

*Seeds of Learning
Early Care
Education Center*

2021
Annual
Report

“New Beginnings”



Seeds
of Learning
Early Care and Education Center

A Note from the Executive Director

2021 has been another outstanding year for Seeds of Learning!

This year marked 25 years of high-quality service for the organization, and it was a year of new beginnings.

This was my first year serving as the new Executive Director of Seeds of Learning. I learned many valuable lessons and had the privilege to collaborate with some amazing teachers, parents, and children.

Over the course of the year, this quote by Plato guided my way, "The beginning is the most important part of the work." When I began my journey as Director, my intent was to support and maintain the high-quality program that was already in place here at Seeds, but I also had new and fresh ideas to bring to the table. After many years of having the continuity of the previous Executive Director, I knew there would be challenges to overcome with this transition and change, but I was confident in my philosophies and overall strategic goals.

During the school year, we experienced many new beginnings with our program and staff. We were able to discontinue most of the Covid precautions that were put in place for the health and safety of the families and children. This allowed our family involvement component, that is so crucial to the success of children in our program, to come back to the forefront. Families were allowed back into the classrooms, and the teachers and children felt the immediate positive impact of this step back to normalcy. Seeds was also able to retain all our highly qualified lead and assistant teachers to maintain the consistency of the program.

Teachers were given substantial pay raises and offered fully paid health insurance for the first time ever. This created the opportunity to attract highly qualified staff and reward the remarkable teachers we already had. We gained many new board members and a new Fund Development Manager to facilitate our fundraising and marketing efforts to move our program forward.

We were given the opportunity to begin our long-term investment fund this year due to the generosity of our amazing donors and the success of our annual fundraiser, Dancing with the Pagosa Stars. This will drive our program towards becoming financially self-sustaining in the future. We cannot thank our incredible donors and community enough for the support given to us this year. You have each helped make a difference in the lives of many children here at Seeds of Learning!

With warm regards,

Michelle Cusick

Michelle Cusick





Who We Are

Seeds of Learning is a stand-alone, not for profit, NAEYC accredited early care and education center, located in Pagosa Springs, Colorado. Held to the highest of standards, we have transformed the lives of over 1,000 preschoolers and their families for nearly 25 years. As a community-based facility, we encompass parenting classes, educational opportunities for our families and other early childhood professionals and participate in community outreach projects.

Seeds Mission is to fulfill the early childcare demands of our community with an exceptional staff encouraging the development of the “whole child” while instilling a love of learning for our diverse young scholars.

Seeds of Learning Strategic Plan 2021-2026

1. Establish an investment fund to work towards a self- sustaining business model
2. Determine the future capacity needs of early childhood education slots at Seeds
3. Actively recruit and incentivize high quality staff
4. Increase family involvement in the children’s education to achieve warm, supportive, and respectful relationships between adults and children
5. Ensure funding to support operational needs through donor management and fundraising
6. Educate the community and donor base of the value and benefits of high-quality Early Child Care Education.
7. Ensure proper Board of Directors governance

2021 Accomplishments & Highlights

- Reconfigured role/membership of Board to achieve long term focus
- Dedicated Seeds building to Lynne Bridges
- Hired new Executive Director
- Hired Fund Development Manager
- Established Development Committee for fundraising
- Secured Adams Foundation \$250,000 five-year grant
- Raised staff salaries to be more reflective of market
- Added health benefits for all staff
- Established long term financial plan
- Established an endowment fund
- Raised \$210,000 at Dancing with the Pagosa Stars
- Managed Covid at school

How We Measure our Success

We will continue our on-going program to improve quality standards addressed in previous evaluations including parent satisfaction surveys distributed twice a year. We will continue to evaluate program quality standards using the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale annually. All three classrooms were evaluated by Clayton using the ECERS scale the week of July 19-23. We will also continue to use the evaluations associated with the Creative Curriculum.

Seeds Unique Programming that Creates Success

Creative Curriculum

This child-directed, play-based program was chosen for our Seeds students because it is based on the latest research about how children learn best. It allows teachers to autonomously decide what needs to be taught to meet every child's individual needs. It meets all the standards put forth for effective early childhood curricula by NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children).



