



**Item:**

Communications Report - November 2021

**Requested Action:**

N/A

**Background:**

The report highlights communications activities of the Children's Trust for the preceding month.

**Attachments:**

Communications Report – November 2021

**Programmatic Impact:**

N/A

**Fiscal Impact:**

N/A

**Recommendation:**

N/A



## Communications Report – November 2021

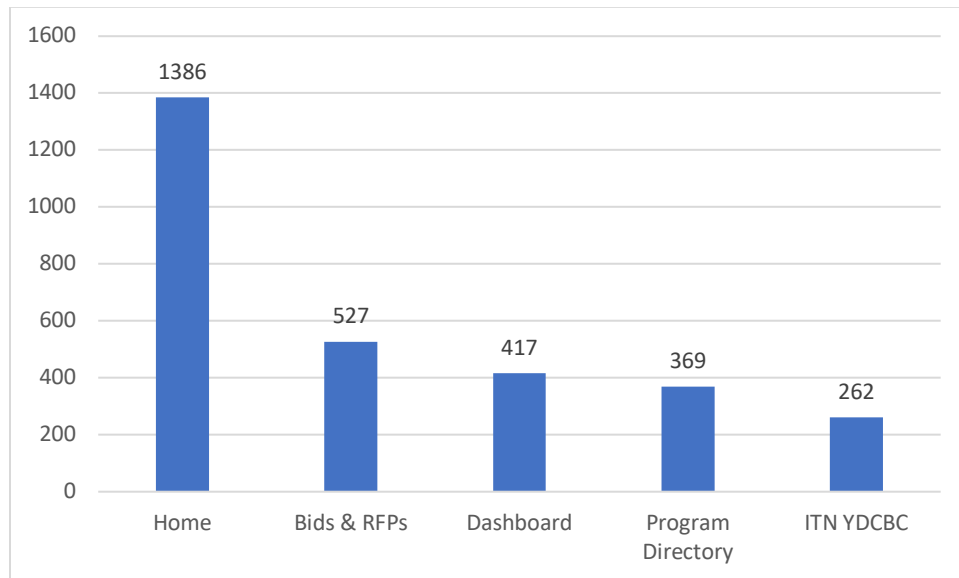
November 1, 2021 – November 30, 2021

### Website Dashboard






#### Website Traffic – Key Points

- Page Views 6,706
- Sessions 1,811
- New Users 721

#### Most Viewed Pages



## Followers

 Constant Contact	1120
	688
	155
	135
	109

## CTAC in the News

### Links and Attachments

[Children's Trust holds roundtable discussion with owners of early childcare centers](#)

[It's time to take big swings at our community's biggest problems](#)

[YMCA in Gainesville reimagines its mission with youth and teen center](#)

## EDUCATION

# Children's Trust holds roundtable discussion with owners of early childcare centers

**Gershon Harrell** The Gainesville Sun

Published 5:35 p.m. ET Nov. 5, 2021

Many entrepreneurs running early childhood facilities — most of them women — gathered for a discussion at the Greater Gainesville Chamber City of Commerce to talk about two things: what it takes to run an early childhood facility and how to pay the bills.

The discussion was organized by the Children's Trust of Alachua County, the Business and Leadership Institute for Early Learning and the chamber, who wanted to hear what preschool business leaders need.

Robyn Perlman, president of the Business Leadership Institute, began the conversation with asking early if they felt valued. Some answered that they are valued by the children but sometimes looked on by parents as babysitters.

Perlman pointed that in low income communities, women who take up the mantle and jump into preschool work because they have a passion for the education field.

"They're willing to take the risk and they're willing to place themselves in a very vulnerable situation because not only are they being vulnerable for each of the children they serve because they don't have the financial resources. They're being vulnerable for themselves and their own families because they're living off of marginalized income," Perlman said.

Perlman made it clear to the business owners that resources such as the chamber and Children's Trust are a resource, but it is critical that they knew how much money they

needed to operate successfully.

"When they ask for help, we want them to know exactly what they're asking for, because when we translate that to our legislators, if they're going to make that change in the funding either on the state level or federal with those vouchers then we need to know the funding... it's really important to know your numbers just like any other business," said Eric Godet, chamber president and CEO.

