

DARLINGTON COUNTY



Getting children ready for school.



Access Condoms in Darlington County (AC/DC)

Countdown to Kindergarten

Diva Den

Dad Cave

Motheread/Fatheread

Parents Are First

Parents as Teachers

Community Outreach and Engagement

Reach Out and Read

Annual Report

2015-16



OUR VISION:

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



By The Numbers

Indicator	SC	Darlington County
Children Under Five	290,519	3,906
Children In Poverty	27.3%	5,575
Children living in households w/ incomes below poverty line	21.1%	36.1%
Births to Mothers With Less Than a High School Diploma	15.7%	18.4%

KIDS COUNT data provided by Children's Trust

Indicator	Darlington County
Teen Pregnancy Rate	53.1%
Repeat Teen Pregnancy Rate	16 th highest in SC

Data provided by PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY

- **Provided 1312 hours of support and guidance 19 families** as well as offered **39 Group Connections Parent Workshops** in our Parents as Teachers program.
- **Held 78 community events and trainings for professional development.**
- **Served 3,427 families and their children in FY16**

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Darlington County First Steps
Mrs. Darnell Byrd McPherson
 Executive Director

Accelerating Progress!

Over the past year, Darlington County First Steps has continued to work collaboratively with local, state, and national partners to accelerate progress of families. We trust, after reading this annual report, you will have a greater understanding of the complex issues which face families in poverty while recognizing the importance of interceding as early as possible in the lives of their children as well. There continue to exist a number of gaps in needed services for the families we serve and their children: lack of public transportation system, limited child care options for children under the age of three, low wage jobs with no benefits, and less than adequate public housing. These are the issues our families face on a daily basis which can cause depression and anxiety while inflicting toxic stress on their young children.

It is our goal at Darlington County First Steps to make a difference in the lives of our families by engaging them in programs and activities which support their personal development, strengthen their abilities to be supportive parents, connect them with educational and job opportunities, and provide positive reinforcement as they achieve goals and reach milestones. Though progress is being made, much more still needs to be done to create a more equitable environment for children and families in Darlington County. The Darlington County First Steps team of board members, partners, consultants and staff members are committed to this goal of accelerating progress!



School Transition

Healthy Start

Family Strengthening

What We Do

Each of the three 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 these school readiness strategy areas**, First Steps is getting results.



Healthy Start

Darlington County First Steps, focuses on supporting a healthy start in the initial stages of life and maintaining a healthy lifestyle throughout the years. This is done in several capacities with children, parents and youth in the community. The programs offered include prenatal and post-partum services for both mother and baby as well as reproductive health resources and education.



Family Strengthening

Darlington County First Steps' home visitation program, Parents as Teachers, helps parents understand their responsibilities to care for and be positive models for their children. The Dad Cave, Diva Den, and the Parents Are First program uses peer-counseling and other activities that encourage parents to be actively and positively involved in their children's life.



School Transition

Our school transition programs include Countdown to Kindergarten and Reach Out and Read which are designed to prepare children for school success.

Based on the needs of our community, Darlington County First Steps focuses its investments in school transition, healthy start, and family strengthening.



Encouraging youth to make proud, responsible, decisions for a healthy future.

Program Description

AC/DC, Access Condoms in Darlington County, provides free condoms to youth in the community. According to data provided by the S.C. Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, Darlington County was identified as being 16th in the state of S.C. for teen pregnancy rates (1 being the worst and 46 being the best). As a result of the findings the research report, Accelerating Progress: A roadmap for achieving further reductions in teen pregnancy, the S.C. Campaign identified four strategies that are needed to reduce teen pregnancy. Having teen friendly condom access points was one of the four strategies. Teen pregnancy is an issue that many youth in our community face but is not the only one. Darlington County is ranked 9th in the state for Chlamydia infections and 14th in the state for Gonorrhea infections amongst 15-19 year olds. Our strategy for distributing condoms are:

- ✓ Placing free condoms in small businesses throughout Darlington County that have a teen-friendly, nonjudgmental environment
- ✓ Providing individuals that have great relationships with youth in the community with condoms to directly distribute
- ✓ Use of graphics that discreetly, communicate condoms are available at specific locations
- ✓ Pledge agreements are signed by partners, committing to the AC/DC program



