



ALL OUR KIN INC.

A SAFE AND LOVING PLACE WHERE PARENTS AND CHILDREN CAN LEARN

## Annual Report 2013

All Our Kin trains, supports, and sustains community child care providers in the greater New Haven and Bridgeport areas. We offer programs that ensure children and their families have the foundation they need to succeed in school and in life. When we invest in informal caregivers, we help them become skilled early childhood educators and savvy small business owners, creating sustainable, quality, neighborhood-based child care programs. Through our programs, child care professionals succeed as business owners; working parents find stable, high-quality care for their children; and children, the workforce of tomorrow, gain an educational foundation that lays the groundwork for achievement in school and beyond.

In 2013, with your support, 54 informal caregivers became licensed family child care providers, and more than 300 family child care providers, serving over 1,500 young children, enhanced the quality and sustainability of their child care programs through All Our Kin's array of professional development programs. As a result of your investment, providers running these programs will **earn a better living**, the **supply of child care** will increase, child care programs will increase in **quality**, and children will get the **foundational learning experiences** they need.

### Our Story

All Our Kin began as an innovative response to the ramifications of the welfare reform act of 1996 on low-income families. Realizing that single mothers of very young children struggled to find both decent work and affordable high-quality child care in their communities, All Our Kin decided to invest in these women by giving them the resources and training to open their own community-based family child care programs. All Our Kin opened in New Haven, Connecticut in 1999 with a staff of two and an original group of six mothers and six children.

Over the last 13 years, we have grown our organizations to reach over 300 child care providers who serve over 1,500 children and their parents throughout Connecticut. Through our **Toolkit Licensing Program**, providers work with All Our Kin to go through the state licensing process and become part of a professional community of child care providers. After they receive their licenses, providers join our **New Teacher Mentor Project**, which pairs providers with skilled master teachers who visit their classrooms and offer individual support and coaching. Finally, providers transition into the **Family Child Care Network**, which offers continuing educational mentorship, professional development classes and workshops, advocacy and leadership opportunities, and a network of relationships with other family child care providers. Providers in the Network come together for monthly meetings, workshops and trainings, including Child Development Associate training, and an annual professional development conference.



We are proud of the work we have done, with your support, over the last 13 years. We have also learned a great deal. When we started, we knew that child care providers played a key role in supporting children's development and in making it possible for parents to go to work. At the same time, we did not yet fully understand the number of ways that providers intersect with families and children or the depth of their impact.

## **Where We Are Going**

As we have realized the myriad ways that child care providers shape the lives and futures of not only the children in their care but also the neighborhoods and communities in which they work, we have begun to expand the kinds of programs we offer. Our newest programs address a wide range of issues:

*Health:* Over 20 percent of children in Connecticut are obese by age four. Our family child care providers typically feed children two meals a day plus snack. In doing so, they shape the way children think about food. By setting children's daily schedules, family child care providers also shape whether and how much children go outside and use their bodies. And, they influence parents through the examples that they set and the conversations that they have. In the last two years, in partnership with Common Ground's School Garden Resource Center, we launched our **Organic Garden Project**. We planted 15 organic gardens in the backyards of 15 family child care programs across New Haven. The gardens provide a ready source of fresh organic produce for providers to serve the children in their care. Extra produce gets sent home with parents. Not only do the gardens help children learn about where their food comes from, they also get providers and kids to go outside more often. Providers report that children are asking for vegetables at meal times and that attention spans are improving with the additional outdoor time.

*Mental Health:* Increasing numbers of psychological studies show that mental health begins with secure attachment—a strong relationship with a safe, reliable, trusted caregiver. Just one loving, caring adult can make all the difference to the life of a child in a chaotic or stressful situation. Our family child care providers can play that role. They can be a source of stability—sometimes the only source of stability—for children and families living in poverty. So we are helping providers deepen and be intentional about creating those attachments, through training in the **Circle of Security**. This is a curriculum originally designed for parents that is all about making those deep relationships with children. We are the first organization to take this curriculum and use it with family child care providers. We see the change already, but we are working with the Yale Child Study Center to prove that this work can make a real, lasting difference to providers' knowledge, skills and beliefs.

*Workforce Development:* A University of Connecticut evaluation of our work's economic effects showed that 60 percent of our providers earn \$5,000 more the first year after becoming licensed, and nearly half earn \$10,000 more the second year. That evaluation also showed that our work generates \$15-20 in economic returns for every dollar invested, through providers' increased earnings and parents' ability to enter, and remain in, the workforce. Despite these significant gains, our providers do not earn nearly enough for their hard work. On average, they earn between \$20,000 and \$25,000 per year. We approach this problem in two ways: First, since 72 percent of children in our providers' care qualify for state child care subsidies, in recent years,



we have **expanded our advocacy efforts** at the state level to increase funding for child care. Second, we have created several initiatives designed to help providers earn more and keep more of what they earn. These include **a zero-interest loan program, a family child care entrepreneurship series, and one-on-one coaching from a business consultant**. Preliminary results show that we are able to help providers earn close to \$200 in additional income per week from these programs.

*Parent Education:* From our providers, we have learned that they are not just educating children; they are educating parents too. Often, they are on the front lines of helping families manage crises, from job loss to domestic violence. They are the first to identify potential developmental delays and have those tough conversations. And they are also the ones who, at the end of a long day, invite a parent to sit down and just talk about their kids. We have teamed up with two leading researchers to create **a curriculum that will give providers strategies for supporting families and engaging parents**. Through the curriculum, providers will build on these already strong relationships to do even more to give disconnected parents and families what they need. In one parent's words: *"My family child care provider is my main resource person. So what she says, I take that to heart."*

### **Awards and Recognition**

As we continue to demonstrate that family child care providers can meet quality standards, and as our impact spreads across the state, our model and management have increasingly received local, state, and national attention. In 2012, All Our Kin was one of fourteen sites across the country chosen to participate in the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Frontiers of Innovation initiative; the federal Offices of Child Care and Head Start highlighted All Our Kin's work in a national webinar; Zero to Three featured All Our Kin as an example of best practice in its white paper "Staffed Family Child Care Networks: A Strategy to Enhance Quality for Infants and Toddlers"; the U.S. Small Business Administration chose All Our Kin's executive director as its 2012 Women in Business Champion for Connecticut; and The International Alliance for Women honored All Our Kin's co-founders and directors with 2012 "World of Difference" awards. In 2013, RYASAP (Regional Youth Adult Social Action Partnership) honored All Our Kin's Nilda Aponte with its "Above and Beyond" award for her outstanding performance bringing our programs and services to Bridgeport, while All Our Kin's co-founders, Jessica Sager and Janna Wagner, were honored by the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame for their work on behalf of women's education and empowerment.

In one parent's words:

*"[Our family child care provider] has been such a gift to our family and to the close-knit community of families she has built. She is creative, kind and generous. She has a deep love for all of our children and has created a vibrant and nurturing learning environment. Our children adore her. We are forever grateful for all that she has brought to our lives."*

We thank you for making our work possible.