Dear Friends,

When we think of the past year, we think of major transitions and milestones. Family Connections’ community partners, staff, and Board celebrated retiring Executive Director Joanne Federman after 29 years of service. We were warmly welcomed as new Executive Director and new Board President. We served over 700 families. We began the commemoration of our 40th anniversary - a timeline of which we share throughout this report.

The continuation of the pandemic, with its isolation, and economic volatility, brought out the best in everyone as we continued to work together to pivot to meet new challenges. As Joanne noted, “I’m proud of our resilience, creativity, and flexibility - being open to change when needed and having the courage to move forward. Family Connections is made up of many visionaries!”

While there have been many locations and many programmatic changes throughout our 40 years, Family Connections' core is focusing on the parents/caregivers, and through them elevate their children. Imagine the number of relationships we have built - with parents, with children and parent to parent!
As we celebrate our 40th anniversary, we are proud to celebrate the many milestones—programmatic and administrative—that we have achieved over the past four decades, largely through the support of a generous and passionate community of supporters. However, we also recognize that to stay relevant, sustainable, and mission-driven, we must always strive to look externally and internally at how we can improve our operations, governance, programs, and community partnerships.

As we approach our 2Gen-centered continuum of support that focuses on both parents/caregivers and children, we aim to pay tribute to the foundation of the past 40 years, while providing visionary leadership for our future of nurturing social connections, enhancing child development, and improving school readiness.

We are grateful to every one of you who have allowed us to be a part of your family,

Tiffany Scruggs  
President, Board of Directors

Beth Darmstadter  
Executive Director

1993  
Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) introduced

2000  
Caledonia Family Resource Program begins in East Cleveland

2002  
First DadsDay Run promotes healthy family fun and raises funds

1998  
Play & Learn Station opens at Shaker Library

1993  
Playroom opens at the Shaker Family Center

2002  
Smart phone invented and Email goes wireless

2003  
Little Heights starts at Heights Libraries on Lee Road
Our full continuum of support for parents and their children, aged birth to 6, is evident through the synergy in the longstanding programs we offer. The Family Playrooms began in our early days, proactively meeting what we perceived to be our communities’ needs. As we grew over the years, it was always in anticipation of what parents needed - which in turn served their young children and helped them thrive.

**Baby & Me**
Starting in 1992, the goals of Baby & Me were to reduce isolation, provide information around early developmental milestones, and build community among parents and caregivers of babies, birth-12 months. Thirty years later, this weekly program provides caregivers connections, gain information, share experiences, and find support from each other and our Family Support Specialist. Babies benefit and thrive from early socialization, varied stimulation as well as more confident and happy parents.

**Beyond Baby & Me**
A virtual after-hours parent chat. Led by our expert staff, this unique parent support program removes barriers of time, location, and transportation that many families with young children encounter in their day-to-day lives.

**Music with Marisa**
A beloved virtual program for children and their caregivers on Zoom. Participants enjoy interactive music, movement and fun. Now world-wide as Marisa has moved to Germany!

**Parent Cafes**
Free parent/caregiver-led conversations about the joys and challenges of raising children and sharing ways to strengthen our families. Funded by a grant from The Louise H. and David S. Ingalls Foundation and a Cleveland Heights Community Block Grant, these gatherings bolster confidence and a sense of community.
We offer these programs free of charge to the community thanks to the generosity of our donors and community partners listed in this report. We are grateful to nurture social connections, enhance child development and improve school readiness for families throughout Greater Cleveland.

**Family Playrooms**
First started in 1983, our Family Playrooms are the cornerstone of Family Connections. Designed for families with children, aged birth to 6, the playrooms provide family support for early childhood literacy & development, build community, and make connections through interactive adult-child play. Each playroom is an imaginative, hands-on space for young children and their caregivers in a safe, comfortable, and reassuring environment. The Family Playrooms have been a place for families to gather, play, connect & find joy for 40 years!

**SPARK (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids)**
SPARK is a program that provides a kindergarten readiness advantage for families with preschool children, aged 3 to 4. Once or twice a month, a SPARK family meets with their assigned home visitor called a Parent Partner. SPARK visits help the parent engage the child in a lesson that was developed around state standards. SPARK also conducts developmental screenings and provides referrals and links to community resources.

**Family School Connection**
A kindergarten-focused home-visiting program that enhances the partnerships between home and school to ensure kindergarten students possess the foundational skills needed to be on track for reading. Parents develop the skills necessary to support their child’s educational development and become actively engaged with the school. Family Coaches use home visits and after-school programming to share with families grade level games and activities to reinforce classroom instruction.
40 Years and Counting

As we look back through photos and mementos of our rich history, we found this picture from simpler days - a fundraiser to bring awareness about the organization into our community - before cell phones, websites, Facebook, and other social media.

In this timepiece, we made a remarkable find with the sign under the popcorn machine that reads “GOALS”.

I  Parent Education
II  Prevention Identification
III  Enjoy Parenthood
IV  Communication and School Connection

Family Connections has delivered on all these goals and more with our carefully crafted programs. The four original principles on this sign have been modified to the changing needs of our current times. Parenting and early childhood development/school readiness are constantly researched and evolving. In this information age, it’s nice to know that after 40 years, Family Connections is still relevant.

