



Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood



Annual Report

July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018

Dear Supporter,

It's an exciting time for those of us who believe that corporate profits should never come at the expense of children's wellbeing. Teachers are pushing back against intrusive educational technologies that profit off student data. Pundits and politicians are finally asking tough questions about Big Tech. Parents are helping one another navigate the challenges of (not) giving smartphones to pre-teens. And Silicon Valley executives are questioning whether the technologies they've unleashed are really good for children.

You've helped make kids and commercialism a mainstream issue, and in this new climate, we're more effective than ever. In just the past twelve months, CCFC has:

- Exposed how one of the world's most powerful companies illegally collects children's sensitive data (p. 3).
- Launched a cross-disciplinary network of professionals who believe that reducing kids' screen time is both necessary and possible (p. 6).
- Stopped a major toymaker from interfering in family relationships and spying on children (p. 1).
- Organized experts, advocates, and parents to say "no!" to the first major social network for young kids (p. 2).
- Convened the first-ever national conference dedicated to helping children and families unplug from ad-supported screens (p. 7).

We're challenging the myths that corporations make good caregivers and teachers, that saturating kids in commercialism is an inevitable facet of modern life, and that face-to-face peer and family relationships are a vestige of days past. We're excited about the impact we're having in Washington and in state houses (p. 4), and we're proud of the real changes CCFC members are making in their classrooms (p. 7), communities (pp 8-9), and homes (p. 10).

We owe all of our success to you, our passionate and committed supporters. As you reflect on all we've achieved together this year, we hope you'll consider sharing our work with the people and organizations in your community who are dedicated to supporting kids' wellbeing. As you'll see in these pages, it takes collaboration, creativity, and strength in numbers to ensure that every child gets the commercial-free time and space they deserve.

Sincerely,



Josh Golin
Executive Director



Nathan Dungan
Board Chair

Keeping Corporations Out of Cribs



Imagine a baby waking at night and being soothed not by a loving adult, but by a device equipped with a camera, microphone, and speaker. As the baby grows, she begins to form an attachment to her “digital nanny.” For years, she plays with, talks to, and confides in it – all under the watchful eyes of the manufacturer and its retail partners.

This isn’t dystopian fiction. It was Mattel’s vision for Aristotle, an always-on, artificially intelligent device for kids that the company planned to release last year. But before that could happen, CCFC took action.

Because we closely monitor companies that target kids, we learned about Aristotle months ahead of its scheduled release date, giving us ample time to organize. We recruited leading privacy and child health experts to document how Aristotle could interrupt family relationships, put kids’ privacy at risk, and interfere with healthy development. The first wave of our campaign led to

widespread negative press coverage of the device, and Mattel pushed the release date back by several months.

But we didn’t let up. We partnered with Story of Stuff to gather more than 20,000 petition signatures asking Mattel to cancel Aristotle, and in response, Mattel pushed the release back another six months. Soon after, a bipartisan group of federal legislators wrote to Mattel on our behalf, echoing our concerns and asking how information collected by the device would be shared with Mattel’s corporate partners. Just days later, faced with another round of bad publicity, Mattel announced that Aristotle was cancelled.

Mattel thought that their “digital nanny” would be integral to the future of childhood – but they were wrong. For every Aristotle, there are countless people who know babies should be soothed by caregivers, not corporations; that play should be driven by kids’ creativity, not commercial scripts; and that marketers have no place in children’s bedrooms. And when we work together, we win.



“This is a huge victory for everyone who believes that corporate profits and experimentation should never come at the expense of children’s privacy and wellbeing. We commend Mattel for listening to the child development experts and thousands of parents who told them a child’s bedroom should be free of corporate surveillance.”

