The 2022 Gratitude Report
Celebrating Friends Austin

Our mission: impacting generational change by empowering youth who are facing the greatest obstacles through relationships with professional mentors—12+ years, no matter what.

Top 5 accomplishments of the past 5 years from Executive Director and Co-Founder, Nancy Pollard

1. Launching Friends Austin in Fall 2017 and growing from 0 to 143 kids, becoming the fourth largest chapter in the Friends of the Children network, while maintaining consistently best-in-class program implementation.

2. Temporarily expanding services throughout 2020 to include provision of food, basic needs supplies, and computers, while also paying off all rent and utility debt for every family in our program through the generous support of our donors and partners. Safely re-opening the Clubhouse to serve as both an in-person school while youth were limited to virtual instruction and a consistent place for Friends to bring children throughout pandemic closures.

3. Creating two signature annual fundraising events, Dinner with Friends and Gingerbread Dreamhouses.

4. Developing a highly engaged and committed Board of Directors, and partnering with three thriving advisory boards, to ensure Friends Austin is well-governed and led to achieve organizational, programmatic, and fundraising success.

5. Growing Friends Austin into an organization with the dedicated staff, financial health and positive reputation that enabled us to be selected for a gift by philanthropist MacKenzie Scott.
Friends Austin launched with a $1.7 million investment from 50 local families as the first and only professional mentorship program in Austin.

2017

Friends Austin partnered with three Austin ISD elementary schools to identify and select our first cohort of kindergartners. Four Friends began serving our first cohort of 32 children.

2018

Five additional Friends were added to serve our second cohort, for a total of 72 children. Through a pilot program created with CASA of Travis County, Friends Austin began serving youth who were exiting foster care to reunite with their families. That summer, we moved into our new offices in East Austin with a 1,600 sq. ft. Clubhouse dedicated for our youth and Friends.

2019

Five more Friends joined the team to serve our third cohort, bringing our total number of youth served to 100+. In response to the pandemic, Friends delivered $200,000+ in assistance to our youth and families while maintaining their long-term mentorship. We reopened our Clubhouse in the fall to provide a school environment for children to participate in remote learning, alongside their Friend.

2020

Friends Austin hosted an inaugural eight-week summer Book Camp in partnership with Literacy First to help our youth reach grade-level reading by the beginning of the new school year. We hired five Friends in the fall to serve a new cohort of youth in the upcoming spring, with the goal of having 130+ children in our program by summer 2022.

2021

Friends Austin selected pre-K children for the first time, in addition to kindergartners, through our school partners, while adding youth through CASA of Travis County and new partner The Salvation Army Rathgeber Center. Our total number of youth served grew to 143. Friends Austin received a $2.4 million donation from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott, catalyzing accelerated growth going into our sixth year in Austin.

2022

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A note from our board

Dear friends of Friends Austin,

On behalf of the Friends of the Children Austin Board of Directors, I want to highlight the important work and actions of our team and thank our community of supporters and partners for making it possible.

Friends Austin saw significant growth over the past year, while remaining steadfast in serving children in our community who are facing the greatest obstacles by providing a professional, consistent, stable, adult presence. We were able to resume enrolling children into our program through our school partnerships, after having to pause that process during the pandemic, and hired talented, committed Friends who are serving those children with intentionality. We brought on an Education Program Manager, who is devoted to ensuring our youth are reading on grade level and finding success in school, and added team members to support our thriving operations, finance and development activities.

The Friends Austin Board is a highly motivated, dedicated and engaged group of individuals with diverse backgrounds and skill sets who efficiently and responsibly lead this organization. Every Board member contributes financially, enabling us to say for the fourth consecutive year that we cover all the organization’s administrative costs. They are strong advocates and ambassadors and have helped us grow to where we are today.

