



# Annual Report



**2020**

[www.thechildrenscenter.com](http://www.thechildrenscenter.com)





## Mission...

### What are we here to do?

*We provide affordable high quality early childhood education and childcare services for working families.*



## Vision...

### Where are we going?

*We strive to be the standard of excellence for early childhood education, development and care in the Lowcountry.*



## Purpose...

### Why we exist

*We support our community by enabling parents to fully participate in the local workforce and ensuring every child is ready to achieve success upon entering kindergarten.*

# A Word from Our Executive Director

As I ponder over 2020, the word that comes to mind is “character.” Do you tilt your head and wonder how in the world I can use the word character to describe the world that we experienced in 2020? The definition of character is: “the mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual and the qualities that make someone or something distinct from other people or places.”

As we welcomed the new year, we were hearing reports of a dangerous virus that was spreading. At our Center, it was business as usual until Beaufort County schools closed due to viral spread in mid-March. As was our policy, The Children’s Center closed as well. By April 2020, we all knew that reopening of schools would not happen and our Center began to strategize on when and how to safely reopen so parents could go back to work and young children could come back to school. We listened to the experts, we evaluated business operations, we applied for paycheck protection funding to maintain our staff. Our Board made the courageous decision to re-open on June 1st in conjunction with the end of the school year. That courageous step took strong character.

The teaching and administrative staff came back to work with some fear and trepidation, but committed to do everything possible to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for our children. At that time, no one could assure them that they would be 100% safe, but they put on their masks, washed their hands, sanitized their classrooms often and got busy providing high quality care and education for the children in their classrooms. As you can imagine, there is no social distancing for a class of 2-year olds and the PreK children shared crayons, sat together at circle and story time and played together as if the virus outside never existed. The Children’s Center became a place where those who were here could play, learn and grow in an environment that offered as much safety as possible. Our staff had the character to put their children’s welfare above all else and to trust the procedures put in place to keep everyone safe.

Community organizations needed COVID specific funding support and the Lowcountry community showed a true strength of character in donations and programming that supported the missions of many local nonprofit organizations on the front lines. The Children’s Center’s focus on daily virus remediation and personal protective equipment was expensive, but our local community made sure we were able to have all the necessities. When schools did not open this Fall, our community provided financial support to ensure children could come to our Center for virtual learning and parents could go to work, keeping our economy moving ahead. Our community partnered with The Children’s Center to provide tuition support for families as they encountered quarantine weeks or when our Center had to close due to exposures. Fortunately, we have only experienced full closures twice since reopening last June.

Character of courage, character of caring, character of compassion and character of conviction surround the commitment to mission by the Board, staff and our community. While the mountains may have been steep in 2020, the paths were made clear because of a focus on ensuring the availability of affordable, high quality early education and childcare for working families throughout the Lowcountry.

I am grateful to be a part of this amazing team of character.



**Jody L. Levitt**  
Executive Director



About Us 

## 2020 Highlights

The Children's Center is pleased to continue to serve the Lowcountry community for fifty-four years. COVID has changed the childcare landscape across the country. A report published in late 2020 categorized South Carolina as a childcare desert. Many Centers closed, and if they reopened, enrollment in most has decreased. The Children's Center has been privileged to receive

community support that has allowed us to remain open and to offer the best for our families and staff to protect everyone from the COVID-19 virus. A special thank you goes to the Coastal Community Foundation, the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry, the Town of Hilton Head and the Wexford Plantation Charitable Foundation for COVID specific grants during 2020.



Sixteen amazing young minds graduated to kindergarten. We held a Facebook Live event so parents could participate complete with pomp and circumstance. These children are now engaged in their first year of formal education, thriving and growing.



Board of Trustees approved an updated strategic plan for 2021 – 2023. The key focus areas include: Financial Stability & Growth, Staff Retention & Development, Educational Excellence, Sustainable Governance, Community Awareness & Engagement and Operational Quality. Through the development of this plan, the organizational goals and objectives will keep focused on those topics identified as mission critical.



