Kids Co.’s mission is to provide and advocate for quality childcare that enriches and nurtures all children, supporting their success in school and in life.
It is time to stir things up. To take a closer look at the assumptions we make about children based upon the neighborhoods in which they live, to question public and private practices that impede families from bettering their lives, and to value the futures of all children and parents who live in Seattle and on Mercer Island.

Is this pie-in-the-sky, nonprofit blather or credible possibility? My Kids Co. colleagues and I believe it is the latter.

From our vantage point, the time has come to wipe the cozy Puget Sound mist from our eyes and see that the childcare playing field in our idealistic mecca is both desperately needed and too often misunderstood, even in circles one might think would get it. Take, for example, the education professional who recently described Kids Co. as an organization that cares for latchkey kids.

Huh?! Latchkey kids?

Not only is this horribly inaccurate—latchkey is a term used to describe children who are left home alone—it grossly minimizes the extraordinary hands-on programming children receive at Kids Co. and diminishes the families who rely upon childcare for work support or to pursue college degrees. Regrettably, this kind of thinking is more commonplace than we would like to admit.

The three stories in Kids Co.’s FY’12 Annual Report, “Invert the World: Voice, Volition, and High Quality Childcare,” challenge this shortsighted thinking. When we invest in the enrichment of youth voices and connect the power of their words with the experience of confidence, right action, and community leadership, we all benefit. When we create opportunities for young parents to exercise volition to pursue college degrees that result in gainful employment, we not only strengthen their family, we strengthen our entire community. When we recruit professionals who embrace and work toward the fulfillment of each of these insights, we invert a world that would limit achievement to the few who can afford it and open wide the door for all young people to discover, develop, and share their gifts with a world that desperately needs their talents.

This is the unassailable view we see at Kids Co. after 23 years of caring for children and the reason why from its inception, Kids Co. has never turned a child away for reasons of financial circumstance. When the vulnerable children and families among us are given opportunities to be successful in life—whether in school, in friendship, or in the case of parents, in careers—we all benefit.

In FY’12, Kids Co.’s 11 centers cared for 1,500 children, awarded 290 childcare scholarships ($387,000), and provided an additional 206 children and their parents access to free Kaleidoscope Play and Learn programming. Kids Co. was also selected to be one of six childcare providers in the United States to partner with SeeYourImpact.org in a pilot funded by The Charles S. Mott Foundation to generate funding for our work.

We thank the donors and parents who made this possible. I invite you to read on and see how they—and you—“inverted the world” last year for children and families in Kids Co.’s care.

Valuing voice, volition, and confident kids,

Susan R. Brown, Kids Co. President and CEO
“...not only did it [the Kids Co. Scholarship] allow me to get my master’s degree, it helped my family become a little more financially independent and made my transition to working a lot easier because we were not saddled with a lot of student debt, which at the master’s level can be significant.” - Jelani Jackson
Cherish and Jelani Jackson have the kind of fairytale-like story that is fun to tell, because it is happy and every bit true. One likes to see couples like them prosper and in this story they do.

Now, typically stories when told begin at a mythic beginning, a “once upon a time” kind of thing, but the telling of their story deserves to begin at the factual end: the day Cherish and Jelani strolled into Susan Brown’s office, Kids Co.’s President and CEO, to say thanks.

It was an unexpected surprise. A handsome couple with a charmer of a soon to be five-year-old son named Jamiel, Cherish and Jelani had come to Kids Co.’s admin office that day to take care of some business, but the person they had come to see was not in. So Susan asked if she could help. This serendipitous introduction to Kids Co.’s founder gave the couple an opportunity to express how grateful they were for the scholarship help that had enabled Jelani to pursue a Master’s Degree in Social Work at the University of Washington. He had just graduated and they wanted her to know that Kids Co. had a major hand in bringing this about.

This is the kind of people Cherish and Jelani are, and the kind of families Kids Co.’s Scholarship Fund supports.

As we know, every good story of triumph needs something to be triumphed over and in this case that something was their family income once Jamiel was born. Even though both parents were working and kept a firm handle on expenses, the family was losing ground financially. They knew Jelani’s income could be increased with a master’s degree, but this path was blocked to them unless they could secure help covering the cost of Jamiel’s childcare.

Initially, things looked dim. At the time, neither the City of Seattle nor the State of Washington offered childcare assistance to parents advancing their families through higher education; only working parents qualified for support. Fortunately, unlike public subsidies, Kids Co.’s Scholarship Fund has only one central criterion for its awards—need—and by this measure, the family qualified.

