



## The Beginning

In February 1996, as part of the Leadership Cincinnati Class XIX Education Day activities, Shannon Carter visited a Woodward High School ninth grade class. Students took valuable class time to line up to buy pencils from their teacher for a nickel a piece. When they compared experiences, Shannon and her fellow class members were surprised and dismayed to learn that class could not start on time because students lacked basic school supplies.

In discussing the situation with the teacher later, they learned that since early in her teaching career she had found that it was impossible to teach math if the students don't have pencils, so she regularly purchased pencils with her own money to provide to her students before each class.



*Shannon Carter and Dick Bere*



*Leadership Cincinnati Class XIX project team – (left to right) Scott Elliott, Shannon Carter, Wick Ach, Barbara Seibel, David Meiners, and Larry Beaupre*

Further research showed that many families lacked the funds to provide their children with lunch, much less basic school supplies, and to address that need, teachers routinely spend \$500 – \$1,000 of their own money annually to buy basic supplies to subsidize students and provide a conducive learning environment.

For Shannon and several others in her Leadership Class, this was a defining moment that led them to do something about the challenges teachers and low-income families face in our region.

Shannon and her colleagues also knew local businesses had many extra or outdated items they no longer needed but which could

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“When our Leadership Cincinnati group was coming up with a business plan for a teacher free store, someone among us learned about an operation in Richmond, Virginia, called Crayons to Computers. Michael Graham (Xavier) and I flew down to Richmond for the day in December of 1996 to check it out. We met Sally Keeler who was the volunteer head of a warehouse operation that distributed supplies to schools. She was most helpful to us—although we wanted to open a retail store for teachers. As a result of Sally’s assistance, we took on the name of her operation. The Crayons ‘store without a cash register’ was the first of its type in the country.”

—Shannon Carter

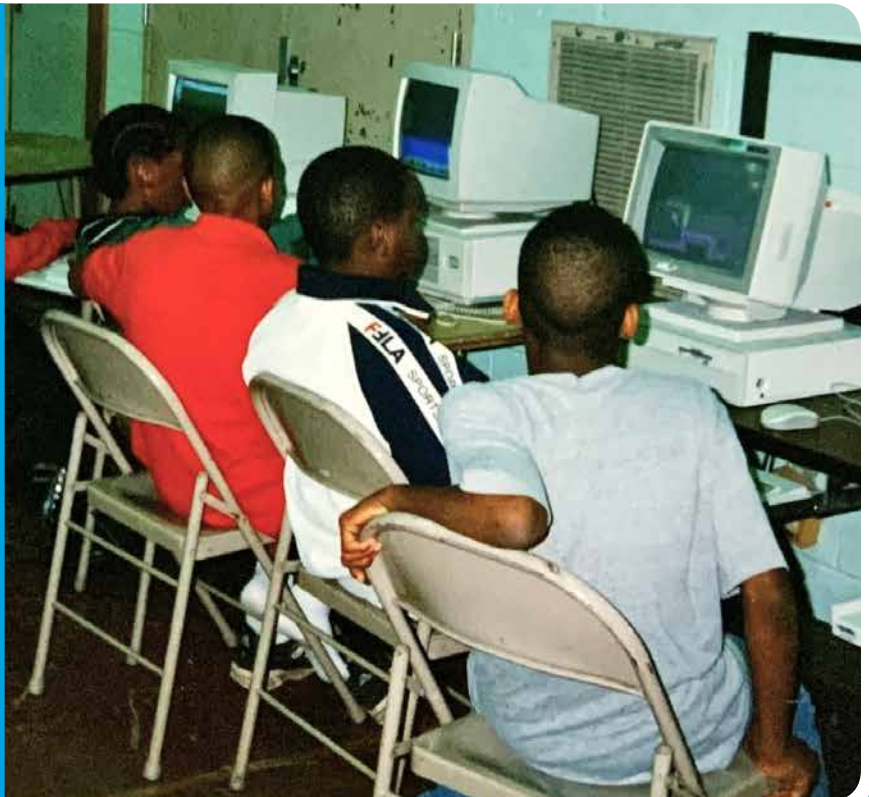
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be of great use to educators and students. In matching the need with the surplus, Shannon and a group in her Leadership Class wrote a business plan to open a free store for teachers.

