



CREATING LANDSCAPES ANNUAL REPORT 2025

# *Making Space for Imagination*





# Annual Report 2025 | Creating Landscapes

## DEAR FRIENDS & SUPPORTERS,



The Learning Shelter, completed 2024,  
Photo: Mike Crowley, Meadville Tribune

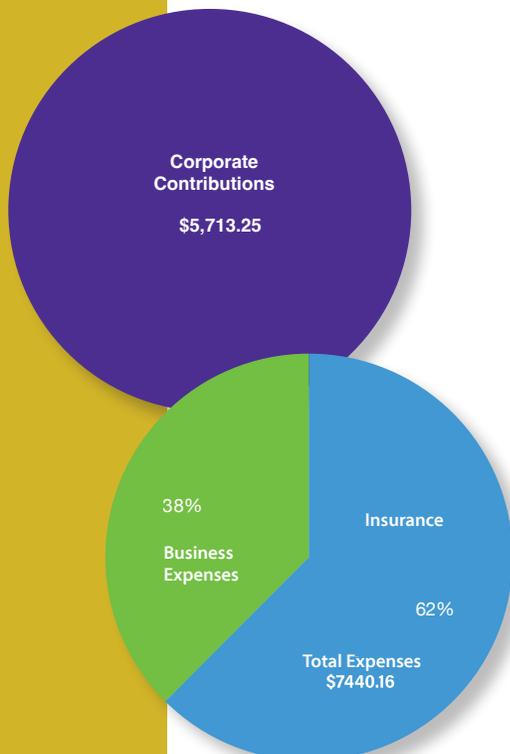
Cover picture: Joyce Klasen

The idea that catalyzed Creating Landscapes was simple—but radical: **What if we made space for imagination?** What if we trusted that learning, creativity, nourishment, and connection could emerge—not from rigid plans—but from listening, from noticing, from wondering together what might be possible? That question, first asked decades ago in a room full of curious children and open-hearted adults, has never stopped shaping us.

Over the years, each new venue of Creating Landscapes—from early learning to food security to adult education—has emerged not because we had a fixed plan, but because we stayed curious. We paid attention. We asked, again and again: **What does our community need now? What might be possible here?** We’ve built things together—sometimes temporary, sometimes enduring—but always with the understanding that lasting impact doesn’t require permanence. It requires presence.

Today, as we look at the world around us and choose not to be consumed by anger or division, but instead to stay rooted in possibility, we’re reminded that flourishing begins with how we nourish—bodies, minds, and spirits. If we continue to listen—to our children, our neighbors, and our hearts—we are convinced that with your continued support, we can keep creating the kind of infrastructure that allows every member of our community not just to survive, but to thrive.

**Nourish & Flourish!**



Creating Landscapes Governing Board

# Summer Parks Program

**THE CREATING LANDSCAPES LEARNING CENTER INC.**

**DBA Creating Landscapes June 2025**

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Scott A. Sjolander, MBA, Chair Food4Thought Governing Board  
Ishita Sinha Roy, Ph.D., Corresponding Secretary  
Dan Winston, MAT

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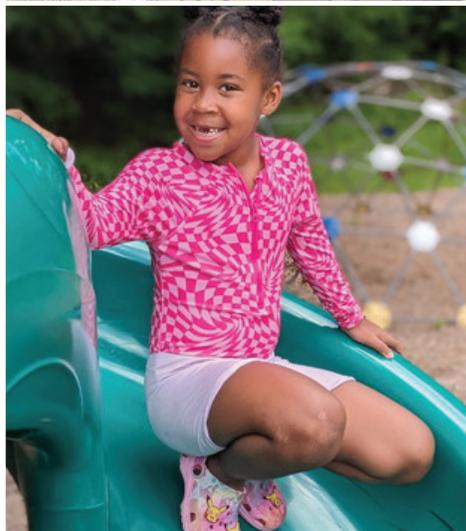
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Rebecca Spadafore, Investments