Our capacity to scale as an organization is directly related to the generosity of our community of supporters and partners. We are grateful for the way in which individuals, foundations, companies and government partners contributed their dollars and time to further our mission. In partnership with the rest of the Board, and the staff at Friends Austin, I reaffirm our commitment to you—we will stay concentrated on running a streamlined, highly effective, mission-focused organization that provides the best possible early intervention and long-term support to children and families who are facing significant barriers and vulnerabilities. No matter what.

Gratefully,
Milam Newby
Board Chair
You’ve got a Friend in me

“It is my honor and privilege to be part of my youths’ lives. I am deeply humbled by the role and opportunity of being an agent of change for my youth through Friends Austin. I am focused on having a real, long-lasting impact on these individuals, so I’m in this for the long run!”
— DEYA ISASSI-VELASCO, FRIEND FOR 3 YEARS

“I have been a part of these individuals’ lives for five years, and I am celebrating five years of growth. Sometimes belonging and hope made development easy, resulting in laughter and smiles. Other times, change came with grit and perseverance, resulting in a growth mindset. I am privileged to continue to facilitate these moments of fun.”
— JORGE JIMÉNEZ, FRIEND FOR 5 YEARS

“During the last year, I provided support to a youth and their family while they were experiencing unstable living conditions. I’m grateful that over the years leading up to this point, I had built such a strong relationship with the caregiver that she trusted me during an uncertain time in their lives. I was able to connect the family with local resources and organizations to help them find an affordable place to live. In doing so, the child I serve and her family were able to stay within our service area and continue with this program.”
— ANDREA ARCA, FRIEND FOR 3 YEARS
Friends Austin’s mission is to break the cycle of generational poverty. We do this by pairing professional, salaried, full-time, bilingual mentors (called “Friends”) with children who are facing the greatest challenges and are at risk of continuing harmful cycles. We commit to these children from pre-K or kindergarten through high school graduation—for 12+ years, no matter what.

Friends use their relationships with our youth as the context for evidence-based, targeted interventions. Every week, Friends spend at least four hours of individualized time with their youth in the classroom, home, and community. During this intentional time together, our youth work with their Friends to develop Road Map Goals and Core Assets proven to empower them to break the cycle of generational poverty.

Youth Demographics

- 76% – Latinx/Hispanic
- 16% – Black
- 7% – Multiracial
- 1% – White

- 143 children served this year
- 39% learning English as a second language
- 55% live in a single-caregiver household
- 100% qualify to receive free or reduced-cost lunch at school
- Ages 4-11 range of children in grades pre-K through 5th grade
- 16 hours time Friends spend with each child they serve per month
- 28 fifth graders from our inaugural cohort of youth (since Spring 2018)
- 6 children average number of children living in a household
- 20 Friends currently serving as professional, salaried, full-time mentors
Friends Austin partners with four of Austin ISD’s highest-poverty schools, CASA of Travis County, and The Salvation Army Rathgeber Center to identify children in need of a Friend. However, the children we serve frequently move to different schools across the city as their families search for affordable, stable housing. The children in our program currently attend 55 schools throughout the Austin area. Friends continue serving youth as long as the child’s family remains within a 30-mile radius of East Austin.

Partner Schools
- Oak Springs Elementary School
- Volma Overton Early College Prep
- Carl T. Widén Elementary School
- Hermelinda Rodriguez Elementary School

Locally supported

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120,000+ miles

Driven over the past year by Friends to serve youth at home, in school, and around Austin.

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Our Partners

Austin Independent School District works with Friends Austin to conduct six-week in-classroom observations and student, caregiver, and educator interviews during our child selection process at four Title I elementary schools.

With support from a federal grant by the U.S. Department of Education, Austin PBS extends its Learning Neighborhoods program to children from low-income communities in partnership with Friends Austin. They offer year-round educational activities that empower youth to build stronger foundations in functional literacy, computational thinking, executive function, and career readiness with a focus on intergenerational learning and accessibility.

CASA of Travis County helps pair Friends with children ages 4–6 who are reunifying with their families after spending time in foster care. This partnership ensures a smooth transition, continued support, and long-term stability for the children and their families.