They approached the Freestore/Foodbank (FS/FB) as a logical partner since they had warehouse space and knew the details on how to distribute free food. And with that—a collaboration began.

In the early days, **computers were not as common in schools as they have become in the 2000s.**

Computers were particularly tricky for the organization from day one. So many of the computer donations needed expertise that the organization did not have until meeting a group of “techie” folks. Crayons to Computers stopped dealing directly with computer donations (except for peripheral items) after about three years. Today Crayons maintains a partnership with the Cincinnati Computer Cooperative which, as a registered Microsoft Refurbisher, is a conduit for computer equipment and between businesses, individuals, schools, and nonprofits in the Cincinnati region.



# Off and Running



*Dick Bere and Shannon Carter stocking store shelves.*

In August of 1996, Dick Bere, COO of the FS/FB and recently retired President of The Kroger Co., heard the story and encouraged the FS/FB's Board to give the new venture the support needed to get started. George Blake, of Cincinnati Enquirer leadership, quickly stepped up to secure \$25,000 from the Neediest Kids of All—and the venture was off and running. Dick secured donated shelving and carts from a nearby Kroger that was closing, and even offered to erect the shelving in their newly leased space from the FS/FB and the

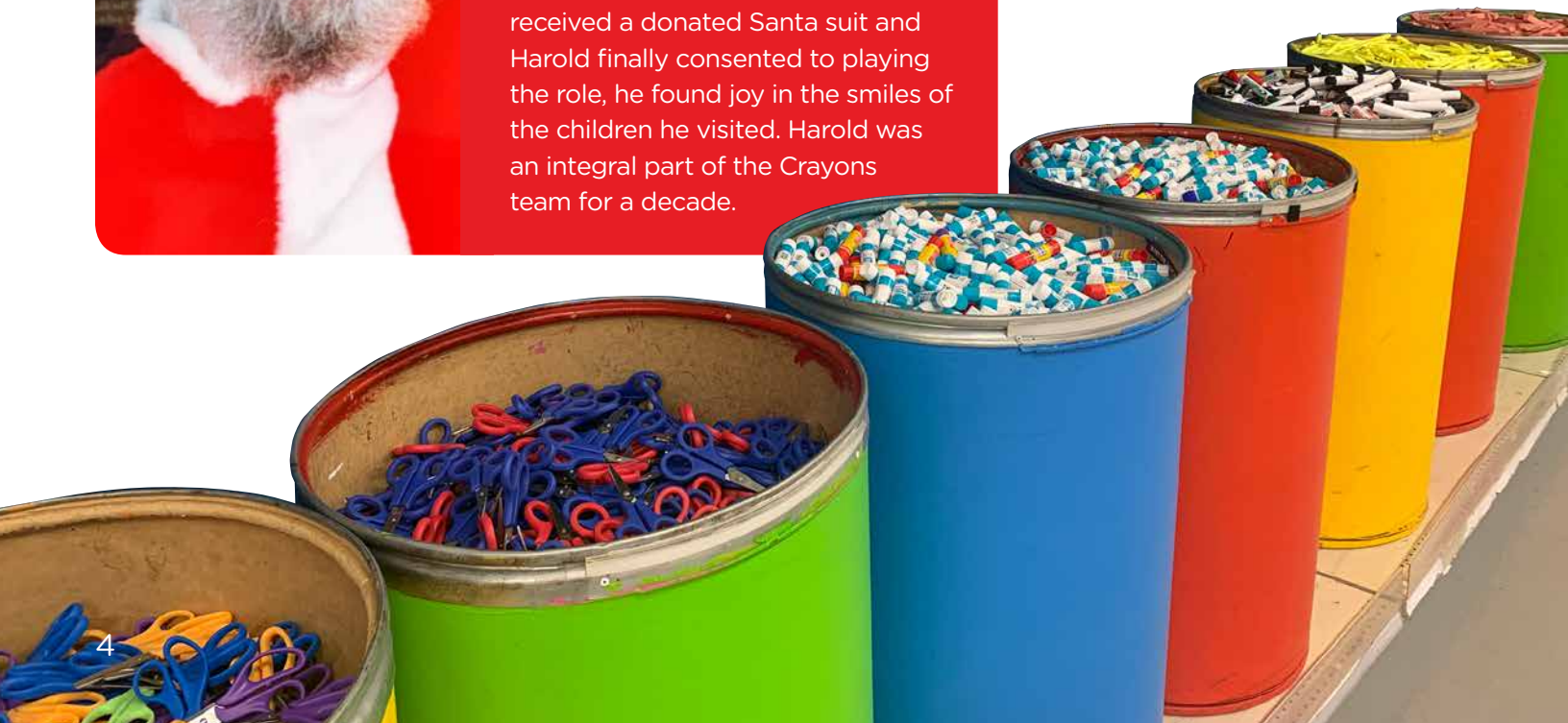
store was underway. Letters were sent to 1,200 prospective local product donors. From slightly used binders to leftover Frisch's kids' menu crayons, Shannon packed it all into the back of her Jeep to later place on the store shelves.

