



Union County Community Action, Inc.

2022-2023 Annual Report

Who We Are

Union County Community Action, Inc. (UCCA) has been mission focused and community oriented since 1966. Today, that mission is simple: To provide pathways for individuals and families to achieve economic self-sufficiency through the provision of services, advocacy, and community partnerships. UCCA operates Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Anson, Richmond, and Union Counties, North Carolina. Providing children with early childhood education to help prepare them for kindergarten and beyond. Staying true to being community oriented, UCCA operates five educational centers across the three-county service area. Ensuring that not only are children being provided a high-quality education but that there are high-quality employment opportunities for the members of those communities. UCCA also administers the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) in Union County, NC to help elevate individuals out of poverty. By offering CSBG resources to low-income individuals and families, we achieve positive outcomes like increased incomes and housing stabilization.

This Year Meant



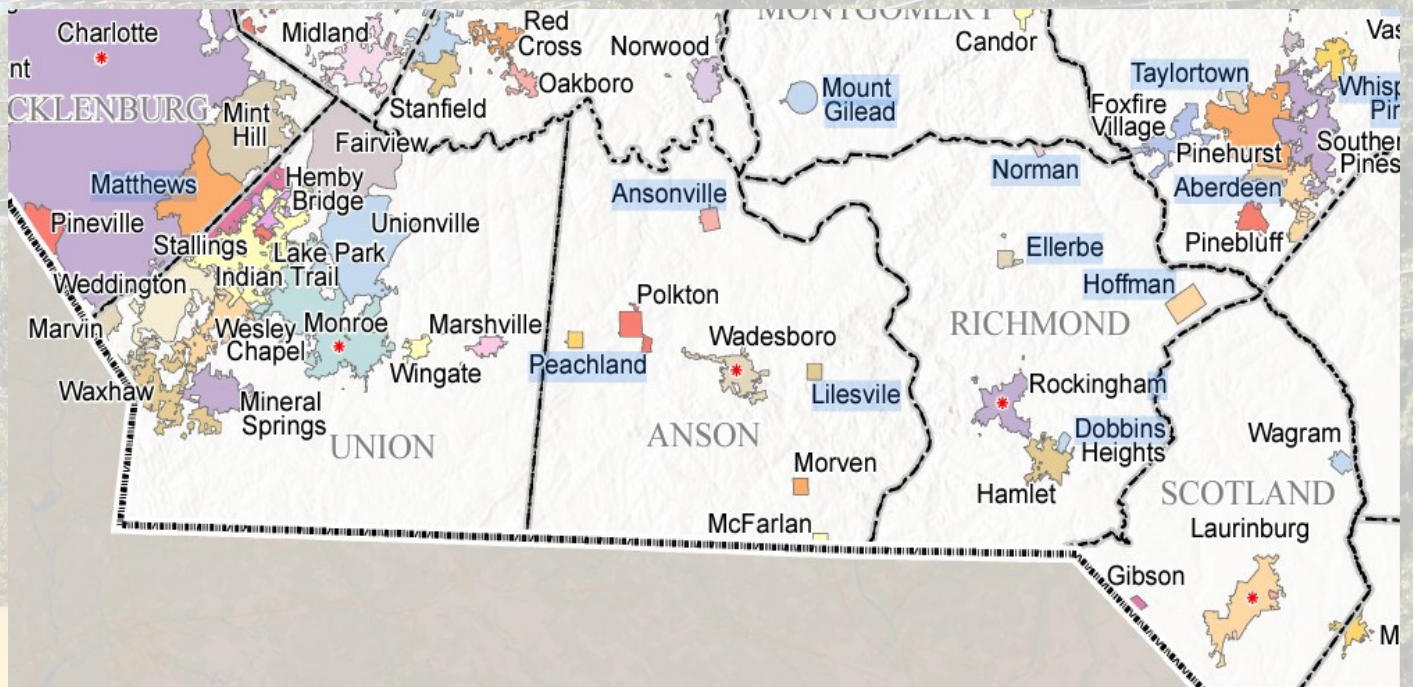
454
Families
Served



57 Years
of
Service



496
Students
Served



Service Area

UCCA serves Anson, Richmond, and Union Counties in North Carolina. Union County is the largest by population with 235,699 people, Richmond is the second largest with a population of 43,301, and Anson is third with a population of 22,388 according to the latest data from the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates. Union County benefits from being close to the economic hub of Charlotte, NC and as a result has a very low poverty rate. Sitting below the national average at 7.2%, Union County has the lowest poverty rate of our tri-county service area. However, with the largest population, this means that 16,971 people are living below the poverty line. Anson County's poverty rate is substantially higher at 18.3%, with an estimated 4,097 people living below the poverty line. Richmond County is even higher with a poverty rate of 25%, resulting in a low-income population of 10,826 people. These may seem like numbers and statistic but they are also the children, adults, and families that UCCA staff see every day. These numbers illustrate the need for the services that UCCA provides in order to reduce poverty and increase outcomes for the individuals and families we serve.

