

The Walden Difference

2020-2021 IMPACT REPORT



45 YEARS
WALDEN FAMILY SERVICES



OUR VISION

EVERY CHILD has a **LOVING FAMILY** and the ability to realize their **GREATEST POTENTIAL** toward becoming a **SELF-SUFFICIENT** and **PRODUCTIVE MEMBER** of their community.

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WHO WE ARE

We are a staff of highly trained social work professionals and licensed therapists who support birth, foster, adoptive families, and the community at large in caring for children and youth—many who have physical or developmental, behavioral, or mental health challenges, are LGBTQ+, or are part of large sibling groups. Preparing families to care for children with special health care needs allows kids to grow up in loving families, rather than in hospitals, skilled-nursing facilities, or group homes and congregate care facilities. Most importantly, living with a family helps children and youth build relationships that form the foundation for learning, experiencing social-emotional well-being, and living successful fulfilling lives.

FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR AND CEO

Walden Family Services turned 45 this summer. While working with children and youth requires that we be forward thinking in this ever-changing world, we know that our past informs the present as it does our future.

The tenacity and commitment of Walden's founder, Roseann Wagoner, flows through our core values and is evident in our nimble response to the past year and a half. We supported our youth who lost their jobs during the pandemic as well as those who faced mental health challenges because of isolation and loneliness. We also found ways to better protect and continue to administer quality care to our children with special healthcare needs, knowing the great risk the coronavirus posed to them.

Yet, even during these challenging times, Walden has had many things to celebrate!

In April, we were invited to serve as co-investigator in Loma Linda University's state research study, *A Multi-Component Intervention to Strengthen Families and Build Youth Resilience*. Our new THP+ program in Los Angeles saw two youth go on to graduate from Cal State Northridge in June, one with a sociology degree and the other with a degree in finance—impressive results for a year-old program. Longtime supporters, Maryanne and Harley Sefton pledged a multi-year gift to fund the Sefton Hearts that Foster program in support of our Foster Family Agency. And we welcomed new supporters and board members even as we had to say goodbye to our dear and loyal friend, Ron Brady.

The speed and efficacy of the coronavirus vaccine brought its own set of opportunities for our Walden community: youth were able to return to work; students to the classroom; and supporters and friends were able to dine together under the stars at our Wine D'Vine fundraiser once again.

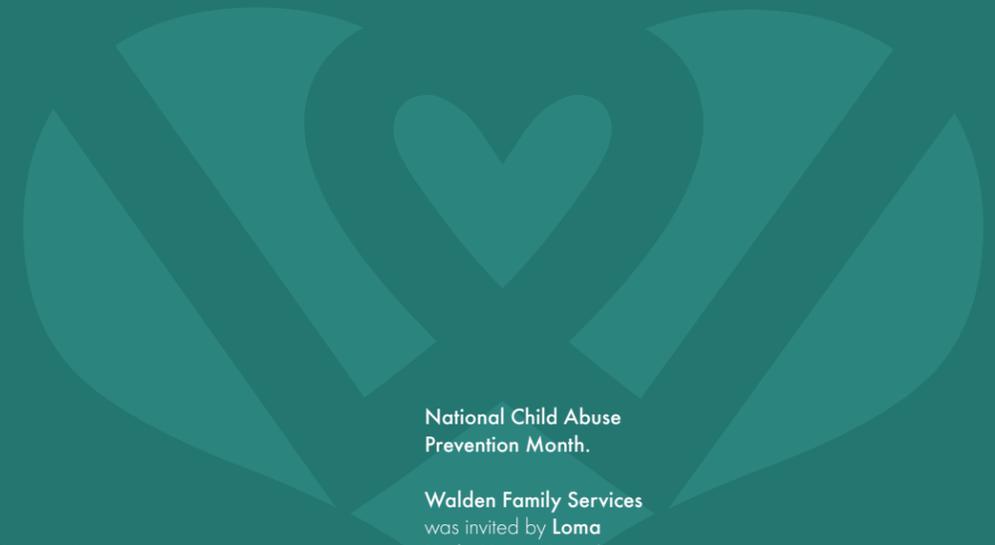
As we look to the future, Walden envisions a more equitable and inclusive world. We have a long history of serving and advocating for marginalized people and the vulnerable as we've worked to end systemic racism in the child welfare system. Our commitment has never been more visible than with our addition of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Manager, Dr. Darjené Graham-Perez, who is working to infuse DEI best practices into our trainings. By helping our clients find their voices and develop their leadership skills, we enable them to advocate for themselves, their communities, and foster care itself.

And so, we march optimistically and enthusiastically into the next 45 years thanks to our foster and adoptive families, community partners, board members, staff, donors, and grant makers. We are grateful for your commitment to us now and in the years to come.

Leslie Levinson
Board Chair

Teresa Stivers
Chief Executive Officer

2020-2021 YEAR IN REVIEW



iFoster expands its reach.
Prior to the fall school term, iFoster expanded its tech program to provide laptops to **all foster kids in K-12** as well as those aging out/transitioning to independence.

Hunter Industries provided Walden with a grant to support our COVID response.

The Walden Difference.
Walden's first all-digital Impact Report released.

First virtual **"Tea with T"** hosted by Walden's **CEO Teresa Stivers** to address foster care and adoption during COVID.

Giving Tuesday, thanks to a **Triple Match** from long-term Walden supporters, **Terri & Craig Gainor**, sets a **new fundraising record.**

Riverside Community Healthcare Foundation awarded Walden a grant from the **Stebler Fund** to support our work addressing the health needs of children ages 0-17 in our care.

Hervey Family Fund granted general operating support for our programs.

Champions for Children, the agency's web-based recurring giving program, launched.

National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Walden Family Services was invited by **Loma Linda University** to be part of their state research project on **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** and social determinants of health. Walden will be providing **Nurturing Families** skills development and structured case management to families in San Bernardino County as part of this research grant, working with families with children 0-11 years.

Virtually celebrated **Pride Month.**

july

august

september

october

november

december

january

february

march

april

may

june

Los Angeles THP Plus program launched with a capacity for 23 youth in San Fernando and Antelope Valleys.

Los Angeles Supervisors Grant. Los Angeles Supervisor Sheila Kuehl provided Walden with a grant from discretionary funds to purchase a new server for our Encino office.

Inland Southern California United Ways Coalition Grant. Provided Walden with a grant to support our COVID response.

Walter G. & Betty C. Zable Foundation provided an unrestricted grant to support Walden Family Services.

Chief Operations Officer Sue Evans and **Director of Quality Assurance Mary Frame** presented to the **National Family Focus Treatment Association (FFTA)** on building capacity and stabilizing family placements to meet community needs through cultural humility.

Shop from the Heart year-end fundraising campaign launched. The campaign went on to **break all previous year-end records** thanks to the **generous match** made possible by **Maryanne & Harley Sefton.**

Walden awarded a grant by **Reach Out** to promote the **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)** for pregnant/parenting youth and other young families throughout the Inland Empire. The goal was to increase economic support for communities at higher risk for **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** through increased awareness and receipt of the EITC.

Dr. Seuss Fund awarded a grant to our San Diego offices serving children, youth, and families (FFA, THP-NMD, and THP Plus programs).

