

# Deepening Our Roots



## Dear Friends of Acre Family Child Care,

We routinely reflect on how amazing our community is. We have the privilege of working with people and agencies that are helping to create a Lowell where families are welcomed and can thrive. Throughout 2017, we worked on strengthening and deepening our connection to our community through some great programs and activities that we are excited to tell you about.

Over the summer, a cohort of 9 Educators participated in a pilot program focused on hands-on garden-based STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, math) learning. The Educators had the opportunity to receive professional development from Mill City Grows, along with the necessary supplies to **create their own gardens**. Educators modified their curriculums to connect their children to the gardens. Art activities, math lessons, and story times were brought outdoors and revolved around the growing plants.

In September we enjoyed the **4th Annual PreK STEAM Fair**. Families and Educators from across the city came together to celebrate learning. When planning for the first STEAM Fair, we didn't know that it would become an annual event – but what sprouted from a long-term partnership with The Discovery Museums has grown to include other amazing organizations like the Tsongas Industrial History Center, Lowell National Historical Park, and Project Learn. Thanks especially to Enterprise Bank as our Lead Sponsor for the second year in a row, and to Eastern Bank and the Lowell Cultural Council for being Premier Sponsors.

Unique to Acre Family Child Care (AFCC) is our **proprietary Benchmark training program** that we require of all Educators, whether they are just entering the field or have been working with children for many years. In 2017, **10 Educators** graduated this class. These trainings are above and beyond any licensing standard, which is one of the many reasons we think our Educators are some of the best prepared and hardest working people in the field of early childhood education.

As everyone in our community knows, we sadly lost Kathy Reticker, our Executive Director for over a decade, in fall 2016. The Board of Directors carried out a search for a new Executive Director and ultimately voted in July to name us – Zelma Khadar (former Chief Operating Officer) and Lucas Skorczeski (former Chief Program Officer) – as Co-Executive Directors. We are deeply honored and proud to take this new responsibility and look forward to growing in our new roles.

This year we are excited to celebrate our **30-year commitment** to providing a pathway for women to achieve economic independence by operating high-quality child care businesses in their homes. Our mission is as relevant today as it was in 1988 – especially as the need for jobs and the demand for sources of quality education continue to be necessary ingredients to help our community grow.

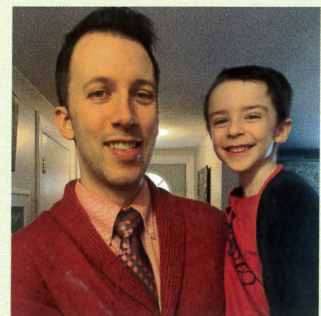
We thank you again for your partnership, which helps sustain our work, our Educators, and our families.

Zelma Khadar  
Co-Executive Director

Lucas Skorczeski  
Co-Executive Director



Zelma Khadar



Lucas Skorczeski



BOARD MEMBER HIGHLIGHT –  
Patricia Sullivan Talty

In 2018, Patricia Sullivan Talty, Esquire, will step down from the Board of Directors after a decade of service. Patty joined the Board of Directors at AFCC in 2008 after being asked by Kathy Reticker, then Executive Director. It wasn’t only the personal ask by Kathy, but also AFCC’s mission of supporting immigrant women owning their own businesses that enticed Patty to become a Director. “Acre provides women the opportunity and professional and personal assistance they need to take the leap as entrepreneurs.”

In 2012, Patty became the Chair of the Board. The organization grew and thrived under the guidance of Patty and our other Directors. Some of the many changes Patty saw AFCC through included the relocation of our offices to a more professional setting on Middle Street, a growing partnership with The Discovery Museums in Acton, celebration of our 25th Anniversary, the launch of our annual STEAM Fair, the painful loss of Kathy and Mike Holland (former Transportation Manager), and our emergence from those tragedies. Patty praises the staff at AFCC for concentrating on what we do best – while being open to trying new things and knowing when to let go of something that’s not benefiting the organization.

Patty says, “I particularly enjoyed the Cultural Celebration events when the providers showcased their cultures with food, music, dance, and materials representative of their homelands. It was a wonderful opportunity for the children, and the adults, to learn about different cultures and for the providers to show their pride in their country of origin.”

