

# # FIRST THINGS FIRST

Yavapai Region

## 2022 Impact Report



**From birth to age 5,**  
a child's brain develops more than  
any other time in life.

# 90% of a child's brain grows before kindergarten. Early childhood matters.

First Things First (FTF) partners with families and communities to help our state's youngest children prepare for kindergarten and beyond.

Many young children in Arizona face challenges that threaten their healthy development and learning. In the FTF Yavapai Region, there are **12,661 children** (under age 6) with **25% living in poverty**.

Here is how FTF is working to support young children and their families in this region.

“ Like watering a garden, investing in the future with high quality and equitable childcare, family services, and copious healthy time in the outdoors, we can grow the citizens who will lead us to the sustainable and abundant future we all dream of.”



**Ellen Bashor**

*2022 Yavapai Champion for Children*

## FTF Yavapai Regional Key Impact Highlights [State Fiscal Year 2020]

### Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

**1,176** Families of newborns received the Arizona Parent Kit, filled with tips and tools to help support their child's healthy development.

**103** Families with young children participated in voluntary home visiting programs proven to reduce parental stress levels, increase connections to community supports, and improve children's cognitive, motor, behavioral and social-emotional development.

### Quality Preschool and Child Care

**1,475** Children attended preschools and child care programs participating in Quality First.

**275** Children birth to age 5 received a Quality First scholarship to attend high-quality preschools and child care programs.

**17** Early childhood educators received college scholarships to improve their qualifications for working with infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

### Preventive Health

**169** Children monitored to receive appropriate screenings to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues to prevent learning challenges later on.

### Additional Strategies

**1,731** **Adults** attended parenting activities to learn more about the importance of early childhood development.

**204** **Professionals** received training so that they could make developmentally appropriate recommendations for children in out-of-home care.



## Camp Verde 3-year-old benefits from Little Learners program

Savannah is like many children her age – the active 3-year-old loves animals, likes to color and enjoys jumping on her trampoline. However, she started life with some big challenges that contributed to her missing key developmental milestones early in life.

Through support from Little Learners, a program of High Country Early Intervention, Savannah has made significant progress in her speech, her ability to focus and her interactions with others.

Little Learners is a free in-home program that promotes the overall development for those children who have mild to moderate delays and do not qualify for early intervention services or preschool special education services. Parents and staff, in consultation with licensed therapists, develop activities to practice during home visits and in-between visits.

The home visitation program brings together family culture and knowledge of parents with the expertise of staff to help children meet their developmental milestones. Regular playgroups of Little Learners participants help children gain key socialization skills while parents and caregivers find support by getting to know others with similar challenges.

The First Things First Yavapai Regional Partnership Council funds the program through its Family Support for Children with Special Needs Strategy.

Savannah was born substance exposed, which contributed to her having various delays in her development. Her grandparents, who live in Camp Verde, assumed custody of Savannah when she was 6 months old.

“She walked late. She talked late. And she was missing other milestones. So we knew we needed help,” said Savannah’s grandmother, Sue, who heard about Little Learners through PBS texts with tips on parenting.

Savannah was almost 2 when she enrolled in the Little Learners program. She struggled with eye contact with others, she rarely smiled or laughed.

Because Savannah started the program during the pandemic, her family received services at the High Country Early Intervention office in Cottonwood rather than in their home. At a time when many agencies either closed down or moved everything to virtual services, Sue was grateful to be able to access needed services in-person in a safe way following health protocols.

At home, Sue began to implement what she was learning. She helped Savannah put together puzzles and do other activities to encourage stronger hand-eye coordination.

When it was safe to do so, Savannah began participating in weekly play groups. Savannah especially enjoyed the music time in these groups. She learned to keep rhythm and would sometimes want to sing the same song over and over again, laughing with delight with every chorus.

When school starts again in the fall, Savannah will be able to attend preschool, where services to assist her will be available. However, over the summer months, Savannah will continue to get the benefit of the Little Learners program so she will be better prepared for school and for life.

“Savannah is able to pay attention so much better now,” Sue said. “She gives more eye contact and smiles, and responds when we talk to her. She still needs help with her speech, but she has made some great improvements.”



Read more FTF stories at  
[FirstThingsFirst.org/Region-Stories](https://www.FirstThingsFirst.org/Region-Stories)

# FTF Yavapai Regional Partnership Council

FTF regional partnership councils are made up of volunteers who study the unique needs of the local community and inform how funds should be used to best support the healthy development and early learning of young children birth to age 5. FTF invests in proven programs

and innovative strategies through grants to community organizations that provide services to children and families. Some of the programs in this region include Parents As Teachers, Little Learners and Best For Babies.

## FTF Yavapai SFY22 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool

\$1,734,604

Preventive Health

\$619,843

Strengthening Families

\$410,509

Parent and Community Awareness

\$126,433

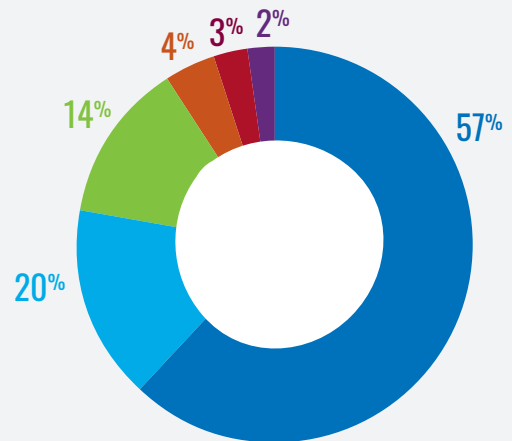
Research and Evaluation

\$94,234

Workforce Development and Training

\$58,594

**Total** \$3,044,218\*



\*rounded to the nearest dollar

## FTF Yavapai Regional Partnership Council and Staff

Chair

**April Hepperle**

Vice Chair

**Sherry Birch**

FTF Regional Director

**Lisa Blyth**

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Members

**Joe Donaldson**

**Cindy Eaton**

**Allison Houtz**

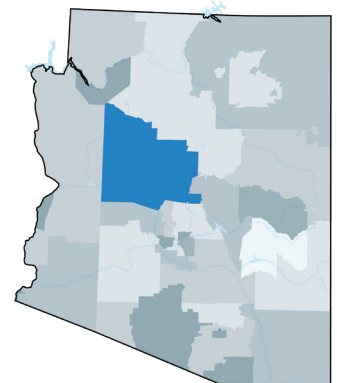
**Steve King**

**Vickey LaMotte**

**Tammy Lee**

**Billi Jo Stedman**

**Kathy Watson**



The **FTF Yavapai Region** covers all of Yavapai County, plus the part of the city of Sedona that lies in Coconino County. The Yavapai-Apache Nation is included in the Yavapai Region. With 38 percent of the land owned by the U.S. Forest Service, the FTF Yavapai Region is known for its four mild seasons, plentiful lakes, mountains and forest and small town atmosphere.

Learn more at

[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Yavapai](https://www.FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Yavapai)