

CHILDREN FIRST

ANNUAL REPORT 2015



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OUR MISSION

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

Welcome!

During the past year, Children First experienced many milestones in its mission to serve infants, toddlers and young children, as well as their families.



We recognized exceptionally generous and compassionate supporters by naming our main campus the “Dr. Elaine Marieb Early Learning Center” and within it, the “Gerri Aaron Educational Wing.” This year also marked the 20th anniversary of Philip’s leadership as President and CEO of Children First.

Perhaps most noticeably, we launched the Raise Your Hand campaign, with a goal of raising \$3.8 million to enhance programs for local children and families. Thanks to early pledges, families can now receive on-site emotional and behavioral support from an experienced psychotherapist. More support is needed to complete the campaign, which also aims to reduce the number of families currently on the waiting list, among other goals.

Of course, the key accomplishment at Children First was the successful continuation of our mission to serve the community’s most vulnerable children, ages birth to 5 years old, and their families.

We could have accomplished none of this, however, were it not for the hundreds of generous individuals and partners who make our mission possible each and every day.

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

Lacy Ray, Jr.
Board Chair

Philip Tavill
President & CEO



LEADING THE WAY

A lot has changed at Children First over the past 20 years, but through it all there has been one constant. Our leader at the helm, Philip Tavill.

Prior to Philip's arrival in 1996, Children First (then named Sarasota Day Nursery) served fewer than 180 preschoolers, ages 3-5 years old, at 6 sites located within the city of Sarasota.

Today, those numbers have grown to encompass a broad range of services for more than 600 children and their families annually at 13 different locations in Sarasota County, covering the region from north to

south and incorporating the cities of Sarasota, North Port and Venice.

Services have been expanded to include work with pregnant mothers, care for infants and toddlers under 3 years of age, and developmental screenings to aid in the identification of physical or emotional issues that could hinder learning.

With a team of trained Family Advocates, teachers and volunteers,

Children First now also offers its Families First Institute, which includes a host of free parenting, personal and career development, and budgeting classes designed to help parents and caregivers be their best.

As a result of its growth and continued quality over the years, Children First is now in the top 1% of programs of its kind in the nation. Having demonstrated excellence

in program management, service performance, and positive outcomes for at-risk children, ages birth to 5 years old, and their families, Children First has been recognized as a Program of Excellence by the National Head Start Association since 2006.

We look forward to many more accomplishments in the next 20 years and beyond!

“Children First is an invaluable asset. If someone told me ten years ago that my kids would be honors students in school and that I would be on my way to a successful career, I wouldn’t have believed them.”

—KELLI, CHILDREN FIRST PARENT



READY FOR KINDERGARTEN

Children and Parents Get a Head Start on Life

With sparkling eyes and an infectious smile, 5-year-old Ashton is well-prepared for Kindergarten, having graduated from Children First this past spring. “Children First was our village,” says Tonya with sons Ashton and Braydon, who is now in second grade. Both boys attended Children First’s infant and preschool programs. “When we arrived here, we had nothing. But they helped us with everything from diapers and formula to making sure Ashton received therapy for a developmental health issue. And the teachers were just incredible.”



At right, Tonya, Ashton and Braydon.

Thrilled at the high quality education her boys received, Tonya also credits the Family Advocates at Children First with helping her secure a full-time job as a receptionist at a local law firm, find an apartment and buy the family's first car. "I can honestly say that none of this would have been possible without Children First."

Tonya's story is not unique.

At 13 locations throughout Sarasota County, approximately 600 local children and their families benefit from Children First programs.

Kindergarten readiness is a key factor in future academic success. The Early Head Start and Head Start programs are designed to help children gain the knowledge and social skills they need in order to succeed in school and beyond. With over 90% of enrolled children coming from disadvantaged families living at or below the federal poverty level, a strong academic start is especially critical.

Taking advanced courses and at the top of his class, 12-year-old Sonny is entering 7th grade at Brookside Middle School on the right path. His sister, Tyrionna, and younger brothers, Tyron and Tyree, are starting the same way at Philippi Shores IB World School.

Given the challenges the family faced just a few short years ago, it is a dream that their mother, Kelli, says is almost impossible to believe. Yet, it is the kind of story that Children First makes possible each year for hundreds of children from low-income families throughout Sarasota County.

