



Youth Caregivers: Growing Up Giving Care

The Rosalynn Carter Institute's
Evidence-Based Approach

“If we have not achieved our early dreams, we must either find new ones or see what we can salvage from the old. If we have accomplished what we set out to do in our youth, we need not weep like Alexander the Great that we have no more worlds to conquer.”

– Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter



Across the United States, millions of children and teens are living the reality of being caregivers. Their daily responsibilities may include managing medications, helping with meals, supporting siblings, or assisting with transportation and care — all before catching the school bus.

Why We Are:

Experience with Courage and Visionary Leadership



Our Future: A Generation Taking Care, Making Sacrifices

More than 5.4 million youth in the U.S. are caregivers (Caregiving in the U.S. 2020 – AARP & National Alliance for Caregiving). These young caregivers often balance caregiving with school, extracurriculars, and their emotional development. Like adult caregivers, they face challenges such as stress, isolation, and limited resources – especially in rural areas, where transportation and support access can be even more restricted.

The Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers (RCI) believes that young people who serve as caregivers are uniquely positioned to bring empathy, leadership, and resilience into adulthood. Their early exposure to caregiving responsibilities teaches valuable lessons about care and community that shape a more compassionate society for future generations.



“There are only four kinds of people in the world - those who have been caregivers, those who are caregivers, those who will be caregivers and those who will need caregivers.”

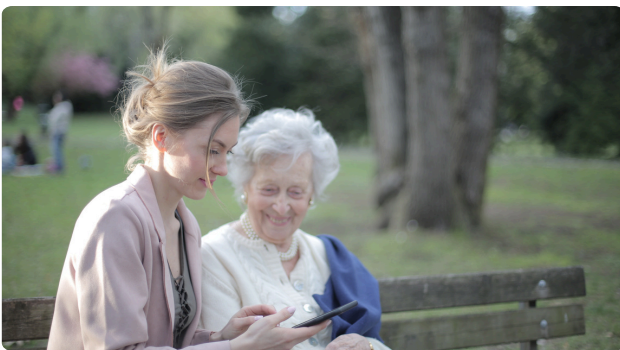
– Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter

Who We Are:

Understanding Caregivers, At All Stages of Life



Inspired by the leadership and personal caregiving journey of Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, RCI has been a national leader in improving the lives of family caregivers for nearly four decades. We are deeply committed to supporting caregivers of all ages, with a special emphasis on building a pipeline of empathy and leadership by engaging youth.



Through community-based partnerships and evidence-based strategies, RCI supports young caregivers and fosters awareness and understanding of their critical roles. Our work spans elementary education through college, building connections that support students academically, emotionally, and socially.

Who We Serve:

Young Caregivers Across the Country



Youth caregivers come from every background and community. They often juggle academic demands, social development, and care responsibilities simultaneously — frequently without acknowledgment or adequate support. Through our initiative, RCI works to change that reality. Our programs address:



The stress of
balancing school
and caregiving

Isolation from
peers and social
activities



The need for caregiver
education within youth
and school settings



Limited visibility into what
caregiving looks like for
younger populations



By centering the experiences of youth caregivers, RCI aims to reduce stigma, foster leadership, and create an environment where young people feel supported and seen.

What We Do:

Programs That Build Empathy and Leadership Through Care



RCI engages youth caregivers through intentional partnerships and evidence-based programs that raise awareness, build empathy, and support their development as future leaders in care.

Rooted in community and driven by impact, RCI works with local organizations and schools to ensure young people understand the value of caregiving and the role they play within it. We draw on our deep experience in caregiver training and curriculum design to help educators, parents, and academic institutions introduce care as an experience that deserves recognition and support.

These efforts create meaningful learning environments that:

Encourage youth to explore what caregiving looks like in real life — from helping siblings to assisting older adults

Provide age-appropriate tools that increase understanding, reduce stigma, and inspire pride in caregiving roles

Strengthen community connections and help students see caregiving as a form of leadership and social contribution

RCI's youth programming helps students feel seen in their experiences, better prepares them for future caregiving responsibilities, and lays the foundation for a more compassionate generation.



Our Impact:

Creating Partnerships to Support Youth Caregivers of All Kinds



Building on our commitment to support youth caregivers, RCI has developed a set of innovative, partnership-driven programs that make caregiving visible, valued, and empowering for young people across different stages of their development.

1 Connecting with Elementary School Children

Jimmy Carter National Historical Park Education Program (JCNHP) and The Butterfly Program:

In partnership with the Jimmy Carter National Historical Park Education Program (JCNHP), RCI delivers They Need Maslow Before they Bloom—an experiential learning initiative that helps fourth and seventh grade students explore what caregiving means in their own lives.

Through guided activities, students connect caregiving to everyday experiences like helping siblings or caring for pets. RCI supports this program at the Rosalynn Smith Carter Childhood Garden and provides classroom resources for post-visit activities in partnership with JCNHP Rangers. Tools include reflection exercises, the “10 Tips for Caregivers” guide, emergency preparedness content, biodegradable bookmarks, and caregiver-themed materials including buttons and a plush toy provided through our collaboration with Sesame Workshop.

To date, this collaboration has served over seven hundred young people.

2

Reaching Younger Children

Sesame Workshop Collaboration for Military Families

RCI partners with Sesame Workshop—the nonprofit behind Sesame Street—to share a wide range of digital tools that help young children in military and veteran families understand caregiving roles.

