

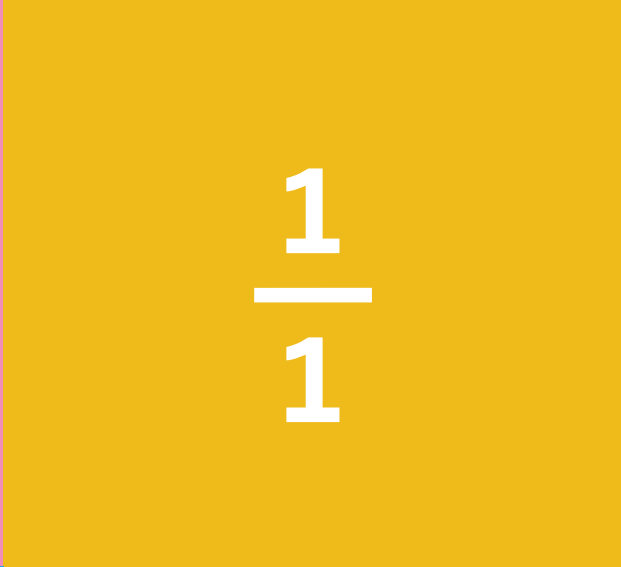


FR1ENDS of the CH1LDREN

Celebrating 30 Years of
Generational Change

IMPACT REPORT

2023 - 2024



HeART OF THE CHILDREN

HeART of the Children is a book featuring youth art projects that highlight and celebrate powerful self-expression. Over 400 youth shared who they are through painting, poetry, sculpture, and video. Their art represents their **IDENTITY, CULTURE, and BELONGING** in community.



(from left to right, starting from top row)

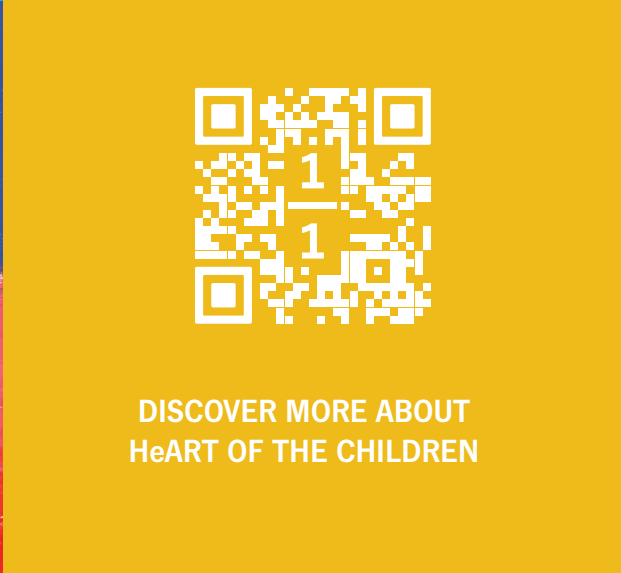
Title: Just Aryanna
Aryanna (age 7), Klamath Falls, OR

Title: A Beautiful Sunny Day
Destiny (age 8), Detroit, MI

Title: One Leaf at a Time
Multiple Artists (ages 6-12), Vancouver, WA

Title: Splatter
Daniyah (age 11), Chicago, IL

Title: A Beautiful Day
Aaliyah (age 9), Detroit, MI



DISCOVER MORE ABOUT
HeART OF THE CHILDREN





DEAR FRIEND,

For more than three decades, Friends of the Children has been walking alongside youth and families, and it is your support that has made this work possible.

As our 30th anniversary celebration comes to a close in this 2023-2024 Impact Report, I'm honored to share stories that focus on the grit, resiliency, and determination of the youth we serve. This Impact Report highlights five graduates who graciously shared their stories with us—each from a Friends of the Children chapter that has been serving youth for more than 20 years.

You'll read about Tah-Jae Franklyn, a talented singer who's opened for superstar Macklemore and is a graduate of Friends – Seattle. And you'll learn how Miguel Guerrero, a graduate of Friends – Boston, still hones his talent for figuring out how things work as he builds a career centered around cars and transportation. You'll meet Truett Rose-Noneo, a graduate from Friends – Klamath Basin, who just rented his first apartment on his own near the Klamath Tribe fish hatchery where he works. You'll journey with us overseas to talk with Taj Wortham, a graduate of Friends – Portland, a trained firefighter and EMT who is

serving our country in the U.S. Marines in Japan. Finally, you'll go with us to Atlanta to meet Freddi McCullers, a graduate of Friends – New York, a seasoned international traveler who began her own successful event planning company.

Duncan Campbell founded Friends of the Children in 1993 in Portland, Oregon with 24 youth and three Friends. In those first years we were told that our research-informed model wouldn't scale, that our plan to walk alongside youth for *12+ years, no matter what* wouldn't work. Today, a little over 30 years later, we have grown into a national network serving 3,000 children and 15,000 family members in 40+ locations including partnerships with Sovereign Tribal Nations.

This phenomenal growth is thanks to your support and to an evidence-based long-term mentoring model that focuses on empowering youth with big dreams who also face some of the hardest things in life including poverty, foster care, housing insecurity, and more.

Our national network is well on the way to meeting our goal of reducing the number of 5-year-olds who enter foster care by 10% by 2030, thanks to funders

and partners like you, and to the tireless support of advocates like basketball legend Michael Jordan, GRAMMY award-winning artist Ciara and Superbowl champion Russell Wilson.

Just months ago, youth advocate and World Champion gymnast Simone Biles became the most decorated U.S. Olympic gymnast in history with 11 medals, winning 3 golds and 1 silver at the Paris Olympics, and throughout 2024 she also prioritized shining a light on Friends of the Children through TV, magazine, and newspaper interviews, in-person support of youth and our work, and her wide reach of influence on social media.

All of this means more and more communities are inviting Friends of the Children to walk alongside youth, as we work toward our biggest goal of all—the day where every child who needs a Friend has one.

Warmest regards,

Terri Sorensen | National CEO, Friends of the Children

VALUES

Our values guide us to achieve our mission. Each value applies not only to our youth, Friends and program teams, but also applies to all Friends of the Children employees, volunteers and partners. We use our values to make informed decisions; to hire, coach, and manage; and most importantly, we use our values 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.



