

2008 Annual Report



introduction

Since January 2004, Whole Child Leon has worked to bring together public, private and nonprofit partners – child advocates, business leaders, government officials, educators, parents and caregivers – in new and exciting ways, forming a solid foundation needed to create systemic change. We set out to build community commitment to children 0–5, improve access to and utilization of services, improve health of children 0–5, develop safe and nurturing environments, foster economic stability for families with small children, provide quality early education, encourage social interaction and competence, and provide spiritual foundation and strength.

Much work remains to be done.

- Our infant mortality rate remains higher than the state average.
- Too many children in Leon County are uninsured.
- Families struggle to find quality childcare that is affordable.
- All children do not have access to consistent screening and assessment.

We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge at least some of the substantial progress that has been made over the past year. In this annual report, we highlight success stories and significant steps in key areas as well as our plan for the future.

Every one of our 90-plus collaborative partners shares a vision for the day when all children in Leon County are healthy at age 1, making appropriate progress, and entering kindergarten ready to succeed. If any group of people can create that day for our community, it is the many partners of Whole Child Leon.

With this report, we issue a challenge.

Please make giving children a good start in life a priority in the decisions you make, the issues you champion and the programs you support. Join Whole Child Leon in building a community where everyone works together to make sure children thrive.

success stories

Collaborative Relationships

Individually, many agencies, organizations and programs in our community serve one dimension of a child's well-being, from immunizations and early learning programs to developmental screenings and assistance to children with special needs. The Whole Child Leon Professional Network is one way professionals from agencies and service providers are working together. Collaborative relationships, like the ones formed in the Professional Network, are at the core of the Whole Child philosophy.

“ The Whole Child Professional Network allows us the opportunity to make valuable connections with other agencies to better serve our clients as well as their clients. By networking with such a broad range of professionals, we share ideas and find new ways to work together in order to fulfill our common goals.”

- Cynthia Valencic
Director of Family Support Services,
Capital Area Community Action Agency

Taking a Whole Child Approach

The Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend (ELC), one of the nearly 500 Whole Child Leon partners, has recently incorporated the Whole Child philosophy into their business model. The ELC has made the Whole Child Connection web-based technology a part of their family intake process. The Connection helps to identify needs beyond the reach of ELC and makes it easy for ELC staff to refer families to the right agency.

Whole Child Leon is building a community where everyone works together to make sure children thrive. You can see the Whole Child philosophy being implemented throughout our community. We're reaching beyond the usual players to bring a diverse perspective to the issues and to help our community achieve a better understanding of what it means to truly be a Whole Child community.

“ I'm pleased to tell you that we are revamping our coverage areas and creating a Children's beat with TaMaryn Waters as the reporter. We have asked her to take a Whole-Child approach to coverage of children 0-18 in what is an experimental approach for us. Her beat will include some traditional education and learning coverage while also including health, learning readiness, and other aspects of the child's overall well being. ”

- Bob Gabordi
Executive Editor, Tallahassee Democrat

Health Care for All Children

Whole Child Leon made significant progress toward our goal of health care for all children in Leon County by 2010. In 2007, Whole Child Leon administered a Florida KidCare Outreach grant. Along with 13 key agencies, we were able to assist hundreds of families with acquiring much need health insurance for their children while raising awareness about Florida KidCare to countless people throughout our community and region.

The success of the Florida KidCare Outreach grant planted the seed for an innovative new partnership with Leon County Schools, made possible by Capital Health Plan. We have placed a dedicated staff person, a Whole Child Liaison, within Leon County Schools to identify families in need of healthcare and guide them through the KidCare application process.

“After being downsized from my job, I needed to apply for KidCare for my daughter. We were in between health insurance and awaiting KidCare processing when my daughter shattered her anklebone and required extensive surgery. After a good cry, I calmed down and remembered that Whole Child and KidCare were linked. My first call went through to Whole Child Leon. They quickly put me through to Courtney Atkins, Whole Child Outreach Specialist with Leon County Schools. While she made no promises, I knew she was going to do everything within her power to help my daughter. I received a call the next day that my daughter would be placed on temporary emergency Medicaid, dating back to the first of the month. When I tell people my story, we all agree this has been a miracle.”

