DVAEYC has come a long way since that cold January day in 1994 when I walked into our office (not much more than a closet) and tried to figure out what to do first. With an annual budget of $75,000 and me as the new half-time director, the possibilities seemed endless.

Fortunately, I was building on an extraordinary legacy that had begun in 1967 and was already a dynamic force for early childhood, even as an all-volunteer organization. With a highly regarded annual conference, the beginnings of a children’s museum (which we now know as Please Touch), the Peace and Justice Committee’s social justice resource library, and the initiative to support children with parents incarcerated at Graterford prison, the leadership at DVAEYC was already standing on tall shoulders in the mid-90’s!

As DVAEYC grew and added staff to the mix, we always focused on two essential tasks: improving quality in programs, with a particular emphasis on children impacted by poverty and other risks; and improving public investments so these gains could be taken to scale and sustained.

In our early years these efforts were called things like Child Care Matters, the Worthy Wage Campaign and QUEST. Later we used terms like Success by Six and PreK for PA. Whatever the label, the work has remained constant, and I am so proud of the legacy the DVAEYC community has built over the past twenty years.

Sometime during the month of June I will turn off the lights and walk out of my DVAEYC office for the last time. As the clock has ticked down the final months and weeks of my tenure as Executive Director, I have become more aware of the things that I will neither start nor finish…

- I so wanted to develop and implement a strategy for growing quality settings for infants and toddlers! The supply of high quality and affordable care for our youngest children remains one of the most stubborn challenges for families, while teachers in infant-toddler settings remain poorly understood and respected by the public.
- How I would have loved working with family child care providers to build a network that offers a full complement of supports while delivering an appropriate level of revenue—to ensure that home-based care can be a viable and rewarding long term business for providers while offering excellent settings for our youngest children!

- A vibrant membership growth strategy that reaches more early childhood professionals in our region has been a dream of mine for years, always seeming just beyond reach.

But these and other initiatives will benefit from new, inspired leadership here in the Delaware Valley, and from our nation’s inexorable movement toward better family and child supportive policies, as new generations of parents, teachers and advocates help shape public policy.

While there are many things I will leave undone, I cannot begin to express how grateful I am for having the opportunity to work with so many dedicated and talented members of the early childhood community – board, staff, and members of this incredible organization. What brings me the most gratification is knowing that DVAEYC’s work has changed the everyday experiences of countless young children for the better; and changed the conversation to one that expects quality for every young child in Pennsylvania.

I am convinced that DVAEYC’s best years are yet to come. I look forward to the next phase, knowing that you will continue to be the voice of early childhood education in our community. Know that I will be cheering you on as you rise to the new challenges and opportunities ahead!
Philadelphia: **Go!**

In his budget address in early March, Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney called for $60 million a year in recurring revenue for an ambitious universal pre-K campaign. He aims to bring 4,000 new quality seats online each year, and has proposed a 3-cents-per-ounce tax on sugary drinks to pay for this and other priorities. The city’s early childhood community is gearing up to support this ambitious effort to bring quality programs to the city’s most underserved neighborhoods.

On one stop in his promotion of this plan, Mayor Kenney visited Lovie Lee’s Stars of Tomorrow, a STAR 4 group provider in East Oak Lane, and got an earful about quality from DVAEYC field organizer, Khadijah Sabir.

On the right, advocates attend City Council hearings.

**Legislators agree on investing in high quality kindergarten.**

Here’s a sampling of what they had to say on pre-k investments during March budget hearings...

* I agree with the educational institutions and I agree with the faculty at the schools and I agree with the law enforcement community - pre-k funding is essential for our kids...No matter your district size or income level, there are always people in need of pre-k.* - Sen. John Rafferty (R-Montgomery)

* I have long been a proponent for early childhood programs, particularly quality early childhood programs that are affordable and accessible to our communities.* - Rep. Donna Bullock (D-Philadelphia)

* Pre-k I think is very important, as kids are like sponges.* - Sen. Randy Vulakovich (R-Allegheny)

* I would echo the sentiments of my colleagues on some of the key, what I would call high-profile, issues: early childhood, pre-k. Those things are vitally important.* - Sen. John Blake (D-Lackawanna)

* To me, that’s where the money should be spent. Spend it at that level and we save it later on.* - Sen. Mario Scavello (R-Monroe)

* In an atmosphere where a lot of people don’t agree with each other...one thing that we all agree on is the importance of pre-k. It’s an investment that can make a world of difference. When the Secretary of Corrections says, ‘Give us more money for pre-k and you’ll cut my costs,’ I think that’s a message we should not ignore.* - Sen. Judy Schwank (D-Berks)

Now they just need to act…

They agree that it’s important. Now we just have to convince them to act on that conviction, beyond the $30 million in additional funding for high quality pre-K that was allocated in December’s stop gap budget. The Governor’s 2016-17 budget once again proposes substantial increases. DVAEYC and our partners in the Pre-K for PA campaign have a goal to ensure that ECE advocates are visible in the Capitol in Harrisburg every day the legislature is in session through the end of June—encouraging our legislators to turn their beliefs into action.

