



FR1ENDS of the
CH1LDREN
Philadelphia



2024 - 2025 Gratitude Report

Impact with Intention



Letter from the Executive Director

Chapter Launch: Setting Intentions for Lasting Change

Dear Friends,

As I reflect on our inaugural year at Friends of the Children – Philadelphia, I am filled with deep gratitude and pride. **What began as a bold vision to disrupt the cycle of generational poverty in our city has taken powerful root**—thanks to your belief in our mission and investment in our youth.

In just our first year, we've matched our first cohort of amazing children with professional, full-time mentors—our Friends—who walk alongside them through every challenge and triumph. These long-term, intentional relationships are already beginning to make a difference, not only in the lives of the children we serve but in the communities they call home. Our commitment to each child for 12+ years, no matter what, is more than a promise—it is a movement grounded in hope, equity, and opportunity.

This foundational year has also been one of learning, listening, and growing. We've established strong partnerships with schools, community organizations, and caregivers, all while building a team of dedicated professionals deeply aligned with our values. Most importantly, we've witnessed the spark of possibility ignite in the eyes of our youth—the clearest indicator that we are on the right path.

Looking ahead, our vision for the future is bold.



With your continued support, we plan to expand our reach—welcoming new cohorts of youth, increasing our mentor capacity, and deepening our presence in neighborhoods most impacted by generational poverty. As we grow, our focus will remain rooted in relationships and outcomes that matter: increased school engagement, improved social-emotional skills, and long-term resilience.

Your partnership is what makes this work possible. **Thank you for believing in our children**, in our model, and in the power of mentorship to transform lives. Together, we are building a brighter future—one child, one family, and one community at a time.

Dr. Betty Handy

Executive Director

Friends of the Children – Philadelphia



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Mission

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

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Intentional Outings

At Friends of the Children – Philadelphia, long-term professional mentors, called Friends, help youth unlock their full potential by building on their inherent strengths and guiding them through challenges.

That's why we set a clear goal for April: to ensure every child in our program received a library card of their own. The ability to read is more than an academic skill. It opens doors to confidence, curiosity, and lifelong learning.

Throughout the month, our professional mentors made library visits a meaningful part of their time with youth. Some children explored their neighborhood libraries for the very first time. Others eagerly chose books on topics they love—dinosaurs, animals, outer space, and more.

We're proud to share that we reached that goal! Every youth we serve now has access to their local library and a world of stories, knowledge, and discovery.

While our goal is complete, our focus on literacy continues. We'll keep encouraging reading in ways that feel engaging and relevant, from building cozy reading corners to making regular library visits a part of our routine.

Thank you to the partners, caregivers, and supporters who helped make this possible. We can't wait to see what our readers check out next.



Core Assets



Belonging



Growth Mindset



Problem Solving



Perseverance
& Grit



Self Management



Hope



Self Determination



Find Your Spark



Positive Relationship
Building

Key Components of the Friends of the Children Model:



Long-Term Mentorship (12+ Years)

Each youth is paired with a professional mentor through their formative years, from Kindergarten through high school graduation. Mentors work with children for 3-4 hours a week, in the community at the Clubhouse and in the classroom, year round.



Whole-Child Approach

Mentors address the unique strengths, needs, and challenges of each child. This includes academics, social and emotional development, connection to community and culture and family relationships.

The holistic approach supports children in navigating challenges while also empowering them to make positive, long-term decisions.



Evidence-Based and Outcome-Focused

The program measures specific outcomes such as school attendance, grade level reading, progress on yearly goals and family stability indicators like housing.

Intentional Pathways to Success

Friends of the Children – Philadelphia provides consistent, long-term mentorship to youth who face significant challenges.

This evidence-based approach is centered on pairing each child with a full-time, salaried mentor—known as a Friend—who commits to working with them for 12+ years, from kindergarten through high school graduation.

The goal is to break cycles of generational poverty, trauma, and adversity by providing children with a stable and supportive adult relationship over the long term.

Intentional Outcomes

Our Long-term Outcomes

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

83% of youth earn a high school diploma or a GED

93% of youth remain free from juvenile justice system involvement

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



Milestones Achieved since Launch

Each program youth receives 3-4 hours of intentional community & school based 1:1 mentoring support every week, year-round.

