



Newsletter

Spring 2021

STEERING COMMITTEE

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Mission Statement

All Saints Church Foster Care Project provides community education, public policy/advocacy and direct services for children and youth who have been removed from the care of their parents to the supervision of the state. The Project recruits and sustains volunteers who serve in public and private agencies or work on special projects designed to enhance the lives of foster, homeless, transitional and incarcerated children and youth.

Foster Care Project: Reaffirming Our Mission in Times of Crisis

"Time has a wonderful way of showing us what really matters."

-Margaret Peters

A crisis prompts us to re-evaluate what really matters. For All Saints Church Foster Care Project (FCP), the pandemic--with all its attendant challenges--has inspired a recommitment to our mission of enhancing quality of life for our foster, homeless, transitional and incarcerated children and youth and giving them hope for a brighter future.



ART HEALS: Donated art supplies provide welcome distraction and help children cope with the effects of trauma.

During these tough times, we've witnessed a heightened need for basic necessities to help reduce the stress on families. We've had to be creative in our efforts to provide care and support. While Covid-19 restrictions have forced us to scale back our direct contact volunteer opportunities, we've countered by increasing outreach efforts to secure donations, so that we may continue to assist in ways that matter most.

FCP friends and supporters have stepped up to help FCP's Adopt a Child Abuse Caseworker (ACAC) Program, as well as some of our partnering agencies, including My Friend's Place, Hathaway Sycamores, Optimist

Youth Homes and Family Services, and Learning Works. Our donors have provided gift cards for clothing and food; school supplies (including Chromebooks); diapers and baby items; household supplies; and rental assistance. Here are just a few ways these generous gifts and donations have lifted up the lives of our children:

Daniel: After spending three months living out of a car, this ten-year-old boy currently resides with his mother in a motel, courtesy of a voucher program. A good student, Daniel nonetheless fell quickly behind when his school ran out of loaner Chromebooks. FCP's ACAC Program stepped into the gap, providing a Chromebook for online learning,

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Reaffirming Our Mission in Times of Crisis

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as well as food, clothing, and school supplies. Daniel sent this one-line note: "Thank you for looking out for me and my mom."

Heather: This young teenage girl was removed from an environment deemed unsafe because of parental drug use and neglect. Now living with relatives, she finds art and reading to be calming

activities that help her cope with past trauma. Heather received books, magazines, watercolors, colored pencils, and sketchpads to ease the transition to her new home.

Arthur, Lorenzo and Matteo:

The boys are members of a large family struggling to put food on the table. Two of the children had been sleeping on the floor. Their DCFS caseworker asked for assistance, and within 24 hours a trundle bed, sheets, pillows, hygiene supplies, and groceries had been delivered. Filled with excitement, the two older brothers insisted on carrying a twin mattress into the house, while the youngest, six-year-old Matteo, happily tried on a donated Captain America Halloween costume.

These children are but five out of the 1,096 children FCP served this past year in spite of the challenges and restrictions engendered by the Covid-19 pandemic. As we enter the first few months of 2021, we expect the need for advocacy and resources for our families to remain high. We offer sincere thanks to our supporters who have responded to the ongoing crisis with both compassion and commitment—answering the call to help protect and transform the lives of our children.



SPECIAL DELIVERY: Filled with excitement, two brothers insist on carrying a donated mattress into their home.



BRIGHTENING A GRIM YEAR: In 2020, generous donors provided tangible gifts to some of our partnering agencies, including My Friend's Place, Hathaway Sycamores, Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services, and Learning Works.

Helping Parents Succeed

While we often focus on the help we give children, the tangible support we offer parents can serve as a powerful tool for sowing the seeds of positive change. Consider "George," a single father of three, who was mortified by the need for court-ordered DCFS supervision. Angry and uncooperative, George refused to attend parenting classes and rejected suggestions that he attend counseling to address his own history of trauma and neglect.

As George teetered on the edge of losing custody of his children, his caseworker made a special visit to the home, bearing Target gift cards donated by the ACAC Program and three fully-loaded backpacks. The surprise delivery served as a major icebreaker and catalyst. For the first time, the young father seemed to realize there might be people who were actually on his side. He began to see his caseworker as an ally instead of an antagonist. As the two built trust and rapport, George agreed to participate in parenting classes and counseling—taking the first steps toward building a better, more stable life, for himself and his children.

