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 child care slots.

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

IN UNION COUNTY:
1,589 children under age 5

56% of young children live in poverty or low-income households.

69% of kindergartners 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.

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
1,571 number of children and adults served by Union 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.

733 Main St., Buffalo, SC 29321 | 864-466-7647 | scfirststeps.org/union
OUR STORY

Union County First Steps works closely with the Union County School District and the Union Library System to promote literacy and school readiness in Union County. Both the library and the school district are strong partners in support of our Parents as Teachers home visiting program. The school district is also a vital supporter of Countdown to Kindergarten.

Other local partners include United Way of the Piedmont and the City of Union. The United Way funds the Dolly Parton Imagination Library for Union County; and their Community Impact Program also provides funding for Parents as Teachers. The City of Union has been a financial partner in providing childcare training for local childcare workers.

OUR GOALS

Our partnership’s work, in collaboration with state and local partners, is focused on advancing Union County towards these strategic goals in support of the Profile of the Ready Kindergartner, South Carolina’s description of school readiness:

• Goal 1: Improve access to quality childcare

• Goal 2: Continue to build communication and collaboration with businesses, other agencies, and the community

• Goal 3: Improve access and delivery of service to Parents as Teachers participants

The Union County Library System is grateful for the wonderful partnership between Union County First Steps and the Library. First Steps is a tremendous supporter of early childhood education, and many of the services the library provides for young children and their families are a result of this partnership.

Rieta Drinkwine, Director, Union County Library System
Parents as Teachers (PAT) is a home visiting program designed to build strong communities, thriving families and children who are healthy, safe and ready to succeed. PAT services include:

- Personal visits from a parent educator at least twice monthly
- Monthly group connections with other PAT families
- Screenings and assessments to identify developmental concerns
- Connections to outside resources that families may need to succeed

PAT recently received the highest rating from the federal Prevention Services Clearinghouse. This recognition validates the effectiveness of Parents as Teachers as a strategy for improving parenting practices, promoting early detection of developmental delays and health issues, preventing child abuse and neglect, and enhancing school readiness and success.

**Quote from a PAT parent:**
“The Parent Educator has helped me so much with my youngest child. She has provided us with so much information and helpful tips.”

**PAT IN UNION COUNTY 2018-2019**

- 55 families served
- 968 total home visits
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.

IMAGINATION LIBRARY BY THE NUMBERS
2018-2019

1,123 10,984

children served books distributed

Books are 100% free to children in Union County because Union County First Steps secures the funds to cover the cost of books and shipping fees through the support of United Way of the Piedmont.

Join us by sponsoring a child for just $30 a year.
COUNTDOWN TO KINDERGARTEN

Developed by South Carolina First Steps – and identified as a promising state practice by the National Governor’s Association in 2005 – Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) is a home visitation program pairing the families of rising kindergarten students with their future teachers during the summer before school entry. Teachers complete six visits with each family, establishing strong connections during the summer that facilitate classroom learning throughout the year.

CTK BY THE NUMBERS
2018-2019

3 kindergarten teachers trained as home visitors
13 children served
78 total home and school visits
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 though 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:

**Staffing 101**  
**Temperaments**  
**Impact of Early Childhood Mental Health on Development**  
**Process Not Product**  
**S.E.E. How You Can Prevent Staff Turnover**  
**Reduce the Stress in Your Classroom**  
**Lock it to Learn**  
**Health and Safety 101**  
**Curriculum Activities for Children**

**TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS**  
2018-2019

- 112 total training attendance
- 28 child care teachers and directors served
- 9 number of training sessions offered

“We benefit a lot from the classes; and not having the expense or having to travel are also great benefits!”

Local childcare center director
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 UNION COUNTY 2018-2019**

- **59** children enrolled
- **3** 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.
Addressing the needs of young children is a shared endeavor. In addition to providing services to families and support for child care providers, Union County First Steps mobilizes partners and community members to ensure all children in Union County begin school ready to succeed. We serve as:

**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**

*Thanks to our partnership with the City of Union, 28 local childcare workers were provided childcare certification classes at no cost to them.

*Thanks to our partnership with United Way of the Piedmont, over 1,000 children in Union County had free books delivered to their mailbox each month!

KIDSFEST 2019 was a celebration of The Week of the Young Child; National Library Week; and Child Abuse Prevention month. Thanks to community partners, this event provided a wealth of information and resources for families in Union County. Approximately 200 people were in attendance!
Through partnerships and collaborations, as well as financial support from grants and contributions, Union County First Steps leverages state dollars to enhance and expand services to children and families.

**FUNDING SUPPORT**

City of Union  $750

Union County Schools $5,010 (Title I funds)

United Way of the Piedmont  $4,280

**IN-KIND SUPPORT**

Union County School District

United Way of the Piedmont

**JOIN US**

For more information on how you can join our efforts, contact us at 864-466-7647 or by email at lwade@union.k12.sc.us
FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY
Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type

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<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>Parents as Teachers</td>
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<td>Total Expenses</td>
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<td>$4,684</td>
<td>$73,032</td>
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5%

95%

Evidence-based

Evidence-informed

ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, Union County First Steps has leveraged $1,308,476 from sources outside of state government.

That’s $0.39 for every state dollar.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY
LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Connie Springs, Chair
Margie Boyd, Vice Chair
Margie Ruff, Secretary
Jan Carter
Mickey Connolly
Rieta Drinkwine
Wyshell Garrett
Azalee Glenn
Amanda Newton
Karl Pendergrass
Robin Rodgers
Page Rogers
Jeff Stribble
Elizabeth Tisdale

STAFF

Laura, Wade, Executive Director
Rakeia Johnson, Parent Educator
Tara Spencer, Parent Educator
Joni Whisenant, Parent Educator

CONTACT US

733 Main St., Buffalo, SC 29321 | 864-466-7647