

50 YEARS OF INNOVATION

..and we're just getting started

think small®

LEADERS IN EARLY LEARNING



1971 to 2021



2021 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

50 YEARS OF INNOVATION ..and we're just getting started



**think
small**[®]
LEADERS IN EARLY LEARNING

Celebrating 50 Years • 1971 to 2021



Services including technical assistance, parent referrals, advocacy on behalf of parents and providers, organizing the child care constituency, and the development of new child care support programs are established, setting the bedrock of services Think Small offers today.

Toys 'N Things develops and publishes the first Calendar-Keeper for child care providers, which remains a bestseller in 2021.

 **Resources for Child Caring**
Raising the standard of care for children

Toys 'N Things changes its name to Resources for Child Caring

1971
Toys'N Things Date of Incorporation

1974
The federal Child Care and Development Block Grant and the At-Risk Child Care bills are made into law, increasing funding for child care for low-income families, improved training of providers and teachers, and the development of child care resource and referral programs.



1977
1982
A retired city bus is purchased to be used as a traveling child care classroom.

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

This past year proved to be another year of obstacles for all of us. From social injustices to the continued uncertainties of the pandemic, our communities and early education continued to be challenged. Early childhood programs struggled to find staff and programs continued to close at alarming rates. This created child care deserts in new areas and exasperated the limited access in neighborhoods that were already negatively impacted.

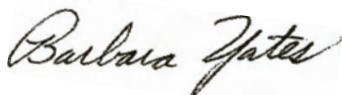
Despite these challenges, Think Small sits at an amazing juncture. We find ourselves in a crisis of the utmost importance and scale AND the ability and opportunity to do something about it. Think Small has the opportunity to lead the way through this crisis through our practice of “test and learn” to create scalable solutions.

This past year, our team at Think Small was able to continue to provide support to providers, families, and children. The pages that follow contain example after example of our steadfast commitment to making a positive impact on our community and children during this child care crisis. To keep our mission and community at the forefront of everything we do, we are evolving to reach new heights of excellence in early childhood education and overcoming barriers that prevent children from accessing quality child care.

Think Small also celebrated a special milestone—50 years of innovation and being a leader in child care. Punctuated by the launch of the Think Small Institute, we are on the cutting edge of virtual training and supports for providers. Our commitment to the Build Your Own program is directly addressing the child care desert crisis and has led to small business successes. We continue to advocate for structural reforms to child care in our state.

Our philanthropic partners are a large reason why Think Small continues to thrive. These pages are an example of what support from our generous supporters has allowed us to achieve. Private donations give us the resources needed to be innovative and quickly react to the needs of our community. We thank you for your loyal and continued support and look forward to our continued partnership as we move our work forward!

While we celebrate our anniversary, we continue to look forward to the promises we have made to our littlest learners and their families. 50 years, and we are just getting started!



BARBARA YATES

President and Chief Executive Officer



TANYA SKOGERBOE

Chair of the Board

A survey of child care supply and demand is coordinated, revealing an alarming 3,900 eligible children on waiting lists and 41 of Minnesota's 87 counties with a supply of licensed child care providers fulfilling less than 30% of the need.

1984–85

1986

The Bush Foundation selects Resources for Child Caring as a national pilot site to bring NAEYC's accreditation program for child care centers statewide, making Minnesota a leader in national accreditation efforts.

1989

The Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network is created, linking all Minnesota resource and referral agencies together.

1991

 Redleaf Press
Toys 'N Things Press becomes Redleaf Press to better reflect its services and honor author and longtime staff and board member Rhoda Redleaf.

1996

Resources for Child Caring celebrates 25 years

Empowering Providers to Build Their Own

Created in 2018, **Build Your Own** was designed to address the alarming shortage of child care across the seven-county metro area. As many as 75% of Minnesota's urban residents live in a child care desert, compared to 26% statewide. In Saint Paul, for example, there are more than 3 children per high-quality child care slot. We know this shortage affects low-income families and families of color deeply; recent research shows child care closures related to the pandemic will be concentrated in low-income and middle-income neighborhoods disrupting families' access. **By providing professional coaching to build a high-quality Parent Aware star-rated program**, including step-by-step assistance through the licensing process, required training, and establishing a child care environment, **the Build Your Own program sets a strong foundation for programs in underserved neighborhoods. 76% of Build Your Own participants identify as people of color.**



In 2021, **Think Small successfully expanded its Build Your Own services in Martin County** with an inaugural cohort of prospective child care providers. **Despite hundreds of programs closing around the state in 2021, Martin County only lost one licensed family child care program in all of 2021.** The individualized supports Build Your Own offers presents a comprehensive approach to closing the opportunity gap and providing families with quality child care programs across the state.



