

Building **STRONG** FOUNDATIONS

IMPACT REPORT 2024



a partner in the
Smart Start network 

Our Mission is to build a strong foundation for children's learning and development by strengthening families, the early childhood system, and the community.

A letter from our **DIRECTOR**

As I reflect on the past year at the Children's Council, I am filled with gratitude and optimism for what we have achieved together. This has been a year of growth, resilience, and transformation. We have faced challenges, but through the unwavering support of this community, we continued to move forward with purpose and passion.

This report provides a snapshot of our work over the last year, including our response after Hurricane Helene. But beyond the numbers and statistics, the true measure of our impact lies in the lives we touch and this community we serve. The needs of local children and families remain great after the hurricane, and the community-level recognition of child care's impact on our local economy makes the necessity to support our child care infrastructure clear. With your continued support, we'll be ready to meet the challenges of the year ahead.

Our board and staff are actively engaged in writing our new three-year strategic plan. In the coming three years, our organization will celebrate 50 years of serving children and families in Watauga County. We'll also have secured a new location. We have outgrown our current space, and our lease ends in early 2028, at which time we hope to be in a new facility that better meets our needs and those of the community we serve.

Thank you for your dedication and generosity. We are deeply grateful for your partnership and invite you to join us in creating lasting change and a brighter future for the children and caregivers we serve.



With heartfelt appreciation,

Elisha Childers

Elisha Childers
Executive Director
The Children's Council of Watauga County

2023-2024 **HIGHLIGHTS**

Over **3,100** children, parents, and early childhood educators served



We earned recognition as a **Family Forward NC Certified Employer** with the adoption of several family-friendly workplace policies. This aligns with our commitment to caring for the staff who dedicate themselves to the children and families we serve.

We became a designated **Family Resource Center in North Carolina** and are partnering with Positive Childhood Alliance NC (formerly Prevent Child Abuse NC) to develop a community-based comprehensive family support plan.



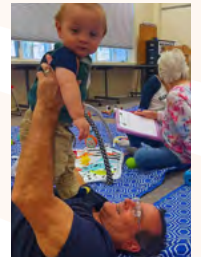
We partnered with our **Boone Area Chamber of Commerce and Appalachian State University** to release a Watauga County Child Care Study that highlighted the need for child care and the impact our local child care industry has on our economy.



With the support of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of North Carolina, we established a **Home-Based Child Care Network, Blue Ridge Beginnings**, to provide support, education and training opportunities to individuals who are caring for young children in a home setting.

We launched the **Early Childhood Workforce Academy** to train potential employees for jobs in our local early childhood workforce.

We responded to the needs of our community with two new programs. We launched a weekly group called **Elevated Dads** where dads of all ages gather in the community to support and learn from one another. We also introduced **Kaleidoscope Play & Learn** groups which are offered weekly throughout our community as an opportunity for children and their adult caregivers to learn and grow together through play.



Our IMPACT

All children deserve the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential. To do so, they need a community that supports and nurtures their growth and their families. Our mission is to build a strong foundation for children's learning and development. We do this by strengthening families, our early childhood system, and our community.

Family Support Programs

2023-2024 HIGHLIGHTS:



119 support group sessions for parents



75,144 diapers were distributed to local children.



50 families (including teen parents and their children) received hundreds of home visits

by trained parent educators who worked directly with children and parents to provide parent education, early childhood development assessments, group learning sessions, and connections to community resources.



25 new parents participated in the post-partum support group.



9 support group sessions were held for parents.

PROGRAM STORIES:



A mother at wits' end:

When Melanie lost her childcare, she was unable to maintain her job, and to top it off, her car broke down. Unable to afford the repairs, she was stranded without access to her prenatal care, pediatric appointments, groceries and all else. Thankfully, she was able to get connected with the Children's Council. It was a long road, but with access to our emergency funds, childcare assistance, ARPA funding, and connection to a local church, Melanie now has all three children in childcare, a working vehicle, and is back to work.



