

Resilience Report

Helping Families Build Resilience so All Children can Thrive

A New Vision for the Future

For 130 years, Families First has been a change agent for families. We have been there to help support parents, counsel families, and strengthen families.

In spite of our work, our families still suffer from the impacts of poverty on their lives. When their day-to-day life is focused on survival, parents often cannot give their children the full attention they need. The economic deprivation poverty creates leads to depression and stress that creates family dysfunction and affects the children. Our families also face biases in education, underinvestment in their communities and unjust policies that limit access to economic opportunity. **So, in 2019, we began to explore how we could do more for our families.**

We convened our staff, Board of Directors, funders, stakeholders and community leaders to examine our operations and develop an innovative strategy for the future. We agreed that if our goal was to strengthen families we must focus on supporting all of the needs of a family, not just the supportive services we

provide. We must also partner with others and, together, lead our communities to drive change in the systems and policies that negatively impact physical and mental health, family stability and economic equality in communities of color and low-income communities.

A new prevention-based strategy emerged, designed to accelerate families toward a permanent path of stability and success. Our vision focuses on two generations – the parent and the child – and combines critical

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A New Vision for the Future

For our families to thrive, we must help them build resilience while we work with partners and communities to break down barriers to success.

Families First services like counseling, parenting skills and maternal health support with those of our partners in housing, education, hunger and workforce development.

Our strategy is driven by our new mission: Building resilient families so all children can thrive.

Resilience decreases the effects of adversity on a family's health and development. It can be learned through proactive experiences, coping skills and strong relationships. It enables adults to then demonstrate healthy behaviors to their children – and it can be measured.

We will measure resilience using the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, to track how our work and that of our partners give our families the ability to thrive in the face of adversity.

The “Navigator” care model is the cornerstone of our strategy, employing a



In Gwinnett County, families in our Chispa program are building resilience through the Navigator Care Model where there is a waiting list for program entry.

“quarterback” who provides intensive early intervention services. **It's a game changer for families.** Navigators engage, listen and connect the families to our programs and other community resources that meet their needs. They also track and measure progress and provide aftercare following program completion. (Learn more about Navigator in the next article.)

We are able to embark on this new vision for our future and the future of our families thanks to your support. We invite you to follow along each month as we share our progress helping families build resilience as we work with partners to break down barriers in communities to ensure our families and their children can thrive.



Program Innovation

Navigator: Moving Families from Surviving to Thriving

“Our Navigator model is an exciting new approach to working with families who have complex challenges,” says Families First Senior Director of Programs Paula Moody. “The families in our programs come in with a combination of issues that have a domino effect on their lives. We help them find their way back to where they are stable and can thrive.”

Many families are in survival mode right now due emotional distress, unemployment, unstable housing, parenting challenges or even a lack of basic needs. When a new family comes to Families First, we begin with a Resiliency Assessment to get to the heart of their needs. We then create a personalized plan to connect them with the programs and essential community services that can help. Our Navigators work with families every step of the way – from food and housing assistance to counseling, coaching and parenting to career planning and goal achievement – to help get them back on track and develop self-sufficiency skills they can use throughout their lives.

“It's not over when they leave us though,” shares Moody. “We know life will throw them more curveballs – and this is why our aftercare program is so important. We help them learn to overcome the new obstacles. Our goal is to prepare the family for long-term success...to be resilient now and in the future.”

Families First follows up with the families for 18 months or more after they complete our programs – and we make sure they know we're

here for them when they need help. We also track the family's resilience over time to identify potential hiccups before they get too serious and pinpoint trends that can help us improve the program for other families in the future.



It's not over when they leave us. We know life will throw them more curveballs – and this is why our aftercare program is so important. -Paula Moody

“The biggest difference between Navigator and other programs,” says Moody, “is the focus on resilience. I'm excited for our families. I'm excited to see where this will take us together.”

Families First launched a 3-year pilot of our Navigator Care Model in October. This pilot will begin in Gwinnett County and will expand to Atlanta's Westside and additional communities in the future. We will screen over 4,500 families for resilience and bring together dozens of new partners to support the families, break down silos, and work together to influence systems and policies that have disproportionately impacted our families' ability to move out of poverty for generations.

