



A Child's World



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Annual Report



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Organizational Overview

A Child's World is a non profit corporation providing licensed early learning and child care services across 19 centres in the Niagara Region.

Our Mission

To provide quality early learning and child care.

Our Vision

Creating an enriched foundation for children and families.

Our Mandate

- To provide a respectful, nurturing, intellectually stimulating, pro social atmosphere.
- To assist children in school readiness through the enhancement of the the child's physical health and well being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, communication skills and general knowledge.
- To provide programs and services to the community to implement and foster the mission of the corporation and the objectives of its members.
- To provide leadership within the early learning and child care community in Niagara.
- To advocate for support and recognition of the value of early learning.
- To raise awareness and support for the fundraising efforts of the Foundation for Quality Child Care.
- To ensure ongoing staff development.
- To ensure compliance with all relevant legislation.
- To support parents and families with information, resources and referrals.



Message from the Executive Director of ACW

This past year marked a pivotal moment for A Child's World—one defined not only by transition, but by resilience, continuity and a shared commitment to excellence. We began the year by recognizing the retirement of Kim Cole, whose 15 years of leadership helped shape the strong foundation we stand on today. While she is missed, we wish her every happiness in this next chapter.

In July 2025, I stepped into the role of Executive Director during this important period of change. What has stood out most is the unwavering dedication of the A Child's World team. Across all Centres, our Educators remained deeply committed to our mission, ensuring that children continue to experience high-quality, nurturing, and engaging early learning environments every day. This year affirmed something important: our strength as an organization lies in our people. It is their professionalism, care, and belief in the work that allowed us not only to maintain stability, but to continue moving forward with purpose. As I look ahead, I am focused on building on that momentum. My focus remains on strengthening the organization, supporting our teams, and enhancing the environments in which children learn and grow. We are entering the next year with clarity, confidence, and a shared vision for what A Child's World can continue to become.

Highlights included:

- Continued investment in our Centres through the purchase of new toys, equipment, and furnishings to enhance learning environments
- Strengthened recruitment and retention strategies for Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs)
- Expanded opportunities for Educators to engage in meaningful professional learning and development

Priorities for the coming Year include:

- Maintaining maximum operating capacity across all A Child's World locations
- Continued investment in our Centres, with a focus on upgrading outdoor playground spaces
- Further enhancing professional learning opportunities for all Educators to support quality programming

I extend my sincere appreciation to:

- The dedicated Educators, Management Teams, and Administrative Staff, whose daily efforts make a difference in the lives of children and families
- The Board of Directors for their leadership and governance
- Our funders and community partners for their ongoing collaboration and support

Your commitment and partnership make our work possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Katherine Martin

Katherine Martin RECE, AECEO.C, Executive Director

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I acknowledge the year of transition and progress reflected in this report. The Board remained focused on its governance responsibilities, including setting direction, providing strategic oversight, and ensuring financial accountability in support of A Child's World.

During this period of change, the Board supported the leadership transition, monitored programs and services, and worked to ensure the organization remained stable and well-positioned for the future. We are encouraged by the continued quality of programming across Centres and the commitment of staff and management.

The Board is confident in the organization's direction and remains committed to working collaboratively with the Executive Director to support strong planning, effective leadership, and continued excellence in service to children and families.

Stephanie Piniak

Stephanie Piniak, Chair, Board of Directors

Board of Directors 2025-2026

Stephanie Piniak
Chair

Andrea Wheaton
Director

Amber LaPointe
Vice Chair

Sherrie Vittie
Director

Jennifer Gauthier
Treasurer

Terilee Shisler
Director

Helen Duffy
Secretary



Pictured from left: Amber LaPointe, Terilee Shisler, Stephanie Piniak, Sherrie Vittie, Helen Duffy & Jennifer Guathier.
Missing From Photo: Andrea Wheaton



Program & Curriculum Highlights

2025 has been an exciting and successful year for A Child's World. We were pleased to see an increase in enrollment, with each centre reaching its maximum capacity. This growth reflects the continued trust families place in our programs and the strong reputation of our centres within the community.

