



**Umbrella Family and Child
Centres of Hamilton**



2024 Annual Report

2025 Board of Directors

Jeffrey Boyle (Chair)
Maggie Irving
Christine Andrews
Michael Highdale
Caitlin Korff

Lois Sanders
Erfa Alani
Emma Garrod
Omar Iqbal
Brittany Misurec

2025 Administrative Team

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Darryl Hall

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
Courtney Potts

Human Resources Manager
Lynne Berwick

Human Resources Coordinator
Jhadea Hodge

Talent Acquisition Specialist
Geli Yong

**Communications &
Marketing Specialist**
Nneka Onwualu

Senior Manager of Finance
Lori Finelli

Accounting Supervisor
Terry Townsend

Accountant
Jill Venema

Accounting Coordinator
Ashley Codispodi

Receptionist and Office Clerk
Jennifer Miles
Leah Belanger (temporary)

**DIRECTOR OF CHILD CARE
PROGRAMS:**
Shawna Webster

Program Managers
Ashley Franko
Breann Domjancic

Program Supervisors
Ashlie Boich
Brenda Parker
Connie Laccheo
James O'Connor
Jenna Kinnaird
Jessica Wight
Julie Kott
Krista Genesiee
Linda Somma
Nicki Risdon
Parvinder Dhillon
Sharon Ricketts
Stacey Pokoradi
Zoubayda Choucair

**Manager of
Program Excellence**
Jennifer Allen

**Pedagogy & Program
Specialists**
Jennifer Redmond
Sophia Windett

CUPE LOCAL 3491

President
Missy Ashley

Vice President
Tara Stirling

Secretary/Treasurer
Rita Santini



Our Vision

Responsive, accessible, and inclusive
child care for all

Our Mission

Excellence in early learning and child care

Our Core Values

1

Collaboration is the Key

Success is rooted in our partnerships
with our team, children, families, and
community partners.

2

Equity and Belonging Always

Children and families are at the centre of
everything we do, and we celebrate their
strengths with respect, passion
and purpose.

3

Excellence Begins with Us

Investing in our team, promoting innovation,
and nurturing quality improvement is what
sets us apart.

4

Respect and Integrity are Essential

We will act with uncompromising honesty
and integrity in everything we do.

5

Trusting Relationships Connect Us

We will create and build trusting
relationships with our team, children,
families and communities.





2024 Annual Report

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Umbrella Family and Child Centres of Hamilton are situated on the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Mississaugas. We recognize that our city is home to many Indigenous people and we have a responsibility to learn more and increase our understanding of this land’s history, actively cultivating a sense of appreciation, respect, and belonging.

In our work with children, we are dedicated to respecting the land, nurturing a love and appreciation for the earth, and fostering an understanding of those who were the first caretakers and stewards of this land. We commit to fostering an appreciation of nature and a connection to the land in our programs, both indoors and outdoors as well as learning from Indigenous voices as we grow in this work.



Chairperson's Message

As the Chair of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present our annual report for 2024. I encourage you to explore this report and read about our achievements in meeting or exceeding the goals in our 2023-2025 Strategic Plan. These accomplishments are a direct result of the hard work and dedication of our team.

We are excited to highlight the continued impact of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Childcare Agreement (CWELCC). This initiative has further reduced fees, providing immense benefits to families across the nation. We are proud to be part of this program that prioritizes affordable and quality child care.

Our Board of Directors has maintained its focus on strengthening our governance leadership. We have implemented additional policies and procedures and invested in further Board training to ensure we are equipped to guide our organization effectively. These steps have strengthened our foundation, enabling us to better serve our community.

Our efforts have been closely aligned with our strategic goals. We have focused on enhancing program quality, fostering equity and inclusion, investing in our staff, and advocating for sustainable funding. These priorities have guided our decisions and actions, ensuring we remain true to our mission.

In closing, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has contributed to our success. Your dedication and hard work are the pillars of our organization. Together, we will continue to strive for excellence in serving children and families in Hamilton.

