

Welcoming Families, Building Home

Every day, Acre Family Child Care seeks to welcome, connect, and have children and families feel like they are home.

Home is many things: an idea, a place, a feeling. Home is a place you feel welcome. A place you are accepted and loved as yourself. A place filled with comfort and memories. Home is a place to rest before the next challenge of life. A place to share food and laughter, to come together to keep traditions and make new ones. And doesn't this sound like a great place for a child to be? A place where they are loved, supported, and encouraged to learn and grow.

This is the magic that happens across Acre Family Child Care educator's homes. Homes that are not just filled with toys, books, and art supplies, but with the sounds of songs in different languages, the smells of meals reflecting different cultures, and the stories representing different backgrounds. It is this welcoming and acceptance that creates safe learning environments that support lifelong learning.

This is our goal for every child, every parent, every educator, and every person we work with - that no matter their background or where they come from, that when they are part of the Acre Family they are home. 2019 has been an outstanding year because of people like YOU! You helped make our "home" bigger than ever. Your support and belief in our work attracted new funders, had parents call looking for care because they heard such great things, and encouraged new educators to enter the field and open their own small businesses.

We are lucky to have such a large family of champions who believe in the critical work of caring. Thank you for helping the hundreds of children and families in Acre Family

programs. And an extra special thanks to every Educator we work with that every day lovingly and intentionally opens the door to their own home to welcome and care for our community, your generosity and dedication inspire us.

2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Zelma Khadar
Co-Executive Director

Lucas Skorczeski
Co-Executive Director

Bethany Watson
Chair

Donna Saati
Vice Chair

Kathleen Leon
Treasurer

Deb Beland
Clerk

Thomas "Doc" Daugherty

Ellen Grondine

Vanna Howard

Valessa Marques

Cathy Mercado

Beth Mitchneck

Darmery Montoya

Chris Ortiz

Maria Pino

Diane Tradd

Sandra Velez



Zelma Khadar
Co-Executive Director



Lucas Skorczeski
Co-Executive Director

Journey to Home

Yinet's Story of Perseverance

Yinet used to receive daily phone calls about her 3-year-old son's behavior. He had three Acre Family Educators over four months, and his challenging behaviors needed additional supports and one-on-one care. Without family members to help, Yinet spoke to her employer about a more flexible schedule so she could be more active in her son's care. When her job refused, Yinet made the difficult decision to leave her job so she could do what was needed as a parent. With no job, she lost her apartment and Yinet and her son moved into a shelter. She also lost her childcare during this period, but Acre Family was still invested in her success and remained involved in her evolving situation. "Acre has always been my home, even when I didn't have a home of my own." Days were long in the small shared spaces. She felt like the shelter didn't understand her son's behavior. As a single parent, it was impossible to be a fulltime parent, caregiver, and breadwinner all at the same time.

Yinet made the incredibly difficult decision to have her son live with her mother in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.



Yelvis, Yinet, and Melody

She set three goals for herself: get a good-paying job, become a U.S. citizen, and bring her mother and her son to the United States. It took two and a half years of hard work, but she was finally prepared to reunite her family. "Without the Acre ingredient in my life, I feel I wouldn't have been able to achieve the goals I set for myself."

Although there were obstacles in achieving her goals, things began to align. She secured housing for her family a few months before her daughter was born. Yinet's son was now in a school-age program and able to receive the services he needed to thrive. Yinet reconnected with

Acre Family now needing childcare for her daughter. Her workdays are long, so she needed transportation at the end of the day. Check. She wanted an educator that could provide a space where her daughter is safe and lovingly cared for. Check. She wanted a program where her daughter is happy and eager to participate. Check.

Yinet's most recent goal was to buy a home. She looked at many houses and finally found one. Her offer was recently accepted and the overwhelming feeling for Yinet was that it was "reserved just for her." She is busy cleaning, painting, and preparing the home for their upcoming move. She is especially excited to have a beautiful yard, giving her children the space and freedom they deserve. Yinet says she is grateful for the hardships she encountered, they made her focus and fight harder. She also feels that Acre Family was a constant and consistent support. "Acre isn't just an agency. My life and situation were important to them. They were not indifferent to my challenges. Acre puts their heart into everything they do." We are so thrilled for Yinet and her family to be together and want to say on behalf of every member of the Acre Family, "Welcome home!"



Pre-K STEAM Fair

Photo credit: Framed Photography



All For My Family

Wendy's Story of Determination & Compassion

As an Acre Educator, Wendy works to create a safe and loving program. "Working with families of different backgrounds, my goal is to be accepting and not judgmental. I've had plenty of challenges in my life and I always can find a way to relate to others." Wendy grew up with her mom teaching her that family was loving and that there is nothing you can't achieve if you support one another unconditionally.

