

# 2020 Annual Report



**RisingOaks**  
Early Learning Ontario

Formerly Owl Child Care Services of Ontario

# Growing Minds Through Play

We believe play, in all its wonderful forms,  
is the heart and soul of early learning.





# Leading in Unprecedented Times



**Sarah Willey-Thomas**  
Chair, Board of Directors

It goes without saying that 2020 was a year like no other.

I would like to begin by thanking the dedicated educators and staff who worked on the front lines during the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting RisingOaks Early Learning families, the broader community via emergency child care, and caring and advocating for children during this collective trauma.

The past year saw the Board of Directors highly engaged and meeting regularly with the senior leadership team to prepare for, adjust with and adapt to the changing pandemic landscape, weighing and considering the needs of all of our stakeholders. Kudos to our volunteer board members and senior leaders for giving so much of themselves.

Through all of this, we also saw the rollout of RisingOaks Early Learning Ontario, and the promise of a new visual identity and brand. This was a tremendous undertaking, particularly during a pandemic. As we say goodbye to Owl, we remember and honour how it got us to where we are today.

As we enter 2021, and the second year of the pandemic, despite incredible circumstances we remain steadfast in our focus on our values to help guide us through these tumultuous times.

I would invite you to join us at our virtual AGM on April 13, 2021 and to all join us in membership of RisingOaks Early Learning.

Take care and stay safe,  
Sarah

A handwritten signature of Sarah in a cursive script.

## Board of Directors

**Sarah Willey-Thomas** | Chair  
**Karen McIlroy** | Vice Chair  
**Doug Laginski** | Treasurer  
**Tracey Murray** | Secretary  
**Alisah Michiels** | Director  
**Amanda Stevens** | Director  
**Brett Bigger** | Director  
**Julia Bloom** | Director  
**Paul Botros** | Director  
**Teresa Godglick** | Director  
**Xenios Ioannou** | Director  
**Lori Prospero** | Executive Director



# We've come a long way, but our values remain constant.

**CREATIVITY:**

As children learn how to learn through play, it naturally sparks a child's creativity. Discovering new ideas and concepts fosters their imagination.

**LEARNING:**

Our intuitiveness and expertise allow us to help children explore and develop their curiosity. Our expert educators identify each child's uniqueness and teach them the tools that help them reach their full potential.

**COMMUNITY:**

Children, their parents, educators and staff belong here. We nurture our community so that everyone who is part of it feels at home. This creates a safe and harmonious place to learn.

**ADVOCACY:**

As leaders supporting children's growth and development, RisingOaks continues to be a strong voice. We are dedicated to quality education, affordability, and accessibility for all learners.

**LOVE:**

Every child is unique. Getting to know them, understanding them, connecting with them so that we can provide them with meaningful discoveries is what our educators and staff are committed to. We love what we do. It's as simple as that.

# Leading by our Values



Lori Prospero, CAE  
Executive Director

As I reflect back on the year ended December 31, 2020, I am reminded of the many ways our core values have shaped our response to the COVID-19 pandemic and our work in general. Upon entering the first pandemic lock-down in mid-March, the board of directors and senior leadership team came together to implement our pandemic preparedness and response plan with a 3-pronged approach:

1. To respond to fast-changing circumstances and emerging stakeholder needs;
2. To safeguard the operational health of the organization.
3. To ensure that children, families and our employees felt informed and supported along the way.

Our team of educators quickly focused in on their own **creativity** and **learning** as they adapted their practice and shifted to offer virtual connections with children and families. This included video conferences, phone calls, virtual story time and activity videos, allowing each child and family to stay connected in a way that best met their changing needs. These connections also encouraged engagement with children and

supported children's expression – giving them a safe place to ask questions, to share their passions and to just be themselves. In consultation with the leadership team, a new 'Learn from Home' resource was added to our website to also support families who were looking for curated learning activities to do as a family at home.

**Advocacy** and government relations played a key role in our work in 2020 with a 101% increase in touchpoints with MPs, MPPs, and the Minister's office. Our advocacy efforts called for the provincial and federal governments to provide funding for the child care sector to ensure the long-term sustainability of licensed child care spaces and address affordability and decent work for educators and staff during these unprecedented times. With financial support from provincial and federal governments, parent fees were put on hold during the closure and employees experienced job and wage security which greatly reduced stress and supported their well-being. An employee assistance plan (EAP) was also added to our employee benefits contract to provide additional supports during these challenging times.





