





THE CONNECTION
**IMPACT
REPORT
2023**

LIFELONG WELLNESS BEGINS HERE.



 79 Maple St. Summit

 908-273-4242

 theconnectiononline.org

CELEBRATING OUR NEXT CENTURY OF IMPACT: A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Fall 2024

Dear Supporters, Volunteers, and Friends of The Connection,

As we reflect on the success of The Connection's past year, I am excited to lead this community cornerstone into a new era. Through the dedication and hard work of our team, coupled with the unwavering support of our donors and volunteers, we have made significant strides in supporting individuals and families towards their physical, social, and emotional wellness goals.

None of this is possible without the generosity and support of our members, whose contributions have enabled us to increase our outreach and make a positive difference in our shared community. Your resolute belief in our mission fuels our passion and drives us forward, and for that, we are truly grateful.

I also want to express my deepest gratitude to our dedicated team of staff and volunteers, whose tireless efforts and commitment have been instrumental in this transitional period. Your passion, creativity, and resilience energize me every day, and I am proud to work alongside such extraordinary individuals. You are what makes The Connection great!

Looking ahead, together with you, we remain steadfast in our commitment to being here for everyone. With the continued support of our volunteers, staff, and donors, I am confident that we will build on our success and create an even greater impact in the years to come. We will be working to find creative ways to meet the demand for our programming, create a safer and more secure environment for our youngest members, and create sustainable budgets informed by data and market conditions.

Thank you for supporting us and belief in our mission. I hope this report will instill confidence in our stewardship and will bring you joy knowing your support is indeed making a difference.

Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CB', with a stylized, cursive flourish extending from the end.

Chris Bonner
Executive Director

ENGAGING COMMUNITY TO MAKE AN IMPACT

COMMUNITY SERVICE



We hosted **71 students from 20 countries** in our English as a Second Language Program.

VOLUNTEER



86 volunteers assisted across our multitude of community service programs.

SUPPORT



Our 2023 Connection Gala **raised \$335,000** to support our Community Service and Financial Aid Fund.

SCHOLARSHIP



Over **\$131,000 in scholarships** were disbursed to fill the gap of disparity in our community.

THE REEVES FOUNDATION

Through a generous \$150,000 challenge grant, **The Reeves Foundation** energized our community and brought in over \$600,000 for capital projects and to fund new accessible and sensory-friendly playgrounds, which are slated for installation in Fall 2024.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU



CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - LENA WILLIS MISSION ENDOWMENT FUND

The partnership of **Central Presbyterian Church**, through the **Lena Willis Mission Endowment Fund**, helps to ensure The Connection's Before and After School programs remain accessible to all who wish to participate, regardless of economic circumstance.



HYDE & WATSON FOUNDATION AND THE E.J. GRASSMANN TRUST

We are grateful to the **Hyde & Watson Foundation** and the **E.J. Grassmann Trust** for their long-time support of our organization, and for their renewed commitment which helped fund the modern and inclusive play structures.



R. SEELAUS & CO., INC.

Through their commitment to the support of women, and in turn, children, adults, and families and our greater community, **R. Seelaus & Co., Inc.** has upheld a continued role in our organization as our Lead Corporate Partner.



THE SUMMIT FOUNDATION

The Summit Foundation's continued partnership helps our organization be *here for everyone* and provides youth of all abilities with inclusive programming, sensory-friendly and adaptive equipment, and quality instruction and support.



THE TYLER FOUNDATION

The consistent support of **The Tyler Foundation** ensures scholarships for children to participate in our certified Preschool program, providing access to a nurturing environment for our youngest students to thrive.

INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITY

YOUR GIFT AT WORK

\$131,000

was raised for scholarship and financial assistance support for participants in need

STUDENTS

received an average of a 90% scholarship towards childcare through our partnerships with the State of NJ and the Summit Public School System

CAMPERS

received an average of an 85% discount to have a memorable, educational, and fun-filled summer

MEMBERS

received scholarships between our ESL, dance, gymnastics, aquatics, and special needs programs to ensure everyone has an activity where they can thrive

\$83,700

Refreshed Indoor Spaces:

New and reupholstered furniture for communal spaces, sensory learning walls, upgraded sound systems, and touchless water refill stations

\$423,185

New accessible and inclusive school age and preschool playgrounds to be installed Fall 2024



2023 DONORS

IN RECOGNITION OF ANNUAL GIFTS MADE TO THE CONNECTION

Endowing Benefactors \$10,000+

The Barberry Foundation
Berger Family Charitable Trust
Ann C.* and Joseph W. Berkery
Bray Family Fund
Central Presbyterian Church
The Coppola Family
Jeanne D'Haem and Bruce Stein
Wendy* and Bruce Graeb
The Graepel Family Fund
E. J. Grassmann Trust
Hyde and Watson Foundation
Erika* and Mark Melchiorre
Donna and Henrik Patel

