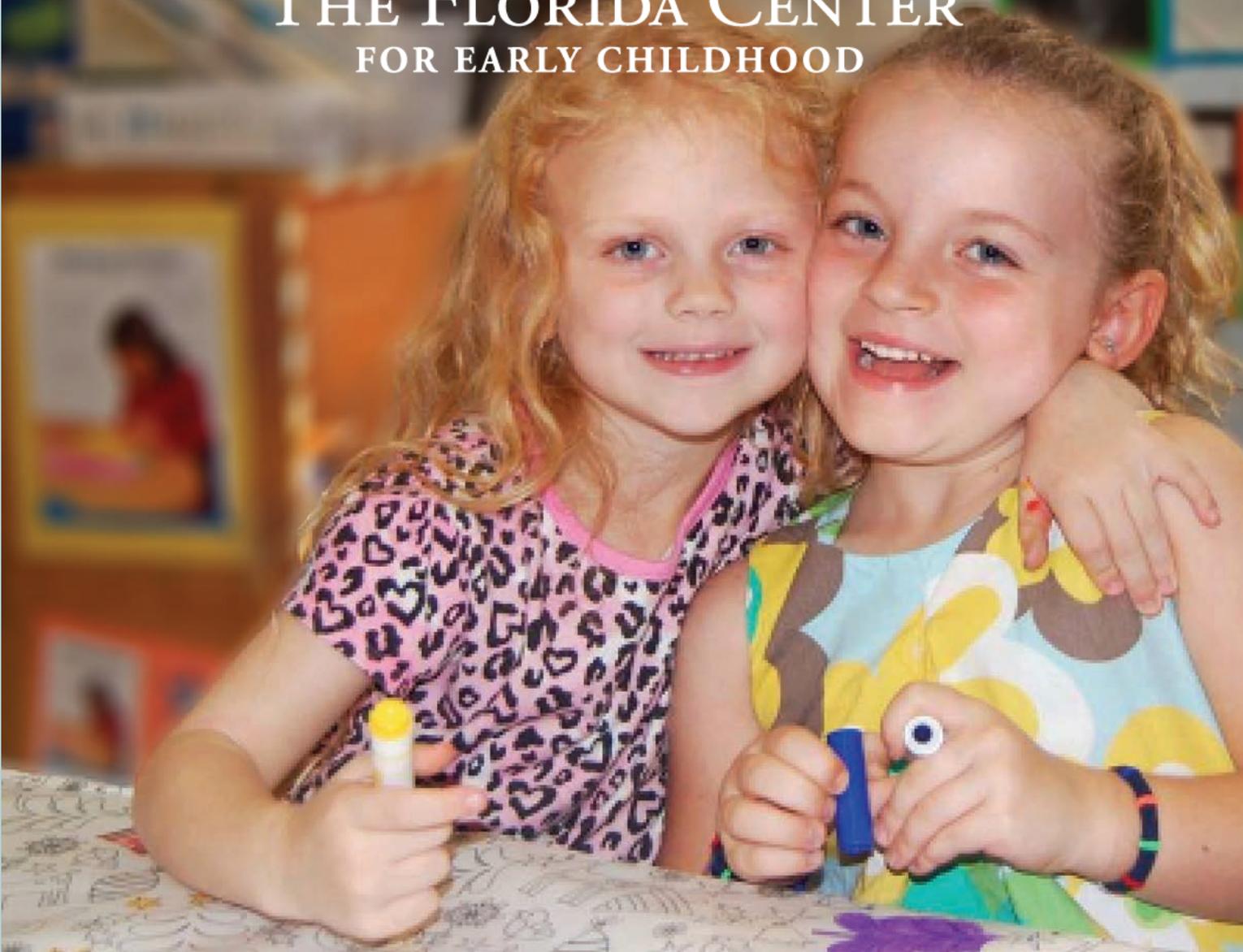




THE FLORIDA CENTER
FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD



Impact Report 2016/2017





Larry Lawman, Board Chair, and Kathryn Shea, President/CEO, visit Starfish Academy.

