



# C.I.T.Y. OF SUPPORT

ANNUAL REPORT 2024





# MISSION

TO CREATE A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY, BOTH ONLINE AND IN PERSON, THAT SUPPORTS ALL FAMILIES NAVIGATING THE NEEDS OF THEIR CHILD IN THERAPY, REGARDLESS OF DIAGNOSIS.

# VISION

ALL FAMILIES WHO HAVE CHILDREN IN THERAPY WILL HAVE ACCESS TO A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY THAT EMPOWERS THEM WITH RESOURCES AND CELEBRATES THEIR JOURNEY.

## HOW IS C.I.T.Y. DIFFERENT FROM OTHER ORGANIZATIONS?



### CONNECTION



### COLLABORATION



### CELEBRATION

- C.I.T.Y. OF SUPPORT WELCOMES ALL FAMILIES & CHILDREN, REGARDLESS OF DIAGNOSIS. WE UNDERSTAND NOT ALL DISABILITIES ARE VISIBLE, FAMILIAR, OR UNDERSTOOD, AND WE BELIEVE ALL FAMILIES CAN BENEFIT FROM THE SUPPORT OF THIS UNIQUE COMMUNITY.
- RESOURCES & PROGRAMS ARE PROVIDED AT NO COST AND IN VARIOUS FORMATS (IN-PERSON AND ONLINE OPTIONS) TO INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY FOR FAMILIES.
- WE STRIVE TO CONNECT FAMILIES TO OUR RESOURCES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THROUGH COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND OUR COLLABORATION PARTNERS.
- HYPER-LOCAL FOCUS IN CHICAGOLAND AND NOT MANAGED BY ANY LARGER CORPORATION.

# CONNECTION

ALL OF OUR PROGRAMS & RESOURCES ARE OFFERED AT NO COST TO FAMILIES, AND MANY ARE AVAILABLE 24/7 ON OUR WEBSITE AND ACTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS.



## 8,016

FOLLOWERS IN SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS OF ENGAGED PARENTS, PROFESSIONALS, & COMMUNITY MEMBERS



## 53

C.I.T.Y. PLAYGROUPS AT DIFFERENT LIBRARIES AND PLAYGROUNDS AROUND CHICAGOLAND IN 2024

- SECOND-ANNUAL “LET’S MEET” PARENT RETREAT
- FAMILY PLAYDATES
- VIRTUAL PARENT MEET-UPS

- MONTHLY DADS HANGOUT GROUPS
- “WELCOME TO OUR C.I.T.Y”

*“The network of families and therapists that CITY brings together is priceless. Being a parent to a special needs kiddo can be scary, and joyful, and overwhelming. For any of these moments, thanks to CITY, I know right where to go for advice, for expertise, for friendship, and for celebration.”*





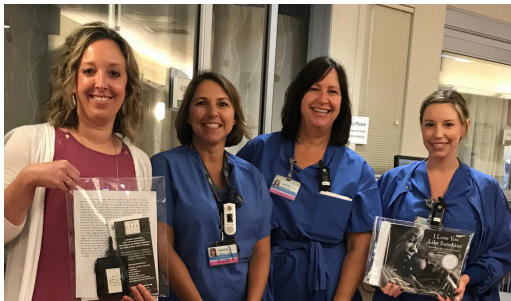
# CONNECTION & OUTREACH

"WELCOME TO OUR C.I.T.Y."

THIS PROGRAM WAS DEVELOPED SPECIFICALLY FOR FAMILIES WHOSE NEWBORN WAS REFERRED FOR THERAPY. UPON DISCHARGE FROM THEIR NICU STAY, PARENTS ARE IMMEDIATELY CONNECTED WITH A SOURCE OF RESOURCES & SUPPORT FROM OUR C.I.T.Y.



**260**  
NICU BAGS DISTRIBUTED  
TO FAMILIES IN 2024



**9**  
PARTICIPATING CHICAGOLAND  
NICU DEPARTMENTS SO FAR,  
WITH THE POTENTIAL TO REACH  
ALL 22 LEVEL III-IV NICUS IN IL.

## CONNECTING C.I.T.Y.'S NEWEST FAMILIES IN A COMMUNITY-WIDE EFFORT





# COLLABORATION

WE BELIEVE WE ARE STRONGER WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER.

