We can see the future from here

We share a vision that every child in the Treasure Valley has access to quality early care and education and that all parents are empowered and supported through the early years of parenthood. We know by doing these things, we are building strong futures every day.

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Giraffe Laugh Mission
We provide quality early childhood education and nurturing to 200 Treasure Valley children every day by ensuring school readiness, empowering families and building strong futures.
Board President
A message from our Board President, Tom Lloyd

We are focused on the growth and opportunities for our staff, for our community relationships, and for the entire Treasure Valley.

On behalf of the entire Board of Directors of Giraffe Laugh Early Learning Centers I want to express our deepest gratitude to our donors, our partners, our staff, and all of our Giraffe Laugh families, for yet another successful year of growth. 2015 was filled with new, ground-breaking opportunities for Giraffe Laugh and the hundreds of children and families that we serve.

As we look forward into the new year, I reflect upon our newest opportunities to provide access to high quality early childhood education to children from all walks of life. In 2015, we successfully expanded our program to create opportunities for 75 more young people to be better prepared for Kindergarten and beyond. With the opening of Giraffe Laugh 4, we have also increased our abilities to strengthen families through expansion of our extended programs, and have continued to build upon the foundation that we have laid to be the Treasure Valley’s industry leader for early childhood education.

Our theme for this past year was Mighty Oaks from Little Acorns Grow,” and we have many “acorns” to cultivate in the coming years. We will continue to reach with each of the children that comes through our care as they begin to confidently stretch their branches out into the world. We will join with parents as they put down their first (or second, or sixth) set of roots in growing a powerful and stable family tree, no matter their circumstances. As a Board, though, we view all of our relationships as acorns in need of tenacious nurturing. To ensure the ongoing and future success of Giraffe Laugh, we are focused on the growth and opportunities for our staff, for our community relationships, and for the entire Treasure Valley (and beyond?) in our goal to ensure that all children have access to high quality early childhood education.

This is a very exciting time to be a part of Giraffe Laugh, and I thank our entire Giraffe Laugh family – students, parents, alumni, staff, board members, donors, and community partners – for all of the many contributions that you each offer to our organization. The mission of Giraffe Laugh is to provide the highest quality early childhood education, and to raise the bar throughout our community to ensure that the level of care and opportunities we are providing our young children will enable them to grow into the brightest and strongest versions of their future selves.

In the grand scheme of our pursuit of that mission, we are still acorns facing daunting challenges, but also tremendous opportunities. In 2016, we will be launching some new and expanded programs to build upon the many ways that we encourage, and need, help from our families and community partners. We look forward to what this upcoming year will bring, and to furthering our engagement with each of you.

With many thanks,

Tom Lloyd
When children are born their brains are only 25 percent developed and by the time they leave our program to enter kindergarten their brain is 90 percent developed.

Ensuring School Readiness

The fastest rate of brain development occurs during the first five years. When my son Jake was a baby I needed care for him and I was fortunate enough to find an opening at Giraffe Laugh. One of the first things I liked about it was how friendly everyone was and how clean the center was. I was also able to access their scholarship program as a single mom of 3 kids.

I met the man of my dreams recently and we have combined our family to include his two children and my three. It's a busy, hectic time when we're all together but we love every minute of it. My husband's son is 5 ½ and just missed the cut off for Kindergarten which in my mind was a good thing. I was shocked to discover that he knows some of his letters, not all, and doesn't recognize any numbers. He can't write his name and it's clear he wouldn't have been ready and I am worried he won't be by next September.

What this experience made me realize is how lucky we were. How lucky that Jake was in a quality program that worked with me on tuition payments and how I wish everyone could have this opportunity. I told Beverly, “You guys did such an amazing job preparing him.” I also expressed how much I’d like to do a reunion as a testament to how well everyone is doing in school plus it would be great to be back together!

Even though Jake's been gone for a while now I called Giraffe Laugh for help. Beverly helped me find resources to provide for my step son and we are now working at home to ensure he is ready for kindergarten. We are having him evaluated and while we can't change where he now attends childcare, we are committed to making sure he's ready.
Empowering Families

Over 1,664 children are abused in Idaho every year. When parents are empowered and connected, and given information and support in time of need, they are less likely to abuse or neglect their children.