COMMIT 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 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.



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 MISSION

Impacting generational change by empowering youth who are facing the greatest obstacles through relationships with professional mentors – 12+ YEARS, NO MATTER WHAT.

A CALLING TO SERVE

TAJ'S STORY

Taj Wortham has been living in Okinawa, Japan, working as a motor transport mechanic for the United States Marines. The 29-year-old is a long way from Portland, Oregon, where he joined Friends of the Children in 1999.

Taj was first matched with a Friend—a paid, professional mentor—in kindergarten. Throughout his twelve years, his mentors helped him navigate some tough decisions, which he says changed the trajectory of his life.

Growing up as an only child, Taj was alone a lot—both his parents working hard to provide him a good life. Early on, he built his identity around his friends, which led to difficult behavior—being disruptive, disrespecting his parents, and acting out in school.

“I didn’t know who I was when I was young,” says Taj. “I needed an outlet to explore who I was and who I wanted to be.”



Taj (left) with Friend Darren in 2012

Through Friends of the Children, Taj was able to explore new things. One mentor in particular, Darren, opened new doors in Taj’s life beginning in 6th grade, when the two were paired.

“We bonded over classic rock, and Darren took me to my first metal concert,” Taj remembers. “One of the best things he did for me was to get me out of my comfort zone.”

Early on, Taj knew he would join the military—serving others was a calling he’d witnessed in his family growing up. His mother works with the elderly, and has also taken care of Taj’s grandparents. Taj remembers, too, how his grandmother had an open door for everyone in her neighborhood.

“It’s part of who I am to think about what it feels like on the other side of the fence, to have empathy,” shares Taj. “And all of this has led to my call to duty, a sense of purpose that makes me happy.”

Taj graduated from the Friends of the Children program with a high school diploma, but he settled into a job he didn’t find fulfilling. He reached out to Darren and together they discussed career aspirations. Soon after, Darren connected Taj to a friend who worked for American Medical Response.

“I was a kid with lots of energy and this job gave me a specific outlet to channel everything into,” explains Taj.



“I know now how I want to live my life and I’m more confident in myself and my capabilities.”

- Taj Wortham

Taj worked with the Gresham Fire Department for three years, and during this time, he and his colleagues made history. In a profession made up of only 8% Black firefighters, Taj and his team became Oregon’s first all-Black engine company. It was an impactful moment for Taj to realize he could create history.

After working in the fire departments in Gresham and in Portland, Taj joined the Marines, where he’s worked for two years.

“I still feel like the same person at my core, but I’m so much different,” says Taj. “I know now how I want to live my life and I’m more confident in myself and my capabilities. I wish I could tell younger Taj it’s all about figuring out your calling and who you are.”



Tah-Jae (left) with Friend Sheena in 2023 and 2008

“ Friends of the Children was a huge part of my support system. They fought for me, believed in me, and they helped open so many doors.”

- Tah-Jae Franklyn

MENTORSHIP SETS THE STAGE FOR A SINGING CAREER

TAH-JAE'S STORY

Tah-Jae Franklyn is at home on the stage. This 22-year-old singer is a graduate of Friends of the Children – Seattle, and she believes the program offered the support she needed as a child, helping her find her spark.

“Friends of the Children was a huge part of my support system,” recalls Tah-Jae. “They fought for me, believed in me, and they helped open so many doors.”

Tah-Jae joined Friends – Seattle in first grade, a challenging time in her life. She lived with her single mother and two siblings after her father died by suicide. She was a talkative kid, whose attempts at connection with fellow students often led to punishments that further isolated Tah-Jae. Being labeled as a “problem child” by teachers compounded the grief and sadness she was already feeling after the loss of her father.

Friends of the Children was a positive change in her life, as she met Sheena—her first Friend in the program. Sheena helped Tah-Jae find her groove in

school and work through her feelings. They spent lots of time hanging out with girls Tah-Jae’s age, building new friendships. They also worked on her school lessons and Tah-Jae began to see that when she put her mind to it, she was a quick learner.

Around the age of 9, Tah-Jae was doing better in school and making friends when a milestone moment occurred: Sheena enrolled Tah-Jae in singing lessons with an organization called Arts in Motion. Through singing, Tah-Jae discovered her deep passion for music.

“I learned so much when I started singing,” says Tah-Jae. “I found a confidence I didn’t know I had... I could explore my potential how I wanted to, not be told what to do.”

Once Tah-Jae started singing, she never stopped, and Sheena and other Friends were there to walk alongside her the whole way. Tah-Jae continued lessons and began performing often at Friends – Seattle events and other opportunities in her community. In her freshman year, Tah-Jae began studying at The Residency, a nonprofit seeking to build a community of young hip-hop artists.

Tah-Jae’s first big performance was at a concert at Seattle Symphony Hall, where she met Russell Wilson and Ciara, who were there with the Why Not You Foundation. She continued studying with The Residency, learning about her craft, and working with teachers, singers, and other students. She also had the exciting opportunity to meet Macklemore, a founder of The Residency.

Last year, Tah-Jae performed two original songs, opening for Macklemore for 14,000+ people at Seattle’s Climate Pledge Arena. She’s also sung at national conferences in Seattle and works with a nonprofit called Bloodworks, providing community outreach to break the misconceptions about giving blood. All the while, Tah-Jae is working to make music her career.

“Friends of the Children genuinely cared for me. They were a safety net that I needed, and they told me, ‘We’re not going to let you fail,’” says Tah-Jae. “Now I have the confidence and determination to follow my dreams and make an impact in the lives of others.”

Tah-Jae and Sheena are still in contact. Tah-Jae knows her life has been changed by her Friend and by music.

“Singing has saved me, and still does—every day,” Tah-Jae shares. “To understand I can take that love and pursue it is incredible. Because people believed in my dreams and invested in me, I have the confidence and determination to say, ‘this is exactly where I’m supposed to be, and I know it won’t be easy. But nothing worth doing is going to be easy.’”

