BE THE ONE

Families First
Because Children Should Never Come Last

ANNUAL REPORT
2014-2015
Vision, Mission, & IMPACT

VISION: A community where all children and families flourish.

MISSION: To ensure the success of children in jeopardy by empowering families.

IMPACT STATEMENT: By 2020, 200,000 additional children and youth in Metropolitan Atlanta facing chronic economic, social or health challenges will succeed in safe, stable, nurturing homes with self-sufficient families—surrounded by a community which champions public policy that promotes the well-being of all children and families.

At Families First, we work to create thriving, self-sufficient families who will, in turn, create communities with a collective commitment and responsibility to the success of its children. We work to ensure that families in need know where to come first, so that their children never come last.

We recognize that one program alone cannot break the cycle of poverty, so we synchronize dozens of programs and initiatives that operate within three broad impact areas to create strong solutions that lead to long-term self-sufficiency and success. These impact areas are:

Connecting Families
Families First offers programs and services that help connect children and youth to families, and families to resources and support to make sure all children have the opportunity to thrive in lifelong, loving relationships. These services include adoption and foster care, post-adoptional family resources, residential living, and our “permanency connections,” where families, communities, and agencies come together to ensure stronger support for our youth.

Strengthening Families
Being a part of a strong family unit can be the difference between success and struggle for Atlanta’s children. Families First provides programs and services that help build up our families, with an emphasis on teaching parents how to be strong people, so that they can raise strong children. We offer individual, family, couples, child, and group counseling, as well as crisis and family violence intervention. Workshops on anger management, parenting and co-parenting, early literacy, pregnancy, and post-partum complications are among the other resources we provide the community to strengthen families through times of trauma and difficulty.

Sustaining Families
We combine housing and social services to provide solutions that help our community members live more stable and productive lives. Families First understands the complex challenges faced by our clients and communities, so we collaborate with other agencies to promote family self-sufficiency. We do this through asset development and financial literacy education, community engagement strategies, and supportive and transitional housing.

We have pursued our mission in Atlanta for more than 125 years, and impacted 37,000 women, children and families in just the past year. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, Families First can respond whenever and wherever we are needed.

There is no other word to describe our 2014-2015 program year except...extraordinary!

- We launched our $13.3 million Family Matters capital campaign to purchase and renovate a historic Atlanta Public School and transform it to the new Families First Resource Center at E.R. Carter, which will open in the Spring of 2016. We achieved 91% of our fundraising goal in only 10 months.
- Families First was awarded one of two Managing for Excellence awards from the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta. The $75,000 grant recognizes organizations who exemplify excellence and possess attributes found in some of the best Fortune 500 companies.
- A young woman who lived in our Gwindale Permanency Cooperative (group home) received the stability and academic support she needed and was named a Bill and Melinda Gates Scholar. Her education expenses are covered for the duration of her undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate pursuits at any accredited university in the country.
- We gazed at the television screen with pride and amazement as a young man who was formally a resident in one of our Permanency Cooperatives was drafted into the NFL.
- More parents than ever served as advocates for their children in local schools due to training and direction received through our Community Support and Parent Engagement efforts in partnership with the Zeist Foundation.
- We were often asked ‘what Families First does,’ and the best response is to describe who Families First is and what Families First achieves.

Families First is… the young mother at our Weaver Gardens supportive housing program for single mothers, who needed help to get her child into a safe home and provide her with the one break in life she needed to work and go to school, and who is now living on her own and will graduate from college in 2016.

Families First is…the mother in our CHISPA program, in Gwinnett County, who takes turns hosting pre-school sessions in her mobile home. She created a library for the community’s children and has learned to advocate for the children in her community.

And there are 36,996 others.

They all have names, they all have challenges, and they all have been helped by Families First.

This was a monumental and memorable year for Families First. We had a bold vision and very ambitious goals to make an even greater impact by moving to a location where those who need us most would have easier access to us, and we could further enhance our direct engagement and partnership with those we serve.

We are proud to share that as the year came to an end we experienced incredible progress in achieving our goals and making our vision a reality. All of these successes are due, in large part, to the support of our donors, volunteers and exceptional staff. As we look back we can only say to each of you...thank you for this remarkable year and for the successes we will continue to achieve together for children, family and our community.

James T. Mills
2014-2015 Board Chair
Chief Executive Officer

Kim Anderson
Chief Financial Officer
A. **KEMARA AND ANDREA** Andrea has mentored Kemara via the Make It Click mentor program for over 5 years.

