



# Families Deserve Housing; Children Deserve Play

Homeless Children's Playtime Project Annual Report 2012







## Where to Find Us

### Homeless Children's Playtime Project

1525 Newton Street NW • Washington, DC 20010  
202.329.4481 • [www.playtimeproject.org](http://www.playtimeproject.org)

**DC General Emergency Family Shelter**  
*Ward 7: Capitol Hill, Washington, DC*

**Turning Point Center for Women & Children**  
*Ward 1: Columbia Heights, Washington, DC*

**District Alliance for Safe Housing (DASH) Cornerstone Program**  
*Ward 5: Washington, DC*

**Valley Place Family Transitional Apartments**  
*Ward 8: Anacostia, Washington, DC*

**New Beginning Family Shelter**  
*Ward 1: Columbia Heights, Washington, DC*

## Playtime Project Weekly Schedule for 13 Weekly Playtime Programs

Mondays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Thursdays
Turning Point Valley Place	DC General Playtime DCG Teen Program DCG Tween Program	DASH DCG Teen Program New Beginning	DASH DC General Playtime DCG Teen Program DCG Tween Program Turning Point

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# Homeless Children's Playtime Project

Annual Report 2012



## Dear Friend of Children,

It started as a simple discovery ten years ago. Children living in family homeless shelters in our nation's capital do not have the opportunity to play. This simple, yet complex rite of childhood was being denied to thousands of children in the most powerful city on earth simply because of their family's housing status. A few of my friends and I set up some playrooms in shelters, filled them with toys, books, and dedicated volunteers to protect their right to play. Over the last decade, something amazing happened. Homelessness among families exploded. And out of nowhere, thousands of volunteers and donors emerged to do something about it. These are people who believe that children learn and heal from trauma best through play and they deserve this opportunity right now. These powerful messengers have shared their time, talents and treasure with the Playtime Project and this Annual Report is dedicated to their commitment to make this vision a reality.

With gratitude,



*Jamila Larson*

Jamila Larson, LICSW  
Executive Director, Co-founder  
Homeless Children's Playtime Project



**Our Mission** is to nurture healthy child development and reduce the effects of trauma among children living in temporary housing programs in Washington DC.

**We believe** that play is a human right that all children deserve, regardless of housing status. We seek to create a city that provides every opportunity for children in homeless families to succeed by ensuring consistent opportunities to play and learn, offering support services for families, and advocating for affordable housing and safe shelter.

**We set up playrooms** where our trained and screened volunteers provide weekly activities, healthy snacks, and opportunities to play and learn for hundreds of children in five emergency shelters and transitional housing programs in the District of Columbia.

“Playtime Project is an essential partner to DASH, providing a safe place for resident children to feel empowered, nurtured, and secure. The relationships developed with volunteers allows the kids to just be kids, not merely children fleeing domestic violence. As the Children’s Program director, I highly value Playtime Project’s excellent volunteer training, developmentally appropriate activities, and strong commitment to the residents of DASH.

Emma Kupferman, LICSW  
Children’s Program Director  
District Alliance for Safe Housing



# Playtime Project Makes an Impact in 2012



**767** Children and teens were served



**488** Playtime families participated



**429** Volunteers made a commitment to Playtime

**85**

Parents and teens referred to outside programs and services to support their goals such as housing, employment, child care, health care, developmental assessments, clothing, computers, adult education, transportation, school uniforms, summer camps, food and furniture

## ACCORDING TO PLAYTIME PARENTS

- 100% of children are happy in Playtime
- 98% feel safe and secure in Playtime
- 98% learn new skills in Playtime that help in school and life
- 100% of parents report feeling happier, calmer, and less stressed as a result of the 2–4 hour break Playtime provides each week

## ACCORDING TO TEEN PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

- 100% of teens are happy in the Teen & Tutoring Night programs
- 92% of teens are learning new skills that help in school and life
- 100% say activities and field trips are fun and engaging
- 100% say volunteers accept, respect and support them

