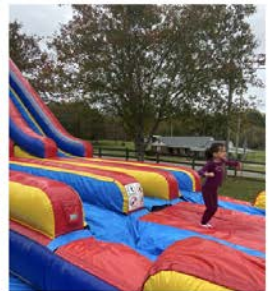


Community Perceptions: Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in Forsyth County, North Carolina

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“The unexpected action of deep listening can create a space of transformation capable of shattering complacency and despair.”

- *Terry Tempest Williams* (American author and activist)

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Background	6
Project Scope	6
Getting Grounded: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)	7
Project Methodology	8
Participants	9
Addressing Barriers to Participation	10
How to Read this Report	11
Overarching Themes: Interviews and Focus Groups	12
Photovoice Project	27
Recommendations from Forsyth County Community Members	45
Additional Recommendations and Opportunities	47
Appendices	48
Appendix 1: Focus Group/Interview Guide and Moderator Script	48
Appendix 2: Participant Demographics	54

Executive Summary

In 2021, the Kellin Foundation research team conducted listening sessions with more than sixty community members to assess the current landscape in Forsyth County for preventing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), healing trauma, and building resilience from the perspectives of parents, guardians, caretakers of young children, and community members. The researchers sought to understand what is working, what is not working, and what recommendations community members would make to support the healthy development of young children and their families. In addition, the researchers participated in a variety of in-person and virtual public meetings that provided them with additional community context.

The research team conducted interviews, held focus groups, and conducted a Photovoice project to gather and synthesize information from a variety of perspectives of people living and working in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County. In structured sessions, participants shared their thoughts and experiences about four constructs identified in the research as critical to ACEs prevention and reduction: (1) adversity; (2) resilience; (3) access; and (4) equity. Perspectives from 63 individuals were collected, themed, and used to inform the recommendations reflected in the report. Participant quotes are included to provide further explanation and nuance to the themes.

While the researchers heard a small amount of finger-pointing at individuals (“family blame”) during the listening sessions, most participants spoke about “the system” and collective opportunities for improvement. Participants noted that many community challenges were not quick fixes, and that root causes needed to be addressed in order to improve outcomes for children and their families. Broadly, this includes shifts in mindsets about whom various systems are meant to serve, a more equitable distribution of resources, the redesign of programs to be more human-centered, supporting policies and funding, and the realignment of power to ensure that the well-being of children and families are considered in decision-making at every level.

For ease, recommendations are grouped into those that improve equity and resilience, and those that improve access and response to adversity. The researchers also noted other opportunities for the Trust’s consideration as a key community leader and trusted funder. Some key recommendations from community members include the following:

- Continue to strengthen support of grassroots organizations working in equity space, especially those led by Black and Brown people, while also developing processes and partnerships that engage white neighborhoods and communities in anti-racism work.
- Identify opportunities to build individual, family, and community resilience by bringing people together safely.

- In collaboration with law enforcement, grassroots organizations, the school system, and other partners, develop and execute a comprehensive violence reduction plan.
- Explore programmatic and system fixes to disrupt cycles of poverty within the Latino/Hispanic community in Forsyth County.
- Take steps to build a trauma-informed Forsyth County at all levels, paying close attention to preventing secondary trauma and burnout among first responders, healthcare professionals, educators, service providers, and others.
- Develop a robust navigation system to help families connect to the right resources at the right times in their young children's lives, and to enter a coordinated system of care at any point.
- Invest in mental health/behavioral supports for children, adolescents, adults and families who otherwise will not have access to care.
- Focus resources on improving service delivery across agencies/organizations via a coordinated continuous quality improvement effort.
- Make sure families are included in decision-making bodies to ensure strategies (and execution of strategies) are on target and that issues can be identified early.

Additional details are included in the report.

The increased awareness of system failures marks a shift in thinking from prior community projects. This may be attributed to a keener awareness about the impact of systems failures on child and family outcomes during multiple pandemics (COVID-19 and racism) that raged during the course of this project. This awareness can be viewed as a significant opportunity to invite the broader community into deeper work focused on building a more equitable Winston-Salem/Forsyth County community where all children enter kindergarten ready to learn and leave set for success in school and life.

Background

Project Scope

The Kellin Foundation was engaged by the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust (the Trust) during the fall of 2020 to participate in a project to develop an overarching strategy to identify the root causes of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in Forsyth County and to address them through a systems change project. Over the next six months, the project morphed into two separate projects — one led by the Center for Trauma Resilient Communities (CTRC) and another led by the Kellin Foundation — with separate goals and separate audiences. To ensure alignment and to reduce community confusion about two data gathering processes, MDC helped both groups define key audiences and to identify specific organizations and sectors that would be engaged by each separate project.

The Kellin Foundation's research team, led by Mary Herbenick, was responsible for gathering qualitative data from community members about community strengths and opportunities to prevent ACEs, heal trauma, and build a resilient community. Specifically, the research team was tasked with assessing the current landscape in Forsyth County for preventing ACEs, healing trauma, and building resilience from the perspectives of parents, guardians, caretakers of young children, and community members. The researchers sought to understand what is working, what is not working, and what recommendations community members make to support the healthy development of young children and their families. Participants shared their perspectives on four constructs identified in the research as critical to ACEs prevention and reduction: (1) adversity; (2) resilience; (3) access; and (4) equity.

The research team conducted a review of academic literature and validated tools within key construct areas to inform the development of interview, focus group, and Photovoice questions. The 47-page review was developed by team member Emma Olson, MSW, MPH, and was used both to inform the development of instruments for interviews and focus groups to understand key construct areas, and to help shape the resulting recommendations. For ease of the reader, the review has not been included in the appendices; however, it is available upon request.

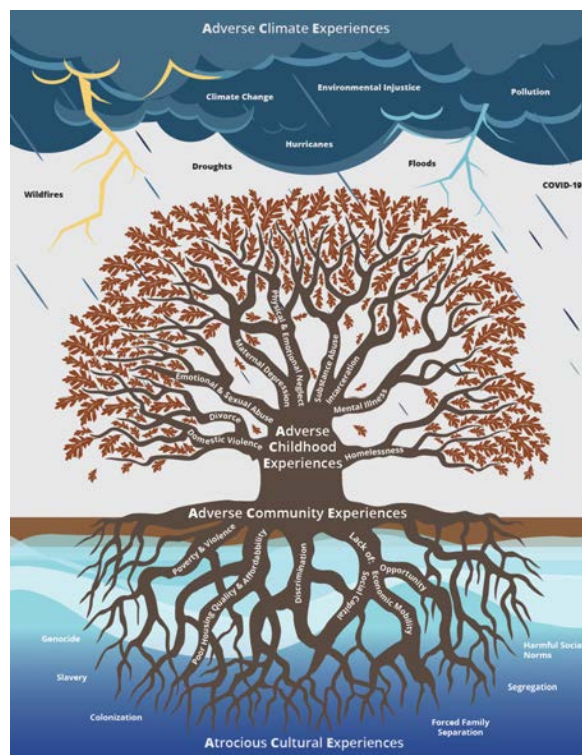
The project included three methods of participant listening: one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and a deeper one-on-one listening exercise through a Photovoice project. Insights gathered during these three methods are included in this report.

Before delving into the scope of the project, the following section is offered to create a common understanding of ACEs and the four levels of trauma explored in this work.

Getting Grounded: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are individual-level experiences of childhood trauma (occurring before age 18) that include abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction (Felitti et al., 1998). The landmark ACEs study conducted by Kaiser-Permanente revolutionized the science behind the understanding of how childhood adversity can have lasting mental and physical health effects over the lifespan. This study highlighted that ACEs are common, and that a dose-response relationship exists between a person's ACE score and their risk for developing diseases like cancer, heart disease, and diabetes later in life. In addition, the higher one's ACEs score, the greater the likelihood that the individual will engage in unhealthy behaviors (smoking, substance use, overeating) and/or experience mental health issues including depression and suicidal ideation (Felitti et al., 1998). The negative effects of childhood trauma and ACEs are well-documented and have garnered increasing attention from leaders across sectors and across the country.

It is critical to acknowledge that racial and ethnic minorities and low-income individuals are disproportionately affected by ACEs because of differential exposure to stress and racial discrimination (Strompolis et al., 2019). The original ACEs study does not account for the many kinds of trauma a person can experience. Evolving research centers on four realms in recognition that adversity can happen at the individual-level, at a community-level (i.e., structural racism, police violence, poverty, etc.), at a climate level (i.e., pandemics, natural disasters), and at a cultural level (i.e., enslavement, segregation, forced family separation). The figure below, used with permission from the [Resilient Communities Landscape Analysis](#), shows the complexity of and the interplay among the four realms of ACEs.



Understanding and mitigating the impacts of systemic and historical racism, discrimination, and race-based trauma must be at the forefront of ACEs prevention efforts. Similarly, recognizing and working with established, trusted partners within communities to heal historical traumas perpetrated against traditionally marginalized communities is critical to breaking cycles of trauma.

The growing understanding of the negative effects of childhood toxic stress on the brain and body has called for a paradigm shift to focus on and invest in prevention and intervention efforts to foster well-being (Garner & Yogman, 2021). Research on relational health as a protective buffer for toxic stress in childhood has changed the understanding of the importance of safe, stable, nurturing relationships (SSNRs) and healthy communities in achieving the best possible outcomes across the lifespan, including the ability to successfully overcome future challenges. Investments in and access to positive parenting programs, screenings for social determinants of health, parent-child literacy programs, treatments for toxic stress, play-therapy, and more can serve a significant role in preventing ACEs, building strong relationships, and repairing strained or compromised relationships.

This evolving research provided the foundation for the project executed by the research team.

Project Methodology

The research team conducted key informant interviews with 12 community leaders from sectors including government, juvenile justice, nonprofit, academia, healthcare, philanthropy, research, early care and education, and more. The purpose was three-fold: (1) to gather perspectives about the Forsyth County landscape; (2) to test and gather feedback on the four constructs and emerging questions; and (3) to ask for assistance in connecting the researchers with a diverse array of parents, guardians, caregivers, and community members within Forsyth County. Key informant interviews provided helpful context and created opportunities to connect with organizations and families within Forsyth County.

The researchers developed processes and supporting materials to support family recruitment, including invitations, flyers, emails, and texts in both English and Spanish. Interview and focus group guides were developed, as well as electronic consent forms and follow up communication with participants. All research materials and processes considered current events within the country, county, and various communities within Forsyth County, and aimed to be trauma-informed, equity-centered, and pandemic-sensitive. MDC served in an advisory role during this process, reviewing materials and providing helpful guidance to inform the final products.

