



Robinson Community Learning Center

Annual Report
2020-2021



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COVID DISCLAIMER

Images in this annual report reflect RCLC events and activities for the 2020-2021 academic year. In accordance with health and safety mandates on campus, face masks were worn at all times until June, when masks were no longer required outside as long as physical distance could be maintained.

Letter from the Manager

This was a year in which the Robinson Community Learning Center’s spirit of ingenuity and innovation really shone through! Programming in a pandemic was a challenge for everyone, but with the resources and technology of our new building, support from Notre Dame and community partners, collaboration with families, and plenty of team problem solving, the RCLC was able to serve 1,500 local youth! Things may have looked a little different than in previous years—Take Ten and Talk With Your Baby conducted classes over Zoom, tutoring occurred in “breakout rooms,” Shakespeare scenes were filmed with actors standing six feet apart, and even the 3-year-olds wore masks—but RCLC programs were offered continuously, both remotely and in-person, throughout 2020-2021.

The new RCLC facility was truly a blessing this year. Not only did it provide a safe environment for gathering during COVID (plenty of space for physical distancing), but it also offered exciting new opportunities to explore. Whether it was learning about sound and video equipment in the theater, solving challenges in the makerspace, playing in the new preschool, or planting a vegetable garden in the yard, there were plenty of ways for children, as well as volunteers and staff, to be actively engaged in learning.



An RCLC AmeriCorps member recently commented that “this year was so challenging and lonely that the connections we have forged with our families were deeper and more profound than ever.” All of us at the RCLC are grateful that we were able to stay connected to so many of our participants. However, we are aware that many of our community members were unable to participate in programs this year because of the pandemic, and we have missed them terribly. We cannot wait to officially welcome people into the new building, and we hope that everyone will join us at the Blessing and Dedication of the new Robinson Community Learning Center on Tuesday, September 21, 2021, at 5:30 p.m.

Jennifer Knapp Beudert
Manager, Robinson Community Learning Center

Tutoring

The RCLC has provided tutoring for community youth for two decades, and this year was no exception! Eighty-five youth, grades 1–12, were tutored by 122 college student volunteers. However, COVID restrictions, such as physical distancing, quarantining, wearing masks, and reduced capacity, presented some unique challenges that resulted in new ways for tutors and children to connect. In the early afternoon, several children came to the RCLC for assistance with school eLearning. In the evening, 10 children were tutored remotely at home, by volunteer tutors in their dorm rooms. The RCLC and the Notre Dame Center for Civic Innovation (NDCCI) offered daily tutoring to youth enrolled in their afterschool programs. The year started with youth on-site at the RCLC/NDCCI, while tutors connected remotely from campus, then it switched to fully in-person, then it switched back again—twice! However, the flexibility demonstrated by our wonderful tutors meant that even when they were quarantining on campus (or had gone home for winter break), children could still continue to receive one-on-one tutoring.

Sixty-seven children, grades 1–6, who were enrolled in the RCLC or NDCCI afterschool programs received literacy tutoring four days per week, with sessions focusing on vocabulary, reading, writing, and comprehension. A pre-post assessment measured literacy skills and identified individual goals for each child. At the end of the year, children demonstrated an average pre-post gain in goal areas of 31.8 percentage points, as well as an average gain of 1.5 grade levels in sight word recognition.



“After a year of not being able to volunteer due to COVID-19, it was so nice to finally be able to engage with students and other people through the RCLC! I am so thankful to have volunteered as a tutor this past semester and will definitely be tutoring again!”

—RCLC tutor

“I looked forward to tutoring each week because I felt fulfilled as I helped the students develop their skills. The kids are so sweet and it was a lot of fun.”

—NDCCI tutor

Youth Enrichment Programs

RCLC youth engaged in many new activities this year, thanks to the resources of the new building and to ND faculty and students who volunteered their time. Children learned how to create their own podcasts in the new sound booth. They constructed models of bees, then learned how to code to make those bees do a “waggle dance.” RCLC youth even designed and built a model roller coaster! Thanks to Dan Stowe, from the Notre Dame Department of Music, children also had regular opportunities to play the piano and compose their own music on digital keyboards. A Dungeons and Dragons Club also provided some Saturday fun.

