Healthy leadership in the home and the workplace builds strong families and a strong workforce. For the first time ever, Chick-fil-A’s annual Leadercast is coming to Chattanooga! This one-of-a-kind event sponsored by area Chick-fil-A operators will be broadcast live from Atlanta on Friday, May 4, 2012, and will be simulcast to our local audience at the Brainerd Crossroads (BX). Participants will hear insights from world-renown leaders at the top of their fields including Soledad O’Brien, Marcus Buckingham, Patrick Lencioni, Urban Meyer, Tim Tebow, Andy Stanley and John Maxwell. Each will discuss topics such as:

- How to make choices that positively impact your family
- Choosing to lead your team to success
- Learning from the choices of historic leaders
- The psychology of how and why we make choices

You’ll gain knowledge to improve your own leadership skills in the home and workplace, network with other community leaders and learn the impact that everyday choices have on our lives. The choices you make define the leader you become. And the choices you make are not just about you. They are about the positive impact you can have on your organization, your community and most importantly, your family.

Seating for this event is very limited. Group discounts are available. For additional information or to register NOW, visit firstthings.org

CALLING ALL DUCKS!

FTF is proud to once again partner with the Kiwanis Club of Chattanooga to present the 2012 Great Kiwanis Duck Race. This fun campaign allows you to “adopt” a rubber duck for $5.00 each. Then on Saturday, June 16, 5,000 ducks will be launched into the Tennessee River from the Walnut Street Bridge and “race” to the Delta Queen pier on the Northshore. The top three ducks to “swim” across the finish line win cash prizes. Adopt your duck today at firstthings.org.
What About the Children?

A few weeks ago, The New York Times published an article citing Child Trends research indicating that in 2009 the largest growth for women having children out of wedlock was white women in their 20’s with some college education, but no degree.

The article describes this as the new normal. In interviewing several women about having their children out of wedlock, the discussion seemed to center around not needing to depend on a man like women used to, and their ability to support themselves and their children.

All of the women liked the idea of marriage, but had reasons for not marrying. Some had witnessed their parent’s ugly divorce while others just said it was out of their reach at this time. Interestingly, college graduates overwhelmingly marry before having children.

The one glaring omission I noticed in this article and others on this topic is the impact of their decisions on the children.

Decades of research on both sides of the fence consistently shows that children born out of wedlock face significantly greater risk for living in poverty, struggling in school and having emotional and behavioral problems.

This makes me think about all that was said in the 70’s and 80’s about divorce and children being resilient, only to find that children aren’t so resilient. Judith Wallerstein’s 25 years’ worth of research on children of divorce (The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce) was just one of hundreds of studies that showed children survive divorce, but not without feeling the impact for the rest of their lives in a variety of ways.

A meta-analysis of worldwide research on the impact of a father conducted by Dr. Warren Farrell showed that children do better in 26 different areas when they grow up in intact families.

Will we continue to buy the myth that men don’t matter when it comes to raising children?

Sara McLanahan, one of the most respected scholars in the study of fragile families states, “Marital status at birth is a reasonably good proxy for whether children will grow up in a stable household.”

We know that having a mom and dad does matter to children. However, over the last two decades, the societal structures that help people work their way through doing marriage and parenting well have been dismantled. This “new normal” should cause us all to stop and consider the long term ramifications of leaving men out of the picture.

What are we teaching our children? How will our decisions today impact their lives and the lives of their children in the future?
Teaching your children healthy relationship skills starts the day they are born. First Things First’s parenting classes will give you the opportunity to learn or enhance skills and techniques to help you navigate the parenting journey along with the most important relationships in your life.

Building Blocks for Parents (For parents of infants and toddlers)
You don't have to dread the terrible two's or the fearsome three's. Building Blocks for Parents will offer you sound parenting techniques/skills to help you prepare for these years of tremendous growth for your child.

Rules to Raise Your Children By (For parents with elementary age children)
Despite the fact that you are not sent home with an owner's manual when your children are born, there are proven parenting techniques that will help you thrive as a family. This class for parents of elementary age children will help you master these skills.

Parenting in the Digital Age (For parents of tweens and teens)
Are your kids in your face? Is there drama in your home? Are you ready to pull your hair out? If you are the parent of a tweenager or teen, this class is for you. Topics covered include: power and control issues, dealing with conflict, dating drama—or how to help them avoid it, mutual respect, technology and more.

To register for these classes, visit firstthings.org.