Chief Operations Officer Sue Evans, Director of Quality Assurance Mary Frame, and Intensive Services Foster Care Supervisor Rochelle Emerick presented to the **California Alliance of Child Family Services Catalyst Center** on the development of programs for children with special health care needs.

National Adoption Month. Walden facilitated 20 adoptions during fiscal year 2020-21.

First Republic Bank provided a grant in support of our THP programs (all districts).

Walden earns highest 3-year reaccreditation from CARF International, the independent agency whose evaluations of health and human services organizations is recognized as the gold standard of care.

Foster Care Awareness Month.

45 YEARS
...AND COUNTING!

Roseann Wagoner: Founder and Visionary Changing the Lives of Children in Care

One could say that **Walden Family Services** was founded on the bedrock of determination, faith, and sheer grit. These traits, and an unshakeable commitment to improving the lives of children and youth in foster care, remain at the heart of the services and programs Walden continues to provide.



In 1975, Roseann Wagoner was completing her master's thesis on behavioral modification for emotionally challenged teens in group home settings when her physician told her that her thyroid cancer had returned. She was 26.

The cancer was aggressive. Roseann was admitted to the hospital to undergo radiation and would be in isolation. To pass the time, she brought her thesis and finished it during her grueling treatment. What she didn't know was that the strength of the radiation necessitated that everything in her room be burned before her discharge. Clothing, books, and her entire typewritten master thesis.

Many people might have given up, but not Roseann. She felt so strongly about her work to support abused and neglected children that she decided not only to rewrite her thesis, but to put her ideas into action. In 1976, with the help of her husband, Don Wagoner's faith in her and the financial support of her older sister, Bonnie Forness, Roseann's vision became a six-bed group home for boys. Walden Sacramento was born!

Roseann's desire to open her own group home was a constructive response to her frustration with the "system" when she worked with boys 6-12 years old. Her instincts told her more could be done to create a healing environment that would offer life-changing impact. She felt the system wasn't moving fast enough and the kids paid the price.

Unfortunately, the bureaucracy involved with opening a group home was also slow moving.

"It was quite difficult to get started," Don says. "Luckily, we found an attorney to do the incorporation papers for free since we had very little money to run on."

Rose was a quiet dynamo. She was sweet... but you never wanted to underestimate her.

continued on page 10



Top to bottom:

Rosann and Don celebrating the day they received the license to open Walden's San Diego office

Sisters Bonnie and Rose in 1987, two years after Walden San Diego was opened; Bonnie served as CEO of the organization until 1996

It took the county six months to do the first home inspection and another six before Roseann and Don received their first placement. That's also when they learned they wouldn't be providing care to 6-12-year-olds as planned.

"The county needed group homes for 12-17-year-olds," Don explains. While they didn't have experience working with older youth, they were hopeful that the principles of the program they'd designed were broad enough to serve that age group.

The first child placed in their care was a 13-year-old boy from Sacramento County Probation. Not long after his arrival, Roseann and Don realized that the program would require further modification to accommodate the unique needs of children coming from the juvenile justice system.

With each challenge, the couple adapted. Roseann had proven that she was willing to fight for her beliefs and knew how to stay the course. She wasn't about to give up on her calling to improve the lives of children.

"Everything that Rose was about, she directed toward helping children," Bonnie recalls. "She was a visionary even as a little girl." Smiling. "But a visionary with moxie. She knew where she wanted to go."

For more than two decades, Roseann led the organization with two clear goals: to increase the number of children reached and to advocate for their well-being at the county, state, and federal levels.

One group home soon became six, and in 1984 Walden merged with Westside Youth Homes in

Antelope Valley, more than doubling its capacity. By the mid 1990's, Walden had established a presence in Sacramento, San Diego, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Imperial counties.

During this time, Roseann recognized the therapeutic benefits of placing abused or neglected children with families. Soon she began transitioning Walden from the group home model to foster family placement.

"As we grew, we were able to rescue so many more children," Bonnie says.

Throughout her tenure, Roseann was a tireless advocate for children in the system, starting with negotiating with Sacramento County to increase the cost per child from \$1,250 to \$2,170.

"This gave us the ability to to expand our services, pay our people better, and train them better," Don says.

As Walden expanded into San Fernando and Antelope valleys, Roseann was able to retain the higher rate per child based on the quality of the program the agency provided.

In time, Roseann teamed up with California Association of Group Homes to spearhead children's rights reforms ranging from mandatory reporting to fingerprinting individuals who work with children.

In 1980, California passed the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA). The law requires mandated reporters, including teachers, social workers, and clergy, to report instances of actual or suspected child abuse and child neglect. It also

protects individuals reporting abuse from being sued by parents.

"She was instrumental in driving that legislation forward," Don explains.

The Walden team saw a significant increase in the level of trauma and abuse in the influx of new cases.

Before her retirement, Roseann lobbied the California legislation to change the laws forcing youth to age out of foster care at eighteen. She argued that with all that youth in care had faced that they weren't ready to be on their own so young and without support.

"To see Walden's transitional housing program where kids don't age out, I take it back to Rose," Bonnie says.

A few years after leaving Walden, Roseann lost her battle with cancer. She was 55.

"If Roseann could see Walden today, she would be delighted," Don concludes. "She would see that the program born in her heart grew and continues to provide care to children, which was her love and her life."

We were happy knowing that Walden would continue into the future in capable hands.

1970s

- Walden founded by Roseann Wagoner in 1976 to provide quality care for children in residential group homes.
- Opens first residential group home in Sacramento for twelve- to seventeen-year-old boys.



2000–2021

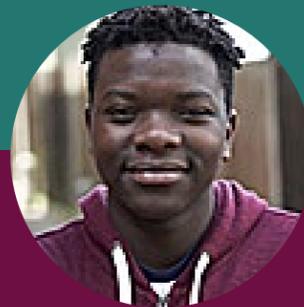
- Launched a program to serve children with special health care needs in Riverside, Los Angeles, and San Diego counties.
- Licensed as a full-service adoption agency.
- Contracted to provide Independent Living Aftercare services to emancipated youth in San Bernardino County.
- Launched Nurturing Parents and CalLearn programs to support pregnant and parenting teens.



- Launched life skills training for San Bernardino County foster youth.
- Expanded mental health services for foster children/youth in Riverside County.
- Expanded First 5 FAMILY Program to serve all age groups within San Bernardino County.
- Provided full uninterrupted services and support to those we serve during COVID-19 pandemic.
- Invited by Loma Linda University to be part of their state research project on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and social determinants of health, working with San Bernardino County families with children zero to eleven-years old.

1980s

- Pioneered one of California's first "Treatment Foster Care" programs to offer children/youth an alternative to group home placement.
- Merged with Westside Youth Homes in Antelope Valley, acquiring eight group homes.
- Expanded services to San Diego County.
- Awarded grant by Los Angeles County Probation to open six group homes and treatment foster care program in San Fernando Valley



- Contracted with San Bernardino County to run centers for birth families to have court-ordered supervised visits while their children are in foster care.
- Licensed for Transitional Housing Placement plus Foster Care (THP+FC) program in San Bernardino, Riverside, San Diego, and Los Angeles counties for youth ages 18–21 who choose to stay in care.
- Earned three 3-year accreditations from CARF, the independent agency whose evaluations of health and human services organizations is recognized internationally as the gold standard of care.
- Named "Live Well San Diego" partner by San Diego County Board of Supervisors.



