

2013 ANNUAL REPORT **CORNERSTONE CENTER** **FOR EARLY LEARNING, INC.**

*A United Way Program for Children
From Six Weeks to Six Years of Age*



Proud member of

United Way
of Greater St. Louis



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CORNERSTONE CENTER FOR EARLY LEARNING, INC.

A United Way Program for Children from Six Weeks to Six Years of Age

Mission: Cornerstone Center for Early Learning provides high-quality, affordable, comprehensive care and education for children while following a constructivist philosophy that governs all aspects of operation. As a nonprofit, United Way agency, the center enables parents to enter or remain in the workforce, or to seek higher education. Cornerstone Center encourages the development of all people within its sphere, promoting the autonomy, creativity, and initiative of children, staff, and family members.

About Cornerstone: Cornerstone Center was founded in September 1969 by a group of churches on the Near South Side whose members recognized a need for child care provided on an income-adjusted basis. From its inception, the school has been a nonprofit, secular program, and has welcomed a diverse population of children from working families. In 1974, the center became a United Way agency. A decade later, Cornerstone's long-standing commitment to quality education was demonstrated when it became the first program in St. Louis, and the third in Missouri, to attain accredited status. In 2013, Cornerstone achieved our 8th accreditation certification from Missouri Accreditation of Programs for Children and Youth.

In 1994, with support from a network of funders, the school acquired a historic building in the Shaw Neighborhood and renovated it to serve more working families. This self-contained facility opened in January 1995, and offered an Infant/Toddler program for the first time in the center's history. The number of classrooms doubled and the teaching staff tripled. In 2000, 2007, and 2008, Cornerstone Center completed modest expansions. At capacity, 156 children from six weeks to five years fill 12 bright classrooms; their education is guided by a caring, knowledgeable staff.

Cornerstone is a well-respected leader in the early education community and we have a well-established relationship with the state of Missouri. In honor of our commitment to students with special needs, Cornerstone received the *2006 Stellar Performer* award for our field from Variety the Children's Charity of St. Louis. In 2007, the St. Louis County YWCA Head Start named our program its *Outstanding Partnership*. The same year, Cornerstone was one of only eight recipients statewide to be awarded a Missouri Preschool Project grant, which came to its successful completion in 2013. In 2010, we were chosen to receive a Child Care Facilities Improvement Grant from the State of Missouri.

Demographics: Cornerstone Center serves children of all economic levels, but many live in poverty, despite the full-time employment of their parents. In 2013, of 244 students enrolled, 50% lived on annual incomes of less than \$20,000. Thirty-six percent of students were so poor according to state guidelines, that they attended our program free-of-charge. Fifty-five percent were members of single-parent households. Last year, 91% of Cornerstone students were city residents. Approximately 65% of families served were of African-American origin, 21% were of European-American extraction; 7% were multi-racial, and another 7% came from Hispanic backgrounds.

Cornerstone Center actively solicits the enrollment of foster children, knowing that their traumatic beginnings almost always produce challenging behaviors that require special commitment from educators. We welcome students who have disabilities, believing that all members of the learning community benefit from immersion in a diverse society. On-site therapies, which are principally funded by charitable gifts, allow these children to play alongside their typically-developing peers, growing and learning in a warm, natural setting.

Program Curriculum and Goals: Cornerstone strives to prepare students for a lifetime of positive social interaction and learning. Our teaching approaches encourage reflection, communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity. We believe that children learn best from active involvement with all aspects of the world. From their earliest days at Cornerstone, students explore the beginnings of reading, writing, math, art and science as they play in water, pound on playdough, draw and paint, sing and dance, or cook and bake. Through “hands on/minds on” experiences, they build the early foundations of autonomous behavior, taking responsibility for their learning, and accepting the natural consequences of their decisions. We have proof that our methods are working: in 2013, 91% of Cornerstone students scored “on target” or better on nationally normed screenings that compare outcomes with peers nationwide.

Family Support Initiatives: Cornerstone Center strengthens low-income, high-risk families by providing a wide range of education and support services. Believing that we can only enhance the future of children by improving the present for their parents, Cornerstone Center offers a variety of parent support initiatives. Knowing the powerful link between nutrition and cognition, we have created an exemplary meal program that includes infant formula and organic baby food; the cost of this program exceeds USDA reimbursements by over \$30,000 annually. Knowing how often low-income children are pressured into premature toilet training in order to reduce the strain on the family budget, we provide diapering supplies for 78 infants, toddlers, and two-year-olds; this project costs the center over \$10,000 annually. Regular parent/teacher education meetings develop a common vocabulary between home and school. These sessions help break down barriers and forge the kind of strong, supportive partnerships that lead to school success. Additionally, the school provides scholarships for many students and offers *Head Start* services for preschoolers of income-eligible families.

Funding Sources: Forty percent of families pay at least a portion of the cost of care, with parent tuition funding approximately 17% of operation expenses. Three government programs (USDA, *Head Start*, and State Tuition Assistance) support 52% of expenses. The United Way of Greater St. Louis provides 18% of operating revenue. The center's own development efforts provide the remainder of our operating funds.

Board of Directors: Cornerstone Center is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors that consists of corporate, community, and parent representatives. The Board is the official decision-making body of the center, charged with furthering the mission of the agency, selecting and supporting the executive, strategic planning, identifying and managing resources, approving broad outlines of programs and services, advancing the public image, approving major changes in the center's operation, and assuring the agency's fiscal integrity.

Administration and Management: Daily operations of the center are supervised by an administrative team consisting of: the Executive Director, the Center Director (Business Manager), the Coordinator of Family Services (Social Worker), the Coordinator of Special Programs (*Head Start*, Development, Screenings, and Volunteers), the Office Manager, and the Office/Operations Assistant.

Community and Volunteer Involvement: Cornerstone collaborates with a variety of other entities, including the United Way's Volunteer Center, St. Louis Children's Hospital (Healthy Kids Express Mobile Health Unit), *Head Start*, Positive Support for Kids, St. Louis University (Micah House, Schools of Nursing and Occupational Therapy), and Ready Readers. In 2013, 411 volunteers donated 3,456 hours of service to the center. These hard-working supporters played with children in the classrooms and outside, painted rooms, prepared classroom materials, participated in field trips, provided gardening and grounds keeping services.

2012-2013 REVENUE AND EXPENSES
CORNERSTONE CENTER FOR EARLY LEARNING, INC.

	2012 Audited	2013 Audited
<u>Revenues</u>		
-Fees, admissions, and other earned income (other than government contracts)	\$ 315,727	\$ 344,350
-Government programs	\$ 1,057,025	\$ 1,017,250
-Interest and other investment income	\$ 251	\$ 272
-United Way	\$ 355,847	\$ 353,948
-Individual gifts/Foundation Grants	\$ 199,842	\$ 186,960
-Corporate grants	\$ 1,662	\$ 1,550
-Other	\$ 110,132	\$ 69,878
Total	\$ 1,976,964	\$ 1,974,208
<u>Expenditures</u>		
-General and administration	\$ 307,535	\$ 315,815
-Program	\$ 1,500,197	\$ 1,517,958
-Fundraising	\$ 42,643	\$ 43,780
-Property, plant and equipment	\$ 0	
-Other	\$ 0	
Total	\$ 1,850,375	\$ 1,877,553
<u>Net Assets</u>		
Beginning of year:	\$ 1,703,010	\$ 1,829,599
End of Year:	\$ 1,829,599	\$ 1,926,254
Change in net assets:	\$ 126,589	\$ 96,655