

Look for the helpers... WECa 2020 ANNUAL REPORT "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."" -Fred Rogers

In a year full of scary things, namely a global pandemic, early childhood educators have continued to not just be the helpers, but also the leaders. COVID-19 placed an already fragile, already stressed to the breaking point, child care system, front and center in our state's and our nation's ability to respond. Within days of cases hitting the US, our school buildings closed and child care, long relied on to allow essential workers (and all workers with young children) to do essential work, was urged to remain open despite declining enrollments, declining revenues, and lack of personal protective equipment. A system surviving on razor thin margins, and a workforce of women earning poverty level wages, responded as we knew it would: with resolute drive and resiliency.

Headlines told the story that we in early education already knew – our nation cannot work, our essential services cannot be provided, and our economy cannot recover without child care:

- 'What do we do now?': With federal support running out, Wisconsin child care providers struggle to survive the pandemic - Post Crescent, July 20, 2020
- COVID-19 pandemic changes child care landscape for providers, parents trying to return to work - Wisconsin State Journal, July 26, 2020
- Child care report warns state's day care network may be insufficient to support schools, reopening economy -Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, July 14, 2020
- 'Child care is a workforce development issue': How Wisconsin companies are meeting child care needs to retain workers - Green Bay Press Gazette, Nov. 30, 2020
- Access to child care poses challenges for reopening WI

economy - Milwaukee Business Journal, Sept. 10, 2020

- In the Covid-19 Economy, You Can Have a Kid or a Job. You Can't Have Both - New York Times, July 2, 2020
- The big factor holding back the U.S. economic recovery: child care The Washington Post, July 3, 2020
- Amid Surge in Covid-19, Companies and Parents Brace for More Child-Care Conflicts - The Wall Street Journal, July 19, 2020
- Coronavirus child-care crisis will set women back a generation The Washington Post, July 29, 2020

However, we must move past relying on the drive and resiliency of child care providers when transformative financial resources to fund their work are glaringly absent. COVID has thrown light on the fact that parent fees and woefully poor subsidies cannot adequately sustain child care infrastructure.

WECA worked, and continues to work, hard to modify our services to support early childhood educators throughout the pandemic. Key highlights include:

- WECA created a COVID-19 webpage which provides vetted, timely resources for child care professionals, families and children.
- WECA developed a robust and comprehensive 25+ page Reopening Guidebook based on best practices in early care and education that is now lifted up as best practice guidance through many county public health departments and was circulated to programs nationwide.
- WECA secured \$600,000 in generous funding from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and Home Grown Emergency Fund to provide stabilization grants to more than 230 family and group child care providers in

Milwaukee.

- WECA offered extensive mentoring and coaching through its Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network (WEESSN). Examples include:
 - » Sharing best practices in providing safe and responsive care to young children during the pandemic
 - » Stacking federal, state, and local financial resources (grants, loan forgiveness, etc.)
 - » Collaborating with child care programs' administrators, leaders, and boards of directors in navigating the evolving licensing requirements, health and safety protocols, among countless other considerations
 - » Long-term financial planning and reimagining of programming to include school-age children
 - » Offering support through online meetups with mental health professionals
- WECA developed and launched a two-part Webinar Series for Wisconsin child care providers (available in English and Spanish) on "Reopening During Times of COVID-19" that focused on the foundational, safety, and operational considerations.
- WECA secured more than 2,100 gallons of hand sanitizer, 3,000 masks, air purifiers for 80 classrooms, dozens of no-touch thermometers, and other critical supplies and delivered to hundreds of child care programs throughout the state.
- WECA awarded approximately 115 REWARD-Plus stipends, totaling over \$140,000 to providers working in child care programs in Milwaukee's 53206 neighborhood.

• T.E.A.C.H. staff continued supporting scholarship recipients as the pandemic evolved by connecting them to needed resources, such as: access to food, access to the internet, computer needs, unemployment, professional development, and other tips on navigating the new policies related to early childhood.

