



FR1ENDS of the **CH1**LDREN

Los Angeles

2019 – 2020

Impact Report

Antelope Valley Friends

Our Newest Site

Last year, Friends of the Children - Los Angeles launched a 3-year pilot in Antelope Valley (AV) designed to keep families together and provide a safe, nurturing environment for children. We co-located our office with our good friends at Antelope Valley Partners for Health to support 96 children and parents. AV has become one of the fastest growing and neediest regions of Southern California. Despite ongoing initiatives to attract more jobs to the area, families there contend with a number of health issues, increased isolation, and limited socio-emotional support. We are grateful for the private investments and public support from Supervisors Kathryn Barger and Janice Hahn, LA County Departments of Mental Health and Children & Family Services, First 5 LA, and everyone who helped us reach this important milestone to scale more broadly throughout LA County.

“It is incumbent upon us all to make sure children’s needs are met, and that they can grow and thrive in a loving home, just as we would want our own children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and neighbors.” - Supervisor Kathryn Barger



Friends LA *Mission Statement*

Friends of the Children – Los Angeles’ mission is to impact generational change by empowering youth through relationships with professional mentors – 12+ years, no matter what.

Getting Back to the Basics

2020 was a year of getting back to the basics – a year of recognition. Health care professionals put their lives on the line to keep our loved ones safe. We saw a fearlessness in grocery clerks willing to brave the elements to keep shelves stocked.

Cooking meals and eating together was vogue again. We remembered that taking a walk and riding a bike is actually fun. Spending a little more time in the garden and connecting with a friend can make a difference.

We realized we all are interconnected – my health can impact yours, so let's both be safe, wear a mask, and keep at a distance – at least for now.

Our capacity to demonstrate empathy grew. The majority of us, from around the world, don't like seeing others treated unfairly. There's a concerted effort to banish the sins of our forefathers.

Parents became full-time teachers. Most of us have been doing it since last March and will likely continue to do so until next June. It's a universal fact that distance learning is hard and children eat 3 times more than usual when at home.

Many lost their jobs. Many lost family and friends. We count our blessings to have the resilience to keep our wits and fight through it all. It's imperative for all of us to see each other a little more clearly.

At Friends of the Children – Los Angeles, this level of recognition happened Day 1. The 224 children we serve in South LA and Antelope Valley don't care about anything but the basics: they want to be loved and have fun. Nothing more. They all deserve it. Their parents want the same thing, but it's not easy to provide it every day. Some days are tougher than others. 2020 has been the toughest.

That's why it is critical for us to fulfill our promise of putting children first, building relationships on love, committing to empowerment, demanding equity, and pursuing our goals on behalf of all the children, relentlessly. Our work is not essential, but we are a critical support in closing the digital divide, preventing social isolation, ensuring academic achievement, empowering parents, and strengthening families.

This Impact Report highlights a few of our successes. We can do even more, but we'll need your help, and we have to commit to do it, together.



Thomas Lee | Executive Director, Friends LA



—— 2019–2020 HIGHLIGHTS ——

\$2,056,675 | Operating revenue

12+ | Years committed to our youth

224 | Youth and parents supported

98% | of youth making progress in school success

493 | Referrals to external agencies

68 | Community partners



MENTORING FOR IMPACT

Youth accomplishments and progress toward our collective goals are tracked regularly.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

With 27 years of data and outcomes to support the efficacy of our model, we're excited to continue to scale across the county and share the amazing stories of our youth.



95% of youth go on to enroll in post-secondary education, serve our country or enter the workforce.



83% of youth receive their high school diploma or GED.



93% of youth remain free from involvement in the juvenile justice system.



98% of youth wait to parent until after their teen years.

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

To ensure that youth are on track to reach our long-term outcomes, we support youth to achieve their own goals within intermediate outcome areas. We are proud of our youth for their achievements.

95% of youth made progress on social and emotional development, such as asking for help from a caring adult, practicing healthy ways to cope with stress, and building relationships with Friends and adults who provide social support and connections to resources.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

93% of youth made progress on attaining skills for safety and independence, setting short and long-term goals and monitoring progress toward them.