An AC/DC Partner

ACDC by the Numbers, 2015-16

Condoms Distributed	3,560
# of AC/DC Partners	15
Chlamydia Infections amongst 15-19 year olds	161 cases
Gonorrhea infections amongst 15-19 year olds	34 cases
Repeat Teen Pregnancies in Darlington County	26% (16 th highest in the state of SC)

This year, our AC/DC program:

- ✓ Made its successful debut in Darlington County
- ✓ The program and its initiatives were highlighted in several community meetings
- ✓ Developed marketing strategy by creating AC/DC logos, window decals, and stickers that communicate directly to target demographic

Thank you to our partners!

S.C. Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
The Duke Endowment

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Bringing parents and teachers together as partners set the foundation for success in school.

Program Description

Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) is a summer home visitation model connecting rising kindergartners and their families with their future teachers. The program is designed:

- ✓ to forge strong and lasting home-school relationships,
- ✓ to acquaint children and families with the state and classroom expectations to increase the likelihood of school success,
- ✓ to increase parent involvement in the early grades (particularly in hard-to-reach communities), when children's learning is foundational for life success; and
- ✓ to increase public awareness of the importance of school readiness and provide ways for parents and communities to impact children's early school success.

Countdown to Kindergarten integrates all of the following:

Home Visitation. Teachers make six visits over the summer to the homes of participating students and families. Children and families are introduced to actual materials used in kindergarten and are given a Kindergarten Transition Toolkit to keep.

Learning Celebration. The last visit is a "field trip" to the school where the child will attend class in the fall.

Public Awareness. Throughout the summer, First Steps releases tips to media to help parents and caregivers get children ready for kindergarten.

Our CTK teachers have dedicated 10 years of service to this program. We are fortunate to have such a committed group!

*CTK by the Numbers, Summer 2016

Children Served	53
Home Visits	323
School Visits	53



CTK teacher, Brandy Weaver, and CTK children.

This year, our Countdown to Kindergarten program:

- ✓ Surpassed our goal for children served
- ✓ Results from Parent Survey:
 - 104% gain of knowing kindergarten expectations at child's school
 - 139% gain in relationship with child's kindergarten teacher
 - 62% chance of parent volunteering in child's classroom and/or attend parent meetings

Thank you to our partners!

Kiwanis of Hartsville

United Way of Hartsville

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Parents play a critical role in their child's development.

Program Description

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an evidence-based home visiting program designed to build strong communities, thriving families and children who are healthy, safe and ready to succeed. PAT services include:

1. **Personal Visits** at least twice monthly
2. **Monthly Group Connections** with other PAT families
3. **Screenings and Assessments** to identify developmental concerns
4. **Connections to Outside Resources** that families may need to succeed

Darlington First Steps serves families in greatest need. Among our PAT families:

100% ... live in poverty
42% ... didn't graduate from high school
63% ... were teen parents



I'm happy that the Parents as Teachers program gives my son another outlet. The home visits introduces him to new learning activities that he really enjoys.

-Kitty Peterson

PAT by the Numbers 2015-16

Families Served	19
Children Served	27
Total Home Visits Hours	487.85
Total Direct Service Hours	1312

This year, our Parents as Teachers program:

- ✓ Averaged 2.1 home visits per family per month
- ✓ Identified and addressed 1 potential developmental delay
- ✓ Parent-children communication has improved due to the group connections meetings with other parents
- ✓ Distributed 455 books to families
- ✓ Conducted two PAT Advisory Committee meetings with representatives from the Hartsville High School Registrar's Office and nonprofit organizations in Darlington County

Thank you to our partner!

United Way of Hartsville

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Community Outreach and Engagement



Childcare Services

We partner with Darlington County Adult Education to provide childcare services to children and families. The childcare program offers a positive, learning environment that aids in ensuring children gain meaningful and educational experiences. Childcare services are available Monday through Thursday. We offer four hours of free childcare in the mornings and three hours of free childcare in the evenings.