On February 11, 1997, Crayons to Computers opened its doors in the FS/FB and thanks to great publicity, 125 teachers from 22 schools came and wiped the shelves clean!

Over the following years, as the need in the community continued to grow, the young organization continued to act, setting up the needed infrastructure to reach out to schools, educators and students. A system was set up to track teacher visits and schools, and many dedicated volunteers helped with daily tasks. The team learned how to raise money and partnered with local businesses for product donations.



**Harold Neumeister** was a client of the Freestore/Foodbank. He was looking for a job in an effort to get a struggle-filled, hard life back on track. Crayons to Computers gave him that job stocking shelves at the store and helping in the warehouse. As a child, Christmas had always been a painful time of disappointment for Harold. But when Crayons to Computers received a donated Santa suit and Harold finally consented to playing the role, he found joy in the smiles of the children he visited. Harold was an integral part of the Crayons team for a decade.



Shannon and Dick brought not only their cumulative extensive retail experience and connections with business leaders in the community—but they also created an incredible amount of goodwill, as they offered all their own work for Crayons, pro-bono as a volunteer service to the community. Their willingness to put in their own time spoke volumes to the sincerity of the organization and created an excitement and synergy with

other business leaders that helped make Crayons a fast-growing success story. And as Crayons became a powerhouse of an organization, it inspired other similar organizations to spring up across the country. According to Crayons' historical records, the idea of Crayons to Computers spread directly to 29 cities across the country in less than a decade. Crayons is often identified as the "gold standard" in the teacher resource center field.



*Teachers lined up to shop.*

“ I am pleased to learn that Crayons to Computers has won the 2000 President's Service Award, the most prestigious award presented for community service.

Crayons to Computers has done so much for students and teachers that communities around the country have adopted this ingenious idea. We are all very fortunate for the time and effort you have given to such a worthwhile endeavor.

Congratulations on winning this prestigious award and best wishes for continuing success.”

—Mike DeWine  
United States Senator



*Happy teacher shoppers!*



*Opening day in the store.*

# Crafts with Conviction



*Inmate decorating mouse pads.*



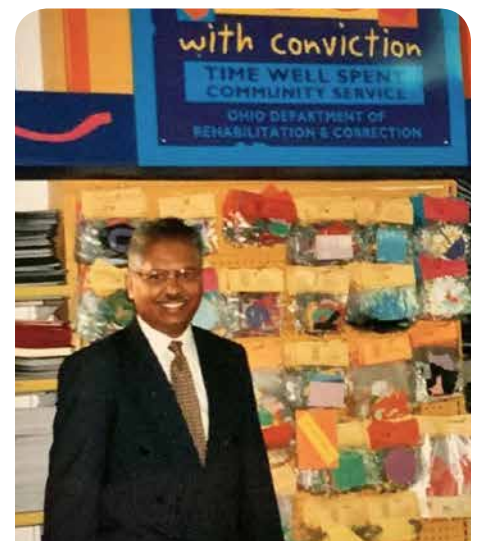
*Student with chair pocket.*

There have been many important collaborations with businesses and organizations, one very important one being the work with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) in creating the Crafts with Conviction Program (CwC).

CwC is a partnership with prisons. Incarcerated men, women, and youth transform raw materials into valuable learning products for teacher and student use. A variety of donations, either in excessive quantities (400,000 bottle caps, anyone?) or typically considered discards (remnant fabric, empty tennis ball tubes) are reimagined and reinvented through this extraordinary community collaboration.

