

Annual Report

2020-2022



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Thank you!



Letter From CAF Leaders

On behalf of our Board of Directors and staff we welcome your review of our two-year journey supporting Mecklenburg County's low income families during the worst public health and financial crisis in our lifetime. Next year marks the 60th anniversary of the historic 1964 Economic Opportunity Act legislation that created 1,000 Community Action Agencies across the nation as the key poverty fighting strategy in U.S President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty. Today, reminiscent of that desperate economic period, massive federal intervention was required to stabilize millions of struggling American families. My hope is that this report provides a glimpse into our passion and dedication to empower whole families toward economic self-sufficiency in collaboration with trusted social sector partners, community leaders, and stakeholders.

In March 2020 the world was rocked with an unforeseen virus that forged for nearly three years without hesitancy. While COVID impacted people from all walks of life, it created havoc for the 1.5 million North Carolinians who live in poverty and extreme poverty as well as the 14.6% of families who are food insecure. In Mecklenburg County, 11% of families live in poverty. The police killing of George Floyd and the disproportionate racial impact of COVID crystalized awareness of social determinants of health and generational poverty, particularly in communities of color.

A halt in sponsored giving forced many social sector partners to cease operations. The Charlotte Area Fund remained open and pivoted to creative interventions to address needs of frontline workers who were unemployed or underemployed, those that had to quarantine due to COVID19, and families previously living on the economic margins. A COVID Healthcare Impact Needs Assessment was conducted to determine the strategic approach to services. CAF leveraged state and private resources to ignite strategic partnerships with under-resourced social sector partners to achieve shared outcomes for families experiencing poverty for the first time. Vital services provided included emergency rental and mortgage assistance, nutrition, transportation, clothing, education support, PPE and mental health services.

In addition, high demand workforce training was provided to prepare for a post pandemic reality. CAF's rapid response was due largely to a \$1.9 million CSBG/ CARES Relief allocation. A crowning endorsement of our preparedness was NC Governor Roy Cooper's recommendation to receive a \$1.1 million IKEA Foundation grant, the first public/ private grant of its kind among nations community action network, according to David Bradley, President, National Community Action Foundation.



Nick Wharton



Abbie Butler

CAF History Embedded in Community

Since its inception in 1963, the Charlotte Area Fund's (CAF) anti-poverty mission has been embedded with local community needs. As one of the first five North Carolina anti-poverty agencies funded by the North Carolina Fund, CAF pre-dates the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act enacting federally sponsored local Community Action Agencies (CAA.) The Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners designated the Charlotte Area Fund as Mecklenburg County's Community Action Agency. The Charlotte Area Fund's organizational model is uniquely governed by a tripartite board of directors representing local private, public, and low income community sector representatives to ensure that planning and implementation of community solutions to poverty have a direct impact on helping people achieve self-sufficiency. To further leverage the scope and impact of Community Action Agency resources, federal Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) funds provide a broad, comprehensive response to community needs.



The Charlotte Area Fund's rich legacy of leveraging resources include critical social services initiatives such as Food Stamp Outreach, Community Organization/Leadership Training, Outreach and Referral, Community Development, Summer Youth Recreation, Manpower Training Program(WOIA), Summer Garden & Canning Project, Head Start, Credit Union, Youth Programs, Consumer Education/Counseling, Senior Citizens Program, Feeding and Nutrition, Energy Conservation (Weatherization), Fuel Assistance, Day Care Program, Legal Services and Metrolina Food Bank, to name a few.

Covid Response & Recovery

When the pandemic struck, the immediate crisis families were experiencing was obvious, but less apparent was the long term effects on families already living on the economic margins and families experiencing extreme poverty for the first time. Many social sector agencies closed or ceased operations without funding. Charlotte Area Fund was built to be nimble and responsive to whole families, particularly in crisis. This was affirmed when the U.S Congress allocated \$26 million to the 33 agency statewide community action network to effectively respond to the most economically impacted North Carolina citizens, of which \$1.9 million was allocated to CAF. Further confirmation of CAF's preparedness to serve the most economically impacted was North Carolina Governor, Roy Cooper's recommendation to receive a \$1.1 million unrestricted US IKEA Foundation grant.

