



2021

IMPACT REPORT

Our Mission

Ready for School, Ready for Life is a collaborative effort to build a connected, innovative system of care for Guilford County's youngest children and their families.

CEO Message

“Efforts and courage are not enough
without purpose and direction.”

—John F. Kennedy

Purpose and direction. As we look back at 2021 in the rearview mirror, I have been considering both. We've been on a journey together through an entire year of the COVID-19 pandemic as we adjusted to the “new normal” and what feels like virtual everything.

As Ready for School, Ready for Life (Ready Ready) continues on its novel path to build a connected, innovative system of care for Guilford County's youngest children and their families, we find strength in funders, board members, staff members, and community partners determined to travel with us. We know that every child deserves a strong start in life, but not every child starts their path from the same place. That is why we are building a system of care that works for all Guilford County children and families with programs that support parents and caregivers and give every baby the same strong start. This beginning makes all the difference for their lifelong journey.

Guilford County is a resource-rich but access-poor environment. Not everyone who lives here has access to the opportunities they deserve and need. Caregivers pack what they can for the parenting journey. Sometimes it is supportive relationships, consistent routines, good nutrition habits, and positive learning experiences to share with their child's early life. Other times the baggage includes discrimination, toxic stress, trauma, and other negative experiences that can lead to long-term health problems or mental health challenges for our children.

Instead of burdening families to pack for the journey alone, we believe that our community should help guide them towards resources, support, and information with a seamless experience for their adventure. And it must begin even before birth.

Researchers published in JAMA Pediatrics are already finding that babies born during the pandemic score lower in gross motor, fine motor, and social-emotional development than infants born before March 2020. It has never been more clear that we must invest in our youngest children and their families.

With your support, we have not only the courage and effort that President John F. Kennedy referenced but the purpose and direction to achieve population-level change.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charrise Hart".

Charrise Hart
Chief Executive Officer
Ready for School, Ready for Life

Equity and Family Voice

We are ready to address structural inequities in Guilford County

In 2021, the Equity Strategies Committee of the Board of Directors sought the input of many stakeholders, including our parent leaders, staff, equity consultants, and board members, to develop our organization's official stance on equity. The Ready for School, Ready for Life Equity statement is posted on our website, and you may read it below.

Equity Statement

Ready for School, Ready for Life (Ready Ready) promotes equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion which are woven through our mission, values, and principles. We stand against racism in all of its forms. Ready Ready will work with our community to address the structural inequities that drive disparate child and family outcomes and work towards an environment where equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion are core values. When we are working to address these structural inequities, Ready Ready will be bold in our actions.

When Guilford County Black and Indigenous children and families of color (BIPOC) feel welcomed, heard, respected, safe, supported, and valued, all of our community and our society benefit.



Sharing family voice

We engage authentic family voice consistently and intentionally in every aspect of our work. The Guilford Parent Leader Network (GPLN) is an integral part of the decision-making structure for Ready for School, Ready for Life. Families who participate are valued consultants, partners, and change agents who work on priorities that are important to their own families and other families in Guilford County.



In June 2021, we created a regular section in our monthly e-newsletter to share information about family voice. These updates allow GPLN members and staff to report on timely topics and parent leadership activities.

This year, we have celebrated the graduation of 13 parent leaders from Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI) Phase 1 training and 11 from COFI Phase 2. This leadership training includes taking on a community project as part of a parent action team.

Nine parent leaders have completed Ready Ready's first Board/Committee Leadership Academy. Graduates will have opportunities to serve in our governance structure.

By the numbers:

10,906

Total number of newsletter subscribers who received GPLN news

COFI Training:

13 Phase I graduates

11 Phase II graduates

“The Guilford Parent Leader Network provides an outreach for parents and families to be involved in the community. Voices heard, resources, and togetherness to incorporate change is what I think of when I hear GPLN.”