The collaboration began in 1998 when the ODRC contacted Crayons to Computers, asking if there were any community service

projects which inmates in Lebanon could do. The program started with posterboard being turned into flash cards and took off by leaps and bounds. Reggie Wilkinson, then Director of the ODRC, hosted wardens from a dozen prisons at the Crayons warehouse and all were eager to start producing supplies for students.



Reggie Wilkinson, Director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (1998)

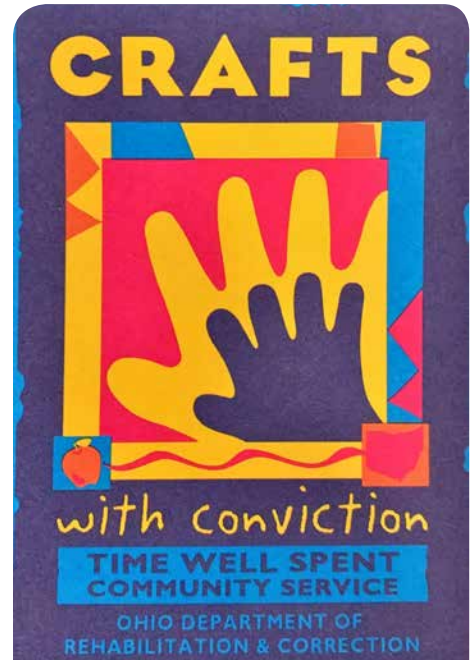


*Inmates at Warren Correctional who developed the first chair pockets.*



*Handmade CwC puppets created by Dan Johnson, Warren Correctional inmate.*

Dozens of different products (from flashcards to die-cut shapes and manipulatives to puppets) are produced each year. One of the most popular items over the years has been the chair pocket (a supply organizer that fits over the back of a classroom chair). At one point, men in the Warren Correctional program were producing 1,000 chair pockets per week!



The name “Crafts with Conviction” came from a friend of Shannon Carter’s (Garda Mann) while they were having coffee one day. Shannon was describing the then-new program and Garda cleverly picked up on the idea. “It was an instant ‘yes!’ on my part. She gets full credit,” says Shannon.



*Inmate cutting paper for CwC journals.*

# The Move

Over time as the needs of the community at large continued to grow, so did Crayons. By 2003, this “retail store without a cash register” had outgrown its space at the Freestore/Foodbank as well as three off-site storage facilities, and so a feasibility study and a Capital Campaign began to build a new facility. While this was underway, providentially, a large warehouse right down the street from the FS/FB became available. With a great deal of help from Messer Construction, a lot of paint and many volunteer hours, the new space was ready. Since the cost of buying and adapting the



*Crayons' new location at 1350 Tennessee Avenue.*

space was less expensive than the original plan to build, the Capital Campaign was able to do double duty. A portion of the \$3,500,000 pledged for a building became the start of an endowment fund

to support the cost of operating the facility and organization into the future.

On August 16, 2004, Crayons to Computers had its grand opening to more than 200 teachers who came to the new store at 1350 Tennessee Avenue. Although they had shopped many times in the past, the excitement about the increased space and products was incredible.



*Dick Bere (left) and volunteers are ready to paint.*



*The store is set for the grand opening (2004).*

“Though I spent lots of days at our old store, I had tears in my eyes when I walked in and saw our brand-new store on ribbon-cutting day. We never know what we’ll find for our children when we come to shop, and there are so many new projects to be thankful for. Now I see signs of Crayons to Computers in children’s hands in rooms all over our building.”

**Susanne Larsen**  
Mayfield Elementary School  
2004



# Early Learners

**T**he new space allowed for an increased push to support the earliest learners.

Inspired by United Way's Success by Six, Crayons created a program to support not only preschools and early learning centers, but the families they serve. *Early Learning Tool* kits were specifically designed to be sent home with families so children and parents can work and learn together. Today, Crayons continues to recognize the value and crucial importance of early childhood education. Since many



*Volunteers assembling the first Early Learning Tool kits (2006).*

preschool programs and providers are not affiliated or located within accredited schools, Crayons partners with 4C for Children to help identify programs that are eligible to shop at the Store. This

partnership connects Crayons with early childhood programs and family/home-care providers committed to improving their quality ratings in both Ohio and Northern Kentucky.