Spotlight on Donors: Children Helping Children

"We all have the power to help others."

Setia and Charlotte

After years of witnessing her mother Nikoo support the Foster Care Project in various ways, ten-year-old Setia decided it was time to step up. Partnering with her friend Charlotte (also ten), the two girls hatched a plan late last fall: they would put together hygiene bags to be given to children in foster care.



STEPPING UP: Charlotte (at left) and Setia put together more than 60 hygiene bags for children in foster care.

By early December, the girls had contributed over 60 bags filled with toiletries, arts and crafts, journals, small toys, and more. In addition, Setia used the savings from her allowance to purchase six \$20.00 Target gift cards for the children. When asked what motivated her to help, Setia said, "I was inspired to make the bags because I know I have a really good life, and I wanted to do something for kids who aren't as fortunate as me." Both girls expressed a well-earned sense of accomplishment. Charlotte said, "After I was done I felt like I had done something good for the world, because I know a lot of people would like to be in the spot I'm in, and I have a lot to be grateful for."

Raymond

For the past several years, Raymond, age 12, has helped his mom Janet organize donations of new and gently used



MAKING LIVES "A LITTLE HAPPIER:" For several years, Raymond has assisted his mom with organizing clothing donations for children in foster care.

boys' clothing for children in foster care. The steady supply of shirts, pants, pajamas, and jackets has been a lifesaver to families already stretched thin by economic stresses, which have been magnified by the pandemic.

When complimented on his willingness to assist others, Raymond responded, "If I can do something to help, then I want to do it. It makes me feel warm inside to know that my donations are helping other kids. I was happy to donate a Captain America costume last Halloween. It makes me feel good to know I made someone's life a little happier and easier."

Troop 2061: Katherine, Ruby M., Sabrina, Charlie, Lilly, and Ruby S.

In early December, Girl Scout Troop 2061's contributions to children in foster care enabled them to earn their Bronze Award (the highest honor a Junior Girl Scout can achieve). Under the supervision of Troop Leader Teri Richardson, the six scouts (all 11 years old) --Katherine, Ruby M., Sabrina, Charlie, Lilly, and Ruby S.-- assembled

30 activity bags for children awaiting emergency placement, an often long and grueling process. Aiming to provide distraction and comfort, the girls spent many hours handpicking items to include and used more than \$500.00 of their cookie-selling proceeds to pull the bags together. When asked about their Bronze Award experience, Troop 2061 had this to say:

"The Foster Care Project appealed to us because we realized that not all children our age are as lucky as we are, and we wanted to help them. Completing the project felt really good because we knew that these children would get some comfort during a difficult time and realize that they are never alone. It helped show that we all have the power to help others."



GIRL SCOUTS REACH OUT: (clockwise, from upper left) Sabrina, Charlie, Katherine, Lilly, Ruby S., and Ruby M. assemble activity bags for children in crisis.

*Learning to stand in somebody else's shoes,
to see through their eyes,
that's how peace begins.*

—Barack Obama

FCP Welcomes New Steering Committee Members

Gail Howland

Gail Howland has a diverse background in the visual and performing arts, having been a ballet dancer for over a decade in Europe. She has also worked as an active mentor and instructor for the arts and photography for more than 20 years. Her education includes a Bachelor of Arts in Art History from UC Berkeley and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Photography from ArtCenter College of Design. She serves on a number of advisory boards/steering committees and participates in extensive fundraising for school districts and nonprofits in both Northern and Southern California.



Gail says, "I love teaching photography because of the incredible natural abilities of young students to tell a narrative in such an honest and compelling manner—they are so authentic and original. It's essential that foster and underserved youth have accessibility to these arts—it's incredibly empowering." Gail notes that early exposure and mentoring can have a lifelong impact on development by "building critical and creative thinking and providing children and youth with the resources to develop their full potential."

Gail has raised two boys. Liam, her youngest, has graduated college and landed his first career job with Disney as an engineer. Lyle, her oldest, is working in computer science. They share a common interest in technology and electronics, which their mother laughingly acknowledges, "Isn't my forte." As a family, they enjoy seeing movies and films together—indeed, all aspects of the cinematic arts. Gail is committed to strengthening other families. Her raison d'être for giving back and sharing the arts is captured by her mantra, "Creativity knows no bounds." She looks forward to contributing to Foster Care Project by drawing upon her background in mentoring, teaching, and outreach to youth.