EXPANSION UPDATE

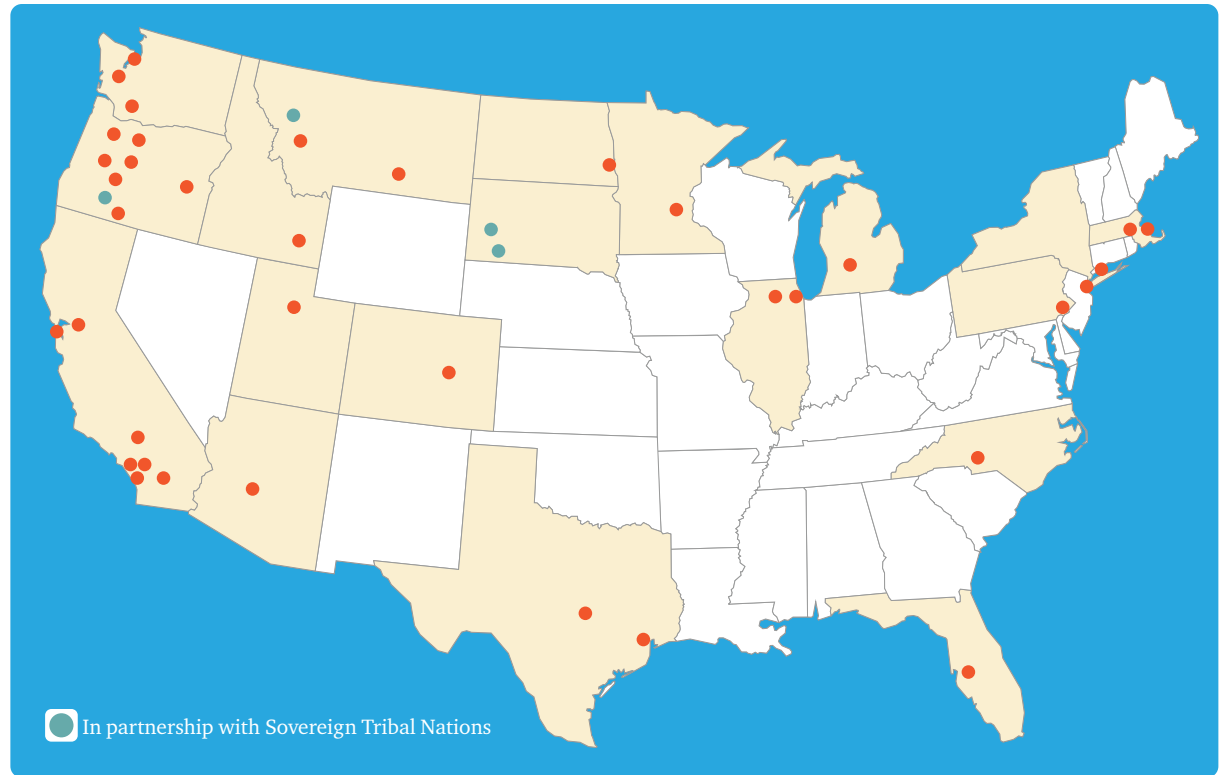
At Friends of the Children, we are now serving more children and families than ever before! Over the past decade, Friends of the Children has expanded from 5 to 41 locations nationwide. This growth spans rural, Indigenous, suburban, and urban communities across 22 states, including partnerships with Sovereign Tribal Nations: the Oglala Lakota Nation, the Confederated Salish-Kootenai Tribes, and the Klamath Tribes. In the last fiscal year alone, we launched four new chapters in Coachella Valley, Eastern Oregon, Philadelphia, and Stockton and expanded our reach at existing chapters with new locations in Long Beach and San Gabriel Valley.

Our national network collaborates with community leaders, school systems, government agencies, foundations, and families nationwide to ensure every child who needs a Friend has one. Together, we are breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty, increasing access to mental health supports, and preventing youth from entering the foster care system.

Friends of the Children continues to nurture its work with Indigenous communities through existing chapters, including Eastern Idaho, Eastern Montana, Fargo-Moorhead, and the Twin Cities. The newest chapters in the Friends of the Children network signify a bold success for our organization, which made a commitment to scale to 40 locations by 2025. With your support, we reached this goal one year early and aim to expand our program to 25 states and Sovereign Tribal Nations by 2025 to provide 12+ years of no matter what support for youth and families across the country.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In alignment with the values of Friends of the Children, as an organization we acknowledge that each of our chapters are located on lands that were home to Indigenous people since time immemorial. Prior to the creation of the United States of America, this part of the continent was Turtle Island, the home of millions of diverse and thriving Indigenous people. We acknowledge and respect the inherent sovereignty and unique cultures of the first peoples of this land.



CURRENT LOCATIONS

ARIZONA

- Phoenix

CALIFORNIA

- Antelope Valley
- Coachella Valley
- Long Beach
- Los Angeles
- San Francisco Bay Area
- San Gabriel Valley
- Stockton

COLORADO

- Colorado Springs

FLORIDA

- Tampa Bay

IDAHO

- Pocatello

ILLINOIS

- South, Chicago
- West, Chicago

MASSACHUSETTS

- Boston
- East Boston

MICHIGAN

- Detroit

MINNESOTA

- Minneapolis-St. Paul
- Fargo-Moorhead

MONTANA

- Billings
- Flathead Nation (Polson)
- Missoula

NEW YORK

- Bronx
- Harlem

NORTH CAROLINA

- Charlotte

NORTH DAKOTA

- Fargo-Moorhead

OREGON

- Bend
- Chiloquin
- Eugene
- Gresham
- Klamath Falls
- La Grande
- La Pine
- Portland

PENNSYLVANIA

- Philadelphia

SOUTH DAKOTA

- He Sapa (Rapid City)
- Oglala Lakota Nation (Pine Ridge Reservation)

TEXAS

- Austin
- Houston

UTAH

- Salt Lake City

WASHINGTON

- Seattle
- Tacoma
- Vancouver

A HISTORY OF SUPPORTING YOUTH

In 1993, Friends of the Children began our work using a unique mentoring model—walking alongside youth for *12+ years, no matter what*. Our three-decade history is based on the power of one-to-one relationships—empowering youth with big dreams who also face some of the toughest things in life such as foster care, poverty, family mental health challenges, and more.