*Sincerely,
Jeff Boyle*



Chief Executive Officer's Report

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Our 2024 Annual Report reflects the tireless efforts of our staff and volunteers who have been instrumental in advancing our mission to provide inclusive, affordable, and high-quality programming.

Achievements and Strategic Goals:

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB):

We have made significant strides in our commitment to EDIB. We launched several initiatives aimed at fostering a more inclusive environment. These include comprehensive EDIB training for staff, the establishment of an EDIB committee, and the implementation of policies that promote diversity and inclusion at all levels of our organization. We are proud to report that these efforts have led to a more diverse workforce and a stronger sense of belonging among our team members and the children we serve.

Staff Development: Recognizing that our staff are our most valuable asset, we have invested heavily in their professional development. This includes offering advanced training programs, leadership development workshops, and opportunities for continuing education. Our goal is to empower our staff with the skills and knowledge they need to excel in their roles and advance their careers within our organization.

Collaborations and Partnerships: We have strengthened our collaborations with community partners locally and provincially to enhance our services. These partnerships have been crucial in expanding our impact and ensuring that we can provide comprehensive support to our community.

Provincial Advocacy: We are actively advocating for a fully-funded child care system at the provincial level. This includes pushing for policies that ensure sustainable funding for child care services which will enable us to provide affordable and high-quality care to families in Hamilton and across the province.

Great Place to Work® Certified:

We are incredibly proud to announce that we received the Great Places to Work® certification for a second year! This prestigious recognition is a testament to our commitment to creating a positive and supportive work environment. It reflects the value we place on our staff and their well-being. Our team members have expressed that they feel valued, respected, and supported in their roles, which is essential for fostering a motivated and dedicated workforce.



In closing, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to our staff, volunteers, and community partners. Your unwavering support and dedication are the driving forces behind our success. Together, we are making a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

Sincerely,

Darryl Hall
Chief Executive Officer



2024 Highlights

At Umbrella Family and Child Centres of Hamilton, we believe that our greatest strength lies in the people and partnerships that bring our vision to life, and 2024 has been a testament to the power of collaboration with families, staff, community partners, and our leadership.

Throughout 2024, we continued to make strides in key areas that shaped the quality of our programs. From deepening our commitment to inclusive pedagogy, to investing in professional learning and infrastructure, to strengthening our family engagement and communication practices – every initiative has been guided by our commitment to nurturing every child's sense of belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression.

Together, we've:

- Deepened our support for inclusive, play-based learning environments.
- Fostered staff well-being through professional development and engagement strategies.
- Strengthened our communications with families and community stakeholders.
- Made key investments in infrastructure and governance.

These achievements reflect not just our organizational goals, but also the shared values that unite our community: care, trust, collaboration, and innovation. We are proud of what we've accomplished and even more excited about what's ahead.



2024 Highlights

Programs and Pedagogy

Building Inclusion, Connection, and Quality Across All Levels

We're a Certified Great Place to Work®

In 2024, Umbrella proudly achieved Great Place to Work® (GPTW) Certification through Great Place to Work Canada, reflecting our commitment to creating a positive and inclusive workplace culture. Highlights from the GPTW Survey include new employees reporting that they feel welcomed and supported upon joining the organization, they are provided with the resources they need to do their jobs effectively, and they feel a strong sense of belonging, collaboration, and alignment with our mission and values.

To build on these results, we launched a GPTW Focus Group with educators to explore areas for improvement identified in the 2024 survey. Focus group feedback informed the development of an Action Plan focused on:

- Recognition
- Improved collaboration
- Enhanced workplace communication

The feedback and proposed strategies were shared with the Leadership Team and are being implemented to strengthen our culture of trust and shared success.



