Dear Friends,

For more than 25 years, You Gotta Believe (YGB) has connected the most vulnerable kids in the foster care system to the permanent loving families they need and deserve. Thankfully, the unwavering commitment of our supporters allowed us to navigate the myriad challenges of 2020 and maintain focus on our mission.

More than 400,000 children and youth are currently living in our nation’s foster care system, through no fault of their own. Each year, about 20,000 young people will age out without a family, nearly half of whom will experience homelessness. They will also be more likely to experience unemployment, unplanned pregnancy, legal system involvement, substance abuse, and lack of basic health care services. Only a small percentage will have a college degree by the age of 26; most are unlikely to have a high school diploma nor earn enough to support themselves. These staggering outcomes do not reflect the true potential of our youth.

The pandemic only exacerbates these gaps in access to success, safety, and well-being.

YGB saw a stark difference in how the COVID-19 pandemic affected those we serve. Youth who were already connected to permanent families had a place to go, emotional support, guidance to safely negotiate the pandemic, and a network to turn to in the midst of the economic crisis. In short, they had families!

For those still waiting for permanent families, the struggle was - and continues to be - difficult. Those in college were forced to leave their dorms (because of COVID-19) and faced homelessness because they had nowhere to go. Others lost their jobs and could not pay bills. Many battled depression, anxiety, and isolation.

YGB remains laser-focused on creating permanent families for youth and supporting them with the resources and services they need to thrive.

Thanks to you—your support, and your belief in family—we will continue to connect and support families, no matter what the future brings. We are deeply grateful to have you as partners in this critical work.

Jennifer Pinder

Executive Director
You Gotta Believe
ABOUT YGB

You Gotta Believe is one of the few organizations that focuses exclusively on finding permanent families for kids in foster care before they age out of the system alone. For more than 25 years, we have worked with the toughest to place kids (including those in group homes and residential treatment facilities), to find them permanent loving families. These families may be part of a child’s family of origin, someone they know (such as a coach or neighbor), or a match from our own parent training and certification program courses. We welcome all capable families and individuals who would like to provide a permanent and loving home. The bottom line: All kids must be connected to someone prepared to make an unconditional lifetime commitment.

Our goal is for each youth to experience love, hope, and a sense of belonging. Connection to a permanent family enables young people to flourish. YOU CAN COUNT ON YGB TO:

RECRUIT
Our approach to finding parents prioritizes closely connected relatives, kin, and community members.

TRAIN
We prepare families with a permanent mindset and certify them to parent kids who have trauma histories

PREPARE
We help youth and young adults address trauma and fear from years of abuse, neglect, rejection, and loneliness

SUPPORT
Our crucial, ongoing, pre and post-placement support services ensure enduring families
The YGB team guides both youth and prospective households through the matching process. Then, YGB continues to provide post-placement support to newly formed families for as long as needed to ensure successful outcomes.
The YGB team served fifty youth in 2020. As shown to the left, 52 percent (26 youth) were placed in families and receiving post-placement support; 36 percent (18 youth) were in various stages of the pre-placement search process.

Four older youth (two in their early 20s, two in their late teens) requested to be withdrawn during the year without a family match. YGB had a single case of family disruption in 2020, involving two siblings. The percentage of disruptions of YGB-formed families is remarkably low, given that more than 90 percent of foster children nationally experience at least one placement disruption while in care.

YOUTH LOCATION

New York
• 32 youth

Massachusetts
• 9 youth

Other States
• 3 youth

I give to YGB because YGB provides the most vulnerable kids in New York with a priceless asset—a family who loves them and has their back always.

– Sabrina Glaser, YGB Board Member

A SMART CONNECTION

In 2019, YGB entered into a partnership with The Children's Village (CV), a like-minded organization that reaches 17,000 children, teens, and families each year through a variety of innovative, community-based and residential programs. Our partnership focuses to provide the most vulnerable youth in CV’s residential facility with intensive family-recruitment and long-term support services. Working together, our aim is provide the best possible outcomes and ensure that all children are loved and belong to a family.

At the outset of 2020, YGB began serving 26 youth from The Children's Village.
Of the 26 youth placed with families and/or receiving post-placement support services in 2020, eight youth were ages 13 or under; nine youth were between 14 and 17; nine youth were 18 years or older.

30% Ages 13 & Under
35% Ages 14 - 17
35% Ages 18 & Older

I give to YGB because family is a safety net, a foundation, and a real solution.
– Maria Llerena, YGB Board Member
As a foster-to-adopt mother of older children and You Gotta Believe board member, I believe in the value of family with forever love, support, and connection.

– Joelle Tramel, YGB Board Member

By year end, 44 youth were active, including 26 placed and matched with a family, and 18 in pre-placement.

Over the entire year, YGB achieved:

- **100 percent increase in youth supported**
- **189 percent increase in youth matched or placed**

By year end, 44 youth were active, including 26 placed and matched with a family, and 18 in pre-placement.
A total of 68 households engaged with YGB during 2020. At year end, 62 were active. Ten households (15 percent) had one or two youth currently placed with them. Nineteen households (28 percent) had been licensed by YGB and were in various stages of the search process. Thirty-three households (49 percent) were pre-licensed, of whom 23 households had competed all ten MAPP classes during the year. Five households (7 percent) chose to stop the search process. A placement of siblings with one household (1 percent) was disrupted mid-year.
159 PERCENT INCREASE IN HOUSEHOLDS ACTIVELY PREPARING FOR MATCH WITH A YOUTH

At the start of 2020, 24 households were engaged with YGB in search of a permanent match. These included 13 households in the search process and 11 in households enrolled in our Model Approach to Partnership in Parenting (MAPP) classes or licensing.

