THE NEW BRANCH

MOUNTAIN RISE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Mountain Rise United Church of Christ
2 Mountain Rise
Fairport, NY 14450
Phone: (585) 223-2433
Website: mtriseucc.org
email office@mtriseucc.org

In this Issue:

Calendar

Knitting, Tuesdays at 10:00AM
Bibles & Books, 10:00AM the Second & Fourth Tuesday
ROMEOs, Fridays, 12:00PM
JULIETs, October 31, 12:00PM
Council Meeting, October 6, 4:45PM
First Monday Dinner & Discussion, October 6, 6:00PM
Open & Affirming Group, October 14, 7:00PM
Service & Advocacy, October 12, 11:15 AM
Book Group, October 20, 7:30PM

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Spiritual Growth Group I, October 27, 7:15 PM
Spiritual Growth Group II, October 14, 7:15PM
Spiritual Growth Group IV, October 1, 2:00PM

The church office is staffed on Tuesdays 10:00am-3:00pm and Thursdays 12:30-3:00pm. If you need to contact staff or access to the building at an alternative time, please email or call: office@mtriseucc.org or 585-223-2433. Please don't hesitate to leave a telephone message.

Mountain Rise UCC presents:

Join us for an evening of music with Jack Snelling and the Bradley Brothers while learning about and raising funds for *HOPE (Haiti Outreach Pwoje Espwa)* the hospital in Borgne, Haiti and *LIDERA (Grow Academy)* in Flor del Campo, Honduras on **Friday, October 24th**.
George DeMott, Rochester vocalist and entertainer, will be our special host for the evening.

Tickets are available for purchase before and after Sunday worship for $25 each or you can reserve and pay for a table for your party. (*Please bring an appetizer or dessert the night of the gala.)*

For additional information, please contact Rob Stevens (robertstevens11@gmail.com) or Nick McClain (nickymcclain@gmail.com)

If you are interested in donating a silent auction item or experience, please contact Kathy Nixon (knixon326@gmail.com) or Kirsten Erman (kirse3@msn.com)

ROC VOX

Church Council

Council Meeting Scheduled

COUNCIL AGENDA
Monday, OCTOBER 6, 2025 4:45 PM

OPENING PRAYER/MEDITATION
GUESTS:
OLD BUSINESS:
- Recap of info mtg
- Policy update
- Spiritual Director proposal

NEW BUSINESS:
- Committee reports
- Finance: approval of pledge campaign dates
- Council budget requests for 2026

Your Council Members:
Jane Pierce, Chair, jpcouncilchair@mtriseucc.org
Mike Tiss, Vice-Chair, michaeltiss4@aol.com
Kathy Nixon, Council Secretary, knixon326@gmail.com
Deborah Nettle, At-Large, roarie67@aol.com
Tom Prins, At-Large, tom@scholarschoice.com
Rick Watkins, At-Large, rwatkins12@rochester.rr.com
Nicky McClain, Communications Committee Chair, nickymcclain@gmail.com

Ministry Committee Chairs:
Faith Formation - Steven Grace
Fellowship - Dave Ackroyd
Caring Connections - Sherry Shaffer and Cheryl Pipkin (co-chairs)
Spiritual Life and Worship - Ted Nixon
Service and Advocacy - Vacant

Pastoral Search Committee:
Kathy Simpson, chair
Faye Eaton, vice chair
Kirsten Erman, secretary
Ted Nixon, chaplain
Linda Boesl
Gary Schaefer

SATURDAY FUN NIGHT!

Regardless of age, come join us for...

GAME NIGHT

Saturday, **October 11**
Second Saturday of each Month
6:30-8:30 pm, Lower Fellowship Hall

Please bring a snack or drink to share as well as games to play.

No Sign-up is necessary.
Questions? Contact Rob Stevens at 314-1938 or robertstevens11@gmail.com

Book Group

The Mountain Rise book group will meet on **October 20, 6:30 pm** in the library of Mountain Rise church. (Please note the change in time and place!

We will be discussing a book written by Ketanji Brown Jackson, *Lovely One: A Memoir*.

Join us for an interesting discussion! Contact Rick Watkins with any questions (585)203-1629, rwatkins12@rochester.rr.com).

Soulful Soup Wednesdays

On the **3rd Wednesday** of the month, join us for a light supper and fellowship. Sponsored by Fellowship and Faith Formation Committees.