Focusing on Pedagogy and High-Quality Programming

Our 2024 Professional Learning Survey guided the development of a Professional Learning Plan for the 2024–2025 school year. Training initiatives are now focused on measuring knowledge transfer and practical application. We also enhanced our onboarding process by embedding Umbrella pedagogy into welcome sessions, on-site training, and one-on-one mentoring. Our Umbrella Protocols remain a key tool during program and pedagogy visits, supporting shared expectations and high-quality learning experiences.

Enhancing Programming through Art

In fall 2024, our educators were excited to learn about the availability of new art and literacy funding. Collaborating closely with site teams and our professional learning consultants from ASCY, we assessed classroom needs and created thoughtful plans for how best to use the funds.

Through Communities of Practice (CoP) offered both online and in person, our Program Excellence Team supported professional learning that deepened educators' understanding of "process vs. product" art. These sessions emphasized the importance of high-quality, accessible materials and the value of creativity in early learning.

A key focus was on open-ended, process-based art experiences. Open-ended art experiences play a vital role in supporting the core foundations of our pedagogy: belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression.

2024 Highlights

Artwork displayed throughout our classrooms serves as a daily reminder that children are competent, capable, and full of ideas. It provides educators with a tangible window into the learning process. Families also played a meaningful role in supporting creativity in our programs. Through the sharing of photos, cultural traditions, and items from home such as mirrors, plants, seeds, and natural materials, children were able to see their home lives reflected in their learning environments. This strengthened their sense of belonging, emotional security, and curiosity, while also building deeper connections between families and educators.

Leading New Pilots and Community-Based Programming

Umbrella continues to be recognized for its leadership in delivering innovative, culturally responsive and community-focused programming. In partnership with the City of Hamilton, ASCY, and Arts for All, Umbrella was selected to pilot the After School Arts Program at Cathy Wever, integrating art into our after school programs (running until June 2025). Additionally, Umbrella will pilot the Story Makers in After School Program at Viola Desmond and Lincoln Alexander in collaboration with the City of Hamilton and Telling Tales (May-June 2025).

Playground Improvements and Outdoor Learning

Recognizing the essential role of outdoor environments in children's development, we prioritized improvements to our playgrounds as part of our 2024 System Priority Goals. Research continues to affirm the benefits of outdoor play for children's physical, cognitive, and social growth. Our goals were to further naturalize our outdoor learning spaces in alignment with our Reggio-Emilia inspired approach and commitment to connecting children with the natural world and to review and adapt outdoor environments to ensure inclusivity, minimizing barriers for all children and families. This ongoing work reinforces our belief that high-quality early learning happens both indoors and out, and that every child deserves a space where they can explore, belong, and thrive.

Inclusive Field Trips: Creating Accessible Summer Experiences

In 2024, we prioritized making our summer camp experience as inclusive as possible. We collaborated closely with community partners to ensure all field trip locations were fully accessible for children with diverse abilities. This included exploring wheelchair-accessible parks, sensory-friendly play environments, and supportive transportation options to ensure every child could participate comfortably and safely.



2024 Highlights

Relationships

Strengthening Staff Communication | Cultivating Leadership and Connection

Coming Together as a Team

In October 2024, we held our Umbrella Wide Team Event, organized 'by staff and for staff' with representatives from Leadership, Admin/Head Office, Supervisors, and Educators. The fall fair-themed event featured music, games, raffle prizes, years of service awards, and a food truck. Over 120 staff from all locations gathered, fostering connection and community.

Promoting Well-Being through Staff Training

Our Supervisors, Pedagogy and Programs team, and Program Managers participated in Reaching In, Reaching Out (RIRO) training in the fall. This initiative supported our collective commitment to the social and emotional well-being of both staff and children. By learning together, our Supervisory team was able to deepen their understanding and extend this knowledge to their site teams, reinforcing our focus on resiliency, empathy, and mental health.

Staff-Led Committees and Communities of Practice

Staff engagement continues to grow, with team members leading and participating in a variety of committees and communities of practice. These groups foster collaboration, leadership, and innovation throughout our organization.



