



SMALL STEPS NURTURING CENTER 2016-2017 Annual Report

Small Steps Nurturing Center's mission is to provide an exemplary early childhood program to instill and foster the social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual growth of economically at-risk children and their families. Throughout the 2016-2017 school year, Small Steps provided a high-quality education, social and emotional support, a nurturing Christian environment, transportation, and nutritious meals to children ages two through six living in poverty. The progress described below would not be possible without the help of our many community supporters, and we are sincerely grateful for your generosity.

2016-2017 SCHOOL YEAR OVERVIEW

- 175 students and 144 families
- 31 teachers at 2 campuses
- 28 percent of our students received transportation to and from school
- 56,587 nutritious meals and 21,581 snacks served to our students
- 37 students received individual or group counseling from social and emotional program specialists
- All children received speech and language screenings, and 49 students received individual speech therapy from our speech-language pathologist
- 90 students received vision screenings from Prevent Blindness Texas, and 13 were referred for treatment
- 92 students received hearing screenings from The Center for Hearing and Speech, and 16 were referred for treatment
- 92 percent student attendance rate
- 94 percent student retention rate
- 88 percent teacher retention rate over the last five years
- Accredited by AdvancED-Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the oldest and largest educational accrediting organization in the world

2016-2017 HIGHLIGHTS

Making an Impact on Children in Poverty

Nurturing Intellectual Growth

In 2016-2017, our students attended school five days a week from late August through June, at no financial cost to their families. Using an integrated curriculum that supports our accreditation by AdvancED-Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, well-educated, responsive teachers provided an exemplary early childhood education in classrooms full of stimulating materials. Teachers emphasized language development and promoted science, math concepts, and critical thinking skills. Our 45-member graduating class of 2017 was our largest to date; Small Steps has graduated a total of 415 children to kindergarten or first grade.

Nurturing Social and Emotional Growth

Through their exposure to a nurturing and supportive environment and a strong social and emotional health program, our students learned positive communication, self-control, problem-solving, and empathetic behavior. On our spring 2017 parent survey, 93 percent of respondents said their child's teacher always communicated effectively with them and took good care of their child's emotional and academic needs.

Nurturing Physical Growth

Small Steps served our students breakfast, lunch, and a snack Mondays through Thursdays and breakfast and lunch on Fridays (due to a half-day on Fridays), providing the majority of each student's daily nutritional needs. Students played outside on our safe, spacious playgrounds, and Small Steps provided transportation in staff-

driven vans to more than one quarter of our students. On our spring 2017 parent survey, 90 percent of parents who responded said that Small Steps always maintained proper health and safety policies and procedures and always provided children with plenty of safe outdoor play opportunities.

Nurturing Spiritual Growth

Students experienced God's love through a loving, safe community of adults and peers and expressed their unique talents through drama, music, and creative movement activities. Small Steps students received weekly drama and music instruction from our fine arts teacher and weekly creative movement classes from Hope Stone, Inc. Small Steps' program also included weekly chapel and incorporated the Godly Play curriculum in the classroom to teach students about the wonder of God. Our chapel teacher focused on the fruits of the Spirit last school year, exploring one virtue in depth each month. Last school year, 91 percent of parent survey respondents stated that the enrichment programs were always beneficial for their child and enjoyed by their child.

Nurturing Families

Through our parent education events, engagement activities, and assistance from our social and emotional program specialists, Small Steps helped parents build and maintain healthy relationships with their children and work through family challenges. Small Steps served as a support network to students and families in times of crisis, often addressing issues such as instability, lack of resources, witnessing traumatic events in the home, or family endangerment due to mental illness or substance abuse. Our social and emotional program specialists made 117 referrals for our families to area social service organizations in the 2016-2017 school year.

Parent Education and Involvement

Parents must complete 10 tuition hours each school year; this can be done through attending parent education events, volunteering, serving as field trip chaperones, or participating in other parent engagement opportunities. Small Steps offered five parent education events on topics including relationships, school choices for kindergarten parents, children's well-being, positive parenting, and self-care. Parents also had the opportunity to attend multiple parent-child events at school for both moms and dads, experiencing learning activities with their children. Due to increased follow up with parents, 97 percent of parents completed the required number of hours. A total of 2,450 tuition hours was completed in all—a record number! In response to the greater need for and increased interest in parent participation opportunities, Small Steps increased the number of parent engagement activities offered. The resulting higher participation rate led to a stronger sense of community among our families and will lead to positive changes in our students' and families' lives.