24
enrolled youth 

2Gen served:
67
caregivers, siblings,
and other family members

 **100%**
of enrolled youth
qualify for free or
reduced school lunch

100%
identify as African American
or Latinx

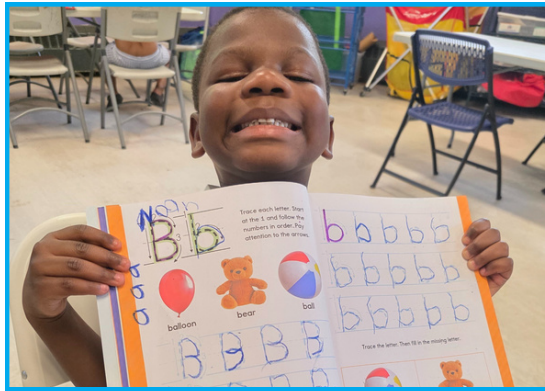
58%
single parent household

15
Community
Partnerships Formed in
our first year

18%
have experienced
adverse life experiences
within the last year 

Roadmap Goals for Friends of the Children - Philadelphia

In the coming year, Friends of the Children–Philadelphia will deepen our commitment to the youth, families, and communities by serving 24 additional youth with the hiring of 3 additional Friends. We will walk alongside each child, helping them grow academically, build confidence, and discover their limitless potential. Our professional mentors will receive the tools and support they need to thrive in their roles, ensuring that every interaction is a step toward lasting impact. Families will be connected to resources, celebrated for their strengths, and embraced as essential partners in their children's success. Together, we are not only setting goals—we are building a future where every child we serve knows they are seen, valued, and unstoppable.



Focus on Literacy, Education, and Life Skills Development

Education and literacy are central to long-term success. Mentors support youth in reaching academic goals, with a focus on foundational reading and writing skills. Every child in our program has a library card, opening doors to learning and imagination. Life skills programs provide practical tools for independence, including financial literacy, emotional regulation, and career planning.

Enhance Family Engagement and Support

Youth flourish when their families are supported with meaningful resources and opportunities. We provide regular workshops, family events, and caregiver resources designed to build trust and foster stability at home. By engaging caregivers as active partners, we ensure that youth benefit from a family environment that is equipped to nurture their growth and resilience.

Community Partnerships and sustained support

Strong partnerships facilitate direct enrollment referrals and provide ongoing program support for youth and families. We are especially grateful to our initial **Philadelphia School District** referral partners, **William D. Kelley** and **Bayard Taylor**, and look forward to our second year with them. Their commitment ensures open communication between mentors, educators, and caregivers. We're also thankful for **North10 Lenfest**, whose collaboration has been a wonderful source of connection and support. Together, these partnerships create a tailored network of care for every child.

Chapter Stories

Our First Pizza Party

We were thrilled to host our first pizza party at William D. Kelley, bringing together youth, caregivers, and school staff for an evening of food, fun, and connection. It wasn't just about sharing a meal—it was about strengthening the bonds that make our program so special.

Our Program Director, Ms. Naimah, along with our dedicated Friends, Mr. Kevin and Ms. Tanya, had the chance to connect with caregivers who are eager to see their children thrive. A special thank you goes out to Ms. Ruth, the school counselor, whose ongoing collaboration and presence at the event helped make it a success.

This pizza party was just the beginning. As we continue to grow our presence at William D. Kelley, we look forward to more opportunities to build trust, celebrate our youth, and create lasting connections that will support them on their journey to success.



Advocating for Mentorship

Our Executive Director, Dr. Betty Handy, traveled to Washington, D.C., to join Friends of the Children leaders from across the country for a national convening focused on advancing long-term, relationship-based mentorship. The visit was a powerful opportunity to engage with policymakers who can help expand its reach.

Dr. Handy had the honor of introducing Pennsylvania Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon, for whom she is a constituent, during the convening. Rep. Scanlon has been a strong advocate for innovative, community-based mentorship programs and we are grateful for her ongoing support. Also in attendance was Friends of the Children-Philadelphia's Board Chair, Dwayne Wharton, joined in the group photo with national staff and chapter leaders.

In addition to the convening, Dr. Handy took the opportunity to speak with Pennsylvania Senator Dave McCormick, author of the bestselling book "Who Believed in You?: How Purposeful Mentorship Changes the World." Their brief exchange emphasized the urgent need for intentional, consistent mentorship—and how it is already transforming lives in Philadelphia and beyond.

Dr. Handy's visit to the U.S. Capitol reflects the heart of our mission: putting children first by building strong, lasting relationships that empower them to thrive.

Walking Together: Ms. Diane and Kareem's Story

At Friends of the Children – Philadelphia, families are at the heart of every child's journey. For Ms. Diane and her son Kareem*, that relationship has become a source of steady encouragement, growth, and joy.

When Ms. Diane looks back on the past year, she can't help but smile. **"He's grown tremendously—not just academically, but personally as well,"** she said. "He's more confident in himself and in his schoolwork. Where he once hesitated, he now moves with purpose and pride."