This year, A Child's World received a generous grant from the Niagara Region. These funds were used to purchase developmentally appropriate, play-based materials designed to promote exploration, creativity, problem-solving, and skill development across all domains of learning.



It has been wonderful to see the children engage with and explore these new materials. The items purchased support hands on learning and encourage children to build important cognitive, social, and physical skills through play.



Some of the new materials include building blocks, creative play resources, and other interactive learning tools that inspire curiosity and imagination. These additions have greatly enhanced the learning environments in our centres, providing children with new opportunities to discover, experiment, and grow.



As we move into 2026, we remain committed to building on this success and continuing to provide enriching, high quality early learning experiences.



Human Resource Update



Through 2025 Human Resources has remained focused on building a skilled, caring and reliable workforce to support the delivery of high-quality child care services.

With our centres operating at full capacity, our team grew by 87 new Educators. Recruitment efforts focused on Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE), as well as Educators with qualifications such as Early Childhood Assistant and Educational Assistant credentials.

A partnership with Niagara Region Children's Services, Early Childhood Community Development Centre (ECCDC) and Niagara College has made a fully funded Professional Advancement of Careers in Early Childhood Education (PACE) program available to eligible Non RECE Educators interested in receiving a diploma in Early Childhood Education. A Child's World currently has 8 Educators enrolled in the first cohort with a graduation date in April 2027. Educators continue paid employment during the program as ACW supports paid placement hours. Also, all tuition, course materials and textbook fees are paid by Niagara Region. A mandatory 2-year commitment to ACW upon completion of the program supports Educator retention.

Educator well-being and engagement were supported through regular communication, feedback opportunities and recognition initiatives. We continued to prioritize Educator retention, supported by a positive and supportive work environment.



ACW continues to invest in Educator development, recruitment and retention strategies to ensure a nurturing, safe and enriching environment for both children and Educators.





Staffing & Professional Learning

Total Educators:

- Registered Early Childhood Educators: 105
- Non Registered Educators: 41
- Supply Educators: 77
- Administration & Management: 37

Professional Learning & Enhancing our Teams

In October 2025, each centre selected a specific professional learning session that best suited their team's goals in lieu of their traditional Educator meeting.

Some of the Professional Learning sessions attended include:

- De-escalating Children and Youth in Crisis- Skills for Emotional Regulation
- Emotional Safety and Cultivating Emotionally Rich Spaces in Early Learning Settings
- When Big Behaviours Show Up- What Young Children Need Most From Us
- From Far Away- Exploring Cultural Diversity and Awareness Through Children's literature

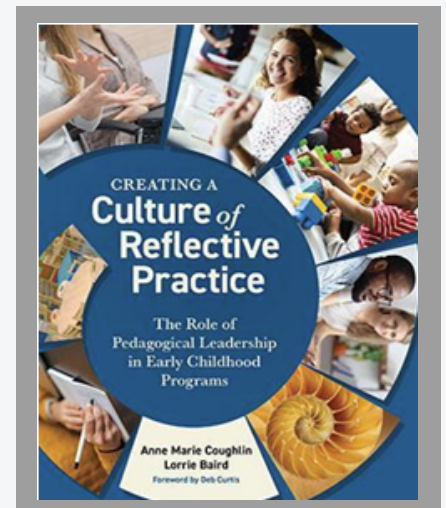
Supporting Leadership

On November 18, 2025, A Management team member from each centre attended an inspiring full day professional development session "Growing a Culture of Reflective Practice –Moving with Purpose and Intention". The speakers were



Anne Marie Coughlin and Lorrie Baird, two of Canada's well known and respected pedagogical leaders and authors.