Head Start and Early Head Start

UCCA operates Head Start and Early Head Start in Union County at the Winchester center in Monroe, NC, in Anson County at the Central Center in Wadesboro and Morven Elementary in Morven, NC, and in Richmond County at the South Hamlet Center and Fayetteville Street Center in Hamlet, NC. These five centers serve children aged birth to five and their families. Head Start and Early Head Start services and resources are crucial to early childhood development. Studies such as Longer-Term Effects of Head Start published in the American Economic Review, found that children that had participated in Head Start programs had increased rates of high school graduation and lower interactions with law enforcement later in life. This early intervention is critical for children that face poverty from a young age and there is no shortage of children within UCCA's service area who fall into this vulnerable population. According to the latest UCCA Community Needs Assessment, Union County has a poverty rate of 9.7% for children under age five. Anson County has a poverty rate of 37.7% and Richmond County a rate of 49.7% for children under the age of five. UCCA's average monthly enrollment as a percentage of full enrollment was 71.03% for Head Start and 77.69% for Early Head Start UCCA strives to make a positive impact on this vulnerable population within our service area.

Education Services

In order to have the greatest effect possible, UCCA Head Start services are offered in a center based format and Early Head Start services are offered in both a home based and center based format. Head Start children may also be provided with transportation services and although Early Head Start does not have transportation services, home visitors are sent out to ensure home based students are receiving the services they need.

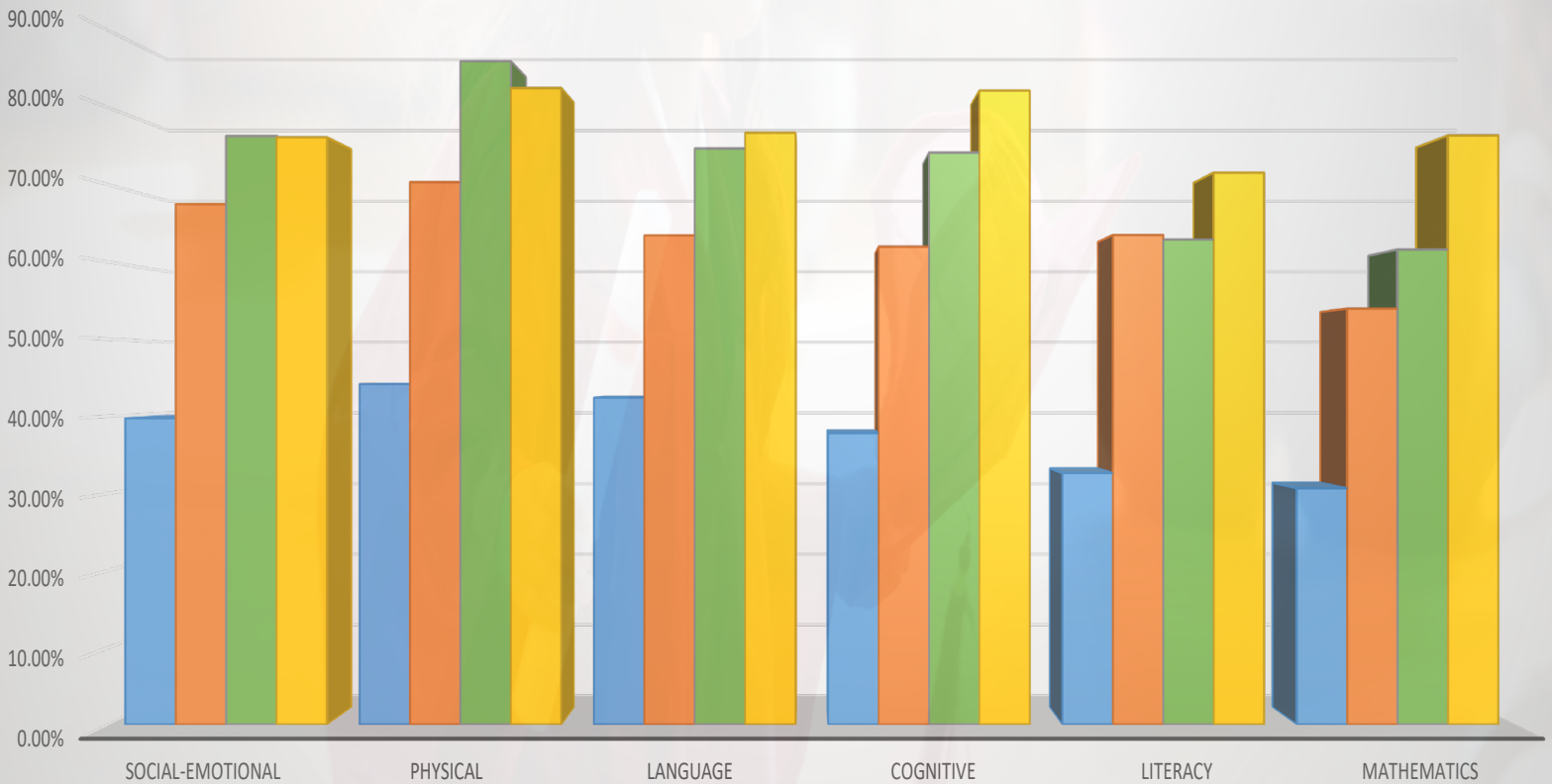
- 3,000+ Children in the tri-county service area are eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start -

