



big things start small



2024 annual report
five years of magic and milestones

Our children deserve the very best from the very beginning.

Small Magic supports the future stability and prosperity of our community by focusing on our most precious resource: our children. Our innovative programs embrace cutting-edge technology and the deep involvement of parents and teachers to ensure all the children in our community are prepared for kindergarten and a lifetime of economic mobility. Research shows that the earliest support for kids can have the most positive and cost-effective lifelong impact.



Dear Friends,

Just over five years ago, a small group of community champions had an idea to bring a nationally recognized early childhood program to Birmingham, Alabama. Since then, we've served more than 3,600 children through that model and expanded our range of evidence-based, community-centered programs. As we turn the page on this milestone year for Small Magic, we are struck by the enormity of our goals and the dedicated support of our community.

From our earliest days, we have been determined to bridge gaps in early education, working to ensure our community is the best place in America to raise a child under five.

Big ideas start small. But with five years behind us, we are seeing the fruits of conversation and connection, between parents and children, corporations and childcare centers, government and technology pioneers. This annual report is filled with examples and celebrations of impact over our first five years, with photos of the real children, parents, and teachers who have joined us on this journey.

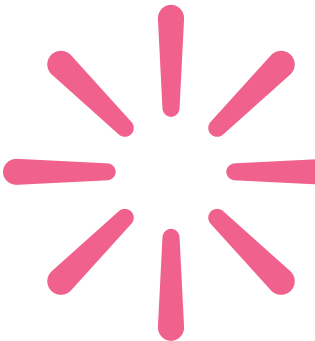
As we look to the days ahead, our plans remain ambitious. We are scaling our efforts to meet the increasing demand for high-quality early education. We are continuing to innovate, leveraging cutting-edge research and community feedback to adapt our programs. We are using our lessons learned to fill gaps, level the playing field, and make big bets on kids.

It's your support that makes all this possible, that makes magic happen one child and day at a time. Here's to the next five years of joy, growth, and impact.

All good things,



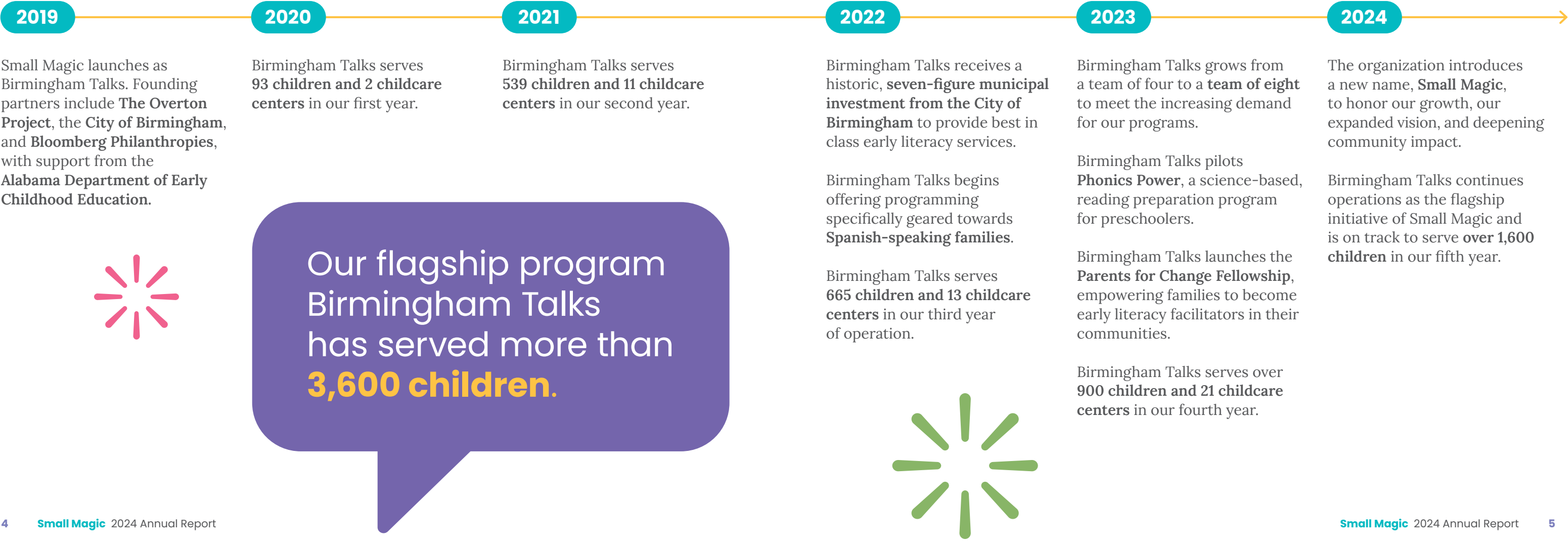
Ruth Ann Moss
Executive Director
Small Magic



