

30 YEARS *of*  
**FAMILY**

AN  
*Anniversary*

FUNDRAISER

CELEBRATING



MONDAY

May 4, 2026

Guastavino's

NEW YORK CITY

HOSTED BY

**Ta'Nika Gibson**  
Broadway,  
Film and TV Artist

HONORING



**Seth Rudetsky and  
James Wesley Jackson**

CELEBRATING

**three decades**  
of helping older  
foster kids find  
permanent,  
loving families

*With Special Guest Performances*

TO DONATE:  
TEXT 30YEARS  
TO 707070  
OR SCAN QR





# Congratulations

on 30 years of  
connecting youth  
with the families  
and support  
they deserve.

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We are pleased to support You Gotta Believe's mission and the difference they make in so many lives.

CELEBRATING  
30 YEARS *of*  
**FAMILY**

PRESENTED BY TOM and KAREN RUTLEDGE



**HOST**

**TA'NIKA GIBSON**

**WELCOME ADDRESS**

**JENNIFER PINDER**, Executive Director

**A YGB MOTHER'S JOURNEY**

**MARY CHANCIE ALLEN**

**CELEBRATING 30 YEARS**

**A MILESTONE VIDEO**

**SPECIAL ADDRESS**

**NYC Council Member RITA JOSEPH**

**HONORING THE VOICES OF YGB CHAMPIONS**

**SETH RUDETSKY and JAMES WESLEY JACKSON**

**WITH SPECIAL PERFORMANCES BY**

**CHARLOTTE D'AMBOISE, TA'NIKA GIBSON, ANIKA LARSEN, LIZ LARSEN, AINSLEY MELHAM, BRIAN STOKES MITCHELL, LILLIAS WHITE, and TONY YAZBECK**

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**YAHOO!**

## VIP SUPPORTERS

**KENNETH DEREGT**

**MELISSA & ANDREW KOMAROFF**

**CATHERINE & KENNETH RENDE FAMILY FOUNDATION**

*Welcome to*

CELEBRATING  
30 YEARS of  
**FAMILY**



Dear Friends,

Welcome to You Gotta Believe's 30 Years of Family Celebration—we're so glad you're here.

Tonight marks a powerful milestone for You Gotta Believe: three decades of finding permanent, loving families for older youth in foster care. We would not be here without you. Your belief in this mission has made this moment possible, and tonight, we celebrate all that we have built—together.

This past year alone has given us so much to be proud of. We achieved a record number of adoptions, trained more parents than ever before, and continued to provide critical mental health resources to families. At You Gotta Believe, we don't just create families—we walk alongside them for the entire journey.

Our story began in 1995, when Pat O'Brien founded You Gotta Believe as a homelessness prevention program. What many don't realize is that a significant portion of the homeless population is made up of former foster youth. Over time, we came to understand a simple but profound truth: the love and support of a permanent family can change everything. No matter your age, you are never too old to need—or deserve—a family.

Thirty years later, that belief has grown into a movement. Our YGB family—our staff, board, supporters, and advocates—has expanded, and so has our impact. Because of you, countless young people have found not just homes, but belonging, stability, and love.

As we honor our pearl anniversary, we reflect with gratitude on how far we've come—but we also look ahead with purpose. There is still so much more to do. Too many young people are still waiting.

Tonight, we invite you to be part of what comes next.

Together, we can ensure that every young person has the chance to grow up with the love and support of a family.

With deep gratitude,

Jennifer Pinder  
Executive Director

Juan Battle, Ph.D  
Board President



## MEET OUR HONOREES

# SETH RUDETSKY AND JAMES WESLEY JACKSON

IN 2015, **You Gotta Believe** encountered a period of financial instability. At this critical moment, we were introduced to Seth Rudetsky, American musician and radio host, and James Wesley Jackson, writer and producer, who quickly became champions of our work. Leveraging their remarkable talents and an incredible circle of friends, Seth and James created **Voices: Stars for Foster Kids**, a star studded concert featuring top performers from Broadway, television, and film. They rallied support in the most inspiring way.





Over the past decade, Seth and James have raised more than \$5 million in support of **You Gotta Believe**, helping to connect countless youth in foster care with permanent, loving families. Those who first joined us in the audience have become deeply engaged members of our community—evolving into long-term supporters, dedicated volunteers, and, most meaningfully, adoptive parents.



**TO DONATE:**  
**TEXT 30YEARS**  
**TO 707070**  
**OR SCAN QR**

# PARTNER AGENCIES & ORGANIZATIONS

**SPECIAL THANKS** *to the following for their contributions to our mission of finding permanent, loving families for older youth in foster care:*

YOUR KIDS, OUR KIDS, INC.