Each of the education centers operated by UCCA are licensed through the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education (NC DCDEE). All of UCCA's Head Start and Early Head Start education centers have received a five star rating, the highest rating given by NC DCDEE. This is a reflection of the high standard UCCA strives to maintain in order to provide a top level education to the children of our service area. Efforts to meet these high expectations start with keeping a low child to teacher ratio in each classroom during the school day. This allows for each child to receive the attention they deserve and ensure that

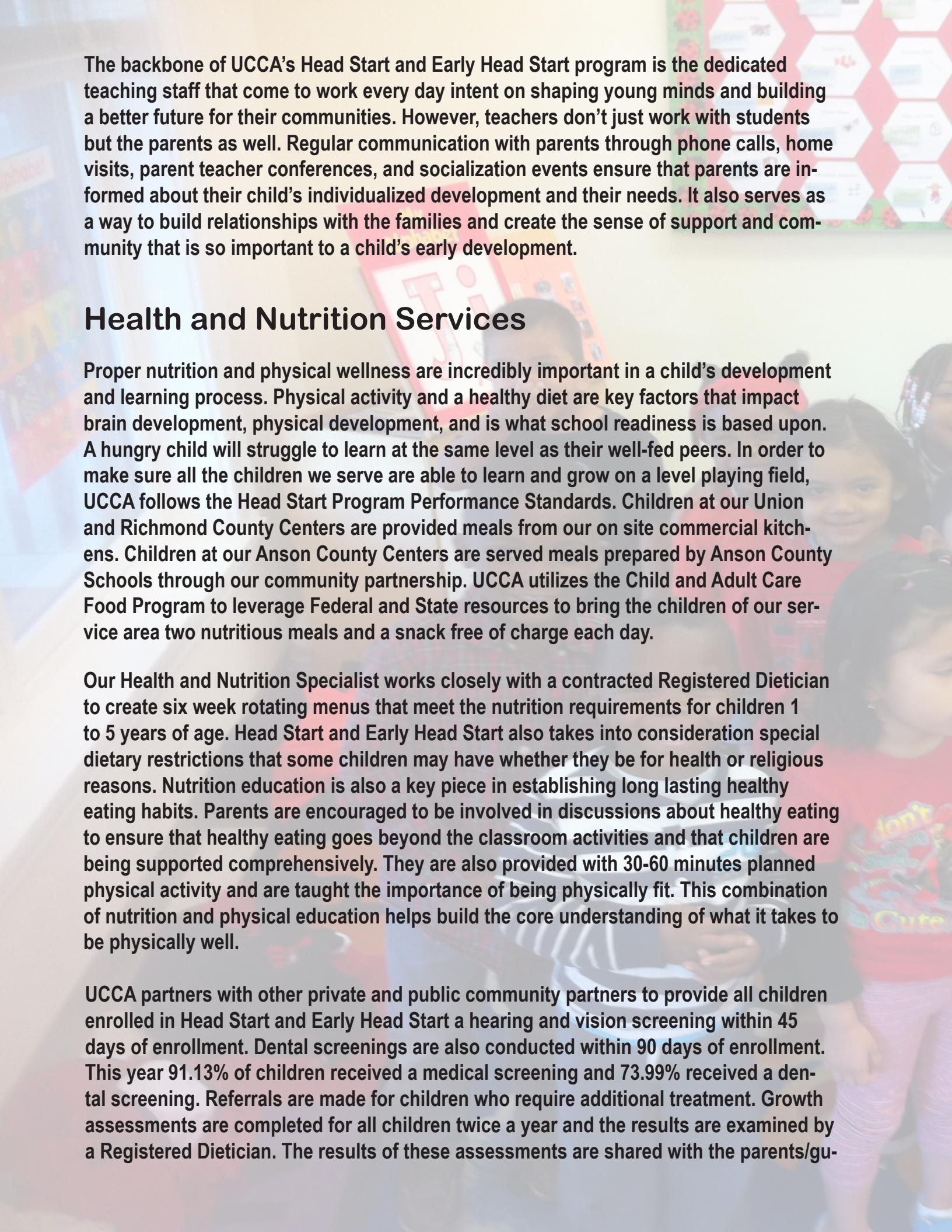
their individualized lesson plans are being implemented to the greatest effect. It also creates an environment where high quality interactions between education staff and children are not just the goal, but a common occurrence in the classroom. UCCA also complies with the NC Day Care Regulations to make sure that all our children are safe and best practices are being followed. UCCA participates in the Star Enhancement Grant through the Richmond County Partnership for Children to provide funding for classroom supplies for four and five star rated centers. All of these efforts culminate in an educational experience that builds a brighter future for the children we serve.

