

YOUR IMPACT

UNITED WAY OF PICKENS COUNTY EDUCATION REPORT MARCH 2024



United Way
of Pickens County
www.uwpickens.org



YOU BUILD BRIGHTER FUTURES

Your generous support of United Way of Pickens County's early education programs is building brighter futures for hundreds of children and their families.

Women United's signature program, **Preschool Pages**, is a partnership with local elementary schools to support the development of early literacy skills in preschoolers in our community. Young children and their caregivers participate in story time and related crafts and activities, which helps these young learners develop important early literacy skills while learning that school is a safe and welcoming place.

Your donations allow the young learners and their caregivers to leave each session with books and activities to do at home, reinforcing the lessons learned at Preschool Pages.

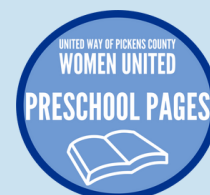
The annual Luncheon for Literacy is a highly sought-after event that brings together women from all across the county to enjoy a powerful speaker, testimonies from parents, and a delicious meal, all

while supporting early literacy in Pickens County.

Because of the support of our community and donors like you, over 300 children and their caregivers participated in Preschool Pages in 2023 and had the best time reading and having so much fun! Your generosity provided more than 1,400 books for the children to keep from each program. What a way to start a home library... and talk about impact! WOW!

Preschool Pages 2023

- ✓ 115 sessions offered
- ✓ 11 sites supported
- ✓ 318 children + caregivers served
- ✓ 1,489 books distributed





Here are just a few heartwarming examples of how you are helping children get ready for a lifetime of reading and adventure.

Ailey

Marisa Mulkey enrolled her youngest daughter, Ailey in Preschool Pages at Crosswell Elementary to give her “social butterfly” a place to be with others her own age and to get prepared for kindergarten. Because Ailey doesn’t have much chance to interact with children her own age, Preschool Pages has been a fantastic opportunity.

“Ailey loves it and she can’t wait to go each month! We do the activities at home and she’s memorized her favorite book!”

Marisa encourages other parents to join Preschool Pages, especially at the school their little one will attend. That way, they will be comfortable and familiar with their school when they enroll.

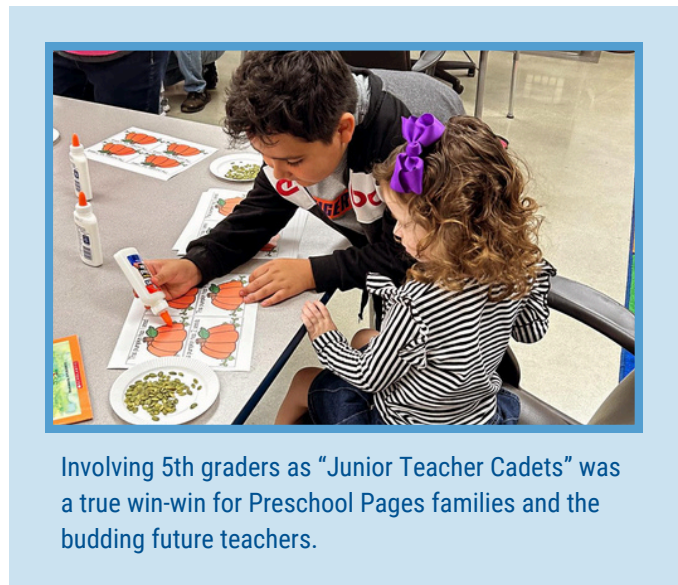
Building Future Teachers

Multiple Preschool Pages sites engaged 5th graders who dream of being teachers one day. They took part in story time and chipped in to help wherever needed. The preschoolers loved the “big kids” and they, in turn, learned about the joys of teaching.

Stran

As soon as Stran turned two, his mom signed him up for Preschool Pages. She wanted him to learn how to be successful in a group setting and how to follow directions.

