Vision

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

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.
Hello,

2012 was an exciting year for education initiatives in our state and the momentum continues. From receiving the Race to the Top grant, to the creation of Minneminds and the development of Promise Neighborhoods in Minneapolis and St. Paul, it's clear we spent the year delivering important resources to communities with the greatest need.

Way to Grow believes that the parent is the primary educator of the child; our vision is that together, we will ensure that every child has an equal opportunity to succeed in school and life! These ambitious goals will only be attained by putting parents at the forefront of a statewide education reform movement.

Since the advent of Way to Grow’s “Great by Eight” initiative, which expands our services from birth up to third grade, we’ve witnessed promising results. In 2012, 91% of babies born to Way to Grow parents met a healthy birth weight, 80% of our pre-schoolers were deemed ready for kindergarten and, with the support of the Minneapolis Public Schools, 77% of our elementary participants were reading at or above grade level. In total, we served over 2,000 parents and children, completed 10,725 home visits, and made over 2,362 referrals to connect parents and children to other agencies for food, clothing, housing, and medical services.

Morally, socially, and economically, it is in our best interests to work toward breaking down the barriers that prevent children from being prepared for school and beyond. As an organization, we will never stop working toward the goal of achieving equal education for all children, regardless of their social or economic status. To do so, we need the diligence of parents, foundations, businesses, schools, government officials and community leaders, who, like us, believe all children should have an equal opportunity to learn and succeed.

On behalf of Way to Grow’s staff and the many children and families we serve, I thank you for your support!

Sincerely,

Carolyn Smallwood
Executive Director, Way to Grow

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”
— Nelson Mandela
Way to Grow’s Impact

91% of Way to Grow newborns were born at or above a healthy birth weight

80% of Way to Grow children were prepared for kindergarten

92% of Way to Grow K-3 elementary program parents attended all 2012 parent-teacher conferences

95% of Way to Grow teen mothers did not have a repeat pregnancy

Results of Our Health and Wellness Services

- 79% Attended at Least 80% of Prenatal Visits
- 86% Children (K-1) with Up-to-Date Physicals
- 91% Healthy Birth Outcome
- 93% Immunized 2-Year-Olds
- 90% Immunized 5-Year-Olds
- 95% Teens Without a Repeat Pregnancy
Family Support

In 2012

• 10,725 home visits were made by Way to Grow Family Educators and Resource Advocates

• 2,281 unduplicated parents and children received high quality home visits focused on early education

• 2,362 referrals were made to agencies to access food, clothing, affordable housing, and other support services

We make strong connections for better care.

Effective early learning must start in a stable home. When a family’s living situation is in jeopardy, it directly affects education efforts. And while Way to Grow parents are committed to helping their children succeed in life, overwhelming economic and social barriers often block their way. Our Resource Advocates work closely with parents to address and help overcome any challenge. Through Way to Grow, parents learn to advocate for themselves and develop the skills they need to nurture their families.

During Way to Grow home visits, our Resource Advocates and Family Educators learn about each family’s situation and any difficulties they have in accessing resources or services. When a family needs help with housing, food, clothing or employment services, Resource Advocates connect the families to one of our 50+ partners. This helps parents build a stable home—enabling children to develop the skills and knowledge they need to be ready for kindergarten.
Health & Wellness Education

In 2012

• 244 pregnant mothers received individualized prenatal home visits
• 91% of pregnant mothers served had a healthy birth outcome

Building the foundation for a healthy home.

Research proves that when children are born healthy, they have fewer developmental delays through their formative years. Our in-home health-and-wellness programming teaches parents about prenatal care, nutrition, immunizations, well-child checkups, and safety to ensure all children are healthy, strong and prepared to learn. When necessary, our Resource Advocates refer families to our appropriate health and dental care partners. Two of our most prominent partnerships are with the Minnesota Visiting Nurse Agency (MVNA) and Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

This complete health-and-wellness programming provides Way to Grow parents access to health services and the chance to develop skills to work effectively within the health care, school, and social services systems.
Great by Eight Early Learning

In 2012

- 53 children ages 3 to 5 received quality, center-based early learning programming through Preschool Pals
- 80% of Way to Grow children achieved school readiness when entering kindergarten
- 132 children graduated Way to Grow and started kindergarten better prepared to learn

For each of the past three years, Way to Grow children have met or exceeded the 80% benchmark for Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDI).
Success starts well before the first school bell.