Our childcare program:

- ✓ **Helps parents of young children increase their education levels**
- ✓ **Teaches parents how to support their child's literacy and overall development**
- ✓ **Provides quality early learning experiences for children 0-5 while their parents attend adult education, parenting sessions, or seek employment**
- ✓ **Provides an age appropriate book on a weekly basis to each child.**

Equity Leaders Action Network

First Steps executive director, Darnell McPherson, is a member of professionals from all over the United States called Equity Leaders Action Network (ELAN). ELAN is composed of individual leaders, who have responsibility at the state or county level for early childhood systems. Over the next three years, ELAN leaders will work together to identify, address and take action on issues of inequity based on race, ethnicity, language and culture in our early childhood state systems. The Equity Leaders Action Network will:

- ✓ **Support leaders in developing the will and skill to question personal assumptions, institutional and structural policies and practices, and work collaboratively to develop a blueprint to promote early childhood systems that are explicitly and measurably equitable and excellent for all children.**
- ✓ **Build the capacity of members to use a racial equity lens to critically examine institutional and structural policies and practices in the distribution of state and federal resources (funding and services).**
- ✓ **Advance change to avoid disadvantaging racially and ethnically diverse children, families and members of the early childhood workforce.**

The Greater Hartsville Chamber of Commerce

DC First Steps is an active member of The Greater Hartsville Chamber of Commerce. DC First Steps staff served on The Greater Hartsville Chamber of Commerce's Women in Business Planning Committee. The Chamber hosts an annual Women in Business Celebration which is also one of their major fundraisers. Over several months, members of DC First Steps and other professional women in the community volunteered time to present this annual event to over 400 women.

Three staff members also participated in the 2016 Leadership Hartsville program and graduated from the program in August of 2016. Leadership Hartsville is an innovative, nine month program presented by the Chamber that is designed to develop leadership skills in participants and provide essential information about our community in order to enhance our emerging and existing leaders' knowledge and vision for Hartsville. It incorporates the community's experts in various fields to explore Hartsville's history, government, nonprofit organizations, education, large and small businesses, emergency response, and quality of life. Participants are required to work towards a class project that benefits the Hartsville community. The 2016 class fundraised over \$6,000 to post a community bulletin board that enhances communication in the rural Hartsville area.

DC First Steps executive director was also elected to serve on the Chamber's Board of Directors.

Other Community Events

Trunk –or- Treat- CareSouth Carolina hosted a Halloween event for families in which DC First Steps participated. Organizations had the opportunity to distribute candy to children and share information with parents about services offered.

Treats in the Streets- The City of Hartsville's Treats in the Streets event attracts hundreds of children and parents every year. DC First Steps was a vendor during the event which helped advertise the organization and recruit more families to join our different programs.

Diaper Giveaway- DC First Steps, CareSouth Carolina, United Way of Hartsville, and Mom4Moms (now known as the SC Diaper Bank) out of Columbia, SC partnered together to host a Diaper Distribution event. Over 200 families were given diapers, wipes, food, and clothing.

Collaborative Meetings, Trainings and Events- DCFS participated in a total of **78** meetings, trainings and events with local, state and national partners that supported our program goals. In addition, DCFS hosted training and special events for our community partners including the following: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs); Let's Talk Event with Shane Slater; Brain Development in Children and Teens, with Dr. Dave Walsh; Building Capacity, Developing Vision, Mission and Values, and Strengthening Community Partnerships with Charles Weathers to name a few. Participated in application process of the City of Hartsville to become designated as an **All America City**. Award received June, 2016.



Parents Are First



The relationship between a parent and child impacts all areas of a child’s life from birth through adulthood.

Program Description

Parents Are First is funded under the federal Pregnancy Assistance Fund Grant and was awarded to Darlington County First Steps in 2014. PAF is a comprehensive program designed to mobilize community partners to enhance the availability and quality of services for young parents, ages 15-24, in Darlington County. The program focuses on both mothers and fathers and provides direct and in-direct services to program participants. Collaboration is the cornerstone of this program and PAF works closely with many community and state partners to ensure the goals of this program are met.

Program Components:

Academic Achievement. Program participants are encouraged to stay in school or return to school to complete their education. PAF works closely with the Darlington County School District high schools and Adult Education Department and the local colleges including Coker College and Florence-Darlington Technical College.

