

wonders



COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

October 2025

Thoughtful community and civic engagement are integral to our collective well-being. In Elliot Haspel's most recent book, "Raising A Nation, 10 Reasons Every American Has a Stake in Child Care for All", he suggests that child care contributes to civic readiness. If you look carefully, you will see democracy in action in early learning and extended day programs. Sharing resources, problem solving, and conflict resolution skills are readily observed as children play and work together. While these skills are rightfully indicators of school readiness, they are also attributes necessary for future civic engagement.

In our program highlights below, you will read about some current activities that support civic literacy and community service. While the federal government is shut down, Wonders is working closely with families who are impacted to ensure that the continuity of care is maintained during this disruption.

Our shared commitment to creating and maintaining a caring Wonders community strengthens all families, children, and our extended community.

Sincerely,

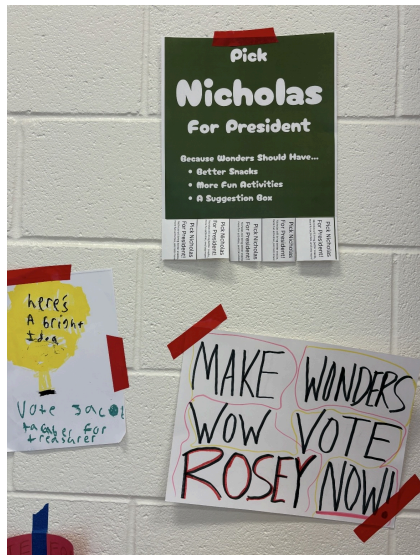


Joanne Hurt
Executive Director



**HAPPY HISPANIC
HERITAGE MONTH**
September 15 - October 15

Program Highlights



Building Leadership and Civic Skills at Wonders at Bethesda

This month, Wonders at Bethesda Elementary students are conducting an election for student leaders. Campaigns have been launched and speeches are being prepared and presented to the voters. Student leaders meet with the Wonders team to help plan full day program activities, provide feedback on a variety of topics (snack selection being high on the list), develop problem-solving skills and learn useful leadership skills. The student leadership program is open to students in grades 2-5, but all students participate in learning civic literacy through engagement in the process.



Wonders Early Learners Join County Environmental Projects

Our early learning programs were recently invited by the County to take part in two exciting environmental initiatives with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP): the **Storm Drain Art Project** and the **Creek Critters Program**. Through these hands-on experiences, children are discovering how storm drains, streams, and the bay are all connected, and how each of us can play a role in protecting our waterways. DEP friends visited our **Dolphins class**, giving the children a chance to explore fascinating “creek critters” that live in nearby streams. It was a wonderful opportunity for our children (and our whole community!) to learn about and celebrate environmental stewardship in a fun, creative way.

Annual Giving Launch!

October - December 31, 2025

Our Annual Giving Campaign is officially underway, and we invite you to join us in supporting high-quality, affordable child care and early education.

This year, with public child care scholarship funds frozen and the federal government shutdown and its impact on related sectors, more families are turning to Wonders for financial assistance. We cannot meet this demand without you. Your generous gift, whether one-time or recurring, helps bridge the gap between tuition revenue and the true cost of delivering exceptional care, supporting children, families, and educators alike.

Our goal is to raise \$105,000 through individual donations, employer matches, corporate partnerships, and grants. Every gift makes a lasting impact.

[Download our 2025 Annual Giving Brochure](#)

 **wonders 2025**
ANNUAL GIVING
CAMPAIGN
nonprofit since 1976

Annual giving plays a vital role in sustaining high-quality programs beyond what tuition alone covers. Tuition provides 90% of the operating budget. The remaining 10% is raised through a combination of contributions, corporate sponsorships and grants from foundations.



CULTIVATING PROFESSIONALISM + EXPERTISE

At Wonders, we invest in our teachers through ongoing training, workshops, coaching, and mentoring. Competitive compensation and benefits ensure that our team and our programs thrive. We believe that when teachers succeed, children succeed. Our commitment to staff development strengthens both our workforce and the learning experiences we provide every day.

ENSURING ACCESS FOR FAMILIES

In order to ensure access to our programs, Wonders participates in subsidy and employer assistance tuition programs. Additionally, Wonders offers faculty, staff, and sibling discounts; and the Circle Fund - Wonders' tuition assistance program. We need to close the gap created by subsidy reimbursement rates that do not cover the full cost of high quality care and provide needed resources to expand affordability to many families.



SUSTAINING HIGH-QUALITY CHILD CARE

Wonders thrives on strong leadership and dedicated support to serve our community effectively. By investing in strategic planning, staff development, curriculum innovation, and family engagement, we advance our mission and ensure that Wonders' programs remain vibrant and sustainable for generations to come.

DONATE TODAY

Wonders Grow Your Own Activities



October Professional Development

On Monday, October 13, Wonders educators will participate in our Fall Professional Development Day. The day will feature workshops and discussion sessions on topics including Developing Effective Early Learning Classroom Teaching Teams, Infant and Toddler Development Assessments, Extended Day Lesson Planning and Curriculum Development, and Early Learning Creative Curriculum Implementation.

We will hold the first of our 50th Anniversary Community Conversations with Rebecca Gale, staff writer, Better Life Lab at New America. Rebecca will be presenting an overview of the history of important child care policy efforts and impacts in the US.