Teaching Strategies Gold

Children's progress is observed, assessed, and recorded online daily. Quarterly the staff completes check points on all 38 developmental goals for each child and twice a year teachers conduct Parent-Teacher Conferences with families to create an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) for each child. Online assessments are available to families to follow development progress.



The Incredible Years Dinosaur School

An award-winning training approach that promotes social, emotional, and academic competence in children using puppets Dina, Molly and Wally. Our children learn to understand feelings and practice conflict management skills while improving their cognitive development.

The Incredible Years and Parent Training

This 14-week training class focuses on strengthening parent competencies and encouraging parent/child relationships. This program includes limit-setting, problem-solving and anger management skills. Families feel included and supported in their own child-rearing as they participate in their child's learning experience at Seeds.



Nutrition

Seeds serves breakfast, a nutritious afternoon snack and a hot lunch prepared every day by Archuleta Seniors, Inc. Nutrition is critical to the brain as well as physical development. The children are provided with the opportunity to learn about a wide variety of foods and get started on a path to healthy eating habits.

Impacts That Create Outcomes

Our Families

All families at Seeds pay tuition on a sliding scale that is based on their income. Family members work in many critical areas of our community and contribute to the economic vitality of Pagosa Springs. As an example, they are:

- Teachers
- Business owners
- Government employees

They work in many arenas such as:

- Construction
- Food service
- Health care
- Real estate



Our Community Outreach

Seeds recognizes the extraordinary benefits of introducing young children to various occupations and age groups in our community. In 2021 our classes spent valuable time:

- Learning about Firemen, Police Officers, EMT's and Forest Rangers
- Sharing holiday gifts and songs with Seniors
- Reading with second graders in their classrooms
- Meeting their new kindergarten teachers
- Caring for their teeth with Dentists and Dental Hygienists

Our Board of Directors

Charged with overseeing the financial health of Seeds of Learning, this dedicated group guided efforts to supplement tuition for over 80% of Seeds' students in 2021. Their determination and hard work prove what passionate volunteers can accomplish. 2021 Board of Directors:

- Lisa Peters ~ Board President
- Martin E Rose ~ Board Vice President
- Bob Scott ~ Board Member
- Janae Ash ~ Board Secretary
- Bob Brobst ~ Board Treasurer

What You Helped Accomplish

The biggest accomplishment in 2021, as in every year since the inception of Seeds of Learning, is the graduation of our children well-prepared for kindergarten and beyond. Without your help, many of the graduating class would have been unable to afford tuition. Nobel Laureate Professor James Heckman has done longitudinal studies following children enrolled in quality preschool programs into their 50's and found that they not only did better in school, but had reductions in lifetime violence, arrests and unemployment. They had higher wages and better health outcomes. Your outstanding support has made these amazing outcomes possible for our 2021 graduates!

2021 Graduates & What They Want to be When They Grow Up

1. Michael Adams- Ride Dirt Bikes
2. Zenna Barnes- All the things my parents do but not wear daddy's clothes.
3. Calvin Baszynski- A Musician, Scientist or Batman
4. Griffin Caler- A Vet
5. Klayton Candelaria- Baseball Player and a Meat Cutter
6. Talbot Diffey- Find Dinosaur Bones
7. Hazel Frederics- I don't know, yet!
8. Zedekiah Freeman- A Police Officer
9. Westin Griffin- A Police Officer
10. Reata Herrera- A Pilot and a Cowgirl
11. Jordan Hewitt- A Teacher
12. Hazel Howard- A Nurse with Mo
13. Adeline Jackson- A Nurse to make animals better
14. Jaxon Karas- A Monster Truck Driver and a Penguin
15. Ashlyn Kossler- Protect People
16. Ava McCauley- I just want to be myself!
17. Lachlan Moore- Eat watermelon, pineapple, cherries, grapes...
18. Sasha Neybardzher- A Doctor
19. Elijah Radar- A Police Officer and a Fire Fighter
20. Jacquelyn Schick- I want to be an artist who helps animals.
21. Macy Schick- Meet new friends and a show player and an actress.
22. Willow Schmidt- A Ballerina and a maker of Games and Food
23. Charlotte Schwarz- A Dentist
24. Dakota Smith- I want to have a bigger airplane like my dad and be a Pilot.
25. Liam Smith- A Cowboy and ride a sheep!
26. Bristol Soniatdufossat- A Doctor
27. Judith Washburn- Make dinner with mom and shave with dad.
28. Ellie White- A Kid Doctor
29. Moorea Zak- A Nurse