IKEA Corporation's "Pay It Forward" campaign reimbursed state governments the total amount of unemployment benefits paid to furloughed IKEA workers in their 26 state footprint in the form of an unrestricted grant to one nonprofit respectively. Throughout the period, CAF leveraged resources with strategic partners and provided direct emergency assistance to support families with rent, mortgage, utilities, telemedicine, mental health, nutrition, education, transportation technology, senior assistance, and also high demand workforce development/ job training to reposition families toward self-sufficiency post pandemic.

Workforce Development

Charlotte Area Fund committed to creating high demand, living wage career pathways that ignite economic mobility and self-sufficiency. As long term impacts of COVID continued disrupting or closing entire industries, a secondary workforce crisis emerged. There was a drastic shortage of qualified workers for many businesses, while some motivated individuals struggled to access needed training. Charlotte Area Fund responded by ramping up job training, offering a larger variety of training on a virtual platform to safely enable increased access to training and support services.



Partnerships

Leveraging resources is a unique and essential advantage to establishing shared outcomes with trusted social sector partners. The infusion of public and private resources enabled Charlotte Area Fund to extend its reach to improve the lives of more individuals and families struggling during the crisis. Resilient new partnerships were established with government agencies, faith based organizations, schools, criminal justice institutions, and under resourced high impact nonprofits, to ensure wise use of resources and maximize impact for families. These new partnerships forged in a crisis state will continue to evolve post pandemic.



"COVID-19 has hurt many North Carolinians who are now struggling to pay bills and make ends meet, and this grant will help people in the Charlotte area. I appreciate IKEA's efforts to help workers and families during this difficult time."

- Governor of North Carolina, Roy Cooper

COVID Recovery

If COVID response was the theme of 2020, then the following two years have been heavily focused on COVID recovery. Many of Charlotte Area Fund’s clients are front line workers. Many others lost their jobs in the early days of the crisis, creating financial challenges that will take years to overcome.

Between financial issues and supply chain slowdowns, many area families struggled to keep food in their pantries and other daily necessities of life that instill dignity. Charlotte Area Fund regularly supplied families with emergency funds and supplies – which was especially evident by the 2200 residents served at The Big Pop-Up Event in July 2021.

Cars lined up as far as the eye could see, snaking through stations of food and household supplies provided. As attendees popped open their trunks, volunteers efficiently loaded in diapers, food, paper towels and other essentials. Other volunteers provided information, COVID vaccines, testing, and job training. More than 2,228 people were served that day – just a fraction of the number of clients Charlotte Area Fund would support with tangible necessities over a 24-month period.

In addition to drastic economic desperation, many families experienced multiple COVID related health impacts. Research shows that Black and Brown communities experienced worse health outcomes after a COVID diagnosis. “Poverty is complex,” notes Nick Wharton, CEO of the Charlotte Area Fund. “COVID-19 exposed the intersectionality of race and class on health outcomes and a failed healthcare system.”

On June 19 2022, at Charlotte’s Annual Juneteenth Celebration, the “Good Health is Wealth” Multimedia Campaign was launched in partnership with CW Williams Community Health Center, designed to encourage at risk communities to invest in a healthy lifestyle that includes doctor visits, improve eating habits, adequate sleep, and getting vaccinated against COVID-19. The strategy involved deploying main highway billboards, radio/television public service announcements, social media articles and events featuring prominent community and healthcare influencers.

IKEA

“Pays It Forward” North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper, recommends CAF for IKEA Corporation \$1.1 million unrestricted grant given to one non-profit in each of the 26 IKEA national markets to support families economically impacted by the pandemic.

CARES Funding received \$1.9 million

U.S Congress allocated \$1 billion in emergency assistance to strengthen the anti-poverty mission of the nation’s CSBG/ Community Action Network. CAF receives \$1.9 million of North Carolina’s \$26 million allocation. A comprehensive range of services were provided including increased emergency assistance to new families experiencing poverty for the first time.



