



# Robinson Community Learning Center

Annual Report  
2019–2020



Images in this annual report reflect RCLC events and activities for the 2019–2020 academic year. As such, individuals represented in group photos taken prior to March 2020 are not wearing face masks as the pictures were captured prior to the incorporation of health and safety mandates on campus.

# Letter from the Manager

This year has brought highs and lows for the Robinson Community Learning Center (RCLC). The school year began with the excitement of the groundbreaking for the new RCLC, which led to a busy fall, filled with educational programs and traditional RCLC community events. Enthusiasm grew as the walls of the new RCLC started to rise, and we began to plan for the opportunities that this new facility would provide.

In February, the RCLC celebrated two decades of memories at its final Anniversary Celebration in the original building. It was wonderful to see so many of the amazing people who have contributed to the center over the years all gathered together in the multi-purpose room—one could certainly see why we were looking forward to additional space!

One month later, the COVID pandemic required the closing of the University of Notre Dame and South Bend schools. For the first time in 19 years, the RCLC was unable to serve the community in-person. This was a devastating loss for everyone, yet it also brought out the resilience and creativity of staff, AmeriCorps members, volunteers, participants, and families as we explored new and

innovative ways to stay connected while physically apart. Details of these efforts can be found in the following pages.

The RCLC moved to its new home at 1004 North Eddy Street in June. The new building brought many things that we had longed for, but we never imagined that it wouldn't be teeming with kids and adults from the first day we went through the front door.

Fortunately, with the help of the ND Committee on Re-Opening, we were able to develop a plan to safely offer pilot programming for children during summer 2020, which in turn enabled us to implement the necessary health and safety protocols to offer youth programs and adult English classes on-site in fall 2020. Although we are proceeding cautiously, we are hopeful that we will soon be able to share our wonderful new facility with the members of our extended community.

Until we are open for visitors, please continue to follow the RCLC on the Robinson Community Learning Center Facebook page @RobinsonCenterND and at [rclc.nd.edu](http://rclc.nd.edu).

**Jennifer Knapp Beudert  
Manager, Robinson Community Learning Center**

RCLC staff photo taken in October 2019. Pictured left to right: Jennifer Knapp Beudert, Emily Sullivan, Ellen Kyes, Jennifer Wittenbrink Ortega, Christy Burgess, Andy Kostielney, Michael Boyd, Tyonne Johnson.

Not pictured: Valerie Kozera, Lu Ella Webster, Virginia Solis.



# Fantastic FALL!

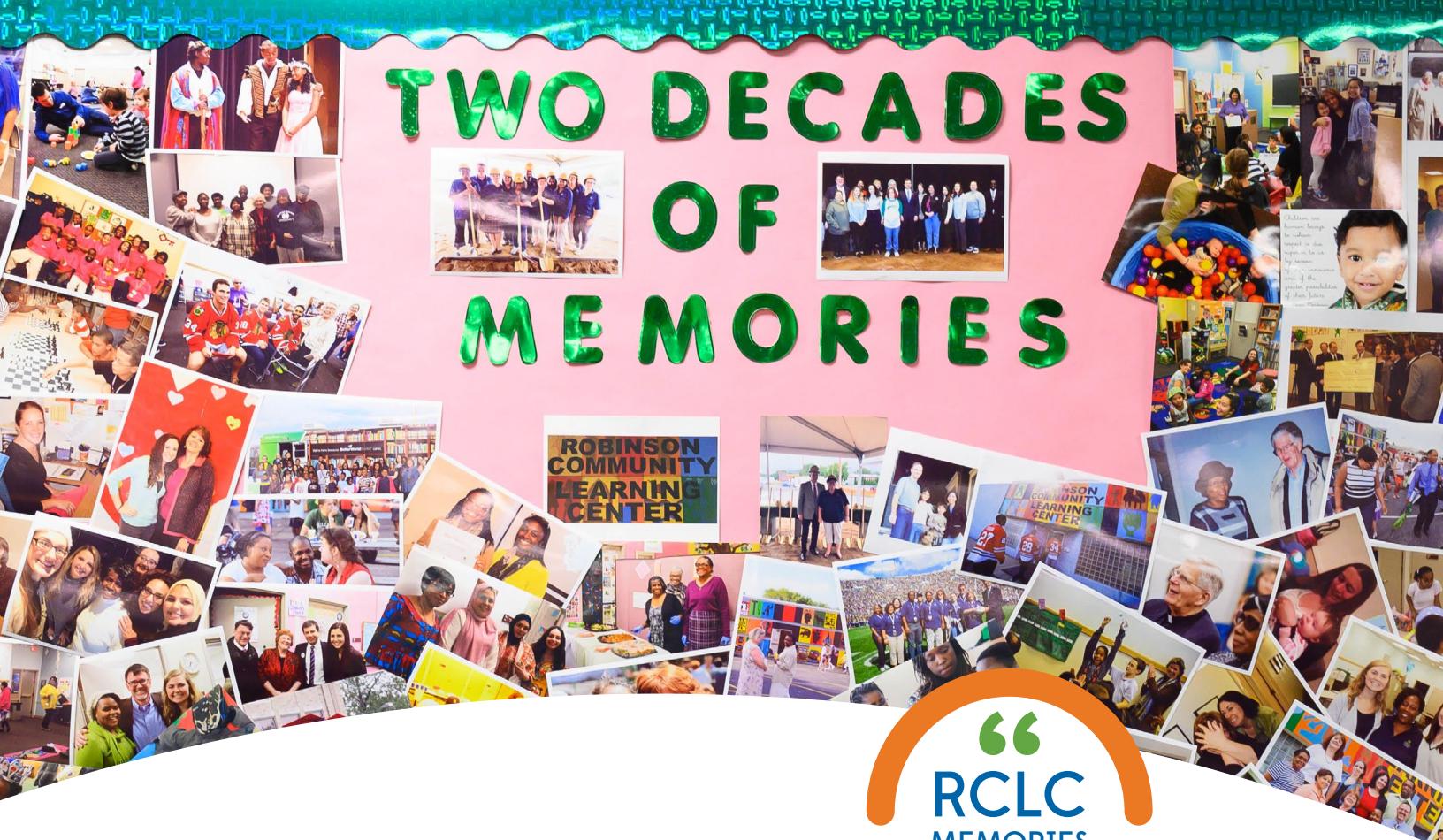
During the final fall semester at the original RCLC, the hallways were bursting with participants ranging from six months to 90 years, as well as with the many volunteers and AmeriCorps members who keep our programs going. Thanks to collaboration with community partners, educational outreach stretched beyond the RCLC walls to connect with 2,000 additional individuals from throughout South Bend.



