



# PEPS

PROGRAM FOR EARLY PARENT SUPPORT

Annual Report  
2020

Dear PEPS community,

2020 was a memorable and transformational year at PEPS and for all of us. It was a year where a global pandemic changed everything as we knew it. Long-standing inequities came to light through COVID, the murder of George Floyd, and a racial reckoning. And it was a time when we were more isolated from one another than ever before. Connection and community became a basic need that none of us could access in the ways we knew how.

At PEPS, we entered the year with a new mission, vision, values, and strategic direction, ready to put our commitment to racial equity and years of learning, reflection, and planning into action. We worked towards growing our reach and impact and increasing the accessibility of our programs. We had done a lot of listening to and learning from parents, organizations, and PEPS Group Leaders to inform this work. After stay-at-home orders led us to adapt to our staff and Groups operating virtually, we paused, adjusted our plan, and stayed grounded in our values of equity, inclusion, authenticity, community, and innovation.

In 2020, while we saw a decline in the number of parents signing up for PEPS peer support groups, we still connected more than 3,000 parents through PEPS Newborn, Second Time Around, and Baby Peppers Groups. We responded to critical needs and developed new programs for expectant parents who were experiencing even more isolation. We introduced a pilot program for LGBTQIA+ families. We completed a landscape analysis to help inform a pilot program for Parents of Adolescents and Teens. And, we worked with our partners to adapt and adjust what parent support could look like in a virtual world.

We moved our commitment to racial equity forward, into PEPS Groups and with the parents in our community. We started intentional conversations on the topic of race and social identity development in PEPS Groups and continue to support parents to learn, unlearn, and have discussions about race, racism, and social identity – early and often. We acknowledge that it should never have taken us this long to bring these conversations to the PEPS community – and we're learning, evaluating, and enhancing this part of the PEPS experience every day.

While 2020 looked nothing like the way we had planned, it grounded us in our values in remarkable ways, and we showed up for one another and the families in our community in ways we could never have imagined. We talked about how hard it was, practiced gratitude, did our best, and operated with a lot of care for one another and the parents in our community. Read on for a deeper dive into this year of growth, resilience, and hope.

We could not have done this without the help of our committed board and staff members, generous community of volunteers, donors, sponsors, funders, and in partnership with community-based organizations. I have a deep appreciation for every single one of you who supports the work we do to connect parents to strengthen families and build community. THANK YOU!

With gratitude,



Dana Guy  
Executive Director, PEPS

*“The best part of PEPS was [that] I would not have felt so connected or supported during the pandemic without having joined PEPS, particularly as my family lives far away and has been unable to visit since my baby was born.”*

*– Virtual PEPS Group participant*

# PEPS Community in 2020 – At a Glance



631 parents served through local and out-of-state PEPS Network Partners



3,016 parents served in PEPS Groups



259 PEPS Groups met virtually and 11 Affinity pilot groups offered



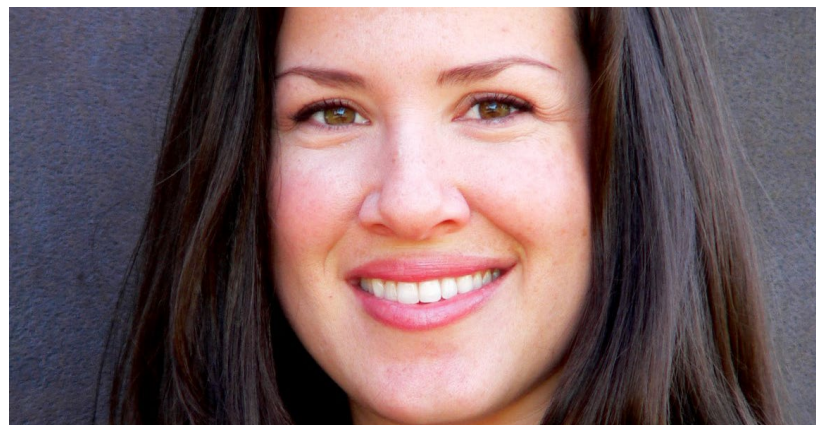
52 parents served in PEPS Groups through local community-based organizations



40 parents served in Spanish-language PEPS Groups through local community-based organizations



202 volunteers trained as PEPS Group Leaders



95 professionals volunteered as Guest Speakers



## **PEPS Strategic Direction**

Our Strategic Direction includes four goals, all guided by our values of equity, inclusion, authenticity, innovation, and community. Our mission to connect parents to strengthen families and build community depends on the growth in each of these four areas and will move us towards creating resilient families, connected communities, and more equitable outcomes. **Learn more about our Strategic Direction at [www.peps.org/about/our-strategic-direction](http://www.peps.org/about/our-strategic-direction).**

- ✓ **Grow the PEPS Reach and Impact**
- ✓ **Innovate Our Approach to Parent Support**
- ✓ **Advocate for Equitable Policies**
- ✓ **Strengthen Organizational Effectiveness**

# Grow our Reach and Impact

PEPS served 3,016 parents in 249 PEPS Groups in 2020! Supporting parents through the early stages (and now later stages, too!) is what we do.