PLANS AND SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

95% of youth made progress toward school success, such as finishing homework, regularly attending school or staying focused in the classroom

SCHOOL SUCCESS

REGIONAL SCOPE

Friends LA's Regional Scope in LA County



Profile of our 224 Youth and Parents:

86% Children of parenting foster youth

15% Children living with relative caregivers

47% Children that have received emergency response services by DCFS

100 Black boys in foster care (ages 12–18+)

Our Partners Include

Friends LA works with dozens of community-based organizations across LA County for youth referrals and support resources. We are also proud of our strong collaborative partnerships with:

Antelope Valley Partners for Health
Antelope Valley Resource Infusion
Department of Children and Family Resources
Department of Mental Health



Health and Wellbeing

For our families, promoting health and wellness takes many forms. This year, we've distributed grocery store gift cards and food as our parents have been impacted by COVID-19. Razor Inc. gave each one of our children and their siblings scooters to inspire play and exercise in the sunshine. We've coached youth on healthy eating and added the importance of physical health into our goals.

It also entails making quality contacts with parents. This year, Friends made over 1,000 parent contacts. This aspect of support is key to our two-generation method and vital to promoting health and wellbeing – letting parents know that Friends LA is here not only for their children, but for them, too. Health and wellbeing is not only physical, and for many of our youth and parents, promoting mental health wellbeing is a key component of our work.

One of our parents, Tina, recognized her past trauma impacted her temperament and patience with her child. She reached out to her son's Friend, asking for help in accessing mental health support. Friends LA relies on several cutting-edge agencies to provide mental health to support to families in need. We connected her to a therapist who now meets with her on a weekly basis. Tina found a lot of value in therapy, and she often discussed what she was learning with her child's Friend – including techniques to make her a more patient and understanding parent.

Like Tina, we continue to connect our parents and our youth with the health support they need, making sure they feel secure and supported on their journey.

“Friends LA has helped my child build self-esteem and confidence — helping her build social skills with peers and adults.”

School Success

When Hannah first enrolled in Friends LA, she was a few months away from entering kindergarten. Her mother, a young, entrepreneur and part-time student who took classes at a nearby college, didn't have the mobility to prioritize preschool. Mom's transportation was unreliable and Hannah's school attendance was spotty.

When Hannah's Friend was matched with her, she realized immediately that Hannah wasn't prepared to start kindergarten. The Friend began incorporating letter and number recognition into their outings and focusing on fun learning activities like flashcards and word games to prepare her for the start of school. Reluctant at first, Hannah gained confidence as she learned new skills. Mom saw how Hannah's Friend was working with her weekly, and jumped in to help. Together, Mom and Friend made sure Hannah was well-prepared for Kindergarten. Now, a year later, Hannah isn't just up to speed with her first grade class – her reading level surpassed her peers. She's succeeding, even with the added challenges of distance learning, and now reading at a middle school level!

Hannah's success was jump started by her Friend, but it was Hannah's own grit and determination that gave her the tremendous growth in her literacy skills. We look forward to seeing how Hannah continues to excel in school over the next decade. This is the power of Friendship!



Keeping Families Together

As with many of our parents, Benny's mom was a former foster youth who aged out of foster care. When Benny first enrolled in our program, he lived in transitional housing with his mother and sister. When their time in the housing program ended, Benny went to live with his father. With these changes, Benny's Friend kept meeting and supporting him, knowing that the movement between homes and drastic changes could severely impact his development.

Benny eventually settled in with his paternal grandmother when his father moved out of state, and his Friend continued to give him the attention and consistency he needed. Benny's Friend didn't just spend time with Benny – he often checked in on Mom.

Benny's Mom couch surfed for a while, and the stress of trying to find a job and a place to live strained her relationship with her son. Benny's Friend continued to call Mom, encouraging her to meet and visit her son despite a difficult year.

Today, Benny's Mom is employed part-time and renting a room near her son. She visits him often, and is making plans to rent a larger apartment so they can live together. Benny's Friend continues to encourage this reunification process by supporting Mom's needs. Together, they are providing the consistency Benny needs for a healthy childhood.

“My son's Friend has helped me be strong for my son and his behavior.”