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Saran Devaughn, Starfish Academy Principal
Kaitlyn Kramer, Director of Marketing



Dear Friends,

“It takes a village.” How many times have you heard or said this familiar phrase? At The Florida Center for Early Childhood, we know this saying still remains true. Thankfully, we have a very caring village. Because of you - your time, generous contributions, and continued belief that every child deserves the opportunity to achieve their potential, more children received care at The Florida Center in 2016-2017 than ever before.

As we approach the 40th anniversary of The Florida Center’s programs for young children and their families, we face increased needs. Many children require multiple therapies to reach developmental milestones and gain the tools necessary to succeed in kindergarten and beyond. In addition to the services provided at our Sarasota and North Port campuses, the Healthy Families team reaches farther into the community, offering guidance and support to at-risk families throughout Southwest Florida. Thanks to partnerships with local foundations, county governments, school districts, and individuals, we are making great progress in reaching children and families! We are truly grateful for our “village.”

By investing in The Florida Center, you are helping to transform the lives of over 2,500 children and their families. In the pages of this report, you will meet some of these families and read their success stories, which were made possible with hard work and the support of caring people like you. Together, we are providing thousands of hours of therapy and services to our most vulnerable populations, helping them gain the tools they need for success. Together, we are “Building Strong Families...One Child at a Time.”

With much gratitude,

Kathryn Shea
President and CEO

Larry Lawman
Board Chairman

We envision a time when every child will be loved, nurtured and encouraged to reach their full potential.

The Florida Center for Early Childhood helps children and their families overcome obstacles to reaching their full potential. Children from birth to eight years old in Sarasota, Charlotte, Manatee, DeSoto and Hardee counties can receive early education and therapeutic services, regardless of income.

In addition to speech and occupational therapies, families benefit from:

- Mental health therapy
- Behavioral support
- Inclusion-model preschool
- In-home parenting support
- The state's only Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders diagnostic clinic.

According to the World Health Organization, high quality early childhood care and education programs greatly improve children's chances for success in later life. Unfortunately, approximately **one in four** children through the age of five are at risk for a developmental delay or disability.

Early identification allows child care professionals to intervene during the critical phases of brain development, leading to more effective treatment. In particular, it can improve the lives of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children and their families. These services are also more cost-efficient during the preschool years, rather than later in life.

Our Mission:

To help build and foster strong families and expand the potential of young children.



Approximately *one in four* children through the age of five are at risk for a developmental delay or disability.

– U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Building strong families...
one child at a time.

95%

of children in our Starfish Academy demonstrate improvement in early literacy and self-regulation.

93%

of children demonstrate progress in communication skills.

94%

of children demonstrate progress in fine or gross motor skills.

100%

of parents indicate that they are satisfied with services provided by our developmental therapy program.



Starfish Academy

The Starfish Academy at The Florida Center is a nationally accredited, inclusion preschool program serving children 6 weeks to 5 years old, including Voluntary Prekindergarten.

Our highly trained, nurturing educators focus on teaching important skills to prepare children for success in kindergarten and beyond. The Starfish Academy incorporates music, art and drama into our early childhood education to encourage growth for the “whole child.” Teachers work in tandem with therapists to provide a full range of services on-site, which helps children progress more quickly toward developmental goals.

DID YOU KNOW?

The brain doubles in size in a child’s first year, and by age six it has reached 90% of its adult development.

- Urban Child Institute



Annabella's Story

Annabella began attending the Starfish Academy at three years old. Her special needs involved extremely low muscle tone, limiting her physical abilities to laying on the floor or sitting with assistance. Her teachers, mother, and therapists all worked together using specific strategies to help Annabella meet appropriate developmental milestones.

One year later, her mom, Darcy, has seen incredible changes in Annabella. Darcy says Annabella not only can sit up on her own, but stands, climbs, and can walk with assistance. She is much more alert when her name is called, makes eye contact, claps, babbles and waves. Darcy credits the team at The Florida Center for working closely together to help Annabella develop new skills.

