




**COLLABORATIONS QUARTERLY
PERSPECTIVES FROM THE CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES CENTER
VOLUME 34 - SPRING 2021**

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK! 

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER! 

TAG US ON INSTAGRAM! 

NETWORK WITH US ON LINKEDIN! 

HELLO AGAIN!

Happy Spring! And welcome to the **Resiliency** Issue.

Stay connected between newsletters on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and our [website](#), to see beacons of hope throughout the year – and to learn how you can be part of it

#1center_aworldofhope

Please share this newsletter with your staff, supporters and friends.

Resiliency during tough times



The first months of 2021 have shown there are lingering effects of the upheaval brought by 2020. The pandemic is not over. However, our agencies have worked continually to help their clients rebound from the devastating effects of last year. In this newsletter, you'll find inspirational stories of resiliency and how our agencies have helped their clients work around the unexpected and nearly unimaginable.

MECKBetter Together

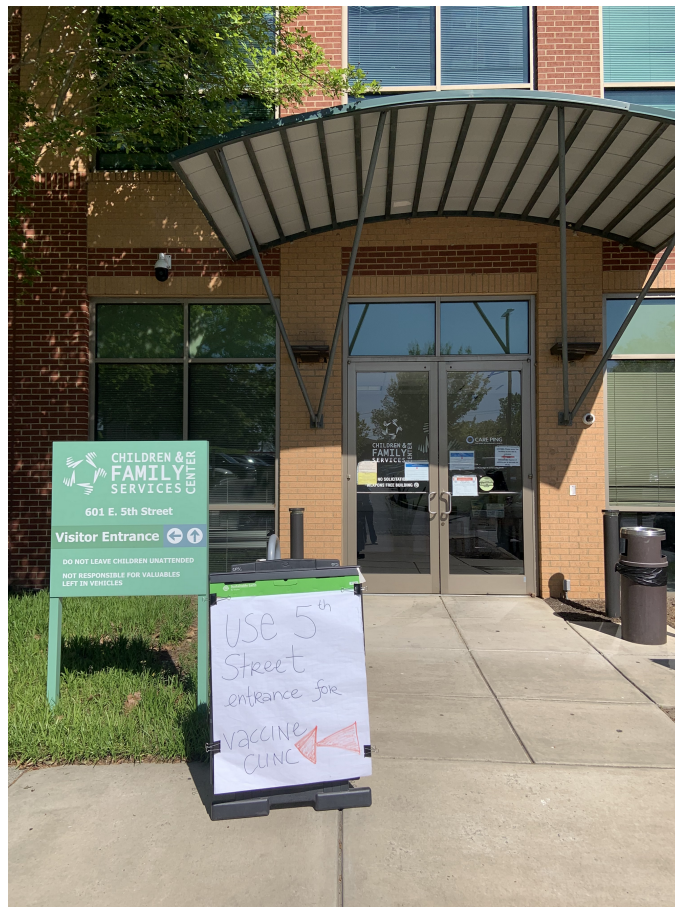


MeckBetterTogether is a great example of Charlotte area leaders collaborating to provide resources for the most vulnerable in our community. This partnership between Department of Social Services, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Smart Start, Childcare Resources, Parks & Recreation and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library pooled resources to assist families in supporting their children during these unprecedented times by creating an online toolkit.

Resources available in the kit include child safety, gun safety and prevention, recreational and educational activities, integrative health and parent support. This toolkit is available on one [website](#) for ease of access. Since its launch, the website was viewed 4,687 times by 2,864 individuals. Participating CFSC partner agencies' websites (Communities In Schools, Smart Start, Safe Alliance and Thompson Child & Family Focus) were viewed most often.

This resource is not just timely because of the lingering public health and economic woes. April was National Child Abuse Prevention Month, while National Mental Health Awareness Month and National Foster Care Month are in May. The toolkit ties in with the missions of all three.