Thirty years of long-term professional mentoring adds up in different ways for the youth and families we serve. There have been thousands of ice cream cones and trips to the playground. Countless hours working on school projects or practicing times tables. Time spent riding bikes, learning to read, doing homework. Big moments focused on applying for college or starting a new job. Tears when pushing through tough times and pure joy after meeting goals.

We celebrate all of this and so much more, reflecting on the thousands of youth who have grown through our program since 1993. There have been more heart-to-heart conversations and big hugs than any one person can count, and we know there are many more to come.

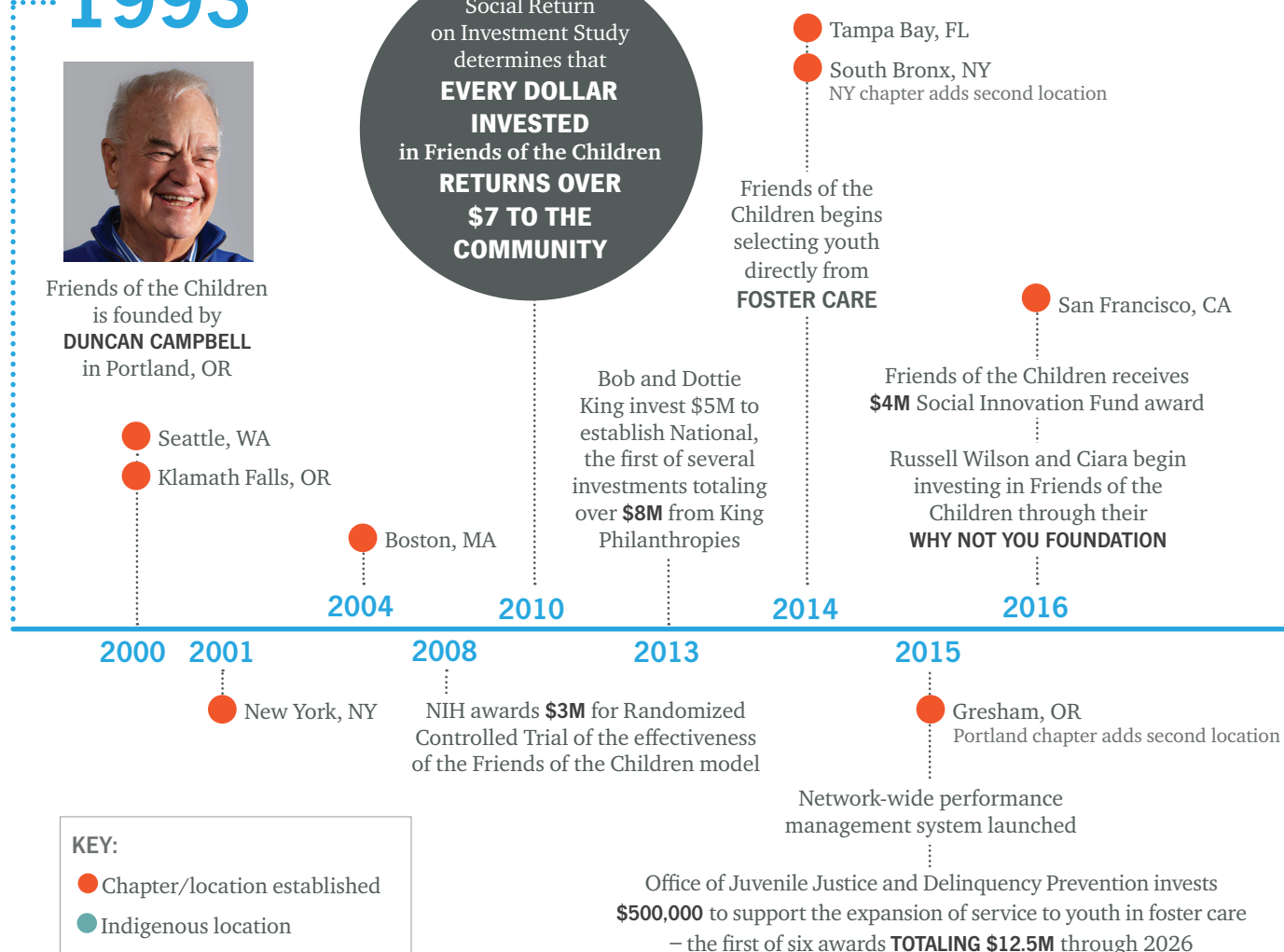
Explore this timeline to see a few key moments in the history of the Friends of the Children national network.

1993



Friends of the Children is founded by **DUNCAN CAMPBELL** in Portland, OR

Social Return on Investment Study determines that **EVERY DOLLAR INVESTED** in Friends of the Children **RETURNS OVER \$7 TO THE COMMUNITY**



Today, Friends of the Children serves in

41 LOCATIONS 22 STATES

including partnerships with

SOVEREIGN TRIBAL NATIONS





2017

- Austin, TX
- Charlotte, NC
- Chicago, IL
- Los Angeles, CA
- Bend, OR

Preliminary findings from the Longitudinal Randomized Controlled Trial are published in *Prevention Science*

2019

- Antelope Valley, CA
LA chapter adds second location
- Fargo, ND
- Detroit, MI
- Tacoma, WA
- Salt Lake City, UT

Annie E. Casey Foundation study results published in *Child & Family Social Work*

2021

- Missoula, MT
- Colorado Springs, CO

ECHO FUND INVESTS \$6M to support the expansion of partnerships with rural and tribal communities

Conrad N. Hilton Foundation invests an additional **\$3.4M** to expand 2Gen work and to study its impact

Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies invests **\$2.5M** to expand partnerships with tribal communities

2023

Gary & Christine Rood commit **\$33M** to the Friends of the Children network

- Pocatello, ID
- Philadelphia, PA
- East Boston, MA
Boston chapter adds second location
- South, Chicago, IL
Chicago chapter adds second location
- Chiloquin
Klamath Basin chapter adds second location in partnership with the Klamath Tribes
- Flathead Nation
Western Montana chapter adds second location in partnership with the Confederated Salish-Kootenai Tribes
- La Pine, OR
Central Oregon chapter adds second location

ECHO FUND INVESTS AN ADDITIONAL \$6M to support the expansion of partnerships with rural and tribal communities

