

PEOPLE  FIRST



EMPOWERED BY
URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.



YEAR
5

TIDEWATER GARDENS
IMPACT REPORT

JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024



US | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.
Partners in the Center of Health

BRINSHORE





▲ Alongside Kaleidoscope, a mental health community partner of People First^{USI}, a young man celebrates his corn hole win during the resident engagement event.



◀ Patrice Collins (center) was recognized as Landlord of the Year at the People First^{USI} Landlord Appreciation Brunch for her outstanding dedication and exceptional service in supporting former Tidewater Gardens residents with affordable housing, utilizing their housing choice vouchers. People First^{USI} staff - Kimi Smith (left), Nicole Brown (right) also pictured here.

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COVER IMAGE: Former Tidewater Gardens youth displaying her newly painted face at the annual People First^{USI} End of the School Year Bash.

ST. PAUL'S TRANSFORMATION TEAM

PEOPLE FIRST^{USI}

Esther Shin, President

Donovan Duncan,
Executive Vice President

Alicia Walter,
Regional Vice President

Tyronda Minter, Vice President,
Educational Initiatives

Nicole Brown,
Director of Operations

Thomasine Norfleet,
Associate Project Manager,
Partnership & Pillars

Kashira Wilson, Associate Project
Manager, Supportive Services

Kimi Smith, Reoccupancy Specialist

Chamika Johnson,
Education Specialist

Gabrielle Robinson,
Education Specialist

Brittany Sutton, Data Manager

Jayla Carrington,
Family Support Specialist

Natalie Lino, Outreach Specialist

Pamela Blount,
Family Support Specialist

Marcus Clarke,
Family Support Specialist

Dominique Hoskins,
Family Support Specialist

Brandi Bailey,
Family Support Specialist

Amber Swain,
Family Support Specialist

Meisha Calloway,
Family Support Specialist

Aaron White,
Family Support Specialist

Makayla Overton,
Family Support Specialist

Monique Clemmons,
Family Support Specialist

Koy Adams,
Family Support Specialist

Hannah Howard,
Family Support Specialist

Brittney Anderson,
Lead Mobility Specialist

Tonya Howard,
Lead Mobility Specialist

Darlene Andrade,
Administrative Assistant

CITY OF NORFOLK, DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Susan Perry, Director

Marcia McGill, Assistant Director

Shamekia Gordon, Senior Project
Manager - People First

Mark Matel, Senior Project Manager
- Redevelopment

Ha Chau, Project Manager

Paige Davis, Management Analyst

Krystle Aponte,
Management Analyst

NORFOLK REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY (NRHA)

Nathan Simms Jr.,
Executive Director

Michael Clark, Deputy Executive
Director, Programs

Steve Morales,
Chief Development Officer

Pamela Jones Watford, Chief of
Rental Assistance Programs

Kelly Hudson, Portfolio Manager

Demetria Johnson, Deputy
Executive Director, Administration

Julius Norman,
Client Services Director

PRINCIPAL EDUCATION PARTNER - NORFOLK PUBLIC SCHOOLS (NPS)

Dr. Doreatha White, Chief Strategy,
Innovation, and Community
Engagement Officer

Bruce Brady, Executive Director,
Curriculum and Instruction

Dr. Karren Bailey, Senior Director,
Assessment, Research and
Accountability

LaEunice Featherson, Community
Engagement Coordinator



“Shoveling success” to celebrate the groundbreaking of the Kindred community are (pictured from left to right): Councilman John Paige, John Majors of the Oughtness Group, resident Natalie Lino, Mayor Kenneth Alexander, resident Krystal Smith, Councilwoman Danica Royster, and Senator Angelia Williams Graves.



FROM MAYOR ALEXANDER



DEAR RESIDENTS AND FRIENDS:

As we wrap up FY2024, we celebrate a significant milestone: the completion of year five in the St. Paul’s area transformation project. I am thrilled to share that construction of the first two apartment buildings, Origin Circle and Reunion, is now complete. Forty-five former Tidewater Gardens residents have returned to new homes in the revitalized neighborhood, now known as Kindred!

A “People First” Commitment

Since 2019, we’ve upheld our “People First” commitment, a promise supported by Urban Strategies, Inc. (USI). This initiative centers around four key pillars to assist residents: housing, employment, education, and health and wellness. Through their hard work and active participation, residents have seen notable improvements across these areas.

Notable Achievements

Former Tidewater Gardens residents who engaged with People First^{USI}, have achieved:

- Secured housing in areas of opportunity in Norfolk and throughout Hampton Roads
- Increased their average annual wage income and attained full-time employment
- Demonstrated significant progress in math and reading proficiency, kindergarten readiness, and graduation rates of school-aged children
- Achieved 100% healthcare coverage for children and 98% coverage of adults

Gratitude and Appreciation

This success would not be possible without the continued support of Norfolk City Council and its annual \$3M commitment to fund the work of People First^{USI}. We extend our gratitude to the dedicated citizens serving on the St. Paul’s area Advisory Committee and to the tenacity of staff and leadership from the Norfolk Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA), and Urban Strategies, Inc. (USI). On behalf of the residents of Norfolk—thank you!

Inspiring Stories and a Vibrant Community

In this report, you’ll find inspiring stories of courage, determination, and achievement from our Norfolk neighbors who, despite facing uncertainty and change, are moving toward a brighter future. Kindred, our vibrant Norfolk neighborhood, welcomes people of diverse backgrounds, ages, incomes, and cultures. Both Reunion and Origin Circle are now fully leased, underscoring the excitement and sense of community that defines Kindred!

Proud to Call Norfolk Home

Kindred is another shining example of why we are so proud to call Norfolk home.

Sincerely,

KENNETH COOPER ALEXANDER, PH.D.
Mayor



FROM COUNCILMEMBERS ROYSTER AND PAIGE

DEAR RESIDENTS, COLLEAGUES, STAKEHOLDERS, AND FRIENDS:

In 2019, we embarked on a transformative journey to revitalize the Tidewater Gardens neighborhood. Our goal was to replace outdated barracks-style housing with new, eco-friendly homes and apartments designed to enhance and strengthen our vibrant community.

But this project is not just about buildings. It's about people — the resilient residents of former Tidewater Gardens whose lives were disrupted and the only certainty was change. The City of Norfolk, NRHA, and the St. Paul's area Advisory Committee promised that all decisions would be made through the lens of "people first," and we kept our promise.

Over the past five years, we have seen remarkable progress: old structures have been demolished, new apartment homes have been constructed and 45 former Tidewater Gardens residents have returned to the neighborhood now called Kindred!

Throughout the relocation process, our guiding principles were housing stability and choice. Residents who wished to return to Kindred were given the opportunity and resources to do so, and many have done so. But some residents are happy with the home they chose during relocation and have decided to stay. As of the end of FY 2024, nearly 90% of residents report being in good standing with their property manager/landlord and 85% say they feel safe in their home.

