



Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham

2024 Annual Report to the Community





Our Mission

To provide best in class, responsive, inclusive programs and services for children and families.

Our Vision

Children will have a strong foundation to meet their full potential.

Our Values

Belonging: We acknowledge and value the individual perspectives, thoughts, beliefs, and ideas of others and create spaces for everyone to belong.

Collaboration: We foster meaningful partnerships and collaborations to meet the diverse needs of the communities we serve.

Innovation: We proactively seek unique ways to create and adapt to change, to inspire the healthy growth and development of others.

Land Acknowledgement

We honour, recognize, and respect this nation and Indigenous Peoples as the traditional stewards of the lands and waters on which we have the privilege to live, work and play. Let us acknowledge the land where we are located is land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange among the Mississauga Peoples and is the traditional and treaty territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. Miigwetch.

Diversity Statement

At Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham we respect the rich diversity of our families, our employees, placement students, volunteers, and partners. We recognize that these individuals represent all dimensions of diversity including, but not limited to, gender, religion, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, family structure, age education, physical and cognitive ability, and socio-economic status. Everyone brings with them a unique set of perspectives, thoughts, beliefs, and ideas. This diversity continuously challenges us to reflect on our practices and strive to do better. We fundamentally believe that all individuals should feel welcome in our spaces and should always be treated equitably. The experiences of families, employees, placement students, volunteers and partners will be free from discrimination.

Message from Nelson Loureiro, Chair of the Board of Directors

As I reflect on 2024, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the incredible strides we continue to make together at Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham. This past year has been a testament to the power of vision, collaboration, and unwavering commitment to the children and families we serve. It is with great enthusiasm and optimism that I share this message with you.

In 2024, we continued to expand our reach, enhance our services, and strengthen our foundation as a leading multi-service early learning and childcare organization. Every step forward was guided by our shared belief that all families deserve access to a childcare system that is inclusive, high-quality, accessible, and affordable. This belief is not just a guiding principle—it is a call to action that the team at SPC answers every single day.

The success of SPC is rooted in the dedication and passion of our people. To our frontline childcare professionals, thank you. Your tireless efforts, creativity, and compassion are the heartbeat of this organization. You are shaping futures, nurturing potential, and building stronger communities with every interaction. To our head office team: your leadership, innovation, and behind-the-scenes support have been instrumental in driving the mission forward. And to my fellow board members: thank you for your strategic guidance, thoughtful oversight, and unwavering belief in our vision.

This year, we had the privilege of supporting over 2,100 children in our childcare centres and 150 children in our licensed home childcare programs each day. We also saw remarkable growth in our summer programs, offering enriching experiences to even more children across the Durham region. These numbers are more than statistics—they represent lives touched, families supported, and communities strengthened.

Looking ahead, I am inspired by the boundless potential that lies before us. Our vision—that children will have a strong foundation to meet their full potential—is not a destination, but a journey. Potential is not finite; it is ever evolving, and when nurtured, it becomes the catalyst for transformation. Together, we are not just preparing children for the future—we are shaping the future itself.

As we move forward in 2025 and beyond, let us carry forward the momentum of this past year. Let us continue to advocate, innovate, and elevate. Let us remain steadfast in our commitment to equity, inclusion, and excellence. And above all, let us continue to believe in the power of potential—because when we believe, we inspire others to believe too.

Thank you for being part of this incredible journey. The future is bright, and I am honored to walk this path with all of you.

Nelson Loureiro
Board Chair

Thank you to our SPC Board of Directors!

You have contributed your time, talent, and experience through 2024 to help advance our mission and to support the diverse needs of the children and families within the communities we serve!

Jamie Bishop | Sharan Brar, Board Secretary | Poonam Dewan | Patrick Farrell, Vice Chair
Nelson Loureiro, Chair | David Nicholl | Sophie Outar | Sanjay Sarkar, Treasurer
Damion Scott | Karen Tsang

Message from Lisa Rankin, Executive Director

2024 was another year of steady growth, expansion and innovation. We remain focused on our commitment to meet the unique needs of the diverse communities we serve, and I am very proud of the progress we have collectively made.

