



MILESTONE REPORT

A YEAR OF PERSEVERANCE AND GRIT

FR1ENDS of the
CH1LDREN
Boston



A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



What comes to your mind when you reflect back on the year 2020? Was it the uncertainties and concerns for you and your loved ones' livelihood, health, and wellbeing? Was it the sudden transition to working from your home and finding a new routine? Adding homeschool teacher to your ever-growing list of responsibilities as a caregiver? What if we can tell you a different story about 2020...

The entire world was challenged this past year – challenged to *do* differently, and to *think* differently. At *Friends of the Children-Boston*, these challenges took on a different meaning. As educational inequity was highlighted by the pandemic and dominated the news, our paid, professional Mentors continued to show up for all of our Achievers as we have done everyday in the last 16 years. When the world was awakened and took to the streets to demand justice for our Black community, we continued to be steadfast in demanding equity in systems that impact our youth as we always have so our youth can show up each day in their power. As the world watched our economy collapse on our most vulnerable citizens, we stepped up to deliver weekly essentials so no one would be left behind.

FOR MOST OF US, 2020 WAS A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER. FOR US AT FRIENDS-BOSTON, IT WAS A YEAR MUCH LIKE THE OTHERS – A YEAR WHERE WE SHOW UP FOR OUR COMMUNITY, NO MATTER WHAT.

When I look back on this past year, I am filled with pride. I watched as our professional Mentors adapted seamlessly and selflessly so they could be there for our youth virtually. Our entire team showed up each week delivering hundreds of pounds of food into the homes of more than 140 of our Achievers – all

with the same enthusiasm and hopefulness as before, even when the world is seemingly on fire around them. Our community of staff and Board of Directors embraced our youth and their families, and poured every ounce ourselves into them.

THAT IS WHAT WE DO.

In return, we had the privilege of celebrating 20 graduations of our Achievers. We carried out 9,500 in-person and virtual outings and offering close to 20,000 hours of support to our youth and their families. All 142 of our Achievers made progress in gaining proficiency in our 9 Core Assets, and 100% of our youth continued to progress in their education trajectory. With their Friends by their sides, our Achievers experienced joy, felt comforted, learned new skills, built new habits, set bigger and bolder goals for their future, and they continued to stay hopeful for a better tomorrow. That is the story of 2020 that we would like to tell you.

We are so proud to present 2020's Milestone Report. *You were right there with us.* Our community of supporters and friends were there cheering us on.

THANK YOU FOR SHOWING UP.

THANK YOU FOR MAKING US A PART OF YOUR 2020 STORY.

Yi-Chin Chen
Executive Director

STORIES FROM OUR ACHIEVERS*

When we were presented with a lot of uncertainties in 2020, we knew that the voices of our youth and families would determine the course we *had* to take in order to best show up for them. Through advocacy, relationship building, and the hard work of our staff and supporters, we were able to overcome the challenges we were met with due to the pandemic. The following stories from our Achievers, caregivers, and Friends represent how *Friends of the Children-Boston* managed to persevere.

*Achiever names are changed for their protection

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS ON LOVE

FRIEND: PAULA ACHIEVER: MIRANDA*

Paula and her Achiever, Miranda, have worked together to maintain their strong relationship over both virtual and distanced outings. Their relationship is a perfect example of our Core Value, *Build Relationships on Love*. Our model is to work with our Achievers for 12+ years which means that we need to intentionally develop collaborative relationships over time with trust, empathy, and healthy communication. Even through the pandemic, this has been a significant part of Miranda's and Paula's relationship.

For Miranda, quarantine started off difficult to adjust to because it was hard for her to transition to having to learn online. Even with her teachers helping her to complete her work, Miranda had to look towards different outlets to be herself again. Miranda's Mentor, Paula, noticed that Miranda enjoyed being creative and expressed herself through art. This intrigued Paula to look into ways to incorporate Miranda's creativity into their outings. Paula dropped off a few crafting supplies to Miranda's home to keep busy during quarantine and the rest was history. What is extremely special is that Miranda was able to do some of these activities together with her mom. For example, they made beaded necklaces and bracelets with various patterns and colors. Miranda even made a bracelet specifically for Paula. Along with the letters of Paula's name, it included pink beads to represent Miranda's favorite color, purple beads to represent Paula's favorite color, and blue beads to represent both of their favorite colors together. Miranda also included a yellow bead to signify their friendship. This meaningful gift shows Paula



that this quarantine hobby is here to stay and Miranda and her mom have continued making jewelry to give to loved ones. As the pandemic continued to be present, Miranda leaned towards another creative outlet when she taught herself how to draw on the computer. This new skill came in handy when our annual Lemonade Day came around. As we had to go virtual this year, we gave hand-sanitizer bottles to our generous donors. Miranda was one of our Achievers who loved to decorate the bottles through her drawings and fun stickers. Paula looks forward to a time when the two of them can do more crafts together in person.

