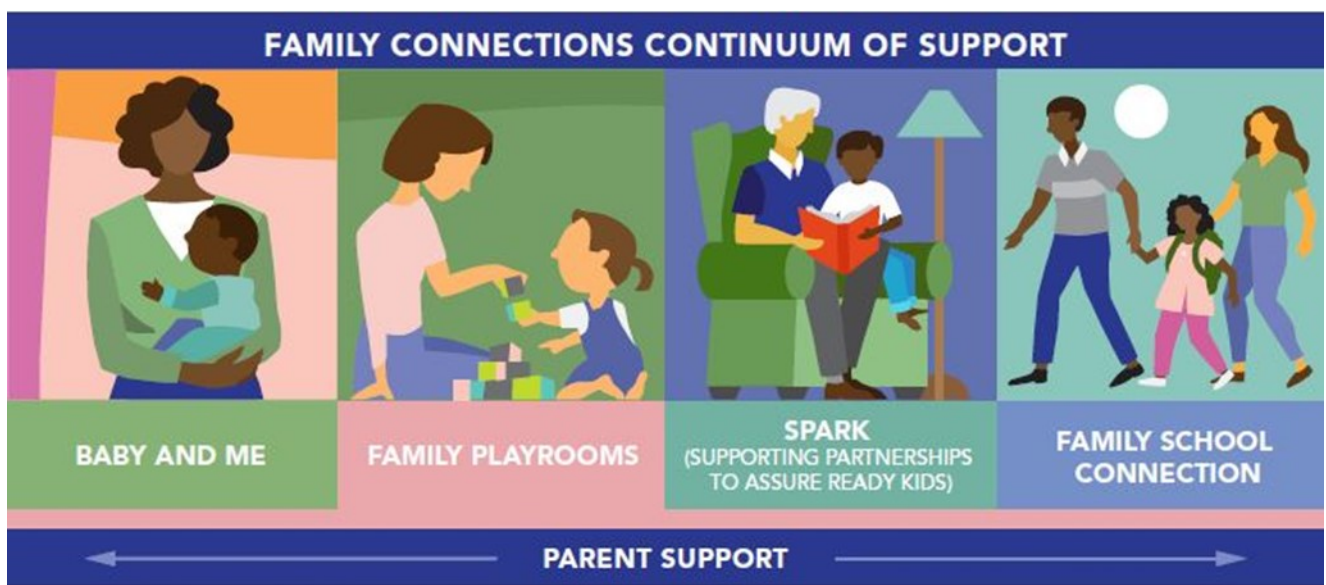




## Strong Families Build Strong Communities

Winter 2021

Family Connections: Partnering with Families of Young Children as we Learn, Grow & Thrive Together



Family Connections had a busy fall and holiday last month and reflected on how grateful we are to our community of families, friends, and donors. We have lots of exciting news to share!



## **NEO Foundations provide that SPARK for Early Literacy**

Many of you provide the contributions that allow Family Connections to provide a full continuum of support to children ages birth-6 and their parents/caregivers. In this edition, we highlight the Northeast Ohio Foundation grants that make the SPARK program possible and thank our many foundation grantors for their continued support. In this issue, we highlight two of our current funders.

Serving 310 families, Family Connections offers SPARK (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids), an in-home school readiness program that helps preschoolers be ready for kindergarten and empowers parents to be actively involved in their child's education. Family Connections provides a trained home visitor (parent partner) to deliver lessons and activities aligned with the Ohio Early Learning and Development Standards. Parent (or caregiver) involvement is key to the SPARK model and parents become empowered as the primary educators of their children.

### **Spotlight on: Sisters of Charity Foundation**

SPARK began as a collaboration between the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton. In 2010, The Literacy Cooperative introduced SPARK to Cuyahoga County and selected Family Connections to deliver these services to hundreds of four-year-old children each year. Thanks to multiple funding sources, SPARK continues to thrive into 2021 and beyond. Funding is currently provided by the Cuyahoga County Office of Early Childhood/Invest in Children, The Cleveland Foundation, The Bruening Foundation, the Sisters of Charity Foundation, and the state of Ohio.

A recent grant from the Sisters of Charity Foundation will allow us to focus on the Cleveland Central Promise Family Partners project, where we will address the widening achievement gap among children entering kindergarten in Central neighborhood schools. The grant provides funding to work intensively with 30 families. Each family will receive between 8 to 16 lessons that proven to increase kindergarten readiness skills. During each visit, our parent partner brings books, supplies and a new lesson and shows parents how to use these materials to talk and interact with their child to increase skills. Our goal is to gradually have the parent conduct the lesson, with the parent partner serving in a support role during the visit.

Best practices have been created by working with the Sisters of Charity Foundation, Ohio Guidestone and the Cleveland Central Promise Neighborhood team – a collective network of residents, organizations and educators focused on improving health and education outcomes for families and children in Central. We look forward to updating you on our success in the Central neighborhood!

## Spotlight on: The Bruening Foundation

The Bruening Foundation invests in efforts to disrupt the cycle of poverty for young families in Cuyahoga County. Knowing that earlier intervention can make a larger impact, we are delighted to receive a multi-year grant from The Bruening Foundation to serve a total of 90 three-year-old children in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District. The three-year-old program can help identify the need for early interventions and serve as a bridge from programs that serve birth-to-three to preschool. Numerous years of practice show that children enrolled in the three-year-old program are much more likely to complete the four-year-old program, leading to even greater Kindergarten readiness.

