

**YOUTH FUTURES AUTHORITY**

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

**WHITE PAPER**

SUBMITTED BY ROTARY-KIWANIS  
COMMUNITY PROJECT COMMITTEE

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Savannah, as in many U.S. cities, education attainment remains low, poverty continues unabated, crime remains above community expectations, and all are disproportionate by race. These conditions exist in a culture that is multigenerational and cyclical; and proven been very challenging to change in spite of extensive and well meaning community resources being applied to the situation.

In our society, prior to school age, early childhood education is primarily the responsibility of the family. Outside resources (school, YMCA, church, sports, music, scouting, etc.) compliment the educational process of the family at school age; but prior to school age the family is the focus of child education.

Research has clearly shown that earliest childhood education (prenatal to 3 yrs old) is absolutely critical to proper brain development characterized as cognitive development. Children at this age who do not receive proper education in their family setting are destined under perform in school, become disenchanted with learning, disenfranchised with authority, detached from social norms, and grow a lack self-respect.

Some young parents or extended families have not acquired sufficient parenting skills to provide proper education for their children. The phenomenon of children of children having children creates the environment that puts the family at risk; especially for families of limited means. The family is the institution that educates the young child and passes on benefits of positive behavior and learning from generation to generation.

An answer to the crisis that exists in many cities has heretofore been elusive in spite of application of extensive community resources in each of our cities until the emergence of a successful model in Harlem called the Harlem Children Zone.

This White Paper outlines how Savannah proposes to adopt and tailor that successful model with oversight by Youth Futures Authority (YFA). Under the YFA banner, the effort to provide leadership to implement the early childhood (birth to 5 yrs) education segment of the model will be championed by the Rotary Clubs of Savannah and Skidaway Kiwanis.

# **YOUTH FUTURES AUTHORITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION WHITE PAPER**

(Submitted to YFA by Rotary-Kiwanis Community Project Committee  
December 2009)

Revised Dec 21,2009

## SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

- According to Step Up Savannah’s Poverty Reduction Action Plan for Savannah, education attainment remains low, the rate of poverty is not declining and is disproportionate by race. As well, according to Chatham Metropolitan Police crime statistics, there was a significant reduction of overall crime in 2006. However crime rates have risen each year since then, remain above national averages, and are higher than the community desires.
- These factors exist in a culture that is multigenerational and cyclical, which has proven to be very challenging to change in spite of extensive and well meaning community resources being applied to the situation.
- Communities like Savannah fund many resources outside of families to assist families in education of children and young adults; but application of most of those resources doesn’t begin until school age and include such examples as schools, Boys/Girls Clubs, YMCA’s, Big Brothers/Sisters, church, scouting, sports, music, etc.
- In our society, prior to school age, early childhood education is primarily the responsibility of the family.
- Much research<sup>1</sup> has shown that earliest childhood education (prenatal to 3yrs old) is absolutely critical to proper brain development necessary to prepare a child to handle all of the challenges that they will experience and to take advantage of opportunities at school age and beyond. For instance, a University of Chicago study shows that children of college educated parents hear 20,000 words per day versus those children of low economic status families hear only 2,000 words per day which is one factor that significantly effects brain development at early childhood.
- The agency “Better Brains for Babies” states that this research shows that the brain is not fully developed at birth and that 90% of the brain is developed by age three.
- Therefore , it follows that children who receive insufficient early childhood cognitive development lack the foundation for a successful school experience.

(1) *Formulating, Identifying, and Estimating the Technology of Cognitive and Non-cognitive Skill Formation* (Cunha, Heckman); Wall Street Journal article *Catch ‘em Young* (Heckman, January 10, 2006); *Interpreting the Evidence of Life Skill Formation* (Cunha, Heckman, Lochner, Masterov); Work of David Lawrence Pres. of Early Childhood Initiative Foundation...Miami-Dade Fla.; University of Chicago study by J. Huttenlocher et al.

