



**think**  
**small**<sup>®</sup>  
LEADERS IN EARLY LEARNING

# Report to the Community

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2015



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# Dear friends and colleagues,

We know many children from low-income families start kindergarten behind and never catch up. We also know that these gaps start extremely early in a child's life. By 18 months old, toddlers from disadvantaged families are already several months behind their more well-off peers in literacy development.

We need to do as much as possible as early as possible for children from low-income families. That's why quality early learning programs are so important. Quality early learning programs can change the trajectory of a child's life. It's a wonderful thing to witness, and that's what drives us every day at Think Small.

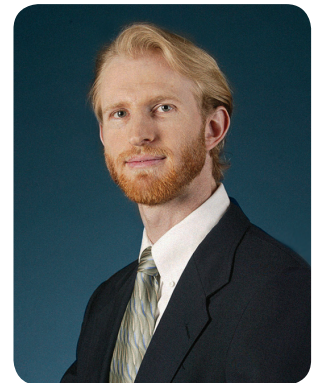
We've had many successes over the past year, and I invite you to read more about it in this report. But know that our work is far from complete. We will not be satisfied until every child in Minnesota has the start in life they need to succeed.

It's a lofty goal, but we are absolutely committed to this mission. Thank you for joining us. Together, we can change the lives of children, and there is nothing more important than that.



*Barbara Yates*

Barbara Yates  
President and Chief  
Executive Officer



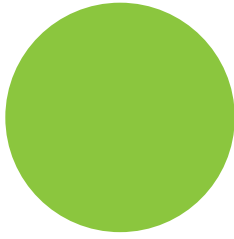
*Rob Grunewald*

Rob Grunewald  
Chairman of  
the Board

# Meet Think Small



Think Small is dedicated to improving quality early learning opportunities for children in their crucial years by teaching families about the importance of early education, training child care providers to improve developmentally appropriate learning in their programs, and influencing decision makers to keep early learning as a top priority -- always with children at the center of our focus.



# Expanding Reach

Each year Think Small works to expand our reach to more neighborhoods and more people that affect the lives of children — parents, caregivers, educators, and policy makers.

**Last year we administered nearly 4,500 Minnesota Early Learning Scholarships and helped more than 900 families receive child care assistance in Ramsey County.**

Even while expanding the reach of Think Small our passionate team maintains the personal relationships that make the organization special and truly touch the lives of the children we are working for. This year we had a special example of that care and personal connection.

Our child care assistance team helped a dual-income family with two preschool-aged children get the funding assistance they needed to provide a quality learning opportunity for their children. Several months after assisting the family with their financial needs, one staff member saw a story on the news about a hit and run accident and instantly recognized the name of the mother. She was in critical condition. Knowing that the mother typically handled the paperwork for the program, the staff reached out to the family to help them work through the eligibility requirements and paperwork to help ensure they retained their funding under medical leave policies. The caring work of the Think Small staff allowed the children to continue to attend the program they were comfortable in while the family was recuperating.

The extra work of the Think Small staff helped the girls thrive during a stressful time in their lives and helped unburden the family so they could focus on working through recovery. We are happy to say the family is doing well and enjoying their time together.



*Think Small child care assistance family after recovery.*



# Parent Aware

In 2014, over 200,000 children participated in a child care program in Minnesota. Think Small is working hard to recruit as many of these programs as possible to voluntarily participate in Parent Aware, the quality rating system to display the high level of kindergarten readiness best practices present in a program.

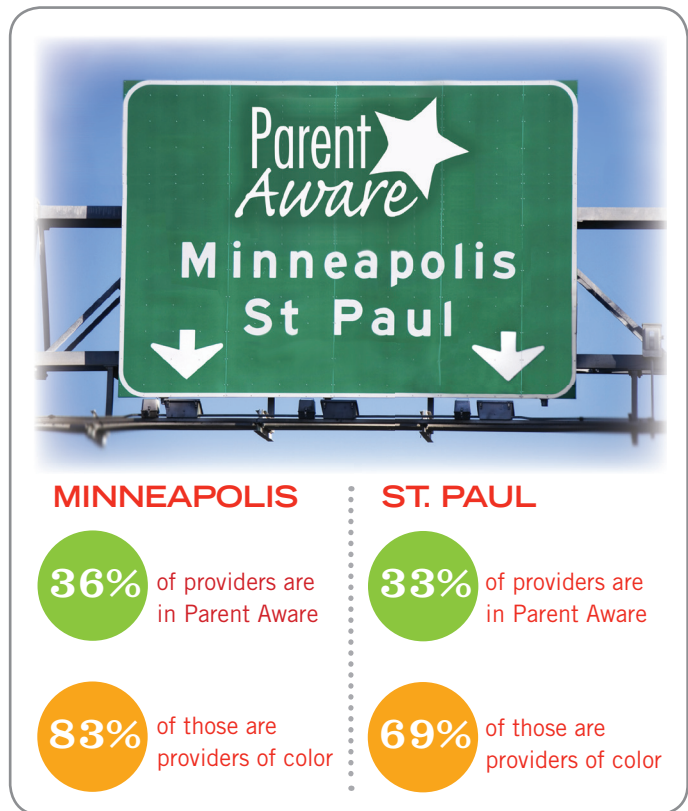
Think Small joined several organizations, government agencies, and county officials to launch Parent Aware in 2012 and successfully rolled it out statewide this past year. This included recruiting and training thousands of child care providers to not only meet health and safety standards, but to also incorporate research-based early learning best practices so that all children in their care are ready for kindergarten, a key indicator of future success in life. Unfortunately, thousands of children still start kindergarten behind, and we know that many of those children never catch up. We also know that many of the children who start behind and stay behind are children from low-income families.