1990s

- Walden diversifies by offering non-residential services to support families in their own homes and communities. Programs include the Family Preservation Program in Los Angeles County, and Wonder Land day care center and Walden's Kids On Campus before and after school child care.
- Expanded foster care program to serve children with developmental disabilities.



- For three consecutive years earned Human Rights Campaign's highest innovator seal of recognition "All Children - All Families" for providing culturally competent services for LGBTQ children/families.
- Provides mental health services for foster children/youth in San Bernardino.
- Launched THP+ transitional housing program in San Diego and Los Angeles counties for former foster youth ages 18–24.

For 45 years, Walden has had an unwavering commitment to children and families. We remain steadfast to helping children and youth rebound from trauma, discover who they are, and develop healthy relationships so that they can successfully transition from foster care to family life, college, career, and the community.

Teresa Stivers, CEO



Clockwise from left:

Former Walden CEO Bonnie Forness, current CEO Teresa Stivers, and Walden co-founder, Don Wagoner

Former Walden client and current Board Secretary, Rajah Gaaney, with son, Austin

Tally Ruiz with daughter, Isabella, who suffers from Rett Syndrome, a rare post-natal neurological disorder

Jennifer and Jeremiah Johnson celebrate growing their family with son, Beau

Former client Samantha Mondrosch with social worker Menya Owens

The Torcellinis and sons welcome Abigail and Angelica.

Nurturing Parenting graduate, Naomi Mack takes a break with daughters, Angel and Giovanni

Mike and Tiffany Norris enjoying the outdoors with sons, Journey and Parker

James and Michael Fuentes with son, Dominic, at his high school graduation

Toddler Mia joined the Zermeno family in 2019

Kelinda and Kristina Garcia with daughter and son, Addison and Theodore



*Once a Walden child,
always a Walden child...*

Our Programs

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY (FFA)

Safe and Stable Family Placement: Children are placed temporarily in the care of foster/resource families. The loving care of these families provides a healthy living model and offers a safe and secure environment. Walden actively recruits, trains, certifies, and connects families interested in giving a home to children in need.

Adoption Services: Walden is a licensed adoption agency and provides adoption services for Walden children and families and other families in Southern California.

Parent Training: Walden's **Parent Resource & Education Program (PREP)** training for parents uses a competency-based program designed to ensure families are prepared to provide children with the highest quality care.



FAMILY SERVICES

Nurturing Families: Walden provides parenting education and case management support to families throughout San Bernardino County.

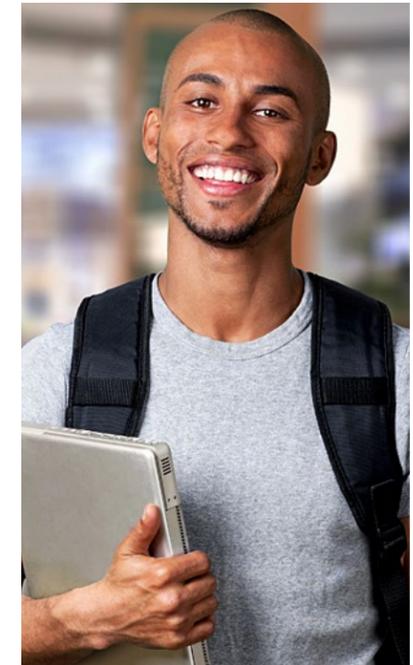
We utilize the **Nurturing Families** curriculum to help improve empathy and relationships between families and in the communities. Case managers focus on maintaining the stability of the family unit, including improving key determinants such as safe housing.



TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMS & YOUTH SERVICES

Transitional Housing for Non-Minor Dependents (THP-NMD): The **THP-NMD** program allows youth to remain in foster care until age 21 to pursue their education and employment while providing them with a stable living environment.

After helping young people decide where to live, Walden covers rent and utilities and provides basic home furnishings. We also provide our youth with the structure they need to set realistic goals and develop the skills to build local connections and to transition to independent living.



Transitional Housing Program Plus (THP Plus): THP Plus

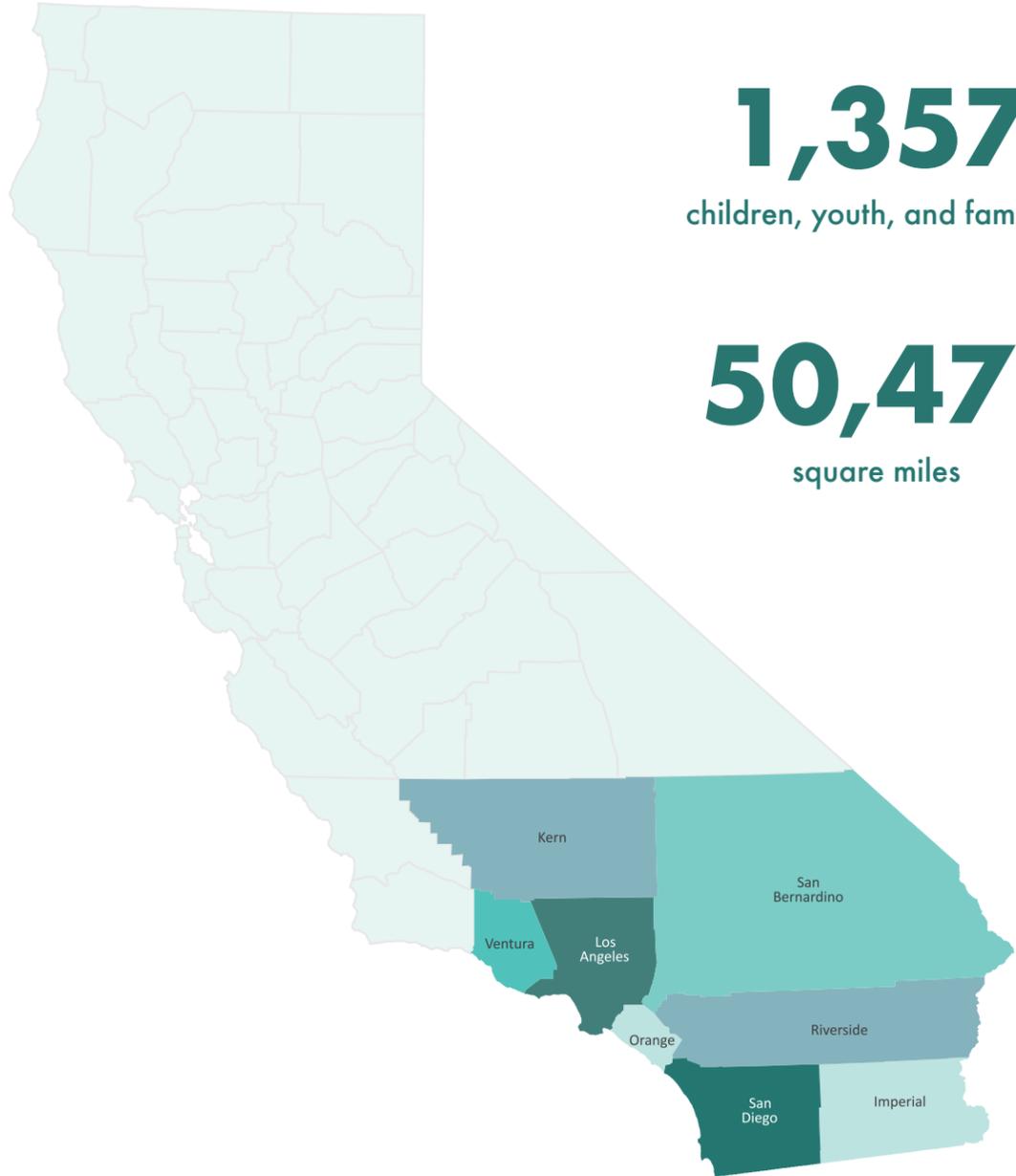
provides housing and supportive services for former foster youth ages 18 to 24 for up to 24 months. Participation can be extended an additional 12 months to cover educational involvement.