New Parenting Classes

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Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month

May is Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month, and new research shows that teens are beginning to get the message that Sex Has Consequences. According to new data from the Guttmacher Institute, statistics show that teen pregnancy in the U.S. has declined 42% from its peak in 1990, and is now at a nearly 40-year low. In addition to the overall national declines, teen pregnancy has also decreased dramatically among all racial and ethnic groups since 1990. This is good news, but it is important to note that the U.S. still has the highest rate of teen pregnancy in the western world where nearly 3 in 10 girls get pregnant by age 20. It is critical that parents and concerned individuals become educated about the issues of teen pregnancy, and continue to reinforce the message that Sex Has Consequences. Remember, your opinion matters to your kids. Keep the dialogue open with them.

Did you know?

- Eighty percent of teen moms end up on welfare for the rest of their lives.
- Teens who complete high school, become employed full-time and marry before having children are 76 percent more likely to avoid living in poverty.
- Children of teen moms are more likely to become teen parents themselves.

For more information visit firstthings.org.
On January 28, FTF hosted the first-ever Secret Keeper Girl Live! Pajama Party Tour at the Chattanooga Convention Center. This high-energy stage show was presented to a sold-out crowd of 1,300 mothers and daughters, and taught the importance of nurturing that special bond that they share. The evening was filled with laughter and excitement as well as tender moments of quiet reflection. A great time was had by all. Special thanks go to J-103, Little Caesars, Silverdale Baptist Academy and Sister Kate Photography for their support in making this event a huge success.

Strengthening relationships is at the core of everything we do at First Things First. We are proud to offer a new relationship skills class for job and career advancement called “Work Smart, Live Well”. Good relationship skills can help you stand out in the crowd. Discover the secrets of effective interviewing techniques, resume writing, dressing for success and more. You’ll also learn things like the importance of good communication, time management, problem-solving and conflict resolution, much-needed skills that will not only help you succeed on the job, but at home with your family as well. Classes can be taught on site at area businesses.

To learn more, visit firstthings.org or call 267-5383.

In 2010, FTF piloted a new version of The Family Connection in four elementary schools in Hamilton County. The newsletter for parents was so well-received that we were asked to distribute the newsletter to all Title One elementary schools in the county.

Our latest endeavor includes e-newsletters for middle and high school students for online and print distribution. These newsletters will have information pertinent to the students to help them in school and life. Look for them soon!

Additionally, FTF works to engage area moms and dads through programs in several area schools. Among these programs are Donuts for Dads, Muffins for Moms and Strong Fathers, Strong Families. Research shows that children whose parents are active participants in their child’s education are more successful than those whose parents are not. FTF helps support parents through these programs.

To schedule First Things First to speak at your school, contact Andrea Perry Lyons at 423.267.5383.
Flower Fest ends on a high note!

Our sixth annual Flower Fest proved to be another great Valentine's Day success as we blanketed the community with tulips. Special thanks go to our media partners 107.9 Big FM and WDEF-News 12 for all their support in promoting the campaign. We also want to thank Unum, our flagship company sponsor, as well as our other participating companies and coordinators for all their help.

We sincerely appreciate your support over the years. Nearly $115,000.00 was raised collectively from the campaigns. Monies from these events go toward the continued work of First Things First to strengthen marriages and families.

Thank you to the following companies and coordinators for all your help:

- BB & T Huffaker & Trimble
- Campbell & Associates
- Chambliss, Bahner & Stophel
- Chattanooga Bakery
- Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce
- Chattanooga Police Department
- Comcast
- Cornerstone Community Bank
- EMJ
- ERMC
- Galen Medical Group
- Gold Bond
- Graybar
- Morgan Keegan
- Seredino Co.
- Signal Mountain Presbyterian Church
- Southern Champion Tray
- Southern Coffee
- Thompson Engineering
- UNUM

New Leadership for 2012

Having strong volunteer leadership is essential to any successful non-profit organization. FTF has been fortunate enough to have a caring group of business and community leaders to help guide us in our mission of strengthening families.

Our 2011-2012 Board of Directors are:


A special salute goes to former board members Ann Caldwell, Vickie Blalock, Andre Dantzler, Judy Markley and Kathy Sanders who completed their term in 2011.
Sign up for our e-news today!
Visit firstthings.org

SAVE THE DATE!

Academy Award nominee
Sean Astin
Speaks at 15th Anniversary Celebration

Mark your calendar for Tuesday, September 25, 2012 as we celebrate 15 years of strengthening marriages and families. We are excited to announce that this year’s speaker is actor Sean Astin, star of the films *Goonies*, *Rudy*, and the *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy as Samwise Gamgee. We hope you will join us for our 15th Anniversary Celebration. More details to come!

Coming Soon in 2012!

• Movies in the Park 2012—New Location!
• Sprint Triathlon—August 5
• 15th Anniversary Celebration—September 25
• Families on the Run—December 1