Everyone is welcome! There will be two kinds of soup, one vegetarian, bread & butter, cheese & crackers. Freewill offering.

October 15
5:30-7pm
Fellowship Hall lower level

Questions: contact Elisabeth Hammer or Dave Ackroyd.
COME WARM YOUR HEART and SOUL!

Music Sounds Like Prayer

As costumed Halloween trick-or-treaters made their way through fog and drizzle that laid heavy on the gothic wonderland of Duke University, the chapel's heavy doors creaked open, and there appeared robed in white, the crucifer, torch bearers with tall burning candles, the thurifer swinging the thurible, releasing its sweet but bitter smoking incense into the dark, dank, dreary night. They moved out, leading a procession onto quad, which included the white alb-clad liturgists, presiding minister, and preacher. And behind this robed liturgical mob, the devoted fell into line as some of the menagerie of costumed candy-laden trick-or-treaters followed along in curiosity.

The procession halted at each corner of Chapel Quad, where at each right angle, a blazing tiki torch lit the darkness, revealing a lector donned in a cinctured white alb who read aloud the biblical stories of the Witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28:3-25), the Vision of Eliphaz the Temanite (Job 4:12-21), the Valley of Dry Bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14), and the War in Heaven (Revelation 12:1-12). After rounding the last corner of the quad, the procession of white-robed liturgical participants, costumed trick-or-treaters, and others dressed for the last night of October returned to the chapel and entered into the building's cavernous darkness by candlelight as the Chapel Organist played the eerie tones of Olivier Messiaen's "Apparition de l'église éternelle" (Apparition on the Eternal Church) poured out of the pipes of the 1932 Æolian organ.

And there was I, clad in one of the albs, moving down the lengthy center aisle following the presiding minister who recited the ancient Te Deum in English while "Apparition de l'église éternelle" reverberated off the walls holding the immense stained-glass windows darkened by night as the entire congregation slowly filled the choir stalls for worship. As the faith and arts intern, I was responsible for coordinating this late-night All Hallows Eve service, and I had been "coerced" into preaching that night by visiting professor Peter Gomes from Harvard University's Memorial Church.

Thirty-two years later, I remember little about the service and none of the words I uttered in one of my earliest sermons that night. But I remember as if it were only yesterday the procession around the quad and down the chapel aisle while notes of Messiaen's "Apparition de l'église éternelle" echoed in my head.

Prayer is music. Just as scripture and contemplation inform prayer, music brings me to a more profound state of devotion and awe. I can't always find words to offer in prayer, but even wordless music sounds out the depths of my spirit. Hymns, too, inform times of devotion and centering. Creating liturgy and selecting hymns are not merely the weekly work of a pastor for me; it's a spiritual practice that brings me closer to the Divine. It is not uncommon for me to read a hymnal as some would read a novel. I acquire hymnals not merely to collect them but as resources for enriching my spiritual practice. My spiritual practice is not simply a personal solitary exercise but one that encourages and animates my and others' voices to protest and to sing for their lives into this often disoriented, dangerous, and demeaning world.

Hymnwriter David Bjorlin in the preface to his collection of hymns, *Protest of Praise*, writes, "The act of true praise is always a protest against all that curses or denigrates the Creator's world and the people made in the Creator's image; and an act of true protest is always in praise of a world that the protestor has begun to envision and works to make real. Praise is protest; protest is praise."

Just as music of the church leads me into a deeper and more profound life of prayer, I pray that your spiritual practice brings you closer to God and the Holy Spirit that dwells within you.

Blessings and Peace,
Kelly

Service and Advocacy For Justice and Peace

Justice and Peace Action Network (JPANet)

Looking for a Way to Take Positive Action?

This network is the grassroots advocacy of the United Church of Christ across the country. The JPANet both educates and engages its members in shaping public policy in keeping with God's vision of a just and loving society. Its work is grounded in General Synod resolutions, consistent with historic UCC witness, and formed by a biblical understanding of prophetic ministry.

Sign up below to join the network and receive weekly action alerts in your email about UCC justice issues.
Click here

DIVERSE INCLUSIVE ACCEPTING WELCOMING SAFE SPACE FOR EVERYONE

Open & Affirming Group Meeting
Tuesday, October 14
at 7:00 pm
at Mountain Rise
YOU are Welcome!