CFSC and Care Ring collaborate to host vaccine clinic



To strengthen community resiliency in the fight against COVID-19, CFSC and Care Ring collaborated with the Mecklenburg Health Department to host a vaccine clinic on April 16. The clinic targeted CFSC building tenants and their clients. Total number of area residents vaccinated: 236. And 82% were of Latino/Hispanic ethnicity, 11% were black, 60% lived in the

public health priority Zip codes (28205, 28206, 28208, 28216, 28217) and 60% of those reported an annual household income of \$19,000 or less. **WSOC-TV** did a story on the clinic's importance for those most vulnerable in our community. Bilingual staff and volunteers helped make the event happen.

A second vaccine clinic will be open Friday, May 7, offering both the first and second Pfizer shots and the Johnson & Johnson single-dose vaccine. No registration is required. NOTE: Recipients of the first Pfizer shot might need to seek another source for the second shot. Conversely, anyone needing the second Pfizer shot can receive it at this clinic regardless of where the first shot was given.

Spring Basket Decorating Contest



Even though many of our partner agencies continue to work from home, we thought it would lighten the year's mood by hosting a basket-decorating contest. We asked agencies to decorate a basket that represented the services they provide. You can see all the submissions on our **Facebook** page. Visitors, building tenants and clients were invited to vote for their favorite basket and Care Ring took the honors.

AGENCY MILESTONES

RECENT SUCCESSES & UPCOMING EVENTS

Care Ring

www.careringnc.com

Tchernavia Montgomery, Executive Director

Join us in welcoming our new Executive Director, **Tchernavia Montgomery!** (And thank you,

CFSC Shared Services, for assisting with the search!)

A resiliency story for Mother's Day

When Felicia learned her pregnancy was high-risk, her obstetrician referred her to Care Ring's Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP). At 19 weeks, Felicia dilated prematurely and needed a procedure to keep her baby in the womb as long as possible. Born at 30 weeks, her daughter, Willow, spent 10 weeks in the NICU before coming home and receiving early intervention services.



Felicia and Willow

Felicia's NFP nurse guided her through the high-risk pregnancy and caring for a premature baby. Her nurse provided support and educational resources, alleviating Felicia's new-mother anxieties and coaching her on developmental milestones to ensure Willow was flourishing. Today, Willow knows her ABCs, can count to 20 and loves to sing!

Communities In Schools

www.cischarlotte.org

Men Tchaas Ari, President and CEO



Alani

In keeping with the theme of resiliency, we share this story from Tyrece Edwards, site coordinator at Druid Hills Academy. Many CIS students already experienced challenging situations prior to the pandemic, and the difficulties and isolation of remote learning only added to their stress. This is one example of the myriad ways CIS staff are supporting students and bolstering their resiliency during this difficult year.

"Alani is a tremendous scholar and top student on my caseload," Edwards said. "Last fall, however, I noticed Alani seemed disengaged and struggling academically. During a weekly check-in, Alani said he was bothered by some changes going on at home. To give Alani space to talk about his feelings, we went to a nearby basketball court and shot some hoops. Here Alani opened up, stating that he was uncomfortable talking about his feelings with his parents because he didn't want to put stress on them. We came to an agreement that he would talk to them about one thing that was bothering him for the next couple of weeks. To assist with that effort, I loaned him a book from my collection, *The Mamba Mentality*, by the late, great Kobe Bryant. In the book, Kobe shares many ways he trained his mind to overcome difficult situations. Alani read the book and admired how Kobe was able to bounce back from a season-ending injury. With support from his parents and me, Alani has made significant strides with virtual learning, his schoolwork and his emotional state of mind. I am extremely proud of his progress and will continue to partner with him throughout this journey."

Community Link

www.communitylinknc.org

Floyd R. Davis Jr., President and CEO



She endured more last year than anyone should in a lifetime. To protect her identity, we'll call her "Robin."

A mother of two, she had to run to a shelter with her sons, ages 4 and 8, following a domestic violence incident. Her sons' father was the abuser.