- “WE LOVE OUR C.I.T.Y.” MONTH THERAPY TIPS
- BI-ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING EVENTS
- AHML ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORT LIBRARY COLLECTION
- ONLINE CLASSES/WEBINARS & COLLABORATIVE BLOG POSTS

243

ON-DEMAND WEBINARS VIEWED BY PARENTS & PROFESSIONALS



26

VIDEOS OF THERAPY TIPS SHARED BY PROFESSIONALS DURING FEBRUARY 2024 FOR “WE LOVE OUR C.I.T.Y.” MONTH

SUNDAY	MUSIC MONDAY	STORY TIME TUESDAY	WORKOUT WEDNESDAY	THERAPY TIP THURSDAY	FUN FACT FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 "FUNCTIONAL Speech Therapy": Step Forward Therapy "Tips for Modeling & Prompting with AAC": RM Speech Integrated Speech Solutions	2 "5-Minute Sit Limit": Easy Peasy Therapy	
	3 "Using Music & Movement to Teach Vocabulary & Concepts": Ms. Paula, SLP "Using Music to Support Pre-Literacy Skills": Prospekt Music Therapy	4 "Cued Speech Story Time": Alexander Graham Bell Montessori School	7 "Wake Up Yoga": My Recipe Therapy	8 "Picky Eating Tip": The Feeding Academy "Parent Support and Self-Care": Successful Families Together	9 "Check out Accessibility Support Items from the Arlington Heights Library": Arlington Heights Memorial Library	10 C.I.T.Y.'s 2nd Tribute Concert 8:00pm: Register Here
	12	13	14	15	16	

131

PROFESSIONALS WHO ATTENDED BI-ANNUAL C.I.T.Y. NETWORKING EVENTS IN 2024





# CELEBRATION

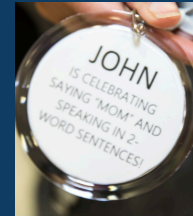
WE BELIEVE FAMILIES SHOULD BE PROVIDED WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO CELEBRATE THEIR CHILD'S ACHIEVEMENTS, WHATEVER THEY MAY BE.

- ANNUAL GRADUATION CELEBRATION
- BIRTHDAY BUDDIES
- TRIBUTE CONCERT/PARENTS NIGHT OUT
- C.I.T.Y. CLOSE-UPS



442

GUESTS AT THIS YEAR'S GRADUATION CELEBRATION



## "C.I.T.Y. CLOSE-UPS"

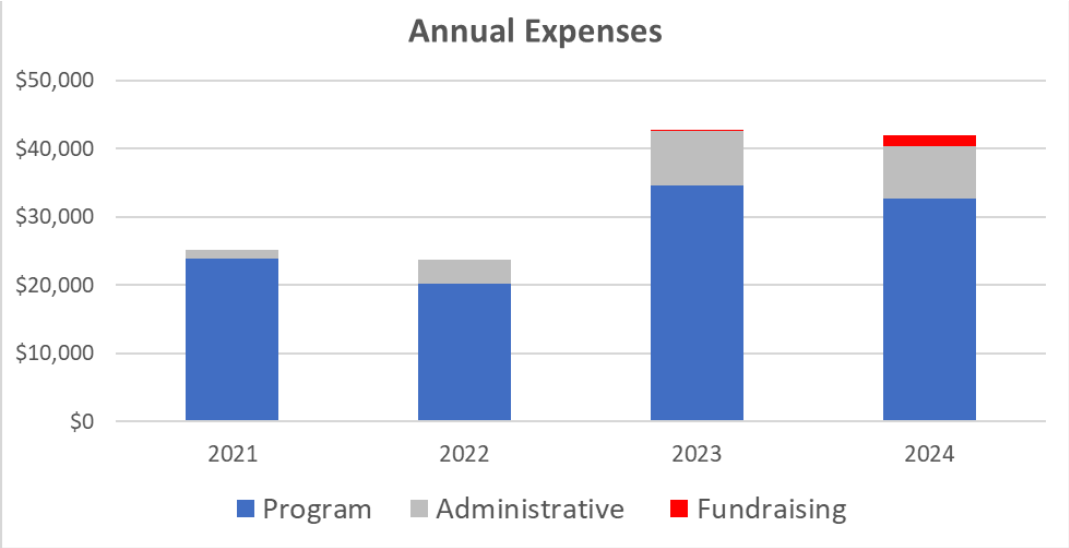
ON THE LAST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH, WE DEDICATE A SPACE FOR PARENTS TO SHARE THEIR CHILD'S LATEST SUCCESS STORIES--WHATEVER THEY MAY BE. WE COMPILE ALL THE COMMENTS FROM THE PAST 3 MONTHS INTO ONE LARGE QUARTERLY RAFFLE, AND THE WINNER IS RANDOMLY SELECTED TO RECEIVE A SENSORY-FRIENDLY FAMILY PHOTO SHOOT WITH SOMETHING BLUE PHOTOGRAPHY.



