



Children's Forum President and CEO Set to Retire

After 22 years as President and CEO of the Children's Forum, Dr. Phyllis Kalifeh has announced her plans to retire on August 1, 2022.

Phyllis has worked tirelessly to advocate for the early learning workforce, expand professional development opportunities, and bring awareness to the poor compensation for those working with our youngest citizens. She has made it her life's mission to make sure young children have quality early learning experiences to prepare them for success in school and in life.

"As the Forum's leader, Dr. Kalifeh has faithfully served and led the Children's Forum through a changing policy environment from a statewide vantage point," said Board Chair Robert Buesing. "We are grateful for her leadership, dedication, and commitment to young children and those who work with them in Florida."

Phyllis decided to retire so she could spend more time with her family, enjoy her 11 grandchildren, and travel with her husband. It was a very difficult decision for her to make. Early care and education has been her passion for 43 years.

"It is bittersweet because I have truly been blessed to do what I love with people I love, but it's time for someone else to step in and take the helm," she explained. "Upon retirement, I plan to pursue opportunities to serve the early learning community perhaps on a contract or volunteer basis."

Phyllis hopes the future President and CEO of the Children's Forum is an early childhood professional or advocate, a leader with "fire in the belly" who is ready to change the landscape of early learning and afterschool programs, and a system-thinker with policy expertise.

"Early care and education is a team sport," she explained. "To the staff of the Children's Forum, thank you for playing on my team and for your unwavering support and belief in the work that we do. I am confident that we will find the right individual to write the next chapter in the Forum's story."



Forum Happenings



Emily Fulkerson, T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship Support Coordinator, became an aunt when her sister Holly and her husband Gerald had a baby in December 2021. Zoe is the only baby in Emily's side of the family. She hopes that it will be safe to travel to Germany so she can meet Zoe for the first time in December 2022.



Courtney Lee, Registry Coach, celebrated the first birthday of her son James on Dec 21. James has started school and loves being outside more than anything else these days!



Jinan Higginbotham, Outreach Coordinator, gave birth to Edgar James "Tripp" Higginbotham on October 19. He weighed 7 pounds 9.5 ounces and was 19.5 inches long. Now seven months old, Tripp enjoys playing jokes on his mommy with daddy's help, eating peas and oatmeal, and sitting up all by himself!



Laura Cain, Registry Coordinator, went skiing in Colorado with her family and friends. Her son James loved the snow, and they had a blast!



Forum Happenings



Jenna Brown, Communications Director, visited the beautiful country of Costa Rica with her family. They loved the country's people, animals (sloths and capuchin monkeys were the highlight), culture, ecosystems, food, zip lines, waterfalls, water parks, rivers, nature walks, coffee, entertainment, and motto (Pura Vida).



Tripp Higginbotham and James Cain, sons of **Jinan Higginbotham**, Outreach Coordinator, and **Laura Cain**, Registry Coordinator, had a fun play date with each other! "Aunts" **Kiki Carter**, INCENTIVE\$ Coordinator, and Laura supervised the children while Jinan and husband E.J. enjoyed a date night.



April Wigsten, Registry Coach, celebrated her engagement to fiancé Eric with close friends and family. The couple have been dating for four years, and Eric popped the question last year. They look forward to partying with family and friends at their November wedding in Trenton, Georgia.



Shane Roerk, Research Assistant, recently adopted Nomi, a kitty who is a tiny, speedy and very chatty 7-month-old calico. Nomi, who was named after a Jedi Master, loves chasing lasers and pestering her older (cat) brother Dobby!



Welcome Newbies!



Gabriela Agosto

Front Desk Assistant

- Likes to go on nature walks- Blue Springs is one of her favorite places to hike
- Loves to draw and paint
- Is the Forum's resident "plant nurse" and revitalizes sick plants



Aly Avila

T.E.A.C.H Process Specialist

- Read 117 books last year
- Was born in Columbia, Central America
- Is a dog parent to Bailey Steven Rogers who she named after Captain America



Ouida Brown

T.E.A.C.H. Reimbursement Specialist

- Enjoys crafting in her free time
- Has three (soon to be four) grandchildren
- Used to be 4'11," but is now 4'9 1/2"



Wioleta Gaddy

Contracts and Grants Manager

- Has a 19-year-old daughter who attends college in Belgium
- Fosters cats and loves animals (owns two dogs and two cats)
- Loves to travel (an African safari to Kenya was her favorite vacation)



Liz Jimenez

T.E.A.C.H. Process Specialist

- Is from El Salvador, Central America
- Loves board games, flowers, traveling and all things tech
- Actively volunteers in her free time



Ivonne Maciel

Professional Development Specialist

- Enjoys walking after work and listening to music
- Eats homemade pizza every Friday
- Likes to pray and read the Bible



Lili Murphy

FAN Executive Director

- Is also known as Amelia's mom (her 18-month-old daughter)
- Loves hiking and outdoor adventures
- Designs beautiful projects/crafts with her Cricut machine



Shane Roerk

Research Assistant

- Loves to travel around the world with his girlfriend Kelli - at Epcot
- Is an avid comic book reader
- Took four years of Latin and Classical Greek in school



Lauren Wofford

Chief Financial Officer

- Has three young children named Emma, Hunter, and Jackson
- Was born and raised in Tallahassee
- Enjoys watching college football



Conferences and Awards



Dr. Phyllis Kalifeh, President and CEO, was among a panel of Florida legislative experts at the 29th Annual Association of Christian Early Educators Conference. The panel addressed current events shaping early education both locally and nationally.

In addition to serving on the panel, Phyllis was the 2022 recipient of the Association of Christian Early Educators Children's Champion award! Congratulations, Phyllis, and thank you for your dedication and commitment to Florida's children!