AdoptUsKids

Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition of New York

Barbara Bradley Baekgaard Family Foundation

The Barker Adoption Foundation

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Broome County Department of Social Services

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Fair Futures

Families Rising (*formerly NACAC*)

Fostering Change for Children

Fostering Media Connections

FPWA

Freedom Flow Solutions, LLC

The Garden of Dreams Foundation

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New York City Administration for

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New York City Department of Youth and

Community Development

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Human Services, Dr. Helen Artega

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New York State Office of Children and Family  
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St. John's Residence for Boy's

Suffolk County Department of Social Services

Think of Us

Uptown Family Enrichment Center

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William J. and Dorothy K. O'Neill Foundation

The Willie Garson Fund Contributors

yahoo!

YGB NYC Marathon and Half Marathon Runners

Youth Inc.



# THE EVOLUTION OF YOU GOTTA BELIEVE

Over the last 30 years, You Gotta Believe has grown tremendously.

## 1995

a small storefront  
in Coney Island



**4**  
employees

  
no structured  
mental health support

  
**1**  
adoption

  
**\$56.6k**  
budget

## 2025

our current office in  
Midtown Manhattan



**25**  
employees

  
a robust mental health program  
with adoption competent therapy  
for all family members

  
**400**  
adoptions

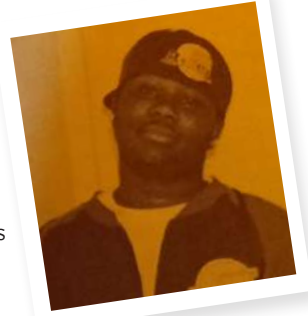
  
**\$2.2M**  
budget



# WHAT FAMILY MEANS TO ME

BY TIMOTHY ANDERSON

(son of Mary Chancie Allen)



*“To understand what family means to me, you have to know my story. Please bear with me.*

On June 24, 1987, I was born to a single parent. The youngest of five kid [sic] with none of my siblings’ fathers around. My mother did the best thing she could of [sic] ever done and left me and my [siblings] with my grandmother. I [will] never forget that day. She said she was going to the store for milk and I ain’t seen that b\*\*\*\* yet. *Please excuse me, I curse a lot.*

From there on, my grandmother [tried] to do the best she could with five kids and one arm. I never knew how she lost her arm but she did her best until she died. From then on I had a chip on my shoulder.... It was hard to lose two mother figures then go with somebody I don’t know to live. The [whole] time I was in foster care, people only [dealt] with me because I was a paycheck the first of every month. Once I realized that, I gave them hell all the way to the bank LOL. I did everything you could think of and [then] some. From setting fires in the house to beating up the other foster kid. I used to get kicked out of school just so they would have to stay home from work just to give them hell. I didn’t give a f\*\*\* — I wanted to live on my own. I always felt alone. I never felt like I had a family.”

*Timothy eventually ended up in a residential treatment center, and then a group home where he vandalized a staff member’s car and ended up in jail, where he was connected to a new social worker. She was subsequently able to get Timothy into a new foster home, which is when things started to turn around for him.*

“...she heard of a new program that may help me but I have to give it a chance. We made a deal [that] if she took me shopping I had to at [least] try. I [gave] her my word that I would try. We went shopping then she showed my picture to this program, **You Gotta Believe.**



Shortly later, I met my match. Mary Chancie!!!! This woman came off as the [sweetest] lady I ever met but I could tell she had a real down to earth side to her [too]. By this time I got real good at reading people. So I gave it a try this time I really [tried]. That was until the day I got adopted. Once she said, 'I will love you no matter what,' I figured now was the best time to try her out.

I started out by missing my curfew, then it was the drinking and smoking. She put her foot down without a doubt, but she never gave up on me.

She came to Rikers Island to visit, sent me letters all the time, took my collect calls, [and] made sure I knew she loved me. My mama is a rider. L.M.F.A.O.

So back to the question at hand. What does family mean to me? Unconditional love. Stability — mentally and physically. That's something these kids never had. It's something I needed and never found until my Mommy saved me. Forgiveness — no matter what I've done, my mother always forgave me... Unconditional love, stability, and forgiveness is what family means to me because no matter what, my mama always got my back and that is why I love you Mary Chancie."



## THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY

In 1999, Mary Chancie Allen moved to a large Brooklyn home with her two biological children and a desire to grow her family. After attending an information session, she realized she could adopt older youth from foster care through You Gotta Believe and, in 2003, adopted Timothy at age 16 after he had experienced 14 different placements in foster care. She later adopted Richard in 2006 at age 20, continuing to open her home and heart. Today, Mary remains deeply connected to her sons, who still rely on her for unwavering love and support.