"WE ARE SO HAPPY TO HAVE FOUND A COMMUNITY LIKE C.I.T.Y. OF SUPPORT THAT CELEBRATES ALL CHILDREN IN THERAPY AND LIFTS UP THEIR CAREGIVERS. "



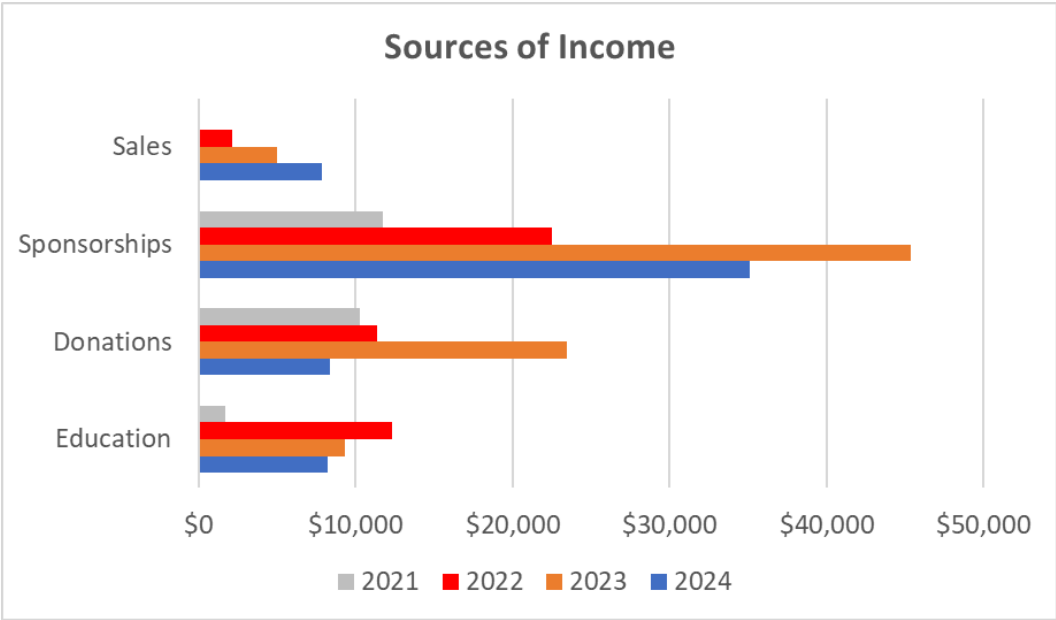
# 2024 FINANCES



IN 2024, **78%** OF EXPENSES WERE USED SPECIFICALLY TO FUND C.I.T.Y. PROGRAMS

C.I.T.Y.'S BOARD CHAIR SPENT 1,303 VOLUNTEER HOURS DEVOTED TO THE RUNNING OF THIS ORGANIZATION IN 2024.

*THAT'S AN EXTRA 108 HOURS/MONTH (27 HOURS/WEEK) IN ADDITION TO HER WORK AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES*

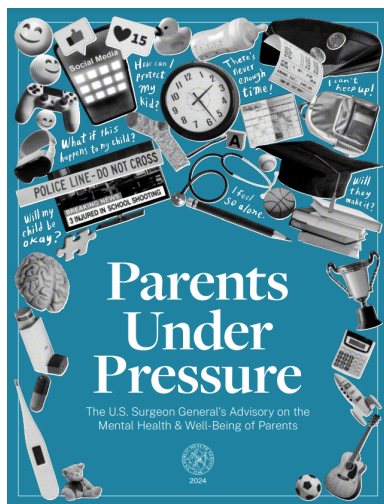


THE COMMUNITY HAS DEMONSTRATED INCREASINGLY STRONG SUPPORT FOR C.I.T.Y, AS THEY RECOGNIZE THE NEED & IMPACT OF OUR ORGANIZATION

2024 MARKED THE BEGINNING OF GENERATING INCOME FROM SALES AT THE GENERO-C.I.T.Y. TOY SHOP



# WHAT'S NEXT FOR C.I.T.Y.?



IN AUGUST 2024, THE SURGEON GENERAL ISSUED AN ADVISORY HIGHLIGHTING:

- 1) THE STRESSORS THAT IMPACT THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS
- 2) THE CRITICAL LINK BETWEEN PARENTAL MENTAL HEALTH AND CHILDREN'S LONG-TERM WELL-BEING
- 3) THE URGENT NEED TO BETTER SUPPORT PARENTS, CAREGIVERS, & FAMILIES."

