

Better Futures

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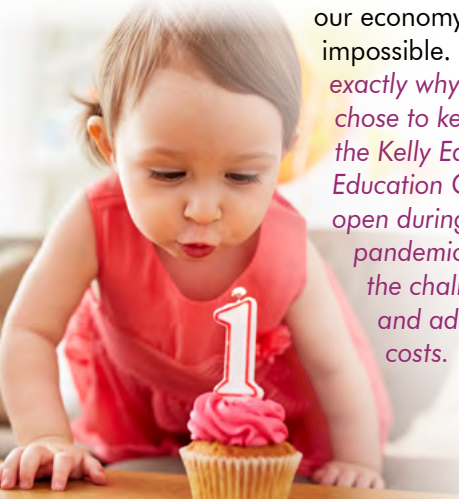
casa de los niños



Early Education Centers More Critical Than Ever

The coronavirus is sending shockwaves through the education system. But how is the spread of COVID-19 affecting the littlest learners—ages 0 to 5—and the adults who teach and care for them? The situation is fast evolving, and each state is responding to the child care conundrum differently. In the current pandemic environment, the need for high-quality early education is more crucial than ever, not only for children, but for their parents and grandparents, for community health, and for economic recovery. Without child care, parents are unable to return to employment, and restarting

our economy will be impossible. *This is exactly why CDLN chose to keep the Kelly Early Education Center open during the pandemic despite the challenges and additional costs.*



Before the pandemic, fewer than 20% of the children in our community attended high-quality preschool. Cost was the primary barrier. However—according to the Arizona Department of Health Service (Child Care Licensing Division)—in the last five months, 73% of licensed child-care centers and homes statewide have closed. It is reported that locally, 50% of child-care centers and 45% of family home child-care facilities are closed. And it is probable that a substantial proportion of these facilities will not be able to reopen. *Many families are unable to afford required fees or co-pays.* But parents are struggling in other ways, too. *Single working mothers* are particularly vulnerable to experiencing food and wage insecurity. Despite provider closures, some parents have been hit with unexpected child-care bills. *As a result, we have waived all registration fees and co-pays thru the pandemic and have absorbed increased costs for COVID-19 related safety-required smaller class size, enhanced sanitation and PPE for employees and children.*

Without an end to the COVID-19 pandemic in sight, parents stuck at home with young ones are juggling their own work lives with their children's play lives and educational needs. With continued urging to practice social distancing—putting play dates and even family visits out of the question—parents are feeling frazzled.

Parents are struggling. Through the pandemic, we have waived fees.

And without access to high-quality safe child-care options, some workers will choose to remain out of the work force altogether. Children will lose the educational and life benefits of early education. Many parents, mostly women, will simply be unable to return to work, and many child-care

Message from Susie Huhn, CEO



During the last six months, we have all been tested with the series of events impacting our daily life, our work and our communities. COVID-19 forced the non-profit sector to reinvent themselves, to quickly examine and adapt our services and business model to a virtual environment, and to find new ways to serve the families and children who depend on us. This requires our staff to embrace change and for our leadership team to continually assess, strategize, and deliver positive results while supporting our teams who are learning to work in this new reality. The non-profit sector that

prides itself in working in collaboration with others now has to learn to build and support these relationships via Zoom or over the phone.

Casa de los Niños is unwavering in our support for kids in Tucson. We made sure we were here not only for the families we serve, but for our employees and the community at large. The longer term human impact of COVID has yet to be seen, but we already have seen dire implications for low-income communities and communities of color who were left behind with loss of jobs, lack of access to technology necessary for their children to learn, limited mental health services, and continued health disparities. On top of COVID, we experienced grave injustices throughout the country with the senseless murder of young black men and women. Now more than ever, our sector needs to step up collectively and advocate for systemic change for inclusion, diversity and social justice, making sure every person has equal access to the tools they need to succeed.

Casa de los Niños continues to rise to these new challenges and remains strong and committed to being here to serve the children and families of our community. Please help support the critical work in front of us as we build our new tomorrow, a tomorrow that creatively looks at new ways to come together and build stronger communities.