Our Head Start and Early Head Start curriculum has six core elements: Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, and Mathematics. Each of these educational areas are essential to early childhood development and positive outcomes in later education. Each of these areas are tracked to ensure that every child is receiving the care and instruction they need to reach their full potential during the school year. Overall, four separate measurements are taken throughout the year. The first is a baseline assessment at the beginning of the year and one follow up assessment in each of the following three quarters.

UCCA Student Performance Outcomes



	Social-Emotional	Physical	Language	Cognitive	Literacy	Mathematics
Preliminary	39.72%	44.17%	42.40%	37.81%	32.62%	30.66%
1st Checkpoint	67.51%	70.36%	63.46%	61.99%	63.51%	53.96%
2nd Checkpoint	76.34%	86.06%	74.73%	74.20%	62.92%	61.63%
3rd Checkpoint	76.19%	82.58%	76.77%	82.25%	71.59%	76.42%



The backbone of UCCA's Head Start and Early Head Start program is the dedicated teaching staff that come to work every day intent on shaping young minds and building a better future for their communities. However, teachers don't just work with students but the parents as well. Regular communication with parents through phone calls, home visits, parent teacher conferences, and socialization events ensure that parents are informed about their child's individualized development and their needs. It also serves as a way to build relationships with the families and create the sense of support and community that is so important to a child's early development.

Health and Nutrition Services

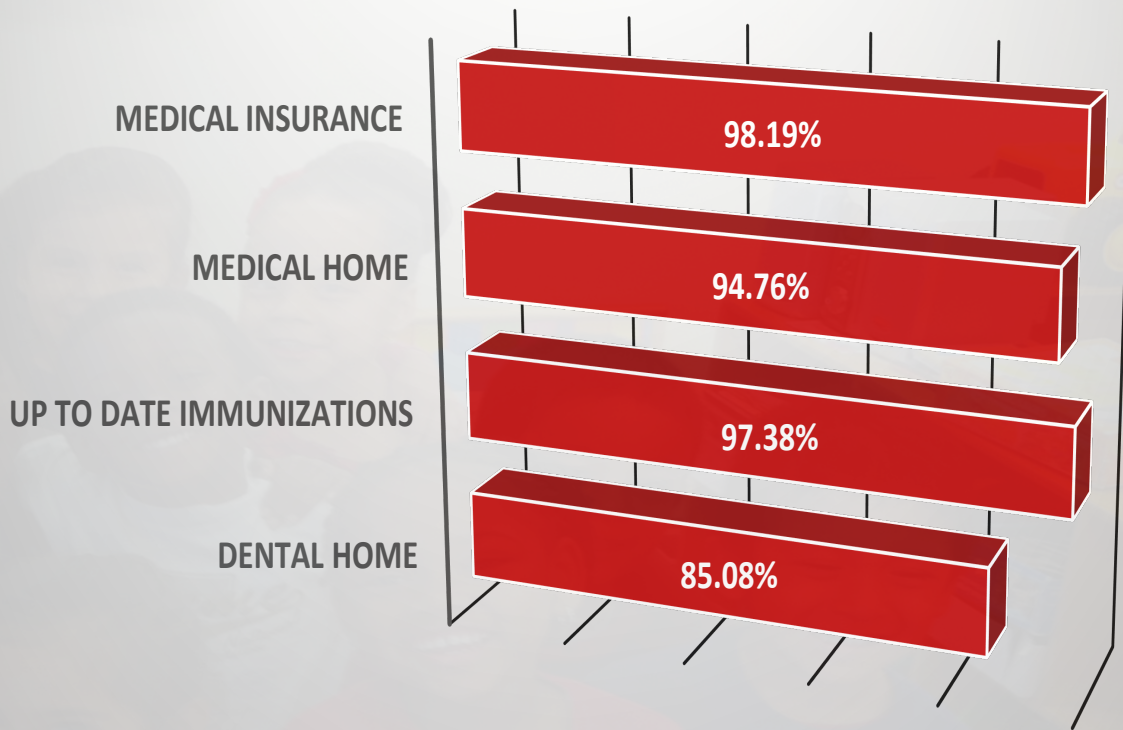
Proper nutrition and physical wellness are incredibly important in a child's development and learning process. Physical activity and a healthy diet are key factors that impact brain development, physical development, and is what school readiness is based upon. A hungry child will struggle to learn at the same level as their well-fed peers. In order to make sure all the children we serve are able to learn and grow on a level playing field, UCCA follows the Head Start Program Performance Standards. Children at our Union and Richmond County Centers are provided meals from our on site commercial kitchens. Children at our Anson County Centers are served meals prepared by Anson County Schools through our community partnership. UCCA utilizes the Child and Adult Care Food Program to leverage Federal and State resources to bring the children of our service area two nutritious meals and a snack free of charge each day.

