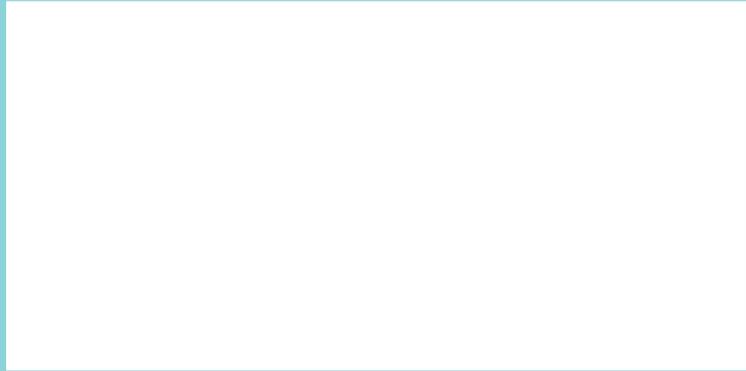


way to grow™

125 West Broadway, Suite 110
Minneapolis, MN 55411



To learn more about
Way to Grow, see our
community impact or
read our success stories,
please visit mplswtg.org.

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way to grow™

2014 Annual Report



Way to Grow Mission

Working closely with parents and communities, we ensure that children within the most isolated families are born healthy, stay healthy and are prepared for school.



“Let’s Shine” is our mantra for 2014 and 2015. As we celebrate our 25-year anniversary and reflect on the 66,000+ people we’ve served in Minneapolis communities, we’re also thinking about the journey ahead as we look to expand our services and reach even more families in need.

Our Vision

Together, we will ensure that every child has an equal opportunity to succeed in school and life.

What we do together matters.

Dear Friends,

Thanks to you, 1,331 children and 992 parents received the education, tools and resources needed to succeed in school and life. We know our program has a profound impact on the families we serve as well as our entire community and I’m proud of what we’ve accomplished:

- 88% of our preschoolers were ready for kindergarten
- 70% of elementary students were reading at or above grade level
- 90% of parents attended parent teachers’ conference
- More parents are volunteering and advocating in our school systems
- Currently serving children from 34 public schools and six charter schools
- 100% of the 37 young parents enrolled in our Dream Tracks program did not have a repeat pregnancy

We must continue to let our work bring light and hope to families who are endeavoring to build a solid future that will prepare their children for school and beyond. Our founders’ vision was to create communities where improved literacy, effective parenting and healthy children and families would be the norm, not the exception. Even though we have a lot of work to do to close the educational gap, we are making progress every day - one parent, one child, one family at a time.

We could not do any of this without our dedicated team of leaders at Way to Grow or our community partners working tirelessly to tackle some of the tough issues associated with families struggling to make a better life. I would like to thank the Way to Grow board of directors, staff and all of our supporters and donors. You truly make a difference!

Let’s continue to bring light and hope for stronger and better health and educational opportunities to all our children. Way to Grow will never stop working toward our goal of empowering our families to lead a better life.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carolyn Smallwood". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Carolyn Smallwood
Executive Director

Our Story

In 1988, Minneapolis Mayor Don Fraser co-chaired a task force with Honeywell CEO Jim Renier to combat an alarming problem: too many Minneapolis children were lagging in school preparedness. The task force toured early learning programs around the country. The tour sparked the idea that would become the foundation of Way to Grow – the first in-home program to serve parents with children ages zero to five using local staff from the same communities as those they serve.

One year later; through a partnership with the mayor’s office, United Way and Honeywell, the Way to Grow program began as part of the Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board. When budget cuts threatened the program, Way to Grow was transformed into a more agile nonprofit. In 2004, we attained independent status as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Today, Way to Grow is one of the preeminent early learning programs in the Twin Cities. Building upon our initial prenatal through kindergarten efforts, we now serve children through the third grade with our Great by Eight programming, while helping parents understand their critical role in the learning process.

How We Shine

Great by Eight, our core early learning program, uses a proven, research-based model with home visits, center-based programming and connection to resources. It includes early childhood and elementary education support, health and wellness education, teen parenting support and parent engagement. In 2014, Family Educators averaged 233 home visits a week, serving diverse families in the Minneapolis area.

Early Education

At its core, early education:

- Helps break the cycle of poverty
- Prepares more children to succeed in school
- Builds a stronger workforce and economy
- Improves the future health and vitality of communities



Early Childhood Benefits Start Now

Ages 0 - 2

Healthier pregnancies; delayed pregnancies among teen parents; increased healthy parenting practices, immunizations and wellness check-ups through health education.

