

# 2025 IMPACT REPORT



## Readers are Leaders

...HELP US BUILD BOTH

[depc.org](http://depc.org)

# Message from the Executive Director

At the Down East Partnership for Children, we know that when our community comes together, amazing things happen for children and families. For more than 30 years, we've walked alongside families to ensure every child has the chance to grow up healthy, supported, and ready to learn.

This year brought challenges—from changes in federal SNAP-Ed funding to the ongoing child care crisis—but we remain optimistic. With the dedication of our staff, the passion of our volunteers, and the support of partners across the region, we are turning obstacles into opportunities to strengthen services and advocate for lasting change.

We are deeply grateful for the parents, board members, interns, retirees, and business partners who give their time and talents to make a difference. Together, we are building a brighter, healthier future for every child in our community—and that is something to celebrate.

As we look ahead, we know there is more work to do. We invite you to join us—whether by volunteering, partnering, or supporting our programs—so that every child has the chance to thrive. With your help, we can continue creating lasting change for generations to come.

With gratitude and hope,

**Henrietta Zalkind**  
Executive Director

## This year Henrietta was featured in a Q&A from the Early Years about W.A.G.E.\$



Here is a brief excerpt:

**Why do you continue to support WAGES? Why do you think it is important?**

*Because it is a system investment that should be available statewide for all teachers.*

*Without having qualified, fairly compensated, stable teachers, you can't stabilize the system. Parents are not going to spend their hard-earned money on something that is not stable and high quality. WAGES addresses both of those, and it helps centers and providers stay in business.*

– Henrietta Zalkind

LEARN  
MORE



*"Early childhood teachers are among the lowest paid even though we have one of the most important jobs. While we should be addressing this issue on a broader scale as a country, programs like WAGES help ease some of the financial burdens. I do wish it was more widely available in all counties of NC."*

–WAGE\$ participant

## Our Vision

We believe that all children and their families can reach their full potential when surrounded by a united and supportive community.

## Our Mission

Launching every child as a healthy, lifelong learner by the end of third grade!

## Our Goals



**Early Care & Education**  
High quality early care and education.



**Families & Communities**  
Engaged families and coordinated communities.



**Health**  
Health and development on track beginning before birth.



**Ready Schools**  
Effective teaching and learning for K-3 students, inside and out, 365 days a year.



# By the Numbers

(July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025)

**15,629** children 0-8 in both Edgecombe & Nash counties

**3,928** children impacted by DEPC services

**4,469** parents/guardians/caregivers impacted by DEPC services

**7,569** children benefited from parent education and support programs

**377** early childhood professionals receiving training

**112** ECE teachers served through WAGE\$

**697** households assisted in child care choices

**89,388** meals served at Summer Feeding/Learning Sites

**1,127** children in kindergarten transition activities



**4,436**

children are receiving books at home each month through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

**2,350**

books donated for DEPC's book drive

## Why We Need Your Support



### LITERACY

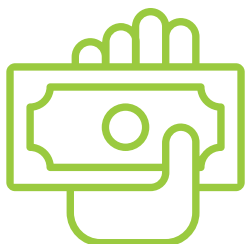
One of the most important predictors of school success and high school graduation is reading on grade level by the end of the third grade.

### POVERTY

**39%** of children in Edgecombe County and **21%** of Nash County children currently live in poverty.

### HEALTH

**16%** in Edgecombe County and **14%** of Nash County children live in food insecure households.



### CHILD CARE

**40%**

On average, single parents with infant or toddlers in child care spend **40%** of their income on their child's care.

### BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

**First 2,000 Days are important**



The first 2,000 days of a child's life are the most important time for their brain development. The most rapid period of development in life happens in children's earliest years.

## School Readiness



**Both children and schools need to be ready for success by 3rd grade**

Quality early care, literacy, summer learning and school attendance are all important to early school success. School Community Teams across Nash and Edgecombe counties work with DEPC's Ready Schools and Ready Communities Collaboratives to continuously strengthen early school success for all children.

# LITTLE FARMERS FESTIVAL

## Little Farmers Festival brings many families to park

DEPC's Discovery Park welcomed 500 children and families to the park this year to participate in the first ever Little Farmer's Festival! This event offered hands-on activities that celebrated healthy living, local agriculture, and early literacy. Thanks to our sponsors, the first 100 families took home free produce boxes. All participants also took home fresh local sweet potatoes and free books. Community partners offered demonstrations, taste tests and games.

Thank you to our community partners for supporting this fun, educational event that connected families to resources and fresh, local food.