We salute the Bruening Foundation for funding this important cohort of children.

## Cuyahoga SPARK by the numbers:

**1,783 families served**

**1,039 home visits conducted**

**1,549 books distributed**

Over 61% of SPARK children were 'On-track' for Language & Literacy at kindergarten entry compared to between 28% and 45% of unserved children at Cleveland, East Cleveland, Maple Heights, and Warrensville Heights.

Parents made gains in their teaching interaction skills and demonstrated an overall positive change of 24% and these improvements were associated with their children's greater school readiness upon entering kindergarten.

34% of SPARK children scored within the Demonstrating Band of the KRA compared to between 8% and 23% of unserved children attending the same school districts.

[DONATE](#)

## Family Connections Foundation Grantors:

Many thanks to all our Foundation partners who help us fulfill our mission to engage families with young children to nurture social connections, enhance child development and improve school readiness.



**THE CHILDREN'S  
GUILD OF  
CLEVELAND**



**The Louise H.  
and David S.  
Ingalls Foundation**



**THE THOMAS H. WHITE FOUNDATION** 



## DadsDay Run Celebrates 20 Years with a New Course

After two years of virtual races due to the pandemic, Family Connections' DadsDay Run returns in person in 2022 to celebrate 20 years of racing with some exciting new changes! This upcoming year will be better than ever with a new course and expanded distance offerings, adding a 2.5-mile option to the traditional 5-mile and 1-mile distances.

The exciting new courses will begin and end at the Shaker Heights Main Library at the corner of Lee Road and Chagrin Boulevard on Father's Day morning, June 19, 2022. Racers will receive a custom DadsDay Race t-shirt and have the choice between a 5-mile, 2.5-mile and 1-mile course. As always, ties will be presented to each racer at the finish line, and a short Kids Sprint will be offered for the youngest racers free of charge, along with ice cream, snacks, and family entertainment. Special appearances by WKYC Meteorologist Matt Wentz and Shaker Heights Mayor David Weiss.

Family Connections kicked off DadsDay races in 2002, under the inspiration and leadership of Peter Nagusky, a longtime supporter and former board member who is serving as the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary DadsDay Run Honorary Chair. Peter says, "We're grateful for the tremendous corporate and community support over the past 20 years, which has combined to make this a one-of-a-kind annual event and provide important financial fuel to Family Connections."

The race has since become a key fundraiser and community building event for the organization, raising \$500,000+ over the years. Nearly 7,000 racers and their families have joined Family Connections to support families with young children on Father's Day morning these past 19 years.

The DadsDay race has become a fun annual tradition for many local families to celebrate fathers and the joys of parenting on Father's Day morning. The Bordeaux family, Jeremy, Jen, Tyler (14), Nathan (12), and Julia (6), have been running DadsDay races since before Julia was born. Both Nathan and Julia's first races were toddling down the road for the Kids Sprint before they were even in preschool. Tyler ran his first distance race in the 5-mile DadsDay Run in 2015, prior to joining the cross-country team in middle school. "We can't wait to be back to racing in person next year and check out the new course!" says Jeremy, who often runs various race distances on Father's Day morning with each of his kids.



**Interested in Sponsorships,  
Day-Of volunteering or serving on the  
DadsDay Run committee?**

**Contact Susie Cargile  
Development Director**

**[SCARGILE@FAMILYCONNECTIONS1.ORG](mailto:SCARGILE@FAMILYCONNECTIONS1.ORG)**

**Please mark your calendars to join us on  
Father's Day, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022!**





## Thanking the CAVS for giving our Kids a night to remember

Their eyes were filled with delight when the children from the SPARK and Family School Connection programs attended a CAVS game at Rocket Mortgage Field House. We are grateful to the CAVS organization for providing more than 300 free tickets to the game, and opportunities for photos with Moondog. We were thrilled to "Let 'Em Know" how phenomenal our CAVS are!

## Great Opportunity as Family Connections seeks new Executive Director

In our last newsletter, we announced the bittersweet news that our executive director Joanne Federman will be retiring in July of 2022. Therefore, the Board of Directors of Family Connections seeks a committed, visionary, and innovative leader to serve as its next executive director and to drive the mission, vision, and strategic plan of the organization in partnership with FC's Board of Directors, staff and volunteers. Please click on the link for a job description:

[FC-ED-Job-Description-for-Distribution.pdf \(familyconnections1.org\)](#)

If you or anyone you know is looking to serve a dynamic organization that makes an impact in the lives of young children and their families, we encourage applicants to provide a cover letter that highlights your qualifications, a resume, and three professional references. Please email to [ltighe@janusmallassociates.com](mailto:ltighe@janusmallassociates.com) and put "Family Connections" in the subject line. While there is no application deadline, review of applications will begin during the week of January 24, 2022. Note: interested applicants must be willing to submit a background check as part of the evaluation process.



## Supporting Family Connections this Holiday Season



We could not do all of this without your support. There are many ways to support Family Connections with financial contributions, in-kind gifts of needed items or specialized volunteering opportunities. You can click on the Donate button below or keep your eye out for special items or volunteering needed on our website <https://familyconnections1.org/get-involved/>. Many thanks for being a part of our community and happiest of holiday wishes!