Active Committees and CoPs include:

- School Break Committee
- Cook's Community of Practice
- Program Leader Community of Practice
- Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging (EDIB) Committee
- Quality Committee
- Monthly Pedagogy Community of Practice
- Monthly Supervisor Community of Practice
- Social Committee
- Umbrella Wide Committee

The Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) Committee, launched in 2023, is Umbrella's first advisory group composed of both staff and parents. This committee brings together diverse voices to promote equity, inclusion, and belonging. It fosters learning, dialogue, and systemic improvements in our organizational practices and child care environments.

Professional Development for Program Excellence

We continued to elevate our commitment to professional growth and mentorship. Monthly Program Leader meetings, launched in September 2024, are helping to improve training delivery and the flow of information to frontline educators. And Supervisors now have dedicated monthly professional development time with the Program Excellence Team, engaging in topics such as Early Years Mental Health and a Pedagogical Documentation book study.

Expanding Leadership Engagement and Sector Collaboration

Umbrella's leadership team has remained deeply involved in community and sector-wide collaboration to strengthen our practice, influence policy, and build impactful partnerships.



2024 Highlights

Key activities and partnerships include:

- Active participation in Quality Early Learning Network (QELN) focus groups on waitlist management, subsidy, and financial reporting.
- The Director of Child Care Programs serves as Co-Chair of the HWDSB Operator's Group and participates in a City-led waitlist working group.
- The Manager of Program Excellence helped facilitate the City of Hamilton's EDIB Policy Initiative, supporting other child care organizations in building

inclusive practices, and contributes to the Hamilton Quality Operators Group.

- The Pedagogy and Program Specialist sits on the Special Needs Resourcing Table (SNR) and co-leads the Infant Early Years Mental Health Community of Practice.
- Our CEO contributes to several national and provincial networks and holds leadership roles on multiple committees, including:
 - Ontario Chapter Coordinator, Coalition for Healthy School Food
 - Child Care Now
 - Quality Early Learning Network (QELN)

- Building Blocks for Better Child Care (B2C2)
- Outdoor Play Canada
- Early Education Advocacy Group (EEAG)
- CMSM Sector Table
- Lead Partner, City of Hamilton's EDIB Child Care Project
- Co-Chair, HWDSB and Early Years Directors Committee
- Board Co-Chair, Governance Committee, Hamilton Child and Family Supports

Umbrella is also represented in key networks, including the ASCY Pedagogy Community of Practice and the Supervisors' Professional Learning Community.

Operations

Strengthening Our Workforce Through Strategic Investment

With support from the Community Services Recovery Fund Grant, funded by the Government of Canada, UFCC undertook a comprehensive initiative to enhance employee engagement, recruitment, and leadership development across the organization. This strategic investment in our people has laid the foundation for stronger recruitment, deeper engagement, and more effective leadership — ensuring that we continue to grow as a supportive, resilient, and high-performing organization.

Key accomplishments include:

Assessment of Employee Engagement Tools:

We reviewed the effectiveness of our current engagement platforms (Lifeworks/TELUS EAP and HR Downloads) to ensure alignment with staff needs.

Recruitment Process Optimization: A full review of our hiring processes, including enhancements to our applicant tracking system, aimed at improving efficiency and candidate experience.

Staff Listening Sessions: We conducted focus groups with educators, staff, and supervisors to identify

barriers to hiring for hard-to-fill positions and inform process improvements.

Employee Value Proposition (EVP): Based on educator input, we developed a compelling EVP to support upcoming recruitment campaigns. Words staff used to describe working at Umbrella included: Welcoming, Belonging, Supported, Caring, Flexible, Growth, Strong Leadership, Compassionate, Collaborative.

Interview Skills & Process Training: All hiring managers received updated training to enhance interview effectiveness and streamline hiring practices.

Workload Management Training: Administrative and leadership staff participated in productivity and workload management sessions delivered by the Priority Management Group.

Mental Health First Aid Training: In partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association, all Program Leaders and supervisory staff received two-day training to better support mental health and wellbeing within our teams.

