THE NEED
IN SOUTH CAROLINA:

42%
of people live in a childcare desert, where there are more than three times as many children as licensed childcare slots

53%
of children ages 3 and 4 are not enrolled in nursery school or preschool

IN CHEROKEE COUNTY:

3,311
children under age 5

26.9%
of young children live in poverty or low-income households

70%
of kindergartners are considered "not ready" for school

OUR MISSION
Collaborating with other entities, First Steps helps South Carolina families and caregivers prepare their children for school success by maximizing public and private community resources to deliver, enhance and expand high-quality early childhood services.

OUR APPROACH
High quality programs and services for children and families
Intensive training, resources and support for childcare providers
Strategic partnerships and community education

OUR IMPACT
5,514
number of children and adults served by Cherokee County First Steps in 2018-2019

JOIN US
We rely on a community of partners, donors, and volunteers – people like you – who believe in a brighter future for children and families in our community.

PO Box 23, Gaffney, SC 29342  |  864.487.9466  |  www.cherokeecountyfirststeps.org
Cherokee County First Steps has been a valuable partner in helping our program increase partnerships with families to support dual language learners, address challenging behaviors in children, and collect and analyze data to improve learning experiences and outcomes for children we serve. The work of the Talk to Me Initiative is important to removing educational, social and economic barriers debilitating families living in poverty in Cherokee County.

Dr. Arthur Brewton, Director
Piedmont Community Action Head Start/Early Head Start Program
As the local affiliate of Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, we provide free, high-quality books to children from birth until age five, no matter their family’s income.

Children enrolled in our Imagination Library program receive one book per month by mail. Each title is selected by a panel of early childhood literacy experts, who are responsible for choosing books that meet the age-specific developmental needs of young children.

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**IMAGINATION LIBRARY BY THE NUMBERS 2018-2019**

2,418 children served 23,082 books distributed

- Children were read to approximately 142,018 hours by parents and caregivers
- 73% of children within the county are participating in the program
- 55% of parents reported reading to their child daily
- 82% of parents reported reading to their child more often than before enrolling
- 64% of parents have doubled the number of books in the home while in the program
High-quality child care hinges on high-quality professional development that meets the needs of the local child care workforce. Our training programs are certified through the SC Center for Child Care Career Development and include topics in the areas of nutrition, health and safety, curriculum, child guidance, professional development and program administration. Our 2018-2019 trainings included:

- Communication & Language Development of Young Children
- Connecting the SC Learning Standards to Your Lessons
- Business Basics Building a Great Team
- Business Marketing Tools & Strategies
- Blood Borne Pathogens
- What Do I Do When the Children Do That
- Social & Emotional Development Within the Context of Relationships
- Physical Activity: Brain Smart Moves
- Importance of Music With Infant & Toddlers
- Brain Power

**TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS**

282 total training attendance

98 child care teachers and directors served

10 number of training sessions offered


Quote from participant regarding the Growth & Development session “Brain Power” by Susan Kear: “I will use this information to make my classroom a better environment for me and my kids.”
Talk to Me Cherokee Initiative's mission includes preparing Cherokee County children for success through language and literacy skill development. Talk to Me addresses the problem of children falling behind in vocabulary skills by increasing parent talk and face-to-face interactions. One of the initiative's main goals is increasing interactive talk and conversational turns. As one component of the program, home visits are provided to targeted families utilizing quality early learning experiences through the LENA curriculum. The LENA (Language ENvironment Analysis) System (device) is used to measure language exchanges between the parent and child, track progress, and provide feedback. Talk to Me Cherokee Initiative is a collaboration between Cherokee County First Steps and other agencies including: United Way of the Piedmont, Cherokee County School District, Piedmont Community Action Head Start/Early Head Start Program, Spartanburg Community College - Cherokee Campus, Cherokee County Public Library, KNOW(2), SC Education Oversight Committee, Institute for Child Success, and Limestone College.

### Talk to Me Cherokee Initiative By the Numbers 2018-2019

- **36** children served
- **291** total home visits

- 65% of parents increased words spoken to their child per hour
- 50% of parents increased conversational turns with their child each day
- 68% of parents increased the amount of time spent talking with their child
South Carolina First Steps provides eligible children with free enrollment in full-day four-year-old kindergarten programs. In coordination with First Steps local partnerships and more than 200 private, faith- and community-based preschool providers, First Steps 4K expands access to quality child care across the state.