Cherish and Jelani will tell you that had it not been for Kids Co.’s help, their family would have been in quite a pickle.

The couple met at Ida B. Wells Middle College at the University of Washington, a small, Seattle Public Schools’ college preparatory high school. After graduating, each parent moved on to the U.W. Cherish graduated in 2007 with a double major in American Ethnic Studies and Political Science and quickly landed a job at the U.W. Medical Center as a Patient Services Specialist in Radiology. Jelani followed her in 2010, graduating with a B.A. in Social Work, landing a job at Seattle Central Community College as a Program Assistant. Jamiel, their son, arrived on the scene between their two graduations in 2008.

Jamiel’s arrival presented new financial challenges for the couple, challenges that could be eased if Jelani had the master’s degree required to pursue better paying positions. The solution here was additional education and Kids Co. helped make that possible.

With his Master of Arts in Social Work in hand, Jelani now works at the Department of Veteran’s Affairs helping homeless vets secure permanent housing, while Cherish is still at the U.W. Medical Center. As for Jamiel, well he just graduated from preschool and is heading off to Kindergarten next year. The photo you see with this article was taken the day of his graduation.

We have no doubt that their story will continue to play out a version of “and they lived happily ever after,” which is what makes Kids Co. scholarships such a source of joy.
Power to the Young People
“Walking feet, gentle hands, and use nice words” might well be the Kids Co. at John Muir mantra. This tempering refrain, often heard from the lips of Ms. Kristin, is a kind reminder of the commitment they made to each other at the beginning of the school year when they drew up a few guidelines for how they would be together as a community of kids.

So do their communal guidelines work? Yes—resoundingly so!—because the kids, themselves, uphold them through self-governing practices that make them accountable to one another.

The emphasis on self-governance at Kids Co. at John Muir is both personal and communal. Personal, in that the teachers use attending practices that help children regulate their emotions through conversations that enable them to name feelings and examine choices; communal, in that the kids cycle through a series of service jobs that provide for the caretaking of their space, as well as one another. Examples of their service jobs include White Board Manager, Library Manager, Block Manager, Sweep Manager, Table Manager, and Game Manager. Job assignments rotate on a schedule developed by the kids and each comes with a special badge that the child performing the service wears, honoring and recognizing their authority that day.

In a community as diverse as the community of children enrolled at Kids Co. at John Muir, this way of caring for one another communally promotes bonding between children from very different backgrounds, some of whom do not yet speak English.

Kids Co. at John Muir Program Manager, Tim Zern, will tell you that standing back and letting the process of self-governance play out is not always easy. It requires a great deal of trust on the part of teachers, as well as a willingness to relinquish outmoded ideas about authority—ideas that research is now showing to be less-than-supportive of kids developmentally. Self-governance in childcare also requires a great deal of wisdom from teachers about when and where to intervene—and who is the best teacher to intervene. The Kids Co. at John Muir staff are sensitive and artful in making this call. “When it is clear that we cannot crack a kid’s code,” shared Tim, “we enlist another teacher to attend to the child, a teacher who has a stronger connection.”

Watching this community interact, one is impressed. The children are obviously happy, like one another, and respect their space. There is an unmistakable calmness at Kids Co. at John Muir in spite of the peals of laughter and rambunctious games of sharks and minnows. This is a community of peace.

It is also a community where learning and mentoring are valued. Throughout the school-year, the center offers a daily “power hour.” During this time the Kindergartners and the school-age kids are divided into two groups. The Kindergartners work on geo-boards, blocks and patterns, handwriting, and activities of this nature, while the bigger kids do their homework with staff support. Once the bigger kids are done, they are encouraged to interact with the smaller kids, a strategy to foster mentoring between the two developmental groups.

Big kid/little kid role-modeling is an important element here. Bigger kids are reminded of their roles as leaders in their community and counseled to be mindful that the little kids look up to them. The role-modeling works, because it gives kids a solid sense of their roles, responsibilities, and value to one another.

The word for this sense is confidence and it is the source of the Kids Co. at John Muir children’s happiness: they know there is a positive place for them in their community—a good place, a place that accepts, celebrates, and respects them for who they are now, who they are becoming, and who they someday will be. It is confidence they will carry throughout their lives.

