



“We were founded with a dual mission to help women become economically stable and successful, and provide great, local childcare. That is as important now as it was 20 years ago.”

Financial *(continued from inside)*
Though her six year term, Carolyn presided over Acre during the best of times, and harder times as the economy, and state funding, were in a downturn.

“When I first came on, business was booming. We had a budget surplus so we added to our reserves, made investments – we wanted to be good stewards of our mission.

“Since 2008, there have been lots of challenges. There was less ability to supply because state funding for childcare was down and less demand as people were out of work and didn’t need childcare. But we wanted to get through the economic downturn with no layoffs. So we started planning and building new partnerships.”

This led to creative thinking about the next step for Acre, including a brainstorm facilitated by Harvard Business School

Alumnus to create a business plan for serving private pay clients.

Throughout the past six years, Carolyn has led Acre to success despite uncertainty both inside and outside of the organization. Her efforts in planning, strategizing, and teambuilding have made a great impact on the organizations success today, and positioned Acre – and the women we serve – for greater success in the future.

Acre Family Child Care
14 Kirk Street
Lowell, Massachusetts 01852



2011 Annual Report



Together We’re Better



Kathy Reticker,
Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Together We’re Better is not only the title of a corny song by the Partridge Family, but also a great description of 2011 at Acre Family Child Care. This year the partnerships we have formed in the Lowell community have enriched our program and made the overall care and education we provide to young children even better.

✿ Working with the International Institute we have jointly received a grant from the Office of Refugee Resettlement to help refugee women establish child care businesses in their homes. We have completed the first series of our Benchmark classes with 6 women from Burma who will be working toward obtaining their child care licenses.

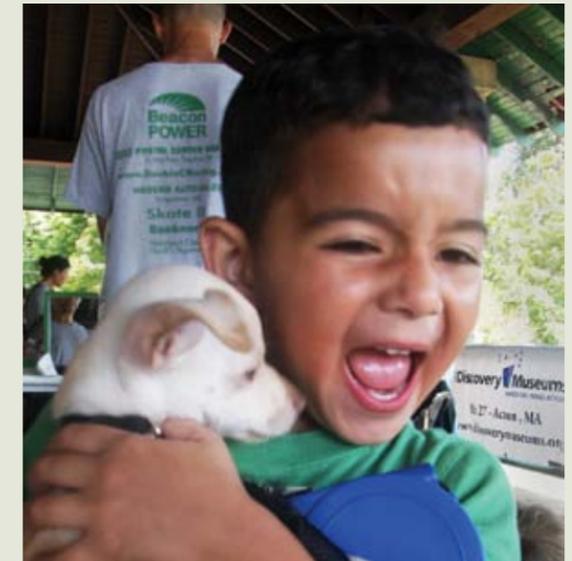
✿ The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) awarded a grant to the Discovery Museums to support the expansion of its partnership with Acre Family Child Care (AFCC) to better engage under-represented local immigrant communities. “Playing Together: Using Museum Fun to Better Engage Immigrant Communities” will offer a seasonal calendar of events that will more than double the number of programs available to AFCC’s providers and families.

✿ We have partnered with Jumpstart to be a pilot site for their work with family child care. Jumpstart is a national early education organization that works with preschool programs like Acre Family Child Care and local universities, like UMass Lowell, and community members to help children enter school prepared to succeed. We have 12 children currently participating in this program.

✿ This year we are working with Professors Allyssa McCabe and Jana Sladkova from UMass Lowell on their research project entitled, “How Immigrant Children Make Sense of Their Experiences.” We have also continued the community service project supervised by Professor McCabe in which students talk, read, and interact with children at an Acre family child care home.

These partnerships enhance the outstanding work that Acre Family Child Care educators offer to families every day. The work that the staff does to support educators and families and the leadership provided by the Board of Directors make Acre a great organization.

Thank you,
Kathy Reticker



“Playing Together: Using Museum Fun to Better Engage Immigrant Communities”

Letter from our Board Chair

February, 2012

Dear Friends,

As we begin a new year at Acre Family Child Care I am pleased, excited and proud to become the Chair of the Board of Directors, succeeding my most capable predecessor, Carolyn Stein. Carolyn gave many years of dedicated service to Acre and we are grateful that she is part of the Acre family.

The past few years have been challenging to all non-profits. At Acre we are fortunate to have very capable staff like Kathy Reticker and Stephan Bader who have helped us to navigate the complex world of public funding while aggressively pursuing private funds and establishing an ever-growing Annual Appeal.

Our new partnerships with the International Institute, Discovery Museums, and Jump Start allow us to provide greater opportunities to the women whose small businesses we support and the children we serve with excellent care.

We look forward to strengthening our community partnerships and our presence in the Greater Lowell Community in 2012. With the continued support of our providers, staff, partners, families, Board and donors we will make it happen.

Sincerely,
Patricia Sullivan Talty



**Acre Board Chair,
Patricia Sullivan Talty**

Educator Profile – Carmen Rivera’s Story

Though the paint is perfect, the countertops are pristine, and the fixtures are polished, the brightest thing in Carmen Rivera’s neat and tidy kitchen is her smile. This room, which she renovated herself, is the center of her home and her business. Each morning, as Carmen begins her day as a child care provider, she welcomes families in this kitchen.

