

2026 Gratitude Report

FRIENDS of the CHILDREN

Dallas


Presented By
UFA
Dairy Farmers of America
at the Plano Event Center
FRIENDS of the
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Letter From the Executive Director



A Year of Showing Up and Making a Difference

Friends of the Children – Dallas was established to bring a proven, long-term mentoring model to Dallas for children facing the greatest obstacles. Friends of the Children was founded in Portland in 1993 by Duncan Campbell, and today the organization has chapters across the country. Dallas is the organization's 43rd chapter. Our mission is to impact generational change by empowering youth who are facing the greatest obstacles through long-term professional mentoring relationships.

Our model is different because we make a commitment that extends far beyond a traditional mentoring program. Children typically enter the program in kindergarten, around ages 4–6, and are paired with a full-time, paid professional mentor called a Friend who commits to walking alongside them for 12+ years, through high school graduation, no matter what.

During Friends – Dallas' first year, our three Friends served 24 children and their families, spending approximately 12–16 hours each month with each child in schools, homes and communities. Collectively, our Friends spent more than 1,600 hours directly with Dallas youth during our first year, building relationships, supporting academic and literacy development, strengthening social-emotional skills, connecting families to resources and helping children navigate challenges.

The impact can be seen in the life of a five-year-old Dallas student who was struggling with significant behavioral challenges and was at risk of being removed from kindergarten.

His Friend provided consistent support and worked alongside the child, his caregiver, and his school. Over the course of the year, his teacher and school counselors saw improvement, and he was able to remain engaged in school. This is what the Friends model is designed to do: show up consistently, build trust and help children overcome obstacles not for a semester or a school year, but for the long term.

Following the success of our first year, Friends of the Children – Dallas began its second year on September 1, 2026. We are adding three additional Friends professional mentors to our team, bringing the total number of Friends serving Dallas children to six. With this expansion, we will grow from serving 24 children to 48 children and their families, doubling the number of young people who will have a dedicated professional mentor in their corner.

With deep appreciation,

Sharon Carson

Sharon Carson
Executive Director
Friends of the Children – Dallas

Our Mission

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



Our Method

We select children who face multiple systemic obstacles. We amplify their voices as they write their own stories of hope and resilience.

Our Model

We commit to each child for the long-term. 12+ years, no matter what. Each child is paired with a paid professional mentor called a Friend.





Our Long-Term Outcomes

92% *of youth go on to enroll in post-secondary education, serve our country, or enter the workforce.*

90% *of youth earn a high school diploma or a GED.*

96% *of youth remain free from juvenile justice system involvement.*

95% *of youth wait to parent until after their teen years.*

Our Core Assets



Growth Mindset

I love learning and know that my abilities will improve through dedication and effort.



Belonging

I understand who I am, have a place where I feel accepted and know that my contributions count.



Hope

When I have tough times, I believe it can get better.



Problem Solving

I know how to weigh the pros and cons and make a decision.



Perseverance & Grit

I work hard through challenges and finish what I start.



Self Management

I know how to manage my feelings and take care of myself in a healthy way.



Self Determination

I believe in myself and am able to set goals and achieve them.



Find Your Spark

I use creativity to explore my passions.



Positive Relationship Building

I get along well with others and am able to find people to support me.

YEAR ONE by the numbers

A LOOK AT OUR FIRST YEAR OF IMPACT



24

children served in our first year



3

Friends providing long-term mentoring



1,600+

hours spent direct with children



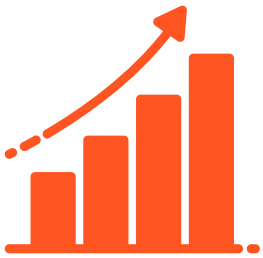
12-16

hours/month with each child



116

caregivers and family members supported



88%

of youth met or exceeded state literacy benchmarks



$1=$7

in greater impact for our youth

12+

years of commitment to each child

Already There



This summer, a mother in our program was rushed to the hospital. That's when her daughter's Friend Dezirae stepped in.

"I appreciate that Dezirae took Mya out so she wouldn't be alone. During this time, you guys helped us with food as well and stayed in close contact checking up on us after I was back home and recovering. Overall, I am very happy to have you all and Dezirae especially. I see the way she pours her time into Mya with intentionality. She has become like a second mom to Mya and has given her a safe space to be herself at all times."
— Mya's mom

Dezirae could move that fast because she already knew the family. That's what showing up week after week makes possible.

*Name changed to protect privacy.







Getting to Know Each Other: Our First Year of Family Events

Our Friends see their youth every week. Our staff doesn't get that kind of time with caregivers, and families rarely get it with each other. Because we support caregivers alongside their children, family engagement events matter as much to the adults as to the kids. In our first year, we held one every month, giving everyone a chance to get to know one another and build a community that holds up over the next 12+ years.

Where the Bond Begins

Our first family event, at 11Max Indoor Fun Park, came with dodgeball, trampoline basketball, and a mechanical bull. Our Friends led a make-your-own-slime session, and more than a few parents rolled up their sleeves to join in. For many of our families, it was the first time meeting each other.

It's also where Mike spotted his Friend, Stedman, across the room and ran straight over. **"I love you, Stedman!"** They'd only had a handful of outings together at that point.







Red, White, and Family Fun

In July, Mercy Street Dallas opened its courtyard to us for an afternoon. Kids moved between the bounce house, bubble station, ring toss, and corn hole, and someone got a sack race going. Parents found shade and talked.

An officer from the Dallas Police Department joined us too. He showed the kids what he keeps in his truck, let them climb in, and handed out stickers. He answered a lot of questions. We wanted our youth to meet an officer this way, on a Saturday afternoon, with time to be curious.



Ready, Set, Read

We kicked off the school year at North Texas Performing Arts. Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins read “Bark, George” to our kids and did every voice, animal noises included. The Dallas Public Library sent every kid home with a book. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas brought blue teddy bears, and their volunteers stayed to help with activities. The face painter had a long line all afternoon.

Caregivers had their own reasons to be there. Dallas College brought information about classes for adults, and Brother Bill’s Helping Hand, Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas, and Life Enhancement Services set up as well. Caregivers told us they appreciated having it all in one room.

Parents making slime next to their kids. Families meeting for the first time. A caregiver leaving with a lead on a class. That’s what a two-generation approach looks like in practice, and each event brings us a little closer to the families we’ll know for the next decade and beyond.







Our youth and families with Judge Clay Jenkins at Ready, Set, Read

"I support Friends Of The Children – Dallas because I believe every child should have an adult who cares for them and loves them and is a friend to them in life. Sometimes just knowing that you have somebody in your corner can make all the difference. Every child deserves that kind of support and that kind of friendship." – Judge Clay Jenkins

FRIENDS of the CHILDREN
Dallas



Families Leading the Way

Our Family Ambassador Program

Some of the best advocates for this work were never hired for it. They're the caregivers raising the youth in our program. This year, we launched our Family Ambassador Program to recognize what they've been doing all along. It grows out of our two-generation approach, which means we support caregivers alongside their children, because a family's stability and a child's growth aren't separate projects.

Family Ambassadors are current caregivers who've chosen to speak for the program. They talk with families who are new to it, show up at community events, and tell donors and partners what long-term mentoring looks like at their own kitchen tables. Each one shapes the role around their own schedule and comfort level, and all of them bring back feedback that helps us serve the families who come next.

Ayanna found us through Vogel Alcove, where her children went to school, and she knows every Friend on staff by name. When we hired a new male mentor, her son was part of choosing him, a moment she says neither of them will forget. "They are not just here for your child," she tells other caregivers. "They are also here for you."

Tye tells caregivers who are new to the program to think in years, not weeks. Long-term support, she says, not a one-time resource. Ayanna pointed her toward us when she was looking for the kind of role models she wanted for her own child. As a single mother, she understands the math of balancing work, parenting, and everything else. Now she's the one other caregivers bring their honest questions to.

Families are our strongest partners.



Meet Our Team

A small team carried our first year. Your support is what made each of these roles possible.



Sharon Carson

Executive Director



Magaly Solis

Program Director



Lindsay Landrum

Operations Manager



Dezirae Grant

Professional Mentor



Stedman Allen

Professional Mentor



Asiyah Martin

Professional Mentor





A Community That Showed Up

For our first North Texas Giving Day, we set a goal of raising $10,000. It was our chance to see how this community would show up for our young organization. Sandra and Paul Nouri generously backed that goal with a match. If we raised $10,000, they'd bring us to $20,000.

The day started early. Our Executive Director Sharon Carson joined Wayne White of Communities Foundation of Texas on WFAA's Good Morning Texas to talk about the work Friends of the Children is doing here in Dallas. By the end of the day, **24 donors had given $22,355, more than double our goal.**

Every dollar raised that day is going to Basic Needs. Grants cover a lot of what we do, but they can't plan for the unexpected. These gifts will ensure our Friends can help a family right away, without waiting on a referral or an approval.

To every donor, to Sandra and Paul, and to Communities Foundation of Texas for hosting the day, thank you. It means a lot to know so many people are in this with us.

2026 Donors

We want to extend our deepest gratitude to all of our generous donors. Your support has been instrumental in enabling us to serve the youth and families who need it most. Your commitment to our mission is helping to build a brighter future for our community, and we are incredibly thankful for your partnership.

Visionaries

- Child Poverty Action Lab
- Communities Foundation of Texas
- The Meadows Foundation
- WoodNext Foundation

Champions

- Aibtikar Foundation
- Horizon Outreach Fund at Saint Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church

Pathfinders

- Annie L. Stevens Fund at The Dallas Foundation
- The John R. McCune Charitable Trust
- Margot Perot
- The Stallings Foundation

Advocates

- Carrie & Hunter Satterfield
- Clay Jenikins Family Foundation
- Keri and Michael Brookshire
- Mary and Michael Von Ahnen
- Mike & Mary Terry Family Foundation
- The Halloway Family Foundation
- The Hoglund Foundation
- The Koz Foundation
- Vinson & Elkins LLP

Allies

- Byrne Family Foundation Trust
- The Hersh Foundation
- H-E-B
- Jennifer & Jon Mosle
- Kim and Evan Wyly
- Mary Jalonick
- National Life Group Charitable Foundation
- Sarah and Jon Sparling
- Susan Butt

Supporters

- Costco Wholesale
- Elizabeth and Tom O'Mahony
- The Forman Foundation
- HEB Charitable Trust
- Jennifer Howell
- Libby Norwood
- Madeline & Jim McClure
- Peggy Carr
- Richard LeBlanc
- Sally Magee
- Sara and David Gail
- Sarah and Loy Shaw, Jr.
- United Way of Metropolitan Dallas

Neighbors

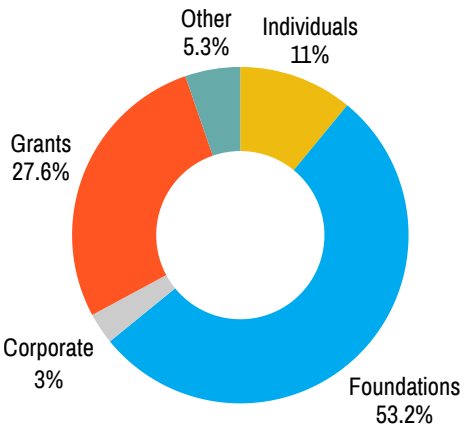
- Amber Martin and Time House
- Andrea Olatunji
- Ann Fields
- Anne and Paul Corley
- Antonella Pisani
- Bill Jackson
- Bob Judd
- Christi and Fabian Feustel
- Claudia MacMillan
- Ed Fjordbak
- Gabe Madison
- Gregory Martin
- Helen Dorsey
- Jeffrey Cross
- Jill Parish
- Keysha Bradley
- LeeLee Gioia
- Leslie and Gregory Coyle
- Linda B. McFarland
- Lisa Hembry
- Marie Fowler
- Marla and David Mosberg
- Mary and Norm Hitzges
- Mary Brinegar
- Maureen Kuntz
- Mike Field
- Neall Rose
- Pam & Jim Walsh
- Peggy Zadina
- Rhonda Roberts
- Roderick-Amy Henderson-Ngo
- Sherry Montoya
- Susan Benton
- Timothy Pannell
- Vickie Allen

FY2026 Financials

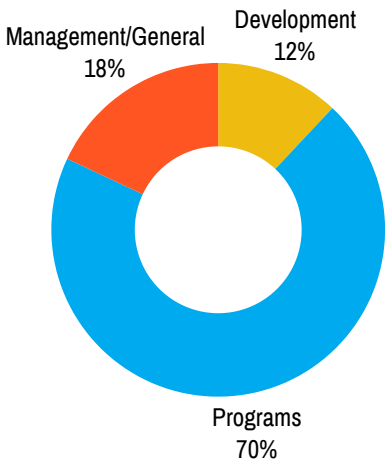
Revenue: **$960,483**

Expenses: **$922,590**

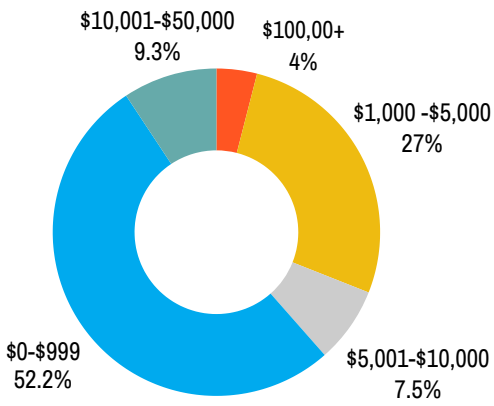
Revenue Source



Allocation



Giving Level



Partners

Aibtikar Foundation

CHILD POVERTY ACTION LAB

COMMUNITIES FOUNDATION of TEXAS

The Dallas Foundation

family compass

THE Hersh FOUNDATION

THE HOGLUND FOUNDATION

HOLLOWAY FAMILY FOUNDATION

HORIZON OUTREACH FUND
SAINT MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

