

A close-up portrait of a young child with curly brown hair, wearing a large blue bow. The child has bright blue eyes and is smiling, showing their teeth. They are wearing a white top with a blue leopard print collar. The background is softly blurred.

CHILDREN FIRST

ANNUAL REPORT 2013

OUR MISSION

Strengthening children and families by improving the quality of their lives through a comprehensive approach to development, education, health and well-being.

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DEAR FRIENDS,

Welcome to the 2013 edition of Children First's Annual Report.

People often ask what makes Children First special. The answer is simple. Because at Children First you have the ability to see your donations at work directly impacting the lives of underprivileged children and their families living in Sarasota County. Our motto is "helping children and families achieve their potential since 1961," and that is just what we have been doing for the past 53 years.

By providing proper nutrition, essential healthcare screenings and high-quality, professional early childhood education programs for kids ranging in age from birth to five years old, we help the over 600 children we serve develop the physical, social, emotional and intellectual well-being needed to enter Kindergarten on time and ready to succeed. Through work with our professionally trained Family Advocates, we also help their families by providing everything from parenting and educational development classes to financial planning, goal-setting and career development workshops and advice.

Inside, we will introduce you to a few of these remarkable children and their families. We are certain you will find their stories both compelling and inspirational. We are also confident that through them you will gain a better understanding of just what it is that makes Children First such a special part of our community.

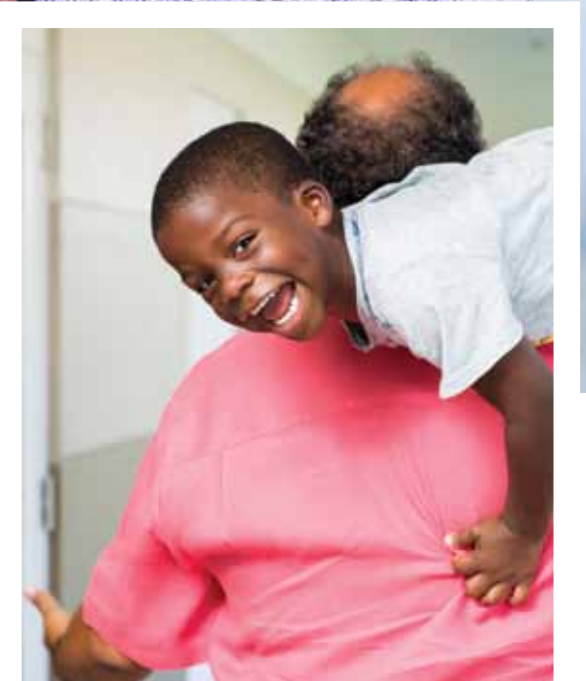
Thank you again for all that you do to support our children and families.

Sincerely,



Brock H. Leach,
Board Chair

Philip Tavill,
President & CEO



“For every \$1 invested in exceptional quality programs like Children First, society yields a benefit of \$1.80-\$17.07 in return.”

~ Rand Corporation

The Potential to Escape Hardship and Build a Brighter Future

Lubie was less than a year old when the catastrophic earthquake that struck Port-au-Prince, Haiti in 2010 changed his family's life forever. With their home destroyed and the country in tatters, Lubie and his mom, sister and two brothers came to the United States and gained legal refuge, while his dad stayed behind in Haiti attempting to pick up the pieces. Less than a year later, his dad passed away, leaving Lubie without a father and the family with few financial resources.

Fortunately for Lubie and his mom, Liliane, there is Children First. Through the help of their Family Advocate, Liliane was able to take classes on parenting, goal-setting and money management while enrolling Lubie and his then 4-year-old brother, Samsky, in preschool at Children First. The Family Advocate also helped her identify resources for job training, employment and housing.

Today, Liliane works as a housekeeper and maintains a small apartment, where she and the kids live. Lubie is now in his final year at Children First and loves reading, computers and playing with friends, while Samsky is excelling as a third grader.

Liliane says the family never would have made it without Children First. "I'm so thankful to Children First and to America," she says. "They have made things possible in our lives that I never thought could be. Whatever my kids become, I'm going to make sure they remember that it all started with Children First."