—Joneaka M. Davis,
GPLN member and parent of a five-year-old

A Message from our Board Co-Chairs

In 2021, Ready for School, Ready for Life made great strides towards launching our Phase II work for families with children ages 3-5. A community-based design team of 39 stakeholders from Guilford County included parent leaders, educators, and other professionals from various roles.

Supported by a leadership team from Ready Ready, The Duke Endowment, and the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, along with an advisory team of national and regional experts, the design team spent much of 2021 considering strategies to help Guilford County children and their families. They received input from more than 880 community members through a comprehensive survey.

We are grateful for their dedication and unwavering support to build the foundation that will enable us to launch the first pilot programs for ages 3-5 strategies later this year. Our Phase II work builds on the strong work and progress Ready Ready has made for families prenatally to age three as part of our continuum of care.

As we focus on early childhood development and education, we must address the child care crisis in North Carolina and our nation. North Carolina is considered a child care desert, a designation that worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. About two-thirds of N.C. children under six years old live in households with all parents working. Parents and caregivers rely on a stable environment for their infants, toddlers, and preschoolers – the time when a child's brain grows more quickly than at any other time in their life.

Demand outpaces supply – there are now 6.1 infants and toddlers for each licensed child care slot across the state as compared to 5.3 per slot in 2019. These child care deserts do not affect families equally across the state. Children of color are more likely to live in poverty and have less access to high-quality child care. When families cannot find care for their children, mothers are 12 percent less likely to be employed, according to the Center for American Progress.

With funding from the North Carolina General Assembly in late 2021, Ready Ready is working to help child care centers in Guilford County develop a better business model, provide professional development for early childhood educators, and improve wages. We are working with EQuIPD of UNC-Greensboro and North Carolina A&T State University to ease the child care crisis working parents face.

Parents with young children need to work to support their families and want to do what's best for their children's development. They can do both if we enact policies that provide parents with the support they need to remain contributing members of the workforce. This is our chance to make a powerful commitment to our youngest generation – we cannot expect a strong, prosperous Guilford County community and workforce in our future if we do not invest in our children now.



Susan Schwartz
Executive Director
Cemala Foundation



Ed Kitchen
Chief Operating Officer
Joseph M. Bryan Foundation

“Ask any child development expert,
and they will tell you that children
do not develop in a straight line.
There are no average children.
There are no standard children.”

—Cassi Clausen



Our Priorities



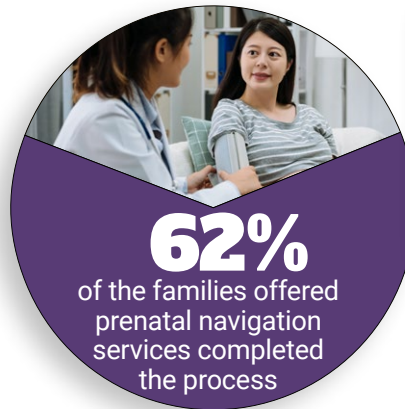
Develop Navigation System to Connect Families with Effective Services

Starting prenatally, Navigators act as liaisons between families and their local service providers, social service organizations, and government representatives. By meeting families in the unique moments of expecting a new baby and attending their child's well-visit appointments, Navigators act as first-line advocates, educators, mentors, and channels for families to improve their daily lives and improve the long-term outcomes for their babies and young children.

- In 2021, 81 percent of OB/GYN practices in Guilford County had implemented or committed to offering Navigation services to their patients.
- Of the families who completed prenatal navigation services in 2021, 77 percent have incomes 196 percent below the federal poverty line.
- Our Community Alignment Team shared an Agency Finder portal with select partners who used it to refer families to resources for their child's healthy development while testing the system and suggesting improvements.



By the numbers:



Finding “Room at the Inn” for a young mother-to-be

In early September, a Children's Home Society Community Navigator met with a young first-time parent-to-be. The parent and her partner had been staying in a variety of temporary housing, such as living with friends or in hotels because the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the already limited emergency shelter and housing options in Guilford County. While the Community Navigator explored these limited options, the pregnant mom was currently living with a friend in another hotel. The parent called the Navigator in crisis, and the Navigator could hear management in the background telling her if she didn't vacate the property, they would call the police. The friend was at work, and the parent was left with her belongings and her friend's puppy, but no transportation and nowhere to go.

