

Local Funding for Collaborative Project Will Help Families with Young Children Thrive

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The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, the United Way of Forsyth County, and The Winston-Salem Foundation provide joint funding for a collaboration among five leading community agencies.

Five leading community agencies have announced a collaborative project which will receive funding from three major community funding organizations in a joint effort to improve the lives of families with young children in vulnerable neighborhoods. The financial support will fund the development and launch of a family success collaborative, called "STRONG@HOME," designed to address issues of poverty for families and school readiness for children in these families.



Beginning in the fall, 100 families enrolled in Head Start and fifty families with young children in Boston-Thurmond will become members of STRONG@HOME. Six family advocates will work on behalf of the families to connect them to the services of the partner agencies. In addition, family members will draw upon their own talents and skills to help achieve their goals and assist other families in the project.

The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, the United Way of Forsyth County, and The Winston-Salem Foundation have joined resources to provide more than \$1.4 million to support the collaborative effort. The United Way awarded \$266,351, and The Winston-Salem Foundation granted \$100,800 toward the first year of the project. The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust has awarded \$800,000 over the next three years, and the Family Services Head Start program will contribute \$96,250 each year, making the initial commitment to the anti-poverty and school readiness project a total of \$1,455,901.

"The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust has long been committed to helping Forsyth County residents improve their quality of life," said Joe Crocker, director of the Trust's Poor and Needy Division. "We are proud to support "STRONG@HOME" because it allows us to help families dealing with poverty, as well as invest in school readiness efforts for our community's youngest children, which is a critical piece of our long-term Great Expectations initiative."

"We are grateful to these community leaders for endorsing our collective efforts to ensure that young children will be able to grow and develop in a nurturing home and community," said Bob Feikema, president and CEO of Family Services, the lead agency in the project.

STRONG@HOME is a collaboration of Family Services with Goodwill Industries of Northwest North Carolina, Financial Pathways of the Piedmont, **Imprints Cares**, and Habitat for Humanity of Forsyth County. Working together, the project will help low-income parents and their children thrive as each partner provides evidence-based programs that are designed to overcome barriers to success.



"Poverty falls especially hard on families with young children. Parents often lack sufficient education, marketable job skills, and affordable housing," Feikema explained. "Poverty produces unremitting stress and can lead to

behavioral health problems. Parents are hard-pressed to find the time and energy to parent effectively. And, when resources are limited at home and in the neighborhood, children too often are not ready to succeed when they enter school.”

“Unfortunately, one in five residents in our community currently lives in poverty,” said Cindy Gordineer, president and CEO, United Way of Forsyth County. “We know that poverty doesn’t relate only to the finances of a family. It also impacts children’s educational success, their health and general well-being. That’s why solutions to the challenge of poverty need to be equally interconnected, which is exactly what STRONG@HOME is attempting to achieve.”

Scott Wierman, president of The Winston-Salem Foundation, noted, “This is a great example of a collaborative effort by local funding organizations to help local families and their children succeed first by identifying and utilizing family and neighborhood assets. That is what Asset-Based Community Development is all about, and we wholeheartedly support it.”

Feikema said that a project of this scope is unprecedented in Forsyth County and sets a new standard for how organizations can work together to improve the well-being of families with preschool children.

“We’re breaking new ground,” he said. “Thanks to the support of the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, The Winston-Salem Foundation, the United Way of Forsyth County, Head Start, and our partner agencies, STRONG@HOME has the potential to transform how families utilize human services to improve their lives and their neighborhoods.”