GOOD HEALTH IS WEALTH!
» Mattie Marshall

Make Healthy Choices to Survive & Thrive:

- » Eat Right & Exercise
- » Mask Up!
- » Get Vaxxed & Boosted

[Click for COVID Resources](#)



Helping People. Changing Lives.
community Action
Charlotte Area Fund, Inc.
OF MECKLENBURG COUNTY

Big Pop Up Impact Snapshot

Families / Households

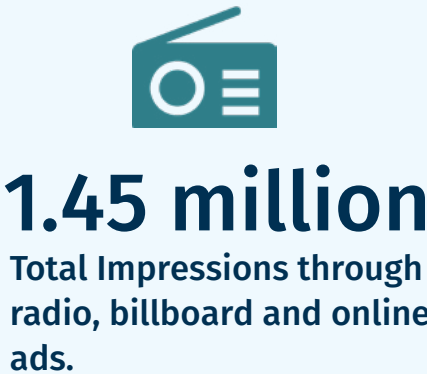


Food Distrupution



Scan to watch Our Big Pop Up Recap Video or [Click here!](#)

Good Health is Wealth Campaign Snapshot





PLEASE MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES!
» Dorothy Counts Scoggins

We Know that Good Health is Wealth.

COVID Resources at: [GoodHealthisWealth.org](#)



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OF MECKLENBURG COUNTY

CELEBRATION OF NATIONAL HEALTH CAREER WEEK!



BACK TO SCHOOL
COMMUNITY HEALTH FAIR

1 Drive Through Event - Rain or Shine

Sat. 13th August (10am-2pm)
Stratford Richardson YMCA
1946 West Blvd. Charlotte, NC 28208



Helping People. Changing Lives.



Scan to watch Our Defeat Poverty Campaign on WCNC or [click here!](#)

Workforce Development

Job training has long been a cornerstone of Charlotte Area Fund’s work and this commitment only increased over the last two years. The most effective path to long-term self-sufficiency is to help people achieve the training skills and opportunities they need for meaningful, living wage employment. Job loss and change due to the pandemic exacerbated an already overwhelming need for career training. At the same time, technology and the rapid retirement of Baby Boomers was creating a need for ‘upskilled’ workers.

Charlotte Area Fund anticipated these needs, positioning the organization’s career training to respond. Early in the pandemic, the team transitioned their learning to a virtual format and developed partnerships with outside trainers to ensure robust offerings that would widely appeal to job-seekers.

Charlotte resident Jessica Bowlin experienced this firsthand. When she and her husband left California for North Carolina, they expected to find a cheaper cost of living and a welcoming community to raise their family.

What they didn’t expect was to land in a brand-new city with a newborn baby, a toddler and no family support during the peak of the pandemic. Jessica knew she needed to make a change for her family – so she contacted Charlotte Area Fund, where her Success Coach connected her to job training.

After exploring her options, she set a goal to receive her certificate of completion in the Dental Assistant Program. With the support of her Success Coach, Jessica didn’t just complete the program – she finished first in her class. “I finally found a career and not a job,” Jessica reflects. “Since the program, I’ve gained a better job with an income that helped us buy our first home. We couldn’t have done it without the help and support of the Charlotte Area Fund. My family and I are extremely thankful.”

And Jessica wasn’t alone - more than 72 people graduated from the organization’s career development programs in the last two years, with training in medical careers, HVAC, IT, CDL licensure and more. Each individual was supported by a Success Coach who helped guide and support families toward a long-term path to self-sufficiency

165 Certifications

CAF was able to help 165 of our clients receive certifications to high paying jobs that are in demand.

- Highway Construction
- High School Equivalency
- Healthy Homes Fund (HHF)
- Fiber Optics
- HVAC
- Entry Level Medical certifications
- CDL

72 Graduates

In June 2022, we celebrated our Self-Sufficiency Graduation Dinner at the Harvey B. Gantt African American Art and Cultural Center honoring more than 60 participants who achieved state and national workforce certifications in high demand careers, high school equivalency, or other personal milestones.

Client Praise Meet Tamir Simmons

Tamir Simmons is feeling extra grateful these days. A recent graduate of Charlotte Area Fund’s HVAC program, he came to the organization looking for support and training that would help him overcome barriers to sustainable employment. “I came into this program with a record, but they assured me they would do the best they could to put me in a good position – and they did.”



Scan to watch Tamir’s Full Story or [click here!](#)

61 Jobs

CAF was able to help 61 clients receive a job after their certification. We also helped 45 families move out of poverty and into self-sufficiency.



