



**Growing
Stronger
Together**

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2022-JUNE 2023

C3's vision that Colchester's children and families are thriving within a nurturing community is our guiding star. It is our goal to serve all families with young children in our town. This can sometimes be challenging with a limited budget and part-time staff. Many good ideas never quite get off the ground. Over the past few years, parent representatives have impressed upon us the need for weekend activities to ensure access to our programming for everyone. We heard you! This past year, we moved toward providing regularly scheduled weekend programming. Partnering with the library, C3 offered monthly Saturday Play and Learn groups with a rotation of our wonderful facilitators. These hour-long sessions filled with music, play, stories, and art were very popular with over 188 attending; serving 91 families. These Saturday sessions allowed parents who are unavailable during our weekday programming to be able to experience all the fun and connection of a Joyful Noises class!

- Provided 16 subsidized school-day preschool spaces and 12 part-day spaces through School Readiness.
- 135 Families participated in Play & Learn groups and Stroller Walks across 3 seasons.
- 61 Parents/Caregivers participated in at least one of our Parent Education programs.
- Provided 195 sessions of programming for children.
- 62 Parent Education opportunities of varying lengths.
- Hosted 8 evening or weekend family programs and participated in 5 community awareness events.



C3 CO-CHAIRS

Julia Lash
Brittany Hebert

STAFF

Cindy Praisner, Coordinator
Laurie Buyniski,
Assistant to Coordinator

SR COUNCIL CO-CHAIRS

Kaitlin Cassidy
Jennifer Rummel

POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS - COLCHESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Since our inception in 2008, C3 has benefitted from a strong partnership with the Colchester Public Schools. This support is concretely provided in the form of office space, programming space, administrative support, funding, and fiscal services as well as staff time. However, as 2021-2022 was nearing an end, it became apparent that CES was maximizing its building use and would no longer have a place for our daytime programming in the coming year. Without a dedicated, safe space, we would not be able to offer the programs that are so instrumental to our work. We had just a few months to find a solution so we started reaching out to others to find a new location. Other opportunities within the community didn't work for our population or were not affordable.

Thankfully, Colchester Public Schools searched within their buildings and committed to providing us with their last remaining free classroom in a portable building behind Bacon Academy. With a little muscle power from Laurie Buyniski, we acquired several area rugs to cozy up the space and a small team of staff went to work setting up a welcoming and fun learning environment. In September of 2022, we opened our new classroom (still shared with TVCCA's Early Head Start program) in a portable building behind the high school. Bacon Academy administrators, staff, and students have fully welcomed us and made us feel at home. We are so grateful for all Colchester Public Schools provides to make our work possible!



VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Sharon has worked with C3 as a Joyful Noises facilitator since the Spring of 2019. So why is she receiving Volunteer of the Year? Because Sharon always goes above and beyond what is required of her to promote C3. She is a champion of our programs and can be found enthusiastically approaching strangers to be sure they know about C3. Sharon often volunteers for farmer's markets and other events where she can talk about C3 and continues to provide a parent voice at our meetings. We can not thank you enough for your dedication and passion!



ADVOCACY EFFORTS

Our Community Plan states that we will "recommend changes in and advocate for new town, state, and federal policies and programs that are necessary for the development of a coordinated early care and education system that provides equal access to quality care, education, and support services for all children birth through age eight in Colchester." It is also a charge of the School Readiness Council to "make recommendations to the chief elected official and the superintendent on issues relating to School Readiness" and "encourage public participation". Families know best what they need but may not always know how to communicate those needs to those in leadership positions. Many of our C3 families took part in the local budget process this year advocating for their points of view. C3 was responsive to their questions and provided guidance and support in learning about our town's governance structure and process.

We also encourage and support the involvement of the families we serve in all of our own decision-making, planning, and implementation phases through parent representation. Our Parent Ambassadors- Julia Lash and Abigail Willbanks- connect our needs to the CT Office of Early Childhood.

The C3 Parent Council meets to both support and inform the Collaborative's work giving us feedback, ideas, and a parent perspective on everything we do. Additionally, we provide opportunities for individuals to learn more about themselves and build skills through our People Empowering People parent leadership series.



C3 hosted a visit with our State Representative Mark DeCaprio to advocate for children and families in Colchester.

Connecticut
Children's
Collective

CT CHILDREN'S COLLECTIVE



The Collaborative for Colchester's Children (C3) fosters and promotes a collaborative system of services and supports to empower young children and families. We are one of about 80 local early childhood collaboratives across the State. The Connecticut Children's Collective provides a network that connects many of these collaboratives with each other, the Office of Early Childhood, and the Connecticut Department of Education. As a Collective, we work together to identify the local needs of children, provide outreach to families, and improve local programs and services for all children. This past year, the Collective was instrumental in providing us with a substantial grant for our work here in Colchester. We used this funding for a variety of initiatives including our first-ever Community Baby Shower that served 10 families, marketing inserts in the Rivereast Newspaper, supporting Cragin's Family Place Program as well as providing much-needed funding for facilitators and other operating expenses. We are proud to be a member of the Collective!



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"The local collaborative (C3) has been invaluable. It is hard to put into words the many ways it has helped our family. Through classes, our family relationships are forever changed for the better."

CHILDCARE HEROES

Providing programs that work for families is a top priority. When we provide parent education, our free childcare is what makes it accessible for many families. Leaving your children in a new place can be unnerving for parents and scary for young children. However, we quickly put those concerns to rest by providing childcare using individuals who have a great deal of experience as parents and providers. We are so grateful for the dedicated service of Barb Branciforte, Leah Feinberg, Kaitlin Cassidy, Deb Simonelli, Betsy Allard, and Sharon Wilinski. These women help us provide consistent faces and a warm, safe, and nurturing care environment that puts everyone's mind at ease.



Barb Branciforte

Leah Feinberg



Kaitlin Cassidy

Deb Simonelli



Sharon Wilinski
& Betsy Allard

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
- FamilyWise Behavior Solutions

DONATIONS RECEIVED IN 2022-2023

- Plum Tomato Fundraiser \$75
- Kidsignments Fundraiser \$150
- Family Pizza Fundraiser \$500
- Colchester Lions \$520
- Dime Bank Foundation Grant \$3,335
- Mel's Downtown Creamery Fundraiser \$153
- Parker Family \$100
- Gifts from Families & Non-Residents \$145
- Stop & Shop Bloomin for Good \$250



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"I now understand why my children behave the way they do, and I have many new tools to use to navigate tantrums and other unwanted behavior. All in ways that simultaneously bring my children and I closer together. The things we've learned through C3 programs have transformed our family in a beautiful way."