Mountain Rise Builds

Come and join fellow Mountain Risers on

October 4 or 25

as we help build a Habitat House in Rochester. Mountain Rise is a key partner with Greater Rochester Interfaith Builders that finished a home this spring and just started a new home in the Beechwood neighborhood. Habitat for Humanity allows us to put our faith into action, directly contributing to a local family's dream of homeownership. This is a chance to build strength, stability, and self-reliance right here in our community.

All skill levels are welcome to join us for a time of fellowship and service. Volunteers must be 16 years or older. **If you are interested in volunteering or have questions, please contact Rob Stevens (585-314-1938) or Bill Holiday (585-755-2775).**

LIDERA

With your support LIDERA / Grow Academy is able to give the children of Flor de Campo a fun, safe place to learn and grow. Please read the two following reports from Evelyn Cantor the director of LIDERA. June/July

PERINTON FOOD SHELF

An Emergency Food Relief Organization

"In the 15 years that I have volunteered at the Perinton Food Shelf, I have never seen our stock so low." Eileen Schopp

Please consider having a food drive in your neighborhood or business. We average close to feeding 30-40 people per week and give them at least a week's groceries.

Listed below is what we really need. Please remember we do not accept expired food and jumbo size isn't always the best as they won't fit into our boxes or make them too heavy.

We need: **Bottled juice (64 oz), coffee, tea, cookies, brownie and cake mixes, frosting, cereal, pancake mix, stuffing, gravy, rice mixes, boxed mashed potatoes and potato mixes, canned peaches, fruit cocktail, jars of applesauce, tuna, salad dressings, mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard, canned beef stew, soup, ramen noodles, baked beans, pork and beans, paper towels, tissue, toilet paper.**

Also needed: sturdy plastic reusable grocery bags like Wegmans, clean and in good shape; they would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your support.

October is UCC Native American Month
History of the Seneca Nation of Western New York
Presentation by David L George Shongo, Jr.
Director, Seneca Nation Tribal Historic Preservation
Sunday, October 19, 2025, 11:15am

The Seneca Nation of Indians is a federally recognized Seneca tribe based in western New York. They are one of three federally recognized Seneca entities in the United States, the others being the Tonawanda Band of Seneca (also in western New York) and the Seneca-Cayuga Nation of Oklahoma. Some Seneca also live with other Iroquois peoples on the Six Nations of the Grand River in Ontario. The Seneca Nation has three reservations, two of which are occupied: Cattaraugus Reservation, Allegany Indian Reservation, and the mostly unpopulated Oil Springs Reservation. An additional territory de facto governed by the nation, the Cornplanter Tract in Pennsylvania, officially expired in 1957 and was submerged by the construction of the Allegheny Reservoir in 1965.

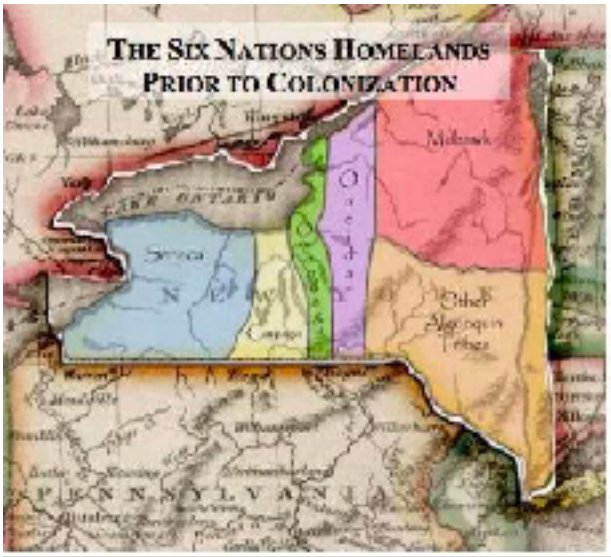
The Seneca were the largest of the six Native American nations that comprised the Haudenosaunee ("Iroquois") Confederacy, or Six Nations. Their democratic government pre-dates the United States Constitution. In the Iroquois Confederacy, the Seneca are known as the "Keepers of the Western Door," for they are the westernmost of the Six Nations. In the Seneca language they are called O-non-dowa-gah, (pronounced: Oh-n'own-dough-wahgah) or "Great Hill People".

