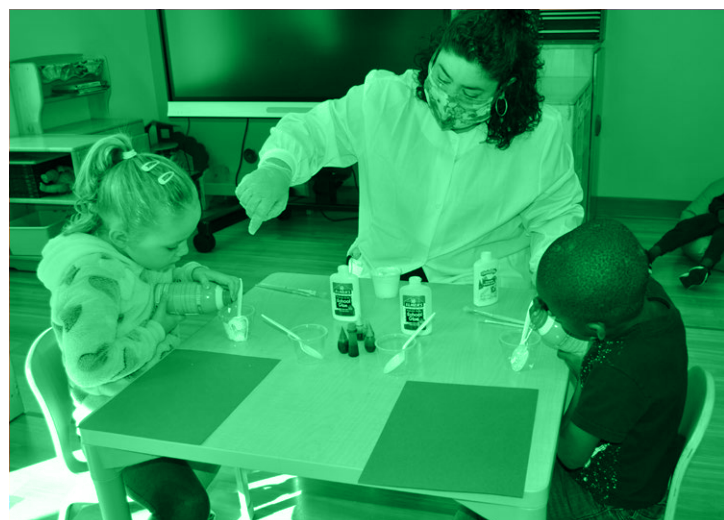




2021

ANNUAL REPORT



OPPORTUNITY
Learning to Learn and Thrive

Dear Friends of Opportunity,

What an incredibly unexpected, challenging, and interesting year we have had! Since 1939, Opportunity has been helping children and families overcome adversity. The pandemic created an unforeseen crisis with an endless number of individual challenges: How do we continue to provide a high-quality educational program to young children while keeping them safe? How do we keep our staff safe? How do we pay our bills after a temporary closure, cancelled fundraisers, and the high cost of operating during a pandemic? In true Opportunity style, we put our heads together, gathered information, reached out to the community, and remained focused on the children.



Opportunity began operating with pandemic safety protocol in place in summer 2020 following a three-month shut down. Classroom learning group centers were transformed into individual play pods. Staff were equipped with PPE. Extensive sanitation procedures were put into place. Throughout these and many additional challenges, we were able to offer the children an enriched learning experience, consistent routine, and socially-distanced emotionally-connected interactions with classmates and teachers.

Success continued with our Family Development Program. The needs of our families changed by the week and our support followed suit. The addition of an on-site social worker was a lifeline for many families. From Zoom workshops and case management meetings to food and diaper distributions, supporting the whole family remained a vital piece of our mission.

The support of the community made our success possible. The high cost of operating under pandemic conditions combined with the effects of cancelled fundraisers put a frightening strain on our operating budget. Individuals, corporations, foundations, and agencies stepped up to make sure the needs of our children and their families were met.

As we reflect on the past year, we look to the future through a wiser lens. We are excited and motivated to continue to expand our enrollment, hold successful fundraisers, and meet the needs of our children and families. The generosity of donors allows us to accomplish our mission. We invite you to join us. Together, we can set children and families on the path to happiness and success.

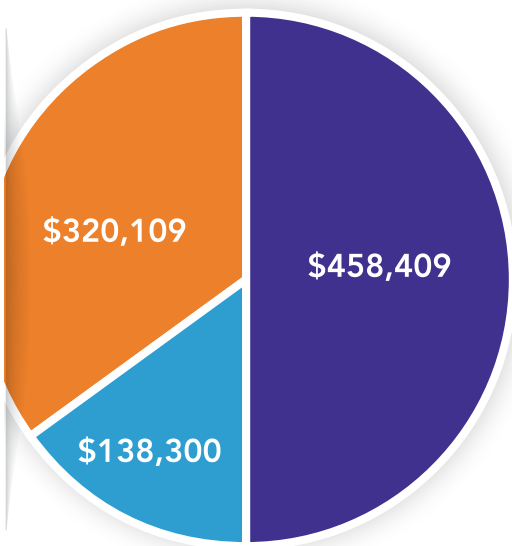
Wishing you well,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Alice M. L. Eger".