“Children First has made things possible in our lives that I never thought could happen.”

The Faces of Children First

As a supporter of Children First, you know that each year we serve hundreds of underprivileged children. But what exactly do those children look like? Consider the following.

Of the more than 600 children who attend our 13 locations each day, 40% are between the ages of birth to 3 years old, and 60% are between

the ages of three and five. These young boys and girls face challenges many of us could never imagine.

More than 90% come from families that earn less than the federal poverty level of \$19,790 per year for a family of three, and nearly 11% have some form of physical, emotional or developmental disability. Many come from homes where there is food insecurity. In

fact, Children First provides more than 50% of the daily nutrition received by the children in our classrooms.

In short, without Children First, not only would childcare and preschool be out of the question, but so would the nutrition, healthcare screenings and therapy these children need in order to grow up strong and healthy.

But there is hope. According to Rand Corporation, for every \$1 invested in exceptional quality programs like Children First, society yields a benefit of \$1.80 to \$17.07 in return. In other words, you can help us make a difference not only in our children's lives today but in our society's future as well.

Small Investment, Big Return

Making a huge impact in the lives of our children costs less than you think.

- \$1,000 provides 10 children with breakfast, lunch and a healthy snack each school day.
- \$2,500 provides baby formula for 8 little ones for an entire school year.
- \$5,000 provides 30 children with milk for an entire school year.
- \$10,000 provides a full year of educational programming, nutritional support, healthcare assessments and family support services.

Won't you help today?

www.childrenfirst.net or 941.953.3877

The Potential for Hope when Everything Seems Lost

Isabella is just two years old. Yet, she and her mom, Aisha, have experienced hardships and challenges that few adults ever will. That is because Isabella's mom was just 15 years old and a star student at North Port High School when her world turned upside down.

Fortunately for Isabella and Aisha, Children First partners with North Port and Riverview High Schools on their Cyesis programs. Through the programs, pregnant teens and young moms work with a Children First Family Advocate, as well as school and community-based mentors, to receive childcare and healthcare screenings, to develop parenting skills, and to graduate on time.

Thanks to such help, Aisha graduated with a 3.0 G.P.A. and this fall entered college, where she plans to pursue a dual major in psychology and social work.

But Isabella and Aisha's story doesn't end there. Inspired by Children First and determined to give back, Aisha joined our Parent Policy Council — eventually becoming its youngest chair ever. She also continues to work with local teens, acting as a kindred spirit and guide for girls who suddenly are forced to confront decisions none of them anticipated.

"Everything I have experienced through Children First has been absolutely incredible," Aisha says. "They are like a family to me and have helped me make it through some really tough times. Most of all, they have provided a loving and nurturing place for Isabella to grow and learn. I can never repay them for that. My message to everyone reading this is, 'Head Start works!'"

"There is so much Isabella and I can still achieve. I refuse to be a statistic."



Early Head Start

Serving infants and toddlers from birth to 3 years of age, our Early Head Start program promotes healthy prenatal outcomes, strengthens family functioning and nurtures the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of the children and families we serve. Our program begins with comprehensive health screenings that assess each child's

medical, dental, developmental and emotional needs. We then assign a Family Advocate who works with the parents to evaluate needs, establish personal goals, and help support and promote a secure and nurturing environment for the children. We also assist parents in improving their parenting skills, gaining career training and other forms of personal advancement.

Head Start

Building on the groundwork established through our Early Head Start initiatives, Children First's Head Start program focuses on the comprehensive needs of children between the ages of 3 to 5 years old. Through highly-trained teachers, small classes and individualized attention, we prepare young learners to be cognitively, socially and emotionally ready to succeed

in Kindergarten and beyond. The majority of teachers in our Head Start classrooms have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, and all of their assistants hold either a Child Development Associate's credential or associate's degree in Early Childhood Education. Both exceed the standards established by the National Head Start Association.



A National Program of Excellence

Children First was recently named a "Program of Excellence" by the National Head Start Association, one of only ten programs nationwide to earn such distinction.

This marked the third consecutive time Children First has been honored by the National Head Start Association with this gold standard award for programming and service excellence.

