



2021 YEAR END

Report

*It Takes
A Village*

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A LETTER FROM

Our Founder

When God first called us into this mission, one thing was especially clear: this was going to be a community-driven effort. Based on our personal experience as a foster family and the many stories that changed us along the way, I could envision the bridge between the needs and those with a desire to help. But it would take all of us to bring it to reality. There were clear dots to connect to make a broken system less traumatic for everyone involved. And the determining factor in making that vision a reality was up to the broader community and the countless ways each of us play a part in raising our next generation.

Nearly six years later, I continue to be in awe of what y'all have created. It has surpassed my expectations and gives me so much hope for what we can accomplish when we band together for our most vulnerable neighbors. Every person plays a critical role in how this "village" functions, and no role is too big or too small. At the end of every day, we see the needle move a little closer toward a more healing and dignified experience for children and families in crisis. Small victories are the stepping stones forward, and this community now has a proven track record of the restoration that is possible when we band together.

This year, thanks to your generous support, we have met the needs of more than 2,000 local children and continue to build the most incredible team of child welfare warriors to make this mission even more sustainable, impactful, and scalable.

As we face the reality that our state is wading through an unprecedented time of child welfare challenges and desperately needed reform, I've never been more hopeful for the opportunities we are positioned for as a community. These are our kids, our families, and our future. Here's to continuing to lock arms together to bridge every gap, to see families restored, and to ensure safe and stable permanency for every child.

WITH HOPE AND GRATITUDE

Chrystal Smith



“This feels so familiar”

SHE THOUGHT.

Samantha pressed her back against her apartment door, wondering, *How could this have happened? How could child protective services remove my boys?* She looked at the empty living room where her children had just been.

This felt familiar because Samantha, herself, had spent time in foster care growing up, when her mom was in the throes of addiction and could no longer take care of her.

As she thought back to her first night spent in foster care as a little girl, she wondered if her boys felt as scared and confused as she had been, staring at the ceiling of an unfamiliar bedroom in a stranger’s house.

And she thought about what her mom must have been feeling—the love, the overwhelm, the sadness, and the fear that she felt now. For the first time, she could understand how alone her mom had been, without support to get her kids back home—a home Samantha had never returned to.

Now, Samantha was without her children because of her struggles with mental health and addiction.

Samantha didn’t know what would happen next, but she did know she couldn’t imagine being separated from her children like she had been from her own mom.

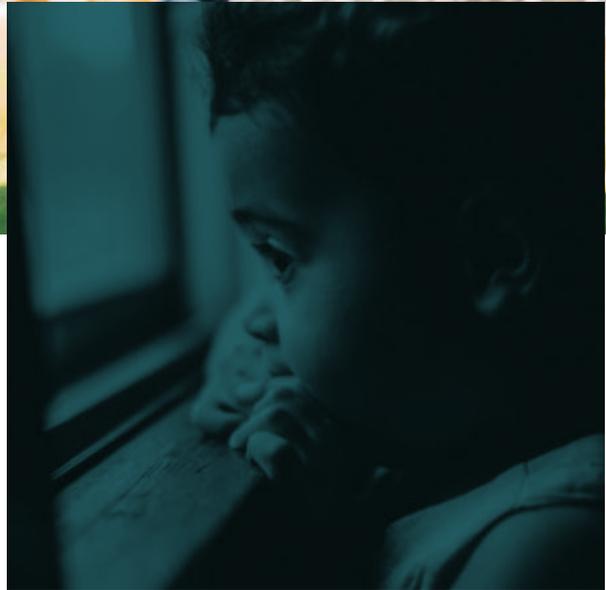


She was determined that, unlike her, her boys were going to come home.

She was going to write a different ending to this foster care story.

She was willing to do whatever it took.

But she had no idea where to begin.



Nowhere to Turn, Nowhere to Start

Samantha loved her boys with everything in her. She wanted more than anything to get her kids back.