Real change starts small.

From the very beginning of their lives, our community’s children have limitless potential—and with our collective support, they can thrive. Just like a child, Small Magic has grown over the past five years from an idea to a force for community impact. Our growth is made possible by the support of our community, including parents, teachers, donors, and partners.

The timeline below celebrates each step we’ve made together, growing from serving just under a hundred children in our first year to reaching thousands of young learners. Each year, we’ve expanded our impact, connecting with more families and childcare centers, and adapting our programs to meet the diverse needs of our community.



Our initiatives

We advance our mission to support our community’s youngest learners through initiatives that maximize school readiness and economic mobility. We work closely with families and teachers to ensure that every child has the support they need to thrive. Through active listening, we adapt and expand our evidence-based programs to address the community’s unique needs and create a lasting impact.

How we measure success

Reach

Continuous expansion in the number of families, child care centers, classrooms, communities, neighborhoods, and counties we serve.

Impact

Growth in metrics like words heard, conversational turns (back and forth interactions), minutes spent reading, or letter sounds acquired for each participant.

Experience

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) for each cohort, measured by how likely participants are to say they would recommend our program to a friend or family member.



Birmingham Talks

For Families

Our parent-facing program equips families with the tools they need to increase talk between caregivers and their children. This 8-week program includes weekly small group classes focused on increasing interactive conversation. We provide cutting-edge technology, books, educational toys, and personalized coaching to all participants.

- **Reach:** Since our founding, we have served over 650 children, including 234 children in the past program year alone.
- **Impact:** Children from the lowest-talk environments experienced a 53% increase in conversational turns and a 79% rise in exposure to adult words.
- **Experience:** 97% of participants would recommend Birmingham Talks to a friend or family member.

“Birmingham Talks is excellent at equipping parents with practical tools to enhance language development through daily interactions. I am leaving with an entire ‘talking toolkit’ to engage more meaningfully with my children.” – Birmingham Talks Participant

Research shows that our model **triples (3x)** the likelihood of children meeting or exceeding initial kindergarten literacy assessment standards.

Every word heard shapes a child’s brain. Birmingham Talks increases exposure to interactive conversation, preparing our youngest learners for school success.

For Providers

Our 5-week professional development program empowers early childhood teachers to create meaningful impact. Weekly sessions prepare teachers to increase the conversational rigor of their classrooms. Classrooms receive books, educational toys, personalized coaching, and professional development hours for the teacher.

- **Reach:** Since our founding, we have served over 3,000 children, including 1,074 children in the past program year alone.
- **Impact:** Children from the lowest-talk environments experienced a 78% increase in conversational turns and a 39% rise in exposure to adult words.
- **Experience:** 85% of participants would recommend Birmingham Talks to a friend or family member.

“Participating in Birmingham Talks increased the interaction between children and teachers in our center, making our students feel more cared for and better prepared for kindergarten. Boosting interactive conversation with children is truly an investment in their potential. We recommend Birmingham Talks to anyone who wants to see children succeed.”