The Pechter Foundation**
The Rhoten Family Fund
Lynne Rogerson and James Fleischmann
The Justin and Lee Kellogg Sadrian
Foundation
Meghan* and Daniel Schorr
R. Seelaus & Co., Inc.
The Martin and Kristen Segal Fund
The State of New Jersey
The Summit Foundation
The Tyler Foundation
Maria* and Evan Williams

Founding Benefactors \$5,000-\$9,999

Tara Ferris* and Mark Negus
Mary Hill
George M. and Pamela S.
Humphrey Fund

Melissa* and Robert Phillips
Caitlin and Matthew Porpora
Terry Virgona
Susan Watts**

Sustaining Benefactors \$2,500-\$4,999

Anonymous
Jill Bray - Lear Bray Team
Virginia** and Shawn Cepeda
Tara Charvat* and Craig Thiebaud
Citizens Philanthropic Foundation
Max Graeb
Investors Foundation

Julie Lanzone*
Beth* and Kyle McCarter
Betsy* and Charles Phillips
J. R. Prisco Inc.
Rev. Jane and John Tomaine
County of Union

Sponsoring Benefactors \$1,000-\$2,499

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Bassett Associates
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Bianca Moreno & Andrew
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Charitable Fund
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Kerri and Andrew Price
Louis J. & Fannie Roncoli
Foundation
Rebecca Sawyer
Yukiko Shuya & William E. Thar
The Vicens Family Fund
Jane & John Walbridge, Jr.
Rachel & Jonathan Wilf
Stephanie & Aaron Wilson

Supporting Benefactors \$500-\$999

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Bristol-Meyers Squibb
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Caroline & Roger Brown
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Mary** & Jack Cooper
Rachel & Tom Cortese
Family Fund
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Marcus Ricciani
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Jennifer Foxson & Kenneth
Plocharski
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Ursula Hartwig-Flint
Abigail & Avi Horev
Suzanne & George Klacik
Jennifer Levanchy & Drew Chen
Ioana & Simon Lindenmann
Tara & Devan Marshall
Meyer & Depew Co.

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Peapack Gladstone Bank
Robin Perenchio
Preferred Electrical Service Inc.
Radest Family Fund*
Bridget & Glenn Renzulli
Sarah & Ben Seelaus
Peter Van Brunt
Joka Vandenberg & Jim
Phillips Fund
Michael Villas
Karen Vitale
Wendover Fund

Benefactors \$250-\$499

Kimberley & William Artemenko
Beacon Hill Club
Ann Bushe
Marianne Carlton
Patricia & Thomas Cassin
CCMO Charitable Trust
Evelyn Chiu
Lynne & Brian Clapp
Lynn Colombo
Jennifer & Ted Counihan
Katie Crockett
Heidi & Bill Evenson
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Gelber Family Charitable
Fund
Pat Giese
Whitney & Ryan Goldberg
Tania & Michael Gonnella
Grennon Family Charitable
Fund
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Sherel Hersch
Parul Jajoo
Samantha Kanter
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Estabrook, & Cooper, P.C.

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Macpherson, Jr.
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Brooke Mayne
Bridget Mracek
Mary Nohara & Steve Jones
Barbara Oberding
Anne Pierce
Daphne Richards
Peter Upton
Barbara & William
Von Klemperer

Connection Staff

Lesley Andrews
Tony Baker
Lizmar Baranov
Sangeeta Prasad Benbow
Lesley Calvert
Daniel Campos
Kathryn Colao
Kathleen Cromie
Krystyna Cukrowski
Leonard Dannatt

Heather Denges
Moona Elsevier
Fanny Gonzalez
Wendy Graeb*
Judy Hrehorovich
Assata Knox
Ellen Mondelli
James S. Monticello
Lauren Nisenson
Daphne Richards

Michelle Stelluto
Linda Wheeler
Tina Whitman**

OUR MISSION IN ACTION



"The Connection has been an outstanding resource for us. It's so difficult to find good coaches for our child, who needs personalized attention for activities. The opportunities that The Connection has potentially opened up, access to different activities which were almost impossible elsewhere; its long term impact for us is probably immeasurable."

- Special Needs Parent

"Thank you so-so much for all you do! The Connection has been a saving grace for my grandpa and his integration into new life! He thrives knowing he has school and swim and meeting new friends. We are grateful for all you do!"

- Family Member of ESL Student



"This has been a great opportunity; I get to spend time with like-minded, goal-oriented community members all working together for a greater purpose."

- Gala Committee Volunteer



2024-2025 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Chairwoman: Erika Melchiorre · Vice Chairwoman: Tara Charvat
Secretary: Annel Montero-Mitchell · Treasurer: Liz Branchflower
Executive Director: Chris Bonner · Michelle Egbetola · Tara Ferris
Renée Frank · Julie Lanzone · Beth McCarter · Lauren Perenchio-Hersh
Melissa Phillips · Meghan Schorr · Maria Williams