JOINT REFERRAL COLLABORATION

Denise Bishop, VP and Chief Outreach and Innovation Officer, **Jenna Brown**, Communications Director, **Liz Randall**, HMG Assistant Director, and **Brenda Romuald**, HMG Program and Outreach Specialist, provided conference coordination support for the in-person Joint Referral Collaboration Summit in Orlando.



The Summit was designed to enhance coordination among referral agencies that support screening, referral, tracking, and early intervention services. In addition, Liz served on the Summit's professional panel.



Conferences and Awards



T.E.A.C.H. and **INCENTIVE\$** colleagues attended the 2022 National Early Childhood Education Workforce Convening in North Carolina. The conference featured topics on advocacy, policy, funding, strategy development, and systems building that support early education programs.



Jinan Higginbotham, Outreach Coordinator, and **Evelyn Thomas**, Outreach Specialist, along with Dianna Erickson with the Michigan AEYC, were excited to present "Using Your Website as an Outreach Tool" at the Convening. In addition, **Lori Stegmeyer**, Director of Workforce Initiatives, and other panelists discussed "Mapping the Community College Early Childhood Education Baccalaureate."

Dr. Phyllis Kalifeh, President and CEO, was honored at the Convening for her career and commitment to the early learning field as well as her service to the Children's Forum, Child Care Services Association, and the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center. We are thankful for you, Phyllis, for all that you do and continue to do for early educators!



Awareness Days and Special Events



 International Women's Day

The Forum celebrated International Women's Day on March 8. This special day marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality as well as honoring the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. Together, we can break the bias.

On April 1, Children's Forum employees wore blue to kick off Child Abuse Prevention Month and their commitment to help Florida families thrive.

Child Abuse Prevention Month recognizes the importance of families and communities working together to strengthen families to prevent child abuse and neglect. Through this collaboration, prevention services and supports help protect children and produce thriving families.



On April 28, some of our extended Forum Family came with their parents to celebrate Take your Child to Work Day! These Forum kids had lots of fun while working hard. The children were also excited to learn more about the Forum and what their parents do in the workplace.





Children's Week 2022 A Success!



We had a wonderful time celebrating Children's Week in-person January 30-February 4! Children's Week is the largest event held in the state that celebrates children, youth, and advocates.

As the organizing partner for Children's Week, the Children's Forum is thankful for all of our employees who dedicated their time to assist with Children's Week events. From helping to hang children's artwork for Celebration of the Hands, distributing lunches at Children's Day at the Capitol, reading to children at Storybook Village, and everything in between, they helped to make Children's Week a success.

Stay tuned for future volunteer opportunities and information about Children's Week 2023!





Children's Week 2022 A Success!



Helping the People of Ukraine



In 1994, **Wioleta Gaddy**, Contracts and Grants Manager, left her native country of Poland to live in the United States. She loves to visit her family who live in Szczecin, a port town in the Northwest region of Poland.

There are currently many Ukrainian refugees and families in Szczecin. Most of the families are women with children. Wioleta's parents and sister Lidia recently helped four families when they arrived in Szczecin. The families stayed with Lidia for a few days before she found them places to live. Lidia also helped them shop for groceries, purchased small toys for the children, and provided other items as needed. In addition, the Ukrainian children recently started school in Szczecin. The teachers did a wonderful job of welcoming them on their first day.

Wioleta is very thankful for the love and care of Poland's citizens in such a sad situation. If you would like to make a donation to help Ukrainian refugees in Szczecin, please contact Wioleta at ext. 355 or wgaddy@thechildrensforum.com.





Special Announcement



Forum Launches Early Childhood Policy WORKS Advocacy Institute

The Children's Forum is excited to announce the launch of its new initiative called the Early Childhood Policy WORKS Advocacy Institute.

The Institute believes that advocacy is central to affecting change, yet too few understand the policies, processes, and relationships building that is necessary to navigate this process. Additionally, barriers such as funding for travel, learning how the system works, and ways to engage in the legislative process have prevented participation in advocacy opportunities.

Thanks to a generous funder, the Institute now has the necessary means to provide advocacy training to those who need it most. The Institute will select a cadre of 20 Policy Fellows (teachers, parents, directors, and early childhood stakeholders) in Florida. The intent of the Institute is to equip and empower the Policy Fellows to serve as change agents around issues of early childhood and the early learning workforce.

The inaugural class of Policy Fellows will meet in July at the One Goal Summer Conference in Tampa, in Tallahassee in October and January, and conclude during Children's Week in Tallahassee in March 2023. During the alternate months, Policy Fellows will meet virtually via Zoom.

The Institute plans to announce the chosen Policy Fellows in May to allow time to plan travel in July. Stay tuned for more information about this innovative initiative!



Office Announcements



Forum Supply Orders

Do you have an office supply that you would like to order? We are happy to help! Please send a description or a link of the item(s) to frontdesk_alerts@thechildrensforum.com. Be sure to copy your supervisor on the request.

Please let the Front Desk staff know which distribution code to use if your order will not be shared with others as a general supply item.



Shout Outs!



Many thanks to the **Forum's leadership team** for providing remote work opportunities for eligible employees. The hybrid work schedule has increased productivity and employee satisfaction, provided opportunities for continuous learning, and improved employee collaboration and relationships.



The Forum's leadership team would like to send a shout to all **Forum employees** for their cooperation on mask mandates and adhering to the Forum's COVID-19 protocols during the height of the pandemic. We hope the worst of the pandemic is behind us.



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conversations®

Let's give a big thank you to our **Group 1** participants of the Crucial Conversations for Mastering Dialogue Training! **We look forward to working with Group 2 May 11 -13.**