



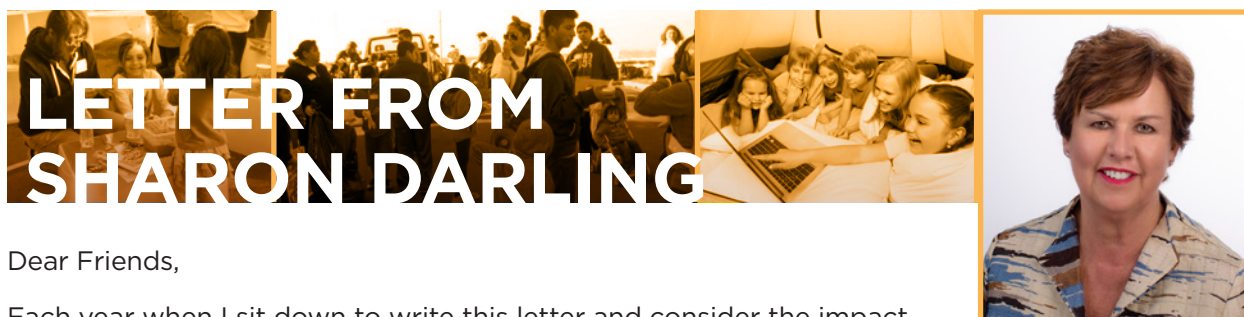
ncfl<sup>TM</sup>

National Center for  
Families Learning



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# LETTER FROM SHARON DARLING

Dear Friends,

Each year when I sit down to write this letter and consider the impact NCFL is making, I'm never disappointed because the work we do each day results in thousands of families being educated and more closely bonded. Parents are excited about the opportunities furthering their skills will allow them. In classrooms, children are engaged and more confident. NCFL is the voice for policy change and model programming. In state and federal representative offices, they are having to consider the impact Family Learning programming is having on their constituents who live in poverty and lack employability skills.

Our synergy with educators, literacy experts, and policy makers continues to grow. This year we went to Washington, DC and hosted a congressional briefing on the impact of family learning. In addition to keeping the importance of family learning in front of our state, local and federal representatives, we expanded our work on the ground in Kentucky and in every county across Mississippi.

In September, Senator Rand Paul came to the NCFL office for a roundtable discussion about Family Service Learning. The morning included participants from our programs, funders, staff, and past and present board members. The senator heard firsthand the story of one participants success because of the Family Learning approach. The conversation was rich with ideas for public/private partnerships moving forward.

Helping Families realize their potential and what they can achieve when they work and learn together is the foundation of our work. NCFL leads the way in the two-generation approach to learning and helping parents to be empowered to raise their entire family out of poverty.

Whether it's through place-based Family Learning programs; our online professional development; or resources such as Wonderopolis®, Camp Wonderopolis®, Family Trails®, or the National Literacy Directory, our work with partner sites across the country to deliver superior educational resources for families.

Among other milestones, in the fall of 2016, our Families Learning Conference was held in Detroit, Michigan. Our line-up of General Sessions included inspirational messages from Sonia Manzano ("Maria" from Sesame Street); Dale Dougherty, founder and CEO of Maker Media; and Tatanka Means, stand-up comic and award-winning actor.

When we began to plan the 2017 conference, how could we exceed the 2016 line-up? The three-day conference stepped things up with General Session speakers Debbie Phelps, J.R. Martinez, Billy Mills, and with support from Toyota our banquet was over the top with keynote speaker, Magic Johnson. The 2017 conference included a record number of over 100 concurrent sessions.

As a staff, we want to stay innovative in our approach to working with families. Across the country, from board rooms to classrooms, we are working with individuals and organizations to partner, expand our reach, and have a greater impact for the most vulnerable among us. Thank you for joining us in the movement that will lift individuals, families and communities.