Our Health and Nutrition Specialist works closely with a contracted Registered Dietician to create six week rotating menus that meet the nutrition requirements for children 1 to 5 years of age. Head Start and Early Head Start also takes into consideration special dietary restrictions that some children may have whether they be for health or religious reasons. Nutrition education is also a key piece in establishing long lasting healthy eating habits. Parents are encouraged to be involved in discussions about healthy eating to ensure that healthy eating goes beyond the classroom activities and that children are being supported comprehensively. They are also provided with 30-60 minutes planned physical activity and are taught the importance of being physically fit. This combination of nutrition and physical education helps build the core understanding of what it takes to be physically well.

UCCA partners with other private and public community partners to provide all children enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start a hearing and vision screening within 45 days of enrollment. Dental screenings are also conducted within 90 days of enrollment. This year 91.13% of children received a medical screening and 73.99% received a dental screening. Referrals are made for children who require additional treatment. Growth assessments are completed for all children twice a year and the results are examined by a Registered Dietician. The results of these assessments are shared with the parents/gu-

-ardians. Conducting these screenings and assessments help provide the children and their families with information to improve their health outlooks.

2022-2023 Health Services



Mental Health and Disability Services

UCCA understands that providing comprehensive and individualized instruction is paramount in delivering a high quality education. That is why UCCA utilizes a licensed mental health consultant to assist in identifying potential mental health and behavioral issues affecting the children enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start. Both the contracted mental health consultant and UCCA staff perform classroom observations to identify potential issues. These observations are reviewed and feedback is given to the parents/guardians regarding any potential mental health or behavioral issues. Should an issue present itself, UCCA policies outline a comprehensive framework to address the specific issue at hand. This approach allows each potential case to be addressed individually and for the teachers, parents, and consultant to develop a behavioral plan together. Should a behavioral plan be necessary, it will entail strategies and help reach identified behavioral goals for the child. Should a family require additional support navigating challenges, they will be referred to a partner agency and/or the agency's licensed mental health consultant. This process allows the child and their family to have the tools and support necessary to begin their education under the best possible circumstances.

Children with disabilities are another vulnerable group that UCCA seeks to support. UCCA partners with Children Developmental Service Agencies (CDSA) and public school systems in our tri-county service area to achieve this goal. Through these collaborative partnerships, children with special needs or disabilities can receive evaluations and services to help aid in their educational journey. should they be determined eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This includes therapies and services to enhance their abilities or alleviate daily struggles, resulting in them being able to enjoy access to educational services that can better prepare them for their future.

- 53 Children with Disabilities Served in 2022-2023 -

- 305 Children Screened for Developmental, Sensory, and Behavioral Concerns -

Community Needs Assessment

The Community Needs Assessment is currently being completed on a three year cycle with updates being completed in each of the interim two years to provide the latest data. The major findings from the last update include early childhood educator/teacher shortages across the State of North Carolina, income disparity within the service area, and the amount of Head Start and Early Head Start eligible children in the service area.

The North Carolina Department of Commerce published findings showing that the state has a shortfall of 3,120 early childcare employees from 2019 to 2021 based on industry growth. 30% leaving to higher paying industries, 34% left the workforce, and 35% are not entering the industry or workforce at all.

Income disparity has become a national topic and it can be seen clearly within Union County. Smaller areas close to the economic hub of Charlotte like Marvin see median household incomes average 3-4 times the incomes of Monroe and Wingate. The further from Charlotte to the East, there is county to county disparity. Wadesboro sees the lowest median household income for a town hosting one of our Head Start/Early Head Start centers.

The 2021 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates show 3,025 income eligible children in the tri-county service area. The majority of the children were in Union and Richmond Counties. However, there is a higher percentage of the population under 5 affected in both Anson and Richmond Counties. UCCA served 16.39% of eligible children in the 2022-2023 program year.

Service Area Population and Poverty				
Location	Population	Poverty Rate	Median Income	HS/EHS Eligible Children
Union County	235,699	7.20%	\$88,465	1266
Monroe	34,464	13.60%	\$58,180	
Wingate	3,830	19.10%	\$55,909	
Marvin	6,326	3.00%	\$221,350	
Anson County	22,388	18.30%	\$39,862	423
Wadesboro	5,079	37.10%	\$26,878	
Morven	385	14.80%	\$53,750	
Richmond County	43,301	25.00%	\$38,926	1336
Hamlet	6,098	25.70%	\$32,224	
Rockingham	9,200	28.70%	\$33,351	

Community Services Block Grant

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) is administered through the North Carolina Office of Economic Opportunity with the objective of helping low-income individuals reach and maintain self-sufficiency. Union County Community Action, Inc. (UCCA) is proud to take part in the poverty fighting network to better the lives of those in our community. UCCA utilizes CSBG funds to administer the Professional Readiness Opportunities for People Engaged in Learning (PROPEL) program in Union County, North Carolina. PROPEL is specifically designed to empower individuals within our community by removing barriers and increasing access to existing community resources so that they may achieve economic self-sufficiency.