Pregnancy Prevention. Evidence-based programs, including *Be Proud! Be Responsible! Be Protected!*, are provided through workshops for program participants. The AC/DC, Access Condoms in Darlington County, provide free condoms at various locations throughout the county in locations including the Dad Cave, local barbershops, beauty salons, small businesses and individuals in the community.

Parenting. Evidenced-based curricula are used for parenting workshops for program participants. Parenting tips and articles are shared with program participants through a range of mediums including social media.

Fatherhood Initiative. The Dad Cave provides a safe and welcoming environment for young fathers served by PAF as well as fathers served by community partners to grow in their most important role as a dad. The *Responsible Fatherhood* Curriculum is used for weekly meetings covering a wide range of topics and as needed, fathers are provided support and direction in dealing with custody and child support issues. Enrichment activities include speakers from our community partners as well as the business community.

Information Referral. Program participants are connected to community partners through the PAF program including nonprofits, government, private and faith based partners. Partners provide educational, health, counseling, financial, and counseling services to name a few.

Parents Are First by the Numbers, 2015-16

Enrolled	63 families
Families Served	131
Community Events	57

This year, our Parents Are First program:

- ✓ Held 57 community meetings/events
- ✓ Opened the Diva Den
- ✓ Added Talks with Tracy
- ✓ Hosted Office of Adolescent Health Site Visit for all Pregnancy Assistance Fund programs in SC
- ✓ Expanded Community Partnerships
- ✓ Increased services for extended family members through seasonal celebrations and other events

Thank you to our partners!

Children’s Trust of South Carolina, Butler Heritage Foundation

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity- Hartsville Chapter

S.C. Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, CareSouth Carolina

McLeod’s Nurse Family Partnership, Darlington County Adult Education

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Being a mother is the greatest job you could have.

Program Description

The Diva Den is a safe haven for expecting and parenting young mothers in Darlington County. Our mission is to provide young women with the support and resources needed for self-empowerment which will give them the confidence to follow their dreams. The Diva Den is a place where pregnant and parenting young mothers are fully engaged in activities and educational, supportive programs that will allow them to make a better life for themselves and their families. Programs offered are:

- ✓ **"I'm a Young Mom, Now What?"**
 - This program is for young mothers with the desire to discover their strengths, explore news ideas for personal and parental growth, as well as develop new skills to ensure a brighter future for themselves and their children. Program participants are encouraged to provide input and suggestions for workshop topics, special speakers, family fun nights and other events
- ✓ **Sex Love and Relationships**
 - A multi-session group for pregnant and parenting young mothers to reduce their risk of STDs, HIV and unplanned repeat pregnancies.
- ✓ **Educational Attainment**
 - We work with our partners at SC Works, Darlington County Adult Education to help mothers either find employment and/or further their education and job skills. Access to computers are available to work on resumes, job applications, papers, etc.

Along with supporting the Diva Den's renovations, The Byerly Foundation also funded the refurbishing of the Family Literacy/Childcare room. Free childcare is available to parents during sessions in the Diva Den.

Diva Den by the Numbers, 2015-16

Number of Sessions	37
Clients Served	112



Events Held in the Diva Den

- Dec. 15, 2015: Christmas Craft & Gift Giveaway Drop-In (ALL DCFS FAMILIES)
- Jan. 19, 2016: Diva Decor Dash (decorating party for Diva Den)
- Feb. 16, 2016: Talks with Tracy! Valentine's Day Edition (Moms & Dads)
- March 15, 2016: Easter Egg Hunt & The Importance of Family Traditions (Moms & Dads)
- March 17, 2016: Staff Spring Fling
- April 20 & 21st, 2016: Hosted Conversation with Cypress Adventures (non-profit organization that focuses on youth development and leadership)
- April 29, 2016: Diva Den Ribbon Cutting and Open House
- Office of Adolescent Health Site visit
- Meet and Greet w/Nurse Family Partnership



Thank you to our partners!

- **The Byerly Foundation**
- **Child and Family Resource Center**
- **Darlington County School District**
- **Attorney Cody Mitchell**

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Dad Cave



Dads make a difference.