Girl Scouts of Central Texas donates enriching, diverse summer camp opportunities for girls in our program and enables Friends to attend the camp alongside the girls they serve.

Horizons AustinTrinity provides a free, bilingual, six-week educational and fun summer camp for our youth, which includes transportation, meals, field trips, swimming lessons, and more.
Thinkery distributes passes to each of our Friends and youth so they can experience the museum’s variety of engaging, hands-on STEAM activities.

YMCA of Austin provides discounted memberships for Friends to use throughout the summer, enabling them to access all facilities with their youth. YMCA of Austin also provides free day-passes for our youth and their families so they can go together, too.

The Salvation Army Rathgeber Center helps pair Friends with children ages 4–6 who are residing at the low-barrier, housing-focused emergency shelter for families and children experiencing homelessness.

The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center provides free entry to our Friends and youth throughout the year so they can explore the great outdoors together.

LifeWorks jointly administers prevention and early intervention funds from the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services which enable us to serve children in the foster care system.

143 children served this year
An act of genuine friendship can be as simple as quietly sitting beside someone. Trust takes time and patience to build. Silvana’s relationship with Ashly began four years ago with few spoken words. Outside school visits, they’d meet at the library to join one of the afternoon activities or work on homework. Ashly, who was seven when they met, didn’t know much English. She was having trouble relating to adults, was quiet in class, and struggled with expressing her emotions. If anything became overwhelming, she’d shut down. So, Silvana began with small connections. She’d ask permission to sit next to Ashly and gently remind her that she was there if she needed anything. Slowly, seven months later, Silvana suggested they go to the park together, and the answer was yes.

“It was like a switch went off,” says Silvana, Friend. Park outings grew into eating together at restaurants, and with that, new opportunities for Silvana to support Ashly in how to advocate for herself and articulate her interests. At nearly 11 years old, Silvana says that Ashly is a very spirited girl who is tall and can command a room with her height and confidence to engage enthusiastically with adults in both English and Spanish. She likes to cook and enrolled in a weeklong dessert-making class this past summer. “With all my girls, especially this year, I’ve been trying to find what they like—their spark,” says Silvana. They’re having conversations about patience, accepting affirmations from people and articulating affirmation about themselves, and building the confidence that comes from knowing someone is there for you week after week and year after year. “I want Ashly to be able to look back and see the growth she’s done for herself—the work she’s put in to get to where she is today,” says Silvana.

Silvana and Ashly start their friendship. Ashly took the longest time to open up out of Silvana’s group of eight girls.

A breakthrough in their friendship turns quiet meetings into outings and silent car rides into times to talk.

The challenges of COVID begin. Friends give each child a laptop, and Ashly and Silvana communicate virtually. “Thankfully, with COVID, our relationship didn’t regress,” says Silvana.
Silvana introduces Ashly to a variety of activities to help her find her spark and hone in on her interests. Ashly begins to enjoy cooking.

Their relationship is four years strong. Silvana is a constant in Ashly's life.
On the last day of a weeklong basketball camp this past summer, Mariah ran excitedly through a crowd of people to find Marilyn in the bleachers and hugged her. It was a big hug—and an even bigger moment for their five-year friendship. Mariah’s affection is something to be earned. When they first met, she was reserved, sometimes choosing to communicate through behaviors instead of using her words, and didn’t seem interested in many school activities. And here was this nearly 11-year-old girl with a broad smile, who had gotten up early herself that week, filled her water bottles, remembered her inhaler, and was prepared to take on an entire day of basketball. Mariah’s dream career is basketball. “She’ll always say to me, ‘I’m going to college,’” says Marilyn, Friends Austin Program Director and Friend to Mariah. “I’m going to play basketball, and you’ll be there. Can we still be friends?”