The insights gained from this session will continue to support and guide reflective and intentional practices and ACW's ongoing commitment to leadership development.



A Child's World Educators engage in ongoing observation, documentation, and reflective practice to support each child's individual learning journey. We recognize that the quality of our programs are directly connected to the dedication and professionalism of our Educators.



10 YEARS OF SERVICE

**Morgan Allen
Tori Dobbie
Sana Sleiman
Courtney Gao-Ayen**

15 YEARS OF SERVICE

**Tabitha Gracey-Laszlo
Linda Caron**

20 YEARS OF SERVICE

**Isabel Plett
Jamie McCormack
Laura Little
Andrea Doan
Marsha Case**

25 YEARS OF SERVICE

**Catherine Manette
Cindy Cunningham
Christian Dignard
Katherine Parker**

30 YEARS OF SERVICE

**Karen Beardwood-Fedun
Kim Munroe
Jennifer Thomas**

35 YEARS OF SERVICE

Cathy Wittmaier

**A Child's World
Annual Educator Appreciation Evening
was held on Tuesday, October 21, 2025
- a very special occasion as it also marked the
25th Annual Child Care Worker
and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day!**

This year, ACW rolled out the red carpet and celebrated our incredible Educators in true Oscar-style fashion at the stunning Welland International Flatwater Centre Celebration Hall. Our Educators were treated to a delicious catered meal and enjoyed an evening filled with recognition, celebration, and meaningful networking opportunities. We proudly presented Years of Service pins to Educators celebrating 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, and 35 years with ACW — an incredible testament to their dedication and commitment to Early Childhood Education.

The prestigious Barb Sockovie Award of Excellence was presented to Cindy Cunningham, & The Steve Noyes Award was presented to Barbara Dykstra. Congratulations to both of these outstanding ACW Educators on their well-deserved recognition!

ACW is what it is today thanks to all of our Educators! It is their passion, care, and commitment that they bring to their work every day that truly makes a difference in the lives of children and families in our community.

**Cindy Cunningham
2025 Barb Sockovie
Award of Excellence
recipient**

**Barbara Dykstra
2025 Steve Noyes
Award
recipient**

Health & Safety 2025 Highlights

- Transitioned to a new First Aid and CPR training provider following the retirement of long-serving trainers.
- Maintained full compliance with water safety legislation, including required testing and weekly flushing.
- Conducted centre inspections with Health and Safety Representatives, with continued focus on maintaining safe, clutter-free environments.
- Completed and documented all emergency preparedness drills to ensure ongoing readiness across centres.

Health & Safety Performance Overview

Our commitment to workplace health and safety continues to show positive progress, with a measurable reduction in overall incidents during the reporting period.

Key Metrics

Year 2024 vs. Year 2025

Category	2024	2025	Change
Total Incidents	43	35	↓ 8 (-18.6%)
First Aid Injuries	5	2	↓ 3 (-60%)
Medical Leaves	29	23	↓ 6 (-20.7%)
Long-Term Disability Claims	2	3	↑ 1

Performance Highlights

- Significant reduction in overall incidents
- Strong decline in first aid injuries
- Improved medical leave management
- Slight increase in long-term disability claims

Outlook

While overall safety performance improved significantly in 2025, we remain committed to strengthening prevention strategies and supporting employee well-being. Continuous training, proactive risk assessments, and early intervention remain central to our safety strategy moving forward.



Financial Operating Results

December 31, 2025

	2025	2024
Revenue		
Regional Municipality of Niagara	12,187,549	9,567,693
Child Care Fees	3,602,186	3,175,575
Other	262,101	188,843
	\$16,051,836	\$12,932,111
Expenses		
Wages	12,292,447	10,388,753
Occupancy	975,448	878,543
Program	913,781	832,135
General and Administrative	265,052	257,883
Depreciation and amortization	81,544	81,656
	\$14,528,272	\$12,438,970



The Foundation For Quality Child Care

- The Foundation for Quality Care serves as the dedicated fundraising arm of A Child's World, advancing our Mission and Vision through strategic and purposeful initiatives.
- The Foundation plans and leads fundraising efforts that directly support our children and strengthen the quality of our Early Learning Environments.
- We remain committed to continuous improvement, recognizing the importance of regularly enhancing our programs and investing in upgrades to our centres to ensure the highest standards of care and learning.
- All funds raised are reinvested directly into our child care centres, helping to create nurturing, engaging environments where children can grow, learn, and thrive.

