

# NEWSLETTER



## FEBRUARY 2025



## FOUNDER'S MESSAGE: GIVE IT TO THE COMMUNITY

We often get asked what are the most significant mistakes school systems make in implementing Bright Futures. Several mistakes can be made, but the #1 mistake is not giving ownership of the initiative to the community. Here's what that mistake can look like:

- ⇒ Loading up the advisory board with "school people."
- ⇒ Establishing school staff as the "co-chairs" of the effort.
- ⇒ The school superintendent and board of education are not advocating the work.

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The best advice we give communities based on our experience working with over 100 school districts is:

- 1 Make sure the Advisory Board is a community-based organization that genuinely reflects the community's make-up. Ask yourself this question: if we took a "selfie" of the Advisory Board, would our community look at the pic and say, "Yes...that looks like us!" If not, you have some work to do.
- 2 Limit school staff participation...if there are more than two school staff on the Advisory Board, it looks like a school-initiated group versus a community group. Remember...we are trying to give ownership of the needs of our children and youth back to the community.
- 3 Without district-level leadership, buy-in, and support, Bright Futures is a listless ship with sails raised in a windless sea. District leadership must champion and advocate for the work while inviting the community to lead the effort.

Listen, the bottom line is this. If school districts don't meaningfully, strategically, and intentionally engage our community in the effort, the Bright Futures Framework will not work. It takes strong leadership and a focused effort to change community culture. It is hard work and not for the faint of heart. If it were easy work, everyone would be doing it. The great news is that we are all in this effort together. Each of you is the reason Bright Futures has been successful. Forty-two school districts and 130,000 students in the state. Our kids are worth it.

With gratitude,



**Dr. C.J. Huff**  
Co-Founder, Bright Futures USA





## GROWTH OF AR COMMUNITIES

### Bright Futures Has Expanded to 42 Arkansas Communities!

And is now impacting over 130,000 students! This growth highlights the collective power of community partnerships in improving outcomes for children and youth across the state.

# BRIGH FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

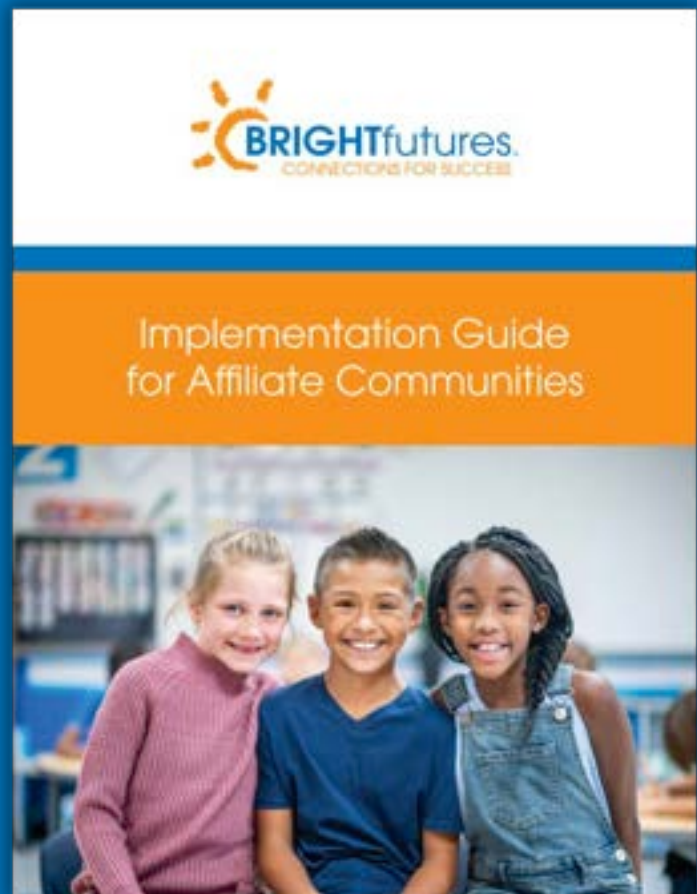
### A Resource for Affiliate Communities

This resource guides affiliate communities with insight, strategies, and resources to develop a strong leadership structure to provide the inputs needed to help children learn, grow, and mature into their full potential.

The implementation guide is available for purchase as both a hard copy and an eBook. However, schools in Arkansas that affiliate this year will receive two copies at no cost. [Contact us](#) to learn how to get started.



[Implementation Guide](#)





## AFFILIATE SPOTLIGHT

### Bright Futures Riverview

#### Serving Riverview Students - A Community Effort!

We loved serving our Riverview schools and are thrilled to share the incredible impact we made together! Over the course of two days, we supported more than 150 families—serving over 50 families at the Jr./High School Parent/Teacher Conference and over 100 families at the elementary schools.

During our first Parent/Teacher Conference Night event in the Riverview District, we distributed hygiene products to students in need.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who supported us through donations! Your generosity truly made a difference. We know life gets busy, but we made it easy for people to help by creating an Amazon Gift Registry, where specific items were donated with just a few clicks and delivered directly to our office.

