From birth to age 5, a child’s brain develops more than any other time in life.
FTF Graham/Greenlee Regional Key Impact Highlights

[State Fiscal Year 2022]

**Strengthening Families and Early Literacy**
- **23,314** Books were given to families with children ages birth to 5 years to encourage parent-child interaction and reading.
- **714** Families of newborns received the Arizona Parent Kit, filled with tips and tools to help support their child’s healthy development.

**Preventive Health**
- **33** Children monitored to receive appropriate screenings to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues to prevent learning challenges later on.

**Quality Preschool and Child Care**
- **345** Children attended preschools and child care programs participating in Quality First.
- **38** Children birth to age 5 received a Quality First scholarship to attend high-quality preschools and child care programs.
- **8** Early childhood educators received a financial incentive for continuing employment with the same program for at least 12 months and advancing their education and credentials.

Additional Strategies
- **280** Adults attended parenting activities to learn how about early child care development in a fun setting.
- **7** Early childhood educators received college scholarships to improve their qualifications for working with infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

First Things First (FTF) partners with families and communities to help our state’s youngest children prepare for kindergarten and beyond.

Many young children in Arizona face challenges that threaten their healthy development and learning. In the FTF Graham/Greenlee Region, there are 3,903 children (under age 6) with 28% living in poverty.

Here is how FTF is working to support young children and their families in this region.

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Graham County Attorney

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Home visitation program helps Thatcher family navigate young daughter’s complex medical needs

About halfway through her second pregnancy, Malia Mullenaux and her husband, Reagan got some scary news.

Doctors told them that their daughter Addelyn would have complex medical needs. Addy was diagnosed in utero with chromosome 6q2627 deletion syndrome, which means that part of her body’s chromosomes has been lost or deleted and could cause severe congenital anomalies and significant intellectual and physical disability.

There was so much that Reagan and Malia didn’t know, but they knew that Addy was meant to be their daughter. They also knew that they would love her and care for her to the best of their abilities.

The Mullenaux family lives in Thatcher, which is three hours away from the high-level medical care that their soon-to-be born daughter would need. As Malia’s due date approached, she stayed with family in Phoenix to safely await Addy’s arrival.

Shortly before Addy was born, a friend told Malia about a voluntary home visitation program called Healthy Families. The First Things First Graham/Greenlee Regional Partnership Council funds Healthy Families to provide parenting information, teaching strategies and connections to community resources.

Malia quickly bonded with her home visitor, Stephanie, who immediately helped Malia navigate as she worked with at least a dozen specialists including a cardiologist, ophthalmologist, neurologist and endocrinologist, to help give Addy the best quality of life.

All specialists are in Phoenix, so every week the family ventures in to the city, sometimes three or four times in the same week.

After a craniotomy due to epileptic seizures, Addy was left legally blind. Stephanie worked with Mullenaux to provide Addy with sensory experiences like music, textures (especially rocks), and smells.

“She especially loves the feeling of bubbles being blown on her hands and face, the wind in her hair and the taste of mac and cheese,” Mullenaux said. “Her very favorite sensation is touch. She loves to cuddle, and gives the best hugs!”

The home visits never felt like appointments, Mullenaux added.

“We say, ‘We have a friend coming to check on us,’” she said. “So much love and support was provided. No judgements were ever made, and our home visitors felt like family. When people ask what this program is and why we are a part of it, I tell them that a kind friend is sent to give us parenting tips, advice on mental health for each of us, and the we learn so much on top of having direct access to resources we may need help finding for our girls, and even for us as parents.”

Mullenaux describes Stephanie as a steady influence through the ups and downs.

“She has seen me at my best and at my worst, yet she always came with a bright smile and a kind hug,” Mullenaux said. “She became a shoulder to cry on, and a friend to laugh with. The difference the program made in our family is priceless.

“I’ve learned so many things to make me a better wife, mom and person. Addelyn and her big sister, Chloe, benefitted from Healthy Families in countless ways, too. Starting with learning techniques for comforting a newborn in sensory overload, to potty-training tips, to preparing for preschool and beyond.”

Addy recently turned 5, and is now ready for school. The family will miss their association with their Healthy Families friends, but they are excited watch Addy continue to grow and thrive in her new learning environment at Brighter Day Transition Kindergarten.

Read more FTF stories at FirstThingsFirst.org/Region-Stories
The FTF Graham/Greenlee Region is defined as the combined area of the two counties, not including the lands belonging to the San Carlos Apache Tribe within Graham County.