At the time of the formation of the Iroquois League, the original five nations occupied large areas of land in Northeast North America, particularly present-day New York, Pennsylvania, and Southeast Canada. The historical territory of the Seneca Nation ran throughout the Finger Lakes area in Central New York, and in the Genesee Valley in Western New York. The Seneca lived in longhouses near rivers, and their villages were well fortified with wooden-stake palisade fences. These were settled communities in which the people cultivated the Three Sisters staple crops: varieties of corn, beans, and squash. In Seneca the Three Sisters are also called Deohako (pronounced: Jo- hay- ko), "the life supporters."

Generally women cultivated and processed the crops, maintaining seed crops and experimenting with varieties, and men were subsistence hunters and fishers. The Seneca were highly skilled at warfare, and were considered fierce adversaries by other Native Americans and European colonists. But the Seneca were also renowned for their sophisticated diplomacy and oratory skills, and their willingness to unite with the other four of the original Five Nations to form the Iroquois Confederacy of Nations.

Today the Seneca Nation sustains its own people. Its enterprises benefit surrounding communities with a variety of cultural, educational and economic efforts. Its varied enterprises include: world-class casino gaming, hospitality and entertainment, which employ over 3,500 people; a convenience store chain (four stores), construction management, and diverse holdings in business ventures. Seneca language, song, art, dance, and sports are all vital expressions of their culture. The number of fluent Seneca language speakers is diminishing due to the deaths of elders, and the language is considered at-risk. The Nation has established language programs to help protect, preserve and develop a new generation of Seneca-language speakers to keep the language alive.

- David Shongo



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Please welcome Director David Shongo as we begin to explore the relationship between Mountain Rise and the original tribal homelands of the Seneca Nation. A special "Three Sisters Soup" will be offered during coffee hour. We will meet in the Sanctuary.
Thank you, your Universal Justice Team

Deohako - Three Sisters Soup

Would you be willing to make a crock pot of Three Sisters Soup?

Would you be willing to make a pot of Three Sisters Soup for our **October 19** Seneca Nation Presentation? One recipe is below but feel free to make your own**.**

Please sign up on the church bulletin board.

Ingredients
3 tablespoons butter
4 cups chicken or vegetable stock
1 cup onion, diced
1 clove garlic, minced
1 butternut or acorn squash, pre-baked and pureed
1 teaspoon curry powder
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup yellow corn kernels
¼ teaspoon ground coriander
½ cup hominy, cooked
1 cup white beans, cooked
1/8 teaspoon crushed red pepper

1. Melt butter in a large saucepan over medium-high heat.
2. Add onion and garlic, cook for 3-5 minutes or until tender.
3. Stir in spices, cook for 1 minute
4. Add stock, corn, hominy, and drained beans, and bring to boil.
5. Reduce to heat to low and cook, stirring occasionally, for 15-20 minutes to develop flavors.
6. Stir in pureed squash, cook for 5 minutes or until heated through.

From Donna LaChapelle and Patricia Chandler
National Headquarters, First Nations Development Institute, Longmont, CO

MRUCC Open & Affirming Group presents:

MOVIE NIGHT on Friday, October 18th 6-9pm
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KE3CIyutfbY

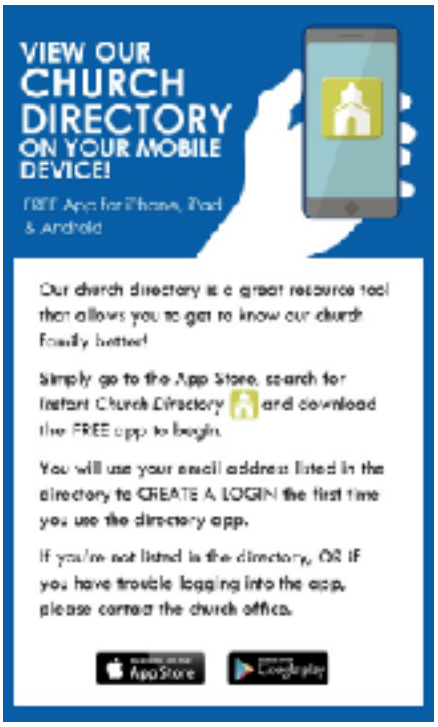
"Summer Qamp" is a 2023 documentary by director Jen Markowitz that follows a group of LGBTQ+ youth at a summer camp for queer and trans teens in Alberta, Canada. The film celebrates the joyful, affirming, and safe environment of Camp fYrefly, where young people explore their identities, find community, and experience traditional summer camp activities in a space that provides a much-needed sense of belonging and support.