– Carolyn Collins, Childcare Center Director



This year alone, Small Magic distributed **2,500 books** to families and childcare centers.

50% of the most common reading curricula in the country do not include phonics in their core approach.



Phonics Power

A pioneering early phonics program that lays the groundwork for literacy skills in preschoolers.

Small Magic launched Phonics Power in the summer of 2023 to connect parents with literacy experts, high-quality phonics instruction, and supplemental videos to ensure their 3- and 4- year-olds arrive in kindergarten prepared to learn to read.

- **Reach:** In its pilot phase, Phonics Power has supported 19 families, including 13 families in the past program year.
- **Impact:** Children of participating families saw a significant boost, with an average increase of 80% in letter sound recognition.
- **Experience:** 72% of participants would recommend Phonics Power to a friend or family member.

Parents for Change

A fellowship that empowers parents as advocates and leaders in early childhood education.

Fellows join a close-knit collective dedicated to enhancing kindergarten readiness and economic mobility within their local ecosystems. They take charge of recruiting participants and facilitating their own Birmingham Talks group.

“The fellowship helped me connect with other parents that share the same passion for early childhood development.”



Small Magic is on track to serve more than **1,600** children this year.

Looking ahead

Our children deserve access to best-in-class early learning services.

As we grow to serve more children, families, and childcare centers across central Alabama, we remain focused on strengthening our connections with caregivers and collaborating with early education and social impact partners to ensure our children receive the very best from the very beginning.

Our earliest learners thrive when given access to innovative tools to support their growth. We are excited to continue implementing impactful programs, fostering lasting relationships with our program alums, and exploring new, cost-effective approaches to extend our reach

in early childhood education. In the near future, we're thrilled to expand Phonics Power with an enhanced curriculum, comprehensive assessments, and increased capacity, ensuring more children have the literacy tools they need for a bright future.

Small Magic is committed to making our community a true “sandbox” for impactful early childhood innovation. We are continually looking for new partnerships and initiatives that are both evidence-based and community-centered.

Have an idea? We'd love to talk.

All 99

A portrait of Birmingham’s youngest learners and their families

The All 99 initiative celebrates the faces of early learning in Birmingham: our city’s children and families. Small Magic is working with a variety of local photographers to capture portraits of families with children under five in each of the city’s ninety-nine neighborhoods. This initiative, partially funded by the Alabama Arts Council, showcases the diversity and vibrant character of our city.



Meet the Plumps
in South East Lake

Captured by C.W. Newell

“Through Birmingham Talks, we learned to communicate more effectively with Kellan and became more intentional in expanding our conversations by offering more descriptions and explanations. He now loves bringing us books to read, any time of day, and we believe the foundation we built with the support of this wonderful organization has played a key role in his love for reading.”



Meet the Carters
in Oxmoor

Captured by Lex Soul

“As new parents in a bilingual family, Birmingham Talks provided us with invaluable guidance through classes, resources, and data from the LENA device. This support has empowered us to encourage Maxton’s communication and language skills, helping us build a strong foundation for his future.”

“As new parents, Birmingham Talks opened our eyes to the importance of not restricting our child’s development. We learned that avoiding baby talk and not explaining things to a child, even if they aren’t speaking yet, can significantly affect their speech foundation. The program revealed that our child has a natural eagerness to learn, highlighting the need for us to be intentional in nurturing and supporting that curiosity.”



Meet the Williams
in Norwood

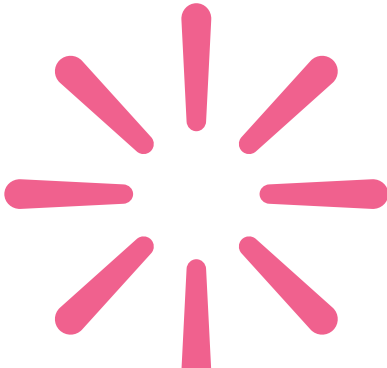
Captured by Bob Miller



Meet the Finleys
in Powderly

Captured by Andi Rice

“Seeing the transformative impact of Small Magic on our friends and their families has been truly inspiring. The program has sparked meaningful conversations, deepened connections, and empowered individuals to engage more effectively with their community. This is a testament to the positive ripple effects that initiatives like Birmingham Talks can create.”



