

The background of the cover is a photograph of a building at night, likely The Landmark Center, with its name visible on a blue sign. The building has large glass windows and is surrounded by a shower of colorful confetti in shades of purple, pink, yellow, and green. The main title is written in large, white, serif capital letters, with the first part in lowercase.

we've ONLY JUST BEGUN

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

ForkKids

The Landmark Center

Through our core programs, we assist approximately 290 families each day.



IN A YEAR where most service organizations could rightfully claim survival as victory, 2021 was one of endurance, aspiration and innovation at ForKids. A dedicated staff and Board of Directors charged through twelve more months of pandemic pressure and uncertainty, undaunted and undeterred.

Funding, staffing and opening The Landmark Center on time, and on budget, meant the innovations we had been dreaming of were ready to deploy. Families found refuge and respect at Sokol Place. Educational and developmental gaps that seemed hopelessly widened by the remote 2020 school year began to shrink in the Batten Learning Hub.

ForKids also launched The McCormick Center for Research and Advocacy, and now provides reliable, real-time data to inform and influence those who represent our communities at local, state and federal levels of government.

The historic South Norfolk community gained a friendly new neighbor. One who supported local businesses, planted trees, and invited their children to come over and play on Saturdays for enrichment programming like “Art at the Mark.” Critical services at both The Landmark Center in Chesapeake and The Birdsong Center in Suffolk created permanent pathways out of poverty.

As we help move our client families into emotional, physical and financial health, ForKids is also charting our course as an organization. We are following a bold new strategic plan and growing our team with an intention to be as diverse as we are dynamic. Our 20th Annual Art Auction was the most successful on record. We secured major grants this past year through proof of performance and skillful presentation of our vision. ForKids has also begun the work of funding an endowment so we can retain the ability to plan as well as pivot, since the challenges for our families will surely remain both predictable and unique.

We are so grateful for the endurance of ForKids, the aspirations of our clients, and the innovation you make possible through your continued support. Thank you!



**THE NEW
LANDMARK CENTER**

60,000
square feet of space

135
bed emergency
shelter

24
seat housing crisis
call center

5
classroom
education center

1
fulltime chef and
full-service kitchen

263+
works of art



Kelly Sokol
Chair, Board of Directors



Thaler McCormick
Chief Executive Officer

Kelly Sokol Thaler McCormick



HOMELESSNESS THREATENED TO BECOME AN EQUALLY DEVASTATING EPIDEMIC

when COVID shut down the world in March 2020.

Calls to the Regional Housing Crisis Hotline surged. Going from several hundred calls per week to over 1,000 calls in a single day left ForKids staff reeling. How to manage the tsunami of need?

Beginning in April 2020, the federally funded Rent Mortgage Relief Program provided ForKids with the money desperately needed to keep families in their homes. By December 2020, ForKids had distributed \$4.8 million to 1,100 households in Hampton Roads.

Millions of dollars became available through RMRP and supplemental unemployment support. But the application process to obtain those funds was burdensome and complicated, often taking months for that additional money to arrive.

Consequently, calls for help often came from local court staff. Janice is appearing before the judge right now, they reported, facing eviction from her apartment. She says she has applied for relief through ForKids. Is that true? Yes, we confirmed, she has. With this confirmation, the judge continued the eviction case and ForKids prioritized Janice's application, immediately distributing funds to Janice's landlord. Additional donations from generous ForKids community partners paid Janice's past due utility bills. Crisis averted for Janice, and hundreds of other local families facing the same devastating scenario.

A FRONT DOOR IS A POWERFUL THING.

Closed, it keeps the world at bay. Open, it welcomes the possibilities of a new day.

Sokol Place, the family shelter at The Landmark Center, boasts 20 front doors, increasing our previous shelter capacity two-fold. Behind each door is a kitchenette, an area with table and chairs, and a larger room with single and bunk beds. A rooftop garden provides an outdoor retreat. Communal living areas within the shelter offer safe spaces to gather and learn.

More importantly, behind each front door is a family striving to overcome poverty and the multiple barriers that keep them unstably housed. ForKids staff are relentless in helping families. But the dignity conveyed with safe housing may be the greatest benefit Sokol Place can offer. The power of those 20 front doors enables each resident to say “I feel like a human being.”