As we head into a new year, we unequivocally advocate for leadership from our state and federal government to more effectively and comprehensively fund child care. Gone must be the days where the helpers – the care providers and early educators – are not viewed as, paid as, resourced as, the professionals they are. Child care IS essential. In fact, it is the workforce behind all others. Child care is also the key to economic recovery and the backbone to healthy thriving communities. It is high time we treat it that way.

In partnership,



BustersSchmid

WECA Executive Director

For over 65 years, WECA has been supporting professional development critical to the work the early care and education workforce does in supporting children and families across Wisconsin.





While the typical WECA Annual Conference is held in person, WECA quickly pivoted to a virtual conference as COVID-19 shutdown in-person gatherings. The conference theme of "Building Connections" set out to bring the early childhood workforce together online for some high-quality trainings on a variety of topics that are crucial to the field right now.

On October 1-3, 2020, WECA held 3 full days of live keynotes and workshops through Zoom. On Thursday, October 1, we hosted Ann Ramminger and Lucy Heimer, authors of the new book *Reshaping Universal Preschool: Critical Perspectives on Power and Policy* where they discussed equitable ways to move forward in early education and navigating community conversations to address the issues of equity.

On Friday, October 2, we focused on dismantling racism and the intersection of COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement. Janean Dilworth-Bart, Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs at UW-Madison, opened the discussion and then helped facilitate a panel discussion to support students and educators of color as they navigate these challenging times.

Saturday, October 3 opened with a fun and engaging presentation by Todd Parr, children's book author and illustrator, and Rachel Giannini, teacher and early childhood specialist, as they talked about how to find joy in 2020 and read Todd's brand-new book, *The Joyful Book*, that was released on the day of their presentation. In addition to the keynote sessions, each conference day also had 3-4 live workshops on Zoom throughout the rest of the day. Participation for each live Zoom session stayed between 60 and 120 participants. On top of the 14 live Zoom sessions, the conference also featured more than 20 pre-recorded workshops for participants to watch and earn continuing education credits.

We not only had keynotes and workshops for our participants, but this year's WECA conference also included two additional special features. The first one was 10 virtual child care program tours from family and group child care programs across Wisconsin. This gave participants the opportunity to take a look at other high-quality programs to gather ideas that they might want to use in their own programs, including ways to adjust their programs with new COVID-19 regulations. The second special feature was a LIVE (on Zoom) author visit with Todd Parr, children's book author and illustrator. On October 9, Todd invited child care programs from across Wisconsin to join him as he read a few of his favorite books, including his brand new book, *The Joyful Book*. The children on the Zoom webinar were also able to ask Todd questions! Ten providers also won a signed copy of Todd's new book!

More than 460 people attended the conference which included WECA staff.



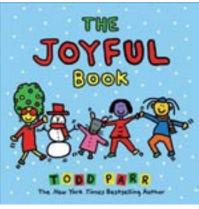
Keynote Speakers: Lucy Heimer, Ann Ramminger, Janean Dilworth-Bart, Rachel Giannini and Todd Parr



LIVE workshops on ZOOM scheduled over the course of three days.

pre-recorded workshops procured for attendees to acces at their convience.

people attended the conference which included WECA staff.



107 signed books by Todd Parr were purchased by attendees.

In 2020, the WECA food program has helped family child care providers serve more than 2.2 million meals to 5,186 young children in 600 child care programs across Wisconsin!



We are proud to be the only food program in Wisconsin to serve all 72 counties and all tribes. WECA is instrumental in providing partial funding to programs that serve meals and snacks to children throughout the state. Child care providers play an important role in children's daily lives and support their wellness, health, and development by serving them nutritious foods. Foods served to children in care include a variety of vegetables and fruits. Meals and snacks include whole grains, less added sugar, and less saturated fat. Providers are encouraged to support breastfeeding by establishing a breastfeeding friendly program for nursing parents of enrolled infants. The WECA Food Program provides guidance, resources, and information on best practices, as well as ongoing training for child care providers to help them continue to provide healthy, balanced meals and snacks to the children of Wisconsin.

In today's trying times, providers are facing the daily struggles of providing a safe and healthy environment for the children in their care. With an increase in Wisconsin K-12 schools being closed due to Covid-19, child care providers need this support now more than ever. We are happy to provide them with the resources to encourage healthy eating for the children of Wisconsin.