All research team members completed the “Protecting Human Research Participants Online Training” prior to the start of the project. The team submitted materials and research methodologies to SolutionsIRB for the institutional review board (IRB) process, ensuring that ethical research practices were being used and that the privacy of participants would be guarded. Final approval of the project was received by the Kellin Foundation

on February 5, 2021. The focus group/interview guide covering the four constructs are included in Appendix 1, as well as other supporting materials.

The research team continued recruiting potential participants, following up with community contacts made while connecting with new community members, agencies, and organizations. Several organization leaders across Forsyth County agreed to promote the effort with families they served and to encourage them to participate.

To avoid extractive practices while centering equity, the researchers recommended providing compensation for participants based on local guidelines and national guidance from organizations like the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). Interview and focus group participants received \$25 Walmart gift cards as compensation for the 60-minute process, while Photovoice participants received \$100 Visa gift cards for their participation in a more in-depth and introspective project.

Transcripts of interviews, focus groups, and the Photovoice project were reviewed with emergent themes identified across the listening sessions. Each transcript and session was reviewed to ensure accuracy of notes, with themes identified and recommendations pulled from participant transcripts.

Participants

Participants remained anonymous apart from sharing an email address where they could receive an electronic gift card and follow-up information. A total of 63 individuals participated in the research – 12 individuals in non-recorded sessions and 51 individuals in recorded interviews, focus groups, and the Photovoice project. Available participant demographic information is included in Appendix 2.

It is important to note that efforts were undertaken to engage people who are traditionally excluded from decision-making processes, including those who may not be using community resources or working with programs. The research team participated in several community events (both virtually and in-person) to gain visibility, to recruit families, and to build credibility with providers. Flyers with instructions in English and Spanish about how to participate were distributed at Forsyth County libraries and in coffee shops, laundromats, and other public, accessible places.

- **Interviews.** The researchers conducted interviews with 27 people who self-identified as living in and/or receiving services within Winston-Salem/Forsyth County. Interviews lasted between 28 and 68 minutes.
- **Focus Groups.** Two focus groups were conducted in Spanish with a total of 14 participants. Each focus group was slated for one hour; however, participants were enthusiastic about the process and engaged for another 30 minutes after the formal sessions ended.
- **Photovoice.** Ten individuals participated in the Photovoice project..

It should be noted that almost two dozen additional individuals expressed interest in and/or signed up for interviews and the Photovoice project. However, when the research team reached out by email, phone, and/or text, they were unable to connect with the people who were interested. In addition, some people declined due to changing life circumstances, including time pressures, mental health challenges, and more.

Addressing Barriers to Participation

Accessing spaces and connecting with families were challenges for a variety of reasons. First, in an effort to not confuse the community about the two simultaneous Great Expectations data gathering projects, the Kellin Foundation team avoided reaching out to traditional structures where data could be gathered by trusted individuals, such as faith communities, childcare centers, and certain organizations within Forsyth County that were deeply engaged with other data gathering project. In similar projects conducted in other communities, these structures provided researchers access to potential study participants and the ability to reach specific target populations more easily and effectively.

During this project, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the Forsyth County/Winston Salem community in significant ways, creating necessary isolation to protect the health of families and children. In addition, communities within Forsyth County (and across the region, state, and country) experienced an uptick in violence, continued social unrest, and instability of community structures and supports (i.e., public education, childcare, etc.). In the backdrop, a contentious election, misinformation campaigns, and violence in the United States Capitol and its aftermath fueled distrust in institutions and traditional power structures, including government and research institutions. It is unclear how these factors may have affected participation in this study; however, they likely had some effect on the willingness of individuals to share personal information and experiences related to trauma.

Individuals did report several barriers to participation, which the research team took steps to mitigate. These barriers included:

- *Time commitment.* Many families reported interest, but also said it was difficult to commit 90-minutes to this process as they juggled work, educating their school-age children at home, challenges with child and elder care, and myriad other disruptions to typical routines.
- *Zoom fatigue.* Many people expressed exhaustion with video conferencing, especially those educating children online and/or working from home.
- *Hassle.* People needed to take several steps to sign up to participate in an interview, including responding to detailed information about data collection. The research team noticed that several people started the process of signing up, then stopped midway through.

To be responsive, the research team made several modifications to the process, including:

- Offering interviews at any time that was convenient for the participant, including early mornings and late nights, and shifting away from focus groups which required coordination of schedules among multiple participants.
- Modifying the interview guide so facilitators could conduct 60-minute interviews while keeping the same level of incentive for participating (\$25 gift card).
- Reducing the amount of demographic data required to sign up and creating a one-step sign up through text messaging.
- Providing choice about whether to meet by Zoom or by phone (with phone conversations recorded using Zoom technology)

How to Read this Report

The following pages include themes that emerged from interviews, focus groups, and the Photovoice project. When reviewing the document, it is helpful to remember the following:

- While participants were asked about four very specific constructs (adversity, resilience, access, and equity), themes are intersectional and do not fit neatly into one category. The resulting themes and recommendations reflect the complex nature of relationships, community structures, and the human experience of these four constructs.
- To be included as a theme, the topic needed to be raised and discussed by multiple participants. None of these themes reflect the views of just one or two individuals.
- The statements reflect **perceptions** of those who live and work within the Forsyth County community. The research team did not fact check what was shared, as it was not within the scope of this project, nor is it appropriate during this type of a community listening effort. The perceptions of community members may not be factually correct, especially about services that may or may not be available. However, they do reflect people's experiences and their understanding of their place within it.
- When appropriate, participant quotes are included to further explain a theme, to amplify a point, or to share differing points of view. *Participant quotes are in italics throughout the document.*
- If a participant's comments require further context, the researchers have added that context in parentheses within the quotes.
- Per guidance from MDC and common practice in listening exercises, the names of specific organizations and individuals have been withheld from quotes.

Overarching Themes

People take pride in living and working in this community.

Many say that Winston-Salem/Forsyth County is a good place to live for themselves, for children, and for families. Several participants stated that the community is a welcoming place, and this sense is particularly strong among those who have lived in the area for most of their lives or who have returned to be near extended family. Long-term residents take significant pride in “being of Winston-Salem/Forsyth County” and contributing to the community’s success. Community events that are “authentically Winston-Salem” are appreciated and bring the community together, building a common identity and community pride.

What community members said:

- *It’s a community-oriented place where we, generally, try to meet each other’s needs. Of course, there are differences of political opinions, but people are generally trying to be supportive of one another.*
- *I was really impressed with how the community rallied around public schools and how well Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools did in terms of pivoting when everything shut down in March 2020.*
- *People here know who they can lean on. A lot of families have been here for a long time and we don’t have a lot of transplants. Most of the people you meet were born and raised here so they have strong family support and strong friend support.*
- *As a person of color, your aunts and uncles are the people around you whether they are blood or not.*
- *I really appreciate that our community is so focused on helping others. There are a lot of great organizations doing work to make WS/FC a better place to live.*
- *What holds us together as WS are specific events and annual traditions that are part of our annual cycle. I really appreciated that (many events) continued during the pandemic because they united the community and also really demonstrated this community’s ingenuity and resilience. Even if you don’t attend, it’s nice to know that they’re still happening.*

Some lift up their challenges to feel a sense of “belonging” within this community, prevalent among newcomers and, to an extent, people with young children.

Almost all participants acknowledged significant losses to their sense of belonging over the past 18 months due to the need for social distancing because of COVID-19 and related public health policies. Individuals with young children struggled in particular due to the breakdown of traditional structures that may have provided support in the past, including connecting with grandparents, gatherings with friends, faith community services, neighborhood connections, and more. The closure of schools during 2020 and partial closings in 2021 also put significant pressure on families juggling multiple responsibilities.

What community members said:

- *Parenting has been really lonely and isolating, especially since I have young children and it's been harder to get out with them. When playgrounds closed, my social network folded.*
- *We moved here a few years ago and I never quite get connected to other people and to what the community has to offer. COVID-19 hasn't helped.*
- *There's a lot of judgment about the decisions my family is making about vaccinations. I feel really alone and that's depressing in itself.*
- *Maybe we have been overcautious, but my children are too young to get the vaccine and I don't want to risk getting them sick. My trust in other people is pretty low right now. I try to imagine what all this will add up to for kids overall. I think we will be dealing with it emotionally for a long time.*

Systemic racism and the discriminatory policies, practices, and traditions that uphold it undercut the promise of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County community.

The majority of participants said they do not believe that everyone is treated fairly in the community. While few said they were personally threatened or harassed due to their own race or ethnicity, almost all say they know someone who had been threatened or harassed due to race or ethnicity. Participants report that physical segregation continues because of historical policies and current practices. A few knew about anti-racism efforts in the Winston-Salem area.

Participants also lifted up the exhaustion of caretaking and the expectations of the community based on gender. These challenges were exacerbated during the COVID-19 crisis as traditional systems of support (family, education system, childcare, public spaces, etc.) were no longer readily available to families caring for children and adult family members. Many described that the burden of these caretaking responsibilities falls disproportionately on mothers and women.

What community members said:

- *Along socio-economic lines and racial lines, there's a lot of work to do. People belong to their different church communities, which are pretty segregated.*
- *There are lots of assumptions made about "those folks over there"...all they care about is this, that, or the other. It's not based on evidence, but based on tradition and history.*
- *Tanglewood Park was opened as an outdoor space for white residents and integrated slowly. But even two summers ago, they were using confederate flag designed banners at the swimming pool. While some spaces are integrated now, you know the past and we may not have fully escaped that history.*
- *The more you learn...which hospitals and schools were built for which residents...you wonder if there's still residue left over within those institutions as they try to pivot to be something else.*
- *Black people live on one side of town and white people live on the other. There are some blended neighborhoods. In (neighboring city), there's more integration and you don't feel like you're entering "Black space" or "White space." In Winston, you have an idea that this is a Black community center,*

this is a Black church, this is a white church, this is a bar that Black people frequent. I think that's driven in part by Wake Forest University and Winston-Salem State University, too.

