



ROBINSON  
COMMUNITY  
LEARNING  
CENTER



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# ANNUAL REPORT

2015-2016



UNIVERSITY OF  
NOTRE DAME

# MISSION STATEMENT

The Robinson Community Learning Center welcomes community and Notre Dame partners who strengthen the Northeast Neighborhood of South Bend through relationship building and educational opportunities. By promoting innovation and excellence, the Center builds individual capacity and enhances existing systems throughout South Bend.



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## Letter from the Manager

It has been 15 years since the Robinson Community Learning Center (RCLC) first opened. Many original initiatives are still going strong. Programs for senior adults and the Youth Development Afterschool Program continue to thrive. Our recently updated computer lab is a widely used neighborhood resource. Programs continue to grow through collaboration between the University of Notre Dame and local partners. The RCLC remains a welcoming place for a truly diverse community.

There has also been growth in areas likely unimagined in the winter of 2001. Who could have guessed an RCLC student would win the statewide Shakespeare Monologue Competition and appear at the national competition at New York City's Lincoln Center?

Or that our literacy tutoring program would serve 200 students from throughout Michiana? Or that our Take Ten program would be implemented as far away as Minnesota? Or that over 500 college students would volunteer here annually?

Shortly before our 10th anniversary, it was suggested that we create a scrapbook of our first decade. Initially this seemed a simple task, but once begun it became a multi-year, ongoing project, involving everything from reviewing original planning documents, to the cataloging of archival material and interviewing the RCLC founders. One product of this effort (spearheaded by our Program Advisory Board's History Committee) is a video, "Making History: One Relationship at a Time." This can be

seen on our website ([rclc.nd.edu](http://rclc.nd.edu)). It's a great way to understand and remember our past as we move together into a future of changing lives—one relationship at a time!

**Jennifer Knapp Beudert**  
RCLC Manager

## GOAL 1: HOSPITALITY

Create a setting that serves as a place of gathering and interaction among neighborhood residents, ND students, faculty, and staff, and community partners.



### 15th Anniversary Celebration

In February, the RCLC welcomed more than 250 neighbors, families, community partners, volunteers, ND faculty and staff, and local government officials to join together in celebrating its 15th anniversary. It was a wonderful evening of sharing memories and hopes for the future. Many of the original founders of the center, including Marguerite Taylor, Father Don McNeill C.S.C., Jim Paladino, Lou Nanni, Jay Caponigro, and Father Monk Malloy C.S.C., were in attendance. Mrs. Mary Williams, mother of eight RCLC graduates, spoke tenderly of the difference that the RCLC had made in the lives of her family and the community.



### Programs for Seniors

*Lu Ella Webster,  
Adult Program Coordinator*

Since its earliest days, the RCLC has had a strong commitment to programs that engage our community's seniors in education and fellowship. The Computer club brings together 25 seniors weekly, who are determined to master Internet searches and Facebook! Beginning in fall of 2015,

the RCLC has been pleased to host the Retired Women's Club, a lively group of 28 women who meet monthly for card-playing and conversation. Other offerings include monthly lunch and learn lectures and a senior exercise class (that recently learned to hula!)

# GOAL 2: EDUCATION

Establish educational opportunities to develop technical abilities, build academic and life skills, and provide support/mentoring at all ages.



“This is a fantastic program that does so much good in the community! Through tutoring, we not only develop stronger readers and more engaged learners, but we also foster leadership skills in our students.”

*ND Student Volunteer Tutor*

## Tutoring

Velshonna Luckey, Youth Development Program Director  
 Jennifer Wittenbrink Ortega, Literacy Program Director  
 Kris Arizmendi, Volunteer Coordinator