Preschool Pages was a profound experience for Stran. In September, he was saying animal sounds. In October, he could identify the animals. By December, Stran improved in his color words and was learning to be still during activities. His fine motor skills improved, and, with the help of Grandma, he was able to paint with accuracy.



Involving 5th graders as “Junior Teacher Cadets” was a true win-win for Preschool Pages families and the budding future teachers.



EXPANDING YOUR IMPACT

You are helping more children than ever through your continued support of a growing number of education initiatives.

Parents are the first and most important teachers of their children. When parents are supported and given the opportunity to develop their skills and confidence, they can help their children succeed in school and in life.

Parent engagement and education programs can strengthen the connection between families and schools. It really builds a “village.”

Children whose school offers a robust parent program have higher grades, better test scores and improved graduation rates. Families have less stress and don’t feel isolated trying to be the best parents they can be. Parents are happy... kiddos are happy... teachers are happy... and what’s not to love about that!

Thanks to your incredible generosity, United Way of Pickens County is now partnering with two

elementary schools to offer these valuable parent engagement programs to their families.

Parents as Learners, also known as PALS, was piloted at McKissick Academy of Science and Technology (MAST) in the fall of 2023. In coordination with Title I Family Nights, this new program focuses on engaging parents as active learners in their children's education.

Parents are essential contributors to their children's learning experiences, and PALS aims to support them in acquiring knowledge and skills to enhance their role in the educational process.

They were very intentional when developing the program to incorporate reading into the curriculum, with sessions like “Muffins and Munchkins: Getting Ready to Read” and “Holiday Literacy Fair- Growing Readers at Home.”



You also helped fund a new parent engagement program at East End Elementary called **Bulldog Action**, whose goal is to establish a love of reading and improve reading levels through activities that involve both the child and the parents.

Nearly half of East End's 3rd graders are not reading on grade level, but your support is allowing East End to try new and innovative ways to help children improve.

Bulldog Action includes "Parent University," where parents are invited to a variety of workshops that help them bridge the gaps in reading by teaching them techniques that are proven to help struggling readers.

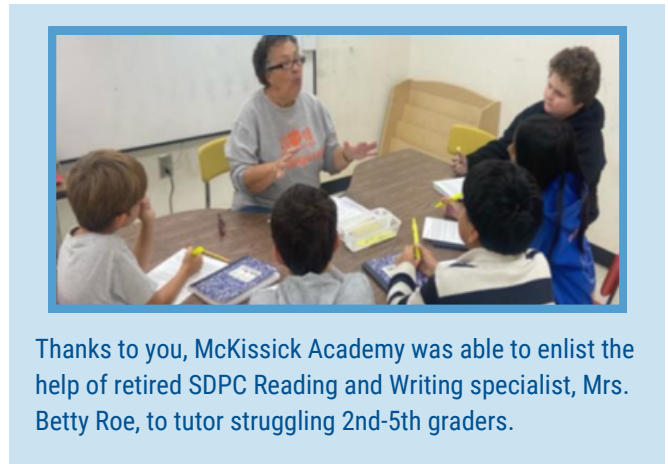
Incentives are also a part of Bulldog Action, including an innovative Book Vending Machine which will allow children to select free books as rewards for growth based on their reading plan.

Bulldog Action has really taken off with record numbers of parents and family members in attendance each time.

In addition to supporting amazing new parent initiatives, you are also funding another pilot program at McKissick Academy, the **iREAD Tutoring Program**.

Last year, MAST identified 193 2nd-5th graders who were reading below grade level and reached out to United Way of Pickens County for assistance.

Thanks to you, MAST was able to enlist the tutoring services of a retired SDPC Reading and Writing Specialist, Betty Roe.



Thanks to you, McKissick Academy was able to enlist the help of retired SDPC Reading and Writing specialist, Mrs. Betty Roe, to tutor struggling 2nd-5th graders.

Mrs. Roe is passionate about student learning. She works 3 hours a day, four days a week to help struggling 2nd through 5th graders gain the skills they need to become confident readers. She helps students improve their comprehension, fluency, word identification and sound-based decoding skills.