Darcy says she found the Starfish Academy's inclusion program and wrap-around services to be very welcoming and a great asset to her daughter's development and education. "The program is unlike any other school, where most kids with special needs are automatically separated. This is the only place I would ever think about sending a child with disabilities. It's been amazing seeing how Annabella has grown since coming here," says Darcy.



Developmental Therapies

At The Florida Center for Early Childhood, Developmental Therapy Services are provided by Speech-Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, and an Infant-Toddler Developmental Specialist. Our trained professionals work with agency teachers and mental health counselors, to ensure children are reaching their goals for growth and development. We provide diagnostic services treatment options for children from birth to 8 years old who have special needs.

DID YOU KNOW?

1,000,000 new neural connections are formed every second in a child's first two years of life.

– Harvard University Center on the Developing Child





Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

Mental health for infants and young children includes the ability to experience and express emotions, form close and secure relationships, and learn through exploring their environment.

Through the infant and early childhood mental health services at The Florida Center, children from birth to age eight receive therapies for a variety of issues that include aggression, grief or loss, exposure to a traumatic event, fear or anxiety, depression, hyperactivity, parent/child relationship challenges, difficulties in childcare or school, and fussiness or difficulties calming down.

Our mental health therapists are trained to meet the unique developmental needs of infants and young children, both in our classrooms and out in the community.

Our family-centered team approach and integration of therapies helps to ensure that all children's developmental needs are being met.

DID YOU KNOW?

High quality birth-to-five programs can yield up to 13% return on investment.

- Prof. James Heckman

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Clinic

The Florida Center for Early Childhood is home to the State's first and only Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Clinic. The purpose of the clinic is to diagnose issues related to prenatal alcohol exposure, as well as to provide education and training statewide on FASD. The Clinic evaluates individuals of all ages. Problems related to pre-natal alcohol exposure can include language, motor and cognitive delays. Issues associated with FASD tend to intensify as children become adults.



Healthy Families

Healthy Families is an award-winning program that promotes healthy child development, family stability, and self-sufficiency. The program prevents child abuse and neglect among high-risk families. The Florida Center serves Sarasota, Charlotte and DeSoto/Hardiee Counties, and is the lead agency for Healthy Families in Southwest Florida.

Denise is part of the family support team at The Florida Center, and worked with Danielle and her husband Rory, as they faced overwhelming financial issues, a baby on the way, and the loss of Danielle's mother. Danielle admits how frightening it was to have a growing family and for the first time, barely able to make ends meet. Then she met Denise who worked with the entire family, and provided structure and guidance, which included teaching them how to set achievable goals. They learned how to improve their credit, return to school, manage their budget, and eventually, reach a financial stability that allowed them to buy their first home.

From a joyful Danielle, "We've been on quite a journey so far, and accomplished so much. Denise taught us how we could do this on our own. Teaching us that we are capable - no matter how deep the hole, no matter how big the goal. I certainly never dreamed in a million years I would own a home, yet here I am. Anything is possible, and not even the sky is the limit!"

"Thank you Denise for never giving up on me even when I didn't believe in myself. Thank you Healthy Families for giving me the tools so that I could help myself."



2500+

children and families served.

2nd

infant classroom opened.

100%

of children in families who complete the Healthy Families Program have no verified findings of maltreatment after 12 months.

744

families were served through the Healthy Families program. (Contracted for 692.)

94%

of families in Health Families Sarasota improve or maintain self-sufficiency while enrolled.



“It helps children feel prepared and gives them a safe environment to work out their feelings,” says Alex Cleworth, Alta Vista’s 2017 Teacher of the Year.



Creating a Mindful Classroom

Through a collaboration with Sarasota County schools, a greater number of children are benefiting from The Florida Center’s mental health services. Walk into any second-grade classroom at Alta Vista Elementary and you may find students “smelling the flowers and blowing out candles”—a tactic that helps students become aware of their breathing, self-regulate emotions, and prepare for their next task—all with the goal of fostering success.

