



# Impact Report 2021





*"All children deserve to be loved, and for children in foster care, there is no difference. Invest in them and we build a better*



*Leonardo Bolanos, Board Chair*

*Barnaby Murff, CEO*

Dear Friends,

The following Impact Report comes on the heels of another unpredictable year. In 2021 we continued to watch upheaval and uncertainty—health, civil, and social—as we all worked to restore a sense of balance to our lives. During this time, the challenges facing children in Los Angeles County's child welfare system continued to grow. More than ever, those children need the safety and stability of safe, nurturing homes.

We are proud to say that the past year strengthened Extraordinary Families' dedication to these resilient children and the loving families who commit to their care. Throughout 2021, our devoted staff rose to every new challenge. We refined a hybrid work model that maximized our service to families and youth while minimizing health risks. We increased the frequency of our online support group meetings offered to our participating families. We added two new, targeted support groups for incoming foster parents and those parenting older children in foster care. At the same time, we prepared for a return to in-person services and events—while also recognizing that we must continue to use every tool at our disposal to pursue our mission.

In the past year, Extraordinary Families elevated our Ambassador and Mentorship Programs, leveraging dedicated community volunteers to assist with and enhance our work. These individuals gave of themselves and their time to ensure the best possible outcomes for our children, youth, and families.

We strengthened our team with fresh new talent and seasoned professionals alike for a newly revived team who are ready to redouble our commitment to serving children. We also incorporated a Master of Social Work program into our operations, further supporting the organization's growth while contributing to our sector's future leaders in child welfare by training the next generation of social workers.

Other outcomes of our work are detailed in the following report. We are proud to share this information with you and celebrate the support we provided during a deeply uncertain time. That support is only possible because of people like you. Whether you are a member of a resource family, a community volunteer, a partner, a donor, a staff member, or an advocate, thank you for helping create Extraordinary Families.

Warmly,

**Leonardo**

Leonardo Bolanos  
Board Chair

**Barnaby**

Barnaby Murff  
Chief Executive Officer

# Nurture. Thrive. Repeat.

Extraordinary Families is a leading child welfare organization in Los Angeles whose mission is to help children and youth in foster care to have the childhoods and futures they rightfully deserve. Our vision is that every child, youth, and family in child welfare will have the ability to achieve their hopes, fulfill their dreams, and thrive.

## Foster Care

*Nurture safe and loving homes for children in care.*

## Adoption

*Recruit, train, support, and join families in forever homes.*

## Advocacy

*Advocate for child centered policies for a more just future.*

## UP4Youth

*Provide resources and mentors for youth with child welfare histories.*

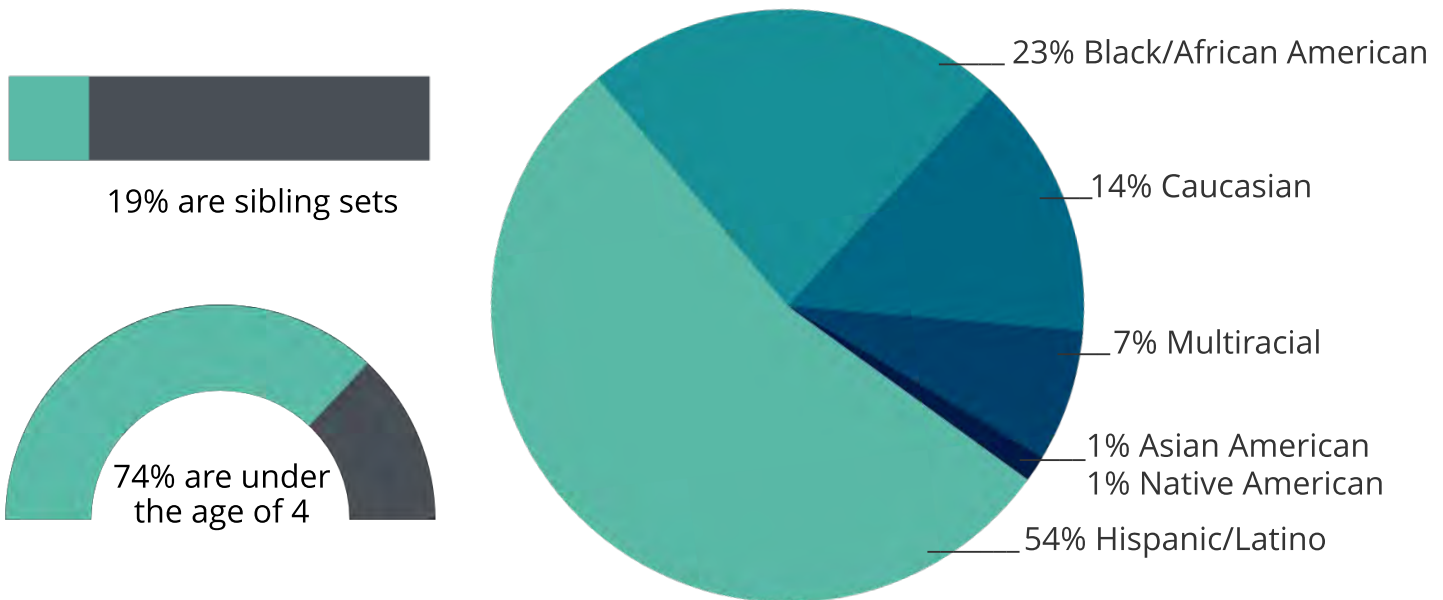
*Our philosophy is child and family centered to reduce childhood trauma, encourage safety and stability, and empower children, youth, and families to flourish.*