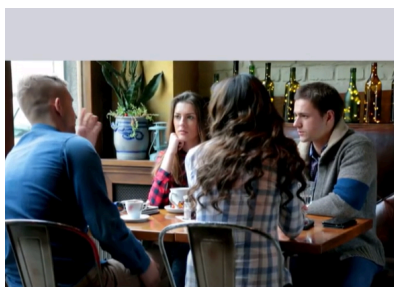
THE SURGEON GENERAL'S SURVEY INDICATED THAT THIS POPULATION OF **PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS REPORTED TWICE THE AMOUNT OF "FAIR OR POOR MENTAL HEALTH"** COMPARED TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN WITHOUT SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS.

AN ARTICLE IN THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS (2023) NOTED: **"IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT HOME- AND HOSPITAL-BASED STAFF AND PROVIDERS, THROUGH COORDINATED AND FAMILY-CENTERED CARE, PARTNER WITH FAMILIES TO ASSESS SUPPORT AND INFORMATION NEEDS AND IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP FAMILIES GENERATE LONG-LASTING NETWORKS OF SUPPORT BEYOND THE HOSPITAL WALLS."**

C.I.T.Y. OF SUPPORT IS UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO ADDRESS THIS NEED.

## C.I.T.Y. WELCOME CENTER

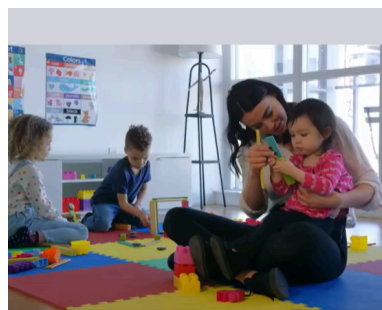
CREATING A **PHYSICAL, CONVENIENT, AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY CENTER** THAT SPECIFICALLY WELCOMES CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR CAREGIVERS.



### Parents could:

- Meet new friends
- Attend classes together
- Enjoy quiet time
- Grab a quick fitness break

- Savor a cup of coffee
- Plan private zoom meetings
- Answer emails & phone calls
- Explore a library of resources



### Children could:

- Meet new friends
- Have playgroups with peers
- Bond with new caregivers

- Enroll in family-fun classes
- Explore different play spaces
- Enjoy options for all ages



WITH STRONG PARENT INTEREST AND FULL SUPPORT FROM COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS, THIS CENTER WOULD BE **THE FIRST OF ITS KIND** TO INCREASE ACCESS TO MEANINGFUL SUPPORTS & RESOURCES THAT **MEET THE NEEDS OF THE ENTIRE FAMILY.**