Jessica Bowlin and her family



Partnerships

Connect – Coordinate – Collaborate

The mission of the Charlotte Area Fund has always been about sharing and helping support the social sector ecosystem. From expanding direct services to creatively deploying opportunities to make a difference in people’s lives, our efforts the last two years would not have been possible without trusted social sector partners willing to Connect/Coordinate/ Collaborate across the region and state. An early infusion of funds from both corporate and federal partners ensured that Charlotte Area Fund never had to slow down its offerings – and in fact, increased both access to and the speed of services. Investment in the Charlotte Area Fund enabled the agency to “Pay It’ forward to support under- resourced partners to achieve shared outcomes for similar clients thereby stabilizing organizations and ensuring the most efficient use of resources possible. The following partnerships illustrate the breadth and depth of the partnerships initiated over this period:

- **Meck Ed Transportation Partnership** - Assisted with critical long term low income families. Making sure they have access to required education training, internship work sites, parent meetings and activities.

- **Healthy Homes Program** - Through the Duke Energy partnership, 13 eligible low income Duke Energy customers were provided critical energy efficient home repairs and appliance replacements which included receiving weatherization, refrigerator replacement and HVAC replacement/ repair services. This effort restored dignity to families long experiencing the harshest living conditions pre-COVID.
- **The Park Church Unhoused Mobile Transportation MT 25:40** - Leveraged resources to support the design and purchase of Multi-purpose Mobile Transportation Vehicle equipped to wash clothing and provide showers to bring dignity to the estimated 3,100 unhoused living in Mecklenburg County.
- **North Carolina Department of Transportation Highway Construction Academy** - Initially launched inside Mecklenburg County Jails, this comprehensive career pathway in highway construction focused on several core competencies and skills such as CDL, OSHA, Highway Repair, and multiple construction related jobs.
- **Young Icons** - Summer youth performing arts education provided music technology awareness instruction by noted music industry performers and technicians (including support by Grammy Award winning artist, Anthony Hamilton).

\$82,500

In Scholarship Funding

Charlotte Area Fund provided scholarships for 50 students to attend the Young Icons summer program. This program focuses on the building blocks of becoming a successful recording artist. A top priority is to inspire recording artists and build their confidence in the natural ability to dream and create.

The Defeat Poverty Resource Fair

On August 30, Charlotte Area Fund partnered with Bruns Avenue Elementary School to host the Defeat Poverty Community Resource event on the school’s campus. Supported by more than 50 volunteers and a variety of community partners, the event offered a range of support to families that would ensure food and clothing security, and meet both health and educational needs. 500+ residents attended the fair.

