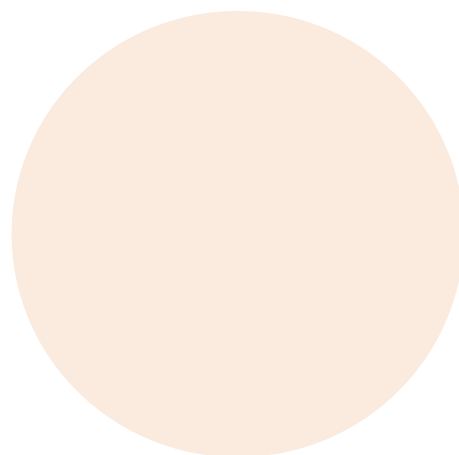
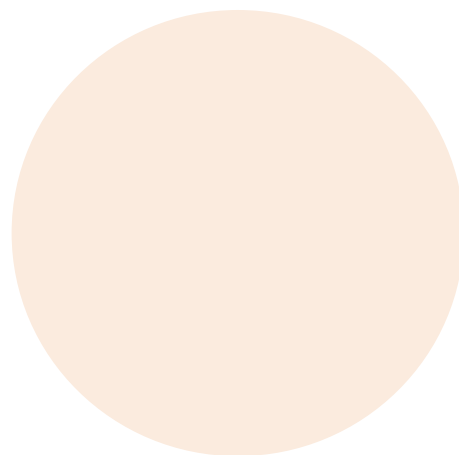


# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

**embrace early** :: Sheltering Arms  
The standard for early childhood education





# Message from the President & CEO

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Dear Friends,



Raising children is difficult. Add financial constraints, unstable housing, and food insecurity, and it's even more challenging for families experiencing hardships. For the past 135 years, Sheltering Arms has risen to the challenge of removing barriers that prevent families from living to their fullest potential. Our commitment to uplifting families has never been more critical. That's why we chose "removing barriers" as the theme for the 2022 Annual Report, and this is just the beginning of us working across communities to create opportunities for all families to succeed at school, at work, and home.

Thanks to your generosity and commitment, we served 1,436 children in 2022, providing them with high-quality early learning education at 13 centers across metro Atlanta. At the end of the 2022-23 school year, 91 percent of young children were at or above expectations and prepared to start school.

Our program is much more than preparing young children for Kindergarten. It's equally important to partner with our families, ensuring they, too, have the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to support their children.

We offered financial literacy, workforce development, and co-parenting programs for families. These programs demonstrate our commitment to breaking down barriers and supporting families toward self-sufficiency.

We recognize that, ultimately, removing all barriers is a long-term and constantly evolving process. To succeed, we must continue collaborating with individuals, communities, and policymakers. It involves identifying and challenging the societal structures perpetuating inequality and striving toward a future where all families can thrive.