Transformation zones, such as Northside Achievement Zone and St. Paul Promise Neighborhood, structured their Race to the Top scholarship funds to be used at highly rated Parent Aware programs to prepare low-income children for kindergarten.

Parent Aware is one of the best tools we have to help children get ready for kindergarten. Think Small is working hard to recruit as many child care providers as possible to participate in Parent Aware. From January 2015 to June 2015 over 2,100 hours of coaching were provided to program participants. These efforts help ensure that more children from low-income families start kindergarten on track giving them a better shot of staying on track and graduating high school. Think Small has focused training and recruitment efforts in low-income neighborhoods and underrepresented communities of color.

The efforts are paying off. 83% of family child care providers participating in Parent Aware in Minneapolis are providers of color, and 62% in that same group speak a second language.

Bringing high-quality child care and early learning programs to all children in Minnesota, particularly from low-income families and in underrepresented communities, is crucial to make sure all children are ready for kindergarten, equipped with the tools they need to succeed in school and life.

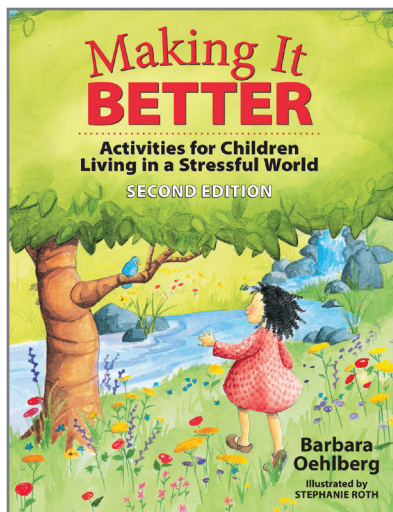


# Redleaf Press

Think Small's award-winning publishing division, Redleaf Press, continues to support the mission for quality early childhood education with professional development and curriculum materials for educators and family child care providers. This past year also saw the addition of the lovable character, Wisteria Jane, to the Redleaf Lane line-up for young readers.

In education and publishing, we often hear that a book can change a life. This year we learned that one of our books may be changing many lives in a big way.

Far away from the typical classroom, the book *Making It Better: Activities for Children Living in a Stressful World* is helping children who need it the most. The book journeyed through a network of caring educators to the refugee camps of the Middle East, where it is being used to train local care providers and educators to effectively work with children traumatized by violence and loss. Helping these children heal through play will allow them to adapt to the difficult circumstances they are facing and thrive to create a brighter future for themselves and Syria. We are honored to be a part of the journey of healing for these children a world away.



**Approximately 183,000 products are distributed annually worldwide.**



# Policy & Advocacy

*Think Small hosted the Affinity Multi-Cultural Cohort that helps build cross-cultural networks among local parents to cultivate leaders and advocates to strengthen efforts in policy, advocacy, and school readiness.*



2015 was a great year for young children at the Minnesota State Capitol. With a supportive Governor and a legislature that is becoming increasingly committed to early learning, overall state investment in early childhood care and education increased by \$100 million, representing the single largest investment in a generation. This investment included a \$48.5 million increase dedicated to Early Learning Scholarships and first time funding of \$3.5 million for Parent Aware, the program guiding parents and providers to high quality child care. School readiness, Head Start, and child care programs all saw increases as well.

Think Small's leadership and staff worked hard with our allies to build public support and forge the needed strategies to achieve these results. We led the grassroots efforts of the MinneMinds Coalition, which includes more than 100 organizations fighting for increased access to quality early learning for our youngest citizens.

Part of Think Small's credibility in influencing public policy comes from our solid work on the ground administering the Early Learning Scholarships. Additionally, our quality coaches and early childhood trainers work with thousands of providers to enhance their skills and increase the amount of quality care options. The rich diversity of our staff enables us to reach cultural communities in ways that respect their values and traditions.