**In the first 14 years of existence, Crayons to Computers received at least 28 different awards.** This recognition “validated that this new organization is okay,” said Shannon Carter. Two of the most meaningful awards bestowed on Crayons were the:

- **2002 Peter F. Drucker Award for Nonprofit Innovation** — a national award recognizing the Crafts with Conviction program
- **2006 ONE (Organizations of Noteworthy Excellence) Award** — presented by the *Business Courier* and the Greater Cincinnati Foundation to recognize Crayons for having the highest standards of customer satisfaction, governance and social responsibility



# Leadership Changes

**A**fter many years of dedicated service, Dick and Shannon decided it was time to step away. Susan Frankel, who had been the Development Director under Shannon, became the

new President & CEO from 2013-2017. During her tenure, Crayons continued to expand. In the search for the most effective and efficient way to achieve the mission, she secured an Impact 100 Grant which brought about the beginning of the Mobile

Outreach Program. This program allowed Crayons to travel out into the community to reach schools in need in the farthest-reaching counties where teachers faced time and distance barriers in accessing the store.



Susan Frankel  
Crayons President & CEO 2013-2017



Susan Frankel and members of the Crayons Board at the MOP dedication (2014).

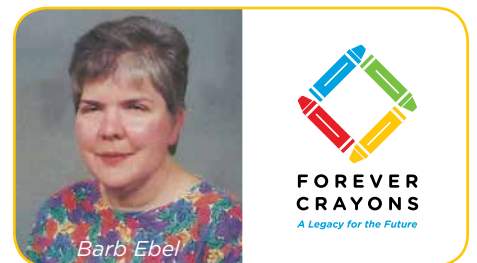


Amy Cheney  
Crayons President & CEO 2017-Present

In 2017, Amy Cheney became President & CEO. Bringing many years of experience from the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, she continues to challenge the organization to better serve its mission and community.

In 2019, Forever Crayons - A Legacy for the Future launched as a way to recognize and thank those individuals who have provided for a gift to Crayons to Computers through their will

or trust. Barb Ebel, a long-time Crayons volunteer, was honored as the founding member of Forever Crayons for the generous gift (the largest Crayons had received to that point) provided after her passing in 2015.



Barb Ebel



# Pivots and Evolution

**A**s the community faced the global pandemic, the organization needed to adapt and adjust to the realities of COVID-19 safety precautions. Under Amy's leadership, the staff found new and innovative ways to deliver product to the teachers and students, including kits for drive-through pick up, increased deliveries and online ordering. This last adaptation also responded to changing expectations and the ways people shop today. Heading into the 2021-22 school year, Crayons 2.0 continued to offer an e-Shop experience for pick up or Mobile Delivery in addition to the in-store shopping experience the teachers have come to depend on at Crayons.

