



2025

# COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

EMPOWERING TEENS TO BE HEALTHY, SAFE, AND SUCCESSFUL



# Continuing Teen Health Connection's Legacy



## Welcome, Dr. Jennifer Thomas

In my new role as Executive Director, I will continue to work collaboratively with our team, board, community partners, and donors to build bridges across Charlotte and throughout Mecklenburg County to improve the lives and opportunities available to teens. Whether you support Teen Health Connection, work directly with teens, or seek to address issues impacting teens in our community, I look forward to working with every one of you to empower teens to be healthy, safe, and successful.

I hope by reading this report, you learn more about what Teen Health Connection means to teens and families in the Charlotte community, and that you feel excited to join us in this critical mission. Teens cannot navigate the path to adulthood alone; we need your help to guide them.

*Dr. Thomas brings more than 15 years of experience at Teen Health Connection as a licensed psychologist and behavioral health care leader, with a deep commitment to trauma-informed care and adolescent well being. She understands the unique challenges teens face today and is dedicated to ensuring they have access to the integrated medical and behavioral health services and health education they need to thrive.*

## Thank You, Libby Safrit

It has been an honor to serve Teen Health Connection for 27 years. Within our walls, I have seen lives changed every day - celebrated the moment that the 'light bulb' goes off for a teen, when a teen starts therapy with someone who 'gets them', when a parent truly hears what their child is telling them. These moments happen because of the incredible team at Teen Health Connection, because of our dedicated partners and funders who share our vision and believe in our mission, and because of the teens and families who put their trust in Teen Health Connection.

*Libby Safrit joined Teen Health Connection in 1998 as our first behavioral health clinician, providing outpatient therapy and launching the behavioral health triage program. She was named Executive Director in 2009 and has been a renowned leader and advocate, supporting the development of specialized care lines at Teen Health Connection for Charlotte's most vulnerable teens.*



## Our Past Executive Directors

*Teen Health Connection was founded in 1991 through community collaboration among the Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners, major local hospital systems, and community philanthropic leaders to address critical healthcare gaps for local adolescents. We are thankful for the ongoing support of Atrium Health in the delivery of adolescent care.*



**Barbara Ziegler**

**TENURE**  
1991-2003

As our first Executive Director, Barbara helped establish Teen Health Connection in 1991 alongside Dr. John Johnston, our first medical director. During her tenure, sitting President Bill Clinton visited Teen Health Connection.



**Linda Gallehugh**

**TENURE**  
2004-2008

In 2008, Linda oversaw Teen Health Connection's relocation to its current location on Randolph Road.



**Libby Safrit**

**TENURE**  
2009-2025

Libby received the 2025 Michael Marsicano Award for Philanthropic Leadership from the Institute for Philanthropic Leadership with Foundation for the Carolinas.



**LEFT**  
Celebrating Libby's impact and our 34th anniversary at Stand Up and Get Down for Teens, held at The Big Chill on February 28, 2026.



## From Our Board

As a healthcare professional and long-standing member of this community, I know the challenges our teens are facing. Teen Health Connection is on the cutting edge of providing the medical and behavioral health services that are critical to today's youth.

**Joann Spaleta** | Assistant Vice President of South Piedmont Area Health Education Center (AHEC)

I have experienced firsthand the difference Teen Health Connection makes when families need trusted support. They provide critical tools and guidance that can truly change a life. Their work strengthened my own family and creates healthier, safer futures every day. Every investment in Teen Health Connection is an investment in the resilience and success of our teens and young adults.

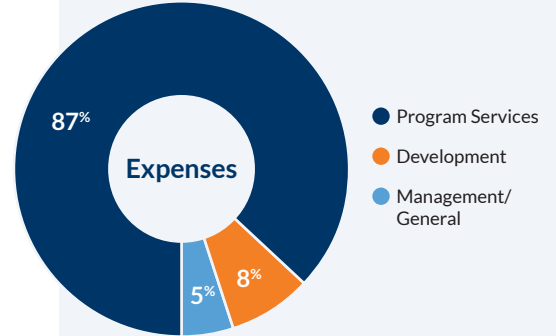
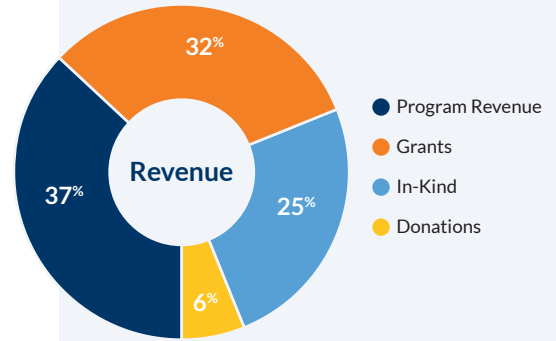
**Kristin Washam** | Owner of CPA Summit Coaching Solutions