In the fall of 2012, I left my ex-husband with our 2 year old daughter due to domestic violence. I couldn’t do it anymore. I was left to find a job to support us while going to school full time.

I finally found a low paying full-time job with the first 2 weeks being without pay as part of an internship. I had been searching for childcare knowing that I would need it as soon as I got a job, and when I found Giraffe Laugh I knew that’s where she belonged. Originally I had gone to the center off 12th but they were full and told me to check with GL1. Neile was the director at the time and she had me fill out the emergency scholarship paperwork to cover the cost of care during my internship. When I did start getting paid, I was only making $10 an hour with absolutely no benefits. I could hardly make ends meet as it was, but I made too much to qualify for ICCP. It was ridiculous.

Although my ex-husband was required to pay a large portion of the childcare bill, he didn’t seem to care. His portion of his bill kept climbing as I begged him, and even had my attorney threaten him to pay it. Eventually he had his portion paid. Had this been at any other center, they wouldn’t have allowed my daughter to continue with such a large balance. If she didn’t have care, I wouldn’t be able to work. This was one of the most stressful parts of our situation. But of course, the amazing ladies at Giraffe Laugh never made me feel like we were the odd ones out. I couldn’t afford ballet or swim lessons, and yet we were so generously given scholarships so that my daughter wasn’t left out. I was doing everything I could to find a good paying job and get us on our feet, but when I still couldn’t find anything in Boise, I started looking in other areas.

While my daughter has attended Giraffe Laugh I have seen so many things in her blossom and develop. She was so shy when it came to other kids, now, she is able to introduce herself at a park full of kids and suddenly she has a dozen new friends. She can recognize every letter, and even is starting to read with me. I love their curriculum and day-to-day activities. She has learned so much, and I have full confidence that she will be ready for kindergarten in the fall!

The generosity, scholarships, love and kindness of all of those involved with Giraffe Laugh made it possible for us to move forward in our lives. I found a job in another area and we plan on staying in touch with her teachers. We love them all so much and without them I honestly don’t know where we would be. Someday when I am able to, I plan on giving back to Giraffe Laugh so that they may continue to give families like us a chance. Without them, I wouldn’t have been able to do what I have done for my daughter and myself.
We provide crying plans to all parents of infants to encourage them to try the techniques on their plan, then to call for help. Parents sign the plan and leave a copy for anyone caring for their infant. This type of support is crucial to preventing abuse.

170 parents received direct support and education this year while countless others stayed connected through activities, parent/teacher conferences and our monthly newsletter.

Crying Plans

We provide crying plans to all parents of infants to encourage them to try the techniques on their plan, then to call for help. Parents sign the plan and leave a copy for anyone caring for their infant. This type of support is crucial to preventing abuse.

$10 PER WEEK provides access to quality care and education in the form of a scholarship for a low-income preschooler for one month.
Building Strong Futures

1 in 5 children go to bed hungry in Idaho every night.
We provide breakfast, lunch and a snack to our children every day.

Nutrition & Food Pantries
We provide food pantries at all four of our sites for parents to access food as they come and go each day. Through our partnership with the Idaho Foodbank we are able to provide a wide array of food for our families in need.

Extracurricular activities level the playing field for all kids.
When a low-income child enters kindergarten with the same vocabulary and experiences as their regular income peers, they have more knowledge base, are more confident and are more successful.

Our partnerships with Ballet Idaho, The Tumble Bus, swim lessons and field trips to the Botanical Gardens, Zoo Boise and more ensure that all children can participate in activities that are out of reach for many low income families.

I was a single mother looking for a job at a quality center that my then three year old could attend as well. I came to Giraffe Laugh as a new hire in 2006 and was brought into the fold a teacher, mother and friend.
Living in poverty is hard. Living in poverty with a young child as a single parent is even harder. I knew what the statistics said about children living in poverty and I also knew how susceptible children from single parent households were. I wanted the very best for my son and I knew that we had found the place for our family to thrive. Giraffe Laugh offered opportunities that I would have never been able to afford or fit into my overflowing schedule, working 35 hours per week, going to school fulltime and being the only parent to my growing child.