TWO-GENERATION APPROACH

Our two-generation (2Gen) method focuses on both child and parent to ensure whole family success. Intergenerational support and learning are core elements of our work. Parents are not only supported by their child's Friend, but also a Caregiver Engagement Specialist – a dedicated team member tasked with providing support and connecting parents to resources. We also work to promote community amongst our families to affirm the realness of the stressors they all face through the presence of peer-to-peer support.

The 2Gen Approach

Our 2Gen approach has been especially important this year. For one of our newly enrolled families in Antelope Valley, the parent reached out to our Caregiver Engagement Specialist and Program Director for help and advice before her child had even met her Friend – a huge indicator of not only the trust placed in Friends LA but also the vast needs of our caregivers. We worked with the parent to make sure she had what she needed to feel confident in her parenting approach.



COVID-19

When our families needed it most, Friends LA adapted our model to ensure we are providing care and support for the ongoing struggles magnified by COVID-19. Friends, who typically spend 3-4 hours a week with each youth, are now supporting youth remotely – through video chats, phone calls, and other virtual platforms.

Putting Children First

Friends are helping with school work, making art and music, completing projects and reminding our youth how resilient they truly are.



Our caregiver contacts quadrupled within a matter of weeks as parents sought advice and solace in an unstable world.

Building Relationships on Love

With schools closed and economic stress on the rise, Friends collaborated with every family in our program to ensure they had what they needed – food, cleaning supplies, and even help with daily routines.



Friends LA is working with a variety of corporations and nonprofits to secure support - including ride-share credit from our partner, Lyft, to alleviate some of the burden on our families.

Pursuing Goals Relentlessly

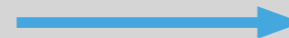
As education shifted to online platforms, Friends became educators – providing instruction, accountability and advocacy for our youth to continue learning.



Friends LA purchased two online learning programs, IXL and Accelerated Reader, to supplement our youths' school work. In addition, we're troubleshooting each youth's internet access.

Committing to Empowerment

Inspiring possibility through empathy, hard work and fun, Friends LA's supporters found creative ways to honor our youth, affirming their individual talents and broadened their visions for the future.



In shifting to a virtual model, our Friends got creative — hosting movie afternoons, playing online games, and sending care packages to our youth. Our youth remain our first and foremost priority.

Demanding Equity

For most of our families, structural inequality came long before COVID-19. We continue the fight to end race-based discrimination and advocate for changes in policy that promote equitable access to opportunity, health and hope.



Friends LA continues to be outspoken in our efforts to end systematic inequality through our own "Real Talk" events, as well as virtual events hosted by Ally2Action and Friends of the Children - National.

DISTRIBUTION HIGHLIGHTS

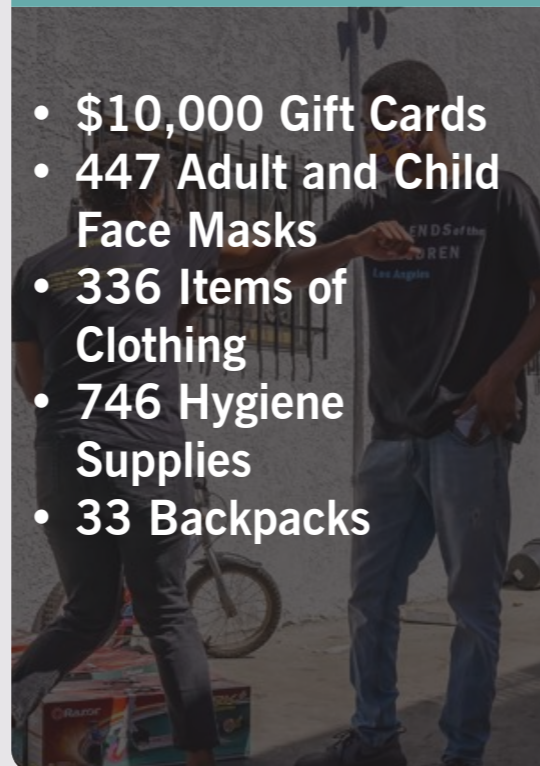
We've responded to our families' unique needs in multiple ways, including monthly distributions, grocery assistance, providing computers and tablets for youth to connect to school, and more. We are following a COVID-19 Recovery Framework that corresponds with government regulations for social distancing, health, and safety, and we look forward to seeing our youth in-person, beyond our monthly distributions.