This program is for young adults who need a minimal amount of coaching and mentoring. In addition to safe and stable housing, Walden provides goal setting guidance, life skills training, case management services, assistance accessing school/college/vocational training, employment counseling, and social activities to help build positive community connections. Participants receive a \$100 transportation allowance for gas or metro card and a monthly stipend for food, clothing, and other needs.

THP Plus supports young adults' transition to sustainable independence and to being fully engaged members of their communities. Program graduates leave Walden's care having secured housing and with enhanced life skills. They take with them household furnishings, substantial savings, and healthy, lifelong connections.

Extended Care/Aftercare: Former foster youth ages 18 to 21 are eligible to receive additional support as they make the transition from a structured foster care system to becoming independent adults.

2020-2021 YEAR IN NUMBERS



1,357
children, youth, and families

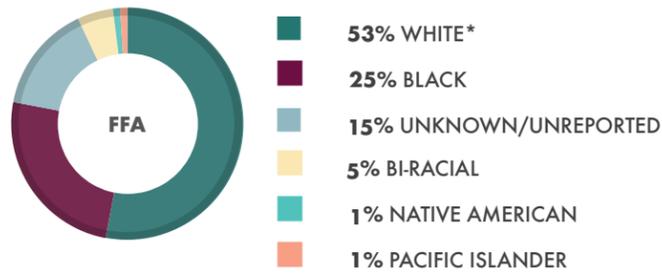
50,471
square miles



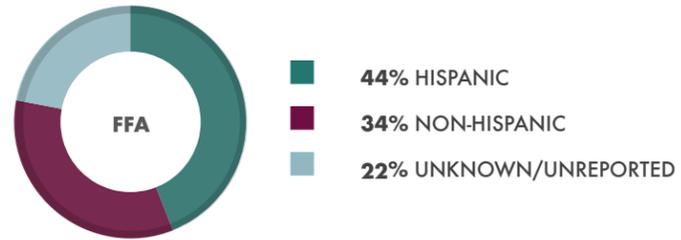
KEY FACT: As a licensed FFA, Walden’s service area encompasses a 2-hour drive radius from its district offices in Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Los Angeles—evidence of the lengths our social workers are willing to go for our children and youth.

2020-2021 YEAR IN NUMBERS

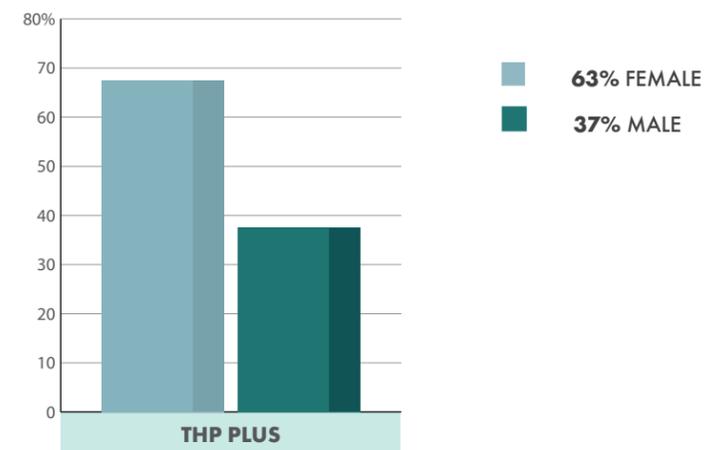
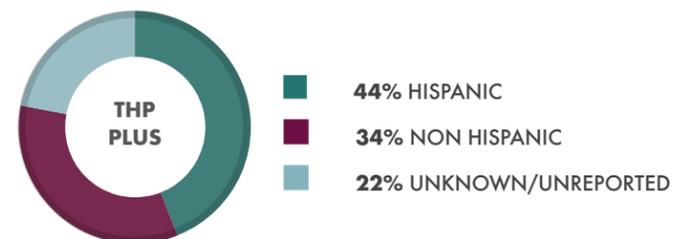
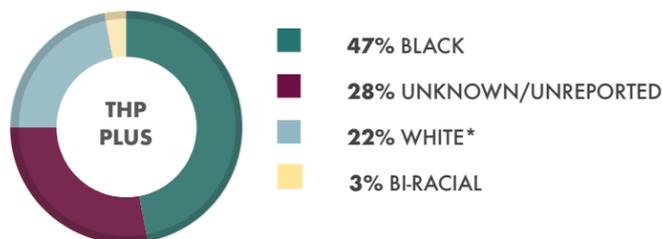
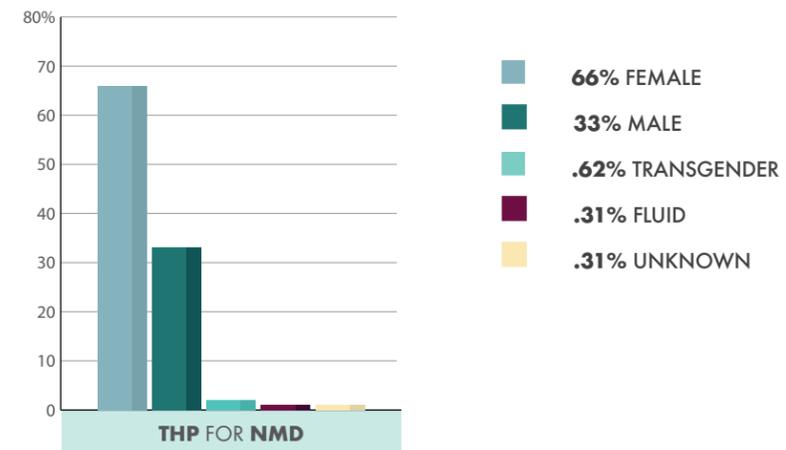
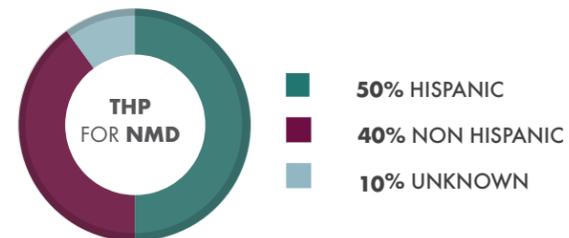
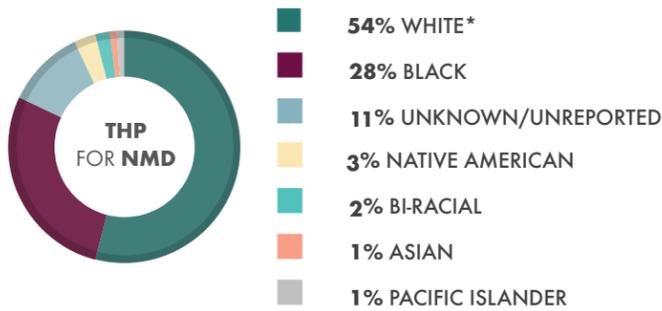
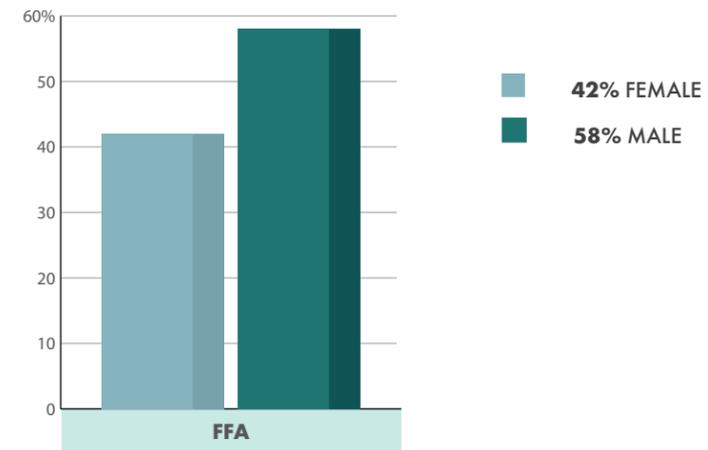
BY RACE