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Joyce Klasen, CL Families ELC, Representative  
Scott A. Sjolander, Food4Thought, Chair

### Venue Treasurers:

Pete Gifford, Food4Thought  
Debra Pipp, CL Families ELC



Photos: Roseanne Sommers



## Creating Landscapes *for Families* Early Learning Center

### *Sunny Little School!*

**T**wo years ago, a mom stopped in to visit Creating Landscapes for Families Early Learning Center. She was thinking about enrolling her 4-year old daughter in preschool. When she walked up the stairs and came through our door, our lead teacher Kelly met her with a warm smile and a welcoming handshake. The mom – looking at that warm, welcoming smile AND looking through our huge beautiful windows said ‘*what a sunny little school!*’...

She was looking for a place where her child’s first school experience would be in a school that was loving, fun, and comfortable. She told us that she hoped her daughter would have the chance to play all day long - learning about life and friendship among friends. She looked around our classroom where children were talking and laughing, singing and dancing, painting and proudly sharing art with friends, working together to build intricate magnatiles castles. She talked with our children who are just as loving as their teachers. She decided that our “sunny little school” was *just* the place she was looking for - and we knew that Cora and her mom were *just* who we needed.

As our Early Learning Center heads into its eighth year, our STAFF is relaxing and renewing while enjoying summer with family and “home time”. They are each taking early childhood continuing education classes and the “summer texts” between them are a sweet mix of reminiscence about last year AND joyful plans for next year. I think it’s important to note that every single one of our seven staff members *have had / or now have* children who attended our school as preschoolers! These moms KNOW our school and what we stand for – first as mothers; then as teachers. Something to celebrate!

- We remain a STAR 4 school and are in good standing with the Department of Human Services (DHS). We also remain in good standing with the federal food program that helps us to afford the healthy home-cooked meals and snacks we provide to all of our children each day - for **no** cost to families
- Our lease for space rented in the Parish House of the Unitarian Universalist Church is renewed. We are forever grateful for our second floor place in their beautiful space. *Those windows!*
- Our Early Learning Center Governing Board is meeting regularly and is working together to keep us fiscally responsible and clearly focused on the mission statements of Creating Landscapes for Families Early Learning Center and the Creating Landscapes Corporation.

And as we submit this report to you, we are just two preschoolers shy of being fully enrolled for next year! We are proud and humbled by the fact that our enrollment numbers grow every year and that enrollment happens organically by “word of mouth”. Our ELC families literally “bring in” their friends to visit. Enrollment happens!

Because our ELC strives to maintain a school community that is reflective of the beautiful diversity in our neighborhoods, city, country, and world; we offer enrollment with a few different financial options:

- Our Pre K Counts grant is renewed and headed into its seventh year of providing financial support as we offer FREE preschool for 23 local children who qualify financially. And NEW this year - our ELC is now partnered with our local FCCA – how sweet it is to be “just a walk up the street” to connect and collaborate with our new PKC partner!

