



small steps nurturing center

2024-2025



Friends of Small Steps.

The 2024-2025 school year taught us the value of a transitional phase – that growth comes from meeting challenges and succeeding. We started the school year with a new Executive Director and completed our Fifth Ward campus expansion. Two additional classrooms opened, and we saw enrollment grow to 225 students with plenty of new spaces in which to learn and thrive. We adopted the Frog Street curriculum that provided valuable resources for both new and experienced teachers. And at the end of the school year, we watched our last kindergarten class graduate as we transition to serving 2-year-olds through pre-K.

Throughout this period of change, Small Steps was guided by our chosen Bible verse for the school year, Jeremiah 17:8. Small Steps aspires to be “like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.” We are privileged to serve more students than ever before, sustained by the continued support of our community and God’s loving grace.

Join us as we reflect on this year’s many blessings that allow us to navigate the bright path ahead!



Annette Mullins
Board President



Barbara Allen
Executive Director



THE SMALL STEPS MISSION

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.

Anatomy of a Student

*I praise you because I
am fearfully and
wonderfully made; your
works are wonderful, I
know that full well.*

PSALM 139:14

EARS

Ears are for listening! The first few years of a child’s life are pivotal for learning social-emotional skills like listening to teacher instructions and the feelings of peers. Active listening also exposes students to a wide range of vocabulary and language constructions that help develop their literacy skills.

HANDS

Hands are for holding! Small Steps is a relationship-based program. We foster strong student-teacher relationships to create a safe and nurturing environment for our students to thrive both emotionally and academically.

BRAIN

Brains are for learning! Language development is at the core of Small Steps’ program. Educational activities focus on expanding vocabulary and building literacy skills. Teachers also integrate science and math concepts to ensure students are receiving a well-rounded academic foundation for elementary school.

HEART

Hearts are for loving! Students learn how to process and express their emotions in productive ways, which helps them build positive relationships with those around them. They also learn about the love of God, and that His love will be with them always.

FEET

Feet are for running! Small Steps provides students with a safe outdoor environment for kids to play and expend their energy, supporting their physical growth.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



Classroom Activities



Celebrating Heritage



Volunteer Buddies



Holiday Festivities



Easter Chapel



Graduation Day

Parents & Families

Our families complete at least ten tuition hours annually for their children to attend Small Steps. This requirement supports parents as active participants in our program and their child's education. Parents complete these hours through parent education classes or volunteerism.

This year, we hosted a collaborative workshop revolving around play-based learning and how it supports child development. Parents attended with their children, learning age-appropriate, hands-on ways to play with their children at home. Other classes on topics like parenting strategies, developmental milestones, and financial literacy took place online throughout the school year.





GULFTON: FOUR YEARS EXPANDING OUR IMPACT

In the 2020-2021 school year, Small Steps opened a new campus in the Gulfton/Sharpstown neighborhood of Houston. When opening the Gulfton campus, children ages four and younger accounted for 13% of the area’s population, but many families lacked access to high-quality early childhood education programs. Small Steps saw the gap and sought to be a resource for this culturally diverse community.

When the Gulfton campus opened, 45 students were welcomed into three classrooms that provided a safe educational environment for them to learn and grow. The 2025-2026 school year will see **75** students walk through the doors on Bellaire Boulevard to begin the campus’s fifth school year!

Our generous donors made this expansion possible, as well as our invaluable partnership with St. Luke’s United Methodist Church Gethsemane. Our partnership with St. Luke’s helped us build strong relationships within the community quickly, and going into our fifth school year, we have a waitlist of more than 40 students.



Strong Leadership

Two Small Steps teachers, Daniela Gonzalez and Begoña Poliakoff, took the reigns at Gulfton in the 2024-2025 school year! They both have a breadth of early childhood knowledge and with their experience in the classroom at the Fifth Ward campus, they are well equipped to support cross-campus consistency and collaboration.





