

**FR1ENDS of the
CH1LDREN**

**Generational Change,
One Child at a Time**

Utah

**GRATITUDE
REPORT
FY2025**



THE BUTTERFLY'S JOURNEY



our first five years

1 | 1

Dear Friends and Supporters,

In 2020, we launched our chapter with a blank canvas and a bold vision. Rooted in research, we know that the stable presence of a consistent, caring adult is the key to changing the life trajectory of youth facing the greatest obstacles. Friends – Utah’s vision is to ensure Utah children navigating profound challenges have a dedicated “Friend” to walk alongside them throughout childhood, for 12+ years, no matter what. That year, a 5x4 foot canvas featuring the silhouette of a butterfly was hung in a place of honor on our clubhouse wall.

Five years later, that colorful butterfly has become a tribute to the transformative power of a “Friend.” Each time we pair a child with a professional mentor, we invite them to add their own personal touch and artistic flair to the canvas. Today, that masterpiece has evolved into a vibrant tapestry of color and texture. It represents 62 Utah children, ranging from five to twelve years old, who now have a dedicated Friend to walk alongside them toward a brighter future.

Sustaining the Promise

This 2025 Annual Report celebrates a “masterpiece” five years in the making. It has been extraordinary to witness our youth’s academic and social-emotional growth as they navigate childhood and approach adolescence. We are consistently inspired by our families, who—despite facing significant barriers to basic needs like housing and healthcare—demonstrate profound resilience and a relentless commitment to their children.

Through strengthened community partnerships and critical investments from the State of Utah, we have reached a pivotal moment. We have secured the resources to sustain our long-term commitment to our current 62 children while preparing for the next phase of our mission. With your continued support, we are ready to take this next step—scaling our impact, pairing more youth with dedicated Friends, and reaching more communities across Utah.



Leadership and Vision

We are guided steadily by our Board of Directors, a group of mission-driven community leaders who provide the oversight necessary to navigate this growth. Alongside them, our dedicated staff of 14 operates with tireless devotion to the youth and families we are honored to serve.

We began with a single silhouette. Today, our 62 youth are putting the final touches on that original butterfly—a map of how far we have come together. In six years, our oldest youth will reach a monumental milestone: high school graduation. We are grateful to walk beside them as they approach that day, ensuring they have a Friend by their side, no matter what.

Perhaps it is time to start a new canvas for the next five years of our journey—one that will capture the stories of new cohorts of youth as they discover their own wings. Thank you for being an essential part of this masterpiece and for helping us turn a simple canvas into a symbol of transformative change.

With gratitude and hope,



Kelsey Lewis
Executive Director



Stephen Foxley
Board Chair

Our Model

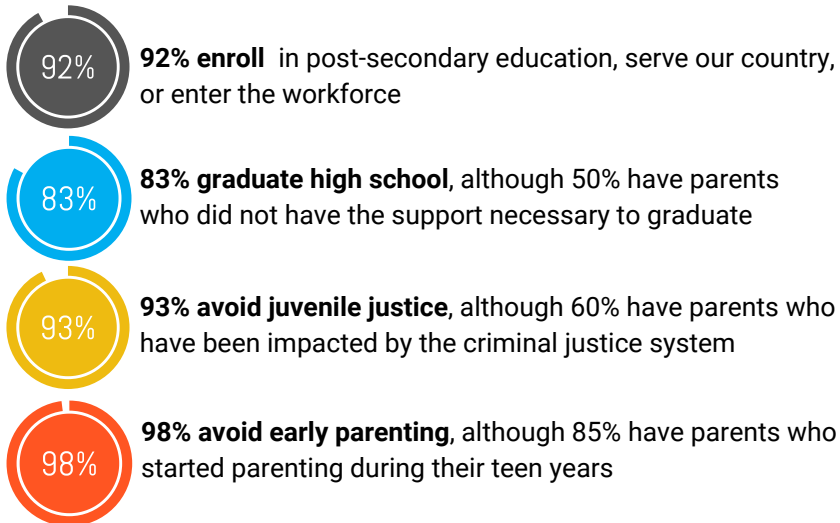
Friends of the Children – Utah is dedicated to breaking cycles of generational poverty and adversity through a unique, professional mentoring model. Our data-driven, trauma-informed approach pairs children facing the greatest systemic challenges with "Friends"—highly trained, full-time salaried professionals.

We identify children ages 4–6 and commit to walking alongside them from kindergarten through high school graduation: 12+ years, no matter what. Unlike traditional volunteer programs, our Friends are specialized experts, including many former educators. Each Friend supports just eight youth, dedicating three to four hours of intentional, individualized time to every child, every week—in the classroom, at home, and in the community. This unwavering relationship provides the vital foundation for our evidence-based, targeted interventions.

