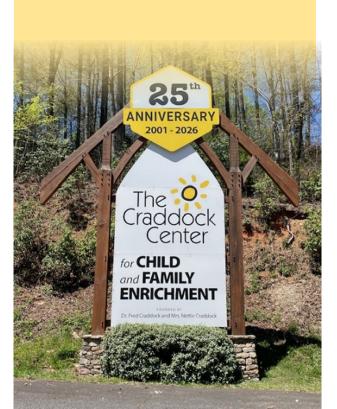


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The Craddock Center Board of Directors and Staff

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Dr. Fred B. Craddock

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Natalie Jones, Arts Specialist
Liese Connell, Arts Specialist
Claudia Bradford, Arts Specialist
Sheila Clayton, Arts Specialist
Donna Collins, Arts Specialist

From the Executive Director

Celebrating 25 Years: Investing in the Future—Our Children

This year marks a special milestone for The Craddock Center—25 years of nurturing dreams, strengthening families, and empowering the next generation. From the very beginning, our mission has been built on a simple but powerful belief: **children are our future**. Every program, partnership, and moment of care over the past quarter-century has been guided by that truth.



When The Craddock Center first began its programming in 2001, our founder, Dr. Fred Craddock saw a need to give children a stronger start in life—through education, enrichment, and encouragement. He believed that by investing in young lives today, we build stronger, more compassionate communities for tomorrow.

We often hear the phrase, "Children are our future." It's easy to nod in agreement, but let's reflect on what that truly means.

Children are our legacy. They are the ones who will carry forward our values, and our dreams. The lessons we teach them today—through our words, actions, and priorities—will echo into the world they inherit. Whether it's love, justice, compassion, or resilience, the next generation will walk forward in the direction we set for them now.

Children also shape society. They will become our leaders, our teachers, our caregivers, our inventors. The decisions they make tomorrow will be rooted in what they learn today. That's why our investment in children's education, and a sense of belonging is one of the most important investments we can ever make.

And let us not forget: **Children are a source of hope**. They remind us that new beginnings are always possible. In their energy, their imagination, and their fearless questions, we are reminded of what is still to come. Children see the world not just as it is, but as it could be—and that is a gift we should treasure.

25 years ago, Dr. Fred Craddock and The Craddock Center responded to a need and began an innovative approach to help Pre-K and Head Start children in southern Appalachia prepare for kindergarten. Dr. Craddock said, "we are about the business of enriching lives, of lifting self-esteem, of instilling a sense of self-worth, of effecting socialization so that each child can play and study and grow as an equal to other children." Today we serve nearly 1,200 three- and four-year-olds in nine counties in southern Appalachia.

As we celebrate our 25th anniversary, we're not just looking back—we're looking ahead. The world our children inherit will depend on what we do now. That's why The Craddock Center remains committed to innovation, inclusion, and inspiration in all we do. Whether through the Children's Enrichment Program, Smart Babies, Craddock Cares, and the Living Room, we will continue to stand alongside families to ensure every child has the chance to thrive.

This milestone belongs to everyone who has shared in our journey—our staff, volunteers, donors, and families. Together, we have proven that **when we invest in children**, **we invest in hope itself**.

Here's to the next 25 years of making a difference—one child, one family, one future at a time.

Kirk Cameron, Executive Director

From the President

On July 31, 2025, The Craddock Center completed its 2025 fiscal year. While we spend time looking back at the year to recognize our accomplishments, this year, we are looking forward to a very important milestone. We are celebrating our 25th year of operations.

Research shows that 12% of non-profits fail within their first year and 30% don't make it to their tenth year. There have been many studies on why non-profits fail. You may think the economy, the political climate, and other external factors are to blame. What if I told you that most of the reasons are internal. With statistics like these, how has The Craddock Center reached this impressive milestone. It all started with one man and a mission, Dr. Fred Craddock. He understood that children needed more than just having their basic needs met. He wanted for each child to have a book of their own. When getting books into the hands of children, I remember that Dr. Craddock wanted every child to experience the crack of the spine as they opened a brand-new book of their very own.