Bruns Avenue Elementary Partnership Fuels Covid Relief



15

Covid-19 Vaccines and 4 Covid -19 Boosters



1,300

Back To School Supplies



100

Gift Cards



40

Families Enrolled World Kitchen Food Program



736

Individuals Provided Shoes



550

Backpacks



400

Fresh Produce Bags + Non-Perishable Food Items



80

Laptops Given



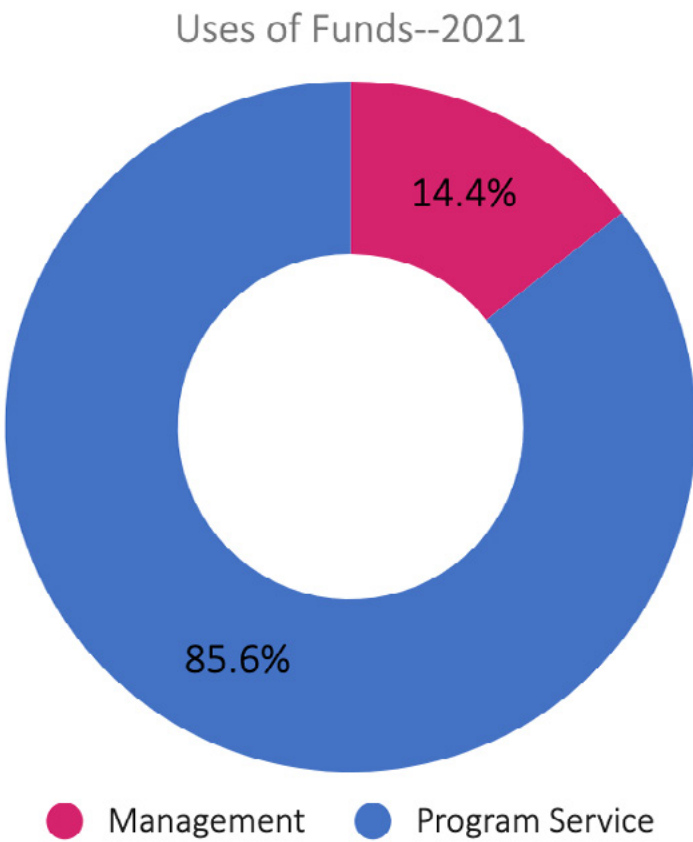
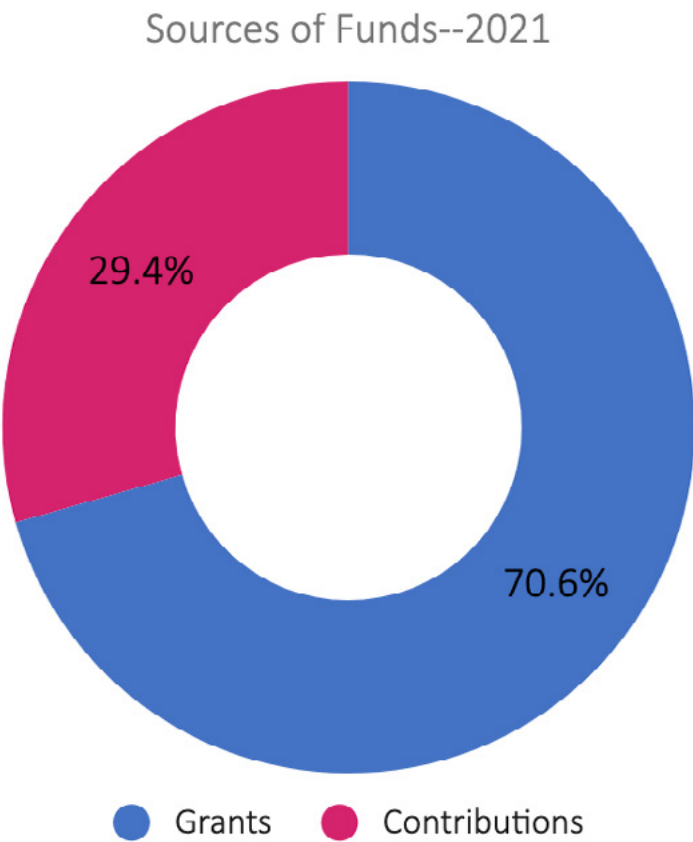
Scan to watch Our Back to School Community Health Fair Recap Video or [click here!](#)