While Friends – Utah was founded five years ago, the proven Friends of the Children model has provided the consistency and connection needed to drive transformational change across the country for over 30 years.

Our Long-Term Outcomes

Data from across our national network show that youth who complete 12+ years in our program accomplish meaningful long-term outcomes:



Our Goals

Friends – Utah sets three high-level goals for every youth in our program:

- 1 Graduate from high school with a plan for what's next.
- 2 Remain free from involvement in the juvenile justice system.
- 3 Wait until after their teen years to become a parent.



To get there, Friends develop Roadmap Goals for each youth they serve.

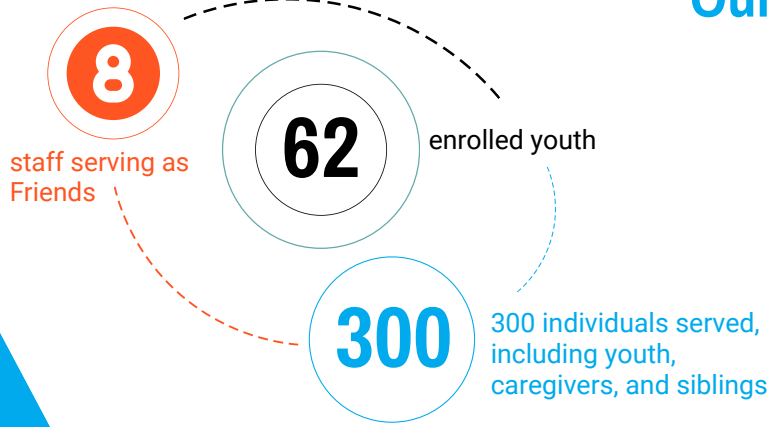
Youth and Friends work together during weekly, intentional, structured one-on-one time to develop the skills and assets to meet established goals. We focus on four key intermediate developmental outcomes:

Social-Emotional Development. Learning & Education. Health & Well-Being. Belonging and Community Involvement.

To ensure our youth will enter adulthood with a solid foundation for future success, Friends of the Children has developed nine research-based Core Assets:



Our Incredible Youth




35% qualify for an IEP or 504 plan

28% speak a language other than English at home

18% live with a grandparent or relative

72% live in a single-caregiver home

60% identify as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color (BIPOC), of whom 67% identify as Latino/Latina

 **43** schools attended by youth

6-12 age range of youth

What We Delivered

97% of youth made progress on their Social-Emotional Development Roadmap Goal

95% of youth made progress on their Belonging/Community Involvement Roadmap Goal

0 youth paired with a Friend entered foster care

 **10** events hosted for the whole family

 **13,239** hours Friends dedicated to youth program support

 **1,942** hours Friends spent with youth in School/Childcare

 **1,574** hours Friends spent with caregivers



Supporting David's Family, No Matter What

When "couch surfing" is no longer an option, where does a family go? This was the question facing young David* and his mother, Mary*, this past year. Homeless and exhausted, they had survived by staying with friends, but because most hosts only had room for one person, David was frequently separated from his mother. Eventually, they ran out of places to stay altogether.

Mary was struggling with her mental health and a paralyzing fear of the shelter system. That's when our team stepped in. David's Friend, Will, and Family Engagement Coordinator, Maddy, became their steady anchors. They took the time to listen to Mary's concerns, offering emotional advocacy, and walking alongside her until she felt safe enough to take a brave step into a family shelter.

While the family worked on finding a permanent roof, David was busy building a foundation of his own. When David first met his Friend, Will, he couldn't yet identify his letters. Despite spending the next ten months living in the shelter and navigating the transition of his father returning home from incarceration, David's commitment to learn never wavered. Through every "big change" and every night in the shelter, Will was there. Together, they turned those missed letters into words, and those words into stories. Today, David isn't just identifying letters—he is reading beginning chapter books independently.

The culmination of this hard work arrived just in time. After months of intensive case management, the family's perseverance paid off: Late last year, Mary and David moved into their very own home together, just in time for the holidays.

Today, Mary expresses a sense of confidence and hope that once felt out of reach. And through it all, David remains the same sweet, cheerful kid who stands up for his friends. Their story reminds us that long-term support allows children and families to do more than navigate a crisis; it empowers them to thrive.

**Youth and parent names changed to protect privacy.*



93%

More than 93% of caregivers report they are strongly satisfied with their child's Friend

"Without family here in Utah, having a person that shows up for my kids — that cares deeply for us and gives us a safe space to be ourselves — means more than words can say. They've given us hope, stability, and care."