How did The Craddock Center go from day 1 to 25 years? It is quite simple; we reinvent how we make our vision and mission statements a reality. Our world changes every day; we need to change with it. Our goals remain the same, we just look for new and innovative ways to achieve them. We surround ourselves with staff, artists, volunteers, and board members that have a true passion for the vision of Dr. Craddock. We employ staff with the skill sets to keep us moving in the right direction. The Craddock Center is financially sound and a good steward of the resources we have available and receive. We create our strategic plan and review it regularly and change direction as we evaluate the success or the need for more action. We know who we serve, and we always keep that in mind.

This is your accomplishment too! Every volunteer, donor, advocate, or participant plays a part in all that we do. I personally appreciate each and every one of you. I am humbled that you also believe in our mission and are willing to join us in our journey. I hope you are as proud of these 25 years as I am.

As we take pride and celebrate these 25 years, we know we are not done, we have more work to do. I am so proud to work along-side some of the most passionate, engaged, and brilliant minds in our community. I am looking forward to the next 25 years of working with our Craddock Center family as we continue to serve in southern Appalachia.

Robin Massaro
Robin Massaro, President of the Board

Overview

The mission of The Craddock Center is to deliver programs to children and families in southern Appalachia. The area we serve consists of nine (9) counties including Dawson, Gilmer, Fannin, Lumpkin, Pickens, Towns, and Union Counties in Georgia, Polk County in eastern Tennessee, and Cherokee County in western North Carolina (see Appendix 1).

DID YOU KNOW:

- Every year 40% of children go into kindergarten 1 to 3 years behind.
- Most students who start behind stay behind, year after year.
- Students who start Kindergarten below grade level form the largest cohort of dropouts, and they have less than a 2% chance of attending post high school education.
- From birth to age 5, a child learns at a speed unmatched for the rest of their life.



This is what The Craddock Center is trying to address, and prevent, through our Pre-K and Head Start programs. Our founders often spoke on the importance of providing these very young ones with enriching activities to encourage creativity and experiences with the arts.

Additionally, we serve many children living in poverty who lack self-worth and often live in significant isolation. We focus our attention on developing school readiness, building self-esteem, and fostering creativity through music, movement, puppetry, and storytelling. Our program is literally an outreach where our artists and volunteers go on-site to deliver messages of hope and happiness through joy-filled experiences.

"We are about the business of enriching lives, of lifting self-esteem, of instilling a sense of self-worth, of effecting socialization so that each child can play and study and grow as an equal to other children."

- Dr. Fred Craddock

"We THANK YOU and those who make this possible every year. The kids love their hats and mittens so much!"

- Julie Murphy, Teacher, Fannin County Head Start

"Our children were so excited to receive their hats, gloves, and books!"

- Haley Gilreath-Brewer, Teacher, Lumpkin County Head Start

"Thank you again for everything you do for the children. It brought smiles to their little faces today."

- Stacey Trammel, Director, Lumpkin County Head Start

"Many thanks to The Craddock Center for all they do to promote literacy and love of music and art in our students! Each child was given a book, a hand knitted hat, and gloves by their wonderful volunteers!"

- Union County Head Start

"Thank you so much for sending the beautiful hats, gloves, and books to our students. With this cold weather, the hats and gloves were very needed!"

- Katrina Kingsley, Director, Gilmer Pre-K

"Thank you very much for this gesture. The children loved everything and we are all very appreciative."

- April DeHart, Director, Andrews Head Start

"Thank you so much for the book packages. The students love them!"

 Katrina Romaella, Preschool Teacher, Peachtree Elementary

"Thank you very much for everything this year you guys have done!!"

- April DeHart, Director, Andrews Head Start

"Thank you for all you do for Union County Primary Pre-K!!"