Sincerely,

Susie Huhn



Early Education Centers, continued

businesses will remain closed permanently. This will be a major setback for our community. We are committed to keeping this center open for kids and families who most need it, and we are working hard to find new funding to support the work.

Several generous funders have helped to ensure that this vital resource is available in Tucson to families and children in need.



We are so grateful to the following organizations for their generous gifts in the last year to support the Early Education Center:

- Knisely Family Foundation
- Marshall Foundation
- Wells Fargo Foundation
- TJX Foundation
- Cardinals Charities
- Stone Canyon Foundation
- Stocker Foundation

The needs of the most vulnerable kids in Tucson are becoming more urgent as this pandemic continues. Casa de los Niños is here to ensure their safety and well-being.

Fostering to Adoption

Fostering a child of any age can be challenging, and it's even more so as we try to navigate these uncertain times. With the pandemic, Pima County is experiencing a shortage of foster families and an increase in children being removed from homes. And the pandemic is taking many foster families into uncharted territory: widespread diaper and baby formula shortages, school and child-care closures, and parents trying to juggle their jobs and home responsibilities. The effect of this virus is being felt in extreme ways by vulnerable children and families. Prior to COVID-19, kids in foster care who had already experienced a great amount of change in their lives—whether it is abandonment or abuse—now add the virus into the mix, and it's a whole new bundle of uncertainty and stress for them.

Now more than ever, we understand the importance of a safe and loving home. Are you considering becoming a foster parent? Casa de los Niños has a team of specialists ready to guide and support you through the process. When you make the commitment to become a foster parent, the impact you have on a child in need goes far beyond bringing them into your home. You can help a child to trust, build confidence, and instill lifelong values that will help prepare a foster child for a brighter future. If this is the right time for you, you can change the life of a child in need by becoming a licensed foster parent.

Visit our website at
casadelosninos.org/foster-care

Foster Family Shares Their Experience

Dear Casa de los Niños,

I am writing to express what a joy it has been working with your staff. We were contacted in 2018 that a baby needed a foster home and might possibly move to adoption. My husband, Melvin, and I were prepared to accept the challenges and joy of having a newborn and Casa de los Niños quickly helped us become licensed and became great advocates for resources and support. But, the mother changed her mind just short of birth and chose to keep her child. CDLN was supportive to myself and my husband with the disappointment that we quickly experienced but encouraged us to continue to maintain our foster license.

December 2018, we received our first foster child, and because my husband and I have medical backgrounds, we chose to accept children with severe medical issues. We had this very sweet 3-month-old with a severe cranial fracture for about a month. We knew shortly after welcoming her into our home that her biological family was the best place for this little girl, and that family was willing to step up. Facing another loss, we decided it was best to relinquish our foster license and focus on us.

- We sadly faced the idea that having children may not be possible. We closed our foster license but still received checkup calls from our Casa Advocate. She was engaging and supportive even when we were feeling down. In July of 2019, we found out about a child that needed a home. She was born substance exposed and needed a lot of TLC. My first call was to Casa de los Niños. Marguerite (Maggie) Mehlhoff was helpful in telling us what we needed to do to get our license reinstated. She walked us through the process and even reached out to DCS before the child was ready for placement. We brought "Sunnie" to our home at just three weeks old.

The baby had symptoms of withdrawal and the first few months were rough to say the least. Maggie has been with us all along the way. She walked us through what we needed to get our license reinstated. She provided a support package with diapers, formula, wipes, and bottles. We could not have made those first couple of weeks without her. We had our license reinstated about three months after Sunnie came to our home. Maggie continued to provide support and helped us to work with DCS. We have never missed a court appointment, request for paperwork, and timely filing all because of Maggie.

We are so grateful to your team! I know Maggie did not work alone and often talked about consulting with other advocates. (Anabeli Miranda also helped make our license reinstatement happen quickly.) We greatly appreciate everything that Casa de los Niños does for us and our community. The adoption of our daughter was finalized on August 19th, 2020!

