



# Annual Report

## 2020-2021



## OUR MISSION

Collaborating with other entities, Calhoun First Steps helps Calhoun County 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 VALUES

Families are the single most important influence on the development of their young children. Services must be individualized and adaptable to meet the unique needs of families and their children. We value, and demonstrate in our collaborative work and advocacy, diverse perspectives in the development of public policy and programs.

## OUR APPROACH



High quality programs and services for children and families



Intensive training, resources and support for childcare providers



Strategic partnerships and community education



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.

## OUR OVERARCHING MEASURES OF SUCCESS

1. By 2025, increase the reach of children who are directly served by First Steps from 17% to 20%.
2. By 2025, the percentage of children directly served by First Steps enrolled in high intensity programs will increase from 28% to 40%
3. By 2025, the percentage of children who score at the highest level on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment between White kindergartners and Black/Hispanic kindergartners will be reduced by 1% each year.

## OUR OBJECTIVES

1. Explore the feasibility of establishing a First Steps 4K classroom at Calhoun Academy.
2. Collaborate with local churches to explore the feasibility of establishing high quality, early childcare centers in the County.
3. Host two or more focus community meetings: 1) with parents and 2) with local stakeholders to discuss the needs of the community in order to build a better community.

## JOIN US



Gain valuable experience and give back to your community through service with First Steps AmeriCorps. Our AmeriCorps members **engage directly with families and communities**, helping to ensure that all children start school ready to reach their highest potential. Apply at [scfirststeps.org/AmeriCorps](https://scfirststeps.org/AmeriCorps).

# First Steps successfully gets children ready for school.

## South Carolina

**341,977**  
children under age 6

**46%**  
of young children live in poverty  
or low-income households

Data Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey

In fall 2020, **27%** of entering  
kindergartners were ready.

Data Source: 2020 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Results

Compared to their like peers, children  
who received First Steps services  
were...

**34%** less likely to be chronically  
absent in kindergarten.

**74%** more likely to enter  
kindergarten ready.

Data Source: 2019 External Evaluation of First Steps

## Calhoun County

**823**  
children under age 6

**54%**  
of young children live in poverty  
or low-income households

Data Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey

In fall 2020, **13%** of entering kindergartners  
in Calhoun County were ready.

Data Source: 2020 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Results



**3,416**  
children, adults, and workforce members were served  
by Calhoun County First Steps in FY20-21.

Since inception,  
Calhoun County First Steps  
has leveraged  
**\$983,453.73**  
from sources outside of  
state government.

That is  
**\$0.28**  
for every  
state dollar.

School District	# of children <6	% of young children living in poverty or low-income households	# entering kindergartners tested	% ready
Calhoun	823	54%	90	13%



# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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**Virginia Newman**

Executive Director  
Calhoun County First Steps

Over the past twenty years, Calhoun First Steps has served an average fifty families/children in our Parents as Teachers and Countdown to Kindergarten programs, with exception of last year due to COVID- 19. As an affiliate of Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, each year we serve an average 200 children, birth to five years, in support of building personal home libraries for children residing in Calhoun County.

Measure of Success shows we 1) serve 274 children directly increasing our reach of First Steps services to 43%, 2) 29% increase in the number of children enrolled in high intensity programs funded by First Steps and 3) reduced the racial/ethnic gap in kindergarten readiness by 3%. These achievements were met due to unwavering partnerships with the United Ways of the Midlands, Tri-county Electric Trust, Calhoun County Council, Calhoun DSS, Calhoun DHEC, St. Matthews K-8 School and our Calhoun First Steps Board.

*Virginia L. Newman*



# GETTING CHILDREN READY FOR SCHOOL

All children are ready to benefit from a quality kindergarten experience when they are five years old by September 1 of that school year. But kindergarten readiness—the critical stage at which children are prepared for learning and success—is more than a matter of age. For a strong start in school, children need positive relationships and supportive learning environments beginning at birth. At First Steps, we partner with families, caregivers, and communities to ensure that all children are prepared for success.

## South Carolina's Profile of the Ready Kindergartner

Developed by SC First Steps and the SC Department of Education, the state's description of school readiness includes 60 developmental milestones across 5 categories:



**Approaches to learning & inquiry**



**Emotional & social development**



**Physical development, self-help & motor skills**



**Mathematical thinking**



**Language & literacy development**



## OUR VISION

**Every child in Calhoun County will enter school healthy and ready to learn.**



# PARENTS AS TEACHERS



*an evidence-based program*

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 GOES VIRTUAL

Due to COVID-19, Parents as Teachers (PAT) National provided guidance for affiliates to deliver virtual services via interactive video conferencing and phone calls. South Carolina PAT affiliates rose to the occasion by engaging families in creative and meaningful ways while continuing to meet the Essential Requirements of implementing a quality PAT program during the pandemic.

## PAT IN CALHOUN COUNTY 2020-2021

**37**

families served

**593**

total home visits

A grant from the United Way of the Midlands afford us to provide laptops for families to keep and use for home visits and group connections. Parents were grateful and happy learning how to access and use zoom and other computer apps.