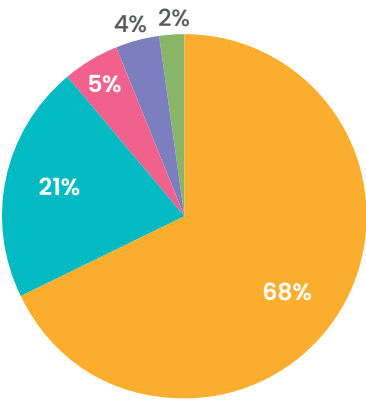
Explore All 99



Investing in our future

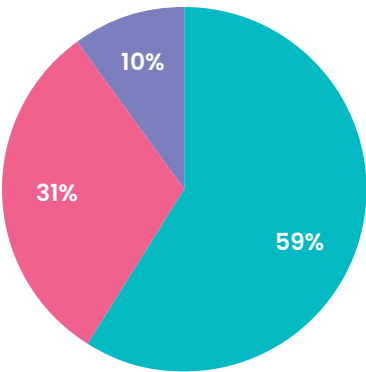
Small Magic helps our youngest children maximize their school readiness and future economic mobility. The support we receive allows us to expand our community-centered, evidence-based programs and initiatives, ensuring that every child has access to the resources and support they need to thrive. Every dollar invested helps provide innovative tools for children, involve parents in early learning, and enhance the resources available for children to ensure their kindergarten readiness and lifelong success.

By carefully managing our revenue and expenses, we ensure that every contribution goes where it's most needed and supports the future stability and prosperity of our community.



Funding sources

City, State, & Federal Funding	68%
Foundations	21%
Investment & Rental Income	5%
Corporations	4%
Individuals	2%
Total	\$1,576,014.88



Expenses

Programming	59%
Administrative & Operations	31%
Fundraising	10%
Total	\$1,267,789.19



Our annual Storytime event brings together the Birmingham community to celebrate the transformative power of words and support early literacy. Each year, Storytime provides an evening of storytelling and exhibits that offer an insightful look into the power of early learning. This year's Storytime: Chapter 2 built on the success of our inaugural event, drawing a sold-out crowd for a memorable night, full of magic and centered around the theme of surprises.

Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, partners, and community members, we raised **more than \$75,000 to fund Small Magic early literacy programs**, helping Birmingham's children develop the foundational skills they need for lifelong success. Storytime has become more than just an event; it's a cherished celebration of literacy, community, and imagination.

Support the magic

Together, we're ensuring that Birmingham becomes the best place in America to raise a child under five.

By supporting Small Magic, you play a vital role in providing our youngest children with the tools they need to be ready for school and set on a path toward lifelong success.



Ways to get involved

Donate

Your contributions power our programs, expand our resources, and help us reach more families. Every dollar counts, allowing us to equip children with innovative tools, involve parents, and enhance learning experiences for a brighter future.

Volunteer

Join us as a volunteer and become part of the magic! Whether helping at events or supporting our programs, your skills make a meaningful difference. Connect with us to learn about current volunteer opportunities.

Share

Support us by sharing our mission with others. Follow us on social media, sign up for our newsletter, and tell your friends and family about Small Magic. Together, we can build a community dedicated to helping children thrive.

Despite 90% of brain development occurring before children turn five, only **4%** of dollars spent on educational philanthropy go to the earliest years.



Every dollar spent on high-quality early education has a **13x** return.

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“Small Magic is showing what best-in-class literacy learning programs can achieve.”

– Paul Styslinger

“Small Magic is vital not only for the children it directly benefits but for the wider community, as it lays the foundation for educational success, interpersonal relationship skill building, and long-term community development.”

– Denzel Okinedo



Donate online



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