As a large multi-service early learning and childcare organization, we believe all families should have access to a childcare system that works. We applaud the government's commitment to ensuring a high-quality, inclusive, accessible and affordable childcare system and we continue to advocate for adequate funding to support these goals.

We are firmly grounded in our belief that the success of the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care program is contingent on a professionally trained, experienced and engaged workforce. We will continue to advocate for our educators to be recognized for the scope and complexity of their important work, and for more funding, professional development and support to ensure inclusive environments that meet the needs of all children and their families.

In 2024, we had the opportunity to work with more than 2,100 children in our childcare centres, and approximately 150 children in our licensed home childcare programs every single day! We also experienced significant growth in our recreational summer camp programs and licensed summer programs for our kindergarten and school age children. It is an honour to be able to step in and step up to support so many families across the Durham region - in a very meaningful way.

Over the last year we have also focused on improving our internal processes and systems. We sought out ways to use technology as an enabler, refreshed our brand through a re-designed website and leveraged our charitable position within the community.

When I reflect on Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham's vision "Children will have a strong foundation to meet their full potential" I am mindful that achieving one's potential implies that there is an end. But to me, potential is just the beginning. We all start with potential, but it's what we do with it that matters. Potential, if inspired, will flourish and evolve – and will build healthier, more vibrant, stronger communities. I am inspired by the incredible work of this organization and the committed professionals that aspire to meet this vision every day. Thank you!!!

I look forward with optimism and hope – and I am so excited to see what our future holds!

Lisa Rankin
Executive Director





Strategic Priority: People and Culture

We will continue to invest in our workforce, position our organization as an “employer of choice” and advocate for our childcare professionals to be recognized by the public, and all levels of government, for the scope and complexity of their critical work.

By the numbers:

- **432** employees
- **69** new educators mentored through their first 6 months
- **45%** Registered Early Childhood Educators
- **7,389** professional learning hours
- **84%** of SPC employees would recommend SPC as a place of employment to others
- **90%** of new employees report a sense of belonging and connection

Myrla's Story

RECE, Toddler Program, Ormiston

I always knew I wanted to be a teacher. I took part in a lot of volunteer 'teaching' opportunities in my youth including kindergarten monitoring, reading buddies, and peer tutoring programs. I also had a passion for working with young children, being more than happy to spend time with all the younger children in my family- so putting the two together just made sense.

In this field, I get the most joy from observing the way children think and view the world. Seeing the things they notice, like an ant walking on the pavement or a bird flying in the sky. I love the sense of wonder and excitement they have, exploring the world to the fullest.

The most rewarding aspect of this role is watching children gain new skills. Whether it's hearing them string together sentences, or the first time they put their snowpants on all by themselves. Watching them grow, tell you 'No, I do it' brings an indescribable sense of pride - seeing how far they've come from when you first met them and how they continue to grow.

20 years from now, I hope that I am remembered as the educator who helped these children feel loved and appreciated. We can't control what happens when children are not in our care, but we can absolutely make an impact on what happens in our care. I hope to have a legacy of raising resilient, inquisitive, and education loving children into wonderful adults who walk the world sharing the same values.

I chose SPC because of their pedagogical values. After learning the Reggio Emilia approach in school, I fell in love with the philosophy and its principles. I appreciate the focus on inquiry-based learning and centering the program around the children and their interests. I also appreciate the diversity in the various SPC programs. Having completed my final placement at the Highbush location and now working at Ormiston - I can see that there is plenty to learn from the various educators and programs at different centers, and how they each take a unique perspective on the guidelines we follow.

For those who are considering becoming an ECE, let your heart lead your work. You are going to meet people who might try and discourage you from joining the industry, whether it's those who have left or others who do not see legitimacy in what you want to do. Remember that their experience is theirs alone, and that you know the kind of teacher you are and will become. Follow your passions and try it out, I stumbled into this career by chance and now I know I am exactly where I need to be.