### DURING 2015-16

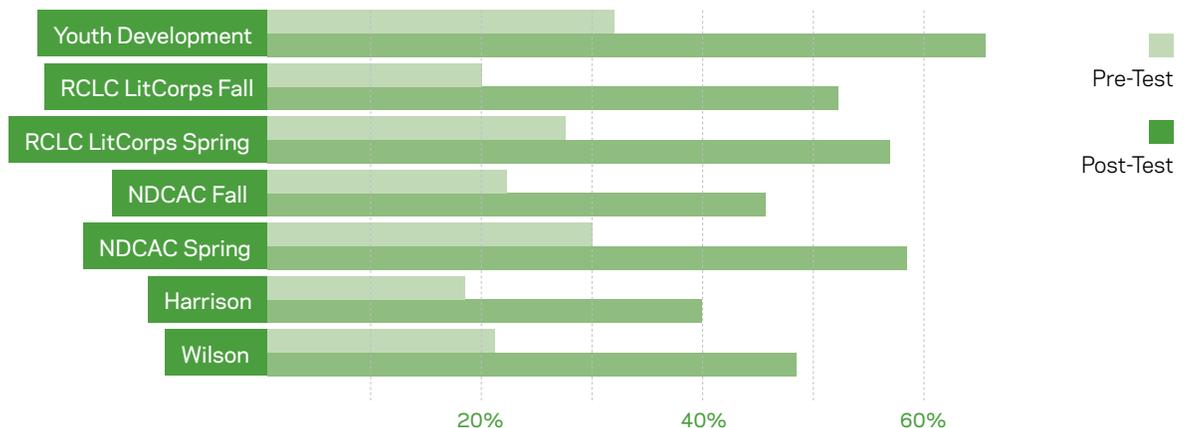
182 children tutored	264 volunteers
20 schools represented	6472 hours of tutoring

For 15 years the RCLC has provided tutoring to youth, grades 1-12. During 2015-16, tutoring was offered to seven cohorts of children at the RCLC, the ND Center for Arts and Culture (NDCAC), and the Boys & Girls Clubs at Harrison and Wilson Primary

Centers. Participants received four hours of tutoring each week, focusing on reading, writing, sight words, vocabulary, and comprehension. A pre-post assessment was administered which measured literacy competency and identified individual goals for each

child. As illustrated below, participants at all sites showed growth in goal areas, with an average pre-post gain of 27 percent. In addition, 69 percent of students advanced more than two grade levels on sight word recognition.

### Average Pre-Post Growth on Literacy Goals



Interested in learning some “tutoring tips?”  
 Like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/literacycorpsrclc](https://www.facebook.com/literacycorpsrclc)

# Enrichment Activities for Youth

A wide range of ongoing enrichment opportunities encourage RCLC youth to engage their creativity, expand their horizons, and re-imagine what is possible. These experiences, offered in collaboration with ND and community partners, enable youth to explore the world beyond the walls of the Robinson Center. During 2015-2016, enrichment activities included lego-robotics, music lessons, ballet, book clubs, and field trips to the Snite Museum, the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center, and Conner Prairie.

## Biology Club

Eleven RCLC 8-10th graders went to the Notre Dame campus each week during fall semester to work with biology and neuroscience faculty on three research projects involving forensics, DNA, and beta fish. They later gave final presentations at the Jordan Hall of Science.

## MyAmerica

Through the RCLC's MyAmerica Program, the older youth learn about moments in American history, and the impact on our lives today. This year's curriculum focused on the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. At the end of the school year, 17 students, grades 6-12, were able to travel to visit those sites, as well as the National September 11 Memorial and Museum, and the American Museum of Natural History.

## Notre Dame Center for Arts and Culture

Forty 2nd-4th graders in the RCLC's Afterschool Arts Enrichment program at the ND Center for Arts and Culture participated in the "Global Experience" project, the NDCAC's flagship celebration of art and culture throughout the world. The children visited the Segura Arts Studio and the ND Crossroads Gallery, and worked directly with internationally known artists, including photographer John Pinderhughes, Honduran artist Alma Leiva, indigenous hip-hop dancer Sacramento Knoxx, and musical ensemble Third Coast Percussion, among others.

"Each place made an impact into our understanding of how we fit into America and how it is part of our personal narrative and life story."

RCLC student





© OMG Photography

“This is a great program that promotes positive classroom activities and experiences. I saw my students shine in a different light and it was amazing to see them grow and learn to become actors/actresses. They didn’t think learning could be this fun.”

*2nd Grade Teacher*

## Robinson Shakespeare Company

*Christy Burgess, Shakespeare Program Director*

The Robinson Shakespeare Company (RSC) was founded in 2008 with the goal of diversifying the arts community in South Bend by recruiting, training, and giving arts exposure to an untapped talent pool of underrepresented youth. Now in its eighth season, The RSC offered two productions of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* this past spring. The RSC Young Company, grades 3-6, performed at First AME Zion Church, while the older students, grades 7-12, performed at Washington Hall. As part of the “One Book, One Michiana” program, members also performed scenes at libraries and other local venues. In total, the 45 RSC members performed for more than 300 community members.

Drama integration, the teaching strategy that incorporates creative dramatics into the academic curriculum, has been

shown to positively impact skills such as reading comprehension, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Since 2012, the RSC Outreach Initiative has provided these opportunities for youth by partnering with local schools to implement afterschool drama clubs and drama integration. During 2015-2016, 470 children at Perley Fine Arts Academy, McKinley Primary, Muessel Primary, Dickinson Fine Arts Intermediate, and Jefferson Intermediate have participated in weekly drama activities, and their performances reached audiences of more than 1,500.



