charlestown playhouse

Building a Strong Foundation for Play

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Since 1936, Playschool has been built on a strong foundation of play.

Play that is **child-centered**, rooted by roaming the wooded hillside, and allowed to run free through painting, music and dramatic creations.

Play that is **skillfully guided** by experienced teachers, so that science, numeracy and literacy are learned through exploration and social-emotional learning is always at the forefront.

Play that is safe, but challenges children to **expand** their horizons.

Play is the way that children **learn**.

At Charlestown Playhouse, play is **essential to our mission** of providing an exceptional learning environment that supports the whole child's development and places the needs of the children first. We also believe in supporting families in their parenting and helping them to learn to participate in their child's educational experiences.

Over the last year, we have made **significant investments** in our programming, our staff, and our building to ensure that we are serving our children and families in the best possible way.

In 2023-24, Charlestown Playhouse made significant investments in our programming, our staff, our building, and our future.

Our first

Strategic Plan was created in over a decade.

1/4

of families are participating in our new Before- and After-Care programs.

Dually

licensed now by both the Pennsylvania Department of Education and Department of Human Services to better serve the needs of our families.

26%

of families received tuition assistance, totaling over $373,000 in the last 10 years.

9,800

volunteer hours by families and alumni as classroom helpers, coop hours and committee events.

80

children learning through play!

Building Our Program

We have been building strong operational and programmatic foundations in order to fully support the diversity of students and families that we serve.

We have made our school more responsive to working families by adding **Before-Care** and **After-Care.** These new programs are being used by almost a quarter of families.

They are possible because the school is **now dually licensed** by both the Pennsylvania Department of Education and Department of Human Services. Our foundational morning program has not changed a bit, but now we can meet families needs more fully.

We also meet our families' needs with tuition assistance - an average of **26% of families receive assistance** each year, totaling **over $373,000** in the last 10 years. We received $19,251 in Scholarship Funding through the Educational Improvement Tax Credit program for 2023-34.

A **new music teacher**, Rin Smith, offers weekly music to every class. Visiting arts programming, such as dance with Kristen Bissinger, enhance Playschool's **emphasis on creative expression**.

Building Our Infrastructure

We completed 4 major projects this year, as well as maintaining our building and grounds for health and safety. These projects are largely funded by committed donors like you!

- The cantilevered corner of the **Yellow (2's) Room** has been supported with two metal posts, a new beam, and new siding.
- The **Bike Yard** (dating to the 1869 Amity School) was retrofitted with drainage, the wall repaired, and surface repaved.
- A new **Wooden Playhouse** was built, replacing the original one from 1992.
- Our main entrance was made safer by **permitting, widening and paving the driveway**.
- The **Tire Swing Oak** receives special treatment, and all our trees are continually maintained for safety.
- **Safety** of our staff and children is a priority which has meant upgrading doors, locks, lighting and other safety features.
- **New learning materials**, such as a platform swing and new light table, are always being added to enhance the opportunities for play.

Child Led Play Every Day

Children learning through play is our foundational vision. Students learn independence, problem-solving, risk-taking, motor skills, and how to be part of a group through a range of indoor and outdoor play. Their social and emotional development takes many forms, always guided by our professional teachers, assistants, and parent helpers.

Teacher Excellence

- Teachers participated in a Leadership Series together throughout the year.
- Two teachers are currently pursuing additional Master's degrees.
- "Permanent substitutes" are now full staff, enhancing classroom consistency and communication.

Building Our Community

League Events

League events such as Back to School playdates and coffee, Mommy & Me playtime for younger siblings, craft nights, Harvest Party, Bazaar, monthly meetings and coffee hours, and the Honoree luncheon create multiple opportunities for parents to get to know each other. The Auction event brings alumni and families together as well for an evening of both fun and fundraising.

Charlestown Sale

The Sale is so important to our school, as well as the greater community. The Sale Committee is proud to give vouchers for each Sale to the Phoenixville Area School District social work team and other organizations. The last three Sales have been the highest grossing on record, and we had 325 consignors in Fall 2024 and over 250 consignors in Spring 2024.

Phoenixville Community

We also gave back to the larger Phoenixville community through participation in PACS Food Drives and Phoenixville Senior Center Valentine's Day.

Parent Involvement

- Parent helpers are still the bedrock of our cooperative program.
- Helping in the classroom benefits both students, parents, and staff as they work together to guide social and emotional learning.
- Parents volunteered almost 10,000 hours last year! This went to maintenance, League, Sale, Auction and other events, and, of course, the classroom.

Strategic Plan

We completed our formal Strategic Planning process in 2024, for the first time in a over a decade.

A consultant facilitated a survey, focus groups and individual interviews with current and past staff, parents, and board members. The resulting information was compiled into a community feedback report and used as a basis for further Board discussion and the resulting goals.

The Strategic Plan will guide our organizational priorities for the next three years.

Strategic Plan Goals

SECTION I: PROGRAMS - Strengthen existing programs.

SECTION II: FUNDRAISING - Increase fundraising revenue and community recognition through enhancing fundraising, community-building, and marketing activities.

SECTION III: HUMAN RESOURCES - Ensure CPH is recognized as a high quality employer, with a culture that supports positive employee and volunteer engagement.

SECTION IV: GOVERNANCE – BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEES - Review and enhance, as needed, the composition and functioning of the Board of Directors; and improve the functioning of the standing committees to provide additional support and oversight for CPH.

