

Annual Impact 2024 - 2025

Celebrating 30 Years



THIRTY YEARS, ONE MISSION

Things around us may change. The crisis we face in any given year might be different and new. Yet our mission remains the same.

It was a simple idea. A mom and dad saw their child growing, learning, and making friends with other children. Their young 3-year-old blossomed in a program designed to meet the unique needs of his curious and expanding mind. They knew they were fortunate. They could afford preschool tuition for their son, while other families who lived right around the corner could not. They believed that every child deserves the chance to begin Kindergarten with the skills needed to learn and thrive and so, they chose to act on that belief by **opening the doors of preschool, one child at a time**.

Jill Lasser and Stuart Lasser founded Preschool Advantage (then, Project Acorn) 30 years ago. Jill and a small committee of volunteers created an application for families. The founding Board refined the mission to focus on funding preschool, not daycare. They agreed PA would fund tuition for the students who came from households who earned too much income to qualify for Headstart but not enough to make ends meet. Six high quality preschools partnered with Jill and Stuart in this mission. Stuart and Jill reached out to neighbors, friends and business colleagues who understood the value of investing in their neighbors and in their children. The first students PA funded were from hard-working families, struggling to meet the educational needs of their children.

These parents worked:

- in repair shops
- as housekeepers
- as truck drivers

They were:

- married couples
- single parents
- a young widow

In 1995, the high cost of tuition was \$2,500, expensive for the time. In that first year PA funded tuition for 23 children at six local schools.

Many things have changed in our world in the last 30 years. The last five years alone have felt like a long series of crises. Since 1995 we have experienced 9/11, multiple wars, a global pandemic, major natural disasters, a fluctuating and ever-changing economy and the arrival of Artificial Intelligence. Yet the struggles of the families we meet at PA are the same. Hard working parents who cannot meet the needs of their families. They earn too much to qualify for State or Federal assistance. They want their children to have the great start they deserve, but they can't afford the high cost of tuition— on average \$9,000. Some work multiple jobs and still find it challenging to get by.

Just as in that first year, this year we funded tuition for students whose parents are:

- teachers
- mechanics
- restaurant workers
- housekeepers
- first responders

They have faced sudden loss and struggled to make ends meet.

In an ever-changing world that sometimes feels chaotic, our mission remains simple. We open the doors of preschool and unlock the possibilities beyond. We know the power of one person who reaches out to help another; that one simple choice can transform lives and launch a child toward a lifetime of learning. More than that, the simple choice to help a child can change a heart forever. Thirty years later, some of the children whose tuitions we funded are now nurses, lawyers, doctors, astronauts, and military service personnel; some are homeowners and parents of little children who are beginning their own great journeys. Many are committed volunteers who help others. These adults know the value of reaching out in their communities because the impact you made was permanent. They have never forgotten and they are forever grateful.

The Talmud teaches: "he who saved one life saves the world". Perhaps it is also true that a person who changes one life changes the world. Thank you for believing that that might be true.

With sincere gratitude,

Executive Director Preschool Advantage



OUR PARTNER PRESCHOOLS



All Saints Academy

Children On the Green

Deep Roots Preschool

East Hanover Child Care Center

El Primer Paso

F.M. Kirby Children's Center

Gentle Shepherd Christian Preschool

Hillside Preschool

Inspire Kids Learning Center

Jefferson Child Care & Education Center

Joyful Noise Nursery School

Kids Connect Early Learning Center

Little Lambs Preschool

Long Hill Montessori School

Madison Montessori School

Morris Plains Cooperative Play School

Mountain Lakes Country Day School

Mount Olive Child Care & Learning Center

Presbyterian Church Nursery School

Rainbow Montessori School

School of St. Elizabeth

St. John's Nursery School

Sunshine Preschool & Infant Care

The Children's Circle at St. Andrew Lutheran Church

The Dogwood School of Chester

The Frances & Herbert Brody Preschool

at Temple B'Nai Or

The Preschool Place & Kindergarten

The Treehouse Child Care Center

The Westmont Montessori School

Union Hill Church Preschool

ARE...



high-quality, age-appropriate, curriculum-based



guided by qualified academic leaders and teaching staff



connected to families who need our support



the source of data on funded students for tracking studies



THE IMPACT



WHO WE IMPACTED IN 2024-2025

- 49 students received funding for a half day
- 50 students received funding for a full academic day

This year marks the third year that Preschool Advantage has funded a full academic day for eligible 4-year-olds. The benefit of a full academic day extends beyond the child - it positively impacts the entire family.