That's when the Navigator called Room at the Inn, which luckily had an opening but needed the client to prove North Carolina residency. The parent didn't have any North Carolina ID, but the Navigator knew the parent had worked a part-time job and asked her to find copies of her paystubs. With that documentation, Room at the Inn was able to pick her up from the hotel and provide her with living accommodations. The young mom reported a positive, supportive environment during her pregnancy and let the Navigator know that a staff member there was even able to care for the puppy and find it a new home.

A healthy baby girl arrived in Spring 2022, and the two of them will continue to receive transitional housing support from Room at the Inn.



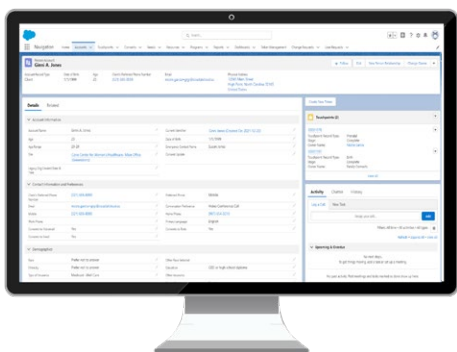
Build Technology to Support Data-informed Decisions

In 2021, Ready Ready focused on updating the Integrated Data System (IDS) technology to facilitate communication between navigators and caregivers. Using feedback from our proven programs, we improved the user experience, data collection, and security. The new system went live at the end of October. Navigators can now share resources directly with parents and caregivers using automated email, including links to referral agencies.

- The IDS will help families connect with resources, gain information, and get the support they need for healthy child development more quickly, with less repetition.
- Programs communicate more effectively and efficiently to serve families, reducing effort for program staff, and preventing families from facing support gaps.
- The community can monitor child outcomes to more effectively deliver resources to families – reducing tax dollars required to cover service gaps in the long term.



The Ready Ready IDS is dynamic. It allows individual programs to maintain their own databases and securely share real-time data, with family consent, without making staff at agencies and community organizations log in and out of multiple programs or work in multiple systems. Instead, the Ready Ready IDS connects disparate databases to streamline services for programs and families.



Family members use mobile forms to capture their contact information and grant consent. This allows program staff members to enter data in a streamlined manner. Families are partners in decision-making through consent and can decide where their data is shared and for how long.

Because program staff members can easily view information families have provided, this reduces the amount of repetition and paperwork. Navigators can clearly see what resources or support families have received and where gaps may exist. Instead of reviewing intake information, they can build stronger relationships with parents and caregivers to support their child's healthy development. One other benefit: families who may have faced trauma in their living conditions, relationships, or jobs won't have to relive the experience by repeatedly sharing their story with different agencies and organizations offering assistance and support.

Agency Finder: Let your fingers do the scrolling

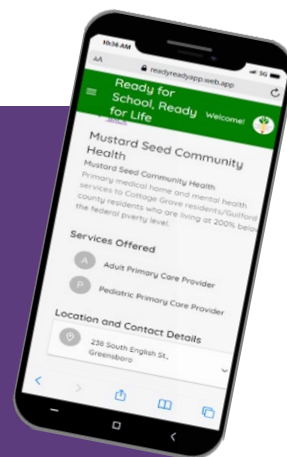


In 2021, Ready Ready's Agency Finder mobile app went live. The web-based app allows family members to search for programs and find contact information for their referrals. Agencies, programs, and community

partners will be able to create custom referral forms to capture the data they need for their organization.

Ready Ready's Community Alignment Team has verified the contact information, location, and more for each agency listed. From A (Adult Education Assistance) to Gen Z (Youth Programs), the app is available online now for the general public to use.

Visit <https://readyreadyapp.web.app/> or scan the QR Code



The Agency Finder community portal is currently in an early version. Future versions will have more robust search capacity, additional services listed, and an interface for families to create an account to maintain a record of their services.

