

Foster Forward's

th



Anniversary Annual Report

30 years of progress, made possible by you.
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Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

This year, Foster Forward celebrates 30 years of service, and I've had the privilege of **being part of this journey for the last twenty-two**. I was hired by a small but mighty board of four people who believed foster families needed support and that young people in foster care deserved more. Today, that board has grown to fourteen dedicated leaders, and together with our remarkable staff and extraordinary youth, **we've helped build a future filled with possibility**.

This work has shaped my professional life in profound ways, and it has also transformed me personally. Sixteen years ago, I became a mentor through our **Real Connections** program and was matched with a remarkable young woman named Bianca. Then eighteen and experiencing homelessness, Bianca was a junior in high school with big dreams. Over time, our bond became permanent. Today, she is thirty-four, a law school graduate, and a beloved member of our family. Bianca's story, like so many others, is a powerful reminder of the proven recipe behind Foster Forward's success: **when young people are given the time, support, and opportunity they deserve, they don't just survive, they thrive**.

Bianca was by my side last year when I was humbled to receive the **Murray Family Prize for Community Enrichment**. To honor the family members who've guided my path, my mother and I established the **Guillette Family Legacy Fund at the Rhode Island Foundation**. This permanent fund reflects my enduring love for Foster Forward. It will annually recognize and reward staff excellence—ensuring that the heart of our organization, our people, are celebrated and supported for generations to come.

In 2025, we continued building on our strong foundation, expanding housing, deepening youth-powered programming, and **responding with urgency to the growing threats** facing vulnerable youth. I was honored **to testify before Congress** this year and advocate for sustained national investment in proven programs for foster youth.

Thank you for your trust, your generosity, and your partnership. Together we are ready for what's next and I'm honored to have you with us on the journey.

With heartfelt gratitude,



Lisa Guillette
Executive Director



Photo includes left to right: Rosemary Guillette, Christine Guillette, Patricia Guillette, Lisa Guillette, Niall Murphy and Bianca Perry.

The Foster Forward Blueprint: 30 Years of Building Holistic Support

When Foster Forward began in **1995** as the **Rhode Island Foster Parents Association**, our mission was grounded in connection and community. At the time, our core programs focused on supporting foster families through **peer-led support groups** and offering **life skills classes** to teens in care. These classes, while limited in scope, provided foundational guidance on day-to-day tasks like cooking, cleaning, and basic household management. These skills were often overlooked in formal systems but were critical for young people stepping into independence.

As the years passed, **we began to notice a pattern**. Young people who had completed our life skills programming continued to come back. They weren't just asking about laundry or cooking. They came with **more complex questions** about securing housing, managing money, finding employment, and navigating adulthood. **We listened. And we evolved.**

Over the past **three decades**, Foster Forward has transformed from an organization with two standalone programs into a **holistic hub**. We now offer a **comprehensive suite of services** designed to meet the multifaceted needs of youth aging out of foster care. **Our Blueprint**, the framework that guides our work, brings together housing support, workforce development, financial literacy, education access, mentorship, and social capital-building. **These services are not siloed.** They are intentionally coordinated to provide **wraparound support** and better outcomes.

At the heart of our Blueprint is a **commitment to co-design and co-delivery** with the youth we serve. While our early programs didn't formally include youth leadership, young people have always helped shape our work. Many came back to connect with peers, encouraged others to join, or offered insights about what they needed most. Today, that same spirit lives on through formal programs like **Works Wonders®**, where **youth co-leaders** help deliver curriculum and improve program quality.

Our approach recognizes that **the journey to adulthood is not linear**. Success in one area often requires support in many others. That's why our staff work collaboratively across programs to ensure that each young person can access the right mix of support for their unique situation. **In 2024, 39%** of the youth we served participated in more than one of our programs. This reflects a **12% increase over 2023** and shows that demand for integrated, coordinated services continues to grow.



What sets Foster Forward apart is **not just what we offer, but how we offer it**. Through relationships. Through listening. Through building community. That value has never changed. In the beginning, it meant giving foster parents a space to learn and lean on one another. Today, it means creating affirming spaces for **young people to connect, lead, and thrive**.

As we celebrate our 30th anniversary, the Foster Forward **Blueprint remains our guide**. It is a living model of innovation, youth partnership, and whole-person care. We are proud of how far we've come, and we are even more excited about what comes next.

From Participant to Changemaker

When Dhyanne first came to Foster Forward, **she already had big dreams:** becoming a nurse, helping others, and making a difference in her community. *“I was freshly out of high school,”* she says. *“I already knew what I wanted to do, but I was looking for a good job and something to help me get started.”* At the suggestion of a friend, she joined Foster Forward’s Works Wonders® program alongside four of her peers.

What she found was **more than just job prep.** *“I was flabbergasted,”* she says. *“I was very happy to know that there are other resources out there for not just me, but for others too.”* Reflecting on her first impressions of Foster Forward, she remembers **how welcome she felt** and how friendly the staff were. *“I met Leilani first and then Victoria after, so it was really nice,”* she says.

The Works Wonders® class provided Dhyanne with the space to reflect on her career goals and develop skills to help her move forward. *“We got to really dig deep, thinking about ourselves, our careers, and what we really wanted to do,”* she says. *“And it was also nice hearing other minority youth my age going through the same process of graduating high school and not knowing what to do. It gave me that reassurance.”*

The class helped her **sharpen key job-readiness tools.** *“We updated my resume. Wrote my cover letter,”* she says. *“We did in-person, face-to-face interviews with classmates who were also in the class, which was nice. That’s where I struggle most, doing interviews face-to-face with somebody.”* Practicing with her peers helped her work through nerves and build confidence.

Through Works Wonders®, Dhyanne was placed in a **healthcare internship with PACE**, where she worked directly with RNs, LPNs, and CNAs, performing tasks such as wound care, patient support, and medication preparation. *“I never got that hands-on experience that I did now at PACE,”* she says. The experience broadened her understanding of the healthcare field and provided her with valuable exposure to day-to-day responsibilities in both home and clinical care settings.

One of the most impactful opportunities she received through Foster Forward was the chance to take a phlebotomy course. **“Foster Forward paid for my phlebotomy class,”** she says. *“Now I’m a certified phlebotomist, and I do part-time work drawing blood whenever I can.”*

Her growth didn’t stop there. Dhyanne is also a community activist and advocate for public health. She has worked with the **YMCA’s Health Equity Youth Leadership program** and participates in monthly youth task force meetings focused on raising graduation rates in Providence, Central Falls, and Pawtucket. Her time in Works Wonders® continues to influence her



Dhyanne pictured at her PACE internship. Photo courtesy of PACE Organization.

advocacy efforts. **“100% yes,”** she says. *“I actually still have my Works Wonders® book, and sometimes I find myself looking back at the programs I was a part of to help others with their journey.”*

Dhyanne has also had the opportunity to take part in other Foster Forward programs, including **ASPIRE**. Through ASPIRE, Dhyanne recently **matched for a car.**

Now a **sophomore at CCRI**, Dhyanne is on her way to earning her nursing degree and plans to transfer to **Rhode Island College** to complete **her BSN**. *“I also want to minor in public health or social justice,”* she says.

While Dhyanne is not currently in any of Foster Forward’s programs, she still feels connected and supported by Foster Forward. *“Even after graduating from Works Wonders® and ASPIRE, I still get their newsletters highlighting different opportunities in the community,”* she says. *“They’re always there to help me out in any way, which I love.”*

Dhyanne’s journey reflects the **power of investing in youth voice and lived experience**, not just to help young people succeed, but to empower them to lead.

Works Wonders® Impact

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Who: Young people ages 14-26 involved in Child Welfare, Juvenile Justice, or facing housing instability.

What: Career exploration and work readiness

How: The program offers 16 hours of skills training, 12 weeks of individual career coaching, and opportunities for paid work-based learning experiences.

Since program implementation in 2016

799 youth have participated
in Works Wonders®

64% of youth have engaged in
another Foster Forward Program

Influential Works Wonders® Employer Partners

Ocean State Job Lot | CVS | Chelo's Hometown Bar & Grill | AS220

Experiential Learning



104 experiential learning
opportunities in 2024



78% hosted by local employers



2024 Program Outcomes

160 youth
started the
program

93% continued
beyond the
initial training

74% achieved
a positive
outcome:

Gained employment

Enrolled in education or training

Participated in an internship

Skill & Confidence Growth



76% reported stronger
teamwork skills



71% improved
communication



43% increase in awareness
of job opportunities



29% increase in time
management skills

"We've been honored to welcome several interns from Foster Forward to our team over the years. It's always a rewarding experience as our team embraces the opportunity to share our culture, provide mentorship, and offer hands-on experience that supports their growth and inspires their passion for the technology field."