One thing I wish parents knew that our jobs are about partnership. We love your children as if they are our own and want to see them grow and thrive. The best way to support growth is through continuity, holding the same boundaries and communicating in the same ways. Combining parent knowledge and expertise of their children and our knowledge of child development so we can ensure your children are supported holistically.



Creating a Sense of Belonging

At Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham, we know how important it is to foster a sense of belonging and connection for our childcare professionals. We continue to focus on a thoughtful and personalized approach to onboarding and mentoring during the first 6 months, and we also provide many opportunities for networking and appreciation throughout the year.

SPC Employee Appreciation and Service Recognition Event

This annual event celebrates the accomplishments of our teams and recognizes years of service. SPC team members also have the opportunity to nominate colleagues who demonstrate excellence in the following categories: leadership, innovation, pedagogy, professional growth and development, and teamwork.

In 2024, the following individuals were the recipient of an award:

- Ambassador of Leadership – Lisa Stone, Sarah Henry, Andrea Williams
- Ambassador of Innovation – Ray Giorgio
- Ambassador of Pedagogy – Amol Arora, Coreen Schuchardt
- Ambassador of Professional Growth and Development – Jenn Cummings
- Ambassador of Teamwork – Emilia Calanchie, Melissa Langworth, Sylvie Stewart

In 2024, we also recognized our longest-term employee ever, at 35 years of service. Lucia Perri is the supervisor of our Elsie MacGill location and is often referred to by the children as “Chia!” When we asked Lucia why she has dedicated her professional career to SPC and to the childcare sector, here is what she said “It gives me a sense of pride to know that I have had an impact on a child’s life and helped guide/educate them to achieve their goals. I value the bonds I have created with both children and families over the years.”

Windreach Farm Event/40th Anniversary & AGM

In honour of our 40th anniversary, we brought our teams and their families together for a FUN day at the farm, where we also hosted our Annual General Meeting. Those who joined had the opportunity to interact with, and learn about, the farm animals. They participated in a scavenger hunt, played SPC camp games, and explored a variety of play-based farm activities hosted by the YMCA Early ON team. Many had their faces painted and a beautiful henna design applied! This was a great opportunity to meet the children and family members of our childcare and licensed home childcare professionals – and the beautiful sunshine and tasty treats added to a VERY successful engagement/appreciation event.

“When you feel a sense of belonging, you realize who you are and what you can become. It is a process of discovery and a path to authenticity”



Kayla's Story

RECE, Assistant Supervisor, Brooklin Village

My passion for working with children started young. As an aunt at eight years old, I was planning activities, outings, and even educational games for my two nephews, and from then on, I knew I wanted to work with children in some capacity. I loved being part of their world — encouraging their learning, celebrating their milestones — and I saw early on how much of a difference feeling supported and cared for can make to a child.

After high school, I enrolled in Durham College's Early Childhood Education program. My first placement was with SPC at the Sinclair S.S. location, and I couldn't have asked for a better first experience. I was surrounded by supportive educators, inspiring supervisors, and a wonderful group of infants who showed me firsthand how important it is to create a space where children feel safe, valued, and excited to grow.

During my studies, I also completed placements with other organizations. It was through those experiences that I realized just how special SPC really is. I found myself comparing the relationships with families, the focus on children's development, and the strong feeling of community — and SPC always stood out. It felt like the kind of place where I could really make a difference, not just for children, but for the families and team around them too.

After graduating, I began working full-time as an educator in the same infant room because of the strong connection I had built during my placement. Encouraged by mentors who believed in me, I later transferred to Brooklin Village to work with a variety of different age groups, where I now proudly work as an Assistant Supervisor. I love that my role allows me to support not only children's growth but also to build strong partnerships with families and educators — creating a community where everyone feels welcome.