Our Priorities —Cont



Build a Culture of Continuous Quality Improvement

We are collaborating with our partners at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill to enhance the work we began with our Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Cohort I programs. Together, we will focus on the “Model for Improvement,” a powerful tool that organizations can use to accelerate improvement. The Model for Improvement is a flexible improvement method designed to promote a structured process for experiential learning. This planning work comes as we prepare to invite a second cohort to participate in the CQI process in 2022.



CQI: Guided step by step

“I think we’re probably the only state agency that has collaborated with Ready Ready to integrate the CQI process into our work,” said Debbi Kennerson, director at Greensboro Children’s Developmental Services Agency (CSDA). Her agency provides the N.C. Infant Toddler Program in Alamance, Caswell, Guilford, Randolph, and Rockingham counties in the Piedmont-Triad region and serves about 2,000 families each year.

“The CDSA takes a coaching approach to intervention instead of a medical model where services are provided directly to the child,” Kennerson said. “We help the adults integrate interventions into their daily routines. For example, a physical therapist may meet the family at parks, or other specialists may meet with a family during mealtime to help them integrate feeding interventions into their daily experiences. We meet the families where they are, incorporate their priorities into intervention plans, and help them learn to support their child’s development.”

When the organization entered the CQI process, it focused on trauma-informed services. Kennerson said the initial assessment showed that while her staff members had knowledge and training about trauma-informed practices, there was no systematic way of knowing what they knew or ensuring it was consistent across the team. Through the CQI process, the organization recognized the need to add baseline training on the impact of trauma on brain development. They did this with information from the Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University for every staff member, including support staff. “We felt it was important for all staff members, not just the direct service providers, to have this training,” Kennerson said. “When families call or come to our offices, they speak with a staff member who has been through this basic training.”

Kennerson said staff members helped decide the direction of the CQI process. “After every step, we asked, ‘What do you need next,’” she said. “We had structured discussions after watching Resilience: The Biology of Stress and Science of Hope movie. After that, every staff member was trained in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) for adults. This led to important conversations about documentation and report writing, considering the potential impact of family mental health information on a child’s evaluation. The last step was to ensure ongoing access to the information. We did this by including MHFA and Attachment Vitamins from the National Center for Traumatic Stress Network for our new staff orientation.”

CDSA was able to keep the process going even after the Cohort I program-specific meetings ended in 2019. “The process has been really good for us. We have shared what we learned with other CDSAs, and many also incorporated MHFA into their professional development plans for their staff,” Kennerson said. “Through other work we are doing – implementing the Pyramid Model (Social Emotional focused interventions) – our work on integrating trauma-informed services was recognized. I was asked to participate in a nationwide webinar in May 2022 to talk about how we used CQI to integrate trauma-informed services.”

The staff’s professional development through the CQI process continues through onboarding, orientation, and monthly staff meetings. “I just had a brand-new staff member tell me our orientation was one of the best she’s ever experienced, and she feels more prepared to carry out her role,” Kennerson said.



Expand Proven Programs to Meet Community Need

Ready Ready works with these evidence-based programs: Family Connects, Nurse-Family Partnership, Healthy Steps, and Reach Out and Read. These proven programs have improved service delivery to influence our targeted outcomes. Each program has documented causal impacts on child well-being through rigorous research. Each program also features national infrastructure, ensuring programs deliver services with fidelity to the proven model.

- Ready Ready created a Medical Home Advisory Team (MHAT) to share best practices for implementing Navigation in partnership with these programs.
- Insights from these peer practices continue to inform and support shared development strategies.
- Our proven programs have hired staff to increase capacity and report quality referrals from the work navigators are doing with prenatal clients.



By the numbers:

Professional-wage jobs created through 2021



Proven programs benefit families and physicians

"It's so great for the families," said Dr. Hilary McCormick, "Especially for first-time parents or newcomers to the community who may not know much about caring for their baby or about all the resources available. The HealthySteps specialists in our practice are so helpful to spend time with the family to share all that information and let our pediatricians focus more on the child's healthy development."

