



In 2019, Children's Law Center...





Reached

1 of every 9 children
living in DC's poorest
neighborhoods.

Collaborated on 500+ cases with pro bono attorneys.

Trained 1,627

judges, pediatricians, parents, social workers, youth, pro bono lawyers and caregivers.

Partnered with District agencies, the DC Council and community leaders to find and implement city-wide solutions that benefit all DC kids.

Children's Law Center fights so every child in DC can grow up with a loving family, good health and a quality education.

LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Today, a toddler with asthma is playing in the bedroom of his new home without the risk that mold in the carpet will send him to the hospital.

In another part of the District, three teenage sisters know their stepdad can continue caring for their medical and education needs following their mother's death.

And, in yet another DC neighborhood, a boy is finally in school and learning, after the school system excluded him for months – simply because of his disability.

In a world of uncertainty, there is one thing we know: Together, we can make a difference in the lives of children right here in our own community.

The need is great. There is much more to be done. That is why we are always looking at how we can think bigger and work smarter.



Trauma, resource scarcity and systemic racism create problems that hinder the success of so many children. But with the tenacity of children and their families, the smarts and commitment of my Children's Law Center colleagues and a strong network of partners and supporters by our side, we have proven time and again that we can solve these problems.

We often say that no child should need a lawyer to access a quality education, prevent treatable health issues from landing them in the hospital or know the love of a supportive family. But too many children do. That is why we are here every day, looking at each problem from multiple angles until we find the right solution.

As I reflect on the past year, one thing is clear: We can't go it alone. We need a team that includes you, our donors, pro bono attorneys and nonprofit partners. Thanks to you we were able to reach more than 5,000 children and families in 2019; and because of you we will fight to achieve even more in 2020.

With gratitude,

Judith Sandalow, Executive Director





PUTTING CHILDREN AT THE CENTER: OUR TEAMING APPROACH

Children's Law Center is appointed to represent children on their first day in foster care. We've met babies whose parents are struggling with unaddressed depression and addiction. We've seen the pain of elementary school children separated from their brothers and sisters. And we have listened to teenagers who have been removed from their homes because they and their mothers were victims of domestic violence.

Every child has unique needs and a distinct history.

But there's one constant: Our team of guardians ad litem (GAL lawyers), education lawyers, social workers and investigators fight for what is in each child's best interests.

Living in foster care can be difficult, especially for a child who has faced more traumatic experiences than anyone should encounter in their lifetime. That's why Children's Law Center ensures that a holistic support team is available for each child we represent.

Every child has a GAL lawyer and an investigator who work together to build relationships and trust with the child and the adults in the child's life. We visit the child at home, at school and in their community because we need to know how their world works.

When the court appoints Children's Law Center to represent a child, our **investigators** quickly learn what is going on in the child's life so that the GAL lawyer can advocate in court and with the government for the living situation and supports that are in the

child's best interests. Investigators request and review school, medical and mental health records; inspect the child's current and potential homes; run criminal record checks for potential caregivers; and meet with teachers about the child's education needs.

Education lawvers review each child's school situation to ensure they are in a stable, successful learning environment; and, when the child isn't, the lawyers work with the parents and school to get the child's education back on the right path. Social workers assess the more complex issues that impact a child – providing clinical recommendations so that the GAL lawyer can advocate for the right supports and family placement.

The GAL lawyer develops the legal strategy, advocating in and out of court so every child has a stable, loving family and receives the necessary services and supports.

This unique approach allows Children's Law Center to pull in all the tools, resources and partners we need to support each child today and to provide a foundation for their future success.

> from one another. I asked Lucy assess the girls' behavioral health evaluations of both children which

Olabisi Davies

*Children's Law Center works hard to protect our clients' confidentiality. The children's names have been modified. All other details are true.

A child's wellbeing is always our central focus.

We also work closely with birth parents, grandparents, foster parents, teachers, siblings and others who provide the child with significant support. The team works together to achieve our goal for each child: a stable family, good health and quality education.



ONE TEAM'S TIRELESS ADVOCACY TO REUNIFY A FAMILY



Children's Law Center guardian ad litem Olabisi Davies and investigator Christina Moss worked together to reunify three children with their mom.