- Sharon Daugherty
Parent

Striking the Work and Family Balance

Whole Child Leon encourages local businesses to implement family friendly policies and procedures that help their employees balance work and family life. Studies show that this mutually beneficial business strategy helps employers retain workers, increase employee loyalty and productivity and gain a more positive community image. Introduced in 2007, the Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce Family Friendly Business Award recognizes a local business for setting the example for family friendly business practices in our community. Moore Consulting Group was honored in 2008 during the Chamber's Small Business Excellence Awards.

“It's a blessing to work for a family-friendly company that has truly amazing teamwork and leadership. Moore Consulting Group received the 2008 Family Friendly Business of the Year honor from the Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce—ironically, during the same month that my husband and I welcomed our daughter into the world. Flexible schedules, great benefits and a kids' room are just some of the wonderful perks that make it a little easier to juggle our seven-month-old with my career.”

- Terri Glover Ard
New Mom and Senior Vice President, Moore Consulting Group

Improving Access to Services

One of the most pressing challenges confronting families is accessing the services they need. Whole Child Leon has championed a community-wide commitment to the "no wrong door" approach. Rather than frustrating parents with "sorry, not this office," Whole Child Leon allows families to reach out in one convenient step through the Whole Child Connection.

When parents complete the "Whole Child Profile," a simple and confidential online questionnaire, the web-based service delivery system identifies appropriate providers and allows the family to make decisions about which services best meet the needs of their family. This approach increases communication among service providers and makes it easier for families to gain access to resources. When a family begins its journey with particular service provider and additional needs are identified, that provider can use the Whole Child Connection to refer the family to additional providers.

Since January 2008, we have seen significant results through the Whole Child Connection, including:

- Access to more than 120 social service programs
- 700 family profiles referred to services of indicated need – more than all previous years combined
- Improved agency accountability for provider responsiveness

“ In my line of work, it is necessary to have information about our community’s resources at my fingertips. The Whole Child Connection has helped me connect families to critical resources that assist with housing, counseling, childcare, utility assistance, and much more. ”

- Brooke Coatney
Family Services Coordinator,
Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend

Learning through Music

Whole Child Leon presented “Catching Smiles” to the community in 2007. “Catching Smiles” features the music of talented local musicians who generously donated their songs to produce a CD filled with a beautiful collection of music that makes kids feel good about themselves and the world around them.

Music and singing help young children learn and can contribute to their progress and development in numerous ways. Many of us learned the alphabet by singing the ABCs and remember lessons connected to music from childhood. Music supports self-expression, cooperative play, creativity, emotional well-being, and the development of social, cognitive, communication, and motor skills. This year, we were able to distribute classroom copies of “Catching Smiles” to more than 200 childcare centers in Leon, Gadsden, Madison, Taylor and Wakulla counties.

“ My class loves listening to “Catching Smiles”. The songs are gentle and fun – perfect for morning playtime. ”

- Wendy Cheney
Teacher, Trinity United Methodist Preschool

Productive Partnerships

Our work is made possible by the many partnerships, grants and in-kind gifts we receive each year. The essential resources of knowledge, relationships, technology and money help us promote the Whole Child philosophy. Countless volunteers contribute their time working on action teams, offering their personal and professional expertise, and helping us forge new relationships.

In 2008, Whole Child Leon designated United Way of the Big Bend's BEST Project as our economic stability partner. The BEST Project focuses on proactive and collaborative efforts to meet the needs of working individuals and families utilizing strategies that empower them to achieve long-term financial stability. Key components of the BEST Project are VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) and Money Smart Free Financial Education classes.

“ Leon County Schools generously donates office space to Whole Child Leon at Wesson School, enabling us to keep overhead low while maintaining a professional and accessible office. The Whole Child Outreach Specialist within Leon County Schools is an example of the kind of innovative partnerships we'd like to have in organizations all over Leon County. ”

- Alan Brock
Executive Director, Whole Child Leon

Innovative Programs

Where parents of the past were challenged by a lack of reliable information, 21st century parents are faced with information overload. The GPS (Get Parenting Solutions) Project, funded through a partnership with the Florida Department of Health, was launched to determine the best way to reach new parents with information to assist them in raising healthy, happy, whole children.

The GPS will be an interactive resource, delivering periodic information and prompts to parents based on the age of their child. Parents will be able to access information and resources at any time ... exactly when they need them.

