

The Power of Change



Kathy Reticker,
Executive Director

Dear Friends and Families,

In 2014, we pledged to move “Full STEAM Ahead!” into a new year with big plans to strengthen our organization and deepen relationships. Although 2015 began with long snowy days and delays, we moved forward and met the warmer sunny days with new faces, collaborations and accomplishments.

New Faces This year we welcomed Geraldine Palacio and Lucas Skorczeski to our team. Geraldine comes to her Child Care Specialist position after completing her BA in Psychology. She has additional expertise earned by serving as an assistant to her Mom and AFCC educator, Lida Chica. Lucas also brings a wealth of experience to his new position as Chief Program Officer. He was the Director of Early Childhood Education and Parent Resources at The Discovery Museums in Acton.

In 2015, we welcomed six new providers and four new board members. Sadly we said goodbye to Cheryl Hylton who, after six years of service, will be serving on a Board closer to her home. We are very grateful for all Cheryl has done for Acre!

Collaborations We are very excited to share the news of our collaboration with Merrimack Repertory Theater. We are providing child care during select performances through a grant funded by the Lowell Cultural Council. This allows parents of young children to attend a performance without the additional cost of a baby sitter. This new collaboration has been very well received in the community.

We are also extremely proud of the publication of the first “Acre Curriculum Book for the Pre-K Steam Fair.” This book filled with ideas created and implemented by Acre Family Child Care educators is the result of our collaboration with The Discovery Museums in Acton through a grant from the Parker Foundation.

Accomplishments This year we hosted our first “friend raiser” at Friends Restaurant, hosted by new Board Member Chris Ortiz. We also held a Cultural Fair! Photos from this fabulous event are included in this report for you to enjoy too. Another major accomplishment was Aleks Tugbiyele’s courageous entry into the Greater Lowell Community Foundation’s Bike-A-Thon.

Finally, we are very proud to share that we were awarded the “Power of Change” award by the Nashoba Valley Rotary. This award is given to an organization that makes a positive difference in women’s lives and we are thrilled to have our work recognized.

2015 has been another wonderful year at Acre Family Child Care. Thank you for supporting for our work, or staff, our educators and our families.

Sincerely,
Kathy Reticker



PHOTO BY DACEY ZOUSA

Our speakers celebrating at The Power of Change award ceremony, January 2015. Left to right: Kathy Reticker, Olga Valencia, and Anita Moller.

Letter from our Board Chair

February, 2016

Greetings,
As I write this letter the Denver Broncos are celebrating their Super Bowl victory. Thinking about their approach, always playing as a team, I see a parallel in the work that has been accomplished by Acre in the past year. We really have a terrific team of educators, staff, and board members working together to provide excellent care and support to over 50 women-owned businesses in Lowell. We also are members of the “team” of agencies in Lowell, both not-for-profit and profit-making, that makes Lowell such a wonderful community in which to live and work.

In the past year Acre has contributed to the workforce by providing 19 full-time and one new part-time job and providing support to 58 women-owned businesses conducted by our educators. Our educators earn an average annual income of over \$48,000.00, and so have a very substantial impact on the Lowell economy. Working as a team with our incredible staff, eight educators have graduated from our Benchmarks Program and 17 have been granted Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) status improving both their incomes and the services they provide.

One of my personal favorite events of the past year was the Cultural Celebration where educators showcased their cultures with food, clothing, dancing and other examples of life in their countries of origin. The smiles on the faces of the children and their families were priceless. We also had a record 150 attendees at our Summer Social, and held Art in the Park, a Night at the Museum, and a Board-Staff Retreat to name a few other events.

We continue our work with other agencies in the city including Lowell Community Health Center, Lowell Day Nursery, Lowell National Historical Park, the Discovery Museums, Merrimack Valley Housing Partnership, Merrimack Repertory Theater, and Lowell Public Schools.

Thank you very much for the continued support of our team and its work. Finally, we look forward to another successful year of growth in 2016!

Sincerely,
Patricia Sullivan Talty
Chair, Board of Directors



Acre Board Chair,
Patricia Sullivan Talty



Highlights from 2015...