This leads to underperforming in school, disenchantment with learning, disenfranchisement with authority, detachment from social norms, and lack of self-respect. The consequential low education attainment results in the furtherance of poverty and the increase of crime

- Some parents or families/extended families have not acquired sufficient parenting skills owing to their own disengagement from learning institutions. Likewise, to the extent that young teens are giving birth to children before they are matured enough to meet such challenges, life can become overwhelming to all of life's challenges including providing proper early childhood education to a new generation.
- Thus, in spite of sometimes valiant application of community resources, the multigenerational cycle of undesirable outcomes is perpetuated.
- A more concise description of the situation is.....children of children having children, which creates the environment that puts the development of family at risk especially for those families of limited means. And family is the institution that passes benefits of positive behavior and learning from generation to generation. At the same time, prior to school age, typically only community resources that provide emergency intervention services are utilized for any early childhood or parent education.
- Geoffery Canada's Harlem Children Zone is an excellent and successful model for the concept of early childhood education and parenting skill development by applying community resources external to the family. This story is documented in the book *Whatever it Takes* by Paul Tough. By assuring proper early childhood education for new generations of children, Canada has significantly improved educational and behavioral outcomes of children; and by teaching parents how to deal with life's challenges, he has not only helped individuals, but transformed a community (Harlem).
- The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) qualifies and provides accreditation for child care centers. NAEYC accredited centers provide the "gold standard" and model of early childhood education. Of the 800 licensed child care centers in Savannah only 4 are NAEYC accredited and of those only one is open to the public and centered in the geographic areas of high poverty. There are two or three other child care centers that are in the area of high poverty that are currently working toward NAEYC accreditation. NAEYC centers are also open full days, year round, and accept infants six weeks old to 5 years old.
- In Savannah much of the funding of the NAEYC centers mentioned comes from local private sector resources or local and national foundation resources.
- Currently, there is no state program that assesses nor establishes quality standards for licensed child care centers in Georgia. Therefore NAEYC accreditation is currently the only assessment of quality for child care centers.
- Savannah also has a large, robust Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS) program funded primarily by Federal funds. The HS/EHS program is expanding capacity as well. The HS/EHS programs are not full day nor full year. Because of Federal admission requirements for children, not all children of high poverty areas in Savannah qualify for admission.

- The few NAEYC centers, those centers currently working toward accreditation, and HS/EHS all have waiting lists of hundreds.
- The Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs of Savannah are made up of business leaders of the community. They can provide third party involvement in an endeavor to meet community challenges unfettered by any vested interest beyond the general well being of the community. The Clubs can also be a source of funding and leadership.

### PREMISE

- To successfully break the multigenerational cycle of the undesirable outcomes of low education, poverty and crime in Savannah, it is imperative to begin by assuring adequate early childhood education of each new generation accompanied by the educational resources for parents in order for them to enhance parenting skills to reinforce the education received by their child.
- By assuring that each child is adequately prepared for school, odds are significantly improved that they can confidently embrace and successfully take advantage of educational opportunities. Additionally, by successfully navigating the educational processes and gaining comfort with ongoing engagement with societal norms, children will advance in life with more emotional and behavioral stability as well.
- Since the task of early childhood education is primarily the responsibility of families with little assistance from outside resources, and to the extent that the “family” (often single parent) is unprepared and overwhelmed for this activity, the community should provide resources to assist families to assure early childhood education for children starting at birth (actually prenatal) as well as parenting skill enhancement for parents.
- Any resource cost to the community to assure that each new generation of children receives appropriate early childhood education can be expected to reduce community resource costs for remediation and mitigation of negative and illegal behaviors later in life.
- This effort fits precisely at the beginning of the continuum that is envisioned in the Mayor’s vision for which Youth Futures Authority (YFA) has responsibility. Additionally, Step Up Savannah has identified child care and transportation as the highest priority issues that face employees of Savannah businesses. Therefore establishing high quality early childhood education centers can satisfy needs identified by both organizations and aid in fulfilling the Mayor’s vision.
- Savannah Rotarians and Kiwanians can offer facilitated leadership for the action plan in this segment of the YFA continuum.

## ACTION PLAN

- Complete a needs assessment for early childhood education and parent skill enhancement in the high poverty demographic in Savannah
- Expand the capacity for NAEYC accredited child care centers and those child care centers that are striving to attain NAEYC accreditation and outcomes.
- Significantly enhance the parent education element of the endeavor to assure enhanced parenting skills that reinforce the lessons learned by their child in early childhood education.
- Obtain commitments from community resources to collaborate with these child care centers to teach the parent skill enhancement program.
- Coordinate with community resources to provide psychometric testing at age three for all children in County.
- Coordinate with schools to identify student preparedness criteria.
- Coordinate with schools to develop assessment data to measure success.
- Complete a cost/benefit analysis meant to describe up front costs of early childhood education and parent skill enhancement and define potential benefits of cost savings created by reduction in poverty, low educational outcomes, and crime.
- Complete strategic and financial plans to accomplish these actions.