Housing is one of four pillars of services provided by People First, Empowered by Urban Strategies Inc. (USI); the others are Economic Mobility, Education, and Health and Wellness. A reported 94% of eligible former Tidewater Gardens residents have engaged with People

First^{USI}. Inside this report, you'll find inspiring personal stories of resilience and self-sufficiency from those who have persevered through their journeys.

We also want to extend a very special "thank you" to the 20 dedicated members of the St. Paul's area Advisory Committee (SPAC). As co-chairs for this dynamic group, we deeply appreciate their commitment, hard work, insightful feedback, and innovative solutions that have guided the transformation of St. Paul's in collaboration with residents, City Council, the City of Norfolk, and NRHA.

We've made significant strides over these five years. Join us in celebrating the sacrifice, determination, and growth of our families who have embraced this new beginning.

Thank you, People First^{USI}, for walking lockstep with each and every family who chooses to engage.

With gratitude,

COUNCILWOMAN DANICA ROYSTER,
SUPERWARD 7

Co-Chair, St. Paul's Advisory Committee

COUNCILMAN JOHN "JP" PAIGE,
WARD 4

Co-Chair, St. Paul's Advisory Committee



Thanks to a Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) leverage commitment, St. Paul's residents were able to enjoy a fun filled day at the Virginia Zoo.



FROM NRHA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMS



DEAR NORFOLK COMMUNITY:

With just a brief tenure at Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA) so far, it is yet evident to me that this organization has played a pivotal role in upholding and transforming communities throughout the city. It excites me to lead that continued effort, as we work toward providing economic mobility, educational advancement, and housing that's not only affordable, but inspirational.

NRHA, alongside our community and corporate partners, has accomplished so much in the past five years. That includes improving our downtown landscape and giving residents the opportunity to expand their real estate. Collaborative initiatives such as the Reunion Senior Living at Kindred and the Origin Circle at Kindred properties, are stellar examples of what can be accomplished when a city, and its critical agencies, are aware of constituents' needs and what the landscape requires.

Now, as we look to construction of the new Aspire on Church Street property, this is another opportunity to showcase how NRHA aims to create spaces and synergy that benefit residents in a myriad of ways.

NRHA is dedicated to not only housing our residents but ensuring they're whole and motivated to take advantage of all our services. A strong NRHA is a strong Norfolk, and a strong Norfolk is a strong America.

NATHAN F. SIMMS JR

Executive Director,
Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority



▲ People First^{USI} Norfolk Team.



FROM USI PRESIDENT ESTHER SHIN



USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.
Families at the Center of Results

DEAR FRIENDS OF USI:

It has been five years since we collectively began reimagining what the former Tidewater Gardens could not only look and feel like, but what the dreams and aspirations of the children and families of this community could realize. With the Origin and Reunion Circle community reopened and Kindred welcoming back families, the dedicated members of the People First Empowered by USI team, our critical partners, and stakeholders throughout Hampton Roads should be proud of the extremely hard work that we have collectively committed to and achieved.

Over this past year, People First^{USI} has celebrated great wins with children, families, and partners. Our collaborative efforts saw 94% of the 614 original, eligible Tidewater Gardens' families continuously engaged with the People First^{USI} services with 45 families reoccupying homes in the Kindred community. By the close of year five, the average wage increased to \$28,645 and the household income reached \$37,985, with 85% of households reporting that they feel safe in their homes. Our collective efforts

show families moving back into the neighborhood, earning more, and feeling safer, which is the best reward to community transformations. This moment has been the dream for households and stakeholders alike to continually center the needs of families while also moving a city forward, together.

USI is proud to present this report to the Norfolk community to celebrate the gains over the last year and the collaborations necessary to support stable and thriving Virginians.

Your partner,

ESTHER SHIN

President & CEO, Urban Strategies, Inc.



The Franklin Group welcomed new and returning former Tidewater Gardens residents, businesses, and Kindred stakeholders to grab paintbrushes and vibrant colors to create visual, permanent marks of representation on a series of canvases during the Make Your Mark project.

THE PEOPLE FIRST^{USI} PROCESS

As the City of Norfolk and Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority prepared to transform the Tidewater Gardens community, a promise was made to its residents—People First. The needs and desires of residents and families would inform the revitalization work, and residents would receive the help they need to be successful during the process.

In 2019, People First, empowered by Urban Strategies, Inc. (People First^{USI}), began working with residents in the areas of housing, employment, education, and health and wellness. Urban Strategies, Inc. brings proven expertise in implementing neighborhood and human services programs in areas undergoing significant transitions, such as the Tidewater Gardens community.

The goal—connecting residents with a wide network of social service, business, education, corporations, and non-profit partners to provide services vital to the growth and stability of residents and their families.



▲ A resident speaks with a community partner during one of many Right to Return events in the former Tidewater Gardens community.



◉ Former Tidewater Gardens resident receives support from Relocation Specialist Kimi Smith of the People First^{USI} team.

HOW IT WORKS

Intake and Assessment

Participation with People First^{USI} is voluntary. We are pleased that the majority of residents and families have engaged with our services.

The process starts with a comprehensive initial assessment with a Family Support Specialist (FSS)—an in-depth, one-on-one meeting, that begins with the head of household and includes each family member. Information is gathered regarding household composition, economic status, health conditions, employment history, and educational needs. The intake process also identifies any immediate challenges such as housing instability, food insecurity or lack of access to healthcare and educational services. Through these conversations, specialists build trust and foster open communication, ensuring that every resident feels heard and understood.

Based on information gathered, a personalized support plan is developed and residents are then connected with community and social service partners to aid identified needs and goals. By taking this person-centered approach, People First^{USI} ensures that all residents receive the targeted support and resources necessary to enhance quality of life and achieve long-term stability.

Assistance Along the Way

People First^{USI} services are available to Tidewater Gardens residents for five years after relocation. After the initial assessment and intake process, People First^{USI} continues to engage with residents through regular follow-ups and check-ins. These ongoing interactions allow representatives to monitor progress, reassess needs and adjust support plans as necessary to ensure they remain aligned with the former residents' evolving circumstances and goals.

Continuous Support and Empowerment

People First^{USI} provides ongoing support for former Tidewater Gardens residents. From job training opportunities—to financial literacy programs, connecting people to vital resources—social gatherings that keep the community connected, People First^{USI} is there! Fostering strong, lasting relationships with residents allows us to not only address immediate needs but also empowers individuals and families to achieve lasting success and long-term well-being. The outcomes of these efforts are highlighted throughout the pages of this report.

94%
eligible families
engaged with
PeopleFirst^{USI}



By the end of Year 5, 94%, or 577, of the 614 original eligible Tidewater Gardens families had engaged with the People First^{USI} Team.