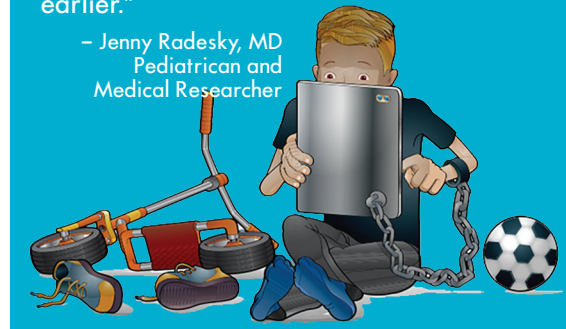
- CCFC’s Josh Golin in the New York Times

No Facebook for Kids

Last year, Facebook released Messenger Kids, the first-ever social networking app designed for children as young as five years old. It features emojis, colorful stickers, and animations that draw and hold kids' attention, keeping them engaged with Facebook even if they're too young to type. Facebook asserts that Messenger Kids will provide a safe alternative for children who have been using social media designed for teens and adults. But the 11- and 12-year-olds already on Snapchat, Instagram, or Facebook won't switch to an app clearly meant for little kids.

"In my research, clinical work, and friendships, I've never heard parents say that they want their child using social media earlier."

– Jenny Radesky, MD
Pediatrician and
Medical Researcher



Messenger Kids is not responding to a need. It's creating one. So when we heard about the app, we did what we do best: we organized.

In January, we sent Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg a letter signed by over 100 experts in media and child health, detailing how Messenger Kids undermines children's wellbeing and urging him to discontinue the app. We presented research showing that teens are struggling with overuse of social media, and explained that younger children are even less developmentally ready for social media's interpersonal challenges and addictive interfaces. We also detailed how moving friendships online displaces the genuine interactions that are crucial for developing empathy and healthy relationships.

Over 21,000 people joined our experts in opposition to Messenger Kids by signing petitions in support of our letter. Our campaign was featured in nearly every major media outlet in the US, educating millions of parents about the risks of ad-supported social media and the importance of face-to-face relationships for healthy development.

A High-Profile Hearing

When Mark Zuckerberg testified before Congress last Spring, we made sure children were part of the conversation. Senator Dick Durbin questioned Zuckerberg about Messenger Kids, mentioning CCFC by name and quoting directly from our letter. When asked what



Facebook would do with the sensitive data collected by the app, the Facebook CEO tried to dodge the question. But Senator Durbin stayed firm, leading Zuckerberg to state on the record that Facebook would never use Messenger Kids data for advertising purposes. In the coming year, we'll be making sure he sticks to his word.

A Groundbreaking Step for Kids' Privacy

In April, we filed a Federal Trade Commission complaint detailing how Google, one of the most powerful companies in the world, illegally collects sensitive data from millions of children on YouTube. Our landmark complaint was supported by a powerful coalition of 23 consumer and privacy groups, including the Center for Digital Democracy and Consumers Union.

The complaint documents how YouTube, which is owned by Google, collects browsing history, location data, and other personal information from children without parental consent. The company then uses that data to target ads to kids on YouTube and across the internet. Both the collection and use of kids' data are clear violations of the Children's Online Privacy and Protection Act (COPPA). Google says they don't need to follow COPPA because, according to their terms of service, YouTube is "not for children under 13." But actions and ad contracts speak louder than fine-printed privacy policies.

YouTube is one of the most popular kids' websites in the world, and that's no accident. Many of YouTube's most successful channels feature nursery rhyme videos, cartoons, toy ads, and other content designed to capture young children's attention. YouTube provides how-to guides for creators making videos for kids. Google even runs a program that lets advertisers pay extra money to get their ads onto the most popular kid-directed channels, like Ryan Toy Review and ChuChuTV Nursery Rhymes & Kids Songs.

In short: Google is aware of, and profits off of, the millions of children who use YouTube every day. But they're not taking steps to protect those children's privacy. So we are – and it's already working.