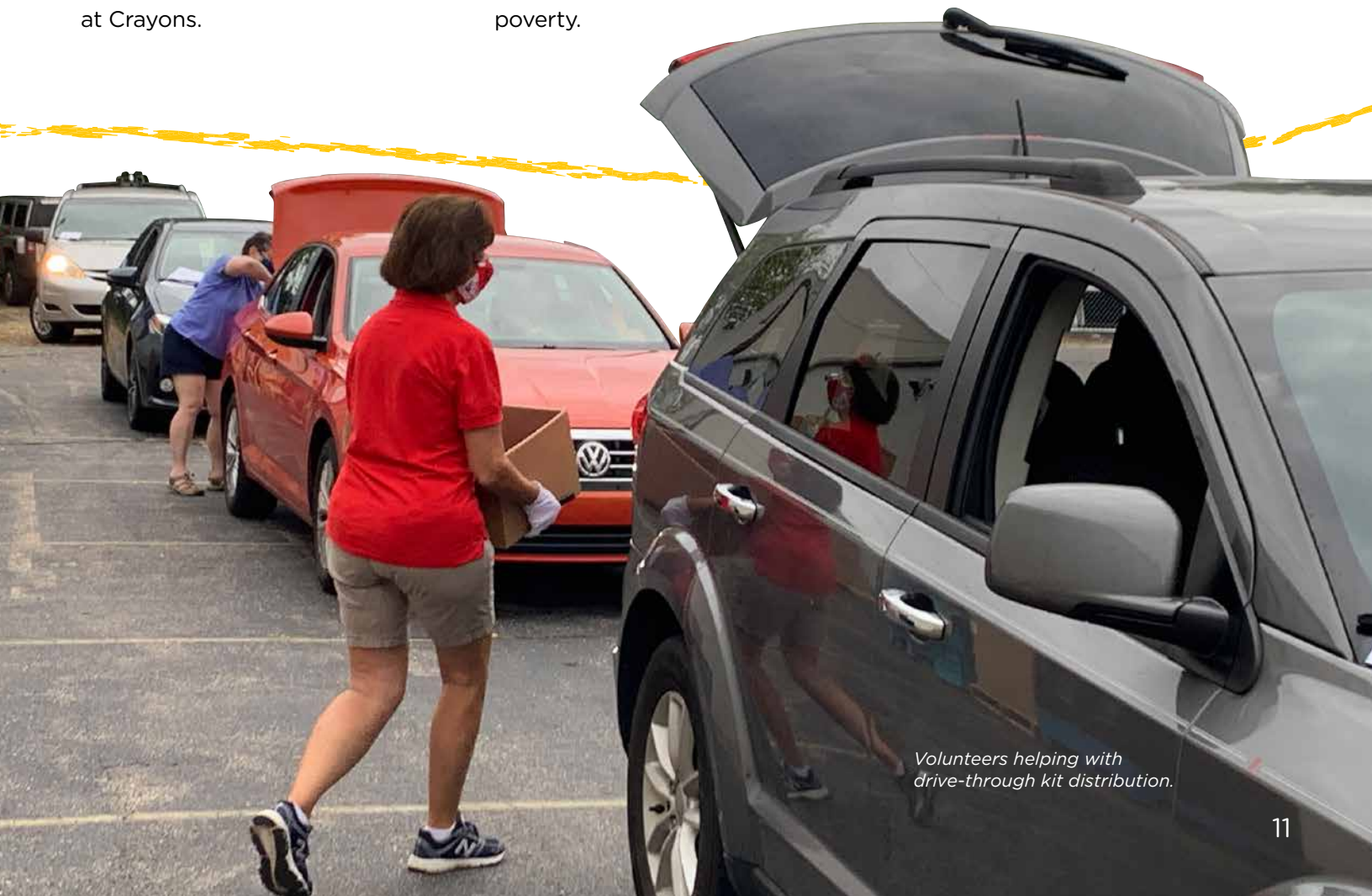
Crayons to Computers implemented a change in business model for the 2021-22 school year. The shopping access fee became necessary to fill the funding gap left when a major corporate partner changed the focus of its philanthropy. The early days of the \$25-30 fee saw success in having the fee paid **on behalf of** teachers and less than 12% of teachers paid the fee out of their own pocket (and chose to do so because they saw the value in what Crayons offers to teachers).

For 25 years, Crayons has been dedicated to leveling the playing field in the classroom by ensuring teachers can provide their students in need the tools to succeed in school. Crayons believes education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty.



*Picking online orders.*

**This work is not possible without the many partners through the years—individual donors, corporate supporters, foundation funders, and volunteers—who have worked to help build the future of the community together.**



*Volunteers helping with drive-through kit distribution.*

## Milestones of Active Volunteers



1998	DiBenedetto, Linda
	Jenkins, Karen
	Miller, Caryl
	Pickett, Donna
	Price, Deb
	Rogers, Lois
1999	Aubert, Larry
	Innis, Jim
	Stritzel, Carl
2000	Teski, Kathy
	Carmean, Kathy
	Freeman, Kathy
	Moore, Susan
	Mowery, Dawn
	Nichols, Kim
	Roeder, Liesl
	Singleton, Bonnie
	Trennepohl, Phyllis
	2001
Fischer, Lisa	
2002	Cassady, Karen
	Dunsker, Ellen
	Green, Ardella
	Tidd, Nancy



2003	Rowe, Karen
	Steinberg, Lisa
	Valerius, Joyce
2005	Castelino, Amy
	Hajer, Jo Ann
2006	Baldwin, Jolene
	Brandt, Jan
	Jauch, Carolyn
	Jerdon, Katie
	Johnson, Andrea
	Rosskopf, Jamie
	Rosskopf, Joyce
	Schorr, Glenda
Wright, Linda	
2007	Reinhart, Rick
	Windows, Michelle
	Wolf, Nancy
	Wolf, Ron

## Volunteers are the Glue Sticks

Crayons to Computers was built by volunteers 25 years ago and could not exist today without thousands of hours of volunteer help annually. The individuals and corporate and community groups who have donated their time and energy over the years make it

possible to level the playing field in classrooms throughout the Greater Cincinnati area for thousands of teachers and their students in need. “Family” volunteers—those who help on a weekly or monthly basis—are especially vital. Their time and dedication are inspiring and greatly appreciated. Thank you to all!



