When DePriest Waddy attended Families First's 21st annual Dining for a Difference in April 2019 he was moved by the personal success stories shared. When he learned Families First was seeking a new CEO, he knew that he wanted to help make a difference for children and families in need across Georgia. With more than 30 years of nonprofit and corporate leadership for both local and national organizations, Waddy's deep understanding of nonprofits and stellar reputation with the broader Atlanta community made him the obvious front-runner of more than 50 qualified candidates identified through a national search.

“Having been a part of the Atlanta nonprofit community for years, I was already familiar with the good work of Families First,” he said. “Attending Dining for a Difference earlier this year underscored the real difference this organization is making in the lives of children and families. I knew I wanted to become more involved with this organization.”

DePriest’s first order of business is to meet with staff, clients, donors, and community leaders to listen to concerns and discuss strategies to ramp up services for at-risk families. He joins the organization this month, following completion of his service as the Executive Director of Jefferson County Committee for Economic Opportunity in Birmingham, Alabama. “I am honored to join Families First,” said Waddy. “This is a dynamic time in the history of the organization as it approaches its 130th anniversary. There are endless opportunities for Families First to help the most vulnerable.”
PREP-A-SCHOLAR SETS YOUTH UP FOR SUCCESS

The average family can spend $685 on supplies to send their children back to school. For families supported by Families First, most struggle to afford the high costs of school supplies. But thanks to friends and supporters like you, our Prep-A-Scholar Back to School Drive sent 433 youth from our programs and surrounding communities back to school with new backpacks full of supplies feeling confident and ready to learn!

Thank you to everyone who donated, ordered from our Amazon Wish List, dropped off supplies in person, or volunteered your time. Special thanks to our corporate sponsors:

- Anisa International
- For the Kid in All of Us
- Kaiser Permanente
- Mercedes-Benz USA
- Prime Revent
- Sterling Seacrest
- WebMD
- Tabernacle of David Church of the Apostles Doctrine
- Georgia Association of Paralegals
- Mission Reach International
- New Hope Baptist Church

NEW CLOTHES. NEW BEGINNINGS.

This year, back-to-school shopping was a little different for one of our foster families. After serving as their foster family, the Jones family (name changed for confidentiality) is now working to finalize the adoption of a sibling group of five children! “For a family that is taking on a sibling group of five, the expenses are enormous,” said Families First Adoption Coordinator Rebekah Staats. “They had to purchase everything for a child times five!”

The Jones family was over the moon to learn that Macy’s would be providing all five of their children with new uniforms and other essentials to start the school year confidently. And for these children, new clothes mean so much more. The new clothes represent the love and stability that will now be a part of their lives thanks to their adoption through Families First.

“Thanks to Macy’s, a total of 71 children received three brand new school uniforms!

“We are honored to continue our partnership with Families First, and we’re particularly glad to be helping our Atlanta area students prepare to put their best foot forward this school year.”

“If your business would like to explore partnership opportunities with Families First, please contact Leigh Plott, Chief Development Officer, at leigh.plott@familiesfirst.org.

“I just want to wear clothes without holes in them so we don’t get made fun of at school.”

—Jones siblings in foster care

“Community is at the heart of our team here at Macy’s,” said Robin Harman, Macy’s Manager, South Region, Corporate Giving.

“Macy’s is excited to continue our partnership with Families First and bring joy to these children through our Back to School Program.”

FIRST LOOK • SUMMER 2019

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In January 2017, Dante, a newly single father, found himself thrust into the role of sole caregiver with no idea of how to provide for his young daughter. For this struggling father, our Early Learning program became a lifeline of support.

Across metro Atlanta, Families First offers Early Learning opportunities for parents, like Dante, to attend classes with their children and help parents ensure their children are prepared to transition into Kindergarten. Through meaningful play, bonding activities, home visits, and connections to community resources, we teach parents how to advocate for their children and become actively engaged in their education and development.

This spring, Families First launched a pilot Learning Space on Atlanta’s Westside in our Family Resource Center. This program, run in partnership with the United Way of Greater Atlanta, offers free, formal preschool experiences in nontraditional settings.

When Dante and his daughter, Brielle, arrived at Families First, they formed an immediate bond with Lisenda Wright, a Families First parent educator. Brielle was not developmentally on track but, at four years old she had little time to get ready for Kindergarten. The three worked together in the Learning Space to help father and daughter bond and to get Brielle ready for school.

Not long after enrolling in the Learning Space, Dante’s housing situation became unstable. “We know that stable housing is critical for children to grow and thrive,” said Lisenda. “So I turned to my Families First colleagues and created an action plan that would be beneficial for both Dante and Brielle.”

Within a few weeks, we were able to place Dante and Brielle in their own apartment that is a part of Families First Shelter-A-Family supporting housing. Here they have a roof over their heads, warm beds, and the benefit of additional social services provided by Families First – all designed to put Dante and Brielle on a path to self-sufficiency.

Support of our mission from donors like you help Families First be there with education, housing, counseling, and more when families, like Dante & Brielle, need it.

“I had to change busses two times to get there, but I made sure Brielle came to class every day”, said Dante. Now, Brielle is in Kindergarten and she is thriving. “She was ready to go to school and I know how to help her now because of our classes at Families First.”
With tears in her eyes, Ms. Charlene Hughley stopped for a final hug, then walked out of the Families First Family Resource Center towards home, her arms filled with lunches and book bags for her 12 grandchildren.

This summer Families First held an eight-week feeding program for families in the Gardens at Washington Park apartments on Atlanta’s Westside. Our neighbors here in Washington Park include some of the 44,690 Fulton County residents who do not always know where their next meal is coming from. When school is out for the summer, and parents or guardians are working, the problem is compounded for children who are home alone all day.

Thanks to you, 441 children, parents and grandparents didn’t have to worry about where their next meal was coming from.

Thanks to you, 441 children, parents and grandparents didn’t have to worry about where their next meal was coming from. Through a partnership with the Atlanta Community Food Bank, fueled by the generosity of donors like you, every Monday through Thursday children and their parents or guardians could stop by the Families First Family Resource Center on Joseph E. Lowery Boulevard and pick up a healthy lunch.

“Every day I take the bus to the train to work and home again”, said Ms. Charlene. The burden of feeding 12 hungry children during the summer is additional stress on a family already struggling.

“Families First has saved me so much time, so much money, and so much worry. Just knowing that my children and grandchildren had a meal every day while I was at work was such a relief!”

In addition to daily lunches for the children in our community, Families First was also able to provide weekly groceries for families in need of extra support. Ms. Annie, one of our senior neighbors told us,

“I’m so grateful that this program could lend support and resources to the seniors in my community, while serving the children too.”