

FR1ENDS of the
CH1LDREN

Los Angeles

IMPACT REPORT

2021



STRONGER TOGETHER

A Message From our Board Chair and Co-Chair

Over the past year and a half, we have had to adapt in ways never imagined – separation from family and friends; uncertainty about health, housing, and jobs; and the loss of people we care about.

We know that our parents struggled to ensure their children had consistent access to shelter, nutritious food, and other basic needs. We know that our children experienced incredible depths of isolation at critical stages of their social and emotional development, and all while navigating a virtual education due to on-site learning school closures.

It would be an understatement to say how difficult these times have been. And yet, we know that despite being forced to face these colossal challenges head on, our children and families remained resilient and endured.

Through all the obstacles created by the pandemic, Friends LA has never wavered from its mission to deliver innovative mentoring to children impacted by foster care. We are intent on being a real solution. We are intent on keeping families together, staying by their sides, and watching them grow and flourish.

Our 2021 Impact Report sheds light on how Friends LA responded to the critical needs that confronted our children and families this past year. We persevered and remained steadfast in our focus of working alongside youth, caregivers, and families to help ensure they had the strength and support necessary to push past their endurance and thrive. While our collective challenges are far from over, we hope that you will read about our response as a continued force of positive influence in our community and gain a better understanding of the difference you are making as a supporter of Friends LA.

Through it all, your generosity and commitment to the children of Friends LA has prevailed. You have changed lives, brought happiness and hope, and reminded our youth and caregivers that they are important. As you read through this report, remember that our impact would not be possible without the support of compassionate believers like you. Thank you.

By pulling together, we not only pulled through – we pulled ahead.

With gratitude,

Peter Lizotte & Mary Jo Johnson

Board Chair & Board Co-Chair



2020-2021 Board Chair Members

Chair

Peter Lizotte

Co-Chair

Mary Jo Johnson

Secretary

Camilo Echavarria

Treasurer

Robyn Young

Jihan Bowes-Little

Annie Campbell

Courtney Carter

Arnold Hackett

Kacy Keys

Raoul Ortega

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Lee Schube

Terri Sorensen

Stephanie Wiggins

Our Mission

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



“Since Friends LA has come into my family’s life, I now know and understand the meaning of taking a village to raise a child. It has been an honor to be a part of the program because my children have another person they can count on, somebody to give a little extra help wherever we need it whether it be with school, making friends, learning about life, or trying new ways. Not only do my children have a mentor, but they have a new Friend.”

- Brianna, Antelope Valley Parent

Our History

2017

Friends of the Children-Los Angeles (Friends LA) launched our innovative mentoring program in partnership with parenting transition-age foster youth to mentor their children.

2020

Friends LA launched a 3-year pilot in Antelope Valley to focus on stabilizing families and preventing child entry into foster care.

At Present

To date, 256 children and parents have been supported by Friends LA. As we walk beside these children throughout their childhood, we concurrently empower their parents to advocate for their children through an ongoing, respectful, and strengths-based partnership.

Our Friends

We call our professional mentors Friends because their role isn't just a job. **It's a calling.**

Friends walk alongside our children from kindergarten through high school graduation. They form meaningful relationships that will have lasting impact on the child's development for years to come.



Our Values

Our values guide us to achieve our mission. We use our values to make informed decisions; to hire, to coach, to manage; and most importantly, to change the way the world treats and views the youth and families we serve.



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.



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.



Pursue Goal 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.



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.

Our Generational Change Model



1

We select children who could most benefit from a relationship with a long-term professional mentor.



2

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



3

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



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.



“Jay* absolutely loves spending time with his Friend Jorge. They play together and get along really well. When play time is over, Jorge helps my son with school work. The structure that Jorge gives Jay makes me proud to be involved with Friends of the Children. I want him to get good grades and get a good job in the future. I know Jorge and Friends LA will help us get there and make sure we succeed.”

- Nora*, Metro-South LA Caregiver

**Name changed to protect identity.*

Our Two Generation (2Gen) Approach

We see greater potential for youth empowerment when we support entire families by also connecting caregivers to their own supports. We call this **2Gen**.

The **2Gen** Approach focuses on creating opportunities for and addressing the needs of both children and their parents together to improve family outcomes. It is a paradigm for thinking about social service delivery in which parents and children from the same family are served deliberately and simultaneously, leading to greater economic mobility for the entire family unit over time and economic self-sufficiency as the ultimate goal.



