Play Cousins Collective
2022 Report
Play Cousins Collective is an African American Family Collective building a village around our children through family and children’s programming and resource sharing.

We are made up of mommas, daddies, uncles, aunties, and of course Play Cousins. Families create and lead programs (rooted in Ancestral methods of healing, resilience and liberation) to serve their unique needs, heal generational traumas and build a network that insulates them from systemic oppression and racism.

According to the Louisville Metro Health Equity Report of 2017, Black people have a lower life expectancy and greater death rates due to systemic oppression in housing, education, employment and healthcare.

Play Cousins Collective strives to build numerous pathways to collective healing for diverse Black families in Louisville through knowledge and resource sharing and community building.

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THE WHY?

There are multiple inequities faced by the Louisville Black community.

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What we Know

- We access & center **Ancestral Knowledge** in school contexts.

- We integrate **constructivist pedagogy** that decolonize Western educational models for **learner empowerment**.

- We have cultural pride in the history of **past** and contemporaneous centers of **learning effectiveness** in the African diaspora.

- **Civic-engagement** and political participation support **positive youth development**.

- **Social justice youth development frameworks** nurture our learners.

- **Interdisciplinary and intergenerational learning communities** support **collective healing**.

- We believe in equitable collaboration with **extended family networks** to cultivate healthy familial interdependence.
Play Cousins Collective Organizational Frameworks:

- Asset-based community development (ABCD)
- Healing-centered engagement
- Ancestral Knowledge Systems (AKS)
- Gentle parenting methods embedded in Play Cousins Collective Gentle Child Rearing ©

What We Know:
ACEs impact parenting experiences in our community. Intergenerational transmission of maltreatment, trauma or cycle of abuse increase the risk of child abuse in families. Sharing resources to reinforce positive parenting practices nurture collective healing.

By integrating Ancestral Knowledge Systems (AKS) with intentional parenting methods, we present culturally-responsive approaches for Black families.

There is a history of negative stereotypes, systemic punishment and criminalization of Black parents. We aim to reframe the narrative, and celebrate the responsive parenting approaches in Black families.

By accessing spaces that lift Ancestral Knowledge Systems and create greater access to therapy and mental health support Play Cousins Collective is collectively healing the inner child, parenting self, healing generational trauma and supporting parenting for liberation.
THE STRUCTURE

5 Modalities of Impact
Resource Sharing
a. Community calendar
b. Directories of support
c. Referrals
d. Individualized support
e. Responsive programming
   Leading Team: Ubuntu & Nzinga

Advocacy
a. Policy work
b. Panels and boards
c. Research
d. Community listening sessions
   Leading Team: Oluko & Ubuntu

Support Groups
a. Circle Time
b. Elementary Innovation
c. Coming of Age
d. Brother Healing Brother
e. Soul Sisters
   Leading Team: Egbe

Village Programming
a. Play Cousins Member Workshops
b. Mizizi Homeschool Co-op
c. Parent’s Night Out
d. Village Play and Learn Labs
   Leading Team: Egbe & Nzinga

Community Programming
a. Community Play and Learn Labs
b. Community and Business Workshops
c. Space rental
   Leading Team: Nzinga

Organizational Structure

Oluko: Leadership Team
1. Executive Director: Kristen Williams
2. Director of Programming: Mahogany Livers

Nzinga: Operations Management
1. Office Admin: Dawnre Frazier
   a. Office Assistant: Mariah
2. IYA Manager: Marie Lewis
   a. IYA Team (12 employees)
3. Griot Storyteller/ Media Director: Janelle Renee Dunn

Egbe: Support Group Program Managers
1. Soul Sisters: Michelle Murrell
2. Brother Healing Brother: Ethan McKenzie
3. Circle Time: Zuri Harrison
4. Elementary Innovation: Brittany Phillips
   a. Mizizi Educators and Parent group
5. Coming of Age: Billye Bridges

Ubuntu: Resource Sharing, Recruitment and Individualized support
1. Park Hill Satellite Office Admin: Sapphire Edwards
2. Engagement Specialist 1: Open Hire
3. Engagement Specialist 2: Shaniece Conner
4. Engagement Specialist 3: Aria Brewer
5. Maternal Health Advocate: September Morgan
6. Village Ambassador 1: Angela Masden
7. Village Ambassador 2: Epiphany McGruder
This year we edited the Black Maternal Health Care directory and the Black Mental Health Directory containing 37 mental health providers and 41 maternal and postpartum support services. We are currently working with Russell A Place of Promise and Metro United Way to create a directory of quality childcare services in West Louisville.