Re-opening in time for our annual Summer Camp program offered thirty children a safe place to emerge from the COVID quarantines of the Spring. The biggest benefit was the ability for our children to reconnect and socialize with old friends and the opportunity to make new ones. The Children's Center Summer Camp program is designed to help children avoid the skills loss many experience over the summer – called Summer Slide. In our 2020 program, all but two of our kindergarten children increased their math and literacy skills over the summer and 50% of our first and second graders increased their skills.

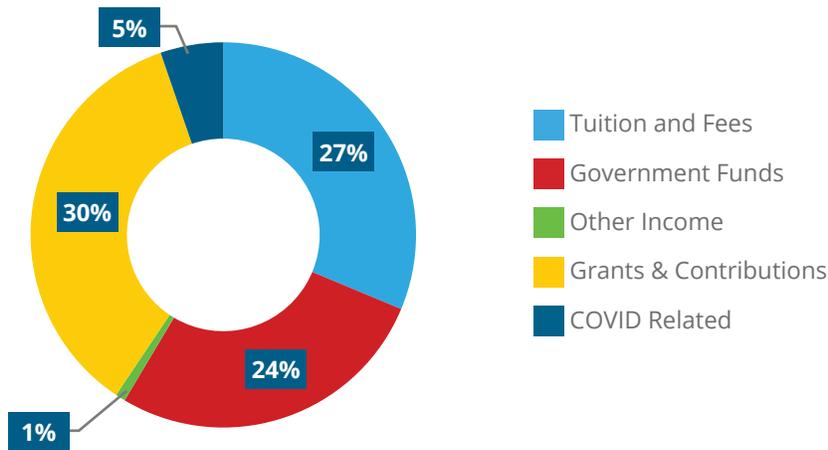


For three years, The Children's Center has been developing a tool to address the measurement of each child's development in conjunction with established South Carolina Early Learning Standards. This is not meant to be a formal assessment tool, it is a measure that allows us to identify strengths and weaknesses in each child's developmental progress. In 2020, we solidified a partnership with Dr. Ron Erdei, Assistant Professor of Computer Science at USCB. He and his students have built a specialized database to help us collect the data and prepare reports for parents, teachers and our organization.