April 2020



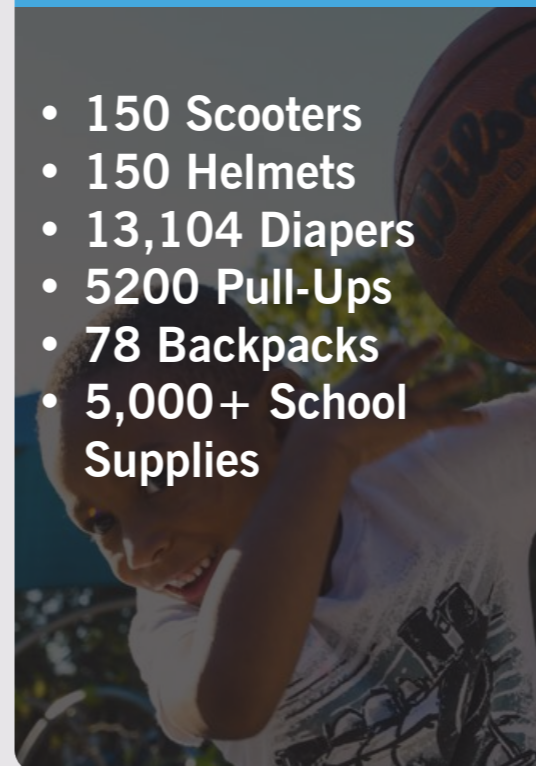
- 11,616 Diapers
- 360 Bottled Beverages
- 100 Hot Meals
- 127 Books
- 208 Toiletries

May 2020



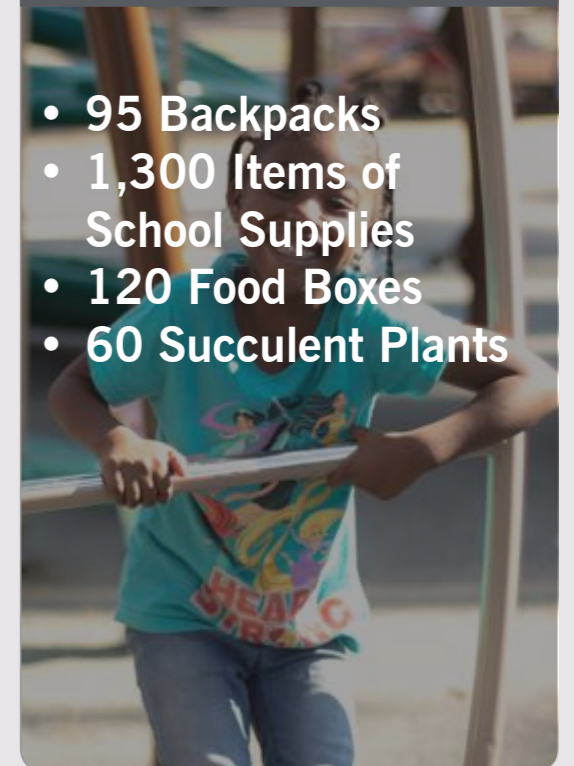
- \$10,000 Gift Cards
- 447 Adult and Child Face Masks
- 336 Items of Clothing
- 746 Hygiene Supplies
- 33 Backpacks

July 2020



- 150 Scooters
- 150 Helmets
- 13,104 Diapers
- 5200 Pull-Ups
- 78 Backpacks
- 5,000+ School Supplies

September 2020



- 95 Backpacks
- 1,300 Items of School Supplies
- 120 Food Boxes
- 60 Succulent Plants

43,913 TOTAL DONATED ITEMS




Demanding Equity

Friends LA Leading Value

One of our core values is demand equity. We do it in a variety of ways, but it begins by giving children the dedicated support of a Friend every week for 12+ years. We are humbled and honored by the decision of our parents – all from communities of color – to permit us to help guide their beloved children through enormous obstacles and systemic challenges that have been in place for decades. We believe a difference can be made in this lifetime.

