

**COLLEGE-MONTROSE CHILDREN'S PLACE** 

**2021 ANNUAL REPORT** 

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# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It was Dolly Parton who said, "We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails."

As the pandemic entered its second year, many of us were pushed to discover new methods of self-care.

It's safe to say the impacts of COVID and the protocols in place to help mitigate those impacts have affected everyone in our community, in some capacity or another.

As an organization, CMCP has followed the advice our passionate and dedicated team often provides to parents and caregivers: "put your own oxygen mask on first before helping others".

In a time where it can be a natural inclination to push our own needs aside in the interest of others, this kind of constant sacrifice can leave us pouring from an "empty cup" - and even with the best intentions, this is neither a sustainable nor healthy option for us as individuals.

We began 2021 in a state of lockdown to prevent further pandemic spread, but there was no doubt a sense of optimism in the air, as vaccines started to be administered. This renewed sense of hope, however, wouldn't be enough to relieve our community entirely of the weight and ongoing pressures of coping with the unprecedented stressors that at times, seemed overwhelming.

Recognizing the challenges facing our organization, CMCP committed to "putting our own oxygen mask on first" in order to better serve the community.

Our first step was to strengthen our team's capacity, awareness, and prioritization of self-care via learning and application of effective strategies to help us as individuals in both managing and



minimizing the mental stresses we face daily. Through training sessions, and ensuring our staff was equipped with additional mental health days, we felt a newfound confidence that we would be resilient in our efforts to meet our mission.

By listening to our communities' feedback, we have been able to adapt and serve them in a new way via the opening of the Coopermills-Gooch Food Bank, which took place on March 25th. This CMCP-led initiative involving 6 of our partners has helped mitigate the increasing need for food security as a result of the pandemic.

Throughout the year, the increasing number of households in weekly attendance demonstrates that this work is meeting a significant need and must continue. Our values have held true as we have worked hard to ensure accessibility and have been able to adapt in order to offer delivery to those families with mobility issues, as well as those isolating at home due to the pandemic.

Knowing how important in-person programming is for family support, we reimagined our programs and re-worked original frameworks in order to deliver these programs via socially-distanced options held outdoors in local parks and provided opportunities for individual families to receive support either in-person or through outreach calls.



Bringing together families with children born during the pandemic has meant that a number of our families have shared with us that CMCP's team and participating families would be the first people their children met in person outside of their home.

We also continued to evaluate and adapt our fundraising endeavours and program delivery to ensure CMCP had the resources necessary to meet the needs of the community. We believe these new strategies and learnings will enable us to have a much greater impact in the years to come.

Without the ability to plan and host fundraising events, CMCP launched our Extended Family Monthly Giving Program to ensure that we were best equipped to respond to emerging needs in the years to come. By focussing on this consistent stream of revenue, we envision great growth for 2022. We were able to rely on corporate donations including the "matching gift opportunity" by Carla Corsi, that led to our most successful year-end campaign to date, and helped us overcome the expected deficit budgeted in 2021.

Our families continue to share with us immense feelings of gratitude for the impact we have had in their lives on a daily basis, prior to, throughout and now at the (hopeful) close of these unprecedented times.

It was truly heart-warming to receive the community recognition award from MPP Chris Glover that recognized our contributions in the Spadina-Fort York community during the pandemic – moments of acknowledgment such as this one serves as encouraging and welcome reminders that we are on the right track!

None of our work would be possible without the support of our two major funders; EarlyON and the United Way Greater Toronto, who both continue to work in conjunction with their wide array of resources and organizations to meet the needs of the community. Napoleon Hill once said: "strength and growth come only through continuous effort and struggle." Navigating the last year has been challenging for all of us, but it has also given us an opportunity to practice our resiliency in the face of struggle.

There is no question that being forced to think outside the box in order to adapt and develop during this time has ultimately allowed us serve our participants in a way that is certain to have a lasting impact for families with young children in the years to come.







