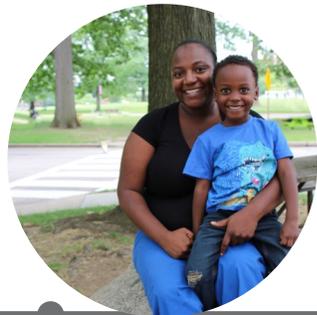




1982/1983
Heights Parent Center Founded by Carolyn Grossman & Barbara Soules

1980s
Personal computer becomes widespread



1990
World Wide Web created

1991/1992
Shaker Family Center Established at Former Sussex School

2023 Report to the Community

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!

1982 /1983
Heights Parent Center (CH) founded by two kindergarten teachers: Carolyn Grossman & Barbara Soules, who found kids were not ready for school, parents felt isolated



1988
Evening programming begins to attract more diverse families

1988
Toy Lending Library expands to 12 sections!



1990
World Wide Web created

1992
Baby & Me Starts at Heights Parent Center



1980s
Personal computer becomes widespread



1980s
VCR, Walkman, camcorder, video game console, cableTV, fax machine

1991/1992
Shaker Family Center established, championed by Shaker Mayor Patricia Means to meet the needs of young families



1993
First text sent

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



1998
Google
Search
Engine
introduced

2000
Caledonia Family
Resource Program
begins in East
Cleveland



2003
Little Heights
starts at
Heights Libraries
on Lee Road

1993
Playroom opens
at the Shaker
Family Center



1998
Play & Learn
Station opens at
Shaker Library

2002
Smart phone
invented
and
Email goes
wireless



2002
First DadsDay Run
promotes healthy
family fun and
raises funds

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.

2004
Greater Cleveland Family Support Consortium consists of both organizations and Lakewood Family Room

2004
Heights Even Start GED for moms, offering schooling and childcare for their kids



2010
SPARK is launched and branches into Cleveland and Maple Heights neighborhoods



2011
AI - Siri available in new iPhones

2004
TheFacebook Launches (later to be known as just Facebook)

2004
Strengthening Families Approach and Protective Factors Framework introduced



2008
Shaker Family Center becomes Family Connections

2008
Sony debuts the world's first OLED (organic light-emitting diode) TV

2010
Heights Parent Center and Family Connections merge as Family Connections of NEO

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 pre-school 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.

2015
FC strengthens partnership in the Cleveland Central Promise Neighborhood

2015
FC partners with Cleveland Public Library to open Woodland Wonderland

2020
All programs go virtual during the pandemic, requiring nimble & creative solutions by staff

2014
Amazon releases Alexa, a smart assistant on the smart speaker called Echo

2016
All staff certified in the National Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support

2020
Zoom & Teams become standard means of holding meetings

2020/2021
Family Connections moves its headquarters to Cleveland's Buckeye neighborhood, while maintaining library playrooms

Family Connections
40
40 Years of Strengthening Families in NE Ohio



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.

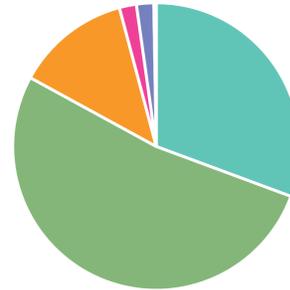
Ellen Barrett and Ellen Barcus have welcomed families to the playrooms for a combined effort of 40+ years. For many new families, the Ellens are the first people they meet at Family Connections. They give caregivers reassurance, guidance, connections, and resources. Their gentle approach to modeling 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

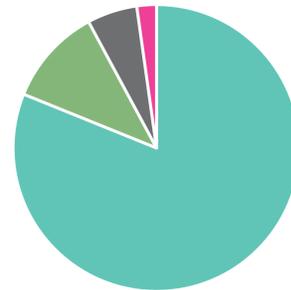
Income

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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 We apologize for any omissions.



Strong Families Build Strong Communities

11811 Shaker Boulevard
Suite 220
Cleveland, OH 44120



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
SPARK: Recruitment, Retention, and Training Supervisor

Karen Gillooly
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Development Associate

Charniece Holmes
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Loree McCorvey
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Demitria McKenzie
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Brontie Benn-Phillips
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Kirsten Radivoyevitch
SPARK: Parent Partner, Westside Cuyahoga County

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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