- *You can identify some of the racial cracks within Winston-Salem, and how people are self-segregating. You can literally look at a map and say "this is a neighborhood where I don't expect to see a single person of color."*
- *To get a mental health assessment, it might be \$250 out of pocket. But if you're doing a mandatory assessment to support your immigration process, you're going to get charged \$1,000 for it. Why? People who are seeking immigration status are desperate for this service. Same thing with regular mental health counseling, which is \$60/hour. For immigration, and you have to do several sessions, you get charged \$300 per session. It's the exact same service. People work hard and are taken advantage of every single day because people know they have nowhere else to go.*
- *How do you see inequality? When you cross 52. You go into East Winston. It doesn't feel like other parts of the city. You can live here and have no idea that any Latinos live here (in the community). Because quite frankly even I don't see it unless I choose to (go outside of my immediate area.) You have to choose to see it.*
- *Things are really interesting around inclusion. There's definitely a culture of "you're in or you're out." You'll see confederate flags occasionally, and other racist memorabilia. As a multi-racial family and with a Black husband, that's really challenging in terms of how comfortable you can actually feel.*
- *I think it's minute and people are unaware...the microaggressive things that aren't explicit, but as a person of color who can notice differences. It's when someone is extra friendly to the white customer and matter of fact with us. It's little nuances that you see but the stress from racial microaggressions is nonstop and accumulates over time and creates health issues and mental health issues. It's an important thing that people don't realize has big impacts on people's health.*
- *There are circles of people who may have more of a traditional view of what families should look like and how they should be structured. Sometimes there's an automatic "don't you have relatives in the area to help out?" or "why can't one of you stay home?", which defaults to the sacrifice of one working parent. That narrative is unhelpful.*
- *There's a sense that you got yourself into this situation (of having children), so you should have made connections with family or a church to help you. There are public sector responses that tend to be delayed, and private sector responses that tend to be expensive.*

Socio-economic disparities are clear across every system in the community.

People recognize the chronic underfunding of both early education and public schools, especially those that serve primarily students of color. Some participants talked about parks, libraries, and open spaces as assets when it comes to overall well-being. However, they note that safety in these spaces is a growing concern and that investments are not made equally across the community.

Several people also stated that direct government assistance plays a role in creating more equality while improving the lives of children and families in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County and elsewhere. They specifically

shared information about how helpful payments from the federal government had been in alleviating some of the economic hardship of raising children.

What community members said:

- *We are a community broken into the haves and the have nots. And the two groups don't really come into contact with one another that much. So, it continues like the parallel play of toddlers, but the stakes are really high for all of our children.*
- *Winston-Salem is so different than it was just three years ago. The cost of living and housing has skyrocketed, and gentrification is happening in pockets everywhere. I worry how this will impact children and families who will be uprooted as a result.*
- *When you have someone who works the same amount as I do but they are paid one-third of what I make...people aren't paid what they should be. You really saw it during Covid because people with lower paid work still had to go out and risk their health if they wanted to keep their jobs.*
- *It was amazing that it took all the schools closed down to realize all of the services that schools are providing -- food, security, childcare, and all the other things that are lacking in Winston-Salem if you take away the schools.*
- *Even in the public libraries, you feel a difference depending on which library you go to in town. You can see which ones are nicer, and who people care about.*
- *A lot of people were surprised by what happens if the government sends you \$1,200...how that can really come in handy. Even just rent and utilities assistance (eviction moratorium), those decisions that come from the federal government have a direct impact on people. For the first time, I could see the power of voting, that the person in charge can make my life easier or harder through legislation.*
- *I'd say that I'm in the camp that the government has a role to play in noticing the problems and sending the resources directly to individual people or to the state.*
- *Why did it take all of this (COVID, violence) for people to realize that poverty hurts children?*

Community violence is a source of significant stress to individuals, families, and children.

Many participants voiced concern over increases in gun violence during the pandemic, which included gunfire in public parks, a school shooting, and record rates of homicides within the county. As a result, a few families with young children and school-aged children expressed concern about taking their children to public spaces, yet also recognized the need for their children to socialize and be around other children their age.

What community members said:

- *My biggest concern for this community is youth violence. There's not enough programming for kids after school -- they don't have anything to do and that just leads to trouble. We need more free resources that are fun and engaging or we'll continue to see more of what's going on now.*

- *We have a gang problem in Forsyth County. People don't want to say that, but it's true. Kids don't have a sense of belonging, and this gives them a way to get some money and just live. If you join a gang, you have an identity and you're accepted.*
- *Youth just don't have as many options and they don't have hope. Many of them don't see a very good future ahead for them. And they get into this cycle of hopelessness and don't see a way out and they do stupid things...they get involved with the wrong people and their families can't do anything about it.*
- *There are too many guns, too little respect, and too few rules for children...even kids in middle school are getting into things they have no business getting involved in.*
- *The violence makes me want to stay inside and I've felt myself do that during the past six months.*
- *About a month or two ago when we had the school shooting, it obviously had a major impact. At one of the listening sessions, we heard from the youth and one of the young girls said, "that could have been me or next time it could be me" and it put her in a place where she's scared to celebrate life. And the impact COVID has had on youth thinking, "can I even go outside and breathe?" because you know I go outside to breathe and celebrate that I've just gotten an A or that it's my birthday, should I be happy?*

Community policing has had mixed effects depending on who you are and where you live.

Several participants said they appreciated the role that local police play in the community, while others expressed that they do not believe police presence has a strong effect on deterring crime. Several expressed that trust between the local police and the community had been broken in the past and hasn't been fully restored. There is also a perception of over policing in certain neighborhoods within Winston-Salem, especially within traditionally Black and Hispanic neighborhoods.

What community members said:

- *Perceptions of the police really depend on socio-economics. People in lower socio-economic situations, and especially people of color, always raise an eyebrow to law enforcement. On the flip side, we're fortunate that many communities within the city have a positive relationship with the police officers.*
- *As a Black female, I've actually formed friendships with officers here because I knew the officers on the beat in my old neighborhood on the west side of town. They wanted to be resources to help. You get a flat tire, we can help change it. They weren't there to see if they could smell weed or to look for trouble.*
- *The Darryl Hunt case and his death by suicide still loom large here. He was a Black man wrongfully incarcerated for the rape and murder of a white woman. He had been tried by an all-white jury, and DNA evidence later showed that he was innocent. That was an event that really broke trust in the police and in the justice system here. The police hired a Black woman to be in neighborhoods of color to do on-the-ground work around what they needed and wanted to see. The police department really put the work in, but it was a really traumatic event that shook this community. It set us back decades.*
- *People in the Latino community don't make a distinction between ICE and local police. They are both a threat to the well-being of their families, which is why crime often goes unreported in our communities. It's also over-policed just like Black communities here.*

- *Not everything can and should be a police matter, as is being discussed at this moment when it comes to calls around mental health.*

Parents/guardians rely on immediate and extended family, neighbors, childcare providers, and religious organizations as primary sources of support when raising their children.

Participants note that many people have tight circles of support and that many residents benefit from being part of many different communities within the larger Forsyth County community. However, the pandemic has removed these sources of support in their daily lives, making coping with stress exceptionally difficult as parents.

What community members said:

- *I wonder how people who don't have families here deal with stress and how they deal with their kids in a healthy way. It's one thing when you have a spouse and parents who are helpful and you're secure economically, it's much easier to be a good mom. There are times in my life when I wouldn't have been a good mom because I didn't have those things.*
- *Within eight days of childcare opening back up, my toddler got sick, brought it home and the whole family was sick. In most cases, I had my family but they could help cover that. Some people aren't that lucky.*
- *I don't ever worry that something will happen when I leave (child) with my parents. But I think sometimes if you don't have a choice and just need someone who can watch your kids, like...the bar goes a lot lower. The bar has to be low or you're gonna lose your job, then you're gonna lose your apartment, and it just keeps going down from there.*
- *We don't have family or close friends here. I had plans to go to the church down the street...just for a few hours of peace and quiet and someone to take care of my toddler. But the doors haven't been open and when they do, I don't know that I'll be in a place (mentally) to even try.*

Generally, people recognize that opportunities exist to influence community decision-making through formal structures. However, getting engaged is a different story.

A few participants said it was easy to connect with city leaders; these individuals were professionals and activists who are already highly engaged in the community. The vast majority said that they are not always aware of how decisions are made and how they could get involved. Several cited a desire to have influence, but they do not have the time or energy to get involved while juggling multiple responsibilities. Personal, professional, and institutional barriers often get in the way of engaging in the community. Many expressed an "I'll wait and see what happens" once the pandemic is over.

What community members said:

- *If you want to find someone who is in power and talk about a concern, they're easy to find and they're responsive. It doesn't take a lot of work. Think the people who want to be plugged in here are. We have*

active political parties on both sides prior to covid hosting events all the time, lots of nonprofits, so people can get involved if they want to with a certain cause.

- *I suppose it's easy to know when the school board meetings are happening and how to get in the queue to participate. It's another thing to get the childcare and the time off work that would be required to go to the school board building to say your piece about whatever issue is on the table.*
- *Some people think that participation has been enhanced by Zoom. I'm thinking about Governor Cooper's press conferences during COVID and that there may be more transparency than in the past because you don't have to show up at the municipal building to know what people are saying. I hope this will continue.*
- *If meetings are always at 6pm and you work until then or don't have childcare, you don't have access to participate. A lot of things like voting and lobbying for what you want...you're going to see more retired people of means at these meetings than younger people who are at the crisis point of caretaking. They're too busy taking care of young children, older parents, or extended family. When those immediate barriers come up, you'll be less inclined to notice what's happening and to participate.*

Generally, quality healthcare services are available to those who have insurance and who can get time off work to seek services. This is not the case for those without insurance or who do not have flexible jobs.

Many community members cited the lack of equitable healthcare coverage (physical and mental health) as a significant barrier to community health and well-being. Several made the connection between a lack of insurance and long-term health outcomes. Others discussed the cost of healthcare and recognized that healthcare events or emergencies could bankrupt a person or family regardless of insurance status.

Adults also said it was easier to get care for themselves and their children when they are sick or hurt, but routine healthcare (wellness visits) is more difficult to access. Some participants questioned whether there are enough providers in the community. Parents also said they will get care for their children, but often ignore their own routine health care due to inability to take time off work.

What community members said:

- *I believe there's great research that's going on in our health care system in Winston-Salem. But I don't think there are enough options for privately owned healthcare places...they're all a conglomerate health care system. Patients are a number and you don't build that rapport and that's where things fall through the cracks. It's working off a checklist because it's so many different providers, there's not the one-on-one care that you get. Privately owned offices can give more attention, but they're not as educated in the latest research and best practices so there's no middle ground. There are gaps either way.*
- *I've never had a problem getting my kids into the doctor's office when something comes up. I think telehealth has helped with that. Access for kids who need something today has been good, but it's been really hard to get the routine and preventive care.*

- *For vision care, dental care, and annual checkups, it's really hard to get an appointment. I wonder whether they're reserving those spaces for sick visits instead since so many are sick right now.*
- *For parents, it's so much work -- including time away from work -- to get the care that our kids need, including immunizations, that sometimes parents might neglect their own health. I don't even have a primary care physician because who has time for that?*

Both the insured and uninsured populations find it difficult to get high-quality behavioral health services for themselves and for their children.

Several participants lifted up the challenges of finding resources and the long waiting lists for behavioral health services. A few participants also expressed concern about the addiction crisis and its impact on parents and children, while others addressed the stigma of getting needed help during this time. There was a strong perception that the challenge is getting worse with the continuation of the pandemic, and that some community violence was connected to mental health.

