



Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

Annual Report

July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015



Dear Supporter,

This was a landmark year for CCFC. We celebrated our 15th anniversary, honored our founding Executive Director, Dr. Susan Linn, and prepared ourselves to take huge strides forward in our efforts to build a better future for children.

In June, we gathered in Boston to thank Susan for her incredible leadership with a fittingly playful sendoff. It was both inspiring to look back on how much we've accomplished and poignant to see how much our friends and supporters value Susan and CCFC.

Yet even as we reflect on how far we have come, we are hard at work ensuring CCFC's future success. This year, we expanded our Board of Directors, adding leading experts from the fields of pediatrics, communications law, and early childhood education. We completed our first four-year strategic plan, providing ourselves with a clear roadmap for bringing our advocacy to new audiences and creating new partnerships. And we appointed CCFC's Associate Director Josh Golin as our new Executive Director.

Josh worked hand-in-hand with Susan for 12 years on all of CCFC's major initiatives and has played a critical role in our success. He is remarkably strategic, with a keen understanding of what drives successful advocacy. He shares Susan's unshakable integrity, fearlessness, and passion for promoting a childhood based on what is best for kids, not corporate interests. And as a father of a seven year old, he is acutely aware of the challenges of raising children in a commercial culture. In short, Josh is the perfect person to bring CCFC's advocacy on behalf of children and families to the next level.

I am proud of what CCFC has accomplished and excited about where we are headed. We couldn't have achieved all that we have without your support, and I hope we can continue to count on you as we work to make a better childhood for all children.

Sincerely,



Kevin Lee Hepner
Chair, Board of Directors



CCFC Board of Directors

(back row, left to right):
Kevin Lee Hepner, John
C. Mack, Tim Kasser,
Dipesh Navsaria, Angelica
Velazquez, Nathan Dungan

(front row, left to right):
Angela Campbell, Jan Emlen,
Ranae DeSantis

Not pictured: Doreen Downs
Miller, Ana Lucia Villela

Dear Friend,

I remember vividly when, in 2003, I first became aware of CCFC and met Dr. Susan Linn. I was thrilled to discover that not only was there someone else who recognized that commercialism is harmful for children, but that she was *doing something about it*. A short time later she offered me an internship, and I've been at CCFC ever since. I am honored to take the reins of this amazing organization and continue the work Susan began 15 years ago.

CCFC has grown so much in this short time, adapting our work on behalf of children and families to address the threats posed by new technologies. When smartphones were promoted as pacifiers, we created Healthy Kids in a Digital World, a program devoted to encouraging creative play while reducing children's screen time. When sensitive student data became a prized commodity for advertisers, we expanded our commercial-free schools initiative to include protecting student privacy. This year, our two highest profile campaigns targeted products that not long ago could have only existed in the realm of science fiction: YouTube Kids, an app for children five and younger that deceptively serves up a steady diet of ads disguised as content, and Hello Barbie, a disturbing new doll that records and analyzes children's conversations.

What haven't changed over the years are the principles guiding our advocacy. We believe that children should be valued for who they are and who they'll become, not for their purchasing or pestering power. We recognize that teaching children to be citizens, not consumers, is critical to the well-being of society and the sustainability of our planet. And we trust that marshalling evidence, not hurling hyperbole, is the key to changing hearts and minds.

We also insist on remaining fiercely—and financially— independent from the corporations that profit by commercializing childhood, which is why your support makes all the difference. Thank you for helping CCFC come this far, and for standing with us as we strive to give children the childhood they deserve.

With gratitude,



Josh Golin
Executive Director



Countering “Creepy” Hello Barbie

When we heard about Mattel’s plan for a new talking Barbie doll, it seemed too bad to be true. At the 2015 Toy Fair in New York City, the company unveiled Hello Barbie, a Wi-Fi-connected doll that uses an embedded microphone to record children’s voices. The doll then transmits the recordings over the Internet to cloud servers, where Mattel’s technology partner, ToyTalk, processes the audio with voice-recognition software to reveal “all of [the child’s] likes and dislikes.”



