



# Gratitude

r e p o r t

2016

FR1ENDS of the  
CH1LDREN

Seattle

Dear Friends,

Having worked with youth who face the highest long-term risks of school dropout, teen parenthood and incarceration for the past 16 years, we have recognized the need to reach out to youth who are navigating the foster care system. Similar to the youth we select from high-poverty schools using research-based risk criteria, most youth in foster care have experienced abuse or neglect as well as exposure to domestic violence and drug abuse in the home. **This year, Friends of the Children started serving our first full cohort of children selected from the foster care system.** We will stay with them for the long term, even when they leave foster care and are with their permanent family.

Since we opened in 2000, we have established a high-quality proven program. Now 130 of the most vulnerable youth in the Seattle area have a professional mentor. **We are excited to announce that, over the next four years, we will double the number of youth enrolled in our program.** Together, our staff and board developed an exciting plan for increased growth. Because of your support, we feel confident about our expansion and greater impact.

It is remarkable that 81 percent of our program graduates have completed high school, matching the graduation rate in Seattle Public



Schools. And 88 percent of our program graduates are engaged in postsecondary education, employment or a job training program. They are overcoming the most limiting barriers, growing into contributing members of our community, and able to pursue their dreams for themselves and their families. This is generational change.

Thank you so much for your support, and for continuing to believe in our youth and our mission. **Together we will connect more youth with professional mentors who will guide them to achieve their greatest potential.**

Kind regards,



Kelly McKee, MPA  
Executive Director



Jerin May  
Board President



# A new initiative will enable Friends-Seattle to reach more youth facing the toughest challenges.

**Youth in foster care face unique challenges due to past trauma and multiple transitions.** Now Friends of the Children has a formal partnership with the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Children’s Administration. Their mission is to transform lives by protecting children and promoting healthier families through strong practice and strong partnerships with the community. We have long provided support and services to children involved with DSHS.



Over the past year, we worked with DSHS to select 16 five- and six-year-old children currently in foster care who face a high risk of school failure, dropout and other poor outcomes. They receive the same support that all of our youth receive: weekly year-round professional mentoring that will help them build the strengths and skills they need to thrive. **Having secured more funding, we will double the number of youth served over the next four years.**

The entire program staff recently participated in a week long workshop with Friends – National to better understand the child welfare system and increase their knowledge and skills in effectively addressing challenges unique to youth in foster care. This training also helped enhance the services they provide to other youth currently enrolled in the program who face similar challenges. During the training, they heard firsthand accounts from youth currently in foster care. Nearly all of the program youth in foster care have experienced trauma as well as multiple transitions among foster families, relative caregivers and birth parents.

“DSHS social workers love this partnership because Friends will follow these children long after the Children’s Administration is no longer involved [in their lives],” said Ivana Rozekova, former area administrator of the Martin Luther King DSHS office. “This is great continuity for the child.”

Youth in foster care with a professional mentor are much more likely to graduate high school, avoid the juvenile justice system and avoid teen parenting.



**Graduate high school**  
with a professional mentor: **85%**  
without a professional mentor: **58%**



**Avoid the juvenile justice system**  
with a professional mentor: **93%**  
without a professional mentor: **75%**



**Avoid teen parenting**  
with a professional mentor: **98%**  
without a professional mentor: **29%**



## Maya seeks consistency; Erika delivers.



Maya (not her real name) walked warily down the stairs of her foster home and stared at the hardwood floors. She smiled suspiciously at me—another stranger—and then whispered, “Hi.” When she noticed we both had glitter on our shoes, she asked if I’d like to see her room. Maya couldn’t stop beaming as she showed me her bed, clothes, nail polish and pictures of her biological brothers and sisters. She was so proud. I explained why I was there to meet her and asked if she’d like to hang out with me every week for the next several years. “Years?!” she asked, surprised. “How many?”

“Until you graduate,” I said, and she lit up.

Maya moved to three different homes over the course of one summer, so when she quizzed me again and again about how long I’d be around, I’d always answer, “Until you graduate.” After hearing my answer, she’d continue reading, painting or cartwheeling.

A couple of weeks after meeting Maya, I bumped into her caseworker. We chatted a while, and she randomly said, “Oh by the way, Maya is being moved tomorrow.” Often times, youth in foster care move suddenly without much planning. This can be difficult because they have to meet new people and change schools.

Wait. What? This was a complete shock to me. Maya’s foster parents hadn’t mentioned anything, and I knew Maya wouldn’t take the news very well.

The following morning, I went to her foster home to check in with Maya. I knew I should be there when her foster mom broke the last-minute news that she was moving. Again. Maya simply stared at the walls as she processed the news.