# Who we serve

We specialize in providing nurturing, safe homes for children in foster care – **finding families for children**, not children for families – and ensuring those aging out of care have supports they need to thrive.

Our motto has always been **“everyone is welcome”** – all races, colors, creeds, national origins, income, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.

## 90+ Children in Foster Care each month



## Resource Parents

Resource Parents, also known as foster parents, provide safe and secure homes for our children in foster care.

**37%** are BIPOC

**35%** identify as LGBTQ+

## Parent Ambassadors

Ambassadors provide peer support to new and current resource parents and serve as advocates for the agency.

**40%** are BIPOC

**67%** identify as LGBTQ+

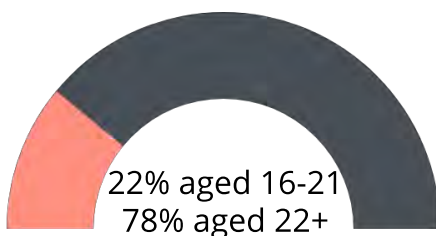




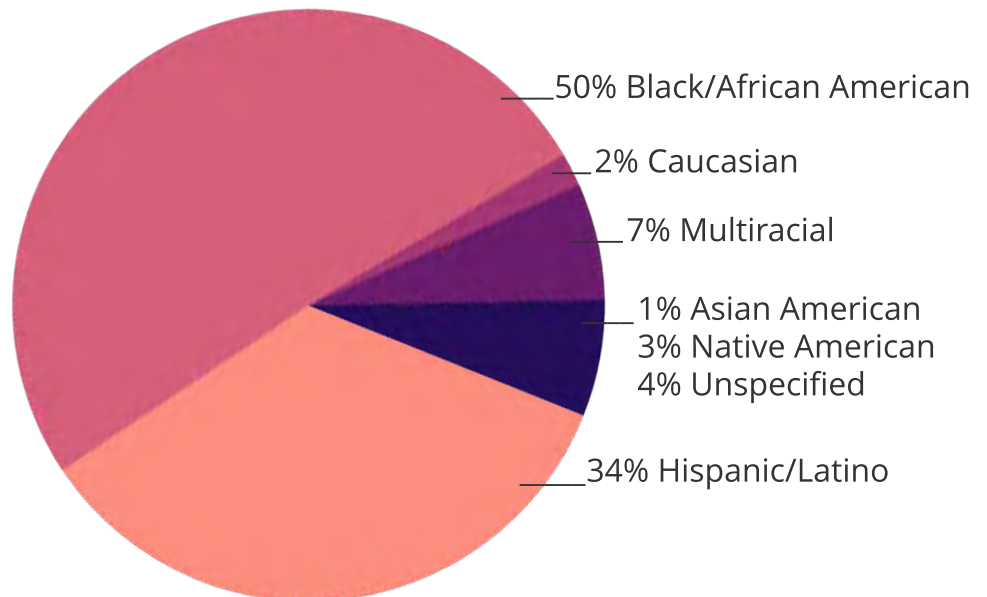
## 111 Youth in UP4Youth each month



24% are parenting youth



22% aged 16-21  
78% aged 22+



*"Together, we are making a positive impact on the lives of our children and youth in foster care."*

- Kayla Wright, staff

## Mentors for Youth

Mentors are positive role models offering social, emotional, and guided support for our youth transitioning into adulthood.

