



Cherokee County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2009 Annual Report*

Board Chair: Larry Wall
Executive Director:
Dorothy M. Priester

Contact Information:
126 Willis Plaza
Gaffney, SC 29341
Phone: (864) 487-9466
Fax: (864) 487-9461
E-mail:
cc1ststeps@yahoo.com
Web site:
www.cherokeecountyfirststeps.org

Total children in county under age 6: 4,144

Total Children in county under 6 living in poverty %: 10.1

Cherokee County Highlights

- *40% increase in enrollment for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library*
- *41 teachers received recertification for DSS hours from our trainings alone (15 hours or more)*
- *Web site for Cherokee County First Steps is in place*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Key progress was made over the 2009 fiscal year through the First Steps Partnership. During this time there was a 40% increase in enrollment and participation of the **Dolly Parton Imagination Library**. A total of 1,069 children were involved in the program during FY09. Zaxby's hosted two fundraisers for Cherokee County First Steps with proceeds that benefitted the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

Child Care Quality Enhancement provided Post-ECERS-R assessments to determine if the classroom materials, mentoring, and technical assistance received were beneficial to the areas that needed improvement. Ratings improved in each of the four facilities reflecting an average increase of 36%.

An emphasis was placed on **Child Care Training and Professional Development**. In partnership with Cherokee County School District's Adult Education Program, trainings were provided to help child care providers maintain their licenses. Amongst those in attendance were 41 teachers that received recertification from our trainings alone. The *Cherokee County Child Care Director's Association* continues to meet each month to discuss business relevant to the child care providers and serve as a support group.

Further, First Steps partnered with DSS to provide 79 children with **Child Care Scholarships**. Among the participants, 100% were identified as having two or more risk factors.

Another grant for an **AmeriCorps VISTA Member** was awarded by the United Way of the Piedmont. This will be the second year that we have received this grant. The VISTA member was instrumental in creating the web site and brochure for Cherokee County First Steps. She also prepared surveys for various programs and assisted in raising money for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. In the coming year, the VISTA member will continue in the creation and maintenance of the volunteer program, develop additional funding opportunities, and broaden the public awareness and education campaign.

The board and staff of First Steps of Cherokee County continue in our mission of "*getting children ready for school.*"

Submitted on behalf of the children of Cherokee County,

Dorothy M. Priester

First Steps to School Readiness Strategy Areas

The First Steps initiative approaches children's school readiness needs in five ways:

Family Strengthening: A parent is a child's first and best teacher. First Steps works to help parents become the best parents they can be. First Steps also helps parents further their own education.

Healthy Start: Children's development and ability to learn are profoundly impacted by their health in the earliest years. First Steps works to help families understand children's health needs through education and screenings while also working to help them access needed health services.

Quality Child Care: Quality child care provides immediate and long-term learning benefits for children. First Steps works to expand the availability of quality child-care to families and to enhance the level of quality in existing child-care environments.

Early Education: Research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool classes are more likely to start school ready to learn, as well as be more successful later in life. First Steps works to expand high-quality 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten opportunities in public and private settings.

School Transition: The transition into kindergarten is a critical time that sets the tone for children's perspectives about the school years, as well their parents' perspectives. Making a strong initial connection between school and home -- and supporting both parents and students during this transition time -- has been shown to impact students' later school success and parents' later involvement during the school years.

2008-09 County Partnership Programs by Strategy

FAMILY STRENGTHENING

Dolly Parton Imagination Library

Program Description: Children under age 5 are enrolled to receive age-appropriate books through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program. We pay for shipping only; the Dollywood Foundation pays for the books. The books are mailed to the child's home in his/her name every month until they are 5 years old. The quality books remove barriers to reading for many of the children and parents are reminded to read to their children. This program increases the availability of books in the homes and increase positive parent-child interactions. All children that participated in any Cherokee County First Steps (CCFS) strategy were encouraged to enroll in this program.

Program Results:

- 1,069 children participated in the program.
- 63% of parents surveyed reported reading to their child at least once a day. (According to the U.S. Census Bureau, released October 2007, only about half of children ages 1 through 5 are read to seven or more times a week.)
- 75% of parents surveyed reported they had increased the amount of time spent reading to their children since they enrolled in the Imagination Library program.
- 63% of parents surveyed reported they had at least doubled the number of children's books in their home since they had enrolled their child in the Imagination Library program.
- Enrollment increased this year by 40%.
- 9,138 books were distributed.
- \$21,444 spent in total.
- 100% of the money spent was used for procurement of books.