McCormick is a pediatrician at The Tim and Carolynn Rice Center for Child and Adolescent Health at Cone Health and has been a pediatrician in Guilford County since 2003. She is a member of the Ready Ready Medical Home Advisory Team and has rave reviews for the proven programs working to build a system of care for Guilford County's youngest children.

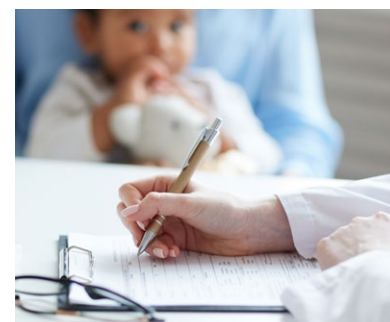
"I trust the HealthySteps specialists," McCormick said. "They follow evidence-based guidelines and support the information pediatricians give parents, like having children sleep on their backs. The specialists call the families after their office visits to follow up on information they were given and might go over in more detail or reinforce what I said."

According to McCormick, this ongoing communication is invaluable. "I've had many parents call the HealthySteps specialist back to ask questions about colic, feeding, sleep, or other needs," she said. "Sometimes in our office, the specialists help find diapers or food for families who don't have those resources, and they can offer this help in Spanish and English."

This team approach took on new importance as the pandemic continued into 2021.

"The first part of the pandemic was scary for everyone and disrupted families who couldn't work or had to stay home with their children," McCormick said. "And, as it continued, new challenges arose: children had to learn remotely, and not every family had enough tablets, internet access, or quiet places to learn. With all the stress and isolation, we've seen an enormous increase in mental health issues for people of all ages."

McCormick said HealthySteps specialists working in the clinic are another set of eyes and ears to hear what families really need, "Having HealthySteps embedded in the practices helps me reinforce information and connect with families around the big issues they face at that moment."



“Being part of the parent leadership network gives me an opportunity to connect with other parents for ideas and support.”

–Janina Holt,
GPLN member and parent of a 8-year-old

Conduct Rigorous Evaluation and Build Sustainability for System-building Work

When creating an innovative system of care, it's essential to document the process, examine the work closely, focus on the outcomes, and measure success. We use data throughout Ready Ready to inform decisions and map our impact on Guilford County as we seek population-level change.

For our evaluation work, we have partnered with The Duke Endowment and MDRC, which builds and applies evidence about changes in policy and practice that can improve the well-being of economically disadvantaged people. MDRC is committed to finding solutions to some of the most challenging problems facing the nation – from reducing poverty and bolstering self-sufficiency to improving public education and graduation rates.

- In 2021, MDRC and Ready Ready teams initiated a process to document implementation plans for each component of Ready Ready's work. These efforts will prepare Ready Ready and its partners for the evaluation process.



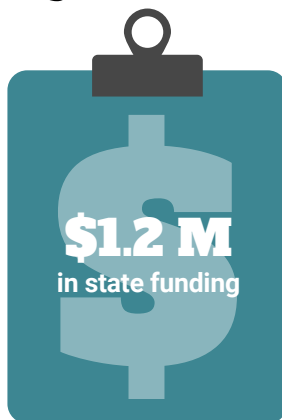
Build Public Will for Early Childhood Priorities

We need Guilford County families, the business community, elected officials, and citizens to understand that every child deserves a strong start. The foundation we provide for them shapes their future and the future of our communities. We have to get this right, and we need the whole community to support our efforts. We made some great strides in 2021.

- The North Carolina state budget includes \$1.2 million in funding for Ready Ready and our mission to build a connected, innovative system of care for Guilford County's youngest children and their families.
- Our Legislative Action Subcommittee worked with the High Point and Greensboro Chambers of Commerce to educate N.C. General Assembly members about the need for early childhood development in Guilford County.



By the numbers:



"Investing in early childhood shows the greatest returns in a community. Working with the Chambers of Commerce and our Guilford County delegation to educate other lawmakers on this legislation was so rewarding. The legislature's support for Ready Ready's mission to create population-level change will make a difference in thousands of children's lives."