Photo: Mark Lennihan, Associated Press

This information is used to “push data” back to the child through Barbie’s built-in speaker, approximating a conversation. According to a Mattel spokesperson, the goal is for the child and Hello Barbie to “become like the best of friends.”

But Hello Barbie isn’t a child’s best friend. It’s a device that enables a multinational corporation to eavesdrop on—and potentially profit from—children’s intimate conversations. That’s why we launched a campaign to protest the doll’s release and publicize the harms it poses for children. We highlighted the threats to children’s privacy, how the doll could be used to market products and media to kids, and how it undermines creative play. Nearly 45,000 people signed CCFC petitions demanding Mattel stop the production and promotion of Hello Barbie. Our campaign ignited a media storm, with coverage in the *Washington Post*, *Time*, and *USA Today*, and on *Good Morning America*, Fox News, CBS News, and dozens of other outlets. Meanwhile, social media exploded with criticism of the “creepy eavesdropping doll” and “Big Brother Barbie.”

We may not have stopped Mattel from releasing Hello Barbie, but we have ensured that countless parents—many of whom may have considered buying the doll if not for the backlash—will leave Hello Barbie on the shelf this holiday season.

ARE YOU LISTENING, MATTEL?

“This is wrong on so many levels that I’m stunned. What makes you think we’re going to let our daughters share their thoughts with you? The number of horrible ways—in addition to your marketing agenda—that this information could be used is chilling. Barbie isn’t the only Mattel product we won’t be buying.”

– CCFC member Julianne Bruce

Stopping the Unfair Ads on YouTube Kids

Working for policies that protect children from harmful commercialism is a core component of CCFC's advocacy. When Google released its YouTube Kids app earlier this year, it was clear the online giant wasn't playing by existing federal rules to protect children from unfair and deceptive marketing. So we sprang to action with a Federal Trade Commission complaint to hold Google accountable for exploiting kids' developmental vulnerabilities.

Research shows that young children have trouble distinguishing commercials from programming, which is why there are laws that require clear separation between advertising and content on children's television. But as we detailed in our FTC complaint and in meetings with the Commission, it's impossible to tell where the content ends and the ads begin on YouTube Kids. Entire channels are devoted to brands like Barbie, Fisher-Price, and McDonald's. Ads for My Little Pony and Care Bear toys surround programs based on those characters. On the LEGO Friends channel, LEGO Friends cartoons are intermingled with LEGO Friends commercials and videos of real people playing with LEGO Friends figurines.

...it was clear the online giant wasn't playing by existing federal rules to protect children from unfair and deceptive marketing.

To make matters worse, we documented countless examples of content no parent would consider child-friendly, including videos featuring explicit sexual language, unsafe behaviors such as playing with lit matches, jokes about pedophilia, advertising for alcohol products, and more.

The FTC is investigating our complaint, and we are hopeful that our advocacy will help ensure that children get the protections they deserve whether they are watching television or a tablet. In the meantime, our efforts—which were featured on the *Today Show*, in the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and hundreds of outlets across the country—have already educated millions of parents that YouTube Kids is not a safe place for children.





The research is clear: Young children benefit from less time with screens. That's why we created Healthy Kids in a Digital World, a program devoted to supporting parents and professionals in reducing kids' screen time and promoting children's play.

New Screen Time Workshop Series for Parents

This year, with a grant from the Herman and Frieda L. Miller Foundation's Innovation Fund, we spearheaded an exciting new initiative to help parents reduce the amount of time their children spend with screen media. CCFC's Sara Adelmann designed a new pilot workshop series, which she implemented with our community partner, Family Nurturing Center. The workshops, which were attended by a diverse group of parents and caregivers from the Boston neighborhoods of Allston-Brighton and Dorchester, were organized around four major themes: unplug and play, unplug and learn, unplug for health, and unplug and connect. These topics touched on broader aspects of child development and parenting—including the importance of open-ended play, setting healthy habits early, and nurturing relationships—all in the context of raising children in a digital world.

