

Play + Grow + Learn



SEATTLE CHILDREN'S PLAYGARDEN ANNUAL REPORT 2018

My word of the year is [Togetherness](#).

I spend a lot of time thinking about what brings us together. Singing brings us together, common goals, food, shops and parks and the beach brings us together. I also think a lot about what keeps us together. Fear, distance, prejudice, segregated schools and workplaces, two tracks, the mainstream track and the disability track keep us apart.

Together we built this amazing slice of heaven called The Seattle Children's PlayGarden. We built it together. We keep it running together. We play here. We work here, and we learn a lot about ourselves and each other here. At the PlayGarden we witness stories of togetherness from kids and adults who know too well the barriers to togetherness at the PlayGarden the social isolation experienced daily is just not a thing.

As I review the year, I recall so many who have been absolutely critical to our success. As many of you know the PG is located in a city park. In 2003 we asked Ken Bounds the superintendent for his support and we got it! Our partnership with Seattle Parks has made a good idea into a world class reality. Because we are located in a public park, we serve the whole community. We are a community center with nature and inclusion at its core.

We also partner with King county. Through the Best Start for Kids Initiative we have brought staffed Open Play to over 7,000 kids this year. Up until we received our BSK grant we had long waiting lists for our summer camp and preschool programs. Those waitlists are still there but we also provide over 1,400 hours of free, no registration, drop in activities for those who cannot make it to camp or preschool.

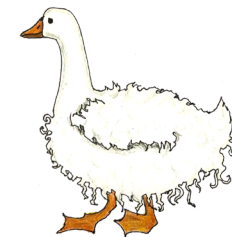


Last Saturday I subbed for Hannah our Inclusive Programs Director so she could go away for the weekend. Our newest staff member, Nick Weiss shared his wheelchair basketball skills with Gabe while his Dad, the talented Patrick Henry replaced the pump on our water feature, Maxim and his sister repainted our worm bin loads of kids fed the bunnies and collected eggs from our chickens, there was a bug hunt happening and all kinds of games that we adults couldn't quite follow. We had over 100 visitors to the PlayGarden that day, some in wheelchairs, one little guy learning to use his walker, a family from Vancouver following their visit to Seattle Children's Hospital with a trip the garden. We all came together because of the PlayGarden. The reach of the PlayGarden is wide and deep. Those of you who come to play, those who contribute to our scholarship fund, those who share our story, those who offer to trim our enormous laurel hedge into a caterpillar, we built this dream, we created this dream together.

**THANK YOU** for bringing us together!

Elizabeth Bullard

Executive Director







“PLAY IS PLAY,  
NO MATTER WHAT BODY  
YOU LIVE IN.” -Ella Li

## Who We Are



### Mission

The PlayGarden’s mission is to provide children of all abilities a safe, accessible, and adventurous place to play.

### Preschool

Preschool 2018 served 75 students from September to June. 54% of our students have disabilities or have a sibling with a disability and 36% of our students receive tuition assistance. We award \$30,000 in tuition assistance, each year, and priority is given to children with disabilities, children of color, and children from low income families. No family is turned away from our preschool for financial reasons. More and more families of kids with disabilities are seeing an outdoor preschool program as not only possible for their child, but enormously beneficial. Playing and learning alongside our typically developing students, we have preschoolers with feeding tubes, preschoolers who are nonverbal, and preschoolers who are wheelchair users, as well as preschoolers with language and motor delays. It is a joy to create and facilitate an environment that makes such inclusion possible.

“Since starting school, Liam’s speech has improved, his personality has expressed itself in new ways, his motor skills have increased. The instructors have connected with him in ways that help him connect...taking walks, playing on the slide, feeding the chickens...these are all things that have brought him to life. The best part of him being able to attend, is his ability to be a part of a group of kids that help each other and build each other up. In their lifetime, there will always be people that will try to tear them down. The experiences that Liam has gotten with the PlayGarden will remind him that there will also always be people who lift him up. We will forever be grateful for the stepping stones that have started Liam’s journey, and will be forever grateful for the people who make donations that allow the stepping stones to be there.”

- Liam’s Mom





“YOUR HAND IS YOUR BASKET.  
PICK A HANDFUL OF BERRIES AND LEAVE  
THE REST FOR OTHERS.”

## Summer Camp

Every summer the PlayGarden comes to life with nine weeks of summer camp. Each week we welcome 20-25 youth, ages 3.5 to 21. There are four junior counselors, and ten teen and young adult counselors. Many of our counselors were campers themselves. Ella and her sister, Cleo have attended camp together for over 10 years.

“My first memory of camp was Cleo absolutely falling in love with a counselor named Mica. Not many people know how to interact with nonverbal kids, but Mica spoke Cleo’s language. Cleo was in giggles and shrieks for hours upon end, and I never once had to check in on her. She finally found a space in which she could exist entirely, without interruption, without judgment, surrounded by friends”.

-Ella Li, Camp Counselor

## Open Play

Full PlayGarden Experience to ALL who come to play. Free, staff supported, open to all, no registration required. Activities vary from day to day and are always designed to be accessible for people with disabilities, encourage parents/ caregivers and children to engage in intergenerational play, and promote interactions with nature. In 2018 over 7,000 people came to play!