But struggling to care for herself, with few life skills, and no one to lean on for help, Samantha had no idea how to do that.

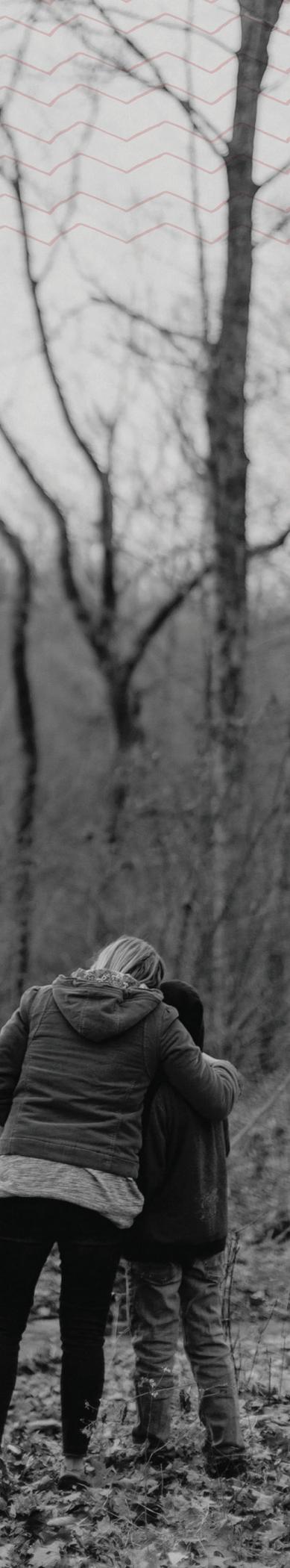
Samantha lacked support and meaningful connections, which led to loneliness and discouragement. The same isolation that led to her mom being unable to sufficiently care for Samantha was now a looming threat to her own ability to care for her sons.

As a single parent without support, Samantha worked multiple jobs to keep the bills paid while also being a full-time caregiver and desperately wanting to overcome her loneliness. She had no quality relationships; after aging out of foster care, she had no one to look up to, no one to ask for advice, and no one to watch her kids while she picked up an extra shift.

No one.

Finally, it had become too much, and Samantha's issues with poverty, addiction, and depression had taken their toll, sending her children away from her home and out of her care.

She really had no idea where to begin to reunite with her kids, and she felt more unsupported than ever.



GIVING SAMANTHA A

Village of Support

Foster Village comes alongside all caregivers who intersect with child welfare, including parents like Samantha who are caught in generational cycles of adversity. Healing happens when children are surrounded by healthy grownups.

For biological parents like Samantha, hope is hard to come by, but one thing can help turn that around.

What do children and families in the system need most?

Support.

We offer that by creating a village beyond the system as we connect families and caregivers with those in the community who want to help. This village:

- Provides families practical resources to meet the immediate needs of foster children in their care
- Offers meaningful opportunities for connection among foster families and biological families
- Surrounds children and families with support
- Advocates for change in the child welfare system

This village offers parents like Samantha the best chance possible at reunification or remaining in their child's life in some capacity.

And when this happens, entire generations are changed.

Cycles are broken. Systems are reformed.

And foster care stories are rewritten—for Samantha's children, their children, and beyond.

Why we care

OVER **430,000**

children in the U.S. foster care system



of licensed foster homes **quit after their first placement**

282 CHILDREN

in Texas who were without any placement options for multiple nights in April 2021

Foster care is a pipeline to some of our most crucial social issues.

80%

of human trafficking victims have intersected with the foster care system

40%

of our homeless population are former or current foster youth



90%

of youth with 5 or more foster placements enter the **criminal justice system**

AT LEAST **80%**

of foster youth suffer from mental health issues such as **PTSD and depression**



TEXAS FOSTER CARE

has a disproportionately **high rate of racial and ethnic disparities** with children of color being twice as likely to be removed from family

OVER **70%** OF CHILDREN

in foster care are placed with biological relatives who often face **economic barriers** when trying to adequately care for additional children

WHY BREAKING THE CYCLE IS *Crucial*

Like Samantha, many families whose children are placed in foster care were once themselves in the system. Abuse and/or neglect of children is never acceptable; however, we know that it is oftentimes cyclical and generational.