In addition, approximately 50 YGB families that had been formed in prior years were identified for post-placement services.

YGB was able to increase intensive service outreach, despite the challenges presented by the pandemic. By year-end, 62 households were engaged with YGB, including 10 recently formed families in post-placement support, 19 in the search process, and 33 enrolled in parent training or licensing process. In addition, 29 families had received direct post-placement support services. Several others had also participated in virtual events.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morality/Legal Adoptions</th>
<th>ATTENDING MAPP CLASSES</th>
<th>PRE-PLACEMENT SEARCH</th>
<th>Start of the Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

I feel blessed to have grown up in a loving family and I believe the power of a forever family can transform lives. I give to YGB because their mission is to find permanent families for kids in the foster care system... everyone deserves a family!

– Brigitte McCray, YGB Board Member
YGB RESPONSE TO COVID-19

When the 2020 pandemic afflicted the entire globe, New York City was struck particularly badly. By March 25, 2020, more than 17,800 New York City cases had been confirmed, with 199 deaths. The city’s infection rate was five times higher than the rest of the country, totaling one-third of confirmed US cases.

The YGB team continued to serve youth and families, uninterrupted.

Quarterly Virtual Events highlighted the urgent need for permanent loving families for older kids in foster care and the difference that permanency makes. Please take a listen: Anything But Normal and Building a Family.

As noted on page 4, YGB delivered 49 additional events to engage youth, prospective and waiting parents, and current families. These were largely led by foster care survivors:

GAME NIGHTS

YGB Advocates Michelle Lyles, Desiree Moore, and Catreena Strait, with Recruiter Aileen Rosario hosted 17 Game Nights, as a safe, virtual space during the pandemic for YGB staff, families, and youth to have fun and build relationships among others sharing the permanency adoption journey.

QUARANTINE & CHILL

On 32 Friday evenings, YGB Advocates hosted a live Instagram show called Quarantine and Chill. Youth, current and prospective parents, caseworkers and others appreciated learning from the personal experiences of inspiring foster care survivors interviewed by YGB peer hosts.
YGB RESPONSE TO COVID-19 (continued)

THE YGB TEAM INTRODUCED A NUMBER OF INNOVATIONS:

• The intensive recruitment team began conducting weekly services with youth via zoom or phone

• When face-to-face interaction seemed necessary, the recruitment team met with youth outdoors at safe distances or talked with them through cottage windows whenever large conference room space was not available

• Trauma-informed support sessions (357) were conducted virtually

• YGB secured funds (gift cards/monies) that were distributed to our neediest former and current foster youth

• Older YGB youth were provided with timely support to secure financial and food assistance

• Monthly events went virtual and increased in frequency (i.e. Youth Empowerment Group is conducted via a live Instagram stream weekly and Meet & Greet Game Nights is conducted twice a month)

• The staff secured state approval to conduct parent training classes virtually

• Most home visits were held virtually

• Support group classes for parents moved to a virtual platform and increased from monthly to two and three times a week

• The annual Long Island Holiday Party was modified to a safe “drive-by” event that everyone loved

• New Youth Advocates took part in an 8-week long training of the Heal to Heal (HTH) curriculum, virtually and it was a big support to youth advocates

• Many YGB staff engaged in daily half-hour virtual check-ins to remain connected and support one another with the impact of the pandemic
This loving, Long Island family has now expanded to five! In October 2017, Michelle, then aged 14, was legally adopted. Exactly a year later, Jenna, then aged 10, was legally adopted. Both girls were referred to YGB from the Massachusetts foster care system, where each had experienced years of movement from place to place before finding their forever home with Stacie and Charrisa Sugarman. You may remember this story from the Today Show.

In March 2020, Stacie and Charrisa identified a 19-year old female in the Rhode Island foster care system that they were interested in bringing into their family. By September, Jon-Neaya had been spending increasing time visiting with the family. She fit in very well and enjoyed participating in family activities. By early October, Jon-Neaya was officially placed with the family. She has enrolled in college for January and will be starting a volunteer position with an animal shelter.

“Many years ago, a kind and loving family took me in via foster care. I was given the gift of a family and I give because everyone deserves the same gift.

– Jonathan Stark, YGB Board Member
The financial information presented above is derived from YGB’s 2019-2020 audited financial statements.
YGB STAFF

Jennifer Pinder
Executive Director

Mary Keane
Senior Advisor, Family Permanency Services

Donald Antonetty
Director IT/QA

Stephanie Arcella
Director of Institutional Giving

Yaridania Betancourt
Nobody Ages Out Coordinator

Emily Collins
Director of Family Support

Erinn Hartley
Social Media Manager & Designer

Nicole Hayward
LI Training Coordinator

Rachel Hood
Permanency Specialist

Martha Hornthal
Permanency Specialist

Anni Keane
Director of Nobody Ages Out/Overseer of Recruiters

Richard Lefebvre
Senior Advocate

Jennifer Lucas
Finance Director

Amanda Lydon
Associate Marketing Director

Michelle Lyles
Youth Advocate

Andrea Marinelli
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Desiree Moore
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Nyamekye Reynolds
Youth Advocate

Monica Rolston
Manager Office Operations

Aileen Rosario
Senior Recruiter/Trainer & Coordinator of Nobody Ages Out Activities

Antoinette Ruckers
Honorary Advocate/Guest Host for Virtual Programs

Paul Snellgrove
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we can connect youth in foster care with loving and permanent families!

ANALYSIS & REPORT BY

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