



**Growing
Stronger
Together**

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2021-JUNE 2022

- **Provided 16 subsidized school-day preschool spaces and 12 part-day spaces through School Readiness.**
- **112 Children participated in Play & Learn groups across 3 seasons.**
- **87 Parents/Caregivers participated in at least one of our Parent Education programs.**
- **Provided 110 sessions of programming for children.**
- **61 Parent Education opportunities of varying lengths.**
- **3 Village Support Groups**
- **73 New families connected with us through Farmer's market outreach and Post card mailing effort.**

While COVID remained a concern, we began the year with hope and optimism! We returned to programming outdoors with virtual workshops and meetings but were able to end the year with in-person and hybrid programs. We learned so much about new ways to engage but also the importance and joy of being physically together in one space again! Joyful Noises Play & Learn Groups continued throughout the year with multiple sessions and we introduced a new Baby and Me program due to a demand for infant programming. Families continued to join up bi-monthly on the Airline Trail for our Stroller Walks. Our Family Empowerment facilitator, Joy Lenares, was busy offering a full slate of parent workshops including Circle of Security, Village Support Groups, Conscious Discipline, and by spring the return of the People Empowering People (PEP) series with childcare provided. The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) continued to support our work through their Strengthening Early Childhood Councils grant funding. Additionally, this funding provided training for the Cragin Library to take the first step toward its goal to become part of the Family Place Libraries™ network. Parent involvement and leadership continue to grow as we added two Parent Ambassador positions to help advise the OEC on issues important to families in Colchester. Our C3 Parent Council increased its membership and held informative meetings to guide us in our efforts!

C3 CO-CHAIRS

**Julia Lash
Beth Tiezzi**

STAFF

**Cindy Praisner, Coordinator
Laurie Buyniski,
Assistant to Coordinator**

SR COUNCIL CO-CHAIRS

**Kaitlin Cassidy
Jennifer Rummel**

POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS - NEW BABY & ME CLASS

During the height of COVID, we began to have caregivers with young infants sign up for Joyful Noises even though the class wasn't geared for ones so little. Recognizing the growing need, this year we were able to put together a class just for babies and young toddlers facilitated by Kaitlin Cassidy!

Baby and Me, for children up to two years old, offered a variety of activities including music, finger plays, rhymes, and gentle movement that were just right for our youngest learners!

Baby programming outdoors though proved to be extra challenging with damp blankets and parents attempting to keep crawlers out of the mud. **DiAnne Cook of Colchester Jazzercise** solved our dilemma when she made her large open studio available at a very reasonable rate. It has been the perfect location and the babies love her exercise balls! The class fills quickly and the feedback has been very positive. One mom said "My baby enjoyed coming so much on Mondays.

We loved Ms Kaitlyn! She was fun, warm, and did a wonderful job leading the class."



VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Stefanie Tracey-Calash is our volunteer of the year! Stefanie began attending everything from Baby & Me to Circle of Security classes with C3 and quickly answered the call for assistance. Even as a newcomer to the organization, she helped at our Farmer's Market booths and began attending our C3 Leadership Work Group meetings. Her can-do attitude and bright spirit have been much appreciated as she has stepped in to serve whenever and wherever she can!



PEP REUNION



We began the year with an amazing night of fun and fellowship at our first-ever People Empowering People (PEP) Reunion. Members of PEP cohorts beginning in 2015 were able to join together to mix and mingle. The participants enjoyed a meal, played some games, and created a list of community projects they'd like to become involved in.

PARENT AMBASSADORS

Local early childhood collaboratives like C3 serve a critical role of being the local to state connect with the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). This year, that connection was formalized further with the creation of two Parent Ambassador positions for the Collaborative. Julia Lash and Abbey Dunbar-Willbanks were selected to serve in this role. As ambassadors they are tasked with advising and informing the OEC Commissioner and staff through our Regional Parent Cabinet members on issues related to the impact of state decisions, communicating opinions and conditions of Colchester families, and engaging local families in discussions related to the resources and systems that families access. Through this process, our local voice, especially those of our families, can be strengthened and organized through C3's collaborative infrastructure and channeled to the state.