“I am so glad we found this place. My family just found out that my son has autism and it has been really hard on us navigating what it all means. We have been having a hard time with schools and we pretty much can only plan one week or so in advance for things because of all his new therapies and so this is great that we can just drop in when it works for us. And it’s free! We live just over in West Seattle so I am sure you will see us here a lot” - Parent of a three-year- old boy recently diagnosed with autism

## Supported Employment

The PlayGarden offers employment opportunities for young adults with disabilities at camp, preschool and Open Play. Representation is important. The impact of seeing yourself represented, whether that’s in media or in the classroom, is powerful. Hiring young adults with disabilities gives our preschoolers, campers and open play visitors with disabilities the opportunity to see someone like them, doing meaningful work in a job where they are respected and valued.



## 2018 Accomplishments



**We wrote a book!** Last summer we held several focus groups with parents of children with disabilities, with other youth service providers and with kids themselves to learn about their experiences with inclusion. At the onset of this project I thought it was going to be hard to write a book, right? It's hard to write, what do you include, how do you convey all you want to, how do you begin to approach the deep stigma that disability in our culture carries, but it was easy. The parents and kids and coaches and dance instructors wrote the book.

We wrote it together. The book is called **"Say Yes to Kids with Disabilities. Stories and Strategies for Including All Kids."** It is filled with beauty and heartbreak, of stories of a small dance center that makes room for Winnie who has down syndrome, of the countless times families shared feeling hurt, angry, embarrassed and defeated by an outing that was supposed to be fun. It is being used across King County and the country to help parents advocate for their child, and by youth care providers to help them include everyone in their programs and spaces.

It is available for purchase or as a free download on our [website: www.childrensplaygarden.org](http://www.childrensplaygarden.org)



## Our Growing Garden

The capital construction project, called **Pathway for Play** is well underway. This project will add important safety, accessibility, and visibility features to our facility. Phase 1 of our Pathway for Play project, a brand new playground, was completed in June!

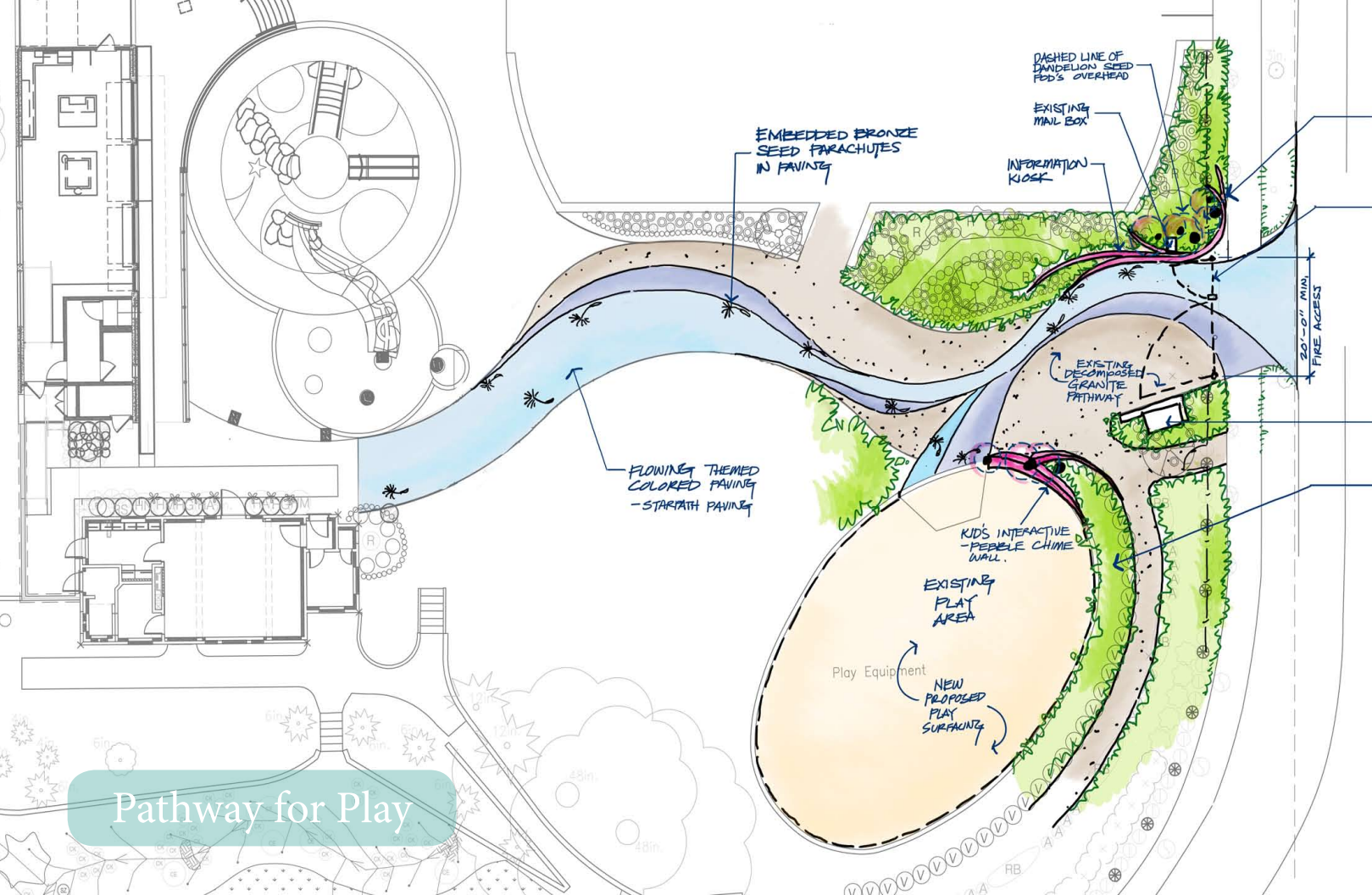
Our **Pathway for Play** project includes:

- \* Front gate signage will replace the temporary banner we currently have.
- \* A kiosk that will be both a play feature for children and a community bulletin board for posting events, program information and general information about the PlayGarden.
- \* Tall Oversized Dandelions will mark the entrance and invite children to follow the seeds as they float into the PlayGarden.
- \* Self-latching gates will be installed on all 8-side gates to ensure the safety of the users of the PlayGarden.
- \* Interactive play features including a wavy walkway, pebble chimes and art elements along the gravel driveway.
- \* Ground Level Pathway lighting that will illuminate the long pathway from the street entry to the Garden House and Field House.

**Wavy Walkway:** Children entering the PlayGarden on wheels will be welcomed by an undulating concrete wavy walkway.

Funded by the State of Washington, private foundations and individual donors.

Design team: Stephen Hirt/ Artist, Trimpin/ Artist, Dennis Poon/ Associate AIA MIG-Portico, Wendy Welch/ Garden Designer, Liz Bullard/ PlayGarden ED, Andy Sheffier/ Project Manager, Seattle Parks and Recreation.





# 2018 Donors & Supporters

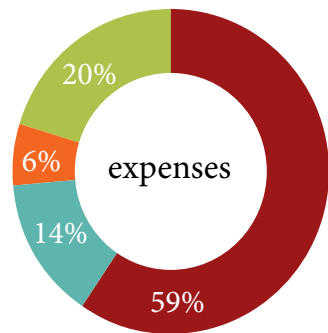
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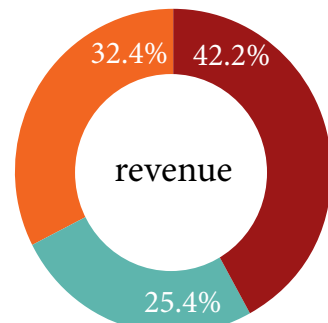
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SEATTLE CHILDREN'S  
**PLAYGARDEN**  
 A Garden for Everyone





THIS IS YOUR **PLAYGARDEN**. YOU **BELONG** HERE. **BE KIND** TO YOURSELF AND OTHERS. **PLANT** SEEDS AND WATCH THEM **GROW**. AND **EAT** THEM. **LEARN** WHY THE CLOUDS MOVE AND HOW THE SUN WARMS THE EARTH, WHY LEAVES FALL, THE SIGN FOR I LOVE YOU. **PLAY** BY YOURSELF AND WITH OTHERS. FIND **TREASURES** AND THEN HIDE THEM FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO FIND. **INCLUDE EVERYONE**. TAKE TURNS, SHARE SHOVELS, TRUCKS, AND TURNS ON THE SCOOTER. TELL EACH OTHER YOUR IDEAS AND STORIES. WHEN YOU HURT SOMEONE ON THE INSIDE OR ON THE OUTSIDE, **ASK, "WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE IT BETTER?"** USE TWO HANDS WHEN PICKING KALE: ONE TO STEADY THE STEM SO THE ROOTS STAY IN THE GROUND AND THE OTHER TO PLUCK THE LEAF. **NOT EVERYONE CAN DO EVERYTHING, BUT EVERYONE CAN DO SOMETHING**. LEARN ABOUT WHAT THAT SOMETHING IS. CHICKENS AND WORMS CAN'T SWIM. BUT CHICKENS LAY EGGS AND WORMS MAKE OUR SOIL. **YOUR HAND IS YOUR HARVEST BASKET**. PICK A HANDFUL OF BERRIED AND LEAVE THE REST FOR OTHERS. DO IT YOURSELF, IF YOU CAN. ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT. OFFER HELP TO OTHERS. **LISTEN** TO THE RAIN, THE BEES, AND EACH OTHER. **DRESS FOR THE WEATHER**. ONLY CLIMB THE STRONG TREES, THOSE WITH THICK BRANCHES THAT DO NOT BEND. THE PAPA GOOSE IS NOT MEAN OR BAD, HE IS PROTECTING HIS FLOCK. **WE ALL HAVE A PURPOSE**. YOUR FRIENDS ARE MY FRIENDS, AND MY FRIENDS ARE YOUR FRIENDS. **PLAY MORE**.