We've met with high level FTC staff to discuss our complaint, and the agency's investigation is ongoing. Meanwhile, US Senators Tom Udall, Catherine Cortez Masto, and Maggie Hassan sent a letter to Google demanding answers about the issues we raised. And our campaign's extensive high-profile media coverage – including the *New York Times*, *Good Morning America*, and the *Washington Post* – has helped parents around the world understand YouTube's privacy risks. In the coming year, we'll work closely with our allies in Congress to make sure the FTC holds Google accountable for their illegal, exploitative practices.



Victory for Kids in Maryland



We're inspired by friend of CCFC Cindy Eckard, who tirelessly lobbied the Maryland legislature on behalf of children – and won! Since 2015, Cindy has been working to establish health and safety guidelines for the use of digital devices in schools. “I have a high-tech background going back to the 1980s,” she says, “and the health risks of computers have always been known – OSHA has regulated the use of office computers since the 90s.” So when her



Cindy, top right, at the bill signing for HB 1110.

kids began using devices at school every day, Cindy wanted to know what guidelines were in place to protect them. She found there were none, and worse, no one seemed interested in developing them. “That’s when I knew I had to take action.”

We met Cindy in 2017, when her proposed legislation was being introduced a second time. “CCFC’s support spanned so many aspects of the bill’s ultimate success,” she says.

“When letters were needed, CCFC wrote letters. When calls needed to be made, CCFC called. Hundreds of CCFC members from across Maryland signed petitions in support of the bill.” With the help of CCFC and other advocates, HB 1110 was signed into law in April 2018, making Maryland

the first state requiring health and safety guidelines for digital devices in the classroom. Since the bill passed, Cindy has heard from advocates across the world working toward similar legislation.

Policies to Protect Children

As public awareness and concerns about privacy grow, lawmakers are getting serious about creating new policies to protect kids – and CCFC is ensuring that our supporters have a seat at the table. In the past year, members of Congress have sent letters to Mattel, Facebook, Amazon, and Google on behalf of CCFC, raising critical questions about how these companies’ practices and products affect children. We also worked closely with Senators Markey and Durbin to craft the Do Not Track Kids Act, a new law to protect children and teens from sneaky online data collection and advertising. We worked with other advocates to co-file FTC complaints against Facebook and Instagram for unfair and deceptive advertising practices, including allowing celebrities to market alcohol and other harmful products to kids. In Canada, we lent our power to a bill banning all food marketing to anyone under 16. Finally, we joined an international coalition of consumer groups to hold the makers of smartwatches accountable for revealing children’s locations and failing to secure their sensitive information.



The international #WatchOut campaign called out security flaws in kids’ smartwatches.

Cleaning up the *New York Times*



Last fall, the *New York Times* launched *The Times for Kids*, a Sunday supplement designed to get kids interested in current events. But the first edition that November was hardly news: five of the 16 pages were full-page ads for Google Home, an always-on smart speaker that collects kids' sensitive data. Even worse, the ads were colorful puzzles and games – exactly the kind of advertising disguised as content that the *Times*' own ad policy bans! CCFC notified the industry watchdogs at CARU, the Children's Advertising Review Unit, and organized nine advocacy groups to write to the *Times*, asking them to drop ads from the *Times for Kids*. Since we took action, there have been eight more editions of the *Times for Kids*, and they're much better: each features just one clearly-marked ad, usually for a museum, park, or the *Times* itself, on the back page.

Standing Up for Public Schools

On September 13, 2017, CCFC, Citizens for Public Schools, and the Schott Foundation hosted the Boston premiere of *Backpack Full of Cash*. The film explores the privatization of public schools and the impact of market-based reform on the country's most vulnerable students, featuring a number of heartbreaking scenes of children whose entire education now takes place online.

The screening was a huge success: over 650 passionate teachers, students, and advocates filled the theater to capacity! After the film, CCFC's Josh Golin moderated a panel with Matt Damon (the film's narrator), CCFC Senior Advisor Nancy Carlsson-Paige, Boston Teachers Union President Jessica Tang, and Youth On Board's Luis Navarro. The conversation was illuminating and inspiring, drawing connections between the commercialization of childhood and the encroaching corporate influence in public schools. As Josh explained, "children are harmed when they are valued only for what they bring to a market economy."