2018

Michael Jordan makes **MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR** investment in Friends of the Children
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation invests **\$1.75M** to launch **2GEN PILOT**

2020

- Vancouver, WA
- Eugene, OR

Simone Biles begins her incredible support for the Friends Network
In response to COVID-19, Family Needs Assessments take place across the network

2022

- Rapid City, SD (He Sapa)
First culturally-specific chapter
- Phoenix, AZ
- Billings, MT
- Houston, TX
- Twin Cities, MN
- Pine Ridge Reservation
He Sapa chapter adds second location in partnership with the Oglala Lakota Nation

MacKenzie Scott invests **\$44M** in the Friends of the Children network
2Gen Impact Randomized Controlled Trial launches in partnership with the University of Notre Dame

2024

- Coachella Valley, CA
- Long Beach, CA
LA chapter adds third location
- San Gabriel Valley, CA
LA chapter adds fourth location
- La Grande, OR
- Stockton, CA

Ballmer Group invests **\$2.3M** to sustain and expand our work in Washington State
Congress approves **\$850,000 GRANT** for National Center of Excellence
Friends of the Children closes out **\$30M** campaign for the 30th anniversary

Celebrating 30 YEARS of Generational Change!

BASKETBALL LEGEND MICHAEL JORDAN'S GAME-CHANGING INVESTMENT

If you ask Michael Jordan what sowed the seeds of his success, he's quick to give credit to his mentors, especially his father and his college coach, Dean Smith. Shortly after learning about our organization in early 2018, Michael Jordan donated his proceeds from three special-edition Nike Michael Jordan Bulls jerseys to Friends of the Children.

“What stood out to me about Friends of the Children was that they employ and train their mentors and that they commit to every child for 12+ years,” says Michael Jordan. “That dedication is important to me. My mentors believed in me and taught me the power of perseverance. I want youth in Friends of the Children to see that they have that same potential.”

Michael Jordan then selected Friends of the Children as a beneficiary of *The Last Dance*, an ESPN and Netflix 10-part documentary series on Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls' quest for a sixth championship in 1998.

Michael Jordan's multi-year, multimillion dollar gift created an opportunity for Friends of the Children to serve more youth and families across the country, including youth in Chicago, Charlotte, Tampa Bay, New York City, and Los Angeles. The investment

also supported the model's expansion to seven new locations, including Detroit and Salt Lake City.

“Friends of the Children is honored to be chosen by Michael Jordan as a beneficiary of proceeds from *The Last Dance*,” said Terri Sorensen, CEO of Friends of the Children. “He understands the power of having a consistent, caring adult in a child's life who can serve as a role model. His support has directly benefited youth in our program so they can achieve their hopes and dreams, just like he did.”

Michael Jordan's investment in Friends of the Children has inspired a wave of generosity, propelling the organization into an unprecedented phase of growth and expansion. This momentum continued in 2023 when Gary and Christine Rood donated \$33 million to Friends of the Children. The Roods cited the multi-year,



“ My mentors believed in me and taught me the power of perseverance. I want youth in Friends of the Children to see that they have that same potential. ”

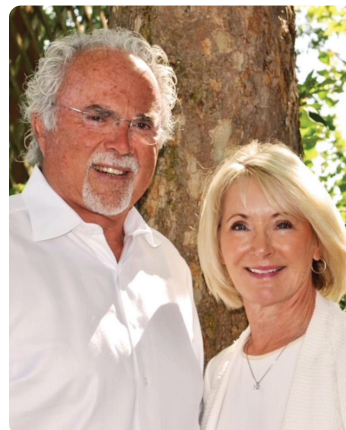
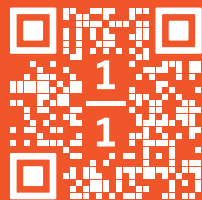
- Michael Jordan

multimillion-dollar gift from basketball legend Michael Jordan as their inspiration.

Thanks to these substantial contributions, Friends of the Children is now able to serve more children and families than ever before, furthering our mission of providing consistent, caring professional mentors to youth across the nation. Thank you to Michael Jordan for being an amazing friend to Friends of the Children. We remain incredibly grateful for his generosity and support.

HELP US MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Scan the QR code to discover more about Friends of the Children and to find ways to help us make a difference in the lives of children and families. You'll also find the Impact Report online to read and to share with your friends and family.



In 2023, the Friends of the Children network received a transformative investment of \$33 million from Gary and Christine Rood. The Roods have directed \$23 million toward expanding our child and whole-family well-being services, and \$10 million for challenge matches for the Duncan and Cindy Campbell National Center of Excellence and for the Gary and Christine Rood Southwest Washington Clubhouse. In addition, the Roods are also generously investing in the launch of the Friends of the Children – Eastern Oregon chapter in La Grande, which is Christine's hometown. The Roods are building a brighter future for paid, professional mentoring and we are grateful for their generosity.

SIMONE BILES CHAMPIONING CHANGE BEYOND THE PODIUM

This year the world celebrated Simone Biles' triumphant return to the Olympics, where her performance in Paris made her the most decorated U.S. Olympic gymnast in history with 11 medals. All the while, Simone was championing a cause close to her heart—Friends of the Children. Off the mat, Simone has shown unwavering support for Friends of the Children and leveraged her platform to amplify our work, particularly around empowering youth and families impacted by foster care and mental health challenges.



“ It is my hope that everyone who needs a ‘Friend’ can have a Friend so they, too, can be fearless, courageous, achieve their big dreams, and have fun while doing it. ”

- Simone Biles

Simone’s personal experiences with foster care and mental health have fueled her passion for advocacy and to be a voice for youth facing these big challenges. Her partnership with Friends of the Children is deeply personal and has grown tremendously, rooted in her belief in the power of mentorship to create lasting change in the lives of the children and families we serve. Over the years, Simone has worked directly with youth in our program, hosting virtual gymnastics stretching sessions and inviting youth to her hometown gym in Spring, Texas. These moments of connection have inspired youth to dream big, and have showed them that their circumstances do not define their potential or their ability to reach goals.