— Envision Technology Advisors



Finding Stability, Building a Home

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When Charlene first connected with Foster Forward in **2021**, she was experiencing homelessness and visiting our **Drop-In Center** for basic needs like food, laundry, and help with paperwork. *“At the time, unfortunately, I was homeless. I was basically starting from zero. I was in a shelter, and I didn’t really know what to do or where to go,”* she remembers.

Through the **Coordinated Entry System (CES)**, Charlene entered Foster Forward’s **Your Way Home Rapid Rehousing program**, which provides both rental assistance and case management support for youth experiencing homelessness. Over the next two years, she participated in **Works Wonders®**, received individualized guidance, and learned new budgeting and life skills. During that time, she also found a job at a grocery store, a position she still holds today.

“There are always going to be resources, but it’s not as easy as a simple Google search,” she says. *“Sometimes you need paperwork, sometimes you need identification, sometimes you need some lost photo from 1792 to get these resources that you need.”* With support from Foster Forward’s case managers, Charlene was able to navigate the **complex systems**, apply for **disability benefits**, and **connect with the resources** she needed to begin rebuilding her stability.

When her Rapid Rehousing voucher expired in **2024**, Charlene remained in the same apartment, **assuming full responsibility for the rent** of \$700. But when the property was sold to a management company, **everything changed**. The new owners raised the rent far beyond what Charlene could afford, leaving her **once again facing housing insecurity**.

“I’ve seen some insane prices, fifteen hundred dollars, thirteen hundred dollars, everything over the thousands, and sometimes not even utilities are included,” she says. Charlene’s situation highlights the **complexity of the path to stability for individuals with limited incomes**. Her disability benefits help cover essential needs, but also restrict how much she’s able to earn without losing that critical support, making affordable housing nearly impossible to find.

That’s when **Foster Forward stepped in**. One of our one-bedroom apartments became available, and we offered it to Charlene at a reduced rate of \$850 a month, below market value and **without any rental subsidy attached**.

For most landlords, that kind of arrangement wouldn’t be possible. However,



because Foster Forward owns housing stock, **we have the flexibility to make decisions rooted in compassion, not profit**. If Foster Forward didn’t own property, finding a unit within Charlene’s budget without a subsidy to offer a landlord would have been nearly impossible.

“I cried that day,” Charlene says. *“I did not know what my situation was going to be if I did not have a place like Foster Forward. It really shifted the trajectory of my life. I don’t think I would be where I am today physically and emotionally if I did not have their support.”*

Now, Charlene is thriving. She **maintains her job**, has **never been late on rent**, and has **built a home** she’s proud of. *“It’s a lot of the little things that we take for granted when we have a home,”* she says. *“I used to have a ‘pick up a bag and go’ mentality. Now I can start new hobbies or put books and posters on my wall. The idea that I can start building things of my own personality and of my own stable place that I can be proud of is a very big bragging right for me.”* Her hobbies include **3D printing and bookbinding**, skills she uses to create small gifts and stock Little Free Libraries in her neighborhood. She also **adopted a cat** named Domino.

For Charlene, stability isn’t just about having an address; **it’s about being able to breathe, plan, and grow**. *“I’m mostly pretty stable now. I have my hobbies, my relationships, and my goals. For me, it’s just being okay with being stable, something I couldn’t picture before.”*

From Empty Lot to Lifeline: Our Next Big Housing Move

At Foster Forward, we don't just respond to challenges, **we rethink them**. When it comes to affordable housing, we know the stakes are high and the resources limited. That is why we are constantly asking: What can we do better? Faster? More efficiently?

This year, we are proud to share a **bold new project** that turns possibility into progress. This Fall, we broke ground on **two new affordable units**: a two-bedroom single-family home and a one-bedroom accessory dwelling unit (**ADU**) on a formerly undeveloped parcel of land. What was once an overflow parking lot will **soon become a lifeline** for families who need it most.

The idea grew out of our purchase of **a multi-family home** in Pawtucket in **2022**. Along with the building came an adjacent lot that sat unused. Too small for a traditional development and too costly to build just one unit, the land remained idle until **Rhode Island's new ADU law** passed in 2024. Suddenly, what had seemed like an impossible site held new potential, and **we moved quickly to act**.

Working with architect **Peter Lofgren of Lofgren Consulting Architect LLC**, who had previously partnered with us to improve safety infrastructure at the property, we designed a creative, **energy-efficient build** that maximizes every inch of space. The result: two new homes that will expand Foster Forward's owned housing stock **by more than 22 percent** in a single project.

"At Foster Forward, we are always looking for ways to stretch our donor dollars and break new ground, literally and figuratively," said Executive Director Lisa Guillette. *"This project shows how bold thinking, strong partnerships, and responsive policy can come together to create real change."*

These homes represent more than just new construction; they are **part of a larger vision**. In just five years, we have evolved from providing temporary housing support to becoming an owner and developer of affordable housing in Rhode Island. Our approach **pairs housing with wraparound services** because we know a lease alone is not enough. Young people aging out of foster care need stability, guidance, and a strong support network to thrive. Alongside these smaller, high-impact builds, we are also partnering with organizations on large-scale solutions like the **Center City Apartments** project in East Providence, which will add **144** affordable apartments,



including **30 reserved for youth** aging out of foster care. Together, these efforts show how Foster Forward is tackling the housing crisis on multiple fronts with both big and small solutions.

Both of the new Pawtucket units will be reserved for individuals and families earning **at or below 50 percent** of the area's median income, ensuring deeply affordable options in a market where such opportunities are scarce. Built to **high-efficiency standards**, including solar panels, the homes will keep costs low for residents while also reducing environmental impact. Construction began this fall, with the first tenants expected to move in before the end of next year.

This project is proof that **innovative housing does not always require massive developments**. Sometimes it means finding smart uses for overlooked spaces and seizing opportunities created by policy shifts. Where others saw a spare lot, we saw a future home.

Because when we talk about building brighter futures for foster youth, we mean that in every sense of the word. We build stability. We build opportunity. **And we are building more than ever.**

Your Way Home: Rapid Rehousing

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Who: Young people ages 18-24 who experience homelessness.

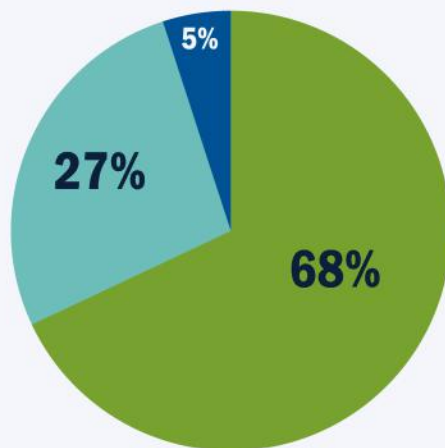
What: Housing navigation, short term rental assistance, and barrier assistance.

How: By providing financial and supportive case management services, including accessing housing vouchers to help them achieve housing stability.

Since program inception, 82 youth have received
Rapid Rehousing rental assistance

2024 Rapid Rehousing Outcomes

Living Situation at
Program Start

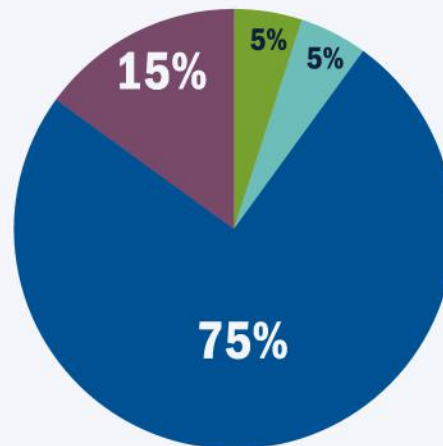


Living in a place not meant for human habitation or emergency shelter: 68%

Couch surfing or other temporary situation: 27%

Other: 5%

Living Situation at
Program Exit



Living in a place not meant for human habitation or emergency shelter: 5%

Couch surfing or other temporary situation: 5%

Permanent Housing Situation: 75%

Other: 15%



In 2024...

41 youth received Rapid Rehousing rental assistance.

84% of participants were enrolled in one or more other Foster Forward Programs.

85% of participants had one or more disabling conditions.

95% of participants obtained housing while in the program.