Leadership Skills Assessment: We evaluated the competencies of all program supervisors to inform the development of a tailored leadership training program.

2024 Highlights

Improving Systems for Families and Staff

In 2024, we made significant investments in our IT infrastructure to enhance both administrative efficiency and family communication. Kindertales, our new childcare management system, was launched in March for fee collection and child-specific forms. The implementation of Kindertales has improved both administrative workflows and communication with families, including:

- Easier school break sign-up process, with in-person support for families facing tech barriers
- Equitable, first-come-first-served placement system

Technology Upgrades

New tablets, laptops, and printers were purchased based on needs identified by staff. Thanks to funding from the City of Hamilton, these upgrades ensure that staff have the tools they need to communicate effectively and support families with up-to-date technology.

Aligning Our Work with Organizational Values

To ensure alignment between day-to-day operations and our long-term goals, we continue to embed our Mission, Vision, and Values (MVV) into every level of our organization. This includes:

- Incorporating MVV into monthly staff meetings
- Embedding MVV into the annual performance review process
- Reviewing and reinforcing MVV during strategic planning updates for Program Leaders and Supervisors
- Conducting quarterly Strategic Plan reviews with administrative, supervisory, and program teams to ensure continued alignment and accountability

Strengthening Our Governance Leadership

Our commitment to strong governance and strategic oversight was reinforced through key developments in 2024:

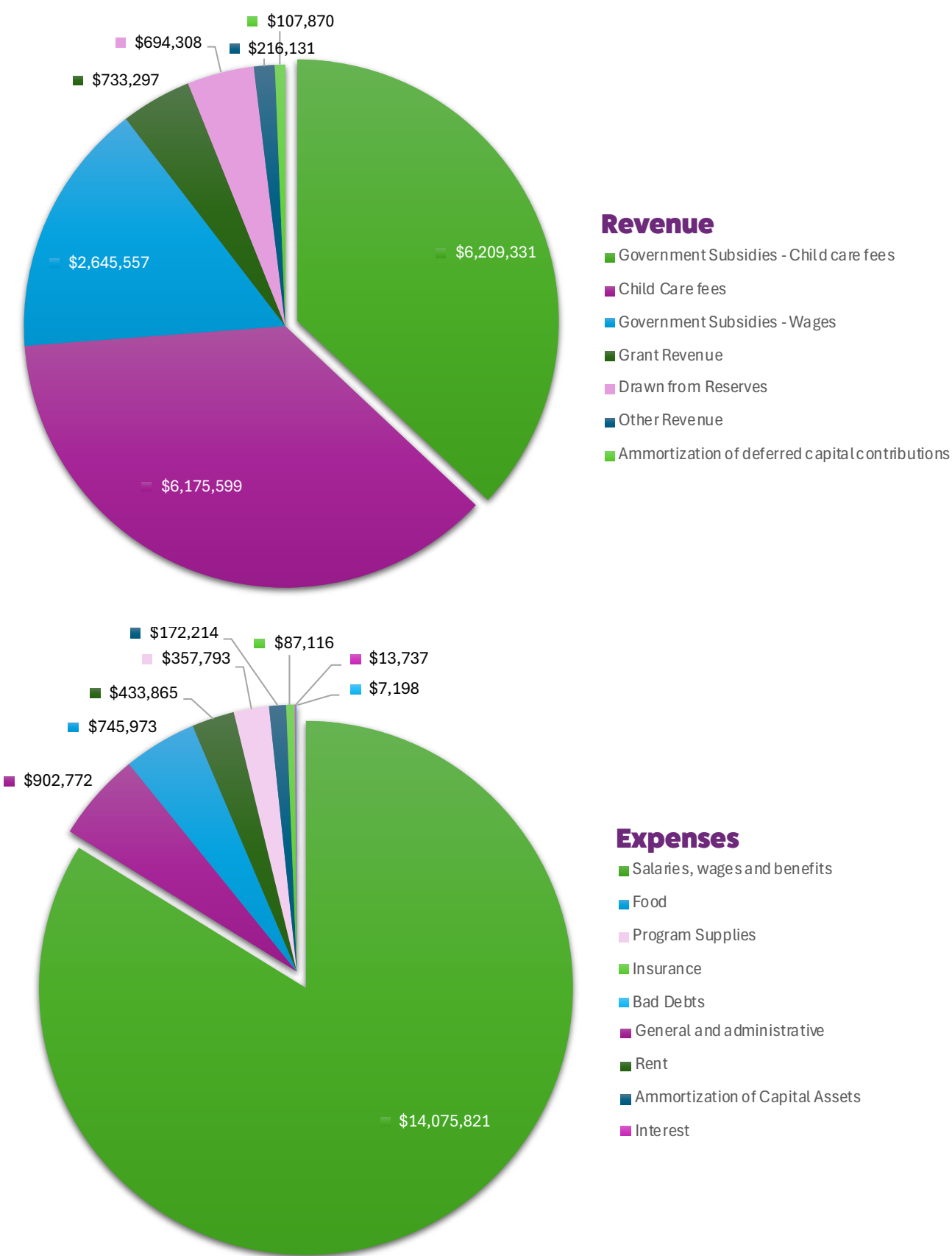
- Three new Board Members were recruited, bringing fresh perspectives and strengthening the diversity of leadership.



