

Open Doors for Kids, a Campaign for Children, Youth & Family Services

OVERVIEW

Mission and Vision

Children, Youth & Family Services is all about kids and has been for 87 years! Our mission is *Opening to doors to bright futures for kids*, and our vision is that *Every child in our community has value and a future rich with possibilities*.

History

Children, Youth & Family Services was founded in 1921 as an orphanage during the Spanish Influenza epidemic. CYFS continues to meet community needs by reaching children wherever they are – at home, in child care, in school, or on the streets – and increasing their chance for a successful future.

Role in the Community

During the past year alone, our programs reached over 3,500 children in low-income or at-risk families, working to meet their immediate needs and helping those around them to create healthy environments at home, in child care and school, and in the community. CYFS programs address the issues of poverty, abuse and neglect, parenting, child care quality, teen runaways, and early learning, including social and pre-literacy skills. We mentor and support at-risk moms as they learn to parent their children; we teach children in Head Start and home child care the skills they need to make healthy decisions and succeed in school; we ensure that child care providers offer developmentally appropriate, enriching environments for the children in their care; we offer counseling to children who have been the victims of abuse; we provide shelter and support to runaway teens; and we teach parents of kids of all ages effective ways to parent their children.

The need is evident and urgent:

- 49% of Charlottesville's children are eligible for free and reduced price school lunches – a reliable indicator of family income;
- 21% of area children live in poverty;
- the teen pregnancy rate in Charlottesville is three times the state teen pregnancy rate;
- only 40% of Charlottesville children live with both parents;
- 49.5 reports of abuse are made for every 1,000 children – and the number is growing;
- 26% of city kindergarteners are found to lack basic kindergarten readiness skills – a deficit that research shows will follow them throughout their school years.
- 64% of the Charlottesville families with children have all adults working outside the home. The rate in Albemarle County is 60.4%.

But the future is bright:

Children served by CYFS programs consistently rise above the statistics, entering kindergarten ready to learn, enjoying healthy family relationships, making healthy choices.

CYFS Programs

- **Early Learning:** STAR Kids and Play Partners send staff and volunteers to work with children in local Head Start and child care facilities. STAR Kids uses puppets and play activities to help kids learn strategies for making healthy choices – choices that will help them avoid risky behaviors such as the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco when they are older. Play Partners volunteers currently visit eleven child care homes every week to share the love of books with the children in their care. A new book is introduced every month, and after four weeks of activities around the themes in the book, a copy is given to each child to take home. The skills that children gain through Play Partners activities help them arrive at their first day of Kindergarten ready to learn and succeed in school. In 2006-2007, 393 children were served by these two programs.

- **Home Visiting:** Healthy Families and Family Partners programs send professional Home Visitors to work with parents of young children to help them create a healthy, nurturing environment that meets their children's needs. Families enrolled in these programs have one or more risk factors for abuse or neglect, and this program helps them use their own strengths to set achievable goals and effectively parent their children. A Fatherhood Specialist works with fathers in the program and throughout the community, helping them to become REAL (Responsible, Engaged, Available, Loving) Dads. In 2006-2007, Home Visitors made 960 home visits with 60 parents and 78 children.

- **Child Care Quality:** When parents work outside the home, they need dependable and safe care for their children. Parents seeking quality child care in Charlottesville and surrounding counties can get advice and help with locating child care providers free of charge from the CYFS Resource and Referral Service. In addition, child care providers receive training and support to gain voluntary state registration and improve the quality of the care they provide so that the time children spend in care is developmentally appropriate and enriching. CYFS administers the Seal of Good Child Care rating system that helps to identify and honor high quality child care providers. Last year 626 families and 251 child care providers and staff were served by this program.

- **Victims of Child Abuse:** This program provides professional counseling to children and adolescents who are victims of child abuse or neglect, as well as to non-abusing family members, to heal the trauma of the abuse and create safe and nurturing home environments. The counseling is free of charge and available as long as the child needs it. VOCA also provides community outreach and education about issues surrounding child abuse. Last year 119 children and non-abusing family members received counseling through our VOCA program.

- **Teen Services:** Our Runaway Emergency Services Program (RESP) provides a 24-hour hotline for kids in crisis and emergency shelter in volunteer homes for kids who have run away, are at risk of running away or are homeless, with continuing counseling and support as

long as they need it. These services are also free of charge to families. In 2006-2007, 156 teens were helped by our hotline, 28 received ongoing counseling, and 14 were given emergency shelter.

- **Parent Education:** Family Connections offers parenting classes to families of young children, families of teenagers, and families torn by divorce or violence. Our Six Easy Steps and Surviving the Teen Years classes give parents a toolbox of strategies to use as they work to provide love, support, discipline and appropriate care for their children. Our workshops address special situations, such as co-parenting after divorce or caring for toddlers. In 2006-2007, 303 parents participated in CYFS parenting education programs. An additional 1,000 were reached through the ParentingMobile, a bright green van staffed by parent educators that visits neighborhoods and community events throughout the year.

The theme shared by all of our programs is that they are all about kids – about reaching children wherever they are – at home, in child care, in school, or on the streets – and increasing their chance for a successful future.

Expanding Our Reach

In the past several years, CYFS has grown and expanded its reach to at-risk children and their families in our community. As we have expanded our programs, we have outgrown our current building. We have to hold parent education classes and staff meetings off-site and need more space to fully meet the needs of our counseling clients.

Building Will Solve Urgent Need for Space and Accommodate Innovation

CYFS has been presented with an extraordinary opportunity to acquire a new building. The acquisition of this much larger space will allow us to realize several innovations that will greatly benefit the kids and families we serve. We will create a model education center that our staff will use to train child care providers and teach classes for parents and teens. Having this state-of-the-art education center on-site will help families access the classes they need when they need them and allow our staff to respond immediately to requests for information and resources. We will be able to offer our counseling clients – abused children, teens in crisis, and at-risk moms – more privacy and more appointment opportunities because we will have more rooms designed and devoted exclusively to counseling, helping them more effectively resolve the trauma and crises they are experiencing. And, we will have the space to expand and modify our programming as the needs of children and families in our community grow and change.

The new building, located at 1000 East High Street, will also allow us to provide more accessible services for our clients as it, is on a major, visible intersection in Charlottesville, served by two city bus lines, and within easy walking distance of downtown. The building is fully handicapped accessible with ample parking on-site.

Generous Donors Provide Unique Opportunity

Hearing of our need, local philanthropists, Jim and Becky Craig – after consulting with the board and the Executive Director – purchased a wonderful nearby office building with almost twice the space of our current location. The Craigs have made a lead gift of \$500,000 and have offered to lease the building to us rent-free for three years, while we raise the money to purchase the building ourselves. Renovations, for which the Craigs have also generously agreed to pay, are now underway.

Campaign Goal

The goal of the *Open Doors for Kids* Campaign is to raise two million dollars by the end of 2010. Contributions pledged before the end of 2009 will help us meet a challenge grant from the Perry Foundation. Including the Craigs' lead gift, the Perry challenge and pledges from all twenty-three members of our Board of Directors, we have thus far raised \$1,123,150 toward this ambitious and important goal.