A child enrolled at Mini Creations Family Child Care enjoys a healthy lunch. Photo credit:Latrice Higgins, owner

As the Wisconsin Affiliate of NAEYC, WECA has supported the Early Childhood profession with timely guidance to navigate the challenges programs, educators, and families faced during the pandemic.



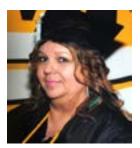
Specifically, WECA supported early childhood professionals by sharing timely and relevant information via WECA's COVID-19 webpage, sourcing needed cleaning supplies and PPE, offering guidance for accessing CARES Act funding, or just listening to educators and administrators that were in crisis. During WECA's first-ever virtual conference, over 70 attendees chose to join or renew their membership as part of registration. Even in tough times, early childhood educators saw the value of a WECA/NAEYC Membership and the power of 1,158 collective voices. To move our profession forward, it is imperative that early childhood educators and administrators see themselves as advocates that will shape the future of our profession. WECA supports this vision by providing opportunities to support emerging leaders.

Tracy Jensen started her journey as an emerging leader through the T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship program. With the completion of her first T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship, she received, as a benefit, a free WECA standard membership. Tracy completed her bachelor's degree with the support of her T.E.A.C.H. Counselor, Nar Doumbya. In turn, this relationship led to Nar and Tracy presenting at the 2019 WECA Conference, "Lifelong Learning: Defining the Passion, Creating the Plan and Resources to Achieve ongoing Professional Development." When the opportunity arose to participate in a Grassroots Advocacy Cohort, Tracy made her next step toward defining herself as an Advocate. The next brave step in her emerging leader pathway was attending NAEYC's Public Policy Forum and meeting with Wisconsin elected officials at the federal level. Through community networking and WECA support, Tracy is submitting her first grant proposal to the Department of Children and Families.



"I believe that you must seize the opportunity when it arises. Even if you feel skeptical, opportunities will lead you to places you never thought were possible. Take those first steps and show up."

WECA Chapters support emerging leaders through engaging trainings and networking opportunities. Chapter Leadership quickly adjusted to offering virtual options for professional development. WECA Chapters offered 19 opportunities to promote best practice and learning. WECA will continue to promote emerging leaders to "find their voice" and raise up the early childhood workforce through responsive advocacy initiatives, professional development, and growing membership.



"WECA Membership has provided me with many opportunities from furthering my early childhood education to providing healthy meals to children in my bi-lingual family child care program. WECA has gone above and beyond for family providers by providing education, annual conferences, etc. I'm proud to be a WECA member."

Xochitl Ortega Child Care Director/Teacher at X's and O's Child Care

The REWARD Wisconsin Stipend Program is poised to celebrate its 20th year of awarding stipends to Early Childhood professionals in recognition of their commitment to higher education and dedication to Wisconsin's children and families.



The REWARD Wisconsin Stipend Program is poised celebrate its 20th year of awarding stipends to Early Childhood professionals in recognition of their commitment to higher education and dedication to Wisconsin's children and families. With the pandemic significantly impacting the ability of child care providers to do their work, these stipends have become even more meaningful. Professionals have had to deal with insecure work hours due to programs closing and re-opening, and increased costs to doing their work. These bonuses are continuing to help fill the gap between the wages early childhood professionals are making, and the wages they need and deserve.

When the pandemic started, REWARD was ready to move remotely, as many processes were already being completed electronically. Most participants chose to return materials electronically, so REWARD staff had an established infrastructure that moved seamlessly to remote operation. There was no interruption or delay in the usual REWARD process. In fact, it has encouraged the program to go further in its efforts to move paperless; the program is currently in testing stages to move all renewals online in 2021. During the fiscal year, REWARD sent 2,380 stipends to 1,451 individuals. Stipends averaged \$273, which is awarded every 6 months. These professionals worked at 839 unique child care programs. The majority of stipends go to direct care providers – those who work directly with children on a daily basis. Assistant teachers, teachers, and family child care providers receive 87% of all stipends. The remaining 13% are awarded to program directors and administrators. The turnover rate for REWARD participants is an astounding 2%. REWARD was additionally able to support active REWARD recipients this year with a one-time payout of approximately \$200 in July of 2020.