Simone’s advocacy reached new heights in December 2023 when she appeared on *CNN Heroes: Sharing the Spotlight* special. In an interview with Alisyn Camerota, Simone shared her personal story and discussed her work with Friends of the Children. “It’s a part of who I am, and I wouldn’t be here without that part. And hopefully those kids out there listening get to be like, Wow, I can be somebody, and this doesn’t have to hold me back,” says Simone. “You can still dream big and do amazing things.”

Her influence extended to print media when she was featured on the cover of the February 2024 issue of *Vanity Fair*. In the article, Simone discussed her advocacy for youth in foster care and her partnership

with Friends of the Children. This high-profile feature brought further visibility to our long-term commitment to every child in our program as we work to prevent foster care.

That same month, Simone hosted the Simone Biles International Invitational and together with Friends of the Children, World Champions Centre, and GK, she launched an exclusive Heart of Friendship leotard and stuffed animal turtle, both featuring Simone’s authentic signature and with all proceeds benefiting our organization. The incredible design of these items, including the Friends of the Children logo, symbolized hope, support, and friendship and we are grateful to Simone and her team for capturing the spirit of our program so beautifully.

Our collaboration with Simone continued with a public service announcement (PSA) narrated by Simone, which aired across the Warner Brothers Discovery networks. The spot highlighted how Friends of the Children empowers children facing significant obstacles to achieve their dreams. This PSA aired across more than

40 nationwide channels reaching millions as we honored the Friends of the Children’s 30th anniversary.

In August, the *New York Times* featured Simone Biles and spotlighted her work with Friends of the Children. The story details how Simone continues to empower youth in the program to dream big. Program Manager and Professional Mentor, Anders Allison from Friends – Austin said it best: Simone shares her own story and “makes the kids believe that they could do anything, like she has done.”

As we celebrate Simone Biles’ historic victories at the 2024 Paris Olympics, we also celebrate her unwavering dedication to Friends of the Children. Her support has been nothing short of transformative. Simone’s dedication to our mission, her willingness to share her personal journey, and her efforts to engage with youth and families in our program have changed thousands of lives. Thank you to Simone for choosing Friends of the Children to be part of her legacy and for being a beacon of hope and a true champion for children on and off the mat.



INDEPENDENCE AND STABILITY THROUGH CONNECTION AND HARD WORK

TRUETT'S STORY

Truett Rose-Noneo is 20 years old, and a recent graduate of Friends of the Children – Klamath Basin in Oregon. Truett is an enrolled member of the Klamath Tribes and is an Aquatic Resource Technician at their fish hatchery. Recently, Truett leased an apartment in Klamath Falls where he lives with a close friend. For him, the apartment and job are the realization of an important dream: to be independent and to have the stability of a home that is his own.

Truett joined Friends – Klamath Basin in kindergarten. Jose Hernandez was Truett’s Friend – a long-term, professional mentor – and Jose remembers his first visits with Truett at school, and how smart and shy he was.

Truett had a lot going on at the time—his dad wasn’t a part of his life, and his mom was in and out of substance use treatment. Truett and his siblings lived with their Auntie Tanya, who became their legal guardian. Tanya’s house was always bustling with Truett, his siblings, and Tanya’s own children. There was plenty of love and support to go around, but a lot weighed on Truett, often causing him to withdraw emotionally.

“ Without Friends of the Children and Jose, I don’t know where I’d be or what I’d be up to. It would be a different story ”

- Truett Rose-Noneo

Jose was there as a support, giving Truett the calm spaces he needed. He would help Truett express and understand his feelings. Truett shared with Jose that he didn’t feel he could really talk to anyone else. While he knew his family loved him, opening up was hard because he thought people would judge him.

“But Jose never judged me for anything, ever,” Truett expresses now. “I’ve never been afraid to say anything to him.”

Jose and Truett worked through difficult times, especially after Truett’s father passed away. Truett wasn’t attending school regularly and started using alcohol. He would work hard and make great strides quickly, but things could also turn incredibly difficult. During those hard times, Truett moved in and out of Tanya’s house, couch surfing with family and friends.

“Truett has gone through so much,” says Jose. “There were times where it made him want to just shut down. I’m so honored that we formed the relationship we have so that we could work through everything together. We have a profound connection.”

Jose worked to get Truett enrolled in the Klamath Works program, so Truett could get his GED and work at the same time. When Truett received his GED in

2023, Friends – Klamath Basin hosted a graduation party at their clubhouse. It was important to Truett to gather his family, friends, and everyone at the Friends – Klamath Basin program who helped him along the way.

One of Truett’s biggest goals was to work and save enough money to sign a lease for his own place—he never wanted to worry again about where he was going to live. When he called up his Auntie to let her know he was signing a lease with money he’d saved, he heard the emotion and pride in her voice.



Friend Jose with Truett (right)

“My work at the hatchery through the Klamath Tribes has me excited for so many new things too,” Truett says. “I can see I’m making a difference, contributing to something important—generationally. It’s a connection I feel strongly.”

Jose caught up with Truett just a few days ago. He relishes the sound of Truett’s laughter with friends out on the patio of his new apartment, knowing Truett is thriving.

“Without Friends of the Children and Jose, I don’t know where I’d be or what I’d be up to. It would be a different story,” Truett shares. “I’ve gained a sense of independence, and I’m proud of that.”

OPENING DOORS TO A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES

FREDDI'S STORY

In February 2024, Freddi McCullers was having a heart to heart with the Honorable Ayanna Pressley, Congressperson for Massachusetts' 7th district.

Freddi, who is 28 and a graduate of Friends of the Children – New York, accompanied several chapters to Congressional meetings in Washington, D.C.

“It was important to me that Congresswoman Pressley understood the difference a caring adult can make in the life of a child,” shares Freddi. “My mentors fostered a healthy environment, encouraging me to dream about the future.”

Freddi was introduced to Friends of the Children when she was a kindergartener in Harlem. She had a lot going on at the time, and says she was living in the day, not focused on the future. Freddi and her sister moved in with their grandmother and then bounced around from place to place.

“Having to move from place to place, I never felt like I had my own space—a place I could call home,” says Freddi.

Then one day at school, Freddi was introduced to Jamali, who would become her new Friend—a long-term, professional mentor. Their times together were an opportunity for Freddi to have fun and be herself. For Freddi, Friends of the Children was much more than a mentoring program: her Friends, Jamali, Keidera, and Alicia, would help transform her life—supporting her as she navigated school and life over the next 12 years.



