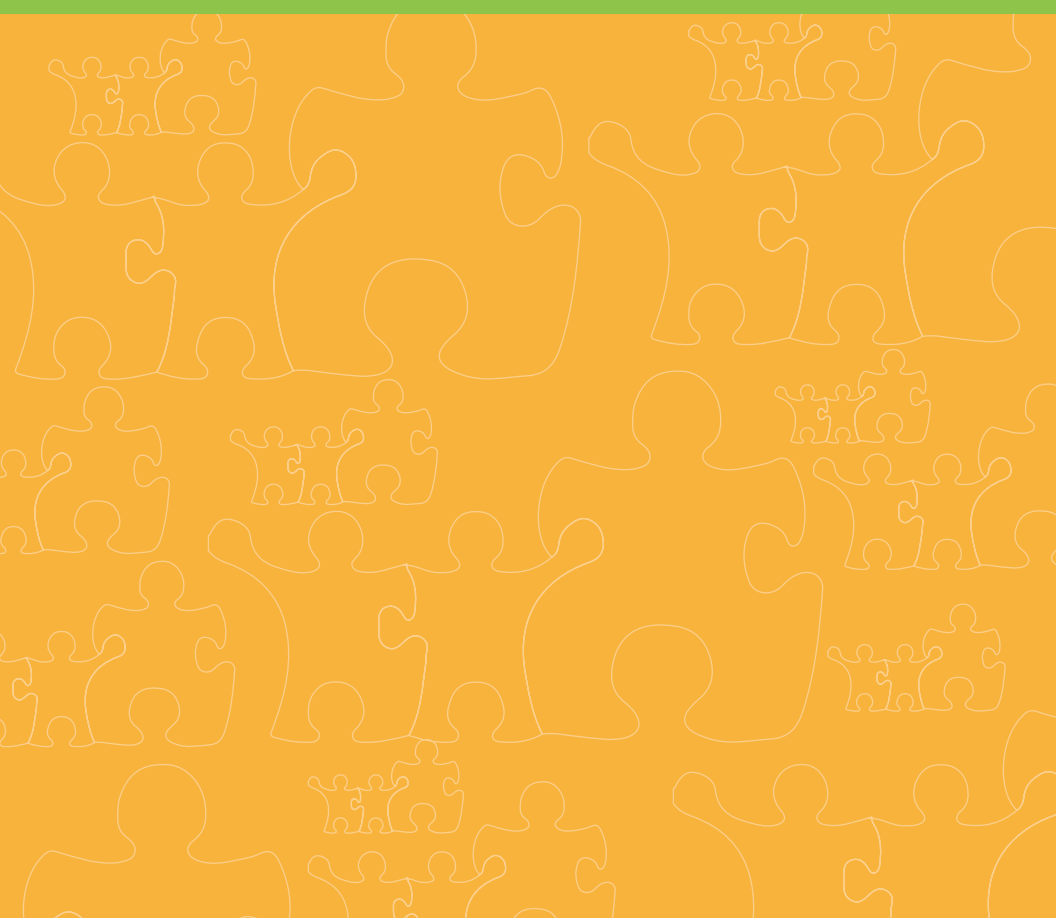




2022-23 Annual Report

FirstStepsNashville.org



WHO WE ARE

Message from Executive Director

Dear First Steps Community,

We have much to celebrate as we reflect on 2022-2023. Our Pediatric Therapy program celebrated its 10th anniversary with inaugural team members Suzanne Satterfield and Erin Carini-Karb still working their magic as therapists. Our Community Outreach program was given the opportunity to expand their services to families through the age of 4 for the first time!

In addition, we were able to honor our own Karla Garig as a Finalist for the Truist CFO of the Year at the Center for Nonprofit Management awards. Our organization was strengthened by the addition of a full-time Human Resources Manager, Kelli Hazen, to focus on the recruitment, retention and support of all staff. Having the best professionals on the team is the backbone of our organization.

Without the resources provided by you, these milestones wouldn't be possible. I hope you join us in celebrating the joy of serving nearly 1,000 children and their families—together!



Heather Higgins
Executive Director



2022-23 Board of Directors

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MISSION DRIVEN

Our Mission and Vision

The **mission** of First Steps is to educate and care for children with special needs and medical conditions alongside their typically developing peers in inclusive environments and support their families.

Vision and Purpose:

- Enhance the quality of life for children and their families
- Eliminate barriers to services for children with special needs
- Empower families as they seek to meet the needs of their children
- Improve the community as a whole, child by child, family by family
- Celebrate each child's unique potential



Our Programs

Child Development Center

First Steps' inclusive McWhorter Family Children's Center offers full time care and education for children with special needs alongside their typically developing peers (ages six weeks to six years).

