Some days are difficult. At a training not long ago in a southern state a mom told the story of calling more than 100 pediatricians before she found one who would see her transgender daughter—not for gender-related care, but for simple childhood medical needs like ear infections and annual well-child visits.

Of course, the challenges related to children, youth and gender are not specific to gender-diverse youth. Colors. Emotions. Activities and interests. Jobs. Our society genders every aspect of our lives, narrowing our access and experience to so much of what the world has to offer. As a result, every child is constrained and the possibilities available to each limited.

The cost of this artificial gendering is enormous, both personally and societally. Earlier this year, new economic research out of the University of Chicago demonstrated that the gender stereotypes girls experience in childhood affects their work and earnings throughout adulthood. And while feminism has helped expand many options for girls, boys have largely been left out of efforts related to gender equality. A recent poll demonstrated the ways boys have largely been left out of efforts to broaden definitions of masculinity, confining them to a narrow set of emotions, interests, and ways of relating to others.

But there is reason to hope. We see signs of progress every day, moving us closer to the gender-inclusive world that we work for. We see cracks in gender stereotyping when major retailers like Target introduce gender-neutral clothing lines. The #MeToo movement is leading young people and adults to question “traditional” gender roles and expectations. The children and youth we serve are embracing their gender in ways that are truly inspiring, living their personal, authentic gender more freely than ever.

The stories in this report will provide you with a glimpse into our work over this past year. We are hopeful in the midst of the present challenges, but there is much more to be done. With your help, we can create a gender inclusive world that unleashes the possibilities in every child.

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR SUPPORT.
THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO FOR GENDER SPECTRUM!

Lisa Kenney
Executive Director

Stephanie Brill
Founder and Board Chair
FAMILIES have the first and greatest impact on children, so our connections with families are central to our work. We provide a wealth of online programs, resources and information families can use to further their understanding of gender and learn the value of parental and adult support. One parent told us,

Through your educational programs and support for all young people and their families, Gender Spectrum is doing the heavy lifting of making the world the kind of place I want to live in. Thank you!

In schools, sports, activities and camps, all children benefit from gender-inclusive practices. That's why Gender Spectrum offers training to professionals who need support in navigating rapidly changing gender understandings. Our work helps professionals work with children to expose harmful gender stereotypes, prevent bullying, and discover an appreciation of the place gender has in everyone's life. While more people know of our work with schools, our connections to other arenas where children spend vast amounts of time are just as vital. Faced with a family who had fears about sending their gender-diverse child away to camp, one camp professional who participated in our training told us, "I had the conversation with the camper's mother and it was smooth sailing. I felt prepared to answer the families' questions, and I shared the resources with my co-workers so they were prepared as well. Thanks for guiding me towards this positive experience."

Children and families need gender-inclusive spaces throughout their communities, including in their faith communities. For many families a struggle arises when a child's gender conflicts with their faith community's culture. As one parent told us, "When my child came out it did present quite a conflict with a lot of the more Evangelical beliefs but now I'm on a new journey to reconsider some of the things that are unique to Evangelicalism without throwing the baby out with the bathwater."

Gender understandings in the workplace are critical too. The majority of millennials see gender as a spectrum and most of Gen Z (today's middle and high school youth) see gender much more broadly than any previous generation. As young people enter adulthood, they're looking for gender-inclusive employers who understand the changing world of gender. Fortunately, some companies see the business value in adapting to this changing business climate and are working to eliminate gendering of products, develop gender inclusive practices, and create gender-sensitive workplaces for a new generation of employees.

Throughout society, children are influenced by the culture’s gender understandings, whether they are conspicuous or subtle. Through our partnerships nationwide and internationally we support organizations who are already doing invaluable educational, family and child support, and anti-discrimination work. Our gender expertise helps facilitate their progress and make their work even stronger.
Our work helps illuminate gender expectations that confine children and creates spaces that give them the freedom they need to thrive. From family beginnings, through school and childhood experiences, into the teen years and young adulthood, Gender Spectrum is there to bring understanding, accurate information, practical resources, and loving support. As one parent said, “Gender Spectrum offers an invaluable resource for people just venturing out on this journey with their children. Thank you for all you do!”

Meeting individuals and organizations where they are in their understanding of gender, we provide practical, accessible information on gender and gender-inclusive principles in order to create a world where all children can live their full, authentic lives.

In the following pages are just a few examples of the work we did this year.
Paula’s Story

Paula and her husband Rich had two children when their third arrived. Assigned female at birth, from an early age it was clear Sam didn’t see himself as a girl.

When Sam went from a happy toddler to a moody, depressed child, Paula knew something needed to change, but she wasn’t sure where to turn. For many parents of transgender and non-binary children, the journey to embracing their child’s gender is challenging, sometimes even paralyzing. For most parents, there simply are no local resources, no place to find information, understanding and support.

Fortunately, Paula found Gender Spectrum. A working mom, she spent hours late at night and early in the mornings poring over the website, looking for answers. She found valuable information on gender, resources she could use to talk about Sam with her husband and family, and comfort in the many success stories of gender-diverse children who are flourishing with family support. She felt she was coming closer to understanding Sam and his needs.