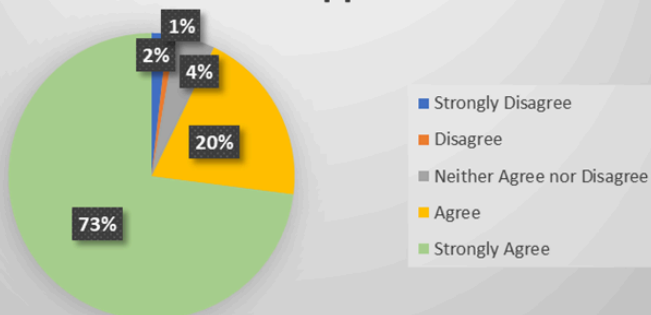


# WHAT'S NEXT FOR C.I.T.Y.?

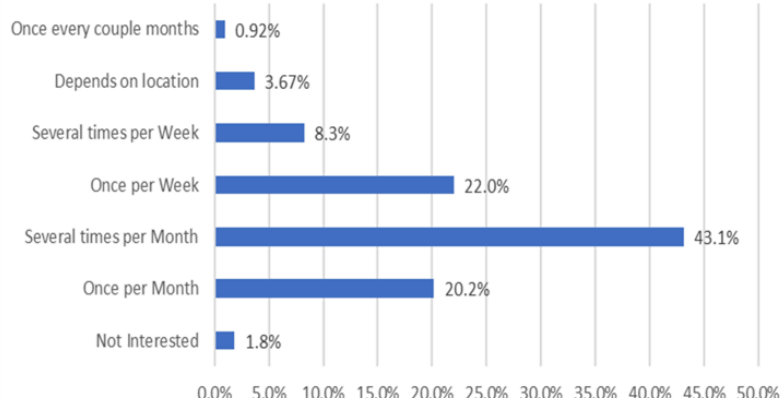


## OVER 100 PARENTS RESPONDED TO OUR SURVEY:

I would be interested in taking advantage of on-site, short-term respite opportunities provided by C.I.T.Y. of Support?



How often would you visit a physical C.I.T.Y. Site if all of the opportunities were no charge for parents:



**93% AGREE/STRONGLY AGREE**

**94% AT LEAST 1X/MONTH**

***"This is a fantastic idea! It's so hard to make adult friends as a parent with our kids. I would love to be able to connect with others that have similar struggles that I could hang out with and foster a friendship."***

***"This would be a dream come true and everything I have been searching for!"***

***"It would be life-changing. Being a parent is lonely, being a parent of a kid who is different is so isolating that it's nearly impossible to socialize. My kids are isolated."***

***"I would love something like this. As my daughter's disease progresses I no longer feel that our favorite play places are meant for us. Having somewhere we can go that is specifically for children with disabilities and their families would be so meaningful!"***

***"It sounds amazing! Nothing like this, only sporadic events and really no place for respite."***

# PHASE 1:



## ESTABLISH A PHYSICAL PRESENCE

### MAKE A FOOTPRINT THAT BUILDS OUR CAPACITY TO SERVE C.I.T.Y. OF SUPPORT & THE COMMUNITY

- INCREASE VISIBILITY AND AWARENESS FOR OUR ORGANIZATION
  - Provide a destination where doctors/schools can refer caregivers for support as they simultaneously refer children for therapy services.
  - Create an internal database of C.I.T.Y. families to cater our resources and offerings based on specific interests/needs.
- SUSTAIN REVENUE TO SUPPORT PROGRAMMING WITH A RESALE TOY STORE, MULTI-PURPOSE ROOMS, & PARENT LOUNGE:
  - Design a fun, multi-use space that uses our knowledge of play and learning to create a niche store where everyone in the community can shop and donate gently-used toys & materials.
  - Create a space that welcomes, acknowledges, & represents ALL children's needs.
  - Generate additional revenue by offering structured child/family classes in the multi-purpose rooms and by selling snacks in the lounge.
- GROW OUR NETWORK OF VOLUNTEERS TO BEGIN OFFERING PROGRAMING SPECIFICALLY TO CHILDREN IN THERAPY AND THEIR FAMILIES.
  - Recruit college students & professionals to lead structured classes and provide less-structured childcare supervision.
  - Provide a separate space for children to play together in this supervised environment, allowing parents to enjoy time together, either shopping in the store, relaxing in the lounge, or attending other small-scale educational/social events on-site.
- DEVELOP EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES THAT BRING ALL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TOGETHER IN A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY.
- SUPPORT ONGOING VOLUNTEERING, OUTREACH, & FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MANY ORGANIZATIONS IN OUR COMMUNITY.



# PHASE 2:



## CREATE A COMMUNITY CENTER

### CREATE A DESTINATION FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN THERAPY, WHERE CHILDREN AND CAREGIVERS ARE SUPPORTED ON THEIR JOURNEY

- CONSOLIDATE THE FUNDING WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM THE RESALE STORE (AND CONTINUE TO GENERATE) IN ORDER TO IDENTIFY A LARGE SPACE IN THE COMMUNITY TO OPEN THE COMPREHENSIVE C.I.T.Y. WELCOME CENTER.
  - AMENITIES FOR KIDS: large motor gym, video game room, sensory room, arts & crafts room, birthday room
  - AMENITIES FOR PARENTS: parent lounge/cafe, library, individual quiet rooms, fitness equipment, large social rooms, classroom
- COMPILE THE SKILLS, METRICS, VOLUNTEERS, AND CONNECTIONS WE HAVE DEVELOPED OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS TO DETERMINE OPTIMAL LOCATION, DESIGN, OFFERINGS, AND SUSTAINING FORMS OF REVENUE TO SUPPORT THE CENTER.
- INTRODUCE A SPACE FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN THERAPY THAT SUPPORTS THE NEEDS OF THEIR KIDS WHILE ALSO SUPPORTING THE NEEDS OF CAREGIVERS IN AN INCLUSIVE, WELCOMING, ONE-OF-A-KIND FACILITY. REPLICATIONS OF THIS MODEL IN OTHER COMMUNITIES CAN ALSO BE CONSIDERED.

