

Our Moment

“Economic independence” is an idea we think about daily. Since our founding, we've known that when child care is not available, parents struggle to keep jobs or attend school – which can easily have long-term consequences for families. This impacts graduation rates, employment, housing and more. **Child care is essential.**

COVID impacted our community in many ways, one of which is that the need for child care has increased. There are child care programs across the state that closed in March 2020 at the onset of COVID that never reopened their doors. There were educators who changed careers or retired, and there were classrooms empty not because there weren't any children, but because there weren't any educators. Yet for us, supported by deep roots in our community, this has been a season of growth. More children, more families, more educators.

This last year has been an opportunity to expand our services to a community in need, as we work with more Providers than at any other time in our history. And with more Providers, we can work with more children – 26% more children to be precise, as compared to three years ago. More children in care means more parents at work; *this is about supporting transformative futures and opportunities across our community.*

This has been our moment: to grow, to serve, to meet a critical and unmet need. The vision of Acre Family in 1988 still drives us today; economic independence remains the cornerstone of our work. While the world may be as unpredictable as ever, we remain dedicated to our community in meeting the care needs of families thanks to the talented staff, Providers, and Board Members that believe in and exemplify our mission.

And as we continue a capital campaign for the building we acquired last year (which will become our new headquarters), we are constantly humbled by individuals and organizations choosing to invest their resources in our future. Each gift is an endorsement of the need for our work and encouragement to keep going. **Thank you for your support** in our continued work of creating a stronger community for everyone, and we can't wait to welcome you to our new home later this year.



Zelma Khadar
Co-Executive Director



Lucas Skorczeski
Co-Executive Director

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New Providers

This year Acre Family began working with eight new Providers, each with their own unique backgrounds and goals. In asking some of these Providers to share their experiences, several common ideas emerged. One of these ideas was how opening their own business provided a new level of control in their life. Eliana, who began last August, shared that “running my own business means that I have a lot of responsibilities, but also that I’m entitled to decide what is best for my program. I can set goals for my program and my personal growth.” Similarly, Yanelis, who began in March 2022, shared, “I can be economically independent and also be my own boss and can make my own decisions regarding my program.”



Gloria

There is a lot to learn when starting a Family Child Care business. Gloria, who launched her program in June, shared that “I am still learning strategies for working with different ages and supporting each child where they are developmentally. I am learning organizational skills to improve the administration of my program.” She continued, “But the work is worth it. The smiles and hugs from the children, and when parents express gratitude and appreciation for my work, that is when I know I’ve made a difference.” Part of the work of Acre Family Child Care is matching new Providers with a Child Care Specialist that can help navigate this learning, from developing curriculum to communicating with parents and everything in between. Yanelis



Eliana

shared that “Acre has given support with trainings, helped with referrals, and has been there when I needed them.”

As entrepreneurs, all these Providers have big plans for the future. Eliana stated that “having the opportunity to meet other educators has helped me to realize that I can reach goals such as buying my own house and continuing my education.” As an agency, we are so proud to have the opportunity to support Eliana and all our Providers as they work toward their personal and professional goals. We have seen time and time again that with hard work and some support, these women are capable of amazing things.



Yanelis

Building Update

Plenty of planning work has been happening behind the scenes to prepare our new permanent headquarters and training facility. Construction plans have been finalized, and a general contractor has been selected. From choosing carpets to approving light fixtures, we consider how each decision will help make staff, families, and educators feel welcome. Additionally, this has been a chance to incorporate energy efficiency upgrades into this beautiful 1890s building. This dream is becoming a reality thanks to individuals that believe deeply in our mission and community. As we move closer to the completion of our Capital Campaign, your support can help us reach our goal—if you would like to make a contribution to this project, please feel free to call for more information or visit acrefamily.org/donate.



Sandra - 30 Years

This last October marked an incredible milestone. Opening her child care business in September 1992, Sandra Vargas was among the first few Providers to join the Acre Family network. Now, she is the first-ever Provider to work with Acre Family for 30 years. She was connected to Acre Family from the very beginning: "I started with Acre as a parent, my children went to Acre's very first Provider. I had two children and was going to college for business and to learn English. I had just moved from Chelsea and when I learned there was a child care program near me that spoke Spanish I said, 'Oh my God, thank you!' When I was expecting my third child, I knew that something needed to change. It was my Provider who first suggested the idea of opening my own child care business."