– Ryan Blackledge, Legislative Action Subcommittee Chair

facebook

396% growth in reach

211% growth in engagement

twitter

763% increase in tweets
80% growth in impressions

Newsletter

24 monthly newsletters

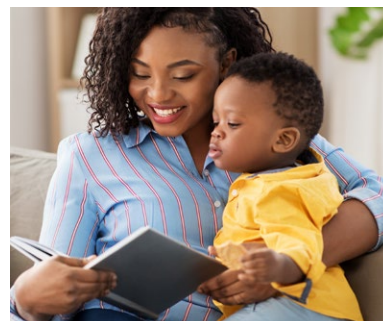
1558 subscribers to Ready Ready's monthly newsletter (4.4% increase)

123 subscribers to CEO Priorities Update newsletter (105% increase)

Sharing The Basics Guilford

The Basics Guilford campaign helps drive awareness of the importance of healthy child development. It's a strategy for whole communities to support vibrant learning and brain development among infants and toddlers. Best of all, it's fun, simple, and powerful. It starts at birth to help every family ensure that every child reaches their full potential.

The Basics are five science-based parenting and caregiving tenets that support children's social, emotional, and cognitive development starting at birth.



Here are some highlights from 2021:



guilfordbasics.org

- 630 people trained in The Basics Guilford, including Department of Social Services employees, service providers, and parents whose children attend Guilford County Schools.
- 25 employers have agreed to share information about The Basics with employees welcoming a child and taking parental leave.
- 200 Basics kits were created and given to Guilford County families.
- We partnered with Parents as Teachers Guilford to share information about The Basics and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library with families in the Housing Authority of the City of High Point and Greensboro Housing Authority.
- The Greensboro Children's Museum featured The Basics Guilford in its revamped Tot Spot when it reopened after the pandemic in May 2021.
- A weekly e-newsletter launched, offering simple tips for caregivers every Tuesday.
- Parent bloggers began offering short glimpses into how they use The Basics Guilford with their children in weekly posts at Everyday Basics.

By the numbers:



Spreading the Word

- 10,031 website visits by 8,335 people
- 60% growth in Facebook followers
- 50% growth in Instagram followers
- 417 subscribers to the weekly Tuesday Tips email



Training Sessions

- 630 people trained by Ready Ready
- 175 DSS employees trained in one session



Sharing Books

- 6,859 books distributed with QR codes that offer more information about The Basics.
- 200+ books gifted to children in 9 Wednesday "Books in the Garden" sessions.



Supplying Information

- 4,000 rack cards distributed
- 3,000 door hangers shared
- 1,500 bookmarks given

Creating a Basics-themed Learning Center in High Point

With a focus on The Basics Guilford, we created the Interactive Learning Center at J.C. Morgan Homes with the Housing Authority of the City of High Point. The rooms began as office space, but with the help of Ready Ready Literacy Coordinator Megan LeFaivre, they bloomed into colorful and cozy spaces.

One of the rooms is for families with children ages 0-3 with soft play mats, age-appropriate toys, and beanbag chairs. The second is designed for families with children ages 3-5 and offers comfortable children's furniture, books, and fun manipulatives.

"We are excited to open the Interactive Learning Center to families at J.C. Morgan Courts," said Angela McGill, HPHA's CEO. "Creating an environment to help families with young children is critical to their emotional, physical, and cognitive well-being. It supports our mission, and Ready Ready has been a dynamic partner!"