“Years?!” She asked, surprised.  
“How many?”  
“Until you graduate,” I said.  
**She lit up...**

When we were finally alone, I asked Maya how she was doing. Over and over, she said, “Fine,” devoid of all emotion. I told her that it’s okay to be sad, or angry, or even happy. She could have any feelings she liked. She thought for a moment and whispered, “Is it okay to be scared?” I took Maya in my arms and said, “It’s absolutely okay to be scared.”

This wasn’t Maya’s first move, and it most definitely will not be her last. But, with this move – and any other time she faces a new placement in the future – she finally has a constant: me. We’ve been together almost a year. Now when I pick Maya up at her new foster home, she rushes me into her room to show me her new nail polish colors, and we make plans about what we want to do next.

**Erika Sweet,**  
Professional Mentor



# Your Return on Investment

**We provide each child with a salaried, professional mentor from kindergarten through graduation, no matter what.** By hiring full-time, experienced, college-educated professionals, we ensure the quality, consistency and commitment needed to give children a new story and break the cycle of poverty.

## It makes economic sense!

The Harvard Business School Association of Oregon showed that, for every \$1 invested in Friends of the Children, the community saves over \$7. Committing to one child for 12½ years saves the community \$900,000.

Based on report card data for the 2015-16 program year, our youths' progress toward our three long-term program goals was remarkable:



**Avoid teen parenting – 94% of enrolled youth ages 10-19 have avoided early parenthood.**



**Avoid involvement in the juvenile justice system – 94% of enrolled youth ages 10-19 have avoided juvenile detention due to criminal activity.**



**Graduate high school – Three out of six youth eligible to complete high school received a diploma, two are engaged in a GED program, and one did not graduate. The majority (88%) of our program graduates have completed high school.**



# Among our enrolled youth K-12:

**51%**

attended at least 95% of school days.

**100%**

were promoted to the next grade.

**74%**

met or exceeded grade-level standards in reading.

**74%**

met or exceeded grade-level standards in math.

**87%**

avoided suspension.



Nat wasn't sure he'd find his dream job after college. Things were never that easy.

**Growing up, there was a lot of domestic violence and abuse in my home.** As a result, my sister and I bounced around women's shelters and relatives' homes, while my other six siblings moved to Florida. I went to seven different schools by the time I was in the eighth grade. I didn't care about school, and felt that if I didn't get my hopes up, I wouldn't feel disappointed anymore. My father was never in my life, and I needed a positive male role model. No one was in my corner.



Then a mentor came into my life. An 18-year-old Abercrombie preppy dude with bleach-tipped spiky hair started coming to my school to lead a youth group for boys. At first Kevin seemed corny, but he took us tubing, cliff-jumping and paintballing, as well as other fun things. I remember thinking, "Man, this guy is so cool. He could be doing anything, but he is hanging out with me." It was my first positive male relationship.

**I can still hear him, to this day, encouraging me to do better: "You have to do well in school. You are better than this. I know you are smart."** He helped

me graduate high school on time and start community college. It felt so good. I was accepted into every university I applied to. It was a pivotal moment in my life, and I went on to receive my bachelor's degree from Western Washington University.

After graduating, I knew I wanted to give back, so I went to work for organizations serving youth in Seattle. Most were summer programs and part-time positions. While meaningful, they weren't enough for me. I couldn't keep volunteering and still support myself.

Then I found Friends of the Children. I thought, this is exactly what the world needs: a consistent program that pays professional

“ I think every kid needs a champion in their corner. They just need someone to believe in them even when they don’t believe in themselves.”

mentors to support kids who are at risk, so they can navigate life from kindergarten through graduation.

I now work as a full-time, salaried, professional mentor to eight bright and amazing young boys who entered the foster care system early in their lives. The things they go through are catastrophic, yet these boys are so resilient.

I think every kid needs a champion in their corner: someone to believe in them even when they don’t believe in themselves. I am honored to be these kids’ professional mentor. I can finally give to the next generation what Kevin gave to me: a future.

**Nat Tillis,**  
Professional Mentor



## A decade ago, one eight-year-old changed an architect's life.

Tori and her professional mentor, Alicia, signed up for our program in which Friends of the Children youth meet professionals to learn about different careers. Alicia took Tori to Baylis Architects, where Meredith Everist taught her how to sketch simple drawings. Tori loved it so much that, every few months, she and Alicia met with Meredith to talk about architecture.



“Tori was my first exposure to Friends of the Children, and she has such a fantastic spirit,” Meredith said.

During one of her visits, Tori sang a song just for Meredith. “I later found out she really wanted to make sure I heard her sing, and it was very moving for me,” Meredith said. “That was when I asked how I could get more involved.”

Meredith started by volunteering for the Inspiring Greatness auction committee.

Then she joined Friends’ Board of Directors. Meanwhile, she stayed in touch with Alicia and Tori. They went to the Bellevue Botanical Garden and Meredith watched Tori perform at a Friends poetry slam.