What community members said:

- *Forsyth County is in dire need of therapeutic resources for children that are free or low cost. So many children, including ones as young as two and many children with IEPs within the school system have behavioral issues that are not being addressed. We're missing them until we get to a crisis situation. You watch the kids suffering; there just weren't a lot of eyes and ears on these kids over the past few years to provide support. So, I'm hung up on this right now and it weighs heavily on me and my colleagues (in family law).*
- *We really need trauma screening in places where kids are -- in daycare centers, schools, and more so they can be more supportive for children and families. Teachers need more training on how to be trauma-informed, and this includes kids who aren't in school yet.*
- *If you can't take care of the mental health of people, what does it matter if they can read or not? In NC, reading is more valued as opposed to the mental health of our students. We need more mental health services in schools and all settings delivered by people who are well trained, bi-lingual, and representative of the student body and families served.*
- *It's difficult right now to get (mental health) care...most are full and insurance only pays for a certain amount of care. In terms of hours...if we're talking about people who are working, they don't have the opportunity to go to the more affordable places on a long-term basis. Schedules are tough and it's very difficult for people to get the help they need.*
- *There is a long waitlist for psychiatrists...and a gap in terms of the number of psychiatrists. People are going unmedicated or untreated, which then creates other challenges.*
- *There's a lot of depression in immigrant communities and especially during the holidays. Depression leads to substance use and sometimes physical/emotional abuse, so I try to get ahead of it.*
- *Addiction is a really hard thing to deal with. And especially when you have the stress of parenting. I think a lot of times people think that addiction is taking drugs and enjoying it, but most addicts I know*

don't. They use (drugs) in order to escape something, whether that's past trauma or the reality of their daily lives. There's something you can't deal with and the only way you know how to deal with it is using a substance. So, the more stress people are under in their daily lives, the easier it becomes to use alcohol or drugs to just numb out. And you can't numb out when you have a 2-year-old. It's amazing the amount of destruction they can do in like 20 minutes unsupervised.

Parents/guardians report not knowing what resources are available in the community to meet the needs of their young children.

Many parents, especially those under age five, say it's difficult to connect to other needed services that would help themselves or their children. Several participants stated that they would like additional help to connect to services, especially around understanding how they can promote healthy development of their children and what programs can help at which stages of childhood.

The challenges around navigation are exacerbated for families of children with special needs. A few families of children with special needs shared stories about their experiences in trying to access both diagnostic and therapeutic services for their children. Their experiences applied to both very young children and children in traditional elementary school settings. Families reported that significant delays in diagnosis caused lost time that could have been invested in meeting the child's needs.

What community members said:

- *You hear that there's something available – or think that something should be available – for the babies and then you can't find it. It's like a game of hide and go-seek gone wrong. Even things like parenting groups or social things for moms and their children are hard to connect to and I find out about things after the fact.*
- *I've become a part-time researcher to get connected. A booklet from (organization) isn't enough. I want to be able to ask questions, to have a dialogue, and to get guidance about what's best for my child.*
- *Nothing feels accessible right now. I can't tell if it's worse because of COVID, but it was hard even before the pandemic hit.*
- *I'm flabbergasted at the hoops we have had to jump through to get connected to resources for children. Nobody seems to know what's going on, and we waste time, we waste resources, we waste energy and there is so little value added.*
- *There doesn't seem to be a working system of care to manage families' needs when they're young. I think we miss out on services that are offered for a really narrow period of time (up to a child's third birthday). If kids don't qualify for a program for whatever reason, it's like "oh well" and they go untreated even if there's something wrong. It also seems like the most intensive services are for kids once they reach age 12, and not from birth until they reach age 12. This leaves a lot of room to miss things that could be prevented, and children then fall through gaps and don't easily recover.*

What parents of children with special needs said:

- *Most of our struggles are needing services from the community that we just can't find. With two special needs children, I needed respite. I needed qualified care that I felt I could trust someone with my daughters because self-care became a thing of the past. My husband's job took him away four days a week, and I work full-time, too. My parents are supportive, but I don't have a lot of respite. My oldest was in a special school and they had a Saturday respite, but it was geographically a good 25-30 minute drive from our home. It was four hours on a Saturday, so I could drop her off, then drive back to my house to get a few things done, then get back in the car to pick her up and get back home. It turned out to be such little time and it created more stress than it was worth.*
- *After school care was a mess for my (autistic) child. My experience with (provider) was a nightmare. I was assured that these were experienced providers who knew how to work with special needs children, and that was not my experience. They had childcare experience, but they weren't trained to work with children with autism. One day, my three-year-old child had pulled her hair out in clumps...scalp and all. It didn't cross their mind to call me, and they didn't get that a meltdown for a child with autism isn't a tantrum and can't be treated that way.*
- *I've really had to advocate hard for my special needs child. We're in a tax bracket where we're not well off, but we don't qualify for anything that's free or discounted either. There was a free service through (provider), and we were really excited about it. However, they didn't meet any of our expectations or goals for my daughter. I pay all these taxes and you hear that all this stuff is supposed to be available and that there's supposed to be more inclusion for this group of individuals (autistic children), but we're not seeing it. Maybe we're not hunting it out enough but it's not being shared with us. We've ended up paying out-of-pocket for services and care.*

Food insecurity for children is top of mind.

Community members were highly attuned to the existence of food deserts within Forsyth County. Several had questions about whether resources are acting as bandaids or systemic solutions to the issue of food insecurity, especially for children.

People appreciated how the school system ensured that school-age children (and younger siblings) had food options while schools were closed. Food did not appear to be an imminent problem in the immigrant community in which focus groups were held; however, this was a snapshot in time and may not reflect overarching conditions.

What community members said:

- *From my vantage point, I see a lot of children and families struggling with having adequate food. Many families that relied on free and reduced lunch didn't have easy access during the school shut down, even though the school system went above and beyond to deliver food to homes and tried to make it accessible to every child. I think about Maslow's hierarchy of needs and see hunger weighing on parents heavily right now.*

- *You expect with car dealerships and mattress stores that they cluster on the street...some of it is about competition. Better for them because you're gonna shop around, and better for you. Unfortunately, in WS, if you map out grocery stores, you're going to see the same thing. Why is there a Lowes, Harris Teeter, and Fresh Market all right here? While in other parts of the city, you have to shop at the convenience store for food because you can't get to the side of town? I'm not sure why these big chain stores don't spread themselves out more in the community.*
- *Even the farmer's market...we'll take food stamps and EBT...but how do I get there if I don't have a car? I don't think it's in a really centralized place for families. And how am I going to carry all this on a bus?*
- *It would be really helpful if someone would make a map to show...here's where the food resources are, here's how you get there on public transportation and back. I think we would find that things are laid out based on profit motives more so than serving the whole community.*
- *I gotta drive about eight minutes to get to a good grocery store. It's not like when I lived in (larger city) where I would hop on public transportation or walk to a store.*
- *We can teach people the benefits of healthy eating all we want, but if people can't afford produce, it's not going to happen. It kind of goes in one ear and out the other because it's meaningless. You get more calories in a pack of ramen than you do in a head of lettuce...it actually makes economic sense.*

People strongly agree that there is a lack of safe and affordable housing.

Several participants expressed fear (for themselves and for others) of becoming displaced because of the current housing market and skyrocketing rents. They also noted that affordable housing is not available citywide and that the conditions of the available housing is not healthy for families and growing children. Respondents shared that stable housing is foundational to a child's well-being and that if it's not available, affordable, and safe, it would be difficult to operate as a parent/family. Two participants talked about their young children expressing stress about housing.

What community members said:

- *All respondents are going to answer differently about housing than they did two years ago. If you can afford a house, it is a seller's market. People are paying list price or above. Early in the pandemic, we sold a condo that was pretty run down for a surprisingly high price. People who lost jobs were trying to downsize, people who lived in urban places were trying to get out, so it was a crush. People care more about their homes because they (have been) stuck in them.*
- *Right now, it's hard to find housing at all whether it's an apartment or something you can buy.*
- *Safe housing varies by the neighborhood, and neighborhoods can change almost imperceptibly. I'm in a top neighborhood, then five years later you're like "I don't know my neighbors anymore." Things change very quickly in this real estate market.*
- *We've still been evicting people even under the eviction moratorium; the courts allowed it and the sheriff said it needed to be enforced. So yeah...we've still been evicting people. And how do you bounce back from an eviction during a pandemic? Where do you go?*

- *When I'm downtown at the library, you know there are certain times of day that the library will have a lot of people who don't have homes. The way that our homeless population moves through Winston, there seems like there's a time when there's a place for them and sometimes when there's not.*
- *My three-year-old son was kind of scared when he learned that we are renting our house. This is my son's place. His space. And that's really important when you're three...to feel like you're secure. That you know what's coming. It makes the world feel safe. If you're getting evicted, the world isn't a safe place. If they're coming in and throwing your stuff on the street, it's not safe. If you have to run in the middle of the night because you know you're getting evicted, that leaves a mark. Moving is hard on kids. If you have to move every year or so, it takes a toll. It's really hard for children...it's hard and scary for small children.*
- *I'm a renter and my neighborhood is being flipped. The people who currently live in this neighborhood won't be living here soon -- there won't be any more renters because they don't like renters. I know I'm part of the problem, too. The question is how do you keep neighborhoods economically integrated.*

High-quality, affordable childcare was not widely available before the pandemic and the situation has gotten worse this year.

People report that it is increasingly difficult to get necessary childcare and that the community is at a crisis point. Nearly all participants reported having family members and/or close friends living in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County who dropped out of the workforce to provide childcare and/or at-home schooling during the 2020-22 academic years.

What community members said:

- *Even prior to Covid-19 there was a childcare crisis from birth to four. It's really hard to find a space and then if something happened, you would lose that space immediately. There was a rash of daycare closures. When my four-year-old was one, we got maybe eight-weeks' notice that the childcare center -- which was connected to the school my daughter was attending -- was going to close. Church related childcare centers went under at the same time; a lot of working parents saying, "I have nothing for my child" and sometimes the waiting lists are two years.*
- *It's not a good community for early childhood anything. A lot of things closed during COVID, and I wonder how many of them are going to reopen. Is a bad situation with early childhood going to be made worse post COVID?*
- *I don't know how essential workers or single parents have made it work during this time (due to children being out of school and a lack of childcare options.)*
- *For my daughter, it costs almost \$1,000 to have one child (grandchild) in care. They can't even consider having more children and I can't help them out because I have to work, too. There aren't any good solutions.*

Public transportation options are limited and create significant barriers to accessing needed services for those who do not have personal transportation.