You can watch these rooms transform in a short video. Just scan the QR code below or visit <https://readyready.link/ILC>





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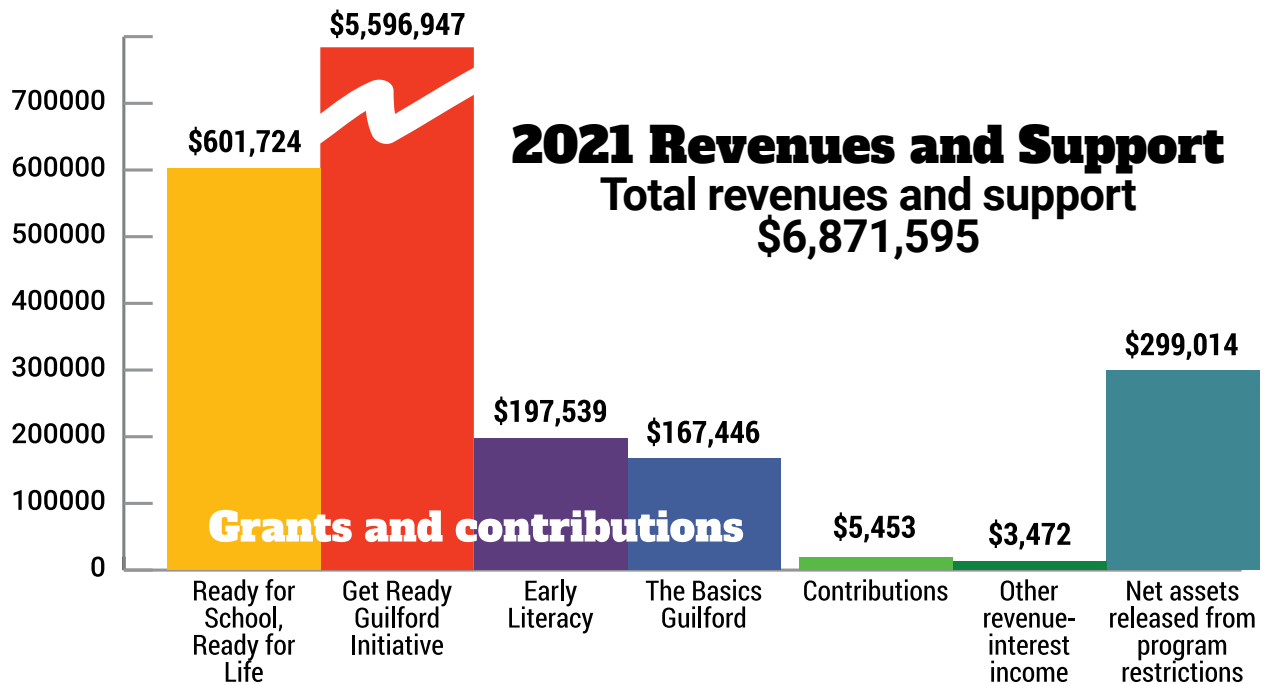
Mr. Jon Esser
Esser CPA, PLLC/English Road
Baptist Church
Managing Partner/Community
Minister