Wednesday a.m. volunteers (2005)



Left to Right: Lawanda Kenny, Terri Rinehart, Virginia Rinehart and Virginia Smith (1999)



Tuesday a.m. volunteers (2017)



Jan & Jack Prickett (1997)



Volunteers sorting Push for Pencils donations (2000).



Martha Barney, Glenda Schorr, Toni Campbell, Naomi Barkley and Ellen Dunsker (2018)



Volunteer stitchers (2005)



Martha Ewalt at KOKW drive (2021)

### Keep Our Kids Warm (KOKW)

A teacher once shared a story about seeing one of her young students on the playground one cold day. He sat down and took off his socks and shoes, put his shoes back on his feet and proceeded to use his socks as mittens. Once this story was shared, folks at Crayons to Computers decided to do something about it! Through an army of volunteer knitters, stitchers and crocheters, thousands of handmade hats, scarves, and mittens are given to teachers for their students in need each year since 2005. In 2010, the program came under the volunteer management of Martha Ewalt who reports that more than 85,000 individual items have been donated over the years! For her work with the KOKW, Martha was honored as the Volunteer of the Year at National Philanthropy Day in 2013.

# Board Member History

Name	Years Served	Name	Years Served
Wick Ach*	1995 - 2002	Keith Hock	1997 - 2005
Jeanette Altenau	2002 - 2013	<i>Genevieve Miller Holt</i>	2019 -
Larry Beaupre*†	1995 - 1998	John Hopper	2002 - 2010
<i>Angel Beets</i>	2022 -	<i>Misha L. Houston</i>	2021 -
Dick Bere	1995 - 2012	Paula Hume	2014 - 2016
<i>Philip Bierhoff</i>	2020 -	Diane Iseman	2013 - 2018
<i>Tom Boggs</i>	2015 -	Kenya Jackson	2009 - 2009
<i>Brian Borchering</i>	2021 -	Marc Kiner	2004 - 2012
<b>Tom Breitenbach</b>	1997 - 2008	<b>Suzanne Kopcha</b>	2015 -
Oscar Britton†	2000 - 2001	<b>Mike Kremzar</b>	1997 - 2010
Irene Bryant†	1998 - 1999	Paola Lucetti	2018 - 2019
John Bryant	1997 - 2013	Lynn Marmer	2001 - 2003
Joe Bunge	2016 - 2019	Jacklyn McGlothlin	2014 - 2018
Stephanie Byrd	2007 - 2012	David Meiners*	1995 - 2003
Shannon Carter*	1995 - 2012	Max Meyers	2004 - 2006
Leonard Chapman	2007 - 2008	Curt Miller†	2003 - 2004
<i>Karen Clemons</i>	2021 -	<i>Laura Napolitano</i>	2019 -
<i>Flip Cohen</i>	2019 -	Karl Niemann	2007 - 2015
Wynne Curry	2002 - 2003	Pat Paul	1999 - 2001
Jennifer Dauer	2014 - 2020	Dennis Poovey	2010 - 2014
Carol Davidow†	1997 - 2003	<i>Joe Rohs</i>	2014 -
Erin Dyer	2010 - 2018	Durk Rorie	2001 - 2007
<b>Scott Elliott**</b>	1995 - 2002	<b>Nick Rosian</b>	2007 - 2020
Lisa FitzGibbon	1997 - 2002	Barbara Seibel*	1995 - 1997
Joi Flowers-Thomas	2020	Dave Seimetz	2008 - 2010
<b>Nick Francis</b>	2013 -	Linda Severin	2008 - 2011
Lee Geiger	2008 - 2014	Julie Smith-Morrow	2004 - 2005
<b>Sam Gingrich</b>	2005 - 2018	<b>Kevin Thomas</b>	2004 - 2013
David Ginsburg	1997 - 1998	Richard Thompson	2012 - 2016
<i>Anthony Glickhouse</i>	2016 -	Michael Veith	2013 - 2016
Cecil Good	1999 - 2004	<b>Luis Visoso</b>	2011 - 2015
Gary Goosman	1998 - 2004	Jim Watkins	2016 - 2019
<i>Colleen Haas</i>	2017 -	Rick Whitescarver	1999 - 2004
<b>Nick Hahn</b>	2005 - 2010	<b>Erin Wisecup</b>	2012 - 2020
<i>Rodney Hardin</i>	2021 -	Chuck Wolfe	2005 - 2007
<i>William Harrod</i>	2020 -		



