

NEW BEGINNINGS

Annual Report
2019



Rochester Childfirst Network



*ANN MARIE STEPHAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR*

Dear Friends of RCN:

I'm excited to share news from the past year and express how fortunate I feel to be part of an organization rich in history that is loved and supported by the community!

2019 represented a year of "new beginnings" as Rochester Childfirst Network welcomed me as the new Executive Director and also welcomed a new Director of Children's Programs and a new Coordinator of the Preschool Special Education Program.

RCN's most notable events included our first ever Casino Night event and an Open House event, which was attended by more than 80 families of children enrolled in various programs at the center. Both events were very successful and reinforced the supportive community we have in our "neighborhood" and greater Rochester.

Our accomplishments included completion of our outdoor natural playscapes; establishing an RCN brand platform; and re-establishing our commitment to children's social-emotional growth and development.

Financially, RCN fell short in meeting its fiscal goals due primarily to decreased enrollment, due, in part, to declining numbers of 4 year-old students and additional preschool classrooms opening in the Rochester City School District.

We have recently developed a more comprehensive marketing strategy to address enrollment, which will continue in the coming year. In addition, we plan to continue to develop corporate partnerships, especially in our local South Wedge community; work to diversify RCN's funding streams; and strategize to meet the needs of children and families in our community, as the demand for quality child care continues to grow.

We are grateful to our dedicated supporters who contributed to RCN. Our door is always open for a tour of the facilities and we are eager to share our vision of ensuring that every child is given a strong and safe start in life, eager and able to reach his/her full potential.

Ann Marie

OUR NETWORK OF PROGRAMS

RCN touches the lives of more than **2,000 children** in the Rochester area. RCN provides comprehensive, whole-child, early childhood education services to children through Universal Pre-Kindergarten, Expanded Pre-Kindergarten, private pay and subsidized child care, special education, school age wraparound care, and in-home childcare business support and monitoring.

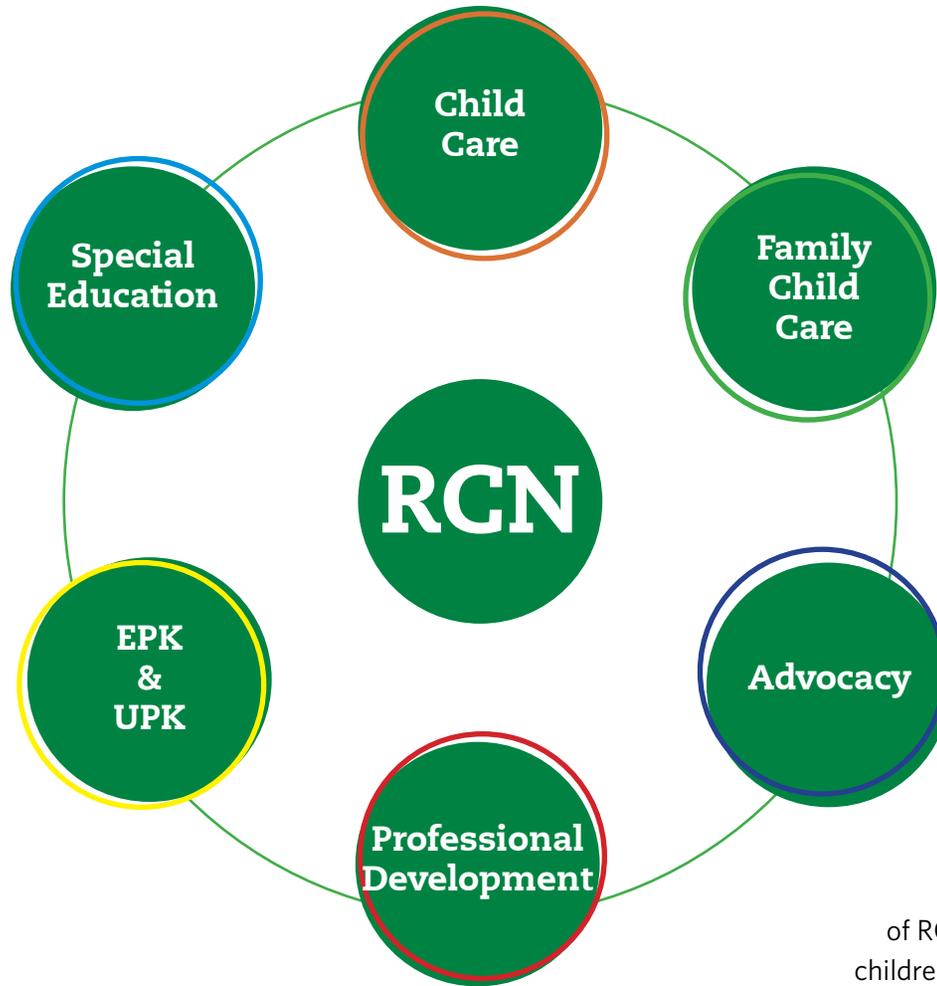
Children grow by as much as **two developmental levels** in one year at RCN