UCCA currently also utilizes the Community Needs Assessment for CSBG, allowing UCCA to better understand the changing landscape of the community we operate in and adapt to best serve those in need. These efforts have helped UCCA identify several issues that lead to the need for the PROPEL program in our community. Lack of educational opportunities leading to higher wage employment, lack of safe and affordable housing, unjust economic and structural systems, population growth, lack of reliable transportation, and lack of affordable childcare put a great deal of stress on those who are at or below the poverty line in Union County. These issues not only create an environment where low income households can proliferate but also present barriers to success that prevent rising above the poverty line. UCCA PROPEL participants are provided with resources to overcome these barriers, including one-on-one coaching/case management, empowering workshops, tuition assistance for qualified programs, and access to a community network that UCCA has cultivated through its partnerships.

Services

PROPEL participants are provided with intensive coaching services and case management services that support personal growth and development. The dedicated CSBG staff work with participants in a collaborative process to help identify individual and family goals. With the understanding that participants are their own best experts regarding their needs and their strengths, coaches/case managers use motivational interviewing to draw out their reasons and skills to stimulate change. Participants are offered workshops that focus on academic advancement, professional development, and empowering experiences. These workshops not only help the participants in achieving their goals, but they positively impact their families. Parents who learn and utilize new skills can pass them onto their children, helping to break the cycle of poverty that can plague low-income families.

In today's specialized economy, the lack of education or specialized training puts up one of the greatest barriers to achieving economic self-sufficiency. UCCA's CSBG staff work diligently with participants to provide them and their families with educational support. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), High School Equivalency Diploma (HSE), and skills training programs are just some of what UCCA offers to its PROPEL participants to ensure they are well equipped to obtain high levels of employment. Some of the most successful programs for employment training include but are not limited to health care, transportation, early childhood education, information technology, manufacturing, and welding. Successful completion of these programs can be instrumental in finding employment in an in demand industry and serve as the first steppingstone for participants building a life-long career.

PROPEL participants benefit from professional development services such as soft and hard skills training, interviewing techniques, time management, as well as resume development. Participants will explore career interests and research career options with guidance from CSBG staff. They are provided with employment and pre-employment support such as but not limited to necessary materials/tools, uniform, and professional attire. These services are tailored to best fit participants' employment needs whether it be to maintain their current line of employment with the opportunity for better pay and benefits or to gain new employment.

By providing stabilization services, PROPEL participants can maintain or obtain stable housing, transportation, or childcare. Alleviating the stressors of these basic needs allows participants to focus and continue to work towards their self-sufficiency goals. In most instances, this bottom-up strategy clears a path to opportunities such as turning a part-time position into full-time employment. These services not only have a positive impact on our participants by easing overwhelming financial stress and helping them regain control of their finances, but it also addresses the existing matter of limited community resources available for a growing community such as Union County.

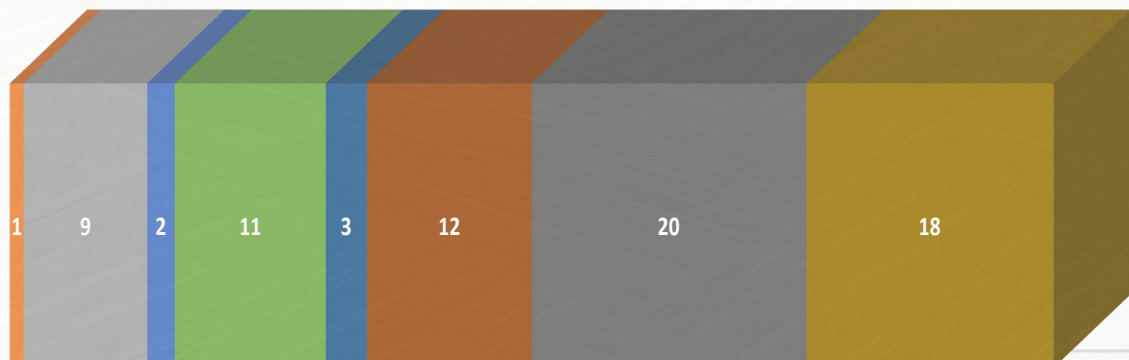
UCCA's PROPEL program also seeks to progress State CSBG priorities such as combatting the opioid crisis, develop better outcomes for early childhood learners, expanding NCCARES360, and implementing healthy opportunities to better serve Union County. The opioid crisis has stretched far across the nation and North Carolina is not immune from its effects. UCCA collaborates with community organizations to ensure a referral system is in place to provide services should a family need it. UCCA also offers mental health support and a support system of coaches, peers, and community resources to prevent misuse, addiction, and overdose of opioids by program participants. UCCA leverages its Head Start and Early Head Start program to ensure that a high quality education is available for early education learners. This further ensures that the entire family is being addressed comprehensively through the PROPEL program. UCCA utilizes the NCCARES360 system to ensure families have access to community resources through its referral system. UCCA continues to collaborate with community partners and PROPEL provides workshops for participants to learn about healthy eating habits, health equity, and social determinates of health in order to implement more healthy opportunities within the community.

