCLA Center
for Healthier
Children, Families
& Communities
West Los Angeles
College
Westside Family
Health Center
Westside Children's
Center
Venice Family Clinic
Virginia Avenue Park

Our Major Funders

California Department
of Education, Early
Educations &
Development Division
Los Angeles County
Department of Public
Social Services
City of Santa Monica
First 5 LA
Los Angeles Universal
Preschool

California Child
Care Resource and
Referral Network
Los Angeles County
Department of
Public Health
Los Angeles County
Office of Child Care
Vista Del Mar
Metro-West Early
Head Start – Child
Care Partnership

Investing in Our Future

It's now clearer than ever that early childhood programs create dividends not just for our children and their families but for society as well. Research has shown that the benefits far outweigh the costs by decreasing the likelihood of special education enrollment, juvenile delinquency, adult incarceration and welfare participation.

And the benefits don't stop there. Parents who have access to quality child care also are able to upgrade their skills, get better jobs and have their families be self-sufficient. Everyone wins.

Yet despite what we know about the benefits to children and their families, social services programs funded by the state have long fallen short of providing the subsidies that make this possible.

That's why your support is needed. Please join us in sustaining this vital program. Together, we can ensure that every child and every family has access to programs that help promote the success of our children in school and in life.

For more information, please call (310) 452-3325 or visit connectionsforchildren.org.



**You can help!
Invest in our
children's future.**

**Connections For Children
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www.connectionsforchildren.org**