Scott "Tom" Dennis



As a long-time writer/producer of many programs, live productions, plays, and documentary films, Scott "Tom" Dennis brings a background of writing, management, and production experience to the Foster Care Project. Born in Detroit and raised in the suburbs, he worked with the Michigan Department of Social Services in a college work/study family health program. After majoring in Performing Arts at Wayne State University, he studied at Oregon State and worked as a teacher in Special Education before moving to be a writer/producer for Nickelodeon TV's "Mr. Wizard's World." He has also been fortunate to work for 12 years in both American and natural history museums as an exhibit and program designer, which has included writing, producing/directing exhibit videos and IMAX shorts, and award-winning documentary films.

Tom has visited all 50 states and traveled extensively throughout Canada, Europe, Australia, and Mexico. He has 10 years of experience in administration and project management for the Catalina Island Conservancy, for which he managed a large volunteer force as well as writing and producing numerous short films, videos, and radio programs. His experience in production and project management there gave him an understanding of what it takes to make a project truly successful. He was one of the founding team members of the Catalina Island Film Festival and continued to be part of the core team for six years.

As a long-term (40 years) cancer survivor, Tom volunteers his time and resources to mentor others with life challenging illnesses – encouraging them to stay positive and continue their path to healing. Among other projects, he is currently pitching a true story feature film script, writing a dark comedy feature, and working to produce an animated short film for children who have lost a beloved pet

Stand with FCP in May for National Foster Care Awareness Month

“Tell me what’s more important than being present for children...I’ll wait.”

—Maxime Lagacé

For 18 years All Saints Church Foster Care Project has provided much-needed funds, resources, and volunteers to serve at-risk children and youth. Please join FCP in commemorating National Foster Care Month in May by making a difference in a child’s life. Here are four ways you can help:

Support the Foster Care Project with a Gift to Our Annual Appeal Fund

Your donation to the Foster Care Project will support efforts to strengthen our families, many of whom are struggling to maintain stability. All donations will be matched dollar for dollar. Your tax-deductible checks should be made out to “Flintridge Center.” Please write “Foster Care Project” on the memo line. Send to Treasurer Kim Miles, at 2110 E. Washington Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91104. If you prefer, you may make your donation online at www.fostercareproject.org. Click on “Donate” to use our secure donation form. We accept Visa, MC, and American Express.

Stay Connected via the Foster Care Project’s Monthly Email Blast

Our monthly Email Blast highlights ways to donate and/or volunteer through FCP’s Adopt a Child Abuse Caseworker (ACAC) Program or one of our partnering agencies. Learn about a variety of opportunities: how to provide essential items to children and families, how to tutor or mentor a child in foster care, how to advocate for a child in the legal system—even how to foster or adopt a child. Not currently signed up to receive the Blast online? Contact: inbox@fostercareproject.org.

Help Fund ACAC’s Annual Shopping Spree Project

In these uncertain times, one thing doesn’t change: children grow. Shoes become tight, zippers strain, and socks wear out. Unfortunately, due to the ongoing pandemic, it is unlikely we will be able to recruit volunteers to take the children shopping—one of the most rewarding parts of the event. Nonetheless, we will continue to work closely with our DCFS caseworkers to provide clothing and meet other needs. This year, in addition to focusing on clothes for school-aged children, we’ll help with outfitting infants and toddlers, as well as youth emancipating from foster care, who may need clothing for college and jobs. Once again, we’re aiming to have up to \$200 to spend on each child. In order to do this, FCP and ACAC must raise at least \$4,000. Many of you have supported us in the past, and we hope you will again contribute to one of our most important annual projects. To donate, please contact: inbox@fostercareproject.org.

Consider Fostering or Adopting a Child

At any given time, more than 1,000 children are waiting to be adopted into a loving home in Los Angeles County. If you would like more information about the challenges and rewards of fostering or adopting, we have experts who can provide information and help you navigate the course. Offering love, stability, and connection to a child or teen is one of the greatest gifts anyone can provide. For more information, please contact: inbox@fostercareproject.org.