Alice M. L. Eger, MAEd.
Executive Director



Financials



- Covid Expenses
- COVID-19 Revenue
- Provided by our generous donors, foundations and grants

Expanding Our Family Development Program Helps Us Build Healthy, Strong, Successful, and Safe Families and Communities.

MEET CAT PATERNO

Catharine Paterno (Cat) joined Opportunity in October 2020. Cat has more than 8 years of experience advocating for children and their families throughout New Jersey and Florida. Cat received a BA in Child Advocacy & Policy from Montclair State University. She worked as the Assistant Director of Lightbridge Academy and at Prevent Child Abuse in New Jersey. Since moving to Florida, Cat has built her community resource network by working as a Case Manager & PPP coordinator for HBH and Sandy Pines, the largest in-state children's Mental Health hospital. She is dedicated to serving all the families and children she meets and is beyond thrilled to be working for Opportunity. Cat is devoted to providing families with the support and resources they need to create happy, healthy, and safe environments for their children.



Services provided to the children and their families include:

- Workshops on health, job readiness, life skills, housing (rental and first time home buyer), and more
- Support groups for pregnant and new moms, as well as grandparents
- Information and referrals for prenatal care, food pantry, housing and utility assistance
- Job readiness: resume and cover letter writing and interviewing skills
- Budgeting and financial planning
- Health insurance assistance
- Fun activities for parents and their children
- Tuition scholarships
- Child development resource referral





Hiring a social worker to help our children and families has been on our wish list for a very long time. Cat works closely with families guiding them in eliminating obstacles and struggles. Roadblocks are replaced with answers and solutions to ensure that every opportunity is made available to the family. It takes a very special person to spearhead this task. Due to the kindness of a generous donor, Opportunity was able to recruit and hire the right person.

Opportunity's goal is to provide the best

possible services to our children and their families. Providing the children with a solid educational and social emotional foundation has been critical to our mission. Equipping and inspiring parents to be successful individually and as a family unit completes our mission.

Cat Paterno impacts the lives of so many families by giving a hand up, not a hand out. Equipping and empowering families is the key to transformation.

SUCCESS STORIES

A mom with four children had a severe accident. She was incapacitated for weeks and couldn't work the three jobs she needed to make ends meet. Her partner, who normally worked a 60-hour week, transported the children to and from school. This provided a true financial hardship for the family. Bills were overdue, money was depleted, the car was repossessed, electricity was turned off, and the landlord was threatening eviction. Cat worked with the family to budget, reduce expenses, and apply for available financial help and got them back on their feet. Never owning a new bed of their own, Cat located 5 new beds (mattress, box spring, frame and bedding) for the family.

One of our single dads, who was trying to turn his life around by staying on the right side of the law and working hard to take care of his daughter, repeatedly tested positive for Covid-19. This meant he had to keep his child home and was prohibited from going to work so as not to spread the virus. The positive results ended up being false due to the antibodies built up in his system. He had missed a month of work, lost his job, and owed a month of tuition. Cat worked with this dad and the Opportunity team to find a solution. Thanks to your generosity, Opportunity awarded this family monies from the Covid Scholarship Emergency Fund so they could get back to school, work, and self-sufficiency!

With your help, Opportunity makes a difference in each child's life every day!

"In every conceivable manner, the family is a link to our past, bridge to our future" -Alex Haley

Thank you for your support during a challenging year.

You made it possible for us to continue to fulfill our mission:

Empowering the children of working families to achieve academic and life success through educational programs that embrace the whole child and through family programming.



**SPECIAL APPRECIATION TO OUR BOARD MEMBERS
WHO HAVE BEEN WITH US EVERY STEP OF THE WAY**

Anderson Arnold, President
Susie Dwinell, Treasurer

Maria Marchetti, Vice President
Robin Remick, Secretary

Gordon Anthony, Director
Ali Eger, Director
Peter Nicoletti, Director

Adriana Burger, Director
Tara Gronberg, Director

Bill Carroll, Director
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Dora Pikounis, Director



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