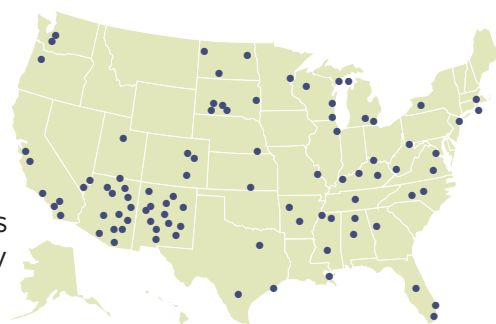
*Sharon Darling*  
President and Founder



The National Center for Families (NCFL) Learning works to eradicate poverty through education solutions for families. Over our 28-year history, we have changed the lives of millions of families across the country by providing literacy strategies, programming, and resources. Engaging multiple generations of the same family in learning together has been a fundamental and distinguishing aspect of our work. We know this holistic approach creates a stronger impact and greater success for families.

### Reach:

- NCFL leads intensive grassroots family learning efforts with more than 140 community partners across 38 states and Washington DC. This work impacts thousands of families each year.
- In August, NCFL trained employees from Mississippi Department of Human Services and Families First for Mississippi to implement the NCFL Family Learning model in 20 social service centers that serve all 82 counties throughout the state.
- NCFL's digital learning properties, such as Wonderopolis® and the National Literacy Directory, serve more than 15 million people each year.



### Rationale + Results:

- Research has shown that the educational level of the parents is the strongest indicator of the educational success of the child. Education achievement is the primary driver for families getting out of poverty and establishing financial stability. This is why NCFL's education model is designed to address the needs of the parent and child together.
- Consistent results for children: increased school attendance, reading on grade level, increase in home literacy activities.
- Consistent results for adults: increased literacy skills, English language acquisition, GED® credential, increased workforce skills (like problem solving and teamwork), and employment gains (jobs, better jobs, and more money).

Please find more information on our website: [familieslearning.org](http://familieslearning.org).





In January 2017, Gehysa Molina came to Broward County Public Schools Community School South with her three-year-old daughter, Fiorella, and her son, Antonio, a first grader in elementary school. She enrolled in the Toyota Family Learning program because she wanted to provide more for her family. The Family Learning model includes content that meets the needs of parents, such as English as a Second Language, job skills, or GED® preparation. Additionally, the program serves the entire family through Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time® and Family Service Learning.



Gehysa and her family came to the United States in September 2016 to leave a political crisis in Venezuela. She started the program speaking very little English, but she says that Family Learning is helping her to listen and understand more. PACT Time brings parents together with their children for time to connect, bond, and learn. Activities are planned as part of the on-site programming, as well as for the home.

Gehysa worked hard to further develop her reading skills. In doing so, her personal confidence was strengthened as demonstrated by her reading in front of the group during PACT Time. She also participated in a multicultural project in her class and spoke to her classmates about Venezuela.

Gehysa learned the importance of sharing more time with her children, and because of the skills she is learning, they can read and watch TV together in English. Now she can also help Antonio more with his homework

Her youngest child, Fiorella, is learning more English, and now can say the days of the week, the alphabet, and some shapes. PACT Time is fun for the family because they can play games and read together. The Toyota Family Learning program has helped Gehysa understand English through both speaking and reading the language, leading to a fuller life with her family and community. Gehysa has greater confidence in making transactions at a store or bank, in addition to being able to interact with more people.

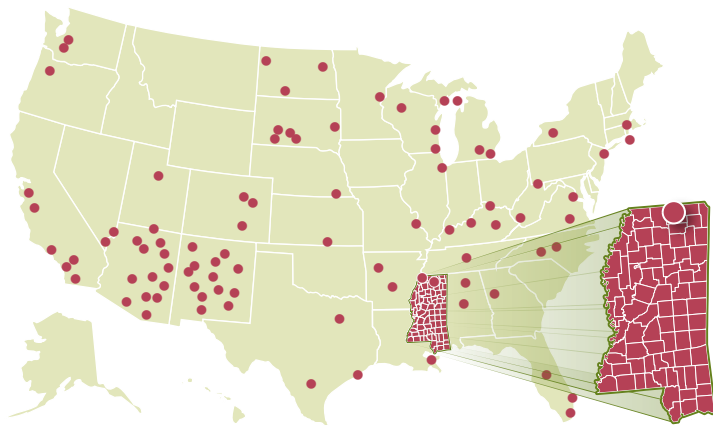
Gehysa's original goal was to learn skills to help her get her GED and a job to provide for her family. While she accomplished this, it is her entire family that was strengthened through Toyota Family Learning.