Much remains to be done for early learning. Even with the investments made, we are still providing less than one half of qualifying children with access to quality early learning programs. The model we support puts a premium on quality, parent choice, and building the capacity of childcare providers to give young children outstanding service. We are optimistic that we can continue to expand access to quality early learning by working with Governor Dayton's Administration and the legislature. We are proud of our work, but we will not be satisfied until every young Minnesotan has access to quality early learning opportunities.

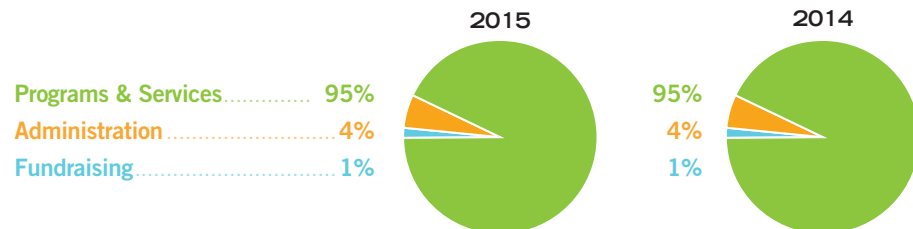


**FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF JUNE 30, 2015**

	2015	2014
Assets	\$11,367,785	\$11,176,921
Liabilities	\$6,920,127	\$6,974,281
Total Net Assets	\$4,447,658	\$4,202,640

<b>REVENUE AND SUPPORT</b>	2015	2014
Contributions	\$1,177,036	\$1,203,689
Government Contracts	\$19,945,524	\$15,879,974
Publishing	\$3,493,373	\$3,020,278
Other Revenue	\$582,337	\$738,789
Total Revenue & Support	\$25,198,270	\$20,842,730

<b>EXPENSES</b>	2015	2014
<b>Program Expenses</b>		
Community Outreach & Access	\$477,640	\$487,355
Family Education & Referral	\$270,193	\$409,221
Library	\$72,306	\$70,114
Policy, Advocacy, & Initiatives	\$185,430	\$323,950
Professional Development, Consultation, Coaching	\$2,304,571	\$1,771,177
Publishing	\$3,253,231	\$3,102,262
Scholarships & Other Financial Supports	\$17,139,098	\$13,446,945
Total Program Services	\$23,702,469	\$19,611,024
<b>Support Services</b>		
Administration	\$945,491	\$789,941
Fundraising	\$305,292	\$281,250
Total Support Services	\$1,250,783	\$1,071,191
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$24,953,252</b>	<b>\$20,682,215</b>



# Looking Ahead

Think Small is proud of all the families, child care providers, and children helped throughout the last year.

## Referral specialists directly served 3,200 families, with over 25% being non-English speaking

We are proud of our work but far from satisfied. We know that children who start school behind often never catch up. Not only that, but, children who enter school unprepared are 60% more likely to never attend college and 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime.

We must do more, or else we risk leaving even more children behind, with the odds stacked against them.

In the next year, Think Small will recruit and train more child care providers in underrepresented communities to provide the best possible early learning environments to children from low-income families. We will urge policymakers to guarantee that every child from a low-income family has the resources they need to attend the highest quality early learning programs. We will support even more parents by helping them narrow the Word Gap between children from low-income families and their more well-off peers.

This work includes continuing to collaborate with organizations across the state. Think Small was proud to partner with Nickelodeon Universe and the Mall of America to fill backpacks with school supplies for kindergarteners. Local neighborhood organizations, Northside Achievement Zone and the St. Paul Promise Neighborhood, assisted with the distribution of the backpacks to low-income families. These relationships are crucial to future successes.

Our work is not done until every child has access to the resources and opportunities they need during their crucial early years. This is a lofty goal, but it is absolutely imperative that we achieve it.

Next year, we will work even harder and smarter to reach this goal. Children are counting on us.

Think Small recognizes with gratitude the time volunteered and financial support by the following.

## Thank you!

If we have overlooked anyone or made an error, please notify us by calling our development department at 651-641-3545 or emailing [development@thinksmall.org](mailto:development@thinksmall.org).

## Volunteers

### GRANT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Rebecca Bringgold  
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Jacque Froemke  
Tara Hallberg  
Debbie Hambleton  
Gwen Jansen  
Jayme Macchitelli  
Natalie Marose  
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Becky Strasser  
Jason Anderson  
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LouAnn Braun  
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Katherine McDowall  
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Kelly McKowan  
Lorna Pain  
Sandra Perez  
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June Peterson  
Stephanie Ponticas  
Dean Porter  
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Wendy Prokosch  
Kara Puterbaugh  
Linda Rietz  
Nikki Robbins