Often, biological parents have faced countless hardships of their own, including unstable childhoods, generational challenges, and their own foster care experiences that have put them in the position of not being equipped to care for their children. Isolation and lack of support are the real villains in the story.

One of our primary aims at Foster Village is to break those destructive generational cycles. Doing so has a healing ripple effect, impacting the immediate family, future generations, and the entire community. We accomplish this with a holistic approach to surrounding families with support.

Changing Lives Across the Country

Our goal is to eventually have a Foster Village in every community where there is a need!

Foster Village now has seven affiliate locations across the United States and two more ready to launch. In 2022, we will launch a new version of the affiliate program that will allow us to bring on new affiliates more quickly. This program will help us expand our reach rapidly, as we will be able to proactively reach potential new affiliates and be more strategic as we structure the program. Each affiliate location is a standalone non-profit with a shared collective mission.

Since launching our first affiliate, Foster Village Charlotte, in 2017, we have had a steady stream of interested communities and individuals from across the country inquire about replicating our model in their areas. We now have a growing waitlist of groups who share a passion for bringing our model to their towns and cities.

At the local level, these Foster Village locations will meet the needs and transform the futures of children and families in communities where there aren't resources. But the impact doesn't stop there.

Ultimately, we want to break generational cycles and see change in the system. We want to see more homes waiting for children than children waiting for homes.

A nationwide presence helps us elevate the voices of vulnerable children and families, disrupt destructive patterns, and advocate for widespread change.

YOUR SUPPORT IS GROWING THE VILLAGE IN COMMUNITIES

nationwide



FOSTER VILLAGE AFFILIATE LOCATIONS:

- Austin, TX
- Houston, TX
- Waco, TX
- North Texas
- Charlotte, NC
- Memphis, TN
- Baton Rouge, LA

COMING SOON:

- Abilene, TX
- Dallas-Ft. Worth, TX
- East Tennessee
- *and several more in 2022*



2021 Updates

Foster Village experienced a year of growth in 2021, and it's due to our donors' generous gifts and support. This year, we've been working on expanding to serve more families through new construction at our Oak Haven resource center in Dripping Springs and by forming new partnerships with organizations aligned with our mission and vision.

Building Additional Support

In 2017 when we launched our first-of-its kind resource center, Oak Haven, we knew that it would be a haven for children in crisis. The vision for the multi-use space came together based on our own first-hand experiences as foster parents and needs expressed from other foster families, biological families, and former and current foster youth.

We created a central hub where children and caregivers intersecting with the child welfare system could be met by community support. It's an easily accessible place for them to gather necessities for new placements, to connect with trained trauma professionals and support gatherings with other caregivers, and a place where children in crisis will always feel at home and cared for by their community. We've celebrated birthdays, holidays, and countless other milestones and facilitated sibling reunions at our Oak Haven resource center.

In January of this year, with the current crisis of children without placement throughout our state, we organized the first of many "think tanks" with multiple child welfare stakeholders. We spent countless hours in weekly meetings troubleshooting how to help the increasing number of children waiting for families. We know these children by name and they are far more than numbers to us. We have had meetings with child welfare leaders at every level and continue to research what is and isn't working throughout Texas and worldwide. Countless child welfare advocates are scrambling to find sustainable options, but sadly, there is no viable quick fix with this crisis.

It's been clear for some time that more physical space is needed at our resource center to keep up with meeting the urgent needs of children entering care while also expanding our therapeutic wraparound support services to sustain families for the long haul. This summer we saw our requests for trauma-informed caregiver support increase nearly seven times what we have received in years past.