High school senior, Paul Ferguson, original RSC member and longtime Shakespeare participant, won the Indiana State English Speaking Union Shakespeare Monologue Competition, advancing to represent Indiana in the 2016 National Competition at New York City’s Lincoln Center!



RSC members welcomed Shakespeare’s First Folio to ND’s Hesburgh Library in January.

# Advanced Skills and Youth Entrepreneurship

Crysta Crum and Michael Boyd,  
Program Directors for Advanced Skills and  
Entrepreneurship

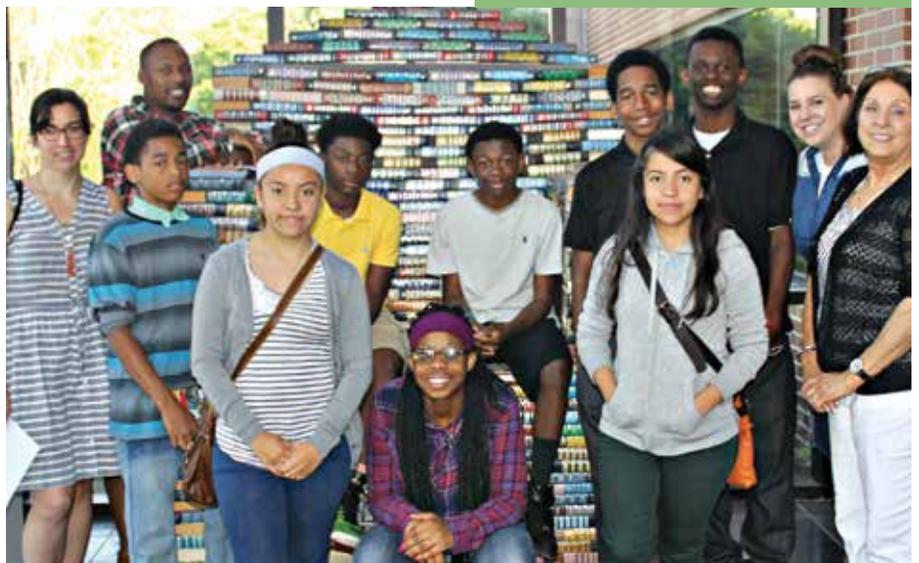


Adams and Mishawaka High Schools,  
and the RCLC Entrepreneurship Club.

The spring Invention Convention Business Plan competition at Notre Dame's Gigot Center was the culmination of the year. Twelve middle and high school students presented their business plans to a panel of judges that included MBA students and local business owners. Mishawaka High School junior Nathan Schook won the 2016 "Investor's Choice" award for his online real estate business, Crystal Realtors ("we make your house search, Crystal Clear!").

Field trips and presentations from eight local entrepreneurs gave students a real-world look at running a business.

The RCLC Youth Entrepreneurship team introduces students, grades 6-12, to the world of entrepreneurship through theoretical and practical business applications. Students explored a variety of competencies aimed at improving critical thinking, research skills, reading for comprehension and synthesis, financial literacy, and public speaking. While working on their business plans, participants developed their ideas from "elevator pitch" to implementation. They worked individually with mentors from Notre Dame's Gigot Center for Entrepreneurship and the ESTEEM program, who provided valuable feedback. Instruction was provided at the RCLC, as well as in partnership with three local high schools. Over 75 local youth participated in the 2015-2016 program, representing the Clay High School CTE class, the Jobs For America's Graduates (JAG) program at



**Robinson Enterprises** gives RCLC youth entrepreneurs the opportunity to "earn as they learn" by implementing a collaborative business venture that meets an important community need—safe, affordable parking during Notre Dame home football games. This year the efforts of 28 middle and high school students earned a record-breaking \$120,000 for the RCLC.

Don't forget to make parking reservations for the upcoming Notre Dame football season online at [rclc.nd.edu](http://rclc.nd.edu)



## Take Ten<sup>©</sup>

*Ellen Kyes, Take Ten Program Director*

Take Ten is a violence prevention/conflict resolution program with a school-based curriculum that focuses on teaching skills to handle conflict in a peaceful way. Take Ten provides participants with the tools to “Talk it Out, Walk it Out, or Wait it Out” as alternatives to violence, and builds their capacity to make better, more positive choices. Take Ten has been serving the South Bend Community for over 15 years.