But others were finding it harder to see Sam for who he is. A pediatrician told Paula to ignore Sam’s wishes, and within the family tension was mounting. Ultimately Paula realized the family needed more help. She and Rich traveled from their East Coast home to Texas for a day-long Gender Spectrum workshop, and then the entire family came to California for our annual Conference. Paula and Rich took part in two days of parenting workshops (she says, “I cried a lot”), and the kids made friends and had the opportunity to see Sam thriving with his peers in our kids’ camp. Paula and Rich found vital resources they can rely on when they return home, including connections with leading experts in medicine, mental health, the law and other fields.

Most importantly, the family met other parents who share similar experiences, including parents with older children who can offer advice and provide examples of happy, thriving children. For Paula’s family, as for many families who find Gender Spectrum, the shift is profound. Paula says, “Gender Spectrum has been my lifeline, my Bible.” While the landscape ahead remains complex, Paula and Rich now feel inspired to move forward in support of Sam’s journey.

That’s the impact we intend to have with every family: greater gender understanding leading to greater family support, creating the conditions for all children to realize their fullest possibilities.

You can see a video with more from Paula at

genderspectrum.org/AR2018
Gender Spectrum provides online resources for parents and young people to further understandings of gender and help all children thrive. Our website, online community, programs and discussion groups, webinars and other online resources help parents and young people connect with peers, share stories, and find support.

“I just wanted to say thank you so much for the Gender Spectrum Youth of Color discussion group! It’s helped me a lot and it’s given me hope for my future. These adults have made me realize that I can love myself and be proud of being a person of color while also being trans. I really appreciate this group, it really does help and it gives me something to look forward to throughout the week.”
common, especially for teens who do not have parental support.

But research shows that with even a single supportive adult, the odds for success dramatically improve for gender-diverse young people. When Jonah found Gender Spectrum and began attending our online groups for teens, things started looking up. “It was really nice that I had a place to share [my identity],” he says. “I don’t have any local groups, being online makes it accessible to anyone.”

Sharing with peers and with our adult group facilitator was critical for Jonah. “It helped that he’s trans and also a person of color, like me.”

Connections like these, with supportive adults who understand what young people are going through make a world of difference for all teens who are struggling with gender. In our online groups, teens like Jonah are safe to be who they are with caring adults who provide guidance, support, and a vision of a hopeful future.

**EVEN** in major urban centers, where many of us think that there are plenty of gender resources for young people, the reality is quite different. Jonah is a transgender teen living in a large, East Coast city. “I’m really only out to close friends,” he says, “I’d like to be out but I’m afraid of being bullied.” Jonah told us that his parents don’t support his gender identity, and before finding Gender Spectrum, he felt that he had “no one to go to, no one who would understand.”

Feeling isolated and alone, Jonah has a hard time even describing the desperation he sometimes feels. The reality for many transgender teens like Jonah is dire: high rates of depression, self-harm and even suicide attempts are all too
At our annual Conference, families come from across the country for two days of parenting workshops, youth programming, and individual support from the country’s leading experts on transgender and gender-expansive youth. This year we partnered with Across Gender, an organization that serves transgender and gender-expansive youth of color in the Bay Area, to help develop and coordinate our Conference youth programming.

I came in feeling fearful about how I was going to screw up my kid’s life by making the wrong decisions at bad times. I left feeling like we can handle this.

YAY!!! Thank you SO much for the sliding scale tickets! I told my son that we could go this year and he started crying. This means more than you know. We LOVE Gender Spectrum and the opportunities it gives us. Much love and light.
BONNIE’S FAITH JOURNEY

DEEPLY involved in her Evangelical community, Bonnie was facing a crisis. During the time that her church was beginning to grapple with its perspectives on gender, her young child began a social gender transition. Bonnie was both an active member of her church community and also worked for an Evangelical group affiliated with the church.

When failure to accept a child’s gender results from strongly held cultural or faith traditions, Gender Spectrum works to meet the faith community where they are. Rather than judging religious beliefs, we assume that the community loves their children and wants them to flourish. From this place of a shared vision, we can work together to bring greater gender understanding, and move towards support.

But for Bonnie, the journey did not work out this way. Though she tried to bring her community to understand her child’s gender, the group she worked for took an extreme anti-inclusionary stance, and she was fired from her job.

Ultimately Bonnie left the Evangelical church, but she reflects that her support for her child did make a difference. “It takes meeting people who are transgender to change people’s minds,” she says.

I know our story changed several people’s minds.

Even though Bonnie left one church, she did not leave her faith. She is now active in a new church, where her child is fully accepted.

“The church is one of the only places where my child is fully out,” she says. “It’s so helpful to know that I can still believe and also support my child.”

FAITH & GENDER

This year, Gender Spectrum has been increasing our emphasis on faith programming. Many families from various faith traditions worry that their child’s gender may be in conflict with their faith; this can be deeply troubling to the family and child. Because of that, we work to address these perceptions, providing additional perspectives from leaders in each tradition to help provide perspectives they may not hear.

