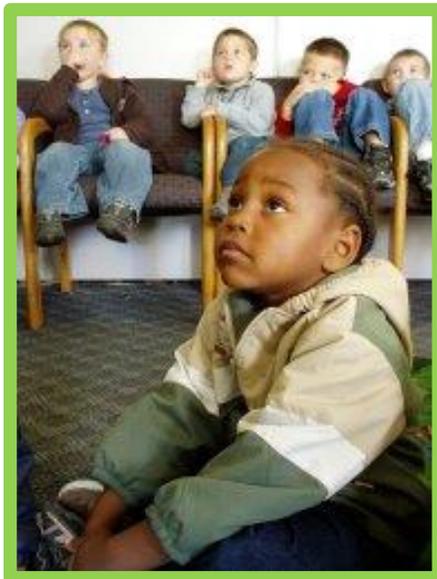


CHEROKEE COUNTY



Getting children ready for school.



Imagination Library

Countdown to Kindergarten

Child Care Training

Child Care Scholarships

Annual Report

2014-15



OUR VISION:

Every South Carolina child will arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed.

First Steps WORKS for the children of Cherokee County.

Who We Serve

First Steps serves South Carolina's young children and their families, with the goal of ensuring each is prepared for school success.

Number of Cherokee County children under 5:
3,529

Number of Cherokee County children living in poverty:
1,270

Babies born each year in Cherokee County to a mother less than a high school diploma:
1 in 4

Our Programs

Imagination Library

Countdown to Kindergarten

Child Care Training

Child Care Scholarships

Our Results

- ✓ 144 unduplicated individuals participated in Child Care Training & Professional Development
- ✓ 1,851 children were enrolled in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
- ✓ 70% of children are read to daily
- ✓ 28 children received child care scholarships

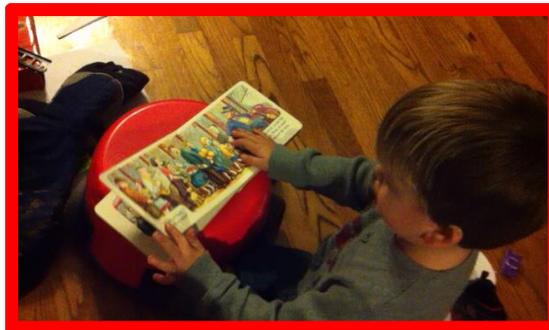
"Talk to Me" – New Early Literacy Initiative

Renee Smith, Chair

Cherokee County First Steps is the lead organization for a new early literacy initiative called, "Talk to Me". The initiative was born through encouragement and guidance from SCFS. Dr. Dan Wuori shared the results of the assessment of public and private 4K students in South Carolina and Cherokee County at our Annual Meeting in January 2015. The interest from numerous partners present prompted the team to move forward with a plan to change the plight of early literacy for our county's children. Having formally launched "Talk to Me" in March, the Partners on "the Team" have been meeting regularly. The Team includes:

- KNOW(2)
- United Way of the Piedmont
- Cherokee County School District
- Piedmont Community Action's Head Start/Early Head Start
- Spartanburg Community College – Cherokee Campus
- Institute for Child Success
- Gaffney Visitor's Center
- Limestone College
- Cherokee County Library

We are preparing to launch the public awareness campaign during the *Week of the Young Child* in April 2016.



I love reading with Mommy!

Board Chair
 Renee Smith

Executive Director
 Dorothy Priester

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 Gaffney, SC 29342

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What We Do

Each of the six color blocks of the First Steps logo represents a core area of service, outlining our comprehensive strategy to prepare children for long-term school success.

With **measurable outcomes across each of its six school readiness strategy areas**, First Steps is getting results.



Healthy Start

We begin with a focus on providing a healthy start to life. This includes prenatal and post-partum services for both mother and baby. In 2007, First Steps collaborated with key philanthropic and agency partners to bring Nurse-Family Partnership to SC having a significant impact on reducing premature births and Medicaid costs.



Quality Childcare

Quality childcare starts with quality childcare providers. Our quality enhancement and training strategies lead to improved teacher-student interaction, which research shows has a significant impact on a child's development and success in school.



Family Strengthening

Our home visitation strategies, such as Parents as Teachers, Parent-Child Home and Early Steps to School Success, are helping parents understand their responsibilities to care for and be positive models for their children. As a result of First Steps' intervention and parenting support, 66% of clients initially assessed at "low" levels of parenting have achieved moderate or high levels of parenting skill.