Each day, connecting with the children brings me the most joy. Their excitement, their curiosity, and their milestones inspire me, and simple moments like hearing "Kayla, Kayla!" when I walk into a room, or being handed artwork to add to my growing collection, remind me why this work matters. One moment that touched me deeply was when a family shared that during nightly video calls with their grandparents, their child insists on saying goodnight to me — even though I'm not there. It's little moments like that which remind me that the relationships we build aren't just for the classroom — they stay with children and families far beyond.

What I'm most proud of in my role is the positive impact I've had — whether it's mentoring new educators, supporting students, or helping to create a workplace where people feel encouraged and connected. I try to bring not just professionalism but also humour and lightheartedness into every day. I believe laughter builds stronger teams, stronger relationships with families, and helps create a place where both children and adults feel comfortable and happy to be themselves.

My advice to every SPC educator is simple: You are valued more than you realize. The work you do is challenging, but it leaves a lasting mark on children, families, and the community you help shape every day.



Igniting a Passion for Professional Learning

In 2024, we invited our SPC team members to share their thoughts about their employment experience, by completing a confidential Employee Engagement Survey. When asked to identify the most important factors that influenced their decision to apply for/accept a position with SPC, 47% said “opportunities for professional growth and development.” At SPC, our childcare professionals have many opportunities to learn, network, reflect and grow professionally. Areas of focus have been related to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Reflective Practice, Collaboration and Teamwork, Pedagogical Leadership and Building Leadership Capacity.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

- Unlearn – Provoking Thought to Inspire Positive Change
- School Age Anxiety Community of Practice
- Respecting the Conversation – Strengthening Relationships with Families
- Promoting Positive Mental Health
- Indigenous Learning – Make & Take

Pedagogical Learning Series

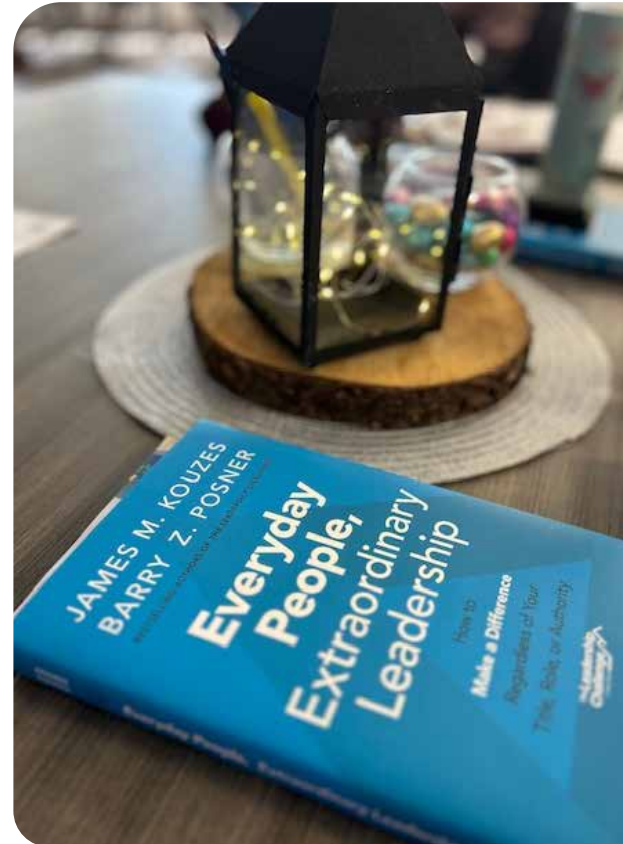
- The Learning Environment
- Observing and Planning
- Implementing and Documentation

Building Leadership Capacity

- Introduction to Myers Briggs Type Indicator & Assessment
- Working Genius Assessment & Tool
- Leadership Skills & What Makes a Good Leader
- Emotional intelligence & Blind spots

Easter Monday Conference

- Reflective Practice
- Teamwork and Collaboration
- The importance of Balance, Connectivity and Resiliency through Humour



“The best way to lead people into the future is to connect with them deeply in the present” -James Kouzes & Barry Posner

Survey says...

“The work environment is warm and welcoming, just as I expected from the interview process. The team is supportive and collaborative.”

