



# Bright Futures

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Summer 2021

## Connect With Us

414.562.2929  
2545 N. 29th Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53210  
NextDoorMKE.org



## Get Involved

**Volunteer or Host a Book Drive**  
Contact Martina at  
414.999.2529  
or mstevens@NextDoorMKE.org

**Donate**  
NextDoorMKE.org



**Our Mission:** Next Door supports the intellectual, physical and emotional development of children by partnering with their families for success in school and the community.

**Our Vision:** Next Door's vision is to position neighborhood children and families for long-term success.

## Letter from the President

It's a busy summer at Next Door as we prepare a comprehensive plan to address our students' transition back to 100% in-person learning in the fall.

We've developed an Accelerating Equity plan to address the greater needs expected from our students and families across our early childhood education and prenatal services programming. In late June, we implemented a few early initiatives like a summer school program. We're also piloting a new team of volunteer tutors called "Accelerators" who are working one-on-one with students. Learn more about these efforts inside.

I'm also excited to share news of the innovative work happening at Next Door like virtual reality programming. In addition, students at our 29th Street campus are expanding their creativity and physical exercise on beautiful, new playgrounds this summer – check out the back page for a photo!

We're investing in our staff, too, with an Aspiring Leaders program in partnership

with Marquette University. We graduated our first class of participants in June and their leadership potential is clear!

We're grateful for the community generosity for Next Door with two major recent events supporting our critical early childhood education work. More than 400 people participated in our Virtual Walk for Children in May. We just wrapped up our Books for Kids 30th birthday celebration with more than 40 book drives hosted by the community. More details on each event are inside.

I want to thank our community supporters – and the Next Door team – for being such devoted champions for our children and families, and helping Next Door continue doing the most important work in Milwaukee today!

**Tracey Sparrow, Ed.D.**  
Next Door President

## Next Door named 2021 Top Workplaces by Journal Sentinel

We're proud to announce another high-profile workplace award for Next Door! In May of this year, the Journal Sentinel named Next Door a Top Workplaces based on feedback from our annual employee survey. As part of the honor, the newspaper recognized Next Door in a virtual ceremony and published a story featuring the work of Next Door in our community and positive feedback from our employee survey.

We've seen a significant improvement in our employee turnover rate from 32% in 2018 to 16% in 2020. 16% is well below the typical average of 30 to 35% in early childhood organizations nationwide. In 2020, Next Door received the Best Places to Work award from Milwaukee Business Journal.





## Engaging Our Community!

### Virtual Walk for Children

We want to thank everyone for participating in and donating to the 2021 Virtual Walk for Children! This year's event expanded in scope with more days and more ways to participate. People were able to walk, run or ride a mile for a child and support their early learning and development at Next Door.

The event culminated in a virtual celebration for Next Door families and event participants. Hosted by Shannon Sims with TMJ4, we featured "Pete the Cat" story time, yoga, an African musical troupe and an interview with our Presenting Sponsor, Harley-Davidson Motor Company. The company has hosted the Walk for Children since it began in 1989. We thank Harley-Davidson and their employees for their generous support over the years!



**\$66,305**

raised

**8,383**

miles pledged to  
walk, run or ride

**438**

participants



### Thank You Sponsors!

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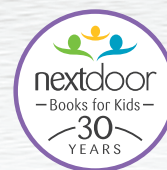
Meg Brzyski Nelson

Larry and Jeanne Prochnow

Amy and Rich Rovin

### Happy 30th Birthday Books for Kids!

We just wrapped up a big celebration honoring 30 years of Books for Kids! We hosted our largest book drive ever to support our city's youngest readers with free books for their home libraries.



People contributed through book drives, donated books from home, purchased new books from our Amazon Wish List and made financial gifts. We thank everyone for their generous donations! Your support will help us provide three books a month to every child we serve in the upcoming school year. You can learn about Books for Kids and donation opportunities at [nextdoormke.org/get-involved/booksforkids](https://nextdoormke.org/get-involved/booksforkids)



**\$55,105**

raised

**13,000**

books and  
still counting

**41**

books drives

### Thank You Sponsors!

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Linda and Michael Groth

Mary and Ted Kellner

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Brenda and Matt Levatich

#### Leading the Way Sponsors

Claire Fritsche

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Nancy and Michael Roos

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#### Champion for Children Sponsors

A gift in memory of Royal and Donna Gordon. Their concept and dedication was the foundation for Next Door.

Donald and Erica Kieffer

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## Transitioning back to school: Next Door's Accelerating Equity Plan

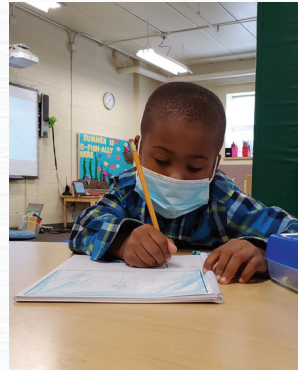
After an unprecedented past year, we recognize the upcoming school year needs to be more than business as usual at Next Door. Our students missed out on critical in-person learning experiences with their teachers and peers, and may have experienced serious trauma at home due to stresses tied to the pandemic.

Guided by our Accelerating Equity plan, we will return this fall with 100% in-person learning for more than 1,300 students across our

center-based, home-based and partnership programming. The plan maintains our high quality early childhood education with enhanced academic and social-emotional support for students. We will provide additional transitional support for parents and staff, too. We've already started implementing parts of the plan this summer and examples are featured below.

### Summer School

- K4 students
- Daily literacy, writing and math instruction
- Daily enrichment activities like STEM, arts, sensory play and library visits
- 3 Calm Classroom mindfulness sessions daily



### Accelerators

- 12 volunteers onsite 2-5 days/week
- One-on-one tutoring for K4 and K5 students
- Supporting children with language, literacy, math and enrichment activities
- Includes partnership with City of Milwaukee's Earn & Learn program and Literacy's Lab's Leading Men Fellowship



### Virtual Reality

- K5 students
- Broadening student horizons with new life experiences
- Topics include world travel, habitat exploration and transportation
- Building vocabulary and cognition skills
- Experiences expanded upon with journaling, art, conversation and more







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## New playgrounds to learn and grow!



Meet Next Door students Kyson, Taveyis, Caden and Ariel! They're having a blast this summer on the new playgrounds at our 29th Street campus. We worked with GRG Playscapes on this major renovation, which incorporates more nature into the children's outdoor experiences, helps them develop important gross motor, cognitive and social skills and inspires their creativity and imagination!