B. **ANISA INTERNATIONAL** has provided volunteerism and specialized donations for over a decade.

C. **GE CIO AND BOARD MEMBER TREY KEISLER** hosts our annual “Real World” youth training event.

D. **COX ENTERPRISES, INC.** has supported for 20+ years, associates came together to collect items for Prep-a-Scholar Back to School drive.

E. **MRS. KAREN SIBLEY**, late Families First leadership icon, with her granddaughter Karen Brown. Mrs. Brown carries her grandmother’s legacy as a current board member at Families First.

F. **BOYS PERMANENCY COOPERATIVE** youth decorate the tree with volunteers.

G. **AMERIGROUP** team members volunteered to assist with our Baby Basics supply drive.

H. **DELTA AIR LINES** team assisted with design and preparation of duffle bags for youth in foster care.

I. **COACHES TEAM** presented at a conference to recruit youth for participation in the program.

Calling themselves the “Chit Chatters,” a group of women from North Atlanta met weekly for a neighborhood Bible study and enjoyed fellowship and friendship. But one year, while studying the book of James—specifically James 2:14, “what good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds?”—the group took God’s message to heart, and provided Christmas for a group of boys through Families First. They delivered carefully wrapped presents and hosted a festive party. But leaving after the party did not seem right; they knew they were called to be the ones to do more.

For more than five years, this group of empty nesters—which included Jill Marsden, Lou Winship, and Mary Yates—who had worked themselves out of a job at their own homes, took on the job of volunteering at another: The Families First Morris Road Cooperative in South Fulton County. They started with planting a garden, knowing that they would need to water and tend to it every week, teaching the boys subtle lessons in responsibility. The hope was that they would watch it grow, and along with it so would their relationships with the boys.

And it did. The garden yielded vegetables for the kitchen, which led to cooking together, which led to the hosting of home-cooked Thanksgiving meals. Some of the activities the boys and women shared were simply small moments, such as playing games and helping with homework. And some simply seemed small, such as talking about school, girls, families, and dreams.

But were so much more. There were birthday parties for boys who had never before celebrated, and there were teacher conferences, sporting events, and even court hearings for these surrogate mothers to attend.

With all these experiences the Chit Chatters had the opportunity to use their mothering skills, which, as one volunteer put it, “were not as much in demand anymore.” The dedicated Families First staff had the opportunity for a much-needed and much-deserved break. And the boys, who had seemed so hardened at first, had the opportunity to soften. One Chit Chatter still cherishes the Valentine made for her by one of the boys, some 10 years later.

Of course, as with any relationship, there have been challenges. The women wondered if they could make a meaningful connection with the boys, as it was often hard enough to relate to their own teenagers. Volunteers lived far away. Residents would leave without having the chance to say goodbye. But the boys—including Lorenzo, Demarcus, Josh, Quentin, and Eric—now know there are other adults in their lives who care about them and who are rooting for their success. And there is a group of women in North Atlanta who will forever carry these young men in their hearts.

Read more about the Chit Chatter legacy on Page 9.
Families First would like to thank the donors who have helped us achieve 97% of our $13.3 million campaign goal.

**CAPITAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE**

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Families First will return to its roots on the Westside in the Spring of 2016 by opening **The New Families First Resource Center at E.R. Carter.**

Since its inception on the Westside of Atlanta in 1890, Families First has continually provided solutions for children and families facing life’s greatest challenges. Thanks to successful service and mission delivery, we have outgrown our main office in Midtown. So in the Fall of 2014 we launched the Family Matters Capital Campaign to raise $13.3 million to purchase and renovate the former E.R. Carter School. We have almost reached our goal to relocate our main office. The new location will be a short distance from the Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Atlanta University Center and directly across the street from the Ashby Street MARTA station, making us more easily accessible for our clients.

