

# EDUCATION: EARLY CHILDHOOD

You help children and youth achieve their potential through United Way



**1 out of every 7 kindergarteners in the region lacks basic literacy and language skills.**

**T**here is no question that the early years are critical for the brain development of children – where the foundation for learning is set. The quality of the care and environment that children experience in the first five years of life greatly influences the strength of that foundation. Sadly, there are too many children in our community who do not receive the good start they deserve.

There are more than 13,000 children under age 6 in the Richmond region living in poverty every day. That's 1 out of every 7 children who likely do not have a single book in their home, or a pediatrician who knows their name, or a safe environment in which to live and play.

Without a good start in the early years, children are ill-prepared for kindergarten. Children who start school behind tend to stay behind, and the gap only widens over time. This affects not only the child's school readiness and performance, but also each one of us. A lack of school readiness contributes to tremendous costs in special education, delinquency, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and lost workforce potential.

That's why, with your help, United Way is working to achieve the vision that all children, from birth through age 5, in the greater Richmond and Petersburg region will be healthy, well-cared for, and ready to succeed in school and in life.

United Way support and services encompass:

- **Strengthening families to promote children's health and school readiness.**

Parents are their children's first and most important teachers, and many need assistance to provide safe, stable, nurturing environments that help kids build skills for school readiness. United Way supports programs that provide classes and home visits to support parents through their children's early years.

- **Improving the availability of and access to quality, affordable child care and early learning opportunities.**

We know that 62% of parents of preschool-age children work outside the home, which makes access to quality child care essential. United Way invests in childcare scholarships, helping hardworking families afford quality childcare, and supports continued education and mentoring for employees of several local childcare centers through the Smart Beginnings initiative.

- **Preparing our region's children for success through the *Regional Plan for Children's School Readiness*.**

Ensuring that young children start school ready to succeed requires large-scale collaboration, common goals, joint accountability, and a shared commitment. United Way is at the forefront of this effort, leading more than 100 community partners to implement the *Regional Plan for Children's School Readiness*. The Plan is our region's roadmap for collaboration and results. This work falls under the Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond initiative, which is led by United Way and the Greater Richmond Chamber.

# YOUR GIFT CHANGES LIVES



Shawn may be young, but he is already getting ready for kindergarten. Thanks to your gift to United Way's **Community Action Fund**, Shawn is able to attend a quality childcare program, where he is making art, reading, and using his imagination to play. These skills and experiences will ultimately impact how well he does in school. Shawn's preparation at home and at his childcare center will give him the foundation to read at grade level, graduate on time, enter the workforce and become a leader in our community. Through United Way, you are helping thousands of young children start preparing for school – and starting early is right on time.



## YOUR GIFT MAKES AN IMPACT

Your contribution of **\$5 per week** funds two weeks of attendance in a high-quality early care and education program that will prepare a child to be successful in school and in life.

Your donation of **\$10 per week** ensures that a child with emotional or behavioral problems receives more than three hours of mental health services. This child may have experienced trauma or abuse, and therapy helps the child develop coping skills

Your Leadership gift of **\$22 per week** gives a family four months of support and parenting classes through home visiting programs. This support for parents reduces child abuse and neglect and improves children's health.



### GIVE.

Make an investment in our community. Through the Community Action Fund, our gifts, whether \$5 a week or \$20 a week, are pooled together and invested to make lasting change.

### ADVOCATE.

Champion the cause and speak out. Everyone in our community needs to know the importance of early childhood development.

### VOLUNTEER.

Give the gift of you. To find ways to get involved, visit our website at [www.yourunitedway.org](http://www.yourunitedway.org) or call 2-1-1.