



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

2025 StepUp
Ambassadors
Sianna L. and
Timothy J.

2025

BY THE NUMBERS

Participants Served

746

496 adults

131 teens

119 children

Funding Sources

INDIVIDUALS

\$792,272

OTHER REVENUE

\$28,629

GOVERNMENT

AGENCIES

\$156,735

CONGREGATIONS

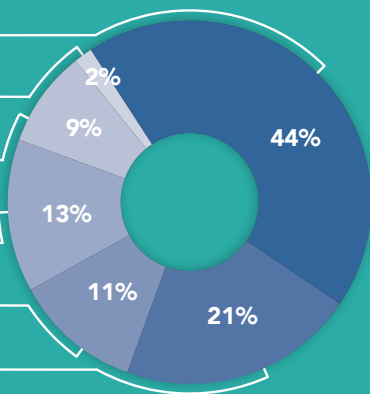
\$243,968

CORPORATIONS

\$206,250

FOUNDATIONS

\$385,880



TOTAL REVENUE

\$1,813,743

Expenditures

YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT ACADEMY

\$516,614

DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING

\$369,395

LIFE SKILLS ACADEMY

(EMPOWER 48)

\$352,247

EMPLOYMENT ACADEMY

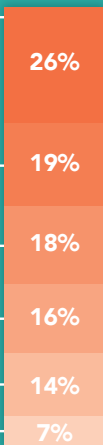
\$305,965

ADMINISTRATION

\$284,355

NEXT STEPS ACADEMY

\$132,701



TOTAL EXPENSES

\$1,961,277

Job Placements

70

58 active employers

\$16⁷⁹ average starting wage

30% included benefits

Donors

860

Volunteers

409

9,372 total hours

Total Number of Participants Served to Date

***10,040**

Cumulative Total of Participants Placed in Jobs

***4,635**

A Year of Impact, Growth, and Transformation

Dear Friends of StepUp Ministry,

This year showed the true power of collective action, bold vision, and the belief that change is possible.



At StepUp, we didn't just continue our work – we deepened it. We listened more closely to the families we serve, our volunteers, partners, and staff. Guided by our Board of Directors, we expanded our reach, strengthened our networks, and stayed focused on our mission. And thanks to you, we saw incredible results.

This year, we served 746 adults and children through our Employment Academy, Life Skills Academy, Youth and Young Adult Academy, and Next Steps Alumni programs. During our fall We StepUp campaign, we welcomed a record number of new donors. We launched our new StepUp

Ambassadors program, empowering participants to share their transformational journeys in their own words. StepUp formed and expanded partnerships with Wake Tech Community College, the City of Raleigh, and others, allowing StepUp to offer free Skills Lab classes open to the broader community. Furthermore, we deepened our advocacy work and invested in data evaluation to better understand our impact.

As we look ahead, we're preparing a bold new strategic plan to continue growing, deepening our impact, and strengthening our roots in Wake County.

Our power is in our people – and that means you. Whether you gave time, ideas, resources, or support, you made this year possible. Together, we are shaping the future.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Colisha C. Stanford".

Colisha C. Stanford,
Chief Executive Officer

Building a Culture of Partnership


At StepUp Ministry, collaboration is more than a value, it's a way of life.

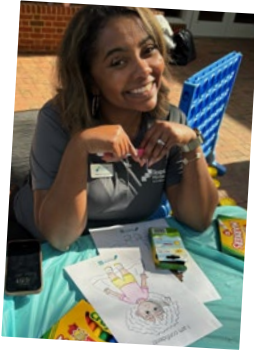
Together with community partners, we create a wider safety net for families – opening doors to opportunities they couldn't access alone. We are often reminded of the vital importance of partnership. Shared resources and outreach can make life-changing support visible right when it's needed most.

That spirit of collaboration came to life at our second annual Pocket Pop Up, hosted with longtime partner and supporter **White Memorial Presbyterian Church**. StepUp's Youth & Young Adult and Outreach teams worked with beloved partners like **Note in the Pocket** to transform the space into a pop-up clothing store. Other local partners

“I learned about you all through a flyer at my son's school, at a time when I needed support. Until I came to the event, I didn't know all the other things you had to offer.” – **Empower 48 Program Graduate**

like **Read and Feed**, **Marbles Kids Museum**, and **No Woman, No Girl** provided books, museum passes, activities, and hygiene essentials. In addition, **Wake County Smart Start**, **Positive Childhood Alliance**, and **Raleigh Police Department Youth Services** joined us to promote safety and growth for children and families. Dedicated community volunteers offered smiles, popsicles, and the kind of hospitality that turns strangers into neighbors.