WHY ITS IMPORTANT

- 52% of our families are categorized as ALICE* families
- 31% of our families are below the ALICE* threshold
- Average household income: \$62,187.00

ALICE families work hard. They earn income above the poverty level yet struggle to afford necessities like housing, childcare, food, and healthcare, and typically do not qualify for government assistance. While the average household income is \$62,187, it takes over \$100,000 to raise a family of four in Morris & Somerset counties. Though families work hard to make ends meet, high-quality early education too often remains inaccessible.

*Asset

Limited

Income

Constrained

Employed

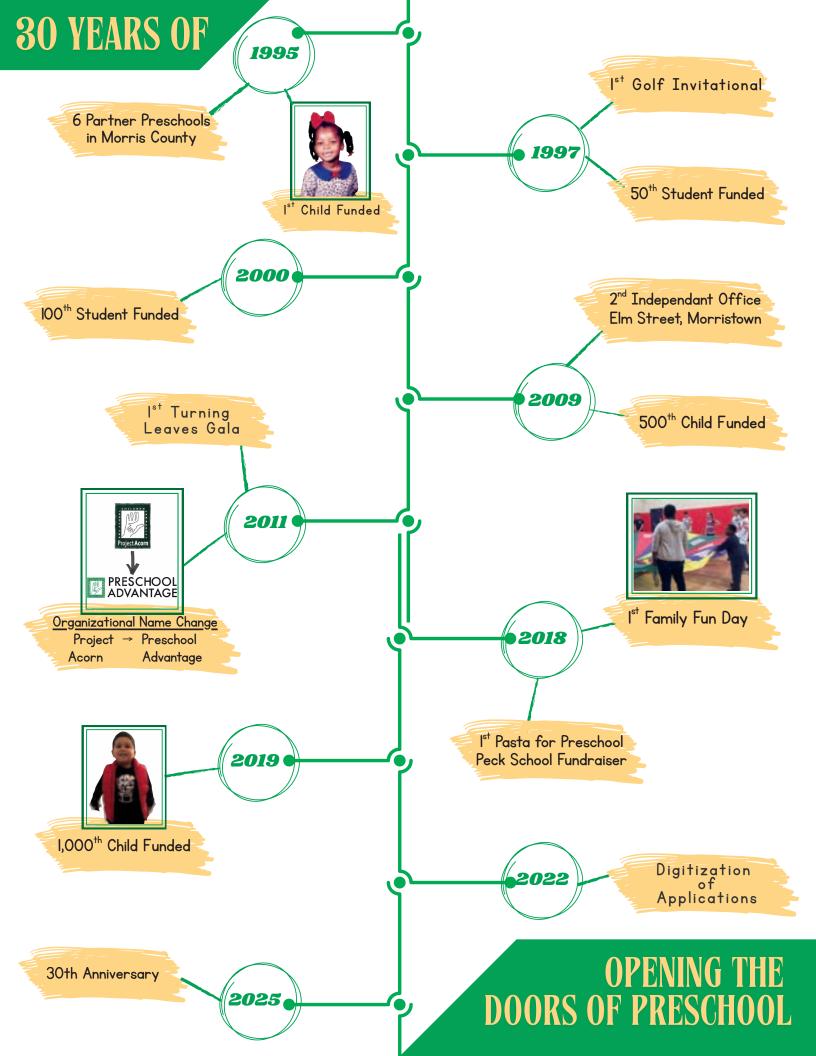
"This opportunity has not only enriched her education but also eased the financial burden for our family, allowing us to support her growth in other meaningful ways."

"Having switched from half day to full day helped my son adjust to full day helped my son adjust better socially. It also allowed me to increase my work hours."