### Take Ten in the community

During 2015-2016, 1,950 youth, grades K-12, participated in the Take Ten program at 17 local schools and seven nonprofit agencies. The curriculum was delivered weekly by teams of student volunteers from five area colleges and universities. Take Ten for adults was offered at the Center for the Homeless, the Indiana Department of Corrections Re-Entry Facility, Hope

Ministries, RCLC, YWCA, Women’s Care Center and El Campito, reaching 192 participants. A total of 96 volunteers and eight AmeriCorps members taught Take Ten classes, providing more than 5,000 hours of service to promote nonviolence in our community.

### Evaluation

“Students with higher Take Ten knowledge bully less, fight less, and are more aware of violence than students with lower Take Ten knowledge.”

This statement summarizes the findings from the eighth annual Take Ten Program Evaluation. The full analysis of this data is available at [taketen.nd.edu/evaluation](http://taketen.nd.edu/evaluation)

### Take Ten at a distance

For years, Take Ten staff members have hoped to engage other campuses in replicating its community partnership model, in which college students deliver the Take Ten program in local schools. This year, that hope has come to fruition. Students and faculty from the College of St. Benedict/ St. John’s University (CSBSJU) in St. Joseph, Minnesota (near St. Cloud), were trained by the Take Ten Program director, and are now delivering Take Ten curriculum at two high schools in St. Cloud, Minnesota. CSBSJU’s Take Ten program was awarded the St. Cloud School Board’s “Partners in Education” award for the 2015-2016 school year.

# Talk With Your Baby

Kris Arizmendi, Talk With Your Baby Coordinator

The first three years of life are the most crucial for the development of a baby's brain. The mission of the Talk With Your Baby (TWYB) program is to educate parents and caregivers about the importance of talking and interacting with children right from birth, to foster language, literacy, and social development. TWYB offers neighborhood classes and agency-based classes. This year, TWYB partnered with St. Margaret's House, the Center for the Homeless, Memorial Hospital Language Services, St. Joseph County Health Department, Women's Care Center, Healthy Families, and El Campito to offer classes to agency clients. TWYB offered neighborhood classes at RCLC, Saint Joseph County Public Library, Department of Child Services, and the Notre Dame Center for Arts and Culture.

Check out the Talk With Your Baby facebook page! Posts include current research, parenting tips, links to events around the community, and fun activities to do with children!

[facebook.com/talkwithyourbaby/](https://facebook.com/talkwithyourbaby/)

DURING 2015-16



338

parents and caregivers participated in TWYB classes.

16

new TWYB facilitators were trained to further spread TWYB's message throughout Michiana.

"I really enjoyed having the opportunity to interact with kids and think about the role of learning and teaching.

I think this experience will help me to better understand the importance of working together and peace-building, whether between younger children or world leaders."

ND student volunteer



# English As A New Language Preschool

Jennifer Wittenbrink Ortega, English As A New Language Preschool Coordinator

For 15 years, the RCLC has partnered with the South Bend Community School Corporation to offer classes for adult English Language Learners. This year, an average of 70 adults, representing 22 countries, participated in the program each week. RCLC's ENL preschool was developed five years ago to serve the children of adult ENL students. Fifteen children, ages

2-5 years, were enrolled in the ENL Preschool this year, representing nine countries and speaking four languages. The ENL Preschool program offers a literacy-rich environment, parent-child activities, Literacy Exploration Activity Packets (LEAP) to check-out on the weekends, and field trips to "family-friendly" places such as the library and local museums.

After nine months of preschool, children demonstrated an average gain of **15 months** of English language development.

Measured by the Peabody Test of Receptive Language.



## Community Events

*Andy Kostielney, RCLC Assistant Manager  
Marguerite Taylor, RCLC Community Liaison*

The RCLC hosts and coordinates annual events which bring together a wide range of RCLC participants—children and families, senior adults, ND student volunteers, neighbors, and local partners—to support our community. This year's events included the Northeast Neighborhood Council's Back-To-School Picnic (attended by more than 200 people, including the ND lacrosse team), "Turning Over A New Leaf" (during which the homes of 45 senior citizens were raked by 105 volunteers), and "Back The Bend" (which engaged more than 600 ND students in community service throughout South Bend).



### SB150 Block Party

"South Bend: Past, Present and Future" was the theme of the RCLC summer art camps offered at the NDCAC. In honor of South Bend's 150th anniversary, 20 middle school youth explored South Bend's history through art, photography, creative writing, and interviews with senior residents. Their work was compiled into a newspaper and buried in a time capsule to be opened on South Bend's bicentennial. The culmination of this project was the SB150 Block Party, offered in partnership with the IUSB

Civil Rights Heritage Center, which was attended by 350 people and featured community performers and local vendors.