Success Story

Carolina* arrived at Small Steps never having been to school before. She struggled with establishing relationships and low academic performance. When the year started, Carolina frequently stated she did not want to come to school. She was unable to identify the difference between colors, shapes, and numbers and recalling information was challenging. To support Carolina’s social-emotional needs, she began play therapy, and as a result, her confidence and performance truly began to soar. Her self-talk became more positive, and she could frequently be heard stating things like, “I love school. You teach me love, Ms. P!” Her progress was powered by a multi-disciplinary team where teachers, parents, and therapists worked together towards her goals. By fostering Carolina’s social-emotional growth, she was equipped with the tools to thrive academically and experienced a complete turnaround by the end of the year.

**Name changed to protect the privacy of our students and families.*

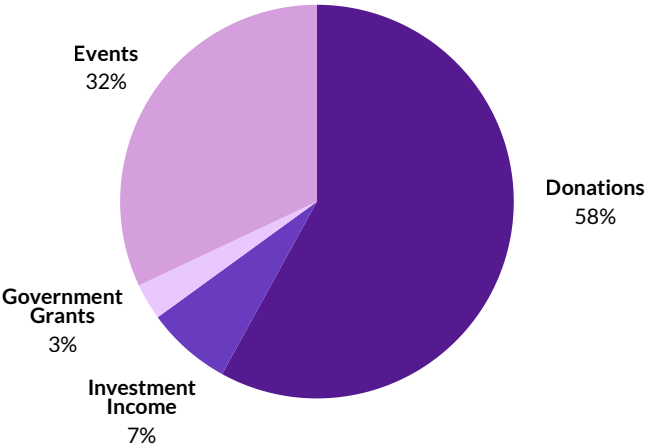
GRAND OPENING CELEBRATION

In the fall, we hosted our Fifth Ward Expansion Grand Opening! Donors and community members gathered to see the new wing, multipurpose room, and more. As a result of these new spaces, Small Steps opened the Hippos and Giraffes classes, serving 30 additional students. When fully operational, the expansion will enable Small Steps to serve 255 students across both campuses. A special thank you to our lead expansion donors, The Hamill Foundation and Maestro Cares Foundation for their generous support!

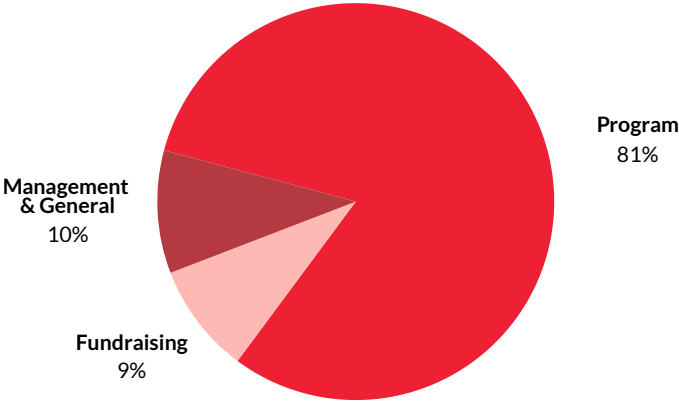


FINANCIALS

REVENUE \$6,100,075



EXPENSES \$5,747,613



**Note: These are unaudited financials for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.*

2024-2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Annette Mullins, <i>President</i> | Alicia Fertitta |
| Jeremy Goebel, <i>Vice President</i> | John F. Griffin |
| Brooks Despot, <i>Secretary</i> | Dawn Krieg |
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| Mundo de la Fuente | Nazareth Tekeste |
| Bob Duran | |



PRE-K AND KINDERGARTEN GRADUATES



Jellyfish Class



Tigers Class



Cheetahs Class



Fifth Ward Campus

2902 Jensen Drive
Houston, Texas 77026

Gulfton Campus

6856 Bellaire Blvd
Houston, Texas 77074