60%

of RCN children are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

30%

of RCN children have special needs and are served in classrooms with typically developing peers with full access to physical, occupational, and speech therapies.



STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

- 47%** BLACK
- 26%** WHITE
- 16%** HISPANIC
- 7%** MULTIRACIAL
- 4%** ASIAN

47%

of RCN's special education children require fewer special education services upon graduating to kindergarten.

HEM'S STORY

Former refugee makes a life in America



Hem Kharel was born in Bhutan, a Buddhist kingdom on the Himalayas' eastern edge. At the age of six, his parents moved Hem and his seven siblings to Nepal to escape growing religious tensions. The Bhutanese government was enacting discriminatory legislation targeting ethnic Nepali living in that country. Many lost their homes and land, and were forced to resettle in refugee camps in Nepal. The United Nations Refugee Agency in Nepal, UNHCR, provided food, shelter, clothing, and education for his family.

After receiving his high school diploma, Hem studied two years of math and science, eventually landing a job as a teacher working with approximately 80 children in grades 1 through 4 — all in the same classroom. Hem taught math, science, social studies, and even taught sports one year. Though life in Nepal was tolerable and he had started a family, land ownership was not possible and opportunity was limited.

In 2006, the US government offered to take in 60,000 of the Bhutanese refugees. Resettlement was a slow process, but finally in 2010, after 22 years as a refugee, Hem seized the opportunity to move his wife and then-two-year-old daughter to the US. He learned English quickly (he also speaks Spanish, Hindi and Nepalese) and became a citizen in 2015.

Hem and his wife, Kamala, have two daughters, now 6 and 11 years old. Hem learned about RCN when his youngest daughter attended here. In 2016, RCN asked Hem if he would like a job. Having worked as a teacher in the past, he jumped at the chance.

"I see these kids like my own kids. I love the kids. I never feel tired when I am working," Hem shared.