- Holly Cook, Director, Union County Pre-K



Programs

CHILDREN'S ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

The **Children's Enrichment Program** is considered the signature program of The Craddock Center. Our program is delivered free of charge to pre-schools and Head Start programs in our southern Appalachian area. Priority is given to schools with the highest percentage of children on free or reduced lunches. We have specially designed our programs, based on research for optimal learning, to best prepare these children for kindergarten. The Craddock Center's programming becomes the foundation for these children to achieve their full potential in all areas of their lives.

We can do this because of our wonderful team of five Arts Specialists who have a combined 175 years of experience in early childhood education, music education, and storytelling. The primary role of the Arts Specialists is to love children and to engage and enrich them through music, storytelling, and movement. They are the key to the success of the

Children's Enrichment Program. The Arts Specialists conduct 25-minute programs, for 30 weeks of the schoolyear, with preschoolers according to a defined weekly schedule. They use music, instruments, props, movement, puppets, storytelling, and routines to encourage children to sing, move, dance, and play. They help build vocabulary and self-esteem and promote motor and rhythmic skills. They serve as cheerful "ambassadors" of The Craddock Center at all the schools we serve. Our Arts Specialists served 1,166 pre-K and Head Start students in 62 classrooms in 20 schools in three states! **Sincere and heartfelt thanks to Natalie Jones, Liese Connell, Claudia Bradford, Sheila Clayton, and Donna Collins!**



BOOKS TO CHILDREN

The Craddock Center provides each child four brand-new children's books during the school year. **That's 4,700 new books last year!**

In mid-November, each child receives a new book to enjoy during their Thanksgiving break.

On March 2nd, The Craddock Center celebrated Read Across America Day and Dr. Seuss' Birthday. On this day volunteers from The Craddock Center delivered brand new Dr. Seuss books to the children we serve. Read Across America Day is a day to celebrate the joys of reading. It also brings awareness to the importance of reading in education for our children. The founders of this day decided to have it on Dr. Seuss' birthday. Dr. Seuss is one of the greatest authors of children's books. Most kids have grown up reading his many entertaining books. The Craddock Center is making sure our kids can share in the joy of his books like many of us have over the years.

In May, we had Summer Send Off. Summer reading is critical for our children to retain knowledge and skills learned in Pre-K and Head Start. Additionally, children who don't read are at risk of falling behind their classmates. This program provides our children an opportunity to continue learning. Each child receives a "goodie bag" with two books, a book reading log, stickers, and arts & crafts supplies to create hand puppets.





In addition to classrooms, The Craddock Center visits community events and gives out books to all school-age children. These books are primarily donated to The Center through the generosity of our nationwide network of supporters. We donated 1,129 new books and 1,230 nearly new books to other non-profits and organizations in our community.

Literacy research shows a correlation between the number of age-appropriate books that a child has at home and the number of years of school that child will complete.

Further, the skills children develop when they handle books are critical to the development of literacy. Simple knowledge, such as how to turn pages, the orientation and direction of print, and relationship between pictures and story, is difficult to learn unless children have experienced holding books.

SMART BABIES!











Research performed by The Craddock Center showed that the parent is the child's first teacher. But we also found that many parents do not have the knowledge or tools to fully help develop their child's mind. Since learning in the first five years is at a speed unmatched by any other time in life, the knowledge and tools must be provided to these parents. The Craddock Center is doing exactly that.

Over a year of research and planning led to the development of parenting workshops through a program called '**Smart Babies**.' Our first workshop was conducted on November 16, 2023.

We have chosen <u>Ready for Kindergarten</u> as the curriculum for our program. In February 2023, two representatives from The Children's Reading Foundation came to The Craddock Center and presented a mock workshop for three board members and our Executive Director. They explained the program, shared materials, and answered our many questions. Those in attendance unanimously decided this program would meet and exceed our needs in developing workshops for parents of children, ages 0-5, to become the best first teacher for their babies.

The Guiding Principles of this program are:

- Honor parents as their child's most influential and most loved teacher.
- Foster effective early-learning experiences for children birth to age 5.
- Instill children with a joy and zest for learning that lasts a lifetime.
- Build relationships between parent, child, family, school, and community.