Along with our regional preventative work, we are launching a three-year pilot in 2021 focusing on Black boys (ages 12—18+) in foster care called Fostering Resiliency. This collaborative effort was inspired by the My Brother's Keeper Community Challenge, the generous support of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the LA County Chief Executive Office, Department of Children & Family Services, and a coalition of community-based organizations. We are empowering 300 boys over the next three years with the social, educational, life-skill, and career support needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world. We are making sure that not only do their lives matter, but they are essential to the future of us all.



When Friends LA Demands Equity for our youth, our efforts are holistic and solutions-oriented.

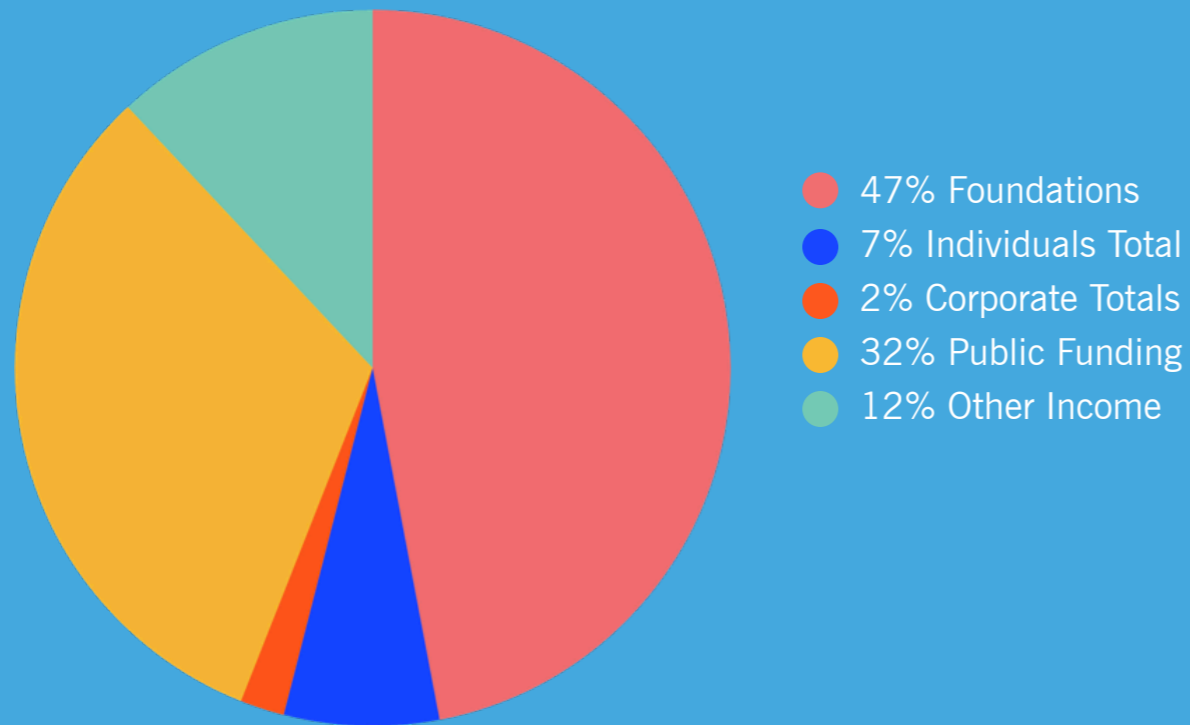
Clara was in kindergarten when she began reporting back to her Mom and Friend that her teacher was treating her differently than the other kids. One of two Black youth in class, Clara frequently was reprimanded for benign behaviors connected to her appearance, including wearing beads in her hair or her earrings. Clara's Mom was once a foster youth herself, and never had anyone advocate for her in school while she was growing up. Mom, however, was very invested in her daughter's life, and she scheduled a meeting with Clara's Friend and the principal to discuss the teacher/student dynamics in the classroom.

While the Friend was there for support, Clara's Mom led the meeting, insisting her daughter was unfairly treated – that the actions Clara's teacher was taking were rooted in ideas contrary to a Black child's growth and self-esteem. Clara's Mom demanded a solution. The school pushed back – due to overcrowding, there was no way Clara could get another teacher. However, Clara's Mom and her Friend were able to connect Clara with the school psychologist, who became a champion for Clara during the school day. The psychologist was another trusted adult advocate for Clara. Over the next few months, Clara became more comfortable in school, and her teacher ceased behaviors that made Clara feel unwelcome.