"Since mom was working hard to address her substance abuse issue, I knew Olabisi needed current records to make an informed recommendation to the court. Before each hearing, I collected progress notes from family members' therapy sessions, gathered medical records and received updates on each child's attendance and grades."

Christina Moss Investigator

"Thanks to Olabisi's tenacious advocacy, three children have been reunited with their mom. She, Lucy and Christina collaborated seamlessly – each bringing their professional expertise to ultimately achieve what was in the best interests of the children."

Kim Daulton Director of Social Work



MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIPS IMPROVE **HEALTH AND REDUCE COSTS**

Willie, an 8th grader, couldn't read when his pediatrician referred him to Children's Law Center. Today he is a high school graduate.

Another child, King, was hospitalized multiple times until Children's Law Center took his family's landlord to housing court. Today his asthma is under control, and he hasn't been hospitalized in over a year.

These are just two of the nearly 16,000 children and families that we've reached since launching Healthy Together, our medical-legal partnership.

Children's Law Center has more than this anecdotal evidence to prove our legal intervention makes a difference. For more than a decade, we have formally assessed Healthy Together's impact. Through interviews with former clients, we confirmed time and again that children are healthier and learning, staying out of the hospital and achieving in school because of our legal assistance.

This year, our research confirmed that Healthy Together has a valuable secondary result: In addition to improving children's health, we also reduce health care costs – saving the government millions of dollars in Medicaid costs.

Uncovering the Data

To determine Medicaid savings, Children's Law Center first needed to navigate HIPAA, the complex federal

health privacy law. With pro bono support from **Ropes** & Gray LLP, Children's Law Center became HIPAAcompliant and entered into data-sharing agreements with Children's National and two managed care organizations, AmeriHealth Caritas District of Columbia and Health Services for Children with Special Needs, Inc. We also turned to The Advisory **Board Company** (now **Optum**) for its expertise on the business of health care.

Children's Law Center analyzed hundreds of thousands of insurance claims, comparing health care usage from up to two years before the medical-legal partnership's assistance to up to two years after.

"It has been a privilege for Ropes & Gray to represent Children's Law Center and we are proud of the result, a cutting edge contract that can be a model for medical-legal partnerships across the country."

David C. Djaha

Managing Partner, Ropes & Gray LLP

Groundbreaking Results Show Reduced Costs

The results of our analysis were astounding. Our medical-legal partnership has improved children's health and reduced the costs of medical care – by a staggering \$14.1 million over the past three years alone!

Take, for example, the typical costs for asthma-related emergency room visits, hospitalizations and other medical supports. For a child in DC, these costs can range from a few hundred dollars to tens of thousands of dollars. When we successfully advocate for a landlord to fix poor housing conditions, a child's asthma improves. As a result, the child stays out of the hospital and emergency room.

Based on our research, each successful intervention reduces government-funded health care costs by an average of \$10,000 during the first 18 months. For the 10% of children with the most significant health issues, the average costs spiked to \$60,000.

¹Stevens, Holly R.; Goodman, Tracy; Alberti, Philip, M.; Nerlinger, Abby; Dale, Karen.; Teach, Stephen. (manuscript in preparation). Building the Business Case for MLP Investment: Cost Avoidance Associated with MLP Intervention for Children with Asthma.

Improving the Health of More Children

We first used this research to negotiate a contract with AmeriHealth Caritas DC so that we could continue this life-saving work. Ropes & Gray guided us through the maze of Medicaid regulations, and we negotiated the first contract of its kind in the nation.

Next, Holly Stevens, PhD, our director of learning and evaluation, and Tracy Goodman, our Healthy Together director, presented our research findings at the National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership Summit and RISE National Summit on Social Determinants of Health, so that medical-legal partnerships around the country could benefit from this model.

Moving forward, we will use the findings to show the DC mayor and DC Council that money invested in improving housing conditions is not only good for children's health, it will also reduce government health care costs.



Children's Law Center Executive Director Judith Sandalow, with our 2019 Pro Bono Champion, Ropes & Gray, and AmeriHealth Caritas DC Market President Karen Dale.