Connecting Families to Concrete Supports Like



Educational assistance like books for their home, tutoring, or library access



Food assistance programs (WIC, SNAP—food stamps)



Cultural or art activities



Fitness or sports activities



Parenting programs or classes



Mental health care like counseling, therapy sessions, or medication



Income assistance (e.g., TANF, unemployment)

2Gen Key Principles

1

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

2

Engage and listen to the voices of families.

3

Ensure equity.

4

Foster innovation and evidence together.

5

Align and link systems and funding streams.

2Gen Key Components

Trusting, long-term relationships with Friends empowers 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

Promote

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

Create

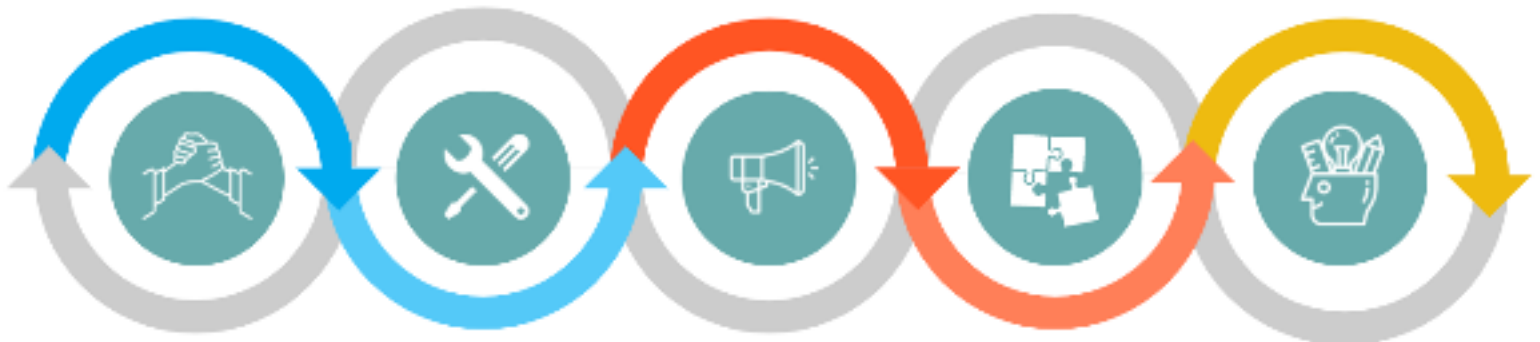
opportunities for culturally-responsive community and peer-to-peer connections

Equip

parents with social and emotional learning skills

Connect

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



Our Impact, by the Numbers

Metro-South LA

9

Friends

65

Youth Enrolled

50

Families
Served

95%

Retention
Rate

13,520

hours of professional mentorship
spent between Friends and their
youth.

Antelope Valley

8

Friends

56

Youth Enrolled

34

Families
Served

94%

Retention
Rate

10,192

hours of professional mentorship
spent between Friends and their
youth.

23,712 hours

combined spent in 2020-2021 mentoring children about goals related
to our Intermediate Outcomes

96%

of youth made progress toward the Intermediate Outcome of **School Success**, such as finishing homework, regularly attending school, or staying focused in the classroom.

92%

of youth made progress on the Intermediate Outcome of **Plans and Skills for the Future**, including attaining skills for safety and independence, setting short and long-term goals, and monitoring progress toward them.

96%

of youth made progress on the Intermediate Outcome of **Pro 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.

90%

of youth made progress towards the Intermediate Outcome of **Making Good Choices**.

96%

of youth met their goals for the Intermediate Outcome of **Improved Health**.

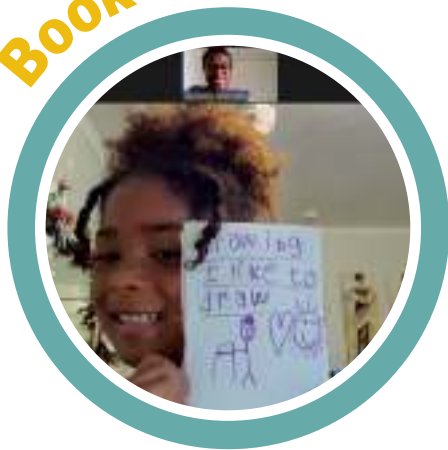


As development and distribution of COVID-19 vaccinations hastened, so too did our Friends' adaptation to a world where mentoring could only be done from a distance. During this time, Friends acted as a resource for material and emotional support needs to our children and caregivers. They listened to frustrated spirits when the uncertainty of the world got to be too much. When our children and caregivers needed us, we showed up, because that's what it means to be a "no matter what" organization. Nothing – not even a pandemic – could stop up from fulfilling our commitment to be by their side for the next 12 and ½ years.