Early Education

Private-public partnerships through First Steps 4K have led to significant cost efficiencies in the delivery of publicly funded 4K. One recent analysis suggests First Steps is achieving comparable results, without the need for costly capital construction, for 80 cents on the dollar.



Early Intervention

According to recent federal evaluations, outcomes for clients participating in BabyNet early intervention programs are above national averages. BabyNet matches the special needs of infants and toddlers who have disabilities and/or developmental delays with customized, community-based resources.



School Transition

Each of the corresponding blocks of services leads ultimately to the goal of transitioning children successfully to school. Programs like Countdown to Kindergarten and From Day One to Grade One are ultimately preparing children for school success.

Based on the needs of our community, Cherokee County First Steps focuses its investments in quality child care, family strengthening, and school transition.

Imagination Library



Children's reading scores improve dramatically when parents are involved in helping them learn to read.

Program Description

According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, the peak period for brain development related to language is around **nine months of age. One of the easiest and most effective ways to build this capacity in young children's brains is to read to them.**

Cherokee County First Steps is the local sponsor of Dolly Parton Imagination Library, which provides free, age-appropriate books to children age birth to 5 years. Operated by the Dollywood Foundation, Imagination Library is currently in more than 1,600 communities internationally and mails books to about 700,000 children each month.

Children who register with Cherokee County First Steps receive one book per month by mail through the month of their fifth birthday. Each book is carefully selected by a committee of educational specialists.



The love of reading is passed from sibling to sibling as big sister reads to little brother. She is a graduate of the program proving that early literacy can be a family affair.

Imagination Library by the Numbers, 2014-15

Children Served	1,851
Books Given to Children 0-5	16,231



This year, our Imagination Library program:

- ✓ Provided one book per month to 1,851 children who were referred from pediatricians, hospitals, 3K and 4K programs at local elementary schools, churches, child care centers, BabyNet, Head Start/Early Head Start, Cherokee County Public Library, Cherokee County School District's Parents of Preschoolers and Special Services programs.
- ✓ 70% of parents reported reading to their child daily
- ✓ 85% of parents reported reading to their child more often than before enrolling in the program
- ✓ 80% of parents said the number of the books in the home had doubled since enrolling
- ✓ Received donations totaling over \$10,000 from multiple community members and organizations in support of children's literacy

Thank you to our partners!

- Dollywood Foundation
- BabyNet
- Cherokee County Public Library
- Cherokee County School District
- Daren Carling, MD
- Fatz Café of Gaffney
- SC Department of Social Services
- United Way of the Piedmont
- Wal-Mart, Gaffney

"My son loves receiving books in the mail each month. We read daily and getting a new book each month helps keep him excited about reading. We love the Imagination Library!"

Julie Powell

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Child Care Training

Those who care for young children need high-quality, accessible, and affordable professional development.

Program Description

High-quality child care hinges on high-quality professional development that meets the needs of the local child care workforce.

First Steps-sponsored training is certified through the SC Center for Child Care Career Development and includes topics in the areas of nutrition, health and safety, curriculum, child guidance, professional development and program administration. Best practices in training include not only the training itself, but follow-up in the classroom.

"The instructor for the training had great energy and interaction with the teachers!"

Description of Presenter Marcia Nash from one of the participants in the training

Child Care Training Sponsored by Cherokee County First Steps, 2014-15	
Topic:	Sessions:
Supporting Social-Emotional Growth and Development/ Encouraging Expressive Environment	Two Sessions
Managing Childhood Illnesses/ Blood Borne Pathogens	Two Sessions
Building a Health Brain	Part A
Nutrition	One Session
Reaching Children Through Block Play	One Session
Cradling Literacy	Two Sessions
Exploring Early Childhood Business Practices	One Session
Early Language & Literacy Development/The Importance of Relationships/Language Development	Three Sessions



Teachers learning new activities to use with the children.

Training by the Numbers, 2014-15

Total Training Attendance	260
Child Care Teachers and Directors Served	253
Number of Training Sessions Offered	13

This year, our Training program provided:

- ✓ 253 early childhood staff with high quality training
- ✓ 22.5 hours of certified training and 8 hours of registered training for staff to meet annual recertification requirements
- ✓ 6 Directors' Association meetings were held with local child care directors as follow-up to training
- ✓ 10 teachers received recertification from CCFS alone

Thank you to our partners!

