

The Blue Ridge Partnership for Children was recently awarded \$180,000 through The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina (CFWNC) to continue its work on creating a regional solution for supporting families who want to strengthen their parenting skills through educational classes. Our goal, with this funding, is to build a full continuum of information, education, and support for parents and caregivers across our region. When parents get the support they need, they have more capacity to give their children positive, nurturing care – even in tough moments. This matters because interactions like these make for capable brains that can confidently take on learning tasks.

This effort began several years ago with a collaboration of community agencies gathered at the behest of the Alliance for Young Children of the Blue Ridge (AYC BR). Their task was to create a beginning model of reliable parent education with extremely limited resources. The model created in Yancey County was subsequently extended into Mitchell and Avery counties. Its core components include:

- A variety of classes giving parents and caregivers the tools and resources they need to be confident and effective, and support their child's healthy social-emotional development and resilience.
- A single portal on the Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey Cooperative Extension websites to learn about and enroll in classes, and receive personalized support in matching needs/goals to parent education offerings.
- Clear choice in the educational offerings, so that parents can match their level of information/support need with the intensity of the service, their parenting philosophy and goals with the parent education model and topic, the demands on their lives with the class schedule and meeting time, and their financial means with class costs.
- Meeting supports like free child care and meals.

The extensive collaboration of service agencies over the last five years and the support of foundations such as CFWNC have added sustainability to our beginning system in numerous ways, increasing the number of trainers and models to meet the complexity of family needs and preferences. This support from the CFWNC will make it possible for the BRPFC to hire a coordinator for this work, and also for the facilitators of the parent education classes to receive training and coaching on how to offer resilience-building tools to parents.

If you would like to learn more about our collaborative, community-based model for parent education, go to the Yancey, Mitchell, or Avery Cooperative Extension websites and click on the Parent Education Opportunities tab to the left. You can also contact Kelsie Gouge at parenting@brpartnershipforchildren.org, or by calling 828.733.2899.

We appreciate The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina for their continued support in developing a system that gives our parents and caregivers tools to help them raise happy, healthy children and secure a stronger future for our community. To learn more about The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina and its efforts to mobilize resources to enrich lives and communities in Western North Carolina, visit its website at <https://cfwnc.org/>.