



# CSC Downtown News

## A NOTE FROM DEIDRA



I've been excited to write this note to you! It's hard to believe it's been 2 years since we launched the campaign for CSC Downtown. In fact, the first dollars donated came in March of 2022. Since then, the highlights and successes are almost too many to name. With your support, we've assisted thousands of families and this year, we saw almost 300 children walk, run, and skip down our hallways. The corridors and stairwells echo with their little voices, filling CSC Downtown with joy.

I'm so proud of the year that we've just had. We have celebrated with you during (a couple!) ribbon cuttings, welcomed dignitaries and staff from The Office of Head Start, and joined forces with our friends at Valley Health Partners to better serve our families. The children participated in a yearlong art program hosted by the Allentown Art Museum which was showcased in their own public exhibit! And, this summer, construction will be finished on a new NatureScape, an innovative outdoor space to take our immersive classroom curriculum to a whole new level. As we prep and plan for next school year, we look forward to offering therapeutic preschool classrooms for children who might need extra support to maximize their success.

What a wonderful journey it's been. Thank you. Thank you for believing in our vision, for believing in children and families, and for knowing that they deserve the very best. I hope you enjoy our CSC Downtown News Update. If you ever have questions, or want to be involved differently, please don't hesitate to reach out.

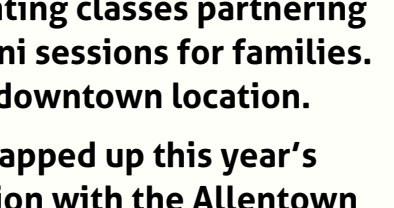
Gratefully yours,

*Debra Z. Vachon*  
CSC President

P.S. Perhaps, if you are available in the fall, we would love to take you on a tour to see our incredible teachers in action. Please reach out if interested!

## HEAD START UPDATES

We've had a tremendous year this year! Renovations were completed on the second floor and that gave us eight additional classrooms, a fitness center, innovation lab, work space for the Early Learning Resource Center, Enrollment staff, Family Engagement staff, and a conference and training space. Our training space hosted well-attended Family Workshops with presentations on financial literacy, first-time home buying, stress management, and autism support. In addition we hosted parenting classes partnering with Second Harvest Food Bank to provide Cooking Matters mini sessions for families. We're so pleased we can now offer these opportunities in our downtown location.



We just wrapped up this year's collaboration with the Allentown Art Museum. Parents were offered the opportunity to attend a painting workshop and receive a private museum tour earlier in the fall. Art museum staff created an "art in residence" program working with children, parents and staff that culminated in a public exhibit in the community gallery.

And finally, classrooms and staff were engaged in the Mindful Child Initiative with the Pratyush Sinha Foundation. Teachers had two mindfulness sessions - one in the fall and one in the spring, and children participated in six mindfulness sessions from October through March where the instructor went into the classrooms and did activities with the children.



For those of us in Head Start, we're gearing up to host a 5-week summer program with fun activities for children and families. Teaching staff are taking a much-deserved break for summer and we're looking forward to welcoming them all back in August!

## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



"Ready, Set, Grow!" How perfect is that guiding theme when describing a shared vision with Community Services for Children? This theme is at the heart of a new project that is now taking shape as part of the PNC Foundation's PNC's Grow Up Great® initiative. This comprehensive, bilingual philanthropic initiative is designed to prepare children from birth to age five in school and life.

Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, through PNC Grow Up Great PNC offers financial support, resources and materials, and employee volunteer engagement. They've been with us for holiday drives, book drives, reading time in the classroom, supporting teachers, school readiness, hosting virtual field trips and more.

For several months, PNC and CSC have been working on an exciting new project that will support children for years to come: The NatureScape. In the heart of Allentown, located in an area that was previously nothing but concrete and asphalt, now boasts an innovative and brand-new outdoor space for our children.



A state-of-the-art fusion of outdoor time and extended classroom education space, this renovated area has taken our immersive classroom curriculum to a whole new level. The NatureScape has designated spaces for small-group learning, quiet reading time, and large-group outdoor play. And, to top it off there is a full wall, collaboratively designed, nature mural to beautify the space and bring it all together.

"Through the PNC Grow Up Great initiative, we've been a long-time champion for high-quality early childhood education locally and across the country. Our relationship with CSC is a core component of our commitment to ensuring our future leaders are well prepared to succeed in school and beyond. PNC recognizes that outdoor play provides significant benefits for a young child's learning and development. We look forward to seeing this project become a reality in downtown Allentown at CSC," said Pete Danchak, PNC regional president for Northeast PA.