Another big challenge for the preschool leaders is the workforce. Most educators teaching at an early childhood center begin at \$12 an hour, however it can be hard for to recruit staff when other businesses in the area are paying upwards of \$15 an hour.

"The reality is you have to have those wages to be competitive," Perlman said.

In order to compete with those other businesses, it's essential that early childcare facilities run the numbers so they can identify those shortfalls.

"And distinguish over a long period of time how am I going to incrementally going to get to where I need to be, and it is, I'm going to have to raise tuition, I'm going to have to perhaps put new programming in that brings in additional revenue, I'm going to have to really explain to my parents the value that our educators are bringing into the classroom for their children," Perlman said.

In the early childcare industry there is a hesitation to raise tuition rates for fear of losing parents.

Misty Smith, owner of Little Preparatory Preschool, a privately owned early learning center in Alachua County, began her journey in education after she found herself pregnant at 16 and began looking for ways to educate her son.

She opened up her center when she was 25 and the business has been running for three years.

The Little Preparatory School educates children starting shortly after birth to age 5. Smith said the school currently has 48 children enrolled and there are six educators in the building. Her starting range for teachers is \$12 an hour.

Parents have the option to pay weekly for the preschool services, which she said can vary from \$150 to \$255.

However she said what her preschool needs right now is stable funding.

Godet said it's thrilling that he got to hear from the early education centers in Alachua County because there aren't that many and they're essential to the community.

He said the next step is to go in front of legislators with some of the educators so they can speak directly to the officials about what it exactly they need.

" And that's why it's important for us to get those numbers so that they know exactly what they need to do to help them," Godet said.

# The Gainesville Sun | Gainesville.com

---

**OPINION** *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

## It's time to take big swings at our community's biggest problems

**Nathan Crabbe** Opinion editor

Published 6:02 a.m. ET Nov. 18, 2021

It's a good problem to have: There is so much money flowing from different sources that officials in Alachua County haven't figured out how to spend it all.

Local government and school district officials have millions in federal COVID-19 relief money to spend, while the recently signed infrastructure bill should bring even more federal funding locally. There are millions more dedicated to children's programs and redevelopment projects through local initiatives that also await spending decisions.

Some of the money needs to be spent quickly to help residents who are still recovering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. But officials should also consider larger, longer-term projects that would bring transformational benefits to our community, rather than just a laundry list of small programs.

Take, for example, the Children's Trust of Alachua County, which nearly 62% of county voters approved creating in 2018. The vote allowed county property taxes to be increased up to a half mil annually over 12 years, raising around \$8 million each year to fund programs benefiting local children.

The Children's Trust got off to a slow start due to Gov. Ron DeSantis taking more than a year to name members to a board that oversees its spending. Much more has been happening this year, including aid to help nearly 1,200 local kids attend summer programs.

Children's Trust Executive Director Colin Murphy told a recent Gainesville for All meeting that other planned initiatives include helping early childhood education providers make improvements and a summer jobs program for young people. Murphy said other efforts still need to be determined, as the trust has collected millions more than it has spent.

The Children's Trust should fund some more substantial projects, especially if it wants voters to appreciate its value enough to continue its funding after 2030. My longtime hope is for area officials to agree on one collective goal — making sure all local students are reading proficient by third grade has been proposed before — and dedicate significant funding from across the community to achieve that goal.

Alachua County Public Schools have about \$61.5 million from the latest round of federal COVID-19 relief funding that could aid in such efforts. Florida was the last state to send the federal government a plan for the money, delaying the district from getting guidelines on spending.

Now that it has those guidelines, Superintendent Carlee Simon kicked off community engagement efforts on spending priorities with a “State of the District” speech Monday. The spending should include a few major initiatives to address longstanding problems such as racial and socioeconomic disparities.

Gainesville's Community Reinvestment Area is another place where significant money remains to be spent. The CRA was formerly comprised of four separate districts that each kept their own pots of money for projects within them. The districts were combined in 2019 so that increased tax revenue from rapidly developing neighborhoods such as the University of Florida campus area could be spent in places in greater need of redevelopment projects, such as east Gainesville.