Program Description

The Dad Cave is a special nonjudgmental place where young fathers receive support and valuable resources. It is a place set aside for young fathers; a place to learn and have fun, a place to find support and a place to gather with other young fathers as they learn and share with each other in their exciting journey call fatherhood. Meetings are two-hour group led discussions in a comfortable and open atmosphere that cover issues facing today's fathers. Topics include:

- ✓ Job Skills/Readiness
- ✓ Parenting/Co-Parenting
- ✓ Men's Health
- ✓ Navigating the Legal System

We attend family court sessions monthly in Darlington and, with the help of The South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families, can assist with family court related issues such as child support payment modifications, visitation and custody matters.

Dad Cave by the Numbers, 2015-16

Number of Sessions	42
Clients Served	73
Number of Presentations	10

Fatherhood Specialist, Jon Flowers, made presentations which focused on the importance of making responsible decisions for the future and the importance of fatherhood. Presentations include:

Kiwanis Club: Parents Are First Overview and Other Services Offered by DCFS

SC State HeadStart Association's Annual Male Conference: "When Netflix and Chill Becomes Diapers and Bills"

Trinity/Byrnes Collegiate School: Working in the Social Services Field; Opportunities, Rewards, and Challenges

Hartsville High School: Empowering Students to Make Healthy Decisions

Thank you to our partners!

S.C. Center for Fathers and Families

Saint Joseph Head Start Center

Attorney Cody Mitchell



The featured area of the Dad Cave

Events Held in the Dad Cave:

- July 1, 2015- Ribbon Cutting Open House
- July 24, 2015- Mobile Video Arcade for Families
- Aug. 24, 2015- PAF Site Visit
- Sept. 10, 2015- Parent Focus Groups
- Nov. 1, 2015 Pool Tournament
- Nov. 17, 2015- Thanksgiving Feast Celebration
- Nov. 19, 2015- Turkey Giveaway
- April 2016- Round Table Discussion on Fatherhood Initiative with State and Federal Representatives

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Motheread/Fatheread

Opening a book opens up a world of literacy.

Program Description

Motheread is an evidenced based family literacy program. Parents are engaged in learning how to: select age-appropriate books; read to their children; extend the story line of each book; and learn about child development.

Program Components:

- ✓ Groups are led by a certified Motheread facilitator.
- ✓ Group meetings with parents are held at local Head Start centers, local county libraries, and at Darlington County First Steps' location.
- ✓ The curriculum introduced parents to adult literature.
- ✓ The curriculum uses a variety of activities that promote the use of oral and written language to explore every day experiences and encourage vocabulary development.
- ✓ Sessions encourage adults to hold or sit close to children, engaging them in the story-reading process through the use of props, discussion questions and story related activities, songs, and games.
- ✓ Helping parents see themselves as learners and participants in a literate society.
- ✓ Pre/post assessments



Motheread facilitator reading to children during Week of the Young Child Celebration

Motheread/Fatheread by the Numbers, 2015-16

Families Served	62
Projected to Serve	40

This year, our Motheread/Fatheread program:

- ✓ Participated in the annual Week of the Young Child Celebration with Darlington County Community Action Agency- Head Start
- ✓ Conducted a Motheread/Fatheread session and presentation during M.G. Burno Head Start's Family Literacy Week
- ✓ Coordinated orientations at Head Start Centers with parents and children

Thank you to our partners!

Darlington County Community Action Agency- Head Start

United Way of Hartsville

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Early literacy creates positive outcomes for children in the future.

Program Description

The Reach Out and Read (ROR) Model prepares young children to succeed in school by partnering with doctors to prescribe books and encourage families to read together. ROR begins at the 6-month checkup and continues through age 5, and focuses on children growing up in low-income communities. Families who participate in ROR read together more often and their children enter kindergarten with larger vocabularies, stronger language skills, and are better prepared to achieve their potential.



How Are We Involved?

Darlington County First Steps partnered with Dr. Dante Lewis of Eastern Carolina Pediatrics in Darlington and the Darlington County Library System. Eastern Carolina Pediatrics is dedicated to the ROR Model and supports early literacy with First Steps and the Library. Eastern Carolina Pediatrics has a literacy rich waiting room for parents and their children to explore the wonders of books together.