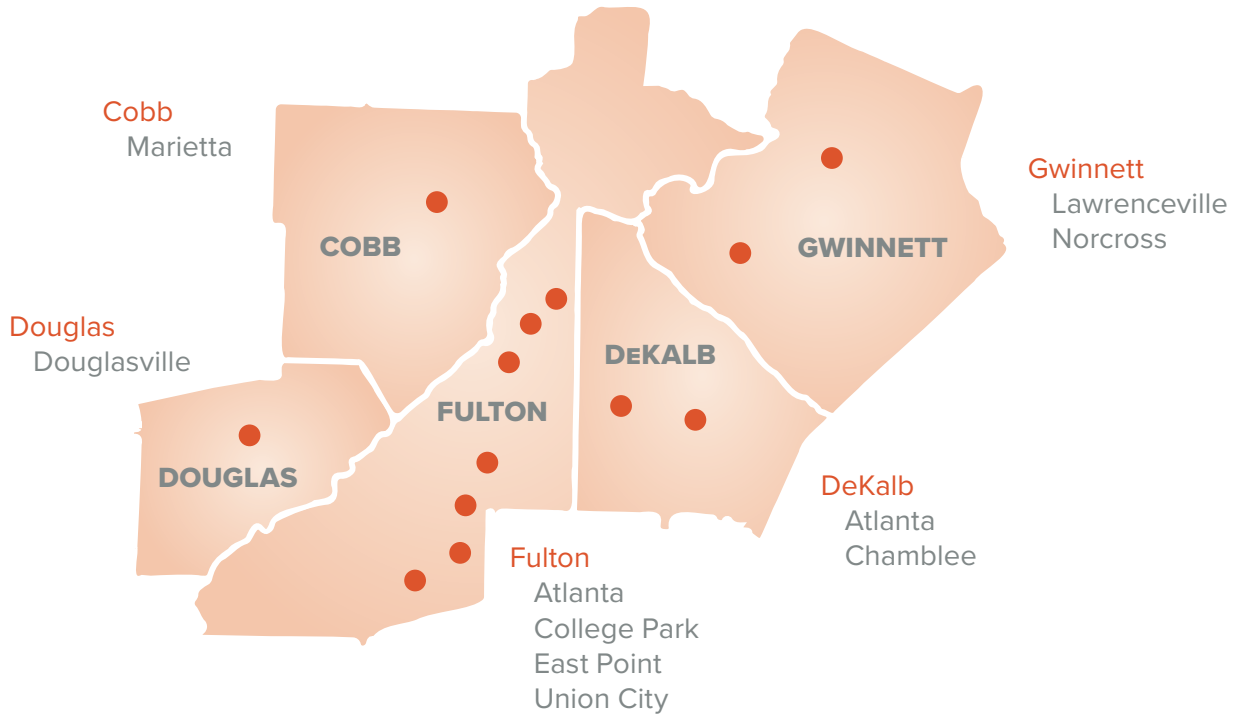
I am proud to share the following Annual Report with you. These accomplishments wouldn't have been possible without your support. As a part of the Sheltering Arms community, you have impacted the children and families we serve and our communities.

Thank you.

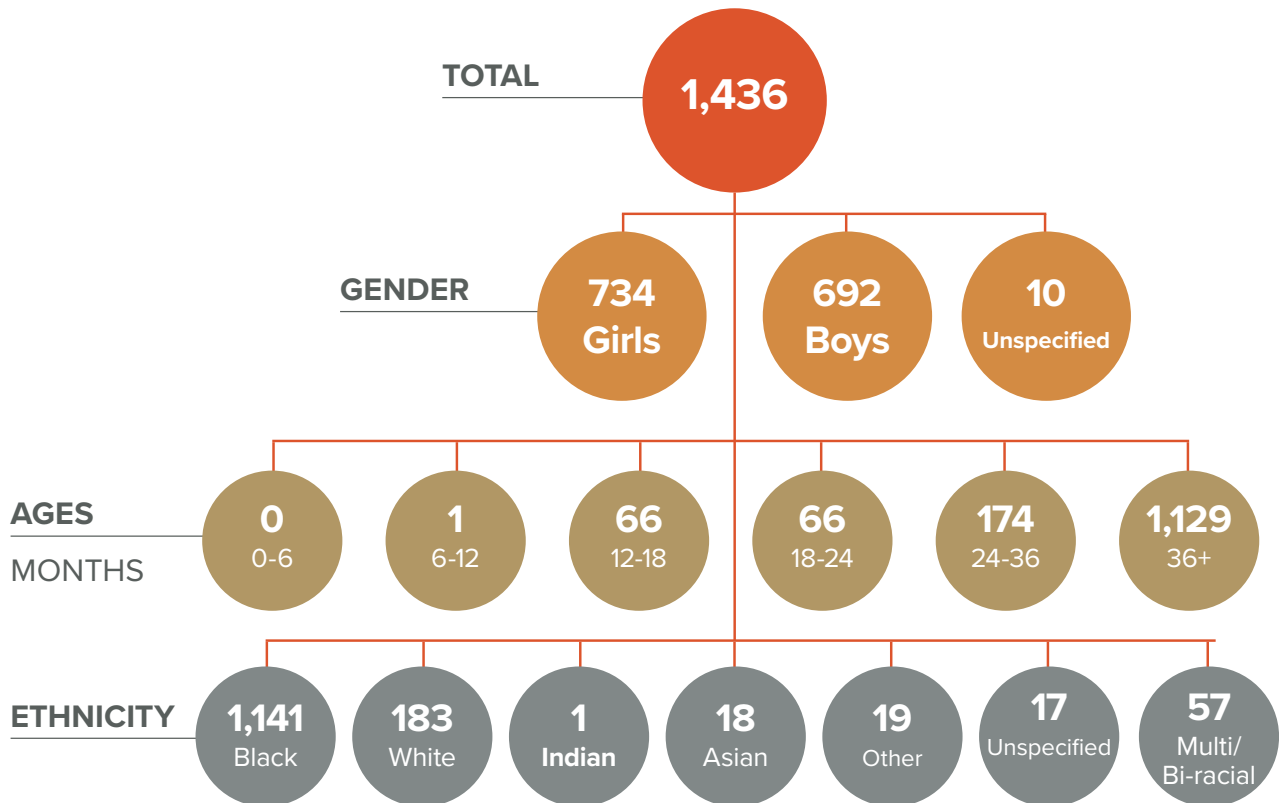
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Blythe Keeler Robinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Blythe Keeler Robinson  
*President and CEO*