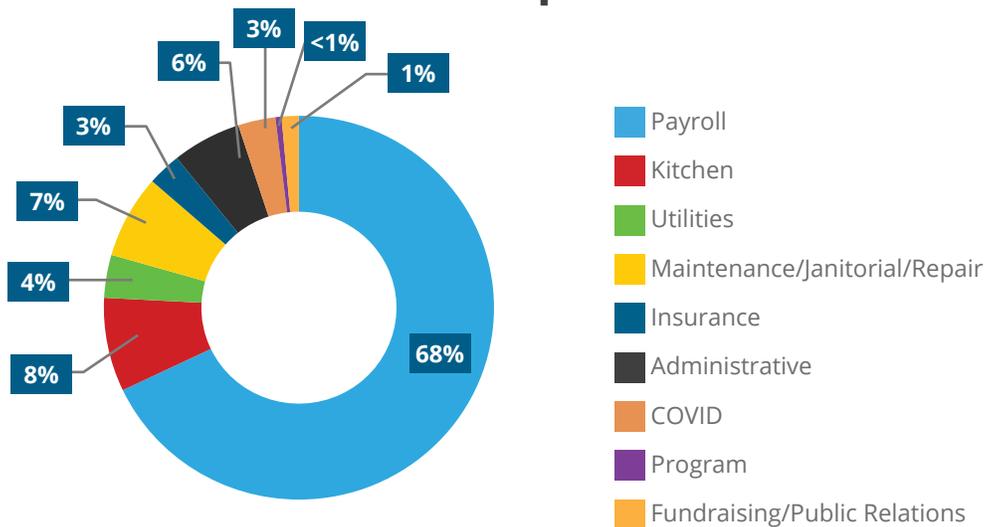


# Financials and Numbers

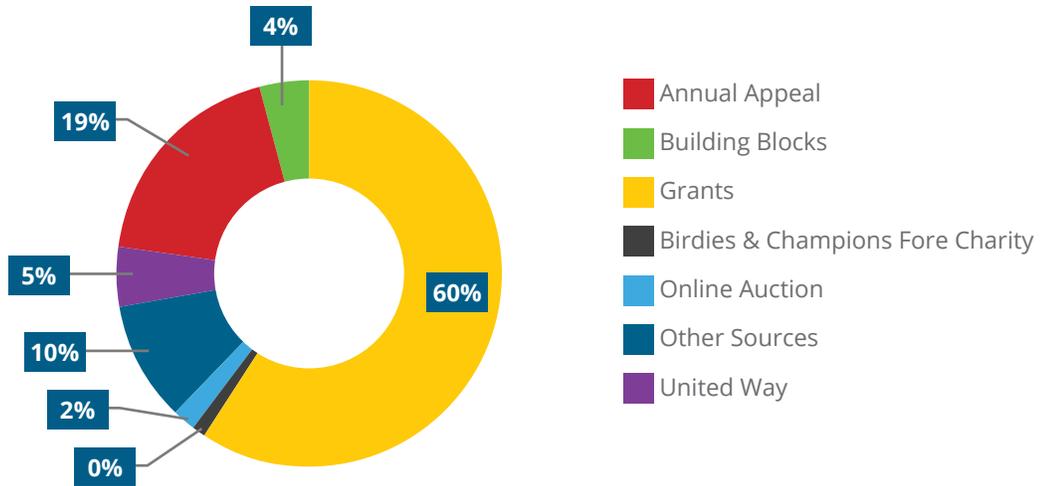
### 2020 Revenue Sources



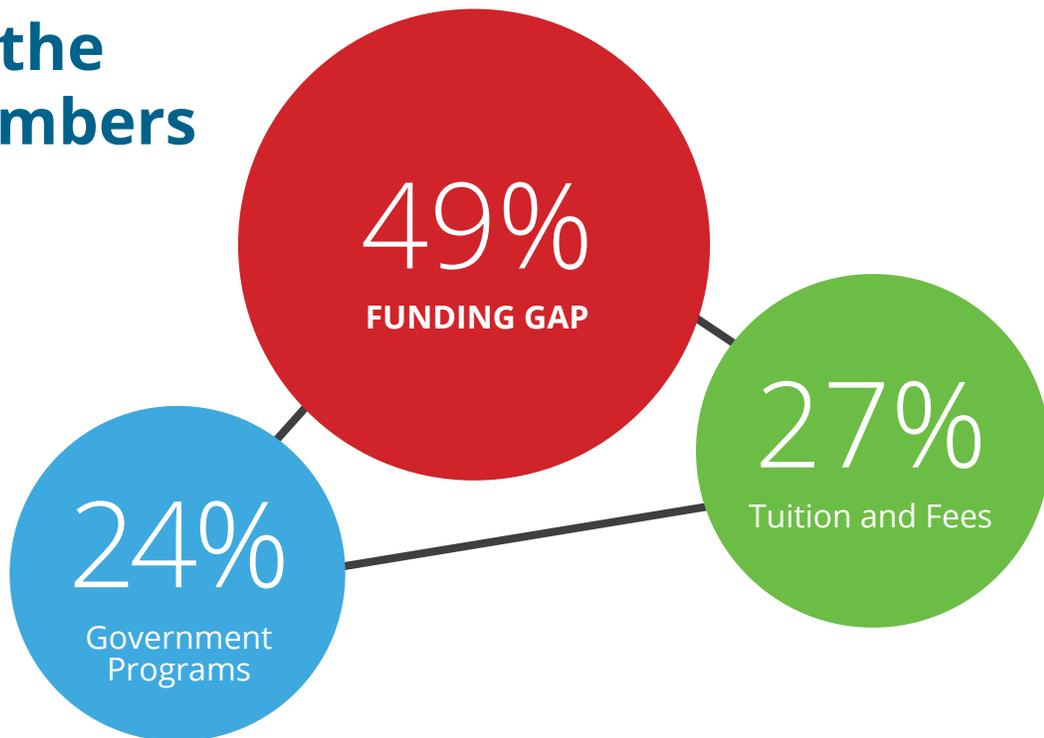
### 2020 Expenses



## 2020 Fundraising Activities



## By the Numbers



*We rely heavily on the generosity of individuals, grants and special events to keep tuition affordable.*