When Marilyn became Mariah’s Friend, she was determined to be a consistent female presence to this little girl. Marilyn has supported Mariah through transitions between five different elementary schools. They have a relationship based on trust, understanding, mutual respect, and patience, and Mariah’s natural confidence has soared over the years. Before the start of this school year, she shared a list with Marilyn of things she wanted to communicate to her new teacher. She’s learned to advocate for herself and shared with her teacher that if she gets overwhelmed, she may need a break but will return. “She’s not afraid to speak her mind,” says Marilyn. “I hope she continues to have people in her circle who allow Mariah to keep working toward her goals no matter what and advocating for herself along the way, whether in school, family, or basketball.”

2018
Marilyn and Mariah start a friendship. Marilyn still has photos on her phone of when Mariah was five years old.

2019
Mariah tells Marilyn about wanting to be a basketball player when she grows up.

2020
Mariah is motivated and sets up her own computer and hot spot every day so she can connect remotely for school. Both devices were provided by Friends Austin.

Writing by Abby Roedel Schlicher
Through Friends Austin’s partnership with the YMCA of Austin, Mariah begins playing basketball, attends all practices, and takes skill building very seriously. Mariah also solidifies her love and respect for Marilyn’s dog, Dr. Dre.

Mariah goes to a basketball camp for the first time, sponsored by Friends Austin board members. Marilyn transports Mariah every day to and from camp, where she quickly makes friends. She asks Marilyn to come early on the last day to cheer her on.
To ensure all Friends Austin children read on grade level, we created two new literacy initiatives:

1. Intensive literacy summer camp, “Book Camp”
   Literacy tutors worked individually and consistently with children to meet their specific needs and provide necessary interventions to support literacy gains.

2. The addition of a new staff role, Education Program Manager (EPM)
   The EPM creates year-round, individualized assessments and interventions for our youth to ensure they are reading on grade level and achieving academic success. This position strengthens the quality and efficacy of our programs by translating data into evidence-based improvements.

66% of children identified as needing urgent intervention at the start of Book Camp. Some youth progressed an entire grade level!
Our summer Book Camp was awesome!

“During the first week of camp, a first-grade boy would get frustrated and shut down when he could not automatically read a sight word correctly or read a word in a paragraph. After multiple tutoring sessions and consistent reminders that mistakes help us learn, his attitude towards challenges became an opportunity to improve at reading. He achieved his sight words and fluency goals during the camp. Not only did he read the most sight words ever, but he read a passage to his friend confidently. His Friend was amazed and excited about his success. The boy was glowing; he had a giant smile and twinkle in his eyes. At the end of camp, he hugged me and said ‘thank you.’ It was a magical moment.”

BOUN, BOOK CAMP TUTOR

“The last week of Book Camp we had graduations for all the participants. Because of our ever-changing summer schedules, it was impossible to find a time when all the kids could graduate together. To make sure all our children could be celebrated, we had mini graduation ceremonies every time a child finished their exit assessment. What started as a scheduling need became the most fun celebration of learning I have ever experienced. We played ‘pomp and circumstance’ and taught the children to march across the Clubhouse. Their tutors talked about their accomplishments and gave them a medal and a certificate. There were smiles, giggles, happy dances, and lots of immensely proud children. So many graduations, and all of them were so meaningful! It was one of my peak experiences as an educator.”

BRENDA COTTO-ESCALERA, FRIENDS AUSTIN EDUCATION PROGRAM MANAGER

45 children ranging in grades from rising kindergartners to rising fifth graders, attended Book Camp.

317 lessons were taught throughout Book Camp throughout June and/or July.
“I have no words to express gratitude to Andrea for how good she is with my daughter.”

CAREGIVER OF FRIENDS AUSTIN YOUTH
**Gimme 5!**

**5 things I’m proud of from the past year:**

1. Improved in math
2. I finished chapter books at the Clubhouse
3. Overcame my fear of deep water through kayaking on Lake LBJ
4. Faced my fear of roller coasters
5. I improved in art skills and crafts

**5 fun things from this summer with Friends Austin:**

1. Going to the Thinkery
2. Swimming at the pool
3. My birthday celebration with my mentor, family, and friends
4. I went to Fun Fridays at the Clubhouse
5. Pitching my first inning at a baseball game