## (more) Early Learning Center

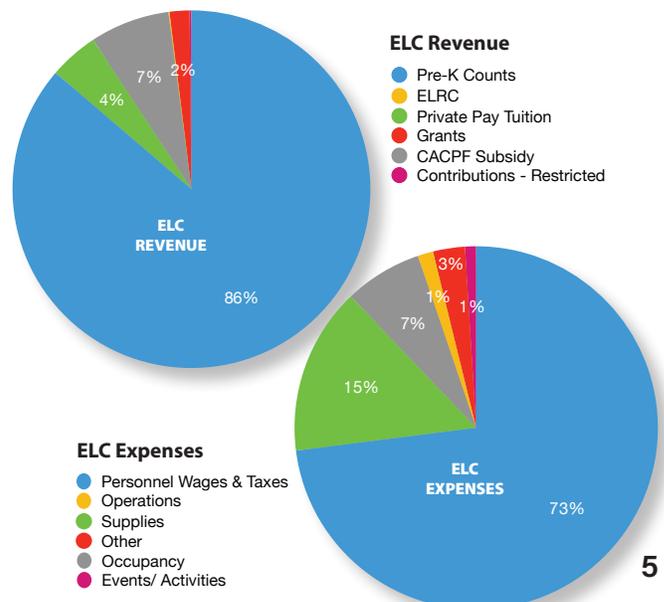
- Our ELC offers a “Private Pay” monthly tuition option which is “in line” with other local preschools.
- Our ELC Scholarship Fund offers opportunities for families to apply for assistance in paying their tuition. Our ELC Board considers the needs of the family as well as the amount in the scholarship account which is totally funded by the generosity of others.
- ELRC (Early Learning Resource Center) has been a steady and solid resource since our beginning eight years ago and every few years, a family or two benefits from financial support from ELRC.

Our families are the collective HEART of our school. For the last several years, we have held an “ELC Family Reunion” in the spring. Children and families from across the years fill our classroom – it has become a “standing room only” event – a time when our ELC Family reconnects after years apart in different schools. Families “catch up” on their lives – they reflect on meeting one another years ago at “drop off” and “pick up”. We fill a table with old photos of classroom moments through the years. Children shuffle through those photos while talking and giggling about “when I was little”..

The community we live in is our source of strength. We are grateful for the ongoing well-wishes of our families, friends, neighbors, and community partners. We appreciate the financial support from various local, state, and federal entities. And we thrive because of the unwavering dedication and enthusiasm of our staff and board. It is because of the commitment and support of many that we are able to offer a high quality early learning experience for our children.



Photos: Joyce Klasen





## (more) Early Learning Center

**Speaking of the children, we are most grateful for each and every one. As one mom wrote to us - "shoes off, hair crazy, paint from head to toe, covered in dirt, and excited to share his day with family when he comes home"... Living proof of a day well spent.**

**We invite you to stop by our sunny little school! All are welcome!**

Respectfully submitted by the Governing Board of  
Creating Landscapes for Families Early Learning  
Center

Corinne Chafey, Pete Gifford, Jan Hyatt, Joyce  
Klasen, John Lawrence, Deb Lehman, Deborah Pipp



Photos: Joyce Klasen

## Food4Thought... 8 Action Venues

**In meeting out stakeholders dynamic needs, Creating Landscapes Food4Thought has developed eight action venues.**

**Walk-able Meadville** first and foremost encourages safe and accessible pathways within and through the community. These pathways connecting our gardens and parks ar intended to be accessible, interesting, educational and fun. Marked by garden stones the Children's Garden participants created, they provide opportunities for learning to notice more and for physical exercise. From this primary intent, Walkable Meadville launched our community's annual spring Walk-A-Thons. Walkathon'25 mounted 16 walking teams that logged more than 16,000 miles and raised more than \$16,000 to help fund the Summer Parks '25 Shadybrook Program.

**Summer Parks Program at Shadybrook Park** The magic of childhood is alive and well in Meadville, PA, as evidenced any given weekday at Shadybrook Park during the eight weeks that span mid-June - early August. Each day, around 50 children choose to spend hours at Shadybrook, immersed in nature, away from technological devices, and surrounded by creative choices. Within the safety limits of the park and the structure of a routine that supports long periods of free play, and surrounded by caring role models, children can choose where, with what materials, with whom, and how long to play. Walk through the park, and you will hear joyful laughter, quiet humming, earnest conversations, and contented sighs coming from naturally formed clusters of children splashing in the creek, inventing song and dance, watercolor painting, or relaxing under shade trees. These children are in the state of flow. This is where the magic happens, building resilience, self-confidence, a connection to nature, a sense of belonging, and the power to shape one's own future.