▶ Groundbreaking ceremony for “Aspire at Church Street,” one of the off site locations with allocated units for former Tidewater Gardens residents.

HOUSING

People First^{USI}'s work with residents includes ensuring all Tidewater Gardens households remain stably housed in their housing of choice by providing comprehensive case management services, including assistance with housing applications, navigating rental subsidies, and connecting families to supportive services like childcare, healthcare, and legal aid. They work closely with residents to help them understand their rights and responsibilities as

tenants, resolve any disputes with landlords, and prevent eviction. Additionally, People First^{USI} supports residents in transitioning to long-term housing stability by offering financial coaching, emergency rent assistance when necessary, and promoting access to affordable housing options. Their approach ensures that families can maintain stable homes while empowering them to live with dignity and independence.



100%
of households enrolled with PeopleFirst^{USI} are eligible for Right to Return.



53%
of our adult participants (315) reported having access to a computer with internet connectivity in their home.

Data snapshot provided by LEARN (USI's Data Management System)

RIGHT TO RETURN: A COMMITMENT TO HOUSING STABILITY

Every former Tidewater Gardens resident who wants a home in the St. Paul's area of Norfolk will have one. This is the guarantee that Norfolk City Council and NRHA made in 2020.

As of October 2024, 45 families have successfully returned to the first two apartment home buildings in Kindred – Reunion and Origin Circle. Construction in Kindred is ongoing, with additional buildings expected to become available in 2025. Additionally, 47 families have returned to off-site housing opportunities to Aspire, Market Heights, and Riverside Station.

The Tidewater Gardens Transformation's right to return policy provides residents with financial resources to

cover utility and moving expenses, security deposits, and other fees related to relocation.

This right to return is a vital component of housing stability and community preservation. Its successful implementation relies on clear policies, effective coordination, and robust support systems, such as People First^{USI}, to assist residents throughout the process.

[Read the full Right to Return document to learn more.](#)

SCAN FOR
RIGHT TO RETURN
POLICY





KRYSTAL SMITH

A Resident Returns to her ‘Origin’

“I was four years old when I moved into Tidewater Gardens,” says Krystal Smith as she reflects on the community she called home for nearly three decades. She made friends, built connections, and liked living in the community.

For Krystal, the transformation of the Tidewater Gardens community meant change. Hers was one of the 614 households required to relocate to other housing while the new community was being built. She moved twice—first to Oakdale Farms in 2020 and then to the Berkley community, both times using housing choice vouchers to help with rental assistance.

But her goal was to move back to the new community called Kindred. By April 2024, Smith achieved her goal with the help of her People First^{USI} specialist Meisha Calloway, who guided her in securing housing at Origin Circle at Kindred. “Meisha was extremely helpful throughout the entire process and was there with me when I signed the lease. She is still available if I have any questions,” Smith shares, underscoring the vital role People First^{USI} played in providing ongoing support during each phase of her journey.

The move to Origin Circle has been a positive experience for Smith and her two children, ages 11 and 13. “It feels like a good community for us,” she says, highlighting the welcoming environment and sense of stability her family has found. Smith is hopeful about the community’s future



Norfolk City Council passed an ordinance allowing former Tidewater Gardens residents the right to return, regardless of their enrollment status with People First^{USI}. Enrollment in People First^{USI} is not a requirement for return.



📍 Krystal Smith, former Tidewater Gardens resident now living in Origin Circle at Kindred.



Meisha was extremely helpful throughout the entire process and was there with me when I signed the lease.

and eagerly anticipates the completion of construction. “I’m looking forward to having the construction be completed so my family and I can enjoy the finished product,” she says.

Smith’s story is a testament to the goals of the St. Paul’s Transformation Project and the comprehensive

support People First^{USI} provides in helping families navigate transitions and settle into new communities. Her experience reflects the project’s commitment to creating a resilient, mixed-income community where former residents, like Smith, can thrive in a supportive environment.



HOW HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHERS EMPOWER RESIDENTS

The Housing Choice Voucher program in Norfolk, Virginia, administered by the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority and funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, plays a crucial role in helping low-income families, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities secure safe and affordable housing in the

private market. Participants are required to meet specific income limits based on the area median income.

This program empowers eligible households to select their own housing options, including single-family homes, townhouses, and apartments, while providing rental subsidies to ensure that these homes remain affordable.

LATRICE MASON

One Naysayer Resident Rejoices in Being Wrong

Latrice Mason happily admits that she was wrong.

After living in Tidewater Gardens for 20 years, she says: “At first, I didn’t want to move.” She admits she was a naysayer and didn’t believe in the transformation effort.

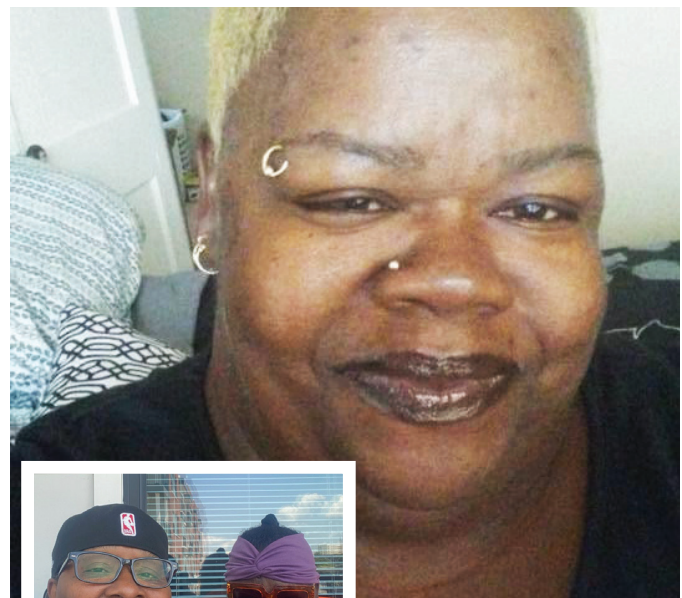
But now, she is happy to have gone through the transition and come back to the community. “I love it,” she exclaims of Origin Circle, the beautiful Kindred community apartment building she now calls home. And throughout the process, she praised People First^{USI} for working with her. “It’s a great organization,” she said.

Mason, in fast-stage renal kidney failure, said her People First^{USI} family support specialist provided essential support that helped her navigate both personal and practical challenges. People First^{USI} ensured she and her sister, who lives with her, were taken care of as she found herself in and out of the hospital. “People First^{USI},” she says, “even helped with moving expenses.”

Now in a two-bedroom apartment in Kindred, Mason has medical transport and easy access to her dialysis center. She thanks People First^{USI} for helping her.

Mason loves the building and all the amenities. “It has everything,” she says of the building. “It’s brand new for new opportunities.”