Robin and the boys felt safer living in the shelter, but her name was still on the apartment lease. Though the boys' father continued to live there, he refused to pay rent. The landlord evicted Robin, leaving "eviction" on her financial record.

An experience at work was equally traumatizing. She left her job at a big-box retailer following an armed robbery where the robber had held a gun to her head.

Robin was determined to stay resilient for her children. Though an eviction on a renter's record makes obtaining housing afterward more difficult, Community Link was able to locate a safe apartment for Robin and her boys. Our organization is also providing subsidies toward rent and utilities for one year.

Robin now works as a front desk manager at a hotel. She is learning about budgeting, growing her assets and other financial strategies from Community Link, which will help her pay her bills without subsidies in the future.

RAIN

www.carolinarain.org

Chelsea Gulden, President and CEO

RAIN helps clients be resilient during COVID pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has had persistent emotional and economic impact for many RAIN clients. During the early months of the pandemic, RAIN provided virtual services. Thanks to a generous grant from United Way of Central Carolinas and Foundation For The Carolinas, RAIN provided immediate financial relief for clients including emergency food, rent and utility bills. Other funding sources helped us provide assistance with insurance premiums, health care costs and prescription medications.

The pandemic has also had a tremendous impact on mental health. Numerous RAIN clients work in service industries and suffer anxiety and financial uncertainty. The initial isolation and depression experienced was compounded by the fear of contracting COVID-19 because of compromised immunity. RAIN's therapists quickly started offering virtual counseling sessions. This shift has allowed more scheduling flexibility – a welcome advantage for clients and staff. More clients have easier access to counseling, and there are fewer missed appointments. Virtual therapy is now a success model that RAIN will continue.

We are grateful for every donor and community partner who makes these life-saving activities possible.

Safe Alliance

www.safealliance.org

Karen Parker, President and CEO



Safe Alliance continues mission of hope, healing with Adapted Services

Resiliency has proven to be the watchword of 2020 and 2021. The ongoing pandemic continues to create unique challenges for Mecklenburg County survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, and Safe Alliance continues to adapt its services to meet the sustained demand for survivor resources and carry out our mission of providing hope and healing. Key adjustments have included:

- Launching telehealth (remote) counseling services in March 2020. Even as pandemic restrictions begin to lift, remote counseling allows Safe Alliance to reach more survivors, offering traditional services in a new way.
- Shifting from in-person to remote volunteer opportunities with an increased emphasis on collection drives, peer-to-peer fundraising and Third Party Events.
- Working with Mecklenburg County to accommodate social distancing guidelines by moving families to a Healthy Hotel, a secondary shelter during the transition to safe housing, and offering support/staffing for the shelter and the hotel since March 2020. Families at the hotel receive supportive services from shelter staff and practice independent living skills that help as they transition into safe housing.
- Shifting from in-person fundraising events to virtual ones, including Walk a Mile in Her Shoes® and Breakfast of Hope in 2020 and Fighting For Women With Fashion in 2021.

Support survivors by [registering](#) for [Walk a Mile in Her Shoes®](#) on May 15.

Survivor Resource Center is a 'step forward' in serving Charlotte survivors

Few people are as resilient as abuse survivors. Even so, the complex process they face when they seek help strains their already-limited resources and energy: On average, a domestic violence survivor goes to nine locations, completes 37 pages of paperwork and repeats their story 27 times. This disjointed process leads **80% of victims to walk away before pressing charges.**

The new Survivor Resource Center streamlines this system, offering a short-term, small-scale solution. Safe Alliance, in partnership with:

- [Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department \(CMPD\)](#)
- [Mecklenburg County Community Support Services](#)
- [Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services](#)
- [Pat's Place Child Advocacy Center](#)

addresses highest-lethality cases on a **referral-only basis for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and child maltreatment**. Navigator staff guide victims through the multi-step process.