Not only do our elementary-aged children experience this magic, but so do half a dozen high schoolers and a handful of young adults who serve as junior counselors. This year, Crawford Heritage Community Foundation awarded us with \$15,000 to employ and develop six high school students. We were thrilled to have five students return from last year. We are using these funds to equip our junior counselors both with general employment skills (the interview process, professional etiquette, and job retention) and with knowledge and hands-on experience in being a positive role model for children. Audrey Smith and Jen Adams from Parkside Psychological led a workshop on relating to children through a trauma-informed lens. Nicole Gillette from The Raising Wonder Foundation provided the teens with a basic understanding of child development and practical guidance for supporting children through challenging behaviors .As Summer Parks facilitators, we have seen incredible growth in our high school students both in professionalism and in the level of empathy and skill displayed in working with children. We are incredibly grateful to our community for believing in the magic of the Summer Parks Program and investing in what matters: our children's and teenagers' mental and physical health and freedom to choose.



Photo: Danuta Majchrowicz



Photo: Roseanne Sommers



## (more) Food4Thought

**Grow Meadville: Community Gardens and City Gardens** are small plots around the city sponsored by individuals, groups or businesses who plant and maintain the plot during the growing season. The gardens are available to anyone walking by to pick fresh vegetables for immediate consumption or pluck herbs for their dinner menu. The City Gardens encourage people to experience and enjoy the savory tastes of summer. Current City Gardens include the plots on Chancery Lane, Meadville Medical Center, Unitarian Universalist Church, Episcopal Church, and Parkside Psychological.

**Children's Garden:** South Main Street provides garden beds for growing and learning on Saturday mornings in May through September.

Participants of all ages gather to plant, weed, water, harvest, learn about friendly insects and create garden art.

In September 2024, master builders Mike Marley, George Stabile, and Doug Lodge led a host of stewards to complete a timber framed garden learning pavilion. This work of art is a structure promising to last a century, and the lease granted by the lot owner Linn Properties provides assurance of its public access.

**Reading Allies** is a collaborative program whose mission is to increase literacy among adults, children and families **through a team effort**. Currently, in Meadville, this group consists of Creating Landscapes Food 4 Thought and FCCA: Family and Community Christian Association.

Reading Allies finished their second year working with Crawford Central students at First District, Second District, Neason Hill, West End and Cochranon elementary schools. Dr Ann Noonan, Director of Ed Tech integration and Community Outreach at Crawford Central, coordinates the program between Reading Allies and Crawford Central. She reported teachers of all elementary schools have noticed improvement in the reading skills of the students Allies have worked with.

In Titusville, retired teachers have taken on the role of Reading Allies. They work with middle school students under the direction of Miles O'Shea, Middle School Principal.

For the 2025-26 school year, Allies will work with students to improve accuracy, fluency and comprehension. Allies are continuing to look for ways to engage adults and families in the Reading Allies Program.

**The Good to Go 5-2-1-0 Program** is a vital part of F4T's ongoing mission to improve the overall health and well-being of families and children in our community. This evidence-based initiative promotes four simple daily goals that can have a lasting impact on physical and mental health:

- \* **5** – Eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each day
- \* **2** – Limit screen time to two hours or less
- \* **1** – Get one hour or more of physical activity (preferably outside)
- \* **0** – Avoid sugary drinks and choose water instead

This initiative is designed to empower families with clear, actionable steps toward healthier living. It is promoted in partnership with local health professionals, educators, and community organizations.

## (more) Food4Thought

F4T members continue to collaborate with Meadville Medical Center and Crawford Central School District leaders. Together, they work to share resources, implement wellness programming, and support families in adopting these healthy habits.

By reinforcing simple, consistent daily choices, *Good to Go 5-2-1-0* helps children and families realize they have the power to improve their health and well-being -- one step at a time.

**The Adult Learning Force** regularly offers members of the community numerous five to ten - week courses in the arts and sciences. Classes meet once or twice each week for ninety - minute sessions throughout the academic year and over the summer—an ongoing opportunity to connect with the best of liberal arts learning.