Ms. Angela McGill
High Point Housing Authority
Chief Executive Officer

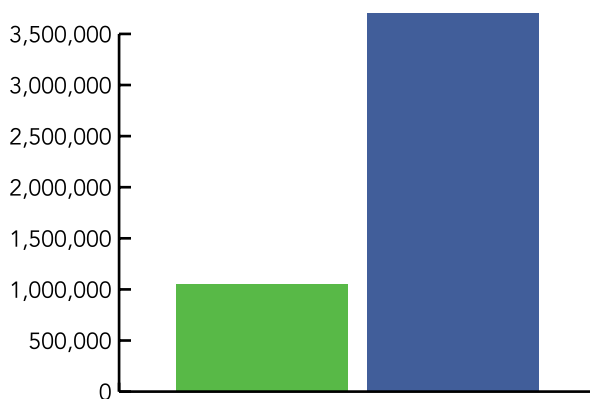
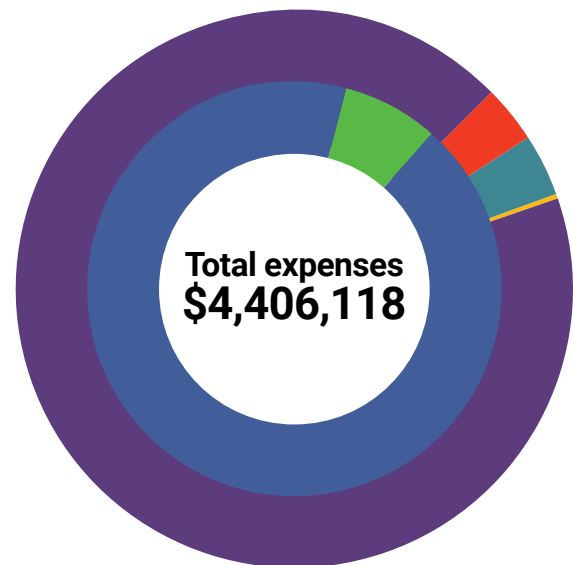
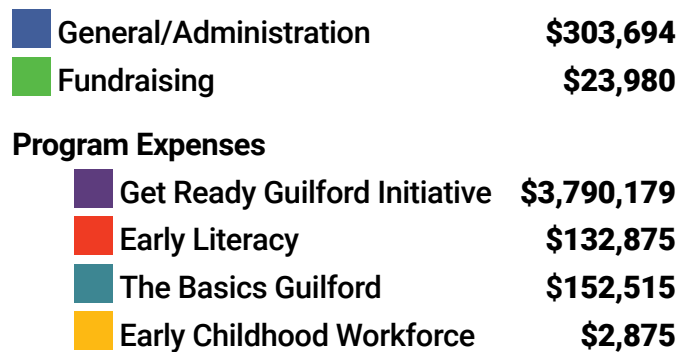
Ms. Cindy Watkins
Watkins Educational Consulting
Principal



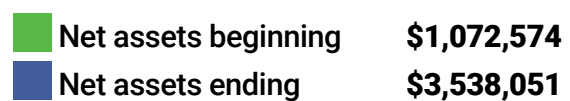
Financials



2021 Expenses



2021 Net Assets



Funders

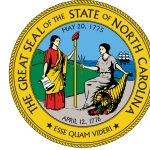
blue
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James B. Duke

THE DUKE ENDOWMENT

THE
Cemala
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THE FOUNDATION FOR A
HEALTHY HIGH POINT
Leadership for change

BB&T
Now Truist

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 **CONE**
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FOUNDATION
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2021 In Review

By supporting children in their earliest years, infants grow into healthy kids who are confident, empathetic, and ready for school and life — and our communities, workforce, and economy become stronger and more productive.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added additional hardship and stress for families during this already challenging time. As we look back on 2021, the partnership between the Duke Endowment and Ready for School, Ready for Life (Ready Ready) continued to address the needs of Guilford County's youngest children and their families despite the COVID-19 pandemic and its ripple effects.

Our multi-year strategy to improve and equalize opportunity for families in Guilford County focuses on reaching multiple generations through targeted investments in early childhood development. Supportive relationships and positive learning experiences begin at home but can also be provided through a range of effective programs and policies accessible to all. We believe this system of care is a community effort.

Creating the conditions for strong and resilient families to thrive requires elected officials, policymakers, and multiple systems coming together — health care, child care, and family support services — to ensure that all parents and caregivers get exactly what they need to nurture their children's healthy development from the very beginning.

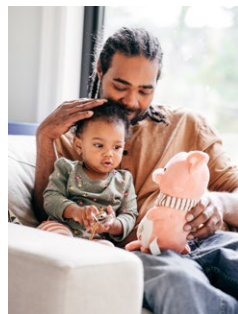
The intensity of the current collective efforts in Guilford County is unique and unprecedented. I applaud the coordination and commitment demonstrated by Ready Ready and its community partners and am hopeful that as we work together, the population level change we seek can be achieved.



Meka Sales
Director, Special Initiatives
The Duke Endowment

“Higher minimum wages, full-employment programs, early-childhood education: Those kinds of programs are, by design, universal, but by definition, because they are helping folks who are in the worst economic situations, are most likely to disproportionately impact and benefit African Americans. They also have the benefit of being sellable to a majority of the body politic.”

—Barack Obama



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