While Patty is stepping down from the Board, she will continue to champion AFCC and assist with our upcoming 30th Anniversary celebration this fall.

*Thank you, Patty, for being a strong supporter and for your unwavering willingness to share your time and insight with us when we needed your expertise. We always appreciated your calm and compassionate way of approaching situations we encountered over the years. Thank you for all you have done for Acre Family Child Care!*



Melissa Devore, Board Member; Patty Sullivan Talty, Board Chair; Kathy Reticker, former Executive Director

EDUCATOR PROFILE – Attle Young

Attle was a mom with three children who first came to know about AFCC through Coalition for a Better Acre. Every day, one of her daughters would put up a fight about getting on the bus to go to child care, so Attle started thinking about how to address that challenge. She loved working with kids and had even once worked as a resident counselor. A flyer about an AFCC training to become a child care provider inspired her, and she signed up.

In May 1998, Attle worked with AFCC to open her own home-based child care business, offering care to 5 children. When her landlord decided to sell the property she was living in, the income from her business allowed her to buy the two-family home. Growing her entrepreneurial spirit, in 2009 Attle moved to a single-family home in Centralville and kept the two-family as a rental.

Attle is proud of working with AFCC and receiving ongoing

training and support. Since becoming a provider, she has received her GED, a Child Development Associate certificate, and a certificate in Early Childhood Education from Middlesex Community College, and she has made great friends in the network. She beams about her daughters, Masada – who has received her degree in business, is an outreach worker, and is a published author and poet – and Diamond – who recently obtained her medical degree.

Attle has experienced hard times, too. Tragically, she lost her son, Andre, at age 23, leaving a hole in her heart. She points out that her Acre Family, both staff and providers, was there to support her with love, meals, and visits during this hard time. Attle then had a kidney transplant in 2012, forcing her to temporarily close her business while she recovered. She again credits her Acre Family for being supportive and compassionate,

with the children in her program continuing to receive care through other providers until she was back on her feet.

Attle is known for reciprocating the love she has received – with the children and families she works with and the other providers of Acre. At trainings and meetings she often sits with the newcomers to offer words of wisdom and a joke. When she hears someone express the familiar challenges of balancing a job and child care costs, she is quick to share and promote the idea of becoming a family child care business owner.

On behalf of the hundreds of children and families that Attle has worked with, we wish her a ‘Happy 20 Years!’ and thank her for being a part of the AFCC family.



Attle Young, Acre Family Child Care Educator, 20 Years



Many photos courtesy of Bethany Fitch

UPDATE – Kathy Reticker Forum

The Inaugural Kathy Reticker Forum event was held October 27, 2017, at the UMass Lowell Inn & Conference Center. The packed room of engaged attendees was welcomed with a video greeting from Senator Elizabeth Warren, given an introduction of our Keynote Speaker by Congresswoman Niki Tsongas, and treated to a rousing Keynote speech by Joan Wallace-Benjamin (CEO and President of the Home for Little Wanderers) titled, “Minding the Gap: The Importance of Early Childhood Development.” A scholarship program in Kathy’s name was announced for Early Education students at Lowell High and Middlesex Community College, with the first scholarships being awarded in spring 2018.

The Kathy Reticker Forum is now planning a political forum for candidates running for U.S. Representative for the Massachusetts 3rd Congressional District; the Forum topic will be Early Childhood Education. The goal is to have attendees walk away from the Forum with a thorough understanding of each candidate’s position on access to quality early childhood education and care. This event is being planned for early June in Lowell.

These annual events focusing attention on the need for high-quality, affordable early childhood education for all children and families and the funding of scholarships for those looking to enter the field of early childhood education are ways to continue honoring Kathy’s memory. To help or request more information, you can contact the Forum Committee at: [KRforum@acrefamily.org](mailto:KRforum@acrefamily.org)

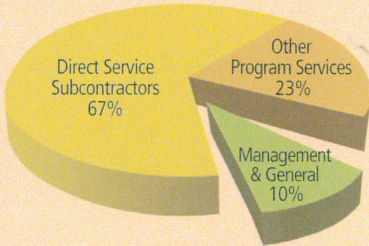


Congresswoman Niki Tsongas (right) welcomes keynote speaker CEO and President of the Home for Little Wanderers, Joan Wallace-Benjamin.