Makerspace Activities

The new makerspace is a most welcome addition to the RCLC. Using the Design Thinking Process—empathize, define, ideate, prototype, test, improve, refine—children of all ages had the opportunity to use the materials in the makerspace to address tricky challenges, ranging from creating eco-friendly animal habitats, to designing tools for a world without light, to building a bridge that could support a family of toy bears. The Youth Entrepreneurship Club learned about simple machines, and created working catapults as well as mousetrap-propelled cars. Appropriately, these young inventors gave their final presentations surrounded by vintage vehicles at the Studebaker Museum.



Lego Robotics

The RCLC Lego Robotics team competed virtually throughout the year and brought home more trophies than ever before! They won the Champions Award at the State Tournament, as well as First Prize for Robot Design, and went on to compete in the 2021 FIRST LEGO LEAGUE Open International Tournament in Greece, which was held virtually. We hope they get to do some real traveling next year!

Robinson SHAKESPEARE Company

What do Robinson Shakespeare Company (RSC) actors do when COVID makes live performances impossible? Why, become filmmakers, of course!

Taking advantage of the many resources available in the new Kite Black Box Theatre, including plenty of space for social distancing and a green screen, not to mention video, sound, and lighting equipment, the 30 members of the RSC produced 10 videos that have generated a total of 600 views on YouTube! There are RSC short films with titles ranging from “Is Shakespeare for Kids?” to “The League of Shakespeare Evil Rabble-Rousers,” but the tour-de-force was the RSC production of *As You Like It*. Each act represented a different film genre—fantasy, science fiction, sitcoms, horror movies, and reality TV—and was released individually on Saturdays, thereby creating an old-fashioned serial movie experience.

Although RSC outreach activities in schools were not possible this year because of COVID, in-person drama classes were held at the ND Center for Civic Innovation, the Boys & Girls Clubs Harrison and OC Carmichael sites, and the DePaul Academy at the Juvenile Justice Center, serving 90 youth.

“This pandemic year was the worst, but Shakespeare made me happy and it was the best part of the year!”

—Robinson Shakespeare Young Company member



EARLY CHILDHOOD Program

This has been an amazing year for the RCLC Preschool, starting with moving into a beautiful new early childhood classroom last fall. In January, the preschool was licensed by the state of Indiana, and in June, the preschool achieved Level 3 on Paths To Quality, the statewide child care rating system. As such, the preschool qualified to receive vouchers from On My Way Pre-K and the state Child Care Development Fund. The preschool continues to serve families from the RCLC Adult English Language Learners Program, but is now open to all families in the community.

The preschool provided morning and afternoon sessions, with a total enrollment of 18 children, aged 3–5 years. This year’s children came from China, Armenia, Venezuela, Vietnam, Russia, Sudan, India, Malawi, Iraq, Palestine, and Jordan, and spoke eight different languages.

➤ After eight months of preschool, children demonstrated an average of 18 months of growth in English language development, as measured by the Peabody Test of Receptive Language. Three children demonstrated more than three years of growth, and five children scored higher than their chronological age.

➤ By the end of the school year, 100% of children demonstrated mastery of book handling concepts, such as features of a book, book handling, directionality, page turning, and enjoyment of being read to. All children demonstrated progress on reading comprehension, and the majority would choose to look at books during choice times.

“Preschool has been an amazing opportunity for our daughter. She so enjoys all her friends and teachers. I couldn’t believe it when she recognized her letters and started writing her name! The kind and caring teachers make all of the children have a wonderful time!”

—Preschool parent

TAKE TEN

Take Ten is a violence prevention/conflict resolution curriculum that teaches skills to resolve 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.

The RCLC Take Ten staff and volunteers continued to teach the Take Ten curriculum throughout South Bend during 2020–2021, but the program was

offered in several new and different ways. A total of 1,002 youth and 61 adults received instruction in Take Ten from 68 volunteers at six local schools and six local agencies, including RCLC, NDCCI, the Boys & Girls Clubs of St. Joseph County, the Housing Authority, Woodford Home, Summerscape Camp, and the Juvenile Justice Center. Since volunteers were not permitted inside schools due to COVID restrictions, they visited classrooms via Zoom. Over the course of the year, videos were created for each lesson of the Take Ten curriculum, grades K–12, which provided invaluable resources for remote teaching. Classes at local agencies were offered in-person, and there were several new programs piloted in the spring and summer, including a Take Ten curriculum track focusing on sports, and a mentoring program titled Take Heart, in which formerly incarcerated adults work with at-risk youth.