Impacting over 16,000 Families


Paula Moody: Champion for Families

Families First leads a portfolio of services that help improve individual outcomes while strengthening and stabilizing families.



Adoption

- 13 children finalized adoptions and found forever families




Counseling

- Our therapists are currently conducting 140 counseling sessions per month




Adoption Support Services

- 12,215 adoptive or fostering parents received trainings to strengthen families




Healthy Starts

- 100% of parenting teens served delayed a second pregnancy
- 95% of children received a health screening




Foster Care

- 85% of youth served were connected to a supportive adult
- 90% of youth aged out of foster care with a full-time job
- 100% of Second Chance Home teen mothers moved to permanent housing



Parenting

- 3,603 participants learned skills to be better parents



Housing

- 170 formerly homeless families received housing and support services

Paula Moody is the Senior Director of Programs for Families First and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She leads the programs and services that support individuals and families at various points in the continuum of care: Adoption & Adoption Support Services, Foster Care, Behavioral Health & Supportive Housing, Healthy Starts & Early Learning and Parenting.

it takes a team effort. Our team is led by incredibly dedicated managers, social workers, clinicians and case coordinators who are always willing to go above and beyond.”



Paula Moody
Senior Director of Programs

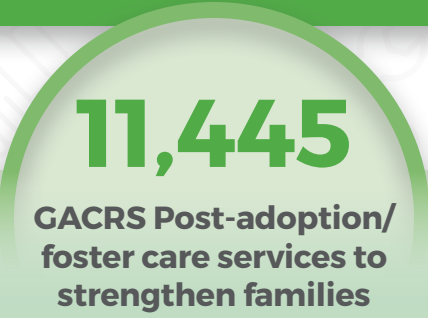
I think I was born for this work. I always wanted to be in nonprofit leadership and I always aspired to be in this type of role.

It’s a complex job, with sometimes heartbreaking stories, but Paula’s experience, dedication, boundless energy and desire to help children, youth and families succeed drives her and her team to change lives every day. “I really believe that in order to serve our families with the empathy, care and nonjudgmental approach that helps them move from surviving whatever challenges they are facing when they come through our door, to thriving,

Paula started with Families First in 2013 as the Child, Youth and Permanency Director. She has a wide array of non-profit program and management experience including juvenile justice, foster care, and independent living, and was the Executive Director of a nonprofit children and family service agency in New Haven, CT for eight years.

Paula earned a Master’s Degree in Urban Studies, as well as a Master’s Degree in Social Work, from Southern Connecticut State University. She is also a proud graduate of North Carolina A&T State University where she earned a Bachelor’s of Arts Degree in Political Science.

By the Numbers: July 2019-June 2020



Scholarship Award Update: Jahrell & Ariel Williams

“I need to prove to the world that regardless of where you come from, what upbringing you are from, you can achieve and accomplish anything you want in life. It’s all about the mind set and the focus toward the life that you want to achieve.” -Jahrell Williams

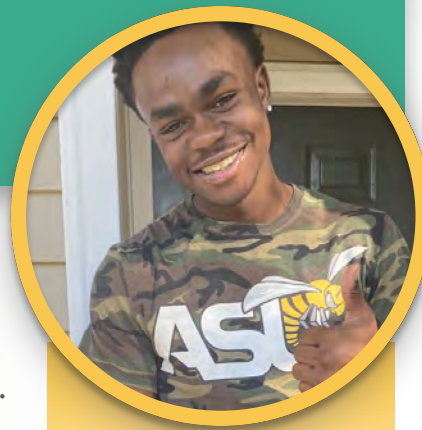
We first met Jahrell Williams earlier this year, when he received the Karen Sibley Scholarship during the 2020 Dining for a Difference Virtual Gala. His journey to college became especially difficult when his mother was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and had a psychotic episode which led to the family becoming homeless. Jahrell finished his high school education and prepared for college while in an Atlanta shelter, sleeping in a single room with his mother, his twin sister Ariel, and two brothers.

