

**STRONG
FOUNDATIONS.**

Soaring futures.

IMPACT REPORT 2025



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.



2024-2025 Agency Highlights

We developed a new strategic plan focused on thoughtful, sustainable growth. Our goals include deepening our reach in our most rural communities, finding a new space to support the expanding needs of our staff and clients, and increasing awareness of our services throughout the region.

We're going on the road! Thanks to a grant from Parents as Teachers National, we were able to add a new van to support our expanding outreach services. An additional grant from the Mooneyhan Family Foundation will allow this program to flourish as we bring services into the furthest reaches of our community and meet families where they are.



We announced a new brand. One of the goals of our strategic plan was to increase visibility, and we wanted a fresh look that aligned with our new tagline, **Strong Foundations. Soaring Futures.** The image of the kite represents so much of who we are, including the importance of play, guidance, and a child's interaction with the world around them. The solid grounding provided by positive childhood experiences serves as the thread, helping set children off to new heights and empowering them to explore their own potential.

We partnered with Stipe Creative to **build a beautiful, functional new website** that helps connect more people to our services and to the wide range of resources available throughout our community.



We launched a brand-new, community-wide fundraiser. The inaugural Building Sweet Futures gingerbread competition was a resounding success and a celebration of local creativity and talent. It created meaningful opportunities for connection and collaboration among children and parents, coworkers, and classmates, with 30 thoughtfully designed entries displayed throughout the holiday season. This event will become a tradition we look forward to hosting year after year.

Our Impact:

Total Individuals Served: **3,354**

As a Smart Start partnership, we work alongside families to maximize child development during the first five years of life, laying the foundation for lifelong health and learning. By supporting providers, caregivers, and educators serving children from prenatal through age five, we are able to meet families wherever children are and strengthen early childhood systems across our community.

Supporting Families

Parents and children served: **1,550**



Number of parent support groups & classes held: **183**



Number of diapers distributed: **95,850**



Number of books received by children through early literacy programs: **10,568**



Individuals served by community Play & Learn groups: **145**



ELEVATED DADS

Dads don't need to do it alone.

After Brian and his wife welcomed their first child with joy, Brian encountered what so many new parents experience. His overwhelming love for their baby was accompanied by worry, sleep deprivation, isolation, and feelings of inadequacy. He found himself in uncharted territory, unsure of himself in his new role as a father.

Thankfully, Brian realized he did not have to walk this path alone. He found our Elevated Dads group and discovered support and encouragement week after week.

"Elevated Dads changed everything for me. Now, I am part of a community of dedicated, caring men who are all navigating fatherhood together. We listen to one another, we support one another, and we inspire one another. I lost my own father to a long illness less than two months before my daughter was born. Not being able to talk to him about fatherhood or ask for advice has been a source of grief for me. The guys in Elevated Dads have become the sounding board I needed after he passed."

Brian, like the other dads in the group, looks forward to this time each week. Vulnerability around parenting roles can be challenging, but these men leave feeling more connected, more supported, and more confident in their roles as parents.

Resilience

from the perspective of a parent educator

Sienna is currently enrolled in our Parents as Teachers program and is the devoted mother of four children. Her youngest son, Jenkins, entered the world far too early and has faced significant developmental challenges from the start. He relies on a feeding tube and requires ongoing, specialized care. Sienna and her husband work tirelessly to support their family, but balancing the needs of four children, especially when one has complex medical needs, has been incredibly overwhelming.

“Throughout the time I have worked with Sienna, I have seen how deeply she cares for her children and how hard she pushes herself to keep her family stable, even when resources are stretched thin. Jenkins often has medical appointments out of town, and the rising costs associated with these trips have made access to care increasingly stressful, states Jessica Yates, Family Support Programs Director. “We were able to support the family by providing emergency assistance in the form of gas cards, which has been critical to ensuring they can continue to get Jenkins to appointments that are vital to his health and development.”

Our parent educators also helped Sienna connect with other local community resources when the family struggled to keep up with their bills. “A few months ago, this family faced one of their most heartbreaking challenges yet: the possibility of eviction. They had fallen behind on utilities and rent and were racking

up late fees, and feared losing their home,” says Jessica. “We worked closely with the family to help them communicate with their landlord and develop a realistic plan to move forward.” A combination of emergency assistance from the Children’s Council and support from our community partners helped the family catch up on their payments and they were then able to maintain stable housing for their family.

In the face of these difficult challenges, Sienna had remained determined and resilient. “Her dedication to her children’s welfare is unwavering,” says Jessica. “I am grateful to have supported her, and am so pleased she continues to work toward stability, health and hope for her family.”

Parental resilience refers to the capacity of parents to cope with stress, adversity, and trauma while maintaining a positive and supportive environment for their children. It involves a parent not only managing personal challenges, but also effectively responding to the needs of their children during difficult times. Resilient parents are better equipped to handle the ups and downs of parenting, which fosters a healthy family dynamic. Parental resilience is a crucial protective factor for the wellbeing of families and children.