Emilia Rodrigues Executive Director

A Lie Trodiques







# VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

Due to the protocols in place to reduce the spread of Covid, we began the year by listening to our participants to offer a wider array of interactive and prerecorded virtual programs including:

**CIRCLE TIME** 

EARLY LITERACY & LANGUAGE

**INFANT ORAL CARE** 

PARENT SOCIAL HOUR

**FAMILY DROP-IN** 

**FAMILY MEAL PLANNING** 

**MAKE THE CONNECTION** 

**FAMILY ART** 

**COOKING WITH KIDS** 

COMMUNICATION & MILESTONES

LET'S GET READY FOR READING

**INFANT NUTRITION** 

IT TAKES A VILLAGE - ONE ON ONE SUPPORT

**CAREGIVER DROP-IN** 

CHILDREN'S FOOD
ALLERGIES & SENSITIVIES

**SCHOOL READINESS** 

KIDS HAVE STRESS TOO

**READING NUTRITION LABELS** 

#### Thank you to our partners who co-facilitated virtual programs:

Music Box, Early Abilities, Toronto Public Library, La Leche League, Patricia Liu (Cityview Dental)

"CMCP has been one of the best things during Covid. Me and Aarav had so much fun doing crafts and learning together. He was so excited each morning to join the programs. We found so many ways to make learning math fun. The online chat with other parents after the program everyday was such stress relief, knowing we are all in the same situation.

- Harminder

# 1788 INTERACTIVE CHILD FOCUSED VIRTUAL SESSIONS ATTENDED 6616 TIMES

298 ADULT FOCUSED SESSIONS ATTENDED BY 568 PARTICIPANTS

423 PRERECORDED VIDEOS VIEWED 16.954 TIMES

330 HOURS OF ONE-ON-ONE CALLS REACHING 1345 PARTICIPANTS



## FOOD BANK

We moved a little outside of our mission to open the doors of the CooperMills-Gooch Foodbank on March 25th, 2021 at 4020 Dundas St West to meet the increasing food insecurity that exists in this community. Throughout the year, the number of families attending increased and we are serving 120 households weekly. Not only has this initiative given families the opportunity to put food on their table, but it also served as a door to reach new families and learn about their needs and connect them to our programs and other community resources. We also distributed 4000 masks, 1000 hand sanitizers, and 73 backpacks filled with school supplies





## OUTDOOR PROGRAMS

With the increased capacity allowed outdoors in the summer, CMCP moved our programs outdoors into local parks. It was revitalizing to see our families in person again!! While we have previously run outdoor programs in the summer, this was a big change for us by introducing activities that allowed for social distancing requiring materials for each family to engage with. We continued running outdoor programs, even when indoor programs began in the fall to ensure all families had access to early education and family support programming



1222 PARTICIPANTS JOINED



3612 VISITS



# 752 ACTIVITY KITS DISTRIBUTED

During the spring we provided infant and toddler/preschooler activity kits to families. These boxes provided materials and activity ideas so families were able to engage in activities that focused on various areas of child development including fine motor, language and numeracy development. Families also had the opportunity to connect with other families during our interactive virtual sessions using the kits.



## YOUNG PARENTS CONNECT

Our Young Parents Connect program had a specific focus in 2021 thanks to three grants, one 1-year grant from the Toronto Urban Health Fund and two (1-year and 3-year) Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council-Government of Canada. As part of a partnership these creative arts workshops were designed to integrate self-care strategies to increase youth resiliency and wellbeing.

The research and evaluation component will inform the work done with this marginalized community in years to come. The Creative Arts (Ceramics, Culinary Arts, Visual Arts, and Movement/Dance) workshops are activities that promote creative expression, self-care, and stress reduction and have increased social networks through relationship-building among young parents and between young parents and the community and health care providers in order to reduce social isolation and increase the wellbeing of parents and their children.

Thank you to our Young Parents Connect partners: Sketch, Women's Habitat, York Residency, Unity Health Toronto, Jessie's Centre, Massey Centre, Planned Parenthood Toronto



# OTHER INITIATIVES

The holidays can be a struggle for many families and thanks to Chum Christmas Wish and the Toronto Star Santa Claus Fund we were able to distribute toys, books and hats to 184 children for the holidays. Another 43 children also received holiday cookie kits and gift bags, with ingredients to bake heathy cookies as a family to make the holidays a little sweeter. We also were able to distribute clothing to 33 families to keep them warm throughout the winter.



### **BOARD**

**College-Montrose Children's Place** is governed by a group of dedicated, dynamic and highly dedicated group of volunteers who strongly believe in our mission. These volunteers set policy and direction for the organization. They also sit on various committees to support our work. If you are interested in potentially joining this team of incredible volunteers, please email **info@cmcp.ca** with your CV.