- 155 children, grades 1–6, received literacy tutoring four days per week from 202 college student volunteers at the **RCLC and the ND Center for Civic Innovation (NDCCI)**.
- **Youth at the RCLC and the NDCCI** engaged in a wide range of enrichment activities, including LegoRobotics, jump rope club, dance, MyAmerica, Brain Health, and art club.
- 1,512 children, grades K–12, and 62 adults from 12 schools and seven agencies received weekly instruction in **Take Ten**, the RCLC's violence prevention/conflict resolution education program, provided by 92 college student volunteers.
- More than 400 children, in four local schools, received weekly drama integration instruction through the **Robinson Shakespeare Company (RSC) Outreach Initiative**.
- Twelve children, from nine different countries, speaking five different languages, attended the **English as a New Language (ENL) Preschool**, while their parents attended Adult ENL classes just down the hallway.
- The **Day of the Dead Celebration**, hosted by NDCCI educational programs, was attended by 400 children and adults, and featured performances from local musicians, traditional food, and a gallery of ofrendas created by NDCCI youth and community members.
- The **Shakespeare Winter Recital** featured scenes and monologues from 30 young actors, grades 3–6. RSC members Monica Caponigro and Forest Wallace went on to win first and second place in the Indiana State Monologue Competition.



# TWO DECADES OF MEMORIES



More than 250 people gathered for the Robinson Center 19th Anniversary Celebration on February 14, 2020.

Displays highlighting RCLC programs were set up throughout the center, there was an RCLC photobooth, and the LegoRobotics team was on hand to demonstrate the robot's prowess! The program included RCLC awards presentations, Shakespeare monologues, and a stirring rendition of "Baby Shark" by the ENL Preschool children.

In honor of the RCLC motto: "Changing lives one relationship at a time," past and present members of the RCLC community were asked to share a memory of relationships they had formed at the Robinson Center. The 200 memories we received were hung throughout the building, and later compiled into a book for the library in the new RCLC.

**"My interactions with my students have taught me compassion can come from all ages and being considerate is at the heart of all healthy relationships."**

**"One relationship that is significant to me is my tutor because she always knows what I'm working on and can respectfully help me."**

**"There are very few places where senior adults can go and have fun learning a new skill. The RCLC has a cross-section of people who are eager to learn, willing to share and to offer assistance on life experiences."**

**"The tongue is incapable of describing my school. It is a school full of love, respect, appreciation, and giving to every student"**