I've seen how Teen Health Connection shows up for teens and their families with care, compassion, and respect for the whole person, not just one need or moment. They create spaces where young people feel safe to be themselves, where they are accepted, supported, and reminded that they matter. At a time when so many teens are navigating stress, uncertainty, and isolation, that sense of belonging can be life-changing. That's why I believe so deeply in this work and am proud to support Teen Health Connection.

**Latisha Hensley** | Director of Family Engagement and Community Outreach, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools



## 2025 Financial Summary



## 2025 Board of Directors

**Kristin Washam** | *President*  
Summit Coaching Solutions

**Jane Llewellyn** | *Vice President*  
Community Leader

**Dr. Tom Gettelman** | *Secretary*  
Community Leader

**Olivia Turnbull** | *Treasurer*  
GreerWalker LLP

**Natasha Ashe-Suber**  
Marketing and Communications Leader

**Dr. Moses Fox**  
Consultant and Community Advocate

**Meredith Funderburk**  
SCOR Global Life Americas Reinsurance Co.

**Joseph Graham**  
Ordained Pastor

**Latisha Hensley**  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

**Tracie Mullins**  
Atrium Health

**Ankedra Reynolds**  
Atrium Health

**Kristen Rouzer**  
LPL Financial

**Dr. Kimberly Scott**  
Mecklenburg County Public Health

**Joann Spaleta**  
South Piedmont AHEC

**Matt Stanford**  
OrthoCarolina

# For Teens and For All

Teen Health Connection is committed to ensuring **all teens** have access to opportunities that allow them to be healthy, safe, and successful.

## By the Numbers

**67%**

Female

**42%**

Black / African-American

**65%**

Medicaid-Insured

**32%**

2+ Races

**23%**

White / Caucasian

**3%**

Other

**30%**

Hispanic / Latino

**32%**

of teens seen at Teen Health Connection have been exposed to 4+ Adverse Childhood Experiences.



**5,050** Primary Care Adolescent Medicine Visits

Board-Certified Adolescent Medicine Specialists and a multidisciplinary team deliver comprehensive primary care. These integrated services are available to all teens and their families in the community.

### Specialized Service Lines

**409**

Center for Disordered Eating Visits

Comprehensive, integrated treatment for eating disorders

**577**

Center for Gender Health Visits

Gender affirming care

**141**

Teens and Tots Visits

Infant and maternal care for new teen parents and their infants through 24 months

### Integrated Care

**469**

Dietician Visits  
Diet and Nutrition

Nutritional guidance, healthy weight management, and wellness planning

**586**

In-person Triage Consultations  
Behavioral Health

Behavioral health screening, brief intervention, psychoeducation, and referrals to care

**2,515**

Phone-based Triage Consultations  
Behavioral Health

#### LEFT

Medical Director, Dr. Shamiela Dixon, and Manager of Behavioral Health Services, Betsy Thompson, were interviewed by WSOC-TV on eating disorders, accessing treatment, and providing support for teens.

#### BELOW

Our multidisciplinary team of adolescent health experts discussed the connection between behavioral health and nutrition in our "Food for Thought: Nutrition for the Developing Teen Brain" webinar, which was featured on WSOC-TV.

#### RIGHT

Our behavioral health team volunteered at the Heart of a Champion Day, a free annual event providing free physical exams and heart screenings for student athletes.



