Dear Friends,

This past April, we celebrated Fit4Kids’ 10th birthday. Despite a year of planning how to recognize the impact made over our first decade, 2020 had other plans for us. The global pandemic and a call to action on systemic racism changed our course.

The level of stress and trauma our target children and families are experiencing is unprecedented. While Fit4Kids is not a “first responder” organization, we strongly believe our work is as important as ever.

Dr. Nadine Burke-Harris, the leading expert on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), notes that physical activity, healthy eating, sleep, and mindfulness are essential for combating trauma. While the focus of Fit4Kids has traditionally been to reduce childhood obesity, the mental, social, and emotional benefits of physical activity and healthy eating are even more critical today.

Moving into our new year, Fit4Kids is continuing to partner with the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities to better ensure our work is inclusive and equitable. Of the more than 12,000 students Fit4Kids serves annually, nearly 60% are Black. It isn’t enough to simply acknowledge how structural racism limits their opportunities for outdoor play, eating healthy, walking and biking to school, and more. We want to be part of the solution.

As we use the current call to action to motivate our path towards becoming an anti-racist organization, we appreciate that this work is long term. A commitment to ongoing learning, reflection, listening, and partnership building will all be part of this process. And we pledge to make necessary changes highlighted through this work to further our mission.

Fit4Kids is counting on your engagement and support in the coming year. A lot has changed, and will continue to change, as we pull up old roots to make way for new growth.

With appreciation,

Mary Dunne Stewart, CEO
**OUR COVID RESPONSE**

*Wellness Integration* empowers elementary school teachers to incorporate movement and health promotion messages into the classroom.

- Created nearly 100 virtual lessons from March to June, a robust resource kit, and supported teachers with online lessons to boost movement with their students.

*Game On, Girl!* is a comprehensive initiative to empower adolescent girls to be physically active, nutritionally fit, and ready to take on the world.

- Offered virtual lessons along with experiential kits (including items like a yoga mat and agility ladder) to girls in Richmond, Henrico, and Chesterfield.

*Learning Gardens* feed students’ appetite for hands-on and delicious learning and fun.

- Donated over 4,600 plants and produce to families, offered virtual lessons in partnership with NextUp, and delivered garden kits to students.

*Safe Routes to School* encourages safe active transportation among students.

- Provided bike and pedestrian safety workbooks through distribution sites and focused on infrastructure changes to promote safer active transportation around schools.

*Policy* promotes system and policy changes that increase school wellness and build capacity among our parents and community members.

- Supported Richmond Public Schools School Nutrition Services staff during spring food distribution, and provided fresh produce boxes and cooking supplies to staff. Coordinated constituent advocacy effort for the extension of federal meal waivers programs helping to ensure free school meals through the 2020-2021 school year.

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**BY THE NUMBERS**

- **12,493** kids participated in Fit4Kids’ health and wellness programs during the 2019-20 school year.

- **33** new crossing guards started with our Safe Routes to School program in our partnership with Richmond Public Schools in Fall 2019 to increase walk and bike safety.

- **4,643** plants donated to families to create home vegetable gardens during the pandemic.

- **22** recess kits provided to schools along with teacher training and technical assistance to boost students’ activity level and encourage healthy fun!

- **97%** of teachers at Fit4Kids’ partner schools believe movement in the classroom improves student engagement (also applies in a virtual setting!)

- **7,700** fruit and veggie samples served through our learning gardens at 20 schools to tickle kids’ taste buds.
Jasmine was first introduced to Fit4Kids when her son Samson, who was in 4th grade at the time, came home from school telling her all about the “letter exercises” they were doing in his class. She was thrilled to learn about the Fit4Kids active lessons and said “it was always a good day at school when Fit4Kids was in the classroom.”

Two years later, Jasmine’s second son, Solomon, participated in the Fit4Kids’ Learning Garden at his elementary school. “Solomon would always take me to the garden whenever I was at the school. That was the high point of his day.”

Jasmine also loved how Solomon’s garden learnings translated to the grocery store. Solomon would put new fruits or vegetables in their shopping cart so they could taste test things like parsnips, aloe leaves, and dinosaur kale. Jasmine loved how Solomon’s experience in the garden not only encouraged family time, but also “a legacy of healthy eating and fun learning.”

Two years after Solomon joined the garden club, Jasmine learned about the Fit4Kids’ Parent Council that equips parents to advocate for improved wellness at their children’s school. This past December, Jasmine joined the Fit4Kids’ staff as one of our first Parent Advocates. Jasmine now facilitates parent meetings and trains other parents on how they can advocate for health and wellness at their children’s school.

Jasmine knows that “children thrive when they are provided with healthy food options and ample opportunities for physical play and imagination”. We’re proud of the experience Jasmine and her boys have had with Fit4Kids and are eager to continue to empower as many kids as possible across the region to be active and form healthy habits!

Fit4Kids is committed to providing partner schools, teachers, and students with programs and resources meeting their changing needs (virtually or in-person) to promote active, healthy lifestyles. This Fall, Fit4Kids is rolling out online training for teachers offering learning strategies that incorporate movement into the curriculum and will count towards teaching recertification points. We’re continuing to meet with stakeholders and utilize policy research findings to advocate for school and student wellness, like safe recess practices to ensure recess is offered daily once students return to school.

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– Jasmine, mom of program participants and Fit4Kids’ Parent Advocate
We believe active, well-nourished kids learn better in school, have greater self-esteem, and brighter futures.

“I love the Learning Garden program! I love that my students learn to taste new vegetables and develop their palate for healthy flavors.”

— Teacher at Cary Elementary

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Ten years ago, we were a handful of committed volunteers with passion and an idea: to improve the health and wellness of kids through physical activity and healthy eating. Today, we have more than a decade of experience making healthy fun for more than 10,000 children across the Richmond region. To celebrate this milestone, Fit4Kids is expanding our reach through new initiatives to enhance school wellness and strengthen advocacy work. Thank you to those who contributed to our Here We Grow campaign helping to deepen the impact and brighten the futures of children across RVA!
Not included in 2020 revenue is a PPE loan of $117,000 which will be forgiven by the SBA in 2021.