Ages 3 - 4

Increased kindergarten readiness; fewer developmental delays; increased family stability; reducing school and parental work absenteeism.

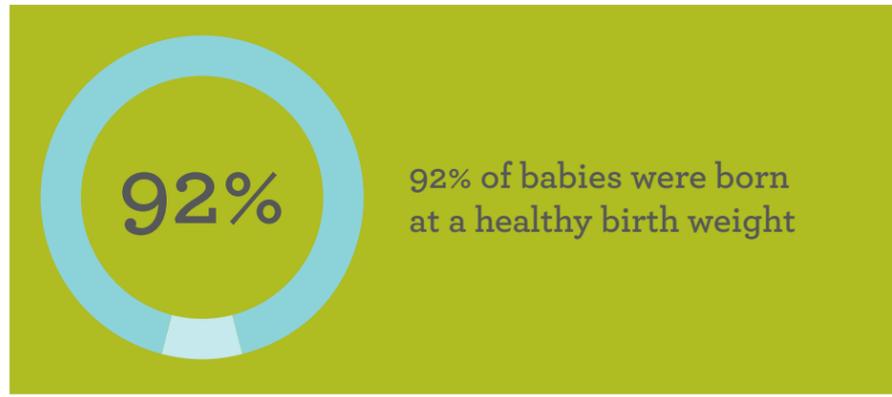
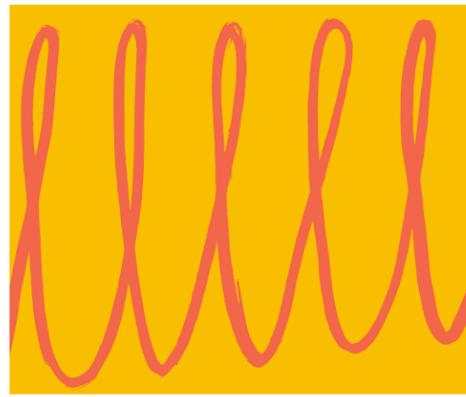
Ages 5 - 8

Increased reading and math proficiency; better health outcomes and lower costs; reduced grade retention, special education placement and absenteeism.

We believe every child deserves an equal opportunity to succeed.

Jermain, a Way to Grow dad, states, “Education, out of everything in the world, is the thing I’m most serious about. My kids know that. I’m going to do all I can to make sure they finish high school, because I didn’t.”

Jermain proudly points across the room to his 23 month old daughter, who is not far behind her preschooler siblings. “I have ‘wow’ moments every day. She knows her ABCs and she can count. Seeing how much my children have enjoyed learning is proof that all kids need the opportunity to learn. Being connected to Way to Grow and also being able to have the kids in preschool helps us [as parents] help them.”



Family Support & Stability

2014 in Review

- 1,964 family referrals were made to agencies for food, clothing, affordable housing, medical care, employment and other support services
- 2,323 parents and children received parent/child education with additional opportunities for parent engagement programs and center-based preschool experiences

Effective early learning must start in a stable home. When a family's living situation is in jeopardy, it directly affects education efforts. We collaborate with medical and dental clinics, employment agencies, housing services, food shelves, churches, schools, libraries and many local and state government programs. Through our strong relationships with community resources, we are able to give families the help they need quickly.

12,123 Home Visits

Home visits are the hallmark of our Great by Eight program. Parents play an important role in their children's early education at home and we know by empowering parents, barriers to the child's development are greatly reduced or even eliminated. In 2014, our team of Way to Grow Family Educators provided culturally-sensitive, year-round, language-to-language, evidence-based education that centered around literacy, numeracy, health and wellness, parent education, child development and school expectations.

Where We Shine

Health and Wellness Education

- 92% of babies were born at a healthy birth weight
- 92% of children entering kindergarten were up-to-date on immunizations
- 82% of elementary children (grades K - 3) were up-to-date on annual physicals

157 Pregnant Parents Served

Research proves when children are born healthy they have fewer developmental delays through their formative years. When we meet the health needs of parents and children, we increase the chances of a child's long-term health, academic, social and economic success. Way to Grow uses research-based health education for parents, expectant mothers and their families in tandem with early literacy and elementary education. Our health programming teaches parents about prenatal, infant and toddler care; physical, mental and dental health; nutrition; exercise; safety and child development. The goal is for all children to be healthy and prepared to learn while encouraging families to adopt a lifelong, health conscious lifestyle.

When necessary, our Resource Advocates refer families to our appropriate health and dental care partners. These important partnerships include the Minnesota Visiting Nurse Agency (MVNA), Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Broadway Family Medicine, NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center and Fairview Health Services & Clinics.