# Adolescent Behavioral Health

**2 in 5 high school students** reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness<sup>1</sup>

**1 in 5 adolescents** live with a current diagnosed mental or behavioral health condition<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CDC, YRBS, 2023  
<sup>2</sup>National Survey of Children's Health, 2024

**61% of U.S. teens** (ages 12-17) had difficulty accessing mental health care when they needed it

**40% of U.S. teens** experiencing a major depressive episode did not receive mental health care when needed<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>National Survey of Children's Health, 2024

## What Do Teens Think?<sup>4</sup>

"I can handle it on my own without care"

"I worry about what people will think and about my privacy"

"Treatment won't help"

"I don't know how to get care"

"No one would care if I got better"

<sup>4</sup>National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2023

**84%**

Our behavioral health triage clinicians work alongside the medical team, directly with our teen patients and their families, to overcome these barriers and help access the right care, at the right time. **84% of patients referred for behavioral health care through our triage clinicians initiate services within 90 business days.**

## Outpatient Therapy



**9,213** Behavioral Health Therapy Sessions

Our 11-therapist team and Pixie, our therapy dog, are trained in the most effective outpatient treatments.

### Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

11% of all Mecklenburg County therapists certified in TF-CBT with the NC Child Treatment Program work at Teen Health Connection.

### Brainspotting

13% of all Brainspotting-certified therapists in a 50-mile radius of Charlotte work at Teen Health Connection.

**9 OUT OF 10**

teens show improvement in clinical symptoms on standardized behavioral health screeners after treatment at Teen Health Connection.

## Assessment Services

Teen Health Connection creates clear action plans to support healing and prevent future trauma in the face of child abuse and neglect. We provide objective, comprehensive assessment services for youth who are in or at risk of entering foster care due to child abuse or neglect. Independent Psychological Assessments are critical components of case plans and treatment decisions when youth enter foster care. We outline a path of resilience for the children we see, from behavioral health services and academic supports to prosocial activities. We give feedback to the adults in their lives, discussing the impact they have on the wellbeing and development of their child. We provide a roadmap towards change and healing for families who are struggling in Mecklenburg County.

**202**

Specialized Assessments for foster-care involved youth



**ABOVE**

Our team planted blue pinwheels in honor of Child Abuse Prevention Month in April.

## Youth Leadership and Prevention

### What is TAB?

The Teen Advisory Board (TAB) develops and empowers teen leaders committed to the health of adolescents in the Charlotte region.

**44 teens served**

on the 2024-25 Teen Advisory Board with 27 schools represented



### 2025 TAB Activities

**4-week PhotoVoice project** using photography as a storytelling tool

**5-week structured curriculum** exploring adolescent mental health

**TAB "Gives Back" campaign** in service of youth experiencing homelessness

**Red Ribbon Week**, a national drug use prevention campaign

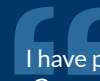
**Recipient selection** of the Johnston Ziegler Safrit Youth Leadership Scholarship

**Participated in the Meck Design Day**, hosted by Mecklenburg County Public Health



**Sophey Cherry**

*TAB Member, Class of 2026*



I have participated in Teen Health Connection's programs since my 8th-grade year, starting with my first viewing of "The Big Picture" and joining TAB. My participation has immensely impacted me as a teenager through my pledge of staying alcohol, tobacco, and drug free. I have had the opportunity to speak at a national CADCA conference, serve as an event panelist, and act in educational videos. I provided mentorship to a group of younger students at our annual Summit and helped select scholarship recipients.

This organization has been a driving force in my personal and professional growth by fostering my developing values of leadership, responsibility, and resilience, inspiring me to actively contribute to my community and become a positive influence for others.

**100%**

of TABBIES committed to being alcohol and drug free. 100% agree that TAB has given them opportunities to be a youth leader in their community.



#### ABOVE

TAB member Sophey Cherry participated in a panel presentation for the Children's Alliance titled: "Digital Dilemma: A Balanced Conversation on Screens, Social Media, and Mental Health of our Young People."

#### LEFT

TAB members learn how to identify "red flags" in relationships during Teen Dating Violence Awareness month in February.

### From the parent of a TAB Member...

My daughters came to Teen Health Connection as teenagers, and they left as leaders.

Shawna Giacomini, mother of three TAB graduates





## Jazzmin Rivers

Senior Program Manager of Education & Engagement,  
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Carolinas

“Teen Health Connection has been one of our outstanding partners to work with over the past few years. Our mentors, mentees, and parents/guardians are eager to participate in workshops. They find the material engaging, they ask questions and interact, and they really enjoy the related games, role play, and practical scenarios. The workshops help to address bullying, prevention, social-emotional health, and more. They take time and build workshops to fit our unique programming - to understand our clients’ needs, curate customized sessions, and go above and beyond to ensure our clients benefit from them. I’m excited for the impact of these sessions for our youth, parent/guardians, and mentors.”