Rocky Mount  
Engine Plant



CONETOE  
FAMILY LIFE CENTER



FROZEN BAKERY



FOOD4LION



ROCKY MOUNT, NC  
THE CENTER OF IT ALL

Boseman Farms



Sweet PGalaxy Lemonade  
Mojoe's BBQ & Grill  
Bobby Walker Food Truck  
GW Carver Elementary  
Northern Nash  
Allen's Nursery

a partner in the  
smart start network.









# Highlights *from* 2025



## Summer Feeding/Summer Learning a Success

Ready Communities and the Down East Partnership for Children proudly celebrated the incredible success of the Summer Feeding Summer Learning (SFSL) program. What began as a way to keep children engaged and nourished during the summer months has grown into a powerful, community-driven effort to help every child thrive.

None of this would be possible without the generous support of our funders and partners—Cummins Engine Plant, United Health Care, the Food Bank of Central and Eastern NC, Edgecombe County Public Schools, and Nash County Public Schools. Their investment ensures that sites have the resources, nourishment, and tools they need to make an impact.

We are also grateful to the dedicated site partners who served our children this summer:

- Bethlehem Baptist Church
- Rocky Mount Housing Authority (Weeks Armstrong & West End Terrace)
- Kidz Port, LLC
- Braswell Library
- South Rocky Mount Community Center & Gym
- Victory Readers

**DEPC named Family Forward Employer** Down East Partnership for Children has been named a Family Forward NC® Certified Employer by the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation's Family Forward NC initiative.



We are proud to be a Family Forward Employer, and we look forward to working with other employers who would like to help our community become certified as a Family Forward Community. A Family Forward NC Employer Certification designates employers that offer policies and practices that support the health and well-being of working families and children. The certification looks at employer benefits like paid leave and wages, accommodations for pregnant and breastfeeding workers, child care supports, health and wellness benefits, and scheduling practices.



## New art in Discovery Park

Come out to Discovery Park to check out the latest art thanks to a grant from PNC. Take a stroll through the park for learning opportunities outside! Thank you to local artist Sarah Winters for her creativity and hard work to bring this project to life! Visit [depc.org/park](https://depc.org/park) for details.



## Community Fellows

One special group of advocates for young children is our Community Fellows Leadership program which started in 1995 and has produced more than 150 leaders to serve our community and advocate for early education. The program has a newly revised curriculum and is led by John Robert Moore, Mr. Moore (commonly known as Mr. Bob) retired from Nash Community College after 20 plus years and has an extensive background in adult education, leadership development & community service. We're proud of the leaders produced from this program and look forward to a their continued service to the community. **Congratulations to the 2025 Community Fellows Graduates:**

- Kenneth Arrington
- Shaquana Bynum
- Kateisha Jones
- Latesha Barnes-Staton
- Andra' Battle
- Marian Cameron
- Nancy Rogers
- Kimberley Battle
- Annette Daugherty
- Tracy Smith



## Connecting schools and families

The Ready Schools initiative supports local elementary schools to connect resources and activities to ensure schools are prepared to meet the needs of all children and families. Connections are made to ensure a seamless transition from PreK settings into elementary schools. Focus areas of the work include school attendance, school readiness, and summer learning to support the mission of DEPC: All children are healthy, life-long learners by the end of grade three. Family and community engagement are critical to the success. An example of the work is offering hands-on learning activities to promote health and literacy. Grade 2 students at Middlesex Elementary School, supported by faith-based community groups, participated in gardening activities coupled with literacy through vocabulary and reading selections.

## Playgroups expand

Kaleidoscope Play & Learn groups expanded to three sites in 2025 – Rocky Mount, Spring Hope and Tarboro!

Playgroups experience a variety of learning opportunities from special visitors like Polly with The Wisdom Tooth Dental Program from NC State. She talked with our Playgroups about keeping our teeth healthy. She shared a story, song, coloring sheets and gave out information and toothbrushes to all of our Playgroup families. Contact us if you want to learn more about Playgroups at DEPC, Spring Hope and Tarboro! Playgroups are designed for families with children ages birth to 5 who want to learn fun ideas for hands-on learning, nurture their child's positive social skills; and, increase their family's healthy lifestyle habits. Thank you to PNC as sponsor of playgroups.







## Literacy-Focused Week of the Young Child

This year, DEPC brought the joy of reading to life with a special literacy-focused celebration during Week of the Young Child. Volunteers, board members, and even local legislators stepped into classrooms across the community, sharing stories and sparking imagination as they read aloud to young learners.

Our community also rallied behind our book drive—collecting more than **2,500 books** for children and families. These books will be shared at upcoming community events, helping to inspire a love of reading and support early literacy all year long.

Together, we're building stronger foundations for young children—one story at a time.