Working with children was something Sandra had always considered. "I always wanted to be a teacher, I like to teach. I would watch my neighbor's kids when I was a teenager. I had an aunt who

always would take care of the cousins, nephews, nieces at her house. Now I'm like that aunt, I open my doors to everyone's kids." Some of Sandra's earliest memories are of her preschool experience. "I loved my preschool teacher. I remember I always would sit next to her. I remember some of the rules and routines and I think I bring a little bit of that to my daycare."

Remarkably, Sandra still maintains relationships with children and families from throughout her career. "The first child in my program is 31 years old now. He's working, he's doing well, and he still comes to my home every Thanksgiving Day. He's never forgotten my food." Some of these children that have become adults and started families of their own have enrolled their children in Sandra's program; they remember her program so fondly that they have chosen for their own children to have the same experience.

Bopha Tran, who is a Child Care Specialist at Acre Family and has been visiting Sandra's program for many years, shared that "Sandra is just amazing. Even coming from different cultures, from the very beginning she has made me feel welcome and valued. I see the love in her work, how she is with children and parents. I am constantly learning from her and have so much respect for her. I feel so lucky to be able work together."

For Providers that are just opening their businesses, Sandra offers this advice: "Be passionate and enjoy what you do. Be with the kids like they are your own kids, you need them to feel they are cared about. If you do this just because it is a job, the kids will know." For Sandra, running a child care program truly feels like a calling and something she was meant to do. "Sometimes I feel like I want to retire, but this is something that I need to do. I do this for me." We applaud Sandra on this remarkable accomplishment and wish her continued success.



Sandra's program, 2012



*Sandra at Acre Family Annual Meeting
being recognized by Bopha Tran*

New Home Visitors

Child Care Specialists visit programs onsite to observe, provide technical assistance, and support Providers with what they need to be successful. As the number of Providers we work with has grown, we have grown the number of staff supporting these programs. This last Fall, thanks to generous support from the Wellington Foundation, we increased our number of Child Care Specialists and are very excited to welcome **Griselle Soto** and **Sacha Cruz** to the Acre Family.

Griselle, a mother of two and a former ESL teacher, was excited to have the opportunity to join Acre Family to support Providers and their needs. She is “passionate about classroom management and curriculum and enjoys providing support.” After three months in this role, Griselle understands “how hard it is to open a business of your own, and how satisfying it is to help provide tools and business management skills to become more successful business owners.”

When joining Acre Family, Sacha saw an opportunity to draw on her degree in psychology in communicating and working with

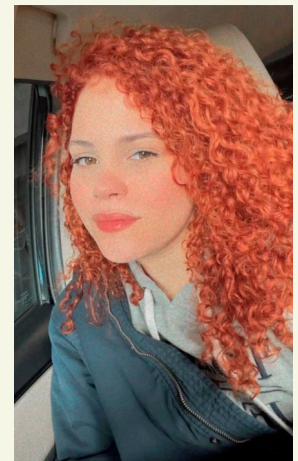
Providers and families. “During home visits I work with Providers to have confidence in themselves and realize all that their programs can achieve. I have enjoyed learning about their different cultures, experiences, and points of view. My degree has helped me a lot to understand human behavior, along with being the mother of a five-year-old.”

When conducting home visits, you can learn so much about a Provider's personal and professional life. Griselle has found that “Providers are deeply passionate about their work. Running a child care business from your home has many benefits but also comes with challenges. Providers have a lot of responsibilities and there is always something going on. It is my goal to continue learning how to provide individualized support to these amazing women.” Similarly, Sacha has learned “about better understanding different points of view coming from different personal and professional experiences.”

Both Griselle and Sacha are fluent in English and Spanish, which allows them to work directly in the native language of the majority of the Educators and families that Acre Family works with. Outside of work, Griselle and Sacha each have very active interests. Griselle enjoys travelling and learning about different cultures, and she loves hiking and spending time outdoors. Sacha really enjoys sports and since childhood has had a passion for track and field. She also loves food, dancing, and spending time with her son. *Welcome to Griselle and Sacha!*



Welcome Griselle!



Welcome Sacha!

A Message from Our Board Chair



Bethany Watson

This is such an exciting moment to think about our past and look forward to our future. 2023 is going to be a BIG year for Acre Family that will include a ribbon cutting for our new permanent headquarters and training center and celebrating our 35th anniversary. These are both testaments to the impact of and need for supporting children, families, and educators. I have such deep gratitude for the staff and Providers that work each day to ensure these critical programs continue, and without that none of this work would be possible.