“I was warmly welcomed at the time of interview, since then I feel integrated and connected”

“My experience has been positive, and I look forward to continuing to grow and contribute to the center’s success.”

“I appreciate the opportunity the organization has given me. I’m looking forward to having career progression in the near future.”



Strategic Priority: Program Excellence, Growth & Expansion

We will continue to maintain our areas of excellence, while expanding opportunities for children, youth, and families to actively and meaningfully engage in their communities.

By the numbers:

- **2,150** children in SPC Childcare Centres (↑7%)
- **148** children in Licensed Home Childcare
- **715** camper weeks in Summer Camp (↑28%)
- **4,080** participant weeks in Licensed Summer Programs (↑10%)

Techenia's Story

RECE, Pedagogical Leader

Being an Early Childhood Educator has taken me on quite a professional journey. I worked with the YMCA for many years, moving quickly into a supervisor position, but started off as a school-age educator. I asked a lot of questions while I was a room educator and welcomed the opportunity to further my professional growth. When the opportunity came to run a centre, I jumped right in and oversaw two centres at a time, coaching educators and a supervisor while staying connected with both centres' children and families.

I was then approached by a supervised access organization to join their management team to help create parenting courses and workshops. I never thought my programming skills would be beneficial for these families, but as I created parenting program plans based on their child's interests I was in awe at how impactful that was for not only the child but for the parent as well.

Through my work with the supervised access company, I became curious about social work and went on to work an administrative position with the Children's Aid Society (CAS). I worked alongside the Branch Director and was consulted on things related to child development. For a second, I contemplated doing my master's in social work but then remembered the joy of being in a childcare setting. This is when I found SPC! At this time in my life, after all the different hats I wore, I found myself wanting to do a job where I could coach and mentor but still feel connected to children, educators, and childcare programming. I was grateful that I was given the opportunity to join the organization as a Pedagogical Leader.

To me, emergent curriculum is like a never-ending exploration ride, and I thought it was amazing that SPC was embracing this. When I was an educator, I would have loved for someone to come into the room and share their insights on how to continue to provide high-quality programming.

One of the amazing parts of being a Pedagogical Leader is that I can connect with the educators, hear and observe what is working, and seek opportunities to provide further support, tools and resources so they can continue to provide enriched experiences for the children and families.

In the short amount of time of being a Pedagogical Leader, I continue to see a great amount of growth in our centres. There are many joyous and rewarding moments being in this role, but my favourite moment is when I can celebrate with an educator when they have an "aha" moment and they are taking one step closer to achieving the goals in their program. I am very proud of all the educators I get to work with every day because I see the work they are doing.

If there was one thing I would want an educator to know, it would be that the small moments matter. Take a second to slow down, live in the moment, and celebrate those little moments with those children. These types of moments remind us of why we all chose to do this work, to join this field, and to be a part of SPC.



Cultivating the Leaders of Tomorrow

At Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham we believe in the power of disconnecting from technology and building connections with others. We know that opportunities for children to be active, get messy, discover their talents, and explore the natural environment creates lifelong positive outcomes. These experiences help children learn valuable life skills that help strengthen confidence and build character.

Camps help to develop self-assured leaders of tomorrow!

Camp provides the perfect environment for campers to build social skills, develop confidence, learn how to function as a team, respectfully work through problems, communicate effectively to achieve a common goal, and appreciate differences. These are among the most important foundational skills of leadership!

In 2024, we **expanded** our recreational camping, outdoor education and leadership programs to include:

- A full day nature-based experience specifically designed for 5-year-olds, located at our Claremont outdoor summer camp
- A multi-sport and sport development summer camp program at our Captain Michael Vandenbos P.S. location
- A March Break outdoor day camp program located at Claremont Nature Centre
- PA day programming focused on outdoor education, team development and leadership specifically designed for 8-12-year-olds
- After-school program enrichment focused on outdoor education, team development and leadership specifically designed for 8-12-year-olds





Strategic Priority: Community Development

We will leverage our charitable position to remove barriers and improve access to programs and services that meet the diverse needs of the communities we serve.