Pediatric Therapy

Pediatric Therapy at First Steps provides occupational, speech-language, physical, and feeding therapies for children with special needs (ages birth to twelve) in the McWhorter Family Children's Center.

Community Outreach Program

The First Steps Community Outreach Program partners with parents and caregivers of children (ages birth to four) with disabilities or delays. Developmental Therapy and support is given in home-based or community settings, as well as via telehealth.



POWER OF INCLUSION

Staff Spotlight | Donna Driver

People's eyes get pretty wide when I tell them I've been teaching at First Steps for eighteen years. Yes it's true, and I'm still here, caring for our youngest students as the lead infant teacher. I started when my own daughter was four years old, and I was looking for a full-time teaching job where I could also have her attend preschool. She is now a college graduate and a co-lead teacher of our Bears PreK classroom!



Why First Steps? And why have I stayed so long? My oldest brother is autistic. He was never diagnosed when we were children because autism still wasn't widely understood or studied yet. With my brother being in special education, my mother decided to become a teaching assistant in special education. She eventually moved to a preschool special education program, and one of my earliest jobs after college was substituting with her in that program, and I loved working there.

Now, my degree in school was Theatre Arts, and I fully intended to become a famous actress, singer, and author (www.dgdriver.com). In the meantime, I had to have a "day job", but it needed to have value and make me feel like I was making a difference. So, I've always been a teacher. I have taught drama and dance, but mostly I've worked in special education. I actually learned about First Steps back in 2005 when I was assisting with childcare at an autism conference. I was told about this early childhood education

center that specialized in caring for children with special needs in an inclusive environment. I applied the next day. I remember telling the Center Director during my interview that I was looking for a job to keep for a long time, something permanent. I guess I wasn't lying.

I've seen many changes—we've even changed locations! However, the one thing that remains the same is the attention and love our staff has for the children in our care. The teachers here do this job because these children matter to them. We want them to learn and thrive. I've had the great joy of working with over a hundred infants in my nearly two decades here, and it never ceases to be wondrous when they hit their milestones. I genuinely celebrate each moment. I'm grateful for this opportunity to work at First Steps and for the families that I've known over these years.



COMMUNITY IMPACT

Program Impact

In 2022-23, **994 children** received the education and care they needed to achieve their developmental success. Many children participated in more than one program throughout the year and **15,472 therapy sessions** were completed.

I believe my child is making progress as a result of First Steps services.

**98%
AGREE**

Child Development Center

All learning activities at First Steps are designed with my child's individual needs in mind across all major learning areas.

**94%
AGREE**

The atmosphere and environment at First Steps is comfortable, warm, welcoming, and appropriate for my child.

**100%
AGREE**

Pediatric Therapy

My child's therapist gives me clear information that helps me perform exercises and activities in the home with my child.

**95%
AGREE**

The treatment activities provided are relevant to my child's individual needs.

**100%
AGREE**

Community Outreach Program

My developmental therapist listens to me, shares developmentally appropriate strategies that increase my confidence and skills to interact with my child.

**97.25%
AGREE**

My developmental therapist works in partnerships with me as we work with my child together.

**97%
AGREE**

Volunteers and Interns

Thank you to the volunteers and interns who generously donated their time and talents to First Steps in 2022-23.

Community Outreach

Hannah Dugan
Callie Eubanks
Anna Efinger
Malia Porto

Vino Committee

Claire Francis
Megan Kelly
Kates Potempa
Joanna Thomson

Child Development Center

Sophie Charton
Lauren Hanner

Pediatric Therapy

Ashley Browder
Bella Ferrel
MacKenzie Hutto
Kendall Jackson
Jennifer Bumpous Taylor
Christian Thomas
Courtney Yarborough



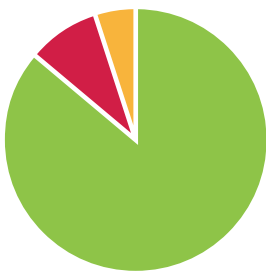
Employees from HCA Healthcare volunteered their time twice during this past fiscal year to assist with facility projects. We are grateful for their hard work and continued support of the mission.





FINANCIALS

Expenses



86.24% Program Services

8.84% Administrative

4.92% Fundraising



Revenue



32.10% Government*

45.93% Program Revenue

21.98% Fundraising and Events

*First Steps partners with the Tennessee Department of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities and United Way of Middle Tennessee.