Dr. Lewis of Eastern Carolina Pediatrics prescribing a book to a patient

This year, the Reach Out and Read program:

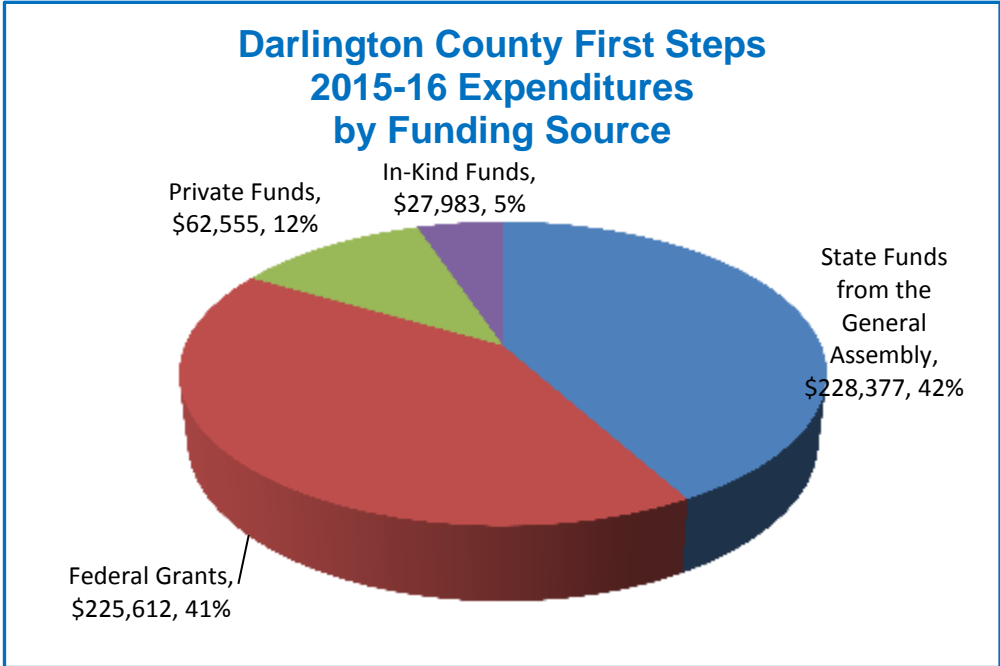
- ✓ Received 4,000 new books from Darlington County First Steps to implement ROR at Eastern Carolina Pediatrics
- ✓ Received 1,000 more gently used books for waiting area to distribute to siblings and children who come for sick visits
- ✓ Created a literacy rich waiting room for patients
- ✓ Served 2450 children
- ✓ Received a book cart from Darlington Library System

Thank you to our partners!

Darlington County Library System
Eastern Carolina Pediatrics
Reach Out and Read Carolinas

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Total 2015-16 Expenditures: \$540,714

State Funds Leveraged in 2015-16*: 42%

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

2015-16 Expenditures by Strategy

	State \$	Federal \$	Private \$	In-Kind \$	Total \$	% of 2015-16 Expenditures
Parents as Teachers	\$53,762	\$0	\$2,921	\$3,076	\$59,759	11%
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$9,273	\$0	\$6,572	\$0	\$15,845	3%
Family Literacy/Learning	\$25,246	\$0	\$1,628	\$471	\$27,345	5%
Health and Human Service Coordination	\$0	\$0	\$8,997	\$200	\$9,197	2%
Parent Training/Parents Are First	\$46,972	\$225,612	\$32,589	\$16,492	\$321,665	59%
Motheread/Fatheread	\$15,284	\$0	\$1,379	\$3,481	\$20,144	4%
Program Support	\$55,929	\$0	\$3,683	\$3,264	\$62,876	12%
Administrative Support	\$21,911	\$0	\$973	\$999	\$23,883	4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$228,377	\$225,612	\$58,742	\$27,983	\$540,714	100%

Unaudited numbers for the period July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016

Community Impact

Children are Born Learning!