In true “it takes a village” fashion, God brought an incredible army of skilled volunteers together who have given their time, energy, expertise, and resources to expand our space at Oak Haven with the addition of a barndominium on the property. Our friends at Cornerstone Restoration helped cast the vision for the space, and generous local builders and contractors have given their time, treasure, and talent to make it a reality. This new building adjacent to our existing space will serve as our Support HUB (Heal, Unite, & Belong) for children and families in need of support beyond those first days of meeting basic needs.

As the walls are being built for this new space, we are also prayerfully building a higher standard for how we approach this crisis. We know that what these kids really need is families, and those families are going to need intensive support that is easily accessible. If we are not sustaining and retaining quality homes (including foster, adoptive, and biological), then we are simply continuing a dysfunctional cycle. **We have never been an organization driven by short-term, quick fixes; we are driven by the hope of seeing families overcome generational cycles of adversity for generations to come.** And that takes time and thinking outside of the box.

So, we are working toward making this addition a **healing haven that supports sustainable solutions.** While the main house will continue to be the resource center where we equip children and families with critical necessities, this new building will be where we connect these children and caregivers with the ongoing therapeutic support that they need for the journey to permanency.

It will be a place where:

- The caregivers who open their homes to these kids can easily access professionals trained in therapeutic care of children who have experienced complex trauma,
- Specialists in the community can volunteer their time to share their skills free of charge,
- Our team of child welfare professionals can help facilitate family visitations in a trauma-informed environment that allows practice of basic life skills and healing parenting strategies, and
- We can invite partner organizations to serve this vulnerable population alongside us in a therapeutic capacity that is not currently available.

Building and sustaining families who have the capacity to care for children from hard places is the best way out of this crisis. And these families will need the community's support.



EXPANDING OUR

Oak Haven

RESOURCE CENTER





EXTERIOR: SIDE VIEW



EXTERIOR: FRONT VIEW



INTERIOR: LIVING + KITCHEN SPACE

New Partnerships

In addition to our growing space, we have also grown in our partnerships with other organizations this year. We are big fans of team work and leveraging the synergy that comes through creative partnerships to maximize the impact for everyone.

- 2021 started off with merging the well respected post-adopt organization, **Stand Up Eight**, into our existing caregiver support program that provides holistic support from placement to permanency. Led by our new Program Director and seasoned child welfare pioneer, Jen Reichert, our more robust caregiver support program has raised the bar in how we sustain caregivers toward optimal outcomes.
- This year we began our clinical partnership with the public health practicum at **University of Texas at Austin's nursing program**. We work with their senior year nursing students to leverage their knowledge of health and our expertise in complex trauma to create critical resources for our child welfare system, including infographics and engaging tip sheets that address common risk factors and social determinants of health that are often increased for those in the foster care system.
- This fall we piloted an innovative partnership with our friends at **Austin Pets Alive**. We identify and refer teenage foster youth who are interested in a paid internship opportunity working with animals alongside trauma-informed volunteers.

At the end of the eight week internship, the youth leave with:

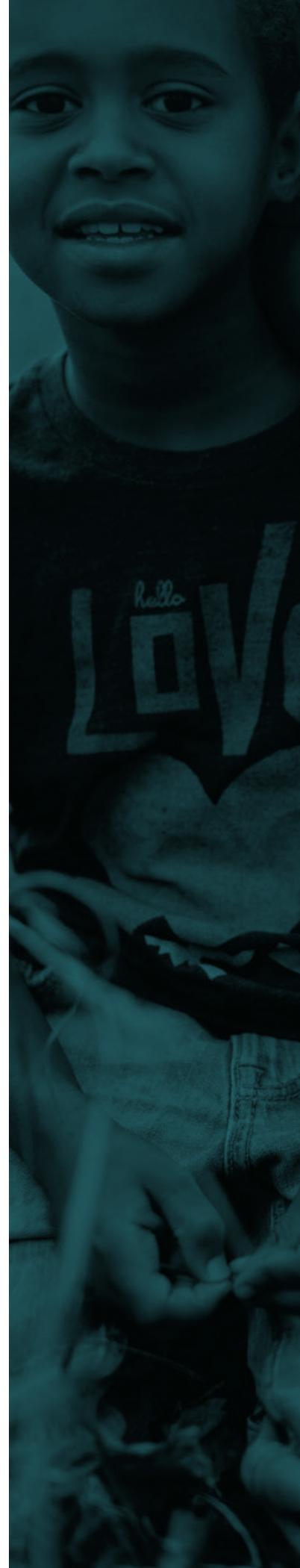
- Work experience and letters of recommendation,
- New mentors, and
- The healing experience of caring for animals who have experienced abuse and/or neglect.