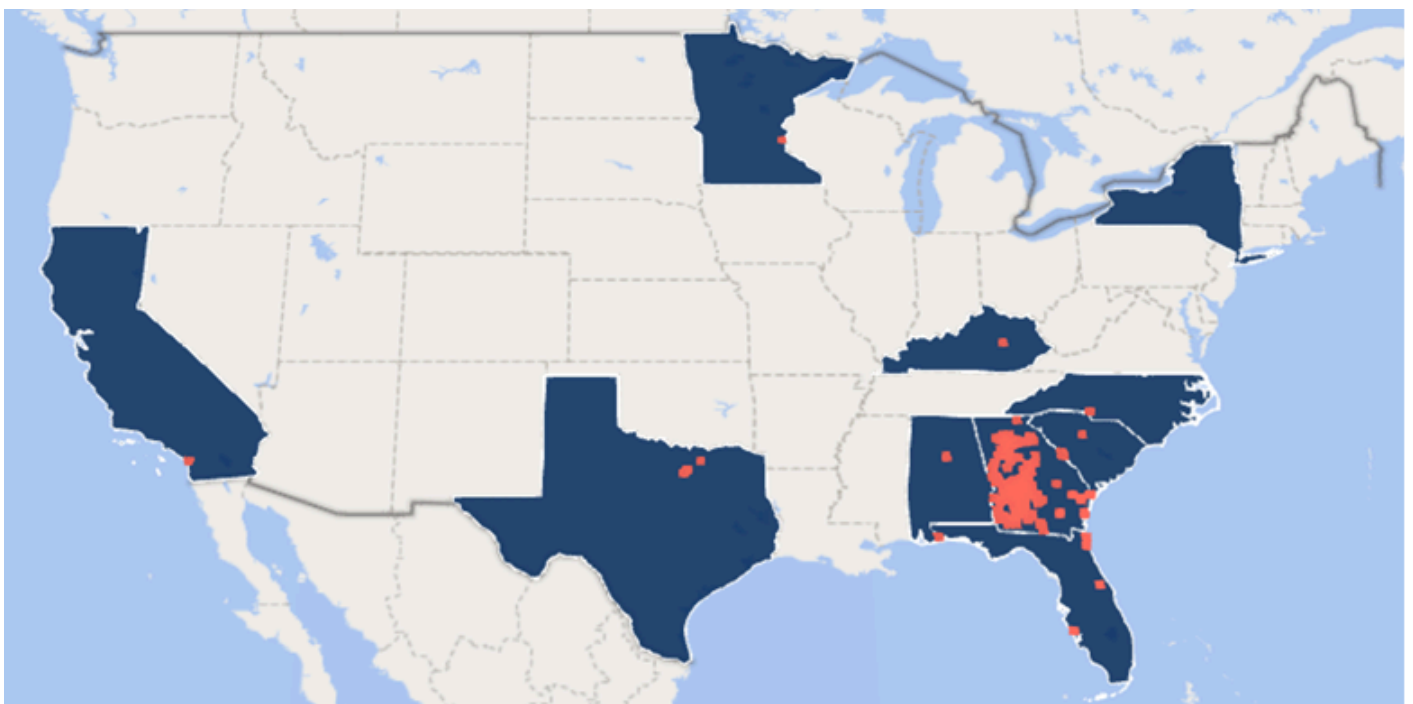
These include videos, coloring pages, and co-facilitated webinars that address emotional well-being and normalize family caregiving. RCI promotes and distributes these materials through its youth-focused initiatives, ensuring they reach the families who need them most. This partnership supports early empathy-building and helps reduce stigma around caregiving at a young age.

3

Enabling College Education for Young Caregivers

John and Betty Pope Caregiver Scholarship – Georgia Southwestern State University (GSW)

To support youth caregivers pursuing higher education, RCI administers the John and Betty Pope Caregiver Scholarship in partnership with Georgia Southwestern State University. This scholarship provides financial aid and mentorship to students who are current or former caregivers, helping them continue their academic journeys while managing caregiving responsibilities.



How We Work:

Cross-Sector Partnerships Grounded in Community and Care



RCI's youth caregiver work is made possible through deep collaboration with educators, nonprofit organizations, public institutions, and researchers. Our approach includes:



**Interactive caregiver education
rooted in classroom and
experiential learning**



**Strategic partnerships with
school systems, national parks,
and scholarship institutions**



**Culturally relevant and age-
appropriate resources that reflect
youth experiences and needs**



**Evidence-driven programming
that reflects RCI's mission to see,
hear, and support all caregivers**

By working across education levels and community settings, we ensure that caregiving becomes a visible, supporting experience for young people.

What's Next:

Why It Matters



Empowering the Next Generation of Caregivers

Supporting youth caregivers means investing in our future. As we look ahead, our partners will continue refining and expanding programs that equip young people with the tools, language, and confidence to thrive — not just as caregivers, but as changemakers in their communities.

We will:

Deepen partnerships that reach youth where they are — at school, in nature, and online

Use our data and impact to inform new policies and resources for young caregivers

Elevate youth voices in the national conversation around caregiving

Provide research-backed support across education levels

RCI believes that understanding care at a young age fosters stronger communities, deeper empathy, and more resilient leaders. That belief is grounded in the legacy of Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, and continues today through our work with youth caregivers across the country.

Learn more:

rosalynncarter.org



Read our other impact papers here:

Rural Caregivers

The Power of
Evidence

Youth Caregivers

Understanding
Inclusion with Data