This new center is a precursor for the comprehensive [Charlotte-Mecklenburg Family Justice Center](#) (named The Umbrella Center). The Umbrella Center will offer a range of services to survivors of domestic, child, sexual and elder abuse and human trafficking and serve as a walk-in center for anyone who self-identifies as an abuse survivor or referred victims.

For more information, including a complete list of on- and off-site service providers, visit [Survivor Resource Center](#) webpage.

Smart Start of Mecklenburg County

www.smartstartofmeck.org

Jake House, CEO



Lakewood Preschool Executive Director, Anthony Howell, receiving a care package

Smart Start of Mecklenburg County's vision is that all children enter kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed. Despite challenges in the face of COVID-19, our agency has worked with community partners in many ways to help clients build resilience while remaining true to our mission.

Some of these initiatives include providing over \$120,000 to more than 300 local childcare centers through our Child Care Provider COVID-19 Relief Fund. Smart Start and North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC) are also supporting family childcare directors to ensure critical access to childcare.

As of September 2020, there were more than 1,300 family childcare homes in North Carolina, serving almost 8,700 children. Smart Start is helping these providers by offering access to Wonderschool, a business automation platform for family childcare and small centers. Wonderschool delivers digital tools and training to help providers adjust to business challenges caused by the pandemic and to improve communication with parents.

Most recently, our staff delivered care packages to pre-kindergarten locations, all of which included health and educational items to help keep their facilities operational. The earliest years of childhood are critical, and addressing the needs of young children is a shared endeavor – one we are privileged to be a part of.

Supportive Housing Communities

www.supportivehousingcommunities.org

Colleen Winslow, Interim Chief Executive Officer



Mr. Vinnie became a resident of McCreesh Place in 2017. He refused to connect with immediate family upon his entry into the program. He felt ashamed of his situation. Eventually, he felt comfortable accepting visits from his aunt to assist him with his anxiety and social skills. Throughout his time at McCreesh Place, he was able to relate to a clinical therapist, who addressed his mental health and anxiety. Vinnie met with his case manager weekly, and she supported his desire to give back to the community. Community involvement provided him with a sense of independence and self-worth. Over time, Vinnie warmed up to the idea of allowing his mother to visit. They began to rebuild their relationship. Through continued support, Vinnie was able to move back with his mother in Virginia. He is now connected with mental health services, medication management and enjoys spending time with his mother and other family members!

Vinnie said, "If it had not been for SHC giving me a place to live again, I do not know how my life would have ended up. I thank my case manager/program coordinator for believing in me and giving me daily motivation."

Thompson Child & Family Focus

www.thompsoncfff.org

Will Jones, President and CEO



Thompson's Family Education workshops give parents strategies to strengthen interactions with their child and incorporate positive methods of discipline.

ABOUT MS. PARKER

Ms. Parker is a single mom of an eighteen month old son. She is back at school to finish her GED with the goal of building a secure future for them both. She was required to attend the Nurturing Parent Program by Youth & Family Services to learn positive parenting techniques as part of the process of regaining custody of her son. He was removed from her home due to inappropriate care, and she currently has weekly, unsupervised visits.

MS. PARKER'S JOURNEY

Ms. Parker started the program several times, and dropped out. She has low self confidence and little family support. With positive reinforcement from the Family Education team, she was able to complete the program. Ms. Parker now has more confidence in herself and her abilities to overcome obstacles. She learned coping skills and how to better regulate her emotions and is now on a better path to regain custody of her son.

'I have learned how to manage my anger and feelings, and how to use these emotions in positive ways.' Ms. Parker



For more information, contact Thompson at 704.536.0375
info@thompsoncfff.org | www.thompsoncfff.org



Thompson's Family Education workshops give parents strategies to strengthen interactions with their child and incorporate positive methods of discipline.

Ms. Parker is a single mom of an 18-month-old son. She is back in school to finish her GED with the goal of building a secure future for them both. She was required by Youth & Family Services to attend our Nurturing Parent Program to learn positive parenting techniques as part of the process of regaining custody of her son. He was removed from her home due to inappropriate care, and she is currently allowed weekly, unsupervised visits.