**"ALWAYS TRY
SOMETHING NEW!"**

PUT CHILDREN FIRST

FRIEND: JAY ACHIEVER: DEVON*

One of our Core Values is to *Put Children First*. To us, this means that we are helping Achievers discover their limitless potential by listening to their voices and make unique choices based off of their needs and dreams. For our Friend, Jay, he had to adapt the way he met with his Achiever, Devon in order to provide the highest quality of support. This is incredibly important while we face these uncertain times. Jay's story explains the hurdles that him and Devon have faced because of the pandemic and how they continue to build their relationship virtually.

Our Achiever, Devon, lives at home with his grandmother along with two other siblings also involved with *Friends-Boston*. His grandmother is very responsible and shows she cares by supervising Devon's and his siblings' activities. Because of the pandemic, this dynamic feels different because there aren't many things Devon and his family are able to do anymore. Being in the fourth grade, he has spent a majority of his formative years inside and distanced from the outside world. This disconnection and sense of loneliness has affected Devon's mood, emotions, and patience. One of the things Devon is missing the most is being able to go on in-person outings with his Mentor, Jay. Jay and Devon used to be able to do many



things together outside of the house which helped break up the day and was something Devon could look forward to. Now, for the safety of Devon and his family, Jay and Devon had to find different ways to stay connected. Although Jay and Devon are still able to meet up with each other virtually, Devon only has access to a computer loaned to him from his school. This means some programs and websites are blocked so Jay and Devon can only video chat and talk. Jay keeps Devon's mental health and wellbeing at the top of his priorities and gets creative with what they are able to do virtually. Devon is happy just to see his Friend and both him and Jay look forward to a time post-quarantine where they can spend more quality time together.

PURSUE GOALS RELENTLESSLY

**FRIEND: KEISHA
ACHIEVER: SHEENA*, ALUMNI**

Keisha has been working with our Alumni to continue providing support and resources that they might need after graduating from our program. This exemplifies our Core Value of *Pursue Goals Relentlessly* as we believe that the definition of success requires intentional reflection and adjustment over time. This is especially true with all the current uncertainties – just ask our Alumni, Sheena!

Our *Friend*, Keisha, has been working hard to encourage both her Achievers on her caseload and also the alumni of our program to stay motivated during the pandemic. One of our alumni, Sheena, is currently a Senior at Framingham State University, and knows Keisha well as Keisha was her Mentor. Going into the pandemic, Keisha knew that Sheena would be prepared to move forward towards pursuing her goals no matter the obstacle. Right now, she is not only enrolled in a full-time schedule, but she also works two jobs to be able to stay on her feet. Sheena is willing to do what she has to in order to continue chasing her dreams. After graduation she is hoping to go to Cosmetology school in Atlanta to learn how to style hair and eventually have her own business. Before she can get there though, she has to first



graduate from college, now via online classes. Sheena has been lucky to be able to remain working during the pandemic since jobs security is unpredictable these days. She also had to face some additional hoops to be able to stay on campus, like having to get a flu shot and being quarantined. Keisha is proud that Sheena stuck through during her last year in college because it's hard to maintain motivation these days. As long as Sheena keeps up with her strong work ethic, she will be eligible to win a scholarship designated for alumni in our program, sponsored by one of our supporters. Sheena's passion and dedication is inspirational to all of us to keep going during these uncertain times.

STORIES FROM OUR MENTORS & PARENTS

DEMAND EQUITY

SONEIA

A parent of one of our Achievers in our program, Soneia, has had to deal with the education gap that exists within the Greater Boston area. Quarantine and remote learning have only intensified this gap for our Achievers and therefore our Core Value, *Demand Equity*, is even more important these days. We insist that all people have the necessary support to achieve all of their hopes and dreams and Soneia's story illustrates how important it is to keep fighting towards closing the education gap.