## CRITICAL FACTORS

- Secure funding sources for both capital and ongoing operation elements of the plan
- Assure that parent skill enhancement program provides the resources to assure reinforcement of lessons learned in early childhood education.
- Strong community leadership advocacy
- Community-wide communications directed at resetting expectations (both with stakeholders and recipients)

YOUTH FUTURE AUTHORITY  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
WORK GROUPS

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CAPACITY EXPANSION

Needs assessment  
Design expansion plan including number of sites and location  
Define both capital and operating financial plans  
Coordinate with schools to articulate preparedness criteria and measurements of success

PARENT SKILL ENHANCEMENT

Design class content based on Harlem Children Zone model and consistent with Early  
Childhood Education content  
Identify community content experts to teach each segment  
Obtain commitment from experts to participate

COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Document quantitatively and qualitative benefits expected compared to costs of  
implementing Early Childhood initiative

ASSESSMENTS

Identify and recommend assessments that can be used to track progress

In 2008 the Board of Directors of Rotary Club of Savannah South asked itself if the Club could be having a more significant impact in the community with its charitable giving and volunteering. The Board concluded that interviews should be conducted with civic leaders to identify the most significant need of the community to better align charitable giving and volunteerism. The only stipulation from the Board was that the effort should focus on youth which would preserve the history of the Club.

The Board conducted a total of 15 interviews with civic leaders. The intuitive sense was that the leaders would reveal that education or even more specifically literacy should be the focus. All stated that efforts to improve education outcomes was important; but the root causes of poor education outcomes and other societal challenges was a lack of sufficient parent skill development and role modeling.

Further imagineering by the Board settled on the idea of creating dual continuums of existing community resources. One continuum would focus on improving parenting skills and other issues facing parents with limited means (e.g. adult education, interview skills, substance abuse intervention, etc.) The other continuum would focus on education of children from birth through high school.

The Board stepped back and grasped the comprehensive and complex challenge that this emerging vision presented. It was agreed that it would be an opportunity for all Savannah Rotary Clubs to work together and make a significant contribution to the community. In February of 2009 the Rotary Community Project Committee was formed with representatives from the various Rotary Clubs of Savannah.

If existing community resources were to be used to provide the services that the continuums would require, the first task was to identify those resources and document how they would contribute to the continuums. It was discovered that no list of existing resources existed. So the first task was to inventory Savannah resources. Table 1 documents the catalog of Savannah resources that was created by the Committee.

In March-April 2009 the Committee discovered that there was a successful model that established similar continuums in Harlem, NY. The book *Whatever It Takes* by Paul Tough tells the successful journey of Geoffry Canada and his Harlem Children Zone.

Almost simultaneously Mayor Johnson and Edward Chisolm, Executive Director of Youth Futures Authority, announced that they were promoting an initiative to establish a Savannah Children Zone based on the Canada model.

The Committee immediately began discussion with the Mayor and Youth Futures Authority to merge efforts. The Committee continued its research on existing resources in order to understand how these resources could work collaboratively to improve outcomes of those of limited means and their children. The Committee was represented in the delegation that the Mayor led to New York City to visit the Harlem Children Zone in the

summer of 2009. Table 2 documents the interviews, tours, and meetings that comprised this research.

Later in 2009 another community member was invited to join the Committee. As it happens this Committee member belongs to the Skidaway Kiwanis Club which is now supporting this initiative.

Based on this research and community input the Committee articulated these findings in this White Paper. In January 2010 the Committee presented this White Paper to the Early Childhood Education Committee of Youth Futures Authority. It was also agreed that the Committee would be the Champion of the birth-5yrs segment, "Early Childhood Education", of the Youth Futures Authority's stated vision of its continuum from birth to 24 yrs. (In actuality "birth" used in this context refers to "prenatal" and "birth")

Table 1

## ROTARYCOMMUNITY RESOURCE LIST

(7/7/09 revised 7/22/09)