# Sheltering Arms Locations



## Overall Enrollment:



*\*Sheltering Arms continued to experience lower enrollment in 2022, partly due to issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, such as staffing shortages and reduced hours of operation.*

# Head Start

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Sheltering Arms has offered the Head Start program for 22 years. Each center provides a full-day schedule to accommodate working parents and blended classroom structures integrating children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Sheltering Arms also offers Early Head Start to infants and toddlers.

All centers followed the Georgia Department of Early Care & Learning and CDC guidelines regarding COVID-19 safety and stay current with published guidelines.

## HEAD START ELIGIBILITY:

**TOTAL IN HEAD START:**

747

*\*Sheltering Arms continued to experience lower enrollment in 2022, partly due to issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, such as staffing shortages and reduced hours of operation.*

**HEAD START**

452

233  
Girls

219  
Boys

**EARLY  
HEAD START**

295

152  
Girls

143  
Boys



# Early Education Outcomes:

Sheltering Arms engages children in excellent early learning experiences. Children learn by observing, listening, exploring, experimenting, and asking questions. Learning occurs in the classroom, on the playground, and everywhere in between. It's when children explore the environment by touching, moving, and doing. It's when children interact with their peers and teachers, try new activities, and experiment without fearing failure.

Sheltering Arms conducts developmental assessments for every child in our centers three times a year. We track children's milestones across five domains: social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, and mathematics. Staff uses data to create curriculum and as benchmarks for future assessments.

Our students demonstrated remarkable proficiency across assessments. During the 2021-2022 school year, 93 percent of our early learners met or exceeded expectations in literacy, and 90 percent of children met or exceeded expectations in math and critical developmental domains. These are essential indicators for future readiness and achievement in core academic subjects.

Sheltering Arms – Spring 2021/2022	
	Meets/Exceeds Development Expectations
Social-Emotional	93%
Physical	92%
Language	86%
Cognitive	92%
Literacy	93%
Math/Science	90%
<b>Average</b>	<b>91%</b>



In 2021, Sheltering Arms committed to the following strategic Initiatives to guide our work for the next five years. We are excited to share updates in the strategic plan outlined in the following areas: Accelerating Family Impact, Our Role in the Field, Financial Resiliency and Employee Well-Being, and Engagement.

## Accelerating Family Impact

### Enhance the 2 Generation (2-Gen) Model of Comprehensive Family Support

As part of Sheltering Arms' 2-generation approach, we provide children with excellent early learning experiences and work with their caregivers to identify goals and opportunities. At the beginning of the school year, we work with families to identify strengths and opportunities. We then use this information to connect families to services and resources through extensive partnerships with community organizations.

**Kimberly Brown:** Kim and her eldest child came to Sheltering Arms while experiencing homelessness fifteen years ago. Still in high school, when she had her first child, Edward, Kim received a scholarship so that Edward could attend Sheltering Arms while she took classes at Georgia State.