- The Board of Directors launched new Training Sessions, reinforcing our dedication to our Mission, Vision, and Values and ensuring alignment with organizational goals.

These initiatives support long-term organizational stability, accountability, and mission-driven leadership.

Statement of Operations





2024 Locations & Programs

LOCATION	2024 PROGRAMS	LOCATION	2024 PROGRAMS
Ancaster Meadow	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School	Lincoln Alexander	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School
Balaclava	Before & After School	Michaelle Jean	Before & After School
Bellmoore	Infant, Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School	Mount Hope	Before & After School
Buchanan Park	OPENED SEPTEMBER 2024 Before & After School	Mountview	Before & After School
Cathy Weaver	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School	Queensdale	Before & After School
Dundana	Before & After School	Ray Lewis	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School
Dundas Central	Before & After School	Rosedale	Before & After School
Eastdale	Before & After School	Shannen Koostachin	Infant, Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School
Gatestone	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School	Sir Wilfrid Laurier	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School
Gordon Price	CLOSED AUGUST 2024	South Meadow	Infant, Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School
Greensville	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School	Templemead	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School
Helen Detwiler	Before & After School	Viola Desmond	Infant, Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School
Hillcrest	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School	Winona	Before & After School
James MacDonald	Before & After School		
Lawfield	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School		



Long Service Staff

THANK YOU!



Each year, we celebrate staff who have reached significant milestones.
This year, we recognize and thank the following team members:

5 YEARS (hired in 2019)

Briana Beaudoin
Caylee Kirilo
Courtney Potts
Darryl Hall
Isabel Rodrigues
Jane Forbes
Jessica Almeida
Jessie Stockdale
Marina Granilo
Marla Berry
Tudora Salama

10 YEARS (hired in 2014)

Elba Cornejo
Heather Eastman
Janet Wilson
Jennifer Miles
Krista Wladyka-Kwok
Larissa Senior
Lindsay McManus
Michelle Whitehouse
Sarah Anger
Zozan Kadir

20 YEARS (hired in 2004)

Krista Genesiee
Julie Jacobs
Malalai Wahidi

25 YEARS (hired in 1999)

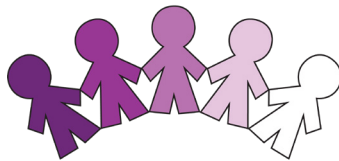
Anna Corsini
Missy Ashley
Rita Santini

30 YEARS (hired in 1994)

Connie Laccheo



**Umbrella Family and Child
Centres of Hamilton**



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