Please join us for the movie and a discussion afterwards.
Popcorn will be provided! Bring your own beverage.

Questions? See Faye Eaton or Gail McClain

Mountain Rise has two updated assisted listening opportunities. One is a loop system to connect with individual hearing aids; the second is new headsets (located on the bench outside the sanctuary).

Anyone interested in learning how to connect hearing aids to the loop can contact Sherry Shaffer at sherks@rochester.rr.com.



We pray especially for these members, friends, and loved ones of Mountain Rise:

Please advise the church office of any changes.

Kathy Simpson, health concerns
Sharon Heister, health concerns
Ken Ackroyd, health concerns
Judy Thorne, health concerns .

Available

Pronoun stickers are available and are a great way to raise awareness about gender inclusiveness. Wear these in support of inclusivity: a simple act toward a just world.

Caring for Each Other

Are you facing a health challenge or other need for a caring connection? Do you know someone else at Mountain Rise in need? Our pastoral care team (Pastor Kelly Sprinkle, Sherry Shaffer, and Cheryl Pipkin) may not be aware of the situation or that contact would be welcomed. Please let us know how we can help by calling 585-223-2433 or sending an email to office@mtriseucc.org.

Mountain Rise

The UCC was founded in 1957 as the union of several different Christian traditions: from the beginning of our history, we were a church that affirmed the ideal that Christians did not always have to agree in order to live together in communion. The United Church of Christ is one of the most diverse Christian churches in the United States. To read stories about our history and future visit ucc.org.

The United Church of Christ Seeks to…
–Be Inclusive, not Exclusive
–Celebrate diverse membership & Christian belief
–Be united and uniting, yet…
–Affirm each congregation's autonomy
–Be Committed to Justice & Peace

God is still speaking… life evolves. we evolve. faith must evolve….are we still listening?

✨ Qualitative Report – June 2025

Introduction

June was a vibrant month filled with purposeful activities designed to spark children's creativity, boost their motivation, and deepen their engagement with the games tailored for each session and group. Every activity was thoughtfully planned to support developmental goals while making play both meaningful and fun.

Training Sessions in June

A total of **25 parents**—including **24 mothers and 1 father**—actively participated in at least two of the four scheduled talks this month. These sessions focused on strengthening parenting skills and fostering positive behavior in children. The topics included:

- **The Garden of Tenderness: Strengthening Obedience in Children**
- **Diagnosing Forms of Discipline at Home**
- **Tools for Improving Obedience in Children**

🌼Testimonies and Highlights – June 2025

Luis & Janna

Luis Martel, father of Janna, stepped in to accompany his daughter to her stimulation session while his wife was ill. Despite feeling nervous about entering a space typically filled with mothers, Luis fully engaged in every activity with Janna. His presence was a powerful example of paternal involvement and support.

Janna joined the program at just 7 months old and has shown remarkable development. She is now an energetic little girl who loves to play, dance, and express herself with age-appropriate fluency in vocabulary and conversation. Her mother, Josselyn, has been a consistent and dedicated participant in every session, playing a vital role in Janna’s progress.

Eliam

Eliam entered the program at just 40 days old. His early sessions focused on age-appropriate stimulation, including sensory play, relaxation techniques, and visual and auditory exercises. Now at 6 months, Eliam is highly active and enjoys storytime. He shows keen interest in learning, often imitating actions that capture his attention.

His mother has shown unwavering commitment, attending every session and actively participating in the educational talks. Her consistency has been key to Eliam’s growth.

Community Engagement & Activities

🌸 Garden of Tenderness Mural

Mothers collaborated to create a beautiful mural titled *The Garden of Tenderness*, symbolizing nurturing and emotional growth. This project also served as a platform for mothers to share advice on strengthening bonds with their children.

Sensory Play & Independence

Children were encouraged to choose activities independently, fostering autonomy and curiosity. Sensory play was a favorite among all participants. Mothers attended sessions with enthusiasm, building strong group cohesion through social activities and practical support.