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

- 82% of our families are two parent households at or below the ALICE category
- 70% of the two-parent households have one or both parents unemployed

While most of our families are two-parent households, fewer than one-third have both parents earning an income. The high cost of early education often forces one parent and sometimes bothout of the workforce, leaving families at or below the ALICE threshold with few options to move forward. Expanding access to high-quality early education changes this reality, opening the door for parents to return to work, strengthen their financial stability, and create brighter futures for their children.



30 YEARS OF

Graduate of: Presbyterian Church Nursery School



Preschool



Now

Scott's journey began in 2002 by attending one of our partner preschools. Today, after graduating from Misericordia University, he is an officer at the Virginia Commonwealth Police Department, where he won Rookie of the Year in 2023.

"Project Acorn positively impacted our family by easing financial stress while giving our son access to early learning and friendship opportunities."

- Scott's Mom

Graduate of: Union Hill Church Preschool



Preschool



Now

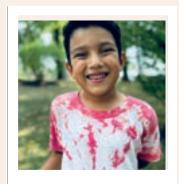
In 2017, Faith began her preschool journey at a local church school. Our support not only nurtured her early love of learning but also equipped her parents with the tools to guide her through remote kindergarten. Her teachers quickly recognized her creativity, calling her "an artist in the making," as she developed strong fine motor skills and a passion for art.

"If it wasn't for Preschool Advantage, Faith wouldn't have gotten the educational start she needed. I now also work in the education department. It was important that Faith got an early education because it helped her academically excel. She has gotten A's in all her classes. Her academic excellence allowed me to focus on my own career in the education force." - Faith's Mom

Graduate of: School of St. Elizabeth



Preschool



Now

In 2022, Hector began his preschool journey at the School of St. Elizabeth. Our support not only gave him an early start to his education but also enabled his mother to return to the workforce—a critical step toward achieving the financial stability that felt out of reach when they first applied.

"At a time when we were going through a difficult time, your support gave us peace of mind and hope that our son could receive a quality early education. That opportunity was much more than financial aid: it was an invaluable boost that motivated all of us to grow. learn. and dream big." - Hector's Mom

UNLOCKING THE POSSIBILITIES BEYOND

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FOUNDERS

Jill Lasser

Stuart Lasser

MESSAGE FROM BOARD PRESIDENT

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, "impact" is defined as "having a powerful effect on someone or something." With this year's Annual Impact Report, we strive to highlight the positive effect Preschool Advantage has had over the past 30 years. Remaining steadfast to our mission of providing funds so those in need can send their 3 and 4-year old children to quality preschool, we have been able to impact the lives of 1500 children and



their families. This has allowed these children to start their educational journeys at an early age while reducing the financial burden their families would face by covering the cost of preschool themselves.

Along with the wonderful generosity of so many donors, foundations, and grantors, none of this would have been possible without the support and guidance of so many volunteers. Whether reading applications, visiting and evaluating partner preschools, coordinating and attending various fundraising events, working with staff in guiding the organization, or promoting Preschool Advantage in the community events, the time, talent, and treasure our volunteers have provided hugely impacted the lives of so many. These individuals thoroughly understand the value of their work, helping families who otherwise would not be able to offer their children a strong educational start. With this annual report, we are proud to share the impact of so many tireless volunteers.

However, our work is not done. We recognize that with today's challenging times, young families will need our support more than ever. The Preschool Advantage staff, trustees, volunteers, and donors will continue their work to make an impact in the lives of those in need, knowing full well that an early education for all children leads to a strong, healthy, and well–prepared citizenry.

Together, let's continue making an impact!

Bette M Simmons

2024 FISCAL REVIEW

SOURCES OF FUNDS

events \$335,367 individuals \$310,433 foundations \$305,212 corporations \$29,500 other \$186,072

HOW FUNDS ARE USED

program \$431,813 ... 74% administration \$137,113 ... 11% fundraising \$115,017 ... 10%



STAFF

pictured left to right

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Director of Communications, Outreach & Events

Wendy Anell

Executive Assistant & Program Manager

Nancy Bangiola

Executive Director

OPENING DOORS...

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(July 1, 2024- June 30,2025)