Studies prove that if a child receives support in developing physical, cognitive, social and emotional skills before age 5, he or she is more likely to succeed later in life—reducing the chances the child will drop out of school, require welfare benefits, or commit crime.

Our Family Educators engage parents in their children’s education — showing them how to teach through everyday interaction and play. Through home visits, we unlock parents’ potential to be strong, positive role models.

During home visits, Family Educators use the Sprouts curriculum to teach parents how to develop vocabulary, conversation, sound awareness and alphabet knowledge with their infants and toddlers from birth to age 3. For children ages 3 to 5, Family Educators utilize the Read Together, Talk Together™ curriculum to begin preparing children for school and to continue teaching The Big 5 Essential Early Literacy Skills identified in the SEEDS© of Early Literacy curriculum: Vocabulary and Meaning, Alphabetic Knowledge, Book and Print Concepts, Phonological Memory and Awareness, and Oral Language, Conversation and Comprehension (Horst 2001, 2012).

Beyond the home, Way to Grow offered two center-based programs and one community-based program during the 2012-2013 school year. Preschool Pals, a four-day-a-week program, is NAEYC accredited and has been awarded a 4-star rating by MN Parent Aware. Lil’ Preschool Pals is a once-a-week class offered to children with no preschool experience, paired with accelerated home visits for parents.

Way to Grow also hosts a community-based program, Family Learning Time, to introduce quality preschool activities and give parents and their children ages 0 to 5 a chance to play, learn and grow together. Family Learning Time is an effective outreach strategy to help engage and educate new families and their children.
Ashley delivered her fifth child, Ashley Nicole, on June 18, 2012. Two weeks later, the family suffered two devastating tragedies: Ashley’s mother passed away from cancer and her husband, James, died suddenly a few days later.

In the weeks following, Way to Grow connected Ashley with both immediate and long-term resources and remained a steady presence in the family’s lives.

Today, Ashley’s children Jaylah and Maurice go to elementary school close to home. Jameie is blossoming in Lil’ Preschool Pals. Jasmine attends Preschool Pals, where she excels in rhyming and letter sounds, and has demonstrated great progress in her kindergarten readiness.

As the family continues to work toward stability, Way to Grow will continue to provide educational home visits, financial literacy classes, and other support.
Great by Eight K-3 Elementary Education

In 2012

- 124 Minneapolis kindergarteners and 1st graders participated in the Elementary Education program

With the support of Minneapolis Public Schools:

- 76% of the students met or exceeded year-end Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment preparedness goals
- 77% of kindergarteners were reading at or above grade level
- 92% of parents attended both Fall and Spring parent-teacher conferences
- 86% of students completed an annual physical

Way to Grow K-3 participants receive routine home visits designed to aid the child’s development while helping parents learn methods to support their child’s education.

Studies show a strong correlation between a child’s third grade literacy scores and the chances that he or she will succeed in graduating from high school and going on to college. Thus, the Great by Eight K-3 Elementary Education program focuses on the skills children need to develop by the time they complete third grade to lay the foundation for success in life. By working with parents and community partners, Way to Grow helps more children meet or exceed the educational goals of the state of Minnesota at the end of third grade.
Parents, teachers and Way to Grow: A team approach for a successful student.

Sometimes obstacles prevent a child from being successful in school. Way to Grow supports families during these times with Family Educators. During home visits, Family Educators help parents find the best way to support their children to succeed.

Through relationships with parents, schools and community partners, Way to Grow is eliminating the barriers that prevent children from being successful in school and life. This process reduces the education gap and builds stronger communities for all of us.
Way to Grow’s Extended Programming

Dream Tracks™ Teen Parenting Program

Teen parents face many obstacles and struggles. The Way to Grow Dream Tracks™ program helps educate and prepare parents ages 15 to 21 for a successful life by addressing parenting, motivational empowerment, academic engagement, career adaptability, and sexual health.

This program is specifically designed for parents who are attending or willing to enroll in high school / GED programs and are committed to their education and career goals. Throughout the course of the Dream Tracks™ program, participants are encouraged to constantly set, work toward, and achieve new 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.