**44%** are BIPOC

**13%** identify as LGBTQ+

# Foster Care



27

*sibling sets  
kept  
together*

Every foster care journey is intricate and unique, and it takes extraordinary parents to take on the incredible adventures ahead. Mikaila and Christian are—like all our resource (foster) parents—big-hearted, family-loving parents prepared to embrace changes.

Three years ago, Mikaila and Christian began their foster journey to become certified resource parents through Extraordinary Families and welcome a child into their home. One day they got a call to foster a newborn named Oliver who was in the intensive care unit and needing a safe, loving home to heal. Mikaila and Christina visited Oliver in NICU daily for two weeks, to hold and feed him, bond, and learn as much about him as they could from the nurses before welcoming him into their family.

A year later, Mikaila and Christian learned Oliver had a newborn sister, Quinn, who also needed a home. These extraordinary parents didn't hesitate: "Siblings belong together. It's really important. We knew she was going to be part of our family no matter what."

Oliver and Quinn joined each other and soon became best buddies with a very special bond. "He's a funny, smart child, always ready to come to Quinn's aid, and she is so playful and happy." The two children are thriving with Mikaila, Christian, and their two birth children Sullivan and Cecelia. Mikaila tells us, "The children love each other and get along really well."

Mikaila and Christian are committed to helping Oliver and Quinn understand their culture and build a relationship with their first family. "Their heritage is an integral part of who they are. Everything has been taken away—we don't want to take their cultural heritage away too." Oliver and Quinn have been reunited with their two older brothers, and also had a visit with their aunt.

This level of effort builds children's awareness that they indeed have a first family. Mikaila expressed that, as resource parents, they can't erase what happened—but they can honor the child's story and their "family before us. They need that to be successful. I want them to be successful. I love them that much."





*"Extraordinary families felt like a family from the very beginning. We've felt very supported, very loved. Your staff is invested in our story and there for the journey,"*

*- Mikaila, extraordinary parent*

**25**

*children  
reunified with  
their families*





*"People who know my journey (with reunification of our first child in care) often ask why I would ever go through this again. I'd tell them 'I just knew I had so much love to give, we all have love to give.'"*

*- Kira, extraordinary parent*



# Foster to Adopt

It takes extraordinary parents—like Kira and Tyler—to create a loving home for foster children to flourish and thrive.

A few months after giving birth to their son, Kira and Tyler began exploring adoption. They attended an Extraordinary Families orientation and knew foster-to-adopt was the path for them. Soon after becoming certified resource (foster) parents, they welcomed an infant who, after a mere two weeks, was able to reunify with her father.

Kira shares, “ExtraFam training spends a lot of time preparing you for this journey, but there’s truly nothing that can prepare you for the calls from desperate mothers, the pit in your stomach every time DCFS comes by, that today might be the day they call and say she’s going home. The other home. And yet, I’d do it all again a million times over, for the chance to love her.”

Though the experience of restoring the baby to her family was heartbreaking for them, Kira and Tyler understood that preserving family relationships is incredibly important for every foster child. A couple of weeks after the reunification, Kira and Tyler got a call about another little girl who needed their love and support. They immediately said yes.

Today Zoe is three years old, and her adoption was finalized during the pandemic. When Kira and Tyler heard the court was only doing virtual adoption finalizations (instead of in-person), they felt something was missing—the celebration. So, they planned an intimate adoption celebration at home with a close friend dressed as a judge (gavel included) to make it “official.” Kira says Zoe still talks about that day, making her adoption even more memorable for the whole family.

Kira sums up what many resource and adoptive parents feel: “Being Zoe’s mother has been one of the greatest joys of my life. She is

perfect, tenacious, funny, and a warrior. I am so proud of her.”

Today Zoe is flourishing. As a tenacious, fun-loving 3 year old, she’s already proven herself to be far more responsible than her older brother Rowen.

“Zoe has gifted me with the most beautiful three years watching her blossom into the kind of creature that takes people’s breath away. She holds onto anyone she meets, like a tiny koala. Embraces them with the total trust of a friend. Giggles into their neck: she is everyone’s co-conspirator. She has wild hair and most of all she likes to pat your hand and say, ‘Are you happy?’”

**93%** of children  
experience  
*only one foster home  
while in our care*



# UP4Youth



The majority of our UP4Youth participants come to us after exiting the foster care system through the County. We see firsthand that every foster youth has experienced trauma, usually multiple traumas. Mental health and other support services such as employment, education, and adult mentorships can be transformative, especially for a youth like Ty.