Your Way Home: Enhanced Case Management

Who: Young people ages 18-21 in Voluntary Extension of Care (VEC) with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and young people experiencing housing instability after leaving foster care.

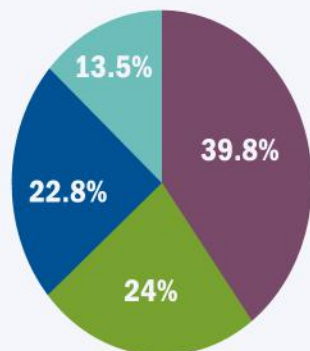
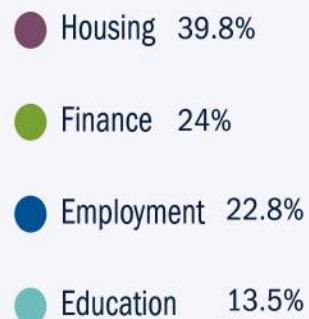
What: Case management and barrier assistance.

How: By providing supportive case management services to help clients achieve their individual goals for successful transition to adulthood.

Since program inception, 95 youth have received supportive case management services.

In 2024, 43 youth received supportive case management services.

2024 Most Common Individual Goals



2024 Individual Goal Outcomes



77% of participants with a housing goal **obtained housing**.



78% of participants with a finance goal **increased** their **financial capability** skills.



59% of participants with an employment goal **obtained employment**.



40% of participants with an education goal **completed a post-secondary credential**.

In 2024, 60% of those participants were enrolled in one or more other Foster Forward Programs.



The Drop-In Center: A Vital First Step for Youth Facing Homelessness

“The Drop-In Center is where relationships start. Sometimes a hot meal, a shower, or just a safe place to sit for a while can open the door to something bigger. We meet youth where they are, and from there, we help them take steps forward, whatever that looks like for them.” – Scott, Housing Services Coordinator

Foster Forward's Drop-In Center is more than a place to get warm or grab a meal; it's often **the first door** young people walk through on their **journey to housing and stability**.

Located at our East Providence office, the Drop-In is open to **any young person experiencing homelessness**, whether they're couch surfing, staying in a shelter, or living on the street. Youth can stop by on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays to access showers, laundry, hot meals, internet, a quiet space to rest, and much more.

The Drop-In Center isn't just a space, **it's a lifeline**. In a state where few resources are designed specifically for young people experiencing homelessness, especially those aging out of foster care, **the Drop-In fills a critical gap**. Traditional adult-focused systems can feel unsafe or overwhelming for youth. At Foster Forward, we meet them where they are with services, staff, and support tailored to **their unique needs**.

Each visit is an opportunity to **build trust and begin the process of change**. Youth can connect with clinical support, get basic needs met, complete their Coordinated Entry intake, and explore

next steps like case management, housing referrals, and workforce programs. From here, they can access Foster Forward's broader network of wraparound services, Your Way Home, Works Wonders®, ASPIRE, and more.

We continue to see **demand for these services rise**, especially among young people with complex needs. Many of the youth who visit the Drop-In are living with **one or more disabling conditions**, challenges that can make navigating traditional systems even harder. The Drop-In offers them a **low-barrier**, compassionate entry point into services that are designed with their realities in mind. What's more, this space doesn't just meet immediate needs, it builds pathways. A growing number of Drop-In participants are choosing to enroll in other Foster Forward programs, where they gain access to education and employment support, housing, financial literacy, and long-term coaching. The Drop-In serves as both **a refuge and a springboard**, helping young people move from surviving to thriving, one step at a time.



34% are enrolled in one or more Foster Forward Programs



There was a 105% increase in participants served from 2023 to 2024



84% of participants had one or more disabling condition(s)



151 participants served in 2024

Drop-In Impact

Who: For ages 14-26 (any youth who spent at least one day in a DCYF placement after age 14).

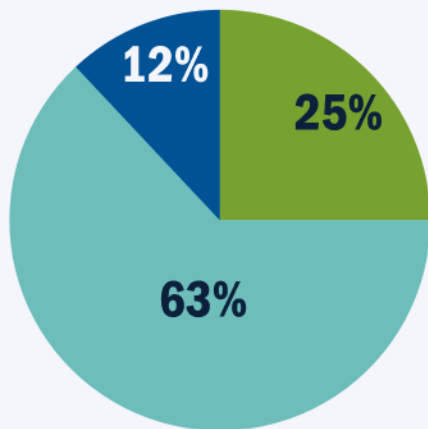
What: Financial education and assistance with setting goals for saving money.

How: Participants engage in training and receive \$100 toward the opening of an Opportunity Passport™ savings account, and a dollar-for-dollar match, up to \$1,000 per year.

2024 Program Outcomes

151 Participants Served

**Living Situation at
Drop-In Entry**

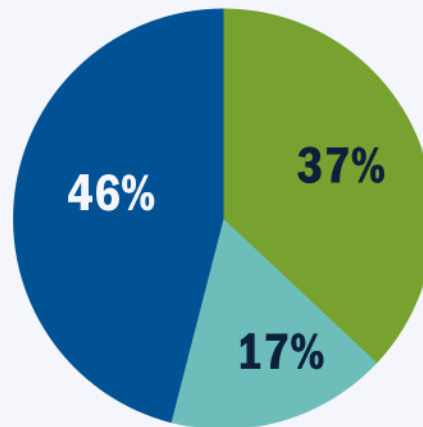


Living in a place not meant for human habitation or emergency shelter: 25%

Couch surfing or other temporary situation: 63%

Other: 12%

**Living Situation at
Program Exit**



Living in a place not meant for human habitation or emergency shelter: 37%

Couch surfing or other temporary situation: 17%

Permanent Housing Situation: 46%

**Based on 30% of participants with known housing outcomes.*

Since Inception, The Drop-In has served 291 participants

2024 Total Service Interactions: 717

Most Common Services:

Food	334
Clothing	224
Bus Pass	160
Personal Hygiene Products	200
Shower	150
Laundry	292

2024 Holiday Gifts Campaign Highlights



10,330 toys
donated by Hasbro



Over 4,000
pajamas collected



400 gift cards (\$35 each)
distributed to teens



494 wishlists fulfilled for
youth and families in care



1,151 children and 488 families served
during the 3-day toy distribution

The Foster Forward Storefront is more than a place to pick up essentials. It is a welcoming space where the **community comes together** to care for children, youth, and families impacted by foster care. Whether it's clothing, school supplies, diapers, hygiene items, or household goods, every item is donated by generous individuals, businesses, and partners.

The Storefront is **open to all licensed foster parents across the state**—nearly 700 in total—as well as to **teens in group homes** and **young people transitioning** out of foster care. Many rely on this space to help meet their immediate needs and build a foundation for stability. For many visitors, the Storefront is a lifeline. It's a place to ask questions, share stories, and connect with others who understand.

This sense of connection is nurtured by the **volunteers who show up week after week** to help run the space. Led by Director of Development Kate Bronner, a dedicated group of long-time volunteers has built its own community within the Storefront. Their **care and consistency** have created a warm, reliable presence that families look forward to seeing.

Throughout the year, the Storefront also **hosts events** that deepen the sense of belonging and care, from parenting classes to seasonal celebrations. One of the most powerful examples of its impact is the annual **Holiday Gifts Campaign**. Thanks to community donations and volunteer support, **thousands of children across the state** receive gifts, pajamas, and essentials that help make the holidays brighter.

The Storefront is a shared space of generosity, connection, and care. It reflects what is possible when community comes together. It meets immediate needs and ensures those impacted by foster care feel seen, supported, and celebrated.

"Foster Forward is the saving grace after you took the leap of faith and accepted a placement, knowing you'll be met with the most resources in the state to get that child everything they need. Without Foster Forward, I'm not sure I would still be fostering and definitely wouldn't accept emergency placements anymore." - Mia

"The Storefront is far more than just a place to get items for our little ones. Once you walk in you feel the friendship, and support. They care! They "get it". It's a family resource center. There were times where I felt unsure, and overwhelmed. Kate and the volunteers always provided a listening ear, they were supportive and provided resources." - Angela



Meet the Sisterhood of the Second Hand Pants

At Foster Forward, some of the strongest bonds are **built behind the scenes**. Among them is a remarkable group known as the “Sisterhood of the Second Hand Pants.” Week after week, these women dedicate their time to sorting donations and preparing goods for foster families at our Storefront, while creating a **circle of friendship, laughter, and unwavering support** for one another.