# PROGRESS TOWARDS OUR VISION

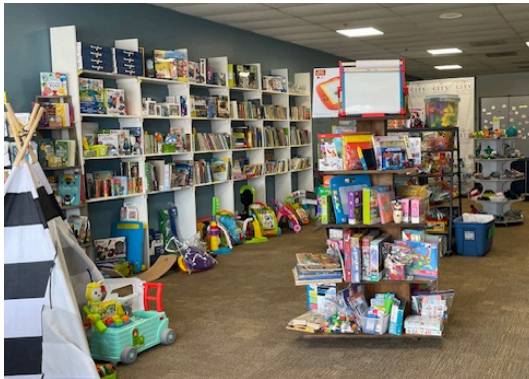
## GENERO-C.I.T.Y. TOY SHOP

**SHORT-TERM LEASE AT  
91 W. RAND ROAD IN ARLINGTON HEIGHTS**

**RECYCLE & SHOP:** BROWSE GENTLY-USED TOY AND BOOK DONATIONS AND NEW, CURATED MERCHANDISE THAT SUPPORT PLAY DEVELOPMENT FOR CHILDREN OF ALL ABILITIES.

**RECONNECT:** EXPLORE OUR OPEN PLAYSPACE, PARENT RESPITE CORNER, AND GROWING CALENDAR OF CHILD, FAMILY, AND PARENT CLASSES—OPEN AND ADAPTED FOR EVERYONE.

**REIMAGINE:** PARTICIPATE IN OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES, VOLUNTEER, AND MODEL ACTS OF KINDNESS BY DOING SO. SUPPORT ALL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN OUR COMMUNITY, ESPECIALLY THOSE WITH ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL AND THERAPEUTIC NEEDS.



- LOUNGE/CAFE
- FREE PLAY SPACE

- CLASS SCHEDULE & PARENT RESPITE
- ON-SITE VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES





# HOW YOU CAN HELP

## GENERO-C.I.T.Y. TOY SHOP

**SHORT-TERM LEASE AT  
91 W. RAND ROAD IN ARLINGTON HEIGHTS**

- **VOLUNTEER WITH US!**
  - **SIGN UP FOR A SHIFT AT THE SHOP**
    - **HELP STOCK DONATIONS**
    - **ASSIST DURING CLASSES**
    - **SALES FLOOR VOLUNTEER**
  - **MAKE CELEBRATION CARDS FOR FAMILIES IN THE NICU**
- **HOST A GENTLY-USED TOY & BOOK DRIVE!**
- **BECOME A SHOP SPONSOR! (HELP US EXTEND OUR LEASE!)**
- **HELP US SPREAD THE WORD!**
  - **CALENDARS**
  - **FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA**
  - **@CITYOFSUPPORT; @GENERO-CITYTOYSHOP**



## THANK YOU TO OUR 2024 SPONSORS

### INTEGRATE SPONSORS:



### INTERACT SPONSORS:



### INTRODUCE SPONSORS:



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ALL OF OUR MOTIVATED  
VOLUNTEERS HAVE A PERSONAL  
CONNECTION WITH C.I.T.Y., WHETHER  
IT BE AS A PARENT, PROFESSIONAL,  
OR COMMUNITY ADVOCATE



**BETH DEITER**

Founder & Board Chair



**DR. JAMES WEEDON**

Board Member



**MARIA  
PAPANASTASSIOU**

Board Member & Secretary



**CAILYN MITTUR**

Board Member



**SUE KOWOLS**

Board Member & Volunteer  
Coordinator



**JON DEITER**

Financial Consultant



**JOAN KURTZ**

Fundraising Coordinator





WHAT AN INCREDIBLE YEAR

**WE WOULD LOVE TO  
WORK WITH YOU!**

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**[www.cityofsupport.org](http://www.cityofsupport.org)**

**Contact us at: [hello@cityofsupport.org](mailto:hello@cityofsupport.org)**