Recognition for the Common Good: SHAPING UTAH’S FUTURE

Friends – Utah was deeply honored to receive the **2025 Envision Utah Common Good Award**. This prestigious accolade is presented annually to organizations and individuals whose work makes significant contributions to the "common good" of our state and aligns with the Your Utah, Your Future vision—a collaborative roadmap for maintaining Utah’s quality of life as the state grows.

The award recognizes Friends – Utah’s efforts to foster belonging, connection, and hope—values that are essential to the long-term health and prosperity of our communities.



Leading By Example: CHAMPIONING WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Our organizational mission to empower families begins within our own walls, a commitment recognized by the **100 Companies Championing Women initiative**.

Led by the **Governor’s Office of Economic Opportunity** and the **Utah Women & Leadership Project**, this recognition highlights organizations throughout the state that are deeply committed to fostering workplaces where women and all employees can thrive through equitable cultures and family-friendly policies.



Friends – Utah has secured increased public investment in our professional mentoring model through a strategic blend of public funding, including a five-year grant with **Utah Department of Health and Human Services Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP)** funds to provide intensive long-term mentorship to youth at risk of entering the child welfare system and Juvenile Justice Prevention funds from the **Utah State Legislature**.

Combined with legislatively directed TANF funding, this multi-stream investment supports currently enrolled youth and fuels continued growth to serve more children across Utah. By providing 12+ years of professional mentorship, this funding strengthens family stability and advances juvenile justice prevention—ensuring a more resilient future for our state’s most vulnerable youth.

TWO GENERATIONS, ONE GOAL: FAMILY RESILIENCE

This year, we fully implemented a proactive approach to build family well-being by simultaneously supporting children and the adults in their lives. By pairing our **Family Needs Assessments** with consistent **Caregiver Feedback Surveys**, we understand each family’s unique journey. We provide trauma-informed tools to bolster resilience for the entire family through **Strengthening Families Coping Resources (SFCR) curriculum**.

Our two-generation (2Gen) commitment is simple: by empowering the child and strengthening the caregiver, we ensure the whole family has the protective factors they need to thrive.

“They helped me find stable housing; they’re willing to help my family in every way.”

“My child’s Friend helped us when we had nobody.”

CAREGIVER VOICES

Resilience Amidst Challenge



The Stability Gap: Families are deeply committed to their children’s success but remain overwhelmed by the daily weight of financial and resource instability. Though most caregivers are employed, 78% agree that access to basic resources remains a significant barrier.

Parenting Partnerships: 46% of caregivers expressed a need for deeper community belonging and social connection. Caregivers are specifically requesting 2Gen support in establishing routines, boundaries, and communication to strengthen the home environment.



Where Support is Needed Most: 65% of families reported urgent mental health needs for a child or caregiver in the past year. 42% of caregivers requested additional support navigating their child’s learning and educational requirements.

A Trusted Anchor: For most Friends - Utah families, their Friend serves as their most consistent and primary source of support.

Our 2Gen Model Transforms Lives and Strengthens Families

With a 100% participation rate, our Caregiver Surveys reveal the profound efficacy of our model. When asked to rate the level of impact that Friends – Utah has had on their lives on a scale of 0 - 10, caregivers express satisfaction and belief in our program’s value:



“Engagement with Friends of the Children has transformed my life for the better”



“The program has created a measurable positive impact on our home”



“Family relationships are stronger because of this partnership”

Empowering Caregivers

- 88% improved parenting confidence
- 85% increased daily life stability
- 82% feel empowered to overcome barriers

Equipping Youth

- 90% saw a boost in their child’s self-esteem
- 87% report growth in their children’s emotional regulation
- 80% saw measurable academic progress



**Our families' top request?
More time for their child with their Friend.**

BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH RITUAL

Family Needs Assessments identify households navigating significant trauma and instability – families with profound resolve to transform their futures despite limited support systems. Our **Strengthening Families Coping Resources (SFCR)** curriculum brings those families together for ten weeks. Each week, families gather and practice routines and rituals – because the traditions families build together are among the most effective ways to strengthen resilience and buffer against the long-term effects of trauma.

How SFCR Works



Caregiver breakout groups:
trauma-informed coping tools
and peer connection



Shared meal: practicing
communication and
belonging



Children's programming:
emotional regulation through
guided play with their Friend and
other youth

During our 2025 pilot phase, 11 families completed the SFCR program.



CAREGIVER FEEDBACK



We recently had to move into my parents' basement and it's been hard. SFCR has taught me to focus on me and my children and the traditions and routines we want to build. It's made me realize how I need to move forward with my children. We love this class and would do it again."