70% of Way to Grow K - 3rd graders read at or above grade level



66% of children ages 3-5 were enrolled in early learning programs



Early Education

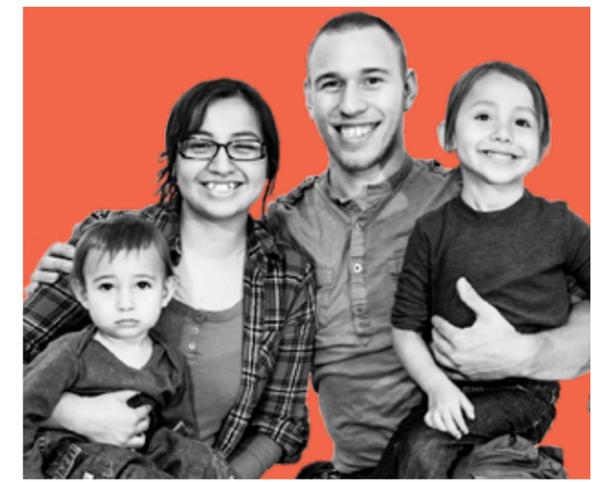
2014 in Review

- 88% of children met literacy benchmarks and were prepared for kindergarten
- 96% of four and five-year-olds were evaluated using school readiness assessments
- 66% of children ages 3-5 were enrolled in early learning programs

1,061 early learners received early childhood education

Way to Grow early childhood programming (ages 0 - 5) is offered through home visits to educate families on best practices, literacy development, math, health and nutrition, family safety, mental health and child development. The research-based SEEDS of Early Literacy and its “Big Five Essential Early Literacy Skills” (Vocabulary and Meaning; Alphabetic Knowledge; Book and Print Concepts; Phonological Memory and Awareness; and Oral Language Conversation and Comprehension) curriculum is used as a framework for Family Educators and parents for children ages birth to five. Parents read and play with their children using intentional literacy and numeracy building practices, including the use of books, toys and props to promote reading and math skills using the Read Together, Talk Together Curriculum.

Beyond the home, Way to Grow offers the option to enroll in one of two center-based preschools. Preschool Pals, a four-day-a-week program, is National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredited and has been awarded a four-star rating by Minnesota Parent Aware. The second program opened in the fall of 2014. Parent-Child Activities Lead to School Success (P.A.L.S.), is offered twice a month and invites parents into the preschool classroom for parent-child learning time.



Jeshua's Story

Wary of strangers, Jeshua was a shy and timid two-year-old when he first met his Family Educator, Tony. The first time Tony visited, Jeshua would hardly leave his mom's lap. But, before long, Jeshua was waiting by the window looking forward to visits with Mr. Tony.

With Dad working two jobs and Mom working part-time while attending the University of Minnesota, making ends meet was a big challenge. Tony helped the family find resources for basic needs like food, clothing and health care. He also helped the family apply for an early learning scholarship for Jeshua to attend a high quality preschool program. Jeshua received the scholarship and was enrolled in Way to Grow's Preschool Pals.

When Mom saw Jeshua's steady improvement and excitement for school and learning grow, she knew Way to Grow was right for her family. Having Tony around has helped to show Mom and Dad new ways to teach their boys. Mom felt that seeing Jeshua's progress over this past year was amazing. Since Jeshua enrolled in Preschool Pals his emotional, social and academic skills have taken a huge leap forward. He is now more confident, holds conversations with full sentences and is on track to be above grade level when he starts kindergarten this fall. Proud of Jeshua's accomplishments, Mom and Dad now have the same high hopes for Jeshua's two-year-old brother, Connor. Combining preschool learning with curriculum and parent involvement has set Jeshua on the path to success.



It's time to celebrate!

Jeshua and Mom are both graduating - Jeshua from Way to Grow Preschool Pals and Mom from the University of Minnesota.



Davion's Story

When Davion was just a few months old his mother suffered a debilitating stroke. As she struggled through physical therapy and faced her physical limitations, she grew concerned with Davion's development. It was then that she sought extra help and made the life-changing decision to join Way to Grow.

Knowing Davion had already missed out on formal early learning opportunities, Family Educator, Shannon jumped right in. Shannon began by introducing Davion to shapes, colors and animals on her first home visit. Davion, however, quickly grew bored and said, "I'm not learning, Ms. Shannon." Shannon, a little unsure of what Davion meant, continued with the curriculum. After a few more home visits, Davion again said, "But, I'm not learning, Ms. Shannon."