We are looking forward to growing this project to onboard more youth interns in 2022!

- We are working with other organizations like **Side by Side Kids** and **Miracle Foundation** on some new tools and training that will allow us to go further upstream in addressing common risk factors of complex trauma before children are faced with the most concerning scenario of bouncing from home to home.
- A **new affiliate program** is coming in 2022! Earlier this year, through a generous growth grant, we were able to start the process of building an e-learning platform that will complement our live training and allow us to scale this affiliate program with even higher quality and efficiency.

Through our online training program, groups will be able to go through an extensive training process and access all of our shared materials, branding guidelines, and continuing education. We will also provide more coaching to our affiliates, connecting them to legal resources and creating websites for them. This innovative new format is designed to grow the number of affiliates exponentially.

We look back at 2021 with much gratitude for the ways that this mission has grown and impacted thousands of lives. We are hopeful for the future of Foster Village and all of those who we have the honor of walking alongside.



HOW WE SERVE *Children and Families*

Driven by the hope of seeing families break generational cycles of adversity, Foster Village bridges the gap between foster families and caregivers and those who want to help. We meet practical needs and provide holistic support beyond the system through three primary ways:

1

EQUIPPING CAREGIVERS AND CHILDREN WITH SUPPORT. At Foster Village resource centers, families can get beds, car seats, clothing, school supplies, therapeutic tools, and other basic necessities—completely free. Each is uniquely chosen and assembled in a trauma-informed, home-like, developmentally-appropriate environment.

Program Highlight: Through Project SOOTHe (Sensory Opportunities Offering Therapeutic Help), we provide sensory-rich play days, ongoing trainings with our sensory processing experts who have real-life Sensory Processing Disorder experience, and sensory objects such as weighted blankets and white noise machines that ease anxiety for children.

2

CONNECTING CAREGIVERS TO SUSTAINING SUPPORT. Foster, kinship, reunifying, and adoptive caregivers are navigating a complex system and challenges that are unique to foster care. By connecting them with other foster and adoptive families, biological families, and trusted experts, they are strengthened and empowered to continue the difficult and often isolating foster care journey.

Program Highlight: Through Caregiver Support, our TBRI® Practitioners and child development professionals wrap-around families to help them bond and build lasting relationships with others who can relate to them at our monthly support groups. We also help caregivers overcome behavioral challenges with therapeutic in-home coaching and ongoing trauma-informed training opportunities for everyone involved in that child's life.

3

ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE IN THE SYSTEM. The reasons a child ends up in foster care are many, which is why full-circle change is needed. At Foster Village, we work to elevate the voices of the children and families in the trenches and invite the community to be part of bridging the many gaps these families face. Together we build awareness and access to the tools needed to end generational cycles of adversity. It takes all of us to create a better future for the next generation.

Program Highlight: Through Partners in Permanency, Foster Village helps families create safe and stable permanency after reunification through ongoing, committed relationships between birth parents and foster parents in order to best care for the children they love.