Supporting Educators & Early Literacy

Number of early
childhood educators
served:

177



Number of children
served in NC-PreK program:

86



Number of visits to the
Lending Library:

146

Number of parents trained in how to read
to their child for literacy development:

144



Number of children served in
Early Literacy Programs:

1,196

Number of trainings provided to early
childhood education providers:

46



HURRICANE HELENE UPDATE

The state awarded \$10 million for relief to child care centers impacted by Hurricane Helene. The Children's Council was awarded \$800,000 to meet the needs of providers in Watauga County and is actively distributing those funds. To date, we have supported 14 local child care programs with funds for repairs, restoration, lost revenues and work that continues to be completed.

EARLY EDUCATION

Lindsay Galileo
Director, Mountain
Pathways Montessori
School



Early Educator Spotlight: Braving the Storms

Stepping into Mountain Pathways Montessori, you feel it immediately: calm, intention, beauty, and heart. That spirit begins with Director Lindsay Galileo.

Born and raised in Watauga County, Lindsay's roots run deep in this community. Her journey has also taken her beyond the Blue Ridge Mountains. She earned degrees in North Carolina and Virginia and spent nearly a decade working abroad in China. Along the way, she became a wife and mother of two. These experiences have shaped her as an educator, parent, and global citizen.

In 2022, Lindsay and her family returned home to Boone. While searching for childcare for her own child, she discovered Mountain Pathways Montessori. What began as a search for a classroom quickly became a calling, and she joined the school as a teacher before stepping into the role of director during a critical period of transition.

In September 2024, flood waters from Hurricane Helene devastated the campus and destroyed classrooms designed to foster learning and creativity. Though heartbroken, the team immediately began recovery efforts. After weeks of closure, renovations, and relocations, the early education program reopened. With support from the Children's Council and community partners, the school has regained stability and momentum.

Mountain Pathways recently joined the Children's Council's Pathways to Accreditation program, receiving training, advising, outreach guidance, and hurricane recovery support. Lindsay shares, "The Children's Council has been an invaluable resource as I continue to grow into my role and guide the program forward."

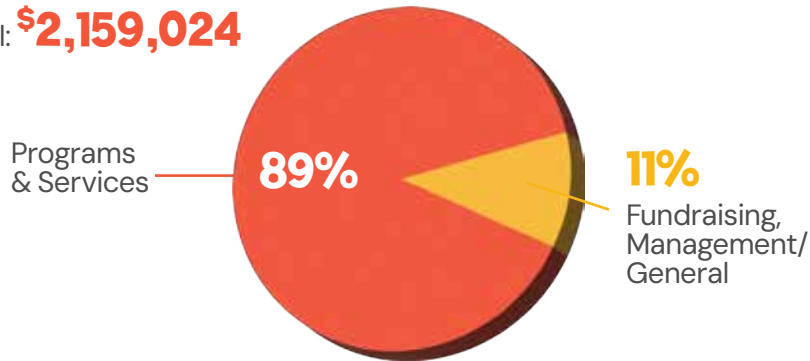
Her vision remains clear: to create a safe, welcoming space where children and families grow together in strong community.

2024-2025 Financials

2023-2024 Expenses:

Fundraising, Management/General.....\$236,345
 Programs & Services\$1,922,679

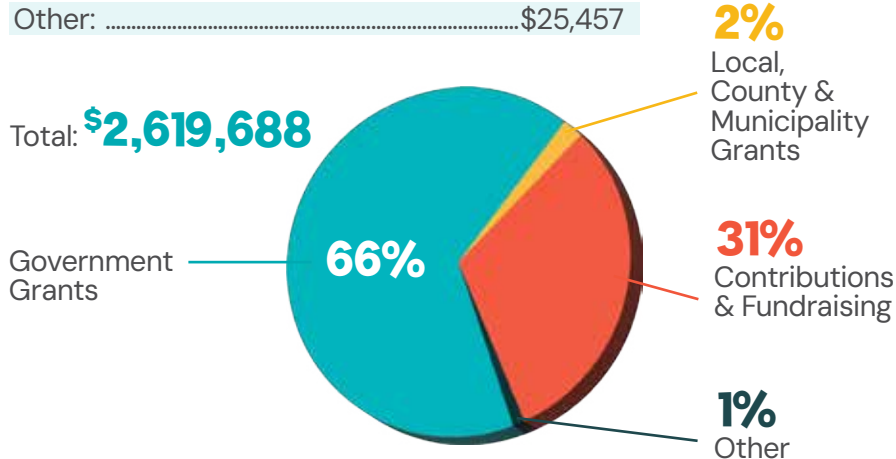
Total: **\$2,159,024**



2023-2024 Income:

Government Grants:.....\$1,719,056
 Local, County & Municipality Grants.....\$60,000
 Contributions & Fundraising:\$815,175
 Other:\$25,457

Total: **\$2,619,688**



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.

2025 PREMIER SPONSORS:



OUR KEY FUNDERS:

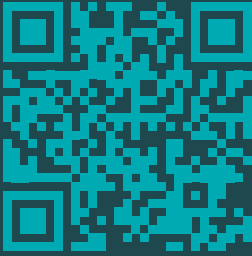


Our littlest learners are our **smartest investment.**

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

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.

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.

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.

Join the Soaring Futures Giving Circle: Pledge to donate \$1,000 or more a year for 5 years to be part of our giving circle. Your steady support helps us meet ongoing needs and plan for the future!

Keep checking our social media and websites for more information on our 2026 events.