Additionally, REWARD worked alongside T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood[®] WISCONSIN to support early childhood professionals in the Milwaukee zip code of 53206. In July of 2020, 96 professionals received stipends in the amount of \$1,377 through a special project called REWARD-Plus.

"Thank you to all of you at WECA for the extra bonus stipend. I appreciate all of the hard work that you are doing for all of us in the world of early childhood education! It is appreciated more than you know."

> Holly's Little Red Wagon Childcare Roberts, WI









1,451

early care and education professionals received a REWARD stipend.



In 2019, we celebrated T.E.A.C.H.'s 20th anniversary and imagined a brighter future for the early childhood field. We could not have foreseen that we would be dealing with a devastating pandemic in 2020.



As we continued to pursue our mission to provide quality and affordable education, we advocated and received approval from the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families to reduce our cost-sharing. Now, T.E.A.C.H. covers 90% of tuition for group center staff and 95% for family child care providers. The program's cost is 5%, down from 15%. All scholarship recipients now pay 5%, down from 10%. Now more than ever, we will continue to advocate to ensure our program remains affordable and accessible.

Without any doubt, the on-going health pandemic and the Black Lives Matter Movement have laid bare the many structural inequities that impact the lives of early educators of color. At the T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship program, we believe in equity, social justice, and pathways to degree completion and upward mobility for educators of color across all settings. With the financial support of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, we provided a comprehensive scholarship package to improve the education, compensation, and retention of educators living in the majority African American community in the 53206 zip code of Milwaukee. Likewise, we expanded our culturally relevant pathways and strengthened our partnerships with our tribal colleges. We added the Supporting Dual Language Learners and the Diversity credentials to the list of T.E.A.C.H. approved credentials.

Our scholars continue to be successful. During the T.E.A.C.H. fiscal year July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020, we provided scholarships to 883 early educators working in 402 group programs and 122 family providers. In total, these early educators and programs serve 32,684 children. In addition, our scholars completed 7,378 credits and maintained a grade point average of 3.7 for credential recipients, 3.6 for associate recipients, and 3.57 for bachelor recipients. Sponsoring a staff member, along with a supportive work environment, is among the best strategies program leaders can use to reduce staff turnover. The turnover rate for associate degree recipients in the commitment period is 5% and 2% for bachelor recipients. Our recipients and sponsors continue to be extremely satisfied with our program. In our annual survey of T.E.A.C.H. recipients, 99% indicated they would recommend T.E.A.C.H. to their peers and 98% of their employers would recommend T.E.A.C.H.

At the T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship program, we believe that an engaged, well-informed, educated early childhood workforce is critical to providing enriching early education environments for children and the sustainability of early childhood programs. We continue to offer our intentionally designed and individualized professional and career development services free to all our Wisconsin early childhood professionals. Additionally, to enhance recipient and sponsor engagement, we will provide free workshops to help educators meet their career goals, gain effective time management, and study skills to improve academic success, among other topics.

As we continue to respond to the pandemic and support our scholars in this complex era, we have reconvened the Early Childhood Higher Education Committee to help address the needs and respond to the evolving challenges. Under the leadership of Joan Hader, Associate Dean at Waukesha County Technical College, and Dr. Lucinda Heimer, Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, the committee formed two subcommittees to respond to pressing issues in early care and education related to workforce development and addressing equity and social justice. We are grateful for each one of our recipients, sponsoring programs, higher education, and community partners for their unequivocal passion for supporting children and families.



The Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network (WEESSN) started in January 2019 with 2 child care programs and now, as we look back over the year, we are proudly serving 135 across Southern Wisconsin.



WEESSN connects individual family child care and centerbased programs together to capitalize on efficiencies of resources, staffing, and expertise. With specialized and experienced staff, we offer targeted financial and business coaching that pairs with software systems, bringing the advancements of technology to the forefront of our work. Programs benefit from seeing real-time data to inform their policies and procedures.