A New Home for One AmeriHealth Client

"I wish I met you sooner." These are the heartfelt words that Ms. Janice Holt* shared with Children's Law Center lawyer Caroline Wick.

Two years earlier, Ms. Holt and her 1-year-old-son Dylan had just moved into a new apartment. He was happy, healthy and starting to say his first words. But at 15 months old, Dylan had his first of what would eventually be six febrile seizures over the course of the following year. Ms. Holt and Dylan went to the ER nearly ten times. He was hospitalized twice.

As more seizures happened, the doctors asked all the right questions, including: "Is there mold in your home?" Each time Ms. Holt said she hadn't seen anything, and nothing smelled like mold or mildew.



One day, Dylan's alphabet playmat was wet. Ms. Holt lifted it up and saw big black dots. She pulled back the carpet and, there it was: Three different colors of mold – black, white, gray.

"I never knew you couldn't see mold," she confessed. "The apartment was very clean. Fresh paint, new carpets."

When Dylan's doctor heard about the mold, he immediately referred Ms. Holt to Children's Law Center. Caroline and investigator Justin Abbasi visited the Holt family. The landlord heard about the referral and hastily fixed the bedroom floor issues before they arrived, but Caroline and Justin also saw signs of water damage everywhere – cracks in the walls, bubbling and peeling paint. It was clear the issues that impacted Dylan's health persisted.

With a lawyer by her side, Ms. Holt was able to finally get the landlord to recognize the extensive problems in the apartment. The landlord agreed to allow the Holt family to move out before the end of their lease.

It's been more than a year since Dylan's last seizure. Now, in his new bedroom, Dylan loves building Lego towers without the fear of what might be growing under his floor.

*Children's Law Center works hard to protect our clients' confidentiality. The family members' names have been modified based on the client's request. All other details are true.

Education

THE NEED FOR MEANINGFUL PARENT **PARTICIPATION**

For several years, we passed the baton inside Children's Law Center – from trial attorneys to policy staff to our communications team to our appellate program. Our goal? To ensure children with disabilities would benefit from their parents' engagement in their education. This year, we won the relay race.

Children learn best when parents² participate in their education. This is particularly true for children with disabilities, because their education program must be tailored to their unique learning needs, and parents know their children best. It is why family engagement is at the core of our special education advocacy and why it's woven into local and federal law.

Sometimes it takes specific expertise to determine whether a classroom is meeting the needs of a child with a disability. Parents may send experts to observe their child in school to secure the information necessary to make decisions about their child's education.

When parents and schools disagree about whether a classroom or program is meeting the child's needs, one option is that parents may go to court to resolve the dispute. The educational expert's testimony is critical to the parents' ability to persuade the hearing officer or judge.

Advocating for Fair School Observations

Our race began in 2012. Children's Law Center's education lawyers identified the school system's objection to having parents and their experts observe children in class as a major barrier to securing needed special education supports. At that time, DC Public

Schools (DCPS) had a vague policy that each school implemented differently.

Our early attempts to challenge DCPS's observation policy through individual cases were unsuccessful so we decided to improve the law instead.

In 2014 and 2015, our **policy and communications teams** picked up the baton – ensuring the right to parent observation was included in DC's landmark special education legislation: the 2014 Student Rights Act.

A Win for DC's Special Education Students

But the race wasn't over. DCPS interpreted the new law in a way that still prevented parents from using their own experts to advocate before a judge. This time our **appellate team** worked with our trial lawyers to identify a case we could appeal to federal court. Together, they found a family who had only been allowed to send an education consultant to observe their child in the classroom if the family signed an agreement that prohibited the expert from testifying later.

In July 2019, we finally crossed the finish line. The judge agreed with Children's Law Center that DCPS's reading of the law was incorrect:

Deborah A. Robinson

The court's opinion is a big win for the District's special education students – giving parents a stronger opportunity to meaningfully participate in their children's education.

*We always provide clients the option to change their name or use initials when sharing their story. Names in this story have not been changed.

²Children's Law Center is proud to work with many kinds of families. We use the term "parents" to represent all adults who can legally make decisions about a child's education, including foster parents, grandparents, relatives and other important adults in a child's life.

³Individualized Education Program



This victory ensures that the parents of more than 13,000 DC students with identified special education needs can access a critical tool: expert observations.