Outcomes

CSBG OUTCOME MEASURES

- Families Rising Above the Poverty Level
- Families Obtaining Jobs with Medical Benefits
- Families Securing Standard Housing
- Families Provided with Employment Supports
- Families Obtaining Employment or Better Employment
- Families Completing Education/Training Programs
- Families Provided Emergency Assistance
- Families Provided with Education Employment

ACHIEVED



PROPEL Success Story

The story one of UCCA's PROPEL participants shared with CSBG staff highlights just how important these services are and how they can change lives for the better.

The client was a former PROPEL participant and in November of 2022, she stopped by the PROPEL main office only to be greeted by her former Success Coach. She disclosed that she was going through a divorce and that she was having to figure out being a single parent of three children ages 3, 7, and 12. At the time she was working from home but was not generating enough income to support her young family on her own. She was considering going to school to earn her commercial driver's license (CDL). She had knowledge of the income benefits but was discouraged by the tuition costs for local programs. The client was surprised to learn that PROPEL extended their Academic Advancement services to include in-demand career certifications/diplomas, including careers in the transportation field. Three days later she had her application submitted to her Success Coach and began actively participating in Empowerment Experience workshops through the PROPEL program, in which topics such as self-worth, time management, developing healthy habits at home, and income management were covered. Within five months she made the most of the tuition assistance provided by the PROPEL program and obtained her Class A CDL with no restrictions. Now she works for a trucking company with an ideal schedule that fits her family needs. She is working hard to achieve her goal of becoming a self-sufficient single mother.

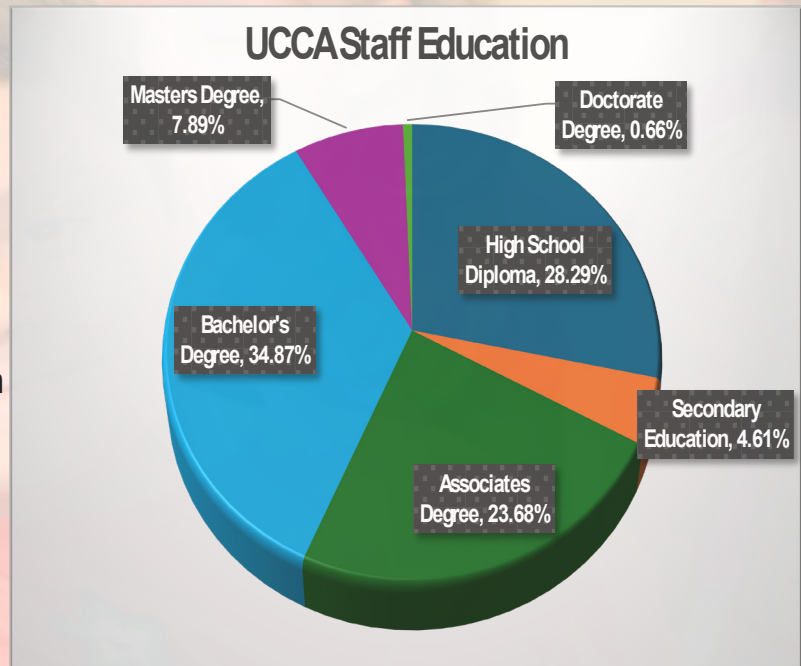
Stories like hers give hope to all who comes through the program. Through the services and training provided by the PROPEL program individuals and families who have fallen on hard times have the opportunity to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

- 42 PROPEL Families Served -

**- Helping to Break the Cycle of Poverty that
Plagues Low-Income Families -**

Human Resources

Union County Community Action, Inc. (UCCA) offers a comprehensive benefits package to its employees including high quality medical, vision, and dental coverage. UCCA's 401k retirement program begins after 12 months of employment and includes an automatic 5% agency contribution regardless of employee contribution. This year, UCCA began utilizing a new applicant tracking system to leverage the latest technology in order to hire high quality teachers and staff.



Agency Financials

Annual Financial Audit

During the most recent comprehensive Financial Audit for the fiscal year ending in September 30th, 2022, Mauldin & Jenkins, CPA and Advisors reported two findings related to fiscal operations at Union County Community Action, Inc. (UCCA). The findings are detailed as follows: "Finding 2022-001 Revenue Recognition: Material audit adjustments totaling \$88,874 were required to correct the current year's revenues from local revenue sources. Union County Community Action, Inc. (UCCA) improperly reported revenues and accounts receivable at the outset of agreements rather than as the promised payments were received." and "Finding 2022-002 Financial Close: Material audit adjustments totaling \$262,951 were required to correct the current year expenses, revenues, and receivables. UCCA improperly recorded FY21 closing accounts payable accrual entries as reversing entries. The entities reversed at the start of the FY22 creating a credit balance in the respective expense accounts, resulting in an understatement of expenses of \$100,117. Revenues/receivables were accrued during FY21 closeout and double booked as revenue when received in FY22, resulting in overstated revenues by \$162,834." UCCA has updated annual fiscal year closeout procedures to mitigate this issue in the future.