“I was still a teenager when I found Sheltering Arms. They helped me create a foundation. It takes

a village to raise a child, and I found my village at Sheltering Arms! They also allowed me to grow. I joined the Parent Leadership Organization. They never gave up on me,” said Kim.

Over the past 15 years, Kim has enrolled all four children at our Model Center. Her youngest, twins Khloe and Kori, are currently in Pre-K. During this time, her father and grandfather were her only support system, so when her father recently passed away, she was devastated. Our Family Support

Coaches worked with Kim to ensure she and her family had a stable living environment and that her children could continue attending Sheltering Arms. Our Center Director was also able to help her sign Edward up for grief counseling, allowing him to understand, express, and manage his emotions.

“I’ve been with Sheltering Arms for 15 years. They’re my family. If it weren’t for the support system I created at Sheltering Arms, I wouldn’t have gotten through it,” said Kim.

### Level Up Program

In fall 2022, we launched **Level Up**, a 12-week career-readiness pilot program in collaboration with Morehouse College and Boss Consulting. This program prepares families for workforce development programs, encompassing valuable components to empower participants. After participants completed a self-assessment to gain insights into their interests and strengths, they gained soft and technical skills that are—critical for success in the workforce. We also worked with participants to write resumes, provided professional headshots, and offered tips to optimize their LinkedIn profiles.



*Sheltering Arms team members and program participants.*

We provided childcare services and a meal for all in-person sessions to encourage family participation and remove potential barriers.

We developed an extensive content library from the Level Up program, which will be a valuable on-demand resource. As a result, more people will have access to this life-enhancing program.

“Shamille Wright completed the Level Up program and was an awesome participant. She came to every session with a smile and actively participated. Her online profile project demonstrated she invested in herself to be the best. She was also a great support for the other participants. Ms. Wright gained knowledge and put that knowledge to good use for her future. She made great strides and secured a position with Teach for America,” says Ms. Keon Buchanan, Family Support Coach at our Educare Center.

### Increase Support for Child Social-Emotional and Mental Health

Sheltering Arms focuses on the social-emotional and mental health of all children. We identified community partners who worked directly with staff and families to support children’s social-emotional and cognitive needs. Essential aspects of early childhood development are learning to express emotions appropriately, handling multiple tasks, and maintaining focus and attention. Our staff helped early learners build executive function,

resilience, and healthy brain development. We focus on mindfulness to help children develop confidence and help in decision-making, emotional regulation, and impulse control.



In 2022, Sheltering Arms introduced Inner Explorer, an evidence-based mindfulness platform designed to support mental health and well-being in schools and centers. Inner Explorer offered age-appropriate

mindfulness practice daily for our children. The practice helped cultivate critical life skills, such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and resilience. “When our little people are overwhelmed by big emotions, it’s our job to provide calming experiences. Inner Explorer is a wonderful tool we use to do just that,” says Center Director at Sheltering Arms.

“A child’s mental health is as important as their physical health. Using Inner Explorer is an integral part of the daily routine in our classrooms and helps our children feel calm, centered, and ready to take on the day,” says Amy Hobart, Director of Education at Sheltering Arms.





# Our Role in the Field

**The Diversity, Equity, Belonging & Inclusion (DEBI) Task Force** spearheaded monthly sessions facilitated by iChange, which proved instrumental in shaping our DEBI initiatives. Together, the task force crafted a powerful vision statement that encapsulates our commitment to recognizing and embracing the unique experiences, attributes, talents, and challenges of others. Sheltering Arms DEBI's vision aims to foster a brave and inclusive community where everyone finds a safe space to belong and feels genuinely valued.

Regarding professional development, Sheltering Arms staff at the Obama and Educare Centers participated in a transformative six-week DEBI program facilitated by Both And Partners. Additionally, our Curriculum Team engaged in culturally relevant training facilitated by iChange, enabling us to deliver an education that resonates with our children's diverse backgrounds and experiences. Moreover, the Executive Leadership Team received monthly coaching sessions, strengthening their capacity to lead and champion DEBI principles.

