



# 2023-2024

## ANNUAL REPORT



# FIRST STEPS IS HERE

Last year, because of Union County First Steps:



**9170 children**

were directly served in Union County



**1,869 parents & caregivers**

received services and support to be their child's first and most important teacher



**210 educators**

participated in First Steps training and professional development, benefitting 500+ children

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## PROVEN RESULTS

A 2019 study found that children who received First Steps local partnership services were:



**74% more likely**

to score at the highest level on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment



**34% less likely**

to be chronically absent in kindergarten

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## THE NEED PERSISTS IN UNION COUNTY

First Steps works but we need to expand our reach to ensure that all children are ready.

**1,812**

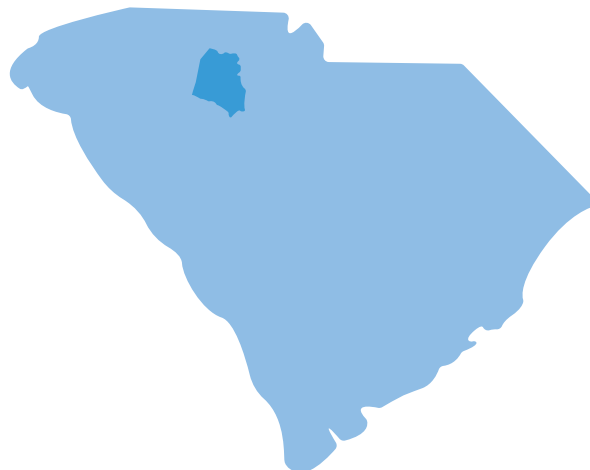
children under 6

**60%**

of young children live in poverty or low-income households

**67%**

of kindergarteners are considered "not ready" for school



# OUR MISSION

To connect families to the resources they need for their children to be safe, healthy and ready for school.



## Nicole Glenn

Executive Director

As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with a deep sense of gratitude and pride. Thanks to your unwavering support and commitment, Union County First Steps has achieved remarkable milestones and made significant strides towards our mission.

This year in our Parents as Teachers program, we earned the Blue-Ribbon Award from the National Parents as Teachers Organization. To earn this award, the affiliate must meet all the essential requirements and complete a comprehensive self-study that demonstrates they have thorough policies and procedures and fulfill at least 80% of the Quality Standards. This success is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our entire team, as well as the invaluable contributions from our supporters and partners. We have faced our share of challenges, but through resilience and innovation, we have turned these obstacles into opportunities for growth.

Our impact this year has been profound. On our Facebook page, we highlight success stories from both past and current families who have participated in our programs. These stories showcase the positive impact of our work and the remarkable journeys of those we serve. It is your belief in our mission that fuels our progress and enables us to make a real difference.

As we look to the future, we are excited to continue to strengthen our collaboration with our local and neighboring county agencies by connecting families to the resources they need for their children to be safe, healthy, and ready for school. With your continued support, we are confident that we will not only meet but exceed our goals, driving even greater positive change. Thank you for being an integral part of our journey!

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## Serving Union County's children birth through age five.

"Mrs. Shanell and the First Steps program benefits my child Jupiter and I because they gave us information on early learning before daycare or school was even thought of. They gave us resources that I never knew was out there. With the help of the First Steps program, I have been able to place Jupiter in daycare for me to be able to return to work as a sub, and also return to school to better myself for him and his brother. We are very thankful and blessed for this program."

Yakima Jeter  
Union County First Steps parent



# PROGRAMS

## PARENTING

### Parents as Teachers

Offers research-based curricula that help families raise children to be healthy, safe, learning, and ready for school.

45

children served

17

group meetings  
and events

729

home visits

## HEALTH

### Reach Out and Read

Free, high-quality books provided by a child's pediatric provider during doctor's visits.

666

children served

1,428

book distributed

## EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

### Training & Professional Development

Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce.

210

children served

8

providers served

20.5

certified training  
hours

### Child Care Scholarships

Eligible children receive tuition-free enrollment at quality child care centers.

10

children served

10

families served

3

providers served

## SCHOOL TRANSITION

### Countdown to Kindergarten

Supports transitions into kindergarten by connecting incoming students, their families, and their teachers in a series of one-on-one sessions during the summer.

10

children served

1

schools served

60

home visits

# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

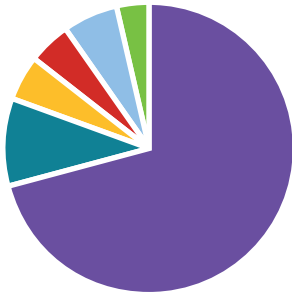


**\$1 = \$1.35**

Union County First Steps leveraged \$70,304.45 from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$0.35 for every state dollar invested.

## EXPENDITURES

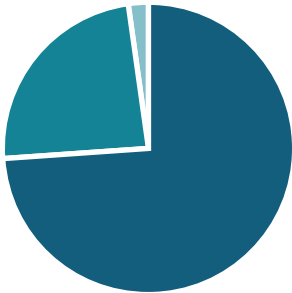
Total: \$281,198.39



- Parenting - \$199,599.69
- Early Care & Education - \$26,980.31
- School Transition - \$14,320.09
- Health - \$13,007.28
- Administrative - \$17,446.06
- Core Functions - \$9,844.96

## FUNDING SOURCES

Total: \$270,304.45



- State Funding - \$200,000
- Federal Funding - \$64,459.32
- Private Funding - \$5,845.13

## FUNDING SUPPORT BY SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS

State Education Improvement Act (EIA) Funding  
 Federal ESSER Funding\*

State Income Tax Check-off and Private Donations to SC First Steps

*\*American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund, awarded to the South Carolina Department of Education*

Note: Revenue amounts may show a difference between allocations and revenue based on penalties imposed by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees for non-compliance with organizational policies. The figures provided are based on unaudited financial statements and, as such, are subject to change.



# Robin Rodgers

## Board Chair

First Steps of Union County continues to play a major role in reaching out and working with our families and community partners to start education early in the lives of our children. This last year has been a very successful one for the program. The program continues to send their staff into the homes to ensure that all young children have a chance to start school ready and prepared to learn more. The First Steps presence in the community is outstanding. It strives to educate the families, businesses, churches, communities, and all that will listen on the importance of making sure a child feels safe, they are healthy and prepared for school. Our Executive Director Nicole Thomas is an awesome young woman that takes her job seriously, and genuinely cares about the wellbeing of children. Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Our First Steps program strives hard to make sure education is first so that our children can and will succeed in life. Union County is blessed to have our First Steps Program. Continue to mold and shape minds to achieve Greatness!

## Our Local Supporters

- City of Union
- Dollar General Distribution
- Lockhart Power
- Community Mortuary, Inc.
- SC Endeavors
- South Carolina First Steps
- Word of Life Christian Church

## Board of Directors

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## CONTACT US

506 S Duncan Bypass B Union, SC 29379 | 864-426-2519 | [unionfirststeps.wixsite.com/my-site](http://unionfirststeps.wixsite.com/my-site)