## DEPC receives Community Organization Award

DEPC received the Richard Allen Community Organization of the Year Award from St. Mark AME Church in Rocky Mount during the church's 133rd anniversary celebration.

Senior Pastor Robert Yarbrough recognized DEPC for its ongoing commitment to supporting children and families across Edgecombe and Nash Counties. He highlighted our shared work in promoting child literacy, preventing summer learning loss, and increasing access to nutritious meals during the summer months—made possible through strong community partnerships, including the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina.





# Success Stories

## Supporting families across generations

Shirley Freeman, a grandmother and retired educator, has long been connected to the Down East Partnership for Children (DEPC). Decades ago, she helped launch DEPC's first playgroups as a program coordinator. Today, her and her family are once again benefiting from DEPC's programs—this time as a grandparent helping raise her granddaughter.

Through DEPC's ARPA Program, her family was able to receive critical supplies, including a car seat, bed with bedding, diapers, and wipes. "After COVID, it became increasingly difficult to purchase what was needed without a financial burden," she shared.

Thanks to DEPC, they can now provide her granddaughter more learning opportunities to enrich her early childhood development while maintaining a nurturing home environment.

"I am so proud and honored to be a recipient 27 years later, receiving services for my granddaughter to enhance her developmental skills in all areas to prepare her for kindergarten. It has been an absolute blessing to know that DEPC continues to provide services and supplies to children and families that were not able to get elsewhere in Edgecombe and Nash Counties."



## Family engagement and leadership

I am writing this letter to express my sincere gratitude for the exceptional support that the Circle of Parents has provided to me and my family. Thank you, Ms Sonja Person, for playing a pivotal role in helping develop and navigate through the challenges that we have faced. Your support has not only helped it has taught us the true meaning of Community. Father Joe Boyd was a faithful member of Circle of Parents this year attending 31 of 32 meetings. He now serves as a COP parent leader. Many thanks to Joe and his family, Tonika, Joel and Joshua.



## Concrete support helps families

DEPC has given me resources and techniques to be a better parent and successfully manage my children as they progress through childhood. I choose to be a part of DEPC because not only does it help me in many ways but it also gives my children social skills. Through the playgroup they can interact with kids their age and learn to socialize in a controlled and safe environment.

*– Playgroup parent receiving ARPA support*

## Something for the whole family!

My experience with DEPC has been nothing short of amazing. Everyone is always friendly and willing to help. I really loved Mrs. Precious warm personality in helping me to get all that I was qualified for and some. DEPC has made a difference in helping with needed items, as well as being financial support for my daughter and me with the ARPA program. It has also been a great support to me and my family through Triple P and all the different parenting classes. This gave me the opportunity to bond with other parents with small kids and my daughter more time to play with other children. I chose to be a part of DEPC because initially, I was quite drawn to it. There is something for the whole family to thrive and succeed. I love DEPC!



# Financials

## Expenditures

### Programs & Support Services:

NC Pre-K	\$3,118,431.30
Scholarship	\$1,257,546.68
Family Services	\$750,048.52
Provider Services	\$239,960.65
Ready Schools / Ready Communities	\$159,198.73
Healthy Kids Collaborative	\$714,030.68
Community Collaboratives	\$219,890.30

**Total Program Services** **\$6,459,106.86**

Management and General \$536,354.43  
(includes Family Resource Center building renovations)