My son was able to join in on things like swimming lessons and gymnastics through Giraffe Laugh’s scholarship program. He had access to high quality preschool where he was offered Spanish lessons, he was read to and challenged academically through literacy lessons, geography, math and science. My son thrived and still holds his education in high importance. I was able to access the food pantries at our center that contained much more than just food. I had access to things such as toilet paper and laundry soap, things I could not purchase with the small amount of food stamps I received each month. I knew I could talk with my son’s teacher about questions and concerns and knew that I had found my village of people in the coworkers and other families enrolled at our center.

My son will be 13 in a few months and our lives are very different than they were 10 years ago. I graduated from college and several years ago moved into a Development position with Giraffe Laugh. My son is part of the Junior National Honor Society at an International Baccalaureate school; he is a skilled chess player and is striving for a full ride academic scholarship to college. Giraffe Laugh has been an integral part of building our strong future. I am forever thankful for the support we received and will never be able to repay the hundreds of donors and volunteers that made that possible.
This year...

64
The number of children who were recipients of our Christmas Adoption Program.

691
The number of children who were provided food baskets from our food pantries.

56,545
The number of meals and snacks that were served to our kids.

$5 PER WEEK provides 200 children a healthy breakfast, lunch and snack for a week.
Our daily goal at Giraffe Laugh is to ensure that each child is ready for school, that their parents are empowered and that strong futures are blossoming each and every day.

Giraffe Laugh’s Futures Begin Here Luncheon had the theme of “Mighty Oaks from Little Acorns Grow”. So you can imagine the joy I experienced when one of our insightful sight directors, Tanya, sent me this quote from Tony Evans, “People without vision see an acorn, people with vision see an oak.”

When we gaze at the tender face of a newborn, adults are naturally filled with the hope for the future and all that little person encompasses. As they move into the independent two’s it is sometimes harder to imagine them as future oaks or rulers of the world, but alas, that’s just what they are. As they become language rich and can argue with every statement an adult makes, again we wonder about the promise of each young person.

Each stage of childhood brings wonder, excitement, doubt and exasperation, but most of all hope. Hope that the little one might bring us a better world and live a fulfilling life that changes our world for the better. Hope for a world filled with peace and understanding beyond what their ancestors lived.

Each acorn has the potential to blossom into a mighty oak and our daily goal at Giraffe Laugh is to ensure that each child is ready for school, that their parents are empowered and that strong futures are blossoming each and every day.

None of this is possible without our incredible staff and donors. One group is the on-the-ground troops who deliver the program with finesse, education and nurturing that keeps kids and families moving forward in a safe, educational, loving environment. The donors ensure that kids and families in need continue to have access and services that are essential to changing lives on a daily basis. We are so fortunate to have both at Giraffe Laugh and so are our families.

After celebrating 25 years at Giraffe Laugh raising families, I feel privileged and blessed that I’ve been a part of so many lives. I’m proud of my own acorns who are now mighty oaks and I’m proud of the many acorns that I’ve been a part of nurturing into mighty oaks. Thank you for letting me into your lives and allowing me to be a part of the most important element of your family, the children. All of it gives me incredible hope for the future of our world.

We can see the future from here!
Our board and staff work diligently to maintain proper stewardship of Giraffe Laugh. Program and staffing are the primary costs and as expected in a high service industry, our greatest treasure is our human resource - our teachers!

2015 EXPENSES: $1,131,170

- Food for 56,545 meals: $56,100
- Scholarships for families: $81,000
- Administration & Fundraising: $181,100
- Childcare & Preschool/Parent Education: $811,970

2015 REVENUE: $1,220,696

- Program Fundraising: $319,947
- Scholarships: $81,184
- Tuition paid by parents: $647,725
- Idaho Child Care Program for tuition: $129,860
- Child Nutrition Program for meals: $41,980
Our Volunteers

Volunteerism is such a vital part of who we are and our mission could not be accomplished without our volunteers.

257 Volunteers

16% under 18 yrs. old

6,880 hours

2 AmeriCorps VISTAs

4,620 hours

18 Ambassadors

“I can tell you that I volunteer with Giraffe Laugh because I know it works, I know that it saves. I’m living proof.”