Head Start & Early Head Start Budgets

Revenues	Head Start & Early Head Start 2022-2023 Actuals	2022-2023 ARP/CRRSA Actuals	Head Start 2023-2024 Projected	Early Head Start 2023-2024 Projected
Federal	\$ 6,645,904.00	\$ 853,557.00	\$ 4,782,620.00	\$ 2,146,073.00
Non-Federal	\$ 1,796,806.00	\$ -	\$ 1,103,391.00	\$ 495,633.00
Total Revenue	\$ 8,442,710.00	\$ 853,557.00	\$ 5,886,011.00	\$ 2,641,706.00
Expenditures	2022-2023 Actuals	2022-2023 ARP/CRRSA Actuals	Head Start 2023-2024 Projected	Early Head Start 2023-2024 Projected
Personnel	\$ 3,436,938.00	\$ 235,536.50	\$ 2,309,486.00	\$ 1,289,721.00
Fringe Benefits	\$ 938,246.00	\$ 28,973.02	\$ 651,665.00	\$ 401,303.00
Travel	\$ 13,638.00	\$ -	\$ 8,375.00	\$ 5,032.00
Equipment	\$ -	\$ 389,711.67	\$ -	\$ -
Supplies	\$ 455,023.00	\$ 14,797.04	\$ 259,853.00	\$ 58,524.00
Contractual	\$ 364,839.00	\$ -	\$ 394,675.00	\$ 251,661.00
Construction	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other	\$ 2,257,527.00	\$ 140,090.77	\$ 539,359.00	\$ 429,784.00
Indirect Costs	\$ 659,601.00	\$ 44,448.00	\$ 438,894.00	\$ 205,681.00
Total Expenditures	\$ 8,125,812.00	\$ 853,557.00	\$ 4,602,307.00	\$ 2,641,706.00

Program Year July 2022 - June 2023

2022-2023 Agency Wide Revenues

Program Revenue	Amount
Union County - Local Cash	\$ 69,263.00
Richmond County - Local Cash	\$ 17,055.00
Richmond County - In-Kind Rent	\$ 54,733.00
Anson County - In-Kind Rent	\$ 220,208.00
City of Monroe - Local Cash	\$ 25.00
City of Monroe - In-Kind Rent	\$ 776,002.00
Community Services Block Grant	\$ 244,520.00
Head Start / Early Head Start	\$ 7,899,775.00
Child Adult Care Food Program - Reimbursement	\$ 381,246.00
NC Pre-K (Anson and Richmond Counties)	\$ 540,960.00
Child Care Star Enhancement	\$ 8,400.00
FCC, Schools & Libraries Program ("E-Rate")	\$ 21,880.00
Total Revenues	\$ 10,234,067.00

Fiscal Year October 2022 - September 2023

Board of Directors

David M. Broome
Board Chair

Deborah Byrum
Vice Chair

Dr. Matthew DeForrest
Treasurer

Neutricia Rushing
Secretary

Grady Burns
Board Member

Isabelle Gillespie
Board Member

Tetra Hailey
Board Member

Melbia Helms
Board Member

Brownie Irving
Board Member

Angelia James
Board Member

Kimberly Morrison-Hansley
Board Member

Lorenzo Richardson
Board Member

Sharleen Sawyer
Board Member

Union County Community Action, Inc.'s 15 member volunteer Board of Directors features a proportional tripartite structure, with five members representing the low-income target groups we serve, five members representing the private sector, and five members representing the public sector. There were two total seats unfilled in through the year.

Jenny R. McGuirt, Executive Director

This past year has been one of seeking normalcy as the pandemic wanes. While many public service organizations continue to feel the lasting effects it had on our lives, Union County Community Action, Inc. (UCCA) has begun the process of stabilizing. It is in no small part thanks to the dedication of our Head Start, Early head Start, CSBG, and administrative staff for ensuring that those in our communities continue to receive the services they need.

There is great purpose in serving the Union, Anson, and Richmond County communities we operate in. The children of each community represent members of the next generation. To ensure they can start off on the best terms in life through education, not only helps them achieve later in life but secures the future of our communities. The families we serve are no different from any other, they seek a better life for themselves and their children, to help them break the cycle of poverty and achieve their goals is a reward in and of itself.

I would like to thank each and every staff member at Union County Community Action, Inc. for your dedication and selfless service. It is your passion and devotion that keeps the agency in a position of strength in the communities we serve, so that we may continue serving and building better lives each day. I would like to thank our community partners who help support our mission. Lastly, I would like to thank the members of the Board of Directors and Head Start/ Early Head Start Policy Council for their support over the past year. Together they continue to promote the services and resources that children and families need to build a brighter future for themselves and their community.



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