People First^{USI}’s involvement allowed Mason to see the transformation as more than a relocation—it’s a new beginning in a revitalized neighborhood designed with her needs in mind.



▶ Above: Latrice Mason, a former Tidewater Gardens resident who recently returned to Origin Circle at Kindred. Left: Sending hugs to her sister Cassandra Moore.

** We had the privilege of speaking with Ms. Mason shortly before her passing. Her warmth touched us, and we are grateful for the opportunity to work with her family to share her words and experience in this report. We extend our heartfelt condolences to her family and friends during this difficult time. May she be remembered for her strength, kindness, and the joy she brought to those around her.*



SHANELL KEENE

Former Resident Celebrates Nonreturn



As of June 30, 2024

89.5%

(or 510) of 570 families report being in good standing with their property manager/landlord



85%

(or 508) of our adult participants report feeling safe in their home

Data snapshot provided by LEARN (USI's Data Management System)

Shanell Keene doesn't want to return to Kindred, and that's by design. Residents in Tidewater Gardens were free to choose where they would relocate during the transformation project. For Shanell, the relocation meant building a fulfilling life for her family outside of the St. Paul's neighborhood.

She decided to move to the quiet community of Norview Heights. "I love my children's schools," she says. Her four children—ages 12, 8, 7, and 6—have thrived academically and socially, and she appreciates having nearby family and a safe environment where her children can play.

People First^{USI}'s resources were invaluable in helping her transition smoothly. "Their resources are unmatched," she says, grateful for the support that has allowed her to establish a stable life and pursue her goals.

Through People First^{USI}'s partnership with Old Dominion University's Dream Builder Program, Keene has



Shanell Keene, former Tidewater Gardens resident and author, smiles proudly as her children hold two of her latest books, "Let's Go to Antarctica" and "Let's Go to Europe."

continued to build her entrepreneurial dreams. During COVID, Keene started writing children's books, which now has expanded into book signings and a growing publishing business. With a mentor from People First, she is working toward homeownership and launching a nationwide contest for young illustrators. Keene's entrepreneurial spirit has even inspired her children: her oldest son started a body butter business, and her daughter now creates and sells lip gloss.

Keene encourages others to take full advantage of People First^{USI}'s resources. "Some just need that helping hand to help them get on track," she says, urging her former neighbors to embrace the opportunities available to them.

By respecting each resident's unique path, People First^{USI} empowers families such as Keene's to thrive in the community that best supports their dreams.



Their resources are unmatched.

LANDLORD PARTNERSHIP

Man Uses Life's 'Second Act' to Provide Affordable Housing for HCV Residents

In 2007, J.M. Nesbitt purchased and renovated a duplex in the historic Park Place neighborhood of Norfolk. His plan was to become a landlord once he retired, using his duplex as rental property.

“The Historic Park Place neighborhood is a great place for tenants to live because it’s safe, convenient, near the Virginia Zoo, a park, and bus stops,” he says of his duplex.

Nesbitt has always been intrigued by real estate. He obtained a real estate license to better understand the industry and says he’d like to keep investing in real estate to help others who need some support and a good space to live and thrive.



J.M. Nesbitt is one of our new landlord partners providing housing options for those with a housing choice voucher (HCV).



I like how they hold residents responsible but also work toward making them independent.

Nesbitt joined HUD’s Housing Choice Voucher program and accepts this form of rental assistance. This means a lot to Nesbitt because he wants to help his community and give back in some way. He never wants to be considered a slumlord. If his tenant calls for a repair, he responds immediately. Excellent service is important to him. Nesbitt says People First^{USI} does the same with engaging their clients. This is the main reason he enjoys working with People First^{USI}.

“I like how they hold residents responsible but also work toward making them independent,” he says of People First^{USI}’s work with those who have transitioned out of the Tidewater Gardens community. “That is so important.”

Nesbitt highlights how People First^{USI} prioritizes mobility counseling as an essential service before, during, and after community revitalization. “The benefit is that families have access to all neighborhoods and lead mobility counselors connect them to the landlords in neighborhoods of opportunity and other neighborhoods of choice,” he explains. Through this approach, People First^{USI}’s engagement with partner landlords ensures available units for families and provides conflict resolution to support both residents and landlords alike.

This collaboration aligns with Nesbitt’s own values, making him an advocate of People First^{USI}’s approach to community development and tenant support.

AMERGIN SUGGS

Overcoming Adversity: How One Child Found Stability and Success After Relocating from Tidewater Gardens

Change is often hardest on children—just ask the Suggs family. Already struggling with the special needs of Amergin, Prestagasia and her daughter were completely overwhelmed when a move from Tidewater Gardens and COVID-19 were added to the mix.

“Honestly, it was hell,” Prestagasia Suggs initially said of her move with Amergin, her then 9-year-old daughter.

Two years prior, Amergin was diagnosed with autism, prompting her mother to quickly find and establish the support systems her daughter needed. But once COVID-19 hit and her national health service worker was taken away mid-move, Amergin spiraled toward being suicidal, overwhelmed by too many changes at once.



▲ Prestagasia Suggs and her daughter Amergin in solidarity and bonding in nature.



I wanted some place where my daughter could go outside.

It was a lot, Prestagasia recalled, managing Amergin’s needs while struggling to find a decent place to live that would accept her housing choice voucher. “I wanted someplace where my daughter could go outside,” she said, describing the search that finally landed her in the Norview area of Norfolk near her family.

After settling in, the task of rebuilding Amergin’s support system began. Prestagasia brought a pet guinea pig into their lives, and her healthcare provider sent journals and coloring books to help. Once the pandemic eased, Amergin tried attending public school with her cousins, but the attempt was unsuccessful.

At this critical point, People First^{USI} stepped in to offer support, connecting Prestagasia with Education Specialist Gabrielle Robinson. “Gabby has been a godsend,”

Prestagasia exclaimed. Over the past two years, Robinson has helped find tutoring, secured grants, and established resources to support Amergin’s homeschooling. People First^{USI} helped Amergin attend a STEM program at Norfolk State University this past summer that supported her needs and provided a positive activity for her with other young people. This marked a significant step in her growth and confidence.

Today, Amergin is thriving, and Prestagasia couldn’t be happier with the progress her daughter has made.

When asked if they would consider returning to Kindred, Prestagasia expressed gratitude for what the community has become but is content with the new village they’ve created.

- ▼ In April 2024, People First^{USI} held its second “Life is a Journey, Not a Race” event, supporting our “aging gracefully” residents (55+). Multiple community partners joined to offer health-based assistance, covering topics from healthy decision-making and end-of-life planning to referrals for JenCare and a presentation by Healthier 757 on rewards for healthy living.



