



# ANNUAL REPORT

2023-24



[FirstStepsNashville.org](https://www.FirstStepsNashville.org)

**A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Dear Friends,

In a world that often throws challenges our way, resilience is the strength that helps us navigate through difficulties and emerge stronger. Resilience isn't just facing challenges; it's about learning and growing from them. Each obstacle we face presents an opportunity to develop new skills. Maintaining a sense of hope can help us all build our resilience. Each small step forward is a victory.

What a gift it is to be a witness to this every day at First Steps. The determination of our children who achieve new milestones; the families who adapt to the changing needs of their children; and the staff who extend their learning through adapting to meet the needs of our families.

Your support inspires this culture of resilience, empowering the organization and the children and families we are blessed to serve. Thank you.

Wishing you strength and resilience in all that you do.

Warm regards,

Executive Director

# 2023-24 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Drew Weiskopf  
*Board President*

Ryan Keith  
*Board Secretary*

Abhay Karandikar  
*Board Treasurer*

Emily Childers  
Hank Clay  
Jacqueline Dixon  
Christy Farrell  
Eric Hoefflin  
Megan Kelly  
Ben Lemly  
Schaefer Rowe  
Kirsten Schriener  
Jordan See  
Kates Potempa  
Ashley Taylor, *Young Leaders Council Intern*



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.

Our **vision** is to:

- 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



## HOW WE SERVE - INTEGRATED SERVICES

First Steps stands out as one of very few providers where therapists and classroom teachers are a team in the same facility, creating an inclusive, seamless way to learn. Some families choose to access First Steps' therapy services outside the classroom. Others may need therapy to come to their home or another facility. We offer all of these options!

### 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

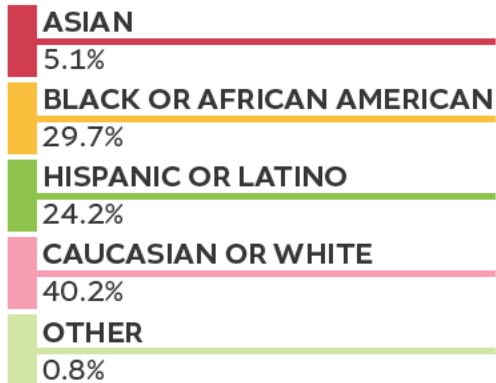
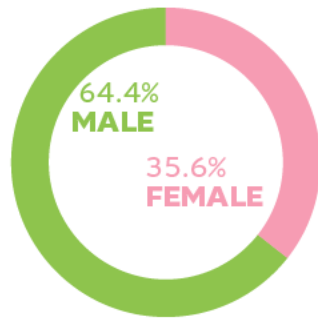
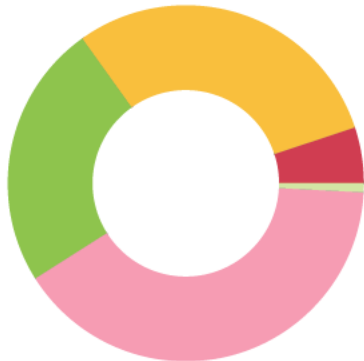
Pediatric Therapy at First Steps provides occupational, speech-language, physical and feeding therapies for children with special needs (ages birth to 12) in the McWhorter Family Children's Center.

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM

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

# IMPACT OF YOUR INVESTMENT IN FIRST STEPS' MISSION

In FY 2023-24, **1,074 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 **19,055 therapy sessions** were completed. Parents and caregivers were encouraged to share their experiences as each program strives to evolve and meet the needs of each family.



**PEDIATRIC THERAPY** served 260 children with 7,349 therapy sessions. Therapies improved their overall health - occupational (achieving a high percentage of their individual goals after 12 sessions), feeding (increased chewing skills and/or acceptance of a variety of foods/textures), physical (demonstrating increased functional mobility after 18 sessions) and speech-language (increased in comprehension, number of words, pictures/signs to communicate their need).

“The friendliness and care of staff, the attention to my child's needs and the treatment we have received is the best.”



**COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM** served 787 children/families with 11,706 therapy sessions. 82.5% of the children made progress with their individual developmental goals.



“There is no judgement or criticism during hard times. My efforts, no matter how small, are acknowledged and encouraged. I feel empowered to raise my kids using the skills I've gained.”



**CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER** served 100 children through the FY23-24. 89% of the children served met their benchmarks in social emotional, language, literacy, physical, cognitive and mathematics skills.

**90%**  
AGREE

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

**97%**  
AGREE

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

“I love that my child gets to go to school with kids with varying needs and abilities, and that therapy is normalized and part of the classroom environment.”

### ELIMINATING BARRIERS

Your investment immediately bridges the financial gap for families with limited assets who are unable to access early intervention services and reduces the need for special education and support services in the future.



### QUALITY PERSONNEL

Your gift attracts and retains the best early intervention teachers and therapists, forming a consistent and dedicated team committed to each child's full and unique potential.



### FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY

Your support ensures that First Steps has the capacity to navigate the changing landscape of funding necessary to maintain and expand its work.

# *Celebrating* EACH CHILD'S UNIQUE *potential*

## **Ben was born with Hyperekplexia and is partially deaf.**

Hyperekplexia causes motor delays, epilepsy, and feeding issues. At birth he was cared for in the NICU for a very long time and had multiple surgeries. Today he has a Gastrostomy tube (G-tube), cochlear implants, a gate trainer for walking and leg braces. Additionally, he needs daily breathing treatments, and various therapies and medications.

He and his family use sign language and pointing gestures to communicate, but one of Ben's biggest development goals has been tolerating strangers saying hello in public community spaces. Easy for most children, but not easy for Ben. In the past, he has experienced seizures from getting upset around unfamiliar faces and this has severely limited his family's ability to leave their home, isolating them all.

With the guidance of their Developmental Therapist, they started addressing this challenge by first going to the library with his family, where it is quieter. With more practice to increase everyone's confidence, Ben has now been able to successfully go with his family on short shopping trips and has worked his way to eating in a restaurant without anxiety or a seizure.

In April, he and his Mom and sister attended First Steps' Run Walk Roll for All Abilities event. This was a very busy environment with many new people and lots of noise/music, but Ben not only enjoyed the event, he soared past the finish line of the Super Hero fun run. His expression tells the whole story.

*Mission accomplished!*



**Thank you** to the volunteers and interns who generously gave their time and talents to First Steps in 2023-24.

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Malia Porto

**PEDIATRIC THERAPY**

Bertha Gunter  
Brenna Hunt  
Christian Thomas

**CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

Anabela Caiola  
Kevin Driver  
Cate Laird  
Caroline Simmons  
Sydney Smith  
Amory Taylor

**VINO EVENT COMMITTEE**

Megan Kelly, *Chair*  
Christy Farrell  
Claire Francis  
Maggie Johnson  
Mollie Reed  
Liz Tardio  
Ashley Taylor



**RUN WALK ROLL FOR ALL ABILITIES**

Anne Marie Turan, *Chair*

Nikki Burdine, *WKRN News 2*

T-Rac, *Tennessee Titans*

Andrew Greer, *Lipscomb Academy Athletics*

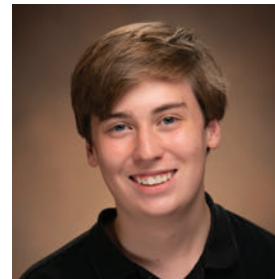


We are grateful for three groups who volunteered their time to assist with facility projects.

**BRIDGESTONE AMERICAS**



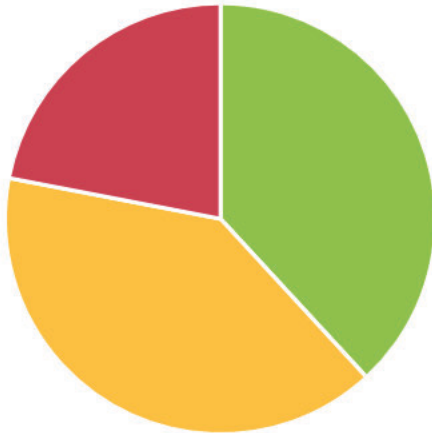
**EAGLE SCOUT PETER BRYANT & BOY SCOUT TROOP 31**



**HCA HEALTHCARE**

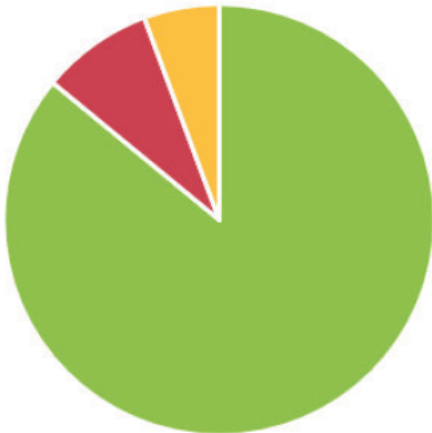


## REVENUE



- Government\* - 38%
- Program Revenue - 40%
- Fundraising and Events - 22%

## EXPENSES



- Program Services - 86%
- Administrative - 8%
- Fundraising - 6%

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



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



*Contact [hhiggins@firststepsnashville.org](mailto:hhiggins@firststepsnashville.org) if you have any questions about the agency's gift acceptance policy.*



# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT



Because of you, children have access to an inclusive environment where they can learn and thrive.



JOIN US AND STAY IN TOUCH



FirstStepsNashville



Firststepsnashville



First-Steps-Inc



Firststepsnash



1900 Graybar Lane // Nashville, TN 37215 // 615-690-3091

[www.firststepsnashville.org](http://www.firststepsnashville.org)