# PROGRAMMING in the Pandemic

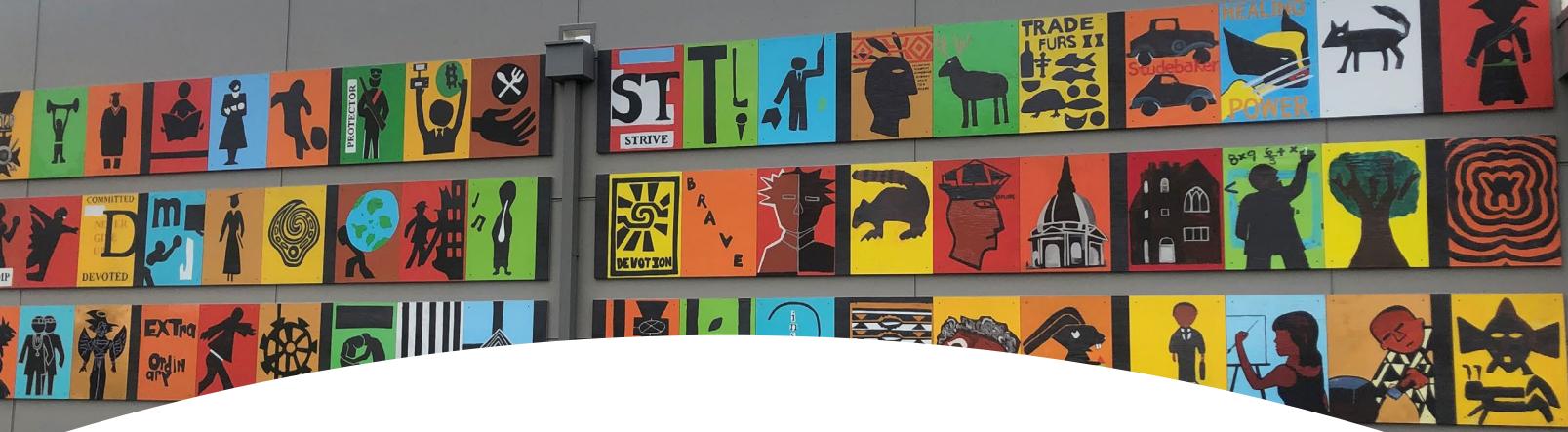
In the spring when the COVID pandemic required that the RCLC close through the end of the school year, RCLC staff and AmeriCorps members found creative ways to reach participants. Innovative activities, such as remote tutoring, Facebook art classes, online piano lessons, a Zoom entrepreneurship club, and chapter books read aloud on Google Classroom, were all offered during this challenging time.

The Robinson Shakespeare Company offered two Zoom productions of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, complete with green screen scenery! RSC members even put their talents to good use creating "Shakespeare Monologue handwashing videos" for the community. ("Robinson youth combine Shakespeare, handwashing amid coronavirus crisis," [publicaffairs.nd.edu](http://publicaffairs.nd.edu)).

Preschool teacher Ms. Samantha read nightly bedtime stories to her students on Facebook live for two months straight. Her daily views grew to more than 200! Even ENL Preschool families that had returned to their home countries watched storytimes from as far away as Egypt, Venezuela, and Armenia ([news.nd.edu/news/amid-coronavirus-story-time-moves-online-for-robinson-center-youth](http://news.nd.edu/news/amid-coronavirus-story-time-moves-online-for-robinson-center-youth)).

A "drive-by" Lunch and Learn was organized for RCLC seniors. They drove up to the center, were given a box lunch, and stopped to chat for a few minutes (while wearing masks and seated safely in their cars). Many also took photos as this was their last visit to the old RCLC.





# A New Building At Last!

After a year of watching the construction of the new Robinson Center just across the street, RCLC staff were finally able to move into the new building during the first week in June. To say that it surpassed our wildest dreams is an understatement!

#### **Some of the new RCLC enhancements include:**

- A gathering space with comfortable couches
  - Lots of light from floor-to-ceiling windows
  - A brand-new logo prominently displayed at the front desk
  - The new Kite Black Box Theatre
  - A tech lab/makerspace
  - A dedicated early childhood classroom
  - A fenced-in yard with a tricycle path
  - An industrial kitchen

Despite so many new features, there are plenty of reminders of the original RCLC. Renelda Robinson's portrait is prominently displayed in the front room, the community photographs and stories still hang along the main hallway, and the RCLC murals on the front of the building continue to announce our presence in the neighborhood.



# SUMMER Programs

After three months of Zoom-ing, RCLC staff and participants were longing for in-person activities—and eager to see the new center in action. It took many weeks, but RCLC staff, in collaboration with the Notre Dame Committee on Re-Opening, developed a plan to safely offer pilot summer programming at both the RCLC and the NDCCI. Needless to say, there was plenty of hand-washing, social distancing, and mask-wearing, but a lot of fun was had by all involved!

- RCLC Youth Development participants enjoyed creating and experimenting with materials in the new makerspace. They even built their own models of the Robinson Center!
- Summer Robinson Shakespeare Company members were the first to perform in the Kite Black Box Theatre and to explore its new technology. They especially enjoyed directing scenes from *MacBeth* and creating Shakespeare TikTok dances.
- Middle school students in the NDCCI Summer Art Camp studied the Roaring Twenties. They learned about art deco, danced the Charleston, and even produced their own silent movies!





# 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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University of Notre Dame

Individual donors and those who wish to remain anonymous



And to the amazing 2019-2020 RCLC AmeriCorps members, who provided a total of 24,745 hours of service to our community!





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