2020 was a year of expansion for WEESSN with two new major grants awards. We successfully secured a Community Impact Grant from the Wisconsin Partnership Program at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, which allowed us to bring shared services to approximately 20 programs in Milwaukee. We also were awarded funds through the Department of Children and Families' Preschool Development Grant, allowing us to launch a 6 county cohort in the Southwest region and another in Jackson County. In total, WEESSN now serves approximately 130 programs across 11 counties of the state.

In 2020, WEESSN coaches worked hard to find creative financial solutions to weather the significant challenges brought about by the pandemic. With a keen eye for available grant funding, WEESSN programs overall received hundreds of thousands of dollars in relief – a vital lifeline as the child care industry has been hard hit by the impact of COVID. Additionally, we leveraged community partnerships to get needed sanitizer, masks, gloves, and thermometers out to programs in the early stages of the crisis.

While we spent much effort on training and outreach focused specifically on operating during a pandemic, we also provided other enriching services to child care providers. One exciting new part of our programming is the integration of Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE). This work included getting fresh food boxes to programs, funding trips to the Fondy Market in Milwaukee, hosting (virtual) guest local chefs to highlight easy to cook, culturally informed, kid favorites and providing the necessary kitchen tools and mentorship to make these recipes manageable on a weekly basis.

WEESSN also celebrates our child care programs' accomplishments. One of our programs received accreditation after many years of hard work and preparation. Another program leader purchased her building and another was able to offer her staff health insurance for the first time—all during a pandemic!



Top: Jessica Anderson, Administrator of Viroqua Children's House Montessori Preschool, LLC receive gallons of hand sanitizer as well as masks thanks to donations obtained by WEESSN staff. Bottom: Dawn Pearson, family child care provider at Country Cabin Day Care in Tomah, is excited to check out her local produce delivery made possible by a pilot project between The Parenting Place and WEESSN. This program is generously funded by Kids Forward.

WITPP: Pritzker Children's Initiative awarded a grant to WECA to fund the Wisconsin Infant Toddler Policy Project (WITPP) to ensure that low-income families with an infant and/or toddler will have equitable access to affordable, high quality early care and education that meets their family and employment needs while supporting optimal child development and well-being.





The Wisconsin Infant Toddler Policy Project (WITPP) will ensure that low-income families with an infant and/ or toddler will have equitable access to affordable, high quality early care and education that meets their family and employment needs while supporting optimal child development and well-being. Additionally, the early childhood workforce will have the skills, training, and support to deliver high quality care and education with commensurate compensation.

In 2020, the WITPP hired a project manager and business engagement director. Combined with a grant from the American Heart Association, we have hired Hamilton and HWZ Consulting to assist with legislative lobbying and advocacy. A statewide poll was conducted to gauge voter support for investments in the childcare industry in October 2020. We are building our coalition of advocates across the state to help advance the WITPP goals and legislative budget requests.

The WITPP state collaborative team met in Fall 2020 to begin the implementation phase of the project, while being closely aligned with the Department of Children and Families' Preschool Development Grant (PDG) focused on infant/toddler efforts. We are convening an Equity Advisory Council in service to the WITPP, the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council, and Wisconsin's Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five Renewal efforts. The primary goals are to develop an equity framework to be used with policy recommendations and support the equitable implementation of the PDG grant. The council will be strategic in its development by bringing in national experts to help create measurable outcomes and making intentional efforts to reach beyond the usual leaders in Wisconsin's state-level Early Childhood policy and systems work to include diverse ECE providers and at least 30% of the membership be reserved for families and parents.

We are excited about the progress to date and are looking forward to the growing momentum of so many various entities working collectively towards a better future for Wisconsin families. WECA's Board of Directors is comprised of 9-13 members with varied backgrounds, from professionals who work directly with children to those who carry the voice of our workforce, and from ECE leaders to leaders in other businesses who know the importance and value of early childhood education for Wisconsin's children.

The purpose and focus of the Board is to carry out the legal, fiduciary and operating responsibilities of WECA. We are proud to recognize them for their volunteer service.