The members of the Sisterhood come from different walks of life, **united by their shared passion** for helping youth in foster care and the personal connections they form with the families who come through our Storefront doors. Nancy, who has been volunteering at the Storefront for five years, shared, “As I kept volunteering, I started to get to know the community and got involved with people who I see on a regular basis... It’s a great cause, and once you meet the people you support, **it touches your heart.**”

One situation that stuck out in Jill’s mind is when a foster parent will come to the Storefront the day before they pick up a newborn at the hospital, **coming in with nothing and leaving with a trunk full of essentials**. Nancy reflected on the time that she and her husband had the chance to do a complete bedroom makeover for a foster child, everything from flooring to stocking the closet. After this experience and getting to know the foster family better, she was eventually invited to their adoption day celebration. Jane recalled a time when she was playing with a foster child at the Storefront while his mother was shopping. As they left the Storefront, the little boy said goodbye to Jane, surprising his mother as this was the first time he had spoken. Then there’s Lori, whose engagement deepened after witnessing firsthand the profound needs of foster families. “Early on, I helped a young woman who had taken in three kin children, in addition to her own. **All they had were the clothes on their backs,**” Lori recalls. “Seeing what these families give, it’s impressive and motivating.”

While these moving experiences ignite our volunteers’ passion for supporting those in the foster community, it’s also their personal connections that keep them



coming back every week. As Jane explained, “The Sisterhood of the Second Hand Pants is a bonus to volunteering... It is a great group of women, and everybody is really committed and we are all here for the same purpose. We are happy to be together, and we are also committed to serving this organization.” Nancy has come to appreciate not only their shared sense of commitment to Foster Forward but also to each other. She reflected, “It’s nice to have that **support of women supporting women**. I really feel like it’s a strong group of women that I can ask anything or have support from.”

Their time together is sprinkled with light moments too. “It can also get very, very silly unpacking donations... sometimes what is inside is very interesting, so we have a lot of fun with that,” reflects Jill, highlighting the joy found in simple tasks when shared with friends.

The Sisterhood’s unique blend of **consistent service, friendship, and fun** has not only transformed the storefront into a hub of activity and support but also illustrates the broader impact of volunteering. It is about filling immediate needs, yes, but also about **building community and connections** that sustain us all.

A Leader in the Making: Niaya's Story of Growth and Purpose

When Niaya first came to Foster Forward, she was looking for stability. Pregnant with her second child and navigating housing insecurity, she was determined to **find a better path forward**. *"I was doing everything I could to take care of my kids and stay in school,"* she said. *"It was hard, but I didn't give up. I just kept calling Foster Forward, even when I didn't know if anything would come of it."*

That persistence paid off. Her first connection was through the **Works Wonders®** program, where she earned her **CNA license**. From there, she joined the **Your Way Home** program and moved into her **first apartment just days before Christmas**, right around her youngest son's first birthday. *"All I prayed for was to be in a home with my kids for the holidays,"* she said. *"That was the first time I ever had that, and it meant everything."*

After finding housing, Niaya enrolled in **ASPIRE**, Foster Forward's financial literacy and matched savings program. In late 2024, she was invited to participate in a **small-scale test of change**, conducted in partnership with the **Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)** **RI** and the **Annie E. Casey Foundation**, to enhance ASPIRE's impact. This pilot introduced one-on-one financial coaching and **increased the savings match from 1:1 to 2:1**. It was designed to better meet the needs of youth juggling real-life responsibilities.

Shortly after, Niaya traveled to a **national conference in Miami** with Foster Forward's team and other youth leaders to share early results from the pilot and help brainstorm the next steps. It was a pivotal experience. *"I used to think I was too young for people to really listen,"* she said. *"But there, everyone wanted to hear what I had to say. I felt equal. That trip gave me so much confidence."*

During one of the sessions, **she pitched her idea**: *"I told Lindsay (her case worker), 'Why don't we run ASPIRE like Works Wonders®, in person, with youth leaders?'"* Her suggestion was grounded in personal experience and her vision for a more engaging and relatable learning environment. *"Youth learn best when they see themselves in the people leading the room,"* she said. **"We bring a perspective others can't."**

Her idea is now being put into practice. **In 2025**, Niaya officially became an **ASPIRE Youth Leader** and will be helping guide the next iteration of the program from the inside out.

For Niaya, being a youth leader is about more than just teaching; it's about changing systems. *"It means speaking up, not just for myself, but for people like me who don't always feel heard,"* she said. *"I want to help create more spaces for youth to grow and be seen."*



Pictured left to right: Elijah, Niaya, Lindsay, and Lisa at the conference in Miami.

Foster Forward's mission is rooted in empowering lives impacted by foster care. **Youth leadership is a crucial part** of that mission, ensuring that the people most affected by these systems have a genuine voice at the table. Niaya's journey is proof of what's possible when young people are supported, included, and empowered to lead.

Niaya is continuing her education and **recently started college** with the goal of becoming a **social worker**. The experience in Miami solidified that sense of purpose. *"That conference made me realize I want to go into social work,"* she said. *"Since I was little, I always thought about it. But being there, meeting other youth and hearing their stories, and seeing how much the Foster Forward staff cared, it just clicked. I thought, 'This is what I want to do.'"*

She hopes to use her voice and lived experience to help others navigate similar challenges. *"I want to create more programs and more support, not just for youth with kids, but for anyone going through it alone. I've always wanted to make an impact. Now I know I can."*

Her advice to other young people? *"Take that first step and speak up. Even if you're scared or think no one will listen. You never know what could come from it."* As Niaya puts it, **"This is just the beginning."**

Who: For ages 14-26 (any youth who spent at least one day in a DCYF placement after age 14).

What: Financial education and assistance with setting goals for saving money.

How: Participants engage in training and receive \$100 toward the opening of an Opportunity Passport™ savings account, and a dollar-for-dollar match, up to \$1,000 per year.

Since program implementation in 2008...

1,317 youth have completed
Financial Life Skills Training

1,169 youth have opened matched
savings accounts through ASPIRE

\$2.17 million in total matched
savings invested in youth assets



2024 Impact Data



40 youth participated in
Financial Literacy Training



22 youth completed
the full curriculum



124 youth participated in the
matched savings program



42% were also enrolled in
other Foster Forward programs

2024 Asset Matches

Asset Type	# of Matches	Total Matched
Vehicle	9	\$22,398.26
Credit Building	7	\$11,383.90
Education & Training	6	\$5,870.52
Investments	3	\$6,000
Housing	2	\$3,700
Health	1	\$360
Total	28	\$49,712.68

From Mentor to Mom: Sam and Isabelle's Story

When Sam Fasso signed up to be a mentor through Foster Forward's **Real Connections** program in **2019**, she and her husband had just moved to Rhode Island. They were curious about adoption from foster care one day, but they weren't sure what that path might look like.

"My husband is a doctor and was working 100 hours a week," Sam shared. "We lived in an apartment. I figured being a mentor was a great way to get experience, give back to my community, and help."

Sam was **matched with Isabelle**, a 14-year-old who was shy and unsure about the program. *"She told me later she never actually wanted to do the mentoring program. Her foster mom at the time basically forced her into it,"* Sam said, laughing. *"She only agreed because in my little intro, I had written that I had bunnies. She loves animals and said, 'Okay, I guess I can deal with this to go see the bunnies.'"*

Their connection wasn't instant, **but Sam stayed consistent**. *"I just kept showing up. I had done the training with Foster Forward, and I was doing a lot of reading about what kids in foster care experience. I knew if I was consistent and showed I cared, she might open up."*

Over time, **their bond grew stronger**. *"We did a little bit of everything. Hanging out at cafes, baking, embroidering, even knocking down a wall in my fixer-upper house with a hammer,"* Sam said. *"It wasn't anything crazy. Just spending time together."*

After nearly **two years of mentoring**, something unexpected happened. Isabelle asked Sam to **become her foster parent**. *"That was how we had that first conversation,"* Sam said. *"Honestly, we didn't decide. Izzy decided."*

Sam and her husband became Isabelle's foster parents in 2021. By **March 2022**, **they finalized the adoption**. *"From the moment we took her in, that was our goal. We were just counting down the six months until we could make it official."*

The **transition from mentor to parent wasn't always easy**. *"My home was the first place she really felt safe,"* Sam reflected. *"And kids who've been through trauma often act out in the safe places. We went through three schools in a year and a half, but we made it through. It's incredible to see how far she's come."*



Sam credits **Real Connections** for giving **her the foundation she needed**. *"The program is incredible. The training was really good and comprehensive, and Michelle was amazing. She was always there to answer questions and offer support."*

To others considering becoming a mentor, Sam offers this advice: *"Do your own research. Learn what it's like to be a kid in foster care. It will help you be more empathetic and patient. Go in with an open mind and expect the unexpected."*

Now, as an adoptive parent, **Sam carries one lesson above all**. *"Connection can come unexpectedly, and you should embrace it when it does. It can change your life in the most incredible ways. I wouldn't be a parent if I hadn't done Real Connections and met Izzy."*

Real Connections Impact

18

Who: Youth ages 12-26 who spent at least one day in DCYF placement after age 12 and are preparing to age out or have already left care without permanent adult support.