Using a collaborative approach, the facilitators and participants worked together during each session to co-develop strategies for reducing screen time and promoting play. Preliminary results are exciting and hopeful: participants significantly reduced their children's average daily screen time between the start of the workshops and an interview six weeks later, and reported huge benefits for their families. One family turned its TV stand into an art station, while others reported loving screen-free meals and delighting in discovering their children's ability to play independently and with siblings. In 2016, we'll be refining our workshop approach and creating a train-the-trainer model, with the ultimate goal of bringing Healthy Kids in a Digital World workshops to parenting education centers across the country.

A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE



"The experience the kids are getting now that they have less screen time is so amazing. The tablets my two older sons had are broken. I'm not replacing them, and they won't even ask for them. We're having so much fun doing other things."

**– Patrice Barker,
Workshop Participant, Boston, MA**

Helping Preschoolers Unplug

This year we created a new resource, *Healthy Kids in a Digital World: Preschoolers*. The brochure includes tips, facts, and screen-free activity ideas for helping children unplug to connect, learn, and play. Perfect for parents looking for developmentally appropriate alternatives to screens, it is also a valuable resource for child care centers, preschools, doctors' offices, libraries, community centers, and more.

The brochure premiered at the annual conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) to rave reviews, and we quickly sold out of an initial print run of 10,000. But you can still download your free copy on our website at www.commercialfreechildhood.org/unplug.

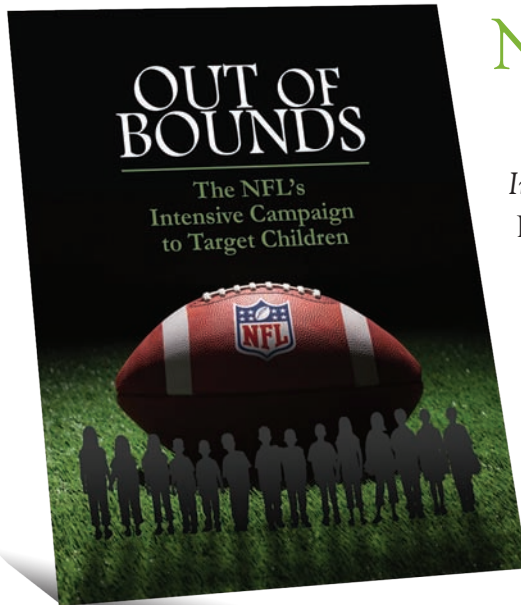


Screen-Free Week Turns 20!

May 4-10, 2015, thousands of people around the world celebrated the 20th anniversary of Screen-Free Week. Formerly known as TV Turnoff Week, Screen-Free Week encourages families, schools, and even whole communities to unplug for seven days. From Washington to Florida and everywhere in between, children, parents, and educators played, read, created, spent time in nature, and learned about their worlds. Organizers in Chehalis, WA, hosted ukulele lessons, while Brooklynites built castles and skyscrapers from recycled materials. In Homewood, IL, kids hunted for treasure, built wild creations with LEGOs, played board games, and crafted. In Irving, TX, and Battle Creek, MI, community organizations hosted different screen-free events every day of the week. And internationally, Screen-Free Week was celebrated in Morocco, Italy, and Australia!

SAVE THE DATE
screen-free week
MAY 2-8, 2016





NFL is Out of Bounds

Our groundbreaking report, *Out of Bounds: The NFL's Intensive Campaign to Target Children*, exposed the National Football League's efforts to attract kids through an all-out advertising assault. We uncovered many disturbing tactics the NFL employs to immerse children in its brand, like producing sponsored teaching materials and distributing them in elementary classrooms, encouraging kids to play fantasy football, partnering with trusted nonprofits, and more. The report also highlights how the league's targeting of kids has serious consequences, including increased sedentary screen time, exposure to junk-food marketing, loss of valuable instructional time in

school, promotion of gambling behaviors, and exposure to the league's off-the-field controversies. The report was featured on National Public Radio's *Only a Game*, *Vice Sports*, and Boston's WGBH TV.