Each year, parents attend three workshops designed to teach them effective, age-specific, methods to help their baby's mind develop. The parents are provided with appropriate tools, toys, books, and given suggestions on using these tools with their children. Reading and playing with their children is encouraged. Many targets, such as language and literacy, math and reasoning, and social and emotional learning are covered in the program.

The word is out in our community about the quality of this program and new agencies are eager to join. And thanks to the \$100,000 grant we received last April 2024, we can support this growth through 2028! In FY25 we conducted workshops in the following locations (Her Hope Pregnancy Center, Safe Choice Pregnancy Center, and Gilmer Head Start) with plans to expand to more locations (Fannin County Schools, Gilmer County Pre-K, Georgia Mountain Health, and Union County Schools) in FY26. In addition, we have trained six new workshop facilitators to help support our growth.

KNITTED HATS, GLOVES, AND WOODEN TOYS

Winters in the southern Appalachian Mountains can be cold, and many of the children we serve do not have adequate clothing for the cold, winter months. A warm knitted hat, and a pair of gloves helps tremendously in preventing loss of critical body heat in the very young. In mid-November, our volunteers provided the children we serve with cozy knitted hats and a pair of gloves. That's 1,166 knitted hats and pairs of gloves!

What would we do without these talented supporters who knit these wonderfully colorful hats with lots of love and care? Thanks to the following for donating over 1600 knitted hats: the Fiber Arts Group of the Blue Ridge Mountain Arts Association, the Encouragement Project, and Peachtree Christian Church, Bascomb UMC United Women in Faith, Mary Flynn, Jackie Mann, Lynda Hyde, Betty Schaffer, Marcia Congdon,

Janet Elder, Cindy Minick, Jane Carwell, Marilyn Carson, Ann Honeycutt, Carol Clark, Big Canoe Knitting Group, Cheryl Murray, Anne Patrick, Courtney O'Rourke, Joyce McClure, Linda Montgomery, and Lynn Starr.

We are also most appreciative of our generous and talented "elves" from Texas, Florida, and Georgia who send cases of hand-carved, wooden toys. These wooden toys are given to children in the Children's Enrichment Program in mid-December. **That's 1,166 beautiful, made with love, wooden toys for our children!**

Thanks to the following for making these wonderful toys: **Toy Makers of East Lake in Palm, Harbor, Florida, St. Luke's United Methodist Church Houston, Texas, Woodworkers Guild of Georgia, and Charlie Stoudenmire, Gary Padgett & Gordon Hellman in Woodstock, GA**. Woodworkers of north Georgia.

"Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does."