Tyra Peone, 17
Four years ago my best friend passed away quickly from cancer, I lost my job and my oldest son left home for college. For the next few years, I spent much of my time consumed in grief - lonely and isolated - contemplating my worth and wondering how I was supposed to impact this world when crawling out of bed in the mornings and participating in life some days was so overwhelming.

Thankfully, I had my husband and youngest son at home relying on me to stay engaged. So each morning I did get out of bed, and I participated in life the best I could. Looking back now though, I understand the pain of my losses clearly played a key role in my life. One day after months of unsuccessfully searching for a job, my husband suggested I find an organization where I could volunteer my time. He hoped finding somewhere to put my energies might help me regain some of my purpose and confidence. It was that next day that I contacted Giraffe Laugh. I had worked with Lori years before as a board member of the organization and felt safe telling her my story. Of course, she embraced me (literally), welcomed me back and encouraged me to volunteer.

That was the day that I started to find myself again. I began volunteering at Giraffe Laugh 3 rocking babies born to moms and dads trying to juggle the responsibilities of parenthood while finishing their high school educations. These babies didn't care who I was or that I was struggling to find myself in the new reality of my life. They weren’t concerned that I was grieving and was afraid. They simply accepted what I was able to give them, unconditionally. They snuggled with me when I held them and in their own way told me that my service to them was important. Slowly my world brightened, my smile became more frequent and eventually I started to feel like the confident, independent, sassy person that I am.

I've started a new career and continue to volunteer rocking babies...the highlight of my week. I feel honored to be associated with the young parents who allow me time with their children, the amazing staff at Giraffe Laugh and of course those sweet babies. It is truly through the service of others that I have been able to find myself, and I am thrilled that I am again able to wake up every morning happy and ready to embrace the day.

$20 PER WEEK provides lifesaving CPR and First Aid training for 33 teachers
Community Support

We are fortunate to have so many generous organizations and corporate supporters within our community dedicated to helping Treasure Valley families.

Community Partners

Boise Southwest Rotary Club
C.A.T.C.H.
City Development Block Grant Funds (CDBG)
City of Boise
Discovery Center
Family Advocates
Housing and Community Development
Idaho Children’s Trust Fund
Idaho Diaper Bank
Idaho Foodbank
Nutrition Works
Rotary Club of Boise Centennial
Salvation Army
United Way of Treasure Valley
Wells Fargo Bank
Zions National Bank

Event Sponsors

Addie’s Restaurant
Bardenay
Bliss Events
BMC West
Corporate Office Installations
Erstad Architects
Greener Burke Shoemaker Oberrecht, PA
Hawley Troxell
Idaho Power
Idaho Physicians Network
Kendall Ford of Meridian
Macy’s Boise Towne Square
Pacific Source
Penny Lane Kids
Riche Dempsey & Associates CHTD
Scott Gull
Scott Summerlin
Simpplot
Whole Foods Market Boise
Zee Christopher
Zee’s Rooftop Cafe

Corporate Partners

Albertson’s Boise Open
Allied Business Solutions
BMC West
Fred Meyer
Happy Family
Hollingshead Eye Center
IDACORP Employee Fund
Icon Credit Union Sock Drive
J.R. Simplot Company
Kendall Ford of Meridian
Macy’s
Mai Thai
Scentsy
Wells Fargo

Grants and other sources

Amazon Smiles
Bowlathon 2015
City Development Block Grant Funds
Fred Meyer Rewards
Fill a Classroom Campaign
Hyde Park Street Fair 2015
Idaho Gives 2015
IDACORP
United Way of Treasure Valley

Foundation Support

The Fund for Joe’s Kids, Idaho Community Foundation (ICF)
Gladys E. Langroise Advised Fund, ICF
Jeker Family Trust
Kissler Family Foundation
Philanthropic Gift Fund, ICF
The Idaho Futures Fund, ICF
The Statewide Education
Philanthropic Gift Fund, ICF
Wharton Junior Trustee Foundation
The Whittenberger Foundation
Tate Family Charitable Trust

Without these important sponsorships and the involvement of companies and foundations, we would not be able to do the important work we do at Giraffe Laugh. They are vital to our shared success.
Futures Begin Here Luncheon

“People without vision see an acorn, people with vision see an oak.”