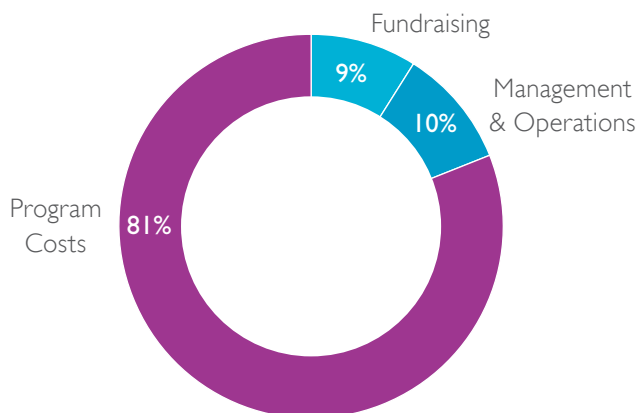
## Revenue and Financials

2012 Revenue:  
**\$329,363**

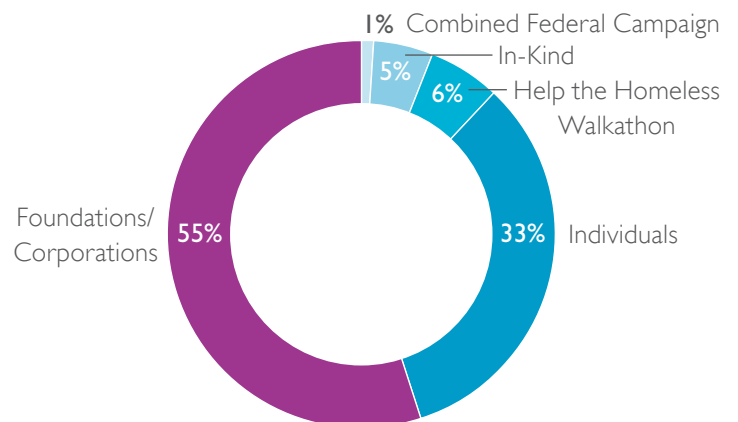
2012 Expenses:  
**\$286,147**

**\$15,000** in in-kind donations distributed

### Budget Breakdown



### Donation Sources



# What Happens in Playtime?

Children are given choices to select the activities they are interested in, such as:

- Arts and crafts projects led by our Art Coordinators like painting and sculpture
- Active play, like sports, group games, and playground visits
- Reading and writing projects, like making books and writing poems
- Science experiments, like creating volcanoes
- Yoga and other new experiences
- Board games and scavenger hunts
- Dramatic, imaginative play (play kitchen, play school, trains and trucks, etc.)
- Educational activities (counting, colors, vocabulary-building, measurement math, play money math, plant and animal care, and geography)
- Building with blocks to inspire engineering, math, and special intelligence
- Team building activities to create community and learn social skills
- Tutoring and homework help
- An opportunity to engage in conversations with caring volunteers
- Playground-in-a-Box to learn creative play with huge, blue blocks of various shapes
- Dress up, puppets, and doll house play
- Musical instruments, performers, and playroom dance parties

## Curriculum Activities

Children are invited to participate in a variety of special curriculum activities designed around monthly themes (e.g. Around the World, Zoo Animals, All About Me, etc.) which incorporate four main learning foci:

- Literacy
- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math)
- Arts & Culture
- Emotional Intelligence/ Character Strengths





# New Initiatives in 2012

## **Started a Girls on the Run Chapter**

This empowerment and running club at DC General helped 14 third- through fifth-grade girls gain life skills and an appreciation for health and fitness through weekly training to run a 5k race.

## **Provided One-on-One Academic Support**

Our Teen Program expanded in 2012 to offer “Tutoring Night” every Tuesday evening at DC General. Youth received homework help and individualized tutoring to help them achieve their academic goals.

## **Brought Playtime to Valley Place in Anacostia**

Valley Place is a transitional housing program for families, located just down the hill from the historic Frederick Douglass House. We created a vibrant playroom out of a storage closet, spruced up the playground and replaced the basketball hoop. Now the children enjoy Playtime every week!

## **Built Partnerships to Create Results for Children**

We brought together the Children’s Defense Fund and the National Center for Children & Families to provide “Freedom Schools” all summer long and three after school nights each week at DC General. Between our initiatives, the children now enjoy programs five nights each week.

## **Hired Our First Staff to Manage Playtime**

The Site Manager Fellows supervise Site Coordinators and volunteers, implement our Playtime Curriculum, and provide support to families and shelters. We also hired our first Communications & Outreach Coordinator to help manage our social media and website presence, recruit and train volunteers and solicit inkind donations.



# Playtime Does More Than Play

**Provide Healthy Snacks:** We supplement dietary needs of undernourished youth by serving fresh fruits, vegetables, and other healthy snacks keeping in mind that childhood obesity and other nutrition-related health deficiencies disproportionately affect our youth.

**Field Trips:** Allow children the freedom to escape the stress of homelessness and experience life outside the shelter on a regular basis, going to fun and educational destinations they have never been before! We provide monthly field trips for teens and every-other-month field trips for Playtime youth.

**Referrals:** Our social work interns and Site Managers connect families to needed services with our trusted partners providing child care, computers, housing, employment, training, clothing, eye glasses, developmental assessments, therapy, and other critical needs.