“Before stepping onto Notre Dame’s campus as a freshman, I knew I wanted to engage with the greater South Bend community, and Take Ten provided the perfect opportunity to do that. Take Ten is an amazing program that has introduced me to so many wonderful people over the past four years. I found that, in teaching conflict resolution, I also learned about how to deal with conflict in my own life. Take Ten was a central part of my college experience and has helped shape me into the person I am today. I anticipate the continued growth of the Take Ten program, as it is truly a force for good in the lives of all those impacted by it.”

—Take Ten Volunteer

Take Ten students create designs and prototypes for water filtration systems in the RCLC makerspace, as part of a project geared toward “living peacefully with our environment.”



TAKE
TEN

Notre Dame CENTER FOR CIVIC INNOVATION

The RCLC has provided educational programming for youth at the Notre Dame Center for Civic Innovation (formerly the Notre Dame Center for Arts and Culture) for nine years. The NDCCI offers a four-day-per-week afterschool program that includes daily tutoring as well as arts enrichment activities.

A total of 138 children were involved in NDCCI arts programs this year. Children in the NDCCI afterschool program engaged in daily activities involving drama, visual arts, arts from other cultures, and artist studies. Other weekly clubs and classes included Storytelling Through Art, dance, Design Thinking Club, piano lessons, and Art Club. The NDCCI Summer “World Explorers” Camp focused on studying the arts and culture found on different continents. Children learned about art forms including calligraphy, Islamic tile art, Kente cloth weaving, Koru art inspired by traditional Maori symbols, and many others. As a culminating project, the children worked together to create a large world map, with representative art on each continent.





SUMMER Fun and Learning!

Thanks to the support of the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County and the United Way of St. Joseph County's "Hello Summer" initiative, the RCLC was able to expand its 2021 summer offerings to provide six weeks of morning and afternoon Shakespeare, youth development, and preschool at the RCLC, and a half-day "World Explorers" summer camp at the NDCCI—altogether serving 96 youth.

After a year of remote learning and social isolation, children and adults were ready for some in-person, hands-on learning! Targeted instruction in literacy was provided for participants, combined with STEM activities and projects involving arts and culture, music, filmmaking, problem solving, and geography.

Thanks to a wonderful partnership with Green Bridge Growers, RCLC preschoolers learned about planting, germination, root systems, aquaponics, and what it's like to be a farmer. They planted their own garden in the RCLC yard, which produced potatoes, greens, radishes, and peppers. Preschool families took a field trip to the Green Bridge farm, where they got to pick raspberries, sit on the tractor, and take home delicious produce to eat.



Senior Adults

We were very disappointed that the RCLC was not able to welcome its senior participants into the new RCLC for programs during 2020-2021—especially since they had spent the prior years helping with planning for the new facility and watching its construction across the street.

Fortunately, with vaccinations on the rise and summer offering opportunities to meet outside, activities for seniors have begun again. The Senior Book Club has met outdoors, and Adult Programs sponsored a concert at Kelly Park with the Music Village Jammers for RCLC's neighbors. In June, 69 seniors attended a "Drive-By Lunch and Learn"—which was their first visit to the new RCLC.

We can't wait for Senior Programs to start again in the fall!

Talk With Your Baby



Talk With Your Baby (TWYB) went virtual this past year, as it was not safe for babies and parents to gather in-person because of COVID. Nevertheless, during 2020-2021, TWYB classes were offered via Zoom for Hannah's House, WIC, and St. Margaret's House, and were open to the public—serving a total of 100 parents. TWYB also held three virtual facilitator trainings, welcoming a total of 28 new trainers. We are looking forward to holding classes in person again, but in the meantime, parents are invited to join "Reading With Your Baby in the Park" gatherings outside at Kelly Park during the summer.

"Great information for babies and toddlers! I learned that I need to remember to keep what my face says the same as what my voice says."

—Talk With Your Baby parent participant





Many thanks to our sponsors

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

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And to the amazing 2020-2021 RCLC AmeriCorps members, who provided a total of 23,589 hours of service to our community!