Now, knowing Davion to be an intelligent, spirited, six year old Ninja Turtles enthusiast with a world full of promise in his eyes, Ms. Shannon had an epiphany! When she returned for her next home visit, she brought additional activities above Davion's current learning level. When she introduced the more challenging activities, Davion's face lit up. Shannon knew she had sparked his interest. After a few more home visits, and lots of work in between, it clicked. Davion jumped out of his seat and shouted, "I'm learning, Ms. Shannon! I'm learning!"

Shannon has been working with Davion for two years; she has been able to support and push him along as he places his attention on school and continues his passion for learning. Instead of playing catch up when he entered school last fall, he excelled beyond many of his elementary peers, scoring 75 points above his grade level on his total literacy score! It's clear that success has just begun for Davion who will carry the lasting impact of his early learning long into the future.

"Ms. Shannon," asks Davion, "can we do another lesson? I think I need some more learning."

K - 3 Elementary Education

2013-2014 School Year in Review

- 270 children served in 35 Minneapolis Public Schools and 6 charter schools
- 90% of parents attended all parent-teacher conferences
- 78% of parents read to their children at least 3 times per week

With the support of our public and charter schools:

- 70% of elementary children read at or above grade level
- 91% of children had 90% or higher school attendance

270 children served

Family Educators continue home visits to parents and their elementary children to model and demonstrate what students are expected to learn at each grade level in literacy/reading, math, science and social studies. Families are connected to tutoring services as needed. Parents learn how to help their children with homework and foster relationships with their school and teachers through conferences, volunteer opportunities and school events. Parent involvement continues to remain high with 90% attending conferences.

The MONDO Let's Talk About It! curriculum helps families increase their vocabulary skills in both English and their home language*. In addition to curriculum, games are used to teach reading and math standards while modeling how families can use games to foster literacy, reasoning, problem-solving, and social and emotional skills. Way to Grow also hosts Family Game Nights at libraries and community locations that give families an opportunity to play and interact in a familiar context. Sessions use games to teach critical skills identified in the Minnesota state standards. Families then take the game home where they can continue to foster an environment of learning.

*Crevola, Carmel, and Mark Vineis. Lets Talk About It . New York, NY: MONDO Publishing, 2005.



of parents attended all parent-teacher conferences



Dream Tracks Teen Program

2013-2014 School Year in Review

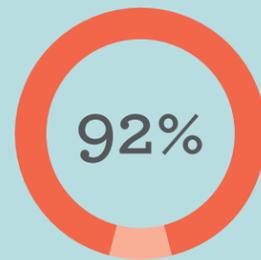
- 38 parenting teens served (ages 15 - 21)
- 100% of parenting teens did not have a repeat pregnancy
- 50% participants graduated high school on time
- 92% of participants developed an individual academic, career and life plan
- 71% of participants secured employment

Young parents face many obstacles. The Way to Grow Dream Tracks™ program helps educate and prepare parents for a successful life by addressing parenting challenges, providing emotional and motivational empowerment, maintaining a focus on academic success and career goals and providing information pertaining to sexual/reproductive health.

This program is specifically designed for parents who are attending or planning to enroll in high school or GED programs and are committed to their education and career goals. Throughout the course of the Dream Tracks™ program, participants are encouraged to consistently set, work toward, and achieve their goals for themselves and their families. This forward-looking approach helps young parents gain new skills and greater confidence as both parents and community members.



100% of parenting teens did not have a repeat pregnancy



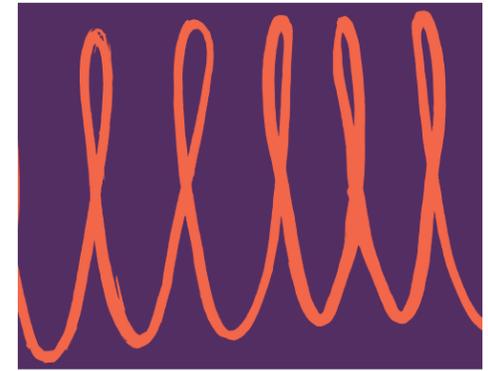
92% of participants developed an individual academic, career and life plan



71% of participants secured employment upon graduation from high school



80% of parents report integrating more healthy foods into family meals



Parent Engagement and Support

New Parent Support Group

During our monthly New Parent Support Group, expectant parents and parents with babies up to one year of age, participate in activities that support the content in our Way to Grow home visits. These sessions are designed to create an intimate, open environment where parents can share their experiences and receive relevant information on topics such as breastfeeding, sleep issues, nutrition and more while teaching their babies through play.

Financial Training

Families often face overwhelming socio-economic barriers which can adversely affect the family's overall stability and contribute to additional stress in the home. We help families gain knowledge and confidence by teaching basic financial skills during home visits and encouraging families to attend group financial sessions.