The Shelter-A-Family program has provided the Williams family with supportive housing, along with mental health treatment and job training for his mother, so Jahrell and his sister Ariel could focus on their college education.

This Fall, Jahrell transferred from Georgia State to Alabama State University in

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Montgomery to study Business Administration, with a minor in Marketing. “I am so thankful for the \$5000 as well as the motivation and inspiration I gained from telling my family’s story. **Not everyone has the opportunity to tell the story of how they came to be.** For you to give me and my family the opportunity to do that, it’s a gift from God. My sister and I are honored and thankful.” Jahrell’s twin sister Ariel, received the Carol Dunlap Reiser Scholarship and this year she transferred to Fisk University to pursue her studies in Medicine. We can’t wait to see what the future holds for these two bright young super stars!



Jahrell Williams
Scholarship Recipient



Ariel Williams, Carol Dunlap Reiser Scholarship
Jahrell Williams, Karen Sibley Scholarship

Introducing the Family Resilience & Recovery Fund

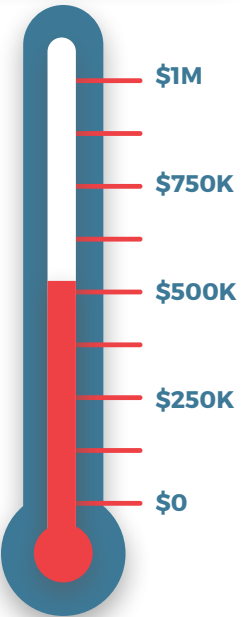
\$523,870 of our \$1,000,000 goal is raised as of October 1, 2020.

Our vision is that all children and families are resilient and able to achieve their fullest potential. The health and economic crises resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic have threatened the ability for our families to achieve their goals. The racial justice protests of the summer highlighted the injustices that often create barriers to success for those we serve.

To ensure we can meet the increased needs of our families, we have launched the Family Resilience & Recovery Fund. Our goal is to

raise \$1M before June 30th. All gifts to this fund ensure our families receive the counseling, coaching, and other supports needed to recover from the challenges of 2020 and build the resilience needed to accelerate their families to success.

Can we count on you to help us with a gift? Visit familiesfirst.org/gift



Georgia Center for Resources and Support: A Lifeline for Adoptive and Foster Families

“GACRS Resource Advisors believe in honoring adoptive parents and their children while strengthening families and changing lives.”-Brenda Gillespie, GACRS Program Manager

The Georgia Center for Resources and Support (GACRS) has been a lifeline for adoptive and foster families since 2001. A program of Families First and funded by the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services, **GACRS served 11,445 people last year.** Our Resource Advisors work one-on-one with clients to help them parent their adopted and foster children with love and understanding through trainings, referrals, support groups, webinars and virtual certificate trainings. Educational resources

range from counseling, learning healthy and effective discipline, managing situational change and “healing yourself so you can heal your child” – all designed to enhance the adoptive or foster experience and prevent family disruptions or dissolution of child placements.

Last November, 280 adoptive parents and their children celebrated their families in an all-day live National Adoption Month event, and **this year’s 6th annual interactive event will be held virtually on November 14**, with games for kids and families and an inspirational celebration led by the GACRS Team. If you are an adoptive or foster parent seeking support, find out more at GACRS.org

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Message from DePriest Waddy, CEO

Exciting things are happening at Families First.

This year has been fraught with hardship, and many families are more fragile than ever. These extraordinary times call for a bold new vision, and Families First has risen to the challenge. We have developed an innovative strategy to drive meaningful change for families while working together to break down the barriers to opportunity created by decades of social injustice.

Our new Navigator model combines tried and true best practices with a new approach for building strong families. With a focus on building resilience, we will serve the whole family (two+ generations) and work across the community to accelerate the whole family so they can achieve their full potential.

I hope you enjoy learning more about our bold vision for the future of Families First and, even more importantly, the lasting change we know we can help the families we serve achieve. With you in our corner, we are truly helping families build resilience so children can thrive.

Yours for a better future,



DePriest Waddy
CEO, Families First

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read 'DePriest Waddy'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

DePriest Waddy
CEO, Families First