Soneia is a proud parent of six children, one of which is involved with Friends-Boston. When quarantine started in March, she had to quickly adjust her schedule to allow her to accommodate to five different schools. This meant she periodically traveled to five different places to pick up Chromebooks, worksheets, and other supplies for her kids. She also had to wake up at 4 o'clock in the morning to set up different work stations for her kids so they all had separate spaces within the home to get their school work done. Soneia mentioned to us that several of her kids are on IEPs which is difficult to translate to online learning since there are different needs to be met for the virtual world. This was especially difficult since she didn't have access to the



fastest internet speed at first. With under a year under her belt with learning how to manage virtual school for all of her children, Soneia is better equipped to adjusting to the hurdles of the pandemic. Knowing that she wasn't doing this alone and had support from teachers and community partners, like *Friends-Boston*, was essential to Soneia's success and therefore essential to her children's success as well. With access to cleaning supplies, PPE, and food, Soneia can focus on paying for rent and academic supplies for her family which is a significant lift.

**"WHEN QUARANTINE STARTED, MY WHOLE WORLD
CRASHED DOWN ON ME BEING THAT I HAVE FIVE
CHILDREN THAT ALL ATTEND BOSTON PUBLIC
SCHOOLS...I WAS LIKE 'WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN?'"**



COMMIT TO EMPOWERMENT

FRIEND: JESSE
ACHIEVER: EVAN*

Another one of our Core Values is to *Commit to Empowerment*. We do so by building relationships within the communities of our youth and families to strengthen social networks and provide bridges to new opportunities. Our Friend, Jesse, describes how the pandemic has affected his Achiever, Evan and how they have worked together towards overcoming some of unexpected outcomes. In his own words, Jesse describes how proud he is of Evan for maintaining his pragmatic optimism.

I've been a Friend (paid, professional Mentor) at Friends of the Children-Boston for over 6 years, and more than half of that I've been mentoring Evan. He's always been a passionate young man, willing to explore his interests and speak his mind. He is very thoughtful about the world around him and always pushed to learn more in everything he is doing.

It has been inspirational to be able to spend time with, talk to, and connect with people in Evan's life since quarantine started. He has a member in his household who is high-risk for COVID-19 which has resulted in an extra restrained summer into winter for him and his family. He's adapted extremely well; stepping up for many household chores that he wouldn't have had to do. Not only has Evan helped manage his own schooling in a completely virtual environment, he has also helped his little sister get set up and helped with her transition to remote learning. He was able to maintain really positive standing with the school by doing excellent in his classes and his advisor reported that he was able to keep his gregarious personality in large zoom meetings which teachers expressed gratitude for.

Evan's goal before the pandemic was to work on his guitar skills and making his own music, so being inside all the time inspired him to continue with these goals. His passion gave him a break from the screen for school and enabled him to work on something he really wanted to get better at which brought him a lot of joy. Evan has always wanted to work as a sound engineer and manage equipment for a music venue for some time, and had to put that on hold as all of those opportunities were closed for business. Instead of being discouraged, he focused on what he can do and the outlets he does have.

What inspires me the most is Evan's demeanor through everything that has been going on. He maintains a pragmatic optimism in an era where that feels contradictory to most. He is not without complaints or sadness or difficulties, but has not let outside circumstances dictate those terms for him, and that's what has encouraged me the most.

THANK YOU

**FOR MAKING 2020
A YEAR OF BEING THERE
NO MATTER WHAT**

Our Pandemic Response Made Possible Because of you!