When she first came to Massachusetts from her native Puerto Rico she worked in “too many companies” trying to make ends meet. Then, when her daughter needed surgery, Carmen was forced to leave her job so she could care for her daughter during the long recovery. With a tight budget, Carmen lived in public housing and received food stamps and other assistance while she raised her young children.

“I remember when a friend said she needed someone to watch her kids and she would give me \$60 a week. I was so excited for that \$60, because I needed to work. But later someone told me I could become licensed and make a real career out of it, and I wanted to do that.”

Carmen heard about Acre Family Child Care where she could get all the information she needed. She was part of a cohort of eight women who took training and received licenses to offer at home child care.

“At first when I started my business I was so stressed, but from the trainings at

Acre I learned how to treat the kids and organize my day.”

Within a few years, Carmen had a booming business. She began pursuing continuing education in child care. She has taken courses at local colleges and earned a Child Development Associate certificate, and accreditation by the National Association for Family Child Care.

Within six years, she was ready to move out of public housing and bought the home where she has lived for the past twelve years.

Listening to Carmen talk about going back to school, raising her now grown children, and all of the do-it-yourself projects she’s completed in her home, you get the sense she could do anything on her own. But she speaks of a network that’s all but invisible while she is running her home business – the community of Acre Family Child Care has always been there for her. Now Carmen, a veteran provider, offers advice and mentorship



to new providers “I am glad to be working with Acre, and to be a mentor. Acre helps people be successful.”

Carolyn Stafford Stein – Leadership through Partnership



Carolyn Stein with her husband, Eric Stein.

In 2006, when Acre brought Kathy Reticker on as an Interim Executive Director, Carolyn, an attorney from Carlisle, MA, was invited to the Board to help with the transition. That was the beginning of what would be a six year term on the Board, four of which she served as Chair.

Carolyn, whose husband is a physician in Lowell, has always been interested in the community and its growth, and was excited to bring her experience to the table to help Acre through an evolutionary period. She has contributed both to Acre’s mission and to the success of many women in Lowell through her service on the Acre Family Child Care Board of Directors.

Mission and Impact

Carolyn was attracted to the idea of helping women gain independence by being business owners, and also helping other women.

“We were founded with a dual mission to help women become economically stable and successful, and provide great, local childcare. That is as important now as it was 20 years ago,” she said.

Programs

To support Acre’s programming, Carolyn worked with the Board to think

of ways Acre could partner with other organizations to grow the program’s scale and effectiveness.

Through her personal network, Carolyn sowed the beginnings of a partnership with the Discovery Museum in Acton. “We started small, with a family night at the museum, where all the kids and providers were able to attend and enjoy the facility together. We’ve really grown this partnership, offering field trips and long term science education programs. And in 2011, we worked together on a grant proposal that brought \$137,000.”

Governance and Management

Diversifying the skills and perspectives on the Board was Carolyn’s major concern when she arrived at Acre.

“We needed a governing board that could really support Acre through some rapid growth and change. We now have that with representatives from business, government, and also 2-3 of our Board members are Acre providers.”

Even as she is leaving the Board, a succession plan is in place so that her Vice Chair will take the helm as she steps down. This ensures that the learning of the Board isn’t lost when one member leaves.

Carolyn also worked as a partner with Executive Director Kathy Reticker to help her build the same initiative and camaraderie within her staff.

“We supported Kathy to keep a great team and create a nurturing environment. The Board created retirement benefits and maternity leave policy, as well as a childcare benefit. We also partnered with Boston University’s School of Non-Profit Management, so that staff can pursue higher learning.”

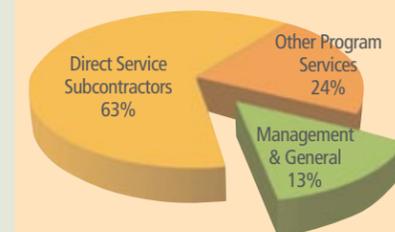
Most remarkably, Carolyn also worked to create positive communication between the Board and staff, initiating retreats where those who govern and operate Acre can come together, tackle issues, share ideas, and get to know one another and strengthen their work. *(continued on back)*

Acre Family Child Care / Financial Summary

(unaudited, in thousands)

	FISCAL YEAR	
	2011	2010
Revenue & Support		
Program Service Revenue	\$3,854	\$3,697
Other Revenues	30	25
Grants & Contributions:		
Grants – Government	61	172
Grants – Foundations	44	66
Individuals & Businesses	21	11
Grants & Contributions	126	249
Total Revenue & Support	4,010	3,971
Expenses		
Direct Service Subcontractors	2,550	2,531
Other Program Services	960	867
Management & General	534	515
Total Expenses	4,044	3,913
Operating (Loss) Income	\$(34)	\$58

Total Expenses 2011



During the past two years, 87% of all expenditures were used to support our child care service programs, while general management and fundraising expenses required only 13 cents of each dollar spent.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS BY THE NUMBERS

1

Nobel Peace Prize Winner Parent

12

Hours of Safety Training completed by each child care driver

14

Field trips to the Discovery Museums in Acton

50+

Parents participated in Educational Workshops

54

Early Childhood Educators in the Lowell area

100%

of Early Childhood Educators participated in professional development training

162

Hours of professional development training organized and offered by Acre

300

Children transported to and from child care daily

1,000+

Books donated by First Book for providers and families