Corrine Hendrickson, President Corrine's Little Explorers New Glarus, WI



Abby Abrisham, Vice President Careplus Child Care, Inc. & Fitchburg Careplus Preschool Fitchburg, WI



Jessica Cavazos Latino Chamber of Commerce of Dane County Madison, WI



Janean Dilworth-Bart, Ph.D University of Wisconsin-Madison Madison, WI



Rick Perrin, Treasurer B2B CFO Verona, WI



Stephanie Harrison Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association Madison, WI



Patricia Wooldridge, Secretary Mariposa Learning Center Stoughton, WI



Toshiba Adams, Ph.D Milwaukee Area Technical College Milwaukee, WI



Dipesh Navsaria, MPH, MSLIS, MD University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health Madison, WI



Henry Wilde Acelero Learning Cudahy, WI



Rafat Arain Crescent Learning Center Milwaukee, WI

While 2020 was a challenging year, especially for the early care and education sector, the generosity of local businesses, philanthropy, and community leaders has been nothing short of extraordinary.

While COVID-19 wreaked havoc on families, communities, and even entire sectors within our economy, the pandemic reinforced the importance of child care as the backbone to a thriving community.

WECA's work of improving the lives of thousands of Wisconsin children and the professionals who dedicate their lives to caring for and educating them is made possible by the following generous donors, funders, and partners:

Individuals

Abby Abrisham Madalyn Abey Chelsea Aeschbach Jackie Anderson Jay Anderson Jocelyn Andreas Mary Anglim Rafat Arain Chad Atchison Laci Bainbridge Laura Jean Baker Nishat Bashar-Ntim Conni Bigler Sharlot Bogart Beau Brummund Lisa Bucher Tonva Burchard Nadine Marie Butler Brian and McKenzie Campbell Kristina Campbell Thomas W. Campbell Thomas G. and Paulette Campbell Megan Carlon Rob Carlon Pat Carter Sue Carter Jessica Cavazos Luke Chirhart Chanel Clark Ellen Clark

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WECA remains committed to being a trusted steward of public and private funds that help to advance early care and education across Wisconsin and promote the optimal wellbeing of children and the early childhood workforce. We are grateful for your generous support, both in-kind and financial, and will continue to work tirelessly on behalf of this sector.

2020 Financials

	2020	2019
Revenue		
Federated Campaigns	\$8,415	\$ -
Food Program	\$3,00,873	\$3,461,723
T.E.A.C.H. & REWARD	\$4,393,636	\$3,918,202
WEESSN SW PDG	\$88,449	\$ -
Paycheck Protection Program	\$338,910	\$ -
Inkinds	\$44,900	\$ -
Individuals, Corporations, Foundations	\$1,489,626	\$ -
Other Contracts	\$392,437	\$850,600
Contributions	\$ -	\$205,948
Membership	\$24,678	\$22,687
Fees for Service	\$51,965	\$ -
Annual Conference	\$65,472	\$83,049
Training Events	\$ -	\$348
Interest	\$6,488	\$14,278
Miscellaneous	\$34,436	\$20,576
TOTAL REVENUE	\$9,940,285	\$8,577,411
Expenses		
Direct: Operations	\$7,464,979	\$6,575,237
Direct: Personnel	\$2,115,167	\$1,751,181
Indirect: Administration	\$136,239	\$201,019
Total Expenses:	\$9,716,385	\$8,527,438
Change in Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions	\$(25,565)	\$ (81,280)
Change in Net Assets With Donor Restrictions	\$249,465	\$618,397
Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	\$223,900	\$537,117

As WECA continues to explore solution-oriented approaches that help to stabilize the current early care and education workforce, we're also seeking allies and invite you to join us! Here are three ways you can support WECA in the near future.

- **1. Donate:** Visit wisconsinearlychildhood.org/donate and give a gift in honor of a special early childhood teacher or program.
- 2. Advocate: Join WECA's Forward For Kids advocacy network to receive updates and action alerts on key early childhood education issues. To join, visit https://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/get-involved/forward-for-kids/.
- **3.** Connect: Connect with us on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter and more. Share your thoughts and join the conversation.





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