



2020–2021 ANNUAL REPORT



THE CHILDREN'S HOUSE



LETTER FROM MICHELE



Dear Children's House Families and Friends,

Since the founding of The Children's House in 1984, we have been committed to offering the highest fidelity Montessori education possible. Over the past year, as we carried out our school year in person during the COVID-19 pandemic, we were challenged to maintain our educational integrity while also providing a safe learning environment for all our learners and staff members.

The process taught us a lot about resilience, flexibility and collaboration, and our rock-solid community rose to help us through one of the biggest challenges we have ever faced. We successfully made it through the year because we all worked together.

One of the unexpected gifts of the pandemic is the opportunity to look at all the systems, traditions, and habits that have been part of our fabric for decades. As a community, we recognized there were many things that we couldn't wait to bring back – like all-school gatherings, in-person meetings, and student interactions between classrooms. There were also some things that we decided should be left behind.

Words cannot express the gratitude that I have for all of you and the faith you put in us as we navigated the year together. You stepped up and supported our beloved school with extras for the staff and financial support in the absence of an in-person gala. Most importantly, you gave us your trust each day as you dropped your child off at the door – even though you could not come inside.

Although we aren't entirely through the pandemic, we have learned just how strong our community truly is – and how we can weather any obstacle with patience and tenacity, if we do it together. When doubt and fear cloud our thoughts, we need only look to the children to restore our belief.

With sincere appreciation,

Michele Shane

Michele Shane,
Head of School

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REIMAGINING HOW WE SUPPORT THE SCHOOL

Announcing Our Bright Futures Fund

As the pandemic continued through the 2020-21 school year, we took the opportunity to reimagine how our school meets its fundraising needs and decided to permanently move away from relying on a single large-scale fundraising event. After months of planning, we launched our Bright Futures Fund in March 2021 and invited our community to make a gift toward the promise and vitality of our school.

Your deep trust in and appreciation for our Montessori learning environment allows us to continually invest in the people, places, and materials that make The Children's House what it is.



BRIGHT FUTURES FUND

Inspire lifelong learning.

Throughout our 37-year history, we have partnered with families to sustain and grow a vibrant learning community. From our humble beginning to now, we have always aspired to create bright futures, not only for our own students - but through our students, as they grow into adults and take their place in our community and our world.



***“The child is both a hope
and a promise for mankind.”***
~ Maria Montessori



Go to traversechildrenshouse.org/giving.asp
to watch our Bright Futures Fund launch video!





YOUR IMPACT: OUR BRIGHT FUTURE

Our new Bright Futures Fund resonated with our community and sustained our school after two years without our annual Gala. In its inaugural year, our Bright Futures Fund totaled \$169,730.

165 current and alumni families, grandparents, staff, and friends chose to invest in:

- Our children - building within them the skills, grace, courage, resiliency, humanity, and a sense of responsibility to create healthy and peaceful futures for themselves and their communities.
- Our teachers - supporting their Montessori practice with professional development opportunities. Our guides are highly trained and prepare a classroom that supports and inspires children to love to learn - they are the dynamic link between the materials and the child's learning experience.
- Our future - sustaining The Children's House to ensure that it will provide an exceptional learning environment for our students today and for years to come - no matter what challenges we may face.



Together, we celebrated our accomplishments, our community, and our teachers - the heroes of the pandemic - with a virtual event in April 2021.



Our Bright Futures Fund will continue to support our school for years to come.
Join us by making a gift today to inspire lifelong learning.

YOUR IMPACT: KAREN CIRCLE

In November 2020, twenty-nine women made a collective gift of \$29,000 to The Children's House in memory of Dr. Karen Gilhooly who died tragically in 2004. This giving circle began in 2005 and now, 15 years later, Karen's legacy of helping children learn to live healthy and active lives continues to be honored in a most generous way.

Discussing proposals made by the guides, specialists, and administration over a Zoom call, the 2020 Karen Circle, decided to support:

- Employee relations
- Washer and dryer for elementary wing
- COVID relief
- Trees for noise/visual barrier along N. Long Lake Rd.
- Contribution to 3 Mariposas Montessori in memory of Patty Anton
- Bookshelf and books for Nido/YCC library
- Sensory tools for classrooms
- Wireless speakers and headphones for classrooms
- Classroom language materials
- Pots and pans for the kitchen
- New sleds and outdoor toys
- Ride-on toys and picnic tables for the YCC outdoor environment
- Projector and screen for art room