**Mike Kremzar** was chairman of the FS/FB board at the time Crayons began. Members of Crayons' founding Board felt that the organization needed a representative from the FS/FB on the fledgling board since Crayons was a tenant in their warehouse. Mike was that crossover board member, became a strong advocate, and chaired the Crayons Board along the way.

\* - Leadership Cincinnati Class 19 Team | † - Deceased | **BOLD** - Served as Chair | *ITALICS* - Current Board Member

# Staff History\*

Robbie Atkinson	Jacqueline Farley	Whitney Jacobson	Harold Neumeister	Jon Swiger†
Stephen Bernstein†	Adam Fischer†	Pam Jensen	Pat Paul	Jimmie Taylor
Gunner Blackmore	Susan Frankel	Bill Kidd	Willia Pelini†	Susan van Amerongen
Alexander Brown†	Larry Gibson	Mark Linder	Caitlin Philpott†	Natalie Westkamp
James Brown	Kendall Glover†	Sara Plaskett Lorenz	Tisa Powell	Sarah Westrich†
Kris Chari	Denise Greber	Tricia Lusher†	Lauren Roberts†	Colleen Whittington
Amy Cheney†	Tom Haggard	Charles Mailhot	Marquis Roberts	Betsy Wilson†
Stefanie Clayton	Ned Haynes†	Stan Mcghee	Daniel Romanello	Taylor Young†
Analisa Condon	Julia Helwig	Shannon McNicholas	Kristen Scott	
Adrian Cunningham	Dave Hicks	Tim Messler†	Rachael Shepler	
Karen Deime	Diane Hopper	Greg Motley	David Steel	
Heather Egan	Bobbi Hosmer	Cameron Napier	Jeffrey Stern	


\* Current staff plus employees who worked more than a year.  
† Current staff.

# Our Impact

## REPORT CARD (1997 through January 2022)



**394,262**  
Teacher "Shops"



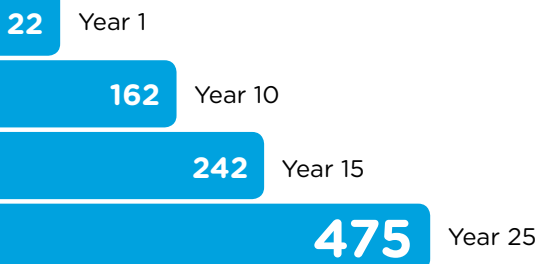
**\$184,533,302**  
Value of Total Supplies Distributed



**385,702\***  
Volunteer Hours  
\*Equivalent to more than 185 FTEs.



**Participating Schools & Preschool Programs**




**\$468**  
Average "Shop"

Crayons to Computers' service area and qualification thresholds have changed over the years. Note that in 2000, Crayons' threshold for the portion of the student population on the Free and Reduced Lunch program decreased to 60% (from 80%). In 2010, the service area expanded to 16 counties. And in 2014, the organization began to grow the number of preschool programs served.

In fall 2021, Crayons developed a measurement framework to amplify these outputs with outcomes as the next 25 years begin to unfold.

### MISSION:

Crayons to Computers exists to level the playing field in the classroom by ensuring that teachers can provide their students in need the tools to succeed in school.

### VISION:

Every child in Greater Cincinnati is equipped to excel at school.

### WE:

**Believe** that education is key to breaking the cycle of poverty and that everyone deserves the same opportunity for a great education.

**Strive** for excellence and integrity in everything we do.

**Respect** diversity and inclusion, treating others with dignity, compassion and professionalism.

**Create** positive experiences for everyone we encounter.



*Special thanks to Mary Tensing for her assistance in writing this publication.*