

# 2021-2022 Annual Report



small steps nurturing center



# Hope for Children Straight from the Heart



## A Letter from Our Leadership

Friends of Small Steps,

We reflect on the 2021-2022 school year with gratitude: for God’s provision and protection during the COVID-19 pandemic, for the privilege of nurturing and educating 167 students across two campuses, for our staff’s commitment to our mission, for the families who entrusted their children to our care, and for everyone in the Houston community who supported our work!

We had hoped that we would return to “normal” in the 2021-2022 school year; instead, COVID-19 impacted our school and community in a multitude of ways. Both the Delta and Omicron variants disrupted our program and required continued agility. Our families living in poverty experienced greater impacts from COVID-19, so Small Steps remained diligent with safety and health procedures.

Students who began the year academically behind or social-emotionally challenged progressed significantly with the support of their teachers, our SET team, and our new Instructional Specialist. A fourth classroom opened at Gulfton, and we sent our first group of pre-K graduates to elementary school with skills to succeed. Despite starting from behind with COVID-19 learning losses, many of our Fifth Ward campus kindergarten graduates left able to read and write their own stories. Small Steps launched an expansion campaign to add four new classrooms to the Fifth Ward campus. Generous donors helped us fully fund our operations and jump-start our expansion campaign.

Through it all, we kept our mission front and center with the knowledge that the seeds of learning and nurture sown at Small Steps will grow in each child in the years to come. Join us in celebrating the 2021-2022 school year as we look eagerly ahead to the next!

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily".

**Emily Sheeren**  
Board President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ana".

**Ana Schick**  
Executive Director

*Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man! Psalm 107:8*



## Fifth Ward Campus

Small Steps' Fifth Ward campus was built in 2006 with four classrooms and expanded in 2012 to add four more. The campus served **112 students**, ages two to six, in the 2021-2022 school year.

*Located just outside downtown Houston, the Fifth Ward is a historic neighborhood with a primarily Hispanic and Black population. More than 55% of children live below the poverty level.*



## Campus Expansion

Small Steps is expanding our Fifth Ward campus! We purchased two adjacent pieces of property and plan to begin construction in 2022, with the goal of opening the new wing in the 2023-2024 school year. We are adding four new classrooms, two therapy rooms, and a large multipurpose space to the campus. Once the new wing is fully open, Small Steps will serve an **additional 60 students** each school year in this community.

We are raising funds for this capital project, which includes the land purchases, design, construction, and renovation costs, and furnishings for the new spaces.



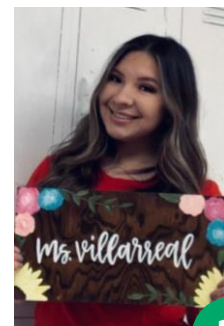
## Gulfton Campus

After opening in January 2021, we celebrated the first full school year for our Gulfton campus in the 2021-2022 school year. This year, the campus served **55 students** in four classrooms, and the fifth and final classroom will open in the 2022-2023 school year.

*Gulfton is a refugee resettlement area. Our families represent many nations and languages and value education for their youngest children.*

## Alumni Spotlight: Azalea Villarreal

Azalea attended Small Steps from 2002 to 2004. Azalea remembers Small Steps as a welcoming and fun environment where everyone cared personally for her and her family. Small Steps was a place Azalea felt safe and loved, "like a home away from home." She reflected that "Small Steps never set limits on me," and the confidence she developed at Small Steps helped her succeed after she graduated. Azalea received a full scholarship through Houston ISD to the University of Houston so that she could become a bilingual kindergarten teacher, and she was the first person in her family to go to college. She was inspired to become a teacher because of her mom, a staff member and teacher at Small Steps for more than 18 years. "I want to make an impact like she does." Azalea seeks to be a safe place for the students she teaches at Scroggins Elementary in Denver Harbor, just like Small Steps was for her.



# Highlights from the Year

## Kindergarten & Pre-K Graduations

This year, Small Steps graduated 29 kindergarten students at our Fifth Ward campus and 11 pre-K students at our Gulfton campus. The graduation ceremonies celebrated the accomplishments and growth of each student, the dedication of all their teachers at Small Steps, and the important role their families play in their education and development. We affirmed, "Oh, the Places You'll Go!" as we sent them off on their next adventure, and we reminded them that they always will be a part of the Small Steps community!



## Hispanic Heritage Month

Small Steps celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month with class projects on our students' heritage, cultural dress days, and incredible potluck meals. We all loved celebrating the heritage of more than 60% of our students and the majority of our staff members.

## Black History Month

During Black History Month, staff members shared stories of an inspiring Black leader during daily morning devotional time. Students learned and even prepared their own presentations about Black Americans who influenced history and are shaping present-day events. They also considered how they would finish the sentence: "I have a dream...."