# Leading by our Values

Re-opening in July was a joyous occasion. With new health and safety protocols in place, we were thrilled to once again hear laughter throughout our centres and to experience play-based learning in action as children and educators made new discoveries together.

To support a sense of **community** and belonging for all, new parent and staff communications were introduced. Surveys with families and staff helped us to better understand and respond to your needs and those of our community. Our centre teams conducted virtual tours and introduced the Sandbox Parent App to provide direct 2-way communication between educators and parents who could not enter the building due to current COVID-19 restrictions. These enhanced communications provide timely information, added clarity and shared supports and resources.

Despite all the uncertainty of the first lockdown, one thing was very clear. Our team shares their **love** for the children and their love of learning each and every day. We continue to share this love and passion for what we do in various leadership roles within our community and across the sector - connecting with leaders and educators across the province as part of the Pedagogy Network of Ontario, organizing virtual workshops and planning opportunities, providing leadership within provincial advocacy associations, offering emergency child care for essential workers and protecting the public interest through work with the College of Early Childhood Educators. We love what we do. It's as simple as that.

This past year has challenged us all, yet it has also been an incredible journey of compassion, understanding and resilience. Children have taught us so much this past year and have shown great strength and resilience. They quickly adapted to their ever changing learning environment, to PPE, physical distancing and increased hand hygiene. They've adapted to birthday parties over zoom and finding new ways to connect with their friends. Each day, we see

their resilience and ability to adapt. As an organization, we continue to adapt as well.

In October, following strong approval of the Members at last year's AGM, the organization moved forward with a legal name change to RisingOaks Early Learning Ontario. In December, we were thrilled with the response to the internal launch of our new brand and visual identity followed by the public launch in January 2021. It is because our core values are so firmly rooted in our history, from the beginning as Owl Child Care to our present and future as RisingOaks Early Learning, that we are poised for the future and will continue to provide families with meaningful early learning experiences and to achieve our strategic goals relating to advocacy, expansion and pedagogical leadership.

Yours in health,



## By the numbers

- 8 child care centres
- 19 before/after school program locations
- 77 days closed due to COVID-19
- 7 revisions to COVID-19 policies and procedures
- 1966 hours of service (compared to 2,783 in 2019)
- 711 Summer Camp weekly enrolments (down from 3,133 in 2019)
- 52,214 in daily screenings completed in 2020
- 2,802 hours dedicated for screening, cleaning and running
- 360 deep cleanings of all toys and equipment (per classroom)
- 3 positive COVID-19 cases
- 47% drop in child care fee revenue
- 5 emergency child care programs offered

Play is the way children naturally learn about the world. From the earliest age, as children begin to interact with the world around them, they play. They test. They take risks. They tumble. They laugh. They learn.

# Stages of Play Across the Developmental Continuum



Unoccupied  
Play

Simple activities that set the stage for future play.

An infant laughs as they blow spit bubbles, clap their hands or kicks their legs.



Spectator  
Play

Observing other children playing.

A child smiles or laughs at what they observe, but don't participate in the actual play.



Solitary  
Play

Play without a playmate.

A child plays alone with blocks and may engage in fantasy or imaginative types of play.



Parallel  
Play

Playing side-by-side, but not with each other.

Two children playing beside each other, with neither one engaging in the other's play.



Associative  
Play

When parallel play morphs into playing together.

Two children playing in the same area, having ownership over similar toys and may involve communication.



Cooperative  
Play

Children cooperating as they play together.

Children take turns, discussing rules and roles as they play together.

# Treasurer's Report



**Doug Laginski**  
Treasurer

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to report that the Board has approved the 2020 audited financial statements produced by BDO LLP. BDO has reported that the consolidated financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of RisingOaks Early Learning at December 31, 2020, and the results of its operations and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

The approved budget for 2020 projected a deficit of \$90,000, though the organization was well positioned to cover this loss. February's interim statements showed a surplus of \$11,000, above projections, due to strong enrolment. Unfortunately, with March came a four-month shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Management, with the support of the board of directors, pivoted quickly in response to operational needs and the needs of our members and other RisingOaks families. The phased in re-opening with small cohorts of just 8 children initially were challenging but necessary to ensure a safe return. Despite sustainability and safe restart funding, the impacts on both our operations and investments resulted in an overall operational deficit of (\$2,231,208). In extraordinary circumstances, we were thankful to have access to support through the federal

government's Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy program. Coupled with a COVID-19 insurance claim, this resulted in an additional \$3,236,090 in revenue to support employment and operations. As a result, RisingOaks ended the year with an unprecedented surplus of \$1,004,882.