THE SCHOOL HAD GIVEN UP, BUT THIS MOM DIDN'T

The moment Ms. Woodson held her son Donnoven, she knew she'd do anything to fight for his future. What she didn't know is just how much fighting she'd have to do.

Donnoven was born six weeks early. At four months old, his mom knew something wasn't right. "He wasn't turning over, he wasn't crawling," she recalled.

The pediatrician ignored her concerns, saying Donnoven would hit his milestones in time. Ms. Woodson later learned her son had a rare birth defect that impaired his development. During his first three years of life, her son underwent multiple surgeries.



When Ms. Woodson tried to enroll Donnoven in pre-kindergarten, DCPS told her it wasn't necessary for him to attend. Ms. Woodson worried that DCPS had already given up on her son. That's when she met Children's Law Center.

Her Children's Law Center team successfully advocated to get Donnoven in school. Then, a few years later, DCPS wanted to move Donnoven to a new elementary school – a school Ms. Woodson worried wouldn't challenge Donnoven enough to learn. She believed DCPS was underestimating his potential and not seeing his strengths.

Children's Law Center lawyer, Sarah Flohre, jumped back in.

"Working with Sarah was such a relief. I knew I wasn't alone," Ms. Woodson recalled. "She would say to me – 'Ms. Woodson, let me do that. That's what I'm here for."

Children's Law Center filed in court to keep Donnoven in school with his typically developing peers and to increase services to help him communicate. But the battle was far from over. Flohre and Donnoven's mom knew he could achieve even more, but they needed the family's education consultant to observe Donnoven in his classroom.

DCPS agreed but only if Donnoven's mom signed paperwork prohibiting the consultant from testifying about what the expert observed.

"DCPS's actions were a direct violation of the 2014 Student Rights Act that CLC had worked so hard to pass," said Melissa Colangelo, Children's Law Center appellate project manager. "Sarah filed a due process complaint challenging the decision and lost, but it was from that loss that we achieved an even greater outcome."

Children's Law Center filed an appeal in District Court and won. For Ms. Woodson, the victory is more than just a legal one: Donnoven is learning at a school he loves.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES

ACTIVELY LISTENING TO CLIENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

At Children's Law Center, we know how important it is to have our clients lead their representation. They know what is best for themselves and their families; our job, like that of any good lawyer, is to use our legal skills to help our clients reach their goals.

For almost a decade, we have tracked how well we have done in accomplishing our clients' legal goals. We have even checked in with many clients two years later to make sure that our legal victory continues to translate into success for them. In short, are their children still healthy and learning?

What was missing from our self-evaluation was direct feedback from our clients about their experience. So, we asked them. Through listening sessions and surveys, we collected feedback from our clients as well as from parents who may someday need our assistance. We asked them to tell us what we do well, how we could improve and what barriers they faced securing legal assistance.

We've received important feedback about the difficulties our clients face staying involved in their case

"It is so rare for nonprofits to listen to the people they serve, implement those suggestions, and share how those ideas made an impact. I'm proud Children's Law Center is leading the way – both soliciting feedback and taking the important step to integrate their input into our work."

Elizabeth Bausch

Children's Law Center **Board Secretary**

"Whenever I share suggestions, I always wonder if they matter. Then, Children's Law Center told me that because of my suggestion, they're already doing things at the initial client meeting differently. It made me realize that they are listening to what I have to say."

Tiara Cuthbertson

Former client and asthma advocate

when they are juggling a long list of responsibilities with too few resources and limited support. Many of our clients have limited transportation, inflexible job schedules and fewer ways to communicate quickly and easily. We've also heard smart suggestions about how to explain complex legal information more simply and how to stay in touch more effectively when clients have only intermittent access to Wi-Fi.

Many of our clients have had negative experiences with lawyers, government agencies and other service providers. They are understandably skeptical when it comes to trusting their child's future to a lawyer they don't know.