Active Learning for Children and Families

Born Learning is a national public engagement campaign that focuses on creating early learning opportunities for young children. Children learn many new things from their parents, family members, childcare providers, and through play. The Born Learning Trail has left its mark in two heavily trafficked areas in Darlington County. The first trail was created at Byerly Park in 2014 and work on the second trail at Pride Park began in February, 2016 and debuted in October of 2016 during a ribbon cutting event. The United Way of Hartsville, City of Hartsville, Darlington County First Steps, and artist Livingston Thomas worked together to bring the trail to fruition.



Livingston Thomas, Painting Artist

Setting the Tone for Creative Thinking

Local artist, Livingston Thomas, volunteered his services to make sure children and families would have a beautiful experience while playing and learning on the Born Learning Trail. He painted the trail to reflect things children would be able to identify such as the sun, books, birds, smiley faces, numbers, letters, animals, and reptiles. The children not only learn from the painted visuals, but from posts that are alongside the trail with different activities that children and adults do together, which stimulate creative thinking and bonding between families. DC First Steps is excited to join these organizations in bringing a new learning addition to Darlington County. A special thank you to Mrs. Joanne DeLong of Hartsville United Way! She really cares about young children.



*United Way of Hartsville Director,
Joann DeLong, and Head Start
children playing on the trail*



*The Born Learning Trail in
Pride Park*

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

Loving Grandmother, Mother, and Friend

Ms. Helen Williams first became known to Darlington County First Steps through a referral from a Board Member, Mr. Winfred Herrington, who attended church with her. At age 63, Mrs. Williams was single handedly raising her three grandchildren. She began receiving home visits through our Parents as Teachers program. From there, Ms. Williams became a volunteer in the Family Literacy Child Care Facility until the time she was rewarded for her outstanding work by being offered a part-time job. Ms. Williams worked in the child care center four days a week. The center provides child care for parents enrolled in programs at Darlington County Adult Education Program, BabyNet, and/or any programs at Darlington County First Steps. She also worked one afternoon a week providing child care for the “I’m a Young Mom...Now What???” sessions that provides services for pregnant and/or young mothers, ages 15 – 24.



Ms. Williams and Granddaughter

Ms. Williams found herself raising her three grandchildren ages 7, 1 and 12 days old all on her own. Ms. Williams’ son and the mother of these children were facing difficulties that were not suitable for young children to be a part of, as the mother had a long history of drug abuse. The youngest son, 12 days old, was born with drugs in his system. Rather than allowing her grandchildren to go into Foster Care and live with strangers, Ms. Williams stepped forward and took all three of these young children into her home. Not an easy task for anyone and certainly not an easy task for an older single woman.

Ms. Williams gained legal custody of these three children and provided a warm loving home for them. She made sure the children were secure and happy and also enrolled them in appropriate learning environments. At 63, she worked part-time to provide the little extra things that made her young grandchildren happy. Working part-time in the Family Literacy Child Care Facility at Darlington County First Steps allowed her to bring her youngest grandson to the child care center with her four days a week where he received developmental appropriate instruction.

Ms. Williams strived to set a positive example and lived in a way that provided her three grandchildren with a road map that will lead them to a brighter future. She stressed the importance of education, getting along with others, and not letting the past keep you down.

Sadly, Mrs. Helen Williams, affectionately known as “Miss Helen” to the staff and families of Darlington County First Steps passed away earlier in August, 2016. Her legacy of love, commitment and generosity will remain a part of the DCFS vision for serving others.

Welcoming Babies with Welcome Baby Bags!

Darlington County First Steps, Darlington Library System, and Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center have partnered for two years to present Welcome Baby Bags/Literacy Kits to moms who deliver new babies at the hospital. Welcome Baby Bags and its contents promotes early learning and school readiness. This year, we distributed over 475 bags to new parents!

Upon being discharged from the hospital, mothers receive a diaper bag that contains wipes, parent literature, growth charts, milestone booklets developed by the Born Learning Campaign, library card forms, and two books- one from DC First Steps and one from Darlington Library System. There is also a “gift card” inside that invites parents to DC First Steps’ office to receive an additional gift. Gifts are composed of wipes, diapers, linens, bottles, baby shampoos, lotions, and baby clothing. This strategy allows us to speak one on one to parents about services that are provided through the organization and how they can utilize them.