The Potential to See Beyond a Disability

Picture a successful family, and you are likely to envision one that looks like that of Bridgette and Bill and their four daughters — Camryn (8), Alyssa (5), Abby (3) and Chloe (2). Both parents have college degrees, and dad is employed full-time by the City of North Port. Mom is busy as well, working toward a master’s degree in mental health counseling while holding down a full-time job.

Yet, what that picture wouldn’t tell you is the struggle the family faced when they discovered that Alyssa suffered from a speech impairment that threatened her social and emotional development. Without treatment, it was doubtful she would be able to enter Kindergarten on time and on track with her peers.

“I was afraid I would have to give up school and work in order for Alyssa to get the therapy she needed, but we couldn’t afford that,” says Bridgette. “Fortunately, the school district put us in touch with Children

First, and they have just been incredible.”

Thanks to Children First’s partnerships with local medical and social service providers, Alyssa worked with a speech therapist two days a week while at Children First. She also received high quality, age-appropriate instruction from our trained teachers and staff and attended summer school so that she would retain what she had learned throughout the year.

As a result, Alyssa entered Kindergarten this fall brimming with confidence. “Alyssa used to be so shy and reserved,” says her mom. “But, thanks to Children First, she really came out of her shell and now expresses herself with great independence. We are so proud of her, and so grateful to Children First.”

Alyssa’s little sisters, Abby and Chloe, joined the family legacy and are now following in their big sister’s footsteps at Children First. We can’t wait to tell their stories in the years ahead.

“I was afraid I would have to give up work so Alyssa could get the therapy she needed, but we couldn’t afford that.”

Nutrition & Health

Young minds and bodies need a well-balanced diet and good health in order to grow. Unfortunately for many of the children we serve, these essential building blocks are not always available at home.

When you give to Children First, you help ensure that each child receives a delicious, healthy breakfast and lunch, plus a

nutritious afternoon snack, each day. To put that into perspective, your gift helps provide more than 50% of the weekly nutritional needs for our children.

Through Children First’s partnerships and the generosity of volunteers from the local healthcare community, your gift also provides each child with a complete health screening for medical, dental,

developmental and emotional well-being. If follow up is needed, we assist with referrals and finding services. Like you, we understand that no child can succeed if he or she is hurting, either physically, emotionally or developmentally.

Family Advocates

Every child and his or her family who is enrolled at Children First is assigned a professionally trained

Family Advocate who serves as the foundation of their support during their time in our program. These Advocates help families assess their needs and create action plans with educational, occupational and financial goals. They also assist families with referrals for food, clothing, housing, employment, education, healthcare and other needs. By helping develop the resources and strategies needed to

be successful, our Family Advocates create a pathway of independence for each of the over 600 children and families we serve each year.

11%

OF THE CHILDREN WE SERVE
HAVE DISABILITIES.



The Potential to Realize a Father's Dream

Angel is only 5, but already his father, Julian, dreams of a better life for him than he had while growing up. Not in the way you might expect. Julian's dreams for his son don't involve fancy cars or expensive houses, just a desire for Angel, who is now in his second year at Children First, to be given a chance to succeed and to earn respect.

"My dream for him is to respect people so that they respect him back," Julian says. "I don't care if he is rich or poor. I just want him to be himself, to be a good person, and to remember the importance of giving back."

Respect, hard work and giving back are things Angel's dad knows well. A native of Mexico, he immigrated to the U.S. as a teenager and earned his green card while working 12 hour days,

7 days a week, washing dishes. Since their son's birth, Julian and Angel's mother, Marcella, have continued to work long hours, but Julian has also returned to school to complete his GED, because he wants to show his son that education is important.

Yet, what remains even more important to him is providing for Angel's future and his determination to give back to Children First. "Every day, I thank God for Children First," Julian says. "Angel has learned things here that we just couldn't teach him at home. We are so proud of him. And because Children First has given so much to us, I'm happy to give back in any way I can."

In recognition for his volunteer service and his mentorship of other dads, Julian was recently named Children First's *Father of the Year*.

"Because Children First has given so much to us, I'm happy to give back in any way I can."