We are using the feedback we heard to improve our services. For example, we heard that parents of children with uncontrolled asthma are often exhausted and overwhelmed by caring for their children. Before they are willing or able to work with a lawyer to improve the housing conditions that are exacerbating the asthma, they want to understand how their investment of time will help achieve positive results. We now hold initial meetings in clients' homes and include both the lawyer and either an investigator or family outreach worker. This is convenient for our clients and, most importantly, gives them a chance to see how committed the Children's Law Center legal team is to them.

We respect the time and thought our clients put into providing feedback. We are working to share back with them the ways their input has changed our practice. We plan to expand our use of feedback as a mechanism to be better partners with our clients and to improve our services.

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* Board term ended in 2019



"I came to Children's Law Center because I was committed to children and education. I've since come to see that health and family are inseparable from a child's success."

Creighton Magid

Partner-in-Charge, Dorsey & Whitney LLP Board Chair, Children's Law Center

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Special thanks to Rochelle-Leigh Rosenberg (Crowell & Moring LLP) and Allison D. Pugsley (Hogan Lovells US LLP) for their assistance with the advisory board.

2019 CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN COMPETE FOR DC'S KIDS!

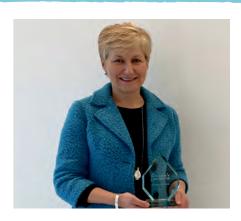


Through our Champions for Children Campaign, law firms and corporations challenge themselves, their corporate contacts, associates, partners, vendors and staff to raise critical funds for Children's Law Center. These generous contributions strengthen families and ensure positive health and education outcomes for DC children. While all participants are Champions for Children, our 2019 campaign winners are:



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Managing Partner | Washington, DC Office Champion among firms with 250+

attorneys in the DC office

A DESTINED PRO BONO PARTNERSHIP

For 14-year-old Destiny*, her journey to a quality education was anything but straightforward. Luckily, her path crossed with pro bono attorney Rebecca Hekman at the right time.

Destiny and her sisters were triplets born prematurely with a range of disabilities. While others may have only seen limitations, Destiny's mom, Shirley Monroe, and her stepdad, Tyrone Wright, knew their daughters deserved every opportunity.

When Destiny started middle school in DC Public Schools in 2016, she began experiencing seizures. Her parents grew concerned: What if she had a seizure when no one was there to help? They requested a dedicated aide to protect Destiny in the event of an episode, but the school refused. That's when they turned to Children's Law Center.

Rebecca, associate litigator at Clifford Chance US LLP, heard about the opportunity through Children's Law Center's pro bono program and immediately stepped in to help. Despite this being Rebecca's first special education case, she knew she had the unflagging support of her firm and Children's Law Center to advocate fiercely for Destiny.

Rebecca convinced the school to provide funding for an independent neuro-psychological evaluation, which revealed the significant extent to which Destiny had fallen behind due to inadequate support for her intellectual disability. It also underscored the need for a dedicated aide. Next, Rebecca entered Destiny in the DC school lottery to find a school that better fit her needs.

Destiny was accepted into Friendship Public Charter Schools' program for middle school students with intellectual disabilities and was later provided a 1:1 aide.

Rebecca reflects, "Having access to an aide was a gamechanger for Destiny – she finally had the attention and support she needed to do well."

Rebecca stayed involved – securing compensatory education funding from DC Public Schools to support tutoring, attending every Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting and working with the family

to ensure Destiny had what she needed to make academic progress and develop adaptive life skills.

Tragically, in April 2019, Destiny's mom passed away.

"It was just devastating," Rebecca shares. "But Tyrone is a saint. He is committed to his girls, attending every education meeting and just making it work."

When Tyrone reached out to Rebecca for assistance in gaining custody of Destiny and her sisters, she and Clifford Chance didn't hesitate to help.

"Working with Rebecca was great," remembers Tyrone. "I knew that I could call her, any time, day or night, and she would be there to help."

Rebecca's help was critical: Destiny was then in eighth grade and about to transition into high school. Tyrone did not have the legal rights to make educational decisions for her.

After consulting Children's Law Center pro bono mentors Kathy Zeisel and Diane Weinroth, Rebecca took on the family law case as well and helped Tyrone file for custody. A judge granted the order, allowing Tyrone to make crucial educational and medical decisions for his daughters. Destiny is now enrolled at Friendship Collegiate Academy and continues to make progress.