**Special visitors:** Bring new ideas, experiences, and energy to our children. Favorite visitors this year included yoga instructors, pet therapy animals, NASA astronaut Leland Melvin, Olympic triple jumper Tiombe Hurd, musicians like Uncle Devin, and more!

**Backpack distribution:** Each fall and spring, we pass out sturdy backpacks with all the needed school supplies and toiletries, personalized based on age and gender (even babies get bags!)

**Holiday parties, gifts, & Halloween costumes** are designed to bring joy to families amidst crisis. We gave out more than 600 Halloween costumes to children in seven shelters and personalized Christmas gifts to each child in our program that the parents presented to their children.

**Meeting material needs:** A mother having twins asked for a double stroller. A teenager needed supplies to complete a required science project. Babies at DC General need baby bathtubs. Thanks to our network of donors and supporters, Playtime is able to make the connections and meet a range of immediate needs quickly and efficiently.

**Advocacy:** Volunteers speak out for the need for affordable housing and shelter funding to ensure that services to prevent homelessness and help families return to self-sufficiency remain a priority each budget season. We also help families advocate for themselves all year long!

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## 2012 Elementary-Age Field Trips

Children need opportunities to escape the stress of shelter living, and explore the world around them. The Playtime Project's field trip program organizes group outings every month for teens, and every other month for elementary-age children. The trips we took in 2012 include:

- Air and Space Museum
- Brainfood to make homemade pizzas and muffins
- Luray Caverns to explore a cave
- Nationals Baseball Game
- Natural History Museum and Kite Flying on the National Mall
- Regal Movie Theater to see summer children's movies

“Playtime offers much more than a children's program—they are a great partner in serving our families. When Playtime volunteers are here, I have peace of mind that our youngest residents are in good hands...the children at Turning Point look forward to the nights when they can go to Playtime!”

Kathy Doxsee  
Program Director  
Turning Point Center for  
Women and Children







## Teen Field Trips in 2012

- African American Art Exhibit at the American Art Museum
- National Arboretum for hike, tour of bonsai gardens, and picnic
- Children's Defense Fund Dinner to celebrate youth who have beaten the odds
- Youth Open Mic Night at Busboy's and Poets restaurant
- United States Capitol
- Garfield Park for yoga and mural painting
- Frederick Douglass House for a tour and picnic
- Hallow Inc.'s Haunted House on Halloween Night
- International Spy Museum
- Swimming at the William H. Rumsey Aquatic Center
- White House West Wing tour and dinner at the Occidental Grill at the Willard
- Regal Cinemas
- Luray Caverns
- Washington Nationals Baseball Game

## Missing Child Found

"Trinita" is a lively 14-year-old girl who sometimes stayed at the D.C. General Emergency Family Shelter with her mother, stepfather, older brother and younger brother. Sharing a small room with your whole family can be a very stressful experience for the whole family, so Trinita preferred to sleep on her aunt's couch most nights. One day, she didn't come home. Her family was worried sick, and her brothers shared in our Teen Program how they were helping their mother follow-up on leads and search for their sister. The family did not feel supported by the police, so Playtime staff and volunteers jumped in to provide direct support to the family, and behind the scenes advocacy. We filed a report with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, met with city

leaders and the police department. After missing for weeks, Trinita was finally discovered by child welfare authorities in Los Angeles, a suspected victim of sex trafficking. Playtime volunteers raised money to bring her home and help the family with the cost of the search. Staff connected her with support services to aid in her recovery. A volunteer who happened to be in California even visited her in a group home there, providing the first familiar face since the ordeal began. As we learn more about the dynamics of child sex trafficking and how our youth are especially at-risk, we partnered with experts to provide training to staff, volunteers and families to help protect our children from the dangers of the streets.

“I like the friendly staff, and great learning environment. [My daughter is] starting to talk more.”



## What Do Parents Like about Playtime?

When I pick her up, she is always reading with someone.

Peace! I need peace of mind, I can breathe, they can play.

I never feel ignored or out-of-place. [The volunteers] are very friendly.

Children get to play and make new friends. Children learn to be respectful to others and are involved with others in a positive way. Friendly staff, great learning environment.

Giving my child a chance to play in a healthy atmosphere.

It is great for the kids for their social, mental and physical well-being.

I like that my son is happy.

I would just like to say I love you all. I also love the fact that my daughter enjoys coming to playtime, and she is learning from you all. Thank you for everything.

I like the fact that the playtime family are very helpful, loving, caring to the children.

My child loves it, so I love it more.

“I like the positive adult interaction, consistency, and the structure of playtime. I love that [my son] has the time to play with other children and build relationships with them. It gives me a chance to go to the meditation room, go grocery shopping, and get things done.”

Tonya, Parent at DASH  
Cornerstone Program



# Why Do People Volunteer with Playtime?

“I love Playtime because the children exemplify resiliency and perseverance. Your thought each week is that you are going there to support the children and each week you leave reflecting how much they helped you.”