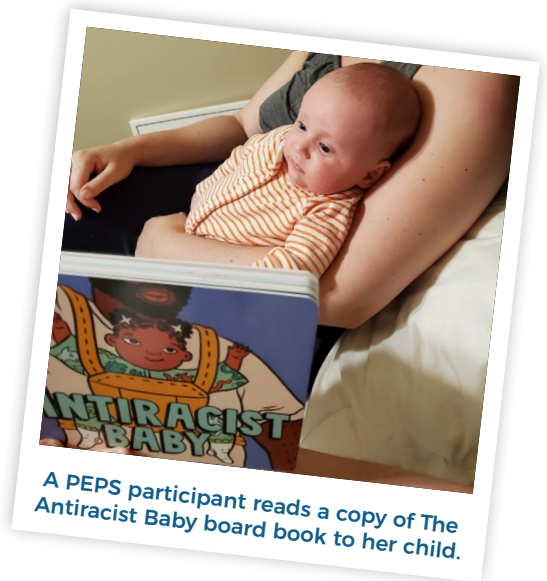
## Virtual Parent Peer Support

In 2020, we continued to provide critical support and resources to families by quickly pivoting our programs to gather virtually once in-person groups were no longer an option due to the pandemic. Parents and caregivers connected weekly over Zoom calls and WhatsApp text threads and video calls. We facilitated meaningful conversation on discussion topics meant to support families based on the Strengthening Families™ framework in each of these weekly meetings. All the while, our staff and Group Leaders were dedicated to supporting parents through the pandemic and worked together tirelessly to pivot the 69 groups that began in-person before the COVID-19 restrictions were implemented to meeting virtually instead.



## Anti-Racism Work

We cultivated parents' capacities for conversations about race, gender, class, and intersectionality within each PEPS Group through education, resource sharing, and discussion. We hired a social justice and racial equity consultant to conduct an anti-bias review, with recommendations that we have since implemented. To counter racism and bias, PEPS encouraged parents to acknowledge, name, and talk with their children about race and racism – early and often. We want to assist families in starting early and have been striving to provide parents with more tools and resources to raise anti-racist children. Beginning in September of 2020, PEPS mailed out copies of the newly-released baby board book *Antiracist Baby* by Ibram X. Kendi, purchased from Estelita's Library, a Black-owned bookstore in South Seattle. We sent more than 450 copies to participants and Group Leaders of Newborn, Second Time Around, and Baby Peppers Groups! We further supported parents in having these conversations by swiftly building an anti-racist parenting resources webpage with relevant information and reference materials and continue to update with new resources.



## Partnerships

Our organization also further developed our approach to collaborating with local and national partners. We extended continuous support to existing community-based partners by sharing resources, information, and learnings between partners. Triangle Area Parenting Support (TAPS), one of our Network Partners, developed a curriculum to be used on WhatsApp. Once piloted, we shared these learnings with two of our other partners, Partners in Parenting (PIP) and NISO Programs, who rolled it out within their own PEPS Groups for Spanish-speaking families.

### 2020 PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

ChildStrive | Cocoon House | Mercy Housing Northwest | NISO Programs  
Open Arms Perinatal Services | Southwest Youth and Family Services | Valley Medical Center

### 2020 NETWORK PARTNERS

Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies | Martha's Table | Partners in Parenting | Seattle Families of Multiples  
Temple B'nai Torah | Temple de Hirsch Sinai | Triangle-Area Parenting Support

# Innovate our Approach to Parent Support

We are approaching our work in new and innovative ways, but **community and connection are still at the center of everything we do at PEPS**. From the time before the baby arrives to the adolescent years, many families have expressed a desire to meet and connect with families who share identities that intersect with their identity as parents, caregivers, and as a child. We have been listening and recognize the need for this form of connection.



## Pilot Programs Development

At PEPS, we know that bringing parents together in groups can help families know that they are not alone. Social connection is critical for mental health, and we are committed to creatively building community for parents around specific identities. Our programs moved away from a one-size-fits-all model. We introduced several [online pilot peer-support series](#) in 2020 for expectant parents and for parents and caregivers who identify as LGBTQIA+. We served more than 150 parents in a total of 11 pilot groups, and the program for expectant parents was in such high demand that we made it into a permanent program.