A teen mom fresh out of high school

with a one-year-old daughter was forced to leave her family's home due to safety reasons shortly before Hurricane Helene. Showing incredible grit and determination, she leaned into the supports and services provided by the Children's Council and connected with community organizations and resources. She landed her first job, began the process of getting her driver's license and is now getting ready to move into her first apartment! Our staff was able to guide her in developing life skills, filling out applications, making phone calls, attending appointments, and learning budgeting. By engaging during Parents as Teachers home visits and being receptive to information around her child's development, she gained confidence to not only begin to support herself, but she is now connecting with other teen parents and offering them support, paying it forward to others experiencing similar situations.

Early Care & Education Programs

2023-2024 HIGHLIGHTS:



192 early childhood educators

participated in the 62 training courses we offered for professional development.



102 four-year-olds were served in our NC Pre-K program.



245 visits to our resource library where parents, early childhood educators and professionals who work with children can check out early childhood learning kits



226 parents received training in how to read to children to promote early childhood literacy development through the Raising a Reader program.



11 students were served in our Dual School, a half-day preschool program to support English Language Learners so they are ready for school.



1,120 children received books from our Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

The Lead **9** licensed childcare programs Teachers in received quality enhancements

to support higher wages for teachers. These investments support increased levels of education and job training and staff retention in a high turnover industry.

PROGRAM STORIES:



Miranda Vaughan, director of Sugar Grove Developmental Day School in Watauga County, has always been passionate about working with children.

With years of experience as a mother and in elementary education, she took on the director role at the non-profit early care and education program. However, managing the school came with challenges, especially supporting staff and families.

Sugar Grove was already part of The Children's Council's Pathways to Accreditation Program before Miranda became director, and their support has been invaluable. "The Children's Council has been there for us in so many ways, providing training, resources, and even diapers and food for families in need," Miranda said.

Through the Pathways program, Sugar Grove staff have accessed free professional development, which has sharpened their skills and boosted their passion for teaching. Miranda, a member of the Director's Leadership Academy, also finds support in a monthly gathering of directors, where she learns and shares ideas with others.

The program has also allowed the school to provide much-needed bonuses to teachers, which Miranda says has made a big difference. The Children's Council's hands-on support includes helping with classroom challenges, like rearranging rooms for safety, and offering strategies to improve teaching. They've also connected families with sponsors for gifts and helped with playground repairs.

Miranda is deeply grateful for the Children's Council's support, saying, "They're not just helping the children, but also our staff, directors, and families. We couldn't do this without them."

HURRICANE RESPONSE

On the Monday following the hurricane, the Children's Council was already up and operating as a distribution hub for diapers, wipes, diapering products, formula, baby food, children's medicine, postpartum materials, and more for families with young children. Our first priority was to check in on all of our clients. A team of staff members packed up hot meals and set out to deliver them along with other supplies, allowing us to check in with our clients and assist them in getting the help they needed. Another team worked at the office simultaneously, receiving donations and distributing them to families who began walking in for assistance. A third team was out in the community, shoveling mud out of homes and childcare centers, cutting down trees, and removing debris. **This work continued non-stop in the weeks that followed.** Over 100 volunteers came alongside us, making our efforts possible.

We were generously supported by individuals and organizations from around the world! So far, we've received over \$100,000 in hurricane relief funds, which served families in our community still struggling after the storm's impact.

Four local child care centers and one family child care home sustained flooding. We helped clean and restore two centers so they could reopen and have found temporary locations for three programs to operate while more extensive repairs continue at the remaining centers.

We were excited to partner with the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Foundation and the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation to distribute over \$230,000 to local small business childcare centers. This funding covered one month's worth of their private-pay tuition income, enabling them to waive tuition for families in need.

Our work continues. There is still a great need among families in our community. The disruption caused by Hurricane Helene will last for months and years to come and the Children's Council is committed to being a resource for families who need us.