Sincerely,

Marc & Melvin



Transition to Teletherapy

In March, we were all suddenly plunged into the new virtual world. And Casa de los Niños—like so many other non-profit organizations—was faced with creating a new way to work with the children and families who rely on our help. Our staff has shown remarkable dedication, resilience, and creativity as we have worked through the tumult that came with that shift to teletherapy and virtual client visits. It is challenging, imperfect, and evolving, and we are already seeing an increase in need. People are seeking mental-health support as they struggle to cope with the pandemic, school and business closures, and civil unrest. We asked four of our Child & Family Therapists to share their experience and perspective of providing therapy in a virtual environment:

HEIDI LONG, MAMFT, LAMFT
CHILD & FAMILY THERAPIST, BIRTH – 5

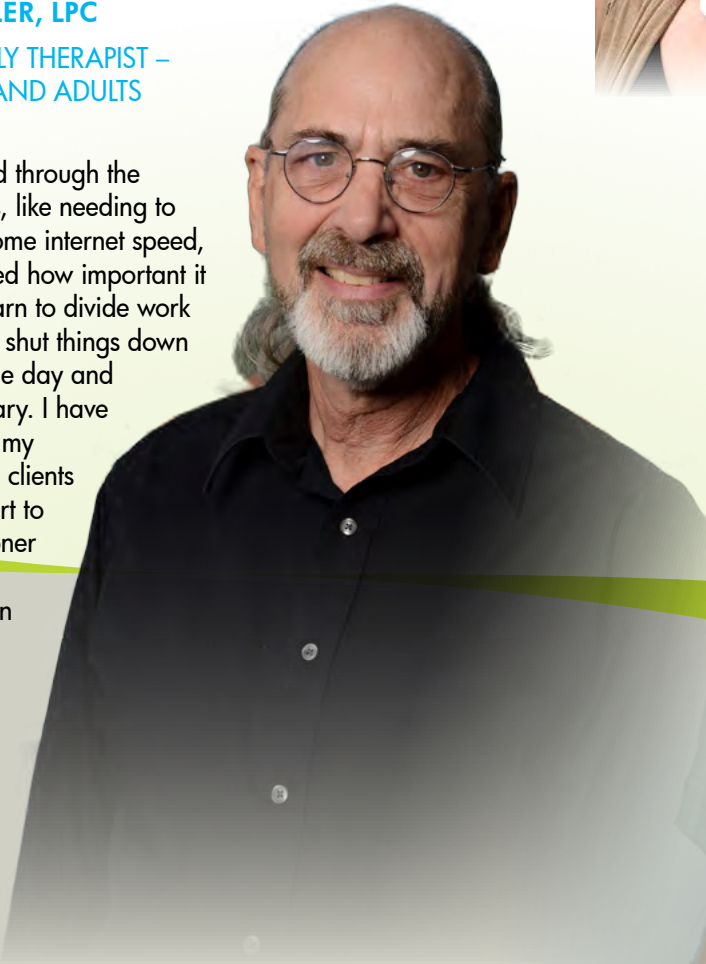


“Telehealth has been a massive change both professionally and personally, but I am grateful to be given the opportunity to continue to work with my families.

The first week had its ups and downs, and it felt as if I was walking down a path that I did not understand. I felt anxious and lost. This experience has really changed my perspective on what therapy is. With in-person therapy, the therapist relies on feeling the environment and to monitor things that are unsaid. To not share a space with the client, but only communicate through a screen, is completely different – and these are little kids under five!

Working with young children, we also rely on movement and finding ways to create space for the child to process feelings. And really important in this virtual world, we need to ensure that the child’s safety is not compromised as we talk about emotions and family issues. On the positive side, I do find new ways to help parents engage and interact with their children, and for many, the burden of finding transportation has been lifted and they have been more consistently involved.”

BRUCE KAHLER, LPC
CHILD & FAMILY THERAPIST – YOUTH (16+) AND ADULTS



“Once I worked through the technical issues, like needing to upgrade my home internet speed, I quickly realized how important it would be to learn to divide work from home—to shut things down at the end of the day and draw a boundary. I have seen in myself, my colleagues and clients that we can start to feel like a prisoner in our own homes! It’s been so important to have hobbies and positive distractions.

