



**2024** Leading for Children

# Impact Report

Navigating Transitions with Purpose

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## Our Vision

All children birth to five grow and learn in thriving and collaborative communities of empowered and nurturing adults.

## Our Mission

Strengthen communities by advancing evidence-based approaches where adults collaborate equitably towards positive outcomes for children.





## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## TEAM

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*Executive Director*  
(4/15/24 to Present)

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*Program Leader*

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**Judy Jablon**  
*Founder*



## Dear Friends,

As we reflect on this past year, I am filled with deep gratitude and admiration for the vibrant, resilient, and committed community that surrounds and sustains our mission. Your unwavering support, through membership, partnership, and generous giving, has made it possible for us to continue building upon and expanding our shared vision. Together, we have advanced meaningful change, strengthened our programs, and opened doors to new possibilities.

This year marked a profound chapter in our journey—one of reflection, renewal, and purposeful transition. At LFC, we navigated this season of change grounded in the powerful legacy of our beloved and visionary founder, Judy Jablon. Judy modeled values of growth, leadership cultivation, and equity throughout her tenure, and in April 2024, she embraced the next chapter of her own journey by passing the proverbial baton to me as LFC's new Executive Director.

Judy's vision, courage, and steadfast commitment laid the foundation on which our work continues to flourish. As we move forward, we do so with a deep sense of responsibility—to preserve what Judy has built, and to nurture progress in ways that adapt to the evolving needs of our time. This moment calls on us to meet unprecedented challenges with boldness and creativity while remaining true to our core values.

We approached the year with intentionality. We deepened relationships with members and partners through mutual learning and co-construction. We applied insights gained from reflection and evaluation to strengthen our collaborative efforts. Together, we considered how to adjust our sails while remaining anchored in our values and our unwavering commitment to ensuring that all children grow and develop in thriving, equitable communities.

In the face of internal and external transitions, we remained rooted in purpose. We forged deeper connections with longtime partners and nurtured relationships with new ones, launched new initiatives, and explored innovative ways to increase our impact. And we did so because of you, the extraordinary humans who believe in and stand with us. Your belief in our work affirms that we are not alone on this journey.

Looking ahead, we do so with optimism, clarity, and resolve. We draw strength from our roots as we embrace the opportunities that lie ahead. We are poised to write the next chapter, one that invites new voices, sparks innovative solutions, and furthers our shared commitment to equity, empowerment, and lasting impact.

Thank you for walking and growing with us, and for believing in the power of possibility.

With warmth and deep appreciation,

**Nichole Parks**  
*Executive Director*





# Year in Review

Through LFC's model, adults develop a strong sense of agency, create open and honest relationships, and work together to nurture thriving communities for children.

## INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOPS

LFC's workshops introduce the Humanity First Model and Mutual Learning Method to build awareness, develop leadership skills, and foster equitable partnerships among adults.

At the **BUILD Conference**, Judy and Nichole's two sessions sparked a transformation in how early childhood systems approach equity work. Partnering with leaders from Marin County, California, they created brave spaces where participants confronted real challenges through honest reflection and peer dialogue. The sessions broke down silos between organizations, fostering new cross-sector partnerships committed to systemic change. Participants left equipped with concrete strategies to navigate difficult equity conversations in their own communities and the confidence to challenge existing systems that perpetuate inequity. By connecting theory to practice through real-world case studies, these sessions empowered attendees to become equity champions who strengthen relationships, build collaborative networks, and drive meaningful change for children and families. The collaborative model demonstrated LFC's belief that sustainable transformation happens when diverse voices unite around shared commitment to children's well-being.

At the **2024 Smart Start Conference**, Nichole's presentation changed how participants view their daily leadership opportunities. Armed with Humanity First strategies, attendees gained the confidence to turn routine interactions into relationship-building moments that strengthen their entire early childhood community. The session empowered participants to move beyond surface-level collaboration, giving them concrete tools to navigate difficult conversations, build trust across differences, and create authentic partnerships. Participants left committed to modeling the respectful, equitable relationships they want children to see.

At the **National Association for the Education of Young Children Annual Conference**, Judy, Jonathan, and Nichole's interactive sessions transformed how participants approach leadership in early childhood settings. By engaging with the *Five Commitments of Optimistic Leadership* and the *11 Simple Rules*, attendees gained concrete tools to break down barriers and create more equitable learning environments. The session equipped leaders with practical strategies they could immediately implement to strengthen adult relationships—the foundation for children's social-emotional growth. Participants reported leaving with renewed confidence to lead difficult conversations, foster inclusive partnerships, and drive systemic change that directly benefits the children and families they serve. This work exemplifies how LFC's approach creates ripple effects throughout the early learning ecosystem, empowering leaders to become catalysts for lasting, positive change in their communities.