"My mom went to prison when I was just 15 years old, so I had to grow up fast. In some ways, a little too fast," says Kelli, who became pregnant with Sonny when she was still in high school and then gave birth to Tyrionna, Tyron and Tyree shortly thereafter. "But through it all, I was determined never to give up and to make sure that my kids would have a better life than I did when I was their age."

Fortunately for Kelli, Children First partners with teen parent programs at local high schools and Our Mother's House for single mothers, including those who have suffered from abusive relationships.

Through programs like these and others offered by Children First, Kelli graduated high school, found a job and an apartment, and is currently working toward her associate's degree in early childhood education.

In addition to Kelli's personal progress, her children were able to learn, grow and flourish, thanks to the care and education they received while at Children First.



From left to right, Tyron, Tyrionna, Tyree, Kelli and Sonny.

Services Provided for Children

- **Early Head Start & Head Start**
- **Infant and Toddler Care**
- **Early Childhood Education**
- **Nutrition**
- **Healthcare Screenings** (In the 2015–16 school year, 100% of enrolled children received medical exams, 100% of Early Head Start students were up to date on preventative dental care, and 62% of Head Start students received dental exams.)
- **Emotional & Behavioral Support**
- **Elaine's Kids Program** (for children most at-risk of summer learning loss)
- **Summer Programs**

Early Head Start & Head Start

With the belief that every child deserves the best chance for success, these programs serve the most vulnerable families in our area. Early Head Start provides support for infants, toddlers up to 3 years of age, and expectant mothers who are low-income or at-risk. Dedicated Family Advocates encourage proper prenatal care and offer guidance after the child's birth. Once enrolled, each child is cared for and nurtured with the highest early educational standards. In Head Start, at-risk children ages 3 to 5 are prepared for Kindergarten so they can perform at the same level as their average-income peers. Family Advocates continue to motivate families to reach for their dreams and build better lives.

Program of Excellence

Children First holds the distinction of being a Head Start "Program of Excellence." This designation is awarded to Head Start organizations that consistently demonstrate excellence in program management and service performance, and that continually support the achievement of robust outcomes for at-risk children birth to 5 years old, pregnant women, families, and their communities. With fewer than ten total Programs of Excellence in the nation, Children First is in the top 1%.



The last thing Maria and Jon expected in retirement was to become caregivers for their infant granddaughter, Valentina. But when their daughter ran into health problems shortly after Valentina's birth, the couple knew they had no other choice. Their granddaughter needed a loving home, and they were her family.

"At first, I felt like a ship without a rudder," says Maria. "So much had changed since we raised our children. But once we found Children First, amazing things started to happen. We discovered a community that was there not only to help our granddaughter, but to support us as well."

Through Children First, Valentina received help for developmental and minor physical issues, which if left untreated might have delayed her ability to learn how to read and write. She also learned critical social skills through working and playing with other kids, something her grandparents simply couldn't replicate at home.

But the benefits to the family extended far beyond childhood services. Through Children First's Families First Institute, Maria and Jon attended classes like 5 Keys to Better Behavior, Positive Solutions for

READY FOR **Life**

Helping Parents and Caregivers Every Step of the Way

Families and Nurturing Dads. They also discovered our Kinship Care Support Group, designed specifically for grandparents raising grandchildren.

Most importantly, they discovered that they were not alone. "We are so blessed to have found Children First," says Maria.





“We could have gone to the most expensive preschool in the area and not had the same quality education that Valentina is receiving. But even more than that, we’ve become part of a family. And there is nothing more special than that.”

—MARIA, CHILDREN FIRST GRANDPARENT

The true meaning of family.

Children First welcomes families of all kinds—from the traditional two-parent households to single parents, to grandparents raising their grandchildren, and more. Life rarely follows a predictable path, so we learn to adjust.

No matter what the family structure may be, each child deserves to learn and grow in a safe, loving environment. Children First goes even further, providing Family Advocates to offer caregivers the support, education and encouragement they need to achieve their goals and raise healthy, happy children. Similarly, the Families First Institute provides opportunities for developing or expanding skills essential for parenting and for life.

Such services offer a lifeline of hope for families in need, says Marcia, whose daughter Kayann started at Children First when she was 3 and graduated this spring.

“Before we discovered Children First, our lives were really hard,” says Marcia. “My husband was out of work, and I couldn’t keep a steady job because I was home with Kayann. It was really a struggle.”