A Bridge to My Dreams

The Gloria Echavarria Story BY KATHY RETICKER



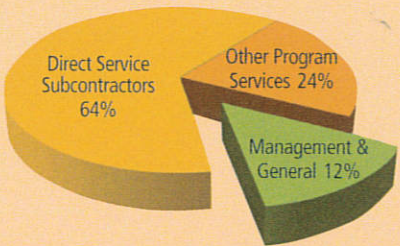
From Left to Right: Zelma Khadar (Chief Operations Officer), Gloria Echavarria, Angela Mendonca (Child Care Specialist), Kathy Reticker (Executive Director).

After 12 incredible years of owning her own business, Gloria Echavarria is ready for a new adventure, and she thanks Acre Family Child Care for helping her prepare.

In 1986 Gloria came to the Lowell to join her husband Carlos Mario, overcoming incredible difficulties in her journey. After getting settled, she set three goals for herself; become an American citizen, bring her family members to Lowell and, retire early! Achieving those goals was not easy. When she first arrived in Lowell, Gloria got a job at Lowell General Hospital. It was important for her to be able to speak up for herself, so after working 10 hour days, she took evening classes to learn English.

Acre Family Child Care / Financial Summary		
(unaudited, in thousands)		
	FISCAL YEAR	
	2015	2014
Revenue & Support		
Program Service Revenue	\$3,955	\$3,869
Other Revenues	78	35
Grants & Contributions:		
Grants – Government	104	107
Grants – Foundations	59	40
Individuals & Businesses	33	28
Grants & Contributions	196	175
Gross Support & Revenue	4,229	4,079
Expenses		
Direct Service Subcontractors	2,727	2,623
Other Program Services	1,034	941
Management & General	500	566
Total Expenses	4,261	4,130
Operating (Loss) Income	\$(32)	\$(51)

Total Expenses 2015



During the past two years, 86% of all expenditures were used to support our child care service programs, while general management & fundraising expenditures required only 14 cents of each dollar spent.

2015
BOARD OF
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Derek Mitchell

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Chris Ortiz

Theresa Park

Blanca Valencia

A Bridge to My Dreams *(Continued)*

Gloria and Carlos have two daughters, Diana and Christina. When her eldest daughter, Diana began Middle School, Gloria felt that it was important to be home and more available for her growing daughters. At that time Beatriz Alvarez, a friend and Acre Family Child Care educator, told her about the opportunity to become a Family Child Care educator at Acre Family Child Care. At the time Cecilio Hernandez was the Executive Director and Gloria recalls that Acre felt like family right from the start.



Many of the families that Gloria cared for over her 12 years at Acre Family Child Care were enrolled in her program for as many as 7 years. Viviana, a parent in Gloria's program says that "Gloria is an excellent provider. I consider her the children's second mother." Gloria remembers many stories from her years running a program, many of them center around her food. She remembers working with one little boy who it took two weeks before he would eat her food, saying he preferred hot dogs and pizza. Gloria stuck with it and eventually he came to love Gloria's now famous soups. She describes another little girl who when out at a restaurant with her family and tried to order Gloria's soup for dinner. That mother has since asked Gloria to share her special recipe.

Gloria Echavarria is a role model for other educators at Acre Family Child Care. She is quick to offer help and advice around starting and running a sympathetic and supportive child care business. Gloria has even taught one of our new Burmese providers how to knit despite the language differences that separated them.

Gloria would like to thank Acre Family Child Care for being the bridge to her achieve her goals. This February she officially retired. She plans to move back to Colombia in the Fall. As we celebrate her accomplishments, we see that Gloria has done more than achieve her three goals. Owning her own business made it possible for her to purchase her home in Lowell, which she will leave to her daughters who have become independent and responsible adults. Gloria continues to encourage other women who come to Acre to stay focused on their goals and dreams so they too can achieve them.

Gloria will be truly missed. She has made an incredible, lasting impact on in the lives of the children, families and staff at Acre. She will always be part of our family.

Acre Family Child Care
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