Originally formed as an aspect of the Creating Landscapes Enrichment Program for Middle and High School students at Allegheny College, the Program needed to leave Campus during the COVID college shut down. They were then welcomed under the F4T fiscal umbrella.

**Teacher Allies** are professional educators who gather regularly with the intention of working together to generate mindfulness, coping skills, mutual appreciation, and support.

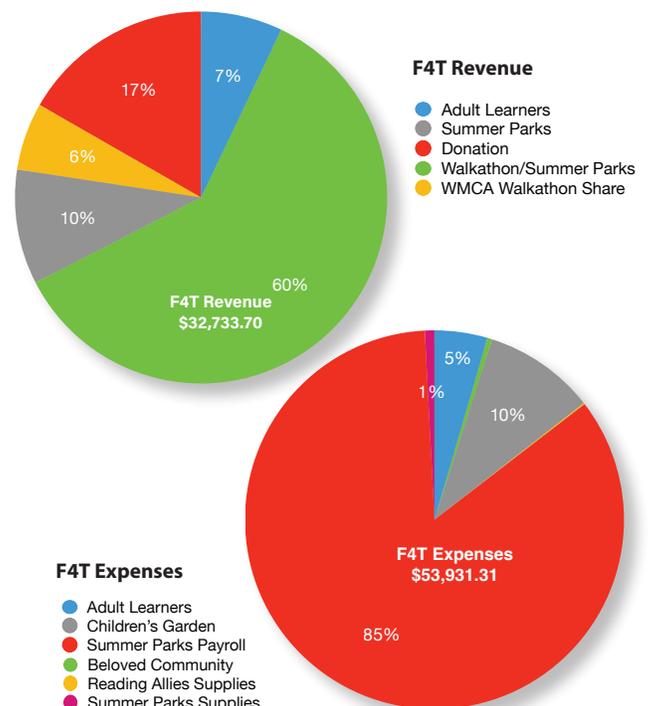
*Scott Sjolander, Food 4 Thought Board Chair*



*Photo: Roseanne Sommers*



*Photo: Jan Hyatt*





# The Creating Landscapes IDEA (1990)

INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING at the INTERFACE of IMAGINATION and CRITICAL THINKING

*Enabled by*  
ALLEGHENY COLLEGE (1990-2010)

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## SUMMER LANDSCAPES

*The Summer Creating Landscapes Program (1990)*

– where curious students and creative faculty play and learn together.

## AESTHETIC EDUCATION

*Aesthetic Education Programs for Educators (1990)*

– where area educators discover the power of arts-infused learning as a viable path toward achieving twenty-first century learning skills.

## ENRICHMENT COLLABORATION

*The Enrichment Collaboration for Middle and High School Students (1999)*

– where Allegheny College faculty and community professionals offer enrichment opportunities in the arts and sciences for area middle and high school students on twelve Fridays each academic year.

## ADULT LEARNING FORCE

*The Adult Learning Force in conjunction with the Enrichment Collaboration (2010)*

– where adult learners participate with area high school students to reacquaint themselves with the best of liberal arts learning.



Photo: Jan Hyatt

*Enabled in the Community by*  
CREATING LANDSCAPES LEARNING CENTER, INC. (2011-2025)

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### **Mission:**

The Corporation will serve as an incubator for programs that strive to develop a healthy, literate and problem-solving community.