12,650

hours of support to Achievers and families

7,755

Virtual and in-person outings with
Achievers (resumed in-person in July)

1,139

school contacts made to support
transition to remote learning

260

noise cancelling headphones provided
to Achievers and their siblings to help
with remote learning

7,320

items of PPE gear, including masks (adult
and child sized), gloves, disinfectant,
transportable first aid kits for vehicles,
temporal thermometers, and hand sanitizer

350

care packages filled with arts supplies,
cleaning projects, toilet paper, books,
and board games delivered to all of
our Achievers and their families

22,000

lbs. of meals and bags of fresh
groceries delivered to families

\$17,500

direct cash support in partnership
with Family Independence Initiative

\$5,000

worth of visa and grocery store gift cards
distributed to families who have fallen into
hard times due to job losses or illness

**OUR RESULTS ARE REMARKABLE, GIVEN THE
IMMENSE CHALLENGES 2020 BROUGHT TO OUR ACHIEVERS:**

80%

of Achievers don't have
enough food at home

62%

of Achievers
experience homelessness

73%

of caregivers struggle with navigating
computers and Chromebooks to
support their child's remote learning

52%

of Achievers are impacted by
the child welfare system

48%

of Achievers have parents
who've been incarcerated

25%

of Achievers were born
to a teen parent

**IN A YEAR OF OVERWHELMING OBSTACLES,
OUR ACHIEVERS HAVE EXCEEDED OUR EXPECTATIONS:**

80%

of alumni are enrolled in post-secondary
education or gainfully employed

100%

avoided early
parenting

100%

avoided the juvenile
justice system

98%

were promoted to the next grade

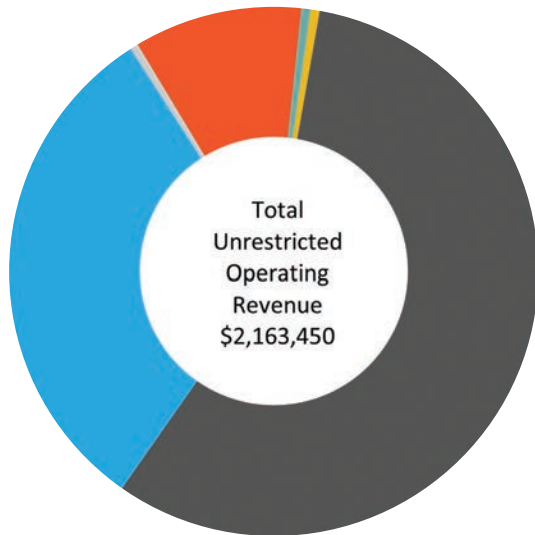
100%

avoided school suspensions

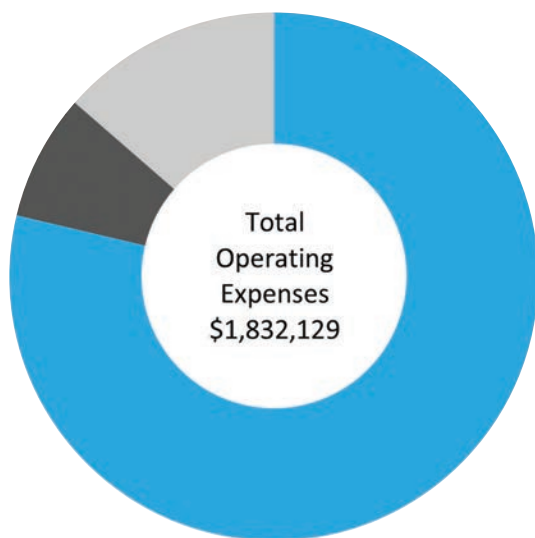
**THANK YOU FOR INVESTING IN OUR ACHIEVERS AND BELIEVING
IN OUR ABILITY TO HELP THEM WRITE A NEW STORY.**

FY20

FINANCIALS



Grants	\$1,231,680 (57%)
Individuals	\$674,524 (31%)
Government	\$222,634 (10%)
In-Kind	\$12,124 (1%)
Other	\$11,898 (1%)
Special Events	\$10,590 (<1%)



Program Services	\$1,441,854 (79%)
Fund Raising	\$248,847 (13%)
Administrative	\$141,428 (8%)



Thanks to supporters like YOU, our Achievers have been able to access a wide variety of post-graduation opportunities even beyond their 12+ years with *Friends-Boston!* Almost 90% of our alumni are either enrolled in a college or university or have full-time jobs. Your impact makes a long-term difference.





STAY CONNECTED

 WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/FRIENDSBOSTON

 [@FRIENDSBOSTON](https://twitter.com/FRIENDSBOSTON)

 [@FRIENDSBOSTON](https://www.instagram.com/FRIENDSBOSTON)

 WWW.LINKEDIN.COM/COMPANY/FRIENDSBOSTON

 WWW.FRIENDSBOSTON.ORG

1
—
1