Jessica Rogers  
Anne Roy  
Christine Schmitz  
Judie Schwanke  
Libby Slood  
Karen Smith  
Sue Spector  
Kay Tellinghuisen  
Nichole Thompson  
Jody Urbano  
Andrea Villanueva  
Barb Wagner  
Tina White  
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Olga Ahumada Forero  
Patricia Galvan  
Sandra Machuda Juarez  
Ivette Izea Martinez  
Luz Maria Payan  
Julieta Baxin Pucheta  
Maricarmen Ramirez  
Patricia Scofield

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Ayni Dawid  
Farhiya Egal  
Safi Farow  
Hawa Gurey  
Suad Haji  
Maryam Ibrahim  
Abshiro Omar  
Hafsa Sheikh

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Kae Moua Fang  
Mai Y. Lee  
Choua Lee  
Vanhsy Lor  
Mee Yang Sherwood  
Jeannette Thao  
Kazoua Thao  
Mao Thao  
Chee M. Vang  
Ya Vang  
Yeur Xiong  
Shao V. Xiong  
May Lee Yang  
Nang Khang Yang  
Bao Yang

# Volunteers (cont.)

## SOUTHEAST ASIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Sydney Chang  
Hue Lee  
Zang Vang-Lee  
Thomas Lee  
Pang Moua  
Mee Yang Sherwood  
Suzanne Thao  
Dao Xiong  
Xou Xai Yang  
Pang Yang  
Mi Yang  
May Lee Yang

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Lynn Galle  
Sharon Gerber  
Rosie Guthrie  
Jon Jacka  
Carrie Johnson  
Pat Landy  
Rhoda Redleaf  
Gail Roberts  
Rica Van

Leroy and Ruth Fingerson  
Beverly Fitzgerald  
Cynthia Fleming  
Olivia C. Ford  
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Salvatore Silvestri Franco  
Kay Fredericks and Dick Cisek  
Jerri and Dan Freier  
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Laurie Hermann  
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Jon Jacka  
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Mary-Louise R. Johnson  
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Nancy Johnson  
Rob and Kris Johnson  
Brian Joyce  
Bill and Carol Kaemmerer  
Douglas A. Kelley  
Kat Kempe  
Patricia Kester  
Jean King and Stuart Appelbaum in appreciation of Mary Ann Barrows Wark  
Mary Klas  
Molly Kline  
Ross Kramer  
Beverly A. Larson in honor of Donald W. Larson  
Noel R. Larson in honor of Mary Ann Barrows Wark  
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Eric and Sue Lund  
Rhoda and Don Mains  
Judith and Todd Marshall  
Rochelle Mateffy  
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Daniel R. Pennie  
Greg Poduska  
Rhoda and Paul Redleaf  
Camilla Reiersgard  
Scott Relyea  
Diana Rockstad  
Bill and Carol Rohde in honor of and many thanks to Mary Ann Barrows Wark and Rhoda Redleaf for their many contributions to the field of early childhood education  
Connie and Paul Ross  
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Hunter Saeklad  
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Fred M. Senn  
Stanley and Lucy Shepard  
Stephanie Silvers  
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Emily Anne Staples Tuttle Fund of the Minnesota Community Foundation  
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Dr. John Wolff  
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Ray Aboyan  
David Allen  
Deborah and Thomas Colling  
Lindsey Fish  
Thomas Fish  
Erika Hoyhtya  
Jon Jacka  
Vi and Steve Lincowski  
Gayle and Jack McJunkin  
Rhoda and Paul Redleaf

## GIFT IN MEMORY OF TO THE DEBRA S. FISH EARLY CHILDHOOD LIBRARY AT THINK SMALL

**In Memory of Donna Anna Petersen**  
Sharon and Dennis Gerber  
Jon Jacka  
Mark Peterson  
Rhoda and Paul Redleaf  
Micki Lechner-Riehle  
Rica J. Van  
Barbara Yates

## In Memory of Alice Bloedoom

Rhoda and Paul Redleaf

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Susan Costello  
Heidi Frankard  
Rosie Guthrie  
Sandra Heidemann  
The Improve Group  
Kat Kempe  
Lerner Publishing Group  
Rochelle Mateffy  
Lynette Olson  
Sue Ostfield  
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Micki Lechner-Riehle  
Diana Rockstad  
Douglas Schmitz  
Janet L. Ward  
Mary Ann Barrows Wark

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The infographic consists of five circles of various colors (green, orange, blue, red, and light blue) arranged in a cluster. Each circle contains a survey question or a list of options. The circles are connected by thin lines, suggesting a flow or relationship between the questions.

- Green circle:** Referral specialists directly served:  
A. 1,791 families  
B. 2,843 families  
C. 3,200 families
- Orange circle:** How many hours of coaching were provided from January 2015 to June 2015?
- Blue circle:** What percentage of our expenses go to administrative costs?
- Red circle:** Which Redleaf Press title is having an impact on children in Syrian refugee camps?
- Light blue circle:** (Empty)

**Look inside to find the answers!**