To participate in a spring Capitol Caravan, contact Tyrone Scott at tyrone@dvaeyc.org or 215-893-0130 x242.

For policy resources, visit the Pre-K for PA “one-stop shop” at: http://www.prekforpa.org/policy-makers

**MLK Day of Service**

What do you get when you mix Pre-K for PA and MLK Day? A day of service for the children at Smart Beginnings Early Learning Center in West Philadelphia, under the direction of Devetta Logan, assembling care packets for residents of a nursing home, while spreading the word about the importance of high quality early childhood education.
The Joy of Coaching

Zaina Keenan, Early Childhood Director, Children’s Village

As Early Childhood Director at Children’s Village, I serve as the leader of our toddler and preschool classrooms. I’ve been encouraging people to branch out of their comfort zones. I invited one teacher to come with us to the NAEYC conference. She was nervous about going, but brought a lot back, and has been sharing what she learned in our curriculum meetings and using it in her classroom. It really helped her expand her practice.

Another co-worker is a native Spanish speaker. Since we have mostly English language learners at Children’s Village, she wanted to give everyone a feel of what that experience is like. So, at a staff meeting, she started a five-minute read aloud, all in Spanish. Most people said, “What’s going on?” I said I would like to turn this into a full workshop, so we could give more people this experience, but also offer some strategies for reaching ELL students. She was nervous about going to the ECE Summit to present the workshop, worried about leaving her family. We decided to travel together to support each other. We got permission from our administration to plan and practice together during the day, so she didn’t have to take time from her family for that.

I do wish that everybody had a very strong advocate within their center or school who could find them the resources that are so necessary for high quality education.

I try to find the strategies that will work best for teachers on a day-to-day basis—in their classrooms, with their individual group of kids. One teacher and I went to a workshop on ADHD at the ECE Summit, since she has a couple of students kind of like that. As they were going over different indicators, she was going through her children. Was it ADHD or just high energy? She found one child who matched those identifiers. The child is already receiving services, but this learning added a new perspective to her plan for that child’s care and education.

I go into teachers’ classrooms every day. Sometimes I just dip in and say hi, and sometimes I spend twenty to thirty minutes. I use it as an opportunity to model rather than telling what to do. If there’s a child with challenging behaviors, or if they’re struggling with small groups, I do it alongside them, not taking over, but modeling different possibilities. With challenging children, I model different strategies for handling that child’s behaviors. I’ve been called down to a classroom where the teacher was very frustrated, and found ways to redirect the child’s behavior, and help him to self-sooth. I try to be there with the teachers so they can find ways that work with their individual style and group. They’re usually very receptive. Now they will come and ask if I will come into their classroom at a time of day that they tend to struggle, or help them with their room layout to make it more accessible to all of the children, or join them for lunch if that transition tends to be chaotic. I try to meet the specific identified needs of the teachers while also just dropping in at different times of day.

A year ago, there was one education coordinator for all 16 classrooms, and she had other tasks as well, with supplies and data. She wasn’t able to be in the classrooms as much as she wanted to. When she left, the position was restructured. Now we have two people doing supplies and data, a toddler coordinator, a preschool coordinator, and an early childhood director so that we can focus more on spending quality time in our early childhood classrooms. Our Executive Director, Mary Graham, who is a huge advocate for funding high quality education, has been able to get the support and backing to make all these changes. Without her advocacy efforts and passion, we’d never be able to have all of this support and resource in one building.

I do wish that everybody had a very strong advocate within their center or school who could find them the resources that are so necessary for high quality education. There are so many places that aren’t as lucky, because there isn’t someone who can provide adequate support for their teachers. Mary is committed to providing a great environment, both for families to come and leave their children and for teachers to come and work.
What’s **UNIQUE** about Family Child Care?