Families First Institute

Sometimes the difference between success and failure can be as simple as knowing the right way to talk with your child or the best way to write a resume. Through our Families First Institute, Children First offers free classes designed to teach adults a wide range of skills to help them with everything from parenting skills, goal-setting, financial planning and

career readiness. The following are examples of some of our regularly offered classes:

- Nurturing Dads Initiative
- Career Readiness for Women
- Second Time Around: Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
- Money Smart
- Five Essential Keys to Better Behavior
- Positive Solutions for Families

Nurturing Dads

Our Nurturing Dads Initiative helps dads of all kinds gain the skills, attitudes and communication tools needed to form a strong, lasting emotional bond with their children. Through the program, dads also learn to be more self-aware and to nurture and nourish their own emotional needs in order to be the best parent possible. Since its founding in 1999, more than 1,800

dads have graduated from the program.

Career Readiness for Women

It is hard to imagine anything more important on the road to self-sufficiency than having a job that provides the income needed to support you and your family. Yet, for many of the women and families we serve, this basic need can be difficult to come by. Our Career

Readiness for Women program provides assistance in everything from resume writing and interview skills to time management and how to dress for success. Working with community partners, we also help coordinate job skill training and educational assistance for women to help them finish a degree or acquire knowledge that will make them more marketable.

THERE HAVE BEEN OVER

1,800

GRADUATES FROM CHILDREN FIRST'S NURTURING DADS INITIATIVE.

The Potential to Change Young Lives through Giving

Visit Children First on any given day, and you are likely to see “Ms. Jean,” as the children call her, reading, laughing and playing with the kids. No, she is not a teacher, but the love, attention and guidance she provides our children are just as important.

As a mother and grandmother, Jean embodies the spirit of the volunteers and donors who make Children First so special. She and her husband, Jeff, were introduced to Children First nearly seven years ago and immediately knew it was the right fit for them.

“So many of the children here need that little bit of extra time and attention,” she says. “Whether it is reading and writing, socializing or even just being there to give a hug on a bad day, I’m happy to do it. And, at the end of the year, I am always amazed by how much they have grown and blossomed.”

But the rewards of volunteering at Children First flow in both directions, as Jean discovered a couple of years ago when Jeff passed away. Initially heartbroken, she soon realized that the friendly smiles and warm hugs she shared with the children helped her cope with her own hard times as well.

To show her appreciation, she rallied friends and family, and gained corporate support from Jeff’s former employer, Sun Hydraulics, to greatly improve a playground at Children First in his honor. Now, every time she hears the children laughing and playing, she thinks of Jeff.

“Sometimes you give to a cause and you’re not sure whether your money really makes a difference,” she says. “But that’s not the case with Children First. Here, you see your donations making a dramatic impact in young children’s lives every day.”

“Your donations make a dramatic impact in young children’s lives every day.”



Change a Child’s Life. Give Today!

What if you knew that for just a small amount of money you could change the life of a child, and his or her family, living in poverty forever? At Children First, that is exactly what we have been doing since 1961. With 13 sites located throughout Sarasota County, we provide early childhood education, nutrition and healthcare services to

more than 600 low-income children each year. Children who desperately need your support.

But when you give to Children First, you do even more than simply help children. You help their families as well. Through individualized programs, personal mentoring and a wide array of support services, Children First works with families to help them gain the parenting,

financial planning and career readiness skills required for success, both at home and in the workplace.

How Can You Help?

There are so many ways you can make a difference in the lives of the children and families we serve. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Tour one of our 13 sites
- Establish a legacy fund
- Make a cash donation

- Invite a friend to become a donor
- Attend our events - and bring your friends!
- Volunteer in a classroom
- Spread the word as a Children First Ambassador

Our Guarantee to You

When you give to Children First, you benefit from knowing that your money is being spent just as you intended — helping children and

families in need. More than 85% of the funds we receive go directly toward programming, a figure that far exceeds federal government guidelines and industry standards for non-profits. Our high percentage of funds spent directly on exceptional quality programming is just one of the reasons Children First has been named a *Program of Excellence* three times by the National Head Start Association.