The engagement didn’t stop there. Meredith recruited her husband, Steve, to publish the poems from the poetry group and bind them into a leather-bound gold-leaf book. Every year, a single copy of *Hearts Out Loud* poetry book generates a donation of over a thousand dollars at the annual Friends event. Ten years after their first encounter, Meredith was there to congratulate Tori when she graduated from high school.

**“It has been such an amazing experience for me to watch Tori grow up as I grew with the organization,” Meredith said. “Friends ensures that vulnerable kids can have some kind of stability and security in their lives.”**

There are many ways to engage with Friends of the Children, and Lindsay has found them to be very rewarding.

**Lindsay Fournier first connected with Friends of the Children as the organization’s graphic designer.** In over five years, she has touched every piece of the Friends mission by volunteering on the Ambassador Board and reading with our youth every week. Lindsay has said interacting with the youth is truly the essence of why she loves Friends of the Children.



*I have been reading with Dominique (not her real name) every Thursday for almost two years. A couple of months ago, she stumbled on the word “friend” while we were reading. I encouraged her to sound it out, and soon realized she needed some guidance. So I asked, “What are you and I?” She looked at me, wide-eyed with a toothy grin, and to my surprise, she said, “Family?” I gave her a squeeze and said, “You’re right, we are family, and we are also great friends.” While I hope I have made an impact on Dominique’s life, I know she has made a tremendous impact on mine. That is invaluable.*

There are many ways to engage and make a tremendous impact on our youth. If you are interested, please contact us at [volunteer@friendsseattle.org](mailto:volunteer@friendsseattle.org) or call **206-328-3535**.



## Assets

Cash and investments .....	\$1,410,791
Pledges receivable.....	\$1,127,554
Prepaid expenses .....	\$23,868
Equipment, net of accumulated depreciation .....	\$316,466
<b>Total assets .....</b>	<b>\$2,878,679</b>

## Liabilities

Accounts payable and accrued liabilities .....	\$87,160
<b>Total liabilities .....</b>	<b>\$87,160</b>

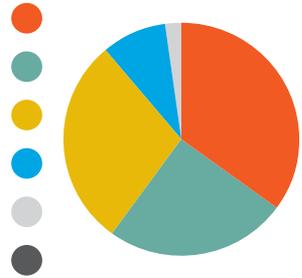
## Net Assets

Unrestricted net assets.....	\$1,668,965
Temporarily restricted net assets.....	\$1,122,554
<b>Total net assets .....</b>	<b>\$2,791,519</b>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets .....</b>	<b>\$2,878,679</b>



# Revenue

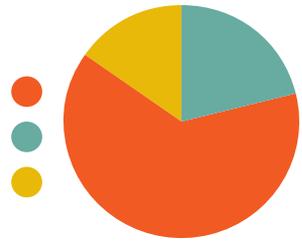
Individual.....	\$554,511
Foundation.....	\$402,587
Special Events .....	\$464,895
Corporate .....	\$133,758
In-Kind .....	\$25,925
Other.....	\$716



**Total unrestricted revenue .....\$1,582,392**

# Operating Expenses

Program services.....	\$1,221,823
Fundraising costs .....	\$356,617
Administrative services .....	\$86,025



**Total operating expenses.....\$1,644,465**



## Board of Directors

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## Ambassador Board

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## Staff list

Kelly McKee, MPA,  
Executive Director

Mary Rennekamp Vegas,  
Deputy Director

Edgar Masmela,  
Partnership Director

Alicia Uehling,  
Program Manager

Bana Abera,  
Professional Mentor, K-5

Jeremy Bradburn,  
Professional Mentor, K-5

Latima Charbonneau, MA,  
Communications Manager

Jessica Crenshaw-Leonard,  
Professional Mentor, K-5

Sheena Fanancial, Assistant  
Program Manager, Teen

Ben Graham, Team Lead K-5

Marcel Hauser,  
Professional Mentor, Teen

Stefan Hauser,  
Professional Mentor, Teen

Courtney Huck, MS,  
Corporate & Foundation  
Relations Manager

Michelle Hurd, Assistant  
Program Manager

Richmond Hurd, Team Lead, Teen

Nakeya Isabell, Professional  
Mentor, Teen

Jesse Klug, Education  
Support Assistant

Doneka Lang, Team Lead,  
Foster Care

Elena Lynch,  
Development Manager

Taylor Malone,  
Operations Manager

Michael Rogers,  
Professional Mentor, K-5

Erika Sweet,  
Professional Mentor, K-5

Jesse Tabisula,  
Professional Mentor, K-5

Nat Tillis,  
Professional Mentor, K-5



**FR1ENDS** of the  
**CH1LDREN**

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Generational change, one child at a time

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[www.friendsseattle.org](http://www.friendsseattle.org)