Josh Golin, Matt Damon, the Schott Foundation's Cassie Schwerner, Citizens for Public School's Lisa Guisbond, and youth activist Luis Navarro. Photo by Cheryl Clegg.

A Network for Change

Last fall, we launched the Children's Screen Time Action Network, a cross-disciplinary coalition of professionals who believe that reducing the amount of time kids spend with digital devices is both necessary and possible. The Network is the first of its kind and brings together teachers, pediatricians, librarians, psychologists, early childhood professionals, and other practitioners to share best practices and resources and keep up with research on kids and tech.



By the Numbers

546

members in 34 states
and 10 countries

200

attendees at our
inaugural conference

85

ready-to-use resources
in our library

5 professional working groups, including Early Childhood Educators and Mental Health Professionals



"As a parent, I was so happy to find the Children's Screen Time Action Network facilitating the kind of collaboration we need to get our kids back into full, rich lives."

– Paula Poundstone, comedian and advocate

A Groundbreaking Conference

On April 20 and 21, the Children's Screen Time Action Network convened the very first interdisciplinary conference dedicated to reducing children's screen time. More than 200 educators, health professionals, advocates, and parents came together to teach and learn about urgent issues facing children and families. Covering everything from child development to commercial data collection to manipulative design that keeps kids on screens, the conference was a unique and exciting gathering united by one goal: to ensure that in a rapidly technologizing world, children's needs are front and center.



Educators Taking Action

Speech and language pathologist and Action Network member Samah Saidi is leading the way in her community of Dearborn, Michigan. She's a founding member of her school district's screen time committee, which she and her colleagues started in Fall of 2017. "Pre-K referrals for special education services were skyrocketing," says Samah, "and we started noticing a pattern, where some of these very young kids were spending 6 to 7 hours a day on screens." Samah and Kellyanne, a special ed resource specialist, started recommending decreasing screen time as a first intervention, and often saw the problematic behaviors decreased too.

"We're all moms," she says of her colleagues Ammerah and Kellyanne, who are committee members and joined her at the Action Network conference. "We see directly how screen time affects our children. It's personal and professional." But not everyone sees it, she says. Fighting increased screen time in her school district is challenging when higher-ups have either bought into technology myths, or don't have the resources to push back. "Parents, staff members, we see it – the people on the ground, we see it. But there's this other reality at the top, where administration is saying, well, we have to give this computer-based assessment to kindergarteners so we can be accountable under the academic readiness law."

That's why it's so important to work together, says Samah, and why she joined the Network. "To be in a room full of people who are saying, 'no, we need to protect our kids,' it's amazing," she said. "It's really knowing that there's a place I can go to ask a question or find a resource. Having a place where I can say: 'here's what worked in my district, and what didn't. What worked in yours?'"

MEMBER SPOT-LIGHT



Kellyanne, Ammerah, and Samah at the Action Network Conference.



Thanks to Our Conference Sponsors

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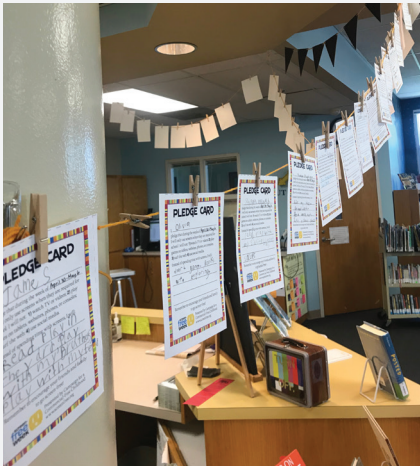
Centre for Child Honouring
Cream Hill Foundation
PEP Parent Encouragement
Program

Screen-Free Week 2018

This year we hosted our eighth Screen-Free Week, and by any measure, it was the best one yet. We had over 100 endorsers (a new record!) including organizations with tremendous reach, like the Sierra Club, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Children and Nature Network. Over 100 media reports documented Screen-Free Week celebrations in schools and communities around the country, like Warrenton Middle School in Virginia, where students made cozy felt blankets for kids undergoing cancer treatments. Here are a few of our favorite stories from this year's celebrations!