### **Learning Venues:**

#### **FOOD 4 THOUGHT (2014) (F4T)**

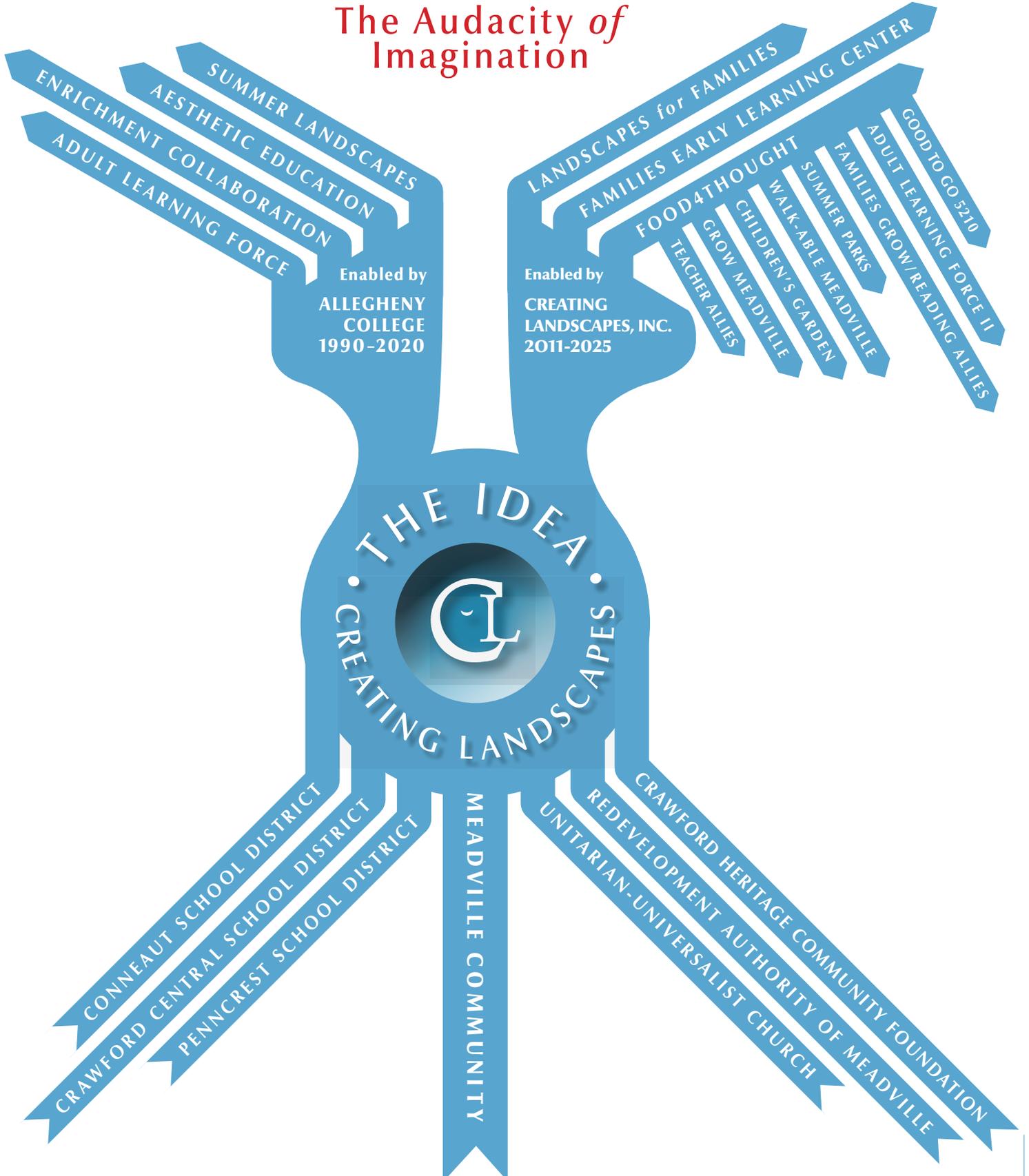
*Home of Grow Meadville, Walkable Meadville, the Children's Garden, Summer Parks Program, Good to Go 5-2-1-0, Adult Learning Force II, Families GROW/Reading Allies and Teacher Allies.*

is an ever-evolving forum of Action Groups to nurture grass roots initiatives toward a well-nourished, well educated, active and resilient community. Its primary objectives are to reduce stressors, to build on strengths, and to encourage intercommunity connections.