Throughout the pandemic, RisingOaks has remained focused on the health of the organization, and continues to mitigate and monitor risks, and adjust to the financial implications of the pandemic. The Board of Directors continues to work closely with management as we chart our path forward in our new reality though the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve as of the date of this report. As such, it is uncertain as to the full magnitude that the pandemic will have on the RisingOaks' financial condition, liquidity, and future results of operations.

To safeguard the organization, the board has created a new internally restricted fund – the Pandemic Recovery Fund - with a balance of \$1,000,000 to support ongoing pandemic-related costs.

Sincerely,

Fiscal Year	Total Revenue	Total Expense	Surplus/Deficit	Notes
2020 Actual	\$9,929,611	\$8,924,729	\$1,004,882	Revenue from child care fees was down 47% due to the impacts of COVID-19. Over \$3M was received in federal/provincial supports.
2020 Budget	\$9,954,919	\$10,044,991	(\$90,072)	A planned deficit was approved to spread the required fee increase over two years and as a result of an audit adjustments in 2019. This budget is pre-COVID19 impacts.
2019 Actual	\$10,109,325	\$9,737,831	\$371,494	Conversion to daily rates in Jan.; no budgeted fee increase in 2019. An audit adjustment brought in the remainder of deferred fee revenue from 2018 - originally planned for 2020.

View the full Audited Financial Statements at: <https://risingoaks.ca/agm>





**RisingOaks**  
Early Learning

# | Locations

## Centre Locations

### John Sweeney

185 Activa Avenue  
Kitchener, Ontario N2E 4A1  
519-742-6291  
johnsweeney@RisingOaks.ca

### Lincoln Road

145 Lincoln Road  
Waterloo, Ontario N2J 2N8  
519-746-1124  
lincoln@RisingOaks.ca

### Our Lady of Fatima

55 Hammet Street  
Cambridge, Ontario N3C 2H5  
519-220-1148  
olf@RisingOaks.ca

### St. Brigid

50 Broom Street  
Ayr, Ontario N0B 1E0  
519-394-2273  
stbrigid@RisingOaks.ca

### Saint John Paul II

75 Pebblecreek Drive  
Kitchener, Ontario N2A 0E3  
519-894-0563  
sjp@RisingOaks.ca

### St. Luke

550 Chesapeake Drive  
Waterloo, Ontario N2K 4G5  
519-747-0054  
stluke@RisingOaks.ca

### St. Matthew

405 Pastern Trail  
Waterloo, Ontario N2K 3V6  
519-885-0512  
stmatthew@RisingOaks.ca

### St. Nicholas

525 Laurelwood Drive  
Waterloo, Ontario N2V 2N1  
519-883-1998  
stnicholas@RisingOaks.ca

## Youth Development Locations

Email: [ydp@RisingOaks.ca](mailto:ydp@RisingOaks.ca)

### Abraham Erb YDP

710 Laurelwood Dr., Waterloo, ON N2V 2V3  
226-220-8349

### Bridgeport YDP

59 Bridge St. W., Kitchener, ON N2K 1K6  
226-338-5916

### Chicopee Hills YDP

300 Chicopee Hills Dr., Kitchener, ON N2A 0J6  
226-338-3054

### Crestview YDP

153 Montcalm Dr., Kitchener, ON N2B 2R6  
226-220-3860

### Franklin YDP

371 Franklin St N., Kitchener, ON N2A 1Y9 3  
226-220-6783

### Laurelwood YDP

460 Brentcliffe Drive, Waterloo, ON N2T 2R5  
226-338-4733

### Lester B. Pearson YDP

520 Chesapeake Dr., Waterloo ON N2K 4G6  
226-220-3952

### Lexington YDP

431 Forestlawn Rd., Waterloo, ON N2K 2J5  
226-338-1983

### Northlake Woods YDP

500 Northlake Dr. Waterloo, ON N2V 2A4  
226-338-0285

### Sandowne YDP

265 Sandowne Dr., Waterloo ON N2K 2C1  
226-338-3632

### Vista Hills YDP

314 Sweet Gale St., Waterloo, ON N2V 0B3  
226-220-5223

## Administration Office

10 Washburn Dr., Unit 2, Kitchener, ON N2R 1S2, 519-894-0581, [info@RisingOaks.ca](mailto:info@RisingOaks.ca)