In a community as diverse as the community of children enrolled at Kids Co. at John Muir, this way of caring for one another communally promotes bonding between children from very different backgrounds, some of whom do not yet speak English.
The Vertical Voice: Amanda Sherry on the Value of Teaching Kids to Speak Up

Intuitively, Amanda Sherry trains her sights on the horizons where possibility rises. Perhaps this is why she is drawn to working with children and why she is so gifted at it. She has a special knack for cultivating developmentally-supportive, playful environments where kids safely explore the abundant possibilities inherent in their own curious natures. This is the mark of a talented childcare professional, which Amanda clearly is.

Her prowess, however, extends beyond the horizons of curiosity to the development of that most mysterious of gifts which sets the futures of kids soaring: the confident voice. Her interest in this particular work is personal, rooted in life experiences that led to the discovery and development of her own ability to speak up.

For this Kids Co. on Mercer Island Program Manager, this growth helped protect her from parental abuse.

Growing up in SeaTac and Federal Way, Amanda’s childhood was tumultuous, frequently marred by her violent stepfather. The extreme volatility of her childhood home gave her insights about children that profoundly shape her work with kids today.

Insight one: kids thrive through bonds with trusted adults. The assurance of safety is a baseline in childcare. First and foremost, the attending adults must be worthy of a child’s trust. In Amanda’s childhood, her trusted adult was her Grandma Margaret (“Oma”), a German-American citizen who grew up in WWII Germany. Oma lived down the road from Amanda and when things got scary at home, she would hightail it to Oma’s house in search of safety.

This safe-keeping vividly modeled the foundation of what would eventually become the touchstone of Amanda’s career. But Oma’s caregiving also gave Amanda something more that powerfully changed the course of her life: it gave Amanda the solid, relational ground she needed to voice her needs, express her interests, and dream about her future.

Insight two: children receive life-long benefits from opportunities and practices that empower their voices. The gift of Amanda’s difficult childhood was learning how to speak up in ways that carried her into a better future. Her passion for this topic is what led Kids Co. on Mercer Island to become the first Kids Co. center to implement the School-Age Program Quality Assessment (SAPQA) standards developed by the David P. Weikert Center for Youth Program Quality. These standards reject the outdated top-down model for youth programming, and instead rely on processes that involve the full participation of kids.

Instrumental in this approach is nondirective conversation. At Kids Co. on Mercer Island, these conversations began by sitting down with the kids to explore topics that interest them. The kids offered quite a few, including areas of science that held particular fascination. Hearing this, the staff purchased a constellation of science-related materials with funding provided by School’s Out Washington. The materials were incorporated into the programming over the course of several months, and at the end of each week, the kids gathered to reflect on what they saw, discovered, and experienced.

The potency of SAPQA is that it fosters confidence-building in children through conversational practices that promote self-reflection and discovery. At Kids Co. on Mercer Island, it is a big hit.

Amanda’s journey has carried her to U.W. Tacoma where she graduated with a B.A. in Social Work, into the childcare profession where she is a leader, and to Kids Co. where she keeps raising the bar for quality youth programming. None of these accomplishments would have occurred had she not had the confidence to voice her dreams in spite of her pain. Pros like her, who value the voices of children and know how to help them cultivate confidence in speaking up, are the very people we need caring for kids.

The potency of SAPQA is that it fosters confidence-building in children through conversational practices that promote self-reflection and discovery within the context of community. At Kids Co. on Mercer Island, it is a big hit.
A standing ovation for these caring people, businesses, foundations, and organizations who supported Kids Co.’s mission and work with children in FY’12 (9/1/2011 to 8/31/2012).

BUSINESSES
A & J Meats and Seafood
Adobe Systems Incorporated
AlphaGraphics
Bader Martin, PS
Better Meat, Inc
Costco - 4th Ave S
Costco - Aurora
Costco - Issaquah
Costco - Kirkland
Costco - Lynnwood
Costco - Southcenter
Dorsey & Whitney LLP
fred Meyer - Ballard
Microsoft Corporation
QFC - Ballard
Starbucks Matching Gift Program
Target - Factoria
Target - Renton
Target - West Seattle
ZippyDogs.com

FOUNDATIONS
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Charles S. Mott Foundation
The Dorsey and Whitney Foundation
JPMorgan Chase Foundation
League of Education Voters Foundation
School’s Out Washington
The Seattle Foundation