If you are already part of our donor community, thank you! If you would like to find out more about how you can help improve the life of a child in our community, contact us today at (941) 953-3877 or email info@childrenfirst.net.

Children First 2013 Donor List

\$50,000 +

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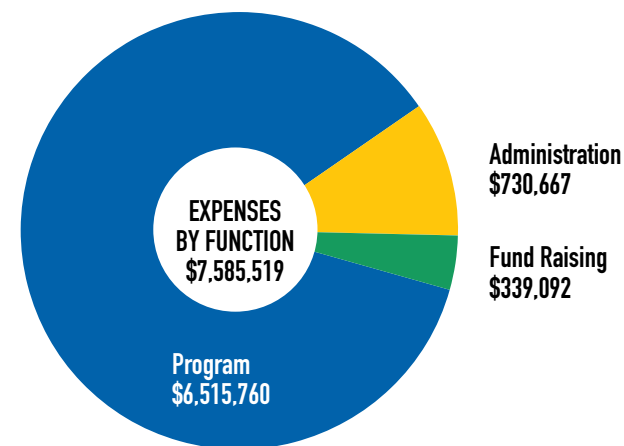
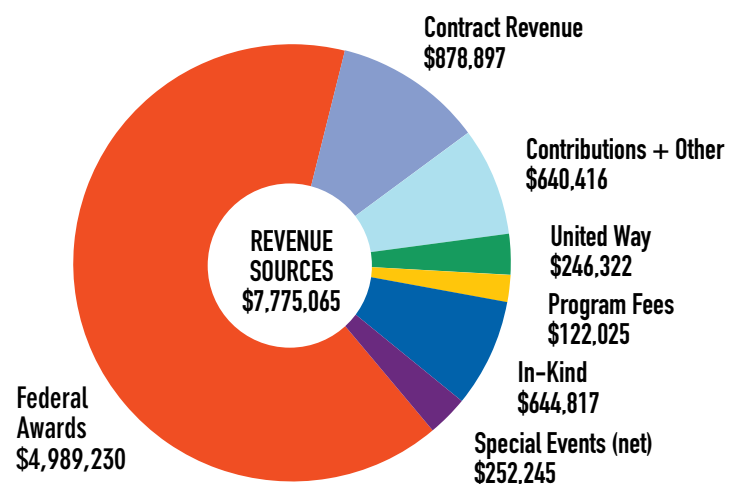
List includes those who donated between January 2013 - December 2013.

Thank You!

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGES TO NET ASSETS

Year Ended December 31, 2013

	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED	TOTAL
REVENUE AND OTHER SUPPORT				
Federal grant revenue	\$4,989,230	-	-	4,989,230
Contract revenue	878,897	-	-	878,897
Contributions & other	629,841	-	10,575	640,416
United Way allocations	121,368	124,954	-	246,322
Program fees	122,025	-	-	122,025
In-kind contributions	644,817	-	-	644,817
Special Events - net of direct expenses of \$118,827 and \$83,469	252,245	-	-	252,245
Interest income including gains from investments	54	-	1,059	1,113
Net assets released from restrictions:				
Expiration of time/use restrictions	\$123,548	(\$123,458)	(90)	-
Total revenues, gains & other support	7,762,025	1,496	11,544	7,775,065
EXPENSES				
PROGRAM SERVICES				
Head Start	2,863,572	-	-	2,863,572
Early Head Start	2,560,740	-	-	2,560,740
Early Childhood Education	988,620	-	-	988,620
Families First Institute	56,977	-	-	56,977
Restricted Grants	45,851	-	-	45,851
SUPPORTING SERVICES				
Management & general	730,667	-	-	730,667
Fundraising	339,092	-	-	339,092
Total expenses	7,585,519	-	-	7,585,519
Change in net assets before other changes	176,506	1,496	11,544	189,546
Change in net assets	176,506	1,496	11,544	189,546
Net assets at beginning of year	4,193,538	133,848	24,277	4,351,663
Net assets at end of year	\$4,370,044	135,344	35,821	\$4,541,209



TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN SERVED IN 2013-2014

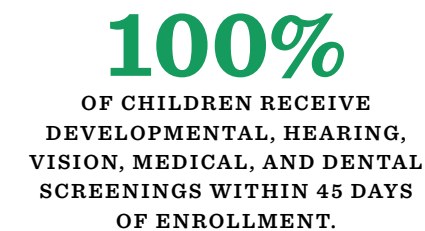
Children First program sites are at full enrollment, serving families who meet the eligibility requirements for Head Start and other programs. Eligibility is based on families living below the federal poverty level or other guidelines which are based on income and family size. Each family is then prioritized for enrollment based on individual needs.