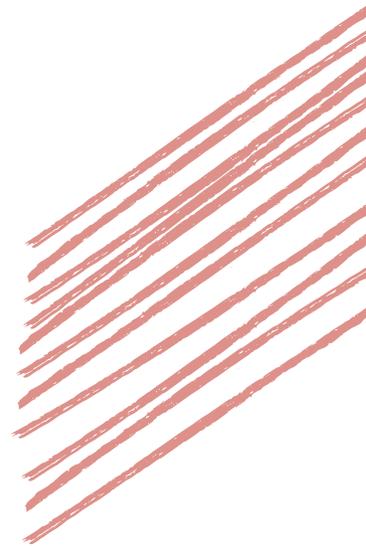
Your generosity will change the future of an entire vulnerable population of children.

Children in foster care are bright, capable, and strong. And when they are surrounded by the love and care they need to feel safe and secure as well as given the tools to be successful, they can:

- Break the cycle of trauma that leads to homelessness, incarceration, and addiction
- Heal from abuse and/or neglect, become resilient, and thrive in life
- Overcome adversity and reach their God-given potential
- Become outstanding daughters, sons, parents, and members of our communities

But their caregivers can't do it alone.

They need to be assured that someone is advocating on their behalf and working with them to create a personal support system that will sustain them through the ups and downs of foster care.



SINCE 2016, JUST IN

Austin

PROVIDED OVER

\$3.5 million

in direct support to children and families in crisis

SUPPORTED OVER

300

successful family reunifications

OVER

8,000

children served

PROVIDED OVER

10,400 hours

of professional therapeutic support to sustain caregivers navigating complex trauma

90%

of caregivers cited Foster Village as a sustaining factor in their ability to continue fostering

Thanks to you, Foster Village is changing the todays and tomorrows for foster families and vulnerable children.

But there is still more to do. And we need the generosity of people like you to help expand our programs to reach thousands of unreached vulnerable children and families around the nation.

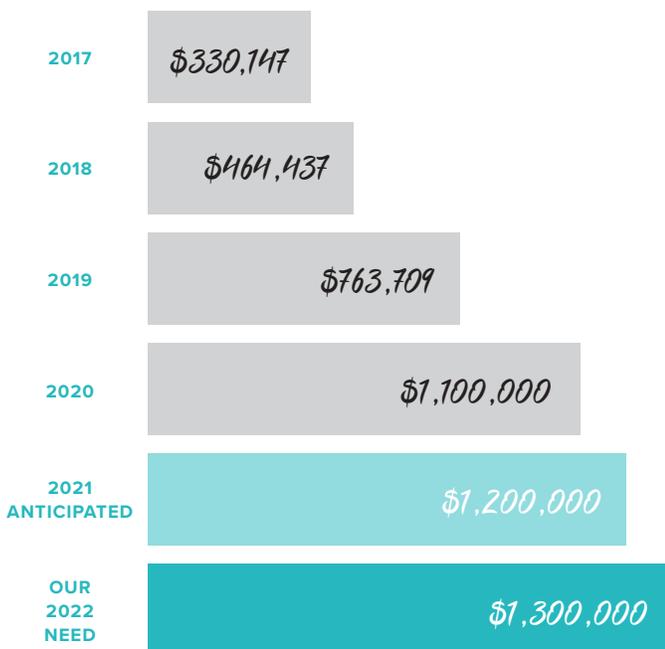
Your gift will:

- Meet critical needs and provide holistic wraparound support to more than 2,000 children impacted by foster care in the Austin area in 2022,
- See lasting permanency and stability for the more than 70 percent of children placed with relatives and/or reunified with biological parents,
- Advocate for sustainable and lasting improvements to our child welfare system by bridging the gaps between the needs and the community, and
- Train and launch at least five more affiliate locations nationwide utilizing our new e-learning platform to onboard new Foster Village affiliates.