Wendy's first exposure to family childcare was as an assistant. Gabina, who was and still is a Provider working with Acre Family, welcomed Wendy into her program. Wendy didn't just learn about early childhood education from Gabina, but had her aha moment of, "I can do this!" She realized she had always been passionate about helping others and giving back to the community. At the time, she was pregnant with her first child, working two jobs, sick, and realizing she couldn't keep it up. This was a moment of opportunity; a moment she can reflect on whenever she has parents that are exhausted, over-stressed, and unsure what to do next.

Motivated by the love for her growing family, she opened a childcare business allowing her to be with her new baby. She didn't originally begin working with Acre Family Child Care, but she gives credit to this change in helping her grow as a professional. "Even when I wasn't working with Acre, they were always there as a resource to answer questions and support me as an individual and as a business owner."

Over the last decade, her children have grown up in a home that opens its doors to children of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. Watching their mother, they have learned about helping others. "During the summer, Jhoendy comes in and will read stories, and Myah will play with the younger children."

Many of the children in Wendy's program become an extension of her own family. "I have a child that started with me at two months old. I have watched him grow, been there for milestones, and I want to challenge him to learn new things as I would my own child." Through all the challenges Wendy has experienced, she wants every family she works with to know, "It doesn't matter what is going on, there are times that



Wendy, Elio, Myah (5), and Jhoendy (9)

you will feel alone. You can keep moving forward, you can make it. Whatever you set your mind on you can have."

It was this attitude that brought Wendy to Lowell. "Before my Dad helped bring me to Lowell, I lived with my mother and sister in the Dominican Republic. The day I left was one of the saddest days of my life, I spent the airplane trip in tears." Over the years of running her own business, buying her own home, and raising her children, she never gave up on her goal of reuniting her family. With hard work and determination, Wendy helped her mother and sister move to Lowell. "My family is whole again. We are home." For the families that send their children to Wendy, they are grateful to be part of such a loving and welcoming home.

Acre Family: Building Family, Strengthening Community

By State Senator Ed Kennedy

My wife, Susan, and I are fortunate to be able to care often for our two young grandsons, allowing our daughter and her husband to work without having to worry about the burden of finding reliable, affordable childcare. It is not always easy, but it is a rewarding experience and I am happy to have the opportunity to help raise them and watch them grow. However, for those who do not have family able to help out, I can think of no better alternative than Acre Family Child Care.

When parents leave their children with Acre Family Child Care, they are granted peace of mind on two fronts: the childcare allows them to continue to work to support their families and their children are with well-trained, trusted providers who care for their children like family.

Affordable, reliable childcare allows parents to work to support their families. At the same time, becoming at-home childcare providers empowers people, mostly women, to run their own small businesses while strengthening their community. The Acre Family model is a great example of the types of partnerships that built and have sustained Lowell for nearly 200 years and make it a top-notch city in which to live, work, and raise a family. The childcare sector is a key driver for economic development and prosperity in Lowell and throughout the Commonwealth. As your State Senator, I will continue to prioritize and support initiatives that bolster organizations like Acre Family Child Care.



Senator Kennedy and his grandsons

Kathy Reticker Forum for Children and Families

As we begin the fourth year of The Kathy Reticker Forum for Families and Children, we have held 3 annual events and awarded 7 college scholarships to young women studying early childhood education. We plan to continue to honor Kathy's memory by holding annual events focusing attention on the need for high-quality, affordable early childhood education for all children and families and by awarding 4 annual college scholarships in Kathy's name to students studying early childhood education.

We continued our annual event program in with the showing of the film, "No Small Matter" on June 6th at the beautiful new Richard & Nancy Donahue Family Academic Arts Center in downtown Lowell. This nationally acclaimed film presents the latest research on early brain development and offers engaging stories of children, families and teachers. Pat Nelson, Executive Director of Concord Children's Center, who served as the event Master of Ceremonies gave opening remarks and introduced our special guests for the evening. Lowell's U.S. Congresswoman, Lori Trahan spoke and told the audience

that her Mother had run a home childcare business in Lowell and gave an update on pending legislation that would benefit children and families. Amy O'Leary, the Director of Education for All, updated us on the state of early childhood education in Massachusetts and encouraged the audience to advocate for the current Massachusetts budget increases for early childhood education. The evening was an opportunity to connect with Forum supporters and meet members of the Lowell Early Childhood community.