Deeper Community Partnerships

Each year, the depth of our community partnerships continues to grow in new and unexpected ways. During the 2016-2017 school year, we expanded our partnership with the Houston Food Bank and joined the Food Bank's Backpack Buddy program to provide food to our neediest families on the weekends. Through a different Food Bank program, Small Steps received a pallet or more of food once or twice a month to distribute to our families with the greatest need. Additionally, the Food Bank led cooking and nutrition classes during Family Fridays at the DePelchin campus. The Food Bank also led exercise classes for our parents and taught them exercises to do at home.

The Center for Hearing and Speech (CHS) performs hearing screenings for our students each school year, and last year it chose Small Steps as the pilot site for its new community outreach program. During eight weekly "Baby Talk" classes in the spring, CHS staff taught our parents how to promote speech and language development with their babies and toddlers.

A simple donation from Home Depot resulted in unexpected enrichment opportunities for our students and families. In October 2016, the Spring Valley store arranged a donation of more than 150 pumpkins for a pumpkin patch at our Jensen campus; each child chose a pumpkin to take home, and each class decorated a

pumpkin for its classroom. In spring 2017, Home Depot not only donated multiple bags of soil, mulch, and sand for the playground, gardens, and sensory activities, but also led a “Dad and Me” event for our students at the Jensen campus in March.

Nutrition Program

During the 2016-2017 school year, our kitchen manager researched the Houston Food Bank’s website daily to purchase food at a greatly reduced cost—usually one-third of retail—or even obtain the food for free. This creative budgeting freed up funds to purchase a higher quality of meats from other vendors, resulting in better-tasting meals for our students. She also used her knowledge of the Houston Food Bank’s offerings to create more varied menus with new recipes and different fresh fruits and vegetables for our students. Additionally, Small Steps’ partnership with Be A Champion, Inc. helped us provide nutritious meals and snacks to our students at a lower cost. Be A Champion provided lunches during our last two summer programs and provided snacks at our Jensen campus in 2016-2017, both at no cost to Small Steps.

Committed Volunteers

In the 2016-2017 school year, approximately 650 volunteers served more than 5,700 hours, and 113 Small Steps students had volunteer Buddies. Buddies spend 30 minutes each week with a student engaged in child-directed play; the volunteer helps to model appropriate adult-child interactions and provides a source of stability and routine by returning at the same time every week. Volunteers also help Small Steps with on-site work projects and enrichment events for our students and families such as holiday celebrations and summer splash days.

Tracking Alumni

One of our most pressing goals to achieve is tracking our former students to determine how they are doing and the role Small Steps played in their development. We formed a new partnership with the Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics (TIMES) at the University of Houston to determine the impact of the Small Steps program on our students and to examine the factors that might moderate program effectiveness. We look forward to utilizing this data to help Small Steps make an even bigger impact on the families we serve.

Fiscal Responsibility

Small Steps has been awarded Charity Navigator’s four-star (highest) rating for 13 years in a row. Charity Navigator’s criteria include the charity’s financial health, accountability, and transparency. Only 1 percent of charities have received this rating for 13 consecutive years, earning Small Steps an “exceptional” designation. In Charity Navigator’s words, this designation “differentiates Small Steps Nurturing Center from its peers and demonstrates to the public it is worthy of their trust.”

2016-2017 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The following is an overview of Small Steps’ income and expenses for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2017.

<u>Total Support & Revenue:</u>	\$3,507,095	
<u>Total Expenses:</u>	\$3,244,720	
Program Expenses:	\$2,674,155	82.4%
Management & General Expenses:	\$233,450	7.2%
Fundraising Expenses:	\$337,115	10.4%

Note: Small Steps received a large multi-year pledge that was accounted for in its entirety in the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

All figures are unaudited. Audited figures for the 2016-2017 fiscal year will be available in late 2017.

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The following members recently rotated off the Board: Jerry Crews, Justin Loweth, and Wynne Snoots.

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Thurmon Address
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Marty Phillips

John Rathmell, Jr.
Wynne Snoots

2017 Executive Director

Ana Schick



*Small Steps Nurturing Center is tax-exempt under 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
Donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

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