2021 Seeds Graduating Class

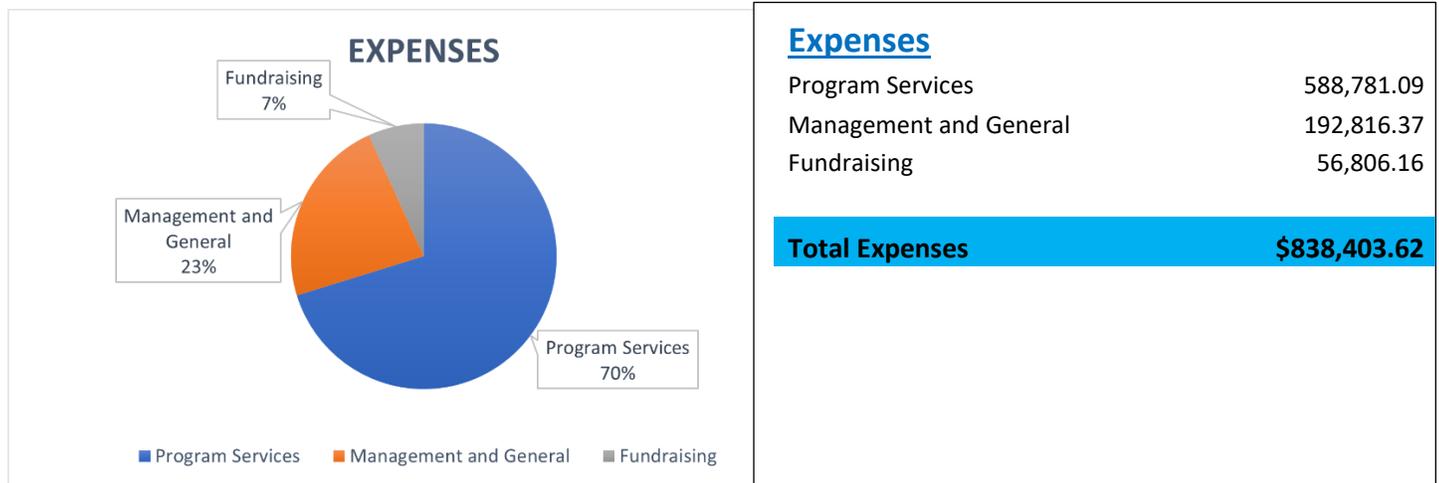
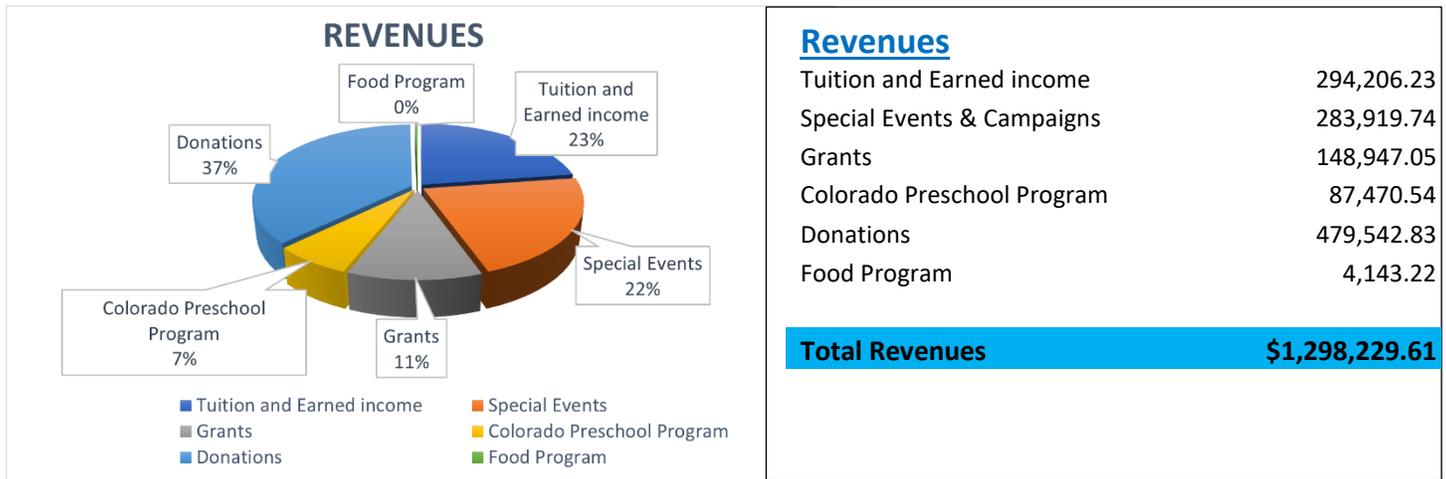
Lastly, your support through fundraising events like *Dancing with the Pagosa Stars* and the annual appeal meant we could continue our food program. Providing breakfast, a hot lunch and snacks every day means tummies are full so brains can learn.