Most families reported having access to some type of transportation, either their own personal transportation or through a shared communal resource. However, several reported trying to use public transportation and several shared stories of individuals they know who rely on public transportation to get to/from work.

What community members said:

- *Forsyth County without a car would be hell.*
- *I wanted to take the bus to try to save on a car payment. To take the bus to my office, it took one-and-a-half hours. By car, getting to the same place takes eight minutes. I bought the car, but had to go into debt.*
- *If I'm an hourly worker and need to take my kids to get health care, it's a four-hour round trip if I don't have a car. It's a whole lot of time for people who have two jobs. When you're hourly, nobody's going to give you time off and they're certainly not going to pay you.*
- *The majority of people riding on the bus are people of color. When downtown walking, you walk by the main bus station and you see it. It's a stark reminder of the inequality that runs along race.*
- *Not being in a more metro area, there could be a lot more improvement...transportation is an issue. If you don't have transportation, then it's difficult to get around, to have a job and to survive.*
- *The bus system and the routes are really difficult to navigate. There aren't many routes and it takes forever. Especially if people have multiple children and are trying to get from one place to another it takes forever. If people are stressed out just getting to and from where they need to be, how are they supposed to function?*

Stigma runs deep when it comes to accessing services, especially mental and behavioral health care.

Participants mentioned that young people dealing with significant depression, anxiety, and other challenges are often labeled as “bad kids”. Several people highlighted the added burden communities of color face due to long-standing stigma around seeking mental health support and services.

What community members said:

- *I'm more comfortable at age 40 talking about and dealing with mental health issues, but I think that it can vary. The older you are, the easier it is to ask for help. The younger you are...not so much. A lot depends on your family and how they view mental health care. Trauma runs in families, so a lot of people just think it's normal. It's something I'll pay attention to as my toddler gets older.*
- *The history of trauma runs deep, and our jails are full of people who have abuse in their background but never had access to counseling. And if the abuse is coming from within the home, you're sure not going to take the family member outside to get help.*
- *There's a lot of stigma in some communities about getting mental health care. Some of it is gendered...buck up, you're fine. Also, whether or not your employer covers it or if your employer has*

resources in an employee handbook (Note: Referring to employee assistance programs) and ideally resources onsite to address mental health care. That makes a big difference.

- *I interact with young people who need mental health care and don't pursue it...out of shame, out of fear of stigma, and sometimes the kinds of arguments people make around "bootstraps" and "grit", and sometimes not wanting to seem different from their peers.*
- *From the time a child can throw his/her first tantrum, the assumption is that they're acting out because they're a bad kid instead of that it may be age appropriate, or that they may be exerting control, or that if they're older, they may be depressed or have anxiety. There's a real opportunity for a more trauma-informed system of care, especially across the educational system.*
- *We're living in an ongoing mental health crisis due to the pandemic and we just don't have enough social workers in the world to help people handle this level of stress right now. We have a huge need and not enough people who live in the area to meet this need. It's not just about being a rural community, it applies everywhere. We need to encourage more people to go into this field, maybe through incentives. But is it too late?*

Barriers like language, cultural competency, hours of services, among others prevent people from accessing and benefiting from services.

Participants across the board shared that they were unable to access essential services (medical care, mental health services, parenting resources, etc.) for themselves or for their children due to hours of operation and the inability to leave work to pursue these services.

Spanish-speaking participants shared that language is often a barrier for them within numerous systems, including education, healthcare, and justice, among others. Spanish-speaking families are committed – and desperate – to learn English to improve their circumstances. They cite that resources are available to them, but many of the programs and resources are not attuned to their preferences and needs as adult English language learners. For example, most ESOL classes are taught in English (immersion) by individuals who cannot/do not speak Spanish. Many in the group have not been able to learn English as quickly as a result.

What community members said:

- *The hours of operation aren't convenient for medical, dental, mental health care appointments. If you happen to be working from 8am to 5pm, it's hard to be seen. Saturday hours and Sunday hours would be great for a lot of people, and so would appointments during early morning hours.*
- *The Hispanic community communicates by word of mouth. I have gotten hundreds of phone calls...you helped so and so and they said you were kind and you understood and you took your time. I need your help. That's how things work...word of mouth.*
- *Service agencies need to make sure people speak Spanish at the point when people are getting services. If you wait to find a translator, you've already lost credibility. Whether it's medical, mental health,*

programs, or anything else. If people speak your language, you're more likely to seek out the help you need. Otherwise, it becomes just another challenge in an already challenging existence.

The broken immigration system has wide-ranging negative effects on children and families, including daily trauma and cycles of trauma within families.

Participants lifted up the interconnectedness of immigration status/documentation, transportation, education, and the ability to make a living in Winston-Salem (and in other places in the country). Families spoke extensively about systemic barriers to building a life in Winston-Salem for themselves and their children.

What community members said:

- *Poverty and immigration status go hand-in-hand. Immigration status limits you a great deal in advancing and also has a severe effect on mental health. Because you're not here legally, you're considered a criminal and your family is treated as such. It's hard for these kids growing up in these circumstances to think about the future. They know that if they apply for college, they may need documents they don't have and that they can't apply for help. After they've been in school, it will be hard to get a job because they need documentation. Without documentation, you can't get transportation, without transportation you can't get anywhere. Plus, they live every day in fear that their parents may be caught and deported. It doesn't even make sense to look to the future for yourself. And you start thinking "how does that affect a child living in that home?"*
- *There have been times when ICE was doing raids and they would drive by school and parents would be afraid to take their kids to school because ICE was picking up parents. Or they'd park in front of where most of them live, so they couldn't even go to work. How is this not traumatizing to people?*
- *I want to be in places like (community center) where I feel safe and my children can play and I know that they care about me. They ask how my health is...if I need anything...and I get to meet other people who are like me, in my situation. We help each other and get to talk when we are doing something like exercise classes together. It makes me feel hopeful and like my life is going to be ok.*
- *The biggest thing that would make a difference to me is documentation. Without it, I can't get a job where I can make enough money. Everything depends on this and there has to be a better way.*

The themes from the interviews and focus groups were amplified during the Photovoice project described in the next section of this report.

Photovoice Project

Photovoice is a qualitative method used in community-based participatory research to document and reflect reality with images and words (Wang & Burris, 1994, 1997). This research method gives participants the opportunity to express community and individual needs, problems, and desires while also building individual and community capacity for change.

The research team recruited participants for this project by posting flyers, connecting with community organizations, and leveraging social media groups with members based in Forsyth County. The researchers completed the sessions in October and November 2021. Each Photovoice participant joined a 20-minute orientation to understand the scope of the research, to provide informed consent for participation, and to get questions answered.

Participants in the Resilient Forsyth Photovoice Project were asked to express their points of view and experiences by photographing scenes related to the ACEs research themes. Individuals were asked to consider four framing questions:

- What are your dreams for yourself and for the children of Winston-Salem/Forsyth County?
- What makes you feel strong and supported?
- What challenges do people who live in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County have when raising children?
- What would you like to see change in the community? What recommendations would you make to other decision-makers in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County?

Participants took photos over several weeks, then selected the ones they wanted to share with the research team. Each participant met with a member of the research team for a one-hour debrief to talk about the photos and the stories behind them. Some participants prepared comments ahead of time and others did not. All sessions were recorded to capture the stories, quotes, and comments accurately.

The following pages include photos and accompanying stories by Winston-Salem/Forsyth County residents.

Photovoice Question 1: What are Your Dreams for Yourself and for the Children of Winston-Salem/Forsyth County?

I saw this dragon as I was leaving the restaurant where I had lunch.

I took this picture because I want our children to stand tall like this dragon, with confidence, and knowledge that they can be successful at anything they want to do. I want our children to know that the future is theirs for the taking and yes, there are going to be some hard days and long days but if they stand tall and confident, get back up, they can do anything.

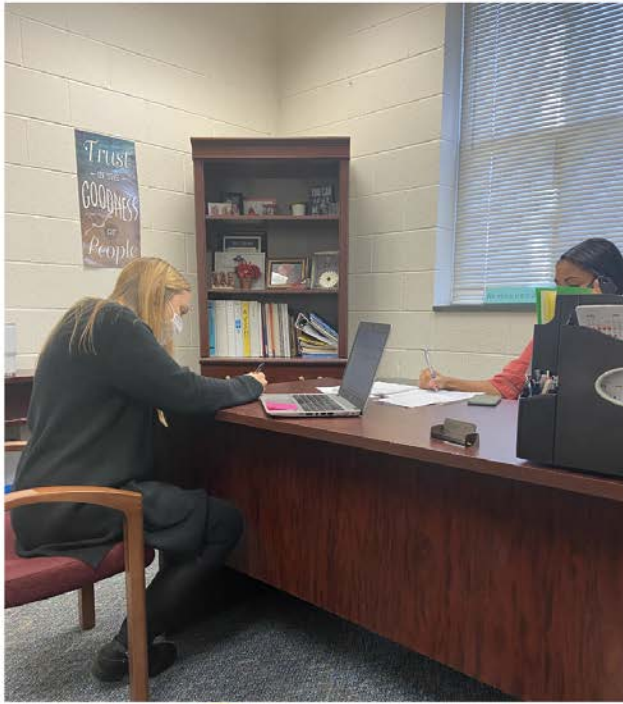


Health, freedom, laughter.

As a whole society I feel we don't spend enough time and resources talking about ways to be healthy and ways to take responsibility for our own health.

We blame others or circumstances, yet we do have so much control. Instead of offering more pills, surgery etc., we need more talk about healthy food choices, getting toxins out of the home, and investing in exercise programs that fit the needs of a busy mom.

Obesity among our youth is outrageous and growing. How can we invest in teaching our youth healthy habits early? Because as we get older our habits are harder to change.



I want our children to know that there are people at school who work hard and care about them.

I want parents to know this as well. In this photo a school social worker and her intern are analyzing attendance trends for students and working on ways to help increase attendance in our schools. Since the pandemic, attendance has steady declined as parents are choosing to keep their children at home.



Dreams I have for myself and my family include continued financial comfort and stability. I dream of leaving behind the generational wealth and property to our children, with the knowledge of how to keep and build onto it.

This year my husband and I purchased a property in Nairobi Kenya. My ancestry links me to the Maasai tribe there, & I have visited the country many times. This year we took our children to our plot of land that we will be building on to show them what will one day become theirs. We also were able to continue to generate income from our rental properties amid the pandemic. We hope to be able to leave a real estate property to each of our children.

My hope is that my children understand the rich legacy they have been born into and feel pride for who and what they are from. I dream of children in the Forsyth County area understanding early on the importance of their history and their ancestors. I hope one day children from all racial backgrounds can celebrate and understand their cultural background & how it has contributed to building our country. I also hope they can learn these things at school and at home.