**5 things I like best about Friends Austin:**

1. My mentor makes me happy
2. My Friend helps me with my schoolwork and homework
3. Friends are kind and we do fun activities
4. Making us learn better, be stronger, and eat healthier
5. I can ask for help when I need it

**5 ways to describe Friends Austin:**

1. The best
2. A friend to me
3. Family
4. I love it
5. Important

Quotes from our Austin youth
Goals lead to lasting impact

Friends Austin sets three high-level goals for every child in our program: 1) graduate from high school, 2) remain free from involvement with the juvenile justice system, and 3) wait until after their teen years to become a parent. Achieving these three goals enables each child to choose their path after graduating from high school.

Friends develop a road map for each child they serve and during their weekly intentional, structured, one-on-time, they are working together on developing a variety of skills and assets and focusing on meeting their road map goals.

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<tr>
<th>OUR ROAD MAP</th>
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<td>School Success</td>
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CREATE LASTING OUTCOMES

- **92%** 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.
- **98%** of youth wait to parent until after their teen years.
- **93%** of youth remain free from involvement in the juvenile justice system.
The Friends Core Assets

Every day, our Friends empower their youth to build nine core assets to create the framework for their success.

Growth Mindset
Problem Solving
Belonging
Self-Management
Find Your Spark
Perseverance and Grit
Positive Relationship Building
Hope
Self-Determination
**FY22**

**REVENUE TOTAL: $5,498,446***
- Individual Donors: $3,453,199
- Fundraising Events: $1,020,256
- Foundation Grants: $597,000
- Government Grants: $181,445
- Corporate Donors: $41,047
- In-Kind Gifts/Other: $205,499

**EXPENSES TOTAL: $2,916,078***
- Program: $2,051,631
- Fundraising: $471,064
- Administrative: $393,383

* Does include a one-time $2,400,000 donation from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott. Does not include $735,358 in multi-year pledge payments and net assets released from restriction.
** Does not include event corporate sponsorships.
*** The Board of Directors contributes at a level that covers all Administrative expenses.
An Austin-specific ROI study quantified the value of Friends Austin.

An Austin-specific ROI study showed the three focus areas in the Friends program—graduating high school, waiting until after their teen years to become a parent, and remaining free from involvement with the juvenile justice system—lead to measurable benefits for our whole community. As the first and only professional mentorship program in Austin, we expect and strive towards similar outcomes for our youth.

**Graduating High School**
- 48% latinx/hispanic
- 67% black
- Youth living in poverty are likely to drop out of school
- 83% of youth in the Friends Program earn their high school diploma or GED
- $308,000 saved per student

**Waiting to Start a Family**
- 49% latinx/hispanic
- 54% black
- Youth living in poverty are likely to become teen parents
- 98% of youth in the Friends Program wait to parent until after their teen years
- $271,000 saved per student

**Avoiding the Juvenile Justice System**
- 13% latinx/hispanic
- 20% black
- Youth living in poverty are likely to be involved in the criminal justice system
- 93% of youth in the Friends Program remain free from involvement in the juvenile justice system
- $153,000 saved per student

$1 invested in Friends Austin = $4 returned to the Austin community

$180,000 total cost of serving one child in the Friends Program with a professional mentor for 12+ years

$732,000 total amount saved by the Austin community over the course of each child’s lifetime
$2,000,000+
MacKenzie Scott

$250,000-$1,999,999
Anonymous
Anne and Ryan Jacob
Wood Next Fund

$100,000-$249,999
Breach Family Foundation
Aaron and Chris Hester

$50,000-$99,999
Rachel and Jeff Arnold
Ali and Ryan Atlas
Susanne and Colby Denison
Harman-Mayes-Sooch Family Fund
Kirkland & Ellis
Dr. Samantha Miller and Russell Valdez
Donald Park
Nancy and Mark Pollard
The Powell Foundation
Sooch Foundation
Mary and Frank Stanley
MML Hospitality
Vista Equity Partners