SECTION V: FACILITIES - Ensure CPH has a safe and well-maintained play yard and school building that pass all inspections and support the school programs.

SECTION VI: THE COOPERATIVE - Increase engagement in and effectiveness of the cooperative while also affirming its value to the CPH community; and Ensure CPH's volunteers receive the training and support they need.

SECTION VII: COMMUNICATIONS/ADMINISTRATION/FINANCE - Increase financial oversight; and Improve internal and external communications and administration through the use of technology.

This plan was funded in part by the Phoenixville Community Health Foundation and the Archie W. and Grace Berry Foundation. More detail on the Strategic Plan process, participants and goals can be found on our website.

We are grateful for all those who have been involved in creating this important plan.

How To Support Playschool

We are grateful to everyone who supports Playschool financially, as well as with your time and energy! Every person can contribute to the resilience and vitality of our school.

We welcome **alumni participation** on the Auction and Sale Committees.

Receive Pennsylvania tax credit by directing individual or business tax burden to Playschool through the **Educational Improvement Tax Credit**. This supports financial aid.

We can now receive gifts of **stock**.

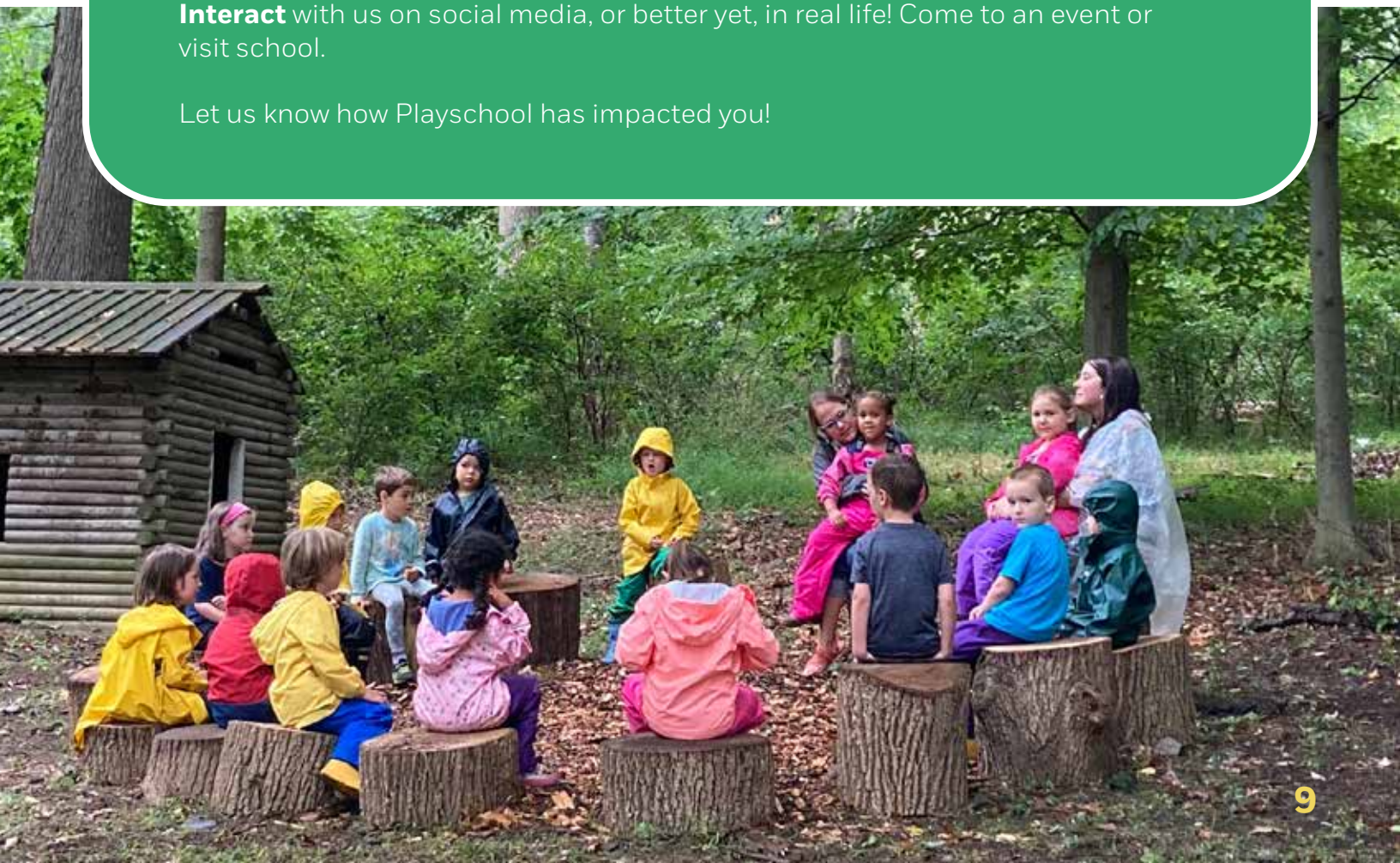
Direct a gift to the Hyson Professional Development **Endowment** Fund.

Ask your **employer to match** any donation you make. Double the impact for Playschool!

Make an **in-kind donation** to school or donate an item for Auction.

Interact with us on social media, or better yet, in real life! Come to an event or visit school.

Let us know how Playschool has impacted you!



Thank You to Our Donors

Fiscal Year July 2023 - June 2024

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