Since joining Friends of the Children and being paired with his mentor, Mr. Justin, Kareem's confidence has flourished. Once shy, he's now eager to connect with others and take on new challenges.

***"Mr. Justin said he was confident I'd start picking it up soon. You know what, Mom? I did."** – Kareem*

Ms. Diane says she sees something new to be proud of every day. **"Honestly, every single day feels like a proud moment,"** she shared. "Whatever beautiful, magical conversations they have, they've lit a spark in him that refuses to go out."

That spark has led to growth both at home and in the community. Kareem now helps his younger sister learn her ABCs, lends a hand around the house, and even discovered a new passion: **football**. It's become a new source of joy for the whole family. "We cheer from the sidelines, share in his highs and lows, and celebrate every small victory together," she said. "It's strengthened our bond as a family unit, uniting us in our support for Kareem as he pursues something he loves."

For Ms. Diane, knowing that Kareem has a Friend like Mr. Justin means everything. "Their bond is deeply influential in the most uplifting way," she said. **"Kareem reflects on their conversations and uses them as motivation to grow and strive to be his best self."**

She describes the peace that comes from knowing her son will move through life's next chapters with someone steady by his side. "It truly takes a village to raise a child—and Mr. Justin has become an invaluable part of ours."

When Ms. Diane talks about Friends of the Children, her gratitude shines through. "They are doing more than just showing up—they are making a lasting difference," she said. "They've become more than mentors. They've become part of our family."

***"Friends of the Children has given Kareem something I never had growing up—a true Friend."** – Ms. Diane*

*Youth name changed for privacy



Our Dedicated Staff



Dr. Betty Handy
Executive Director



Naimah Wilson
Program Director



Rev. Kimberly Jones
Operations Director



Justin Agard
Professional Mentor



Kevin Kelley
Professional Mentor



Tanya Yates
Professional Mentor

Letter from the Board Chair

Dear Friends,

As Board Chair of Friends of the Children – Philadelphia, I am honored to share this Gratitude Report with you. This past year has been one of growth, resilience, and impact. At the heart of it all are the young people and families we serve—and the community of supporters like you who make this work possible.

Our mission is simple yet transformative: to walk alongside children for 12+ years, no matter what. This long-term commitment is what sets us apart and ensures that children facing the greatest challenges have consistent, caring adults in their lives who believe in their potential.

In 2024, we further established and solidified our program, strengthened our partnerships, and deepened our support for caregivers.

These milestones were made possible through your generosity and belief in the power of mentoring. As we look ahead, we remain focused on building a strong foundation for sustainable growth—through continued board development and leadership, fundraising, and community partnerships. Together, we will ensure that more children in Philadelphia have the chance to thrive and lead lives filled with possibility.

On behalf of our board, staff, and the children and families we serve, thank you for being a vital part of this journey. Your support is not only appreciated—it is essential.

With gratitude,

Dwayne Wharton, M.Ed
Board Chair
Friends of the Children –
Philadelphia



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Dwayne Wharton, M.E.
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Founder & Principal,
Just Strategies



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Board Member
Director,
Nonprofit Finance Fund



Steven Scott Bradley
Board Member
Principal & Sr. Executive,
One Digital



Charity Curtis
Board Member
Manager of Marketing,
Independence Blue Cross



Katrina Ernst
Board Member
Executive Director,
Camino Farms



Rob Lamb
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Realtor Sales Associate,
Compass



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Board Member (2024-2025)
Advisor Consultant,
Hartford Group



Dr. Susan Walsh
Board Member
Director of Research,
Friends of the Children National



Henry Warren
Board Member
VP & Product Advisor III,
PNC Bank

Intentional Generosity

A heartfelt thank you to our incredible donors! Your generosity is making a lasting impact, empowering us to provide sustained, long-term mentorship that transforms lives. We are deeply grateful for your belief in our mission and for making this vital work possible. Together, we are creating brighter futures!



Jennifer Carrol of the Connelly Foundation

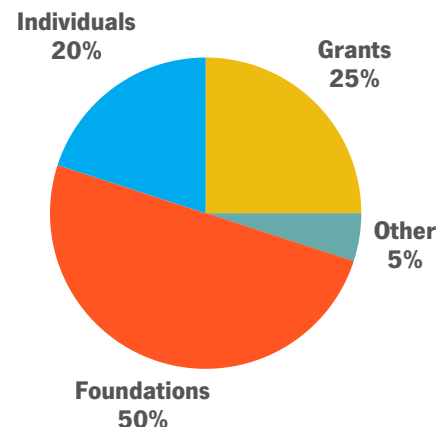
Thank You Donors!