Ms. Parker started the program several times and dropped out. She has low self-confidence and little family support. With positive reinforcement from the Family Education team, she was able to complete the program. "I have learned how to manage my anger and feelings and how to use these emotions in positive ways," stated Ms. Parker.

She now has more confidence in herself and her abilities to overcome obstacles. She learned coping skills and how to better regulate her emotions and is now on a better path to regain custody of her son.

United Way of Central Carolinas

www.uwcentralcarolinas.org

Laura Yates Clark, President and CEO



Shaping nonprofits into forces for good

United Way of Central Carolinas provides organizations across the Charlotte region with the resources and opportunities to build capacity, strengthen resiliency and affect agency-level change while delivering on their mission.

Founded in 2016, United Way's **Unite Charlotte** initiative provides funding and resources to local grassroots organizations advancing racial equity and addressing economic mobility.

Through capacity-building training like the Duke University Nonprofit Management Intensive Track Program, United Way helps its Unite Charlotte partners ensure future sustainability and have greater community impact.

"United Way offers more than just grants; they take what they've provided and expand on it with training and mentorship, helping you scale and grow your nonprofit," said Monique Douglas, executive director of Grooming Greatness Foundation. "Even when you're the founder of an organization, you need some guidance, too."

Duke program participants learn about board development and governance, fundraising, social enterprise, financial management, sustainable strategic planning and more.

"With the insights gained from the Duke program, we've been able to grow engagement by creating intentional interaction to identify next steps," said Jonathan Gardner, executive director of GardHouse Limited. "Without United Way's support, GardHouse would still be fighting an uphill battle to ensure that college students of color received needed support."

NON-PARTNER AGENCIES MILESTONES

RECENT SUCCESSES AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Arts+

www.artsplus.org



Pandemic year prompts connectivity and healing at Arts+

The year 2020 introduced challenges that many nonprofits never thought we'd have to face. With a global health pandemic, rising racial tensions and forced distance from loved ones, our organization simply turned to what we know best – art.

For one year, we stuck together and embraced a new virtual norm. Like many organizations, our workshops and private lessons went from intimate learning environments to remote classroom settings. Even our summer campers practiced music and visual arts from behind a screen in the comfort and safety of their homes.

We quickly learned one thing: No one is immune to change. As a society, we realized the many ways that our worlds intersect. We made deeper connections with our neighbors, we banded together to keep local business afloat and acknowledged that we really are more alike than we are different.

These newfound connections came to life on-screen through our new program, **Intersections**. In a three-part series, Studio 345, a free, creative, out-of-school youth development program for Charlotte-Mecklenburg high school students, participants swapped stories with adult community leaders and elected officials. An unlikely pair of groups quickly formed meaningful and lasting bonds through the power of storytelling.

In a moving presentation from Cohort 2 this past winter, participants present, "Chasing Home." Watch the replay [here](#).

Charlotte Family Housing

www.charlottefamilyhousing.org



When crisis calls, Charlotte Family Housing (CFH) answers. In late 2019, CFH joined Children and Family Services Center partners United Way of Central Carolinas and Community Link, other nonprofit organizations and local government to form a coalition to respond to the needs of tenants on the verge of displacement due to the closure of the Lake Arbor apartments in west Charlotte.

Local government forced the owners of the apartment complex to clean and renovate buildings riddled with pest infestations, mold and other substandard conditions.

Despite the horrendous circumstances, many tenants continued to live at Lake Arbor because they did not have to pay rent due to various lawsuits involving the dilapidated dwellings. In December 2019, Shante faced an order to evacuate her family from their apartment by year's end. With time winding down before she and her two elementary-aged daughters faced homelessness, she connected with CFH.

Shante excelled immediately. She created her first budget and opened her first savings account. With the support of a skilled volunteer, she started a home business to supplement her wages from her full-time job. Within a year, she graduated from our program and signed a lease for a three-bedroom apartment for her and her girls.