Initially, about half of my clients did not want to try remote therapy, but most of them have transitioned to teletherapy. It has been very surprising to me just how effective the virtual therapy is, although I do see some people struggle to open up without the physical closeness of being in the same room. I am very aware of the discomfort that comes up with clients not being able to leave the therapeutic work behind in the office. They process some very deep, traumatic experiences and then shut the screen down and are still in the same space. That concerns me, and I work hard to pay close attention and help to ensure they will feel safe in their home after each therapy session.”

TAMAR REED, MSC, LPC, BHP
CHILD & FAMILY THERAPIST – PRETEENS, TEENS, YOUNG ADULTS



“I have been impressed with the fluidity of CDLN’s transition to teletherapy. I do miss welcoming clients into my physical office space. There is a ritual of sorts in that interaction... the client arrives in the reception area where I greet them, lead them back toward the office, offer them some tea or a snack, and then we co-create a safe and nurturing space for therapeutic work. I know that

many of my clients miss being able to step out of their homes and into a separate, dedicated therapy space. Clients know that they can process difficult content that “stays in the office”. The shift to participating in teletherapy from home affects that sense of safety environmental separation affords. Even so, I have learned that creating a therapeutic and welcoming environment is not contingent on sharing a physical space. I am capable of creating a space dedicated to healing and therapeutic work, even when meeting virtually. Family work via teletherapy presents a unique challenge as my control as a facilitator decreases when I am not in the same room as my participants. I may choose not to engage certain topics if they are likely to cue an unsafe response in my client or to trigger an escalated environment. My primary goal is to ensure the emotional safety and well-being of my clients. Some objectives have been put on hold temporarily so that progress is not jeopardized. A benefit of teletherapy is being invited virtually into my clients’ personal space. Clients get to share their homes, their pets, their collections and their artwork with me. This adds a unique and valuable perspective. With challenge comes opportunity, and these changes too have provided occasion to flourish in new ways. I have witnessed youth who struggle with change demonstrate amazing adaptability, and I have been blown away by how skillfully my clients’ families have been navigating during this time.”

CASSAUNDR LOLLER, LCSW
CHILD & FAMILY THERAPIST – ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS



“This was a difficult transition for me because I am an extrovert and a people person! I love the energy and interaction of the office, and I really miss seeing my colleagues and clients. I work with kids twelve and older struggling with mood disorders. I love working with teens, and we have been able to build a shared experience with the new virtual therapy. We are navigating this “new normal” together. It helps build rapport and trust.

When they walk into my office, we have to work to find that commonality. In this environment, we have this as a common starting point! And, perhaps because they are teenagers, they are often more brave and willing to talk about tough things through the screen than in person.

Therapy is more precise, and I am able to address issues head on. I am really concerned about my clients though. So many have stressful and unhealthy situations, and now they have limited school, few activities, and no time with friends. It has been really important during this time that they know that I am not going anywhere. I am here for them.”



Educational Engagement at Home

The Parents as Teachers team has been working over-time to help parents and caregivers to come up with new, fun, and educational activities for their young children at home! These are trying times for parents with youngsters, and these activities can keep kids engaged, learning, and happy. All of these activities help support social, emotional, language, cognitive, and fine motor development.

DECORATE YOUR OWN PANCAKE

Help your child decorate a pancake. Cut up fruit and separate fruit into groups. You can also use a variety of items if you want to get super creative.



FEELINGS FACE

Have your child draw feeling faces and talk about the feelings. Ask your child what makes them happy, sad, mad, or frustrated. They will enjoy drawing out those feeling faces and talking about them.



SINK AND FLOAT

Get a large bowl and fill with water. Pick several items around the house and have your child guess if the items you choose will sink or float.

This activity can also be done in the tub during bath time.



COTTON BALL FUN

Take out cotton balls, a bowl and tongs or tweezers. Have your child practice picking them up and counting.