This is one of the many examples of how Friends demand equity for our families - through intentional, unconditional support that comes through in our day-to-day support of youth and their parents.

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

Revenue

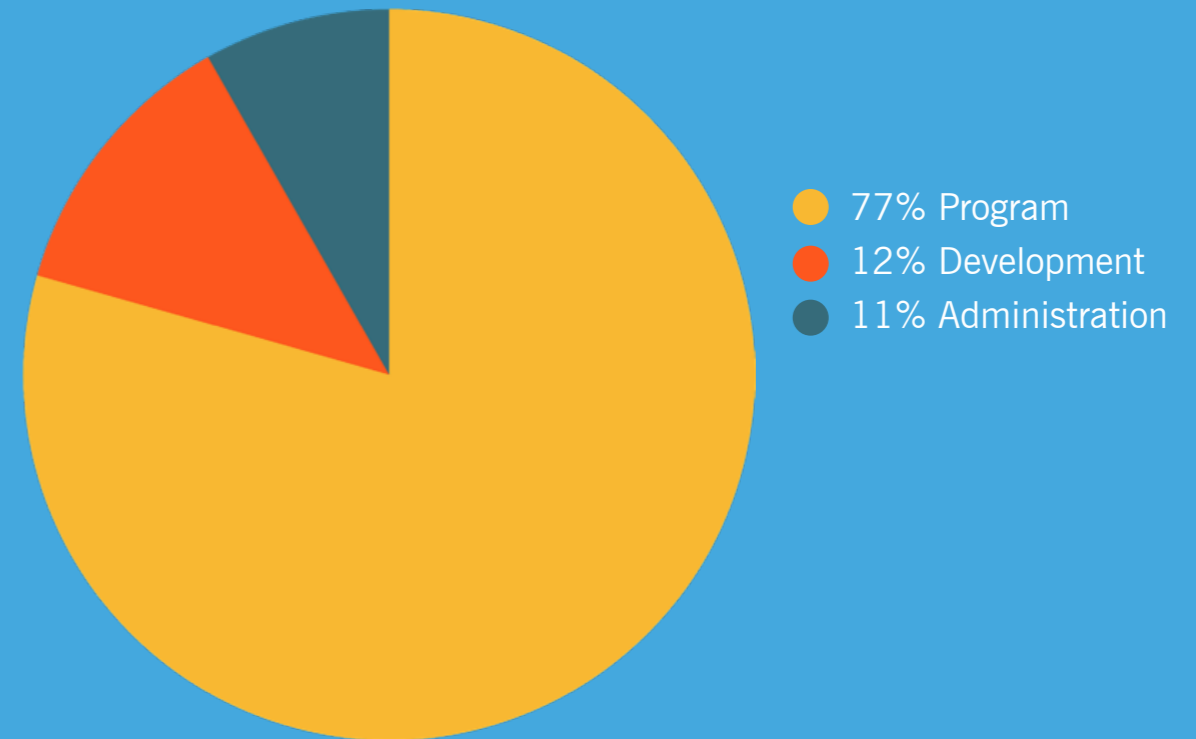


OPERATING REVENUE

Foundations	\$958,870
Individuals Total	\$141,560
Corporate Total	\$40,795
Public Funding	\$665,009
Other Income	\$250,441