When asked about her participation in the CFH program, Shante said her licensed clinical social worker, Brook, was "from day one, so helpful and so encouraging." In a thank-you email to Brook the week of her graduation, Shante wrote:

Brook, thank you for always seeing so much potential in me. So many times, I've doubted myself, but you always let me know I had what it takes to be successful in this program. Today, I graduate this program with confidence that I'll be able to make it on my own, using the tools I've gained in this program. I know how to budget. I know how to save money. I'm also disciplined to take care of my priorities. When I started Charlotte Family Housing, I was broke and broken. I was on the verge of being homeless. CFH saved me and today I say thank you. Thank you to the staff. Thank you to the Board of Directors, the volunteers and, especially, Brook. Today, I graduate a conqueror ... a fighter who doesn't give up. Today, I graduate with stability, a savings plan and money saved. These words won't measure up to how thankful I truly am for everything big and small that this program has done for me and my family. I'll be forever grateful.

P.S. I couldn't go away without mentioning one of the volunteers who took time out of his busy schedule to meet with me and give me some great business advice. Because of the program, I have my own website and a side income to help me on my journey. Thank you for all the referrals to the amazing programs, I couldn't and wouldn't be as successful had it NOT been for CFH. You are all amazing. Namaste.

The light in CFH honors the light in you, Shante. Namaste.

Ada Jenkins Center

www.adajenkins.org



Like everyone – families, businesses and nonprofit agencies – the Ada Jenkins Center was rocked by COVID and the resulting faltering economy. Our medical and dental health services were forced to pause as a result of the pandemic. Our food pantry transitioned to a "drive-thru" service. We served as a distribution point for federal CARES Act funding, to help clients pay their mortgage, rent and utility bills. Many of our employees had to work remotely so they could balance their children's new virtual learning experience with their commitment to our clients.

The reality is: the Ada Jenkins Center has never stopped working for the vulnerable families we serve. Between March 2020 and March 2021, we assisted 315 families with crisis funding and

provided food for 2,500 people through our food pantry.

An additional reality is: We had to pivot our services to best serve the families who rely on us, and we had to do so while facing decreased contributions from some of our major funders. As a result, we have been intentional about seeking intra-agency partnerships and economies of scale in order to stretch community resources.

We look forward to our new partnerships with the Lake Norman Community Health Clinic and Matthews Free Medical Clinic to enhance patient services and to seeing what additional opportunities await in the months ahead.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Office Space

Our building at 601 E. Fifth St. is an ideal location for human service agencies in Charlotte. From easy access to light rail and the transit center to access to our own surface parking lot, we have an accessible location for clients and visitors. And we promise never to ask if you've [put a cover sheet on your TPS reports](#).

The CFSC building has three available suites ranging from 1,594 to 5,249 square feet of contiguous office space. The space can be subdivided. Rent ranges from \$28 to \$29 per square foot.

Individual cubicles are also available to rent for startup nonprofits and smaller nonprofits in need of a landing spot. Our co-working space is a great place to get a business going or to have a quiet place in the center city to work.

If you could just go ahead and refer potential partners to Becca Dolan at 704.943.9409 or bdolan@childrenfamily.org, that would be great. Learn more [here](#).

THE LAST WORD

Talk to us.

Let's keep the conversation going. Tell us your success stories, how collaboration has helped your clients and what you'd like to see in *Collaborations Quarterly*. Contact bdolan@childrenfamily.org with your feedback and story ideas. Stay safe, everyone!

Like us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram & LinkedIn



CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

601 EAST FIFTH STREET, SUITE 450 | CHARLOTTE, NC 28202 | P 704.943.9400
CHILDRENFAMILY.ORG

© 2012 CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES CENTER, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

[forward to a friend](#)

Copyright © 2021 Children & Family Services Center, All rights reserved.

[unsubscribe from this list](#) | [update subscription preferences](#)