By the numbers:

- **1,191** families engaging on Storypark
- **934** social media followers
- **224** members of the SPC Resources Facebook community
- **\$34,085** raised for the Adventure Awaits campaign

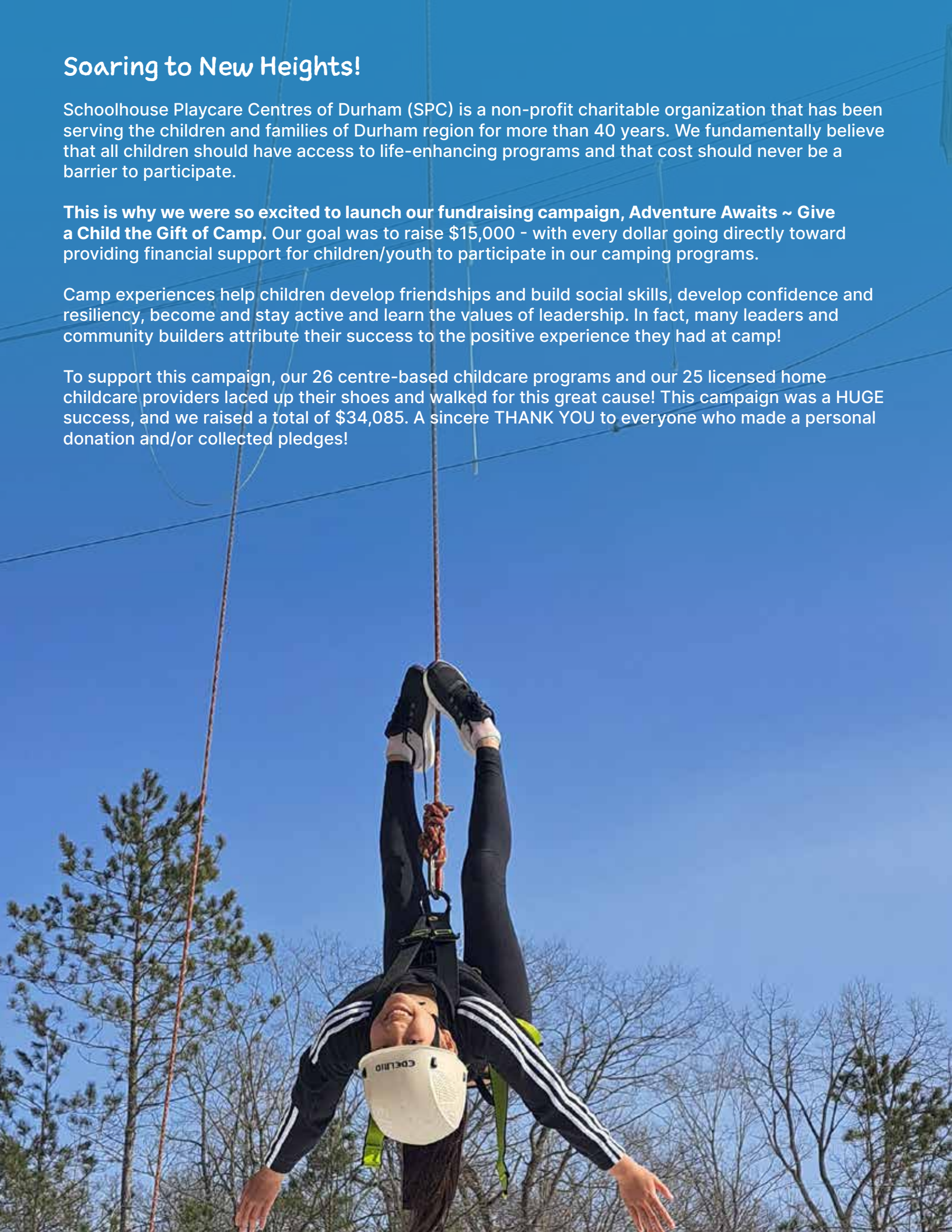
Soaring to New Heights!