**ELIGIBILITY**

To qualify for enrollment, a child must:

- Be 4 years old on or before September 1
- Qualify for Medicaid or a free or reduced-price lunch program
- Live in one of 64 qualifying school districts

**FIRST STEPS 4K IN ABC COUNTY 2018-2019**

- 23 children enrolled
- 2 participating classrooms

**4K NEWS**

In fiscal year 2019-2020, South Carolina First Steps is launching a pilot program to expand 4K enrollment within underserved communities. Age- and income-eligible children residing in any SC school district may qualify for a slot in a participating center that also serves students from eligible districts.
Public awareness was increased regarding the importance of early education by conducting presentations at meetings and events in the community. Local learning events included Early Head Start Family Socialization Events, Gaffney Outlet Marketplace Halloween Event, and the City of Gaffney Easter Egg Hunt. There were 14 outreach events, which included education/health fairs, back to school activities, company presentations and picnics. A total of 276 children and families were served by these events. An additional 144 adults were provided with information about the program.

**PUBLIC AWARENESS BY THE NUMBERS 2018-2019**

581 materials distributed

14 events held

1,243 total event attendance

A few members of the Cherokee County First Steps Board and staff at an event in August 2018.
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Addressing the needs of young children is a shared endeavor. In addition to providing services to families and support for child care providers, Cherokee County First Steps mobilizes partners and community members to ensure all children in Cherokee County begin school ready to succeed. We serve as a:

LOCAL PORTAL
connecting preschool children and their families to services

CONVENER
of community stakeholders to develop an effective and comprehensive early childhood system

CHAMPION
of the importance of school readiness to our children’s future

OUR PARTNERSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS 2018-2019

5  3
Talk to Me Cherokee Initiative Partner Meetings Cherokee County Child Care Directors’ Association Meetings

Cherokee County First Steps continues to reach people in the community and is willing to meet and discuss critical areas of our program to improve our reach and effectiveness. Cherokee County First Steps is a vital part of early childhood learning in our community.

HEATHER SWAYNGIM, FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KNOW(2)
Through partnerships and collaborations, as well as financial support from grants and contributions, Cherokee County First Steps leverages state dollars to enhance and expand services to children and families.

**FUNDING SUPPORT**

- State of South Carolina $197,438 (through South Carolina First Steps)
- Broad River Electric Charities $1,000
- Burns Chevrolet, Inc. $300
- Cherokee County Community Foundation $2,000
- Encounter Church $300
- Limestone Presbyterian Church $329
- Remnant Warriors Global, Inc. $400
- Roger Shiflett Ford $300
- SC Center for Child Care Career Development $2,000
- SC State Federal Credit Union $250
- United Way of the Piedmont $10,285
- Walmart of Gaffney $1,000
- Larry & Ann Sossamon $1,000
- Early Childhood Innovation Grant $10,000
- Preschool Development Grant $11,022
- Board Fundraisers $3,526

**IN-KIND SUPPORT**

- Dollywood Foundation
- Kiser Development Company
- Allegra Marketing Print Mail
- Midway Baptist Church
- Spartanburg Community College, Cherokee Campus
- SC Child Care Resource & Referral Network

**JOIN US**

Support Cherokee County First Steps today through a tax-deductible donation or volunteer! For more information, please call our office at 864.487.9466 or email us at cc1ststeps@yahoo.com.
### Financial Highlights

#### Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Type</th>
<th>State Funding</th>
<th>Federal Funding</th>
<th>Private Funding</th>
<th>In-Kind Contributions</th>
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<td>Dolly Parton's Imagination Library</td>
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<td>LENA-Talk to Me Cherokee Initiative</td>
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<td>Countdown to Kindergarten</td>
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<td>Partnerships and Community Education</td>
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<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
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<td><strong>$8,480</strong></td>
<td><strong>$26,626</strong></td>
<td><strong>$278,757</strong></td>
<td><strong>$511,301</strong></td>
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Since inception, Cherokee County First Steps has leveraged $2,645,072 from sources outside of state government. That's $0.59 for every state dollar.
LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. Ron Cope, Chair
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Tammy Hutcherson, Program & Grants Coordinator
Maggie Williams, Program Assistant
Mae Frances Sarratt, Outreach Professional; Consultant
Timena Sarratt, Talk to Me Coordinator; Consultant
Corene Potlow, Talk to Me Home Visitor; Consultant

CONTACT US

PO Box 23, Gaffney, SC 29342 | 864.487.9466 | www.cherokeecountyfirststeps.org