

Dear First Steps Partners:

I am delighted to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Executive Director of Berkeley County First Steps, and share my excitement about our work together in the coming years, that will ensure that all children in Berkeley County are born healthy and ready to grow and meet their full potential.

A preschooler can't ask for a high-quality caregiver. A parent can't work without child care. A teacher can't advance school readiness in students without professional development based on best practices in curriculum and instruction. An unborn child can't ask for prenatal care. Parents can't afford to build a home library for their children when most of their income is used to pay for housing, food, child care and transportation.

As professionals in the field of Early Childhood Education, we can advocate for quality child care that is affordable and accessible, professional development that promotes positive child outcomes, and developmental, medical and social service supports that are available to all. This is what we do each day at Berkeley County First Steps.

One of the main social problems faced in the rural communities of Berkeley County is generational poverty. Parents living in poverty with young children often lose the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to manage the household and utilize social supports and resources to optimum levels. Poverty and its relationship to early parenthood are often cyclic, with the poorest women being most likely to have children young and most likely to remain in poverty. Children, who are born into poverty, face additional at-risk factors in the areas of nutrition, health care and education. Parents residing in communities with lower levels of education, employment and income have fewer opportunities for educational and career advancement.

“The effects of poverty are statically linked to negative outcomes for children, from poor nutrition in infancy, to increased instances of academic failure, emotional stress and teen parenthood.” (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 2000).

South Carolina's greatest assets and threats are nowhere more apparent than in the lives of its children and families. Although we have seen the quality of life improve for some in Berkeley County, there are many who remain

under-served, under-resourced and vulnerable. Berkeley County First Steps provides programs and resources such as Parents As Teachers and Nurse–Family Partnership that not only promote powerful partnerships, but are also designed to support parents in their role as their child’s first and most important teacher.

We are of course limited in what we can accomplish by the amount of human and financial resources we can leverage annually. Realizing Berkeley County First Steps can’t work in isolation, we will continuously seek the support and input of the communities with which we work.

As the new Executive Director of Berkeley County First Steps, I embrace the opportunity to work in tandem with community partners, parents, board and staff to develop new and expand current programs that promote life changing partnerships with families.

For children,

Adrienne Troy-Frazier

Read more about Adrienne Troy-Frazier’s at:

<http://www.linkedin.com/pub/adrienne-troy-frazier/a/926/4b2/>