Bradley, Volunteer Site Coordinator

“One of my most favorite memories and what keeps me going is remembering my little two-year-old buddy, who could barely talk, look up at me and exclaim “Playtime! Happy!” and seeing the giant grin on his face. Reminds me of why we do what we do!”

Sabrina, Volunteer Site Coordinator

“Playtime is a wonderful organization that allows me to balance the stress that comes with working in DC, meet new friends, help out others and gain some perspective on what is really important in life. Playtime is the biggest thing I look forward to each week, and I’d probably be at a loss without it. I get as much, if not more, out of Playtime than I give to all the children I interact with on a weekly basis.”

Darin, Volunteer Site Coordinator

“My favorite part of Playtime is that it provides a space for kids to be themselves. There’s nothing better than being handed a homemade ticket for a dance performance to be held at the end of the night and seeing 10 children proudly express their creativity by singing, dancing and playing.”

Dana, Volunteer Site Coordinator

“Through the Playtime Project, I’ve been able to meet so many wonderful children and families who have taught me to be more compassionate. The children in particular remind me every week with their smiles and bravery that we should appreciate what we have and help others as best as we can.”

Robin, Volunteer Site Coordinator

“One of the most important things kids learn at Playtime is that they are valued and worthy of the time and attention of caring adults in the community. I love watching kids’ confidence grow as they get that message week after week!”

Lauren, Volunteer Site Coordinator

“Playtime is the highlight of my week. The children have been through so much and have endured so many hardships, but they are still able to find smiles, laughter, and happiness while they experience the sheer joy of being a child and playing. And for two hours each week, I get to experience this joy with them.”

Laura, Volunteer Site Coordinator





# Thanking Our Supporters

The Playtime Project is grateful for the support of the following individuals, foundations, corporations, religious congregations, and organizations whose generous contributions make our work and play possible. This list reflects all monetary gifts received in 2012.

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# Homeless Children's Playtime Project

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## CURRENT STAFF

Jamila Larson, LICSW  
*Executive Director, Co-Founder*

Lauren Anderson  
*Operations and Financials Coordinator*

Carrie Beaudreau  
*Development Associate*

Kelli Beyer  
*Communications and Outreach Coordinator*

Lauren Cranman  
*Program Manager*

Andy Miller  
*Teen Program & Field Trip Coordinator*

## CURRENT SITE MANAGER FELLOWS

*(Part-time staff who manage our weekly Play programs)*

Dominique Agypt  
*DASH Shelter and Valley Place Transitional Living Program*

Lexie Herman  
*Turning Point Transitional Living Program*

Danielle Rothman  
*DC General Emergency Shelter*

Heather Wade  
*New Beginning Shelter and DC General Tween Program*

## CURRENT VOLUNTEER SITE COORDINATORS

### DASH

Lauren Waterhouse

### DC GENERAL SHELTER

Anna Hurley  
Genevieve Fugere  
Julie Balin

Kathleen Fawcett  
Robin Ngo

### NEW BEGINNING

Haley Adams

Bradley Westley

### TURNING POINT

Dana Payes  
Darin Bayley  
Laura Rothenberg

Lori Chesla  
Sabrina Nettles

### VALLEY PLACE

Stephanie Marrone

## SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to the amazing Lana Tilley, Program and Operations Manager, who faithfully served Playtime from 2007–2013 and has since moved to California for graduate school.

Thanks also to Eddie Moat, Site Manager for DASH and Valley Place in 2012.

“I LOVE hummus! I'm going to eat hummus for breakfast, lunch and dinner for the rest of my life!”

11-year-old boy trying hummus for the first time during Playtime's snack

“My name is Ms. Ward, and I really LOVE how Playtime runs their business. The volunteers work really hard with the children; I love the way they teach them new things, and the children love to come. Every week, the volunteers are very respectful and kind and I am very grateful to them for coming and giving parents a break.”

Tyrece Ward, mother of four at DC General (ages 2, 3, 5, 7)

“The New Beginning staff, families, and children appreciate and enjoy the long-term relationship we have with the Homeless Children's Playtime Project. Playtime reminds us that the work of ending homelessness starts with empowering children. Thanks to the efforts of the volunteers at Playtime, our children have a place to express themselves, thrive, and grow, but most importantly smile and be children. Thank you for all of your love and support.”

Kareem A. Davis, Program Director  
National Center for Children and Families  
New Beginning Temporary Family Shelter

“Teen Night makes us feel like family. They listen to what I have to say. I respect them and they respect me. I have everything off my chest [and] I can get away from all of what happen[ed].”

Teen Program participant

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