Patrick Madden - Board Chair & Chair of Governance Committee

**Robert Spafford** - Vice Chair & Treasurer

Julie Martins - Chair of Program Committee

Laurel Maule - Chair of Development Committee

Morten Lave - Development Committee

Clara Juando-Prats - Program Committee

Mirjana Vladusic - Development Committee

Marzio Silva - Development Committee

Also supporting our work by serving on our:

Program Committee
Abby Wong
Jasminta Edwards
Afrina Lamy

Development Committee Patrick Waller Melissa Grover Dickstein

# STATEMENT OF REVENUE & EXPENSES

REVENUE 2021			
	2021	2020	
Government funding	\$742,269	\$775,806	
United Way Greater Toronto	\$195,016	\$251,083	
Corporate & Foundations	\$19,298	\$46,751	
Individual Donations	\$117,814	\$38,344	
Canada Emergency Wage & Rent Subsidies	\$39,796	\$101,718	
Fundraising & Other	\$36,309	\$28,553	
Interest	\$1,634	\$2,593	
	\$1,152,136	\$1,244,848	
EXPENSES 2021			
	2021	2020	
Personnel	\$749,913	\$717,380	
Payment to Partners	\$115,121	<b>#4</b> / / 000	
	\$110,121	\$166,033	
Program	\$54,117	\$166,033 \$152,588	
Program Occupancy			
	\$54,117	\$152,588	
Occupancy	\$54,117 \$121,085	\$152,588 \$119,451	
Occupancy Professional Fees	\$54,117 \$121,085 \$33,017	\$152,588 \$119,451 \$33,896	
Occupancy Professional Fees Administration	\$54,117 \$121,085 \$33,017 \$24,938	\$152,588 \$119,451 \$33,896 \$26,514	
Occupancy Professional Fees Administration Staff Travel and Development	\$54,117 \$121,085 \$33,017 \$24,938 \$2,725	\$152,588 \$119,451 \$33,896 \$26,514 \$3,330	
Occupancy Professional Fees Administration Staff Travel and Development	\$54,117 \$121,085 \$33,017 \$24,938 \$2,725 \$942	\$152,588 \$119,451 \$33,896 \$26,514 \$3,330 \$1,180	

### TREASURER'S REPORT

Understanding the challenges, the organization faced due to the pandemic, both in terms of new fundraising initiatives to replace the loss of fundraising events and the increased needs of the community, our Board of Directors approved a deficit budget of \$35,504 for 2021 to ensure management had necessary resources available. Throughout the year CMCP was able to manage our finances and were on track to end the year with the slight deficit as expected. Thanks to an incredibly generous donation of \$75,000 from a first-time donor of that we received on December 31st, we ended the year with an unexpected surplus of \$50,278.

We are grateful for continued support of EarlyON and the United Way Greater Toronto as we moved into the second year of the pandemic. We are thankful to each of our corporate and individual donors for their generosity and shared belief in our mission.





## **VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers have always been the heart of CMCP's work and crucial to our success. We are so grateful for the hard work and dedication of all our volunteers for your ongoing support and commitment, not to mention your adaptability. This past year you helped package groceries in our foodbank, delivered soup out of our Community Kitchen, helped bring our programs into parks, assisted and co-facilitated our virtual programs, helped sort, bundle and distributed clothes, toys, school supplies and other necessities for our families. You participated in focus groups, sat on committees and worked tirelessly to ensure CMCP continued serving the community. Your energy and willingness to help others is an inspiration to all of us.

#### **THANK YOU!**

The 2022 Catherine Fowler Award will be awarded to a CMCP volunteer at our AGM to recognize extraordinary contributions that helped further CMCP's mission. This award is named after Catherine Fowler, who for 8 years demonstrated incredible dedication, enthusiasm and responsibility as a volunteer, Board Member and Board Chair.



Catherine is incredibly passionate, dedicated and willing to help out wherever needed. Some highlights of her include her relentless advocacy on behalf of CMCP, demonstrating her immense leadership skills sitting on numerous committees and always being the first one to show up the morning of our Family Fun festival bringing along extra hands to support and making sure every last detail is looked after.

The contributions made by Catherine have had a long-lasting impact in our community, and we will annually honor a CMCP volunteer who exemplifies the characteristics of Catherine Fowler in supporting our organization.

"We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give."

**Winston Churchill** 

### **STAFF**

We are so grateful to have such a committed staff of talented, caring professionals running our programs. It is an absolute privilege to work with a team that goes above and beyond the call of duty on a daily basis to ensure our families feel welcome, connected and part of a community. We rely on each other when we face challenges, offer praise in moments of accomplishment and provide encouragement to be the best versions of ourselves. Staff or team doesn't do it justice, we think of each other as family.