### National Bookmobile Day

Better World Books (BWB) began in RCLC's back room more than a decade ago, and its very first book drive benefited the RCLC. This year, BWB decided to launch its brand-new bookmobile (named Wordsworth) at the RCLC on National Bookmobile Day. The event was celebrated with storytelling, recycled book crafts, and poetry writing. Children and adults were excited to climb on board Wordsworth and receive new books to take home.





## AmeriCorps

Each year AmeriCorps, a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, engages 75,000 members to serve communities across the country. These individuals give a year of their lives in service, receiving only a modest stipend and an education award on completion of their terms. The RCLC's AmeriCorps program is now in its fifth year. During 2015-2016, 30 AmeriCorps members served with the RCLC, with responsibilities for implementing educational programs, coordinating volunteers, expanding outreach, and developing curricula to respond to community needs. The RCLC AmeriCorps program has also placed members at partner sites, including the Boys & Girls Clubs of St. Joseph County, the Westville Education Initiative with Holy Cross College, and El Campito Child Development Center.



## 2015-16 AmeriCorps Members

Chuck Ball	Devon Gonzalez	Elliot Lorenc	Jordan Ryan
Omar Bell	Phallonte Gunn	Valentina Marquez-Montero	John Scanlon
Chris Bush	Lauren Haruno	Emily Munn-Wood	Emmeline Schwarz
Kristina Charleston	Maya Hippensteel	Isabela Nanni	Jenny Shan
Olivia Chen	Daniel Kleiman	Julie Novak	Chelsea Smith
Madeline Coneys	Savannah Kounelis	Jared Page	Candace Williams
Aurelie DeLavignette	Grace Lazarz	Paola Polo	Madison Zeiss
Ben Fouch	Grace Linczer	Kathy Reese	

116,165

Total AmeriCorps hours served

2,000

Education Awards received

134

RCLC AmeriCorps Members

650

Volunteers recruited/  
supported annually

116

RCLC participants served  
annually

17

Members served more than  
one term (15%)

**206,165** hours of service provided  
for the community!

# Thanks to our Sponsors and Board Members

The Robinson Community Learning Center would like to acknowledge our generous sponsors, without whom our work throughout the community would not be possible:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Arco/Murray National Construction  | Indiana Michigan Power Company                           |
| The ArtsEverywhere Initiative of the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County | Jessie Ball DuPont Foundation                            |
| Better World Books   | University of Notre Dame                                 |
| The Bowsher-Booher Foundation  | Key Bank Foundation                                      |
| The Boys & Girls Club of St. Joseph County                                     | Notre Dame Alumni Association                            |
| Carroll Charitable Trust at Wells Fargo Bank                                   | Notre Dame Center for Social Concerns                    |
| The Gigot Center for Entrepreneurship at ND's Mendoza College of Business      | Notre Dame Federal Credit Union                          |
| Holy Cross College   | PNC "Grow Up Great"                                      |
| Indiana Arts Commission Partnering Arts, Communities and Education Initiative  | Serve Indiana/AmeriCorps                                 |
|  | Shakespeare at Notre Dame                                |
|  | The South Bend Community School Corporation              |
|  | Individual donors and those who wish to remain anonymous |

## RCLC History

The RCLC was launched in February 2001 as an off-campus educational initiative of Notre Dame in partnership with Northeast Neighborhood residents of South Bend. While RCLC staff report to Public Affairs at the University of Notre Dame, programs are overseen by a program advisory board comprised of residents, program partners, ND faculty/staff, and students.

The Robinson Community Learning Center is a department in the Office of Public Affairs and Communication, under the direction of Jay Caponigro, Director of Community Engagement, Timothy Sexton, Associate Vice President, and Paul J. Brown, Vice President for Public Affairs and Communication. See more about Notre Dame's local outreach efforts at [publicaffairs.nd.edu](http://publicaffairs.nd.edu).

## And to our 2015-2016 RCLC Program Advisory Board Members

- |                    |                     |                    |                           |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Chuck Ball         | Kreece Fuchs        | Caitlin Kinser     | Tiana Mudzimurema         |
| Michael Ball       | Kathy Grayson Reese | Nicole MacLaughlin | Richard Pierce, co-chair  |
| Annie Cahill Kelly | Reem Hassaen        | Sarah Martin       | Alfredo Redding           |
| Steve Egan         | Brenda Hunt         | Maria McKenna      | Carmen Williams, co-chair |
| Ben Fouch          | Kiana Jackson       | G. David Moss      |                           |