November 18, 2015

Our second annual Futures Begin Here Luncheon was a major success and we are grateful to have spent it with such a loving group of people. Our theme for this event was ‘Mighty oaks from little acorns grow.” We heard from our Giraffe Laugh mighty oaks about the amazing things they are doing in the world and from our little acorns about their big plans for the future.

We shared stories of school readiness, empowering families and of building strong futures in our community. We shared a video of families that we have impacted over the years. With the story of how a mother and her children got back on their feet after finding Giraffe Laugh, we ended with an invitation to join our Dream Big Society. Our society members are special people who are passionate about the work we do in the community and have chosen to invest in our growth to meet the need for quality early childhood education.

We still have over 500 children on our waiting list, many of whom are aging out of our program every day, who deserve access to quality care. It is our vision for the future that each little acorn has the opportunity to grow into a mighty oak, and that their mighty oaks are empowered and given the resources for them to thrive.

Thank you to our amazing friends and supporters who attended the event, we hope you were impacted and continue to share the mission of Giraffe Laugh.
Thank you donors!
We appreciate all of these people beyond compare. We work hard to ensure that every donor is listed and recognized.

Big Dreams Society Members

James and Karen Bailey
Dix Brown
Bruce and Heather Copner
Ross and Jennifer Erickson
Joe and Lori Fascilla
Erica Galeai
Jacque and Karen Istok
Richard Johnson and Thomas Gangwer
Scott Johnson
Julia Joy

Amanda Klock
Gary and Neile Kyle
David and Janet Larsen
Thomas and Tara Lloyd
Matt and Kristin McGee
Pete and Alice Simpson
Pat Truman
David and Brandi Van Etten
Ryan and Holli Woodings
Christopher Zahn

Giraffe Laugh Staff Society Members

Lindsey Antram
Nadia Beckham
Emma Clement
Kaylee Duncan
Lisa Duncan
Victoria Felton
Beverly Haugen
Alissa Javaux
Kelsey Kautsch
Nicole Manzanares
Amber Murray
Fatima Sjekirica
Lupita Werner
Tanya Wilson

"I believe in what we are doing. My parents would have done anything to send me to a place like this but they couldn’t. I want to make a difference in a child’s life.”

-Nadia, Giraffe Laugh 4 Teacher
Thank you donors!

If you see changes that need to be made please contact us so we can acknowledge each person correctly.
In Memoriam

Owen Thomas Erpelding Scholarship Fund

Georgianna Ainslie
Nicholas Baldick
Bryn Banuelos
Mark Barney
Jamie Bentley
Steve Berch
Deb Berman
Sean Bierle
Simon Boaz
Ingrid Brudenell
Lisa Buchanan
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Bill Burns
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Daryl Sallaz
Larry & Elizabeth Saltzman
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Scot & Sarah Scheffel
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Deanna Smith
Leslie Smith
Skip Smyser
Albertsons Social & Digital Family
Cassie Somerville
Ashley Squyres
Ray Stark
Michelle Steele
Colton Streufert
Janet & Jon Stride
Carlton Swisher
Paul Tame
Richard Tarrent
Steve & Maureen Thomas
Tim Trombly
Julie VanOrden
Norm & Tracy Varin
Kristen Venable
James Walker
Kevin & Renae Walter
Ron & Kathy Watters
Tracy Watts
Jessica Wauer
Michelle Weiskittel
Mark Wesling
Russ Westerberg
Katrina Williams
Melissa Wintrow
Stacey Workman
Erin Yeager Randle
Sarah Zollner

18
We Can See the Future from Here

Rachel Meyer Memorial Fund in the Idaho Community Foundation
Changing lives, impacting kids and ensuring school readiness.

Dix Brown Memorial Fund
Building strong foundations and futures for teen moms and their babies.

Also contributed to the Owen Thomas Erpelding Scholarship Fund in memory of Sammy J Buchanan
Sammy and Jane Buchanan
Steve and Annlynne Farr
Susan Silva Skinner
MIGHTY OAKS
FROM LITTLE ACORNS GROW

Giraffe Laugh
Early Learning Centers