What: Long-term, one-on-one mentoring relationships that offer guidance, encouragement, and emotional support during the transition to adulthood.

How: Participants are matched with trained adult mentors based on compatibility and shared interests, with ongoing support from Foster Forward staff to help build lasting, meaningful connections.



Since Program Implementation in 2005



891 youth have participated in Real Connections



639 mentor-mentee matches have been made



42% of matches continued beyond the program



Matches last an average of **471** days, well beyond the one-year commitment



25 matches led to permanency (adoption, guardianship, or long-term connection)

2024 Program Outcomes



15 youth participated in Real Connections



10 matches were made



53% of youth were matched with a mentor

Youth say their mentors make a difference:



94% felt their mentor listened to when something is bothering them.



92% said their mentor helps them take their mind off things.



91% felt their mentor encouraged them to do well.



90% said their mentor helped them feel good about themselves.

Following a pause in new matches due to prior funding shifts, Real Connections is now entering a period of renewed growth!



Celebrating 30 Years: Foster Forward Timeline

1995 Rhode Island Foster Parents Association was formed, creating the first foster parent mentoring program in the country.		1997 Held the first Holiday Gifts event in partnership with Hasbro, providing gifts for foster youth across the state.		2003 Hosted the first annual event, Cheeseburgers in Paradise, which eventually evolved into our annual Gala.	
	2003 Lisa Guillette is hired as Executive Director.		2005 Launched the Real Connections mentoring program, later endowed by the Joseph & Rosalyn Sinclair Family Foundation in 2014.		2005 First youth Friendsgiving is celebrated.
2007 Created Rhode Island's first Youth Board of foster youth, The VOICE.		2008 Selected as a Jim Casey site, launching the ASPIRE financial Literacy program and joining a national grantee community.		2009 ASPIRE was named a Citizens Bank Champion in Action Award recipient.	
	2010 Launched the Consolidated Youth Services (CYS) contract with DCYF to deliver life skills, financial education, aftercare, and mentoring.		2011 Developed the Works Wonders® workforce program through a five-year grant from the Children's Bureau.		2012 Rebranded and officially changed our name to Foster Forward.

Roots & Identity

Youth-Driven Innovation

Recognition & Replication

Growth & Infrastructure

2013

Awarded Bank of America Neighborhood Builders Award.



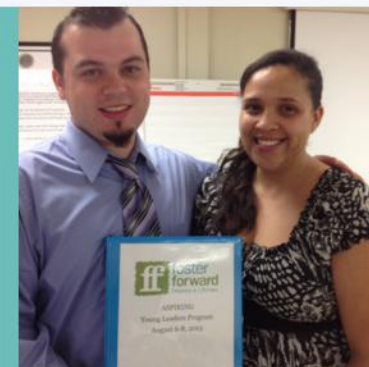
2013

Launched the first Works Wonders® cohort, co-facilitated by a Youth Leader.



2013

Launch of Aspiring Young Leaders program.



2015

Transitioned delivery of the YESS aftercare program to Foster Forward, expanding support for youth exiting foster care.



2017

Purchased our office building, using assets from the Bank of America Neighborhood Builders Award.



2017

Secured a permanent home for the Storefront in Ocean State Job Lot's Pawtucket plaza, offering gently used items to foster youth and families.

2017

Works Wonders® receives Innovation Award from RI Foundation & BCBS RI



2017

Launched 30 Days to Family + Spanish-language support group



2018

Works Wonders® received the National Blueprint Award for innovation and excellence from the Child Welfare League of America.



2018

Works Wonders® won the Innovations in American Government Award from Harvard Kennedy School's Ash Center.



2018

Received a HUD contract to implement Rhode Island's first Rapid Rehousing Program for homeless foster youth.



2018

Awarded a VOCA grant to provide crisis intervention services to underserved populations.

Celebrating 30 Years: Foster Forward Timeline

2018

Voluntary Extension of Care (VEC) was passed by the RI legislature, extending foster care to age 21 for eligible youth.



2019

Monroe Harding in Nashville became the first Works Wonders® replication site.



2020

Becomes a WIOA grantee through Department of Labor



2020

Federal FYI vouchers program launched, providing housing support for youth aging out of foster care.



2020

Built the Drop-In Center for youth experiencing homelessness, with support from the Champlin Foundation.



2020

Participated in the inaugural 401Gives campaign created by United Way of RI, later becoming the top fundraising organization.

2021

Purchased and renovated our first multifamily property: a 3-unit home in Pawtucket, with United Way of RI support.



2021

Foster Success in Indiana became our second Works Wonders® replication partner.



2021

Foster Forward Board of Directors establishes a permanent endowment fund and raised over \$1 million.



2022

ASPIRE participants reached \$2 million in assets purchased through their Opportunity Passport matched savings accounts.



2022

Purchased a 4-unit property in Pawtucket through Rhode Island Housing's Site Acquisition Program.



2023

Works Wonders® added to California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse.

Roots & Identity

Youth-Driven Innovation

Recognition & Replication

Growth & Infrastructure

2023

Launched Enterprising Connections with Annie E. Casey Foundation support



2023

Purchased 2-unit property in East Providence.



2023

The New England Patriots and Kraft Foundation donated hundreds of Ed Sheeran concert tickets to foster youth and families.



2024

Attended the LISC National Conference in Arizona to kick off the Partnership for Youth Financial Wellness, a multi-year initiative with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and LISC to expand ASPIRE.



2024

One Neighborhood Builders opened the 16-unit Riverside Square property, including 3 units for former foster youth and fully furnished thanks to Bob's Discount Furniture and the New England Patriots.



2024

Becomes a member of the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC)



2024

Led a workforce development training in South Carolina with DSS and partners, sharing the Works Wonders® model with 5 organizations.



2024

Presented Works Wonders® at the National Youth Employment Coalition's Annual Forum in Atlanta, highlighting youth co-creation and shared leadership in workforce development.



2024

Honored with the Community Organization Spotlight Award at Haus of Codec's Anniversary event for our work supporting youth transitioning from foster care.



2025

Executive Director Lisa Guillette testified before the U.S. House Ways & Means Subcommittee on Work & Welfare, sharing how programs like Works Wonders® and FYI vouchers support youth aging out of foster care.



2025

Scheduled to break ground on two new units including a two bedroom apartment and Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU).



2025

Breaking ground on Center City Apartments, a 144-unit affordable housing project with ONB, Crossroads, and Family Service RI, including 20 units for former foster youth, supported by a \$2M earmark from Senator Jack Reed.

Over the past three decades, Foster Forward has been shaped by the vision and commitment of remarkable leaders who helped guide the organization through moments of innovation and transformation. This section highlights voices from our history whose leadership has left a lasting impact and continues to inform our work today.

Jerry Perez: A former Hasbro executive and past Board President, Jerry Perez helped guide Foster Forward through major milestones, from leading its 2012 rebrand to forging lasting corporate partnerships. His marketing expertise and steady leadership strengthened the organization's visibility, resilience, and impact for youth in foster care.

What moment or milestone stands out most from your time with Foster Forward?

The rebranding of the Rhode Island Foster Parents Association to Foster Forward back in 2012 was a defining milestone. When Lisa approached me about broadening the organization's mission and identity, I saw an opportunity to connect Hasbro's world-class marketing team with a deeply committed social service agency doing vital work. Leading that partnership was deeply rewarding—our team brought its best creative energy, and together we launched a new name, tagline ("Empower a Lifetime"), and brand style guide that positioned Foster Forward as not only one of Rhode Island's strongest agencies but also a national leader. It was the kind of public-private collaboration one dreams of, and in this case, it truly changed the way the organization could tell its story and expand its impact.



Jane & Jerry Perez pictured at Foster Forward's Gala.



Foster Forward Board members pictured at celebration event to honor Jerry's service as Foster Forward Board President.