Protecting Student Privacy

Fueled by accountability mandates and pressure to incorporate technology into classrooms, schools are increasingly moving their operational and educational functions to online vendors. And that leaves sensitive student data—which may include information like students' names, addresses, social security numbers, test scores, disabilities, disciplinary records, and sensitive medical information—vulnerable to misuse by marketers.

That's why CCFC has expanded our advocacy for commercial-free schools to include a focus on protecting student privacy. This year, we teamed up with the Parent Coalition for Student Privacy to urge Congress to incorporate five key principles of student privacy—including no commercial uses—into any law or policy regarding personal student data. Student privacy is a hot topic in Washington right now, and we think it's critical that policymakers hear from advocacy groups like CCFC, who take no money from the forces hoping to profit off of students' personal information.



Dipesh Navsaria, MPH, MSLIS, MD

We were thrilled when Dr. Dipesh Navsaria joined CCFC's Board of Directors. His long-standing commitment to children's health and well-being and his passion for public health advocacy make

BOARD MEMBER SPOT- LIGHT



Photo: Parker Hoerz

him an invaluable addition to CCFC. Dr. Navsaria is an assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, and a practicing pediatrician who works with underserved populations. In addition to his direct service work with children at a community health center, Dr. Navsaria is the founding medical director for Reach Out and Read Wisconsin, and is strongly engaged with early literacy programs that address the effects of adversity and poverty on the developing brain. Dr. Navsaria is a long-time CCFC supporter who lent his voice to our successful campaign against *Your Baby Can Read*, a video series that falsely claimed to teach babies to read. In our petition to the Federal Trade Commission, he told the powerful story of counseling a homeless

mother whose family hoped to give her two-day-old infant a leg up by buying the \$200 product. Dr. Navsaria uses his expertise not only to serve the children for whom he provides care, but to advocate on behalf of all children—a perfect fit for CCFC.

And the TOADY Goes to...

...the BabyFirst U-verse App, the first “two screen” experience for infants and toddlers. The app bested other contenders, including the runner-up Barbie Loves Girl Scouts doll, to win the 2015 TOADY (Toys Oppressive And Destructive to Young children) Award for Worst Toy of the Year. Marketed as a product for babies as young as newborns, the BabyFirst U-verse App allows infants to “draw” on an iPhone or iPad, and then projects their drawings onto a TV screen showing BabyFirstTV programming. It's the fourth year in a row that voters awarded the dreaded TOADY to a screen-based toy for infants and toddlers.



Passing the Torch

This past summer marked an important moment in CCFC's history as our founding Executive Director, Dr. Susan Linn, stepped down. Under Susan's leadership, CCFC grew from a small, informal group into what it is today: a powerful organization that successfully challenges and limits the influence of corporations in children's lives.

Over the past 15 years, CCFC has achieved one improbable and inspiring victory after another, facing down mega-corporations like Hasbro, McDonald's, and Disney. Just as important, countless parents, caregivers, and professionals around the world now believe that it is truly possible to reclaim childhood from corporate marketers.

Susan left the organization in great hands. Josh Golin, CCFC's Associate Director, was unanimously chosen by the Board of Directors to be Executive Director. Josh has been at CCFC since 2003 and has played a major role in the organization's success.

A Spectacular Sendoff

On June 13, 2015, friends and supporters from around the world came together in Boston to honor Susan Linn for her amazing 15 years at CCFC. The event reflected Susan's playfulness, creativity, and love of childhood, with songs and dances by the Revels Kids and acts by jugglers, magicians, and other fun performers. Friends and colleagues gave heartfelt tributes to Susan, and Bill Isler of the Fred Rogers Company led a surprise presentation of CCFC's Fred Rogers Integrity Award, given to a public figure whose efforts best embody Mr. Rogers' long-standing commitment to nurturing the health and well-being of America's children. The evening concluded with a moving farewell from Susan and her famous puppet, Audrey Duck.