## Profiles

# 2020 Donors

### Birdies for Charity

Mr. Norman Harberger  
 Mr. & Mrs. Phil Hartman  
 Mr. & Mrs. Ward Kirby  
 Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Levitt  
 Mrs. Mary Ellen McConnell  
 Mr. & Mrs. Albert Prillaman  
 Mr. & Mrs. Larry Sanders  
 Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Siebold  
 Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Voight  
 Rev. Isaac Wilborn Jr.  
 Mrs. Rhetta Yount

### Building Blocks

Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Bailey  
 Mr. & Mrs. James Berding  
 Mr. & Mrs. Malcolm Binks  
 Mr. & Mrs. Larry Brown  
 Mr. & Mrs. Walter Buroker  
 Mr. & Mrs. Morris Campbell  
 Mr. & Mrs. Irvin Campbell  
 Ms. Celia G Carroll  
 Mr. & Mrs. William Cizmaric  
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Curri  
 Mr. & Mrs. John Diamond  
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Eberly, Jr.  
 Mr. & Mrs. James Ferree  
 Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Fraser III  
 Mr. & Mrs. Craig Gilliland  
 Mr. & Mrs. Steve Gottfried  
 Mr. & Mrs. Larry Heichel  
 Mr. & Mrs. Jerome Horwitz  
 Mr. & Mrs. George Krall  
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Mason  
 Mrs. Mary Ellen McConnell  
 Mr. & Mrs. Ian Murray

Mr. & Mrs. Henry Noble  
 Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Palmiero  
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Pawlishyn  
 Mr. & Mrs. Albert Prillaman  
 Mr. & Mrs. William Raisch  
 Mr. & Mrs. Frank Raiti  
 Ms. Cristy Robertson  
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Rotella  
 Dr. Bonnie Rothwell  
 Mr. & Mrs. Louis Salvatore  
 The Charles M. Grant Foundation  
 The Eberly Foundation  
 The GE Foundation  
 Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Voight  
 Mr. & Mrs. Charles Wallace  
 Ms. Linda Warnock  
 Mr. & Mrs. George Westerfield  
 Mr. & Mrs. Ed Wilcox  
 Col. & Mrs. Richard Wiles  
 Mr. & Mrs. Burrell Williams  
 Mr. & Mrs. Phillip Wright

### Grants

Beaufort County Human Services Alliance  
 Berkeley Hall Charitable Fund, LLC  
 Coastal Community Foundation  
 Eleanor A & Bernard H Breedlove Fund  
 Hilton Head Island Alumnae Association of Kappa Kappa Gamma  
 Long Cove Club Community Charitable Fund  
 Palmetto Electric Trust  
 SCDS ABC Quality  
 St. Andrew by the Sea  
 St. Francis Thrift Shop  
 The Bargain Box

The Church Mouse  
 The Ward Family Foundation  
 Wexford Plantation Charitable Foundation  
 Women's Association of Hilton Head Island

### COVID Specific Grants

Coastal Community Foundation  
 Community Foundation of the Lowcountry  
 Wexford Plantation Charitable Foundation  
 Town of Hilton Head - HUD

### Annual Appeal

Mr. & Mrs. Hans Abbink  
 Mr. & Mrs. David Ames  
 Mr. Michael Aronstein  
 Ms. Helen Baker  
 Mr. & Mrs. Herwig Baumann  
 Beach Properties of Hilton Head  
 Ms. Debra Beakes  
 Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Beaver  
 Mr. & Mrs. Karl Becker  
 Ms. Barbara Becker  
 Ms. Sandra Benson  
 Ms. Anne Berkeley  
 Mr. & Mrs. Richard Berthelsen  
 Mr. & Mrs. Malcolm Binks  
 Mr. Jeffrey Birk  
 Mr. & Mrs Barry Bittman  
 Dr. & Mrs. Joseph Black  
 Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Bohn  
 Mr. & Mrs. Richard Bourgon  
 Mr. Randolph Brooks  
 Mr. & Mrs. Larry Brown