Schoolhouse Playcare Centres of Durham (SPC) is a non-profit charitable organization that has been serving the children and families of Durham region for more than 40 years. We fundamentally believe that all children should have access to life-enhancing programs and that cost should never be a barrier to participate.

This is why we were so excited to launch our fundraising campaign, Adventure Awaits ~ Give a Child the Gift of Camp. Our goal was to raise \$15,000 - with every dollar going directly toward providing financial support for children/youth to participate in our camping programs.

Camp experiences help children develop friendships and build social skills, develop confidence and resiliency, become and stay active and learn the values of leadership. In fact, many leaders and community builders attribute their success to the positive experience they had at camp!

To support this campaign, our 26 centre-based childcare programs and our 25 licensed home childcare providers laced up their shoes and walked for this great cause! This campaign was a HUGE success, and we raised a total of \$34,085. A sincere THANK YOU to everyone who made a personal donation and/or collected pledges!



Strengthening our Impact

One of our most innovative and impactful camp experiences is our March Break Overnight Camp offered in partnership with YMCA Camp Pinecrest. Campers sleep in winterized cabins and dine “family style” in the winterized dining hall during this 4-night, 5-day overnight camp experience. While participants were involved in FUN and engaging programming throughout the week, the impact and benefits were immeasurable.

Many of those who joined had never been away from home before – and they started their journey as “hesitant” individuals and returned as an “energized” team, having developed amazing new friendships. This experience fostered independence, developed confidence and challenged campers to step outside their comfort zone. Through the experience, campers had a sense of accomplishment as they put their teambuilding, leadership and problem-solving skills to the test. Not to mention – they created a positive connection with nature and had a refreshing break from technology!

What made this experience more meaningful was our partnership with the Ignite Durham Learning Foundation (IDLF). IDLF was able to work with school administrators to identify 5 students (9-12 years), who would benefit from our March Break Overnight Camp experience. These students were partially sponsored through the IDLF and were also provided with financial support through SPC. For so many deserving children, an overnight camp experience is not an option due to cost. We are thankful to our IDLF partners, for making this opportunity come to life!

IDLF is a charitable organization that serves to remove financial barriers to create equitable opportunities that empower Durham District School Board students to achieve academic and personal success



“As someone who is new to Canada when I heard I had the chance to go to a camp i was very excited, and I am so, so thankful that i got the chance to go.it was a very fun experience and i made so many friends there. The cabins were beautiful and was bigger on the inside than it was on the outside. The counselors, the staff, the chefs, they were so nice. I loved going skiing but i have to say my favourite activity was gaga ball so fun, so intense, so exciting. The bus ride to the camp was two hours thirty minutes so i knew this trip was going to be fun. the highlights of the trip were skiing, gaga ball, wall climbing, capture the flag, broom ball {hockey but different gear}. snow shoeing, talent shows, moon watching and so much more. It was also heartbreaking having to leave my family and friends but an experience like that made it worth it. If i had another chance to go i will. If there was one word to describe that trip that word would be “astonishing”. i wish i would be able to see my friends again. I hope that another

lucky person like me will be to go.” **-March Break Overnight Camp Participant**

“He came back so excited about it, and I know it meant a lot to him and his family. We are so appreciative that he received the opportunity.”
-Vice-Principal, DDSB

“The experience of overnight camp was something that we have wanted our son to experience for some time. Having the opportunity to go with a friend, his initial feelings of nervousness were replaced with excitement and anticipation. Throughout the week, we were overjoyed to receive the nightly updates and photos, seeing for ourselves the fun the kids were all having! The best part of the week was seeing my son’s face as he came off the bus, smiling ear to ear, enthusiastically telling us about every aspect of his week, and introducing us to the new friends that he made at his week away!” **-Parent**







"The educators are amazing. They truly care and have developed a fantastic relationship with my child. They are an important part of my child's daily life and social-emotional development. For sure the reason we come back to SPC is because of the frontline educators."