Securing the Future

In honor of CCFC's founder, we have launched a capital campaign: **The Susan Linn Fund for a Commercial-Free Childhood**. Our goal of \$1 million will help us realize Susan's vision of childhood: a world where play is shaped by real life experiences, hopes, and dreams, not dictated by what's on a screen; where kids attend schools free of advertising; and where the well-being of children trumps the bottom line.

We are pleased to announce that a longtime friend, supporter, and advocate for children has stepped forward with a most generous pledge of \$500,000. This gift is a challenge for CCFC supporters to match that amount. We are extremely grateful to those who have already contributed to this special, one-time campaign, and we encourage others to help us reach our \$1 million goal by June 1, 2016. To make your donation to the Susan Linn Fund, please visit www.commercialfreechildhood.org/susanlinnfund.

With tremendous gratitude, CCFC thanks the following donors who made gifts and pledges to the Susan Linn Fund during the 2014-15 fiscal year (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015).

Leadership Giving

\$500,000

Alana USA
Foundation

\$100,000

Doreen Downs
Miller

\$50,000

Ranae DeSantis
Jacaranda Fund

\$10,000

Kevin Lee Hepner
Craig Martone
Michael Rankowitz
& Sheila Heffron

\$5,000

The Harry Fisch
Research Fund
Laurie & Nigel Key
Erin & Nick Silvers

\$2,500

Anonymous
Nathan Dungan
& Susan Hawks

Friends

\$1,000 - \$2,499

Anonymous
Angela Campbell
Phyllis Menken
Jean Rystrom
The Van Dyke Family

\$500-999

Janette Emlen
Susan Goldberger
& Robert Keough
Marjorie Siegel
Jenava Tait in honor of
Mr. Adrian Pulfer

\$250-499

Dr. and Mrs. Myron L. Belfer
Josh Golin
& Jennifer Smith
Robert Kuttner
Lemberg Children's Center
Diane Levin
Dipesh Navsaria
Peace Educators Allied for
Children Everywhere
Angelica L. Velazquez
Benjamin Wagner
in honor of Fred Rogers
Anne Wilson

\$100-249

Anonymous (3)
Kathryn Aschliman
Linda Barnes
Constance Bloomfield
& William McFarlane
in memory of
Sharland Trotter
Darragh Callahan
Julia Chen
Alison Corning Clarke
Jane Feinberg-Kaplan
Steve & Alice Golin
Elizabeth Goodenough
Diane Gordon
Dr. & Mrs. Carden Johnston
in honor of Jim Metrock
Tim Kasser
Joe Kelly & Nancy Gruver
Jean Kilbourne, EdD
Douglas Kline
& Nancy Carlsson-Paige
Allelu Kurten
Lexi Ladd
Toni Liebman
Geraldyn B. McLaughlin
Erin McNeill
Brigid Murphy

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& Rheta Rubenstein
Craig Simpson
Michael Steiner
Sherry Steiner
John Surr
Barbara Sweeny
Rhoda Trietsch
Martha Vibbert, PhD
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Up to \$100

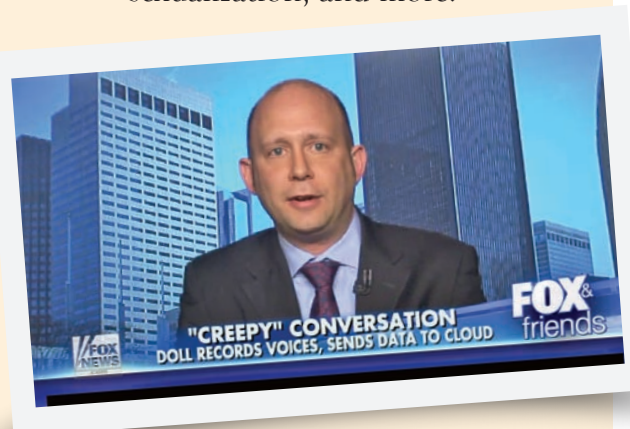
Janice Babcock
Stephen Babcock
Sharon Bauer
Beverly Bruce in honor
of Susan Linn
& Diane Levin
Pat Dorman
Nadine Gerdts
Christine Gerzon
Max Greenberg
Kendra Hodgson
Brandy King
& Stephen Palumbo