[Click here to learn more about Sharaya's experience with Build Your Own](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jwFPq7KLYeM)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=jwFPq7KLYeM



In 2021, **Build Your Own helped license 41 child care providers in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties, creating 569 more opportunities for children to learn and grow in a high-quality early learning environment and 70 jobs** for early childhood educators. One such program is owned by Sharaya Robinson in North Minneapolis. Robinson wanted to open her own family child care program after observing how much better prepared children were when they had gone through a high-quality early learning program. Through Think Small's Build Your Own program, she was able to overcome the biggest challenges to starting her business and create an equitable early learning program, ready to serve her community for the long term where there was previously no child care program available for families.

Resources for Child Caring expands from serving the communities of Ramsey, Washington and Dakota to the entire seven-county metro area by adding Hennepin, Carver, Scott and Anoka.

2003

2008

RCC and Mary Ann Barrows Wark drive capital campaign to purchase and move to a permanent office space and warehouse in St. Paul.

Resources for Child Caring adopts the name Think Small; merges with Minnesota's leading early childhood advocacy organization Ready 4 K, setting a new chapter prioritizing early childhood education through policy.

2008

2012

Barbara Yates becomes CEO, (2008 to present), and Resources for Child Caring expands services and opens an office in Minneapolis to reach the west-metro area

Minnesota makes its largest early childhood investment in over a decade: \$46 million is appropriated by the legislature for 8,000 Early Learning Scholarships over two years for children in families at or near poverty income levels, with an additional \$20 million committed to strengthen and support high-quality child care programs.

2012

2013



Think Small's Debra S. Fish Early Childhood Resource Library becomes a branch of the public library system, making its resources accessible statewide.

Preparing Providers at the Think Small Institute

Instructor-Led Training

Dual Language Learners in Early Education Settings

Instructor:
Hannah Riddle de Rojas

Monday, Jan. 10th
6:30pm - 8:30pm



This year launched the Think Small Institute for early childhood professionals, offering professional development opportunities in both live-virtual trainings and self-paced eLearning formats. Prioritizing equity and diversity-informed practice, the Think Small Institute provides personalized services to empower child care providers to help children be ready to succeed in kindergarten. **In the spring alone, we held more than 50 instructor-led, live-virtual trainings, with more than 600 participants.**

www.ThinkSmallInstitute.org



Talking about Race, Racism, Equity and Fairness in Early Childhood



- **The Early Risers podcast began in April 2021. Hosted by Dianne Haulcy, Think Small's Senior Vice President for Family Engagement, Early Risers is a podcast from Little Moments Count and Minnesota Public Radio** with conversations about challenging topics, engaging stories and real how-tos for anyone who cares about raising children with a clear-eyed understanding of cultural differences, race and implicit bias. Dianne's guests have included authors, a neuroscientist, and many leaders from the community. **Listen to Early Risers with Dianne Haulcy at www.mpr.org/collections/early-risers.**



2015

The Bush Foundation awards Think Small and Generation Next \$3 million to create and pilot Pathways to Quality. This program focused on increasing the number of Parent Aware rated family child care programs by providing them a menu of services and professional development opportunities to help improve program quality.



2015

Redleaf Press' *Making it Better: Activities for Children Living in a Stressful World* is used to train local child care providers and educators in Syria to help children living in the midst of the civil war.

2016

Think Small tests a Parent Aware financial incentive and finds that participants who received just \$1,000 were 33% less likely to go out of business. As a result, the state increases its financial incentives rates.

Embracing Equity Within



Under the leadership of Candace Yates, Strategic Leader of Equity and Quality Supports, Think Small continues to make BIG moves in our commitment to equity. Throughout 2021, Think Small staff engaged in a variety of activities that deepened our understanding of one another and strengthened our collective commitment to advancing equity in early childhood, supporting a culture of trust, inclusion, and respect for all staff, clients, customers, and partners.

One of our first priorities this year was to undergo an organization-wide equity survey. The organization, Embracing Equity evaluated our current state across three areas: personal and professional development, organizational culture and climate, and organizational systems and structures. Based on the findings, Embracing Equity recommended specific improvements for each area.

Think Small staff at all levels of the organization furthered their individual critical awareness around diversity, equity, and inclusion by participating in monthly Leadership Learning Community meetings. Staff also explored their own racial and ethnic identities while developing and expanding their anti-racist mindsets and practices.

Senior leadership members spent a portion of the year exploring their role in creating an equitable work environment to broaden their understanding of the role they play in fostering equity within the organization. They created action plans, which along with the learnings from our equity survey, have positioned us to create meaningful change within Think Small in 2022.

Think Small also held monthly virtual conversations about identity, race, and privilege, recognizing our shared humanity, finding strength and healing amid the events in our communities, and embracing and honoring our differences.

As we look to the year ahead, we are excited to continue to provide intentional space for staff leaders to engage in meaningful conversations, activities, and learning. We look forward to revisiting the equity audit process and assessing the impact of our work in the past year while working to accomplish the goals we have established. We recognize that creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment is an ongoing process, requiring commitment at all levels of leadership.

Think Small ParentPowered Texts begins delivering timely, useful early learning and care tips for caregivers to support children's kindergarten readiness in Minnesota and beyond.