We have revised and updated our website section on faith resources for Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Confucianist, Taoist, Buddhist and other faith communities. We’ve also created a series of video interviews with gender-diverse faith leaders, including a Native American faith leader, a Muslim trans woman, an African American interfaith organizer and advocate, and others. Additionally, we are facilitating online groups for youth and parents, leading social media conversations on faith and gender, and much more.

www.genderspectrum.org/AR2018
ALL STUDENTS: A STORY

A SCHOOLYARD at recess can look like a windstorm of fun: kids flying through the air on the swings, running across the playground at full tilt, balls soaring from one child to another, with sounds of laughter and screams of pure enjoyment.

But looking closely, it may be that not all of the kids are having fun. Even at the best schools, some kids face bullying, isolation and a sense that school simply isn’t a safe space for them.

This is the case at so many schools that reach out to Gender Spectrum. One school came to us after worried parents confronted the school leaders. “Parents came to us with real stories of their kids’ suffering,” the principal recalls. “And we felt we needed help, for the sake of all of our students.”

Gender Spectrum began to work with the school community. We emphasized the value of understanding gender for all kids, and soon the teachers, parents and children were diving in to conversations around gender and the kind of school they all wanted to create. Most critically, everyone agreed that the ultimate goal was a safe, welcoming school for all students. The results were tangible: as one teacher told us, “As a result of this work my students feel happier and they feel they have permission to be who they are.”

The conversations we bring to schools, to health care facilities, and other youth-serving professional organizations all point to one goal: safe, welcoming environments for all children, where they can be who they are and be free to develop their full creativity, innovation and possibilities.

See a video with students, teachers and parents from this school at genderspectrum.org/AR2018
I loved the [Gender Spectrum training]! Thank you so much! I wish this training was mandatory for all humans!

We worked with more than 130 leading organizations of youth serving professionals who have more than 20,000 principals and over 200k teachers who work with more than 3.2 million children.
GENDER SPECTRUM trains thousands of youth-serving professionals every year, reaching leaders who work with millions of children. Erin Fawkes is a school psychologist who provides gender training for teachers and staff in a Colorado school district of 40,000 students. After she heard a Gender Spectrum presentation at a Conference, she says “I knew right away we needed to work together.”

Once the work started, the need quickly became apparent. Erin recalls,

“As soon as the word got out that the district was doing this work, we started getting calls from our schools. Right away we realized how much support our students needed, and how large the gaps were in our knowledge and ability to be there for them.”

With ongoing training, resources and consultations from Gender Spectrum, Erin finds that the entire district is now on board. “Five years ago there would have been a lot of pushback,” she says, but now she believes that all of the schools’ administrators and staff see how valuable gender understanding is for all of their students.
Our work with major corporations focuses on the implications evolving understandings of gender have on companies today—from competition for talent to expanding markets for products and services. Companies who can adapt in this changing landscape will not only improve corporate performance, but also contribute to more empowering and inclusive representations of gender. This year we conducted outreach on gender-inclusive work to 70 major corporations, leading to conversations with more than ten companies, including industry leaders in the food industry, technology, telecommunications, finance and others.
GROWTH NEEDED TO MEET URGENT NEEDS

As this report has outlined, the urgent need for our work continues for millions of children and families. With your support, Gender Spectrum has been able to change the lives of people like Paula and Jonah, and we have helped professionals bring life-affirming work to schools and other institutions who needed our help in supporting all children in their gender. But the need for our work continues to grow.

Parents, professionals, corporations and government institutions recognize the need for gender literacy. They are asking for help to provide practical solutions to the everyday challenges they face regarding gender in their institutions. We have identified online programs and discussion groups we would develop today if we had the additional people and other resources needed. And with the demand for training greatly exceeding our ability to respond — even one more trainer would allow us to change the lives of thousands more.

That’s why we need your help. In this time of growth, Gender Spectrum has ambitious plans to meet these urgent needs. In the next year we are prepared to add several new staff positions to help grow our programs, improve our content, and expand our reach. We will continue our work throughout the country, focusing on areas where few gender resources exist. We will further shape the national conversation towards greater gender understanding. We will boldly and unceasingly strive to meet every child’s need for gender development free from harmful stereotypes and assumptions.

All of this work is impossible without your support — contributions from individuals like you are by far our greatest source of funding. Please consider making your donation to Gender Spectrum today!

THANK YOU FOR MAKING THIS LIFE AFFIRMING, AND LIFE-SAVERING WORK POSSIBLE.

Lisa Kenney
Executive Director

Stephanie Brill
 Founder and Board Chair

I have given myself a few days to try to find the words to thank you for my experience at the Conference. I find that I am still quite emotional when I think about it, and am no closer to knowing how to properly thank you. Thank you for the long hours of planning. Thank you for the kind words. Thank you for the sincere interest in our well-being. Thank you for creating a place where families can recharge. Thank you for helping me to be a better parent and a better person.