In one afternoon, **282 families** received resources, and something even greater – *a sense of belonging*. At StepUp, we know real change happens in community. We built trust, shared information, and helped families take the next step toward stability and hope. Events like this are a powerful reminder that when we collaborate with compassion, we don't just serve – we lift each other up. 

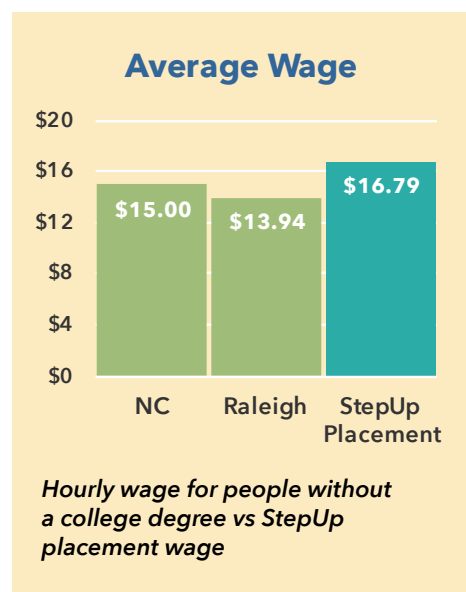


Opening Doors Through Employment Support

StepUp Ministry understands that past justice involvement can present real challenges when seeking employment.

Collateral consequences such as limited housing options and wage disparities can follow individuals for years. Our Employment Academy meets people where they are, providing practical tools, supportive relationships, and a pathway to sustainable employment.

Approximately 40% of StepUp participants have been involved in the justice system. Our team actively reaches justice-involved individuals through partnerships with the North Carolina Correctional Institution for Women (NCCIW) and the Federal Correctional Institution at Butner. Inside these facilities, StepUp staff deliver employment readiness workshops, focusing on resumes, interviews, and how to talk about justice involvement in a way that empowers, not limits.



In 2024-2025, participants in our employment programs earned an average of \$16.79 per hour, well above the Raleigh average of \$13.94 per hour for individuals with a compromised background.

Beyond just the wages, our participants gained something even more meaningful: confidence, community, and hope for the future.

StepUp believes everyone deserves the chance to work, grow, and be valued for who they are today. 🧩

EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

\$16.79

Average hourly wage for StepUp employment participants

121

Participants trained through Second Chance Hiring Initiative

SaQuon's Second Chance

When SaQuon B. came to StepUp, he was looking for more than a job – he was looking for a community that believed in second chances. Through the Employment Academy, he found consistent support, accountability, and encouragement. StepUp helped him build not only a strong résumé, but a renewed sense of confidence.



Today, SaQuon is a manager at a major parts distributor in the Southeast. He'll tell anyone who asks that the resilience and preparation he gained at StepUp made all the difference.

“StepUp helped me land this job. I'd recommend the Employment Academy to anyone serious about starting over.”

– SaQuon B., Employment Academy Graduate
and StepUp Volunteer

Shining Through Adversity

When Arius B. and his mother arrived in North Carolina, they were experiencing homelessness and looking for more than just a roof over their heads.

They were searching for stability, hope, and a new beginning. They found all three at StepUp.

Arius entered the Real World Program quietly, unsure of himself and his surroundings. He soon found renewed confidence during a StepUp field trip to North Carolina Central University, where he saw all the possibilities available to him if he was willing to take them. With the help of our Real World Program, he secured a job, learned the importance of saving money, and got involved in his classroom and community. The young man who once held himself back now leads discussions, uplifts his peers, and radiates confidence. As a result, Arius will soon be honored for his resilience and leadership in the face of adversity at the Shine Bright, Dream Big gala hosted by Connecting Villages Worldwide.