We wanted to give a special acknowledgement to Durriya and Manuela who retired at the end of this past year. Together you have worked for CMCP for almost 42 years and you will be missed by our families, staff and volunteers. Thank you for all of your hard work and the joy and passion you brought to CMCP.





## A MOTHER'S STORY...

I never thought I would be in this situation. I'm someone who has worked full time and I used to donate to charities and foodbanks to help others in my community. I wasn't someone who would be considered wealthy, but I was able to support my two children as a single mother. I lost my job when the pandemic hit, and while there were some government supports available I was put in a situation where I needed to use my savings to pay my rent and feed my family.

I struggled with finding a job and the stress about how I could provide for my family. As the months went on I started to get desperate, and heard about the CooperMills/Gooch Community Foodbank through a Facebook post. I questioned myself for weeks if I should go visit. I felt such shame that I couldn't manage on my own and needed to rely on help.

I was so nervous my first time going and I couldn't even make eye contact with the person registering me, but she so friendly and did her best to make me feel welcome. I was so surprised that they had so many vegetables and rice and pasta for me to take home. I got to choose what I took home. I'm not sure what I was expecting, but it wasn't this. I got home and went to my bedroom and cried for being in this situation and these complete strangers helped me without judging me.



After all these thoughts went through my head, I emerged from my room extremely grateful that I had a place that would help me out, and I started to make dinner for my family, thankful my children weren't going to have macaroni and cheese again. I kept going back and started to feel more comfortable talking to the staff and volunteers. I told them about my children and one of them told me about a donation of backpacks with school supplies they were receiving and also added some children's masks to my box. Even though I had to keep my distance I just wanted to hug her and to thank her.

I finally found a new job and am on my way to getting back on my feet. I still go to the foodbank from time to time when things are tight, but I really can't wait for the day that I'm in a position to start donating to them to continue their great work in the community.



#### **AMANDA'S STORY...**

When John and I found out we were expecting in December 2019 I had many dreams about how my maternity leave and raising a baby would be like. When I felt finally better after a rough first trimester, the pandemic was declared. As we all know it, a lot of my dreams couldn't come true the way I had originally envisioned.



One of the dreams I had was to join parent baby programs in the neighbourhood. I wanted my baby to be engaged, to learn how to support their development, and meet other local parents. Needless to say, with the series of lockdowns, new covid variants and waves, what had been once a reasonable expectation now suddenly became a far reaching reality.

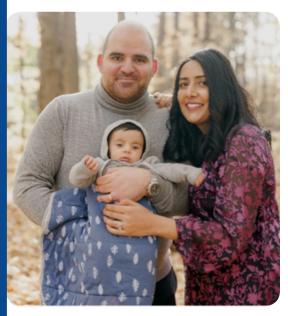
Winter months came as my newborn was growing rapidly. Not being able to go outside and having limited indoor spaces to visit with an unmasked baby didn't help my frustration. My only resolution was to dress warm in layers and walk around the Trinity Bellwoods Park and neighbourhood.

It is an understatement to say I was glad to find the placard advertising the online early on centre programs on my way to the park one day. When I joined the zoom sessions I was warmly welcomed by Mehmet, Ally, and Melanie, and immediately felt supported and cared for. The rest is now history. I was absolutely impressed by CMCP's commitment to be agile and adaptable, and quickly pivotting to meet the needs of the children and families throughout the many waves and challenges of the pandemic.

Their programming was high quality, creative, and inclusive. Having been in the social service and healthcare sectors for over 15 years I understand how much heart and work go in to plan and execute programs of that caliber. There was something for everyone from infants and toddlers, to parents and caregivers, informative and engaging sessions on important topics for new parents and great facilitation. I noticed how equity, diversity, and inclusion were intentionally and sincerely woven into their programming. This has always been a very important value I hold in my personal and professional life, and I so appreciated this aspect as a parent and program participant. I have now attended online, outdoor and indoor CMCP programs in multiple locations and I have witnessed the consistency in quality of the programs, staff, and volunteers.

CMCP has been a silver lining in our family's lives during the pandemic and the first two years of my daughter's life, which are formative years critical to her development. CMCP's impact in our lives has been invaluable, and I am forever grateful to all their dedicated and selfless staff and volunteers doing their parts big or small, despite all the obstacles Covid threw at us, to make the wonder happen. Whether it was you repeating the rollypolly song 1001 times, coming up with a creative activity, disinfecting the toys between sessions, gathering rocks and leaves, or coming up with new covid protocols, a sincere thank you to every single one of you from the bottom of our hearts.