QUALITY CHILD CARE

Child Care Quality Enhancement

Program Description: We provided Post-ECERS-R assessments that revealed areas that needed improvement in the classrooms at four child care facilities. We determined and provided materials that could help improve areas identified in the assessments of the respective child care centers.

Program results:

- 4 classrooms were assessed (1 in each facility).
- 100% of directors surveyed felt the scores reflected the areas that showed improvement from the Pre-ECERS-R test and the parts of their facility that displayed notable ratings.

- 90% of directors surveyed reported the materials received were age appropriate and beneficial in teaching the children.
- 50% of directors surveyed believe the additional materials have helped increase their enrollment.
- 361 children were impacted.
- \$1,451 was spent for Post-ECERS-R, technical assistance, and mentoring for the four facilities.
- Post-ECERS-R scores ranged from 3.38 – 4.63 increasing an average of 36% in each of the four facilities.
- 15 monitoring visits totaled 50.5 hours.

Child Care Training and Professional Development

Program Description: Child Care Providers are required by DSS to attend training each year to maintain licensing. The Directors and Assistant Directors must report 20 classroom hours and other employees are required to have 15 hours of training. These trainings were provided at a very nominal fee. The cost was \$10 for a half-day and \$20 for a full-day session (5 hours). Some of the trainings were provided by volunteers, including the executive director and a board member. The partnership collaborated with the Cherokee County School District's Adult Education Program in offering trainings. Cherokee County First Steps underwrote the cost to provide all the training sessions and each partner hosted at their respective sites.

Program Results:

- 172 teachers were trained.
- 41 teachers received recertification (15 hours of training) for DSS hours from these trainings.
- 47 teachers received at least half (7.5 hours of training) of their credit hours from these trainings.
- 2 child care facilities had **all** of their staff receive recertification for DSS hours.
- 5 child care facilities had **half** of their staff receive recertification for DSS hours.
- 27 child care facilities participated.
- 18 trainings totaled 57.5 credit hours.

Child Care Scholarships

Program Description: This strategy provided quality child care for children age 5 and under who qualified based on federal poverty guidelines and other risk factors. We partnered with State Department of Social Services to administer this program and received a 20% match in scholarships.

Program Results:

- 79 children received scholarships.
- 66% of directors surveyed stated that children in their facility received ABC Vouchers and/or scholarships.
- 12 child care facilities received scholarships from CCFS.
- 100% of participants were identified as having two or more of the First Steps' priority risk factors.
- 19 monitoring visits totaled 26.5 hours.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Expenditures By Funding Source	
State Appropriation (<i>Fund 10</i>)	\$191,950
E.I.A. Appropriation (<i>Fund 55</i>)	\$ 18,328
Lottery Appropriation (<i>Fund 35</i>)	\$ 0
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 60</i>)	\$ 0
C.O.E. Appropriation (<i>Fund 65</i>)	\$ 0
N.F.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 70</i>)	\$ 0
State Private (<i>Fund 15</i>)	\$ 692
Local Private (<i>Fund 20</i>)	\$ 6,611
Federal (<i>Fund 30</i>)	\$ 19,755
In-Kind (<i>Fund 25</i>)	\$
TOTAL:	\$237,336

Expenditures By Program / Strategy Name	
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library	\$21,444
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$ 1,451
Child Care Training & Professional Development	\$54,587
Scholarship Initiatives	\$81,992
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$22,888
Administrative Functions	\$54,974
TOTAL:	\$237,336

Inkind	
Allegra Printing and Imaging (Printing)	\$ 400
AmeriCorps VISTA Member (Volunteer)	\$17,414
Laura Camp (Volunteer/Instructor)	\$ 2,400
Cherokee Community Learning Center (Meeting Space)	\$ 500
Hampton Inn (Meeting Space)	\$ 185
Ruth Hutcherson (Volunteer)	\$ 265
Kiser Development Company (Rent)	\$ 7,200
Midway Baptist Church (Meeting Space)	\$ 200
SC Department of Social Services (Match=5 Scholarships)	\$35,360
Spartanburg Community College Cherokee Campus (Meeting Space)	\$ 850
TOTAL	\$64,774