Your gifting meant we were able to maintain a safe and loving learning environment year-round at an reduced cost so parents could continue to work throughout the summer months.

2021 Financial Report in a Nutshell (audited)

Tuition, fundraising events, grants, and individual donations comprise the bulk of Seeds' revenues. Funding from the Colorado Preschool Program helps offset the costs of the tuition for eligible at-risk families.

In 2021, 70% of the funds raised went toward program expenses, while 23% was used for administration & general operating costs and 7% was used to pay for fundraising costs.



Detailed financials are available on request. Our current 990 (non-profit tax return) is posted on our website: www.growingseeds.org

A Snapshot of Your Incredible Support

Individual Donations

To protect the privacy of our individual donors, they will not be publicly acknowledged. The numbers below represent the levels of giving and the number of donors who gave at each level in 2021.

Percentage of Giving Levels compared to 2020 (excluding grants):

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
% of cumulative gifts over \$10,000	42% from 9 donors	58% from 10 donors
% of cumulative gifts \$2,500 - \$9,999	34% from 29 donors	22% from 29 donors
% of cumulative gifts \$1,000 - \$2,499	12% from 30 donors	12% from 42 donors
% of cumulative gifts \$500 - \$999	7% from 39 donors	3% from 34 donors
% of cumulative gifts under \$499	5% from 136 donors	5% from 247 donors

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021 Goal</u>	<u>2021 Final</u>
Total number of current year donors	243	300	362
Average Gift	\$875	\$1000	\$1074
Retention Rate	30%	35%	41%
# of New Donors	98	100	221



Special Events & Campaigns

Dancing with the Pagosa Stars was the fundraising event of the year and netted \$216,394 to support the students, staff, and programs at Seeds of Learning. Our heartfelt appreciation to the businesses, individuals, dancers, coaches, donors, attendees, and volunteers that made it a resounding success.

The Annual Appeal Campaign generated \$67,524.97 which allowed Seeds to continue to offer a discounted tuition to those families in need.

Sponsorships

Our 2021 Dancing with the Pagosa Stars event not have been possible without the generous and loyal sponsors that help underwrite the event.

Volunteers

Hundreds of hours donated by Seeds' families and supporters allow monetary contributions to directly benefit the children. From ground maintenance and notecard production, your extraordinary help allowed the staff time to do what they do best - educate the children.

Community Benefits

Though all children benefit from high quality early childhood education, at-risk children receive the greatest value. Children who have access to high quality early childhood education experienced: fewer teen pregnancies, less arrests, higher graduation rates, earned a higher income, are more likely to go obtain a higher education or trade, lower rates of substance abuse, are less likely to be on public assistance programs which lowers the cost of more expensive interventions later in life.



Thank You!

Your support in 2021 meant that children in our community were able to access the highest quality education Archuleta County has to offer at an affordable price and the quality teachers at Seeds received competitive wages and health benefits that supported them.



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