Feedback from service quality surveys revealed a strong desire for the program to continue and for more stimulation davs to be added.

Developmental Progress - Ages 24 to 36 Months

Children in this age group demonstrated excellent fine and gross motor skills. Language development is actively progressing. One ongoing challenge is reducing screen time at home, particularly mobile phone use. However, a promising opportunity has emerged: children are happily spending up to four hours without screens, which has led to increased creativity, interest in reading, relaxation, and deeper engagement with their surroundings.

Earth Day Celebration - Guardians of the Planet

To celebrate Earth Day, children painted two versions of the planet—one suffering, and one thriving. They then toured the school block to collect litter, an activity that deeply resonated with them. The group was named *Guardians of the Planet* and received badges to honor their commitment. Mothers shared that their children now remind them to keep the home clean, showing how the activity inspired real change.

🌙 Sleepover Event

Children and their parents participated in a joyful sleepover, arriving in their sleepwear. The evening included storytelling, a movie about emotions, popcorn, and a playful pillow fight. This event fostered emotional expression and bonding in a fun, safe environment.

Upcoming Activities

- **Evaluation of Achievements**: Each child's progress will be assessed, and copies of the evaluations will be shared with parents.
- **Artistic Rehearsals**: Children will begin preparing performances for the upcoming *Family Day* celebration.

QUALITATIVE REPORT – JULY 2025

A picture often speaks louder than words. Each morning, as we open the doors of our academy, we are greeted by bright, eager faces ready for their stimulation sessions. July was a month filled with joy, laughter, and meaningful experiences for both children and mothers.

The variety of new and dynamic activities kept the children motivated and excited to participate every day. Mothers have even shared that their little ones insist on attending, asking to be brought to class whenever circumstances prevent them from coming. This enthusiasm reflects the impact and value the program continues to generate in their lives.

To enhance children's cognitive and perceptual skills, we introduced an activity focused on sensory recognition. The session began with illustrations of the ear, nose, eyes, and mouth, accompanied by a brief explanation of each organ's function. Afterwards, each child received a card featuring a face. Using pre-cut figures or drawings representing the senses, the children were tasked with placing each element in its correct position on the face.

By stimulating and awakening the sense of touch, we activate a vital pathway for transferring information and experiences to the brain. This stimulation not only enriches sensory perception but also reinforces cognitive processes that support multiple areas of child development—ranging from artistic expression and sensorimotor experiences to language acquisition and socio-affective interaction. Touch serves as a bridge between the external world and the inner self, transforming sensations into meaningful learning opportunities and powerful tools for expression and communication.

Another effective strategy for strengthening children's cognitive processes is the implementation of activities that foster logical thinking, coordination, and problem-solving. Examples include puzzles and construction materials such as Lego, which encourage planning, spatial awareness, and creativity. Observation and classification games can also be introduced, allowing children to identify and group objects by similarities, such as matching colors, or to connect items using materials like hooks and string.
These activities not only enhance attention and visual discrimination but also strengthen fine motor skills, concentration, and the ability to establish meaningful relationships between objects and concepts.

To stimulate language development, each child receives a stuffed animal that will serve as the protagonist of a creative activity. Using this object, they are invited to invent and tell a story, using their imagination to describe characters, settings, and actions. This activity encourages verbal expression, sentence construction, and vocabulary development.
Additionally, basic mathematical concepts are introduced through the identification and naming of numbers. This can be integrated into the story, for example, by counting the objects that appear in the story, assigning numbers to characters, or establishing numerical sequences. In this way, the activity not only strengthens language but also stimulates logical and mathematical thinking in a fun and meaningful way.

Mothers and fathers actively participate in the process. The results obtained are presented through evaluation rubrics, which systematically record the progress made in the children's development. These results demonstrate significant improvements in different areas of child growth, positively contributing to their overall development. These progressions reflect not only the impact of the implemented activities but also the constant support of families and the educational team. Likewise, mothers express satisfaction and joy when observing the favorable changes in their children, recognizing that these achievements strengthen their abilities and enhance their overall well-being. Within the Tender Parenting program, we addressed the effect of prolonged screen use on children's brains. A video was presented explaining all the areas affected, from the behavioral, emotional, and physical aspects of infants. The talk aims to sensitize mothers and fathers to control the use of these devices.