Welcome Baby Bags



Welcome Baby Bag Envelope

Thank you to the 2015 Greater Hartsville Chamber of Commerce's Women in Business Committee for the donation of baby items, wipes, and diapers. These donations were used for Welcome Baby Bags and our parent services.

Learning begins in the womb and continues for a lifetime.

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First Steps Partnership Board

Increasing Board Engagement and Moving Forward!

This fiscal year was a successful year for our board. We are working towards our fundraising goal and set the bar higher for the upcoming year. The board showed support in many instances at community meetings and events. We were led by a stellar board chair, Dr. Alvin T. Heatley, who is an advocate for the work we do. Dr. Heatley has represented Darlington County First Steps on several occasions, giving remarks to professionals in the county and those who work across the state. Our newest members did a wonderful job of adjusting to the board giving insight and new vision to their fellow members.

Connecting the Dots

This year board members connected the dots by providing resources and the opportunity to share information with people who have an impact on families and who are leaders in education. For example, board member Allison Baker brought over 20 teachers from the Darlington County School District to the Dad Cave to learn about the many services that are offered through the Parents Are First program. Board member, Tracy Redfearn, a licensed psycho-educational specialist, teamed up with DCFS parenting programs to provide a series of sessions, “Talks with Tracy” for young mothers. These sessions focused on resolving issues many of our young mothers face as a result of adverse childhood experiences, ACEs, which increase adult risk of substance abuse, depression, unplanned pregnancies, as well as physical and mental health issues. Board member, Crystal Gardner, was recently promoted from Vice President of Mutual Savings Bank to President and Alma Harris was promoted to Executive Director of Clemson Extension State Advancement Council. We are proud of our board and are confident that they will continue leading us in the right direction.

Darlington County First Steps Partnership Board, 2015-16

Name	Position	Board Category
Alvin Heatley	Chairman	Non-Profit Organization
Allison Baker	Member	Darlington County School District
Alma Harris	Member	Family Education, Training and Support Provider
Beth Campbell	Member	D.S.S. Designee
Crystal Gardner	Member	Business Community
Diane McIver	Member	Head Start Designee
James Jackson	Member	Legislative Appointee
Jimmie Epling	Vice-Chairman	County Library Designee
Lucretia Bellamy	Member	DHEC Designee
Sharman Poplava	Member	Philanthropic Community
Thomasena Davis	Member	Child Care Provider
Tracy Redfearn	Member	Healthcare Provider
Winfred Herrington	Member	Faith Based Community

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 in Darlington County:

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

Thank you donors!

Funding Support

State of South Carolina: **\$231,171**
(through South Carolina First Steps)

Belk Charity: **\$510***

Big Give of the Pee Dee: **\$925***

Burry Bookstore: **\$186**

The Byerly Foundation: **\$24,000**

The Duke Endowment: **\$61,225**

Children's Trust of South Carolina: **\$203,122**

Kiwanis of Hartsville: **\$1,500**

S.C. Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy: **\$17,603**

United Way of Hartsville: **\$16,500**

DC First Steps Board of Directors: **\$535***
(contributed for Belk Charity and Big Give Pee Dee fundraisers)

In-Kind Support

Butler Heritage Foundation

Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center

CareSouth Carolina

Child and Family Resource Center

Darlington County Community Action Agency- Head Start

Darlington County Library System

Darlington County School District

The Greater Hartsville Chamber of Commerce

SPC Credit Union

South Carolina Diaper Bank
 (formally known as Mom4Moms)



Donations from Hartsville Chamber's Women in Business event



Donations from SPC Credit Union

How your support helps children in Darlington County:

- ✓ A Countdown to Kindergarten toolkit costs \$170
- ✓ 1 case of books for children cost up to \$20
- ✓ Diapers and wipes expenses for 1 family ranges from \$30-\$50

HOW TO GIVE: Make check payable to Darlington County First Steps,

437 W. Carolina Avenue, Bldg. 1, Hartsville, SC 29550 or deliver donations to this address.

Save the Date!

- ✓ **Big Give Pee Dee- May 2, 2016**

Support Darlington First Steps today through a tax-deductible donation, or volunteer!