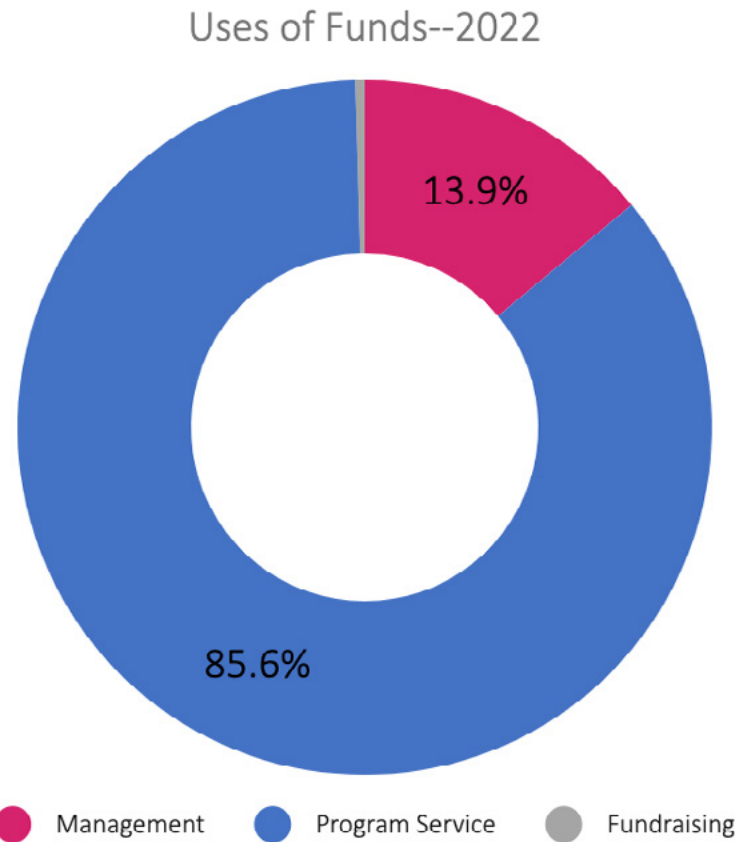
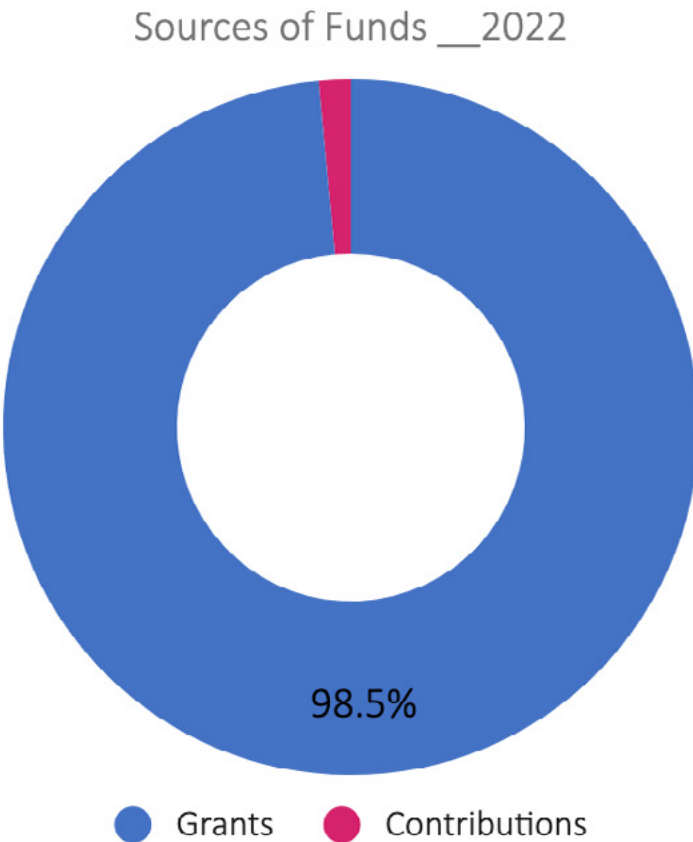
Scan to watch the MT25:40 Dedication and Celebration Ceremony or [click here!](#)



Our Financials 2020-2021



Our Financials 2021-2022



What's Next?

The pandemic taught us many difficult lessons

not to be forgotten or undervalued in future planning. One undisputed fact is that in global/ national economic crisis public and private intervention is an absolute necessity. The pandemic revealed an inconvenient truth that poverty and race disproportionately impacts health outcomes and remains a terminal barrier to achieving economic mobility and self-sufficiency for far too many Mecklenburg County residents. At the statewide level, we are proud with how significant the North Carolina Community Action Network of 33 agencies came together to provide immediate emergency assistance to thousands of NC citizens in crisis which bodes well for joint efforts in the future. Locally, we were empowered to extend that same Coordinate/ Communicate/ Collaborate mission in Mecklenburg County.

The Charlotte Area Fund plans to continue our forward movement of Helping People and Changing Lives by:

- Review CAF Strategic Plan mindful of lessons learned to improve agency management and service delivery
- Explore relocation opportunities afforded by rethinking current and future facility needs
- Launch Community Healthcare Worker Training program in partnership with Council of Black Health
- Strengthen Workforce Development collaborations with existing and new partners
- Celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act creating Community Action Agencies signed by U.S. President Lyndon Baines Johnson



“

Those whom we enthusiastically serve warmly consider the Charlotte Area Fund a family and we will defend their right to a quality life that economic self sufficiency affords.”

- Nick Wharton,
Charlotte Area Fund CEO



HELPING PEOPLE & CHANGING LIVES.



We Care Like Family

The board and staff of the Charlotte Area Fund are grateful to every sponsor, donor, partner and client who made the last two years possible. Our team is committed to providing holistic, high-quality support for families to build a better, more sustainable future. And if your family ever needs us – we're here for you too.