# IMAGINATION LIBRARY



*an evidence-based 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.

## IMAGINATION LIBRARY BY THE NUMBERS 2020-2021

# 217

children served

# 1645

books distributed

Books are 100% free to children in Calhoun County because Calhoun County First Steps secures the funds to cover the cost of books and shipping fees. Thank you to our Imagination Library supporters: Dollywood Foundation, Tri- County Electric Trust, Calhoun County First Steps Board, and United Way of the Midlands.

**Sponsor a child for just \$25 a year.**





# COUNTDOWN TO KINDERGARTEN



*an evidence-informed program*

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 kindergartners 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 2020-2021

**3**

kindergarten teachers  
trained as home visitors

**20**

children served

**100**

total home and school  
visits



Mrs. Marla Fanning was selected as Ambassador of Countdown To Kindergarten. Mrs. Fanning has served as a CTK teacher for the past eight summers.







## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

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Addressing the needs of young children is a shared endeavor. In addition to providing services to families and support for childcare providers, Calhoun County First Steps mobilizes partners and community members to ensure all children in Calhoun 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

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## OUR PARTNERSHIPS BY THE NUMBERS 2020-2021

6

PAT parents, 4K teacher and ex-board member attended 3 PAT Council meetings

12

Community partners attended 3 Literacy Launch Strategic Planning sessions



St. Matthews OCAB Head Start Program is extremely proud to partner with Calhoun County First Steps. We are excited about working together collectively to ensure our early learners receive the best start and a strong foundation to build on as they move forward.



- Mrs. LW Hickson, Family Service Coordinator



## **OUR SUPPORTERS**

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Through partnerships and collaborations, as well as financial support from grants and contributions, Calhoun County First Steps leverages state dollars to enhance and expand services to children and families.

### **FUNDING SUPPORT**

State of South Carolina: \$205,800  
(through South Carolina First Steps)

Federal: \$3000

United Way of the Midlands: \$13,364

United Way Augusta: \$ 474

Central Carolina (Midlands Gives): \$2979

Tri-County Electric: \$2700

### **IN-KIND SUPPORT**

Calhoun County Council: \$ 21,050.00

## **JOIN US**

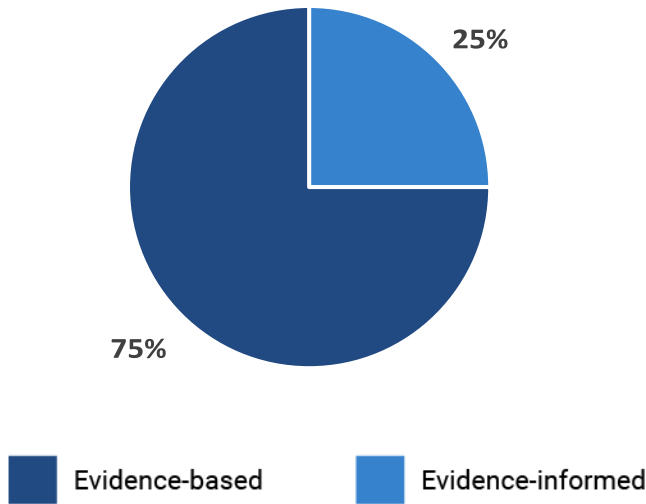
For more information on partnership opportunities, visit our website at  
[calhouncountyfirststeps.org](http://calhouncountyfirststeps.org)



# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

## OUR INVESTMENT IN QUALITY

Expenditures of State Funds by Program Type



## ESTIMATION OF COST SAVINGS

Since inception, Calhoun County First Steps has leveraged **\$983,453.73** from sources outside of state government.

That's **\$0.28** for every state dollar.

## SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES BY STRATEGY

	State Funding	Federal Funding	Private Funding	In-Kind Contributions	Total
Parents as Teachers	\$130,341	\$2,000	\$9,425	\$12,021	\$153,787
Imagination Library	\$2,043	\$0	\$3,779	\$0	\$5,822
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$28,485	\$0	\$2,239	\$0	\$30,724
Program Support	\$20,570	\$1,000	\$1,977	\$6,518	\$30,065
Administrative Support	\$24,361	\$0	\$1,376	\$2,511	\$28,248
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$205,800</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>	<b>\$18,797</b>	<b>\$21,050</b>	<b>\$248,647</b>



# LEADERSHIP

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sam Richardson, Board Chair

Stanley Rivers, Co-Chair

Mariam Aiken, Secretary

Michael Smalls, Jr. Fundraiser Chair

Sharon Daniels

Frederick Golden

Bridgett McKnight

Gary Jones

Christia Murdaugh

Charlene Nimmons

Kim Henderson

Cheryl Prickett

Melissa Eisom

## STAFF

Virginia Newman, Executive Director/PAT Supervisor

JaVonna Lewis, Director Assistant/ Lead Parent Educator

Quinnetta Garner, Program Assistant/Parent Educator

## CONTACT US

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