ORG	*	CONTACT	PHONE	E-MAIL	COMMENT
A+ Parents	J	Pat Edwards	355-2083		Foster Care Adoption
All Walks of Life	U	Tony Jordan	341-8306	tjordan@awolinc.org	Skills training thru artistic formats
Appalachian Wildernes	J		ClevelandGA		706-865-3141 Camp for Boys/Girls
Ash Tree	J	Morris Brown	651-9662		Mentoring
Babies Can't Wait	S	Matt Walker	303-1613		0-3 yrs and family early intervention
Baby Think It Over	J				DFCS uses dolls and programs
Barnabas Ctr Counsel	J		352-7638		Counseling
Behaviorial Health	J		comment		Counseling PH 866-713-7763
Bethesda Home Boys	J	David Tribble	351-2040		Group Home/School Boys
BigBrothers/Sisters	U	John Kendricks	233-7669	john@bbbscoastalempire.org	One on one mentoring
Blount Youth Home	J		VidaliaGA		912-537-7758 Group Home-Boys
Boy Scouts	U	Tom Cardiff	927-7272		Scouting
CASA	J	ReneeCrawfordGresham		447-8908	Juv Court vol for abused and neglected
Catholic Pastoral Cntr	J		201-4100		Community Center
Center for Counseling	J		353-7699		Counseling
Chat.Co.Juvenile Ct	U	Lee Moore	652-6700		Juvenile Court
ChathamCo Health	U	Dr. Diane Weems	356-2441	www.gachd.org	healthcare,immunization,nutritional
ChildCareRes/Referral	U	Sheri Costa	443-3011		Child Care Referrals
Children 1st	S	Matt Walker	303-1613		0-5 yrs High risk delay develop
Children of Tomorrow	U	Julia Green	234-6159	JBCD1128@aol.com	School activities/outings
Coast.Chld Advocacy	J		236-1401		Counseling
Coastal Harbor Treat.	J	Ray Heckerman	354-3911		Counseling subsstance abuse
Community Works	J				Juv Court learn impact of crime on comm.
Conflict Resolution	J				Union Mission Ed for offenders
Ctr Behavioral Meds	J		350-5600		Counseling
DFCS	U	Yvonna Brown	651-2216	yvbrown@dhr.state.ga.us	Medical assistance
Early Start	S	Sherry Costa	443-3016	scosta@savannahtech.edu	
Eckerd Family YouthAlt	J		comment		800-222-1473 ext 278 Group home-Boys
Econ Opportunity Auth	U	John Finney	238-2960	www.eoasga.org	Directs Headstart for preschool
Eureka Mentoring Prog	J		604-1825		Mentoring
Fam.Depend.Treatment	J				Break cycle of addiction in families
Family Reconstruction	J		234-6194		Counseling
First Steps	U	Stephanie Mobley	819-6910	mobleyste@sjchs.org	ROCK birth mothers in hosp
Frank Callen Boys/Girls	J	Vince Delmonte	233-2939	www.bgcsavannah.org	Community Center
Fresh Air Home	U	Jason Watts	786-5746	www.thefreshairhome.com	summer camp-low income children
Future Focus	J				Teach females bus. Skills
GA Baptist Homes	J		Georgia		888-545-8299 multiple homes

