

Smartly United Early Childhood Collective Hires Collective Impact Facilitator

The Smartly United Early Childhood Collective (SUECC) hired Rachel Keeney as its Collective Impact Facilitator. In this position, Keeney will encourage conversations and collaboration across the county to facilitate children and their families in preparations for success in kindergarten. Her work will draw on community members' experiences and situations to gain insights into current assets and needs.

"I very much want to work with community members to investigate what is working and what isn't working in preparing children for kindergarten in Transylvania County. I'm looking forward to working with stake holders...individuals and agencies...to inform responses and directions for growth," Keeney explained.

SUECC's goals include dissecting and mapping the complicated relationships between health, education, and financial stability. SUECC will then use the Collective Impact model to add energy to cross-sector collaboration for transformational change.

The SUECC partnership is co-led by Smart Start of Transylvania County and United Way of Transylvania County. SUECC provides a strong backbone structure to implement county-wide Early Childhood Initiative plans for success in kindergarten. A recent grant by The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina investing in Early Childhood in Transylvania County has allowed SUECC to implement a Collective Impact model.

The Early Childhood Initiative, comprised of community wide organizations, government, schools and concerned citizens, has identified increasing affordable, high quality pre-school options as a top priority. SUECC's mission in that process is to provide a community outreach, grant seeking, project management, and business development role for any large project emerging from the Early Childhood Initiative.

Keeney comes to this position with an extensive background in community development and community-based participatory research. She collaborated with a team of young adults and agencies to develop a youth-driven curriculum promoting leadership and advocacy regarding mental and behavioral health challenges within communities.

Other community-development work experience is rooted in Liberia. She spent two and a half years in communities with extreme poverty, teaching high school biology and chemistry. In collaboration with her female students, she developed a project encouraging high school completion, with the goal of economic independence for the students.

Keeney also served for one year on the island of St. Kitts. Her work there focused on teaching students from preschool to middle school, with an additional focus on community building activities.

Keeney holds an undergraduate degree in Biology and Sociology from Furman University. She recently completed her Master of Public Health degree, with a concentration in maternal and child health, from University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Her husband, Chris Keeney, is an associate at Carolina Financial Securities, LLC, in Brevard. The couple worked together in Liberia and in St. Kitts before returning to the United States.

About Collective Impact

The Collective Impact model for significant, positive, lasting social change offers structure to collaborative efforts across private and public agencies, governments, businesses and non-profits. Collective Impact structures include a core, backbone organization with a staff dedicated to assisting participating entities with working in concert to achieve their common agenda. Collective Impact groups communicate effectively and openly to coordinate, plan and conduct activities. They collect and evaluate data to assess progress toward the stated objective(s).

About Smart Start of Transylvania County

Smart Start of Transylvania County is part of the North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC), a nationally recognized and award-winning early childhood initiative designed to ensure that young children enter school healthy and ready to succeed.

Smart Start's vision is a community aware of the need for and dedicated to, providing a safe, healthy, nurturing environment so all young children and their families have the opportunity to develop to their full potential.

To volunteer or financially support Smart Start of Transylvania County, call 828-877-3025, visit the office at 93 N Broad Street, Suites D/E, Brevard, send US Mail to PO Box 1676, Brevard, NC, 28712, email smartstarttc1996@gmail.com, or visit Smart Start online at <http://smartstarttransylvaniamc.org/> or <https://www.facebook.com/SmartStartTransylvaniaCounty2016/>.

About United Way of Transylvania County

United Way of Transylvania County (UWTC) empowers people to improve their lives. Specific goals are for all residents to achieve their full academic potential, maintain a financially stable household, and live a healthy lifestyle.

UWTC funds programs preventing homelessness, abuse and neglect, and programs providing housing, adult day care, after-school and summer youth programs, health services, financial education and counseling, youth conflict resolution training and parenting education and support.

United Way of Transylvania County's fiscal year 2016-2017 campaign goal is \$510,000. Campaign contributions support local health and human service initiatives including www.VolunteerTransylvania.org community-wide volunteer opportunity listings, the [2-1-1](#) information and referral service, [TRAIN](#) (Transylvania Resource Access and Information Network) non-profit support, [Familywize](#) and [Coast2Coast](#) prescription discount cards, the [Tiny House Initiative for Brevard](#), and [MyFreeTaxes.com](#) free state and local tax preparation and filing assistance.

United Way of Transylvania County also awards approximately \$300,000 annually to local health and human service non-profit programs and collaborative actions.

To volunteer or financially support the United Way of Transylvania County, call 828-883-8822, visit the office at 101 W. Jordan Street, #4 (below PNC Bank in downtown Brevard), send US Mail to PO Box 53, Brevard, NC, 28712, or visit www.unitedwaytransylvania.org or <https://www.facebook.com/UnitedwayTC>.

GREAT things happen when we LIVE UNITED for our community!