Fostering Values Through Events

This past year, Friends LA incorporated our 9 Core Assets into multiple events. Core Assets are specific qualities we focus on to ensure the social and emotional development of our youth. By intentionally incorporating our Core Assets into our programming, we believe our youth will enter their adulthood with a solid foundation for future success.

Book Club



Back to School



Simon Biles Tour



Celebration

Trunk or Treat



Making Holiday Cookies



CORE ASSETS



Hope



Positive
Relationship
Building



Belonging



Problem
Solving



Perseverance
Grit



Self
Management



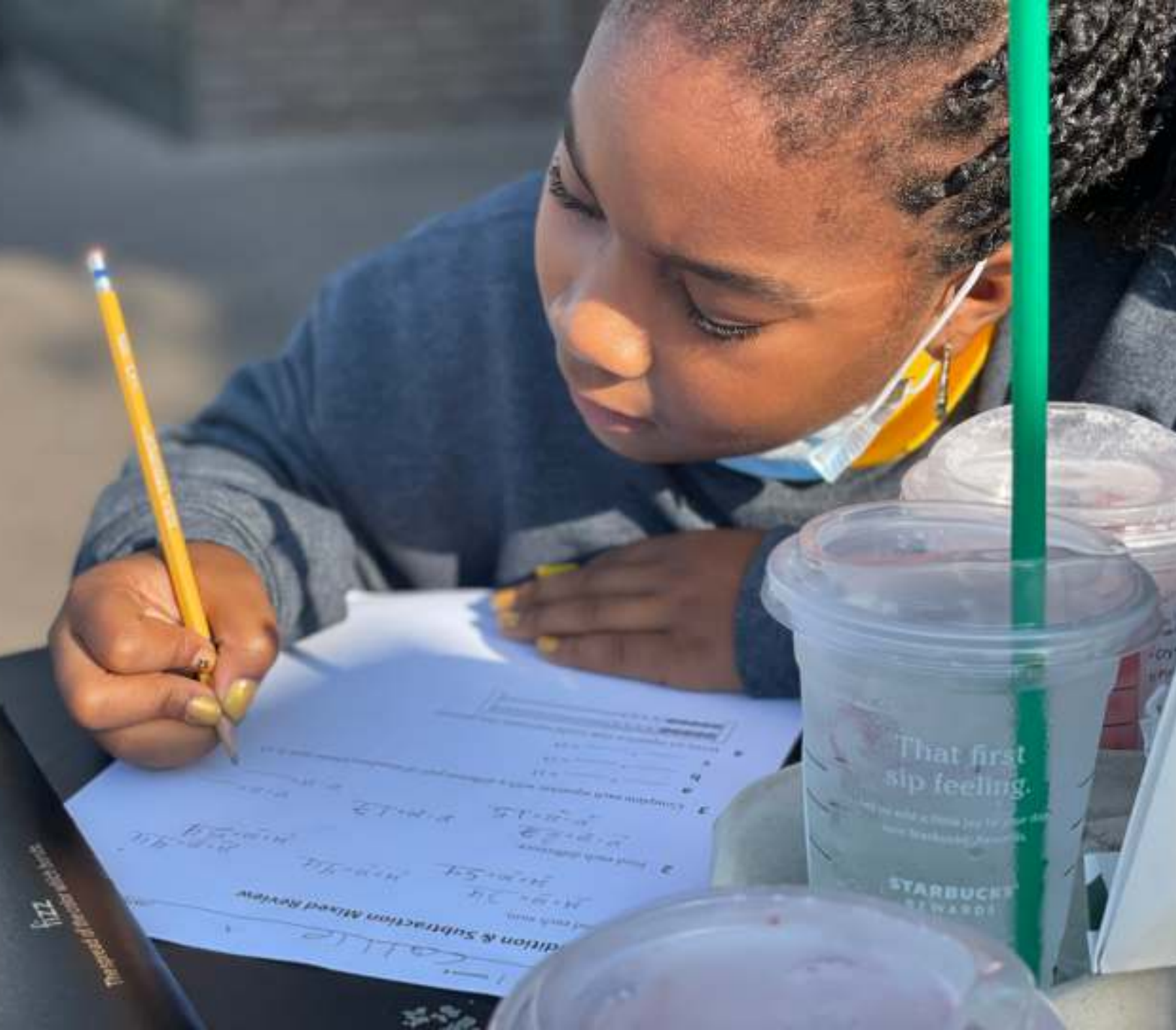
Find Your
Spark



Growth
Mindset



Self
Determination



With many of our youth going to school virtually, one of the greatest challenges we had to overcome was helping kids and caregivers remain positive about school as they struggled with the woes of remote learning. We adapted to overcome this challenge by introducing a host of resources (such as Caribou, IXL, ABC Mouse, and Accelerated Reader) to our children and caregivers. By doing so, we strengthened our focus on school success and prevented the widening of the achievement gap in an age of distanced learning.



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

- Kathryn Barger, Los Angeles County 5th District Supervisor



A Place for Community

We're proud to share that this year, our Antelope Valley site upgraded to their very own office space!

The Antelope Valley Friends office is located on Lancaster Blvd, a central area neighboring the Lancaster Library, Movie Theatre, Art Museum, American Heroes Park, and the Sheriff's Office. The office is a single-story open floor plan which allows the opportunity to have safe, observable youth friendly activity stations available for our children at all times. The prime location also allows Friends to introduce new experiences to our kids as most things are in walking distance!