Policy Council

Families can further their involvement in Children First by serving on the Policy Council. This group is comprised of parents or guardians of currently enrolled children and representatives of the community. They meet regularly, acting as the parents’ voice in making major decisions for the program.

“I stayed home to take care of Kayann. But I knew couldn’t teach her all the skills she needed to learn, and she didn’t have any other kids to play with. She was really missing out.”

—MARCIA, CHILDREN FIRST PARENT

Working with their Family Advocate, though, Marcia and her husband, Verchell, began to build a better life. Verchell found work and is now employed full-time at a local automotive dealership. And because Kayann was able to attend Children First throughout the day and during school breaks as part of our extended hours for working families, Marcia also began working. She is currently employed full-time as a private caregiver and is completing course work toward her degree as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA).

Kayann benefitted as well. Formerly shy and reserved around other kids, she now has lots of friends and loves to read. Thanks to the daily nutrition she received at Children First, she is now also stronger and healthier, and a good eater, says her mom.

“All of the staff and teachers at Children First are just wonderful,” says Marcia. “They have helped us in so many ways, I can’t even begin to explain them all. We thank them from the bottom of our hearts.”

Services Provided for Families

- **Family Advocacy**
- **Families First Institute**
 - **Nurturing Dads**
 - **Career Readiness for Women**
- **Positive Solutions for Families**
(taught in English and Spanish)
- **Calendar Based Budgeting**
- **5 Keys to Better Behavior**
- **Kinship Care Support Groups**

Family Advocates

Providing a community of support for parents and caregivers of all ages is just one of the services Children First offers for families. Our professionally trained Family Advocates are also there to help with such essentials as referrals for clothing, housing and food assistance; goal-setting, budgeting and household management; and advice and guidance for career and educational development.

Families First Institute

The Families First Institute provides classes, training and support to families of the children we serve, as well as those in the community. We encourage them to make productive lifestyle choices so they can be positive role models and enhance family well-being. This includes helping parents identify and attain goals such as training, continuing education and employment. Our FFI team is committed to helping families become self-sufficient, successful, and strong.



169,514

NUTRITIOUS BREAKFASTS,
LUNCHES AND SNACKS
WERE PROVIDED IN 2015.





READY TO Change Lives

Raising their Hands for Children First

As is the case with every Children First donor, philanthropist Gerri Aaron has plenty of options when it comes to charitable organizations seeking her support. Yet, like so many others, Gerri chooses Children First.

Why? Because every day, Children First helps hundreds of local children and families in need gain the resources and tools it takes to escape poverty and achieve their full potential.

“The amount of time and love shared by everyone in this organization is just phenomenal. That’s why I give to Children First,” says Gerri.

“There is nothing more important or more meaningful than the work Children First is doing for young children and families living in our community.”

—GERRI AARON

It is an unfortunate fact that the number of children and families in Sarasota County currently living below the federal poverty level of \$20,160 for a family of 3 continues to grow. And as their numbers increase, so do the challenges they face.

But there is hope. In response to these growing needs, Children First recently launched the Raise Your Hand campaign, with 4 attainable goals:

1 Extend Emotional and Behavioral Support
Provides support for families in the critical area of emotional and behavioral health, by adding an on-site mental health professional

2 Increase Individualized Classroom Attention
Adds a third teacher to each preschool classroom, ensuring frequent opportunities for one-on-one teaching and enhanced learning experiences

3 Intensify Family Advocacy Services
Increases the number of Family Advocates available for continued education and support

4 Serve More Children and Families in Need
Reduces the number of children currently on the waitlist for services—approximately 300 on average

Through this initiative, hundreds of supporters, like Gerri Aaron, are stepping up to help us reach even more young children and their families who suffer from the debilitating effects of poverty.

Won't you join us and Raise Your Hand for Children First? Together, we truly can change lives!

Find out more by visiting us online at childrenfirst.net or by calling Vice President of Development Carol Butera at 941.953.3877 x 115.



Raise Your Hand

THE CAMPAIGN FOR
CHILDREN FIRST

RAISE YOUR HAND SUPPORTERS

\$1,000,000+

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Educated Kids: Well Rested, Well Fed, & Well Read
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Gifts between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2015

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Wine for Humanity
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Ms. Michelle Young
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Diocese of Venice, Inc.
City of Sarasota
First Presbyterian Church
Sarasota Housing Authority
The School Board of Sarasota
County, Florida
Suncoast Charities For Children, Inc.
Suncoast Foundation for
Handicapped Children, Inc.