Ty never knew his father, and his mother, an addict, was abusive. The family lived in poverty and daily food insecurity to the point that if he and his siblings were hungry, they went to the grocery store to steal food. When Ty was six years old, he and his siblings were removed from their home and entered the child welfare system.



Ty spent 14 years in foster care and lived in 27 different homes. Sometimes he and his brother were together in the same home for short period, but would then be separated. During his final four years in care, Ty was moved to several group homes without any family and with youth he didn't know. Needless to say, Ty's life in foster care was, in his words, "hell."

Additionally, Ty faced overwhelming health challenges with epilepsy and hydrocephalus. When he emancipated at the age 21, Ty was penniless and at risk of becoming a tragic homeless foster youth statistic. Fortunately, friends took him in and helped him stabilize until he joined our UP4Youth program, which provided employment and housing services and a one-on-one mentor to help get back on track.

When the pandemic retriggered trauma and anxiety, Ty expressed the need for further support. Since being in the program, he has learned to manage his severe panic attacks. He attends weekly counseling sessions and is "able to let out things I've been holding back," which has been healing. At the same time, Ty attends our skill-building workshops and participates in weekly peer support groups. The group has been a lifeline, as without it he is isolated and doesn't engage much with others who don't have the same lived experience.

Today Ty is working on his dream to be an actor. Not only has he found rehearsing lines helps him manage anxiety, he's enjoying success! He starred in a documentary, "We Gotta Get Out of Here," (2019), chronicling journeys of five youth struggling to beat the odds as they navigate their way out of LA's foster care system. He participates weekly in "Kids in the Spotlight," which empowers foster youth through filmmaking, and "The Difference Legacy," a career mentorship to guide foster youth into the entertainment industry.

Our team celebrates Ty's ongoing success to build a better, more empowered life for himself, and continue support him on his journey of healing and well-being.



# Advocacy







*"The security and care provided in our home gave our kids the chance to be their true selves and the freedom to do what they love"*

*- lenny, extraordinary parent*

Extraordinary Families is committed to advocating at the local, state, and federal levels for policy solutions that help ensure the rights of children and youth in foster care and that best practices are implemented to promote optimal child welfare outcomes. Working at the systems level, we combine best practices with evidence-based research and advocacy to create and advocate for policies, programs, and services that are transformational, scalable, and produce measurable improvements in the lives of children.

