



CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER  
for Learning



### Message from the CEO

Dear friends of the Center,

In these rapidly changing times, confusion and uncertainty can be profound. Yet at the Carole Robertson Center for Learning, we remain steadfast in our mission to educate, enrich, and empower our children and families—just as we have since our founding nearly 50 years ago.

And as we close out Head Start Awareness Month in the 60th anniversary year of this life-changing program, we are reminded of the power of Head Start to transform the lives of children, families, and their communities.

Amidst challenge and change, we are anchored in our purpose and strengthened by our shared belief in the power of growth, connection, and community.

As noted in this newsletter, the Center continues to spark potential and the joy of learning. Family orientation fairs at each flagship site in October provided families with opportunities to engage with staff, learn about our programs and curriculum, and collect educational toys for their children. And we're gearing up to begin our annual Holiday Gift Giving campaign so that every child and youth in our programs will experience the spirit of the season.

Together, we will continue to serve and stand alongside our children and families through these uncertain times. However, your partnership is expressed—through giving, volunteering, or working to improve the landscape for our children's future—we are grateful for your vital and continuing support.

In service,  
Bela Moté  
President & CEO

## Program-Wide

### Honoring our History: The Center Reflects on the Legacies of Carole Robertson, Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, and Denise McNair

Center youth and staff honored the lives of our namesake Carole Robertson, and her classmates Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, and Denise McNair during our annual Legacy Week celebration in September. As part of the observance, we came together to peacefully march while chanting declarations of unity and resilience. Legacy Week reminds us to continually uplift our children and families by upholding a nurturing, safe place to learn and grow.



### Celebrating Impact: Maria Rosaura Saavedra Receives Home Visiting Impact Award

Congratulations to Maria Rosaura Saavedra, a home visitor at the Carole Robertson Center, who received this year's Chicago Region Home Visiting Impact Award. Maria was recognized this month at the Illinois Home Visiting Summit Celebration Dinner; part of the Annual Prevent Child Abuse Illinois Statewide Conference.

This award honors Maria's unwavering commitment to supporting mothers and families—especially those in vulnerable situations who need it most. Her work embodies compassion, trust, and the belief that early support can shape a child's future.

Thank you to Maria and all of the Center's home visiting team for the incredible impact you're making—one family at a time.

### Recognizing Quality in Early Education: North Lawndale Flagship Receives National Association of Education for Young Children (NAEYC) Re-accreditation

The Center's North Lawndale flagship received re-accreditation from the National Association of Education for Young Children (NAEYC). This is a national mark of excellence in early childhood education and reflects this flagship site's continuous dedication to providing high-quality care for children and families. We celebrate this milestone with gratitude to our dedicated staff whose hard work and commitment made it possible.



## Cultivating Community Relationships: Join Us in Welcoming New Board Members

The Center has welcomed three new board members to our Board of Directors this year, including Jillonda Reed Washington, Senior Vice President, Chief People Officer, Peoples Bank; Amorita Falcon, Portfolio Management Associate, Chicago Community Loan Fund; and Margaret McTigue, Vice President, Corporate Risk Management, Wintrust Bank. We are delighted to have the dedication and talents of these three remarkable individuals on our Board and look forward to partnering to advance our mission.



**Jillonda Reed Washington**

Senior Vice President,  
Chief People Officer,  
Peoples Bank



**Amorita Falcon**

Portfolio Management  
Associate, Chicago  
Community Loan Fund



**Margaret McTigue**

Vice President, Corporate  
Risk Management, Wintrust  
Bank

## Early Childhood Education & Youth Development

### Uplifting the Whole Child: Center Staff and Families Come Together for Family Orientation

This month, our three flagship sites held Family Orientation and Resource Fairs for families to meet our team, explore key resources, and learn about our holistic programs designed to support children's growth at any age. Families left with insights into our curriculum and the many facets of our programs, plus an array of educational toys. They

were also invited to participate in parent governance to have an active role in shaping the future of the Center.



## In The Media

### Amplifying Impact: *Health Calls* Podcast Highlights the Center

The Carole Robertson Center was mentioned in the Sept. 22, 2025, episode of *Health Calls*. Dr. Anoop Takher, interim chair of behavioral health at Saint Anthony Hospital, was interviewed about the Hospital's SPARK Program and highlighted the Center as a key community partner. He noted that such collaborations serve as a model for supporting youth mental health.

This recognition underscores the strength of our shared commitment to community-based care that helps children thrive in and out of the classroom.

[Listen to the Podcast](#)

## Community Outreach

### Helping Students Start Strong: The Center's Albany Park Site Welcomes Senator Villivalam's Office



Representatives from State Senator Ram Villivalam's office visited our Albany Park site to help distribute backpacks to children and families during our annual Pack-to-School campaign. The event provided students with essential tools to ensure a strong start to the new school year. Through this partnership, families received support as they prepared for the year ahead.

## Giving

### Spreading Joy to Chicago Children and Families: The Center's Annual Holiday Gift Giving Drive Kicks Off

Winter is almost here, and the holiday season is just around the corner. At the Center, we're preparing to turn the most wonderful time of the year into something truly sparkling through our 2025 Holiday Gift Giving Drive. With your generosity, we're committed to making this time of year special for all of the children and youth in our programs.

You can join us by purchasing directly from our curated gift registries, organizing a gift drive, or making a monetary donation.



Give the Gift of Magic!

## COMING SOON! Save the Date for our Annual E3 Gala

We are thrilled to share that on May 7, 2026, the Center will be hosting our signature event, the E3 Gala, at The Geraghty in Chicago. The gala brings together friends, supporters, and partners to celebrate and ground us in our mission to educate, enrich, and empower children and families.

**Keep your eyes peeled for future emails and social media posts on ways to get involved!**

Empower Your Community!



Apply Today!

Join Our Alumni Network!



CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER  
for Learning

# Join Our Alumni Network

Since 1976, the Carole Robertson Center for Learning has supported thousands of children and families across Chicago. If you or your child were part of our early childhood or youth development programs, we want to hear from you!

[Sign Up Today!](#)



## An Honor & Responsibility

Since its inception, the Center has worked to honor the life and memory of Carole Robertson who, together with her friends Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, and Denise McNair, was killed in the 1963 bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

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