## Expansion of Parenting Stages Served

For many years, PEPS has heard from our communities that there is also a gap in peer-support services for parents and caregivers of adolescents and teens. With support from King County Best Starts for Kids and the Jolene McCaw Foundation in 2020, we conducted research and data collection to inform the development of a [pilot program for Parents of Adolescents and Teens \(PAT\)](#).

## Group Leader Training and Support

PEPS programs are successful, thanks in large part to our incredible community of Group Leaders. In 2020, we provided 112 hours of extensive training to more than 200 Group Leaders to lead inclusive conversations on over 46 discussion topics. 80% of PEPS Groups are led by trained volunteers, and selected programs such as the one for parents of adolescents and teens are led by paid Leaders with expertise in the field. PEPS Groups also had access to 95 Guest Speakers. These volunteers are available to virtually attend PEPS Group meetings and present in their area of expertise, ranging from relationships to postpartum mood and anxiety disorders to feeding and sleep, and more.

As we pivoted to offering virtual groups in 2020, we also looked at how Leader training could be made more accessible and effective through the use of an online learning management system tool. Over the course of last year, PEPS staff worked on creating training modules for facilitators to access in a self-paced virtual format. Going forward, PEPS Group Leaders will have the opportunity to work through the basics of inclusive group facilitation and have access to various online training videos and resources. These recorded video modules and assessments will be complemented by a learning session led by PEPS for Group Leaders to role play and practice active facilitation with other Leaders. This online learning system allows Leaders to learn at their own pace, in the comfort of their own space, and increases options for Leaders from a wider geographical area to participate.

*"The most valuable aspect of this program was talking to other families going through the same thing as mine, in a safe space for gay parents. I also loved our discussion on self-care."*

*— PEPS LGBTQIA+ pilot program participant*





# Strengthening Organizational Effectiveness

At PEPS, we believe in taking care of our staff as much as taking care of families in our community. We prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion in our organizational policies, processes, and programs. We strive for PEPS Groups to be a safe place where every person belongs and the diversity of identities, perspectives, and experiences are honored and celebrated.

## **Staff Development and Support**

At PEPS, we operate in a trust-based work environment, making it easier for all staff to work from home during the pandemic. We invested in staff through professional development and training, and throughout our organizational processes and practices, we strive to live our values and nurture a strengths-based culture.

*“Volunteering for PEPS was one of the best things I have ever done. [The families] gave me much more than I gave to them. They taught me how to be a good grandmother and mother-in-law!”*