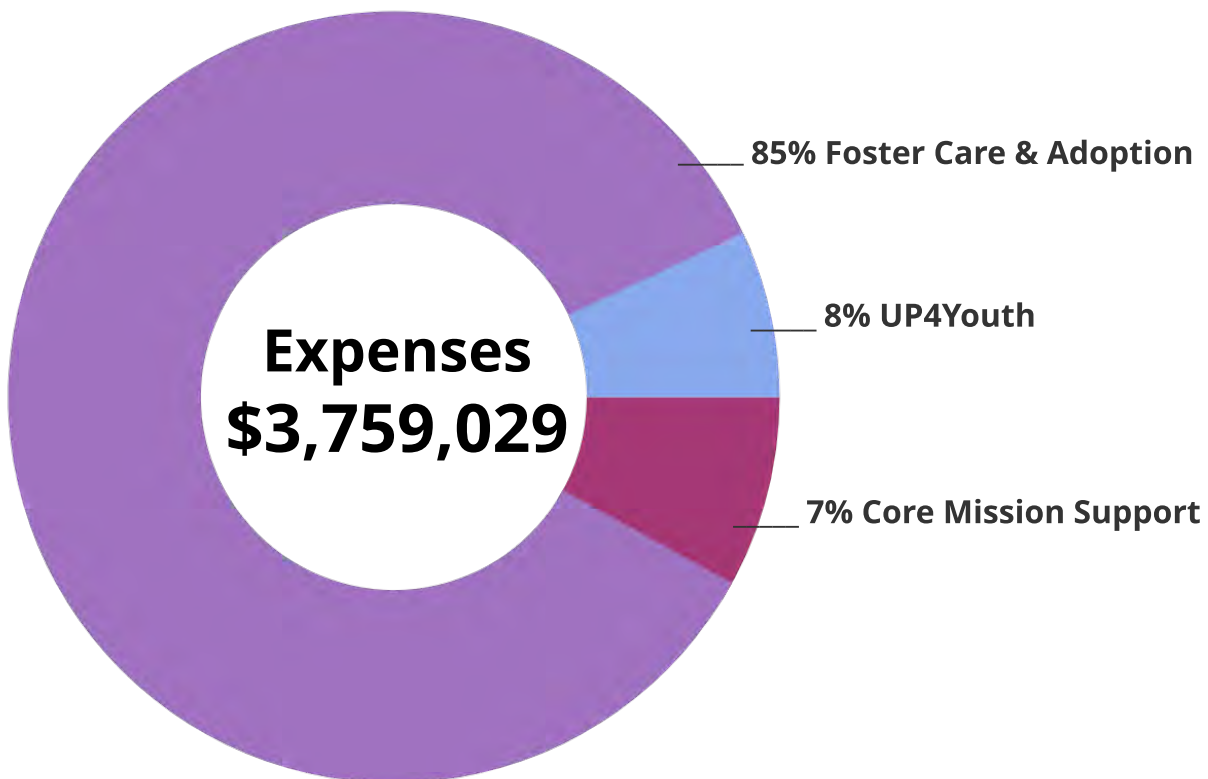
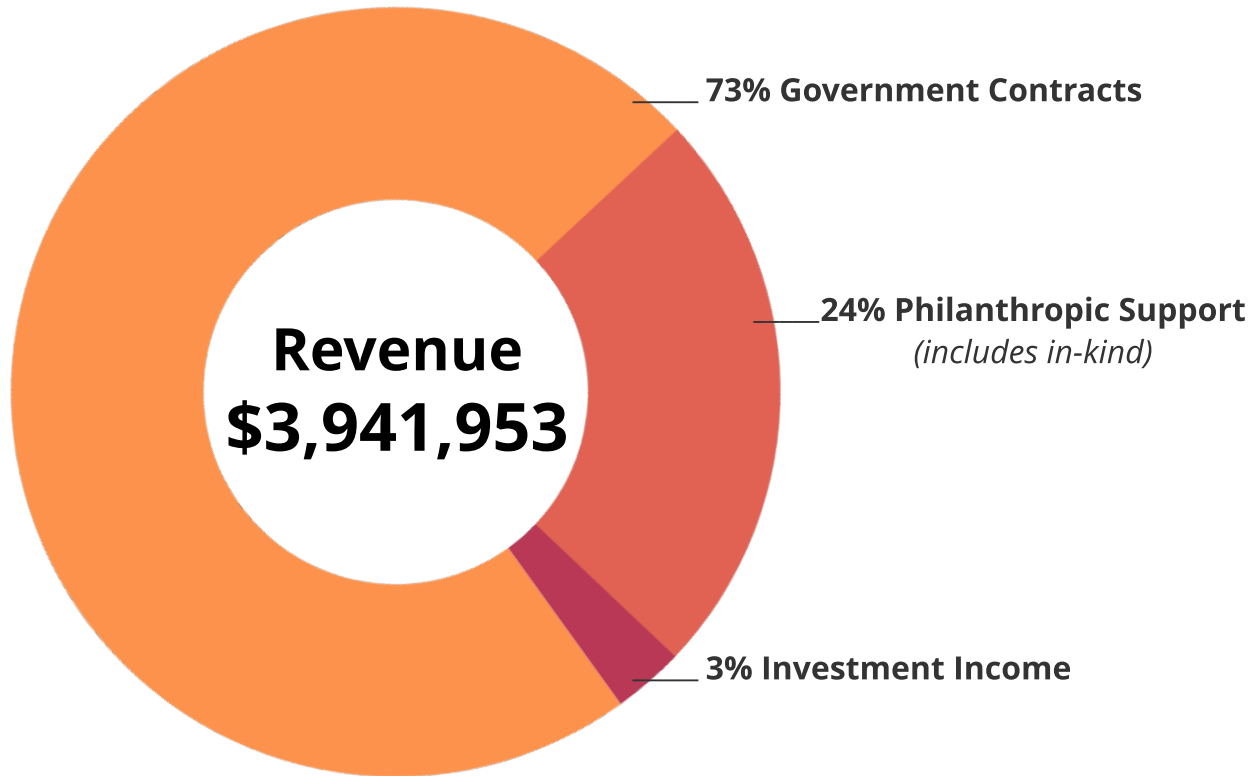
We continue collaborating with our partners at all levels to help inform and develop best practices in child welfare. Over the past few years, our team actively engaged with our sector peers to navigate COVID-related issues and changes that continue to impact foster care. We also played an active role in the Foster Together Network, helping to lead conference and subcommittee discussions on issues impacting the recruitment and retention of more resource families for children in need.