**I have seen . . .**

Children interact with each other, not only as classmates, friends and peers, but as real “siblings” — who typically argue, compete for attention, get mad at each other, etc., but at the end of the day are inseparable.

Children’s family members greet, interface with and embrace the other children on a daily basis as if they’re just as important as their own children.

Spouses of providers (particularly husbands) engage with the children, proudly accepting being referred to as “pop-pop”.

Pets—cats, dogs, turtles, fish—play a role in the children’s play and learning, as well as social-emotional relationship building.

Children take full responsibility with chores, beyond the typical clean-up time.

Providers form a loving bond with children (and families) that emerges from long-term relationships and enables them to participate in all stages of the child’s early to later years.

Parents and providers work hand-in-hand in a true partnership in raising a child (which has included out-of-pocket purchases such as books, educational materials, clothes, etc.).

Children with challenging behaviors and/or special needs thrive because they were given the opportunity to be accepted, understood, and nurtured with genuine compassion and patience.

Providers transform their home to a “home away from home”, as well as their mindsets to being an extended family member where love, attention, and a home-like setting are paramount to the child caring experience.

Next generation children return to a provider who cared for their parents when they were children.

A network of providers support each other with resources, technical assistance . . . whatever it takes!

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**Lou Warren Groomes**, DVAEYC Technical Assistant for a new Head Start family child care network, and a ten-year veteran family child care provider herself, has witnessed first-hand the advantages of family child care from a variety of perspectives. She and two family child care providers in the Head Start network reflect on the strengths and challenges of offering high quality early childhood programs in their homes.

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**Cynthia MB Robinson**

Over the years, I’ve noticed that it’s not just the children that I’m educating, but the mothers, who are often young. They call sometimes and they cry, the dads too. I’m like the little old lady in the shoe. They see me as a surrogate mother, they get personal, and my family grows.

I’m most proud of watching the children grow. We have an annual picture day on Good Friday and my alumni come back to take pictures. They want to come. One day a young man was walking by on the
street, and said, “I used to go to the day care here”. He’s sixteen now and still wants to be recognized as part of the fellowships that was here, and all the fun they had. That makes me proud.

When I was just starting, the challenges were about security and making enough money. After nineteen years, I always have a waiting list now, but the challenge is finding the ones who are looking for MY service. I’m also asking how else I can grow so I can still be impacting the families. One thing is to be educated. Going back to school takes you to another level. I had to bite the bullet, decide to stay up late studying. It was hard at the beginning, but I learned so much. You don’t realize how much you’re learning and how you’re applying it till somebody asks and you realized you know something. I’m proud of that. Now, I realize that I want to be a leader and an advocate, so I can share all the information I have, so that what I’ve done doesn’t die, but can benefit the family day care community.

Being part of the Head Start pilot project has its challenges. There’s a lot of paperwork, but the benefit is for the children. We complain, but no matter what level you are you have to adapt, embrace the change and learn from it. I often call our group trailblazers, or pioneers. Before roads, you had to cut all the bushes and trees with machetes. We have no road map, but we’re making it easier for the next ones who come to be part of Head Start.

A good thing about Head Start is their emphasis on the family. They expect parents to assist, to come to meetings, to look out for the health and welfare of the child. They offer resources for parents to tap into if they need assistance. Whatever we’re teaching, they want the parents to benefit. So it’s a partnership.

I’m glad that family child care is being placed on the map and seen as worthy to be included in some of these benefits, and I’m glad to be part of that trailblazing process. We’re still fighting the idea that we’re just babysitters. We’re educated women—many with our masters—who are educating children. We’re setting the stage.

*Deb Colter*

In family child care, we are able to help each and every family at their point of need. I would never want to start a larger center. Here, I know every child. I can share myself among six families, and they become an extension of my family. We’re fit together like a bloodline. They’ll call over the weekend, they’ll ask to be taught what I do with the children. As I help the child I am empowering the family, and I’m empowered by seeing that growth and development.

Head Start made a major impact on me; it changed my mindset. After eleven years in business, I still enjoyed my work, but it seemed like I was just doing and doing for the families, and it was getting repetitive. The timing was just right because my little babies are four year olds now. Following the Head Start guidelines, we’re scaffolding and taking it to the next level, and it’s awesome to see how my babies have grown. When I go to their homes, they show me around, they read a book to me. The parents are so excited that their children have grown and are truly ready for school.

In family child care you have some structure, but in Head Start they want deliverables. It’s mind boggling and mind blowing. It’s not just the ABCs. The key was socialization skills, helping the children to embrace people, look at adversity, assess, reassess, target and conquer, turn it around for the good. Before, they would run from it, or scream and cry about it. Now there’s an “aha” moment. They know how to conquer what comes before them.