What was your role during a key transition or change at Foster Forward?

When I was Board President, and Foster Forward lost its largest state contract back in 2018, it felt as though the ground had shifted beneath us. With nearly half the budget gone, we faced painful choices. What sustained us was the shared conviction of the board and staff in the critical importance of Foster Forward's mission. Together, we streamlined operations, built new corporate partnerships, welcomed a circle of donors who deeply believed in our work and participated in new funding streams like 401 Gives. Looking back, I'm proud that from such a daunting moment came renewed strength, financial stability, and new initiatives like housing—testament to the resilience of Lisa, her team, and a deeply committed board.

What did being part of the Foster Forward team mean to you personally?

As former foster parents, my wife Jane and I hold a deep belief in the importance of supporting foster youth and creating systems where they can thrive. We know firsthand the power of a loving, supportive family—it shapes lives and strengthens communities. For those foster youth who haven't had that same start but carry so much potential, we feel a responsibility to pay forward the blessings we've been given and to help open doors of opportunity wherever we can.

What gives you hope for the future of Foster Forward?

In a world where it's easy to be cynical, I hold onto the belief that most people genuinely want to do good—they just need the right opportunity. Foster Forward provides that opportunity by connecting caring individuals with meaningful ways to support youth needing a hand-up. With Foster Forward's growing visibility, amazing leadership and thirty year track record, I'm confident more people will step forward, and I trust Foster Forward to continue turning that generosity into real, life-changing outcomes.

Kat Keenan: As former Deputy Director and co-creator of Works Wonders®, Kat Keenan helped redefine how Foster Forward empowers youth transitioning from care. Her dedication to youth voice and collaboration sparked innovative programs that continue to influence national best practices today.

What moment or milestone stands out most from your time with Foster Forward?

One of the most meaningful milestones in my time with Foster Forward was receiving the federal grant in 2011 that allowed us to build the Works Wonders® program from the ground up. I still remember being in a meeting when we heard Lisa yell upstairs—then the sound of her heels rushing down the hall before she burst in, beaming. None of us knew it yet, but that moment would shape Foster Forward's future.

What made it powerful wasn't just the \$2 million to launch our idea—it was how we built the program with young people, not just for them. From day one, youth were in the driver's seat, helping to design, implement, and refine the model. That experience redefined what youth-adult partnership means and set a standard that continues to guide Foster Forward today.

It was incredible to be part of every stage—from dreaming big and writing the proposal to developing, evaluating, and improving the model. Now, as a consultant supporting the team's expansion efforts, it's rewarding to see Works Wonders® thrive in places like Tennessee and Indiana while staying true to its roots in youth voice. It's not just a program—it's a movement transforming systems, expectations, and lives.



Kat Keenan (pictured on right) accepting the Bank of America Neighborhood Builders Award for Foster Forward.

What was your role during a key transition or change at Foster Forward?

During one of Foster Forward's most pivotal transitions, I was serving as Deputy Director. At the time, we were supporting youth aging out of foster care through the state's aftercare program—but too many were still falling through the cracks.

So we did what we do best: we listened. Youth told us they needed more time, consistent support, and safe, affordable housing with understanding landlords. In response, we wrote our first grant to pilot a Rapid Rehousing program for youth—laying the foundation for what would become the Your Way Home program, now funded through HUD and the state's Continuum of Care.

What did being part of the Foster Forward team mean to you personally?

Growing up, I didn't have the easiest childhood, but I had my mom—a caring, consistent adult who helped me build resilience. Being part of Foster Forward let me live out that same belief: that every young person deserves someone in their corner.

Foster Forward wasn't just a workplace—it was family. My kids grew up there, learning what it means to be part of something bigger than yourself. The people, the laughter, the growth—it all shaped how I lead, how I parent, and how I show up in the world. It will always feel like home.

What gives you hope for the future of Foster Forward?

What gives me hope is the unwavering commitment of Foster Forward's leadership and staff. They never settle—they ask what's next, what youth need, and they truly listen. By creating space for young people to lead, they ensure solutions come from lived experience.

That mix of humility, courage, and curiosity is what makes Foster Forward special. They face hard truths, fight necessary fights, and keep youth at the center. That's what will keep driving lasting change and a future where every young person can thrive.

Ocean State Job Lot: A Legacy of Partnership and Purpose

Over the last 20 years, **Ocean State Job Lot** (OSJL) has stood with us, steadfast in their support, generous in their commitment, and deeply rooted in our shared belief that every young person deserves the chance to thrive. From their **first donation in 2005** to hosting our holiday storefront beginning in 2013 and providing us with a dedicated year-round storefront in 2017, their support has helped **build a legacy of trust**, opportunity, and impact that has shaped the lives of thousands.

From the very beginning of our **Works Wonders®** program, OSJL stepped up not only as **one of our earliest employer partners** but also as true champions for the young people we serve. For many participants, it's their first experience in the workforce, and OSJL has created an environment where they **feel safe to learn, grow, and discover** their capabilities. Whether it's giving youth the chance to practice job applications, offering constructive feedback, or **extending employment beyond internships**, their team has gone above and beyond to invest in youth success.

Reflecting on this partnership, **Casey Grimes, Talent Partnerships Specialist at OSJL**, shared: *"Ocean State Job Lot is proud of its partnership with Foster Forward and their Works Wonders® Program. This collaboration has provided invaluable work experience opportunities for young people in our Rhode Island stores, allowing them to gain firsthand experience in a retail environment. **We've seen these youth truly thrive**, expanding their skills and confidence. **Foster Forward's commitment to the success of each individual in the program is evident**, fostering a collaborative and encouraging atmosphere that benefits everyone involved."*

That spirit of generosity extends beyond the workplace. In **2017**, OSJL enabled us to establish a **permanent storefront space**, transforming what was once a collection of cramped closets into a vibrant and welcoming resource hub for youth and foster families across Rhode Island. As the property owners, they offered us the space to create something special: **a dignified, beautifully organized Storefront** where foster youth and families can find what they need and feel supported while doing it. It was a pivotal moment in our organization's growth, one that enabled us to reach more people with greater consistency than ever before.

"We are so grateful to OSJL for the commitment they made, not only to our organization but to the RI foster care system, by providing us with a consistent storefront space for foster families and children to come and shop free of charge," shared Kate Bronner, our Director of Development. *"When this space became ours in 2017, **it allowed our organization to expand our services** to every foster family and child in RI DCYF care. The ripple effects of that decision have **impacted thousands of lives since.**"*

OSJL's impact continues year after year, not only through their generosity as a consistent gala sponsor, but through the leadership of John Conforti, OSJL's Chief Financial Officer and a longtime member of



John Conforti, OSJL CFO and Foster Forward Board member, and wife Lori Conforti.

Foster Forward's Board of Directors. John has played a key role in deepening and sustaining the partnership between our organizations. His steady leadership, as a former board treasurer and current chair of our investment committee, has strengthened our financial stewardship. At the same time, his personal passion for the mission has helped shape the path forward.

"As a former foster and adoptive parent, and a long-time board member, my personal connection to Foster Forward runs deep," said Conforti. *"The work they do, especially in empowering youth through their program initiatives, is transformative. We've seen firsthand the positive impact of programs like Works Wonders®, not only in providing vital opportunities for youth but also in enriching our own workplace with dedicated and talented individuals. Ocean State Job Lot is honored to be a part of Foster Forward's incredible 30-year journey."*

Over the years, we've shared milestones, lifted one another, and **stood side by side** through times of growth and challenge. Ocean State Job Lot has helped us plant roots and widen our reach, and for that, we are deeply grateful. Their enduring partnership is part of our story and a legacy we carry forward into the next chapter.

Over a Decade of Dedication: Honoring The Junior League of Rhode Island

At Foster Forward, the community has always been at the heart of our work. Whether we are providing housing, offering financial education, or helping a young person land their first job, we know that **true impact is only possible through strong partnerships**. For 30 years, volunteers, supporters, and local organizations have helped us uplift youth and families impacted by foster care. One of those remarkable partners has been the **Junior League of Rhode Island**.

In **2013**, the Junior League identified kids aging out of foster care as their new **Community Impact issue** and selected Foster Forward as one of their nonprofit partners. Since then, their members have been a **steady presence** in our work and a powerful example of what committed community support looks like.

Over the years, Junior League volunteers have helped in many ways. They **renovated apartments** to help youth transition into safe and welcoming homes. They **sorted donations** and **assisted families** in our Community Storefront. They showed up during the holidays with pajamas, gifts, and good cheer. They prepared **Thanksgiving baskets** and even became mentors through our **Real Connections** program.