There is no shortage of stories that demonstrate the impact of Acre Family's work. From Educators that have opened their businesses this last year, to those celebrating 30 years – each and every Educator makes a universe of difference for the children and families that they work with. And as we grow to work with more Educators, we are able to make a greater difference across the entire Greater Lowell Community. I hope you will be able to join us throughout this year as we come together to recognize and celebrate this amazing work.

| | FISCAL YEAR | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|---------|
| | 2022* | 2021 |
| Revenue & Support | | |
| Program Service Revenue | \$6,802 | \$5,911 |
| Other Revenues | \$113 | \$75 |
| Grants & Contributions: | | |
| Grants – Government | \$738 | \$435 |
| Grants – Foundations | \$217 | \$165 |
| Grants – Campaign | \$600 | \$451 |
| Individuals & Businesses | \$30 | \$38 |
| Gross Support & Revenue | \$8,500 | \$7,075 |
| Expenses | | |
| Direct Service Subcontractors | \$4,767 | \$3,993 |
| Other Program Services | \$1,276 | \$1,144 |
| Management & General | \$698 | \$525 |
| Total Expenses | \$6,741 | \$5,662 |
| Operating (Loss) Income | \$1,759 | \$1,413 |

Thank you to all who support the educators, families, and children.

Aubert J. Fay Charitable Fund
City of Lowell – Community Development Block Grant
Cummings Foundation
Demoulas Foundation
Linde Family Foundation
MA Department of Early Education & Care
The Trustees of the Ayer Home
UKG
Wellington Management Foundation
We Share a Common Thread Foundation/Jeanne D'Arc Credit Union

Building/Capital Campaign

An Anonymous Friend
Chirag Foundation
Cummings Foundation
Eastern Bank Foundation
George and Carol Duncan
Nancy L. Donahue
State of Massachusetts
Theodore Edson Parker Foundation

Kathy Reticker Forum for Children and Families

With Massachusetts struggling with persistent childcare staffing shortages, The Kathy Reticker Forum for Children and Families has focused on raising funds for scholarships to support students studying to become Early Childhood Educators. This year we reached our long-stated goal of establishing The Kathy Reticker Memorial Endowment at the Middlesex Community College Foundation. The Endowment will fund scholarships for students studying Early Childhood Education at Middlesex Community College not just this year, but forever. Thanks to our partnership with Acre Family Child Care and generous contributions from Acre staff and Providers, we have made steady progress toward reaching our goal of a \$100,000+ endowed fund. We are proud to support those students eager to dedicate their careers to the youngest members of our community.

For each of the past five years, the Kathy Reticker Forum has been privileged to fund scholarships for two students studying Early Childhood Education at Middlesex Community College. The stories they have shared in their applications and letters of thanks are remarkable: juggling work, school, and family obligations, they are determined to complete their education to become the outstanding early childhood educators our community and our world so desperately need. This year's recipient Alexander Ponce expressed how proud she felt to receive a scholarship established to honor “a tremendous woman who cared so deeply about children and their education. It has made me feel that I, too, have the potential to contribute in making that kind of difference for

children.” Musu Gaye, who plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education at Salem State when she graduates from Middlesex in May, expressed her “hope to carry on Kathy's legacy” and to “become a role model for other students entering the field of Education.”

In addition to our wonderful Middlesex Kathy Reticker Scholars, the Forum has also been able to fund scholarships each year for Lowell High School seniors planning to study Early Childhood Education in college. This year's recipient Mia Frazier is attending Gordon College; recipient Darlena Suy, the first in her family to attend college, is attending Middlesex Community College.

Together we have honored Kathy's legacy and worked toward realizing her vision of high-quality early childhood care and education for all. Together we will continue to support deserving students in 2023 and for years to come.



Kathy Reticker Scholarship
presented at Lowell High School
Honors Night May 17, 2022

“Nothing is more important to the future of early childhood education than supporting the next generation of educators.”

–Pat Nelson, Executive Director, Concord Children's Center

www.KathyRetickerForum.org

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.



4%

Increase in Educators



8

New Educators



1

Educator celebrating
30 years in business



8%

Increase in average number
of children in care daily