The world is always changing, so we have to stay in school and keep learning. You never know who you’re going to meet or how you’re going to affect a life. The children are being exposed to new things all the time. They’re growing up so fast. I hear them talking on the play phone about what their parents talk about, and I sit down with them and spin the conversation around to being a pure child, just enjoying life. I’m getting ready to take the trauma awareness class—to deal with things that may have happened in my life, as well as help the children. You need this theory in order to survive.

I love what I do, but there are challenges. Three years ago, I lost my fine motor skills to a pinched nerve. I couldn’t change diapers or pull zippers. I had to hire someone to come in and help with my children, because I couldn’t let my families down. You give more than what you receive. It has to be a ministry, because it’s not about the money. Some things were a hard pill to swallow, but I made it through. I’m fully recovered and moving forward. Luckily there will be new children coming along that I can empower. I know I can be a blessing in their life, as they are a blessing in mine.
Improving a High Quality Program

The Childworks teachers were not as enthusiastic about becoming participants in either program. They all had been working at the school for ten years or more, and it was evident that they understood how to offer a safe and engaging place for small children to learn. Families were appreciative, bringing multiple children and relatives to the program. They were already NAEYC accredited.

When I first began as an SB6 Quality Improvement Coordinator, I remember the teachers saying things like, “Why do we need to change? We like the way our program works. How is this Success by Six really going to help us anyway?” They were worried that being a part of SB6 and STARS meant more work and possibly the elimination of things they liked to do in their classrooms.

As I worked to establish a trusting relationship with the teachers they began to realize that I was not there to criticize them or tell that what they were doing wrong. I was there to support and guide them on things that they wanted help with, and to coach them on the Environmental Rating Scale. A turning point came with a PD called Inspiring Spaces. Judi and I were eager to help the teachers realize that they could extend learning throughout the environment if the centers were interesting and had materials that inspired the children to explore and learn.

Nancy, one of the preschool teachers, shared her reaction to the Inspiring Spaces PD:

The “Success by Six” program made me look closer at the classroom, both indoors and outside. I now look at learning areas, asking myself, “Would I be interested in playing here?” Then I make adjustments to create interest and extend their learning about concepts I am teaching.

Nancy chose to change her dramatic play area because she felt the center was too small and she wanted to help the children to be able to pretend what it was like to have a family meal at their own houses. Within a week Nancy—and all the other teachers—reported wonderful things happening in their classrooms. The children

Introducing Infant/Toddler Roundtables

Jillian Adler, DVAEYC Quality Improvement Coordinator

While professional development is important in many professional fields, the quality of the training in early childhood education and care is particularly important since we have direct influence on young children’s lives. A run-down teacher with stale ideas can have a dangerous effect on the well-being of a toddler! DVAEYC provides a wide variety of professional development in our office and at other locations around the city, but we are finding that we can make great trainings more accessible by holding them in child care programs. This year we have developed some new models and are reaching out to well-equipped programs to serve as hosts.

One such model is the community of practice, which Etienne Wenger defines as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.” We are working with this model as our newest form of high quality professional development. By encouraging early childhood education and care professionals to engage in an ongoing conversation on a topic that they value, participants are able to deepen their knowledge and strengthen their classroom practice.

DVAEYC’s newest community of practice is the Infant/Toddler Roundtable. Infant and toddler teachers are often underserved, as so much training is tailored for the pre-academic skills being taught in preschool classrooms. The Infant/Toddler Roundtable provides professional caregivers with the chance to discuss cutting-edge topics and interact with their peers outside of the classroom.

This series of discussions happens once a month during naptime. Each session presents a new topic and the group determines the direction of the conversation, so that there is space for the participants to develop the points that are most relevant to them. There is time during each session for quiet reflection, as well as practical “take-home” tips and resources that can be shared with others professionals and parents.

Alison Leshon, DVAEYC Quality Improvement Coordinator

When Judi Clyman opened Childworks Preschool in Kulpsville in 1993, her priority was to offer a quality place for children to learn and grow. Now NAEYC accredited, she continues to feel that it is important to be reflective and acknowledges that there is always room to improve quality. Wanting to help her teachers see the “big picture” when it comes to quality care and education for young children, she turned to Success by Six (SB6) and Keystone STARS:

I knew that I needed outside help. I had heard about the technical support that would mentor myself and the teachers in best practices in the classroom. I also wanted the teachers to become familiar with and experience a practice ERS before the real thing, as we moved to STAR 4A.
were now using previously neglected interest areas, because they were inspiring. In addition, the teachers were also able to extend many new concepts within the renewed areas. It was like a light bulb went off. From this point on the teachers became more open to other new ideas and slowly grew in their understanding of best practices.