Polly, a long-time Junior League volunteer, shared, *“Each experience was truly rewarding. The dedication of Foster Forward and your mission to empower children, youth, and families is nothing short of inspiring.”*

Many volunteers spoke about how much they learned from working with us. Elizabeth said, *“I really didn’t know anything about the foster care system or youth in foster care in Rhode Island before volunteering. But working at the storefront and with different Foster Forward programs really opened my eyes to what kids are going through.”*

That kind of **learning and awareness** is a big part of why community partnerships matter. At Foster Forward, we don’t just aim to provide services. We also work to raise awareness and **build a deeper understanding** of the foster care experience. The Junior League has been an incredible partner in that mission. Their members helped educate each other, their neighborhoods, and their wider networks.



As Brittany shared, *“Our partnership allowed the Junior League of Rhode Island to help impact these individuals on their next steps. But it also helped educate us about foster care in Rhode Island.”*

In 2025, the Junior League **is starting a new chapter** with a new community impact focus. While this means the end of our formal partnership, the impact of their support will last. Their work has touched lives, built connections, and brought comfort to countless youth and families.

We are **truly thankful** for every League member who gave their time and energy. From the storefront to the holiday drives, from apartment rehabs to mentoring, their kindness made a real difference. They reminded us of the power of showing up and what it means to build community.

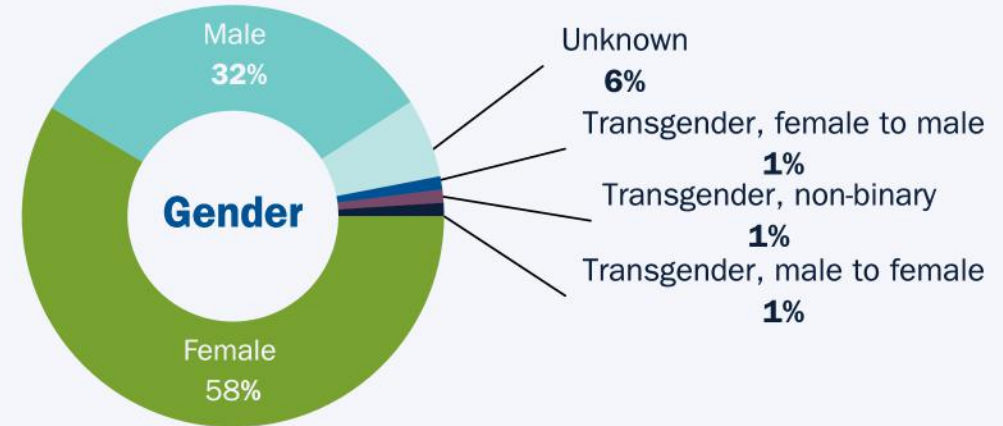
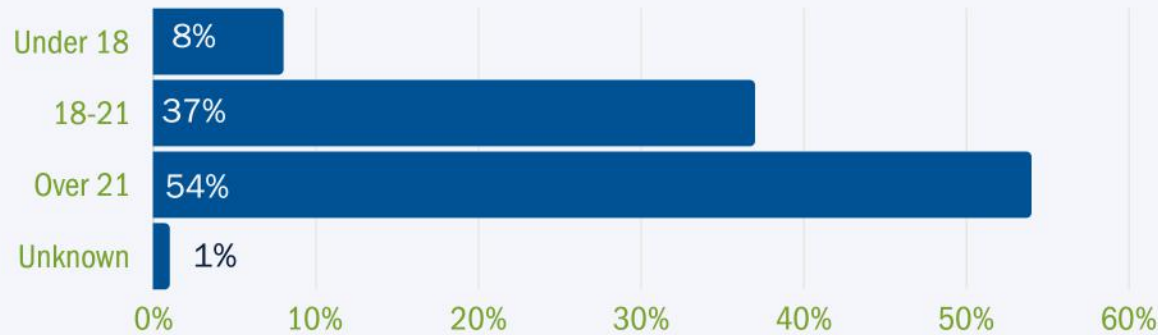
To all our friends at the Junior League of Rhode Island: thank you. Thank you for believing in our youth. Thank you for standing with us. And thank you for being an important part of Foster Forward’s 30-year journey.

Who We Serve

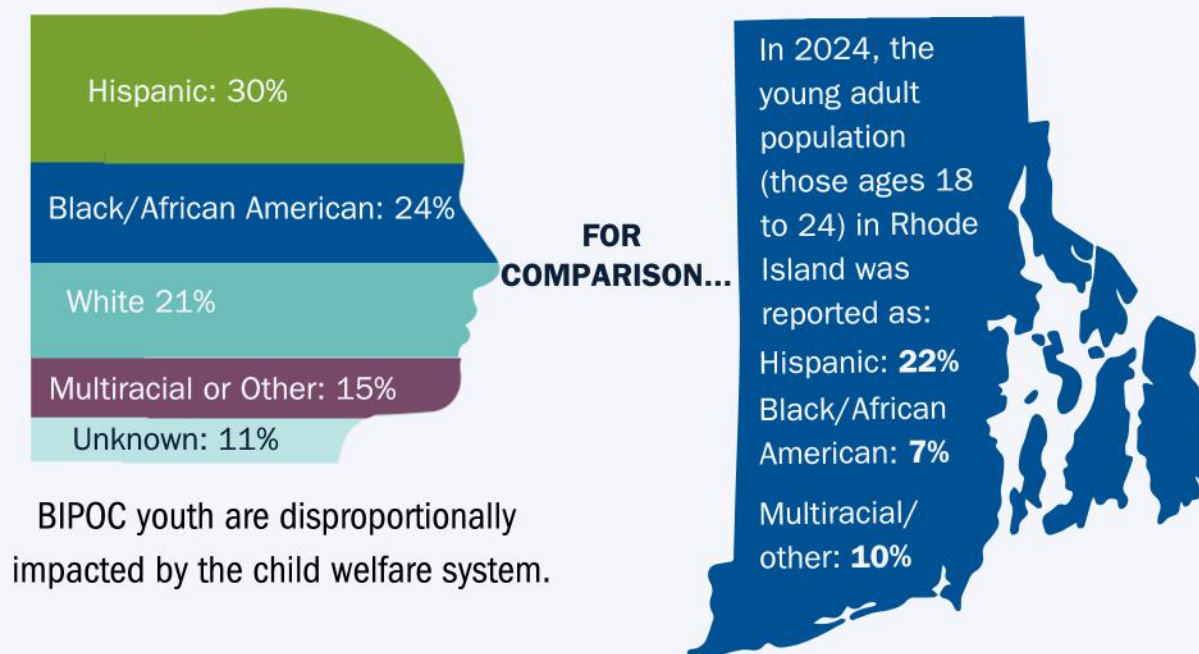
In **2024**, Foster Forward served **513 clients** across all our programs.

22% increase from 2023 to 2024

Client Ages



68% of Foster Forward's clients identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (**BIPOC**).



