



2024 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT



Written by
dedicated staff, Board members,
volunteers, and all who believe in our mission.

*This 2024 Annual Impact Report is dedicated to our donors,
volunteers, Board members, and staff, who are all part of our
Village community and work diligently, give generously, and care deeply.
Their unwavering commitment to our children and young adults is both
unparalleled and deeply appreciated.*

*To our children and young adults, we will always continue
to fuel your brilliance and talent and champion
the fulfillment of your greatest dreams.*

PROLOGUE

SOS Children's Villages Florida (SOS) opened in 1993 to care for children who have been removed from their homes and placed into foster care in Broward and Palm Beach Counties. Currently, SOS is home for up to 72 children ages newborn to 18. At SOS, special emphasis is placed on keeping biological siblings together. We also have a Next Steps program designed to provide a continuum of services for young adults who have aged out of care at 18.

At one of the most difficult times in their young lives, our Village offers a safe and supportive environment for our children in 13 single-family homes with full-time foster parents in a residential neighborhood cul-de-sac in Coconut Creek, Florida. In addition to housing, safety, security, and stability, we are committed to providing vital support services for our children, to help them deal with their emotions, deficiencies in school, and social skills and behavior. We are also committed to preparing our kids to live independently. The SOS on-site programs include mental health counseling and medical services, a behavioral step system program in each home, extracurricular activities, educational tutoring, a mentoring program, and independent life skills classes. SOS also offers a Next Steps program for youth who have aged out of foster care and have transitioned to adulthood. There are currently close to 200 youth enrolled in this program throughout South Florida.

Over the past 31 years, SOS has helped to raise more than 1500 foster children who have grown into healthy, successful, contributing members of our community. Our children are twice as likely to complete high school, and six times as likely to graduate college, than children living in foster care in the general population. For the past fifteen years, 100% of our high school seniors have graduated AND enrolled in college or trade school, outcomes for which we are most proud and demonstrate the life-changing impact of our support programs.

We are committed to the welfare of children living in foster care in our community and this 2024 annual impact report demonstrates the manifestation of this commitment.

1.

PROGRAM SERVICES

We consider the children and teens living at SOS Children's Villages Florida to be part of our family and their complete well-being is of the utmost importance to us. To address the often-complex needs of our children, we offer a comprehensive Residential Care Program and utilize an innovative team-based approach to offer each of them the individualized physical, emotional, developmental and educational services they require to succeed now and into the future.

CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES: We have six full-time case managers who oversee the needs of each child. The case managers find the children the appropriate services and connect the children to the community-based providers to address their needs and challenges. They advocate on behalf of the children in school and in judicial settings and provide crisis intervention, as needed.

MEDICAL AND SUPPORT SERVICES: A medical coordinator monitors the needs of our children, including psychotherapeutic and other prescriptions, and serves as the point of contact with the children's physicians, psychiatrists, and dentists. The coordinator manages the health care needs of the children by scheduling medical and dental appointments and managing medication plans. In addition, children are taken off-site for medical visits as needed.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: Our children benefit from one full-time and a part time mental health counselor providing individual, family and group counseling to our children with a variety of issues, including abuse, abandonment and neglect, post-traumatic stress disorder, attachment disorder, grief, and loss, as well as any number of other early childhood traumas. Our goal is to help the children to move beyond these traumas and to make choices that can result in happier and more productive lives, in a safe and supportive environment.

A STEP SYSTEM PROGRAM: Everyone at the Village uses this program designed to teach appropriate behaviors that will improve our children's social skills and school performance as well as enhance their self-esteem. Further, the system assesses life skills to ensure that mastery of vital skills is attained.

INDEPENDENT LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM: Within 30 days of their 13th birthday or ages 13-18 for those arriving at the Village, children receive the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment comprehensive test that identifies their strengths and highlights areas where more knowledge or improvement is needed. They are then enrolled in an individualized and comprehensive on-site life skills curriculum where youth begin working on daily life skills, such as interpersonal communication skills, nutrition, health care, personal hygiene, meal planning and housekeeping. Also included are educational and career planning, job application and interview training and personal money management. Classes are held on a weekly basis and are taught by our Independent Living Skills Manager, Case Managers and outside volunteers in a small group setting.

TUTORING: Is offered on-site by Study Zone to all school-age children living at SOS Children's Villages Florida. Four tutors and a supervisor are available for two hours, four days a week to help the children with reading, math, homework assistance and study skills. An initial assessment is completed for each child, and a learning plan is created based on individual needs.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM: Screened and trained volunteers spend time in our homes forming long-term bonds as they support our foster parents.

ENRICHMENT SERVICES: At SOS, we provide each child in our care with a supportive neighborhood to help them heal and grow, and we strive to give our children well-rounded life experiences. A critical part of creating our nurturing environment are our enrichment activities that enable each child to take part in school-based and extracurricular activities such as art classes, sports, yoga, photography, music classes, college prep courses, field trips, and summer camp.

Participation in activities and summer camp creates a positive social environment and brings together SOS children with other children in the community, allowing them to integrate, socialize, and develop their personal skills outside of the classroom. As our children develop interest in specific activities, they discover new aptitudes and talents. They blossom as their self-esteem grows through personal success and a sense of accomplishment. Every child in the Village is offered this opportunity.

2. NEXT STEPS

Next Steps has earned the designation of being our fastest growing program and is funded in the majority by The Jim Moran Foundation, The Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation, and a private family foundation.

Children, especially those aging out of the foster care system, need a solid support system to provide them with safe, stable and healthy paths to transition into adults. Without the proper resources and assistance, the likelihood that they will succeed as adults could be compromised. In addition, children aging out of foster care can face unique challenges based on their previous exposure to parental abuse, neglect, abandonment, violence in their home, separation from birth families, illicit substances, and frequent changes in placement.

The goal of the program is to support our young adults in becoming independent and productive members of society. We provide them with assistance in proactively managing their housing, finances, medical services, transportation, education, and career goals. We also provide targeted support services for those with children of their own. The “411” program component which addresses salient issues such as dating relationships, weight management, self-esteem, sex education, and self-defense. We currently have close to 200 young adults enrolled throughout the community. Program participants consist of former SOS residents and others who had experience within the foster care system throughout South Florida.

DID YOU KNOW?

90% of our young adults are enrolled in undergraduate, graduate, or vocational programs.

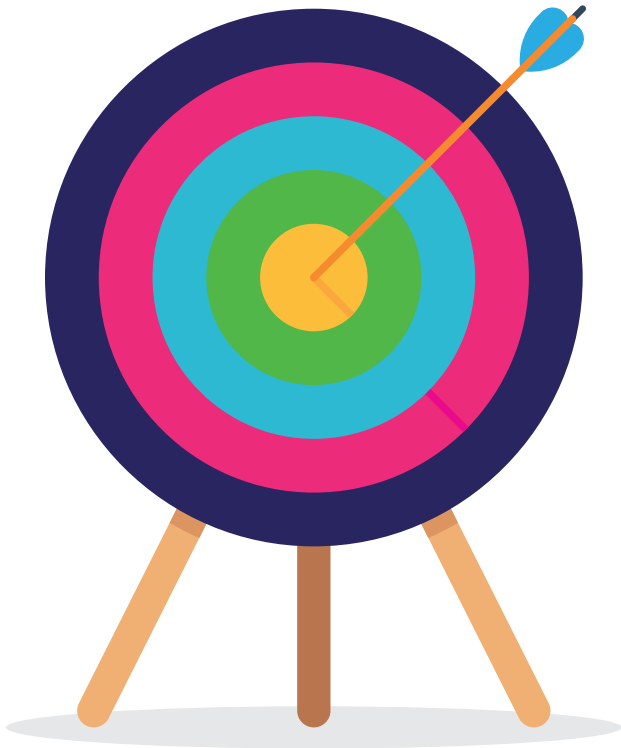
80% of our young adults gain employment via SOS partner organizations or through mentor relationships.

**45
years old** Our oldest Next Steps program member. He is fully independent with his own business and family, and while he does not utilize program services, he remains in touch due to the sense of family and relationships established over the years.

3.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

It is always important to chart our progress and assess the effectiveness of our programs by establishing active measurements of success. For 2024 we are pleased to share the following program outcomes. These outcomes demonstrate the life-changing power of comprehensive support and individualized care.



2024 PROGRAM GOALS & OUTCOMES:

GOAL: 75% of the children will improve or maintain their academic level.

RESULT: 90% attained this goal.

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GOAL: 75% of the children will improve or maintain their independent living skills.

RESULT: 95% attained this goal.

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GOAL: 75% of the young adults participating in the Next Steps Program will be enrolled in school or employed full time.

RESULT: 94% attained this goal.

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GOAL: 90% of the young adults participating in the Next STEPS Program will not be homeless.

RESULT: 98% attained this goal.