Total **\$2,056,675**

Expenses



OPERATING EXPENSES

Program Expenses	\$1,477,491
Development	\$230,258
Administration	\$211,070

Total **\$1,918,819**

THANK YOU

Donors and Sponsors

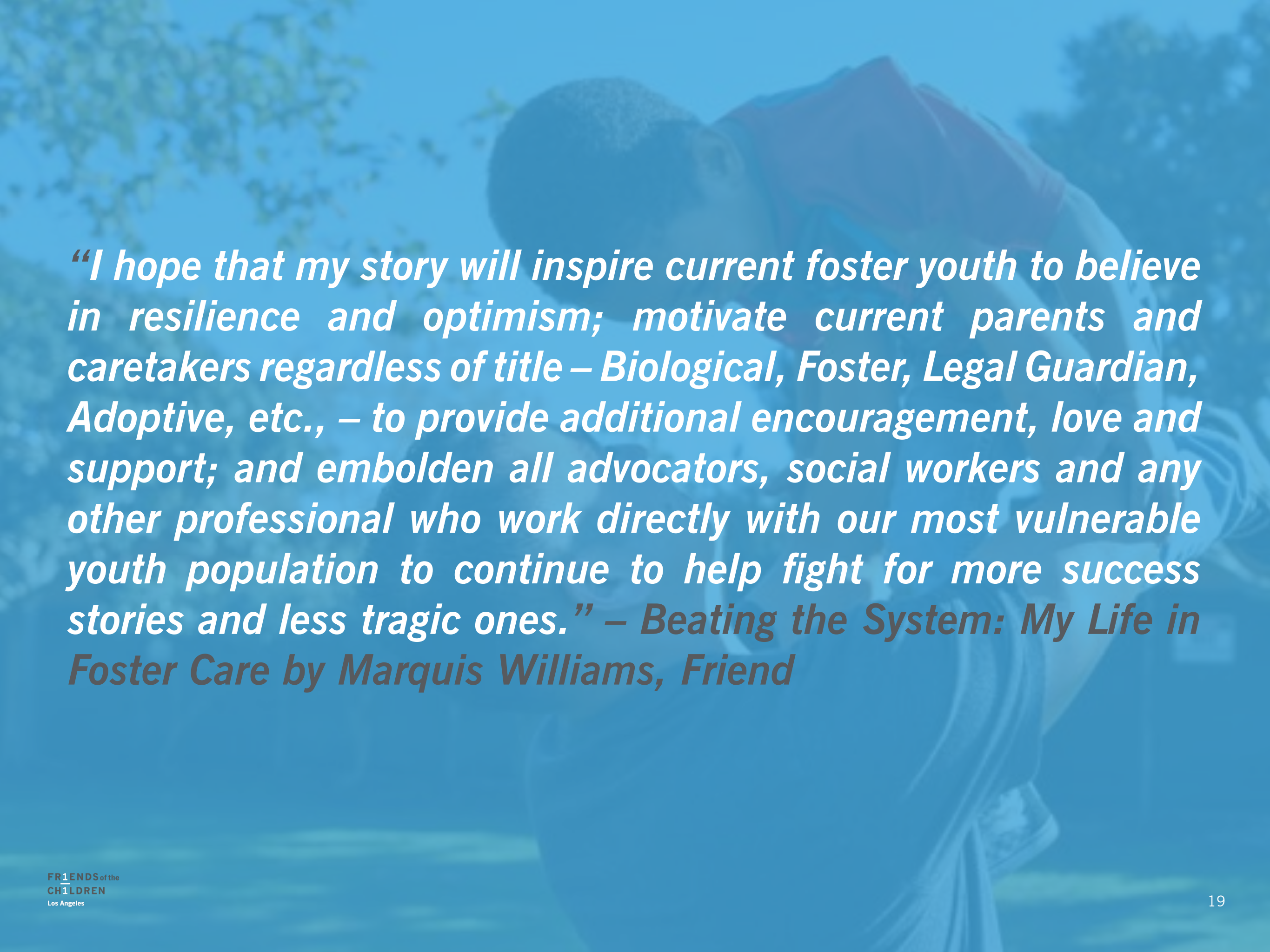
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“I hope that my story will inspire current foster youth to believe in resilience and optimism; motivate current parents and caretakers regardless of title – Biological, Foster, Legal Guardian, Adoptive, etc., – to provide additional encouragement, love and support; and embolden all advocates, social workers and any other professional who work directly with our most vulnerable youth population to continue to help fight for more success stories and less tragic ones.” – Beating the System: My Life in Foster Care by Marquis Williams, Friend

Get Involved Today:

- Ambassador Board and Governance Board Opportunities
- Corporate Sponsorships
- Major Gifts, including stock donations
- Volunteering
- Host a Fundraising Event
- Host a Training
- Gift Drives

Please reach out to info@FriendsLA.org or scan the code below for more information.



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