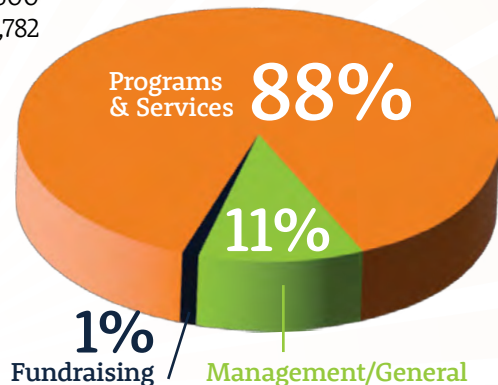


2023-2024 FINANCIALS

2023-2024 EXPENSES:

Management/General \$225,952
 Fundraising \$20,500
 Programs & Services \$1,782,782

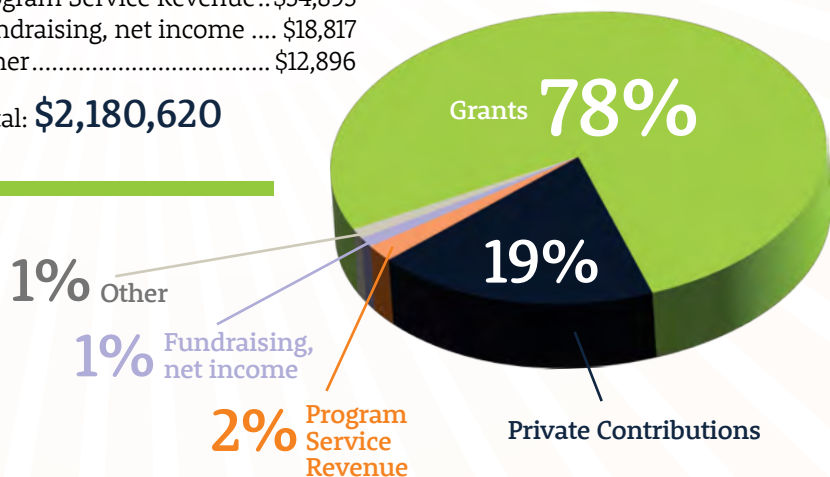
Total: **\$2,029,234**



2023-2024 INCOME:

Grants \$1,705,821
 Private Contributions \$408,193
 Program Service Revenue.. \$34,893
 Fundraising, net income \$18,817
 Other \$12,896

Total: **\$2,180,620**



HUMBLE THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Our board of directors and staff extend our heartfelt thanks to the many individuals, volunteers, businesses, churches, and grant partners who gave to the Children's Council this year. Thank you for making an investment into the future of Watauga County through grants and personal donations to our work. With your support, we have made a positive difference in the lives of thousands of people in Watauga County.



2024 PREMIER SPONSORS:



Our littlest learners are our **smartest** **investment.**

We **support children** during the most **critical phase of brain development** to help ensure they have the right tools to start kindergarten on track.

There are about **1,900 children under the age of five** in Watauga County, and with your help we can do something good for all of them.

Here are ways you can support our work:

MAKE A DONATION:



Your unrestricted donation will allow us to use the funds where they are most needed to support local children and families.

Online: www.thechildrenscouncil.org

Mail or drop a check made out to
The Children's Council,
225 Birch Street, Suite 3 Boone, NC 28697

Join our monthly donor family: Your support provides essential financial stability, allowing us to be flexible and responsive to the needs of children in our community. Simply choose the monthly option when donating online or mail your donation each month.

Donate to our Building Fund: Your support will help us start the process of purchasing or building a new home as we outgrow our current space with our lease ending in 2028. We rely on the generosity of our community to make this dream a reality.

Hurricane Relief Fund: Your donation will help support families still impacted by Hurricane Helene, including those facing financial hardship, displacement, and the need for home repairs not covered by insurance or FEMA.

Early Childhood Literacy Fund: Your donation will directly support our early childhood literacy programs, including Dolly Parton Imagination Library, Raising a Reader, Dual School, and our Resource Library.



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