## Parent and Adult Education

77% of parents in the U.S. believe their teen receives the social and emotional support they need. Only 28% of teens believe the same.<sup>5</sup> Teen Health Connection’s adult education programs teach parents, caregivers, and other adults how to provide the support that teens need at this critical developmental period. We provide a range of workshops, webinars, trainings, coaching sessions, and other learning opportunities for parents, caregivers, and other adults committed to the wellbeing of teens.

<sup>5</sup>CDC, 2024

613 parents and adults were reached in 2025

### From an online workshop participant...

“We as parents and adults must be able to have tough conversations and address difficult situations with our teens. The class opened my eyes to situations I didn’t see that my child is facing. It was very informative.”



## Facilitating Community Education through The Big Picture

Adult and teen training events incorporate The Big Picture – Teen Health Connection’s innovative, teen-led health education video series. This initiative places the voices of teens front and center, bringing to light the most pressing health challenges.

The Big Picture provides a customizable educational tool used in curriculum by our own team of healthcare experts and available for teens, parents, and professionals across the community. Each May, we offer continuing education workshops with South Piedmont AHEC launching new video topics for local professionals.

### What is The Big Picture?

- A groundbreaking health education video series by teens, for teens.
- Written and performed by local high school students, guided by our multidisciplinary healthcare experts.
- Based on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and local public health data.
- Empowers teens, parents, and professionals to start meaningful conversations about adolescent health.



Scan to watch the The Big Picture video series, including our newest video releases, and schedule a presentation from our team.

# Investing in Tomorrow's Leaders

## Johnston Ziegler Safrit Youth Leadership Scholarship

The Johnston Ziegler Safrit Youth Leadership Scholarship is a merit-based scholarship that recognizes a local high-school senior who demonstrates outstanding leadership, advocacy, and passion for service in their community. In 2025, the award was renamed the **Johnston Ziegler Safrit Youth Leadership Scholarship**, recognizing our recently retired Executive Director Libby Safrit. This year the scholarship was increased to \$10,000 and 97 teens submitted applications.

## Congratulations Alexis Agurs of Independence High School!

Alexis plans to attend Winston-Salem State University on a career path in medicine with a focus on public health and community advocacy. Alexis has made a meaningful impact through her church, local YMCA, Girls Scouts chapter, Jack and Jill of America, and as a softball player and youth coach. She serves as a mentor to young summer campers and organizes an annual Breakfast with Santa program at a Title I school. After seeing critical gaps in emergency preparedness following an incident at her church, Alexis facilitated free First Aid and CPR training for families and youth in her community and made emergency preparedness an official part of her church's volunteer curriculum.



## Alexis Agurs

Recipient of the 2026 Johnston Ziegler Safrit Youth Leadership Scholarship

## Catching Up with Jewel Wood



## Undergraduate at Howard University

2023 Johnston Ziegler Youth Leadership Scholarship Recipient

The Johnston Ziegler scholarship significantly helped ease the financial burden of my freshman year. This year was a big adjustment, financially for my parents and mentally for me. With unexpected costs and unpredictability of circumstances during my first year, this scholarship helped put things at ease. It allowed me to fully focus on my studies, and it reinforced my commitment to pursuing a career in healthcare and serving youth. I am currently in my third year of undergraduate studies at Howard University, majoring in Health Science and minoring in Human Development. After graduation, I plan to pursue further education to become a pediatric occupational therapist.

Receiving this scholarship is an incredible honor. It eases some of the financial burden of college and motivates me to pursue my dreams in health and wellness. This scholarship shows me that my hard work and dedication are recognized, and it gives me the confidence to make a meaningful impact in my future. Thank you for making this possible.



## Your Support Matters!

Teens need us now more than ever. Today's teens face a myriad of challenges, from anxiety and depression to pressures at school to violence and relationship conflicts. Our programs are a direct result of your support. **Teens are our future. Make a gift today!**



## Our Mission

To improve the health of adolescents by providing adolescent medicine and behavioral health services, education, advocacy, leadership development, and research through connections among adolescents, parents, and the community.

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