With guidance from our mental health therapists at The Florida Center, second graders and their teachers are learning and practicing mindfulness. Students come from diverse backgrounds – some very challenging. Teachers find they need to provide techniques for students to regulate their feelings before they can begin to focus on academics. A second-grade Alta Vista teacher says, “This has been a phenomenal program for us. I have found that meditation and mindfulness techniques have helped not only with students in my classroom, but with my own family too.”

At The Florida Center, children in the Starfish Academy preschool begin learning meditation techniques and self-regulation as early as age two. The program is based on the “MindUP” curriculum, which promotes the development of social and emotional skills to provide a foundation for safe and positive learning. These in-class meditation practices help students learn self-awareness, empathy, appropriate emotional reactions for their environment, and responsible decision-making.

DID YOU KNOW?

1 out of 7 U.S. children aged 2 to 8 years had a diagnosed mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.

– Center for Disease Control and Prevention



Carol's Story



Carol is a valued employee of The Florida Center, but is also a foster parent with her husband, Paul. Today, they have opened up their home to six foster children, four of whom are currently enrolled in the Starfish Academy and receiving our unique wrap-around services including speech, mental health and occupational therapy.

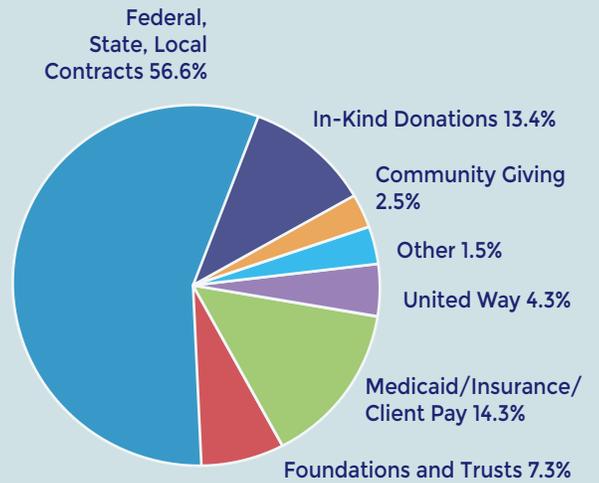
“I have had a chance to meet some truly exceptional people. Everyone has taken an interest in our kiddos not only scholastically, but also from a personal standpoint,” says Carol. Each morning, before beginning her job as the billing and systems administrator at The Florida Center, Carol drops off their twin 2-year-olds and two 4-year-olds at The Starfish Academy.

“The 4-year-old in Voluntary Prekindergarten has gone from three out of four benchmarks falling below expectations to three out of four areas exceeding expectations. The twins are now talking clearly, non-stop,” she said. “I can’t wait to see how our newest little one will blossom. She can’t wait to see her teachers and has already mastered the morning classroom check-in process.”

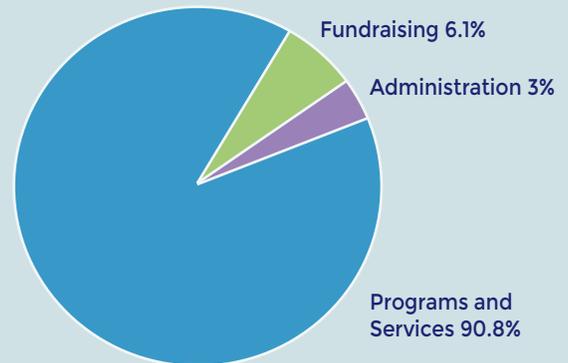
Carol recommends The Florida Center to other parents – foster or not. “This is the best place for a child. Any child. They excel at engaging children where they are and gently bring them to the place they need to be. They are whole-child centered.”

Funding Their Future

Total Operating Revenue and Support: \$5,550,726



Total Operating Expenses: \$5,506,670



Net Assets

Changes in net assets	\$ 44,056
Net assets beginning of year	\$ 1,339,334
Net assets end of year	\$ 1,383,390

Fiscal information prepared from financial statements of The Florida Center for Early Childhood, Inc. as audited by Shinn & Company, LLC., Certified Public Accountants.



Thank you for investing in their future*

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*Gifts from 7/1/2016-6/30/2017

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