

SUCCESS

FOR ALL STUDENTS,
TEACHERS, AND FAMILIES



SMART BEGINNINGS DANVILLE PITTSYLVANIA RECEIVES \$3.9 MILLION INVESTMENT FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Smart Beginnings Danville Pittsylvania (SBDP) will receive a \$3.9 million grant from the Danville Regional Foundation (DRF) to continue its support of the early childhood system in Danville and Pittsylvania County.

The mission of SBDP is to strengthen the system of individuals and organizations educating and caring for children ages birth to five. “Over the last ten years, Smart Beginnings has built and maintained a reliable, regional hub for school readiness efforts. Our goal is to ensure that all young children are physically, emotionally and intellectually ready to succeed in life,” says Dr. Julie Brown, SBDP Board Chair.

Since 2010, SBDP and its partners have improved performance on PALS K, Virginia’s reading readiness assessment, by fifty percent. “We work closely with preschool programs, including the Virginia Preschool Initiative, Head Start, private childcare, and family day homes. Our partners also include Departments of Social Services, PATHS, the Community Services Board, Averett University, Danville Community College, the United Way, Danville Public Schools, Pittsylvania County Schools, the YMCA, the City of Danville, Boys & Girls Club, our parent partners and others. Working in collaboration with other organizations is key,” explains Ann Vandervliet Stratton, executive director.

SBDP has leveraged DRF’s infrastructure investment to raise another \$3.5 million to increase training and technical assistance for early childhood programs working with infants and toddlers, children ages 3-5, and children K-5 in need of childcare during the pandemic. “Our region is fortunate to have a funder that continues to prioritize the health and well being of our youngest citizens,” adds Stratton.

With DRF’s renewed investment in school readiness, SBDP will create a school readiness data system to



track 100 data points. “This will help the community improve its understanding of the impact and cost of unaddressed stress factors in families, utilization of existing resources, and gaps in resources,” explains Angela Barnes, director of PCCA Head Start and a member of the data steering committee. “Strong information can inform where resources and improvement strategies are needed most,” adds Stratton.

Other goals include:

- ☑ Increase early detection and treatment of developmental delays or other special needs, including “gap funding” for costs associated with out-of-town assessment and treatment that insurance will not pay and providing incentives to pediatric specialists to serve this area
- ☑ Increase access to preschool for vulnerable 4 year old children by providing gap funding for children on VA Preschool Initiative or Head Start wait lists
- ☑ Increase access to home visiting for parents by expanding options and capacity
- ☑ Increase awareness and utilization of important services and support for parents with young children by funding collaborative marketing efforts
- ☑ Continue to improve access to high quality childcare by providing training and technical assistance for all adults working with or caring for children ages birth to five

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There are approximately 5,000 children ages birth to five living in Danville and Pittsylvania County. Almost 3,000 of those children live in households at the 200% poverty level (60% in Danville and 53% in Pittsylvania County). “Poverty and related stressors have multiple, long lasting affects on young children. A strong early childhood system of resources can provide critical support,” notes Jessie Barksdale, immediate past chairman of SBDP.

“Smart Beginnings is an excellent example of DRF prioritizing investments in transformative projects throughout the Dan River Region,” said Clark Casteel, president and CEO of Danville Regional Foundation. “Their work in ensuring that our local early childhood system is connected, collaborative and effective has been invaluable to this community and the impact can be seen in our local children and families.”



SMART BEGINNINGS OFFERS A “SAFE PLACE TO LEARN”

SBDP was awarded a \$1.25 million Ready Regions for School Age Care grant. With this funding, SBDP has launched the “Safe Place to Learn” initiative. The goal of Safe Place to Learn is to provide safe places for economically and academically vulnerable children who are attending virtual school part or full time, and in need of in-person academic and emotional support throughout the day.