Congressperson Ayanna Pressley with Freddi McCullers, Friends of the Children - New York graduate.



Her Friends helped her focus on school—she enrolled in college classes in the city during high school. Mentorship provided a profound sense of preparedness and confidence as Freddi stepped into adulthood. That foundation would be pivotal to later meet the challenges of college life at Syracuse University, where she attained a bachelor's degree in economics. Friends of the Children equipped her with skills to advocate for herself, to network effectively, and to understand the true essence of mentorship.

Freddi had other door-opening experiences at Friends – New York, including meeting then-Judge Sonia Sotomayor, traveling to Washington, D.C. to talk with Members of Congress, and spending an afternoon walking across the Brooklyn Bridge with her Friend. These are bright memories for her. She says Friends of the Children opened her eyes to a world of possibilities beyond the confines of her immediate neighborhood, and showed Freddi that her personal goals were within reach.

Now living in Atlanta and working as a successful event planner, Freddi has a deep sense of gratitude

“ My mentors empowered me to find the confidence I had deep down, and it's changed my life. ”

- Freddi McCullers

and a desire to pay it forward. The lessons learned, the goals set, and the exposure to diverse cultures enriched her life and inspired her to contribute to the empowerment of others. Whether it's raising funds for young girls in Zimbabwe or participating in mentoring programs, Freddi has a profound understanding of the power of one-to-one mentorship. For her, mentorship has been a vital component of personal growth and resilience.

One of Freddi's favorite things to do now is travel. She savors planning trips in South America and Europe where she can explore new things. As she prepares for an upcoming trip to Italy, Freddi thinks back on her time with Friends – New York.

“Friends of the Children opened the world up to me,” Freddi says. “My mentors empowered me to find the confidence I had deep down, and it's changed my life. I hope I can make this difference in someone else's life too.”



Miguel (left) with Friend Jesse

“ I’m my own person now, and the program brought me closer to my parents and other people I hold dear.”

- Miguel Guerrero

TODAY IS JUST TODAY – TOMORROW WILL BE BETTER

MIGUEL'S STORY

When you meet Miguel Guerrero, the first thing you notice is the big smile and charm of this 21-year-old. It's almost hard to believe that Miguel had to work to build confidence and find his own voice.

“There were times I felt stuck when I was younger,” says Miguel. “I’m really proud that I was able to get more confident. I’m my own person now, and the program brought me closer to my parents and other people I hold dear.”

Born in Boston, Miguel’s family is from the Dominican Republic. Miguel was enrolled in classes to learn English in school. At seven, Miguel was shy when first meeting people—that’s when he joined Friends of the Children – Boston. His long-term, professional mentors—called his Friends—took him to try new things, helped him with school, and worked with him on building confidence. When Miguel was 12, he was paired with his second Friend, Jesse.

“I didn’t know it back then, but he would become one of the most important people in my life. Jesse cares about me in ways that not many people in my life do,” shares Miguel.

“I was bowled over by Miguel’s big heart and how genuinely caring and sweet he was,” remembers Jesse, who is now Director of Program and Evaluation at Friends – Boston. “He was so curious and always wanted to learn and tinker, and he wanted more independence. Miguel is an explorer and someone who wants to understand how things work.”

Together, Jesse and Miguel joined a Boston program where they could learn about bike safety, practice mechanical skills, and build a bike that Miguel could keep. But after the bike was built, Miguel’s mother wouldn’t let him ride to school. She had concerns about violence in the neighborhood and the safety of bike riding.

Jesse and Miguel worked on a presentation together to advocate for Miguel. They focused on mitigating the risks he faced: Miguel would always wear a helmet, he’d map out where he was going to ride, and he’d activate Find My Phone. When Miguel’s mother agreed to let him ride more, it opened up Miguel’s world.

“I’m presenting this PowerPoint, trying to be so serious, and my mom is crying and smiling at the same time. And my dad is just laughing,” says Miguel. “But they were both there, and they were listening.”

This life change not only expanded Miguel’s radius physically, but also improved his self-confidence. When Miguel was 14 years old, he and Jesse joined the Rodman Ride for Kids, a 25-mile charity ride. They’ve participated in the ride several times now with a few other Friends and youth from the program.

After graduating high school, Miguel enrolled in Franklin Cummings Tech in Boston, where he continued his love for building. He concentrated on auto mechanics, and now Miguel is working in the auto industry—but on the other side of the steering wheel. After attaining his commercial driver’s license, he’s transporting cars across the country.

“I never thought I’d make it this far...having my own commercial driver’s license,” says Miguel. “And now I’m even helping train someone else on the job.”

Miguel continues: “I wish I could tell my younger self, ‘be patient and everything will come to you.’ Just the other day, I was upset about something, and I took a deep breath and said to myself: ‘Today is just today, and tomorrow will be better.’”

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

The youth in our program achieve incredible success. We are inspired by their accomplishments as they pursue their hopes and dreams.



92% of youth go on to enroll in post-secondary education, serve our country or enter the workforce with a living-wage job.



93% of youth remain free from involvement in the juvenile justice system.



83% of youth receive their high school diploma or GED.



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



FRIENDS OF THE CHILDREN'S

IMPACT ON FOSTER CARE AND MENTAL HEALTH

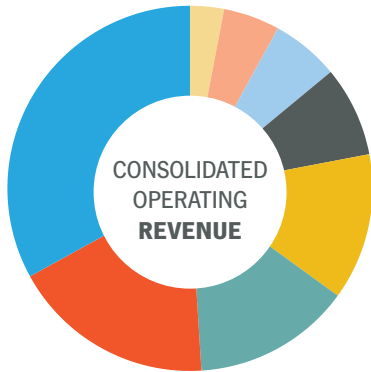
Friends of the Children is proud to celebrate the transformative impact of our professional mentoring model on children and families affected by foster care and mental health barriers. For 30 years, we have empowered youth to overcome systemic obstacles. Our two-generation approach has demonstrated measurable outcomes and proven effectiveness in promoting family stability and preventing child welfare involvement.