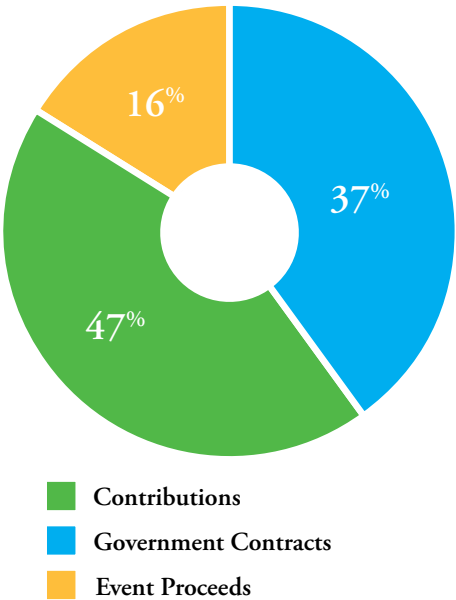
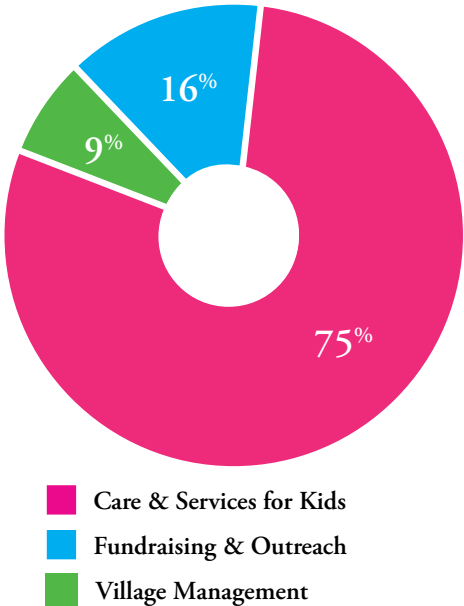


4. FINANCIALS

TOTAL REVENUES:	\$ 5,991,222
Grants And Foundations	\$2,234,778
ChildNet/Government Grants	\$2,191,247
Special Events	\$993,710
Other Income	\$571,487
EXPENSES	\$4,976,496
Program Services	\$3,724,234
Management And General	\$436,832
Fundraising	\$524,462
Special Events	\$290,968
FINANCIAL POSITION	
Cash And Cash Equivalents - Operations	\$3,283,121
Cash And Cash Equivalents - Building Expansion	\$213,678
Property And Equipment Net	\$1,645,758
Other Assets	\$3,505,044
Liabilities	\$359,428
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$8,288,173

HOW WE USE OUR FUNDS

Your support gives SOS the means to provide a warm, caring, and supportive environment where every child and young adult has access to a variety of enriching programs designed to help them thrive.



HOW WE ARE FUNDED

In addition to the daily stipend SOS Children’s Villages Florida receives from the State of Florida for the daily care of our children, we rely upon the support of friends like you to fill the cost gap for our programs and services. Funding through grants and foundations, special event income, third party events, and individual giving account for additional revenue streams.

5.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Our Board members are comprised of a cross section of professionals who provide financial oversight, secure resources to advance our mission, support fundraising efforts, and ensure that we have a sustainable future. They give of their time, talent, and resources, and each has a deep passion and commitment to our mission.

In 2024 our total Board giving, either personally or through their networks, was \$603,640.72, which represented 10% of all revenues for the year.

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JOSEPHINE SMITH
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CATHERINE WALKER
Philanthropist

6.

OUR MISSION IN MOTION

OUR MISSION:

To provide a family-oriented community offering healing, hope, and home for children, young adults, and families to become self-sufficient, contributing members of society.

The following stories illustrate how our program has allowed others to thrive. It is the human side of the work we do that is most gratifying, as there is nothing more uplifting than being a part of helping others become the very best versions of themselves.

STORY 1: WHY LANGUAGE MATTERS

“People should not be defined by their experiences. This is especially true for youth with lived experience in the child welfare system which includes foster care.”

In June 2024 SOS Children’s Villages Florida hosted a community program made up of a panel of business leaders and advocates, to work to redress foster care biases, close gaps of marginalization, and shed light on more appropriate and sensitive ways of addressing youth. The term “Foster Youth” can be potentially viewed as reducing, and does not appropriately acknowledge the varied experiences and accomplishments of these young adults. Each person is his/her own entity and time spent in foster care is only a “pocket” of their life experience.

Advocates Maria Batista and Barbara Amedoadzi share valuable insights and salient perspectives on what change is necessary and how we can become our own “agents of change.”