The impact of NCFL's approach has been experienced in over 140 communities across the country. In April we welcomed the Family Resource Center in Tupelo, Mississippi, as a new partner.

This year saw expansion in both Louisville, Kentucky, and in Mississippi. We expanded the number of sites to 10 in Louisville, Kentucky, offering Family Learning Programming.



In August, NCFL trained employees from Mississippi Department of Human Services and Families First for Mississippi to implement the NCFL Family Learning model in



20 social service centers located throughout the state. Participants learned about our research-based, innovative model that consists of Family Service Learning, Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time®, and Parent Time. High impact strategies used in the model include adult skill building, child skill building, digital integration, and deliberate social capital building.

Mississippi Gen+ is a Department of Human Services initiative that partners with the Families First for Mississippi grant program to help families rise out of poverty by teaching employability skills to unemployed adults while also helping children make academic gains. NCFL was approached by the state of Mississippi to train

its employees on the NCFL Family Learning model, because of the positive outcomes observed in our Family Learning programs throughout the country.







Family Service Learning is a component of the NCFL Family Learning model. Through a series of six steps that are based in research, families come together to identify a problem or issue in their community they would like to work to resolve.

Family Service Learning is helping close the skills gap in urban communities such as Flint, Michigan, and Bronx, New York. Throughout the process, individuals are learning collaborative problem solving, critical thinking skills, and how to work with community leaders—all of which can be transferred to skills valued by employers. Participants have shared that, through Family Service Learning, they have increased their personal confidence and their commitment to making their community a better place. Additionally, they are creating shared experiences with their families as they serve together.



Families drive Family Service Learning projects at every step: from conceptualizing and planning the events, recruiting donors and volunteers, carrying out the plan of action, and reflecting on what went well and what can be improved. This framework has been strengthened through practice and, according to independent evaluation results, has shown academic and social gains for children and adults: better employment opportunities, decreased social isolation, improved technology and formal learning skills, greater sense of self-efficacy, self-confidence, and expanded social capital.



Groups developed and participated in projects such as [cleaning up neighborhood streets](#), [making scarves and meals for the homeless](#), [beautifying parks](#), and raising awareness of the importance of clean drinking water.

In 2017, independent evaluations showed that through Family Service Learning, 90 different community issues were addressed across 12 communities.

Participating families gained 21st-century employability skills. More than half of parents reported upgrading their skills and most got jobs or better jobs as a result of the program.



# FAMILY LEARNING THROUGH STORYTELLING

The FACE (Family and Child Education) program is supported by NCFL through a contract with the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). NCFL provides web-based and onsite professional development for preschool education (three- and four-year- old children), parent engagement, and adult education (GED, ABE, etc.) for the FACE program.



Salvanna Brown participated in FACE programming at the Pueblo Pintado Community School in Cuba, New Mexico. At the 2016 Families Learning Conference, she shared her experience in the FACE program and the impact it had on her youngest child.

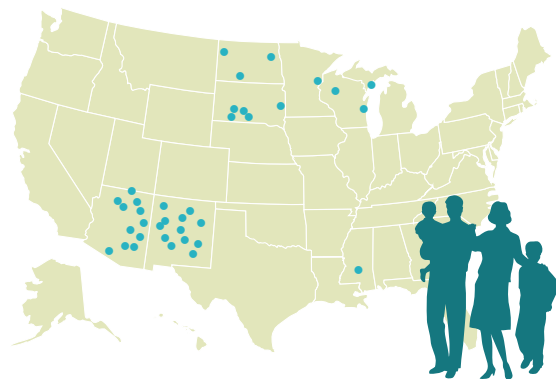
Salvanna attended the program with Shanna Happy, the youngest of her four children. While in the FACE program, she describes her daughter as “soaking up all the knowledge that was presented.” The FACE program taught her how to explore every aspect of knowledge

and encouraged Shanna Happy to be curious about the world around her. FACE was her stepping stone into furthering her passion for learning. As a result, today the young girl has a dream of going to college to become a veterinarian and owning a small pet shop.

For Salvanna, the FACE program gave her the tools she needed to grow and thrive in a changing society. It prepared her to attend college and pursue training for her own job. The program and the people she met there helped her to believe in herself and develop her own dreams of a better life.