"When my house had no TV, computer and video games, all I did was read, until one day I dreamed big about becoming a writer. Loving to read gave me an idea to write my own book. It made me happy."

- Anthony, 11, New York



Student pledge cards decorate the library of the Walker School in Marietta, GA. According to librarian Kate Carter, Screen-Free Week was "a huge hit."

Fourth grader Daric Barth holds a snake from the petting zoo that helped kick off the ILES Screen-Free Week. Photo by Jamie Ross, Indian Lake Schools.



Students at Marguerite E. Small Elementary School in West Yarmouth, MA, listen to directions before participating in a bike rodeo during Screen-Free Week.

"I realized how many games the kids could play with each other that I thought they needed me to help facilitate. I wasn't giving them enough credit and that was great as a parent to acknowledge and grow upon."

- Megan, parent, Cape Cod

"Not having electronics has not only made me happier, but it has made my family happier, because when one person is happy, you can make everyone happy with even just a smile, a laugh, or a hug. Just one kind thing can make a gigantic impact on someone else's life."

- Hadley, 13, Massachusetts



**Save the Date
April 29 - May 5
2019**

"It was a week filled with wonder and discovery. I want to thank CFCC for supporting our families and teachers by providing the tools and inspiration to create and celebrate healthy, strong and resourceful families."

– Sue Gubbons, early ed teacher, Cape Cod

Students at Warrenton Middle School in Virginia made felt blankets for pediatric cancer patients during their Screen-Free Week.



Students playing a game in the library at East Hartford High School. The response was so positive, they're already planning for 2019! Photo by Kristine Emond.



Students at Foster Traditional Academy in Louisville, KY proudly display their certificates for completing Screen-Free Week.

"Our class got to interact with each other more and we really got to know each other better!"

– Avery, 5th grade, Alaska

A Helping Hand

"My volunteering with CCFC was predestined," says Rinny Yourman, who led the organizing and outreach efforts for Screen-Free Week 2018. Rinny first became interested in TV's impact on children as a communications major at Penn. "While I ultimately pursued a career in labor law," she says, "something happened that led me to CCFC: I had children of my own." The overcommercialization of her kids' childhood led Rinny to Screen-Free Week. "I empathize with the challenges parents face with pervasive digital entertainment," she says. "Screen-Free Week is a perfect way to support them." Rinny's passion led to 2018 being the biggest Screen-Free Week yet! She recruited new organizations who share her love of the outdoors, and brought in a record 102 endorsers. In 2019, she's focusing on increasing school involvement. We are so grateful to Rinny and other CCFC supporters keeping the screen-free experience alive for children throughout the year!

**VOLUNTEER
SPOTLIGHT**





Why I Support CCFC

by Lauren Kopans



Twenty years ago, several of my friends were becoming parents, and I spent time watching Baby Einstein videos with them and their babies. My friends were impressed with the attention spans their infants seemed to possess, yet I was confused and concerned. At the time, I was in graduate school for clinical and school psychology, and I had a nagging sense that something wasn't quite right. Yes, their children were entranced, but was staring at a screen better than engaging in the actual world, manipulating objects, even looking out the window?

Several years later, I became a parent and discovered CCFC – an organization that not only agreed with me about Baby Einstein, but had taken action against them! It felt like a homecoming. I knew from my education, and from my gut, that spending hours consumed by

commercial screens deprives kids of important aspects of healthy development: exploration, creativity, movement, play, being outside, and even being bored. CCFC's guidance, validation, and resources have helped me and my husband parent according to our values. It was such a relief to know that we weren't alone in our ideas, which were often against the grain. Our daughters are now 12 and 15, and of course, there are challenges: we want them to feel connected to their peers, and they sometimes wish they had access to the commercial technology that their friends do. But we talk candidly with them about why we make the choices we do, and ... they get it. They see in their lives the same thing I see in my practice as a psychologist: teens who feel isolated, anxious, and unable to put down their phones, even for a few minutes.