NOTABLE DONORS

<i>DONOR'S NAME</i>	AMOUNT
Child Care Training (Fees from Child Care Providers)	\$5,760
DPIL Fundraiser	\$2,336
Chandra Guillary	\$ 100
Michelle & Henry Jolly	\$ 100
Dr. J. W. Sanders, Jr.	\$ 100
Dr. Ron and Barbara Cope	\$ 90
Charles Phillips Orr	\$ 90
Benny and Katherine Dukes	\$ 88
Other Donors (Donated Less than \$75)	\$1,768
Fujikura Foundation	\$2,000
United Way of the Piedmont	\$1,700
Zaxby's	\$ 400
Cash Donations	\$ 153
TOTAL: \$14,685	

Local Match Percentage for FY 2009: 32.5%
(at least 15% Legislative requirement)

COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Kim Bagwell, Pre-K Primary Educator
 Pennie Bevis, Business Community
 Jean Brewington, Early Childhood Educator
 Kara Brill, Parent
 Kim Camp, Family Education & Training Representative
 Laura Camp, School District Representative
 Dr. Ron Cope, Pre-K Primary Educator
 Kelly Davis, House of Representatives Appointee
 Benny Dukes, Senate Appointee
 Katherine Dukes, *Vice Chair*, Transportation Provider
 Pastor Deborah Eadie, Faith-Based Community
 Verlene Eaker, Child Care Representative
 Lana Gardner, Library Representative
 Sandra Greene, Senate Appointee
 Christine Gregory, Healthcare Representative
 Dr. Angela Hinton, Parent
 Vanessa Jefferies, Head Start Representative
 Dr. Joette Johnson, Early Childhood Educator
 Randy Mathis, *Treasurer*, Non-Profit Community
 Rev. Flor Morales, Faith-Based Community
 Janet Moss, House of Representatives Appointee

COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Joy Phillips, Early Childhood Educator

Dr. J. W. Sanders, Jr., Non-Profit Community

Renee Smith, *Secretary*, Parent

Jenny Stroupe, Family Education & Training Representative

Kayron Wall, Early Childhood Educator

Larry Wall, *Chair*, DSS Representative

Teresa Welch, Health Department Representative

Brian West, *Member at Large*, Business Community

Linda Wilson, Child Care Representative

COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT

In FY09, First Steps County Partnerships statewide made it a priority to become increasingly data-driven. County Partnerships successfully began using powerful new components of the First Steps data system, and County Partnerships also utilized data in new ways to drive their FY09 program plans. In addition to enhanced program data tracking, County Partnerships are also focusing on the best available data about children and families to best understand their communities' needs. At the end of FY08 and the beginning of FY09, County Partnerships began an extensive analysis of this data, including data about the risk factors known to impact children's potential school success, such as low birth weight, teen mothers, and families living in poverty. A county-level risk data report is included in the subsequent pages of this report.

SUCCESS STORY

Dear Ms. Priester and Cherokee County First Steps:

I would like to take this opportunity to share the successes that you have helped with the citizens of Cherokee County. This help has been extended from Business to Babies.

First and foremost, the children of Cherokee County greatly benefit from our First Steps Program. First Steps helps small children by providing scholarships for childcare. This not only benefits the child, but their parents as well by providing quality child care that the parent could not otherwise afford. It is also a way that they help support the childcare industry in our county.

Cherokee County First Steps helped the childcare directors form an association, thus promoting positive socialization among competitors rather than negative. This proves that we can all work together and that there are "enough children" to go around. It has been a very informative association and through First Steps, we have been able to obtain the mandatory Program Administration Training Requirements required by the State.

First Steps was also fundamental in providing ECERS training which brings the center standards up to a higher level. By participating in this training, we have also been able to receive some equipment that is needed to help us obtain these higher levels.

It is such a privilege to get to work with you, Dorothy and Cherokee County First Steps. Thank you for all you do for us!

Sincerely,

Verlene Eaker and Diana Federico
Crayons 2 Computers Child Care Facility

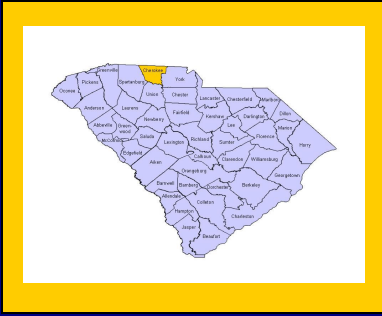
The SC General Assembly created in 1999 the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Initiative as a “comprehensive, results-oriented initiative for improving early childhood development by providing, through county partnerships, public and private funds and support for high quality early childhood development and education services for children by providing support for their families’ efforts toward enabling their children to reach school ready to learn” ...here’s what happened next:

First Steps Strategy Areas	Notable Moments
Family Strengthening	<p>As we needed to have a 50% match of private funds to maintain the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program, Cherokee County First Steps held a fundraising campaign to raise needed funds in 2009. With private funds already donated such as \$5,000 from Alcoa Foundation, along with \$2,000 from Fujikura Foundation, \$1,700 from United Way of the Piedmont, and the remaining amount given by parents, Board and Staff, we were able to meet and surpass this amount.</p> <p>Cherokee County First Steps has experienced a marked improvement in the enrollment and participation in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library with a 35% increase in 2008 and another 40% in 2009.</p>
Quality Child Care	<p>In 2007, Cherokee County First Steps provided facility quality enhancement including playground equipment grants. These grants were needed as DSS implemented new standards for recreational equipment. Four facilities received the funding to improve their playgrounds and all were successful in upgrading their equipment to the appropriate level.</p> <p>The need for a child care network in Cherokee County was identified through a survey with the child care directors in Fall 2007. <i>Cherokee County Child Care Director’s Association</i> has 13 members that meet each month where their purpose is to discuss business relevant to the child care providers and serve as a support</p>

	<p>group.</p> <p>In the Fall of 2007, an emphasis was placed on Child Care Training and Professional Development. In partnership with Cherokee County School District's Adult Education Program trainings were provided to help child care providers maintain their licenses. 76 teachers received recertification from our trainings alone. Training was increased to 5 hours a day to meet the needs of the Child Care Providers. In previous years, training had been two or three hours a day.</p> <p>In April of 2008, Cherokee County First Steps was chosen to be the recipient of proceeds awarded at the <i>Inaugural Annual Limestone College 5K/1Mile Walk/Run</i>. Donations totaling \$2,990 were used to supplement the child care training budget.</p> <p>In June of 2008, Cherokee County First Steps hosted a community development event giving the child care workers a chance to express their ideas and to provide their input for the coming year. It was an informative session, so it was held again in June of 2009. This was also an opportunity to increase membership in the Cherokee County Child Care Director's Association.</p>
Early Education	<p>In order to provide high quality early childhood education programs, Cherokee County First Steps funded two (2) full day 4K classes in 2006. One in the private sector at the Student Development Center, and one in a public school at Corinth Elementary. All students were targeted for participation on the basis of school readiness risk factors. The programs met SC 4K requirements for curriculum, pupil-teacher ratios, materials, and class size.</p>

Other Notable Moments:

- In 2008, Cherokee County First Steps received a highly competitive grant awarded by the United Way of the Piedmont for an **AmeriCorps VISTA Member**. The VISTA member was instrumental in creating the web site and brochure for Cherokee County First Steps. She also prepared surveys for various programs and assisted in fundraising efforts throughout the year. United Way has bestowed this grant upon us for a second year, and the VISTA member will continue in the creation and maintenance of the volunteer program, develop additional funding opportunities and broaden the public awareness and education campaign.
- In Spring of 2009, Cherokee County First Steps participated in a strategic planning group. The Children's Resources meeting consisted of representatives from the Cherokee County School District, Department of Health and Environmental Control, Department of Social Services, Spartanburg Community College Cherokee Campus, and several local businesses.
- In 2009, Cherokee County First Steps Staff participated in the United Way campaign and was presented a "Newcomer Award" since it was the first time the organization participated in their campaign.



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile Cherokee County

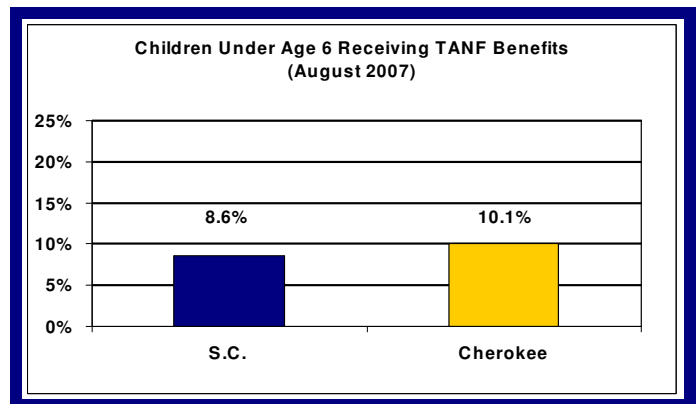
Total Children Under Six: 4,144

CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4% Cherokee County (2007): 10.1%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 10 Cherokee County children has an annual family income equivalent to \$10,325 (or less) for a family of four. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 45% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Children in deep poverty often face a wide variety of school readiness obstacles, ranging from inadequate prenatal care and nutrition to low maternal education.
- 419 of Cherokee County’s 4,144 children under age 6 received federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits during 2007, indicating a family income at or below 50% of the federal poverty definition.