Sharon Maxwell
Margaret Merrell
Roxanna Myhrum
Drs. Linda Zoe Podbros
& James M. Waters
Kerry Prasad
Estelle Regolsky
Jean Rogers
Eve Sullivan
Margot & David Wizansky
in honor of
Elio DeNiro Wizansky
& Rosa Lillian Paul

The
Susan Linn
Fund *for a*
Commercial-free
Childhood

Spreading the Word

Generating press coverage of our activities is one way we ensure our voices are consistently heard across the country and around the world. This year, our Hello Barbie and YouTube Kids campaigns were the focus of hundreds of stories, including in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and the *Guardian*, as well as on National Public Radio, Fox News, and the *Today Show*. In addition, our expertise was routinely featured in major outlets on a wide range of topics, including the harms of excessive screen time, student privacy, junk food marketing, sexualization, and more.



CCFC's Josh Golin tells *Fox & Friends* why Hello Barbie is a terrible toy.



Why I Support CCFC

by Amber Van Dyke

It's Saturday morning and my two children rally together and agree, "Let's play!" For the rest of the day the living room comes alive with stories and make-believe. As bedtime approaches they protest, "We're not done yet!"

I applaud CCFC for bringing awareness to the importance of play in children's lives. Play is innate in children and essential to a well-balanced childhood, but is being stifled by unrelenting commercialism. I am thankful that CCFC helps guard the time and space that nurtures play so that children can develop their abilities and creativity to their fullest potential.

As my children grow up I can only hope to give them more than a packaged childhood. With so many forces working against children's best interests it is easy for any parent to have self-doubt. CCFC is there to help. They create tools for parents, stand up to those who seek to undermine our best efforts, and change the rules of the game. I believe in CCFC's mission and have let my friends and family know that giving a gift to the organization on my behalf is the best present I could receive, because the more influence CCFC has, the better the future will be for our children and our children's children.

CCFC Financials

July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015

Income

TOTAL INCOME

\$777,225

NET ASSETS (JULY 1, 2014)

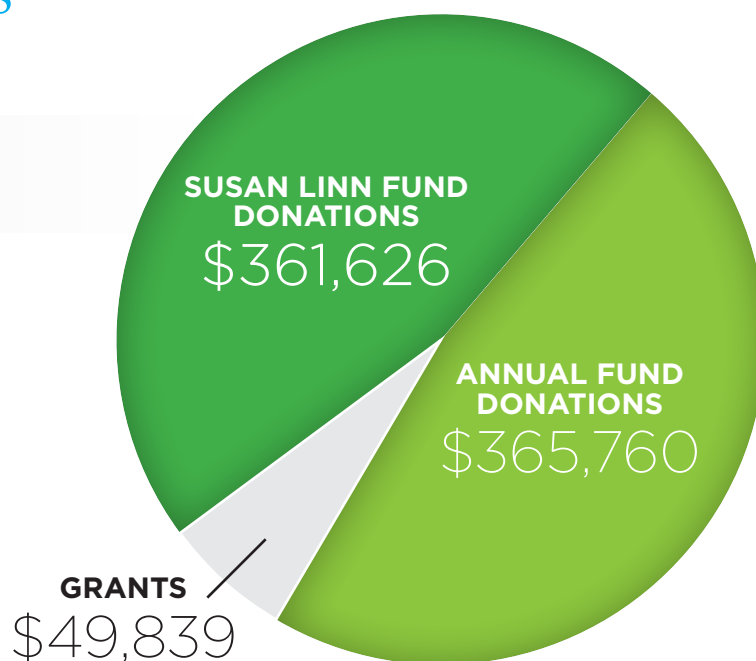
\$298,134

NET ASSETS (JUNE 30, 2015)