- William James

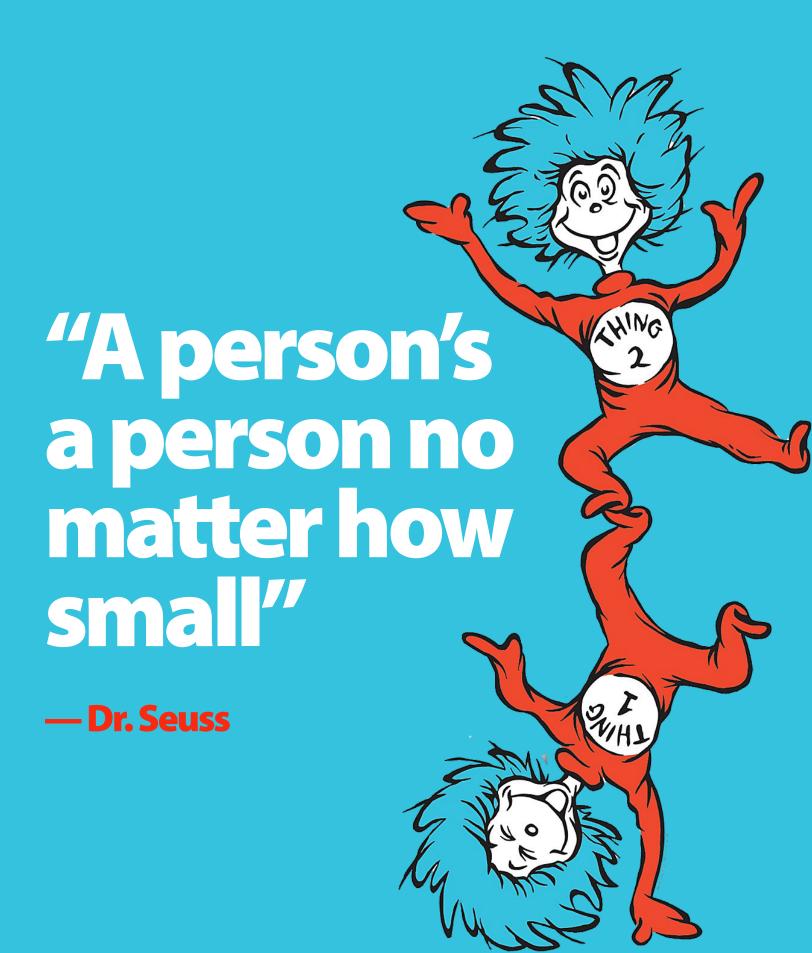












CRADDOCK CARES

Craddock Cares is an outreach program sponsored by The Craddock Center. Craddock Cares was formed to support children, women, and the elderly who find themselves in emergency situations, displacements, and other significant crisis events.

Our Craddock Cares kits include selected items placed in 2-gallon, water-proof bags. The bags are designed to be easily carried by first responders for emergency use when transporting or caring temporarily for children or adults in transition. One Craddock Cares kit includes: Lightweight tote bag, Blanket, Bottled water, Stuffed animal, Toothbrush and toothpaste, Bar Soap, Hand towel, and a Hat and gloves (winter months).

We gave away 93 kits to local first responders and other organizations this fiscal year.

WELCOME NEWBORN KITS

On behalf of The Craddock Center, local agencies in our community provide the mothers a 'Welcome Newborn' kit. Each kit contains: Congratulations letter from The Craddock Center with our contact information, an article titled '50 Simple Ways to Make Your Baby Smarter, a new children's book, blanket, baby socks, baby wipes, Sesame Street rattler and a small wooden toy.

The goal is to promote learning skills beginning at age '0' and for the parents to help prepare the children for pre-K and kindergarten.

Hopefully, the recipient of the kit will contact The Craddock Center so that we can send them books and enroll them in the Smart Babies program. We will keep track of those that contact us so that we can encourage their enrollment into pre-K as they approach 3 years old.

THE LIVING ROOM

The Living Room is a furniture and household goods outreach program stocked wholly from donations from our surrounding community. This outreach of The Craddock Center grew significantly during the pandemic.

Used and occasionally new furniture and household items are shared with families who are in crisis, recovering from fire, eviction, mold infestation, or family violence. We often see young families with small children visiting The Living Room in search of very simple items such as a table, a chair, or a set of dishes. We have a partnership with the Family Connections in Gilmer and Fannin Counties. This has enabled us to offer support to organizations such as the Women's Crisis Center. We saw many similar organizations in our community increase referrals of families in need to The Living Room. The Living Room is open every day for donations and open to families to select their items two days a week.

The Craddock Center provided furniture and household goods to 86 families and individuals this last year.

"The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention." — Oscar Wilde

CUB SCOUTS

The Craddock Center charters a Cub Scout Troop, Pack 440. The Scouting's focus on children and family aligns perfectly with the mission of The Craddock Center. The Craddock Center works with Scouting leadership to promote and grow the new Pack 440 and host events like Carnival Day, NOVA experiences, and the annual Pinewood Derby. Pack 440 is considered a "Family Troop" consisting of both boys and girls.



Songs & Stories

Songs & Stories returned to The Craddock Center on February 8, 2025 to a packed house.

Natalie Jones, one of The Craddock Center's Arts Specialist, provided lively and humorous storytelling and John McCutcheon, a world-traveled musician and songwriter, returned to thrill the guests with beautiful folk music.