#### ROMA'S STORY...



I had my first (and only child), Krishna, in August 2020. A proper poster child for a COVID baby. Raising a baby during the pandemic, my husband and I were in over our heads - not much was available in terms of support beyond your essential healthcare services. which too were overburdened. I regularly looked online for programs, even virtual ones where I could develop a network or access a community of families in similar situa-

tions. I had joined a virtual Mom group for those in Toronto born during a similar time period. Living in North York, there really wasn't much in terms of community and support for new moms like me in our neighbourhood, neighbouring municipalities had even stopped offering the breastfeeding clinic and some other resources for young parents like me. One of the mothers in the group mentioned joining a, "great program online, - circle time" and that her son, "loved it!". During that very fortunate conversation, I learned about CMCP and all the programs they offer. One of the few major upsides to the lockdown was being able to leverage technology to access services beyond the neighbourhood.

CMCP was a blessing to our family. It is very difficult, even while COVID restrictions are slowly being lifted, to find organizations and programs that offer similar services to the community and young families. I initially joined in the virtual drop in sessions for infants as a way to simply meet with other moms and show Krishna other children as a way to offer him limited interaction beyond what my husband and I were able to offer. Soon enough, our

experiences blossomed beyond drop in with Melanie, and into circle time with Ally, formal programs, and cooking class with Donia. I spoke at lengths with Melanie about, what I realize now are very typical concerns, around development and milestones, and Krishna increasingly developed a strong fondness for Ally's approach to Circle time, even learning and imitating basic words in sign language (while teaching us). Melanie and the team helped me build some comfort over approaching baby led weaning, milestones, and shared many ideas about age appropriate sensory activities and games. I also learned about some of the other educational resources available for parents in the GTHA. Some of my best memories of this time include watching Krishna's delight over Ally's songs using felt objects pinned to a colourful felt board, and giggling over Melanie's use of hand puppets and animated character voices. Over time, tapping into CMCP programs began feeling like like reaching out to an extended family; welcoming, judgement-free and empathetic.

Over a few months, restrictions had eased in the summer of 2021, and Krishna and I went down for an in-person outdoor program. It was fantastic! As Krishna grew beyond the infancy stage and into full-blown toddlerdom, so my confidence and security as a Mom grew. Up until I returned to work after 15 Months and Krishna joined daycare, we continued to join in Ally's circle time and Krishna made some great online friends in the CMCP community. It was so beautiful to see him recognize Ally and wave to his other friends and then following the program, repeat their names and sing and sign the songs with us at dinner.

CMCP is a unicorn in their ability to develop an inclusive, barrier-free and welcoming environment. Each team member and volunteer brimming with empathy, enthusiasm, education and warmth. I can say from experience that CMCP provides an essential service to families and children. Krishna is now 21 months old, and just as we're getting into a groove, he throws us a curveball! We are looking forward to joining Melanie, Ally and the team for yet another in-person drop-in program!

CMCP is grateful to all of our funders, donors and partners who have supported our work during such a challenging year. It is through your generosity that we have been able to quickly respond to the emerging needs of the community.

#### Thank you!

#### **Government Funders**

Children's Services - Toronto
EarlyON Child And Family Centre
Employment and Social Development - Canada
Employment and Social Services - Toronto
Ministry of Education - Ontario

#### **Community Funders**

United Way of Greater Toronto LiUNA Local 183 Delta Bingo and Gaming

#### **Corporate/Foundation Funders**

Burgundy Asset Management Ltd
Canada Post Community Foundation
Nestle Canada Inc.
Chum Charitable Foundation
The Taligent Group
Shawn Kimel Investments Inc
McCall MacBain Foundation
Daily Bread Food Bank
The CLOROX Company
Carla Corsi
The Toronto Star Santa Claus Fund

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# YOUR DONATIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

CMCP relies on the community to ensure we are able to serve our families. You can help by <u>making a donation</u>, join CMCP's <u>Extended Family Monthly Giving Program</u> or getting your <u>company involved</u>.

If you would like to learn more about how you can support CMCP and/ or how your gift will impact children and families in the community please contact our Community Engagement Manager, Mark Osler at mosler@cmcp.ca



"CMCP is a warm supportive hub for many family/child services that build a stronger more inclusive community! As a supporting member for 15 years, I can assure you that although all the good done by CMCP can't be measured in dollars & cents, it does need generous donations to continue its vital work in our community! Please give generously! Thanks!"





#### College-Montrose Children's Place

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