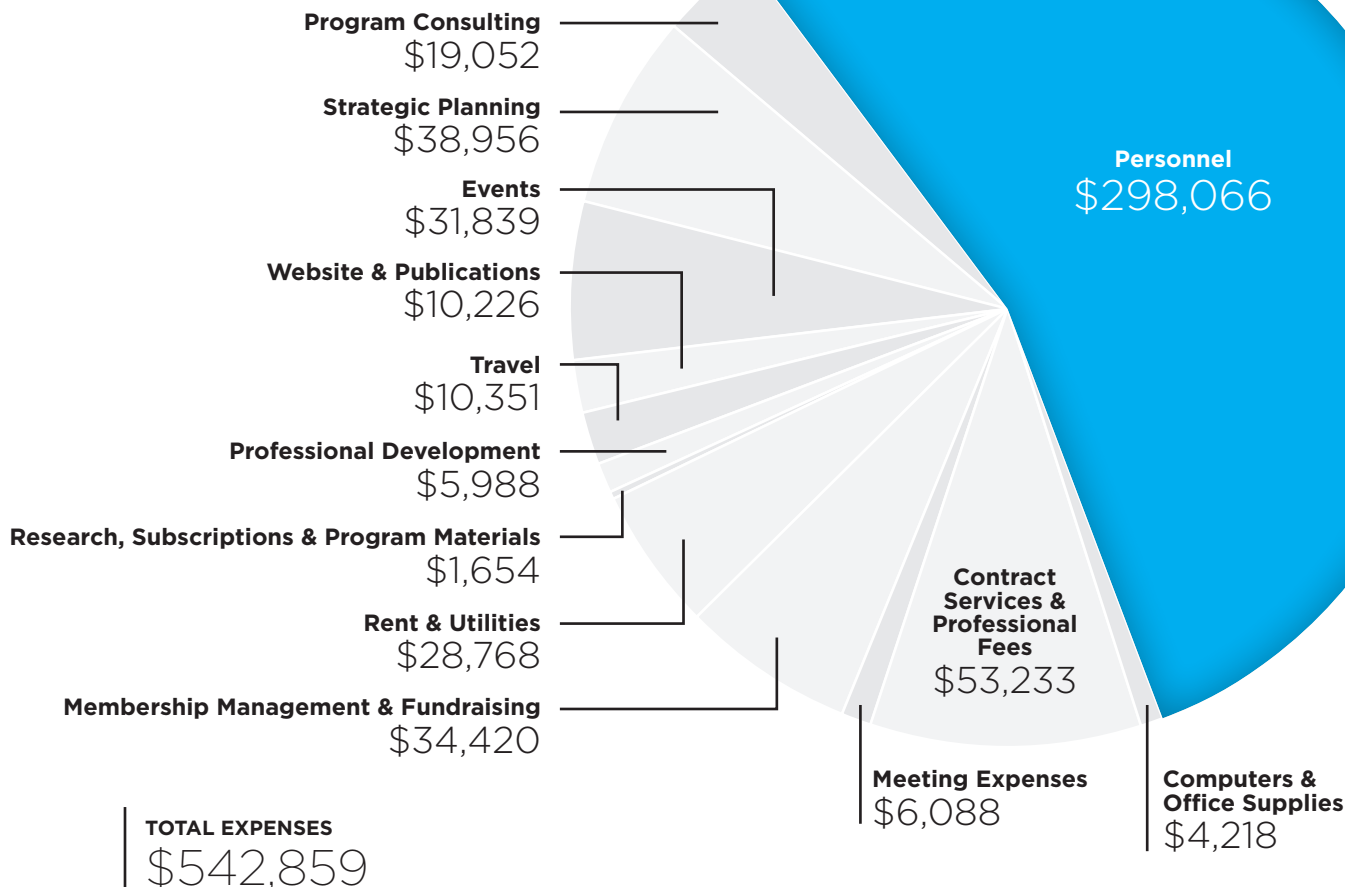
\$532,502

NET INCOME

\$234,366



Expenses



Our Supporters

We are incredibly grateful to our supporters, whose generosity allows CCFC to continue our important work. Below are our annual fund donors for fiscal year 2014-15 (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015). For a list of donors to the Susan Linn Fund, please see page 9.

Leadership Circle

\$75,000+

Jacaranda Fund

\$25,000 - \$74,999

Church Communities
Foundation
Matt Damon
Ranae DeSantis
Instituto Alana
Doreen Downs Miller

\$10,000 - \$24,999

Elaine Golin
M/H Metrock Charitable
Foundation
Milner Family Foundation

\$2,500 - \$9,999

Anonymous
Richard & Carol Daynard
Small Planet Fund
The Eliot and
Anne Weathers
Charitable Trust

\$1,000 - \$2,499

Anonymous (2)
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Joel & Aparna Brown
Dawn Yael Daniel, MD
The Ellis Fund

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Nancy Marsden
John C. Medcalf

Kimberly Rathmann
Margaret Schmidt
United Methodist Women
Donna & Douglas Wheeler
Monica Wood

Friends

\$500 - \$999

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Matthew Armstrong
Petra Arzberger
Abraham Flazman
Charles Fox
Holly Groh
Kevin Lee Hepner
Liz Hoge
Judy MacDonald Johnston
Andy Singer
Jenava Tait
Benjamin Wagner
in honor of Fred Rogers
Brian & Carey Wentzel

\$250 - \$499

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Natalie Cohen
Jeanne Cosby
Allison DeLong
Shannon Dodge
& Mark McCaustland
Ariah Fine
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Martha Sibert
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Daniel & Martha Smith
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Cathleen Theys
The Tovar McDonnell Family
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in honor of
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& Wilbur Lam
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\$100 - \$249

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Emily Dolbear
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Garland Waller
Kristie Wang
 & Michael Frank