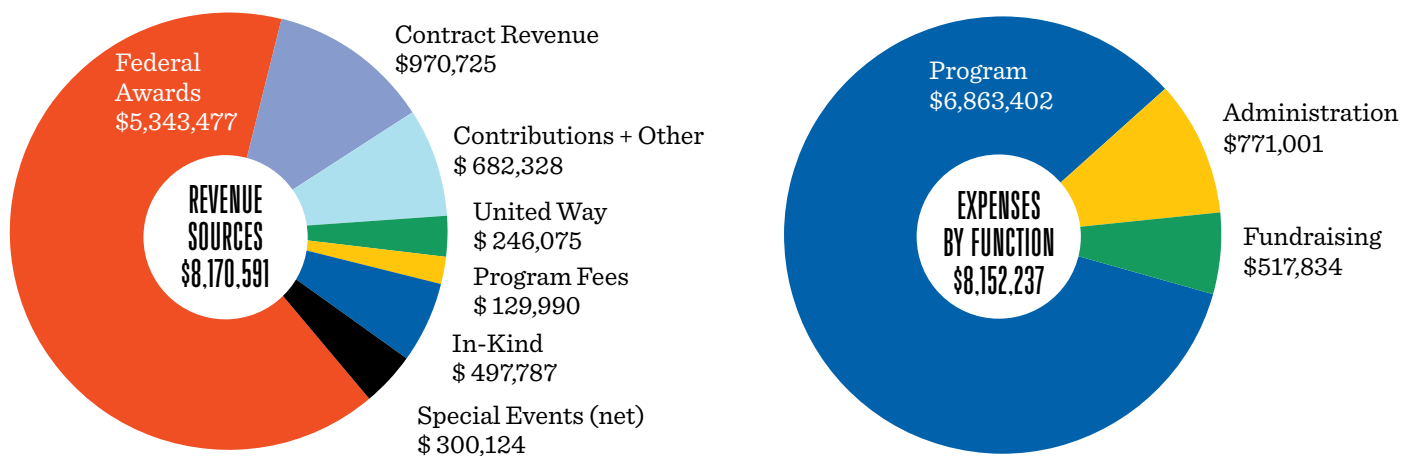
**Deceased
**Raise Your Hand Supporters
Gifts between January 1, 2015 and
December 31, 2015*

Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets

Year Ended December 31, 2015

	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED	TOTAL
REVENUE AND OTHER SUPPORT				
Federal grant revenue	\$5,343,477	-	-	\$5,343,477
Contract revenue	970,725	-	-	970,725
Contributions and other	668,160	-	14,168	682,328
United Way allocations	121,121	124,954	-	246,075
Program fees	129,990	-	-	129,990
In-kind contributions	497,787	-	-	497,787
Special events — net of direct expenses of \$140,456 and \$119,165	300,124	-	-	300,124
Interest income including gains from investments	85	-	-	85
Net assets released from restrictions:				
Expiration of time/use restrictions	\$ 129,658	(\$129,658)	-	-
Total revenue and other support	8,161,127	(4,704)	14,168	8,170,591
EXPENSES				
PROGRAM SERVICES				
Head Start	2,889,901	-	-	2,889,901
Early Head Start	2,665,397	-	-	2,665,397
Early Childhood Education	1,213,892	-	-	1,213,892
Families First Initiative	68,080	-	-	68,080
Other restricted grants	26,132	-	-	26,132
SUPPORTING SERVICES				
Management and general	771,001	-	-	771,001
Fundraising	517,834	-	-	517,834
Total program and supporting services	8,152,237	-	-	8,152,237
Change in net assets before other changes	8,890	(4,704)	14,168	18,354
Other changes				
Gain on disposal of assets	1,900	-	-	1,900
Change in net assets	10,790	(4,704)	14,168	20,254
Net assets at beginning of year	4,764,8624	132,296	66,547	4,963,705
Net assets at end of year	\$4,775,652	\$127,592	\$80,715	\$4,983,959

Children First's 2015 Independent Financial Audit had no findings, adjustments or management letter.