The goal of the office space is to be a youth/family friendly hub where Friends can utilize the space to facilitate 1:1 outing, have resources available, and host group activities. Parent groups are also hosted in the office, as it gives a centralized location where parents can come together and create a community amongst each other. Artwork made by our children adorn the walls in the office. We can't wait to see the walls of this space become more full with art as the seasons pass us by!

“Friends LA has been a great opportunity for Ruby* to learn necessary life skills while building a relationship with her mentor, Ashakia. We are always linked into resources that we may need and Ashakia has been a consistent helping hand no matter what our needs are. I’m grateful to have this program assist me and my family in making sure that we are in good standing.”

- Marren*, Antelope Valley Parent



The Proof is in the Pudding

Our model was founded on research showing that the single most important factor in overcoming childhood adversity is a long-term, nurturing relationship with a consistent and caring adult. Research over the past three decades continues to affirm how much these relationships matter. But don't take our word for it – let the data speak for itself.

86%

of parents and caregivers said Friends LA supported them to better understand the child's needs/strengths.

88%

said child's behavior had improved, making the home a more positive place.

84%

of parents and caregivers said Friends LA helped strengthen family relationships.

84%

said Friends LA supported caregivers to spend more time with other children.

91%

of parents and caregivers said Friends LA helped them support the child's school success.

94%

said Friends LA supported caregivers to spend more time with other children.

92%

of parents and caregivers said Friends LA connected caregivers to concrete supports that enrich and stabilize their family.

"The Los Angeles Dodgers Foundation believes every Angeleno regardless of neighborhood or zip code should have the opportunity to thrive. Our investment into Friends of the Children – Los Angeles was an investment in our vision. As a member of their Village of Believers, we are proud to say their innovative mentoring program addresses all four of our priority areas: education, youth development, health care, and preventing homelessness – for 12+ years, no matter what!"