#### **CREATING LANDSCAPE for FAMILIES EARLY LEARNING CENTER (2017)**

**(ELC)** supports, nurtures, and directs the operation of the Pre-Kindergarten ELC in a manner consistent with the purpose of Creating Landscapes Inc., The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDELL).

# The Audacity of Imagination



## A SINCERE THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED IN 2024-2025!

**Food4Thought:  
Eight Collaborative  
Initiatives -  
Grow Meadville,  
Walkable Meadville,  
Children's Garden, Parks  
Program,  
Reading Allies,  
5-2-1-0,  
Adult Learning Force,  
Teacher Allies**

**Time and \$\$\$  
contributors as well as  
Collaborative Partners\***

Judy Acker  
Ann Areson  
Debbie & Dan Aaronson  
Tammy Marley Averill  
Donna Baker  
Susie Baker  
Paul Brieck  
Carla Chisholm  
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Hannah & Mark Cosdon  
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Andy Walker  
Kimmy Warner  
Charlotte Wellman  
Julie Zimmerman

\*Allegheny College  
Armstrong Group:  
Meagan Waters  
CATA Crawford Area  
Transportation Authority:  
Tracy Labow  
Crawford Heritage  
Community Foundation  
\*City of Meadville: Maryann  
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Crawford Central School  
District: Ann Noonan and Jenni-  
fer Galdon  
\*Crawford County Master Gar-  
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Dick Allen Auto Service  
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Ernst Conservation Seeds, Inc.  
\*Fairview Fairmont Family Center  
\*Family Children Community  
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\*French Creek Recreational Trails,  
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French Creek Valley  
Conservancy  
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Krista Rhoades  
Girl Architect:  
Brenda Williams  
Jenn Gifford Design  
Jonathan Miller Design  
Kiwanis Club of Meadville  
Linn Properties LLC  
Lubiniecki Welding and  
Fabrication Chris Gordon  
and Staff  
\*Meadville Family YMCA:  
Hannah Fuller and Stacie Hiatt  
Meadville Medical Center:  
Brian MacMurray, Anne White,

Tracy Meure  
Meadville Mennonite Chapel  
\*Meadville Public Library: Steve Utz,  
Gabby Miller  
Meadville Presbyterian  
Church  
New Beginnings Church  
Palmiero Toyota  
\*Penn State Extension  
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Tim McNamara  
Pizza Villa Ice Cream  
Parlor: Mike and Staff  
Porter Consulting Engineers:  
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Mick Stabile and Staff  
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Visit Crawford County:  
Kevin Parsons  
\*Women's Services Inc.:  
Bruce Harlan, Patti Prince, Maria  
Rosado Husband  
Yoga Spot Meadville

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from the Community CLLC Inc.  
2024--2025**

Ann Areson  
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The Better Way Law, Ross Prather  
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Jonathan Milleer Design  
The Robert Hyatt Family Fund  
McGill Power Bell & Associates LLP  
Redevelopment Authority of the City  
of Meadville  
Specialty Group Printing  
George J. Vukmer Jr.

**Early Learning Center  
Our Generous Donors of time,  
resources, and funds  
July 2024 through June 2025**

Corinne & Rich Chafey  
Cheryl Dooley  
Janet Edmonds  
Pat Ferrey  
Jessica Gosnell & Family  
Pete Gifford  
Jenn Gifford Designs  
Kim Heller  
Jan Hyatt Family  
Bob & Joyce Klasen  
John Lawrence  
Deb Lehman  
Jed Miller  
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Deborah Pipp  
Rosemary Richardson  
Jodi Sipos  
Sue Sloss  
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Robin Howell  
Pennsylvania Keystone STARS:  
Lori Sanner, Lisa Mulliken,  
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PNC Bank - Project Warm Coats  
Pre-K Counts: Susan Moorehead  
Unitarian Universalist Church