At the **Alabama Early Learning Conference**, the LFC team created a learning experience that equipped more than 50 educators with immediately applicable tools to strengthen their leadership and coaching practices. Through pre-conference workshops and breakout sessions, participants discovered how curiosity can break down barriers between teachers and coaches, fostering the collaborative partnerships essential for children's success. The interactive format empowered attendees to practice difficult conversations in safe spaces, building their confidence to navigate real-world challenges back home. Beyond the formal sessions, the exhibit booth became a hub for deeper engagement, where educators connected LFC's approach to their specific contexts through meaningful dialogue. The team's demonstration of Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (ADECE) videos as coaching tools gave participants concrete strategies to transform routine observations into powerful professional development opportunities. Attendees left with more than resources—they gained a new mindset about their role as leaders and collaborators, equipped to create the respectful, growth-oriented environments where both adults and children thrive. This comprehensive approach exemplifies how LFC meets educators where they are, providing multiple touchpoints that reinforce sustainable change in early childhood systems.



## BOOK STUDY GROUPS

Grounded in the Mutual Learning Method, LFC's Book Study Groups brought members together to engage in meaningful exploration of the *Five Commitments*. Participants reported increased confidence in their leadership, improved relational practices, and a deeper understanding of how to create responsive, respectful environments for both adults and children.

Leading for Children's remote book study groups created a powerful multiplier effect **across six states**, transforming how **208 early childhood professionals** approach their daily work with children and families. These facilitator-led groups didn't just build knowledge—they fostered communities of practice where educators supported each other through real challenges, strengthened their leadership confidence, and developed deeper commitment to equity-centered approaches. The ripple effect extends far beyond the participants: these newly empowered leaders are now creating more nurturing, responsive environments for approximately **3,120 children across California, Hawaii, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, and Pennsylvania**. By building sustained learning communities rather than one-time trainings, LFC's book study model ensures lasting change—as participants are empowered to continue supporting each other's growth long after the formal sessions end.

## LEARNING NETWORKS

LFC's Learning Networks are deep engagements that take place over 9 to 12 months and include in-depth, practical application of the HFM's principles, leading to transformational personal, interpersonal, and organizational level change.

*In 2024, LFC's program leaders facilitated six learning networks—three state-based networks with partners in Arkansas, California, and Pennsylvania, and three national networks that connected participants across multiple states.*

LFC officially launched its groundbreaking **Leading from Strength National Learning Network** with generous support from the Dodge Family Fund, creating a transformative space where women of color in early learning found their voices and strengthened their collective power.



This 11-month program didn't just provide professional development—it fostered a “professional tribe” where participants moved from feeling undervalued and isolated to becoming confident advocates for themselves and their communities. Through monthly convenings, individual coaching, and peer support, participants gained the tools to navigate systemic challenges while maintaining their authentic selves. The network created lasting change: members reported career advancement opportunities, strengthened advocacy skills, and renewed confidence to lead difficult conversations about equity. Most importantly, participants discovered they were “enough”—building the self-empowerment needed to address systemic inequities and model inclusive leadership for the children they serve. This program demonstrates LFC's commitment to centering the voices and experiences of those closest to the work, creating sustainable change that ripples through entire early learning communities.

**Optimistic Leaders in Thriving Communities Learning Networks** supported members in cultivating self-awareness, making intentional decisions, and refining communication practices for place-based impact and growth. Members formed essential partnerships rooted in shared power, respect for diverse perspectives, and a commitment to learning together. The result: warm, responsive, and connected communities where both adults and children can thrive.

**Coaching as an Optimistic Leader Learning Networks** supported coaches—and others in the early education field—in adopting a growth-oriented perspective to form equitable partnerships. Centering curiosity, collaboration, and Mutual Learning, coaches and educators deepened their connections and strengthened interactions with each other and with children.

LFC hosted a **National Learning Network of Facilitator Fellows**, bringing together educators from across the country to explore coaching through the lens of Optimistic Leaders. The LFC Program Team engaged Facilitator Fellows in monthly sessions focused on the Humanity First Model tools and Mutual Learning Method strategies. This approach built capacity and sustainability by equipping a dedicated, wide-reaching cohort to lead change and carry the work forward beyond the Learning Network.

## NATIONAL CONVERSATIONS

LFC launched monthly **National Conversations**, virtually uniting Humanity First community members from across the country who share a passion and commitment to shaping a world where we all lead with Humanity First. Focused this year on the *11 Simple Rules*, these gatherings fostered a safe space where participants could find camaraderie and support through authentic dialogue and mutual learning. The wisdom and connections exchanged ripple outward as participants bring practices of empathy, equity, and connection-building into their own lives and communities.