Ms. Sheila Buck  
 Mr & Mrs James Burns  
 Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Campbell  
 Mr. Carl Cannon  
 Ms. Jean Caplan  
 Ms. Nadine Chaplin  
 Mr. & Mrs. William Cizmaric  
 Mr. & Mrs. James Coleman  
 Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Conner  
 Mr. & Mrs. Peter Cooper  
 Mr & Mrs. Rad Darby  
 Mr. & Mrs. John Diamond  
 Mr. & Mrs. Dennis Draeger  
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Eberly  
 Mr. & Mrs. David Ekedahl  
 Mr. & Mrs. Morton Ganelin  
 Mr. & Mrs. Bob Gentzler  
 Mr. & Mrs. Bubba Gillis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Marty Gleason  
 Mr. & Mrs. Frederick Hack  
 Mr. Norman Harberger  
 Ms. Susan Hardin  
 Mr. & Mrs. Phil Hartman  
 Mr. & Mrs. Larry Heichel  
 Ms. Mary Lou Hiatt  
 Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Hill  
 Ms. Gabriele Hoffmann  
 Mr. & Mrs. Jack Holland  
 Mr. & Mrs. John Howe  
 Mr. Douglas Howe  
 Mr. & Mrs. Carl Jones  
 Mr. & Mrs. John Kellom  
 Mr. & Mrs. Dudley King  
 Mr. & Mrs. George Krall  
 Mr. & Mrs. Jake Kriney  
 Mr & Mrs Allan LaCoe  
 Mr. & Mrs. Kent Lee  
 Dr. & Mrs. Robert Leff  
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Locker  
 Michael & Louise Lynch  
 Charitable Foundation  
 Mr. & Mrs. James Maguire  
 Mr. & Mrs. Brian Marlowe  
 Ms. Cynthia Marsteller  
 Mr. & Mrs. Toney Mathews  
 Mr. & Mrs. David Mathison  
 Dr. & Mrs. Charles Mattka  
 Mr. & Mrs. Michael Mavrogordato  
 Mr. James McCarl  
 Mr. & Mrs. Emmett McCracken  
 Mr. & Mrs. Floyd McKeag  
 Mr. & Mrs. Howard Misthal  
 Mr. & Mrs. Ian Murray  
 Dr. & Mrs. David Nelson  
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Pawlishyn  
 Mrs. Donald Peirce  
 Ms. Lisa Pendley  
 Mr. & Mrs. David Pierce  
 Mr. & Mrs. Albert Prillaman  
 Mr. & Mrs. William Raisch  
 Ms. Jeanne Ricciardelli  
 Ms. Cristy Robertson  
 Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Rodolakis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Rotella  
 Dr. Bonnie Rothwell  
 Mr. & Mrs. Peter Sanders  
 Mr. & Mrs. Larry Sanders  
 Mrs. Ianthia Scott  
 Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Siebold  
 Mr. & Mrs. John Simmons  
 Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Simonetti  
 Ms. Kimberly Slovensky  
 Mr. & Mrs. Stanley Smith  
 Ms. Robin Smith  
 Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Smythe  
 Mr. Roger Soens, Jr.  
 Mr. & Mrs. Tim Stehly  
 Mr. & Mrs. Ray Stickel  
 Mr. Spencer Stouffer  
 Mr & Mrs Joseph Strojnowski  
 Mr. & Mrs. Lee Sturm  
 The Eberly Foundation  
 The Sisters!! - Church of the Palms UM  
 Mrs. Thomas Tucker  
 Ms. Jean Vahey  
 Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Voight  
 Mr. & Mrs. Michael Welsh  
 Mr. & Mrs. James Wood