The Real World Program is more than workshops and field trips – it's a launchpad. It empowers teens to rise above their circumstances and discover their potential. For participants like Arius, it's where transformation begins and where their future starts shining bright and full of promise. ■■

“Real World helps me get out of my comfort zone and to explore new and different things. I developed connections and met people I wouldn't usually meet. Real World challenges me to be better for myself and the people around me.”

– Arius B., Age 17, Real World Participant

*Amaya Jarmon, Real World Program Manager, ►
with Arius B., getting fitted at StepUp's GG's
Closet for a bright and professional future.*



Introducing our 2025 StepUp Ambassadors



Journey to Wholeness: Sianna L.

"I found StepUp – not because I was desperate, but because I wanted more."

Sianna L. graduated from our Empower 48 Life Skills Program in 2022. When she began her journey, she was like an unpolished stone – full of potential, waiting to be refined. What she discovered went far beyond financial classes: she found a community where her voice mattered and her story was

honored. Surrounded by mentors who believed in her, embraced by a team who invested in her, and equipped with resources to strengthen her family, Sianna gained the tools she needed to thrive. With this foundation, her life began to sparkle with possibility.

This summer, Sianna proudly earned her bachelor's degree in anthropology. Her jewelry business, www.gemthropology.org, continues to thrive, and her family is enjoying a new season of peace and stability.

Sianna's journey is a reminder that when you invest in a diamond, the brilliance reaches beyond one life – illuminating a family and casting light for generations to come. 🌟



WATCH
Sianna tell her story

Sianna and Timothy are living proof of what is possible when people are seen, supported, and empowered.

Today, they serve as StepUp Ambassadors, sharing their stories of transformation and inspiring others to join them.



From Running to Redemption: Timothy J.

"StepUp didn't just teach me skills – it gave me the vision and courage to build a completely new life."

Timothy J. graduated from our Empower 48 Life Skills Program in 2019. When he first joined, he was encouraged to dream beyond the immediate and imagine what was truly possible for his future. With the support of his mentors, Timothy created a vision board filled with bold goals: launching

his own business, traveling with his wife, and building a strong foundation for his family.

Six years later, those dreams are no longer just pictures on a board. Timothy is the proud owner of Puppy Love Pet Grooming in Durham (puppylove-rdu.com), a thriving business that reflects his dedication and creativity. Every day, he draws on the tools he gained at StepUp – casting vision, setting goals, and living with purpose.

Timothy's story is proof that when hope is nurtured and dreams are given room to grow, lives can be transformed, not only for individuals, but for families and communities as well. 🧱



WATCH

Timothy tell his story

A Family Transformed


Before StepUp Ministry, Kenny and Letitia were just surviving.

They were recovering from a devastating business fallout, juggling unstable jobs, and trying to provide stability for their four children. Everything changed the day Letitia attended a session at StepUp's Employment Academy. Curious, Kenny joined her, and together, they found more than job training. They found hope.

With the newfound confidence and community found at StepUp, Kenny secured a stable job and quickly earned a promotion. After Letitia created her first resume, she began to rediscover her voice and worth. Life sure did test them. They lost their van and faced homelessness, but – bolstered by the support of the StepUp Community – they pressed on. Step by step, with guidance from mentors, they rebuilt. They bought two reliable cars, moved into a safe home, and finally had the chance to exhale. Through community partners, they furnished their house, received technology to perform job searches, and regained dignity.

Enrolled in our Youth and Young Adults Program, their children also blossomed. Ilicia, once struggling in school, rose to a 3.0 GPA with the help of StepUp tutoring. Five-year-old Kyree mastered second-grade level reading and math. Shy little Kobe began speaking and engaging confidently. Even the baby, Iman, beamed with joy when he arrived for class.

Today, Letitia credits StepUp with helping her find her footing as a mother and leader. She uplifts other StepUp parents who are walking a similar path, showing them that transformation isn't just personal, it's generational. Once skeptical, Kenny is now a mentor to others and a voice of inspiration. He spoke at his StepUp graduation, where he shared his testimony of perseverance and faith.

In a world that often tears families apart, StepUp helped bring this one back together stronger than ever. **StepUp didn't just support them, it united them.** 



“This became something we could all do together. It brought us closer.”

– Letitia L., Empower 48 Graduate

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