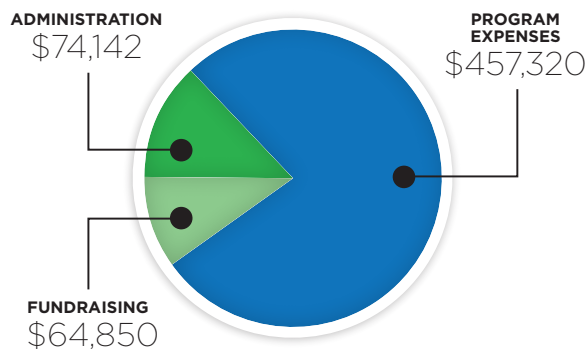
As more and more people start to see first-hand the negative impact of screens, commercialism, and consumerism on children, we desperately need thoughtful voices, backed by research, to challenge corporations who put profits over children's needs. I have no doubt that the passionate, committed, and hard-working people at CCFC will continue to be leaders. As I've told CCFC directly, they are my favorite organization, and I love sending my friends, colleagues, and clients their way. I am tremendously grateful to them - and to you, for joining me in supporting them.

"...we desperately need thoughtful voices, backed by research, to challenge corporations who put profits over children's needs."

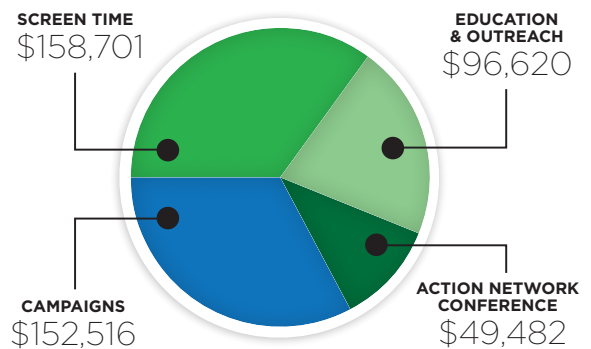
CCFC Financials

INCOME	
Grants	\$ 60,000
Individual Donations	\$ 422,406
Event Fees and Book Sales	\$ 29,837
Total FY1 Income	\$ 512,243
Expenses	\$ 596,311
Net Increase/(Decrease)	\$ (84,068)
Beginning Reserves	\$ 563,724
Net Assets FY18	\$ 479,655

TOTAL EXPENSES: \$596,312



PROGRAM EXPENSES: \$457,320



Shaping the Narrative

All of our campaigns this year received major national press coverage – and even when the story wasn't about CCFC, journalists turned to us for our expertise. When YouTube faced criticism for recommending inappropriate videos to children, both the *New York Times* and *Good Morning America* called on CCFC's Josh Golin to explain how the video site puts kids' wellbeing at risk. Our Melissa Campbell and David Monahan published op-eds in *Fortune*, critiquing YouTube and Amazon for inappropriately targeting children. And in May, the *Guardian's* coverage of our ongoing Messenger Kids campaign featured CCFC supporters demanding Facebook do right by kids.

All of that coverage gives us real power to shape the conversation, and it even spurred one company to change its harmful practices: When Netflix began testing a feature that gave kids cartoon badges as a reward for binge-watching TV shows, reporters called us first. Just days after our public critique of the badge system, Netflix announced the new feature was cancelled!

Our Supporters

We are incredibly grateful for CCFC's supporters, who are actively building a world where all kids get the commercial-free time and space they deserve. Below are our donors for FY17 (July 2017 - June 2018), without whom our work would not be possible.

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CCFC educates the public about commercialism's impact on kids' wellbeing and advocates for the end of child-targeted marketing.

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