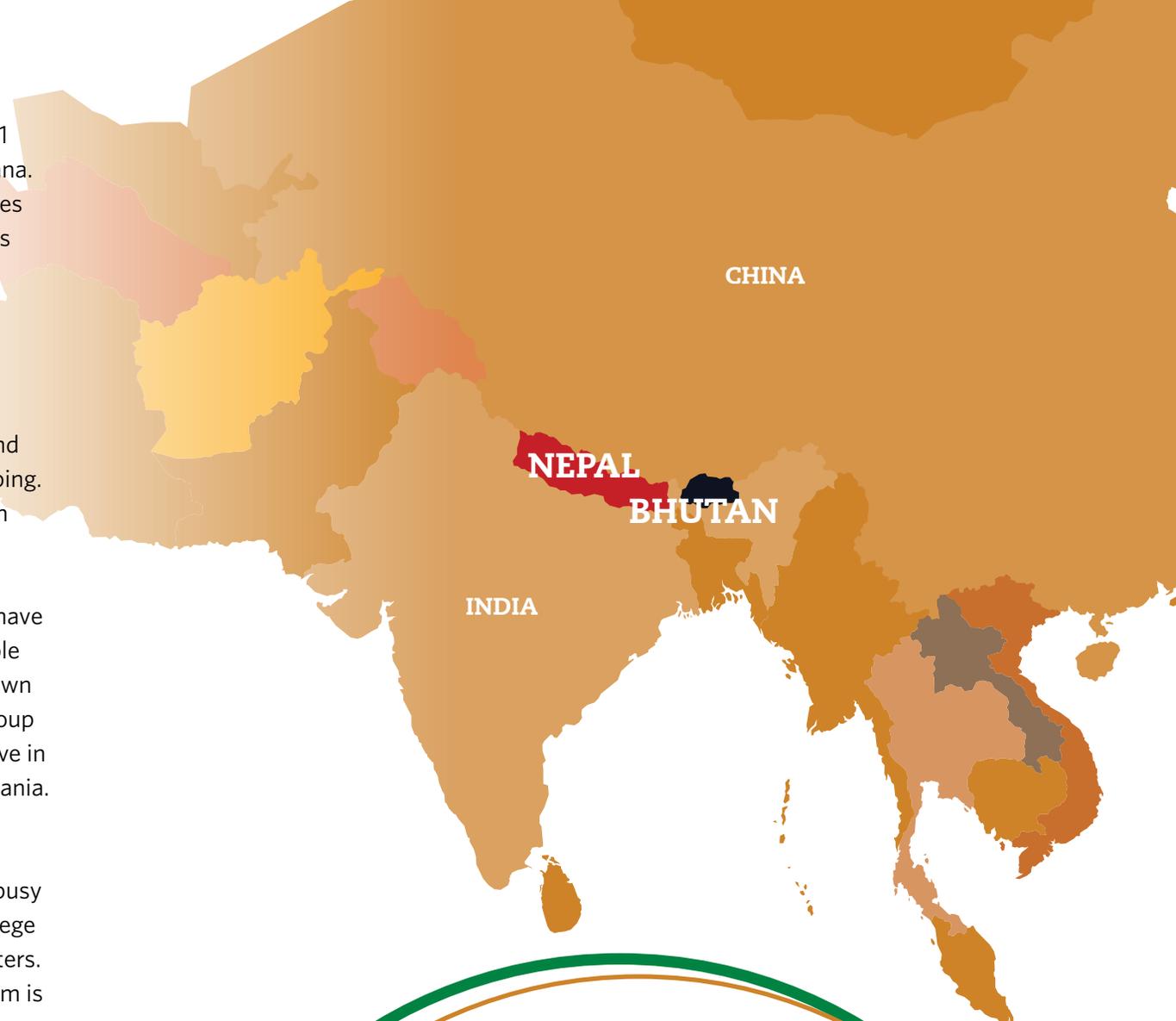
*HEM AND KAMALA KHAREL
AND THEIR DAUGHTERS
KAMALA AND ROSTAINA*

At RCN, he started out working in Crickets as a 1:1 assistant with Ms. Heather, Ms. Kris, and Ms. Jenna. He now works as a teacher's assistant in Butterflies with Ms. Ellen and Ms. LaShannon. He said he has worked in every room and enjoys helping parents — especially those with limited English skills — to understand what's going on in their children's classrooms.

Hem, now 38 years old, works full time at RCN and also works shifts at Strong Hospital in Housekeeping. "I try to work hard. Days I don't have to go to both jobs, I rest. I am happy."

Hem and Kamala — who also works two jobs — have little downtime. Through hard work, they were able to purchase a home in West Henrietta and now own two cars. They like Rochester and have a good group of friends here. Most of Hem's family members live in the US, including his parents who live in Pennsylvania. Only one sister remains in Nepal.

Education is very important to Hem. Though his busy work and family schedule makes returning to college difficult, he stresses the importance to his daughters. "I tell my kids they have to go to college. My dream is for both of them to become doctors."



"I see these kids like my own kids. I love the kids. I never feel tired when I am working."

— Hem Kharel

“WHO HAS FEELINGS?”



ELLEN STOFKO,
RCN UPK TEACHER
IN CRICKETS

One day, we were doing our PATHS lesson and I asked the children, **“Who has feelings?”** After a bit, one of the children raised his hand and said, “I do!” Soon other children chimed in. “I do, too!”

Then, I asked, **“Well, who else might have feelings?”** The children came up with their pets, and then brothers and sisters. I prompted them some more. **“Do you think your mommy and daddy have feelings?”** **“NOOO!”** said the children. After some discussion, they eventually agreed that their parents might have feelings.

I pressed on, **“Think about other people you know, who might have feelings?”** There were a few moments of silence, then one child said, “My grandma?” I nodded yes. This prompted other children to start naming cousins, aunts, and Godparents.

Finally, came the big questions, I prompted the class and asked, **“What about teachers; do they have feelings?”** The children were positive when they said, **“NOOO!”** It was hard for me to contain my laughter. When I told the class **“YES, teachers have feelings”, they broke out in laughter!**

It was contagious!

So we created a **friendship tree** for feelings and wrote our ideas down. Now when we review (which is often) there is more of a connection for the children.

