

Our Community's Children



ANNUAL REPORT 2016

Getting to and through college!

t2cstudio

Grand Rapids Center for College Success

Ready for College, Work, & Life

I get inspired every day by young people who are seeking ways to improve themselves for a better life. The challenges young people face are real and deep. Yet, they persist through hard work, sheer determination, and practice.

Our Community's Children has created many opportunities for city youth to have voice, to learn new skills, develop professional networks, secure meaningful employment, and persist to and through college to degree attainment.

We believe having high standards, a good education, and a college degree prepare our youth the best to be leaders at community tables. In this report we lift up some of the stories of the youth we have served. We're honored to be part of their journey.



Shayla Willis, t2c Studio Coordinator and Daniel Caracheo 2017 GRPS Graduate

We are addressing a deep need to help students get to and through college. The t2c studio had its grand opening on November 14, 2016. Since then, nearly 900 students have been served. Shayla Willis, the t2c studio Coordinator and our To College, Through College partners have provided supportive coaching and financial assistance to ensure students are enrolled and persist in college. Many thanks to the Grand Rapids Public Library, Steelcase, and higher education partners including Cornerstone University, Davenport University, Ferris State University, Grand Rapids Community College, and Michigan State University for providing financial support and studio time.



Lynn Heemstra
Executive Director

YOUTH ENGAGED

ELO Network
KidSpeak®

Afterschool Matters!

ELOnetwork
Expanded Learning Opportunities

All children have the ability to learn, grow and achieve to reach their “North Star.” The ELO Network, facilitated by OCC, is dedicated to helping children reach their potential. In partnership with Believe 2 Become and the Doug and Maria DeVos Foundation, the ELO Network launched nationally an Imagine U Toolkit for youth development professionals. This toolkit is packed with innovative, field-tested student activities by ELO members that are designed to instill a sense of purpose, impact career knowledge, cultivate growth mindsets, and teach workplace social skills.



Go to www.eloafterschool.com for links to the toolkit online and www.gryouthdata.org for the ELO Dashboard on outcomes.

Why talk about race?

“It’s a relevant topic and we’re living in a world where disparities need to be addressed,” says Raymond Lee, a 2017 Mayor’s Youth Council member. “When you predetermine who a person is just by their appearance, you limit the possibilities of all the things they can do.” Every year the Mayor’s Youth Council organizes KidSpeak® – an event where young people give testimony to elected officials and community leaders. They chose race as their topic given the recent national elections and the Mayor’s equity agenda. The questions raised were: What do you think about race? How does it affect you? Is Grand Rapids a tale of two cities? How can all children be successful regardless of race?



“By talking openly and honestly about race and what it means, we can help the world see beyond the outward differences, and look deeper for the things that connect us.” - 2017 KidSpeak® Participant



YOUTH EMPLOYED LEAD PROGRAM

Cindy Gonzalez is college-bound to Michigan State University this September after having successfully graduated from the Grand Rapids Public Schools. She just completed the Leadership, Employment, Achievement & Direction (LEAD) program and is now employed as an assistant at Our Community's Children. She exemplifies the resilience and determination of young people today despite the hardships growing up. She is confident, poised, and ready to give back. Born to a young single mother, Cindy learned early on to stand on her own two feet. As her mother worked in the fields, Cindy provided care and support for her three siblings while attending school. Through the challenges, Cindy found the support she needed at the Cook Library Center and the TRIO Upward Bound program. As a LEAD participant, Cindy prides herself on being prepared and being helpful to others. She along with her peer – Carina Cisneros, are employed by the City of Grand Rapids assisting on OCC projects and program coordination.



"I have a job and I will be the first female in my family to go to college. I am very proud of how far I have come."

- Cindy Gonzalez



LEAD is a nationally-recognized program developed by Our Community's Children for teens and young adults, aged 15-24.

The LEAD participants are eligible for employment with Mayor's 100 businesses.



Shannon L. Harris
Program Coordinator

Our Community's Children

CHILDREN CONNECTING TO NATURE

Our Community's Children received a grant from the Children & Nature Network and the National League of Cities to connect children to nature through an equity lens. The more children learn and engage within nature the better they do mentally, academically and physically. This work is focused on the southwest neighborhoods around Buchanan and Burton schools where re-design efforts are underway. Young people are engaged in the planning process to give input and shape public strategies. OCC is working closely with the Grand Rapids Public Schools and the City's Parks and Recreation Department.

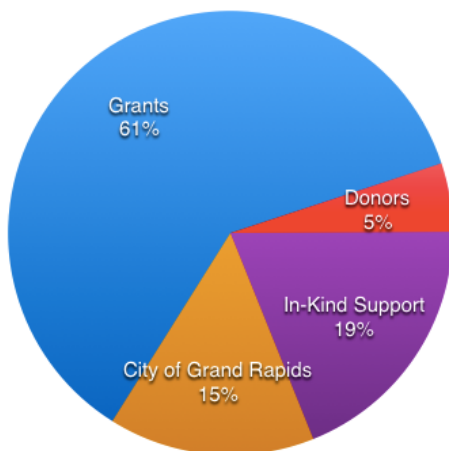


Our Vision: All Grand Rapids youth have equitable access to natural places and spaces for a happy and healthy life.

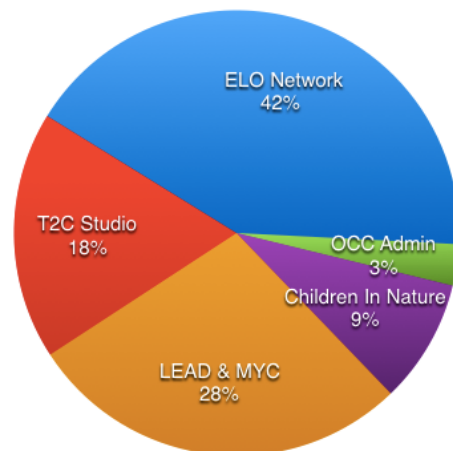
2016 Budget

\$828,000

Revenues



Expenditures



Our Community's Children appreciates the generous support of these partners:

