



IMPACT REPORT

FR1ENDS of the  
CH1LDREN

Los Angeles

2022

FriendsLA.org

 @FriendsSoCal

 @FriendsLA

 @FriendsLA



# OUR MISSION

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

MAKING IT POSSIBLE

BOARD MEMBERS

- Chair:** Peter Lizotte

**Vice Chair:** Mary Jo Johnson

Annie Campbell

Courtney Carter

Arnold Hackett
- Ilissa Samplin

**Secretary:** Leona “Lee” Schube

Stephanie Wiggins

**Treasurer:** Robyn Young

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OUR VALUES

PUT CHILDREN FIRST

We intentionally serve youth who are facing the greatest obstacles. To help our youth discover their limitless potential, we foster their internal resiliency. We listen to our youth and base decisions on each youth's needs and dreams. We prioritize self-care so that we bring our best selves to our work and focus on our youth.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS ON LOVE

We nurture long-term relationships from a foundation of love, acceptance, and culturally-informed practice. We don't give up easily and take a no matter what approach to our work. We commit for the long-term. We intentionally develop collaborative relationships over time with trust, empathy and healthy communication. We believe that we build community through one-on-one connections that are authentic, respectful, and meaningful.

GUIDING THE MISSION

*These principles inform our decisions when hiring, coaching, managing, and most importantly, changing the way the world treats and views the youth and families we serve.*

PURSUE GOALS RELENTLESSLY

We celebrate all achievements, big and small. We are disciplined in our commitment to goals, while innovative in how we reach them. We believe that the definition of success requires intentional reflection and adjustment over time. We work together and hold ourselves accountable with data to achieve short and long-term outcomes.

COMMITMENT TO EMPOWERMENT

We leverage personal strengths to take ownership of our futures. We build relationships within the communities of our youth and families to strengthen social networks and provide bridges to new opportunities. We consistently inspire possibility through empathy, hard work, and fun. We model all of this for our youth, families and each other.

DEMAND EQUITY

We acknowledge the historical and present injustices impacting marginalized communities. We demand equity from ourselves and from our community. We insist that all people have the necessary support to achieve all of their hopes and dreams. We amplify the voices of our children, families and communities. We bring together different experiences, skills and backgrounds to provide opportunities to overcome personal, systemic and institutional barriers.

PROFILE

REANDRA | ASHLEY

I HAVE WORKED FOR FRIENDS LA FOR THREE AND A HALF YEARS – AND AFTER ALL THIS TIME, I STILL CONSIDER MYSELF LUCKY. I GET TO DO WHAT I LOVE FOR A LIVING. I'VE ALWAYS HAD A DESIRE TO GIVE BACK BY HELPING KIDS REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL. WITH FRIENDS LA, I'M ABLE TO SEE PHENOMENAL GROWTH IN THE YOUTH WE SUPPORT WITH EACH PASSING SEASON.



REANDRA FRANCIS  
PROGRAM LEAD | METRO-SOUTH LOS ANGELES



EQUAL PARTS  
HEAD &  
HEART



ON THE FOREFRONT

# INSPIRING MULTI-GENERATIONAL CHANGE

WE'RE RISING TO THE CHALLENGE OF ENDING GENERATIONAL POVERTY IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY.

Already living with the pressures of race, trauma, and the complexities of navigating systems such as child welfare and education, many caregivers in Los Angeles County now face increased economic pressures and heightened stress around keeping themselves and their children safe and healthy. Friends of the Children – Los Angeles (Friends LA) stabilizes L.A. County families facing the greatest challenges and provides crisis-prevention services to disrupt child entry into foster care.

Our work is based on a unique Two-Generation (2Gen) approach where we leverage our proven professional mentor model to impact generational change for both youth and caregivers. We support the enrolled youth and their caregivers, creating a holistic model of support for the entire family for 12+ years, no matter what. Our approach is a paradigm for thinking about social service delivery in which caregivers and children are served deliberately and simultaneously, leading to greater economic mobility for the entire family unit over time with economic self-sufficiency as the ultimate goal.

Ultimately, greater social change is needed to address the economic and social conditions at the root of toxic stress. But given that these complex social problems will not be remediated easily or quickly, through highly individualized, long-term professional mentorship, we can support youth living with the intersecting pressures of generational poverty and trauma to create new paths for themselves. And the data show we're right – our model has been recognized as an evidence-based practice for children and families involved in the child welfare system by the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC).



PROFILE

# ASHAKIA | MIRANDA

Miranda is a bright, warm-hearted girl who enjoys learning and using her knowledge to help others. Miranda's mom often works long hours to support her family, so Miranda and her Friend, Ashakia, make weekly trips to the library together to pass the time. Ashakia shares that Miranda is confident in her education and shines with encouragement and verbal praise.



BEING MIRANDA'S MENTOR IS SIMPLY AMAZING. AS HER MENTOR, I AIM TO TEACH HER AN IMPORTANT LIFE SKILL EVERY TIME WE MEET...BUT I FIND MYSELF LEARNING FROM HER JUST AS OFTEN! HER CURIOSITY IS HER GREATEST GIFT, AND I TRY TO REMIND HER OF THAT WHENEVER I CAN.

**ASHAKIA** PROFESSIONAL MENTOR | ANTELOPE VALLEY





AT A GLANCE

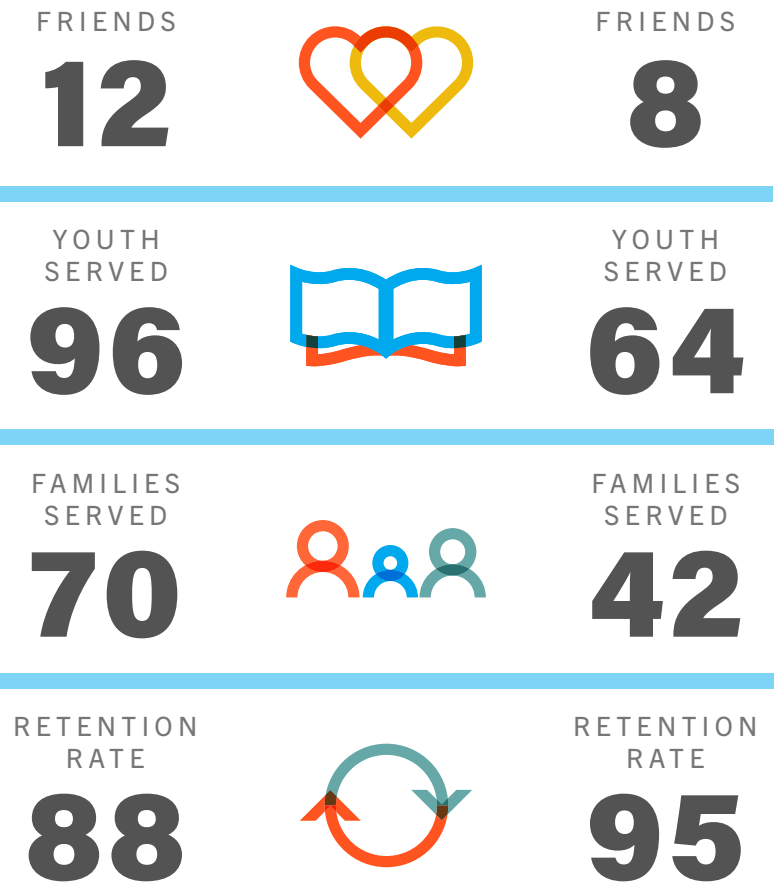
# OUR BIGGEST YEAR YET

SINCE OPENING IN 2017, FRIENDS LA HAS SERVED MORE THAN 100 FAMILIES AT OUR METRO SOUTH AND ANTELOPE VALLEY LOCATIONS. JOIN US IN CELEBRATING AND REFLECTING ON THE IMPACT OUR FRIENDS HAVE HAD ON AT-RISK CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN THESE COMMUNITIES.

1. Our **Metro South** location serves the children of caregivers who experienced foster care and the child welfare system during their childhood or adolescence.

2. Our **Antelope Valley** location serves children and families who are identified as most at risk of entering foster care and the child welfare system.

METRO-SOUTH      ANTELOPE VALLEY



**93% of the families** we serve have had no further contacts with Department of Children and Family Services. **Prior to joining our program, at least 60% of our families** have had one or more contacts with the department.

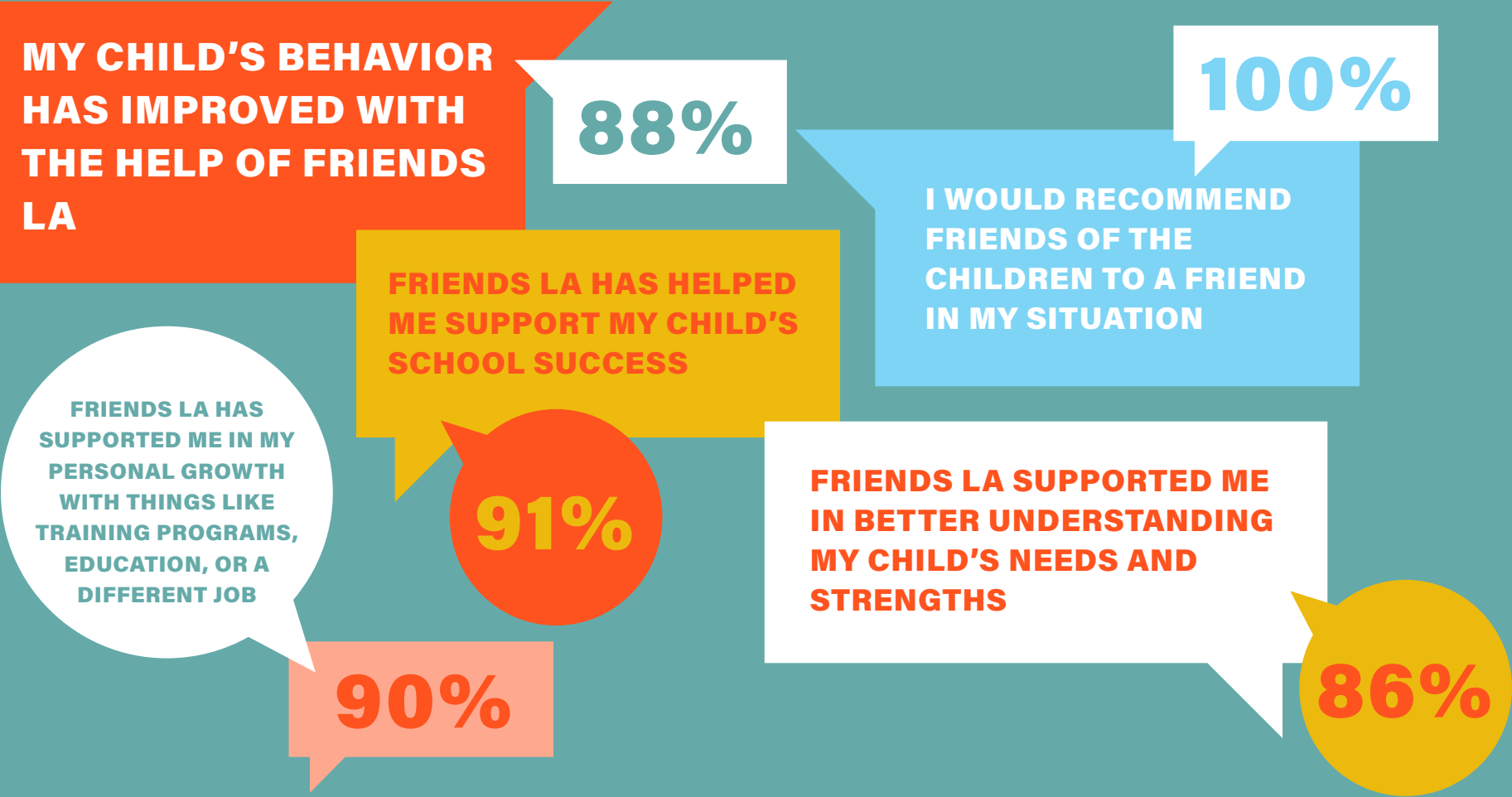
Third-party research data shows that for children already in foster care, having a Friend shortens their length of stay **by nearly six months.**

DID YOU KNOW?

DON'T TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT, TAKE THEIRS

# CAREGIVER SURVEY RESULTS

This year's survey results demonstrate that Friends LA is empowering caregivers as they work toward positive and lasting changes in their lives.





INNOVATIVE MENTORING PROGRAM

# OUR GENERATIONAL CHANGE MODEL

We identify children ages 4-6 who could most benefit from a relationship with a long-term professional mentor.

1

We hire and train full-time paid professional mentors called “Friends.”

2

We commit to every child for the long term. 12+ years, no matter what.

3

4

Our work is relationship-based, individualized and intentional.

5

We work with youth in school, at home, and in the community.

6

We evaluate, measure, and improve.

OUR COMMITMENT

## HELPING FAMILIES THRIVE

A DUAL APPROACH TO SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

**Strengthening Families™** is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. We utilize the Strengthening Families Framework in our work to engage families, deliver strong programs, and build up entire communities. We also cultivate five key protective factors in those involved in our program.

These **five protective factors** are:

1. Parental resilience
2. Social connections
3. Knowledge of parenting and child development
4. Concrete support in times of need
5. Social and emotional competence of children

Crafting our programming with these two approaches in mind ensures that we are supporting caregivers by instilling key protective factors in families that ultimately enable children to thrive.







## PROFILE **ANGEL | AJ | SHERRY**

**SHERRY'S STORY ILLUSTRATES HOW A FRIEND CAN MITIGATE TRAUMA, BREAK THE CYCLE OF POVERTY, AND CHANGE LIVES – ONE FAMILY AT A TIME. FRIENDS OF THE CHILDREN IS THE ANSWER.**

When Sherry learned that she was going to be a mom, she knew what she did not want for her children. Having grown up in the foster care system, she was familiar with painful family separations. She witnessed children being taken from their homes, families dissolving, and siblings losing touch – each scenario a nightmare that she was determined to protect her child from no matter what.

Sherry was introduced to Friends of the Children Los Angeles and was intrigued by the promise of long-term support for herself and her child. But it wasn't easy for us to earn her trust right away.

"I didn't want to depend on Friends LA or my child's professional mentor, because for so long I could only depend on myself," she

shared. "But eventually I realized that in order to break the cycle, I had to teach my son that it was okay to accept help from others during the times when you need extra support. And that lesson needed to start with me."

Today, Sherry is glad that she decided to enroll her son, A.J., into our program. She has become a leading voice among our caregiver network and sits on our Parent Advisory Council to help provide caregiver feedback to our programming. Though fully confident as an empowered woman, Sherry realizes that there are some gaps as a role model that she isn't fully equipped to fulfill. "As a single mom raising two children, it is challenging to provide my son with the positive male influence he needs. Thankfully, his Friend can be there for him to fill that void."

A.J. – who is now 12 years old – wholeheartedly agrees. He spends at least 2 hours a week with his Friend, Angel. Together, they bond over shared interests in music and gaming. In recent years, AJ has struggled with self-confidence. By using their shared interests as mediums, Angel has helped him believe in himself. "Angel always hypes me up, and that's something that really makes my day."

## KEY PRINCIPLES

# OUR APPROACH IS SIMPLE AND FOCUSED

Measure and account for outcomes for both children and their caregivers.

Engage and listen to the voices of families.

Ensure equity.

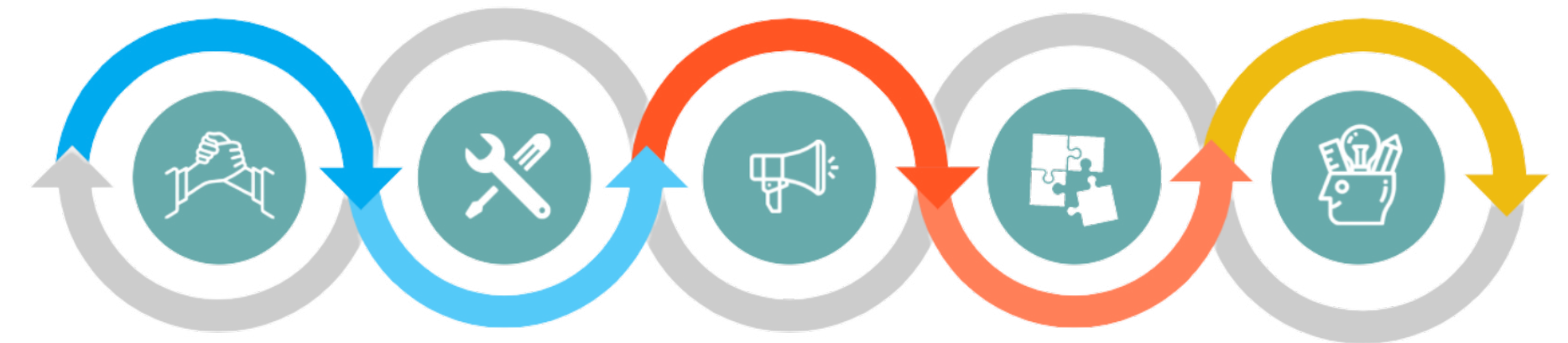
Foster innovation and evidence together.

Align and link systems and funding streams.

## 2 GEN COMPONENTS

# EMPOWERING CAREGIVERS AND CHILDREN

Trusting, long-term relationships with Friends empower change across generations – for both caregivers and their children. Caregivers have told us that what they need to achieve their hopes and dreams are people who believe in their power, potential and contributions. We use these 2Gen Key Components to help meet their goals as caregivers.



**Support** parents to understand their child's needs and strengths

**Equip** parents with social and emotional learning skills

**Promote** self-advocacy through understanding of, and advocacy within, complex systems such as education and child welfare

**Connect** families to concrete supports, like housing and education/employment pathways

**Create** opportunities for culturally-responsive community and peer-to-peer connections



# OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

## 2021

### OCTOBER

Family fun at our annual Trunk or Treat.



### NOVEMBER

Friends and volunteers come together to support Friendsgiving, our annual Thanksgiving event.

## 2022

### DECEMBER

Our Friends2Family Holiday Distribution brings joy and cheer to many of our youth and families!



### JANUARY

The Aspen Institute partners caregivers from our program who are Transition-Age-Youth (TAY) for leadership programming.



### FEBRUARY

Ciara spotlights a family from our program on the Ellen show!



### MARCH

Kids and Friends join together to watch our first-ever virtual Women's Career Panel



### JUNE

The U.S. Surgeon General recognizes Friends LA by endorsing our professional mentorship model as a remedy to address the emerging youth mental health crisis.



### MAY

Our new Championing Fatherhood program, designed to support male father figures, makes its debut! We also held a Men's Mental Health Panel to bring awareness to the topic.



### AUGUST

Youth and families prepare for a successful school season at our Back2School event.



### JULY

We developed a partnership with Camp Bob to send our youth to summer camp for the first time!

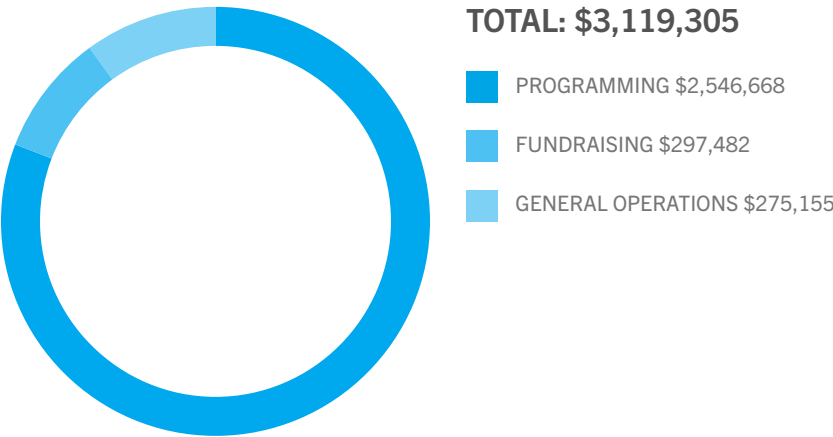
THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT

# FINANCIALS

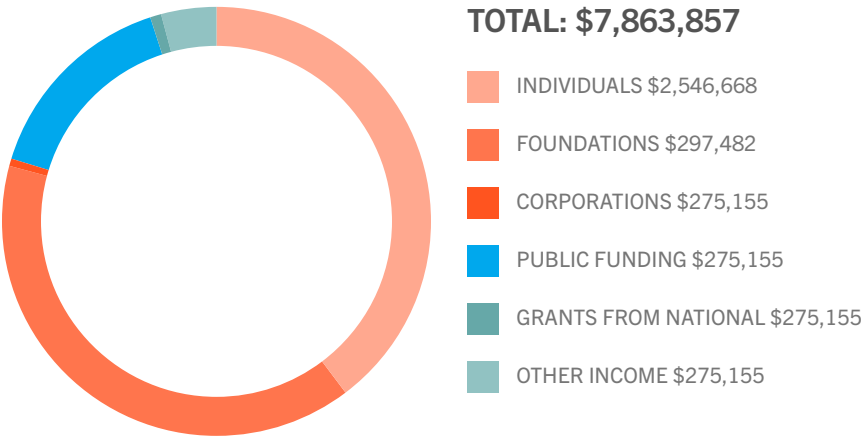
As an organization, modeling fiscal responsibility is vital to our success. We take great pride in our financial efficiency, our transparency, and our accountability to investors and the communities we serve.

Our diverse funding model leverages a recent history of private and public philanthropic investments that has catalyzed growth and established increased demand for scale .

OPERATING EXPENSES



OPERATING REVENUE



\*NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM RESTRICTION -\$259,144

# MACKENZIE SCOTT



WE'RE THRILLED TO SHARE THAT THIS YEAR WE RECEIVED OUR LARGEST-EVER INDIVIDUAL GIFT BY A SINGLE DONOR FROM RENOWNED BUSINESSWOMAN AND PHILANTHROPIST, MACKENZIE SCOTT.

This catalytic gift will enable us to expand our reach and impact in the community while also ensuring that we can continue our vital work for years to come.





PROFILE

# THE CHANGE REACTION

We are incredibly grateful to partner with **The Change Reaction** to swiftly fulfill caregiver needs.

Many of our caregivers struggle to meet their basic needs or face unanticipated emergencies. The Change Reaction has built the largest and most impactful direct giving platform in Los Angeles – enabling us to provide urgent financial relief to caregivers without bureaucracy. Through our partnership, we have secured over \$50,000 in support of our caregivers. The Change Reaction has also established an Angel Fund for Friends LA, which will allow us to meet the needs of our caregivers even more rapidly!



HOUSING



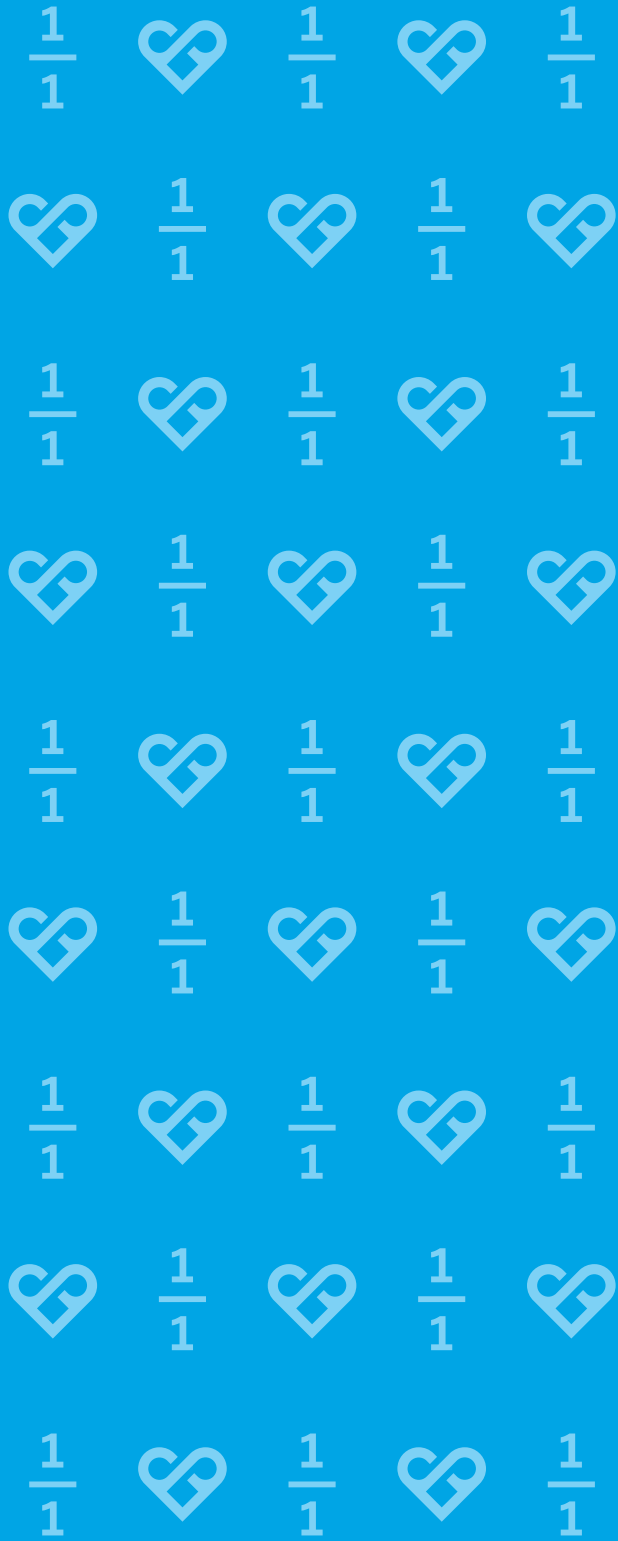
MEDICAL  
EXPENSES



UTILITIES



TRANSPORTATION



## WITH GRATITUDE

We believe that every child and family should have the long-term, consistent support necessary to break generational cycles of poverty. Salaried, professional mentoring is the key to affecting real change. Together we can lead the paradigm shift that empowers youth and families to transcend poverty.

**Believe in Generational  
Change With Us**

A photograph of two young girls in a park. One girl is sitting on the grass, wearing a pink hoodie and brown pants, holding a black sign with white text. The other girl is standing behind her, wearing a light blue shirt and grey pants, with her arms around the first girl. The background is a blurred green field with trees.

# FR1ENDS of the CH1LDREN

Los Angeles

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THE DIFFERENCE WE  
CAN MAKE TOGETHER  
IS LIMITLESS.

[FriendsLA.org](https://FriendsLA.org)

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