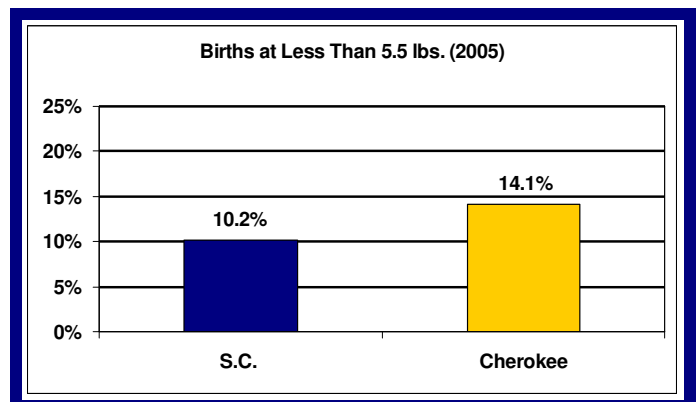


CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2% Cherokee County (2005): 14.1%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 7 Cherokee County children is born at a weight less than 5.5 lbs. A recent statewide analysis suggests that at least one-third of these children (36%-52% depending on weight category) will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Babies born at low weights are often prone to developmental delays associated with early academic failure.
- Many have received inadequate prenatal care and suffer from significant health complications.
- 95 of the 672 children born in Cherokee County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.

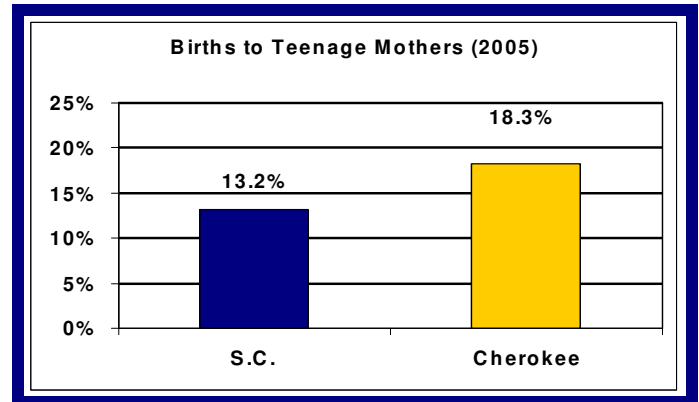


BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2% Cherokee County (2005): 18.3%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 5 Cherokee County births is to a mother under 20 years of age. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 43% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Teenage parents often lack the maturity and knowledge required to optimally fulfill important parental responsibilities, are less likely to advance their own educational attainment and often fail to advance beyond low-income status.
- 123 of the 672 children born in Cherokee County during 2005 had teenage mothers.

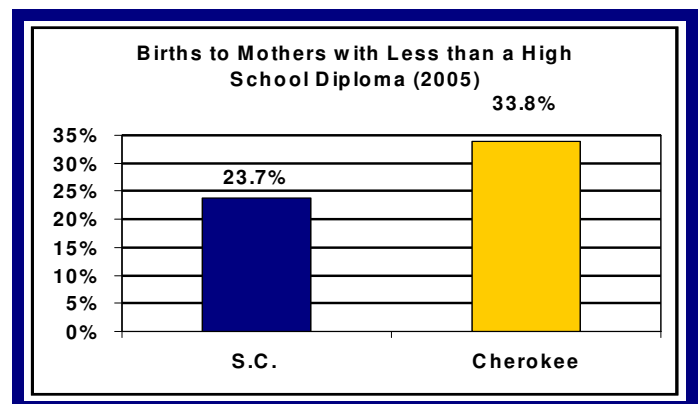


BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7% Cherokee County (2005): 33.8%

Fast Fact: 1 in 3 children in Cherokee County is born to a mother possessing less than a high school diploma. A recent statewide analysis suggests that roughly half (48%) of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Research suggests that a mother’s own educational attainment is closely linked to the subsequent academic performance of her children.
- 227 of the 672 children born in Cherokee County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.



All data provided by the SC Budget and Control Board’s Office of Research and Statistics