For the year ended August 31, 2025,
the Foundation for Quality Child Care raised
\$ 16,946

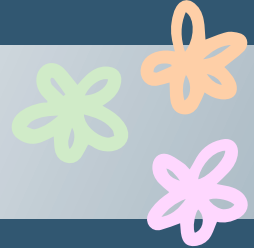
through the Fresh From the Farm fundraising campaign, Educator payroll contributions, and generous community donations.

We extend our sincere appreciation to our families, Educators, and community partners for their continued generosity and support.



19 CHILD CARE CENTRES

Year in Review



1639 CHILDREN CARED FOR



260 DEDICATED EDUCATORS



1231 FAMILIES SERVED





Looking Ahead- 2026 Priorities



- ★ **Manage Growth & Capacity Expansion**- Increase operating capacity where feasible, while maintaining high-quality standards and meeting community demand.
- ★ **Strengthen Educator Recruitment & Retention**-through supportive work environments, professional development opportunities, competitive compensation, benefits, and incentives.
- ★ **Sustainability & Financial Viability**-Maintain long-term financial health by ensuring responsible budgeting, resource allocation, and operational efficiency across all centres.
- ★ **Educator Development & Performance Excellence**- Performance appraisals and structured goal-setting processes for all Educators to support continuous professional growth and accountability.
- ★ **Safety & Risk Reduction**-Enhance safety and accountability measures across all centres, with a targeted focus on reducing serious occurrences through proactive monitoring, training, and compliance.
- ★ **Quality Improvement**-Continue ongoing quality improvement initiatives across all centres, ensuring alignment with best practices and regulatory standards.
- ★ **Family & Community Engagement**-Increase family engagement initiatives to foster stronger relationships, improve communication, and support positive outcomes for children and families.





Community Partnerships

A Child's World Family Child Care Services of Niagara values strong partnerships and works collaboratively with organizations across the community to support high-quality early learning and care experiences for children and families. Through these meaningful relationships, we are able to strengthen programs, support educator growth, and enhance services across Niagara.



We gratefully acknowledge Niagara Region as our funder and a valued community partner whose ongoing support helps us deliver accessible, responsive, and quality child care services throughout the region.



We appreciate our partnerships with District School Board of Niagara and Niagara Catholic District School Board, who provide host locations and shared spaces for several of our Before and After School Programs, helping us create welcoming and convenient environments for children and families.



Our collaboration with Niagara College supports the future of the Early Childhood Education profession, as several of our centres serve as placement locations for Early Childhood Education students completing their field placements.



We also value the support of the Early Childhood Community Development Centre, whose professional development opportunities and resources contribute to the ongoing professional learning and growth of our Educators.

Together, these partnerships strengthen our ability to provide inclusive and enriching experiences, strengthening our community and building a foundation for life long learning for children and families across Niagara.



Acknowledgements

A Child's World Family Child Care Services of Niagara extends its sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed to the success of our organization.

We gratefully acknowledge:

- Our dedicated Educators, whose commitment and professionalism support the daily growth and well-being of the children in our care.
- The children and families we are privileged to serve, for their trust and partnership.
- Our Board of Directors, for their leadership, guidance, and ongoing support.
- Our community partners and funders, for their collaboration and investment in our shared mission.

Your collective support has been invaluable in helping us nurture and empower children, creating a stronger and brighter future for our community.