CELEBRATING
125 Years

CONNECTING FAMILIES
 Snapshot of Impact:
8,676 instances of distinct client engagements and affected relations that included youth and families.
121 homes received adoption services.
82% of clients who completed bonding assessments demonstrated good or improved bonding with their adopted child.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
July 1, 2014—June 30, 2015

**CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION**

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<th>Assets</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cash and cash equivalents</td>
<td>$ 4,800,747</td>
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<td>Interest receivable</td>
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<td>Capital campaign pledges receivable, net</td>
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<td>Property and equipment, net</td>
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<td>1,550,855</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
<td><strong>$ 32,089,243</strong></td>
<td><strong>$ 14,420,807</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Liabilities</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
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<td>Accounts payable and accrued expenses</td>
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<td>Accrued compensated absences</td>
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<td>Advances under grants and contracts</td>
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<td>Note payable</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES</strong></td>
<td><strong>$ 3,305,595</strong></td>
<td><strong>$ 684,768</strong></td>
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Net assets:
Unrestricted | 13,219,529 | 9,686,885 |
Temporarily restricted | 10,021,822 | 3,506,857 |
Permanently restricted | 5,542,297 | 542,297 |
**TOTAL NET ASSETS** | **28,783,648** | **13,736,039** |

**TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS** | **$ 32,089,243** | **$ 14,420,807** |

*NOTE: Substantial increase due to launch of $13.3 million Family Matters Capital Campaign
“He didn’t walk in the door saying he was going to be an NFL athlete,” said Michael Foust, a licensed clinical social worker who oversees a mentoring program at Families First. “He walked in the door trying to survive.”

He is Lorenzo Mauldin, arguably one of the most successful young men to emerge from a Families First permanency cooperative, and definitely not the last.

With both parents in jail, Lorenzo went through 16 different sets of foster parents before he finally ended up at the Families First Cherokee Group Home during his freshman year of high school. His anger and depression, a part of him as long as he could remember, began to lessen under the stable influence of his “Grandma” Martha Whitehead and his “Auntie” Donna Cunningham, the Families First house mothers in charge of his care.

These women taught him the basics that more fortunate young men learn earlier in life, usually from their parents, and they enforced rules that Lorenzo never before had to follow. They taught him how to be a man.

Thanks in part to this more stable environment via Families First, and the support of community volunteers, like the Chit Chatters, Lorenzo began to shine at Maynard Jackson High School—emerging as a three-sport varsity athlete in basketball, track, and football. He knew he was good at football, possibly good enough for that to be his ticket to college. He worked hard to make the grades so he could play; volunteers even pitched in to hire him a tutor. The dedication paid off, with a scholarship to the University of Louisville, facilitated in part by a connection through a volunteer from the Chit Chatters. Ultimately Lorenzo’s hard work resulted in a multi-million dollar contract in the third round of the 2015 NFL draft, not long after he graduated with his bachelor’s degree. He now is a linebacker for the New York Jets.

He is forever grateful for the volunteers, mentors and staff at Families First who encouraged him, and for the social workers and therapists who provided the counseling and support he needed. He knew people were there to help him, and he accepted that help, humbly acknowledging that he could not go it alone.

“They are trying to help you get your foot in the door of success. That’s their 50. The other 50 is up to you.”

Lorenzo recognizes that he would not be in the NFL—and may have ended up a bad statistic—without Families First. So he commits his time, talent and treasure to the organization. He wants to be the one to give back to other kids, kids just like him, and be a positive force of change in their lives.

“Go to the door.”

See the Chit Chatters Story on Page 5.
37,000 children and families

Government Funders

2014-2015 DONORS over the past year. We extend appreciation to all of our partners.

Georgia Division of Family Services, Children, Adults, Services, Children, Adults

State of New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department Substance Abuse Services and Mental Health Administration Department of Family and Protective Services U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicaid and Medicare/Amegroup

CORPORATIONS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND INDIVIDUALS $100,000+$

A Friend of Families First Atlanta Corporation Bank of America

The James M. Cox Foundation J. Buquia Foundation, Inc. Joseph B. Whitfield Foundation

Charitable Foundation for Greater Atlanta - Grants $10,000-$99,000

Anonymous

Architects & Western Contractors CBRE

Cobb Community Foundation

Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta

the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta

Cox Enterprises, Inc.

Dominum

the Frasier Parker Foundation

the Georgia Brown Trust Fund Foundation

Jean and George Bruney* Lorraine Jarrinneh

Georgia Funders

Atlanta Community Foundation City of Atlanta CBED

DeKalb County Human Services Fair Housing Office of the Department of Protective Services Fulton County CBED

Gwinnett County Housing and Community Development Office of Grants Gwinnett Community Partnerships Council Community Affairs

Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice

Georgia Department of Public Safety

Georgia Department of Social Services

Georgia Division of Children Services

Gwinnett County CBED

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