HEALTH & WELLNESS

People First^{USI}'s goal is to ensure that all children and adults living in Tidewater Gardens, before and after redevelopment, are mentally and physically healthy by providing access to a range of healthcare services, including preventative care, mental health counseling, and substance abuse treatment. They partner with local healthcare providers to offer regular health screenings, immunizations, and wellness check-ups for families. Additionally, People First prioritizes mental health support

by organizing workshops, support groups, and counseling services that address trauma, stress, and other challenges residents may face. They also promote healthy lifestyles by organizing fitness programs, nutrition education, and community wellness events. By addressing both physical and mental health needs, People First^{USI} aims to create an environment where residents can thrive and lead fulfilling, healthy lives, regardless of the challenges they may face during the redevelopment process.



98%
of residents have health insurance



85%
of residents have secured a place where they regularly go for care other than an emergency room

Data snapshot provided by LEARN (USI's Data Management System)

PEOPLES PHARMACY

Passionate Partner for the People

“We’re trying to save and improve lives,” says Dr. Anna Peoples. For more than 30 years, she has taken care of the community where she was raised. Her deep connection to the Huntersville community and former Tidewater Gardens residents has shaped her holistic approach to care—focused on treating the root causes of health issues, not just the symptoms.

Peoples Pharmacy is a trusted pillar in the community, offering more than just prescriptions. Dr. Peoples is passionate about understanding the unique needs of local residents and providing personalized care. Today, 92% of People First^{USI} supported residents are connected and managing their chronic diagnosis, thanks in part to the commitment of Dr. Peoples.



▲ Pillar of the community, Dr. Anna Peoples standing in the center of her own pharmacy located on Church St. in Norfolk.



We’re trying to save and improve lives.

“It’s important for me to reach out and see where their needs lie,” she explains.

Since 2019, Peoples Pharmacy has partnered with People First^{USI} to strengthen its ability to connect with residents and ensure continuity of care. This partnership helps minimize healthcare disruptions by providing a comprehensive list of services, ensuring that no one loses access to essential health resources.

Dr. Peoples’s functional medicine approach treats the whole person. Peoples Pharmacy offers chronic care management for conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, and obesity, while also addressing mental health through stress care and mental health referrals.

These personalized care plans guide residents toward better health and wellness, supporting them in achieving their health goals. In addition, Peoples Pharmacy helps manage monthly referrals and has expanded its prescription delivery services to further reach residents in need.

“We want to meet folks where they are,” says Dr. Peoples, who is proud to lessen the trauma residents may have experienced. The partnership with People First^{USI} plays a vital role in enhancing the pharmacy’s ability to provide these services and support.

And for People First^{USI}, the alignment is purposeful, ensuring all community members are healthy and thriving.



100%
of assessed children
have health insurance



92%
of residents with chronic health conditions
are successfully accessing services to manage
their health

Data snapshot provided by LEARN (USI's Data Management System)

JANICE OLIVER

People First^{USI} Advocates for Residents' Access to Health Insurance

Janice Oliver is not only thrilled to return to Kindred, but she is also deeply appreciative of the support she received from People First^{USI} throughout her journey. She returned to the revitalized community after a temporary stay in the Calvert Square community.

“I feel safer,” she said about her new home in the Origin Circle at Kindred apartments, crediting People First^{USI} for their ongoing check-ins and assistance. “People First^{USI} has been a big help.”

As Oliver settled into her new residence, she faced an unexpected challenge: just before a scheduled medical procedure, she discovered that her health insurance had been canceled, and she would need to pay half of the procedure cost upfront—an amount she couldn't afford.

Fortunately, People First^{USI} stepped in to help her secure affordable and reliable insurance. Her family support specialist, Ms. Makayla, worked closely with Oliver to review various insurance policies to find a plan



▲ Janice Oliver, a former Tidewater Gardens resident who has returned to Origin Circle at Kindred, exudes the essence of resilience as she reflects on the support received from People First^{USI} during her physical and personal health journey.

to meet her needs. Janice is now insured and rescheduling her much-needed procedure. She trusted People First^{USI} and is grateful for the help.



I feel safer. People First^{USI} has been a big help.



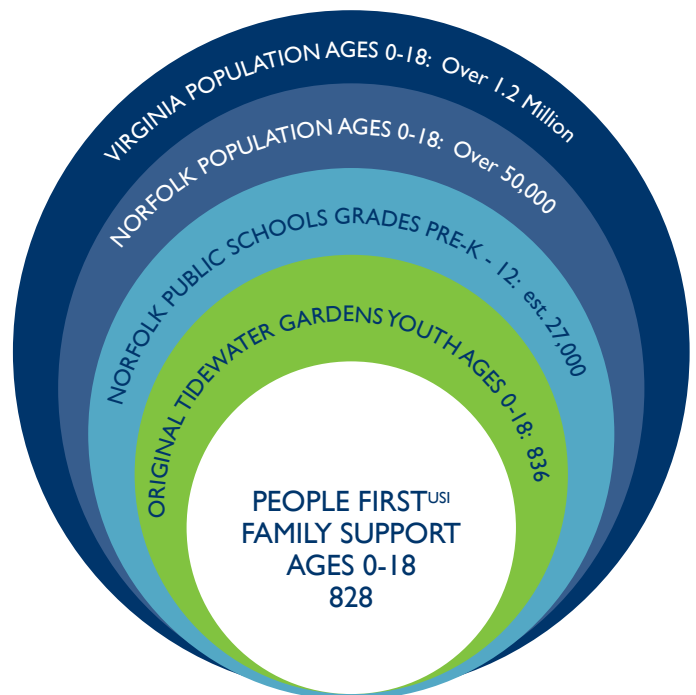
Three of our People First^{USI} youth attended the NSU tour on April 4, 2024. While no seniors are heading to NSU, one student will attend Glenville State in WV, one VA Wesleyan, one Christopher Newport, and another is enrolled in TCC for Cyber Security.



EDUCATION

People First^{USI}'s work focuses on ensuring all children and youth in Tidewater Gardens are ready for school, thrive in and out of school, graduate from high school, and are prepared for college, career, and life by providing a comprehensive suite of educational support services. This includes early childhood education programs that prepare young children for kindergarten, after-school tutoring, mentorship, and enrichment activities that foster academic success and personal growth. People First collaborates with local schools and community organizations to ensure that students have access to extracurricular programs, internships, and career exploration opportunities that build skills and expand horizons. They also offer resources for college preparation, including scholarship applications, and guidance on navigating the college admissions process. For those pursuing career pathways, People First^{USI} connects youth with job readiness training, internships, and vocational programs. Through these efforts, People First^{USI} strives to ensure that all youth in Tidewater Gardens have the tools, support, and opportunities needed to succeed in school, graduate, and build a bright future in both higher education and the workforce. Keep in mind, as you read through the education pillar, NPS Served Target Students are youth enrolled in People First^{USI}. Lastly, all data snapshots provided by Norfolk Public Schools will be in reference to school year (SY) 2022-2023; SY2023-24 will be updated by December of 2024.