**Total Expenditures** **\$6,995,461.29**

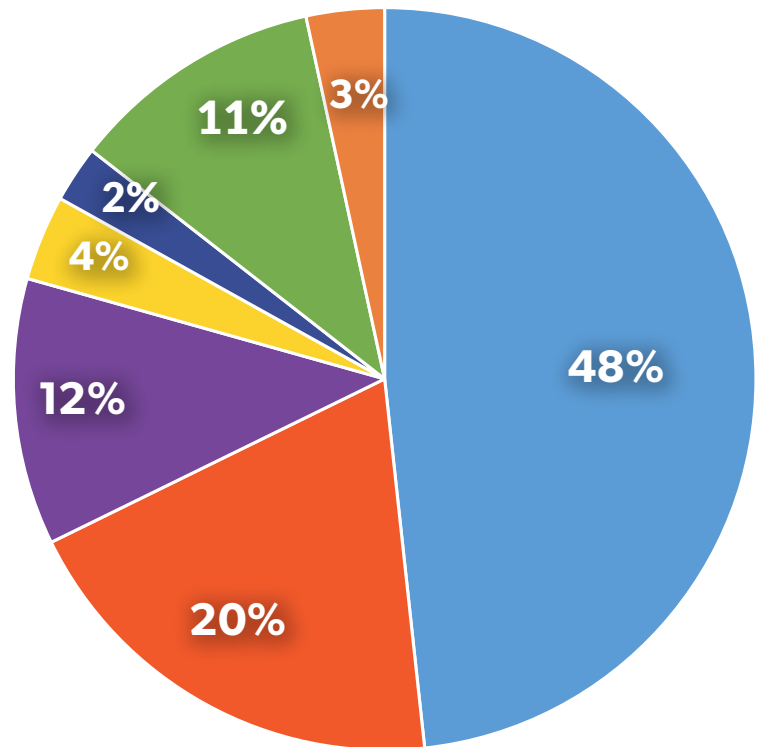
## Assets

**Net Assets, Beginning of Year** **\$498,677.56**

**Change in Net Assets** **\$110,455.44**

**Net Assets, End of Year** **\$609,133.00**

(Unaudited)



## Donors & In-Kind Sponsors

Donations from July 1, 2024 through Sept. 30, 2025

A. J. Fletcher Foundation  
Allegra Marketing & Print  
American Online Giving Foundation, Inc.  
Ameriprise Financial  
Barnhill Family Foundation  
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of NC Foundation  
Boddie-Noell Enterprises, Inc.  
Nicholas Bunn Boddie & Lucy Mayo Boddie Foundation  
Boice Willis Clinic P.A.  
BPM Properties  
Carolina Chicken & Waffles  
Childtrust Foundation  
Coastal Federal Credit Union  
Cummins Engine Foundation  
Cummins Rocky Mount Engine Plant  
Davenport Motor Company  
ECU Health Edgecombe Hospital  
Edgecombe Charitable Foundation  
Edgecombe Community College  
Edgecombe County  
First Christian Church  
First United Methodist Church

Food Lion  
Holland Custom Builders  
HoneyDrew Photography  
Jersey Mike's  
JHA Risk Management  
Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust  
Kent Construction  
Leggett Chapel Baptist Church  
The Links at Cotton Valley  
Lou Reda's An American Table  
Mattress Warehouse, LLC  
Nash Building Systems  
Nash Community College  
Nash County  
Nash UNC Health Care  
NC Farm Bureau  
NC SECC  
NC Wesleyan University  
Outback Steakhouse  
Panera Bread  
Pizza Inn - Hunter Hill  
PNC Bank  
PNC Foundation

Ripple Effects Group  
Sara Lee Frozen Bakery  
Sheetz  
Simmons & Harris  
Southern Bank Tarboro  
St. Mark AME Church  
St. Paul Baptist Church  
S.T.E.P.  
Sun Drop/Long Beverage  
Sun Energy 1  
Harriet & George Thorpe Foundation  
Tidal Wave Auto Spa  
Think & Grow  
Trillium Health Resources  
United Healthcare Services  
United Way of Bartholomew County  
United Way of the Greater Triangle  
United Way Tar River Region  
Vidant Health Foundation  
Wake Stone Corporation  
Welcome to Tarboro Magazine  
WellWorth Financial  
Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, Inc.



# Board of Directors 2024-25 Year

DEPC's Board of Directors and working committees are made up of parents, child care providers, representatives from the school systems, human service agencies, members of the faith community, local businesses and government. Each member is committed to ensuring the financial and programmatic integrity of the Partnership.

## Officers & Committee Chairs:

BOARD CHAIR:

**Dr. Trent Mohrbutter**, AVID

VICE CHAIR:

**Benton Moss**, Simmons & Harris Inc.

TREASURER:

**Natalie Bess**, Edgecombe County Deputy County Manager

SECRETARY:

**Michelle Etheridge**, Edgecombe County Health Department

CCR&R ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHAIR:

**Tia Foula**, Nash County Assistant Manager

COMMUNITY OUTREACH COMMITTEE CHAIR:

**Liz Lord**, Nash County Health Department

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE CHAIR:

**Dr. Trent Mohrbutter**, AVID

## Members:

**Betty Battle**, Edgecombe County Department of Social Services

**Patricia Bell-Spruill**, Step By Step Family Daycare Home

**Dr. Andrew Bryan**, Edgecombe County Public Schools, *Designee* **Dr. Michael Myrick**

**Melissa Corso**, Director of Library Services, Braswell Memorial Library

**Leigh Daughtridge**, Monarch

**Dr. Steve Ellis**, Nash County Public Schools, *Designee* **Melissa Dancy-Smith**

**Eric Evans**, Edgecombe County Manager, *Designee* **Natalie Bess**

**Tyler Gupton**, Vice President, Emerald Asset Management

**Tanya Heath**, Edgecombe Cooperative Extension

**Dr. Lew Hunnicutt**, Nash Community College, *Designee* **Adrienne Covington**

**Linda Knight**, Child Care Center, Think & Grow

**Pastor Gary Lee**, First Baptist Middlesex

**Liz Lord**, Deputy Health Director, Nash County Health Department

**Mary Jane Lonnais**, Regional Planner, Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments

**Channing McDowell**, Branch Manager, United Bank

**Durell Petway**, Parent/Boys & Girls Club

**Stacie Shatzer**, Nash County Manager, *Designee* **Tia Foula**

**Shermekka Williams**, Parent

**Wendy Wilson**, Carlton Family Foundation

If you are interested in joining a Committee or the Board, please contact Henrietta Zalkind, Executive Director at [hzalkind@depc.org](mailto:hzalkind@depc.org)



## Individual Donors

Wanda Barnes

Michelle Battle

Dr. Bigswell

Viola Barnes-Gray

Jenee Bowman

Thomas & Diane Braddy

Shaquanna Bynum

Pamela Chapman

Melissa Corso

Adrienne Covington

Ryan Cox

W.H. & Carol Crocker

Leigh Daughtridge

Dorothy Davis

Frenchy Davis

Purvi Desai

Joel & Monica Dood

Larry Duffee

Charles Dunn

Steve Ellis

Michelle Etheridge

Steve Felton

Tia Foula

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Todd Gardner

Pam Gould

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Jamers & Amber Payton

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Durell Petway

Karen W. Ponder

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Amy Pridgen-Hamlett

Terry Richardson

Denise Rickman

XyNarria Roberstson

Betty Robinson

Jason Rochelle

Mark Sesler

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Joseph W. Smith

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Jasmine Smith

Karen Snead

Dr. Kristi Snuggs

Brittany Spear

Braxton Townsend Jr.

Lydia Vande Sande

Imani West

Aljeana Whitaker

Shermekka Williams

Tim and Wendy

Wilson

Gary Wingfield

Lori Winstead

Mr. & Mrs. Barden Winstead, Jr.

Robert Yarbrough

Henrietta Zalkind

Orlando and Ericka Zito



# Save the Dates

## PARTNER APPRECIATION *Popover*

Wednesday, Feb. 11 | 11:30am to 1:30pm

Join us as we thank our community partners, volunteers and leaders



# DEPC

## GOLF CLASSIC

# APRIL 17

THE LINKS AT  
COTTON VALLEY  
(ARBOR)

LUNCH PROVIDED 12:00PM

All skill levels invited. Handicap not required.

SHOTGUN START 1:00PM

SUPERBALL FORMAT

Prizes for 1st, 2nd, 3rd place teams

Closest to the Pin, Putting Contest  
and Longest Drive prizes



**50/50 RAFFLE**  
\$5 per ticket  
or 5 for \$20

**\$360** per foursome

Mulligan & tee buster package  
Raffle entry for each team member

**\$75** INDIVIDUAL

REGISTER ONLINE AT [WWW.DEPC.ORG](http://WWW.DEPC.ORG)

SPONSORSHIPS AVAILABLE Call 252-985-4300 with questions.

## Learn more about our programs

Down East Partnership for Children offers a variety of services and resources for families with children ages 0-8. Scan the QR code to the right to view all of DEPC's family services and our programs for 2026!



## Invest early. Invest locally with us.

At Down East Partnership for Children *we are wherever kids are*, from living rooms to classrooms, playgrounds to community spaces.

We connect parents to programs and services, improve early childhood classroom quality and safety, and unite partners across the Twin Counties to build a stronger system for every child and the adults that care for them.



When you give to us, you're investing in local families, local programs, and local impact – where it matters most.



Please make checks, corporate matches, or other gifts payable to:  
DEPC, P.O. Box 1245, Rocky Mount, NC 27802, ATTN: Jackie Kearney

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Company/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_



### Be A Champion

Please accept my donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to help give children a brighter future.

☐ Make it a monthly donation to be included in the Champions Circle.



### Seventh Annual DEPC Golf Classic

- ☐ \$100 Hole Sponsorship
- ☐ \$300 Team Sponsor (4-person team)
- ☐ Prize donation for raffle  
(Gift certificate, promotional item like hat, t-shirt, etc.)

**JOIN US!**  
April 17,  
2026



### Volunteer

Please contact me with volunteer opportunities with DEPC.



### Monthly Gift

Make a Monthly Gift to DEPC. Please contact me with more information.



**NC SNAP-ED**

This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



a partner in the  
smart start network



\*DEPC is qualified as a charitable organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions to DEPC are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.