PANELISTS WEIGH IN ON WHY LANGUAGE MATTERS

“The coming together as a community and having corporate support to produce this type of event are critical towards impacting change. It was an eye opener for me personally and has caused us to rethink and literally rewrite some of the narrative we send to our donors,” shared SOS Chief Development Officer, Dawn Seay.

MARIA BATISTA

Maria Batista is the Florida Youth SHINE Statewide Coordinator where she empowers youth to become leaders and advocates. Growing up, Maria spent seven years in the Florida Foster Care system and saw the injustices that youth experienced firsthand, which served as fuel for her advocacy journey.



“Language matters because youth need unconditional love and support. Language can have an impact which we may not know or understand. My goal is to make sure that whatever language I use only uplifts and empowers youth.”

Maria Batista works with organizations and national partners to use the term “Lived Experience” in foster care vs. using “Foster Youth.” The latter is more labeling and removes the identity of the person. For a person who spent time in the foster care system, this was something endured and does not serve as an identity. She shares that labeling can lead to re-traumatization of unresolved issues for some, and for others it can contribute to biases, particularly in the workplace where mistakes can be viewed and blamed as a result of a person having lived experience in the foster care system.

BARBARA AMEDOADZI

Barbara Amedoadzi currently works as a Research Manager at Boston Medical Center and advocates to raise awareness for children without parental care both in the United States and Internationally. She also brings attention to issues on gender-based violence impacting children and families leading to intergenerational trauma, and generational poverty.



“Language matters in unimaginable ways. We do not refer to or identify a person who is divorced as a “divorcee,” or someone who has experienced domestic violence as a “domestic violence survivor.” These labels are narrow and limiting and we do a disservice to youth by imposing this language on them.”

For Barbara, as a wife, new mother, and accomplished professional, and having moved further away from her lived experience in foster care, it is especially important to acknowledge that as a woman she has grown into a multi-layered individual whose current roles eclipse her past life experience. This holds true for most of us as we evolve through life. We do a disservice by referring to those in the foster care system as “foster youth”. As a person heals from what was most likely a traumatic experience, we must do all that we can to allow individuals to move forward while opening room for conversation to address issues such as this. Removing labels is paramount to orchestrating change. Change can be impactful and with education we can all help.

STORY 2: AMY'S STORY

Ten years ago, we welcomed a sibling group of seven to the Village. Unfortunately, their mother's parental rights were terminated leaving the children in foster care. The primary goal in foster care is for children to be reunited with their parents. If this is not possible, the next step is to try to place them with relatives. If relative care is not an option, children are placed for adoption. Those who do not meet any of these circumstances age out of care by state law at eighteen. This is Amy's story of how her relationship with our SOS therapist Krista developed into an everlasting bond of love, support, and family.



A few years ago, Amy's younger siblings went to live with a family member in Georgia, her oldest sister was adopted by one of her teachers in 2017, and another older sister aged out of care at eighteen, leaving sixteen-year-old Amy at SOS. Over the past three years her relationship with Krista evolved to a place where Krista has permanent legal guardianship of Amy, and they live together with Krista's twelve-year-old daughter as a family. Krista describes Amy as "sweet, kind, caring, smart, loving, pretty, and has a good head on her shoulders. She has good insight and thought patterns. She does not take a "woe is me" approach to life, she is very independent, and moves forward."

DID YOU KNOW?

All young adults with lived experience in the foster care system for at least six-months before their 18th birthday are eligible for a full tuition waiver from State universities and accredited technical schools in Florida. Additionally, they receive a monthly stipend of \$1,730 as long as they maintain a 2.0 GPA. The stipend is available until age twenty-three, and the tuition waiver is in place until age twenty-eight, allowing them to continue to graduate school or further.

Amy is a motivated student who entered the 11th grade this year and is taking honors classes. She broke free from a group of negative friends and primarily hangs out with Krista, her daughter, and her sisters. It is wonderful that she has been able to maintain a close bond with her two older sisters who visit her often and recently came to pick her up to get her nails done and for some back-to-school shopping. She will begin looking at colleges soon as she decides what she would like to study.

STORY 3: BRIANNA'S JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE

No one ever plans to end up in the foster care system. With "happily ever after as the goal," foster care is your worst nightmare. Mine began when I was just eight years old, and my mother lost her job. Prior to this we lived as a family and did family things like go to the movies, the park, the beach, and take trips to visit my mom's family in Alabama. For the most part it was a good life. The "AFTER happily" which is how I describe the unraveling of my short existence and was the beginning of my journey. A journey of homelessness and displacement which consisted of us living in a motel, on the sofas of friends and relatives, and in a car. Homelessness resulted in me being taken away from my mother and placed in foster care – a dark place where I was fearful, sad, and untrusting. My spirit plummeted to the lowest level I can remember, and if asked to describe myself, I would have said "broken." My mother developed mental illness.