BY ETHNICITY



BY GENDER



*INCLUDES LATINX POPULATION

KEY STATS

323

18-21 year old youth served in our THP for NMD Program

88%

young adults in the THP for NMD program with lifelong connections

32

21-24 year old youth enrolled in THP Plus

356

young adults in our aftercare/extended care program training and events

2020-2021 YEAR IN RESULTS

100%
FOSTER CARE STABILITY

} of children and youth in our foster care program experienced two or fewer family placements. This stability creates minimal disruption, helping to mitigate the trauma of entering care.

95%
HOUSING STABILITY

} of THP for NMD youth who had secured safe, stable, and affordable housing upon exiting the program.

85%
EDUCATION / EMPLOYMENT

} of youth pursuing 2- or 4-year college degrees; employed part-time or full-time; or a combination of both during the COVID-19 pandemic.

73%
MENTAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENT

} clients who reported improved mental health under the duress of coronavirus fears, distance learning, and racial tensions. THP youth, in particular, struggled with the isolation created by the shutdown.



233

foster children and youth placed with carefully matched families

100%
young parents who showed improved empathy, a positive step toward breaking the cycle of abuse



KEY STATS:

\$3,000

savings amount of 30% of youth at the time of exiting THP Plus

124

FFA foster families

20

foster care to adoptions achieved

51

mental health services recipients

88¢

of every dollar spent goes directly to a Walden program



163

pregnant or parenting youth in our Nurturing Families Program

2020-2021 FINANCIALS



REVENUE: \$17,948,074.00

- 96% GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS
- 4% GRANTS AND DONATIONS



EXPENSES: \$17,868,328.00

- 88% PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
- 12% ADMINISTRATION AND FUNDRAISING

Note: These are unaudited financials for 2020-2021. For a final audited version, please visit: waldenfamily.org.

88¢ of every dollar goes **directly** to Walden's programs benefitting our children, youth, and families.



MEET THE GONZALEZ-MUNSELL FAMILY

When teenager Jonathan desperately needed an accepting and loving home, Patrick Gonzalez and Darin Munsell stepped up. Understanding the challenges that he'd faced, the couple worked patiently with Jonathan to help him feel loved and safe. They showed him that he was an equally important member of their family, and soon made his role permanent.

Since Jonathan's adoption, Patrick and Darin have fostered many other youth in need of a safe and affirming home. Their steadfast commitment to bettering the lives of foster youth garnered the couple a recent nomination for **RaiseAChild HONORS**, an event celebrating excellence of foster and adoptive families.

WALDEN FAMILY SERVICES HONORED BY HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

For the third consecutive year, Walden has earned the Innovator seal from the Human Rights Campaign's All Children-All Families project. This top-tier designation is reserved for agencies that implement innovative approaches to LGBTQ+ inclusion and demonstrate leadership in policy advocacy or organizational partnerships. Recipients are recognized for adopting a framework that promotes cultural competency and policies and practices that affirm LGBTQ+ equal rights. Walden educates all of our constituencies about the needs of LGBTQ+ foster children and youth.



We are wholly committed to serving both children and prospective parents in the LGBTQ+ community and are proud to be longstanding members of the **All Children-All Families** project.

Walden To Serve as Co-Investigator in Loma Linda University Research Study

In June 2020, Walden Family Services was invited by Loma Linda University (LLU) to join their state research study: *A Multi-Component Intervention to Strengthen Families and Build Youth Resilience*.

LLU was one of only seven awardees for the *California Initiative to Advance Precision Medicine, Addressing Health Impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences through a Collaborative Precision Medicine Approach*.

This investment is part of Governor Gavin Newsom's **California Comeback Plan** to transform the state's behavioral health system for children and youth into an innovative, prevention-focused system. This is also a priority of California Surgeon General Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, who aims to cut **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** and toxic stress in half within a generation.

Walden's **Nurturing Families** Program Director Dr. Kim Kimpel will serve as co-investigator on the project that focuses on ACEs and social determinants of health. As part of the research grant, Walden will provide Nurturing Families skills development and structured case management to families with children 0-11 years old living in San Bernardino County.

Dr. Ariane Marie-Mitchell, who authored the grant proposal and heads up the research team, describes Walden's selection as an "evolution of relationships."

"For this grant, Walden came up with **FIRST 5's Family Community Support Partnership (FCSP)** program and I remember thinking, 'I know Kim!' We had worked together on a similar grant through Kaiser related to

organizational change. Kim was also a member of the ACEs task force and child abuse prevention council I had started. Walden was the natural partner."

Precision medicine seeks to more fully apply data to improve health and advance equity. State funds were awarded to support proof-of-principle demonstration projects for families and communities with ACEs with an aim to improve access, care, and outcomes through collaboration between academic, community, nonprofit, and industry partners.

"The premise of precision medicine is to deliver the right healthcare for the right person—to provide care that extends beyond pharmacotherapy," Dr. Marie-Mitchell says.

In the case of the Loma Linda study, pediatricians, medical assistants, community health workers, and Walden Family Services come together to help families identified as at-risk for ACEs and toxic stress.

Participating families will be referred from SAC Health System clinic in San Bernardino, most of whom are on Medi-Cal or are uninsured.

We're complex human beings and our psychosocial circumstances matter. That's where this grant fits in.