- Nichol Whiteman, CEO of Los Angeles Dodgers Foundation

The Financials

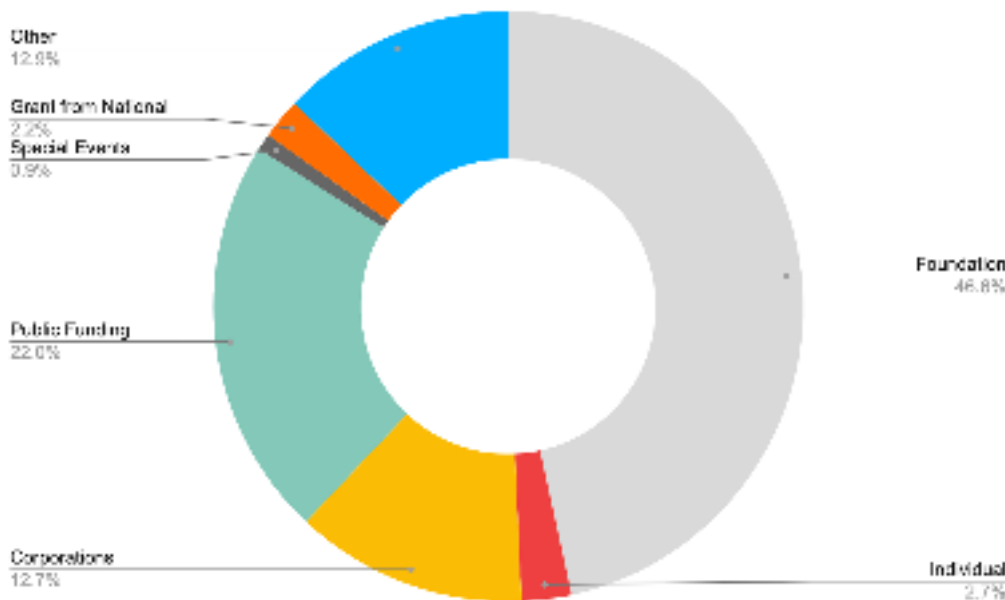
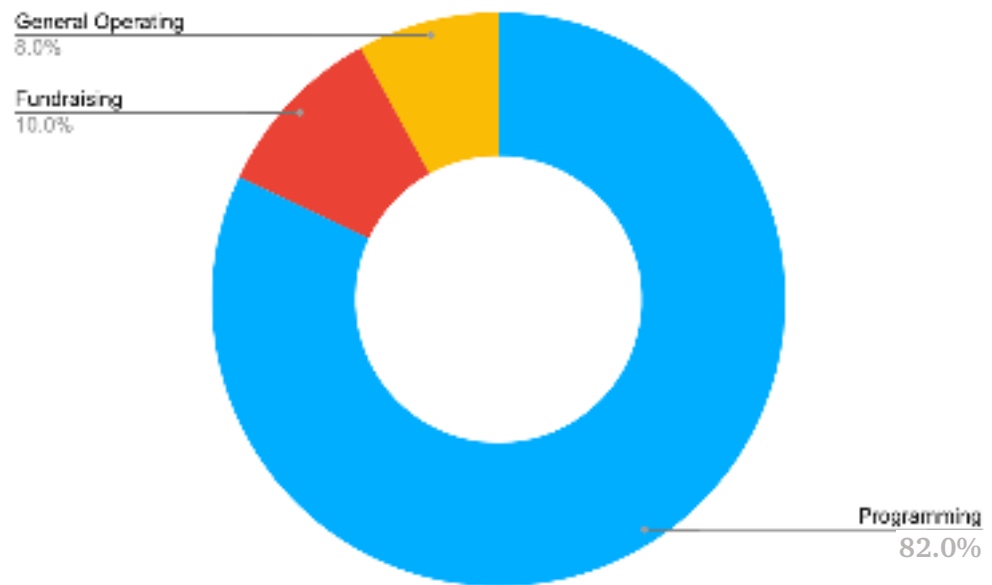
As an organization, modeling fiscal responsibility is vital to our success. We take great pride in our financial efficiency, our transparency, and our accountability to investors and the communities we serve.

Programming: \$2,158,774

Fundraising: \$272,740

General Operations: \$206,714

**Total Operating
Expenses:
\$2,638,228**



Foundations: \$1,679,923

Individual: \$98,638

Corporations: \$45,8893

Public Funding: \$792,074

Special Events: \$32,476

Other: \$466,532

Grants from National: \$80,000

**Total Operating
Revenue:
\$2,489,260***

**Due to the COVID pandemic, we saw a reduction in donations in 2020 and an increase in program expenditures. Despite this challenge, we are satisfied to report a positive bottom line in 2021.*

Thank You Believers

Friends LA is supported by compassionate individuals, organizations, companies, and foundations who share our belief in creating generational change one child at a time.



We extend our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to you, our dearest “Friend”, for gifting us with the resources necessary to sustain our organization and its impact. Alone, our children and families have so much unharnessed greatness inside of them. It is only when we join together that we are able to help amplify their innate talents and see them grow to reach their full potentials.



Don't let our impact end on this page.

Scan the QR Code to Get Involved with Friends LA!



FRIENDS of the
CHILDREN

Los Angeles

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