*— Vicki R., PEPS Group Leader*

## **Group Leader Connection and Collaboration**

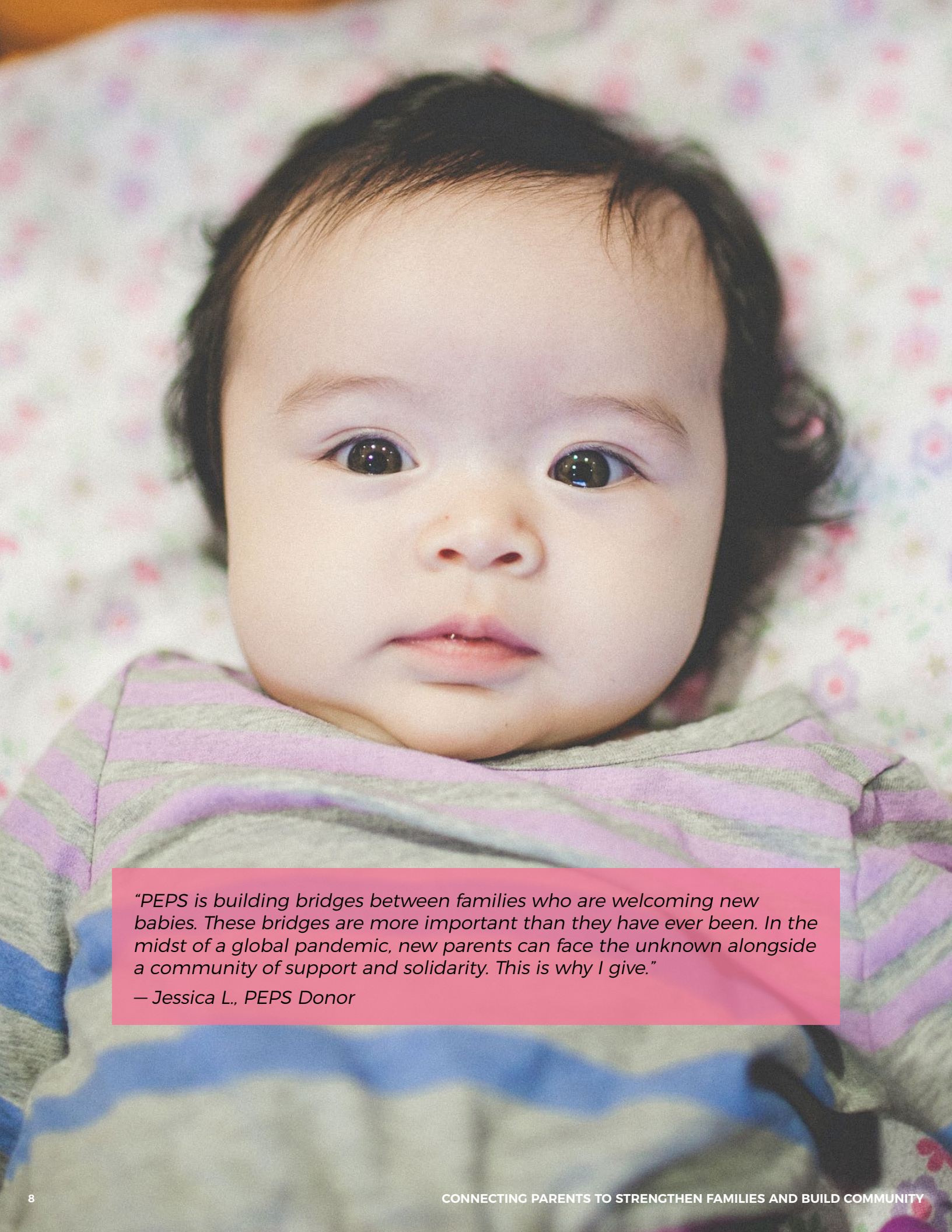
In 2020, we offered Leader support with monthly virtual chats to encourage networking and collaboration. We also offered 4 virtual Advanced Facilitation Training sessions for Leaders to improve their facilitation skills in mindfulness, emotional changes and challenges, Developmental Moments, and race and social identity development. Additionally, we moderated an active Facebook group for Group Leaders to share ideas, challenges, and connection with more than 450 members.





## **Advocate and Influence for More Equitable Policies**

We've committed to showing up to advance equity in our community through advocacy. This past year, we shared issues and policies that impact parents and babies like the Paid Family and Medical Leave in Washington State. We are committed to taking a stand and using our voice to create positive change for families and our community. As we develop an advocacy strategy and platform, we will be taking action and asking you to join us, so stay tuned!



*“PEPS is building bridges between families who are welcoming new babies. These bridges are more important than they have ever been. In the midst of a global pandemic, new parents can face the unknown alongside a community of support and solidarity. This is why I give.”*

*— Jessica L., PEPS Donor*

# Your Investment at Work

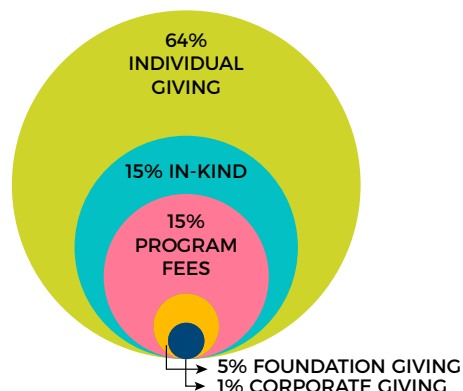
2020 was a year like none other in our lifetime. COVID and the murder of George Floyd had a profound impact on the world, this country, our work at PEPS, and the families we serve. Many were hit hard, and priorities shifted.

At PEPS, we saw a shift in parents signing up and thus a loss in program revenue. Bringing more than 500 PEPS friends together in person became incomprehensible, and we canceled our only signature benefit event in early March and lost the opportunity to create a joyful collective giving opportunity. While our community came together and helped us raise funds, we saw a decline in donor numbers and multi-year giving commitments. Foundation and corporate funders shifted their giving priorities, rightfully so, to fund basic needs and racial and social justice work.