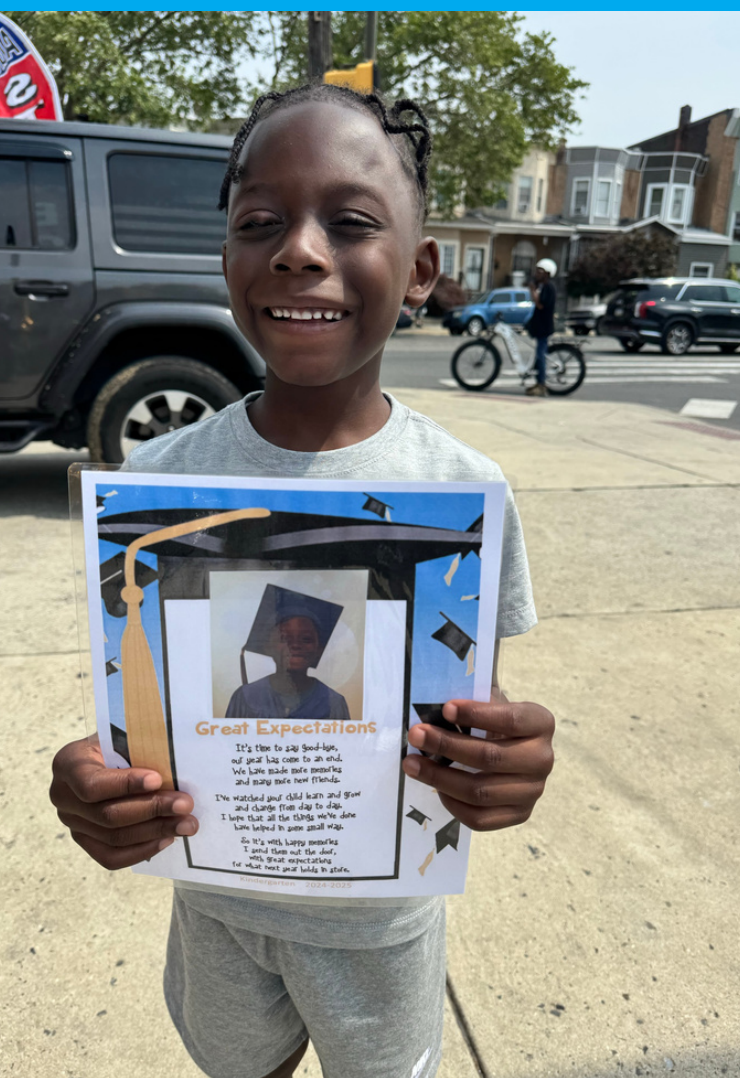
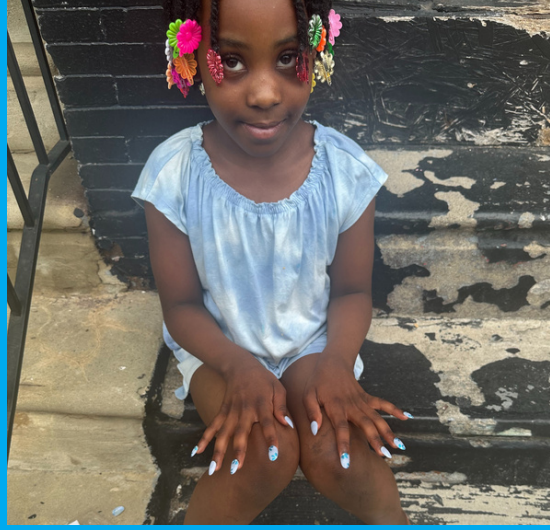
- William Penn Foundation - \$600,000†*
- K Ten Kids Foundation - \$250,000†*
- Progress Charitable Foundation - \$125,000*
- Connelly Foundation - \$100,000†
- Seybert Foundation - \$20,000†
- Harry and Jan Cohen- \$10,000*
- Megan and Peter Rohr - \$10,000*
- Mike and Deborah Feldser- \$10,000*
- Laura Kind McKenna and Marc McKenna - \$5,000*
- The Do Gooders Philadelphia - \$3,500
- Stephanie Jones - \$2,500*

† Multi-year commitment

*Seed donors

Total Annual Revenue \$893,333





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FR1ENDS of the CH1LDREN Philadelphia

555 N. Lawrence Street
Philadelphia, PA 19123

info@friendsphiladelphia.org
www.friendsphiladelphia.org

[@friendsphiladelphia](https://www.instagram.com/friendsphiladelphia)