In 2023, Urban Strategies Inc. continued to make strides in supporting educational growth for students formerly living in Tidewater Gardens in partnership with Norfolk Public Schools and a host of other community partners. Results have been achieved across early learning, literacy and math proficiency, graduation, and post secondary planning. This report highlights key areas of progress and demonstrates the impact of collaborative efforts, showcasing a commitment to fostering student achievement and creating pathways for lifelong learning and growth. We believe that advancing equitable educational opportunities for the target population will have a positive ripple effect on the educational outcomes at Norfolk Public Schools, the City, and the Commonwealth.



Data snapshot provided by Norfolk Public Schools and LEARN (USI's Data Management System)



To inspire higher education plans, People First^{USI} hosted college tours for former Tidewater Gardens students. Visits to Norfolk State, Old Dominion, and Hampton University allowed seniors to experience campus life, connect with students, and explore future options. Participants who attended four out of six sessions received a complimentary graduation cap and gown.

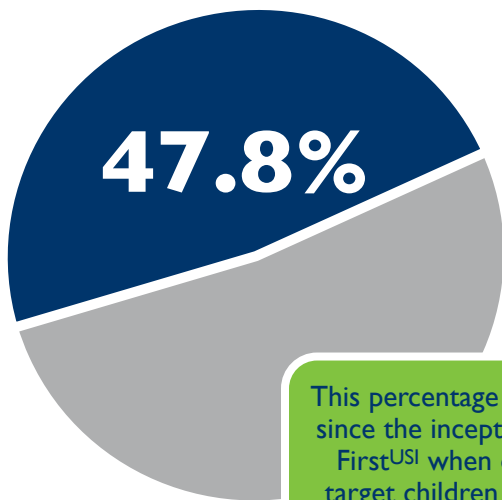


STATISTICS

Early Learning and Kindergarten Readiness

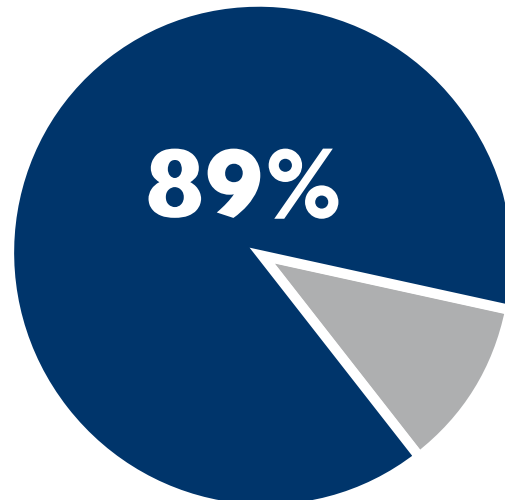
Almost half of 0–4 year-olds served by People First^{USI} have actively participated in center-based or formal home-learning programs or services. There continues to be an increase in these metrics as new early learning strategies are being implemented with community partners.

0-4 YEAR OLDS SERVED BY PEOPLE FIRST^{USI} ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING IN LEARNING PROGRAMS



This percentage has increased since the inception of People First^{USI} when only 12% of target children participated.

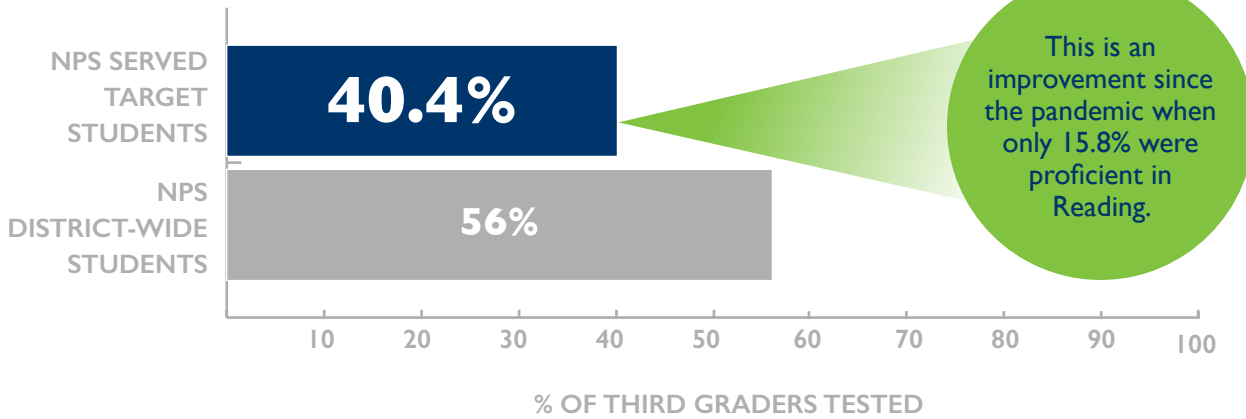
PRESCHOOL AGED CHILDREN SCREENED FOR AGE-APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT



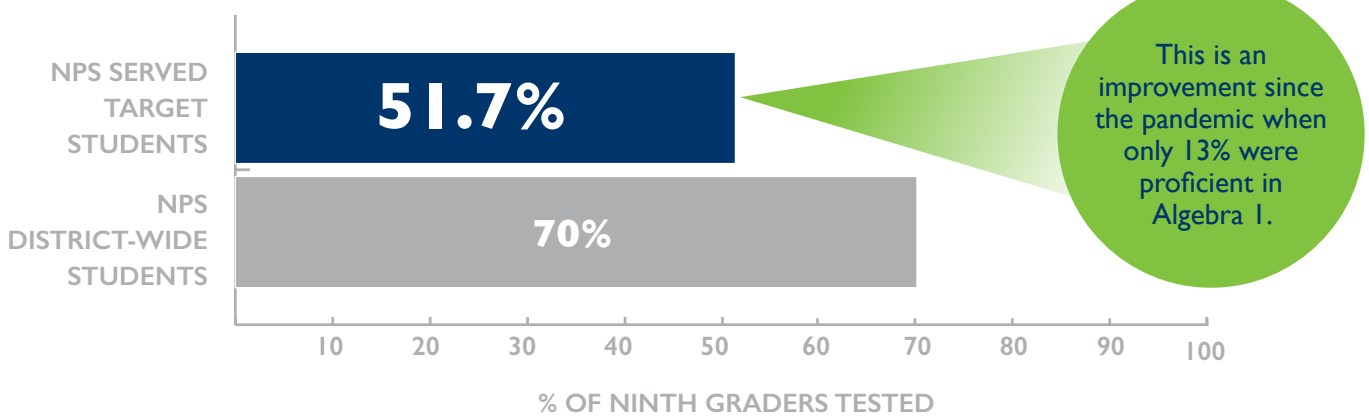
Data snapshot provided by LEARN (USI's Data Management System)