The result is supposed to be \$70 million spent over 10 years. But a government reorganization under the former city manager stalled work over the past couple years on major projects in such areas as the Power District and the Eighth Avenue and Waldo Road area. The new interim city manager should make the changes needed to get these projects started as soon as possible.

The city could contribute additional funding to these projects through the more than \$32 million received from the American Rescue Plan and whatever comes from the recently signed infrastructure bill. But city commissioners' discussions of spending American Rescue Plan funding have so far been a jumbled mess, with debates over an east-side clinic and grocery



store putting off those efforts. Commissioners need to take advantage of having all of this money to fund longtime community priorities.

The pandemic created new challenges, but also an unprecedented opportunity to get major things accomplished. If local officials fail to use this moment to take big swings at our community's biggest problems, they might never again get the chance. The time is now to make some major investments so we can come out of the pandemic in a much stronger position.

*Nathan Crabbe is The Sun's opinion and engagement editor. Follow him at [twitter.com/nathancrabbe](https://twitter.com/nathancrabbe) and [facebook.com/nathancrabbe](https://facebook.com/nathancrabbe).*

## **Join the conversation**

Send a letter to the editor (up to 200 words) to [letters@gainesville.com](mailto:letters@gainesville.com). Letters must include the writer's full name and city of residence. Additional guidelines for submitting letters and longer guest columns can be found at [bit.ly/sunopinionguidelines](https://bit.ly/sunopinionguidelines).

## **Journalism matters. Your support matters.**

Get a digital subscription to the Gainesville Sun. Includes must-see content on [Gainesville.com](https://Gainesville.com) and [Gatorsports.com](https://Gatorsports.com), breaking news and updates on all your devices, and access to the Gainesville.com ePaper. Visit [www.gainesville.com/subscribe](https://www.gainesville.com/subscribe) to sign up.

## EDUCATION

# YMCA in Gainesville reimagines its mission with youth and teen center

**[Gershon Harrell](#)** The Gainesville Sun

Published 8:03 p.m. ET Nov. 14, 2021

The YMCA in Gainesville is reimagining itself after several tough years, with a vision of branching out more into Alachua County to meet the needs of young people.

Angela Howard, CEO of the North Central Florida YMCA, the YMCA's goal is to strengthen the community through their three areas of focus: youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility.

"A lot of people aren't aware of our purpose and our three areas focus because they see us as a gym and a pool, so the last two words and our actual mission is for all," Howard said.

The new business model will be more inclusive and "purpose-driven" and will ensure that everyone throughout the county can participate in the YMCA's programs or participate in future programs that don't exist at the moment.

The YMCA here nearly closed in 2016, but donations have kept it afloat as it reorganized following the arrest of its former top executive on embezzlement charges.

"Underneath our Y we have a fairly large territory, because we have all of Alachua County. So that means our rural communities, looking at different areas of going into the rural communities and actually doing programming there," Howard said.

**Gainesville:** Community wants solutions for gun violence, disparities

The first step taken within their business model was creating and implementing the Youth and Teen Center with nonprofit organization Motive8U of North Central Florida.

The Youth and Teen Center launched in September and targets teenagers who ages 10-16.

Howard said there is a lot of programming for school-aged children, however; through her research, she saw that there wasn't much for preteens and teens.

"And so when we looked at this research and saw the juvenile arrest rates, and different stats, we said okay,... 10-16 is where we need to be," Howard said.

John S. Rollins, CEO of Motiv8U and interim operations director of the YMCA, said he has attended several meetings with groups in Alachua County such as Children's Trust, the Alachua County School Board and neighborhood associations where it was identified that a lot of youth don't have a safe place to go.

"The YMCA we have a huge facility, we have a lot of space. We have a mission that aligns with serving the community and it seemed like all the pieces come together here," Rollins said.

According to figures from the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice in the 2019-2020 fiscal year out of Alachua County's 20,968 youth population — for ages 10-17 — there were 699 juvenile arrests made. Black youth made up 83.3% of juvenile arrests, 15.2% of arrests were white and 1.4% were Hispanic youth.