$25,000-$49,999
Maggie and Anand Anbalagan
Amy and Josh Baer
Bettina and Brian Barrow
Kimi and Stuart Casillas
Germana de Falco
Caroline and Brian Haley
Janet Harman and Kent Mayes
Maile and Brian Loring
Education Foundation of America
Jill and J.R. Kraft
Lauren and Tom Moorman
Tory and Milam Newby
Danielle and Jevin Sackett
Colleen and Frank Trabold

$15,000-$24,999
Michelle and Alan Cline
Holly Bohart - The Prentice Foundation, Inc.
Dr. Christine Fisher, Austin Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery
Gottesman Residential Real Estate
Jessica and Paul Leggett
Lowe Foundation
Johanna and George Peyton
Laurie Pompa and Tyron Stading
Lori and Jeff Sackett
Springhouse Foundation
Vinson & Elkins LLP

$10,000-$14,999
Khalida Ali
Alliance Bernstein
Daisy and Justin Cho
Jenny and Jason Ford
Lisa and Dan Graham - Notley
Eleanor and Brad Langston
Ann McEldowney
Paramount Specialty Finance
Seawell Elam Foundation
Heather and Phillip Wilhelm

$5,000-$9,999
Nancy and Scott Atlas
Elizabeth and Don Baker
Cassie and Kevin Burke
Jamie and Blake Chandlee
Alison and DeWitt Corrigan
Coleman Family Charitable Foundation
Jade and Jake DeKinder
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James Mitchell
Walter New
Leslie and Mark Newberry
Maria Nicolas and Florent Joubert
Linsey and Ryan Nixon
Catherine and Matt O’Hayer
Mark Olsen
Racheal and Burton Roberts
Amy Rogers
Ropes & Gray LLP
Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP
Texas Mutual
Shelby and Dunny Wansstrath
Anna-Marie Wascher
Radney Wood
Steve Wood
Vela Wood
Marc Zametto
Amy and Jordan Yeats

$2,500-$4,999
Anonymous
Benchmark Bank
Cynthia Bode
Morgan Chapple
KC Coats
Sara and Thomas Conley
Amanda and Clay Cowan
Friends Austin extends our heartfelt thanks to the following donors for their generous contributions in fiscal year 2021-2022.

Lauren and Bennett Ford
Regina and Stephen Foster
Leslie and Rob Gandy
Andrea and Megan Giles
Katherine and Jody Goehring
Manny and Andrea Gonzalez
Sydney and Harlan Goode
Justin Grimm
Anne and Charlie Henderson
Meredith and Ted Jarrett
Kim Kaupe and Fernando Vigil
Amy Laverenz
Kathleen and Chris Loughlin
Mark Lowry
Cade and Cameron Massey
Melody and Shain McCaig
Maya Nairn
Hunter and Robert Norris
Jessica and J. Pieratt
Rebecca and Phil Powers
Raymond James Charitable
Joy and Doug Rauls
Elizabeth Rogers
Lindsay and Brad Schlueter
Mia Baxter Smail
Michelle and Robert Strauss
Dalton and Victor Young

Morgan and John Burnham
ByGeorge
Anne and Cameron Campbell
Lesley Campbell
Peggy Carr
Nicole and Robert Cederstrom
Laura and Tommy Craddock
Caroline Weir Dixon
Ann and Peter Flemings
April and Joshua Fox
Shaleiah Fox
Pamela Friedman and Mitch Sundet
Laurie Gaither
Stephen Garten
Allison and Hank Gerdes
Kristin and Greg Gish
Kate and Steve Goode
Xio Goss
Anna and Reg Hargrove
Shelly Johnson Heflin
Pauline Johnson
Thomas Johnston
Priti Joshi and Aaron Gupta
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Mikey and Pete Mankins
Eddie Margain
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Erin and Blakeley McCracken
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Anna and Jason Near
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If you feel you have been excluded from this list or we misspelled your name, please accept our sincerest apologies and email cpage@friendsaustin.org so we may properly thank you.
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