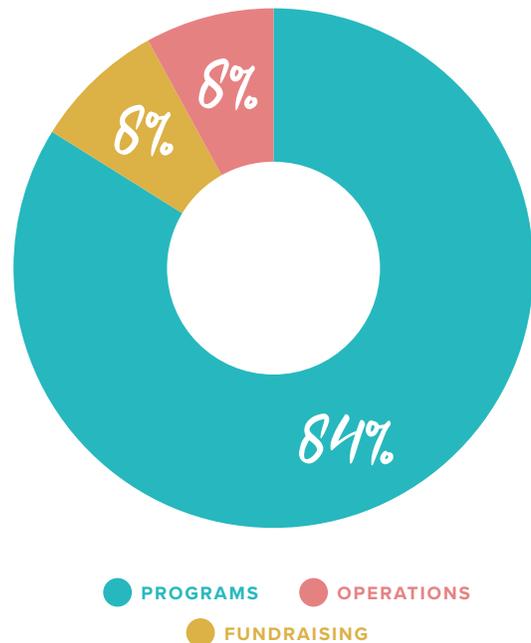
And that’s just over the next year. This is what we can accomplish together. This is the power of a village.



ANNUAL REVENUE BY YEAR



FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY





IT
TAKES A
VILLAGE





A New Future

FOR SAMANTHA'S FAMILY

Lisa, the wonderful foster mom who was caring for Samantha's children, had been attending Foster Village support gatherings and services for more than a year. The Partners in Permanency meetings helped give her a new perspective on her role and opportunities as a foster mom.

Samantha was surprised when she met Lisa during her first weekly visit with her kids. Lisa was kind and open and seemed to be only a few years older than Samantha. Lisa asked about her sons' favorite foods and seemed to share a genuine interest in making her sons feel happy and safe in her home. Samantha immediately felt better knowing her sons were genuinely cared for, and she shared their favorite macaroni and cheese recipe with Lisa.

Lisa told Samantha about Foster Village and how she could find people to help her navigate Child Protective Services' plan for reunification.

Lisa kept telling her, "I'm rooting for you. I'll keep them safe while you do what you need to do to bring them home where they belong. They can't wait to get back to you."

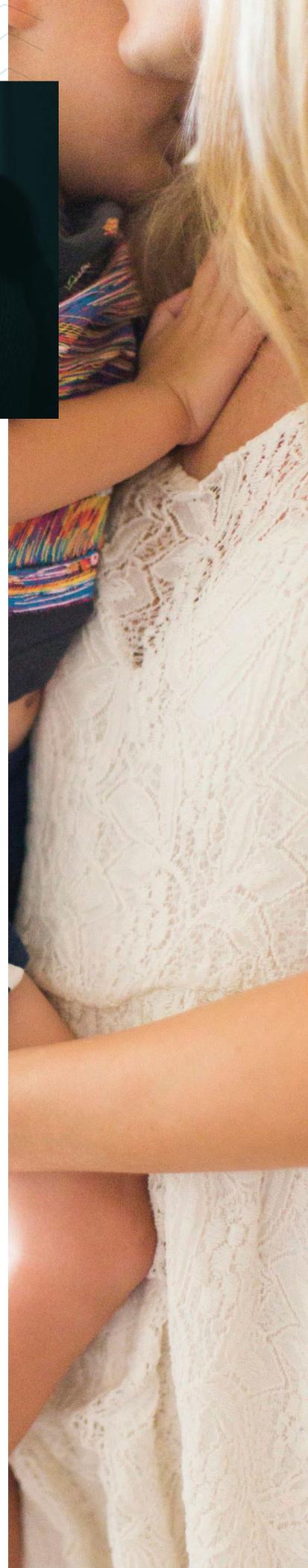
For the first time in such a long time, Samantha felt like someone was on her side. Just having Lisa believe she could do it helped her keep going.

During the next few months, Samantha began to understand what she'd need to do to bring her boys home: attend parenting classes, participate in individual therapy appointments, and keep up with her weekly visits & check-ins with supervision.

She cut off contact with her abusive boyfriend, and she worked with her boss to get extra time off to follow the plan for reunification. She sometimes struggled to get around without a driver's license, but she realized she could turn to coworkers and public resources to do what it took to get to her appointments.

Samantha had never felt so empowered. She realized that despite all the obstacles she faced, she wasn't alone, and she was stronger than she ever knew.