While in the FACE program, she describes her daughter as **“soaking up all the knowledge that was presented.”**

FACE opened the door for both Salvanna and her daughter, to soar as high as they dare to try. This is something Salvanna would not have had the courage to try or been able to encourage in her children, without participating in FACE!



FACE has served 17,000 families, including 22,688 children and 20,022 adults.

During the 26 years of FACE and the implementation of NCFL’s two-generation model 46,734 American Indian families have been served (24,911 children and 21,823 adults). During the 2016 program year, NCFL had FACE programming in 43 different schools. In a post-program evaluation, it was reported that **76% of FACE parents increased their frequency of reading to their child daily or almost daily. This is a higher percentage than parents nationwide.**





## Families Learning Conference brings connection and collaboration

At the core of a strong community are strong families—families in which the members care for and support each other. The Family Learning model is the resource used to help families climb out of oppressed situations. As a result of dedicated family learning practitioners who are catalysts for progress, participants have the support and encouragement to reach a little further toward their goal of a better quality of life for their family and the generations to come.

Each year, the Families Learning Conference serves to re-energize practitioners, provide a forum for sharing strategies for working with marginalized families, and strengthen the professional learning networks of educators.

At the 2016 Summit in Detroit, Michigan, over 600 attendees heard inspiring stories like that of Deenie Espinoza, who began working on her GED® in 1993 as she attended an NCFL family literacy program



in Tucson, Arizona, with her son, and today has a Master's degree in Educational Leadership. Audiences also heard from Peyton Rhone, who felt her life was incomplete until she enrolled in an NCFL family literacy program and earned her GED®. Both women shared that family literacy changed their lives in very dramatic ways. With the first step of attending a family literacy program, additional education and employment opportunities opened for them.



The 2017 Families Learning Conference again brought high energy keynote speakers, Deborah Phelps, J. R. Martinez, and Magic Johnson. As well, attendees shared best practices and celebrated the 2017 Toyota Teacher of the Year, Mary Andrews.

At the Toyota banquet, Magic Johnson engaged with the audience through selfies and a motivating message of courage and staying the course in their work to help families out of poverty

Held in Tucson, Arizona, the conference drew many from the nearby Native American and FACE communities. During the conference, we listened to an inspiring opening session with Olympic champion, U. S. Marine, and member of the Oglala Lakota Tribe, Billy Mills. He motivated the audience with his story of exceeding the expectations of others.



## Toyota Family Teacher of the Year

Teachers play an important role in connecting families with each other and with key resources. Each year at the Families Learning Conference, Toyota recognizes one teacher for the innovative ways they reach parents and families.



When **Jean Ciborowski Fahey** of Weymouth, Massachusetts, joins a circle of moms and newborns, she condenses decades of knowledge about brain development into a 20-minute message that's straightforward and provides parents ways to help their children develop a strong foundation for learning.

Ciborowski Fahey was named 2016 Toyota Family Teacher of the Year by NCFL and Toyota for her efforts to educate parents of babies and young children about reading and brain development. Central to Ciborowski Fahey's outreach strategy is a book she wrote, [Make Time for](#)

[Reading: a Story Guide for Parents of Babies and Young Children](#). Ciborowski Fahey used the \$20,000 grant from Toyota and NCFL to reprint her book in English and Spanish, which will enable her to reach nearly 7,000 more parents.

[Read More](#)

**Mary Andrews** was named 2017 Toyota Family Teacher of the Year for her dedication to countless children and families through her unique literacy programs in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Mary's Family Reading Partners and READ2ME programs are designed to model and encourage reading



together as a family. Facilitators teach parents how to interact with their children to promote kindergarten readiness and reinforce that parents are their child's first and most important teacher. Watch Mary's reaction to receiving her award.





In June the impact of two-generation family literacy was shared at a briefing for congressional staff in Washington, DC. The message was shared through a panel discussion with Sharon Darling, representatives from The Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy, Educational Alliance, Toyota, and a Toyota Family Learning program participant.



“The secret sauce to family literacy is parents and children working and learning together,” said Sharon Darling, NCFL president and founder. “When this happens, the two generations of a family are impacted as well as future generations, and we start to see a systemic change.”