As part of the initiative, SBDP is providing the following supports for the childcare community:

- Scholarships that cover 100% of the tuition costs for children ages 3 – 12 with pre-approved Safe Place to Learn vendors. Vendors include: 2B Successful Youth ▪ Abundant Life Child Care and Learning Center ▪ Boys & Girls Clubs of the Danville Area ▪ Children’s House ▪ Danville Parks and Recreation ▪ Duck Mentoring Program – The Learning Hub ▪ Just Kids Child Development Center ▪ Learn ‘N’ Play Childcare Center ▪ Pathfinders Resources, Inc. ▪ The Harvest Corner: Child Kare Center and Guidance Services ▪ Two Cares Daycare ▪ Wanda’s Wonderland, YMCA ▪ Danville ▪ Children’s First Learning Center, LLC ▪ New Beginnings Virtual and Remote Day Care center, LLC. ▪ YMCA – Altavista ▪ Little Blessings Child Care, Inc. ▪ Play N Pretend ▪ Danville Redevelopment and Housing Authority
- One-time “Hero Pay” stipends to recognize full time employees in the child care industry, who have continued to work throughout this difficult time
- Training and technical assistance to providers through the VA Partnership for Out of School Time (VPOST).

For more information, please contact Shana Galloway or Jessica Breakley at 797-8887. This initiative is facilitated by SBDP with funding provided by the Governor and Virginia General Assembly. SBDP is working with the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation to administer the “Ready Regions – Emergency School-Age Child Care for Virginia Families” funding from Jan. 1 – June 30, 2021.

IMAGINATION LIBRARY TRANSITIONS TO UNITED WAY

Smart Beginnings DP is transferring the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to the United Way of Danville and Pittsylvania County (UWDPC). Literacy-rich environments are an important support for “reading readiness,” especially in economically challenged homes. The Imagination Library provides vulnerable children with new, high-quality and age-appropriate books, at the rate of one book per month, from the time they are born until their fifth birthday. There are currently over 700 local children enrolled in the Imagination Library, most of whom are enrolled in some other type of program such as Healthy Families, Head Start or VPI. “We need your help to continue to offer this service. Please consider a \$29 annual pledge to help us provide books to young children who may not otherwise have access to them,” Jennifer Smith, President/CEO, UWDPC.



If you would like to make a donation, please call the United Way at 792-3700.

Preschool Matters Initiative:

SUPPORTING HIGH QUALITY TEACHER – CHILD INTERACTIONS!

The Preschool Matters Initiative has been busy conducting spring CLASS observations at local early childhood programs. These observations provide feedback and guidance for classrooms and teachers and serve to prepare programs for changes under Virginia's new Unified Measurement and Improvement System. Thank you to the following partners for their participation!

Abundant Life Child Care and Educational Center ▪ Garnetta Deshazor ▪ Brosville Elementary ▪ Chatham Elementary ▪ Community Improvement Council, Inc. ▪ Head Start ▪ Cynthia Morton ▪ Gretna Elementary ▪ Grove Park Preschool ▪ Helping Hands Child Development Center ▪ John L. Hurt Elementary ▪ Just Kids Too ▪ Kentuck Elementary ▪ Kid-Konnection Child Development Center ▪ Learn N' Play Child Care Center ▪ Little Blessings Child Care, Inc. ▪ Michelle Borst ▪ Mount Airy Elementary ▪ Northside Preschool ▪ PCCA Bethel Head Start ▪ PCCA Head Start - Joseph L. Galloway ▪ PCCA Shiloh Head Start ▪ Penny Bruce ▪ Searlet Howard ▪ Shirley Ferrell ▪ Small World Child Care Center ▪ Southside Elementary ▪ Stony Mill Elementary ▪ The Harvest Corner ▪ TwoCares Daycare ▪ Twin Springs Elementary Preschool ▪ Union Hall Elementary Preschool ▪ Wanda Joyner ▪ Children's First ▪ Play & Pretend

SBDP welcomes two new CLASS certified observers to the team:

» **Jessica C. Testerman** is the owner and Program Director of Helping Hands Child Development Center. She has worked in child care for 18 years. Helping Hands is a licensed Child Day Center with the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), a subsidy vendor for VDSS, and is currently working with the Virginia Quality initiative program. Mrs. Testerman is active in the community and enjoys giving back by volunteering at her children's schools. She and her husband Nathan have 3 children.



» **Dr. Sandra Andrews** retired from Danville Public Schools after 30 years of service as a teacher, administrator, and central office administrator. Her educational background includes a B.S. from Averett College, an M.Ed. in Adapted Physical Education from the University of Virginia, an M.Ed. in Administration and Supervision from Liberty University, and a Ph.D. in K-12 Educational Leadership from Walden University.