"Foster care does not define who you are as a person. You can take the experiences from your past and allow them to push you to achieve your dreams."



My 18th Birthday

One afternoon the Department of Children and Families (DCF) came to get me from school and took me to what was my first "placement" with a family in Pompano. I was in the third grade. I lived with this family for four years and things changed when my foster mother had to retire from fostering due to an illness. This resulted in my second "placement" which was with a family in Plantation. I won't get into the details as I like to keep some things private and the memories are too painful; but let's say that after two years here, the placement broke down and I was faced with having to endure a third "placement."

I came to SOS at age thirteen or fourteen. I don't remember my exact age. While I was always a good student, it was here that I made a promise to myself to excel academically so that I could break the cycle of poverty and build a better life for myself. Like any teen, my emotions ranged from happy, sad, to being rebellious. SOS provided the structure and support I needed to get on my way. While still not utopia, I was better off than I had been in years. It was always difficult for me when someone was adopted

or got reunited with their family. My heart would break each time as I saw them go home and I stayed behind. A good memory from this time was when I got to go to overnight camp and make new friends. An unforgettable memory was when our SOS foster parent took all of us in our house to spend Christmas and Thanksgiving with her family. This made me feel “normal.” For those of you who have not experienced life in foster care, normalcy is a big deal. I can’t explain what the sense of belonging does other than say that it brings out endorphins.



*My 1st graduation in 2020
from USF with my B.S. in
Health Sciences*

Another thing that happened to me at SOS was that I met my mentor. Our relationship started when I was leaving to go away to college, and I was just a few months away from my 18th birthday. For the past seven years she has been there for me in so many ways – even times when I have not been there for myself. We have a deep connection, and she is more like a mother. While



*My 2nd graduation in
August 2024 from FAU
with my BSN*

we do not always share the same point of view: she listens to what I have to say and challenges me to evaluate the potential outcomes of my decisions. She pushes me to have healthy relationships and surround myself with people who share my values. She is kind, lots of fun, very fair, and firm... all at the same time. We have gone on several trips to places where we can experience our shared interests of historical homes, art exhibits, beautiful scenery, afternoon tea, and great food. She is in the process of helping me get my passport so we can visit even more places together.

This is my story. A chapter is closing and another opening up to receive me and everything I have worked so hard to achieve. So far, at age twenty- four I have a B.S. from the University of South Florida in Health Sciences, and most recently a BSN from Florida Atlantic University. I am not bragging about my accomplishments – I am just proud. This is a big deal for me. I am the first in my family to get a college degree and the journey does not end here.



Me with my mentor and SOS life coach



JILLIAN SMATH, MSW
Chief Executive Officer

Jillian Smath, MSW has been with SOS for the past twenty-seven years and served as CEO for nine. Her leadership is fueled by a deep knowledge of the nuances of the child welfare system and an innate passion to ensure that all children find a secure place in the world.



IVAN VELEZ-LEON, CFE, CPA
Board Chair

Ivan Velez-Leon, CPA is an accountant with KPMG specializing in risk and control evaluation, ethics and compliance, and remediation, and serves as Chair of the Board at SOS Children’s Villages Florida. His financial oversight ensures the organization remains on solid footing and ensures that SOS exercises superb stewardship of donor dollars.



THE POWER OF PHILANTHROPY

We all want to make a difference. The act of philanthropy by each person results in enormous benefits for those who are marginalized in our communities. Children in foster care are particularly vulnerable and need champions so they can thrive, realize “unmet” dreams, and move beyond sordid pasts to become the best versions of themselves as the universe intended them to be. **Philanthropy is more than writing a check - volunteering time, mentoring, donating items and experiences, all make a difference.**

SOS Children’s Villages Florida 2024 Annual Impact Report
is a testimony to the power of philanthropy and what happens
when caring people band together and give from the heart!

“You can give to this organization with Confidence.

★★★★ top rating.”

- CHARITY NAVIGATOR,

The world’s largest and most trusted nonprofit evaluator

“As a donor who has invested in SOS’s programs and services, this is a reaffirmation of the excellent work they do for not only kids in foster care, but the support offered to those who age out of care at eighteen.”

- WANDA MORAN, *The Wanda and Jim Moran Foundation*

“You will see the profound impact of giving and will be challenged to join in the lifesaving support of this mission.”

- DAWN SEAY, *Chief Development Officer, SOS Children’s Villages Florida*