COLANDER CHAOS

Children can spend a good amount of time placing pipe cleaners into the holes of colander. (Some kids use it as a hat after they have finished filling the holes; let them use their imagination.) Picture only shows partially completed. You can use a variety of colored pipe cleaners to talk about colors.



COLOR MATCHING

Pick your child's favorite book. While you read, point out the colors on the page and ask the child to repeat the color. Then you can walk around the home finding items in your home that match those colors.



Thank You to these Amazing People!

Generosity has the power to unite and heal communities in times of crisis. These wonderful donors have helped support the children and families we serve!

The Diaper Bank of Southern Arizona is a critical resource for the Tucson community especially during this time of uncertainty. While families struggle to make ends meet, Casa de los Niños—along with the support of the Diaper Bank of Southern Arizona—has been able to help families with diapers and wipes. This partnership helps thousands of people in need and relieves so much stress for families!

COVID-19 has been a difficult time and face masks are a critical need. Some local groups and individuals donated handmade masks to keep the children and families we serve safe! High school students from STITCHES made 250 masks and Cathey's Sewing and Vacuum made 100 masks. Mary Alice Webster, who makes beautiful fleece quilts every month for our families, also made a large batch of face masks of all sizes. Thank you to all!



Angel Heart Pajama Program donates new pajamas to children in need to ensure they are feeling comfortable and cared for at bedtime. We are incredibly grateful for the support of this group that continues to drop off new pajamas for our families!

The Knights of Columbus of San Martin de Porres donated backpacks filled with goodies for our Parents as Teachers graduation. Despite graduation being held virtually this year, the Knights of Columbus of San Martin de Porres made this day very special and will help kids start kindergarten off right! When they ask how they can help, they always go above and beyond, so thank you for your continued support and generosity!

Roche Tissue Diagnostics put social distancing into practice by turning their 2020 Roche Children's Walk into a virtual one. Employees "walked" to support Casa de los Niños with an amazing gift of money to help kids!

Bourn Companies came together to really help the community this summer, recognizing they could make this happen by purchasing gift cards to support restaurants and by giving those gift cards to support families in need.

Thanks to the support of Albertsons Companies Foundation, their gift will allow us to provide more free parenting classes to the Tucson community through our Community Education and Outreach Program!

School supplies are always a need, but since this school year will look a little different, we need them now more than ever.

St. Mark's Catholic Church continuously does a remarkable job at gathering items for the children and families we serve! This summer they gathered backpacks, notebooks, folders, crayons, pencils, and so much more.



Mothers and their daughters from the National Charity League of Tucson are always looking for creative ways to help those in need. With two large drop offs, they came together and donated boxes full of hygiene items and school supplies!

Due to COVID-19, kids and teens are home and need to stay busy! West Coast Karate and their members hosted an art supply drive to help during this critical time.



A local Walmart (Ruthrauff and La Cholla) made a financial gift to support children and families during COVID-19. We appreciate the support and generosity from Walmart especially during these uneasy times for our community. Thank you, Walmart!

The Long Realty Cares Foundation gave \$1,000 to our Community Education & Outreach program that offers free parenting classes to hundreds of parents and caregivers. Thank you, Long Realty Cares, for supporting the safety and education of families all over Tucson!

THE MISSION of Casa de los Niños
is to promote
CHILD WELL-BEING and
FAMILY STABILITY in our community.

the
voice
for change
advocacy
children



casa de los niños

CHANGING LIVES FOR GENERATIONS

Casa de los Niños
1120 N. 5th Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85705

casadelosninos.org
520.624.5600

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TWO WAYS TO HELP

Make Your Tax Credit Gift Early!

More than ever, children and families need your help!

Please consider making your tax credit gift early this year and help families during this difficult time.

Casa de los Niños is a **Qualified Charitable Organization**. Your gift may entitle you to a credit of up to **\$400 as an individual** or **\$800 as a couple** on your Arizona State tax return. QCO Code: 22048

For more information regarding your state tax credit, please visit azdor.gov or consult your tax advisor.

To make a gift, email lcanez@casadelosninos.org or call 520.624.5600.

Thank you!



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