Cooking Matters

In partnership with the University of Minnesota Extension Services, Way to Grow offers Cooking Matters, a six-week cooking and nutrition course for parents and their children. Skills for healthy cooking, eating and shopping are discussed throughout the course. Families learn how to use healthy recipes and plan meals on a tight budget. A professional chef then demonstrates how to prepare healthy meals at home.

Father Project

In partnership with Goodwill/Easter Seals, this program helps fathers overcome barriers preventing them from supporting their children financially and emotionally. Our Family Educators show fathers how they can be role models for their children and positively influence learning by creating a safe and playful home environment.

Parent Leadership Council

Our newly formed Parent Leadership Council teaches parents how to advocate for their families and communities at large. Parents are equipped to build relationships with their children's teachers and school administrators and find resources for education and employment. These parents work alongside Way to Grow as they help share the success of our program with other parents and supporters.

The Sum of Hope

In 2014 we met our fundraising goals head on and were fortunate to secure a variety of funding sources for our programs, forging new friendships and partnerships to ensure critical support is given to our growing number of families and children.

Operating Revenue	2014	2013
Contributions	\$146,633	\$172,891
Government	\$904,634	\$891,402
Foundations	\$992,117	\$855,019
United Way	\$124,462	\$200,446
Program Service	\$73,692	\$31,326
Annual Celebration	\$136,826	\$91,533
Interest & Other Income	\$2,135	\$2,261
Total Operating Revenue	\$2,380,499	\$2,244,878
Operating Expenses		
Program Services	\$1,773,313	\$1,777,134
Administrative Services	\$177,668	\$202,733
Fundraising Services	\$314,524	\$298,002
Total Operating Expenses	\$2,265,505	\$2,277,869

Way to Grow Board of Directors

The Way to Grow Board of Directors is composed of proven leaders from our community. As experts in their individual fields, they share a belief that a brighter future for our economy starts at home with our children.

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Carolyn Smallwood
Executive Director, Way to Grow



Individual Donors

At Way to Grow, more funds mean more families can move off our wait list and enroll in Great by Eight. Every donation has benefits today and well into the future. Our work does not just help children and families in need; it also improves our school system, our community, our future workforce and even our economy. For this reason, our donors are the foundation of what we do. Thank you.

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American Indian Family Center	Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches	North Life Care Center
Bell Museum of Natural History	Harvest Prep/Best Academy	Northside Achievement Zone
Blaisdell YMCA	Head Start, Parents In Community Action	NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota	Hennepin County Child and Teen Check Up	PACER Center
BlueWater Associates, Inc.	Hennepin County:	Park Avenue Methodist Church
BOND (Branching Out in New Directions)	Human Services and Public Health Department	Park Nicollet Health Services
Books to Grow	Research, Planning & Development Department	People Serving People
Bridging, Inc.	Libraries	Phyllis Wheatley Community Center
Broadway Family Medicine	Medical Center & Clinics	Pillsbury United Communities
Broadway School at Longfellow	Teen Parent Connection	Portico Healthnet
Bundles of Love	Indian Health Board	Powderhorn Cultural Wellness Center
Center for Families	Jewish Family & Children's Services of Minneapolis – Parent Child Home Program	Project for Pride and Living (PPL)
Centro Cultural Chicano	Kids in Need	Sabathani Community Center
Children's Defense Fund (Bridge to Benefits)	Kente Circle, LLC	St. Stephen's Human Services
Children's Dental Services	La Crèche Early Childhood Centers	Simpson Housing Services
Children's Hospitals & Clinics	Legal Aid Society	South High School Teen Parent Services
Children's Theatre Company	The Links, Inc.	Sustainable Resource Center, Inc.
Church of St. Gerard	Lundstrum Center for the Performing Arts	Tapestry Resource Center
City of Minneapolis Department of Health & Family Support	Lutheran Social Services	Teen Wise
City of Minneapolis Office of Multicultural Services	MacPhail Center for Music	Think Small
Community Initiatives for Children	Magers & Quinn Booksellers	Twin Cities Healthy Start
Community University Health Care Center	Medica	Twin Cities Rise
Early Childhood Family Education	MinnCAN	Twirl
Early Childhood Intervention Services of Hennepin County	Minneapolis Early Childhood Screening	UCare
Early Childhood Special Education	Minneapolis Jewish Federation	United Health Group
Early Learning Labs, Inc.	Minneapolis Public Schools	University Life Care Center
East Side Neighborhood Services	Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children	University of Minnesota: Center for Early Education & Development (CEED)
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