GA Outdoor Therap	J		WarmSpringsGA		706-677-5900 Wilderness Camp
GA Special Olympics	U	Aaron Jackson	356-1711	aaron.jackson@specialolympicsga.org	
Gateway	J		Bloomingtondale		912-748-4378 intensive counsel
Girl Scouts	U		236-1571	ceo@girlscouting.org	
GIRLS Ministries	U	PatriciaReevesMarira	352-0332	pat_marira@bellsouth.net	Christian-girls abuse 6-14
GreenbriarChldCntr	J	Gena Taylor	234-3431		Group Home Emergency Boys/Girls
Harambee House	U	Dr Mildred McCain	233-0907	cfej@bellsouth.net	African Am issues
Hope House	J		236-5310		Home for unwed mothers/training
Housing Auth. Drug Elim	J		232-4232		Community Center
JC Lewis Health Clinic	J		495-8887		Health Care for homeless
Jewish Ed Alliance	U	Moises Paz	355-8111	www.savj.org	Jewish community center
Job Corps	J		351-0710		Job Training
Judicial Citizen Review	J				Juv Court Review foster care cases
Junior Achievement	U	Elissa Meddin	790-7822	jacoast@world.att.net	Economic Education
Kicklighter Resource Ct	U	Robert Kozlowski	355-7633		Training/Home for mental retarded
KidsNet	J	TimekaGrubbs-Perry	201-2163	tgperry@kidsnetsav.org	Sys of care for most at-risk
Live Oak Library		George Hubbs			Literacy
Living Vine, The	J		352-9998		Home for unwed mothers
LOVE program					elem. School tutoring
Maggies Morn School	S	Maggie Smith	352-8404		2,3,4 yrs Day Camp Day Care
MARTHA	U	Emma Conyers	596-7320	prettyteac@aol.com	Mentoring middle school girls
Mediation	J				Juv Court
Mentor Network, The	J		354-8990		Mentoring
Methodist Home	J		MaconGA		478-751-2800 Group Home-Boys
Moral Reconation	J				Juv Court Ed Prog intervention
Morningstar Fam. Res.	J		691-1262		Counseling
Parent university		Mike O'Neal	507-8566	mikelaeno@aol.com	Teaching Parenting skills
Park Place Outreach	J	Linda Lamas	234-4048	SRH_Admin@comcast.net	Emergency shelter Boys/Girls
Paul Anerson Home	J		VidaliaGA		912-537-7237 Group Home-Boys
Project Success	U	Willie Ferrell	651-6801		afternoon program for kids/parents
ROCK	U	Penny Maggioni	356-8404		prevention child abuse/neglect
Sat. Work Squad	J				Juv Court Supervised labor
Sav. Impact Prog	J				ProbOfcr/police reduce recidivism
Savannah Baptist Ctr	J		232-1033		Community Center
Sex Offend./Addiction	J				Juv Court Lic. Counselors
St Mary's Comm Cntr	J		232-0578		Community Center
St Mary's Home	J		236-7164		Group Home Boys/Girls
St Pius Fam Resource	J		651-6815		Community Center
Stand Out Youth	U	Ernie Lee	231-2000	info@standoutyouth.org	issues gay/les/bi/transgender
STAR Prog	J		658-1767		Military style training
Strong Families	J				Counseling
Teen Challenge Intl	U	Shane Thompson	341-0034	phillipwells@teenchallenge.cc	drug rehab-faith based
Truancy Intervention	J				Juv Court Lawyer/Kids
Union Mission	J		238-2786		Counseling
Upward Bound	J		356-2196		Yr round tutorial prog



Table 2

**ROTARY MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES**  
(Revised Jan 2010)

<u>INTERVIEWS</u>	<u>PERSON</u>		<u>CONFERENCES</u>	
Parent				
University	Mike O'Neal	2	Early Childhood	1
	Stephanie			
First Steps	Mobley	3	YFA	1
Early Start	Shery Costa	1	Step Up	1
	Penny			
ROCK	Mangionni	1	Parent U	1
Wesley	Tammy Mixon	2		
	Van Johnson			
Lady	Nina Bryant-			
Bamford	Hunter	1		
West Side	Pam Oglesby	1		
	Kenneth			
	Dunham			
EOA	John Finney	1		
	Nacole			
Head Start	Guyton	1		
	Yvonnia			
DFCS	Brown	1		
Roy				
Davenport		2		
	Edward			
YFA	Chisolm	2		
Step Up	Daniel Dodd	1	<u>TOURS</u>	
	Dale Bebout		Baptist/Dollar Store	1
	Mayor			
Mayor	Johnson	1	West Side	1
	George			
Library	Hubbs	1	Lady Bamford	1
Coastal				
Health	Matt Walker	1	Wesley	1
Housing				
Authority	Earline Davis	1	Head Start	1
Church of	Bishop			
Hope	Jackson	1	Church of Hope	1
	Christina			
We Can	Gibson	1	May St YMCA	1
Visiting				
Nurses	John Johnson	1		
Baptist	Pearline			
Center	Burns	1		
	Pearl Beaupre			
May St				
YMCA	Peter Doliber	1		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>28</b>		
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>

**MEETINGS**

Rotary Committee	9
Pre meeting agenda meetings	12
Rotary DT	1
Rotary Skidaway	1
YFA	<u>3</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26</b>

**TRIPS**

Harlem Children Zone	<b>1</b>
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**ORIGINAL CIVIC LEADERS INTERVIEWEES**

Mayor Johnson	Judge Stone
Chief Berkow	Dr Clark
	Stephanie
Supt Lockamy	Mobley
	Principle Barry
Pres Buck	Lollis
Judge Abott	Tom Kohler
Judge Brannen	