



ampersand
families
belonging · dignity · hope

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Leading and Innovating





AMPERSAND FAMILIES' MISSION

Ampersand Families' mission is to provide permanency and adoption services to older youth and families who face barriers to equity in child welfare, and to champion systemic changes that advance belonging, dignity and hope.

OUR VISION

Our vision is that every young person whose life has been disrupted by trauma and subsequent child welfare intervention will be restored to a safe, permanent family with an urgency that honors the brevity of childhood.

OUR VALUES

Equity

We understand that privilege, systemic racism and economic disparities impact ourselves, the people and communities we serve, and the child welfare field, and we are uniquely charged to advance equity through our practice and leadership.

Belonging

We believe that being connected to family, kin, community and culture are essential aspects of wellbeing. We challenge barriers that keep youth from building or accessing these relationships, and we bravely advocate for practices that create opportunities for connection.

Dignity

We know that the adversarial nature of the child welfare system can leave youth, families and professionals feeling unseen, unheard and powerless. We commit to seeing and honoring the diversity of perspectives and intersecting identities each player brings to the table, knowing that the best outcomes are achieved when youth and families are understood to be more than the challenges they are facing.

Hope

We demonstrate hope through creative ideas, constructive partnerships, commitment to breaking through barriers, and the fervent belief that youth who have been separated from family need and deserve meaningful human relationships.

Integrity

We behave with honesty, act with the highest ethical behavior, and strive for superior performance standards, including holding ourselves accountable for the outcomes of our work, offering transparency in our financial management and honoring the public trust conferred upon us as a nonprofit organization.

Leadership

We champion positive change and proactively advance ideas and innovations that strengthen practices, accountability and outcomes throughout the child welfare system.

We're grateful.

As we reflect on the past year at Ampersand Families, we're filled with gratitude for the amazing individuals we're fortunate to serve and serve with. People like Aretina and her family, pictured on the cover of this report. Working with our incredible staff, Aretina was able to overcome systemic barriers and adopt her 12-year-old cousin from foster care earlier this year, welcoming her into a safe, loving, permanent and *familiar* home and family.

Connecting youth to family and supportive adult relationships is our passion, but we don't stop there. We know that youth who've experienced childhood trauma, including the trauma of family separation, need more to heal and reach their full potential. That's why programs like the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT™) and Minnesota Youth Voice (MYVoice) are so important.

NMT™ is a comprehensive assessment that identifies the impact of childhood trauma on a young person's developing brain, identifying and prioritizing areas that need support to heal. Ampersand Families is among only a handful of agencies in Minnesota offering this in-demand service for youth impacted by childhood trauma, and the only agency offering it at no cost to



Christina Zeise, Executive Director



Christina Zeise
Executive Director



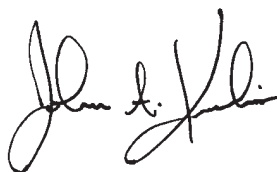
John Kunelius
Board Chair

families. Over the past year, we're proud to have doubled our capacity to provide NMT assessments by adding a second staff member certified to provide this innovative service.

MYVoice is Ampersand Families' youth leadership program serving young people with lived experience in foster care and/or adoption. MYVoice saw record-setting growth in 2023 thanks to new summer engagement opportunities in the arts, writing, and other areas. We also deepened our commitment to serving youth in highly restrictive settings like treatment facilities and juvenile detention centers. MYVoice programs are reaching teens and young adults who have been stereotyped, isolated, and written off, helping them feel seen, known and valued by caring adults and peers.

These are just two examples of how Ampersand Families continues to innovate and lead in our service to youth and families navigating Minnesota's flawed and inequitable child welfare system. We invite you to learn more by visiting our fresh new website at www.ampersandfamilies.org.

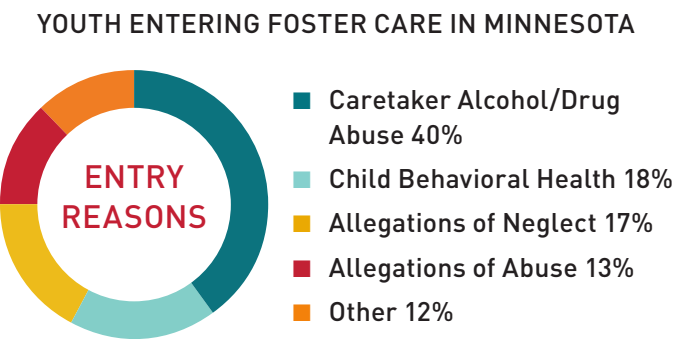
As we reflect on the past year, we're filled with gratitude for you, too. Thank you for your partnership as we do this difficult but essential work.



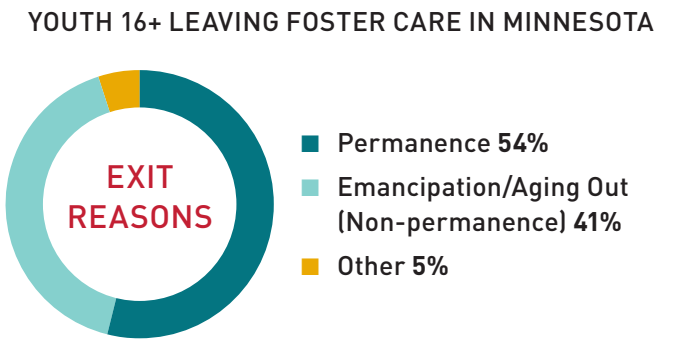
John Kunelius, Board Chair

2023 BY THE NUMBERS

75 Heart Gallery Photo Sessions Completed	58 MYVoice Youth Program Participants	49 Relative Search & Engagement Referrals	42 Youth Connected to Family Through Kin Link
28 Families Attended Weekend Retreats	17 Trauma Assessments Completed	15 Youth Placed with Families	7 Buddy Families Trained