The PATHS curriculum, used throughout RCN classrooms, is a comprehensive program that promotes emotional and social competencies, reducing aggression, and behavior problems in preschool through elementary school-aged children, while simultaneously enhancing the educational process in the classroom. PATHS stands for Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies.



RCN'S IN-HOME CHILD CARE TRAINING

Training gives providers tools to enhance family-based care

Children learn best by hands-on activities, and that is what Krista Nicolaisen delivers. Ms. Krista is the Coordinator and Trainer for FCC-SGR, the Family Child Care Satellites of Greater Rochester. RCN has been the home base for FCC-SGR, supporting in-home, family-based child care businesses for over 20 years.

Whether it is building healthy eating habits, or working on math and science activities, Ms. Krista always provides a fun, nurturing, learning experience. Said FCC provider Yvonne Benson, "When I mention to the children that Ms. Krista will be coming over they are so excited! 'Do you think we will paint or sing? Maybe she will read to us!' They know when she comes it will be fun, and presented in a loving, caring way."

Yvonne also noted that she has learned a lot from our in-home trainings. "I would definitely recommend the FCC-SGR in-home trainings. There is so much interaction and sharing. It's a professional, positive experience for both children and providers!"





ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FUND CREATED



MURIEL STEINBERG

Muriel D. Steinberg Scholarship Fund to support families with financial need

Mention the name of Muriel Steinberg and many words come to mind: wise, kind, a lover of all children, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother. Another word is generous, which Muriel and her daughter Liz have demonstrated through the Muriel D. Steinberg Scholarship Fund. This permanent, endowed fund will support families with financial need whose children are attending RCN.

Muriel Steinberg is the child of Norman and Lillian Schiffrin, who emigrated from Russia in the early 20th Century. She attended Syracuse University and married Charles Steinberg in 1945. Muriel worked at Chase Bank, where she came to know RCN over 30 years ago when she was our banker. "I remember convincing Chase Bank to give Tim Draper a startup loan to begin the Rochester City Ballet," Muriel recalled. "I also helped young residents at Strong manage their accounts that kept them going until they started their practices."

"It is the intent and hope of the Steinberg family that others will join us by adding to the Steinberg Scholarship Fund, or by creating their own funds," said Liz Steinberg. For information on how to support the Steinberg or other funds at RCN, contact the development office at 585.473.2858.

RCN DEDICATES ADAM DUMKA PAVILION

On November 21, 2019, more than 50 family and friends joined us for the dedication of the Adam David Dumka Outdoor Education Pavilion. The pavilion is the new centerpiece of RCN's spacious backyard, and was provided by a generous in-kind gift from New Energy Works. This gift was made possible by our backyard architect Tom Robinson (son of longtime RCN Board Member Jim Robinson). This project was also supported through a major grant from the IDEX Foundation.

Adam Dumka was the son of RCN's former Executive Director Marsha and her husband Bernie. In the resolution naming the Pavilion in Adam's honor, the Board of Directors noted:

"Whereas, Marsha Dumka has served the families of Rochester for more than three decades as a volunteer, teacher, professor and advocate; and whereas the Board of Directors wishes to honor Marsha Dumka for her career at RCN and to perpetuate the memory of her and Bernard Dumka's son, Adam David Dumka who passed away in 2015; now therefore be it resolved, that the Board of Directors of Rochester Childfirst Network does hereby designate the new pavilion at RCN as the Adam David Dumka Outdoor Education Pavilion."

"It warmed our hearts to have this new pavilion dedicated to RCN's children and families, and to honor our son's memory. May it see much laughter and learning under its roof for many years to come."

— Marsha and Bernie Dumka

RCN STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Year ending June 30, 2019

REVENUES

● Program Service Income	\$2,859,256.00
● Grants	\$1,178,785.00
● Contributions	\$465,895.00
● RCN Foundation Support	\$229,472.00
● Other	\$42,424.00

Total Revenue and Support \$4,775,832.00

EXPENSES

● Program Services	\$3,998,809.00
● Management and General	\$419,914.00
● Fundraising	\$236,744.00