The Youth and Teen Center program operates from 12 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, and on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The center hours start at noon so that the YMCA can cater to youth who may be homeschooled.

Students who come through the center have the opportunity to learn basic cooking skills and have had the opportunity to work in robotics. Currently, the students are working on painting a mural outside the YMCA.

"Their next project is they're going to go out and plant a garden and learn what it means to grow your own vegetables and tend to them," Howard said.

It's a safe place where youth can come and be a child, Rollins said. The YMCA is looking to expand the center to rural areas in Alachua County. However, there are barriers that the program faces such as transportation. If a child wants to participate in the program, their parent or guardian has to drop them off and pick them up.

"Our goal is to resolve our transportation issue and make transportation available because we've heard from many who are interested in what we're doing that's that the challenge they're experiencing. If we could help transport the students, we could probably serve more students," Rollins said.

The YMCA is still in their transitional phase but going into the next year they're planning to have more summer camps in the rural communities that want and need their services.

"I tell my team, 'okay, now, we're getting ready to transition. I need everybody to get their best tennis shoes out because once this transition starts moving, we are literally going to start running,'" Howard said.

# The Gainesville Sun | Gainesville.com

---

## EDUCATION

# Gainesville community wants solutions for gun violence, disparities

**[Gershon Harrell](#)** The Gainesville Sun

Published 12:18 p.m. ET July 15, 2021

In a small room at the North Central Florida YMCA, people from the community came together to discuss ways to put an end to disparities that affect them and a recent spate of gun violence.

The meeting was the second part of a Gun Violence Call to Action meeting organized by community activist Chanae Jackson. The first was held July 1 in response to the June 24 shooting of five teens that occurred at the American Legion on Sixth Street.

A 13-year-old boy died July 7 from his injuries. Four other teens were wounded.

**More:** Gainesville activist Chanae Jackson on her new book, 'Yeah, I said it, I don't give a D.A.M.N.'

**More:** Teenage boy shot at American Legion dies

**More:** Charges in teen party shooting upgraded to murder

"One of the issues is we're literally always being reactive, so we are working to try to and come up with solutions without actually figuring out what the root cause is," Jackson said.

She said the purpose of the event's second part was to educate and train people, and equip them with enough information so they can feel comfortable being part of the solution.

"They need to understand, number one, the root cause of things that are going on, they need to understand how things are interrelated in order to come up with viable solutions,"

Jackson said.

She identified poverty as being a root cause that affects the community.

"As it relates to people not being properly educated as a root cause, lack of housing is a root cause, literally the blight within our community. The disparities are our major contributory factors ... and those are uncomfortable conversations we're not willing to have," Jackson said.

Ronald Foxx, pastor at Shady Grove Primitive Baptist Church, said the teenagers inflicting the harm don't understand the damage they're doing and how it damages families.

"You may have shot someone, but you destroyed yourself and another family's kid," Foxx said.

Near the event's end, Jackson had attendees stand and face each other. A blue ball of yarn in her hand, she passed it around and asked everyone their thoughts on how they would better the community, then to pass the yarn to the next person.

Offering more mental health services, offering help to parents, more community engagement and youth engagement were among their suggestions.

"So the reason I had you all do this activity, it's for a few reasons, number one you how all of this yarn is interconnected, this our community," Jackson said.

Tiffany Phillips, an Alachua County community member, left the meeting feeling empowered.

"I do think it takes research within our community and hunkering down and finding out what's out there and before we got about creating new programs I think we need to have a better understanding of what's happening," Phillips said.

Jackson left members in attendance with immediate actions they could take to better serve the community, such as contacting five youth service organizations and figuring out what they offer, identify five youth families who may benefit from a conversation and identify a child who would benefit from speaking with a trusted adult.

She also asked that the community get involved by attending the Gainesville Commission meeting July 15 and ask that American Rescue Plan Funds — federal funds given to the Gainesville to address community issues worsened by the pandemic— be used for youth programs to decrease gun violence.