"ACEs don't discriminate and are across all sociodemographics," Dr. Marie-Mitchell points out. "Having said that, when you add the stress of being low income, you add stress to the family—and this increases the rate of ACEs."

Dr. Marie-Mitchell stresses that the grant is not solely a research grant. "It's both an intervention and a research evaluation. Starting with the intervention piece, the pediatricians identify families who have a history of ACEs. If families are interested in participating in the intervention, they get referred to a community health worker who does an evaluation of social determinants and parenting."

Enter Walden and our Nurturing Families course.

"While Walden can't change your ACE score, if we can help you with your current determinants of health, we can help build resiliency into your family unit," Dr. Kimpel explains.

Dr. Kimpel and the other community partners will share data in order to better coordinate services. Community health workers will follow-up with families who complete Walden's course after six and twelve months.

Dr. Marie-Mitchell sees the family curriculum as benefitting both parents and children. Children in families with ACEs are at higher risk of developmental delays or behavior problems, while their parents often suffer from their own unaddressed ACEs.

"Walden's program deals with ACEs in the moment," Dr. Kimpel says. "We are so excited to be a part of a study that will show how we can have a lasting impact on the lives of families. A roadmap for effective community-based intervention."



MEET KIM KIMPEL

Dr. Kim Kimpel (affectionately known as "Dr. Kim") joined Walden Family Services in 2016. She currently serves as Nurturing Families Program Director in San Bernardino. She is a trainer for both Nurturing Families and Trauma Informed Systems.

Dr. Kim will serve as the co-investigator for Walden Family Services' role in Loma Linda University's research study: *A Multi-Component Intervention to Strengthen Families and Build Youth Resilience*.

"I love supporting people in achieving their full potential. My work with Walden truly allows me to live my passion: helping others," she says.

It's her love for people that led her to create her two nonprofit organizations: Giving 365, dedicated to disrupting the cycle of poverty for families while building their skills; and Coaching 365, a support program for women who've suffered loss of marriage through divorce.

Dr. Kim holds a master's degree in Organizational Leadership from Biola University and a Doctor of Ministry from California Graduate School of Theology.

Walden's Approach to Healing ACEs



All children enter into the Child Welfare System with at least one **Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)** simply by having been removed from their homes. Many of those placed in care have experienced multiple traumas from abuse or neglect.

State data shows that these children are more likely to be severely punished in school. For example, 15 percent of foster youth statewide were suspended in 2018-2019, compared to 4 percent of all students. Experts believe this is largely because foster youth experience more trauma than other children and are often in fight-or-flight mode. To break the cycle of punishing children for behavior beyond their control, trauma-informed training and education is needed for teachers and staff.

Unfortunately, the physical, mental, and emotional repercussions of abuse don't end with childhood. Studies show that foster children who've experienced abuse, are twice as likely to suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as combat veterans.

Walden Family Services' pioneering treatment-level foster care serves children with severe emotional and behavioral challenges due to past trauma and who require intensive services to help them heal.

Our intake coordinators identify the needs of the child, including **special healthcare** or **behavioral needs**. They are then placed with carefully matched, well-trained, trauma-informed foster families to coordinate care with mental health professionals.

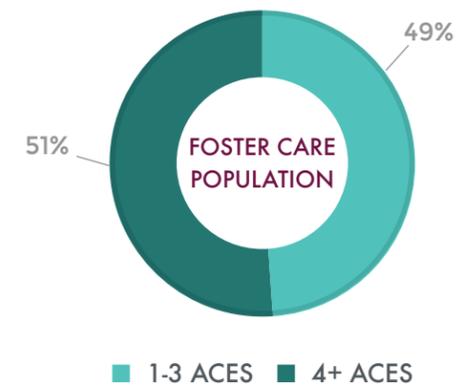
The process to become a Walden foster parent is rigorous. In addition to background and home checks, prospective foster parents must complete our **Parent Resource & Education Program (PREP)** training. Certified families, as well as social workers, must meet quarterly training requirements and additional guidance for children with special healthcare needs.

To support our children and youth as they heal, our staff and foster parents understand the consequences of ACEs. We meet those we serve where they are in their recovery and we provide them with the support needed to succeed.

Trauma and abuse can impact both physical and mental health and can even shorten life expectancy.

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACEs)

Prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences:⁴



While Adverse Childhood Experiences refers to a specific set of traumatic events including physical or emotional abuse or neglect, children can endure other significant trauma such as community violence, racism, homophobia, and separation from parents.

Childhood trauma can result in **toxic stress**, which negatively impacts long-term physical and mental health and wellness.

A person with 4+ ACEs is more likely:⁵

- 2.2x** TO HAVE HEART DISEASE
- 2.4x** TO HAVE A STROKE
- 27%** TO NOT HAVE A COLLEGE DEGREE
- 39%** TO BE UNEMPLOYED
- 10.3x** TO USE INJECTION DRUGS
- 12.2x** TO ATTEMPT SUICIDE

Among California children who reported experiencing ACEs, percent who identified the following:⁶



⁴ KIDSDATA

⁵ CENTER FOR YOUTH WELLNESS

⁶ CENTER FOR YOUTH WELLNESS

Transitional Housing Allows Youth to Grow. Gives Her a Voice for Herself.

Nineteen-year-old Lorraine* entered Walden's Transitional Housing Placement for Non-Minor Dependents (THP for NMD) program with many valuable independent living skills.

"From the beginning, it surprised me the number of things she could handle," Sarina Castaneda, her Walden social worker says. "Lorraine's extremely dependable and resourceful."

For so much of her life, she's had to be.

Lorraine's biological mother struggled with drug abuse and mental illness. From a young age, Lorraine had to assume the role as parent of her two younger sisters. When she was five years old, her youngest sister, Hannah, then just three months old, was taken by the child's biological father. The last time Lorraine saw Hannah, she was four years old.

Instability and uncertainty were the hallmarks of Lorraine's childhood. In 2012, she and her younger sister, Kayla, were left alone at a strange place while their mother went to a casino. It was a pivotal night.

"We were staying in this shed thing—it wasn't a bedroom; it wasn't even attached to the house on the property," Lorraine explains. Adding. "It was my sister's birthday."

She remembers waking up her sister to wish her a happy birthday. "I told her our bio mom would be



home soon with balloons and birthday cake. That's what she told me she was getting before she left."

But their mother didn't return. The girls remained alone the whole day and into the following night. When their hunger became too much, they snuck into the main house looking for food. The homeowner found them and then called the authorities about two young girls standing in his kitchen.

Lorraine and Kayla were taken to Polinsky Children's Center, an emergency shelter for children in San Diego. When they arrived, they were brought to the medical ward for evaluation.

"They tried to separate us, but I wasn't going to let that happen. I was supposed to bunk with the



MEET SARINA CASTANEDA

When native San Diegan and Walden Family Services THP social worker Sarina Castaneda started college, her intention was to become a teacher. She had no experience with the Child Welfare System and admits that she didn't know much about social work.

"I wanted to work with vulnerable populations. Then someone told me I sounded like a social worker," Sarina explains. When she learned about social work, she agreed. "It aligned with who I was as a person."

Sarina spent two years at San Diego City College (SDCC) before transferring to San Diego State University (SDSU) where she majored in social work.