- Cherokee County Child Care Directors' Association
- Kiser Development Company
- Midway Baptist Church
- Piedmont Community Action's Head Start/Early Head Start Program
- SC Center for Child Care Career Development
- SC Child Care Resource & Referral Network

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Child Care Scholarships

Too many families in Cherokee County cannot afford quality care for their children.

Program Description

Access to quality child care is essential for children while away from their primary caregivers. Yet, of those families income-eligible for child care assistance in South Carolina, only a small fraction receive it due to lack of funds. In the absence of nurturing and consistently available family, friends or neighbors, parents are faced with few - or no - affordable care options.

Cherokee First Steps serves families in greatest need. Among our scholarship families:

- 100% ... live in poverty
- 32% ... didn't graduate from high school
- 27% ... were teen parents
- 14% ... had developmental delays

In addition to regular monitoring of child care providers that receive First Steps scholarships, First Steps conducts at least one developmental screening each year with scholarship children and connects families to needed services within the community.

Cherokee County First Steps integrates the scholarships with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library as well as Child Care Training & Professional Development.

"This program is a major benefit for children."
 Wendy Parker



Putting puzzles together is fun and educational. It helps with fine motor, reasoning, memory, and logic skills.

Scholarships by the Numbers, 2014-15

Children Served	28
Providers Served	4

This year, our Scholarship program:

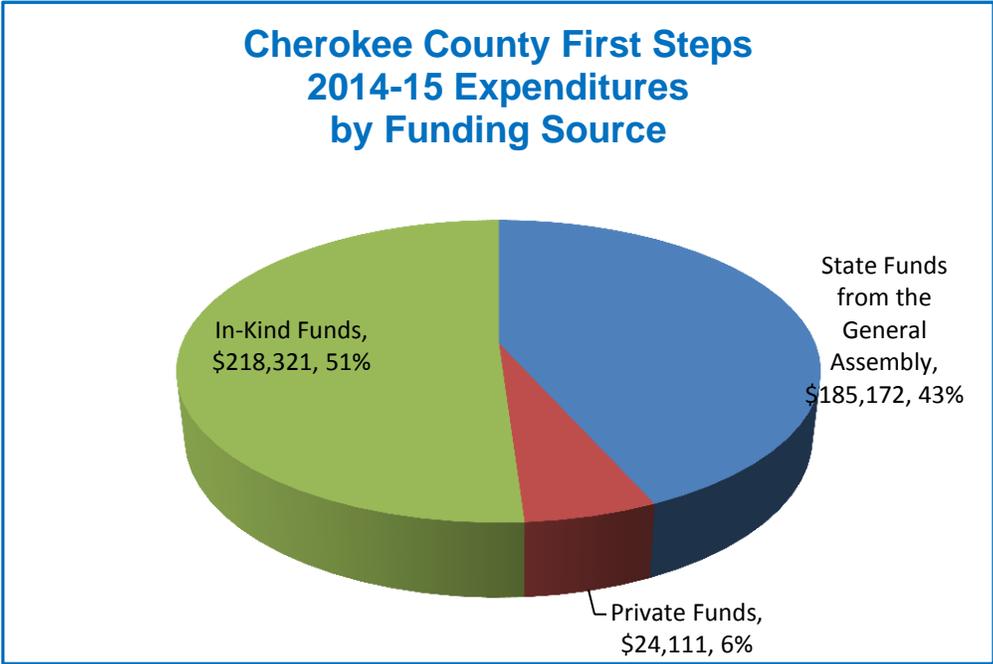
- ✓ Provided 28 children with scholarship assistance so their parents could work or attend school
- ✓ Identified and addressed 11 potential developmental delays among scholarship children
- ✓ 6 children's families were connected to services such as BabyNet, Preschool Special Services Program, and counseling services (substance abuse, domestic violence, and/or mental health)
- ✓ Supported 4 small businesses in Cherokee County by subsidizing child care tuition for families who would not otherwise be able to afford quality care
- ✓ Provided 22 hours of training for scholarship parents in topics such as the importance of parental involvement.

Thank you to our partners!