Children in Foster Care: Why We Do What We Do

Facts and statistics on foster care in Los Angeles County are stark and sobering. According to the Alliance for Children’s Rights:

- There are more than 30,000 children in foster care in Los Angeles County.
- 1,400 of these children are awaiting adoptive families.
- Children who have experienced child abuse are 42% more likely to be abused and neglected again.
- Nearly half of all children in foster care have learning disabilities or delays.
- By 11th grade, only 20% of students in foster care are proficient in English.
- Only 5% are proficient in math.
- Only 58% of young people in foster care graduate from high school.
- Only 3% graduate from college.
- Half of all young adults who age out of foster care end up homeless or incarcerated.
- 50% of young men aging out of foster care have become fathers, compared to 19% of their peers who were not in foster care.
- 75% of young women in foster care report at least one pregnancy by age 21, compared to only 33% of their peers who are not in foster care.

Join us in our mission to change these statistics for the better. Become involved in Foster Care Project’s efforts to provide prevention, intervention, and healing to the children and families we serve.

Partnering Agencies

50/50 Leadership
Aspire West, Pasadena
Barrio Action Youth and Family Center
California Youth Connection
Cal Tech Y
CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate)
Children's Law Center of California
COLORS
County of Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services
County of Los Angeles Probation Department
Cultural Brokers
EOPS Resilient Scholars Program, California State University Northridge
First Place for Youth
First United Methodist Church
Five Acres
FosterAll
Friends of Foster Children
Hathaway-Sycamores
Hillsides
Hillsides YMO
Holy Family Services Adoption and Foster Care
Junior League Los Angeles
Imagine LA
Kidsave Los Angeles Weekend Miracles
League of Women Voters
Learning Works Charter School/ Home Boys
Maryvale (Rosemead address)
My Friend's Place
National Congress of Black Women
Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services
Pasadena YouthBuild
Pacific Clinics
Public Counsel Law Center
Raise-A-Child, US
Rosemary Children's Services (Pasadena address)
STARS at PCC
The Alliance for Children's Rights
Violence Intervention Program
Vista Del Mar Child and Foster Care Program
Young and Healthy

In Memoriam: Lacreta Scott



On February 6, 2021, we were saddened to learn of the death of our dear friend and colleague Lacreta Scott from complications of Covid-19. Lacreta was a long-time ally of All Saints Church Foster Care Project. Even when she lived in Sacramento (supporting husband Jack in his stints as California State Assemblyman and Senator), Lacreta never forgot the children, often bringing items for our FCP families with her on the airplane during her frequent trips to Southern California.

After moving back to Pasadena, Lacreta became an active Steering Committee member from 2012 to 2017, and for several years focused her energy on our Adopt a Child Abuse Caseworker projects.

Beth Gertmenian, an ACAC coordinator, recalls, "Lacreta liked the hands-on aspect of ACAC, making sure that food or clothing or games brought smiles and some comfort to our families and children. She was such an enthusiastic, dependable, and wise team member."

Throughout the years, Lacreta and Jack remained among our strongest financial supporters, with a generous monthly contribution to FCP for administrative expenses. Even when ill health limited her participation, Lacreta helped in ways she could, filling Thanksgiving and Easter baskets, planning graduation celebrations, and helping to address many of the emergencies our DCFS caseworkers brought to our attention. And, as a former English professor and newspaper columnist, Lacreta could always be counted on to help edit an FCP publication.

Lacreta was a strong advocate for education, social justice, and gun control. She adored her husband Jack and the five children they shared: Sharon, Sheila, Amy, Greg, and Adam, as well as eleven grandchildren and many great grandchildren. Lacreta strongly believed in the FCP mission of strengthening families and improving quality of life for all the children in our community. We will miss Lacreta's warmth and gracious Southern charm, her wit and generous spirit, and her heartfelt commitment to making the world a better place. We extend our deepest sympathy to her family and to all those who knew her and loved her.

All Saints Church



For Volunteer Opportunities visit our website:
www.fostercareproject.org
or email
inbox@fostercareproject.org

Joe Kelly: Art/Design
Jeanette Mann: Writing/Editing
Anne Riffenburgh: Writing/Editing