## EXTENDING THE CONVERSATION

LFC's commitment to shaping a Humanity First world doesn't end with our direct service programs. Through our podcast and blog, we make the dialogue on equity, leadership, and community-building accessible to a national audience. These channels deepen exploration, highlight stories, and advocate for our vision—inviting reflection and sparking action.



In its second year, **The Leading for Children Podcast** produced a series of dynamic conversations with parents, educators, and community members from across the Humanity First community. Episodes explored topics grounded in LFC's principles, with a particular focus this year on the *11 Simple Rules*, offering diverse perspectives, lived experiences, and stories that connect these ideas to everyday life. Available across major platforms, the podcast extends our mission nationally, reaching hundreds of listeners and inviting them to reflect, learn, find fuel, and bring Humanity First practices into their own communities.

LFC's **Blog** served as a written extension of our monthly conversations, offering space for deeper reflection on the themes explored with our community.

Each post linked back to LFC's principles and, this year, highlighted the *11 Simple Rules* as a guide for cultivating the relationships, environments, and learning experiences children need to thrive. By weaving together insights from dialogue, organizational perspective, and lived experience, the blog provided continuity across our communications and an accessible resource for readers to pause, reflect, and carry Humanity First practices into their daily lives.

## IN THE MEDIA



In their spring issue, **Exchange** magazine published Judy and Nichole's article, "11 Simple Rules to Create Thriving Communities for Children." Reaching a national audience of early childhood leaders, this piece introduces the rules as groundwork for strengthening adults' capacities to shape communities where everyone flourishes by centering humanity and equity.





**“Humanity is not a lofty idea,** it’s the heart of our daily life. It is what we say and do and how we treat others. It is the soul of our community, and it is what children experience and learn from every day.”

— **Judy Jablon, *Founder***



# Stories of Impact ”



## DR. SHANNON BRACAMONTE

Program Operations Director,  
The University of New Mexico Early Childhood  
Services Center

**When I think back to where we started**, our team was depleted—not just from long hours, but from a growing sense of disconnection. For years, we had supported early learning programs across New Mexico with deep commitment but little time to reflect, connect, or replenish. The work had become increasingly focused on compliance, systematically meeting requirements, satisfying external demands, and attempting to achieve more with diminishing resources.

“Compliance had replaced connection.”

The heart of our work—relationships—was becoming an afterthought. What we needed was not simply

more resources, but a renewed way of working that centered trust, reflection, and humanity.

That renewal came when we met Leading for Children at the BUILD conference. The Humanity First Model and Mutual Learning Method weren't just new frameworks—they were an invitation to reimagine how we lead. From our very first conversation, we experienced something rare: a partnership built on presence and shared reflection, not deliverables and deadlines. By slowing down and creating space for authentic dialogue, our team began to reconnect with each other and with our purpose.

This was more than professional development; it was a re-centering. We shifted from seeing leadership as a role held by a few to a practice shaped by all. Through ongoing reflection and mutual learning, our consultants began to speak more openly, trust more deeply, and recognize their own agency. They moved from simply supporting programs to modeling the values they were learning—equity, co-leadership, and mutual respect. These internal shifts created ripple effects, transforming how they engaged with educators across the state.

The impact wasn't linear, it was multidimensional, like a kaleidoscope, shifting and expanding with every conversation and connection.

“We didn't just become more effective. We became more human.”

Partnering with LFC reminded us that true transformation doesn't come from doing more; it comes from slowing down, being present, and leading with care. Today, our work is more grounded, intentional, and equitable. For me, this experience has not only reaffirmed why I do this work, it has clarified how I want to continue doing it: with authenticity, intention, and always, in community.



## MALLORY CARPENTER

Second Grade Teacher, Zion Chapel School

**When I was first invited to join a statewide project** on early childhood practices, I wasn't sure what I was stepping into. Someone from the State had reached out and said it was an opportunity to reflect with educators across Alabama—facilitated by Judy and Nichole from Leading for Children. It sounded interesting, but I'll be honest: when Judy first called and started asking these deep, thoughtful questions, I thought, What have I gotten myself into? I was juggling a big shift toward play-based learning in my kindergarten classroom and wasn't used to being asked what I thought.

**“Vulnerability makes us human.”**

I've never been someone who felt confident speaking up in big groups, especially when I assumed others had more authority. In those early sessions, I stayed quiet. But as I engaged with the Humanity First Model and Mutual Learning Method, something shifted. I began to see that vulnerability isn't something to hide—it's something we all feel. That realization changed how I viewed myself, and it changed how I showed up—in meetings, at home, and with my students. I started to speak with

intention, even when it felt hard. I began preparing for conversations that mattered, like one I had with my principal about changes at our school. Even when strong emotions arose, I stayed focused because I believed in what I had to say—and why it mattered.