We put this mirror out and play with it to help build self-awareness, recognition, and empathy.

So many of us are taught to look in the mirror and not like what we see. And that turns into the way we look at the world. I want to help my child break that cycle.

I want R to see strength and joy and resilience and kindness when he looks in the mirror. Not only today, but as a teenager and as an adult.



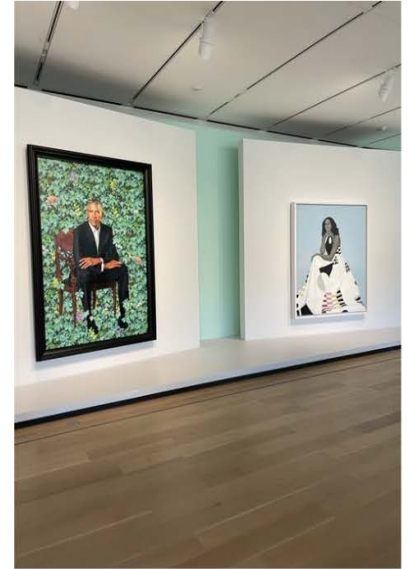
This is a sunshine basket and this is something I ordered from one of our local businesses in Kernersville. I sent it to a friend who had just lost her mother. The whole idea of a sunshine basket is to bring a little bit of sunshine to someone when they are not having the best day or whatever the case may be. As I thought about myself, my dreams, my goals, and I think about my family all the time, and then I think about children. I was downtown at Bailey Park with some friends and there were some kids running around with their parents and I was watching them and I was thinking, that is all I want for everyone including myself to always have this bit of joy, this happy place, this sunshine in our life.

Not too long ago, there was a verdict just released and I was thinking about that family and the people who were impacted by that and I was thinking they are not going to have sunshine for a very long time, the family of the victim. How do you deal with that? We still have a system that in my opinion steals that sunshine. So for me, that was really big to have that happiness and to bring this light into our lives.



I think of this picture when I think about little black girls and little black boys. This is me and I went to Chicago and the Obama exhibit was at the museum there. This photo is for me when I think specifically about little black girls and little black boys in Winston-Salem, Forsyth County.

I just want them to know that they are special and they have the power to one day if they want dream as big as reaching the highest office in our country. They can come from Winston-Salem and go straight to the White House and do it in a beautiful eloquent way and not feel judged. And even if you are judged still end on a beautiful note which I think this photo does a really good job of sending that message.



Photovoice Question 2: What Makes You Feel Strong and Supported?



My loving supportive husband and parents are my foundational support system and help me stay encouraged and supported at all times.

I also during very tough times find myself watching my children sleep. They are a constant reminder to keep pushing forward no matter what.

I have also begun the groundwork of building friends in my local community. Companionship is truly a gift and leaves me feeling refreshed and focused.



When you look in those eyes, you see how happy, steady and stable R is. These are photos of him with our family's chiropractor who has been part of R's life since right after birth. You can see the comfort level and the trust they have in each other.

We're making some choices in our family about how to more holistically take care of our health and well-being. Some of this goes against the "norm" and there's a lot of judgment out there. But when I see these photos, I know we're making the right choices and doing what's best for us and that's what matters.



My family makes me feel strong and supported.

I am a member of the North Carolina School Psychology Association and was nominated as their 2021 Practitioner of the Year. This organization also makes me feel strong and supported with all the training, resources, and advocacy they do for our profession.



Lately I haven't felt very strong. I have felt lost and alone.

Being a stay-at-home mom means the most of my day is filled with all things baby. We do go out but most of the time it's me talking to a baby who only babbles back.

My husband and I are choosing to take the path less traveled with our child. Meaning we haven't vaccinated him (and don't plan on it). We didn't circumcise him, and we aren't sleep training or letting him cry it out. We aren't feeding him solids and food at 4 months. Instead, we waited till he had 6-7 teeth because that indicates his digestive track is developed enough for food.

We feel alone a lot in these decisions. It's not the mainstream so pediatricians look down on us for our way of doing things. I want a society that allows parents to feel good about the decisions they are making for their child. I want to feel supported and not ashamed. There is not one way to do this.

Many of us moms who are doing things out of the box don't feel strong. We feel scared and question if we are good parents everyday. At the end of the day, deep down, I know I'm making the right choices for my child and his long-term health. So, I AM STRONG! Deep down I do feel STRONG. I am supported by my husband in the decisions, and I guess that is all that really matters!



This picture was taken as I was leaving work.

My work makes me feel strong and supported because I know that if I need anything, I can talk with my supervisor about it. I know that if I need a break or need time to reset myself, I can come to my office and sit and recover. Most may think that their job isn't supportive, and I have been there, but I know that this position is so supportive that I don't want to leave!



This was two weeks when I was in Florida. I went to FAMU. This is a photo of me at our football game and just being around the greatness of homecoming. What I really want to point out is having the support system makes me feel supported. In my case the support system comes in the connections I made in college. That is why homecoming is such a big deal to me. I almost feel like I am still an extension of everything I became in college. So even though I am no longer in Florida I feel like I am always representing my university just like family. My university played such a huge role in the woman that I am today so being able to represent FAMU even though I am no longer there and going back home to FAMU, I fully understand now why it's called homecoming.

Coming back home to FAMU really is kind of like an opportunity to rejuvenate and just come back to your community and serve because I really love the slogan or the tagline for Winston-Salem State which is "enter to learn, depart to serve". And although that is for Winston-Salem State, I truly feel like I experienced that at FAMU. FAMU was "excellence with caring". That is our motto. However, really it can translate to the same message that Winston-Salem State has with their motto because at FAMU there was never a moment when we didn't see our university serve the community around them.



I always think about when Katrina hit New Orleans and watching my university immediately respond. I was a freshman in college and I was like, we are in Florida, but my university immediately packed up a bus of students and supplies and went there to help gut houses and things of that nature. Students who went to that were able to get approval to not be in class and the university showed us the importance of showing up for your community, your country. And even returning for the Christmas season later that year, we started with what we called Christmas for Katrina and they packed up two buses of student leaders and students who wanted to go and we donated gifts and went to some of the more marginalized communities in New Orleans and literally dumped baskets of gifts in the middle of the neighborhood and told the children to have at it. Everytime we did a recruitment trip we did community service. It was not a question, it was understood. It was our tradition wherever we are we are going to serve. They would find community service for the students to do. So all of that just really makes me feel strong and supported and it reminds me everywhere I go to do that. With FAMU I always feel supported and connected and I feel strong in what I'm doing in my community.

Photovoice Question 3: What Challenges Do People Have When Raising Children in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County?



I talk to youth all the time in marginalized communities and I recognize families of those children don't know or or unsure when to celebrate something wonderful because you blink and something bad is going to happen. Or people just assume that you if you're doing really well, you're put in a different category or box then those who look just like you or who come from the same background as you. This is one of the many challenges for parents and people working with children.

When adults bring adverse experiences with them, they don't really know how to celebrate their victory or even think they deserve their victory. In our community, unfortunately I think we feed into that fear and that's one of the challenges that students and the young kids experience.

I want the children to know you can be happy, your victory is not a question, it shouldn't be a mystery to anyone and when you're living in your joy particularly when I think about young boys. I love the the concept that someone created that says black boy joy because in our community it's often said that black boys don't deserve joy you don't have any opportunity for joy because the system is set up for you to end up in prison dead or are we always working to provide and never get an opportunity to just live in the moment and be happy and be joyous. I talked to a lot of adult males, particularly black males and they think they're supposed to work and provide. It's like "no, you can also just be happy." I know this is this is an issue that males in general our society has poured into them that's the challenge they're facing.

Look at this reading box. I don't think I have seen many parents come to this box to get books for their children. Do parents know that this resource is available to them?

I know many places may have boxes like this but how do we get parents on board with using the items in the boxes without feeling embarrassed or ashamed for it?



Resources, childcare, adequate housing, livable wages, & encouragement. I never take for granted the situation my family is in. I know without a doubt and see everyday people needing mental & emotional support.

I see families desperately seeking food and housing daily that is safe affordable and large enough for their families. While I do acknowledge an increase in resources becoming available, many are unaware of them until it is too late if ever at all.



I am a stay at home with no family around. It is hard to get just a few minutes a day to myself. I shower with my kid in the room. I use the bathroom with my kid in the room. I cook one handed most of the time and eat cold food a lot!

I miss having a job/business. I miss my independence. I love being a mom and being his first teacher, but it would be nice to have a couple hours a day for me. Time to rest, meditate, work etc.

Daycare can be so expensive that it doesn't make sense to put my kid in daycare to go to work and not make any money while someone else is raising him.

Moms have the most important job in the world, yet we have to sacrifice the most. One of the biggest things is not being able to make money to contribute to the home.



While this is a beautiful photo of the sun rising in the morning, I think a lot of parents have challenges of balancing work, family, and self-care.

Having to get up early, or find a job is challenging when it doesn't meet the needs of your family.

I feel that most parents are struggling to find something that is sustainable and that provides for their family. It may be early morning or at night but I think finding stable employment is hard.

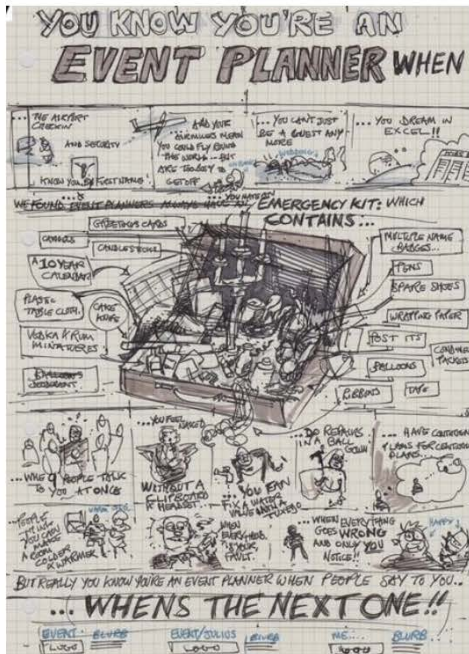


My husband took this picture a few mornings ago after a really rough night. The baby hadn't slept well, and this photo shows the exhaustion a stretch of nights like that. The baby and the dog are in the bed with us...right? And that's not what is supposed to happen according to parenting experts.

There are a lot of things like this surrounding parenting...we know what's supposed to happen, but the reality is that many parents are just trying to make it through the day, to keep our families healthy, to nurture the baby at this important time, and to keep everything else going...juggling careers, schedules, and everyone's needs. It's not easy, but I do think it's worthwhile.