AVERAGE MONTHLY ENROLLMENT OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN SERVED



HEALTH & DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS



CHILDREN FIRST RANKS IN THE **TOP 1%** OF ALL HEAD START PROGRAMS NATIONWIDE.

FOR EVERY DOLLAR RAISED THERE IS A **\$4** MATCH.

CHILDREN FIRST PROVIDES OVER **50%** OF OUR CHILDREN'S WEEKLY NUTRITIONAL NEEDS.

PREPARING CHILDREN FOR KINDERGARTEN

Children First's 2013-14 School Readiness Goals align with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework, Florida's Early Learning and Developmental Standards, and the Creative Curriculum GOLD assessment system's Objectives for Development and Learning.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY



INFANTS & TODDLERS

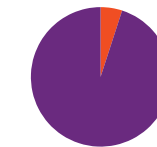
93% meet or exceed expectations



PRESCHOOLERS

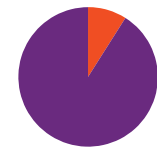
92% meet or exceed expectations

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL



INFANTS & TODDLERS

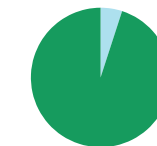
95% meet or exceed expectations



PRESCHOOLERS

91% meet or exceed expectations

APPROACHES TO LEARNING



INFANTS & TODDLERS

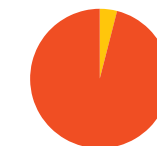
95% meet or exceed expectations



PRESCHOOLERS

93% meet or exceed expectations

COGNITION & GENERAL KNOWLEDGE



INFANTS & TODDLERS

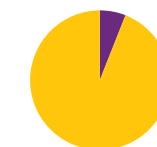
96% meet or exceed expectations



PRESCHOOLERS

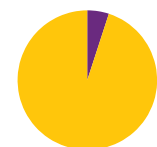
93% meet or exceed expectations

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT



INFANTS & TODDLERS

94% meet or exceed expectations



PRESCHOOLERS

95% meet or exceed expectations

Based on end-of-year assessments

CHILDREN

1723 N. Orange Ave
Sarasota, FL 34234



HEAD START



NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MANASOTA, FL
PERMIT #307

Children First has multiple locations throughout Sarasota County, giving us the advantage of being easily accessible to children and families in need.

Children First Main Campus

1723 N. Orange Ave
Sarasota, FL 34234

Alta Vista Elementary

1050 S. Euclid Ave
Sarasota, FL 34237

Dalbeck EHS Center

2036 Oak St
Sarasota, FL 34237

Emma E. Booker Elementary

2350 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Sarasota, FL 34234

Helen Payne Annex

1742 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Sarasota, FL 34234

Helen Payne Center

1729 33rd St
Sarasota, FL 34234

North Port Campus

6926 Children Way
North Port, FL 34287

R.O.S.S. Center

1912 N. Orange Ave
Sarasota, FL 34234

Venice Main Campus

800 Gulf Coast Blvd
Venice, FL 34285

CHILDCARE COMMUNITY PARTNERS

School Board of Sarasota County

Cyesis – Sarasota
Cyesis – North Port

Catholic Charities

St. Martha's Early Learning Center
Our Mother's House

UPCOMING EVENTS

Flip Flops & Fashion

Luncheon
Thursday, October 30, 2014
11:30 am–1:00 pm
Sharky's on the Pier

Rockin' Lobster

Lobster Boil and Beach Party
Saturday, November 1, 2014
6:30 pm
Sharky's on the Pier

Fairytale Ball

Annual Gala Celebration
Saturday, April 25, 2015
6:30 pm
Michael's on East

www.childrenfirst.net

941.953.3877