INDIVIDUALS
Leslie Aberman and Justin Hulvershorn
Amy Africa
Leah and Adam Africa
Naveen Ahmed
Tom Alberg and Judy Beck
Nathan Alexander
Amanda Allen and Eric Rucker
Senoria Allen
Anna Anafi
Sharron Anderson and Andrae Israel
Virginia Anderson
Anonymous
Dana Aoyama
Kirsten and Gregg Aoyama
Karen Aoyama
Sandra and George Aposporos
Michelle Aschenbrenner
Jennifer Ashley
Catherine Bachy and Peg Giffels
Heidi Badger-Chrisman
Elisabeth Bailey
Orion Balliet
Jennifer and Tony Balogh
Dr. Mark Balter O.D.
LaDella Bareither
Brooke Barnes
Gretta Bartels
Nikki Baulista
Suzanne Beckerman
Christopher Bedford-King
Henry Bedford-King
Marjorie Bedford-King
R. Marie Belt
Sherie Belt and Darius Hart
John Benner
Pamela Bennett-Sacco and Tony Sacco
Bradley Berg
Allison and Bob Bergstrom
Sherie and Tim Bernardes
Gary Bird
Ray and Erin Blakeney
Cate and Thomas Boerema
Jean Boler and John Dienhart
Alice Bossart
Megan Bradley
Karen Braun and Jim Dean
Timme Brewer
Herb Bridge and Edie Hilliard
Jon and Bobbie Bridge
David and Gretchen Broderson
Paul and Dottie Brown
Susan and Jim Brown
Diane Buckley
Kathy Buzon and Chris Braham
Ray and Heather Caldwell
Laura and Eric Camplin
Clausy Campos and Rodolfo Castillo
Shana Carmody
Bill Carr
Thomas Carter
Mayra Castanos
Pavla Ceskova and Petr Koncny
Jean Chaback
Carmen and Paul Chan
Namchee Chan
Doris Chan-Lee and Elton Lee
Randy Chapman
Lorraine Cheng and Mark Nakagawara
Julie and David Chivo
Nancy and Henry Chou
Kim and Peter Cleworth
Jeff Cohn and Dana Flanegin
Patrick and Pamela Cone
Jenny Connor
Chris Cook
Shannon Corbin and Jonathan Tingstad
Catherine Cornwall and Jim Swenson
Kara Costa
Catherine Crowe
Carolyn Cunningham and Keith Ward
Natalia Czajkiewicz and Paul Ohlhaunt
Colleen and Seaton Daly
Missy Daniels and David Glisson
Terri and David Danielson
Jim David
Char Davies
Carli DeCaro
Diane DeHart
Sigrun Denny and Lester Eastlick
Kanako Depusoy
Connor Desai
Krissten and Thomas Deskin
Anna DiCicco and Manuel Sarabia Quinteros
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Ngoc Do
Judy Doerflinger
Elinor Dofredo
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Linda and Randy Eberson
Tami and Bruce Echigoshima
Liz Economou
Deborah and Peter Ehrlichman
Bonnie and Ron Elgin
Steven and Liz Ellmann
Erin Elsasser
George Erving
Ann Esco and Steve Tatge
Cindi and Dave Esquinasi
Tamara Evans-Thronton and Fredrick Thronton
Kim Fabel
Jane Fairchild
Jerri Farstad and Melissa Nathanson
Brian and Jamie Fauer
Sean Fennessy
Nathan Ferguson
John and Lauren Ferraro
Malu Fischer and Jari Ahonen
Tresa Flanegin
Roger Fong
Jennifer Fontaine
Erskine and Hiroko Fred
Carolyn and Tom Freeman
Elisabeth Fretz
Mary Ellen and Wayne Fukuhara
Robert Gagnon
Jill and Bill Gallagher
Stephen M. Gerard
Michael Geri
Angelica Germani
Colin Getty
Brian Gianforcaro
Karen and Samuel Gigliotti
Lisa and Stephan Gilges
Robin and Greg Gillick
Vincent Gonzales and Celeste Meneses-Gonzales
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Sharon Goochey and Curtis Brakay
Kathy and Andrew Goroffh
Lindell Graham
Elisa Frost Granger and Rick Granger
Penny Gray
Kathleen and Matthew Grosnong
Rich Grunder and Christina Economou
Jo Ann and Wilford Hairston
Yuji Hakuno
James Halada
Toni Halada
May Halard and Bernali Nandy
Eleanor Hamburger and Daniel Gross
Michelle and Neil Hamilton
Thomas Hansen
Sara and Burke Harris
Danetta Hart
Jennifer Hartpence and Travis Ortlieb
Carroll Haymon
Candace Heckman
Elizabeth and Tom Heldmann
Kim and Jon Hemingway
Bruce and Deborah Hendrickson
Erich Hennessey and Peter Lewis
Serina and David Hijriida
Steve Hoffman
Kandace and Rick Holley
John and Mary Hoverson
Cat Howell and Michael Ernst
Thuy Huynh
Laura Ichikawa and Jack Howland
Elisha Ishii
Shana and Mike Jackson
Jo Ann (no last name given)
Jennifer and Mark JoHannah
Jen and Josh Johnsen
Krysia Johnson
Dwight and Amy Jones
Jia Jones
Joseph Jornadal
Antje and Holger Kache
Susan and John M. Kaiser
Lyne Kalina and Chris Houck
Zola and Daniel Kane
Erin Karp and Peter Graff
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Finn Longinotto
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Jessica Louie
Ryan Louie
Elisabeth Loux
Amy Lowen
Carol Ludford
Trinh Luu
Liz M. (no last name given)
Julie Madden
Barbara and Donald Madsen
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Chad Mains
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Joanne and Tim Malm
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Danielle White
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Cassandra Wickholm
Nadja and Kerry Wiese
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Ann Williams and Carlos Arisuggesta
Kinnon Williams
LaFawnda Williams
Nicole Williams
Rebecca Willikens
Bart H. Wilson
Jacqueline Wilson
Stacy and Dustin Winegardner
Ryan Winker
Steven Wrenn
Steven Wright
S. Murat Yanar and Kimberly Boltz
Steve Yeo
Angela Ying and John Ruhland
Mark Zufelt