PARENT COUNCIL CO-LEADS

Our Parent Council continues to grow and reach out to families in the community through its outreach efforts and activities. Parent Council members help to inform the work that C3 does as well as communicate our efforts to the community. As Parent Council Co-Leads, Beth Tiezzi and Brittany Hebert have planned outreach activities at the Colchester Farmer's Market as well as opportunities to gather and meet such as our Yoga Night at Priam Vineyards.



PEP CHOOSE LOVE

The People Empowering People (PEP) group returned after two years off due to COVID. PEP is an innovative personal, family, and civic leadership development program with a strong community focus. At the end of the 10-week series, the group plans and executes a community project. This year's class decided to assist in the fundraising effort to bring the Choose Love movement to Colchester. The class sold "Choose Love" pins, solicited business and individual sponsorships, and designed t-shirts to raise almost \$2000 to close the gap and bring the Choose Love bus tour and Scarlett Lewis to town during the September 17 Celebrate Colchester event. Thank you for your efforts!



OUTREACH

Connecting with new families in Colchester to share the resources of C3 is always a top priority. This year, through the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) Strengthening Early Childhood Councils grant funding an introductory postcard was sent to every household in Colchester. This town-wide mailer gave families an easy way to connect with C3 along with the incentive of a raffle drawing for local restaurant gift cards.

The postcard was also handed out at Colchester Farmer's Markets by Parent volunteers who manned a table multiple times throughout the summer. The effort was a great success bringing seventy-three new families to C3!



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VISION

Colchester's children and families are thriving within a nurturing community.

CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE MONTHLY

This year we introduced a seven-part series of Conscious Discipline Workshops, which were held on the first Wednesday of the month. By offering in-person and virtual options, parents, caregivers, and providers had a choice in the platform they attended. Combining families and providers together allowed for a rich conversation as to how the model is applied in early childcare settings and at home. Each month a different topic of the Conscious Discipline Model was explored so that it could be broken down into manageable parts each session. Families and providers attended multiple workshops, gaining an understanding of the Conscious Discipline program. This series had one of the highest attendance rates ever.



DONATIONS RECEIVED IN 2021-2022

- Oakwood Virtual Golf \$100
- Stop & Shop Bloomin for Good \$219
- Colchester Care \$825
- Colchester Lions \$550
- McGlynn Family \$30

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS

- Colchester Public Schools
- Town of Colchester
- Colchester Board of Education
- Colchester Board of Selectman
- Colchester Youth & Social Services
- Cragin Memorial Library
- CASTLE
- Dime Bank Foundation
- TVCCA
- UCFS
- Connecticut Office of Early Childhood
- Hartford Healthcare



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MISSION

To foster and promote a collaborative system of services and supports to empower young children and families.

MEET THE FACILITATORS

We are so pleased to welcome our newest facilitator, **Kaitlin Cassidy**.

Her background, and one and a half-year-old sidekick, make for the perfect combination to lead the highly popular Baby & Me program. Kaitlin has teaching experience with the Head Start preschool program and currently teaches Art part-time. In the class, she uses her musical talent through a variety of songs, rhymes, and gentle movements, to help parents bond with their children and also connect with others in order to build their social support system. It's a win for all.



Joy Lenares continued to be the go-to support person for families, as they face parenting challenges. She led Joyful Noises, Stroller Walks, Conscious Discipline Workshops, Circle of Security, and Village Support Groups. She also offers one-on-one support as a parenting coach. Families know that by talking with her, they can sort through some of life's most difficult situations and find the resources they need. She is an invaluable asset to the C3 community.

Sharon Wilinski continued to teach multiple days of Joyful Noises classes throughout each season. She stepped up to add an additional day to the schedule to accommodate the growing waitlist. Her cheerfulness and positive attitude are infectious.



Ashley LaParre co-taught Circle of Security with Joy once again. The program requires deep reflection and Ashley helped participants to find the focus and thoughtfulness to do so, as they gained a solid foundation of the material.



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ColchesterC3.org

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