In 2012,

- 27 parenting teens enrolled in the program; 12 received home visiting
- 95% of Way to Grow teen mothers did not have a repeat pregnancy

FATHER Project

Partnering with the Goodwill/Easter Seals program, Way to Grow helped 21 participants in the FATHER Project provide safe and stable home environments for their families. Our Family Educators teach fathers how to positively impact their child’s learning and help guide the men on how to be role models for their children.
Prenatal Workshops

In February 2012, Way to Grow began offering monthly prenatal workshops to our enrolled pregnant participants and to pregnant women interested in joining Way to Grow. The women are encouraged to bring a partner to each workshop. Workshop topics include: prenatal health, labor and delivery, postpartum care, and early parenting skills. Time is also allotted for the group to discuss other questions and concerns regarding their pregnancies and adding a child to their family.

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 enrolled parents and their children. Skills for healthy cooking, eating and shopping are discussed throughout the sessions. Three six-week classes serving 30 families took place in May, October and November 2012.

Financial Literacy Classes

This year, Way to Grow partnered with Lutheran Social Services to provide financial literacy classes for families enrolled in Way to Grow. Class topics include savings/spending plan, budgeting and building credit. In addition, participants were offered one-on-one financial tutor sessions. Way to Grow served 156 participants, with classes offered in January, February, March, May, November, and December.
Jyakima

Jyakima was referred to Way to Grow through the FATHER Project, a program designed to help fathers improve their ability to provide economic and emotional support for their children.

Jyakima is raising his 6-year-old son, Saint, on his own. With the support of Way to Grow, he has made great strides in creating a stable environment for Saint. His family educator helped him secure reliable transportation through Ways to Work and a computer through a partnership with Comcast. Jyakima graduated from the FATHER Project and is now employed with a temp agency. Saint attends Emerson Spanish Immersion School.

Jyakima believes his introduction to the FATHER Project and Way to Grow were a blessing. He gives back by volunteering as a student mentor at Little Earth Youth Development Center in Minneapolis.
2012 Revenue & Expenses

Way to Grow met the year’s pending financial challenges head on. The organization was fortunate to secure a variety of new funding sources for our programs. 2012 was a year of forging new friendships and partnerships and growing programs while ensuring that the critical support given to an increasing number of families and children remained of the highest quality.

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Our Outlook for the Future

An Update on the Great by Eight Initiative

This year marked the midway point of our 5-year pilot program, Great by Eight, an initiative which extends our home-visiting services to families with children up to grade 3, age 8.

Experts agree the early childhood development window extends beyond kindergarten to the first decade of a child’s life, as research confirms that achievement in 3rd grade is remarkably predictive of academic, social and economic success.

In 2012, Way to Grow served over 120 children in 26 Minneapolis public schools and 4 public charters. By serving children in the Minneapolis Public Schools during these critical first eight years, we hope to lay the groundwork for their success in school and life, creating a better future for our community by reducing cyclical poverty and supporting an educated workforce.

- Way to Grow families read to their children 3 or more times per week: 72%
- Kindergartners were reading at or above grade-level: 77%
- Students met or exceeded year-end MCA preparedness benchmarks: 76%
- Students with 90% attendance or better: 92%
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General Mills Foundation
Goodwill/Easter Seals
Greater Twin Cities United Way
Grotto Foundation
Hearst Foundation
Hennepin County
Hinrichs & Associates
Hunt Electric Foundation
Innovative Office Solutions
Intercen Partners, LLC
J. Murphy & Associates
James R Boyle & Associates
Jostens Foundation
LarsonAllen Financial
Learning ZoneXpress
Liberty Diversified International

