



Liftoff WNY | E-News | Spring 2022

Liftoff WNY works to ensure all children across WNY are meeting critical milestones, ready to learn and succeed to their fullest potential by the time they reach school. As an aligned action network of leaders across the region, we've had a busy spring advocating at home and in Albany for young children and their families. With the weather turning warmer the Liftoff team has been out across the region holding Liftoff's Annual Meeting in Orchard Park and joining the Chautauqua Children's Coalition meeting in Jamestown. We even took time to catch-up and do some brainstorming over waffles!



Pictured above: Rachel Bonsignore and Amy Miranti

Liftoff's Annual All Member Meeting



On May 6, Liftoff held its Annual Member Meeting in Orchard Park, at the Orchard Park Country Club. This was the first time the group had been together in person since November 2019. It was a wonderful time for colleagues to meet and reconnect. Director, Rachel Bonsignore kicked off the day with a presentation to discuss Liftoff's evolution since its forming in 2017, review policy victories from 2021 and share plans for the coming year.

Executive Director of the Peter and Elizabeth Tower Foundation and Liftoff Steering Committee Chair, Tracy Sawicki said, "It is so exciting to see how far we have come. Liftoff has evolved into a strong aligned action network with clear strategic priorities. Our Director, Rachel Bonsignore, works closely with the Steering Committee, and calls on our network members to assist in the efforts. There were several wins for young children and their families in 2021. Liftoff and its members were actively involved in pushing for these changes at the local and state levels and will continue to do so going forward."

To stay up to date with Liftoff's virtual and in-person events and activities, be sure to follow us on social media:



Aligned Action Update: Preschool Special Education and Affordable Child Care



When Liftoff asked over three hundred Western New Yorkers '[what will it take for children to be school ready?](#)' parents, providers, pediatricians, and community partners overwhelmingly said two things:

- knowledge of a child's developmental milestones and connections to supports and services; and
- high-quality, affordable, and accessible child care.

This has been, and will continue to be, our strategic focus. By design, Liftoff joins with organizations and leaders advocating for changes in policy and in funding at the State and local levels.

This spring Liftoff advocated for increased support for Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education systems and a handful of other critical legislative priorities, as a member of the [Kids Can't Wait Campaign](#). Several were passed by the Senate and Assembly and are on the way to Governor Hochul's desk!

Liftoff is also a proud partner of the [Empire State Child Care Campaign](#) which has seen many policy wins in the past few weeks, including improved child care subsidy assistance for working families and greater efficiency in its administration. [Click here to read the ESCCC's full statement.](#)

Help Me Grow WNY Partners with Parent Network of WNY

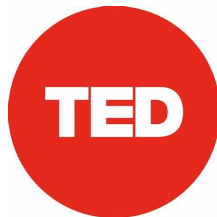


When parents have questions about their child's development, they often turn to the Parent Network of WNY for resources, counsel, and support. In recognition of the outstanding service this organization provides, we are thrilled to announce that **Parent Network of WNY will be home to the new Help Me Grow WNY helpline (716-760-GROW)**. The Help Me Grow hotline is an easy "go-to" resource for caregivers seeking information, support and referrals for children who may be at risk for social-emotional and/or developmental delays. Core to the Help Me Grow model, this 'Centralized Access Point' supports caregivers with free developmental screenings to check for milestones for children ages birth to 5 and help connect families to WNY resources and services.

For more on the Parent Network of WNY, [click here](#).



Early Childhood Resources & Partner Reports



"How Every Child Can Thrive by Five"

Can peek-a-boo change the world? Molly Wright, one of the youngest Ted Talk speakers highlights scientifically based ways in which parents and caregivers can support children's healthy brain development from an early age. Wright discusses the benefits of play on lifetime learning, behavior and well-being for children.

TheChildren'sAgenda Empowering, Not Overpowering

"Family Voices: Monroe County Parent Poll"

The Children's Agenda's countywide survey of 400 Monroe County parents finds: "the balance between caring for children and work is a crisis or major problem for 7 out of 10 Monroe County families and 5 out of 10 parents say their stress is high as a result of the pandemic. The stress parents are experiencing has three branches: affording and accessing resources, pandemic disruptions in schools, and mental health impacts of the pandemic."



"The Wellbeing of Infants and Toddlers in the Adirondacks"

The Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance published "The Wellbeing of Infants and Toddlers in the Adirondacks", "...this report paints a picture of the health and well-being of young children and their families...". In this report the Alliance describes their efforts to improve child health and development.

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