2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR ENROLLMENT SNAPSHOT

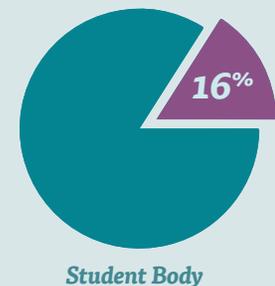


142 **3 MONTHS**
STUDENTS **— TO —**
6 YEARS



105 **1ST GRADE**
STUDENTS **— TO —**
8TH GRADE

\$295,277
TUITION
ASSISTANCE
FOR 40
STUDENTS



OUR STAFF: OUR HEROES

To the Staff, Guides, and Administration of The Children's House,

Heroes have certainly emerged over the last year and a half...nurses, first responders, delivery people (from mail to meals), doctors, frontline workers....and, in an incredibly profound way, all of you. When the doors of The Children's House reopened in Fall of 2020, you gave our families a long-awaited rhythm to the days and weeks that we simply would not be able to create on our own. Not only did we step outside of our bubbles for the first time in months, but we sent our children out first. With trust, hope, hand sanitizer, and two-layered masks, we entrusted you with our kids. Some, for the first time ever, a giant leap of faith. For many, it was a return to a familiar environment with a new set of circumstances. Through it all, school was a lifeline – a safe place our kids could go to learn, grow, and connect with each other.

You lead us all with your expertise as educators, support staff, and administration. More so, you lead with your compassion and care. You learned to read the expressions in our children's eyes and listen carefully to young voices muffled through masks.

When the doors of The Children's House reopened, you became our role models. You stepped into the world again first, so we could all follow. You navigated the once-mundane tasks of handwashing and lunch-seating with heightened priority and made daily temperature checks feel not-so-scary. You did all of this while preparing snacks, supervising studies, reading books aloud about social justice, giving spelling tests, and planning (with bated breath) The Dance of the Cosmos, among thousands of other things.

Each and every one of you individually are exemplary. Together, you embody the wonderful, loving, inclusive community that has grown to feel like home. When the doors to The Children's House reopened, you are what kept them open – every day... all year long...except that glorious snow day! We are grateful to be part of this special community.

Thank you to our heroes!

Carrie Goodreau
TCH Parent







FEATURED ALUMNI: LEGACY STUDENTS

By Emily Modrall

Long ago, in a little Suttons Bay farmhouse, dedicated educators and families opened the Children's House, a school where goats lived on the playground and a cat roamed the classrooms. Nearly four decades and a move to Traverse City later, our children spend their school days on a Children's House campus designed expressly for them and for the extraordinary resources, people, and materials that make the school the exceptional place that it is.

There are three Children's House parents this year - Dusty Christensen, John Bailey and I - who were once students in the Suttons Bay farmhouse. Two more - Nick Darga and Lindsey Smith - are Traverse City alums. That there are now five alumni-parents is a mark of the school's age, and it is also a unique testimony.

After the five of us were Children's House students, we went to local high schools and moved away for college. Our pursuits and paths back were varied: Lindsey and Dusty returned to Traverse City for post-college jobs (controller at H. Cox & Son, landscape architect and planner), and John, Nick, and I went elsewhere (Chicago for John, Nick travelled for work, and I went to graduate school) before moving home.

As adult alums, we have clear memories of being children at the Children's House. In the Dance of the Cosmos, Lindsey was Mars. Dusty and I were comets. John remembers standing in the middle of the classroom with a globe, which remains an excellent way to celebrate a birthday. (Some of us can still sing the birthday song.) Classroom materials and spaces can be flashback inducing - the metal insets for me, the school's library for Nick.

More than specific activities or events, though, we share a distinct memory of the values, awareness, and empowerment encouraged in us as children at the school, and the respect and love we felt from the adults around us. We agree that the emphasis on independent learning, practical skills, and caring for our environment, our friends, and ourselves equipped us as adults to appreciate, in John's words, the "sense of responsibility and satisfaction that comes with taking care of myself and helping others," and to identify and pursue our interests as older students, professionals, parents, and people.

We alumni-parents have chosen to send our own children to the same school we attended as much for what the school was then as for what it is today. The lessons that we learned as Montessori students and have carried with us into parenthood are now the reasons why our children are at the Children's House; robots might have replaced the goats, but we see the same opportunity for our children to be recognized as individuals, and to learn the value of independence and community. For this, we're willing to spend some more years in carline, and we are deeply grateful.



OUR ALUMNI:

2021 Graduating Seniors



Eirwen Moshier has started the next chapter of her life at George Mason University where she is pursuing a BFA in Dance at the College of Visual and Performing Arts and considering a second major as well.