"WHEN WE SHARE THERE IS ALWAYS ENOUGH"

“The frequent posts from Play Cousins Collective on social media serve as an excellent reminder about reflection points as a parent and have helped me.” - PCC Parent

Our Facebook page now boasts over 2,400 followers who count on Play Cousins Collective to inform them about the resources available in their village every week. From Black vendor fairs, therapists, healthcare providers, tenant’s rights meetings and the like, our members can count on PCC to stay informed. In 2022 we are exploring a relationship with The Vision Group to expand this initiative to include video interviews, radio broadcasts and a website dedicated to showcasing the positive opportunities and resources in the Black community.
Advocacy

Telling OUR OWN STORIES

Under our pillar of advocacy the Director of Programming, the Maternal Health Advocate and the Executive Director have committed their time and experience to contributing to the following boards and initiatives:

- Ready 4 K Alliance
- Healthy Babies Louisville
- Race, Community and Child Welfare Advisory Board
- Black Maternal Health Coalition
- Black Maternal Health Fair
- Louisville Black Leaders Call (Urban League)
- Racial Trauma/Advocacy Intervention Team
- Planting Seeds: Environmental Justice Workgroup

Play Cousins Collective stands with Black families, because we know "sticks in a bundle are unbreakable". Our advocacy work has become a much needed resource in gathering community members for conversations that don’t lean on a "sit and get" style information share or research experience that leaves us feeling poked and prodded. We work with partners such as the University of Louisville and Norton Healthcare to gather and amplify the voices of our families in safe and loving spaces.

Great news!!
At the Metro Council meeting last night the lead ordinance Ready for K endorsed passed unanimously! We were so grateful to represent our families as we worked to support this ordinance. A special shout out is due to Mahogany Livers our Director of Programming for her leadership and advocacy on this issue. We are so grateful to Metro United Way and the Ready for K Alliance for bringing together so many diverse organizations to really fight for our children and ensure they have the best start in life, that their parents are regarded as the first teachers and that the communities they’re born into are respected and valued. Huge thanks also to Megan Metcalf and Councilwoman Cassie Chambers Armstrong who championed this issue and saw it through!

Many of our Play Cousins live in West Louisville’s historic homes or apartments that have not been recently renovated and this puts their children at risk for lead exposure. "We know that children in west Louisville neighborhoods are nine times more likely to be exposed to lead than are children in our city at large," Councilwoman Cassie Chambers Armstrong, D-B, said. Ordinance O-134-22 takes a vital step toward reducing the harm in Louisville by establishing a protocol for identifying and addressing lead hazards within rental units with the greatest risk of exposure due to construction date and current upkeep.

"To best serve the community, providers must be trained to work with Black and people of color – like when they come test your home for lead."

- Kristen Williams of Play Cousins Collective

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Resources
at StopLeadLou.com
We believe that everyone belongs in the village!

All elders share a responsibility for the next generation. As such we must strive to do the internal healing and parenting of our inner children while caring for our young.

We believe that by intentionally parenting we can pass down methods of healing, resilience and liberation rather than traumas. These protective factors help us prevent or heal from Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Our support groups meet monthly to model or discuss these methods. We practice the PanAfrican tradition of call and response. As needs are called out in our groups we respond with collective knowledge and program managers seek experts in the village to come and share in ways that feel like we are collectively remembering the methods of our Ancestors and innovating together on their legacy of love.