POWER OF FAMILIES

Turan Family

It took 28 days until I was able to hold my newborn daughter for the first time. It would take another 2 months until she would be discharged from the hospital and move home with us. My daughter, Grace, spent the first 97 days of her life at the Saint Thomas Midtown NICU after she was born at 26 weeks due to a tumor in the placenta which caused excessive fluid buildup, drowning her from the inside out. We quickly discovered we were a one in a million case, as no doctor in Nashville had come across our circumstance as it related to the size of the tumor.



Grace's arrival Earth-side at 26 weeks proved to be just the beginning of an incredibly complicated and emotion filled journey. There were some days where her condition led us down the path of realizing we might be planning her funeral vs. celebrating her arrival home. We would come to discover Grace would go from being a one in a million statistic to one in a billion as she was diagnosed with a heart condition proven to be fatal by medical accounts. However, with prayers and a true miracle she survived.

Grace would start to receive physical therapy and occupational therapy in this NICU. In addition to coming home on oxygen support, we learned closer to discharge that Grace would need weekly physical, occupational, and developmental therapy. After not having my child home for the first 97 days of her life, I was very hesitant about signing her up to then be out of arms for any hours of the day. However, upon our first meeting at First Steps I just knew in my heart that this was this place where my child needed to be - and she would thrive. She started First Steps nine months to the day after she was born.

As with a lot of children who are micro-preemies, you have the initial roadblocks and developmental delays to navigate through. Then there are challenges that start to arise from their premature experience as they grow older. This is the part I really want to highlight as the reason First Steps is so near and dear to our heart.

Between her First Steps therapists and teachers, over the past year, they have identified and working on executive functioning delays related to prematurity which I strongly feel would've been overlooked in other learning environments. The difference with First Steps is they are not only able to identify challenges, but also are equipped to come up with the proper support needed to navigate through challenges identified. Had we been in another environment at this point in my child's life, she would either be left behind or singled out and separated for her learning disabilities.



At First Steps, there is no separation.

My daughter—who at one time I thought I would have to plan her funeral even before she came home from the hospital—gets to be fully in the experience of being a four-year-old in school. Not only that, she has learned one of the most valuable lessons the whole world can benefit from. The learning that physical or mental differences do not mean we are less than and we can all co-exist as equals.

While there are delays and challenges which still exist for Grace, none of those are discouraging thanks to the level of care First Steps is able to provide. We are grateful for this community which gives our children an opportunity at a childhood they will remember for joy and laughter rather than loneliness due to their delays in development.

Thank you, First Steps.

–Anne Marie Turan



POWER OF FAMILIES

Kemp Family



Joseph's final weeks at First Steps have been on our minds every day as we get closer to the first major change in his life. We can't believe that he's moving on after nearly five years of being part of the First Steps family. We're excited for what lies ahead for him, but also apprehensive and heavy hearted to leave such a caring, supportive, and friendly community that has meant so much to our family. We have imagined so many times over the past few years how lost, anxious, and afraid we would have been about how best to help Joseph (and Elliott) without the educational and therapeutic teams at First Steps. Our opportunity to become a First Steps family has felt like one of the miracles of our lives.

-Leslye and Todd Kemp

Have a Donor Advised Fund (DAF)?



Donor Advised Funds are an excellent tool for unrestricted or designated giving. If you already have a DAF, simply request a grant distribution using First Steps' Tax ID #62-0674974.

Consider a Legacy Gift

We invite you to sit down with your financial planner to explore unique ways to extend your philanthropic legacy.

You can make a significant impact while taking advantage of tax-saving strategies and income-producing assets. Wills and living trusts, IRA charitable rollovers, stocks and insurance beneficiaries are just some of the many options you could consider.



Contact bgrant@firststepsnashville.org if you have any questions about the agency's gift acceptance policy.

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In recognition of individual donors who made gifts of more than \$1,000 in the 2022-23 year

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Kates and Matt Potempa
Kay and David Raybin
Brenda and Marshall Richards
Brittney and Schaefer Rowe
Mark Swaim
Richard J. Vaughn
Ashleigh Whitworth
Alice and Mike Yopp

We are also grateful to our in-kind donors for their gifts to events, staff recognition and program needs. While every attempt is made to report with accuracy, some errors may occur.

We apologize and invite you to contact us at 615-964-5134, ext. 229 with corrections.

In Honor Of

First Steps is grateful to the donors who made gifts in honor of others in the 2022-23 year

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Jennifer Barnes

In memory of Spencer Day

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*In honor of Lezette Thomason
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