"None of this would have been possible without the support of Children's Law Center, particularly Kathy and Diane's mentorship," says Rebecca. "It has been incredibly rewarding both to contribute to the community and to work on a matter that directly impacts a family's life."

Through twists, turns and tragedy, Rebecca never gave up – because Shirley and Tyrone never stopped fighting.



Destiny joins her dad, Tyrone Wright, and Children's Law Center pro bono attorney Rebecca Hekman of Clifford Chance following an IEP meeting at Destiny's high school.

*We always provide clients the option to change their name or use initials when sharing their story. Names in this story have not been changed.

2019 PRO BONO PARTNERS

The DC area's top law firms, government lawyers and in-house legal departments turn to Children's Law Center for meaningful pro bono opportunities. Our partners know that in exchange for their time, they will be given world-class mentorship, training and materials that will set them up for success. Many lawyers attest that taking a Children's Law Center pro bono case both develops their skills and touches their hearts – because our cases are life-changing.

Thank you to the following pro bono partners who – because of their tenacious advocacy – help us reach more of our neighbors in need:

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"When someone says 'premier nonprofit,' Children's Law Center is one of the first names that comes to mind. Accenture is proud to partner with an organization that focuses on making authentic and lasting change for children."

Michael J. Cammarota

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Hali Kerr (left) and Isabel Treichel (right) continue Covington & Burling's 19 years of "loaning" associates and paralegals to Children's Law Center to represent children and caregivers.

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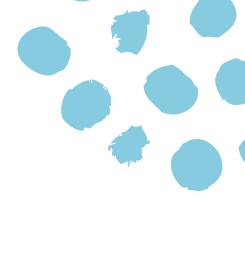
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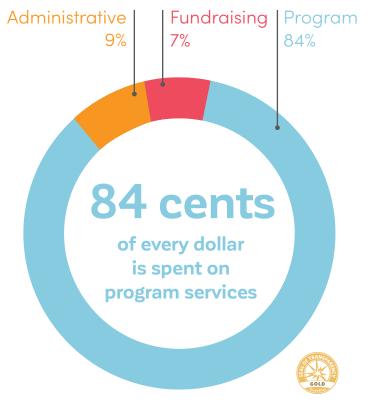


October 1, 2018 - September 30, 2019

REVENUE AND SUPPORT	
DC Court Contractual Service	\$5,772,953
Grants	\$1,825,151
Multi-year Grants*	\$850,000
Contributions	\$1,748,235
Donated Goods & Services	\$465,534
Other Income	\$32,005
TOTAL REVENUE AND SUPPORT Children Can't Wait Fund*	\$10,693,878 \$942,000

TOTAL EXPENSES	\$9,681,615
Fundraising	\$627,310
General and Administrative	\$914,751
Total Legal Programs	\$8,139,554
EXPENSES	

^{*} Includes multi-year pledges that will be paid through FY23.





CHILDREN CAN'T WAIT FUND

Staff and Donors Put Children First

Our financial statement on the preceding page reflects the nearly \$2 million loss of federal funding that Children's Law Center sustained in fiscal year 2019. What it doesn't show is how that reduction impacted our staff and the children and families we serve.

Children's Law Center came together in response to the funding cut with one guiding principal: continue to help as many DC children as possible secure the foundation of family, health and education they need to thrive. To do this, we took several short-term steps. First, staff gave up their annual raises. Second, we developed as lean a budget as possible. Ultimately, we made hard choices about eliminating positions and laying off staff. Despite these efforts, the size of the funding reduction meant we reached several hundred fewer children than we did in 2018.

Throughout 2019 the generosity and commitment of our donors* gave us confidence to focus on our mission with renewed fervor. Increased and expanded support from new and longstanding donors alike allowed us to reinvest in our greatest asset—our staff. Although the sharp decrease in federal funding has continued for a second year, we have found ways to expand our impact. With no certainty that the federal funding will ever be restored, a group of donors, led by Diana & Stephen Goldberg, has begun to build the Children Can't Wait Fund to help us remain a stable, anchor institution—one that will continue to have a profound impact on our children and our community.

Creighton Magid,Board Chair

*Indicates Children Can't Wait Fund donors on pages 14 & 16.



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