Ashanti came to Play Cousins as a young adult participating in Soul Sisters after seeing us support the youth at Books and Breakfast. When she became pregnant she leaned on Play Cousins to review our directory of Black midwives and doulas and craft a birth plan that worked for her. After giving birth she joined Tummy Time which supported her breastfeeding journey and helped her manage her postpartum care. As her daughter Kai grew, Ashanti joined circle Time and enrolled in the Ages and Stages program. There she monitored Kai’s developmental growth, participated in Kwanzaa, parent and child playdates and took our Gentle Child Rearing workshop. During one of our sessions she gained her Ancestor’s knowledge of baby wearing and its benefits. She was given an African fabric to wrap Kai in and herbs for healing baths. Together with Play Cousins Ashanti is raising Kai to live, play and prosper in a village that is looking out for her, serving her and awaiting her leadership as the next generation.

1,143 participants have gathered in our support and healing circles in 2022 so far!
Under our pillar of village programming Play Cousins Collective serves its members through out of school time programs like our annual pajama party, co-work co-play sessions, library and museum excursions, parent's night out events, Free play in nature experiences, our Mizizi Homeschool Co-Op classes and events curated to meet the needs of our families as they arise.

With our village programming we are able to explore more freely, important and sensitive topics like race, mental health or bullying. Member based programs often hold sacred space for our youth to establish friendships, grow their social and emotional skills and provide parents with a much needed break or spark of inspiration.

Village programming also includes special information sessions held based on the needs and interests of adult members like classes on gardening and herbal tinctures for fire-cider and elderberry syrup or financial literacy workshops led in collaboration with Russell A Place of Promise. Our Sankofa parenting classes are led under this pillar as well. These classes share methods of parenting that are culturally relevant and responsive to the trauma and systemic issues Black parents face raising children. Here Black families unpack issues like the media’s misrepresentation of Black lives and it’s impact on youth, parenting as a trauma response and more. We have partnered with Norton Healthcare to receive their train the trainer course on “Connect the Dots” which also informs our practice.

"If you think education is expensive try ignorance." – African Proverb
This year Play Cousins Collective provided parenting education, Louisville family-centered community resources, and youth programming to provide parents with tools to support the needs of their children. One of our parents, Michelle, disclosed that her village of support grew as a result of participating in our programs. She shared with our team that she gained knowledge about the developmental needs of her children and how to incorporate gentle child-rearing methods in daily practice. She gained a deeper knowledge and appreciation of self as a Black parent through participating in our programs.

Since 2017, PCC has led thousands of Play & Learn Labs that provide quality children’s programming at community events so parents can engage without the burden of childcare. All of our programs for youth are literacy based and offer free play and learning activities. Lessons strengthen the social and emotional skills of our participants and affirm their unique identities and ideas. Lessons are created to match the topic parents are engaging around to support family relationships and communication. Play and Learn Labs are also offered at summer camps and in school classes. Creating liberating spaces for children to feel powerful, celebrated and heard is our labor of love! Play is our favorite way to learn!

Beyond Play and Learn Labs we also share workshops on "Building Your Village" and "Engaging Community".

**PCC has created and facilitated lesson plans for 2,807 youth in 2022!**
Starting the month of October out with our Parent Café at Miniversity set the tone for months to come. Our parents created vision boards focusing on the question, “What does your dream village look like?” We collaboratively created a list that reflected our goals and actions to help us progress and grow as a community. From our discussion it was clear that we all are wanting a united community that is not only a service to others but to ourselves as well. Many Aunties and Uncles in PCC expressed the need to do better with their self-care in order to be a service to others. After we wrapped up our vision board ice breaker, we dived into a great talk with our panelists from Option for Success, JCPS Early Childhood, Quality Childcare, and Childcare Aware. They covered everything from important questions to ask when looking for daycares, schools, and nannies to resources for parents to help with their child’s development.
After our Parent’s Café, we wanted to create more fun family moments, so we hosted a Fall Fest in the Parkhill community. This day was one for the books! It was filled with crafts, laughter, and good food. Aunites from the community came and helped our staff set up and make sure no was left behind.