TIPS FROM RECENT TRAININGS

Responsive Caregiving: Tips for Getting "In Tune"

- Observe without interfering. Spend time quietly looking and listening.
- Ask the child, through words and actions, what is right for him/her.
- Ask yourself, "Is what I am doing meeting the child's needs?"
- Pay attention to your own feelings and the impact they have on the relationship.
- Be aware of your own "hot spots."
- When you take an action, watch the infant and try not to move too fast. Give the baby the opportunity to respond, and to learn from their response.
- Try to identify the reason and emotion behind an action.
- Pay special attention to what you have already learned from your interactions with each child in your care.

Ten Caregiving Gifts

- Gift 1: Respond to infants in ways that encourage them to feel they can make things happen.
- Gift 2: Help infants learn they have ways to take care of their own needs.
- Gift 3: Help infants and toddlers develop confidence and trust in others.
- Gift 4: Help babies learn about intimacy.
- Gift 5: Help toddlers learn that adults cannot solve every problem.
- Gift 6: Be tolerant of toddler's internal conflicts and desires.
- Gift 7: Help toddlers sort out the evaluations of adults.
- Gift 8: Match your reaction to the temperament of the baby.
- Gift 9: Exchange information with parents about their children.
- Gift 10: Remind children in care of an absent parent or caregiver's continued existence.



UPCOMING VIRTUAL TRAININGS

Call us at 434-797-8887 or email training@smartbeginningsdp.org to register today! Please include your name and the name and date of the training you want to register for in your email. All trainings are presented by Stephanie Mann, Virginia Infant and Toddler Specialist, unless otherwise noted.

DIVERSITY IN THE INFANT AND TODDLER LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Thursday, April 15, 2021, 1:00-2:00PM. Register online @ <https://va.gapitc.org/>

- Discover how Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) requirements relate to diversity
- Learn strategies for incorporating diversity into the early childhood learning environment
- Discuss common challenges with increasing diversity
Trainers: Stephanie Mann and Jamie Wallace

IT'S NOT JUST BABY TALK

Friday, April 16, 2021, 12:00-2:00PM. Registration Deadline: Monday, April 12, 2021.

- Explore how and when language develops
- Learn techniques for talking with children that enhance language development
- Share ideas for building language skills through routines and play experiences

EARLY MATH

Friday, May 14, 2021, 12:00-2:00PM OR Tuesday, May 18, 2021, 6:15-8:15PM. Registration Deadline: Monday, May 10 or Friday, May 14.

- Understand early math concepts and how they are acquired
- Identify indicators of early math concepts for infants and toddlers
- Discuss early math learning opportunities you can provide as infants and toddlers explore the world around them



You and the Smart Beginnings Team

It has been my honor to serve the early childhood system in Danville and Pittsylvania County the last ten years. Together, we have improved the system of care and education for young children. I remain in awe of caretakers, parents and teachers caring for the little ones each and every day. It is a challenging job. But I know you do it because you care and because you want the best for your "babies."

And, I am so grateful to our team of employees who care for the caretakers. Angela Wells, Becky Tickle, Stephanie Mann, Shana Galloway, Jessica Breakley, Helen Jane Hodges and Deb Easley work very hard to ensure that you have the training, support and resources you need to be successful guides in all things birth to five. Thank you for your passion and your partnership.

Ann

Executive Director, Ann Vandervliet Stratton, has accepted a position in NC to be closer to home. Sue Davis, Ed.D. will serve as the Interim Executive Director until a replacement is hired. She can be reached at sdavis@SmartBeginningsDP.org

FREE SUPPORT FOR INFANT & TODDLER CLASSROOMS The Infant and Toddler Specialists are now recruiting new programs for the next grant year beginning on July 1, 2021. Programs who participate receive on-site technical assistance, mentoring and support to meet goals set to increase quality in their learning environments for ages 0-3. Furthermore, they receive access to educational resources to enrich the program. Eligible programs must currently work with ages 0-3 and can be in a family day home or center-based setting. Although encouraged, programs are not required to be licensed to participate. **Call 797-8887 for more information!**

This publication supported by: The Virginia Infant & Toddler Specialist Network is a program of Child Development Resources, www.cdr.org, and is supported by the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) Grant #93.575, with funds made available to Virginia from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Danville Regional Foundation.



133 Robertson Avenue
Danville, VA 24541
Phone: (434) 797-8887
Fax: (434) 797-9999
info@SmartBeginningsDP.org

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