Source: Minnesota’s Out-of-Home Care and Permanency Report, 2021



Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, www.aecf.org

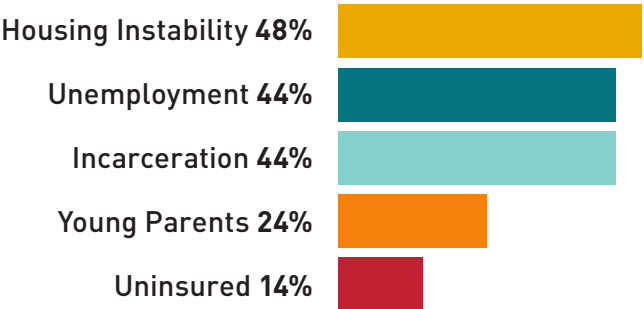


“If it wasn’t for Ampersand Families, I don’t think we would be where we’re at today. We’d probably still be fighting to get these boys.”

Linda Buechner, who fought the court system for six years before she could adopt her three grandsons

YOUNG ADULT OUTCOMES BY AGE 21

Young people in Minnesota who have experienced foster care have worse outcomes than their peers in the general population across a variety of measures. That's why our work to find family for youth who've experienced foster care is so important.



Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, www.aecf.org

OUR SERVICES

- Home Studies & Foster Care Licensing
- Child-Specific Recruitment
- Relative Search & Engagement
- Kin Link
- Parent Trainings
- Caregiver Roundtables
- Family Retreats
- Legal Clinics
- Parent Consultation Supports
- NMT Assessments
- Buddy Family Program
- Minnesota Youth Voice
- Minnesota Heart Gallery



Our service area is all **87** counties in Minnesota and all **11** tribal nations.
In 2023, we served **201** youth in **39** counties.

Anoka	Crow Wing	Houston	Otter Tail	Steele
Becker	Dakota	Kandiyohi	Pine	Stevens
Beltrami	Douglas	Le Sueur	Pipestone	Swift
Blue Earth	Fillmore	Lincoln	Ramsey	Todd
Brown	Freeborn	Lyon	Redwood	Waseca
Chippewa	Goodhue	Martin	Rice	Washington
Clay	Grant	Morrison	St Louis	Wright
Cottonwood	Hennepin	Olmsted	Stearns	

Our staff represent the **CULTURES** and **LIVED EXPERIENCES** of the youth we serve

32 Total Number of Staff	12 LGBTQ+ Staff	11 BIPOC Staff	12 Staff with lived experience in foster care/adoption
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FY23 FINANCIALS

	2023	2022
ASSETS		
Cash & Cash Equivalent	20,145	459,051
Accounts Receivables	760,241	433,171
Other Assets	716,275	46,968
Total Assets	\$1,496,661	\$939,190

LIABILITIES		
Accounts Payable and Accruals	274,410	119,671
Lease Liabilities - Non-Current	527,668	
Total Liabilities	\$802,078	\$119,671

NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted Net Assets	93,813	126,249
Board Restricted Net Assets	535,000	610,000
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	65,770	83,270
Total Net Assets	\$694,583	\$819,519

Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$1,496,661	\$939,190
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REVENUE		
Contributions	356,831	679,926
In-kind Contributions	58,767	18,271
Government Grants	2,310,564	1,433,497
Other	\$738	\$1,799
Total Revenue	\$2,726,900	\$2,133,493

EXPENSES		
Program Services	2,353,494	1,687,346
Management & General	388,718	316,733
Fundraising	109,624	81,679
Total Expenses	\$2,851,836	\$2,085,758

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS

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2023 AMPERSAND NEWS

RECRUITING FAMILIES FOR SOME OF MINNESOTA'S LONGEST-WAITING YOUTH

Youth in foster care who've experienced sexual abuse have high support needs and sometimes troubling behaviors, creating barriers to adoption. In FY23, Ampersand Families launched a new initiative to find families ready and able to parent these youth. This work included outreach and partnership-building with 14 organizations statewide including Rainbow Health, Annex Teen Clinic, and North Homes Child and Family Services.

RELATIVE SEARCH & ENGAGEMENT TAKES OFF

All relatives have something to offer youth in care even if they're unable to adopt. In 2021, Ampersand Families launched Relative Search & Engagement Services (RSES) with private funding. RSES staff identify and reach out to relatives and kin for older youth in care using a variety of innovative tools and techniques. In FY23, the state of Minnesota took over funding this program, expanding our capacity to move more youth, who may otherwise age out, to permanency with a relative or kin.



TARGETED RECRUITMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES

African American youth comprise more than half of all youth awaiting adoption, but only a tiny fraction of potential adoptive parents are African American. In FY23, Ampersand Families launched a new initiative to recruit more African American families as potential permanency and adoption resources. This work included hosting listening sessions and attending cultural events to raise awareness of the need and opportunity for more African American adoptive families.



KATIE'S QUILTS

Volunteer Katie Simonton makes colorful quilts for our staff to give to youth on adoption finalization day or to mark other milestone events. Katie made more than a dozen beautiful quilts for our youth in 2023.



AMPERSAND FAMILIES STAFF



Find us on



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