Muffie & Scott Waterman
Bill Weber
Rebecca Weiker
 & Sean Hecht
Dr. & Mrs. Paul V. Williams
Margot & David Wizansky
 in honor of
 Elio DeNiro Wizansky
 & Rosa Lillian Paul
Kristine Wyndham
Roland Young

Rinny & Len Yourman
Julie Zuraw

Up to \$100
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Jodi Lynn Abel
Joan Abruzzo
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Rosalinda Aguirre
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Liz Austin
Alyssa Bannister
Ameena Batada
 & Michael Brown
Sarah Batcheler
Tyler Bateman
Ellen Bates-Brackett
The Bevacqua Family
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Brandi Burke-Hicks
Meredith Burton
Lydia Busler-Blais
Martha J. Campbell
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Jim & Kara Carden
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Kirsten L. Crase
David Crockett
 in honor of
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Joyce Daniels
MJ Davison
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Rob & Leigh Dewis
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 & Jayson Dotzenrod
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Libby Kreutz
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Yi Lei
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 in honor of Diane Levin
John Lippitt
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Ruben Martinez
Karen Mateling
Janet S. Matthews
Allyssa McCabe
Petra McDowell
Joan McGlincy
Stephanie McKenna
Elizabeth Memel
Phoebe Milliken
Rose Marie Mirabile
Kathy Modigliani
Sheila Monks
 in honor of
 Kate Hodgson
Jenny Morse
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Our Mission

CCFC supports parents' efforts to raise healthy families by limiting commercial access to children and ending the exploitive practice of child-targeted marketing. In working for the rights of children to grow up—and the freedom for parents to raise them—without being undermined by corporate interests, CCFC promotes a more democratic and sustainable world.



Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

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