Our trauma-informed and culturally responsive mentoring has significantly improved the mental health of the youth we serve, with 98% of youth making progress in social and emotional development and 70% of teens accessing counseling services when needed. By enhancing and expanding access to crucial mental health supports, we help reduce strain on the system and increase engagement for those in need.

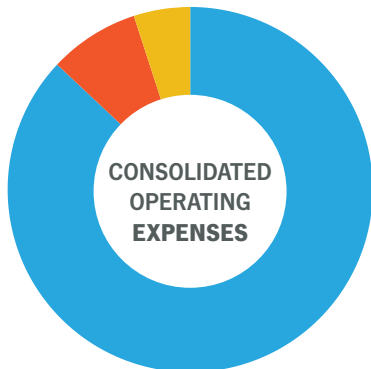
Our dedicated approach to work in foster care has yielded remarkable outcomes: reducing foster care entry, shortening stays, and preventing re-entry. Preliminary data from our pilot projects in Los Angeles and Austin show that children with a Friend remain safely with family and avoid foster care. As we look to the future, we are committed to reducing the number of 5-year-olds entering foster care by 10% by 2030, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to be safe, well, and reach their full potential.

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

FISCAL YEAR 2023



- Donated Properties (33%)
- Foundations (18%)
- Individual (14%)
- Government (13%)
- Event (8%)
- Consulting Fees (6%)
- Corporate (5%)
- Other & In Kind (3%)



- Program Expenses (87%)
- Administrative Services (8%)
- Fundraising Costs (5%)

OPERATING REVENUE

Donated Properties	\$8,331,265
Foundations	\$4,552,187
Individual	\$3,566,911
Government	\$3,183,996
Event	\$1,981,297
Consulting Fees	\$1,586,287
Corporate	\$1,210,518
Other & In Kind	\$688,002

Total Operating Revenue **\$25,100,463**

OPERATING EXPENSES

Program Expenses	\$21,446,884
Administrative Services	\$1,993,093
Fundraising Costs	\$1,291,236

Total Operating Expenses **\$24,731,213**

ASSETS

Cash & Investments	\$39,964,114
Properties Held for Sale	\$5,226,598
Receivables	\$4,619,295
Equipment & Leases	\$3,950,414
Prepaid Expenses	\$384,308

Total Assets **\$54,144,729**

LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities	\$3,710,148
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NET ASSETS

With Donor Restrictions	\$18,357,746
Unrestricted Board Designated	\$16,296,123
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$15,780,712

Total Net Assets & Liabilities **\$54,144,729**



THANK YOU

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*Denotes support of chapter(s) across the
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†Investments recognized between the time
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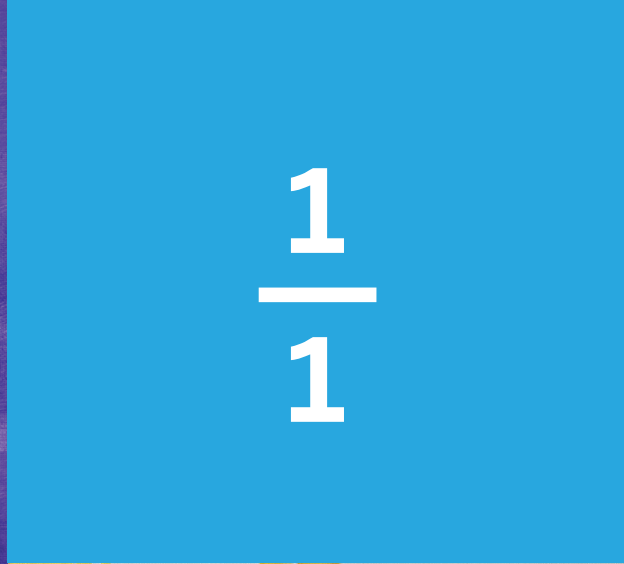
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(from left to right, starting from top row)

Title: Coffee
Mariah (age 14), Tampa Bay, FL

Title: MiMi's Mind Growth
J.M.H. (age 10), Charlotte, NC

Title: Loving Eyes, Paint Your Happy
Stephanie (age 8), Fargo-Moorhead, ND

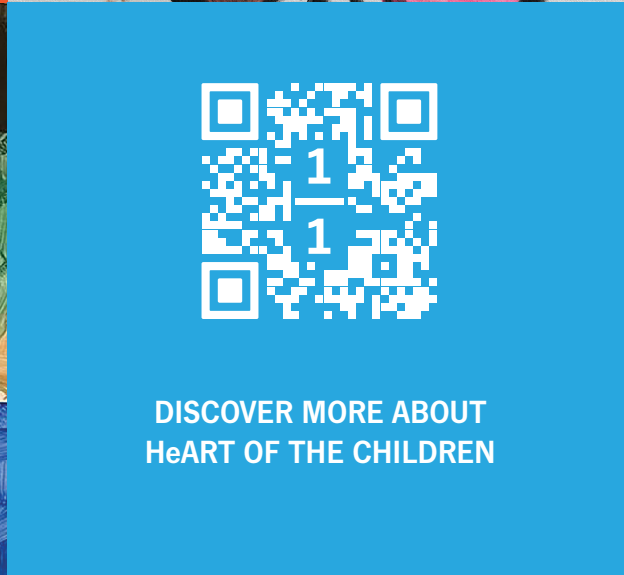
Title: Flower
Jose (age 13), Seattle, WA

Title: Family
K.D.B.H. (age 7), He Sapa/Rapid City, SD



HeART OF THE CHILDREN

HeART of the Children is a book featuring youth art projects that highlight and celebrate powerful self-expression. Over 400 youth shared who they are through painting, poetry, sculpture, and video. Their art represents their **IDENTITY, CULTURE,** and **BELONGING** in community.



DISCOVER MORE ABOUT
HeART OF THE CHILDREN

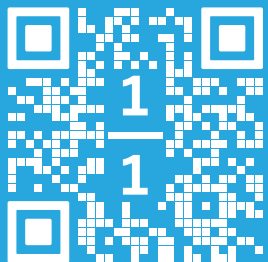


FR1ENDS of the CH1LDREN

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friendsofthechildren.org



@friendsnational



Discover more about
Friends of the Children