The Childworks teachers ended up making tremendous strides and changes. They began using an emergent curriculum, looking more closely at what the children were truly interested in, making their classrooms more inspiring, and offering more open-ended art activities. Three of the teachers have almost completed a CDA program, and one has almost finished her Master’s in Education. Starting at STAR 2, within eight months they received their STAR 4A Certificate. Best of all, they are seeing quality improvement and best practices in a whole new light. Judi shared this reaction:

Since our program has been in SB6, the biggest change would have to be how proud I see the teachers in their growth and accomplishments. I don’t know if the teachers see it themselves. But so much growth happened in all of them and myself. The teachers have become experts in handwashing, sanitizing/disinfecting, process art, embellishing all areas of their classrooms, looking to the children for ways to expand their knowledge and the curriculum, and now know all about ERS. The list goes on and on. I enjoy being able to brainstorm and problem solve with my SB6 TA and participate with other directors in the “Director’s Learning Circle”. I will be very sad when SB6 ends. The continued support, networking, and education in ECE best practices has been invaluable.

Childworks teachers are beginning to see that the “big picture” is to be more reflective and to understand that quality improvement is not about drastic change, but about the small steps they can take to make the experiences for young children meaningful, safe, fun and engaging. That is what makes a world of difference. Hopefully, by the time they have completed this 18-month journey with SB6, they will look back with pride on all the quality improvements they did make, and look forward to making more as they journey forward.

The first session’s discussion revolved around the role of culture and ethics in infant and toddler care, seeking to respond to the normal conflicts that are inevitable when people from a variety of cultures share in the caregiving of the same child. The second session investigated the value in appropriate risk taking, using what we know about physical development as a framework. Other topics included attachment and its relationship to healthy emotional development, diving deeper into the use the Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scales to create a strong room arrangement to support exploration and discovery, as well as learning how open-ended materials and “loose parts” can encourage young children to stay focused on their play for longer periods of time.

There are currently three Infant/Toddler Roundtable series running throughout the region, at Zipporah Abramson Preschool in Maple Glen, The Caring Center in West Philadelphia, and Acclaim Academy in Germantown. Directors who are interested in hosting an Infant/Toddler Roundtable at their center during the next school year are encouraged to reach out to Caroline Campana, Manager of Professional Development, at caroline@dvaeyc.org, to ask questions and make arrangements.

Enjoy your Member Benefits:
Quarterly DVAEYC newsletter, Connection
Bi-Weekly DVAEYC electronic newsletter, eConnection
NAEYC Journal
Discounts on DVAEYC Conference and trainings
Discounts on NAEYC Conference
20% discount on products in NAEYC’s catalog/store
Free Membership to SharedSource PA
Shop Becker’s School Supplies and receive an 18% discount at www.shopbecker.com with the special member promo code on your membership card.

Membership Matters
As of March 1, DVAEYC membership now stands at 1,812!

Thanks to the 162 NEW members who joined since December 2015

Rennee Alston-Vaughn
Molly Andersen
Taylor Airell
Tasheena Artis
Anna Ayala
ChristianneBalsamo
Kathleen Baroz
Diane Barr
Rita Barretta
Felicitas Bederman
Kate Bender
Kia Bennett
Carolyn Berensato
Sabrina Blakley
Valerie Boothe
Morgan Bosken
MaryKate Boylan
Allison Brennan
Sabrina Tbroderick
Meghan Brooks
Keondra Brown
Janet Brownlowe
Anne Byrne
Ryan Chang
Kendra Chavis
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Jaime Cominsky
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Beth Schulman
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Laurn Wensel
Desiree Wheeler
Jessica Wheelihan
Anne Williams
Alanna Williamson
Sherrie Wilson
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Melissa Herd
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Amy Oberholtzer
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Aminata Tarawally
Laura Tate
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Sonya U
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The voice of early childhood education

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Over 1500 participants put the pieces together at the 2016 DVAEYC Annual Conference

DVAEYC champions high quality early care and education for all young children (birth-eight) in Southeastern Pennsylvania through professional development, advocacy, and public engagement.

Patricia Baxter,
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