**ORGANIZATIONS**

Local Independent Charities
Missionfish
Quota International of Kent Valley
SeeYourImpact.org
South Shore PTSF
United Way of King County
Woodland Park Zoo
Allocation of Funds Received for Fiscal Year 2012

8.1% Management and General
3.0% Fundraising
88.9% Current and Future Needs

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
August 31, 2012

Current Assets:
- Cash and Cash Equivalents $679,813
- Accounts Receivable, Net 59,961
- Prepaid Expenses 25,093
Total Current Assets 764,867
Property and Equipment, Net 128,163

$893,030

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities:
- Accounts Payable $180,984
- Refundable Deposits 57,300
- Unearned Program Fees 55,820
Total Current Liabilities 294,104
Capital Lease Obligations 20,641
Total Liabilities 314,745
Unrestricted Net Assets 578,285
$893,030

STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES
August 31, 2012

Revenue and Support:
- Program Service Fees $2,791,171
- Grants and Contributions 69,690
- Miscellaneous Revenue 6,758
- Investment Income 230
Total Revenue and Support 2,867,849

Expenses:
- Program Services 2,565,798
- Management and General 232,558
- Fundraising 86,678
Total Expenses 2,885,034

Increase in Unrestricted Net Assets -17,185
Unrestricted Net Assets, Beginning of Year 595,470
Unrestricted Net Assets, End of Year $578,285
The Independent Charities Seal of Excellence is awarded to the members of Independent Charities of America and Local Independent Charities of America that have, upon rigorous independent review, been able to certify, document, and demonstrate on an annual basis that they meet the highest standards of public accountability, program effectiveness, and cost effectiveness. These standards include those required by the US Government for inclusion in the Combined Federal Campaign, probably the most exclusive fund drive in the world. Of the 1,000,000 charities operating in the United States today, it is estimated that fewer than 50,000, or 5 percent, meet or exceed these standards, and, of those, fewer than 2,000 have been awarded this Seal. Kids Co. is one.

Come play with us! Like Kids Co. on Facebook (search on Kids Co. Seattle).

Kids Co. 11 Center Locations
Ballard
Capitol Hill/Eastlake
Green Lake
Mercer Island (2)
Mount Baker
Queen Anne (2)
Rainier Beach
Seward Park
Wallingford

Kids Co.
2208 NW Market Street, Ste. 510
Seattle, WA 98107
206.781.8062
admin@kidscompany.org
www.kidscompany.org

Photographs taken by Rachel Alves Photography (www.rachelalvesphotography.com)

Evergreen Children’s Association, dba Kids Co., is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit registered in the State of Washington (Tax Id #91-1450148).