Elementary and Middle Reading/Math Proficiency

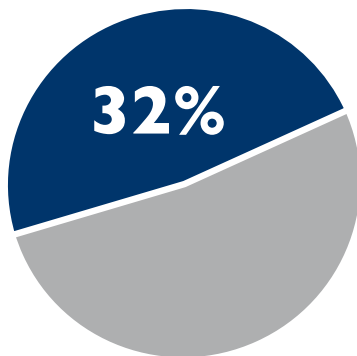
THIRD GRADERS PROFICIENT IN READING



NINTH GRADE MATH PROFICIENCY (ALGEBRA I)



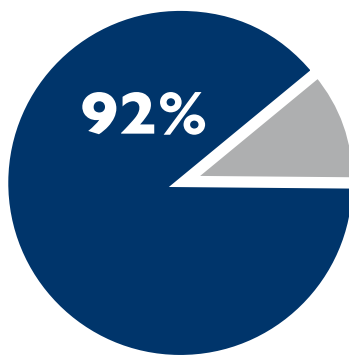
ENROLLED IN YOUTH ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES



32% of target school age youth enrolled in Family Support are participating in youth enrichment activities with partnering organizations

92% of the elementary, middle, and high school students who attended more than 45 different NPS schools in 2023 were promoted to the next grade level

STUDENTS PROMOTED TO THE NEXT GRADE LEVEL

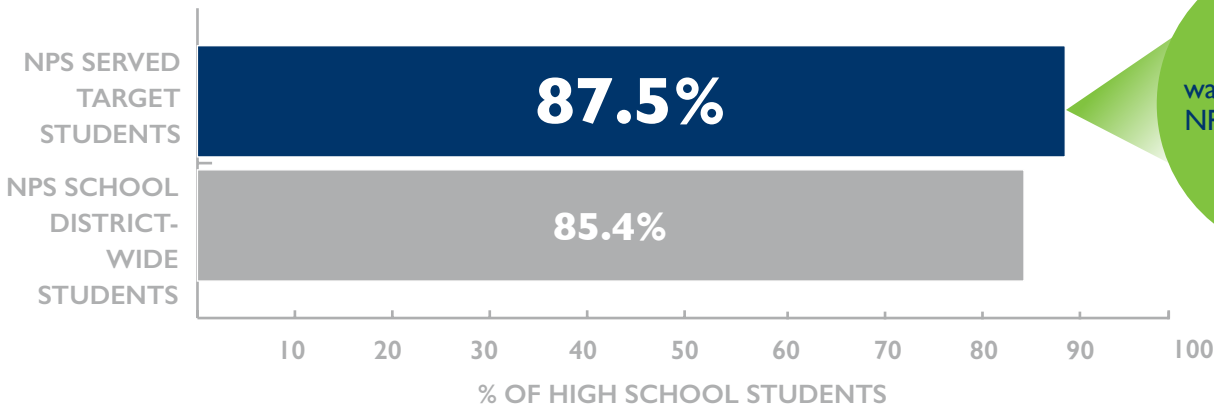


84% of the students attend schools outside of the neighborhood
15.5% attend schools in the St Paul's transformation area

Data snapshot provided by Norfolk Public Schools and LEARN (USI's Data Management System)

High School

2023 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE



The graduation rate in 2023 was 87.5%, exceeding NPS' graduation rate, which was 85.4%.

No single agency can improve outcomes for target youth on its own. It requires partnerships and a team approach, with parents playing a crucial role. People First leverages existing community assets and programs to build partnerships that support target youth. The Network meets quarterly to review collective results, celebrate successes and problem-solve. USI also meets monthly with the Principal Education Partner to coordinate resources and address any challenges as needed.



22 target students in 2024

USI is tracking student's post-secondary activities and progress

Data snapshot provided by Norfolk Public Schools

Through focused initiatives and strong partnerships, Norfolk Public Schools and People First^{USI} have made significant progress in empowering students from the former Tidewater Gardens community to achieve academic milestones and access enriching educational opportunities. This year's achievements — from early learning engagement and increased literacy to improved promotion rates and high school graduation — highlight the strength of a collaborative, community-centered

approach. Recognizing the diverse needs of students and families, People First^{USI} has advanced its individualized service delivery model to provide tailored support, working closely with parents and assessing each student's unique circumstances to ensure continued growth. As we track each student's journey, we reaffirm our commitment to fostering a foundation for lifelong learning and success for every student, every step of the way.

TEENS WITH A PURPOSE

A Purposeful Mission with a Purposeful Partner

“It’s personal and intentional,” says Deirdre Love, chief executive officer and founder of Teens With a Purpose (TWP). Her words sum up the spirit of the organization she built, the community she serves, and the impact of the partnership with People First^{USI}.

This collaboration between Teens With a Purpose and People First^{USI} began in 2017, when Love joined a Norfolk city committee that helped bring People First^{USI} to the area. She immediately recognized the potential for alignment between the two organizations. “I saw the similarities in our missions,” Love recalls. Like Teens With a Purpose, People First^{USI} hires and trains community members, working from within the neighborhoods they serve. Most importantly, both groups empower the same communities and families, providing critical support where it’s needed most.



▲ Longtime community pioneer, Deirdre Love, displaying the vibrant background created by youth who attended her nonprofit organization, Teens With a Purpose



It means everything to me. They invest in their families.

Teens With a Purpose started in 1996 as a peer-to-peer youth leadership program addressing HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness. Since then, it has grown into a broad, mission-driven movement that helps young people develop confidence, creativity, and a sense of responsibility. The organization’s home base is the Vivian C. Mason Arts & Technology Center for Teens, located in the heart of Norfolk. Here, students engage in year-round programs that enhance their education, foster emotional well-being, and allow for creative expression.

Working with People First^{USI} has amplified TWP’s reach and impact. Recently, Love and her team joined People First^{USI} partners from across the country to help shape an urban wellness model that emphasizes community-driven support. At the gathering, they shared ideas, discussed solutions, and worked together on strategies to enhance wellness and empowerment for communities. Love

describes the collaboration as a powerful moment of collective intelligence: “The smartest person in the room is the collective,” she said. The insights and strategies from the conference are now being implemented in Norfolk, with plans for the group to meet again to discuss progress and impact in their respective communities.

Reflecting on the partnership, Love notes the deep investment that People First^{USI} makes in Norfolk families. “It means everything to me,” she says. “They invest in their families.”

For Love and Teens With a Purpose, this partnership isn’t just an initiative; it’s a community movement—one that’s deeply personal, profoundly intentional, and entirely dedicated to creating a brighter future for Norfolk’s youth.



SHAHIDE BATTLE

From Tidewater Gardens to College Gridiron: One Teen’s Journey of Resilience and Success

When families were relocated from Tidewater Gardens, eighth-grader Shahide Battle found himself in a new home in the Grandy Village public housing community. It was a time of significant change for any young person—made even more challenging by the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. But Shahide didn’t let the upheaval define him. Rather than dwell on leaving his old neighborhood and friends, he focused on the things he could control: school and sports at Lake Taylor High School.