FORKIDS KIDS DESIGNED A CITY PARK! When the City of Chesapeake announced plans to renovate Johnson Park, a grassy field located behind The Landmark Center, ForKids kids and their teachers jumped on the chance to design the park of their dreams.

The park project fit well into the Project-Based Learning (PBL) philosophy practiced by educators in ForKids classrooms, where our students take on real-world questions and explore them deeply over several weeks. At the end of the process, they share their work publicly.

Our students started their park project by learning about landscape architects and what they do in creating parks. They researched parks around the world and prioritized their “wish list,” dividing the park into 5 sections - splash pad, dog park, starter playground, finisher playground and basketball/volleyball court.

The kids focused next on what challenges parks have today and how to mitigate those challenges with their own park. This included gazebos with solar panel roofs that charge phone-charging stations so parents don't have to charge phones in their cars. Students wanted both a volleyball and a basketball court and found a way to combine the courts into one and came up with a rotation schedule for play.

Next, they worked through drawing to scale, which included multiplication, division and measurement. Students used the blueprints from The Landmark Center to understand the amount of space they had for the park.

For the project finale, the kids made presentations of their park models to ForKids staff and the City of Chesapeake's Department of Parks and Recreation.



PERHAPS THE MOST UNUSUAL GRANT RECEIVED

during *The Campaign For Kids* came from the Virginia Department of Forestry for an urban orchard for the Landmark Center's Brock Rooftop Garden. Puzzled, we wondered what kind of orchard--what kind of garden, for that matter--can you expect from a few planters and raised flowerbeds?

A beautiful, prolific one!

Michael Andruczyk, Virginia Cooperative Extension Horticulture Agent and Chesapeake Master Gardener, oversaw the project, helping to select and source over 450 fruit, vegetable and herb plants and seeds. Additional input came from Tymoff+Moss Architects, Hourigan Construction, Healthy Chesapeake, and Chesapeake Department of Health. Mike recruited volunteers from his fellow Chesapeake Master Gardeners and Department of Forestry staff for the official "Urban Orchard Planting Day" in February, a cloudy, blustery day more suited to a cozy fire than playing outside in dirt.

Master Gardeners worked with families in Sokol Place emergency shelter throughout the growing season, tending the garden and nurturing souls. The Birdsong Café in the Landmark Center used all the produce for nutrition education and delicious meals. Mike continues to coordinate all aspects of the garden, from scheduling the Master Gardeners to planning seasonal plantings. Let's get growing!

RECIPE FOR A FRUITFUL PARTNERSHIP

- 1 team of Master Gardeners (Chesapeake variety)
- 1 Brock Rooftop Garden
- 1 Sokol Place emergency family shelter
- Variety of seeds, plants and trees
- Assorted families and staff

Gather ingredients. Stir enthusiastically. Add water, sunshine, and teachable moments, including proper plant care. Harvest prolific amounts of vegetables and fruit. Assemble produce, families and staff in kitchen to prep, cook and learn. Sample homemade jams, pasta sauces, teas, and salads... the bounty of hard work and friendship.

Repeat planting seasonally. Repeat garden maintenance and tutorials weekly.

Bon appetit!



Michael Andruczyk

FY21
SHELTER
STATS

ForKids
sheltered

133

families

There were

267

kids in
Emergency Shelter

47%

of those kids
were 5 and under

#HOUSINGMATTERS

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition:

In Hampton Roads, a person who is earning minimum wage can afford to pay **\$494** a month in rent.

In Hampton Roads, a modest one-bedroom rental is **\$972** a month and a two-bedroom is **\$1,147**.

Across Virginia, there are only **39** affordable homes per **100** extremely-low income households .

The average income of a ForKids housing client is **\$10,510** a year or **\$875** a month.

That client would need to work **93** hours a week to afford a modest two-bedroom rental home at Fair Market Rent in Hampton Roads.



85% of families leaving our Emergency Shelter program moved into appropriate housing.

This success rate is because of the incredible efforts of the ForKids Housing team in a housing market lacking sufficient affordable housing.



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