Taking care of myself is often the last thing that happens. But if I'm not healthy physically and emotionally, there's an impact on everyone else around me, including R.

Photovoice Question 4: What Changes Do You Want to See in This Community to Support Children and Families?



The concept I want to see in our community here is being ok with letting our community figure it out...that beauty and the strength is in the process.

This is the event planning process. It looks messy and might not make sense to everyone. We have start off with what this is and then everything in between is chaos, and we need to be ok with a little chaos because it will all come together in the end. When it does, and someone says “when’s the next one (event)?” you know you’ve done a good job.

That's the recommendation I want to make to our community as a whole. It's ok for us to have an umbrella goal but let the community figure it out. Maybe it's messy and sometimes we may not like the path, but let's be ok with the uncomfortable, the unknown and see what happens because we might be surprised at the end with what comes out. We might say, "wow, we need to do this again" because look at the magic that happened when we just let people be and we didn't put all of these constraints and rules and barriers and application processes in place.



I would love to see the racial and class walls destroyed in the area. It is disappointing how easy it is to see what children come from what economic and racial background based on where they attend school (both public and private). I would also love for us to offer private schools that offer real diversity. Some of the best schools in the area have virtually no diversity and in addition, do not teach about it. I would love to see a larger blend of students from all backgrounds be able to attend schools together.

I strongly recommend we all begin to hold our elected officials accountable. We all also need to vote accordingly and listen to what candidates will and can do. More questions need to be asked, more answers need to be heard and followed through on. It is also important to educate ourselves on what our options are and what things are happening locally. So often so many are not aware of who exactly makes decisions for our children and when they are elected to the position.

I know this Orb Weaver spider looks intimidating, but she never leaves her web. I know some of our parents are hesitant to leave their “webs” for fear of change and don’t want to reach out for support, but there is nothing wrong with needing help or wanting to change.

Sometimes, we must step outside of our comfort zone to grow. I can say that his Orb Weaver spider relocated herself to a better spot to avoid being trampled on. Change is good 😊



More supports and connections within the community for all moms, especially stay-at-home moms, for ways to stay engaged (socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually).

More options for safe and affordable childcare (and respite care) in the community to support families.

More education and empathy about the different ways people parent and the choices they make for their families.

I took this photo as I was eating lunch and it brought back fond memories of my mom, great grandmother, and I snapping green beans.

I wish that some of the old traditions we grew up with came back and just stayed. I think it's important to share these experiences with our family members because it shows connection and family bonding.

I heard these ladies talking in their native language and laughing. It was just a special moment to know that some traditions do continue.



I would like for Winston-Salem to host more community events to bring people together. I don't hear about them often, but my family and I went to one event in Statesville aimed at bringing the community together.

There were games, rides, activities, food, laughter, communication, and community. Community is important to families of WS. They want to feel like they belong.



This is a painting titled "Crowns", which is focused on the women's hair being their crowns. What I get out of this picture and that I want to see in our community is the acceptance that different is ok. What is different or we don't expect to be the norm is ok. It doesn't make the person any less professional, less smart, less of anything.



This is impacting people at school, at work. During the pandemic, there was a student who was the salutatorian at his high school and they they refused to let him walk across the stage unless he cut off his dreadlocks.

In talking to the different groups of younger kids here (in Winston-Salem) who see that again and again on social media, it makes them think "if I ever want to grow out my hair, I can't if I want to be seen as successful."

One of the changes I want to see made is that we start to create a culture where people accept who they are and are accepted for who they are.



This is a picture of me smiling at a recent awards banquet. I think it's an overall answer to this process. I'm really happy in this picture in this moment and this process allowed put a smile on my face and I really hope that more people can participate in processes like this to continue to improve our community and to hear directly from community members in a nontraditional way. I would have never thought to think of our community through photos. I'm grateful for the process.

Recommendations from Forsyth County Community Members

The following recommendations reflect what was shared during interviews, focus groups, and the Photovoice project by community members.

Recommendations: Improve Equity and Resilience

- **Continue to strengthen support of grassroots organizations working in equity space, especially those led by Black and Brown people, while also developing processes and partnerships that engage white neighborhoods and communities in anti-racism work.** Participants envision a more equitable Forsyth County, and some knew of current efforts happening within Black and Brown communities to drive more equitable policies and practices. Similar efforts are needed in traditionally white neighborhoods, faith communities, and organizations.
- **Identify opportunities to build individual, family, and community resilience.** For example, safely bring families with young children together to rebuild social safety nets and increase the sense of belonging and connection. This could be through intentionally multi-racial affinity groups that are facilitated by experienced staff and supported by technology.
- **In collaboration with law enforcement, grassroots organizations, the school system, and other partners, develop and execute a comprehensive violence reduction plan.** This includes investments in additional after school programs designed to keep children safe and enhancing public health approaches to gun violence, such as an expanded Cure Violence model.
- **Explore programmatic and system fixes to disrupt cycles of poverty within the Latino/Hispanic community in Forsyth County.** This includes barriers to transportation, ability to report crime, engaging bilingual speakers to teach English, and more. Lack of documentation was identified as the root cause of many challenges. While an ID program for immigrants was discussed during a review of this report with the Trust, focus group participants in the Hispanic community were unaware of the program and/or had not taken advantage of it.

Recommendations: Improve Access and Respond to Adversity

- **Take steps to build a trauma-informed Forsyth County at the macro, mezzo, and micro levels.** The pandemic and its aftermath will require individuals, organizations, and institutions to take trauma-informed approaches when working with the public. Interest in building a trauma-informed community is growing with momentum building in some large institutions like WS/FCS. This includes

training service providers across systems in trauma-informed care, while also identifying resources to help prevent secondary trauma and burnout among first responders, healthcare professionals, educators, service providers, and more.

- **Develop a robust navigation system to help families connect to the right resources at the right times** in their young children's lives, and to enter a coordinated system of care at any point.
- **Invest in mental health/behavioral supports for families (adults and children) who otherwise will not have access** in preparation for significant increase in behavioral health services across the lifespan. In December 2021, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy issued an advisory highlighting the urgent need to address the nation's youth mental health crisis. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, up to 20 percent of U.S. children ages three to 17 had a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorder (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). The pandemic has exacerbated the problem with community members observing and reporting challenges in finding services for children, adolescents, and themselves.
- **Focus resources on improving service delivery across agencies/organizations via a coordinated continuous quality improvement effort.** The disruption caused by the pandemic offers an opportunity to rethink how services are delivered, by whom, and how to improve programmatic delivery to meet the needs of those most impacted. One key area for improvement is to hire and train native Spanish-speakers to ensure people have access to the services they need.
- **Make sure families are included in decision-making bodies to ensure strategies (and execution of strategies) are on target and that issues can be identified early.** Participants appreciated the opportunity to be heard throughout this process. They also recognize that very few families with young children are included in decision-making bodies within Forsyth County. Opportunities should be explored, with barriers to participation (childcare, compensation, transportation, and more) addressed proactively.

Additional Recommendations and Opportunities

The following recommendations and opportunities were identified by the research team to translate community recommendations into practical steps that could be implemented by the Trust and other entities within Forsyth County to address root causes that lead to increased ACEs:

- **Influence and leverage new funding streams (specifically the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act) to make systemic changes that will drive more equitable outcomes across Forsyth County.** Identify how philanthropic dollars could support and extend the positive impact of investments while driving equity across systems like transportation, healthcare, and more.
- **Rethink the structure and delivery of childcare services to increase access, affordability, and quality while centering livable wages for professionals.** Leverage new funding streams that could be the result of the Build Back Better Act to provide meaningful choice for families, including those who choose in-home care.
- **Continue to influence and work with partners to build grassroots support for Medicaid expansion during the next state budget cycle.** While Medicaid expansion was not included in the recent North Carolina budget, the foundation is in place for continued pressure on decision makers to make healthcare accessible to more North Carolinians. A continued cadence around Medicaid expansion or another federal solution will be necessary to alleviate barriers to affordable health care for all.
- **Leverage funding to encourage collaboration across agencies and systems.** The Trust is acutely aware of the challenges and opportunities associated with using funding to drive collaboration among organizations. As the county rebuilds after the pandemic, the Trust may consider employing funding structures that will reduce silos and strengthen collaborations across organizations.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1: FOCUS GROUP/INTERVIEW GUIDE AND MODERATOR SCRIPT

WELCOME: *Welcome participants as they come in and ask that they have only their initials showing. Say out loud and write in the chat:* Welcome, please change your name to your initials by right clicking the participant list where you are and editing to your initials only. Please keep yourself on mute for now. We will begin in just a few minutes.

Welcome everyone. Thank you for joining us in today's discussion. My name is [your name], and I will be guiding us through our conversation today. *[Read the following, not including the heading words.]*

PURPOSE: The Kellin Foundation is working on a project called Resilient Forsyth to reduce the occurrence and impact of traumatic experiences on young children. We are seeking to understand issues related to childhood trauma or adverse childhood experiences (also known as ACES), resilience, access and equity across the county.

BENEFITS: This focus group on [topic area] is part of that work, and your participation will help us understand strengths, challenges and opportunities in our community and inform improvement efforts. The data that is collected from this focus group will support efforts to build a more resilient Forsyth county community, preparing all youth for academic, social and emotional success as they enter into their primary school years. After we finish, you will be provided an electronic gift card for \$25 via the email address you provided.

RISKS: We do not anticipate any risk in participation, although some of the topics we discuss today may be sensitive, or you may feel uncomfortable with some of the questions. You do not have to answer any questions that you don't want to or that make you feel uncomfortable, and you are welcome to leave the meeting at any time. We will put a list of resources in the chat in case you experience difficult emotions as a result of being asked questions about these issues and would like support. *[Copy the list of resources into the chat box]*

ELIGIBILITY: You have been invited to participate today because we value your knowledge and perspectives on this topic. Is everyone at least 18 years old and lives/stays or works in Forsyth county? Please unmute and say yes or use the chat box to confirm. Is everyone comfortable participating in English? Please unmute and say yes or use the chat box to confirm. (If the answer is "no", we will thank that participant and invite him/her/them to leave the meeting space.)

LOGISTICS: We expect this group will take about an hour total, and we hope you can participate for the full time. If you have to leave early or want to, you are welcome to at any point, but you will not receive the \$25 Walmart electronic gift card. If you would like to participate in other focus groups on the other topics we mentioned, and you have not received confirmation information after you completed the registration form, please let us know in the chat now or at any time.

Please keep yourself on mute until you would like to share something to limit background noise. If you are able to, keep your video on. You can also use the chat box to share your ideas and any questions you might have.

Participants in this group are anonymous. You will never be asked your name and should not share it with anyone. You also should not share any personal information like your address.