The concert was free to those who attended but they responded with generous donations that were used to purchase books for the children we serve.

Songs & Stories was started by Dr. Fred Craddock twenty years ago. He wanted something in the winter that people could enjoy. An event that brought people together to have a fun winter afternoon highlighting the old Appalachian traditions of storytelling and folk music.





Thanks to Our Volunteers

At The Craddock Center, we want to reflect on the bright spots and find reasons to celebrate and show gratitude. And there were many! And there were many because of our wonderful, hard-working volunteers. Without our volunteers, we could not have enriched the lives of the children and families we have served for the last 25 years. We go back to part of our mission statement…"We serve by Sharing." Our volunteers exemplified this! The Craddock Center is grateful for all of those who share their time, talents, and gifts with those we serve. We had 328 volunteer encounters, and our volunteers logged 2,322 hours to support the work of The Craddock Center. 17 new volunteers joined us this past year.

"The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away."

— Pablo Picasso







Friends of The Craddock Center

It is the friends of The Craddock Center who have made our work possible the last 23 years as we live and experience the vision of Fred and Nettie Craddock to "enrich the lives of children and families in southern Appalachia."

Thank you and recognition to those individuals, organizations, and foundations for their generosity in supporting The Craddock Center since August 1, 2024, through July 31, 2025.

\$50,000+

Regina Mitchell Diaz

\$30,000+

\$25,000+

\$19,000+

The Warren & Augusta Hume Foundation

Thornwell Family Foundation

Susan Elliott-Bryan

\$15,000+

\$10,000+

\$9,000+

William B. Orkin Foundation, Inc.

The George Link Jr. Charitable Trust

Gary and Nancy Fayard Nettie Craddock

Elizabeth Roberts King Endowment Jim and Carla Self

\$7,000+

\$6,000+

\$5,000+

\$4,000+

Linda Kliros

Earline Crooke

Hammill Family Foundation **Piedmont Charitable Foundation** Friendship Christian Church

\$3,000+

Dr. Rolf Meinhold Heidi and Todd Ferraro Faith, Hope, and Charity Patti O'Dell D. Russ Atchley

Ellijay Lions Club

Due West UMC Sue and Mike Hriljac Blue Ridge Kiwanis

Ray Larson New Hope Christian Church \$2,000+

Faith Presbyterian Church Milly Hastings and Steve Stevens Sally C. Anderson

Karen Boring John and Dee Craddock

Marcia Lehman North Georgia Community Foundation Paige Peugh **Anonymous**

\$1,000+

Diane W. Bales and James Gibson August Fifth Foundation, Inc. Big Canoe Women's Fellowship Clipper Petroleum Foundation

Jane Simpson

Bill and Patty Crowl Ronald and Bette Jensen Hartwell and Susan Dew Robin Hering Advisewell, Inc.

Amicalola EMC Trust Cathy and Richard Cavagnaro First UMC Elliiav Barbara and Bill Johnson Gerald and Joan Lord

Mac and Eileen McRoberts Jerald and Aundre Rookstool Jack and Trisha Senterfitt

\$500+

Christian Women's Fellowship Steven and Annette McBrayer Leslie and Susan Spencer Vivian Hays Guthrie Charitable Fund Sarah Allred

Kirk Cameron and Michael Kilpatrick Vivian Guthrie Celine Melton

AA Tuesday Nights AA Thursday Nights Tommy and Cathy Archibald Gordon Hellman Clarence and Gwendolyn Seeliger **Beth Roberts** Paul H. Anderson

Ken Cissna

Ann H. Cook Willis and Leona DuVall First Christian Church of Decatur Groovy Zoo Clayton and Ethel Hock Larry King Carol G. McGinnis Nancy Sargent McGrath

Ted McMullan W. Arlyn and Susan Moulder William Prather Dianne D. Watson Cindy West **Hodges Willis**

Up to \$499

Robin Massaro Anne M. Haltiwanger Julie Weisberg Jewish Congregation of Blue Ridge Log Cabin Community Church Lydia Weathersby