THE KOZ FOUNDATION

The Meadows Foundation
Serving the People of Texas

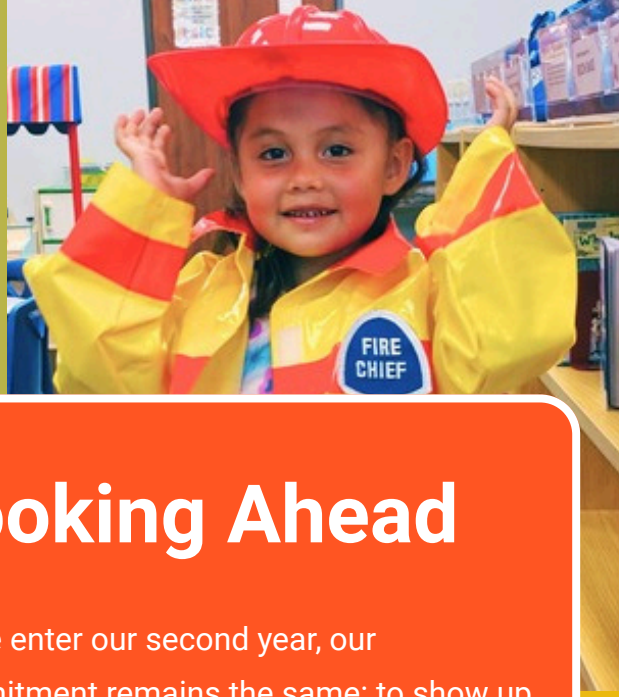
The Mike & Mary Terry FAMILY FOUNDATION
Faithfully dedicated to changing lives

THE STALLINGS FOUNDATION

Vogel

WoodNext Foundation











Looking Ahead

As we enter our second year, our commitment remains the same: to show up for children facing the greatest obstacles and their families, build trusted relationships and help young people develop the skills, confidence and support they need to thrive no matter what.

Enroll 24 Additonal Youth

Expand our reach and hire 3 additional Friends.

Launch Literacy & Learning Initiative

Add dedicated literacy coaches to reinforce literacy programming.

Deepen Family Partnerships

Expand caregiver engagement and basic-needs connections, including collaborations with schools and community organizations.

Measure Youth Progress

At least 80% of youth will achieve their individualized Road Map goals, demonstrating progress towards educational and developmental milestones.

Letter From the Board Chair



To Our Community,

One year ago, Friends of the Children – Dallas launched with a commitment to end generational poverty by following a proven, national model: empowering youth who face the greatest obstacles with a full-time professional mentor, from kindergarten for 12+ years, no matter what.

Today, we are proud to share our first Gratitude Report and celebrate the completion of our first year. As Board Chair, I am deeply grateful to our Board, Founders, Partners, donors, and staff, whose generosity and hard work made this possible.

Our mentors are walking alongside our first cohort of children and will soon welcome a second. We know this evidence-based model helps young people graduate high school, avoid the juvenile justice system, and break cycles that have persisted for generations.

As we close our first year, we look ahead with both urgency and hope. Our goal is to grow our team and serve an additional cohort of Dallas children, each one supported, known, and never alone on the path to a thriving future. Reaching that goal will take all of us.

Thank you for being part of this beginning. I invite you to help us spread the word about our mission and continue to support these children as a donor, volunteer, or partner, as we turn this first year into a lasting legacy for Dallas children.

With gratitude,

Jennifer Howell

Jennifer Howell
Board Chair
Friends of the Children – Dallas

Board of Directors

Jennifer Howell, Board Chair
Founder & CEO, Spark EQ

Peggy Carr, Secretary
Community Volunteer

Mary Von Ahnen, Development Chair
Former SVP & CIO, Fossil Group

Paul Nouri, Treasurer
President, Noble Equity Fund

Keri Brookshire, Program Chair
Community Member

Dr. Andrae L. Brown
Chief Officer of Chapter Success, Friends of the Children

Bill Jackson
VP of Dallas-Lubbock Regional Operations, Texas Mutual Insurance Company

Annam Manthiram
CEO, The Bridge Homeless Recovery Center

Nancy Pollard
Executive Director, Friends of the Children – Texas

Carrie Satterfield
LPC, CEDS, Private Practice

Founding Council

Lael Brodsky
Community Volunteer

Sara Craig
Consultant

Mary M. Jalonick
Community Philanthropist

Madeline McClure
Founder and CEO Emeritus, TexProtects

Elizabeth Hooper O'Mahony
Community Volunteer

Jan Osborn
Community Volunteer

Suzanne Smith, MBA
CEO, Social Impact Architects

Whitney Strauss
Senior Counsel, CSR & Philanthropic Services


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Dallas

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