



Our History

Learning Help Centers of Charlotte (LHCC) has been serving at-risk immigrant and refugee families since 2012, when the ministry was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit by Pastor Jeff Park. LHCC was established to break generational poverty among at-risk children and their families by empowering the next generation to stay in school and become educated and successful in life. The mission of LHCC was initially to place chaplains within low-income apartment communities who would be both neighbors and program service providers.

Our current Executive Director, Brent Morris, joined LHCC in March 2013 as a volunteer, and was named Executive Director in January 2014. With the ministry in capable hands, founder Jeff Park, whose passion was the start-up of the ministry, moved on to other ministry opportunities in 2015.

While the apartment-based model met with some initial success, it was challenged by gentrification and frequent relocation of the families served by LHCC that disrupted the long-term relationships LHCC sought to build. As a result, during 2015 a shift was made to delivering services to our target community in partnership with and utilizing the facilities of multi-cultural churches, including Forest Hill Church's South Boulevard Campus, Central United Methodist Church, and Saint Andrews United Methodist Church.

Church partners such as Forest Hill Church, a major contributor to the startup of LHCC, Central UMC, and St. Andrews UMC, where LHCC programs are currently based, and most recently Moments of Hope Church, have been instrumental in the success and growth of LHCC.

In 2018, the primary programs of Homework Assistance, Summer Camps, and Community Events were expanded to involve whole families in addition to their students. A program for parents was offered in conjunction with the Tuesday evening Homework Assistance/Tutoring program to assist them with cultural assimilation and navigation. The addition of Senor Diego Torres to the staff as a part-time Family Coordinator facilitated this effort.

Also in 2018, LHCC was selected from 170 non-profits to join a cohort of 4 grass-root non-profits in an incubator project, led by Next Stage Consulting, to build a platform for sustainable growth and effectiveness, including the development of a Strategic Business Plan that we continue to follow and leverage.

In 2020, faced by the global Covid pandemic, LHCC pivoted from church-based programs to delivery of much-needed food and supplies to families impacted by stay-at-home mandates and subsequent loss of employment that created food securities issues. We delivered over 26,500 meals to 90 families and upward of 180 children, more than double the number of our usual program participants. As school

shutdowns wore on and students suffered significant learning loss, we implemented a twice-weekly Connect Hub where students could obtain assistance in a safe environment.

In late 2020, two part-time staff, a Program Coordinator and a Volunteer Coordinator, were hired to help relieve the workload of our Executive Director, and at the same time a search was initiated for a full-time Operations Leader.

In 2021, as Covid restrictions eased, we returned to in-person programs at St. Andrews, still maintaining an emphasis on personal protection and hygiene. In Fall 2021 we held a Vaccination Clinic at St. Andrews in which children and adults received their Covid vaccinations. A Mental Health project was begun with Camino Health to address the mental health issues our families faced as a result of the isolation created by Covid.

The “Kinship Kitchen” project was initiated in 2021, with the support of the Reemprise Fund. In conjunction with other like-minded organizations, LHCC sought to leverage the lessons learned from other LHCC programs to understand the dynamics of developing mutually beneficial relationships between those in need and those who wished to serve them. The kitchen was utilized to train parents in food preparation safety and provide healthy meals for our Tuesday evening program, while yielding valuable learnings that will influence our programs going forward.

God blessed the search for a full-time Operations Leader in February 2022 with the hiring of former CMS teacher Meghan Miller. She brings to our team her considerable expertise in education, her bilingual skills, and a passion for serving our families. In December 2022 Ana Robles, also bilingual, was hired to serve as our Parent Outreach Lead.

These additional resources have allowed us to grow our current programs in depth and quality, as well as to expand our services to our families. We continue to increase parental engagement through a Parent Advisory Committee. A Health & Wellness initiative, in partnership with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Health Department and Atrium Health is addressing the needs of our families for physical and mental healthcare, healthy nutrition, and exercise through a Thursday evening ‘Family FIT’ program. In 2023 we plan to increase our efforts in Workforce Development. Our elementary school students are beginning a reading program called iReady that is tailored to their specific needs.

Now in our 11th year of operation, we celebrate the successful ministry the Lord has entrusted to LHCC and expectantly hope in his continued blessing as we endeavor to develop families that are equipped and empowered with life skills that help both children and parents achieve spiritual, scholastic, financial, and social health and vitality.

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