That personal growth made its way into my classroom. When I moved to second grade, I brought new practices with me. I model reflection for my students by going first—writing my own thoughts on a sticky note and reading them aloud. We've turned “I invite...” into a daily classroom ritual. I want my students to know their voices matter, and that kindness and thoughtfulness are just as important as speaking up. At home, too, things shifted. I've learned to pause instead of react, and I've started saying to my family, Let's come back to this when we're calm. That space has made our conversations more honest—and more human.

**“By modeling that every voice matters, we felt more grounded and empowered.”**

This journey didn't give me a script—it helped me hear my own voice. With the tools and support from LFC, I've grown into a more reflective, grounded version of myself. I used to take on the energy in the room. Now, I aim to be the thermostat, not the thermometer—to set the tone I want others to feel. In every space I'm in, I try to lead with presence, listen without judgment, and create room for others to do the same.





# Financials

These financial statements reflect both the strength of our stewardship and the generosity of our supporters. Your investment ensures Leading for Children can continue advancing the Humanity First Model to empower adults and create brighter futures for children.

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

As of June 30, 2024

### Assets

#### Current Assets

Cash	\$447,545
Accounts receivable	\$234,003
Prepaid expenses	\$3,338
Website Development Costs, Net	\$28,596
Total Current Assets	\$713,482

### Liabilities & Net Assets

#### Current Liabilities

Accounts payable & accrued expenses	\$30,621
Deferred revenue	-
Total Current Liabilities	\$30,621

#### Net Assets

Without donor restrictions	\$682,861
With donor restrictions	-
Total Net Assets	\$682,861

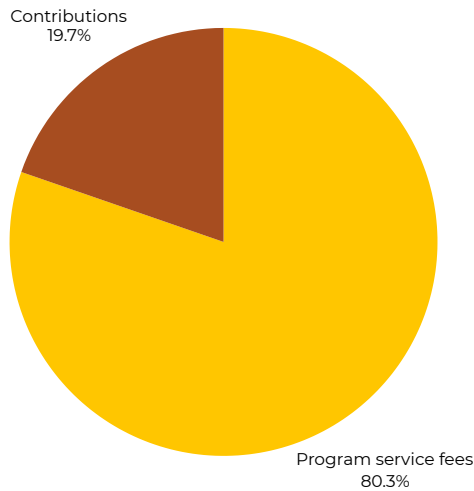
**Total Liabilities & Net Assets** **\$713,482**



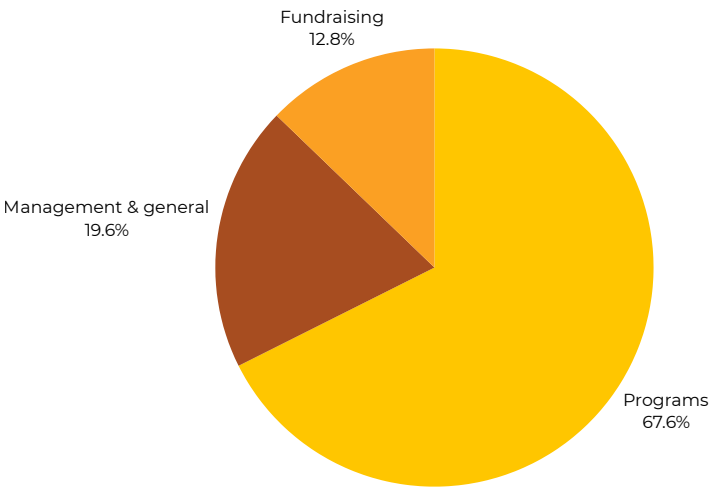
LFC is highly rated as a Four-Star charitable organization by Charity Navigator, meeting and exceeding best practices and industry standards across "Accountability & Finance".



# Where Our Money Comes From



# Where Our Money is Spent



Support & Revenue	
(for the year ended June 30, 2024)	
Program service fees	\$1,008,893
Contributions	\$247,237
In-kind contributions	-
Total Support & Revenue	\$1,256,130

Operating Expenses	
(for the year ended June 30, 2024)	
Program & supporting services	\$841,878
Management & general	\$244,741
Fundraising	\$159,128
Total Expenses	\$1,245,748

Source: Leading for Children Financial Statements June 2024 and 2023 audited by CliftonLarsonAllen LLP.





# Thank You to Our Donors

Many thanks to the generous supporters who made significant gifts to support Leading for Children in 2024. Your partnership and commitment ensure that we are creating communities where children thrive. Together, we are elevating the humanity in us all.

Alex Morse  
Alison Masutani  
Amy Dombro  
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Andrea Greene  
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Wade Wilson and Claudia Bismark  
Wanda Commander  
West Point Baptist Church  
Yusra Khaled Abboud







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