She hopes to join a ballet company after college. *“My journey at the Children’s House taught me more than I even begin to realize. Every day I find a new set of skills that I have already acquired through my education at the Children’s House. I was given the opportunity to truly find my curiosity and passion for learning, which I am grateful for daily.”*



Aristeia Santoro is pursuing a Major in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts at University of Michigan. While she is not sure what she wants to do after

college, she plans on studying abroad during her sophomore and junior years. *“The Children’s House fostered my love of learning. It gave me the support to pursue whatever path I wanted and when there wasn’t a path it gave me the confidence to create my own.”*

STRATEGIC FINANCIAL DIRECTION

Drawing from the lessons of the previous year, the school moved away from its single in-person fundraising event to an ongoing fundraising campaign, our Bright Futures Fund. Donors at all levels stepped up to make the inaugural year of this fund a success. Over \$169,000 was raised through contributions made throughout the year, as well as during our online Bright Futures Celebration in April 2021.

The Board of Directors has continued its focus on growing and maintaining the school’s cash reserves. The Long Lake campus is nearly 20 years old, with \$600k of capital replacement costs anticipated over the next 5-10 years. Having met our reserve fund benchmark of 20% of operating budget, the board invested the school’s cash reserves into a series of mutual funds that prioritize environmental, social, and governance issues. To date, the funds have grown by nearly \$25,000, a return of around 4%. In addition, the endowment fund continues to grow, with a 50% rate of return since its inception date in March 2020.

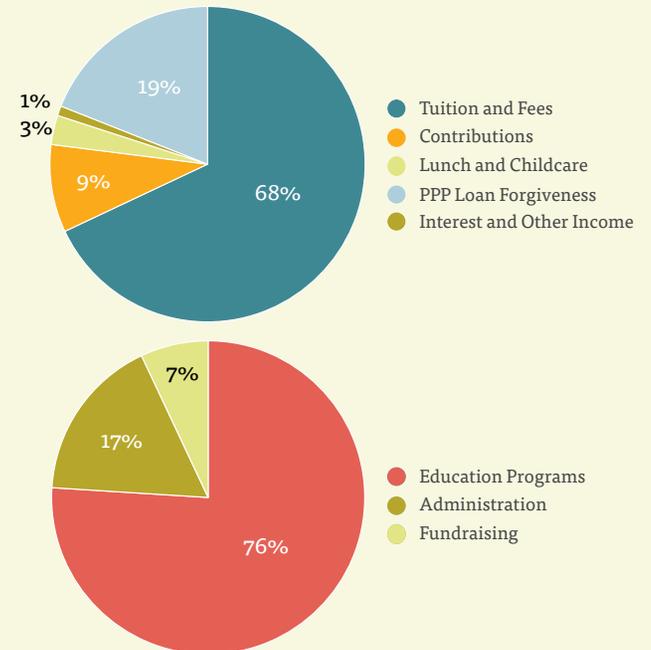
Staff compensation continues to be a major focus for the board. Steps taken this year to provide both salaried and hourly staff competitive compensation and benefits include increased retirement benefits and an increased minimum hourly wage. The Paycheck Protection Program loans forgiven during the year allowed for tuition relief for all our families and consistent paychecks for all TCH staff, both salaried and hourly, during the three months when the school moved to in-person learning the previous spring. In addition, all salaried and hourly staff were issued bonuses at the end of the FY2020-2021 school year for their outstanding hard work throughout a most challenging year.

Summary of fiscal year 2021 financials:

Revenue Total	\$4,098,467
● Tuition and fees	\$2,773,038
● Contributions	\$382,172
● Lunch and Childcare	\$108,627
● Interest and Other Income	\$51,408
● PPP Loan Forgiveness	\$783,222

Expense Total	\$3,436,428
● Education Programs	\$2,614,178
● Administration	\$583,378
● Fundraising	\$238,872

Net Assets - Beginning of Year	\$1,343,933
Net Assets - End of Year	\$2,005,972
Increase in Net Assets	\$662,039



OUR DONORS

With sincere thanks, we recognize those who give generously in support of The Children's House.

**Bright Futures Fund Lead Donors
(\$2,500 to \$10,000)**

Bay Area Urology Associates PC
Michael Bukowski
Lori Lemonnier and Jay Dujon
Carrie and Scott Goodreau
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Patty Anton Random Acts of Kindness Fund
 Renee and Rob Mittelstaedt,
in support of trees and landscaping
 Suzanne and Jason Allen,
in support of trees and landscaping





THE CHILDREN'S HOUSE

Montessori Children's House, Grand Traverse

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