DEBI is embedded in everything we do. Our team members visited the National Center for Civil and Human Rights for a DEI workshop and toured the facility. The National Center for Civil and Human Rights is a museum and cultural institution that connects the U.S. Civil Rights Movement to human rights challenges today.

Recognizing the significance of open dialogue and constructive engagement, Sheltering Arms hosted two Virtual Equity Dinner Conversations. Sheltering Arms' staff, board members, and community leadership attended the conversations, providing a platform to address pressing issues

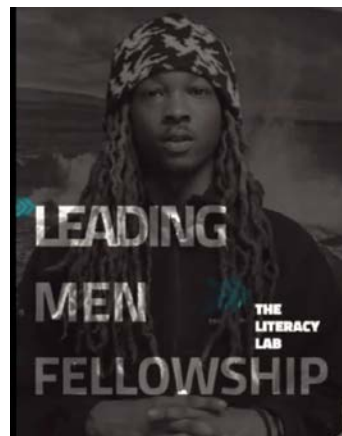


such as discrimination, poverty, gentrification, racial disparities, and religious and political divisions prevalent in metro Atlanta. These conversations laid the groundwork for honest and open dialogue, establishing safe spaces where participants could share their perspectives and experiences.



**Blythe Keeler Robinson, our President & CEO, emphasizes the importance of these discussions, stating, “Having honest, open discussions are crucial to improving our understanding of each other and our diverse backgrounds and will ultimately lead to greater equity in our community.”**

**In 2022, Sheltering Arms was an inaugural partner for the Literacy Lab and its Leading Men Fellowship.** Leading Men Fellows are young men of color between 18 to 24 years of age who have recently graduated from high school. They participated in a year-long, residency-style experience providing evidence-based literacy support to pre-kindergarten students while receiving robust coaching and professional



development and gaining valuable experience. This fellowship created opportunities for young men of color and their increased representation in education.

Sheltering Arms hosted five Leading Men Fellows at our East Lake, Educare, and Obama Centers in 2022. These Fellows taught in the classrooms daily, enhancing children's early learning experience and expanding the Fellows' understanding of early learning.

### Alumni Story: Marcus Adams

“I am a former student at Sheltering Arms and a Leading Men Fellow. They [Leading Men Fellow] created opportunities for young men of color and increased representation in education. I am a proud Leading Men Fellow and proud to have been with Sheltering Arms.”

### Parent Highlight

Ms. Kasandra Brisco has two children enrolled at the Educare Center. Roderick McWhorther, now in Pre-K, and Kaydon McWhorther, enrolled in our Toddler 2 Classroom, have been at Sheltering Arms since they were infants. We helped Kasandra understand the milestones for every age level with her children. When parents and teachers share an understanding and language to talk about a child’s development, the child receives a more robust early learning experience. Kasandra embraced learning about the milestones and communicated regularly with the teachers about her children’s milestones. Kasandra was a parent classroom and leader in the support group I mom/Boss Mom. She was the president of the Parent Leader Organization and a Level Up graduate. She participated in the majority of events in and outside of the center. Kasandra’s participation enhanced her children’s experiences and supported the teachers and the center.

Unfortunately, Kyden was injured one day, and Sheltering Arms connected Kasandra with Nurse Johnnie, a nurse health navigator from Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta. Nurse Johnnie helps parents get better access to the appropriate healthcare. In addition, Sheltering Arms shared resources through the Healthy Beginnings System of Care. Once he was released from the hospital, Sheltering Arms support staff helped Kasandra with Kayden’s proper follow-up care.

“Sheltering Arms is a one-stop shop for my family’s needs, and I love them and appreciate the support they offered my family,” said Kasandra.



*Kasandra Brisco is pictured in the middle.*

## Financial Resiliency



Sheltering Arms strengthened the organization’s ability to weather financial challenges by focusing on strategies such as continued diversification of our funding sources, building our emergency reserves, extending our partnerships with corporations, foundations, and individuals, and investigating other revenue streams. One example of the strategy is the deepening partnership with The Royster Group.