Sarina became President of the Latino Student Social Work Association (LSSWA). "It gave me a lot of leadership skills from planning monthly events to public speaking." She credits the experience for helping her with her social work. "When I have a client in college, I try to motivate them to join a club."

After getting her bachelor degree, Sarina applied for SDSU's accelerated master's program in Social Work. During this time, she interned at a domestic violence shelter, got a Pupil Personnel Services credential, and interned in elementary and high schools.

Sarina joined the Walden team in 2017. She currently has a caseload of nine clients, and says that most are working or enrolled in school.

"But I don't push college. It isn't for everyone."

For those who choose to pursue higher education, she is very involved in the process. She remembers her own experience of feeling overwhelmed in college.

"If clients are okay with it, I make a point to get to know their counselors and teachers. Nine out of ten of the kids want me to know their teachers."

Sarina has also developed relationships with those counselors at community colleges that offer NextUP programs. NextUP helps current and former foster youth by offering support with such things as books, school supplies, and with services like tutoring.

"These relationships help me better help my clients. Counselors call me to let me know things going on in school that the kids might not tell me."

She also believes in accentuating the positive, as well as normalizing things for her clients. "I always try to highlight their potential and find the strengths in everyone. If there's a crisis, I tell them that everything is okay and that we're going to get through it together. I process the crisis with them after the fact to help them prepare for future crises."

Sarina's approach to working with older foster youth values transparency and finding common ground.

"I'm straightforward and very real with them. I think the kids appreciate that. I tell them this is a fresh start—I don't know anything about your past. I focus on the present."

*Some names have been changed to protect privacy.

continued on page 32

teenagers because I was almost twelve. My sister was nine, so they allowed me to stay with her and the younger kids.”

For three days the girls remained at Polinsky, waiting for their mother to come. When she finally surfaced, she told them that she couldn’t care for them, but they could choose to live with Kayla’s teacher, or Mary, the woman that worked in the school’s office.

A decision was made: the girls would go with Mary. For the first time in their lives, Lorraine and Kayla experienced stability.

“Mary and Bob, our first foster family, really helped us become kids. We were able to relax. We were able to have fun and do normal things that kids do. We had chores and got an allowance. Bob even opened a savings account for us,” Lorraine says. “I call them mom and dad because they are my mom and dad.”

Leaving even the most chaotic circumstances with birth parents is disruptive and traumatizing. Forming lasting relationships with caring adults is key to giving children and youth the foundation they need for recovery and healthy emotional development. That’s why Walden puts so much emphasis on carefully placing children with skilled resource families and supporting their success. We also aim to keep siblings together.

Lorraine counts herself lucky that she and Kayla were able to remain together. More than half of children in system have a sibling in care and most are separated. Walden makes keeping sibling groups together a high priority. We know from our work that children heal from past trauma and handle tough transitions better with some sense of consistency. It’s a sentiment Lorraine echoes.

“Our situation was hard—only a sibling could understand,” she says. “I have so many friends who were split up from their siblings and they’ve never seen them again. I am so thankful we could stay together.”

Lorraine and Kayla were eventually placed in kinship care with Kayla’s paternal aunt who lives in Arizona. Although Lorraine wasn’t a blood relative, the girls were determined to remain together. The aunt agreed to take both.

“But it wasn’t great,” Lorraine says. “I went back to raising my sister. I went from being a kid in my first foster home to being a mom again for another six years.”

Lorraine believes that a lack of parental training and inconsistency at the county level made a challenging situation more difficult. Although the sisters were living in Arizona, they remained under California’s jurisdiction. Because of logistics, they were rarely seen by the social worker who was assigned to their case.

“I’ve had over 30 county social workers, but I’ve met only seven in person,” Lorraine says. “They may have known my story, but they didn’t know me.”

In May 2019, Lorraine reluctantly left her sister in Arizona and returned to California. “I knew I would have more opportunities in San Diego County.”

We lived in a hotel two miles from school. We walked every day and sometimes we were late and had to check in with the office.

Walden was one of the opportunities she had discussed with her social worker before leaving Arizona. She had barely been put on our THP waiting list when she received a call telling her there was an opening. Housing stability would change her life again.

“I was fortunate enough to receive a one bed, one bath apartment. I moved in the next day and I’m still here. It’s been amazing and Sarina’s been with me from the start. Walden was the first time I had any real consistency in foster care.”

Lorraine feels one of the best things about being in the THP program is having something of her own. “No one can take it away from me unless there’s a valid reason.”

Sarina doubts there’s much chance of that. “Lorraine has been a great tenant and a great client—by every measure. Even when she wanted to get her emotional support cat, she went about it the right way and followed the rules.”

The program has allowed her to explore options. When she was going over her goals with Sarina, Lorraine dismissed the idea of pursuing higher education.

“She said, ‘nope, I’m not interested in college,’” Sarina recalls. “I said, ‘that’s fine.’” As a rule, Sarina doesn’t push school on clients, knowing it isn’t a path for everyone. “But then she told me how active she was in high school and how she’d been a part of all these clubs. I told her I thought she belonged in college.”

Sarina encouraged Lorraine to speak with a counselor that she knew at Grossmont College. Lorraine’s community college experience in Arizona left her reluctant to try again.

Walden provides me supportive guidance. But if I mess up, I have someone to help me. I appreciate both Walden and Sarina so much.

“At AWC, I couldn’t get any help—I couldn’t even meet with a counselor. I wanted to quit school for good,” Lorraine says. “Then Sarina introduced me to my counselor, Jack. I feel very supported at Grossmont.”

In addition to fulfilling her general education and Fine Arts/Dance major requirements, Lorraine makes a point to stay connected and involved on campus, including joining NextUP, a program designed specifically to help foster youth.

“NextUP has weekly meetings called Mid-Week Meltdowns. They have speakers—it’s always informative. The group gives me a huge support system.”

“College is hard and can feel isolating,” Sarina says. “But Lorraine makes time to do things that benefit her and she’s thriving. I’m so glad she takes the opportunity to do this.” Adding. “Lorraine is a very selfless person. She’s always had to keep it together for everyone else. It’s good for her to do things just for her.”

“Being with Walden has allowed me to become the individual that I should have been. Having this apartment has allowed me to be an individual within the community and within myself. It’s allowed me to grow up mentally and emotionally. I have a voice for myself. I am so thankful for this program.”

Transitional Housing Provides a Lifeline



For any young adult, leaving home is an enormous step. Imagine finding, securing, and sustaining safe housing—at age 18—without family support. Nearly 65% of youth leave foster care with no place to call home and no family to help them; one in three experience homelessness within 24 months of leaving care.

Walden Family Services has a proven record of helping thousands of foster and former foster youth successfully transition to adulthood and achieve independence.

As the second largest provider in Southern California, our Transitional Housing Program for Non-Minor Dependents (THP for NMD) serves youth age 18–21 who elect to stay in foster care.

For former foster youth age 21–24, we offer our Transitional Housing Placement Plus (THP Plus) program. Walden was one of the state’s first agencies to offer independent living support services—twelve years before state law guaranteed these services.