“ We are in the process of gathering the information, services, and resources available in our community through in-depth interviews with agency leaders. We are organizing these resources by aligning with the Six Dimensions of a Whole Child and researching how to best deliver this information to 21st century parents in a manner that is not only practical and timely, but is relevant, local information they can trust. ”

- Lori Danello Roberts
GPS Project Manager and Publisher, Family Forum

the future of whole child leon

We believe it is essential that we provide children with a good start in life. Aligning with that ideal, we will focus our future efforts in three key areas.

Whole Child Leon is committed to ensuring that:

1. Children Are Healthy at Age 1
2. Children Are Making Appropriate Progress
3. Children Are Entering Kindergarten Ready to Succeed

With the input of our partners, issue experts and other key stakeholders, we are confident that this focus is consistent with the most vital needs that exist in our community.

Whole Child Leon will continue to bring together the individuals, companies, government entities and nonprofit agencies necessary to address the issues that contribute to attaining these goals. Community Buy-In, Parent Education, and the Whole Child Connection remain critical components of our success. We are developing the means to measure our results and accurately report these results to the community. And we will work to direct resources toward innovative programs.

The model on the following page charts the course for the work of Whole Child Leon and our many partners, linking the activities we have planned with the changes and results we hope to achieve.

Healthy at Age 1

Priority: A multi-year commitment to a significant reduction in the Infant Mortality Rate.

Measurable Action Items:

- Increase number of home visits by the time a child reaches age 1 by ____ % of children.
- Increase the number or percentage of mothers breastfeeding.
- Establish medical benchmarks for pregnant mothers, new mothers and babies.
- Develop a coordination plan for Whole Child Leon to work with HAB and to include community experts.

Making Appropriate Progress

Priority: A multi-year commitment to the significant increase in affordable quality childcare.

Measurable Action Items:

- Increase the number of quality childcare sources.
- Implement the Quality Rating System.
- Conduct a campaign for quality childcare centers.
- Establish Pilot Project: A Business-Childcare Center Co-op.

Priority: A multi-year commitment to a uniform system of periodic screening, assessment and follow-up for all children.

Measurable Action Items:

- Create blue-ribbon committee to choose the tools our community uses for screening.
- Develop a basic self-screening tool for parents.
- Implement an educational campaign for parents on the WHY and HOW of screenings.

Entering Kindergarten Ready to Succeed

Priority: A multi-year commitment to a significant increase in children entering kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life.

Measurable Action Items:

- By _____ have experts (parents, teachers, administrators and Kindergarten teachers) define the criterion of success.
- By _____ have an early childhood to kindergarten transition plan in place.

* This model would have all three goals on a linear path, with the second and third goals being further developments of their predecessors. Whole Child Leon's goals are that children are healthy at age 1, make appropriate progress, and enter kindergarten ready to succeed. Community Education is essential, involves all aspects of the community, and is communicated through each action item.

whole child leon steering committee

Loranne Ausley

Chair, Whole Child Leon
Lawton Chiles Foundation

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United Way of the Big Bend

Nina Ashenafi

2nd Judicial Circuit

Laurie Dozier

Chair, Spiritual Foundation & Strength Action Team
Mad Dog Design & Construction

Alfredo Cruz

Chair, Quality Education Action Team
Florida House of Representatives

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Capital Area Healthy Start Coalition

Kristin Dozier

Chair, Safe & Nurturing Environments Action Team
Mad Dog Design & Construction

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Bob Gabordi

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Tallahassee Community College

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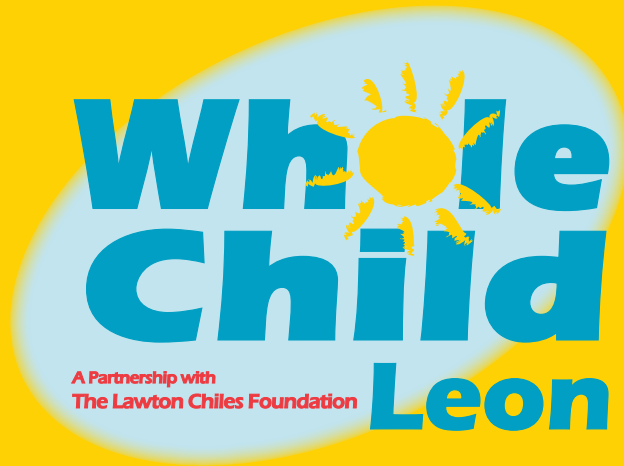
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whole child leon major benefactors





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Building a community where everyone works together to make sure children thrive