Community Partner

United Way

SOUTH HAMPTON ROADS

Thank You, Norfolk Tides!

The Up Center would like to thank the Norfolk Tides for donating tickets for Team Up mentors, mentees and their families to enjoy a fun-filled day at Harbor Park. Mentee, Aubrey (top left), impressed the crowd with a 40-mph opening pitch. We think he might have a baseball career in his future!

Camp Horizon: Where Abilities Shine

Joshua Parker has been a familiar smiling face at Camp Horizon since he was 6 years old. Now 19, his time spent at camp is still what he looks most forward to every year. "Year after year, he would come home from camp and excitedly pack his bag for the next day without me having to tell him," says Dianna Lamb, Joshua’s mom. Joshua says that Camp Horizon feels almost like a second home for him. "I feel like I can be myself at Camp Horizon because everyone just gets me."

Joshua recently graduated from high school in Virginia Beach, with honors, and works two jobs while also volunteering and doing speaking engagements in his spare time. "I’m looking forward to my time at camp even more this year because I can relax and have so much fun without having to think about school and work." He believes that he would not be as outgoing if it were not for his years spent at camp. "Camp Horizon is so special to me."

His favorite things to do at camp are sing and dance, which is how he was given the nickname Ray Charles by the staff. He also enjoys the pool and getting to go on field trips. "I just love hanging out with my friends and the staff, we have so much fun together. Oh, and you can’t forget the delicious food!"

For years, Camp Horizon, held at Virginia Wesleyan University, has helped children and youth with disabilities connect with others and feel like they are part of a community. Campers like Joshua are exposed to activities that are adapted to their individual needs while also having experiences together as a group. "The supportive staff teaches him how to interact with other kids and have pride in himself regardless of his disability," says Joshua’s mom. "They teach him how to be somebody and to not worry about what other people say." Camp Horizon is offered by The Up Center through the support of generous donors. With your support, you help to provide a safe, fun environment to let campers’ abilities shine.

Interested in supporting Camp Horizon? Visit us online at Giving.TheUpCenter.org, or call 757.965.8684.
Improving the Mental Health of Foster Youth

Johnny* was ripped away from his family and entered the foster care system at 6 years old. Unable to cope with being separated from his family and being in a new and unfamiliar place, he started misbehaving and acting out at school and at home. Without better knowledge or resources, Johnny’s foster parents took him to see a family doctor who misdiagnosed his severe trauma and anxiety as ADHD. While taking ADHD medication, he began to have trouble sleeping. After another doctor’s visit he was prescribed a sedative to help with the insomnia. The mix of uppers and downers made Johnny feel out of balance and he began showing signs of depression. An anti-depressant, another pill, was added to the daily handful of medications Johnny was prescribed to take.

This is the sad reality for hundreds of children in foster care in the Eastern Region of Virginia. Children are being prescribed stimulants, sedatives and antidepressants, rather than being treated for the anxiety, pain and trauma of being taken away from their homes and their families with alternative methods like trauma-focused therapy.

This May, in honor of Foster Care Awareness month, we convened social workers, clinicians, therapists and physicians to discuss how we can improve how we treat severely traumatized youth in foster care with alternatives to medication. Thanks to you, kids like Johnny can receive better care. They deserve it. This story highlights the impact you can make when you support an agency like ours. By working with doctors and service providers, we can ensure kids struggling with trauma get the best support that they need.

*Johnny’s name has been changed to maintain anonymity

According to the VDSS, there are currently 927 youth in foster care in the Eastern Region of Virginia.

Research shows that 80% of children in the foster care system have significant mental health issues. This means that about 742 children in care in Virginia’s Eastern Region suffer from a mental health issue.

100% of The Up Center’s foster families are trained in trauma-informed care to better support the mental health needs of children entering their care.

On December 15, 2013, Davion, DeAra and Drevion entered foster care due to abuse and neglect. They found their forever home through The Up Center’s Therapeutic Foster Care program when they were placed with Jerry and Sylvester Starks-Davis on March 24, 2016. We are proud to announce that their adoption was finalized March 1, 2017.

You’re the reason for our success!

Thanks to your ongoing support of Step Up for The Up Center, this year’s fundraising event drew over 500 climbers, volunteers and spectators.

Because of your commitment, we raised nearly $60,000 this year that will help us provide critical services to children, families and people with disabilities across Hampton Roads!

Youth of all ages from Tide Swimming blew the competition out of the water!

A big thanks to MY Ride Cycling Studio for stepping up to make our community better!

Thanks to you...

Our youth have brighter futures!
- Nearly 200 at-risk parents received home visits and parenting education.
- 139 at-risk youth were paired with caring adult mentors.

Our families are more resilient!
- 1,893 individuals, children and families received 16,000 hours of counseling, equipping them with the tools to manage and overcome life’s challenges.
- Nearly 200 families avoided eviction or foreclosure and kept their homes.

Our community is more inclusive!
- 1,186 people with disabilities maintained their homes within the community through our representative payee program.

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Congressman Scott Taylor kicked off the event with the first climb of the morning.

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Norfolk’s Sheriff’s Office stepped up in a large show of support for The Up Center’s work in our community.

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