Think Small launches Small Talks, an on-going speaker series bringing together experts connected to early childhood education to discuss topics challenging the field today.



Think Small introduces Build Your Own which offers free individualized assistance in the start-up or expansion of licensed family child care programs or child care centers.



2016

2016
October 13, 2016 is declared Think Small Day in Minnesota by Governor Dayton in honor of our 45th anniversary.

2017



2018

Think Small is awarded the Community Leader Award by Close Gaps by 5 for our continuous work to support Minnesota's smallest and most vulnerable children.

2018

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July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

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Past President, Cargill Foundation

Tanya Skogerboe – VICE CHAIR
Vice President, Customer Relationship,
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Sarah Wade – TREASURER
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Senior Marketing Research Consultant,
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Minneapolis

Trent Tucker
Community Volunteer

EMERITUS DIRECTORS

Rhoda Redleaf

Mary Ann Barrows Wark

Donors Set the Fuse



"I was an elementary music teacher for 40 years and really know how important early childhood education is. It is especially important for kids who are not getting a lot of social stimulation, language stimulation and opportunities at home and with their families. This work is probably the most important thing we can support to close the achievement gap!"

SHARON WAGNER



"Families need to have access to child care and our kids deserve to have safe quality programs. The value of educators has also been more apparent. Families have seen the passion and effort quality programs have for educating their little ones."

MARY ANN BARROWS WARK



"Research has shown that brain development in our youngest years is critical to educational success in school and economic success after graduation. Society should be supporting quality early childcare for all. We could choose to support day care programs alone. We are supporting Think Small because of its efforts to change public policy and support child care for more at-risk kids."

GINNY AND WILL CRAIG



In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Think Small begins partnering with local businesses and organizations to obtain and distribute emergency supplies to child care providers at no cost. Think Small raises over \$300,000 to provide emergency aid to more than 300 child care providers before the Minnesota Peacetime Emergency Grants become available.



The Think Small Institute launches, offering a wide range of learning opportunities which include options for both live-virtual training and self-paced eLearning, prioritizing equity and evidence-based practices.

2019

2020

2021

2021

Results from the Pathways to Quality program, started in 2015, find the percentage of licensed family child care providers in Minneapolis and St. Paul with three- and four-star Parent Aware ratings rose from 9% to 23% in three years, compared to statewide growth of only 3% to 7%.



Think Small's Senior Vice President of Family Engagement, Dianne Haulcy, introduces the Early Risers 2021 podcast on MPR.

Donors

Organizations

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AmazonSmile Foundation
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Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation
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Catherine M. Schmoker Family Foundation
Charities Aid Foundation of America
Children's Minnesota
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Daniel and Sheila Saklad Foundation
David M. Wark and Mary Ann Barrows Wark Foundation
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Kimberly Garcia
Daniel Gartrell and Julie Jochum
Tanya Skogerboe and Brooks Goldade
Lynn Goodwyne
Darlene Gorrill
Rob Grunewald
Jenna Hadley

"I'm a donor to Think Small because of the importance of quality child care in our society and the support it gives to providers, and thus children and parents. In the next 50 years? All I can say is keep up the good work that has an effect that is crucial to all of us. its efforts to change public policy and support child care for more at-risk kids."

JACKIE SPIES

Jane A. and Mark B. Heille
Steven Heller
Russ Heuckendorf
Joan Higinbotham
Phil Hodapp
Michael Meents and Brenda Hovander
Marcella Howe
Reid Huey
Deborah I. Isabelle
Sandra Johnholtz
Kristine and Derald Johnson
Eric T. Johnson
James E. Johnson and Lucy Rosenberry Jones
Justin Johnson
Mary-Louise R. Johnson
Christine Kaehler
Margeaux and Joe King
Joanne Kiserow
Chris and Krystle Krusmark
Beverly A. Larson
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Dana Lonn
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Ericca Maas and Ben Richter
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James Pogue
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Rhoda and Paul Redleaf
Brandt Richardson
Diana Rockstad and Steve Rockstad
Art and Cheri Rolnick

"Looking to the next 50 years, I believe Think Small will be steadfast in its mission to advance quality child care and education of children during their crucial early years. The tools to effect change will continue to evolve, though the values and importance of early childhood education will not wane at Think Small"

SARAH WADE

Jaylon and Elliot Rosenblum
Rita Rosengren
Ken and Nina Rothchild
John and Bonnie Schlagel
Thomas Lee Menzel and Kerry Schwichtenberg-Menzel
Fred M. Senn
Joan Shrum
Harry Sieben
Jane C. Simon
Dr. James and Joanne Smith
Jackie Spies
Sue Stein
Andrea Stern
Mary Kay Stranik
Todd Swanson
Jill Thompson
Al and Parker Trostel
May Vang
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Peg and Doug Wangenstein
Janet L. Ward
Tom and Rita Welch
John and Mary Wilson
Gary Winget
Suzanne and Pete Wyckoff
Ms. Ann Wynia
Barbara Yates
Dimitrios Zermas



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