Acre Family Child Care / Financial Summary

(unaudited, in thousands)	FISCAL YEAR	
	2017	2016
<b>Revenue &amp; Support</b>		
Program Service Revenue	\$4,361	\$4,213
Other Revenues	\$55	\$66
Grants & Contributions:		
Grants – Government	—	\$111
Grants – Foundations	\$51	\$35
Individuals & Businesses	\$41	\$33
Grants & Contributions	\$92	\$179
Gross Support & Revenue	\$4,508	\$4,458
<b>Expenses</b>		
Direct Service Subcontractors	\$2,980	\$2,918
Other Program Services	\$999	\$991
Management & General	\$454	\$487
Total Expenses	\$4,433	\$4,396
Operating (Loss) Income	\$75	\$62

Total Expenses 2017



In 2017, 90% of all expenditures were used to support our child care service programs, while general management and fundraising expenditures required only 10 cents of each dollar spent.



2017  
BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS

**Zelma Khadar**  
*Co-Executive Director*

**Lucas Skorczeski**  
*Co-Executive Director*

**Patricia Sullivan Talty**  
*Chair*

**Bethany Fitch**  
*Vice Chair*

**Kathleen Leon**  
*Treasurer*

**Deb Beland**  
*Clerk*

**Rose Castillo**

**Melissa Devore**

**Vanna Howard**

**Valessa Marques**

**Allyssa McCabe**

**Velda McRae-Yates**

**Derek Mitchell**

**Darmery Montoya**

**Chris Ortiz**

**Theresa Park**

**Donna Saati**

**Diane Tradd**

**Blanca Valencia**

**Be on the  
lookout for our  
SAVE THE DATE  
postcard for our  
30th Anniversary  
Celebration!**

## PARENT PROFILE – Lisa

Lisa and her family became homeless when her landlord sold the house they were living in. She couldn't find affordable housing that met her family's needs. Not having family support in the area, the only option was the homeless shelter.

Lisa's son suffered from chronic ear infections, resulting in many medical appointments and hospitalizations. She felt pressure to get a job or go back to school, but she felt her son needed her more. The thought of having him in child care was very scary and did not feel right given his condition.

One day Lisa was introduced to the Parent Engagement Coordinator at Acre Family Child Care (AFCC), and things began to change quickly for her. "I was asked what I wanted in a day care provider. I was listened to and asked questions that I didn't think of before. And best of all, no pressure was placed on me to choose. Instead I felt empowered to decide the type of care that I wanted for my child."

After determining what Lisa was looking for – and her son's personality and needs – she was introduced to Luz, an educator that works with AFCC. Everything started to fall into place. "I was so scared of this first step, although I knew that it was important for me to make it if I wanted to change my situation. I wanted to make great things happen for my son and me, and this was going to get me there."

Lisa is able to concentrate on her future now that she knows her son is being taken care of. "I found a provider that I feel loves my child. I send him to Luz without worrying about his wellbeing, knowing he is being cared for extremely well. My son is now more confident in showing tenderness and affection.

I know this is being nurtured at Luz's day care. I can tell my son is loved by Luz. My son lights up when he hears her name mentioned. I want Luz to know that I am forever grateful for loving him and making him feel loved."

Child care is intertwined with other issues such as housing and maintaining a job. With Acre Family Child Care, Lisa found so much more than child care: "I now feel that my future holds many amazing things. I can look forward to so much. I am attending school and studying to receive my HiSET diploma. I'm also volunteering at another homeless shelter. My hope is to pursue a degree in human services to be able to help others as I've been helped."

"It is amazing what one person can do for you, never mind a community of people – like I have found in Luz and Acre Family Child Care. I have a job interview at the end of this week as well as a possibility of acquiring affordable housing. Great things are happening to me, and it started with just one person lending out their hand."



*Luz reading with Lisa's son and other children*

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