Little & Company
Little-Abeln Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation
LRE Foundation
Magers & Quinn Booksellers
March Family Foundation
McKnight Foundation
Minneapolis Public Schools
Minnesota School of Science
Minnesota Vikings Children’s Fund
Mortenson Family Foundation
Nash Foundation
Northpoint Health & Wellness Center
Northwest Area Foundation
Orbit Studios
Otto Bremer Foundation
Piper Family Fund of The Minneapolis Foundation
Piper Jaffray
Pohlad Family Foundation
RJ Ahmann Company
Robins, Kaplan, Miller and Ciresi Foundation for Children of the Minneapolis Foundation
Rose Francis Foundation
Saint Paul Foundation
Saunders Family Foundation
Science Museum of Minnesota
Seigel, Brill, Greupner, Duffy & Foster, P.A.
Sheltering Arms Foundation
SPEDCO Economic Development Foundation
Studio Hive, Inc.
Target Corporation
The Links
The Minneapolis Foundation
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Tradition Capital Bank
UCare Foundation
US Bank Foundation Employee Gift Matching
Wells Fargo
Women’s Foundation of Minnesota - Ripley Memorial Foundation
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Keith Adams
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Douglas Franzwa
Donald Fraser
Gloria Freeman
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Heidi Gesell
Sharon Gibbons
E. Peter & Julia Gillette
Jessie Goff
Janet Gracia
Janice Grochel
Lawrence & Mary Haeg
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Clarice Hallberg
Greg & Sarah Hansen
Melissa Hanson
Lea Hargett
Sandy Harris
Corey & Carla Haugen
Winston Wood and Mary Haugh-Wood
Nancy Heimer
Adam Hendrickson
Kay Hendrickson
Joan Higinbotham
Tom & Cecily Hines
Anthony & Terra Hinrichs
Pat Hinz
William Hittler
Byron Hill & Twanya Hood Hill
Paul & Jennifer Hovelsrud
Karen Huey
Fred Hurst & Margo Allen Hurst
Asisa Ibrahim
Julie Ingleman
Harold Irereton
Lawrence Jacobs & Julie Schumacher
Jerry & Cynthia Jean-Baptiste
Bernadea Johnson
Jill Johnson & Andrew Sherman
Eric & Elizabeth Jolly
Robert Jones
Scott & Kimberly Jones
Shawn Judge
Cordell Jung
Donald & Phyllis Kahn
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Community Partners

Allina Hospitals & Clinics  
AchieveMpls  
African American Family Services  
American Indian Family Center  
Blaisdell YMCA  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota  
BlueWater Association, Inc.  
Bridging, Inc.  
Broadway Family Medicine  
Broadway School at Longfellow  
Bundles of Love  
Center for Families with the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches  
Centro Cultural Chicano  
Children’s Defense Fund – Bridge to Benefits  
Children’s Dental Services  
Children’s Hospitals & Clinics  
City of Minneapolis Department of Health & Family Support  
City of Minneapolis Office of Multicultural Services  
Community Initiatives for Children  
Community University Health Care Center  
Early Childhood Family Education  
Early Childhood Intervention Services of Hennepin County  
East Side Neighborhood Services  
East Side Thrift Store  
Emerge Family Supportive Housing Program  
Fairview Health Services & Clinics  
Family Partnerships  
The FATHER Project  
First Book  
Gale Woods Farm  
Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches  
Harvest Prep/Best Academy  
Head Start, Parents In Community Action  
Hennepin County Child and Teen Check Up  
Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department  
Hennepin County Libraries  
Hennepin County Medical Center & Clinics  
Hennepin County Teen Parent Connection  
Indian Health Board  
Jewish Family & Children’s Services of Minneapolis  
Kente Circle  
La Crèche Early Childhood Centers  
Legal Aid Society  
Links Women’s Organization  
Lutheran Social Services  
MacPhail Center for Music  
Magers & Quinn Booksellers  
Medica  
Minneapolis Early Childhood Screening  
Minneapolis Jewish Federation  
Minneapolis Public Schools  
Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children  
Minnesota Children’s Museum  
Minnesota School of Science  
Minnesota Visiting Nurse Agency  
Minnesota Workforce Center  
MPS Health Related Services
North Life Care Center
Northside Achievement Zone
NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center
PACER
Park Avenue Methodist Church
Park Nicollet Health Services
People Serving People
Phyllis Wheatley Community Center
Pillsbury United Communities
Portico Healthnet
Powderhorn Cultural Wellness Center
Research, Planning & Development Department–Hennepin County
Sabathani Community Center
St. Stephen’s Human Services
Simpson Housing Services
South High School TAPPP
Sustainable Resource Center
Tapestry Resource Center
Teen Wise
Think Small
Twin Cities Healthy Start
Twin Cities Rise
UCare
United Health Group
University Life Care Center
University of Minnesota Center for Early Education & Development
University of Minnesota Extension Service Cooking Matters Program
University of Minnesota Physician Clinics
University of Minnesota Technical Assistance Program
University of Minnesota Urban Research and Outreach/Engagement Center
Washburn Center for Children
Wellshare International
Women, Infants and Children
YouthLink