Our Growing Wonders Team

We are excited to welcome new staff members to the Wonders family:

- Husna Zakaria, Intern - Early Learning
- Lillian Barnett, Classroom Aide - Horace Mann
- Emely Cruz, Substitute - Early Learning
- Mackenzie Harrington, Classroom Aide - Bethesda
- Evelyn Alava, Floater Teacher - Early Learning
- Zoe Reyes, Classroom Aide - Bethesda
- Tyler Stewart, Teacher - Bethesda
- Smitha Doud, HR Generalist
- Journee Finney, Classroom Aide - Bethesda
- Shanice Hinds, Teacher - Charles E Smith
- Nieves Ildefonso, Substitute - Early Learning
- Lucena Natividad, Floater Teacher - Early Learning
- Johnkear Watts, Teacher - Early Learning
- John Martinez, Assistant Program Director - Murch
- Julie Meyers, Floater Teacher - Early Learning
- Liam Mercado, Classroom Aide - Horace Mann

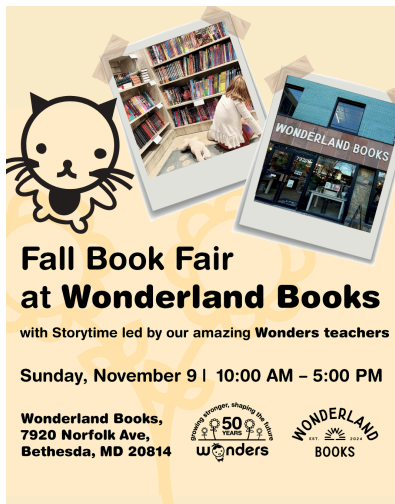


Wonders Recruitment

Anila Rawasia, Wonders' Recruitment Specialist, plays a key role in building a strong pipeline of talented educators. She attends job fairs across the region to connect with job seekers and share what makes a career at Wonders so meaningful. This month and next, Anila will be representing Wonders at American University, the B-CC Internship Fair, and WorkForce Montgomery. If you know someone passionate about early childhood or after-school education,

encourage them to explore opportunities with Wonders. For more information, visit www.wonderslearning.org/careers.

The Celebration Continues: A Legacy 50 Years in the Making



This year, we're honoring *five incredible decades* of nurturing curiosity, supporting families, and building brighter futures at Wonders. As we continue our 50th Anniversary Celebration, we're thrilled to announce that the **Wonders 50th Anniversary Garden Party** will take place on:

Saturday, March 28th, 2026

Imagination Stage, Bethesda, MD

6:30 - 9:30 PM

Save the Date!

Mark your calendars for an unforgettable evening of joy, reflection, and community as we celebrate the transformative power of early learning. Stay tuned- tickets will be available soon!

We have a full calendar of events, stories, and opportunities for our entire Wonders family:

Community Gatherings & Special Events

Join us for our Fall Book Fair at Wonderland Books! Enjoy a special story time led by our wonderful Wonders teachers and stock up on great reads for the season.

15% of all book sale proceeds will be donated back to Wonders!

Sunday, November 9 | 10 AM - 5 PM

Wonderland Books - 7920 Norfolk Ave, Bethesda, MD 20814

Alumni Spotlights – We love sharing stories from former students, parents and staff. If you have a story you'd like to share, [please click here](#) and we'd be happy to showcase it.

Family & Staff Story Collection- We're still gathering your favorite Wonders memories, photos, and reflections for our digital archive and 50th anniversary displays—[share yours today!](#)

If you still remember your favorite Wonders classroom, a current parent watching your child grow here, or an educator who has helped shape our programs, this milestone is a celebration of you.

We can't wait to celebrate this extraordinary chapter together!

Parent + Caregiver Workshops



October Workshop Topic: How to Manage Parenting Stress with Maven Psychology Group

Date: Friday, October 24, 2025

Time: 1:00 - 2:00 P.M.

Location: ZOOM

Register now on Eventbrite: [Click Here](#)



November Workshop Topic: The ABC's of Behavior: How to Manage Challenging Behaviors and Nurture Socially Appropriate Behaviors in Early Childhood

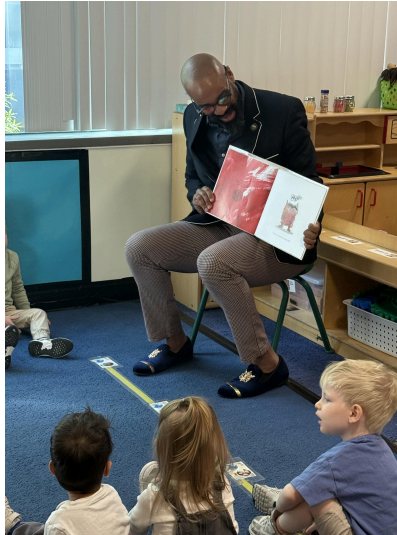
Date: Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Time: 1:00 - 2:00 P.M.

Location: ZOOM

Register now on Eventbrite: [Click Here](#)

Community Spotlight



First Friday Guest Readers!

This month, our Early Learning Center at Edgemoor was delighted to welcome **Phillip Alexander Downie**, CEO and Executive Director of the **Montgomery County Pride Center**. Mr. Downie joined the **Rainbow Fish** and **Angelfish** classes for a special story time, reading *The Color Monster* by Anna Llenas, a beautiful story that helps children understand and name their emotions by sorting them into colorful jars representing happiness, sadness, anger, fear, and calm.

A heartfelt thank-you to Mr. Downie for sharing his time with our classrooms!

Interested in our First Friday Reading program? Reach out to [Brittney Stern, Development Manager](#) to learn how you can get involved!

Donate to Wonders

Teaching children through play and a nurturing and diverse community.

[Make a donation today to ensure access to quality care and education.](#)

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