- Cherokee County Child Care Directors' Association
- Local Child Care Facilities
- SC Department of Social Services

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Financial Impact



Total 2014-15 Expenditures: \$427,604

State Funds Leveraged in 2014-15*: 131%

**Percentage of state dollars matched by additional federal, private, and/or in-kind funds*

2014-15 Expenditures by Strategy

	State \$	Private \$	In-Kind \$	Total \$	% of 2014-15 Expenditures
Imagination Library	\$17,303	\$17,303	\$203,015	\$237,621	56%
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$7,576	\$0	\$0	\$7,576	2%
Child Care Training	\$44,936	\$4,281	\$3,850	\$53,067	12%
Child Care Scholarships	\$28,954	\$0	\$0	\$28,954	7%
Program Support	\$59,246	\$134	\$10,556	\$69,936	16%
Administrative Support	\$27,157	\$2,393	\$900	\$30,450	7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$185,172	\$24,111	\$218,321	\$427,604	

Unaudited numbers for the period July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015

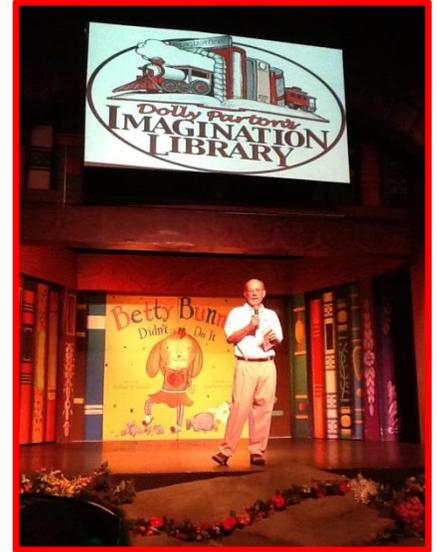
Since inception, Cherokee First Steps has leveraged \$1,536,132 from sources outside of state government. That's 41 cents for every state dollar.

Active Partners Make the Difference!

Collective Efforts throughout Programs

Daryl Smith, Executive Director (SCC, Cherokee County Campus)

Spartanburg Community College's Cherokee County Campus and Cherokee County First Steps have enjoyed a lot of years of collaborative efforts. Often our students have children of their own, so First Steps has made sure that they have the opportunity to participate in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Our library also has materials to promote this program to county patrons who visit our college library. In return, we have allowed and encouraged First Steps to use our meeting facilities and electronic promotional media for their programs. First Steps and SCC have also had ongoing cooperative efforts to train, certify, and supply professional day-care employees in facilities in Cherokee County.



David Dotson, President of the Dollywood Foundation, at the Imagination Library Homecoming in June 2015.



Cherokee County First Steps staff and Board Members at a Fatz Pancake Breakfast raising funds for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

Thank you to our partners!

Funding Support

State of South Carolina: \$185,172
 (through South Carolina First Steps)

Fatz Fundraiser: \$1,651

Broad River Electric Charities: \$1,500

Nestle Prepared Foods: \$500

SC Center for Child Care Career Development:
 \$2,000

United Way of the Piedmont: \$7,500

Wal-Mart, Gaffney: \$250

In-Kind Support

Allegra Print & Imaging

Dollywood Foundation

Fatz Café of Gaffney

Kiser Development Company

Midway Baptist Church

SC Department of Social Services

Spartanburg Community College,
 Cherokee Campus

SC Child Care Resource & Referral Network

Support Cherokee First Steps today through a tax-deductible donation, or volunteer.

“Talk to Me” Initiative - Early Literacy

Robin Reed, Executive Director [KNOW(2)]

KNOW(2) is pleased to have the opportunity to expand its reach in the community and help change the culture of education. We are eager to partner with Cherokee County First Steps to reduce the word gap. Our goal is to improve the number of individuals in Cherokee County who obtain a high school diploma with the knowledge that education improves their economic success and a better quality of life. This can be achieved with the help of programs similar to “Talk to Me”. We look forward to working with you on this initiative.



Doug Eberhart, President and CEO [United Way of the Piedmont]

United Way of the Piedmont understands that the children’s IQ and their language abilities are directly correlated to the amount of words spoken to them by their parents or caregivers. Therefore, we fully support the “Talk to Me” initiative. We are excited about working with you on this project to improve school readiness by raising awareness of the importance of early language development, which is essential in Cherokee County; we will assist you in making this project a success.

Laura Camp, Coordinator Early Childhood [Cherokee County School District]

Our school district’s 14 year affiliation with Cherokee County First Steps has resulted in several beneficial programs to support the families in our county. I strongly believe the “Talk to Me” initiative will be another successful partnership to improve the school readiness of students in Cherokee County.