Your support is helping these students get back on track with their reading abilities, and back on track toward a bright future.



BETTER TOGETHER

Your generosity brings like-minded community partners together to support young learners in even bigger ways.

Ever since the creation of Pickens County First Steps, United Way of Pickens County has counted them as one of our most valued partners. From programs like Raising a Reader, Reach Out and Read, Born Learning Trails, Bright by Text and more, our two agencies have defined what it means to have a shared mission and collaboration on behalf of our community's children and families.

This year, because of donors like you, we are funding two First Steps initiatives: Reach Out and Read and Bright by Text.

According to Amity Buckner, Executive Director of Pickens County First Steps, we know that reading is the gateway to all other learning. Reading aloud to children is the single most important thing that a parent or caregiver can do with their child. **Reach Out and Read** gives parents simple, easy access to high-quality, read-aloud books by combining a

planned visit to the doctor's office with a free book.

At each well-child visit, children receive an age-appropriate book from their family doctor or pediatrician. Studies show that families participating in Reach Out and Read are two and a half times more likely to read with their infants, toddlers and preschoolers.



Our patient families have been thrilled to receive books at well-child visits. We have received a lot of feedback about how wonderful this program is to help support the love of reading at home.

-Jessica Rivera,
Family Nurse Practitioner, PRISMA
Pediatric and Internal Medicine



Your support is also providing on-demand resources for parents and caregivers of children birth to 5 years old through **Bright by Text**.

Bright by Text meets today's parents and caregivers where they are by sharing free, age-specific parenting tips and community resources through text messages. Available in English and Spanish, texts provide content such as developmental milestones, conversation starters, social-emotional development tips, games to boost brain development, and help for challenging topics like sleep, picky eating and much more!

Robin, a mother in the Parenting and Family Literacy program, loves Bright by Text. "It's nice



that it comes to you and you don't have to search for it," said Robin. "It gives me new ideas and activities to do with my son, Gabe."

Each text is brief and has an instant takeaway, but for those who want to learn more, Bright by Text provides a short link with more information and links to services and resources.

Over 1,000 children are now represented through the SCKIDS keyword! To sign up, text SCKIDS to 274448.

Everyone Needs a Buddy

We are super excited to tell you how our Camp iRock **Reading Buddy** program has expanded. Residents from The Reserve at Lake Keowee have teamed up with Pickens Elementary School for a wonderful Reading Buddy partnership. Buddies are paired up with one or two children and work with them consistently throughout the school year. The kiddos LOVE their Buddy and the feeling is mutual!

Camp iRock Reading Buddies have found their way to Crosswell Elementary School, too.

We just learned that Reading Buddy, Laura Shick has continued to work with her Camp iRock student, long after camp. He loves seeing her and continues to make progress.

Could YOU be somebody's buddy? Karen Culley can hook you up. Give her a call at 864-826-8102 or email her at kculley@uwpickens.org.



YOU CAN CHANGE A CHILD'S LIFE

Your support is needed...urgently and right now...to write the next chapter in the story of a child who is struggling in school and in life.

Nearly half of Pickens County 3rd graders are not reading on grade level. Did you know that if a child isn't reading proficiently by the end of 3rd grade, she may NEVER catch up?

Third grade has been identified as the FINAL year children are learning to read. After 3rd grade, they are reading to learn. If they are not proficient readers when they begin the 4th grade, as much as half of the curriculum they will be taught will be incomprehensible!

But it doesn't have to be that way! Early intervention and parental involvement are key. Through your support of United Way education initiatives, children can thrive!

Every child's story deserves a happy ending, don't you agree?

My next gift to help a struggling child!

YES! I will help a struggling child and support the work of United Way of Pickens County. Enclosed is my gift of:

\$ 50 \$100 \$500 \$ _____ to help as much as possible.



Scan with your phone's camera to donate securely online.

Support children today: uwpickens.org/donate | PO Box 96 Easley, SC 29641 | 864-850-7094