"Family Meals have been great learning opportunities for me and my son. We are learning how to talk to one another at the table during mealtime and ask questions. It's great to spend one-on-one time with my son.



CRISIS TO CONNECTION: SARAH'S JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE

When Sarah* sat down with Family Engagement Coordinator, Maddy, for a routine needs assessment, she found the courage to share something devastating – a recent suicide attempt and ongoing mental health struggles.

Maddy acted immediately, connecting Sarah to SafeUT, 988 crisis support, and NAMI Utah. She and Sarah's child's Friend built a structured follow-up plan: daily check-ins for the first two weeks, and a therapeutic journal to support her therapy sessions.

As Sarah stabilized, the focus shifted to building for the future. She enrolled her entire family in SFCR – a rigorous 10-week program to strengthen communication and resilience – and completed it with 100% attendance.

Today, Sarah reports stabilized mental health and greater confidence as a caregiver. She moved from isolation to community, and built lasting coping strategies that are strengthening her whole family.

**Parent name changed to protect privacy.*

Our Literacy Initiative: EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH THE POWER OF READING

The Need

At Friends – Utah, we recognize that literacy is far more than an academic milestone; it is a fundamental lifeline and one of the most powerful protective factors we can offer our youth. National data paints a sobering picture: students who fall behind as early as kindergarten represent the largest portion of school dropouts, and children reading below grade level by third grade have a less than 20% chance of attending college. Furthermore, the link between literacy and long-term outcomes is stark, with 85% of youth in the juvenile court system classified as functionally illiterate. Currently, across the country, over half of all fourth graders are struggling to read on grade level. At Friends – Utah, our initial assessments mirror these challenges, revealing that 64% of our enrolled youth are currently reading below grade level.

The Plan

In partnership with Friends of the Children – National, our trauma-informed approach centers on a healing, mentor-led model that integrates literacy into the long-term, professional mentoring at the heart of our program. Literacy and mental health are deeply connected; strong reading skills foster the self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and resilience necessary to navigate life’s challenges.



FOUR STRATEGIC PILLARS



Culture of Literacy

Normalizing reading in all spaces— from the clubhouse to mentor vehicles— through joyful daily habits like book clubs.



Data-Driven Support

Utilizing standardized assessments and school data to provide tailored literacy interventions for every child.



Professional Expertise

Training staff in the "Science of Reading" and the critical intersection of literacy and mental health.



Strategic Partnerships

Collaborating with schools and libraries to expand access to specialized tutoring and high-quality materials.

64%

64% of Friends – Utah youth reading below grade level on our initial assessment

Rather than viewing literacy as a separate school-based task, we weave it into the fabric of our relationship-based mentoring, ensuring that every child receives the individualized, trauma-informed support they need to bridge the opportunity gap.

A Bilingual Mentor Helps Bridge the Gap

When Mateo* and his family joined our program 3 years ago, his parents tirelessly worked multiple jobs to maintain housing and build a stable foundation for their future. Despite the stressors facing his family, Mateo was a joyful child with a bright personality.

As a bilingual speaker himself, Mateo's Friend, Chris, knew exactly how to support Mateo's journey in mastering a second language so he could fully participate in school. He stepped in as both a mentor and a translator, making sure no key concept was lost. By bridging the gap between English and Spanish, Chris ensured that Mateo didn't just 'get through' the day but actively thrived—especially as he tackled the challenge of learning to read in two languages at once.

Today, Mateo is not only fluent in English—he's become a passionate reader. After Chris gave him a copy of "Dog Man," Mateo told everyone, "I've read it three times, and I'm going to read it again!"

Mateo's love of books isn't by accident. His mother reads with him regularly at home, while Chris collaborates closely with his teachers and parents to continuously strengthen his skills. As Chris puts it, "If it's something related to books or reading, Mateo is all about it."

**Youth name changed to protect privacy.*



Friends – Utah is committed to ensuring that our youth have the power to read, the resilience to thrive, and the support necessary to write their own futures.



Friends – Utah Board of Directors

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Owner, Evesquared Industries

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Vasi Katsikathas

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RaeJeanne McCutcheon

Retired Mortgage Loan Officer

Diana Harter

Strategic Marketing Sourcing Manager, Adobe



Celebrating 30 Years of Friends of the Children

The past year was full of milestones for Friends of the Children. We celebrated 30 years of our Friends of the Children national network and the collective impact we have made!