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.

EARLY HEAD START
299

HEAD START
365

AVERAGE MONTHLY ENROLLMENT OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN SERVED

EARLY HEAD START
100%

HEAD START
100%

PERCENTAGE OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN SERVED*

EARLY HEAD START
56%

HEAD START
89%

**reflects children on a waiting list for enrollment*

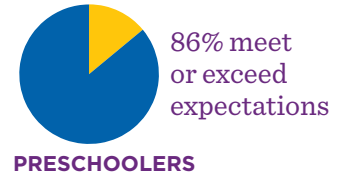
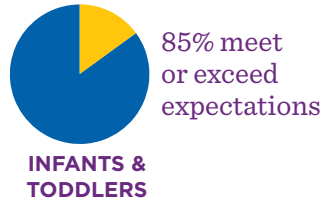
CHILDREN FIRST RANKS IN THE
TOP 1%
OF ALL HEAD START PROGRAMS
NATIONWIDE.

72%
OF PARENTS ARE
WORKING OR
ATTENDING SCHOOL

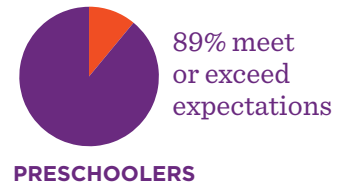
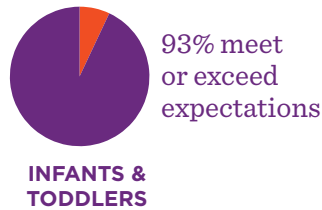
94%
OF FAMILIES
ATTENDED AT LEAST
ONE SCHOOL ACTIVITY

Children First's 2015-16 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.

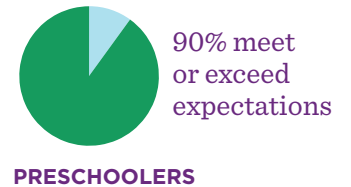
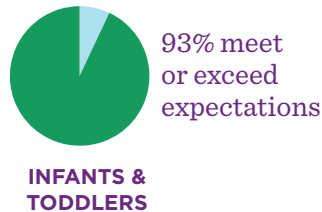
LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION



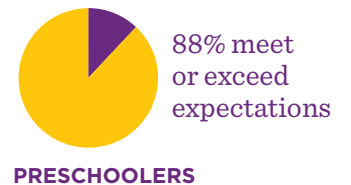
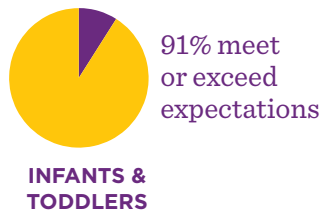
SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL



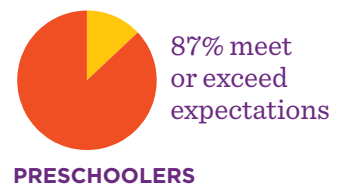
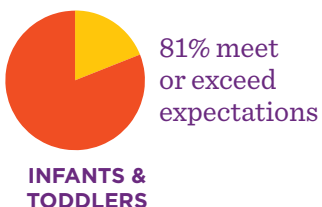
APPROACHES TO LEARNING



PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT



COGNITION & GENERAL KNOWLEDGE



Based on end-of-year assessments



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, to be easily accessible for children and families in need.

**Dr. Elaine Marieb
Early Learning Center**
1723 N. Orange Ave
Sarasota, FL 34234

Alta Vista Elementary
1050 S. Euclid Ave
Sarasota, FL 34237

Linnie E. Dalbeck EHS Center
2036 Oak St
Sarasota, FL 34237

Emma E. Booker Elementary
2350 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Way
Sarasota, FL 34234

Helen R. Payne Annex
1742 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Way
Sarasota, FL 34234

Helen R. 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
Riverview High Early Childcare Program
Teen Parent Program—North Port High

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

Flip Flops & Fashion
Luncheon
Thursday, November 3, 2016
11:30 am—1:00 pm
Sharky's on the Pier

Rockin' Lobster
Lobster Boil and Beach Party
Saturday, November 5, 2016
6:30 pm
Sharky's on the Pier

Fairytale Ball
Annual Gala Celebration
Saturday, March 25, 2017
6:30 pm
Michael's on East

www.childrenfirst.net

941.953.3877