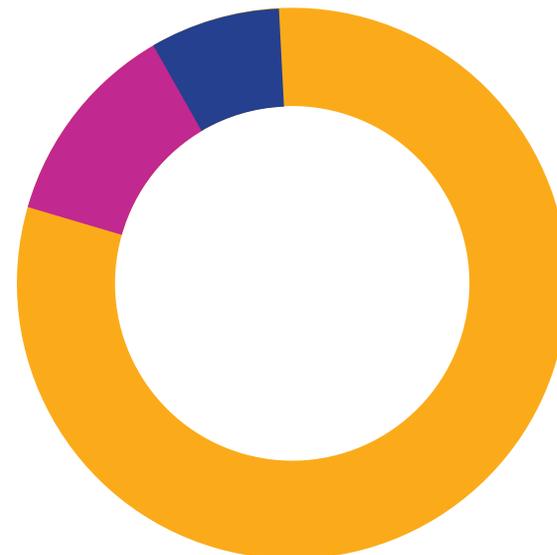
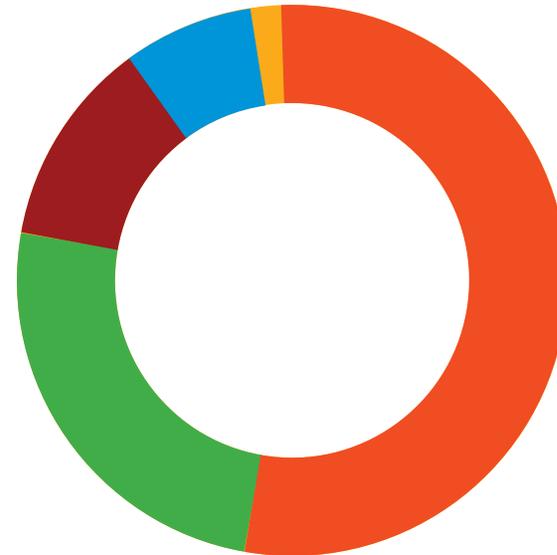
Total Expenses \$4,655,467.00

Surplus/Deficit \$120,365.00

Net Assets: July 1, 2018

Net Assets: June 30, 2019

Change \$124,266.00



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Windsor Cottage

Rochester Childfirst Network makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of our Annual Report. If you have questions, please contact the Development Office at 585.473.2858, ext. 246. Thank you.

CAMPAIGN REACHES GOALS

Celebrating Kids, Changing Lives

In 2015, RCN's four-acre property was showing its age. Our playgrounds hadn't been improved in years. Inside, we relied on an inefficient 1954 heat exchanger that needed regular repairs. The doors and windows kept us hot all summer and cold in the winter. Some classrooms even experienced flooding after heavy rainstorms!

We set a goal of \$1.2 million, which we'll reach by June 30, 2020. What has this accomplished?

- We transformed our playgrounds into outdoor educational playscapes, fully accessible to children of all abilities. These support STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) education, using play and the wonders found in nature;
- We added an education pavilion to our backyard play area;
- New windows and doors made our classrooms more comfortable year-round;
- RCN now has air conditioning for our kids and teachers; and
- Our new heating system and energy conservation measures will save RCN up to \$20,000 in annual operating costs.

RCN thanks everyone who participated generously in the ***Celebrating Kids, Changing Lives*** campaign. Your dedication has given our children and teachers the facilities they deserve. While the campaign is closing, RCN still needs and welcomes your ongoing support! Contact the Development Office at 585.473.2858, ext. 246.

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“YOU FEEL LIKE YOU’RE HOME”

Paula Howk receives the Jim Robinson Award for outstanding volunteer service to RCN

Paula Smith Howk has been an active community volunteer for many years. She is a Past Board President of the Junior League of Rochester and the Catholic Family Center. She was a mediator and arbitrator at the Center for Dispute Settlement.

Paula has also served as a board member of Chatterbox Club, Preventive Partners, and the City/County Youth Board. Professionally, she worked as the director of public relations and advertising for Jay Advertising.

Paula joined RCN’s Board in 2003. She served as Board Chair from 2006 to 2008, and has worked on the Governance, Development, Marketing, and Special Events committees. As co-chair of the Special Events Committee, she oversaw RCN’s most successful Mad Hatter Tea Party ever, which netted over \$30,000.

In 2003 Paula was named a New York State “Woman of Distinction” by then-Senator Jim Alesi. Paula and her husband Ted have two grown children, three grandsons, and three granddaughters, two of which are twins.

Paula embodies all of the outstanding qualities of a true volunteer — leadership, guidance, thoughtfulness, and wisdom, which she has shown throughout her years at RCN. One of her favorite memories of RCN is the celebration of our 150th anniversary year while she served as Board President, helping to establish the Robinson Award. She has said that, “Once you walk through the doors here, it just grabs you and you feel like you’re home.”



PAULA SMITH HOWK

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