Our plan for 2020 is to host another showing of "No Small Matter" on June 11th in Concord at the new theatre in The Umbrella Community Arts Center. The event will target the Early Childhood and Business communities and will be a fundraising opportunity for our scholarship program. Plans are now in progress. We will award 2 scholarships to Lowell High school graduating seniors in May and 2 scholarship to Middlesex Community College students in October. Thank you to our generous donors and thank you to the Acre Family Child Care community and staff for all your support.



Congresswoman Lori Trahan, Pat Nelson, and Amy O'Leary

www.KathyRetickerForum.org

All Families Are Our Families

A Message from our Board Chair

To me, home is comfort and security, it's being surrounded by the ones you love. As a mother, it warms my heart hearing stories about the relationships between families and educators in the Acre Family network. Each day the 60+ Acre Family educators open their doors not just to wonderful childcare businesses, but to their homes. It is so special for parents that find care, but also find a true partner in raising their child. There are many parents that consider their educator as an extension of their family, a second mom, an aunt, or grandmother.



Bethany Watson

Acre Family creates opportunities for families to participate and to feel welcome, especially through our summer program. This past year, we hosted our 5th Pre-K STEAM Fair, enjoyed ice cream with kid goats, painted beautiful pictures, listened to music at Boarding House Park, hula hooped at Shedd Park, and explored the Discovery Museum!

We are thankful for our strong community of supporters who make all of this work possible. We are excited for what the future holds, to work with more families and educators than ever before. But as we continue to grow, our work isn't to be bigger. It is for anyone that walks through our door to know they are part of the Acre Family and that they are home.



Acre Family's Annual Field Day

Photo credit: Megpix

ACRE FAMILY CHILD CARE / Financial Summary

(unaudited, in thousands)

	FISCAL YEAR	
	2019	2018
Revenue & Support		
Program Service Revenue	\$5,231	\$5,009
Other Revenues	\$74	\$28
Grants & Contributions:		
Grants – Government	—	—
Grants – Foundations	\$123	\$89
Individuals & Businesses	\$37	\$85
Grants & Contributions	\$160	\$174
Gross Support & Revenue	\$5,465	\$5,211
Expenses		
Direct Service Subcontractors	\$3,521	\$3,406
Other Program Services	\$1,031	\$1,042
Management & General	\$547	\$529
Total Expenses	\$5,099	\$4,977
Operating (Loss) Income	\$366	\$234

In 2019, 89% of all expenditures were used to support our child care service programs, while general management and fundraising expenditures required only 11 cents of each dollar spent.

In 2018, we celebrated our 30th Anniversary and had wonderful support from individual and business sponsors for our celebration. In 2019, our work is supported by many community members, friends, and family – both new and long-time. Thank you for empowering women business owners.

Many thanks to:

- An Anonymous Friend
- City of Lowell – Community Development Block Grant
- Cummings Foundation
- DCU
- Demoulas Foundation
- Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation
- Enterprise Bank
- Aubert J. Fay Charitable Fund
- Gisela B. Hogan Foundation
- Linde Family Foundation
- Nordson Foundation
- Monogram Loves Kids Foundation
- The Trustees of the Ayer Home
- We Share a Common Thread Foundation
- Women Working Wonders Fund



Celebrating grants from Monogram Loves Kids Foundation, Cummings Foundation, Eastern Bank Community Foundation, as well as Zelma & Lucas receiving the 2019 Eastern Bank Community Advocacy Award.





600+

Bookmarks
made
at 4
Summer Music
Events

5

Professional Development
Days for Educators
with Expert Trainers in
Child Development
Education
Business Practices
Policy



11

Educators
and 50 Children
participating
in semester-long
literacy classes
with Jumpstart



23
new gardens

Created through
2 cohorts of educators
working with
Mill City Grows

OUR MISSION

Acre Family Child Care
provides a pathway for
women to achieve economic
independence by operating
high quality child care
businesses in their
homes.

**Discovery
Museum
Fieldtrip**

200 children & parents
3 School Buses
40 Pizzas

5th

Pre-K STEAM
Fair partners

Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust
Lowell National Historical Park
Tsongas Industrial History Center
Discovery Museum
Drumlin Farm
Eyes on Owls
Project Learn



12

Graduates

75-hour Benchmark
Training for
New Educators

In 2019, Acre Family
participated in a multi-phase
Family Child Care study with
the Erikson Institute. A full
report will be available later
in 2020.



75%

educators who
participated
in survey

44%

educators who
hosted a researcher
in a quality
observation visit

74%

educators who intend
to stay in childcare
"As long as
I am able"

41%

educators who
see childcare as
"My personal call
or career"