Together with PNC, we'll cut the ribbon on our new NatureScape when the children return from summer vacation. We can't wait to witness the excitement and joy it brings. PNC Foundation, from the bottom of our hearts, thank you for understanding the needs of our children and caring enough to show them the very best. PNC and CSC have worked together for 20 years now - the longest-running PNC Grow Up Great connection in the Northeast - here's to 20 more!

## EARLY LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER

OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING



The Early Learning Resource Center in Region 14 has also greatly benefited from the CSC Downtown renovations. ELRCs are steadfastly focused on collaboration, access,

and partnership, and each of these pillars has been strengthened because of their newly designed workspace. Collaboration and networking with Head Start staff has increased significantly, including establishing quarterly meetings between all staff, leading to better support for families.

ELRC hosted several PreK Counts Community Partner meetings, to share ideas and plan for future growth. Local organizations, such as DaVinci Center, WIC office, and Parent to Parent, have been invited to present to share the most up-to-date information with staff. And finally, Valley Health Partners, just upstairs on the 3rd floor, have been wonderful and accommodating neighbors for staff and clients.



The ELRC prides itself on learning to understand challenges and then working to remove barriers to success. Staff possess an extraordinary level of expertise and knowledge about local resources. When families meet with staff, they listen to determine needs and concerns, and then they activate by suggesting resources and connecting families to the right agencies to support future success. Moving to CSC Downtown was just another example of listening. Transportation, whether that is money for bus passes or having a reliable vehicle, is something staff hear frequently. Moving to Center City Allentown has removed that barrier and allowed easier access for clients to meet with ELRC staff. Since the move in October 2023, staff saw 900 visitors!

ELRC staff meet with families all summer to ensure a smooth school year transition. We're so grateful for our new space and we look forward to increasing partnerships and connection with families, providers, and agencies!

## VHP PARTNERSHIP

With the added advantages of our expanded space in downtown Allentown, we were able to join forces with Valley Health Partners Community Health Center (VHP).



VALLEY HEALTH PARTNERS

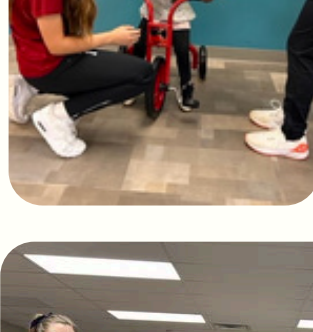
VHP, a federally qualified health center look-alike (FQHC-LA) offering comprehensive primary care and other services, opened its 20,000-square-foot space on the third floor in mid-2023. As VHP's largest standalone location, the VHP Children's Clinic has expanded, offering primary pediatric care, the VHP Community Smiles Dental Program, and the VHP Community Vision Center, offering a full range of ophthalmology and optometric services. In addition, VHP provides a pediatric acute care center, offering walk-in same-day appointments for children. Together CSC and VHP form a one-of-a-kind center

offering a broad range of early childhood education, health, and social services to local children, and families in need in one neighborhood location. We are so proud we can offer these services for our families and children, just upstairs.



## COMMUNITY INITIATIVES & ADVANCEMENT

In partnership with VHP, and in an effort to share resources and provide direct support to families, staff from the CI&A team table in the lobby of the VHP clinic. This allows families direct access to our bilingual staff, without an appointment, to ask for support with enrollment paperwork and guidance on resources. Trust and rapport are built during these invaluable touchpoints allowing us to better support their children.



The Community Initiatives & Advancement Team has also been busy with volunteer groups in our new space. In September, the Parkland School District girls' soccer team celebrated and played with the children in our fun and fitness spaces. In March, Amazon employees spent the morning in our classrooms as part of our Read Across America celebration. They read books with our children, using silly voices in funny stories, and answered a lot of little learner questions!



We all loved spending time together! Then, in May, members of the Junior League packed over 500 summer activity kits! These bags were filled with playing cards, activity books, bubbles, a jump rope, crayons, paper, and more. The students received these bags on the last day of school. Thank you, Parkland soccer athletes, Junior League, and Amazon for your time and care of our students!

## INTERESTED IN DONATING OR VOLUNTEERING?

If you are interested in donating to our CSC Downtown space, volunteering with our children, or getting a tour of our classrooms don't hesitate to reach out. We'd love to hear from you! Reach out to Gillian Smith Sharkey, Director of Communications & Advancement at [gsharkey@cscinc.org](mailto:gsharkey@cscinc.org) or 610-437-6000 ext 2303.

You can also donate online by clicking the link [here!](#)



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