## Christmas and Easter Chapels

Small Steps students sang "Angels We Have Heard on High" and performed a live nativity program in Christmas chapels. Easter chapels were full of joyful singing and dance moves fit for Jesus the King's resurrection!







## Family Support In Response to Inflation

As inflation rose, our families' finances were stretched more than ever, even as many already struggled with food insecurity and finding quality employment. Small Steps responded to this need by collecting donated gas cards and distributing them to high-need families. Volunteers also received, organized, and helped distribute food from Second Servings to provide families with high-quality food and help alleviate their food insecurity.

## The Most Wonderful Time of the Year

The holidays are a time when we witness the generosity of our Small Steps community. Every family received a Thanksgiving Food Box of non-perishable goods plus a turkey in November and an overflowing Family Baskets filled with household essentials for the December break. We were thrilled to welcome back Santa and Mrs. Claus to visit with students and listen to their Christmas wishes. Students and their siblings had numerous gifts to open on Christmas morning due to the generous donations of individuals, corporations, and church partners. Thank you, one and all!



## Fine Arts Programs

Fine arts are an essential part of Small Steps' robust program. In addition to drama with Mr. Justin and creative movement with Hope Stone, Inc., Small Steps contracted with Prelude Music Foundation to provide music classes to students at both campuses during the 2021-2022 school year. Music promotes learning and brain development, and pre-reading skills are connected to rhythm skills.



## Record-Breaking Wine Classic

After two years without the annual Small Steps Wine Classic due to COVID-19, the 2022 Wine Classic, chaired by Kristy & Chris Bradshaw and Carolyn & Garry Tanner, enjoyed record-breaking success! Highlights from the evening included Chris Shepherd as sommelier, a Small Steps graduate speaker, and remarks from honoree Townes Pressler, Jr.



# Financial Statements

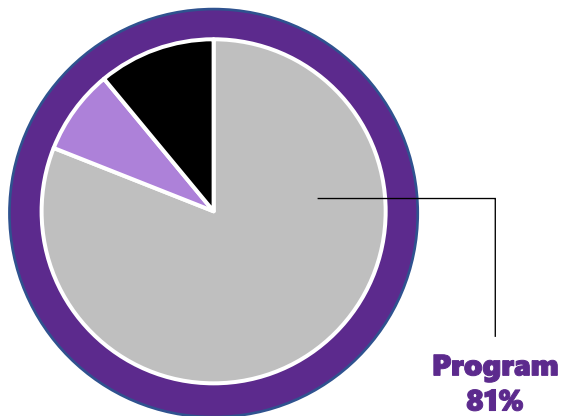


## Revenue

|  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| Contributions                                | \$ 4,822,572        |
| Signature Events                             | \$ 1,665,160        |
| Foundations                                  | 2,419,719           |
| Corporate, Church, & Community Organizations | 324,606             |
| Individuals                                  | 315,602             |
| Young Professionals                          | 97,485              |
| Gifts in Kind                                | 61,304              |
| Investment Income                            | (110,123)           |
| Public Funding                               | \$396,353           |
| <b>Total Revenue</b>                         | <b>\$ 5,170,106</b> |

## Expenses

|                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Program               | \$ 3,173,050        |
| Management & General  | 305,805             |
| Fundraising           | 430,772             |
| <b>Total Expenses</b> | <b>\$ 3,909,627</b> |



Note: These are based on our unaudited financials for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.







## Our Mission

Small Steps Nurturing Center provides 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.

## Board & Leadership

Emily Sheeren, *President*  
Michael Fertitta, *Vice President*  
Brooks Despot, *Secretary*  
Greg Highberger, *Treasurer*  
Tom Bastian  
Chris Bradshaw  
Cameron Robert Brown\*  
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Karen David-Green  
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Charlotte MacVane\*  
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Annette Mullins  
W. David de Roode  
R. Linda Alonzo Saenz  
Julie P. Samson\*  
Tim Samson  
Stephanie Sauer  
Bobby Stillwell, Jr.  
Carolyn Tanner  
Nazareth Tekeste  
Patrick Trask

*\*Joined in 2022-2023 school year*



**Ana Schick**, *Executive Director*  
[aschick@ssnc.org](mailto:aschick@ssnc.org) | 713-236-0330



## Our Locations

### Fifth Ward Campus

2902 Jensen Drive  
Houston, TX 77026

### Gulfton Campus

6856 Bellaire Blvd  
Houston, TX 77074

**Questions?**

Contact Sara Terry at  
[sterry@ssnc.org](mailto:sterry@ssnc.org)

# Parting Words from Our Parents



"[Small Steps is] doing a fantastic job, and they are always improving one way or another. I love all the teachers and staff...they are awesome!"

"The staff members were extremely supportive every step of the way. The teachers helped my son prepare for elementary [school] mentally and academically."

"I feel since day one, Small Steps has been on top of making the children their top priority."