“I just wanted to be out of the house,” Shahide explained with the straightforwardness typical of an 18-year-old. Yet, what he accomplished went far beyond simply staying busy. Shahide poured his energy into excelling on the basketball court, baseball diamond, and football field. His talent shone particularly bright in football, where he



Shahide Battle, former Tidewater Gardens youth, now college student showcasing academic ability coupled with his athletic progression, which has gained him a full ride to Glenville State University



It is what you make it. Enjoy the moment and the time.

earned a second-team all-region selection—a testament to his dedication and skill.

As graduation in 2024 approached, Shahide’s hard work and perseverance opened new doors. Universities took notice, with West Virginia and Old Dominion showing interest. Ultimately, he accepted a full-ride scholarship to Glenville State University in West Virginia—a milestone that marked not just a personal achievement, but a triumph for his family and community.

During his senior year, Shahide’s journey was supported every step of the way by an education specialist and graduation coach who ensured he stayed on track for college success. The team at People First^{USI} further lightened the load by providing practical resources: a new

computer, a lifetime membership to Office 365, and gift cards to ease his transition to college life.

Today, Shahide is a freshman at Glenville State, majoring in business management and playing defensive back for the Pioneers. He’s thriving in his new environment and is eager to give back by setting an example for his younger siblings and other youth who have transitioned from Tidewater Gardens. His message is one of hope and perseverance: “It is what you make it. Enjoy the moment and the time.”

Shahide’s story reminds us of the power of resilience, the strength of community support, and the bright futures that lie ahead when young people are given the opportunity to succeed.



▲ Aaron White, People First^{USI} family support specialist, says his greatest joy comes from connecting with residents in the community.

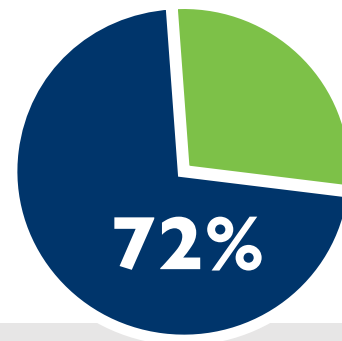
ECONOMIC MOBILITY

People First^{USI}'s work with residents includes ensuring they are economically independent by providing access to job training, financial literacy education, and resources for stable employment. They also offer support for developing skills that enhance self-sufficiency, such as resume building, interview preparation, and networking

opportunities. Additionally, People First^{USI} collaborates with local businesses and organizations to create pathways to sustainable employment, ensuring that residents not only gain the tools they need to find work but also to thrive in their careers long-term.



117 JOBS
were gained between
July 1, 2023–June 30, 2024



72% of target residents aged 18–64
reported receiving wage income



The average annual wage income of target
households—excluding those unable to work
due to age or disability—was
\$28,645



At the close of Year 5 (June 30, 2024),
the average household income was
\$37,985

Data snapshot provided by LEARN (USI's Data Management System)

HELGA ROBERTSDOTTIR

From Tidewater Gardens to Entrepreneurship and Empowerment

Helga Robertsdottir's journey reflects both personal growth and the transformative impact of the St. Paul's Transformation Project, guided every step of the way by People First^{USI}. When Tidewater Gardens began its redevelopment, Helga relocated with the support of a Housing Choice Voucher and mobility counseling from People First^{USI}. With their assistance, she found a new, safer environment for her and her young daughter—a critical step toward a better future. "I was kind of happy," she said of the change, appreciating the transparent communication and the plan People First^{USI} provided to support her move.

This move was not just a change in location; it marked the beginning of new opportunities for Helga. With People First^{USI}'s consistent encouragement, she completed cosmetology school in February 2022, supported by a scholarship that helped her finish her final year. Now working as a mobile stylist and building her business, Helga attributes much of her success to the skills she gained through the DreamBuilder program at Old Dominion University, introduced to her by People First^{USI}. This program provided essential training in business planning, marketing, and leadership.

Throughout her journey, People First^{USI} remained a steady partner, offering monthly guidance and support through the Family Support Specialist (FSS) program. They connected Helga to the Thriving Tuesday job readiness initiative, which sharpened her professional



▲ Here is Helga Robertsdottir, an ambitious continuous learner and entrepreneur exploring new opportunities both professionally and personally.

skills and expanded her network. "I appreciate all of the people who are reaching out," Helga said. "It feels good to know there are people who have your back."

Now, as her lease nears its end, Helga is considering a short-term return to the new Kindred community while setting her sights on homeownership—a goal she is actively pursuing with the dedicated help of People First^{USI} staff and Keisha Saunders (NRHA). For Helga, the support and resources provided by People First^{USI} have turned challenges into opportunities, allowing her to create a stable and promising future for herself and her daughter.



**I appreciate all of the people who are reaching out.
It feels good to know there are people who have your back.**

COMMUNITY PARTNERS*

Bank On Hampton Roads
Basilica of Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception
Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeast Virginia
Brinshore Development
Children's Health Investment Program (CHIP) of South Hampton Roads
City of Norfolk Community Services Board
City of Norfolk Department of Housing and Community Development
City of Norfolk Department of Human Services
City of Norfolk Department of Parks and Recreation
Dollar Bank
EVMS (Minus 9 to 5)
Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore
Gethsemane Community Fellowship Baptist Church
Greater Hampton Roads Diaper Bank
Hampton Roads Community Health Center
Hampton Roads Transit
Hunton YMCA
Kaleidoscope Counseling & Case Management, LLC
Legal Aid Society of Eastern Virginia
Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program
Moms On a Mission
Nauticus
Next Steps To Success
Norfolk Public Library
Norfolk Public Health
Norfolk Public Schools
Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority (NRHA)
Norfolk State University
Norfolk Tides
Norfolk Works/Norfolk Department of Economic Development
NRHA HomeNet Homeownership Center
Old Dominion University:
Institute for Innovation & Entrepreneurship
Peoples Pharmacy LLC
PMI Virginia/CENTURY 21 Nachman Realty
Teens With a Purpose
The Franklin Group
The Planning Council
The Salvation Army
The Up Center
Tidewater Community College
Truist Bank
St. John's AME Church
St. Paul's Advisory Committee (SPAC)
SevenVenues
Shands Therapeutic Solutions LLC
Silver Care LLC
Southside Boys & Girls Club
STOP Inc.
United Way of South Hampton Roads
Virginia Cooperative Extension (Virginia Tech)
Virginia Zoo
Welfore Health
WIC Program/City of Norfolk Public Health
YMCA South Hampton Roads
YWCA South Hampton Roads

*USI carries out this work with the support of both paid and unpaid partners.



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