Our founder, **Duncan Campbell**, was honored with the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award at the National Mentoring Summit. Our Executive Director, Kelsey, shares, “I remember my first week as Executive Director, and how meaningful it was that Duncan took the time to meet with me, it was a testament to his leadership and the importance he places on the relationships that are at the core of our organization.”



After being honored as a Champion for Children at our 30th Anniversary Gala, Friends of the Children ambassador **Simone Biles** was also named 2024 Sportsperson of the Year, and used her platform to spotlight the work Friends of the Children is doing across the country. A few months later, Simone hosted a fun-filled Zoom session for youth here in Utah and across our network.



We loved seeing **Tah-Jae Franklyn**, a graduate of Friends of the Children – Seattle, on the Today Show with Jenna Bush and guest host Ciara, who Tah-Jae had met as a youth through Friends of the Children and the Why Not You Foundation!

Thank You

\$100,000+

Utah Department of Workforce Services
 Call to Action Philanthropies
 Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice
 Anonymous Donor

\$50,000 - \$99,000

Intermountain Health
 George S. and Dolores Dore Eccles Foundation
 RLC Family Foundation

\$10,000 - \$49,999

The Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention
 Larry H. and Gail Miller Family Foundation
 O.C. Tanner
 McCutcheon Family
 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Foundation
 Yardi Systems
 KeyBank
 Beverley Taylor Sorenson Foundation
 Joseph and Kathleen Sorenson Legacy Foundation
 IKEA
 Optum Bank
 Sorenson Legacy Foundation
 The Stayner Family Trust
 Dick and Sue Jacobsen
 Marriner S. Eccles Foundation
 The Clark and Christine Ivory Foundation
 Utah Financial Services Foundation

Friends – Utah is incredibly grateful for each member of our community who chose to invest in our youth and families in fiscal year 2025!

\$1,000 - \$9,999

Cambia Health Foundation
 Community Based Child Abuse Prevention Funding,
 Division of Child and Family Services, Utah
 Department of Health and Human Services
 FinWise Bank
 Chase and Evelyn Everton
 Utah Division of Multicultural Affairs
 Mitch and Ashley Dummitt
 Enbridge
 Mark and Kathie Miller Foundation
 Nordstrom Cares
 Steven B. Achelis Foundation
 Friends of the Children - National
 Mountain America Credit Union
 First Utah Bank
 Prog Foundation
 Steven Foxley
 Karl and Jane Braithwaite
 Esteban Nunez
 Jillana Webb
 Monet and Drew Maggalet
 Emily Tyler
 Erinn Kelley-Siel
 Todd Omelchuk and Kelsey Lewis
 Sherri and Jeff Short Giving Fund
 America First Credit Union
 Doug Foxley
 Matthew and Aimee Newton Family Fund
 Max and Cheryl Neves
 Pierce Woodward
 Scheels

\$500 - \$999

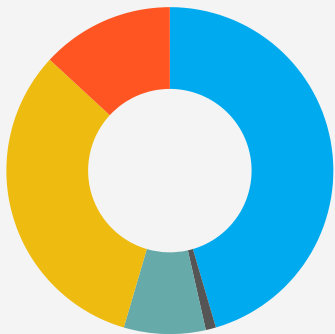
Brett Peterson
 Diana Harter
 Stacey Snyder
 Stephanie Croasdell-Stokes
 Lindsey and Andy Crossman
 Bennett and Elise Wallace
 Marcus and Raylee Tarr
 University of Utah Health
 Zach and Ashlee Jeppson



2025 Financials

Financial summary for September 1, 2024 - August 31, 2025

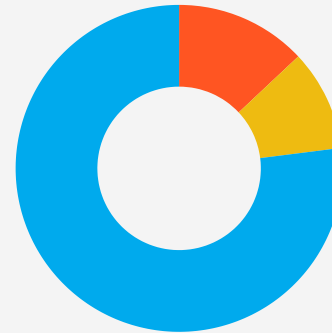
Revenue: \$1,402,855



- **Foundation Grants: \$626,886 (45%)**
- **Individual Donors: \$183,976 (13%)**
- **Public Funding: \$451,674 (33%)**
- **Corporate Contributions: \$112,830 (8%)**
- **Other Revenue: \$27,489 (<1%)**

Includes grants from Friends - National, interest income, in-kind donations, and cash back refunds.

Expenses: \$1,506,097



- **Program: \$1,158,433 (77%)**
- **Management: \$197,552 (13%)**
- **Development: \$150,112 (10%)**







Discover more about
Friends - Utah

FR1ENDS of the CH1LDREN

Utah

5361 S 4220 W Suite B
Kearns, UT 84118

385.474.8369
info@friendsutah.org
FriendsUtah.org



@friendsutah