We recognized that many students in our district face significant challenges in meeting basic needs—things like hygiene products, clothes, and food. When these foundational needs go unmet, it becomes a major distraction, preventing students from thriving academically. Thanks to our incredible community, we were able to step in and make a meaningful difference.

Bright Futures Riverview was proud to partner with, United Way of White County, Simmons Bank, and Harding University Social Work Students to make this possible. Together, we collected and distributed personal hygiene items to ensure students' basic needs were met, allowing them to focus on learning and success in school. Thank you again to everyone who donated or supported this effort. Your kindness and generosity have made a lasting impact on Riverview students, and we are so grateful to be part of such a caring and supportive community!



## MEET THE COORDINATOR

### Julie Stratton

Coordinator, Bright Futures Riverview



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[Bright Futures Riverview](#)





## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

### **Bright Futures Riverview and United Way of White County, Inc. Partner to Help Students Succeed**



In the months of September and October (2024) United Way of White County, Inc. (UWWC) helped to support a collection drive being held and coordinated by the Bright Futures Program at Riverview School District. The purpose of this drive was to collect hygiene and other items for students / families at Riverview that had a need.

UWWC was able to muster volunteers and community partners to aid in this collection. This included partnering with First Security Bank, Harding University, and Simmons Bank to collect items at their locations and recruit volunteers for the event itself. In addition, UWWC had already been working with (3) Harding University Social Work students who were doing a service project for one of their final courses in the program before graduation. These students were instrumental in the success of the drive and their feedback on what they learned in the process was tremendous.

The Harding students also helped as manpower to make grab-bags to be handed out and at the event itself. They also solicited local businesses in support of this endeavor.

UWWC and our partners, promoted the collection on social media and other local media outlets, held our own collection drive at our office, and in the process collected 3 vehicle loads (several boxes each) of hygiene items (toothpaste, feminine hygiene items, shampoo, socks, etc.) for the two night, two location Bright Futures event.

These items, along with items collected at the school and through other partners, were handed out at October parent/teacher conferences. In addition, the Harding University students were able to obtain a few items to use as door prizes to entice parents to attend the meetings promising a chance to win a door prize of some kind. I was told that this seemed to really increase attendance for these important meetings.

While at the event, Riverview students and their parents were asked if they had needs for hygiene items, underwear, socks, and other items. Virtually all needs were able to be met during this two-night event.

Established in 1979, United Way of White County's mission is to increase the organized capacity of people in White County to care for one another. Key focus areas of UWWC through 2027 include homelessness, mental health, and financial stability for the underemployed. We not only help with immediate needs but work to get to the root of these issues and help to find solutions for them; to bring experts and stakeholders together to find solutions that work and are sustainable; to be a convener and coordinator of efforts to maximize the positive impact on the citizens of White County. We feel strongly that programs such as Bright Futures, help us do that very thing.

The Bright Futures program, through their meeting of immediate needs of students enables students to focus on the pursuit of academic excellence. Additionally, creating an environment for students where a strong academic base of knowledge can be gained sets the groundwork for students to grow into strong, educated, and productive adults in society. In other words, Bright Futures is making a lasting impact on those that will one day be the leaders, educators, business owners, and decision makers in our community.





## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

### Walmart: Spark Good Local Grants

“Walmart believes that strengthening local communities creates value for business as well as society. Each year, Walmart U.S. stores, Sam’s Clubs and Distribution Centers award local cash grants ranging from \$250 to \$5000. These local grants are designed to address the unique needs of the communities where we operate.”

- **Grants Open & Reviewed: March 1 – July 15 | Aug. 6 – Oct. 15 | Nov. 1 – Dec. 31**



[Click Here & Learn More](#)

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### Dollar General Foundation: Youth Literacy Grant

“Schools, public libraries, and nonprofit organizations who help K-12 students that are below grade level or having trouble reading are eligible to apply. Grant funding is provided to assist in the following areas:

- Implementing new or expanding existing literacy programs
- Purchasing new technology or equipment to support literacy initiatives
- Purchasing books, materials or software for literacy programs”

**Grant Opens: March 6 | Applications Due: April 3 (10pm CST)**



[Click Here & Learn More](#)







## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Gangs, Guns & School Violence Prevention Summit (GGSVP25)

**February 13-14 • Vancouver, BC**

Join Safe and Sound Schools and Safer Schools Together February 13-14 in Vancouver, BC. Explore event details, including both in-person and virtual options! Don't miss your opportunity to attend—sign up today!

**Can't join live?  
Watch the livestream!**

 [Register Now](#)

### Coffee & Connections

**DATE CHANGE!**

**February 26 • Online**

A great opportunity to meet with local coordinators, community champions, and stakeholders to discuss how we can drive Bright Futures forward. The next Coffee and Connections will be on February 26th. Be on the lookout for an email with more details and a link to register!

**For Coordinators Only!**

[Registration Coming Soon](#)





# STAY IN TOUCH



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