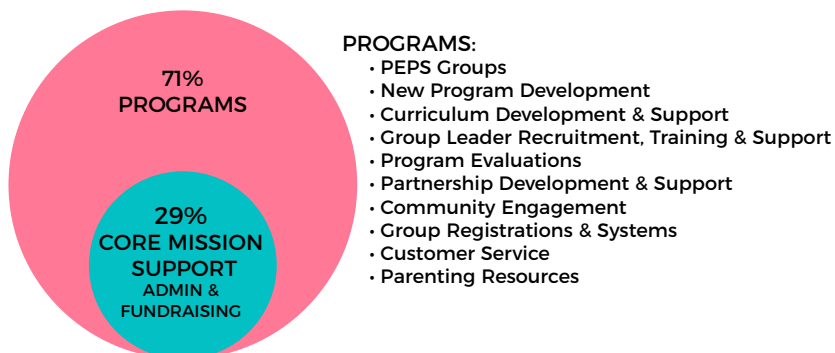
In this context, we are extremely grateful to those who continued to support our mission and work or joined our giving community for the first time with their investment of time, expertise, and/or financial resources: our committed board members and staff, our community of volunteers, donors, funders, sponsors, and our community partners. We are also grateful to the US government for providing financial resources in these extraordinary times. We were extremely fortunate to receive a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan that was fully forgiven. The combined effort of our giving community allowed us to adapt and pivot and find new ways to connect parents in extremely isolating times.

In all of this, as an organization, we are operating with a community-centric abundance mindset which includes investing in and uplifting the work of other organizations throughout our programmatic, fundraising, and organizational work.

## REVENUES \$1,873,586



## EXPENSES \$1,545,755



Net assets as of December 31, 2020: \$ 1,812,422

For more details on our financial resources, please view our 2020 Financial Statement at [www.peps.org/about/impact/annual-reports](http://www.peps.org/about/impact/annual-reports).



## Looking Forward

2020 brought us to places we hadn't anticipated, and we are especially grateful for the support of this community. It allowed us to adapt and pivot. And as an organization whose core mission is to foster and facilitate in-person connection for families, we had to adapt A LOT in a short amount of time – and we did. At PEPS, we are wholeheartedly committed to helping parents adjust to their new roles by connecting them with other parents going through the same journey at the same time.

A huge thank you to everyone who makes support for parents through PEPS possible!

# Thank you to all of our enthusiastic and committed board and staff!

## **2020 PEPS Board of Directors**

Sarah Cody Roth, Co-President (part year)  
Mary Ellen Cunningham  
Tracy Cutchlow  
Shanna Donhauser (part year)  
Chrissy Egan, Treasurer  
Suzanna Fix  
Lesley Graham  
Rue Khosa (part year)  
Rebecca Koladycz, Secretary  
Caroline Koplowitz, Treasurer  
Julianna Rigg Hillard  
Beth Trakimas  
Chezik Tsunoda  
Vidya Vasu Devan  
Leslie Wander, President  
Kathryn Zetzer

## **2020 PEPS Staff**

Patricia Andre-Edgar, Communications and Marketing Director  
Swarnima Aswinkumar, Leader Impact Specialist  
Zoe Barker-Aderem, Donor Relations Manager  
Jennie Capron, Community Connector  
Michelle Geller, Finance and Administrative Coordinator  
Maria Alejandra Gomez, Community Connector  
Dana Guy, Executive Director  
Polly Jirkovsky, PEPS Partnership Manager  
Marion Mohrlök, Development Director  
Cari Morales, Operations Director  
Christina Phelps Shaw, Data Specialist  
Allanah Raas-Bergquist, Operations Coordinator  
Kintea Rossiter, Program Director

*“We believe, now more than ever, in the power of connection, the power of listening to each other, and the immense relief in knowing that we have the support of a caring and passionate community.”*

*— Polly Jirkovsky, PEPS Partnership Manager*

## Join us

Interested in supporting families to find support and build community? Get involved today!

- ✓ [Lead](#) a PEPS Group
- ✓ [Invest](#) in PEPS
- ✓ [Share your expertise](#) as a Guest Speaker
- ✓ [Tell](#) a neighbor, colleague, or friend about PEPS
- ✓ [Sign up](#) for our newsletter



### **Our Mission**

PEPS connects parents to strengthen families and build community.

### **Our Vision**

Resilient Families – Connected Communities – Equitable Outcomes

### **Our Values**

**EQUITY** We strive for better access and outcomes for every family, centering those most impacted by disparities.

**INNOVATION** We are bold, curious, and creative in seeking new ways to deepen impact.

**INCLUSION** We welcome all parents, honoring their experiences, identities, and voices through a culture of belonging and acceptance.

**COMMUNITY** We believe that human connection is at the heart of meaningful parent support. Through shared experience, parents know they are not alone.

**AUTHENTICITY** We show up and speak up with humility, vulnerability and strength. We create space for parents to do the same.