Dr. Arthur Brewton, Director [Piedmont Community Action - Head Start/Early Head Start]

Our agency is thrilled to collaborate with Cherokee County First Steps on the “Talk to Me” initiative. This innovative program will focus community awareness on the impact that the 30 million word gap is having on our children, our community, and our state. It will provide information on how to increase the number of words spoken and encouraging parents and caregivers to take a more active role in their children’s education. Piedmont Community Action Agency’s Head Start and Early Head Start also focus on early childhood development and school readiness. We understand the importance of this initiative and are committed to providing the necessary support to make this project successful.



Signs to promote reading to both boys and girls through the “Talk to Me” Initiative.



First Steps Partnership Board

Credit Where Credit is Due!

This year the board decided to highlight work in the area of education of a community leader and a board member. It is necessary to illustrate our support and gratitude for their achievements within the field of education in Cherokee County.

As a community leader, we decided to honor Mr. Oscar Fuller. He is the founder of KNOW(2), a community strategic planning organization. He has empowered five sectors of the community to begin a planning process, which are moving forward. The most substantial progress has been in early childhood education over the past five years. We will select a community leader annually for the “Oscar Fuller Education Achievement Award”; and will recognize the selected individual at the Annual Meeting of the Board.

The board member selected for Cherokee County First Steps to distinguish was Sandra Greene-Tucker. She is a founding board member and was honored for commitment and dedication to education and young children. She served as past Chair, convened the First Board, and is a twenty year veteran of the Cherokee County School Board. This recognition was especially dear to Sandra as it coincided with her retirement from SC Department of Social Services. Subsequently, a current or past board member will be honored each year for their board service and commitment at the Annual Meeting of the Board. This person will receive the “Sandra Greene-Tucker Exemplary Board Member Award.”

Name	Position	Board Category
Renee Smith, Chair	Branch Manager, Carolina Premier Bank	Family Education/Training
Jeff Taylor, Vice Chair	Manager of Engineering Maintenance Facility, Timken	Business
Brian Lawson, Secretary	Director of Operations, American TransMed Inc.	Transportation
Paige Wright, Treasurer	Co-Director, Little Angels Day Care	Child Care
Dr. Ron Cope, Member –at- Large	Retired Principal	Pre-K Primary Educator
Pennie Bevis	Food Technician, Nestle Prepared Foods	Family Education/Training
Jean Brewington	Early Childhood Coordinator, Sptbg. Co. School District 3	Early Childhood
Alisa Britt	Child Services Manager, PCA’s Head Start/Early Head Start	Head Start Representative
Kim Camp	Principal, Alma Elementary School	Early Childhood
Jacquelyn Childers	Sam’s Optical	Business
Cliffietta Cochran	Retired Army & Healthcare	Parent
Alyssa D’Angelo	Youth Services Manager, Cherokee County Library	Library Representative
Anitonette Gardner	Pastor, Hopewell Presbyterian Church/Hope Broadcasting	Faith-Based
Melissa Green	Director, Iron City Ministries	Non-Profit
Sandra Greene-Tucker	Workforce Consultant, Cherokee County DSS	DSS Representative
Deborah Hamrick	Principal, Blacksburg Primary School	Pre-K Primary Educator
Karen Henderson	Asst. Principal, Mary Bramlett Elementary School	Early Childhood
Vanessa Jefferies	Director, Ann’s Playland Day Care	Child Care
Novella Kelly	Retire Nurse	Healthcare
Audrey McClary	Principal, Mary Bramlett Elementary School	School District Representative
Bruce Price	Pastor, Buffalo Baptist Church	Parent
Dr. J. W. Sanders, Jr.	Senior Pastor, Bethel Baptist Church	Faith-Based
Kristen Smith	Cherokee County DHEC	Health Dept. Representative

Getting children ready for school.

The Goals of First Steps

- (1) provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want** to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children;
- (2) increase comprehensive services** so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems;
- (3) promote high-quality preschool programs** that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development;
- (4) provide services** so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to succeed; and
- (5) mobilize communities** to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to succeed.

-- Section 59-152-30



Interested parents can contact any participating 4K providers to complete an application. To view a list of participating First Steps 4K providers, visit:

<http://scfirststeps.org/4k>



BabyNet

South Carolina's Early Intervention System

BabyNet in Cherokee, Spartanburg,
and Union Counties: Office: 864.591.8641.

<http://scfirststeps.org/babynet/>