Travis Bealmear Jeffre Ray Bascomb UMC United Women in Faith

Steven Dennison

Wayne Everbach Linda and John Montgomery Jack Nolen

Albert Toth Phyllis and Joseph Adams David Akers

Rebecca and Daniel Doster Fannin County Democratic Party Maureen and Dan Hicks William and Connie Inglish

David Jones Robert and Nancy Leitch Deborah Westcott Dairy Queen Ellijay Alight Solutions Blue Cabin Rentals

Liese Connell Bill and Sharon Golden Kenneth W. Irby Kathy and Art Judy Gérald Kersey Michael McWilliams Judy Weiland Caról Hanson Blake Jaurigue Nordstrom Benton Mackaye Trail Assoc. Mr. and Mrs. Mark Musick **Betty and James Willis** Diane Payne Mark Stallings District 15B Gary Batchelor Glenda Bell Robert and Jeannie Haralson

Lisa Helbling Donna Helgeson Louanne Watkins Michael and Andrea Bales **Beverly Cook** Group of Rachel Milton and Janis Hill

Amber Johnson Marla Johnson Mary Elisabeth Jones Jane F. Keene Robert Lauth Carol Martel Edward Murrey, IV Howard D. Rees III and Julie Weisberg Robert Smith, III MD Vera Roberts Karen Rosenberg Kenneth and Frances Strickland Johnny Wray Dr. Roger Beck Carole L. Hahn Joe and Patricia Webb Kenneth Carlo Amy Grosklags Jacqueline Mann Carol Moulder Katie Tomlin Kimberly Anna-Soission Ida-Anne Clarke **Richard Coombs** Kurt Greenwall

Lynn Higginbotham

Charles Krick Sarah Lightner Lillie Mae Lumpkin Andy and Sherry Meeks Michael Oliphant Layne Smith Marc and Debbie Liskin Ann Ploetz James Shelton Ann Brayley Robert and Emily Cowdrick Karen Dorgan Sheila Clayton Ann Hixon Laura and Ryan Jensen Frances E. Shumake Frieda Brands George Taylor Christoph Tallerico Manuela Uhl Kathy Knox Amy Ulrich Kevin Moody Vicky White **Gary Schneeberg** Anne Williamson

ANNUAL REPORT - APPENDIX 1

CHILDREN'S ENRICHMENT PROGRAM DATA

States, Districts, Schools, Programs, and Numbers Served

FY 2025

State and School District	School and Program	Number of Children Served	Number of Classrooms
Tennessee			
Polk County	Copper Basin ES (preschool)	30	2
		TN Total = 30	TN Total = 2
North Carolina			
Cherokee County	Andrews HS (Head Start)	22	1
	Andrews ES (preschool)	18	1
	Martins Cr (preschool)	18	1
	Murphy HS (Head Start)	54	3
	Peachtree ES (preschool)	13	1
	Murphy ES (preschool)	33	2
	Ranger ES (preschool)	18	1
		NC Total = 176	NC Total = 10
Georgia			
Dawson County	Dawson HS (Head Start)	70	3
Gilmer County	Gilmer HS (Head Start)	87	5
	Gilmer ES (preschool)	128	6
Fannin County	Blue Ridge ES (preschool)	20	1
	Fannin HS (Head Start)	71	4
	East Fannin ES (preschool)	40	2
	Milestones PS (preschool)	14	1
	West Fannin ES (preschool)	20	1
Lumpkin County	Lumpkin HS (Head Start)	110	6
Pickens County	Pickens HS (Head Start)	105	6
Towns County	Towns HS & PS (Head Start & preschool)	54	3
Union County	Union ES (preschool)	110	6
	Blairsville UMC (preschool)	66	3
	Union General (preschool)	14	1
	Union HS (Head Start)	51	2
		GA Total = 960	GA Total = 51
Southern Appalachian Total		Total = 1,166	Total = 63

"Unless someone like YOU cares a wholeawful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It's not."

— Dr. Seuss