Norma Aguilar is one of the parents who participates in Toyota Family Learning in Plano, Texas—an NCFL model program—with her young son and daughter. Aguilar, who participated

on the panel, said she learned the importance of reading with her children to increase their vocabulary and reading comprehension, and gained confidence in herself by learning English. Now she plans to find a job and work on an associate’s degree.

“Learning English gives me the freedom to achieve my goals and to have more experiences with my children,” said Aguilar. “It is the key to knowledge, power, and freedom in my life.”

Aguilar is not alone in her success. Results of an independent evaluation by Penn State University of participants graduating from NCFL Family Learning in 2016 show 94 percent became a better parent. Additional results include:

- 79 percent improved their English skills
- 47 percent upgraded skills to keep current job
- 40 percent got a better job
- 28 percent obtained the knowledge necessary to pass the U.S. citizenship test
- 29 percent earned a GED® certificate or high school equivalency



The briefing also included comments from Congressional Adult Literacy Caucus Co-Chairs, Representative Phil Roe (R-TN) and Representative John Yarmuth (D-KY).

[Read More](#)



NCFL continues to lead the conversation with policy makers. Creating this dialogue keeps lawmakers in touch with the impact of two-generational family literacy programming; lifting parents and children to find greater success academically and economically. That's the message that Sen. Rand Paul heard from the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) President and Founder, Sharon Darling, and our program participants and partners at a roundtable discussion at NCFL headquarters on September 25, 2017.

"The NCFL approach is a solution to transforming the way our government engages with low-income families in a way that provides families a genuine opportunity to gain essential workforce skills in a real-world context while addressing community problems at the same time," Darling said. "It's a win-win for tax payers, families, and communities. We see immediate and long-term effects happening sooner so that families cease to receive government assistance."



In NCFL model programs, parents learn how to better work and learn together with their children, while also building employability, technology, and language skills. Data shows half of adults participating in 2017 got a better job and 53 percent upgraded their skills to earn more money after gaining experience with 40 out of 42 career and technical education skills.

"I'm a big believer that strong families play an integral role in the future success of individuals," said Sen. Paul. "As I learned here today, NCFL is serving our communities through empowering entire families by giving parents the tools to support their children and gain necessary skills for employability. I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn more about this organization and look forward to hearing more of their success stories."

**"I'm a big believer  
that strong families  
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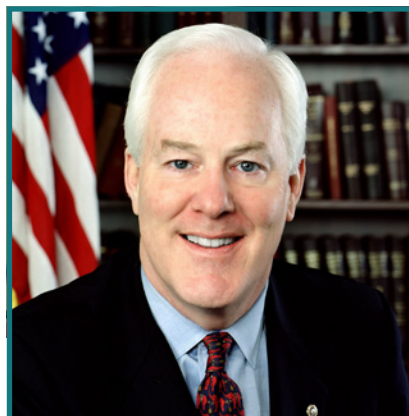
— Sen. Paul

[Read More](#)





In September, members of congress, led by Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) and Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) in the Senate, and Congressman Sam Johnson (R-TX) and Congressman John Yarmuth (D-KY) in the House of Representatives, sponsored House Bill 514 declaring the week beginning September 12 as “National Family Service Learning Week.” The bill supports the designation of the week to raise awareness about the importance of family service learning, family literacy, community service, and two-generational learning experiences.



The senators’ comments recognized the value of investing in families and supporting their efforts in communities. Additionally, the Family Service Learning model builds employability skills and opens new opportunities for parents to connect and engage with their children, ultimately strengthening the family and the community.

Having the United States Senate recognize the definition of Family Service Learning and its results gives continued credibility to the NCFL

Family Learning model and the potential for future programming.

Over [40 percent of parents](#) whose families graduate from these programs get promoted or find a better job. Family Service Learning has been implemented in 20 communities nationwide with plans to expand.



# FAMILY LEARNING THROUGH WONDER

## Wonderopolis®

NCFL's signature digital property, Wonderopolis®, continues to address the most curious of questions. This year [How Do You Get Rid of Hiccups](#) was the Wonder that received the most views, 253,494. The Wonderopolis site saw continued increase in site visits and engagement.