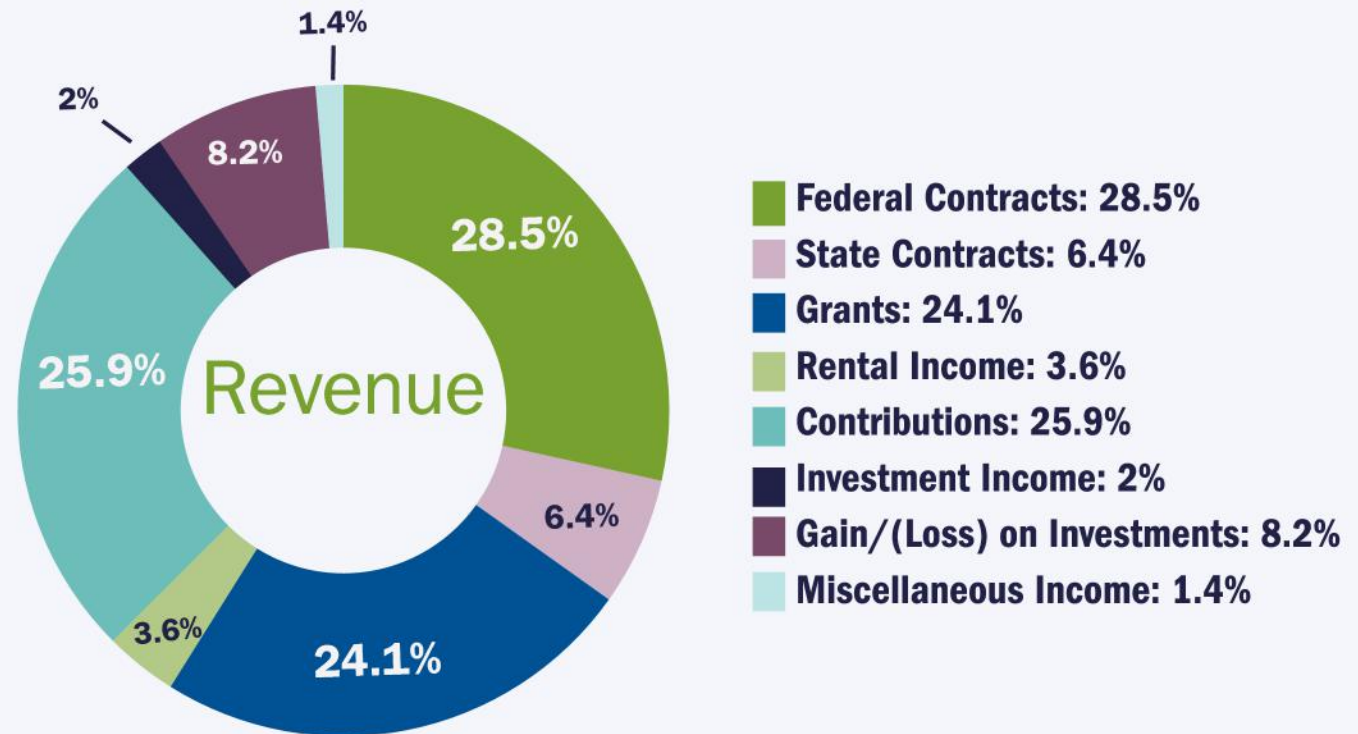
2024 Fiscal Year Financials

28

*Fiscal year is from **October** through **September**

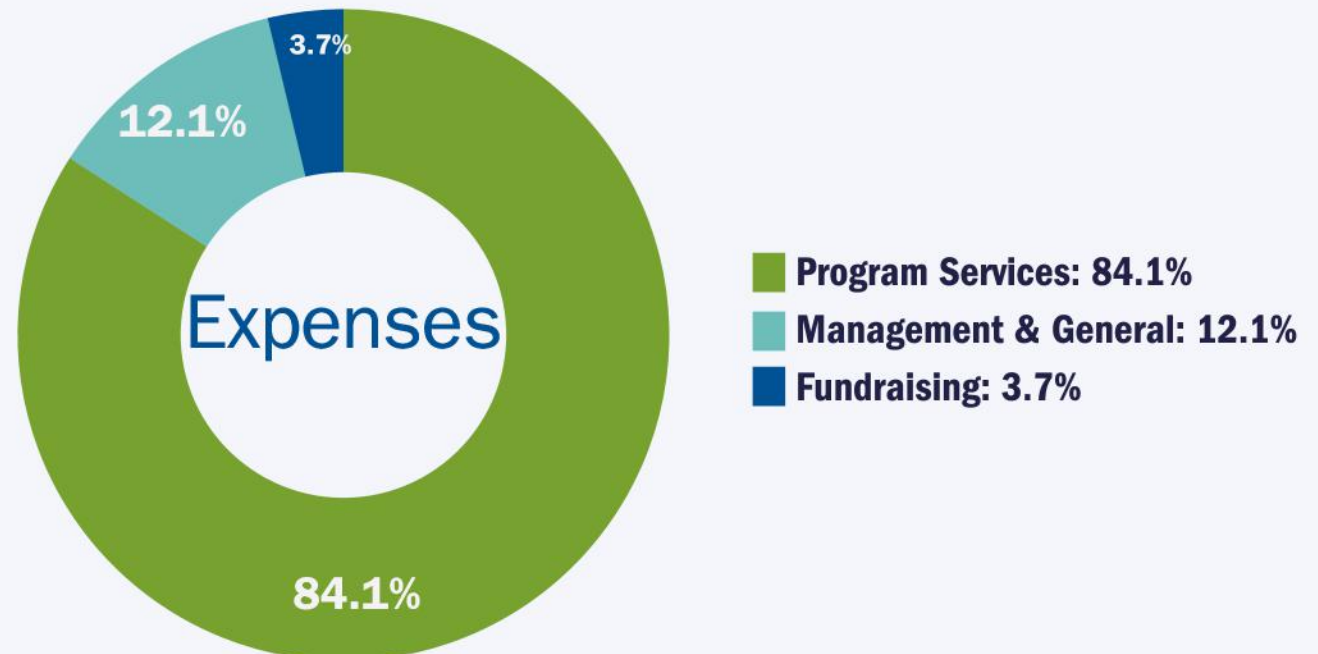
Revenue

Federal Contracts	\$955,307.31
State Contracts	\$214,269.06
Grants	\$807,074.62
Rental Income	\$121,463.00
Contributions	\$869,456.01
Investment Income	\$68,211.00
Gain/(Loss) on Investments	\$273,932.00
Miscellaneous Income	\$45,917.00
Total Revenues	\$3,355,630.00



Expenses

Program Services	\$2,528,798.00
Management & General	\$364,817.00
Fundraising	\$112,251.00
Total	\$3,005,866.00



Change in Net Assets \$349,764.00

Total Assets

Current Assets	\$1,915,958.00
Fixed Assets	\$2,466,121.00
Investments & Other Assets	\$1,540,833.00

Liabilities & Net Assets

Current Liabilities	\$1,444,555.00
Non Current Liabilities	\$612,584.00
Net Assets	\$3,865,773.00

Letter from the Board President

Dear Friends,

As Foster Forward celebrates 30 years of impact, I'm proud to reflect not only on what we've achieved, but on the **deep sense of purpose** that continues to drive us forward. I've served on the **board for over 11 of those 30 years**, and it's been one of the most meaningful chapters of my life.

My perspective is shaped by personal experience: when I was a child, my parents opened our home to a boy in need and raised him as part of our family. I believed then, as I do now, **that every young person deserves a stable foundation, the chance to succeed, and a community that has their back.**

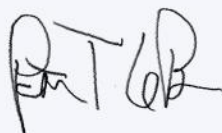
Over the years, I've watched Foster Forward evolve from a **scrappy organization** with big ideas to a **nationally recognized leader** in youth transition services. I've had the privilege of witnessing **milestone moments firsthand**; the purchase of our headquarters in 2017, national recognition of the Works Wonders® program in 2018, and our bold entry into affordable housing development in recent years. Through it all, I've been inspired by the **staff's unwavering commitment** and the remarkable resilience of the young people we serve.

I'm especially proud of the board team we've cultivated. I've been fortunate to serve on several nonprofit boards over the years, and **my experience at Foster Forward has been uniquely meaningful.** I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to work alongside such a passionate and purpose-driven group of leaders. Together, we've supported investments in housing, workforce, and innovation, while also striving to ensure Foster Forward is a best-in-class organization for the people who power our mission: our staff.

As we mark this milestone, our sights are set squarely on the future. The next 30 years of Foster Forward's work will be shaped not only by the lessons of our past, but by **the voices of youth**, the **creativity of our team**, and the **strength of our community.** Most of all, it will be **made possible by you**, our supporters. Your generosity has been the steady force behind our progress, and we are deeply thankful to have you with us.

We are ready for what's next, and **we're honored to have you by our side.**

With appreciation and resolve,



Patrick T. LeBeau
Board President



Key milestone: Foster Forward accepts an award for Works Wonders as the CWLA National Blueprint Champion in 2018. **Pictures left to right:** Patrick LeBeau, Kat Keenan, Lisa Guillette and Bernadette Tavares

Patrick LeBeau, President

Executive Director, Private Wealth Advisor, **Morgan Stanley, Private Wealth Management**

Stephanie Sleeper, Vice President

Retired SVP, Senior Director, Head of Third Party Risk Management, **Citizens Bank**

David Pellegrino, Esq., Treasurer,

SVP General Counsel & Chief Risk Officer, **Navigant Credit Union**

Luciana Rivera, Secretary

Executive Office, Vice President, Investor Relations, **Goldman Sachs**

Adam Biehl

Head of Global Partnership Strategy, Toys, Licensing & Entertainment, **Hasbro**

Kevin J. Briggs

SVP, Strategic Partnerships, **BayCoast Bank**

John Conforti

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