Extraordinary Families took a stand to support our youth who have or will soon age out of the child welfare system. Half of all young adults who age out of foster care end up homeless or incarcerated. Youth in foster care are significantly over-represented among students experiencing basic needs insecurity and would benefit greatly from resources at the college level. We supported the passage of CA Senate Bill 228, which will allow greater access to higher education for current and former foster youth by strengthening an existing program for youth attending community colleges.

Lastly, we advocated to the California Senate for \$5.4 million in State General Funds to increase the Foster Family Agency social worker rate to reduce social worker turnover and promote better outcomes for children and youth in foster care who are negatively affected by the loss of a social worker. We know we must continue to advocate to policymakers at all levels of government to ensure that every child and youth in the foster care system can have the childhoods and the futures they rightfully deserve. We are unwavering in our commitment to creating change through advocacy.

# Financial Statements

*\*Based on 2021 Unaudited Statements*













# 2022-2024 Strategic Plan

Extraordinary Families' vision for 2022-2024 brings together innovative strategies in youth services and enhanced community engagement to meet the unique needs of the children, youth, and families we serve. Grounded by our strong history of success, Extraordinary Families plans to amplify our impact by going broad and deep with our high-quality foster care and youth services. The next three years we intend to better serve more children and youth by decreasing their barriers, building up child-family bonds, and investing in our staff development. We will strengthen our ongoing commitment to equity and inclusivity in all we do. We will build partnerships with special interest groups and community partners to extend our reach within the community, and our leadership in child welfare will grow through this enhanced collaboration and visibility.

1

## **Go broad and deep with our high quality foster care and youth services**

- Enhance support for children and families in foster care

- Enhance support for our transition age youth

- Decrease barriers and build child-family bonds

- Build partnerships with interest groups and community partners

2

## **Invest in our team and those we serve with training and development**

- Enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts

- Enrich staff training, professional development, and retention

3

## **Raise private funds and increase visibility in the community**

- Enhance support for children and families in foster care

- Enhance support for our transition age youth

# Our Leadership and Team



## Board of Directors.

Leonardo Bolanos, Board Chair  
*Northern Trust*

Dawn Bridges, Treasurer  
*KTGY Architecture + Planning*

Brooke Kaufman Halsband, Secretary  
*Hilton & Hyland*

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*Skirball Cultural Center*

Steve Vai  
*Musician, Composer*

Michelle Visage  
*Television Host, Media Personality*

Tiffany White Stanton  
*Costume Designer*



*Together, we make meaningful improvements in the  
lives of our most vulnerable children and families.  
Together, we are extraordinary.*

## **Staff**

Barnaby Murff  
*Chief Executive Officer*

Kayla Wright, EdD  
*Director of Programs*

Beth Lazar, MSW  
*Director of Philanthropy & Relations*

Lorena Bernal, LCSW  
*Lead Adoption Social Worker*

Christina Casillas, MSW  
*Foster Care Supervisor*

Katy Corona  
*Communications Specialist*

Anthony Dela Cruz, MSW  
*Foster-Adopt Social Worker*

Danielle Gordon, MSW  
*Foster-Adopt Social Worker*

Christina Hedrick  
*Quality Assurance Specialist*

Alejandra Hernandez-Flores  
*Foster-Adopt Case Assistant*

Leo Kirkham  
*UP4Youth Program Specialist*

Robert Martinez, MSW  
*Foster-Adopt Social Worker*

Abbey Price  
*Family Recruitment Specialist*

Jill Rosenberg, MSW  
*Adoption Supervisor*

Tessa Rouse, MSW  
*Foster-Adopt Social Worker*

Stacie Ruhl, MSW  
*Foster-Adopt Social Worker*

Bonnie Sharpe, MSW  
*Associate Director of Programs*

Luis Tlalcalco  
*Administrative Assistant*

Ana Campos Torres, MSW  
*Foster-Adopt Social Worker*

Joe Udeochu  
*Staff Accountant*

Marta Valle  
*Office Manager*

Mark Zipoli  
*Director of Operations*



# Thank You Donors

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May & Stanley Smith Charitable Trust

## **\$50,000 - \$99,000**

Angell Foundation  
John Gogian Family Foundation

## **\$25,000 - \$49,999**

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The Eisner Foundation  
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The Earl B. and Loraine H. Miller Foundation  
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Skylight Foundation

## **\$10,000 - \$24,999**

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## **\$5,000 - \$9,999**

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