**27%**

Site traffic increased  
by 27% from last year  
to over **15 million**

**19%**

Page views increased  
by 19% from last year  
30 million to **35 million**



Significant **international audience growth** in India, Philippines, and South Africa



Instagram account launched May 2017 and accumulated over **400** followers by end of the year

## 2016 & 2017 Camp Wonderopolis®

Six libraries across the nation were awarded \$1,500 grants, NCFL training, and Youth and Family Campsite Kits to implement [Camp Wonderopolis®](#) programming this summer, thanks to generous support from Better World Books. These libraries provided Maker activities exclusively found in the [Youth and Family Campsite Kit](#) and suggested book pairings for each of the six Camp Wonderopolis tracks online. One of the library camp sites was Prospect Community Library (Prospect, Pennsylvania). Read in this [guest blog post](#) about how they engaged families in participating in the 2016 Camp Wonderopolis – Flex Your Wonder activities.



[Read More](#)



In 2017, three libraries were awarded Camp Wonderopolis grants. The winning libraries were [Covina Public Library](#) (Covina, California), [Leonard Reed Elementary School](#) (Cedar Park, Texas), and [Taylor County Public Library](#) (Campbellsville, Kentucky). These three official Camp Wonderopolis Campsites combined online Camp content with fun, hands-on Maker activities and special guest speakers to keep children and their families engaged and learning over the summer.

[Read More](#)

Camp Wonderopolis is a free online summer-learning destination that's full of fun, interactive STEM and literacy-building topics boosted by Maker experiments. While the free online elements are great

for families, the Camp Kits are designed to support learning in both the home and educational setting.

The program kits include implementation guides, webinar/online training, an online promotion and technology package, campsite markers and recruitment materials.

The family camp kit includes a youth and family guide, Wonder journal, Wonder pencils, Wonder Cards®, and other goodies.

Each summer there is a new theme to camp. In 2018, the theme will be Symphony of Wonders. Register today at [camp.wonderopolis.org](http://camp.wonderopolis.org).

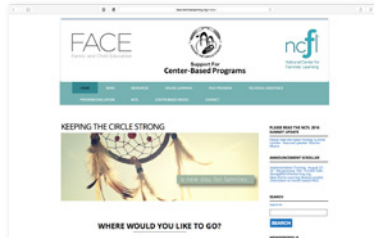




# DIGITAL PROPERTIES



[familieslearning.org](http://familieslearning.org)



[face.familieslearning.org](http://face.familieslearning.org)



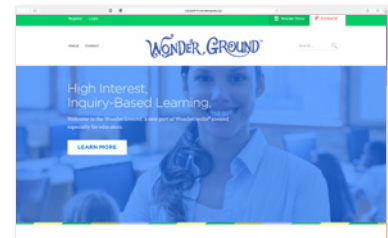
[toyotafamilylearning.org](http://toyotafamilylearning.org)



[wonderopolis.org](http://wonderopolis.org)



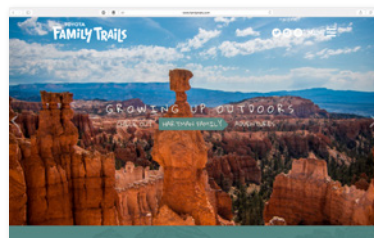
[camp.wonderopolis.org](http://camp.wonderopolis.org)



[wg.wonderopolis.org](http://wg.wonderopolis.org)



[nationalliteracydirectory.org](http://nationalliteracydirectory.org)



[familytrails.com](http://familytrails.com)



[learn2earn toolkit.org](http://learn2earn toolkit.org)

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NCFL's Board of Directors is a diverse group including researchers and business executives who help us champion the cause of family literacy. They understand that literacy is the foundation for national economic well-being and local community progress.

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William Wilson  
Christy Wyman  
Amanda Wyrick

**Income**

Corporations, foundations, and individuals	\$3,866,858
Federal and state grants	\$75,017
Contract services/registration fee income	\$2,267,347
Endowment income	\$1,190,091
Other income	\$15,829

**Expenses**

Program services	\$5,085,724
Development and fundraising	\$494,756
Management and administration	\$932,635

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<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,513,117</b>
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<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$902,025</b>
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<b>Net Assets End of Year</b>	<b>\$16,416,407</b>
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