She could figure this out knowing that she had a healthy support system to turn to.



At her weekly visits, Samantha's sons shared about their foster home and foster family. They missed their mom and wanted to get back home, but they knew that their foster parents loved them and were on their side. Every week, they wanted to know when they could finally go home.

The visits felt too short, but seeing her sons weekly helped Samantha stay on track. As the months passed, she finished her classes, attended all of the appointments, and never missed a chance to see her boys.

When Samantha was approved to bring her boys back home, her Foster Village community made sure she had everything she needed to create a safe home where they could live permanently.

Through the gifts of generous donors like you, Foster Village helped Samantha bridge the financial gaps that would have hindered her from bringing her boys home. A team of Foster Village volunteers delivered and assembled beds and furniture to help her make her new apartment warm and welcoming for her sons.

Social workers on staff walked Samantha through the process of getting the boys registered for school and finding other existing services in her neighborhood to help sustain them for the long haul.

Lisa was by Samantha's side every step of the way, and she received support and training from Foster Village on the grief and joy she would experience when transitioning the boys back home.

Samantha, Lisa, and the boys continue to do life together as an extended family, mended together through compassion and community.



You can change lives...

TODAY AND TOMORROW

All over the country, thousands of parents—just like Samantha—are fighting to keep their families together but feel alone and hopeless.

Across the nation, thousands of passionate individuals—just like Lisa and just like you—want to offer love and support to families in the child welfare system.



EVEN THOUGH
WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED
SO MUCH, OUR WORK
IS NOT YET DONE.

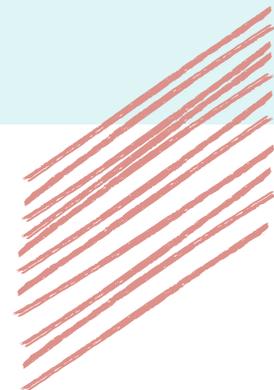


Your generous and compassionate gifts equip Foster Village to accomplish our mission as we ...

... bridge the gap and become the village that meets practical needs and provides holistic support for people like Samantha and Lisa and their families ...

... help break cycles of adversity, transform generations, advocate for system reform, and forever change communities ...

... create a ripple effect of change for children who deserve a village beyond the system.



Thank you

FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!

“

There is a heart passion and calling behind Foster Village. It's genuine. That makes all the difference in the world.

Eric

BUSINESS SUPPORTER AND DONOR





Ways you can give

BY DONOR ADVISED FUND OR CHARITABLE STOCK DONATIONS:

Email chrystal@fostervillageaustin.org with questions.

BY MAIL: Gifts can be mailed to 15400 Fitzhugh Road
Dripping Springs, TX 78620

BY PHONE: Please call our office at 512.599.4144, and
someone from our team can help process your gift.

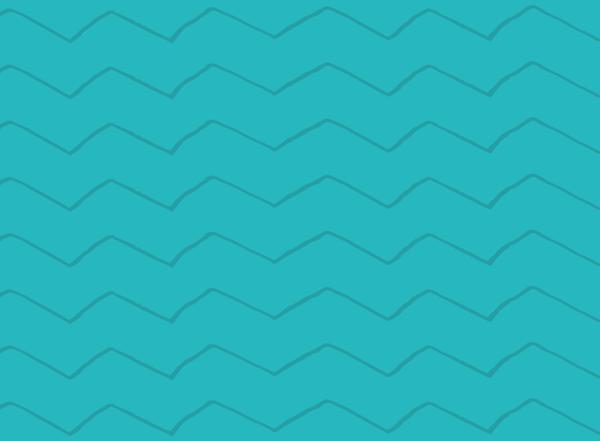
ONLINE: www.fostervillageaustin.org

EIN 81-3143881

Questions?

Please contact us at info@fostervillageaustin.org or call us at 512.599.4144.

We'd love to hear from you!



Children deserve a village **beyond the system**



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