The principles not mentioned on the sign that Family Connections provides are play, friendships, advice, community, and love.

In our 40 years, Family Connections has become a leader in Northeast Ohio when talking about early childhood development and parenting.
Observations from the Playroom

When you walk into one of our playrooms, you’re immediately struck with an environment filled with colorful toys, joyful laughter, a toddler pleading her case, and a welcoming smile.

In the playroom, you will meet a variety of people with diverse backgrounds from the community. For all caregivers, there are many opportunities for discussing parenting comparisons, current events in the neighborhood/school, other Family Connections programs, and making plans for a future play date.

Family Connections has been a unique family destination for 40 years and counting. Others have duplicated our playrooms but can’t replicate what we genuinely offer. What’s the secret? Our staff, carefully designed playrooms, and curriculum.

Ellen Barrett and Ellen Barcus have welcomed families to the playrooms for a combined effort of 40+ years. For many new families, the Ellens are the first people they meet at Family Connections. They give caregivers reassurance, guidance, connections, and resources. Their gentle approach to modeling effective ways of communicating with children or talking about child-age stages in a non-judgmental way helps caregivers navigate the daily challenges of parenting you can’t get from a book or the internet.
## 2022 Finances

### Income

- Contributions & Grants: $542,750
- Contractual Services: $926,641
- Other Income (pandemic relief): $228,748
- Special Events (net expenses): $33,950
- In-Kind Services: $34,500
- Donated Facility: $4,893
- **Total Support**: $1,771,482

### Expenses

- Program Expenses: $1,265,501
- Management & General: $171,918
- Fundraising: $88,129
- In-Kind Services: $34,500
- **Total Expenses**: $1,560,048

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- Robbie Twells, Interim Secretary
- Andrew Bouthilet
- Sarah Cain Spannagel
- Michael Copeland
- Jeff Koons
- Tracey Marks
- H. David Rocker
- Sofia Sova

- Alexis Kim, Vice President
- Scott Henry, Treasurer
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- Rita Camardo
- Jed Davies
- Gayle Lewin
- Lissy Rand
- Sarah Schutt

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Grace Kress
Joyce Kucler

www.familyconnections1.org/get-involved/donate
In 2022, we celebrated the retirement of Executive Director, Joanne Federman after a 29-year career with Family Connections. Tribute gifts made in her honor include:

Anonymous
Shelley and Mark Assel
Jennifer and Jeremy Bordeaux
Susan and Michael Cargile
Beth Darmstadter

Ginnie and David Dawson
Laure and Scott Desmond
Jan and Michael Devereaux
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City of Shaker Heights
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Cleveland Hearing and Speech Center
CH-UH School District
CH-UH Board of Education
Cleveland Kids’ Book Bank
Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority
Cleveland Metropolitan School District
Cleveland Public Library
Cuyahoga County Board of Commissioners
Cuyahoga County Fatherhood Initiative
Cuyahoga County Public Library
Early Ages, Healthy Stages (a program of the Cuyahoga County Health Department)
Early Childhood Enrichment Center
Early Childhood Resource Center
Early Childhood Resource Center/SPARK Ohio
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East Cleveland Public Library
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Shaker Heights Public Library
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Slavic Village P-16, a MyCom Neighborhood
St. Vincent Charity
Starting Point
The Centers
The Literacy Cooperative
University Settlement
Urban Poverty & Community Development
at MSASS - CWRU
Voices for Ohio’s Children
Warrensville Heights City School District

Please note: these pages list gifts and grants gratefully received in 2022.
We apologize for any omissions.
Family Connections Staff

Beth Darmstadter
Executive Director

Jasmine Bailey
Family Coach: Mound Elementary School, CMSD

Ellen Barcus
Program Coordinator: Family Playroom at Shaker Library

Ellen Barrett
Program Coordinator: Family Playroom at Heights Libraries

Edward Denny IV
SPARK: Parent Partner

Quinzetta Ellis
Family Coach: Oxford Elementary School, CH-UH

Monica Gaulden
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Director of Programs

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Program Coordinator: Family School Connection

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SPARK: Parent Partner

Demitria McKenzie
SPARK: Parent Partner, Cuyahoga County

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Playroom/Engagement Associate

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Karen Reinhardt
SPARK: Parent Partner, Cleveland Heights-University Heights

Trena Saxon
SPARK: Program Director

Mildred Seward
Administrative Staff

Loretta Slaughter
SPARK: Administrative Staff

LaKeesha Tolliver Funches
SPARK: Recruitment, Retention, and Training Supervisor

Sharon Walters
Data Specialist

Salema Wiggins
SPARK: Parent Partner, Cuyahoga County

Aja Williamson
SPARK: Parent Partner, Cuyahoga County

Chrissy Zoldak
SPARK: Parent Partner, Cuyahoga County

As we look forward, we encourage you to engage with us to help further our mission. With the support of our community, we delight in bringing early childhood literacy and connections to our families!

www.FamilyConnections1.org