This group is happening online through a platform called Zoom. It is being recorded so we can make sure we accurately capture your ideas. The recording will be stored securely, and only our research team will have access to it. Is it ok with everyone that we record this session? (If anyone answers “no”, do not record. Otherwise, begin recording.)

The information will be aggregated and analyzed by the research team. Findings from all focus groups will be sent to the partner agencies and may someday be shared publicly through news outlets or publications. Your initials, email, the recording and your images will never be shared beyond the research team.

Say out loud and put in the chat: If you have any questions about this study you can contact the Executive Director of the Kellin Foundation and leader of this work Dr. Kelly Graves at 336-429-5600 or kelly@kellinfoundation.org.

Does anyone have any questions about this work?

GROUP AGREEMENTS: Now I want to talk about the group norms for today’s discussion that are listed on this slide. [*Share screen with a slide that shows the following in a shorter bullet format.*]

- We ask that you, as a participant, do not share any information that you hear from others during this session outside of this group. We, as the study team, agree to do the same with the exception of anonymous quotes and overall themes that will be pulled out for the assessment.
- There are no right or wrong answers in our discussion today. I expect you will have different ideas and points of view from one another. Please share your perspective even if it differs from others in the group. We hope you will respect each other’s differences in opinions.
- Do not feel like you have to respond directly to me. If you want to follow up on something that someone else has said or provide an example, feel free to do so. You can talk with each other about these questions. I am here to guide the conversation, listen, and make sure everyone has a chance to share.
- We are interested in hearing from each of you. If you are speaking too often, I may ask you to step back. If you have not been heard from, I may ask you to step forward. We want to make sure all of you have a chance to give your ideas.
- We hope you can limit other distractions and be as present as possible during this group.

Are there any other norms that you would like to suggest to the group before our conversation? (*Type any additional norms into the slide so people can see them throughout the discussion.*)

Does everyone understand the purpose, benefits, risks and group agreements? Does everyone agree to participate today? Please nod, say yes, or use the chat. Thank you!

Do you have any other questions before we begin? Great, let's get started.

Questions about Adversity & Resilience

1. What are the most significant and widespread sources of stress or challenges in your community? [*Give examples like inequality, racial segregation, poverty, etc. if need be.*] Of these types of stress, which do you feel have the most influence on children and families? How or why?
2. Are there any events that have been particularly stressful? [*Give examples like disasters, major conflicts, or other specific problems you are aware of for this community if need be.*] How well has your community responded to stressful events in the past?
3. What are the most helpful resources in your community for dealing with these challenges? [*Alternate: Who or what helps you overcome challenges? Where does your community get support from? If need be, give examples like institutions, schools, community centers, churches, etc.*] Are any of these groups particularly important for supporting young children and families?
4. How would you describe the levels of trust in your community? How well does your community function together? [*If appropriate: What might improve this?*]
5. How would you describe your community's perceptions of the government?
6. Is your community actively involved in local decision-making? Have any events changed how the community interacts with government leaders? How so, or in what ways?
7. Do you think the entire community has the opportunity to contribute ideas to improving it?
8. What kinds of policies, conditions or programs have helped your community recover from stressful events? Have any of this been particularly important for young children and families?

9. What kinds of policies and conditions would better help your community in the future and lessen the impact of challenges? Why do you believe these factors aren't in place now? [*Probe if not stated: For example, there isn't enough community engagement or political will, not enough information, etc.*]
10. Are there any ongoing efforts to build community well-being? What are they?
11. Is there anything else you would like to share about trauma, especially trauma that affects children, and resilience in your community?

Questions about Access

1. Many people experience barriers to getting the medical care that they need. For you or other people you know, how challenging is it to get access to medical care, for example to see a primary care doctor or a pediatrician when you need it? What are some of the main reasons that people can't or don't get this needed care? [*Give examples like cost, lack of insurance, distance or transportation, language or child care issues, etc. if need be.*]
2. Considering cost, quality, number of options and availability, is there good healthcare in your county? Why or why not?
3. People often experience challenges to getting help when they are having a difficult time mentally or emotionally. For you or other people you know, how challenging is it to get access to mental health resources, for example to see a counselor, a therapist or a psychiatrist when you need it? What are some of the main reasons that people can't or don't get this needed care? [*Give examples like cost, lack of insurance, stigma, etc. if need be.*]
4. Considering cost, quality, number of options and availability, are there good mental health care resources in your county? Why or why not?
5. Do you believe that many people in your community have struggled to meet their basic expenses like food, clothing, and housing in the last year? Are there any groups in particular that have a harder time making ends meet? Why might that be?
6. What programs and resources are most helpful to those who are struggling? How do they help people, especially young children and families?

7. Sometimes there are barriers to eating healthy. For you or for people that you know, how difficult is it to buy fresh produce like fruits and vegetables at an affordable price? What are some of the challenges for families in trying to get the nutritious food they need?
8. We know that physical activity can be really important for people's health and wellbeing. How easy is it for people in your community to get the exercise they need to stay healthy? What are some challenges to this? [*Give examples like lack of parks, greenspaces, sidewalks, etc. if need be.*]
9. Sometimes there are also barriers to having safe and affordable housing. For you or for people that you know, how difficult is it to find a good place to live at a price you can afford?
10. If you have young children or know people with young children, how difficult was it to get your or their children enrolled in a child care program or early childhood education program?
11. Overall, what are the greatest challenges in your community? Do any impact children and families in particular?
12. What kind of changes (like policies, programs, etc.) would help people in the future ? Would any be particularly important for children and families?
13. Is there anything else you would like to share about access, especially access to resources for families and children?

Questions about Equity

One of the things that we know is that people's experiences in a community can be very different. So we are going to ask a few questions about what you have experienced and what you have seen in your community.

1. Do you feel like your community is a welcoming place for all people?
2. Do you feel that all people are treated fairly in your community?
3. How often have you or people you know been threatened or harassed because of race or ethnicity?
4. How often have you or people you know been treated unfairly or been discriminated against because of race or ethnicity? Was this ever when trying to get medical care, a job, in a school setting or by a police officer?

5. How often have you or people you know been treated unfairly or discriminated against because of other aspects of your identity (that are not race or ethnicity)? [*Give examples like gender, sexual orientation, income, disability status, etc. if need be.*] If you're comfortable sharing, which aspects of your or others' identities do you think caused this? How were you or others treated differently?
6. How often have you or people you know been criticized because of your accent or the way you speak?
7. How stressful have these experiences of unfair treatment usually been for you or others you know?
8. Have you or people you know ever experienced any physical symptoms, for example, a headache, tensing muscles, or a pounding heart, as a result of how you were treated?
9. Have you or people you know ever felt emotionally upset, for example angry, sad, or frustrated, as a result of how you were treated based on your race?
10. What changes might make your community a more welcoming place for all people?
11. What changes might make your community one in which all people are treated fairly?
12. Is there anything else you would like to share related to equity in your community, especially as it might affect young children and families?

CLOSING: We are just about finished now. Are there any final thoughts or questions?

Thank you again for taking the time today to share your experiences and expertise. If you have any questions after today, feel free to contact us. [*Put Kelly's contact information in the chat box again:* If you have any questions about this study you can contact the Executive Director of the Kellin Foundation and leader of this work Dr. Kelly Graves at 336-429-5600 or kelly@kellinfoundation.org.]

Here again is a list of resources, in case you would like to connect to supports after sharing your experiences and observations today. [*Copy the following list of resources into the chat box*]

To ensure we have the correct email address for you, please put your email in the chat box before you leave in a private message to me, the moderator, selecting my name. You will also be given the opportunity to weigh into the final report, and we will be in touch with details. Thank you again and take care.

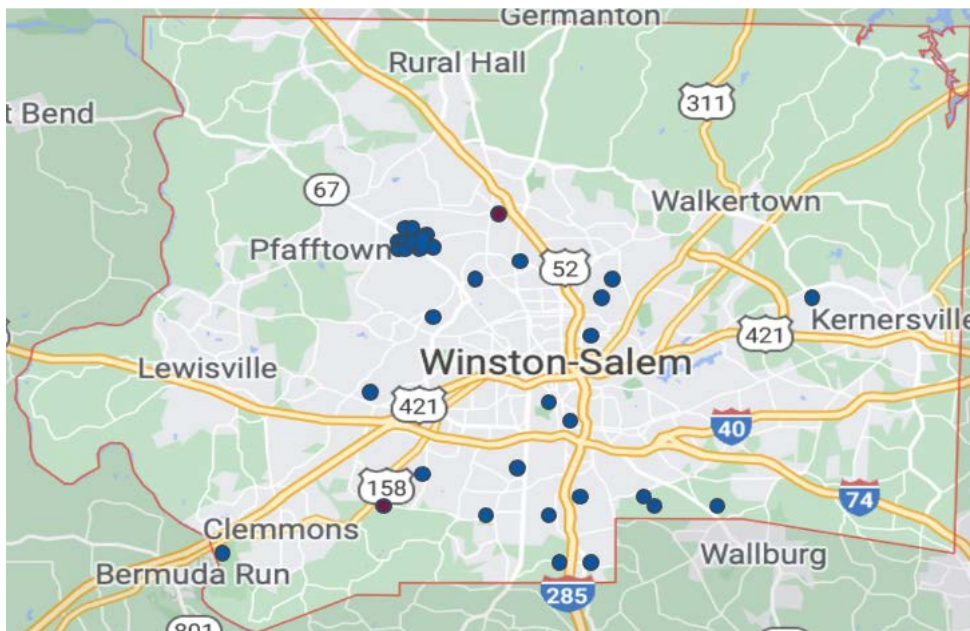
APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 63 individuals participated in interviews, focus groups, and the Photovoice project. Fifty-one individuals participated in recorded sessions either by phone or through Zoom. The 51 individuals ranged in age from 24 to 73 years old, with the majority between the ages of 35 and 50 years old. Forty-nine identified as primary caretakers of children up to age 18.

Of the 51 individuals:

- Seven identified as male and 44 identified as females.
- 16 identified as Black/African-American
- 16 identified as being of Hispanic descent
- 12 identified as White/Caucasian
- 4 did not identify their racial background
- 2 identified as multi-racial
- 1 identified as Asian-American

The figure below shows the approximate geographic location of 37 individuals who participated in the study. The cluster of blue dots indicate individuals who participated in focus groups, most of whom lived and received services in the adjacent neighborhood.



The research team aimed to reflect the demographics of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County community (see [U.S. Census Bureau data](#)), while also elevating the voices of those who were most likely to have experienced

ACEs and were more likely to have been left out of community decision-making. Recruitment efforts were focused on these areas.

To achieve broader gender representation, the researchers reached out to organizations and individuals with targeted messages for male participants. However, they were unable to secure more male perspectives for the study.