We provide a continuum of services including case management and skills training. We help our young people set attainable goals and create action plans. Our housing specialist secures an apartment, and we then cover rent, utilities, and provide basic home furnishings. Walden’s social workers and coaches teach our youth life skills including how to establish healthy relationships, apply to educational programs, manage money, and conduct a job search.

The results from data analyses and youth surveys make it clear that these programs are highly effective. For each year in THP, we improve a youth’s likelihood of successful transition to independence.

“We know statistically and from our experience that our THP programs work,” says Walden CEO Teresa Stivers. “With assistance, our young people can reach their full potential as productive members of our communities. We are so grateful to our supporters who recognize this and step up to help us cover those costs our state and county contracts don’t. Together, we are creating pathways to success for our foster and former foster youth.”

Our THP youth have higher educational achievements, employment rates, and long-term relationships.

AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

Youth who age out of foster care **without** the support of transitional housing or extended care programs face greater challenges and have less successful outcomes.

The number of youth aging out of foster care each year:

20,000
NATIONWIDE⁷

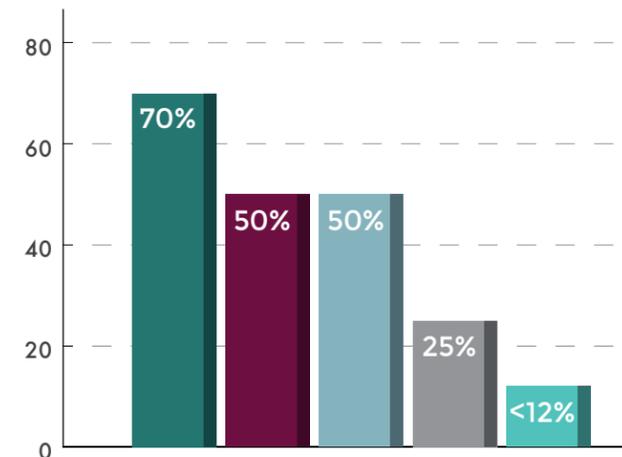
4,000
STATEWIDE⁸

Within two years of aging out of California foster care:⁹

1 in 3 will experience homelessness



Within four years of aging out of foster care:¹⁰



Raising a child costs the average American family more than twice what the government contributes to the welfare of foster children.

This failure to invest in these vulnerable children comes with a cost: for every youth we fail, we create a \$1 million economic burden stemming from lost production and social services costs.

- will be on government assistance
- will be unemployed
- will experience homelessness
- will not have completed high school
- will **ever** earn a college degree

⁷ IFOSTER
⁸ CALIFORNIA COURTS
⁹ JOHN BURTON ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH
¹⁰ IFOSTER

2020-2021

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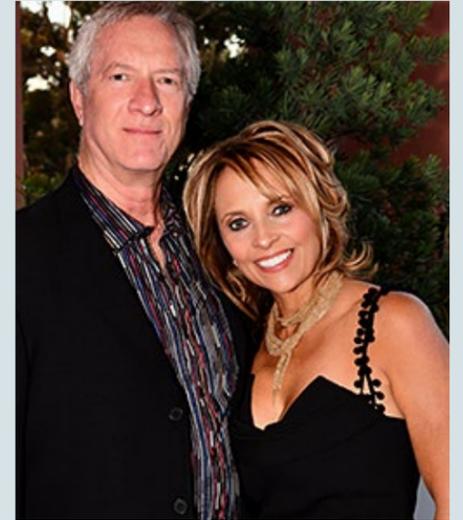
Longtime supporters, Maryanne and Harley Sefton have pledged a multi-year gift to fund the **Sefton Hearts that Foster Program** in support of our Foster Family Agency. Walden currently serves more than 480 children and resource families.

The Seftons hold a firm belief that all children deserve quality care and support and have been active members of the Walden community for many years. Maryanne served on our Board of Directors for over 10 years as Treasurer, Vice Chair, and President. For the couple, Walden's mission is personal dating back twenty years when a child they knew was temporarily placed in the child welfare system.

"I could not understand how a little two-year-old boy could be moving from home to home when a family member could have taken him in until his mama came back.

I was committed to getting this little boy out of the 'system,'" Maryanne explains. "Then I learned about the miracles that can happen in foster care and that's why Walden is where our time, money, and dedication exists and always will."

We are is deeply grateful for the Sefton partnership and their continued life-changing generosity and support for children in need.



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By giving monthly, you help provide stable and ongoing support to important programs and resources for our foster children, youth, and families.

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Create an enduring impact by including Walden in your estate plans. Making a planned gift is a meaningful way to contribute to the organization's future while providing financial and tax benefits for you and your family.

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Gifts of stock can provide tax advantages for you while yielding profound benefits for the communities we serve.

*If you would like to donate by check, please mail to: 8525 Gibbs Drive, Suite 100, San Diego, CA 92123

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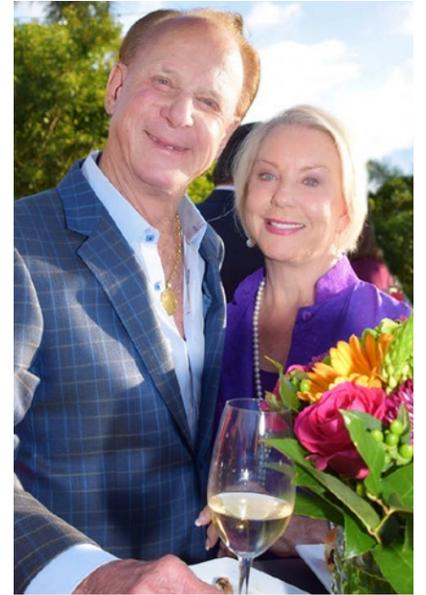
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REMEMBERING OUR FRIEND, RON BRADY

On August 5, 2021, the world lost Ron Brady, a dear friend, supporter, and very important member of our Walden family.

For nearly two decades, Ron and Mary Alice Brady ardently supported Walden Family Services. Their generosity and devotion to the well-being of children extends throughout the San Diego area and also includes Vista Hill, Grossmont Hospital, Rady Children's Hospital, East County YMCA, and the Boys and Girls Clubs of East County.



Ron established the Gr'mere's I'mpossible Journey Fund to help fulfill the needs of foster families and children and as a tribute to his loving wife. Through this fund, the Brady's supplied "Kick Off Kits"—duffle bags that included things a child entering foster care might need such as a school backpack, a hygiene kit, a book, and more.

The Brady's have a permanent tribute in Walden's San Diego office. Dedicated in 2015, the Gr'mere's I'mpossible Journey Playroom is a welcoming space where children can read, relax, and work with caregivers in a peaceful setting.

"Ron Brady is one of the most generous and funny people I have had the joy of knowing." Kathryn Stephens, Director of Philanthropy, says. "The impact of his generosity to Walden has been transformational. He wanted all children to feel happy and safe with the love of family, just as he loved his own."

In 2017, Walden honored Ron and Mary Alice at our annual Wine D'Vine event. The couple received Walden's Fostering Hearts Legacy Award for their longtime commitment to foster youth and families.

Ron Brady was a cherished friend and loved by many. Throughout his life he remained focused on improving and investing in his community to improve the lives of others. He will be deeply missed.



THANK YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF OUR HEARTS!



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