During our festival, Circle Time Program Director, Zuri Harrison was able to build a bond within the village as she extended an offer to be a maternal support partner (doula) to Sky’Toria Lowe. We met Sky’Toria at her first PCC event at our Parent’s Café at the beginning of the month. Sky’Toria had an ideal village around her (mom, grandma, and Play Cousins), who were all able to support one another during the birth of our newest Play Cousin, Donavan Jr.

Circle Time Program Manager, Zuri Harrison
Frequently Asked Questions

What is the legal name of the organization?
Play Cousins Collective, Incorporated

How long has your organization been in existence?
July 2017

What is your current operating budget?
$700,000

What does our organization do? What is our organizational mission and vision?
Play Cousins Collective (PCC) is an Afrocentric family resource institute that nurtures a community of care around Black children in Louisville, Kentucky. We envision a world where all Black children can play freely, and prosper without social barriers. Play Cousins Collectives strive to build numerous pathways to collective healing for diverse Black families in Louisville through education and community outreach programs.

What population does your organization serve?
PCC serves Black people, particularly Black families (children, parents, caregivers, grandparents, and extended kin) in Louisville. PCC primarily works in the West End of Louisville, with our office space located in Lyles Mall on West Broadway. Data from our Circle Time program shows that more than 3/4 of the families we reached in previous years were in the 40203 and 40210 zip codes.
How do you measure your work?

- Attendance tracked in Member Site "Wild Apricot"
- Surveys recorded in Google Forms
- Testimonials gathered monthly
- Storytelling featured in monthly newsletter and quarterly reports

Advocacy
- How many surveys were collected as a result of our advocacy work? Goal: 500 annually
- How many attendees of listening sessions? 50 annually
- Quarterly report out

Resource Sharing
- Infant and postpartum care supply kits Goal: 100 annually
- Household and hygiene care supply kits Goal: 100 annually
- Clothing Goal: 50
- Parent crisis support Goal: 50 annually
- Books Goal: 25 a month 300 annually
- Christmas Toys Goal: 150 annually
- Circle Time Kits Goal: 180 annually
- Annual member survey Goal: 100 annually
- How many community events are added to the calendar and promoted each week? Goal: 5 events a week, 265 annually
- How many organizations submit their events to the community calendar monthly? Goal: 5 a month
- How many people visit The Vision Lou website Goal: monthly 100, 1,200 a yr

Support Groups
- How many attendees of support groups? Goal: 600 annually (50 a month)
- Monthly survey evaluating the impact of each session Goal: 25 a month (300 annually)
- Parent exit surveys 2x a yr during kindergarten events and spring event (Goal: 25 annually)
- Ages and Stages Questionnaires Goal: 300 annually
  ○ 135 completing 2 or more

Village Programming
- How many attendees of parenting workshops? Goal: 120 annually
- How many attendees of Mizizi Homeschool Co-Op Goal: 25 enrolled annually
- Annual member survey Goal: 100 annually

Community Programming
- How many attendees of Play and Learn Labs? Goal: 636 annually
- How many attendees of PCC In-services/Professional Development? Goal: 3 talks a year 20 ppl 60 annually
- Play and Learn Lab Survey for clients Goal: 50 surveys annually
- Play and Learn Lab Survey for parents Goal: 50 surveys annually
Play Cousins Collective pledges to:

1. Provide children with safe and affirming spaces that build their self-worth, mental health and social and emotional skills.
2. Increase knowledge of child development and Akoko Nan Elder techniques (Pan-African gentle child rearing methods)
3. Build and support an active and engaged community that advocates for itself and enjoys shared resources and opportunities.
4. Decrease stigma around participating in and receiving community support and care
5. Decrease stigma around gentle parenting and breastfeeding
6. Decrease stigma around therapy and mental health support
7. Normalize self preservation and care within the Black community
8. Increase language around indigenous and sustainable practices as protective factors originating
9. Increase self love and pride in Black children and families
10. Advocate for Black children and families by sharing knowledge with organizations that serve them centering the vulnerable, lifting Black family/indigenous cultural values and sharing methods of engagement the preserve the dignity and sovereignty of Black people.
A few of our partners...