## Other Sources & Tributes

100+ Women Who Care of Hilton Head  
 Mr. & Mrs. Charles Bradshaw III  
 Mr. David Crowell  
 CTC Insurance  
 Lang 72 Degrees  
 Ms. Cynthia Marsteller  
 Mercedes Benz of Hilton Head  
 Mikkelson Law Firm  
 Olivetti, McCray & Wither LLC  
 Physical Home Damage Services LLC  
 Mr. & Mrs. Albert Prillaman  
 Procyon Private Wealth Partners  
 Mr. & Mrs. Jack Alderman  
 Amazon Smiles  
 Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Beaver  
 Mr. & Mrs. James Berding  
 Ms. Susan Case  
 Congregation Beth Yam  
 Evelyn and Arthur, Inc.  
 Mr. & Dr. Ronald Farsetti  
 Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence Hoover  
 IMC Resort Services, Inc.  
 Kiwanis Club of Hilton Head Island  
 Kroger Community Rewards  
 Ms. LIL Lontai  
 Mako Medical Laboratories  
 Reilley's Mortgage Network  
 Rotary Club of Hilton Head Island  
 Rotary Club of Hilton Head Island -  
 Sunset  
 Mr. & Mrs. Charles Sanders  
 South State Bank  
 Mr. & Mrs. Tim Stehly  
 Mr. & Mrs. Daryl Sturre  
 Mrs. Thomas Tucker  
 Mr. & Mrs. Charles Wallace  
 Mr. & Mrs. Charles Wallace  
 Ms. Linda Warnock  
 Mr. & Mrs. James Wood  
 Zonta Club of Hilton Head



## Profiles

# Board of Trustees

Barbara Pawlishyn

**BOARD CHAIR**

Retired Hospital Administrator

Tim Stehly

**VICE CHAIR**

Retired Executive Manager

Christine McKeag

**TREASURER**

Retired College Instructor

Robert Eberly, Jr.

**SECRETARY**

Retired Attorney

Robin Berkeley

Retired Early Educator

Sandy Berthelsen

Retired Educator, Community Volunteer

Larry Brown

Retired Corporate Attorney

Carl Cannon

Human Resources Consultant

Betsy Doughtie

Retired Nonprofit Executive

Phil Hartman

Retired Education Administrator

Helen (Rose) Jackson

Vice President, South State Bank

Carl Jones

Retired Sales & Nonprofit Development

Norman (Jake) Kriney

Retired Entrepreneur

Allan Lacoë

Realtor, Dunes Real Estate

Brian Marlow

Retired Executive Manager

Robert Mason

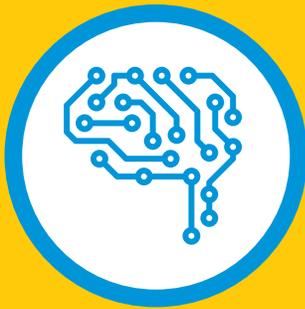
Retired Info Tech Executive

Mary Scott

Community Volunteer

Kimberly Slovensky

Office Leader, Pinnacle Financial Partners



The brain forms as many as **700** neural connections per second before the age of 5.



Students with early education are **29%** more likely to graduate from high school.



Every **\$1** invested in early education equals as much as **\$13** saved in future costs to our society.

# The importance of Early Education

**The speed of brain development is fastest from birth to age 5 and is also the most important.** A newborn at birth has most of the brain cells they will ever have, but relatively fewer connections, the circuits among the different cells. A baby forms 700 new neural connections per second in the first years of life.

An infant's brain is dependent on responsiveness from adults. So all those adorable things that babies do right from the beginning -- coos, gurgles, sounds and smiles -- how an adult responds to those coos and gurgles help shape the brain circuitry. The baby does something, the adult responds back. Vice versa. It's all about how the baby feels -- is she in an environment that is safe, loving and enriching?

Brain development in the area of language, the synapses needed to learn language, peak at 9 – 10 months of age. Many higher cognitive functions peak at 1 year of age. Language has been shown to be a predictor of success. Researchers see differences in children's vocabulary as early as 18-24 months. **We know that 3rd grade reading scores can predict future life success, but did you know that 18 month vocabulary can predict 3rd grade reading skills?**

Research shows us that many children from low income households are at a disadvantage in the area of brain development, language development and loving caregiver involvement. So, if these children do not receive the important interactions to develop those positive brain connections, their vocabulary development is lacking - they will enter kindergarten well behind their peers. Statistics show they are less likely to graduate high school, have poor health habits and more likely to become a part of the expense of crime and poverty to the American taxpayer.

- We are born with about 100 billion brain cells
- 85% of brain growth happens in the first 3 years of life
- 1 million NEW neural connections/second made daily



## Annual Report



8 Nature's Way  
Hilton Head Island  
South Carolina  
29926

843.681.2739

[info@thechildrensc.org](mailto:info@thechildrensc.org)  
[www.thechildrensc.org](http://www.thechildrensc.org)

  Follow us @thechildrensc