“The Royster Group is proud to partner strategically with Sheltering Arms in their mission. Education is the foundation upon which dreams are built, and literacy is the foundation’s cornerstone. By partnering with Sheltering Arms, The Royster Group wants to ensure that every child, regardless of their background or circumstances, has the opportunity

to unlock their full potential. As a member of the community and a believer in the power of education, I’ve witnessed firsthand the incredible impact that Sheltering Arms has had on the lives of young children,” Ken Taunton, President & CEO, The Royster Group.

# Employee Well-Being and Engagement

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## Enhanced Employee Support and Development

“Workplace Wellness is not the latest organizational buzzword for us. It is an organizational imperative grounded in our concern for the well-being of our staff,” said Chief People Officer Norman Hill. To illustrate this commitment to our staff, Sheltering Arms offered a mental health stipend to every employee.



*Elvia Munoz, Human Resources Manager, and Ana Alvarez, Infant Lead Teacher, Norcross Center*

Employees used their stipends for mental health care, which included health and wellness memberships, yoga, time away from work, and other activities that contribute to health and wellness. We aim for all staff members to embody the sentiments of newly hired Sheltering Arms teacher Theresa Roberts, who said, “I love Sheltering Arms. It’s my new home away from home. It has been the greatest workplace, and I’m excited to come to work every day.”

Sheltering Arms considers our employees our greatest asset. We created several new initiatives to ensure they feel supported and appreciated, including employee well-being and engagement, health and wellness, staff recognition and rewards, and talent development.

Sheltering Arms prioritizes a caring and supportive culture for our staff members. In 2022, we implemented several strategies that promote staff wellness, including occupational, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, physical, environmental, financial, and social health.

Sheltering Arms focused on increasing the diversity of our staff in 2022 by launching BEEP (Bilingual Embrace Early Program). BEEP used financial incentives to recruit and retain bilingual team members.

As a result of the focus, Sheltering Arms accomplished the following:

- Center-based bilingual Spanish-speaking staff grew from 6.5% to 11%.
- Overall bilingual staff grew by 33% over the previous year

“The BEEP retention stipends made me feel recognized for my skills and talents,” said Alejandra Martinez, Family Support Director for Sheltering Arms. “It says, ‘We see the work that you’re doing and the benefit to families and staff that your skills provide,’” Martinez added.

The Sheltering Arms’ recruitment efforts resulted in a surge in hiring thanks to signing incentives, educational partnership stipends, and staff compensation increases. While hiring remains a challenge, talent acquisition and retention strategies, an innovative Human Resources team, and committed leaders and staff are helping to address this issue.

We recognized Juneteenth—also called Freedom Day or Emancipation Day—as a new paid holiday for staff, commemorating the end of slavery in the United States.

# Financial Summary

## CURRENT YTD ACTUAL

### PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE 12/31/22

Head Start/Early Head Start	\$	11,775,657
Other Government Grants	\$	6,638,638
Development Funds	\$	2,659,565
Parent Tuition	\$	2,981,855
Other Income	\$	6,057,753
<b>TOTAL PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>30,113,468</b>

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION-UNAUDITED

As of December 31, 2022

### ASSETS 12/31/2022

Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$	4,127,813
Investments	\$	6,391,394
Investments in a non-qualified plan	\$	–
Receivables	\$	2,182,224
Land, Property, Plant & Equip, CIP (net)	\$	24,072,317
The Sheltering Arms, NMTC	\$	7,656,087
Prepaid Expenses	\$	28,757
	<b>\$</b>	<b>44,458,592</b>

### LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable	\$	(12,136)
Deferred Revenue	\$	482,495
Accrued non-qualified plan	\$	–
Tax Deferred Savings	\$	380,003
Loan Withholding	\$	13,668
Other	\$	(258,421)
ACB Line of credit	\$	898,778
ACB Note	\$	3,730,000
NMTC Payable	\$	9,300,000
	<b>\$</b>	<b>14,534,386</b>

### NET ASSETS

Total Net Assets	\$	27,738,541
Current year surplus/(deficit)	\$	138,447
	<b>\$</b>	<b>27,876,988</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>42,411,374</b>

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---

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