# You Gotta BELIEVE Celebrates 30 YEARS



## YGB's Inception & Founding

You Gotta Believe is founded by Pat O'Brien as a homelessness prevention program for older youth in foster care.

## NYC's Administration for Children's Services awards YGB with its first city contract

ACS tasks YGB with recruiting adoptive families to expand the number of homes available for older youth in foster care in need of permanency.

## YGB expands its services throughout New York State

YGB's reach extends throughout the entire state, increasing the number of parents trained and licensed to become adoptive parents, and providing YGB with access to more youth who are in need of permanent families.



1995

2001

2005



1996

## YGB's First Adoption

YGB creates its first family by connecting an older youth in foster care with a permanent, loving family.

2004

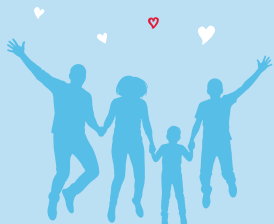
## YGB establishes a key partnership with The Children's Village

YGB and The Children's Village collaborate to find permanent families for teen residents, all of whom had been in residential care for at least 5 years and were poised to age out of the system without a family. Both agencies continue to collaborate to find permanency for older youth in foster care.

2015

## Talented performers Seth Rudetsky and James Wesley Jackson host the first VOICES concert

This pivotal event has raised nearly \$5 million dollars over the past 10 years, and involves several television, film, and Broadway stars who volunteer their time and talent to spread awareness of YGB's mission.



## YGB becomes a charity partner for the TCS NYC Marathon

Serving as a charity partner for the NYC Marathon allows YGB to identify committed runners to participate in this world-renowned event, raising money and spreading awareness for our mission. To date, 58 YGB runners have completed nearly 1,650 miles throughout all 5 boroughs and have raised over \$250,000 for YGB's mission.

2019



## YGB hosts its inaugural Willie Garson Poker Tournament in Los Angeles

Honoring the memory of our friend Willie Garson and his love for poker, YGB began hosting an annual tournament to raise funds and awareness for YGB's mission. After 3 tournaments, over \$150,000 have been raised, and Willie's legacy continues to be celebrated.



2024

## YGB establishes a key partnership with St. John's Residence For Boys

At St. John's Residence for Boys, our work goes beyond programming. It's about showing up, building trust, and reminding young people that they are not alone. Together, we are creating opportunities for connection, healing, and the possibility of lasting, supportive relationships that every young person deserves.



2021

## Warner Bros. Discovery establishes the Willie Garson Fund for YGB

In honor of Willie Garson's legacy, Warner Bros. Discovery—through the largest one-time gift in YGB's history—establishes the Willie Garson Fund to support our mission of connecting every child in foster care with a lifelong family.



WARNER BROS.  
DISCOVERY

2022

## YGB creates its Mental Health Program

This robust program addresses the unique therapeutic needs of adoptive families, providing specialized care that understands the complexities of adoption and foster care trauma. We combine evidence-based therapeutic practices with deep adoption competency, creating a safe space where families can heal, grow, and thrive together on their journey to permanency.

2025



You Gotta Believe proudly celebrates 30 years of finding forever families for older youth in foster care!

ICES  
FOR FOSTER KIDS

# WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Each year, thousands of young people age out of foster care without a family. In New York, youth age out when they reach the maximum state-supported age of 21.

Without a stable home and people to lean on, these young people face significant challenges. The resources, emotional support, and social connections that a family provides are crucial for upward mobility and personal success.

In the US, there are **70,000 KIDS** waiting to be adopted

In New York state, there are about **3,000 KIDS** waiting to be adopted

**30-35%** of youth in foster care identify as LGBTQIA+

**60%** of youth in foster care are age 11 or older

YGB IS DEDICATED TO ENSURING PERMANENCY FOR THESE YOUTH.

## WHAT IS PERMANENCY?

PERMANENCY can include reunification with a parent, legal adoption, moral adoption, or obtaining permanent legal custody with another caregiver.





**Because every young  
person deserves a family.**

# GET INVOLVED WITH YOU GOTTA BELIEVE!



**JOIN OUR BELIEVER'S CLUB** Monthly donors are the backbone of our fundraising! A small gift each month helps to sustain our mission while having less impact on your budget. Visit [yougottabelieve.org](http://yougottabelieve.org) to sign up for monthly donations.



**MATCH YOUR GIFT** Check with your employer to learn more about the company's matching gift program. Your gift tonight might be eligible to be doubled, even tripled!



**BECOME A PARENT** Join our introductory call and learn more about the process to become a parent to a teen in foster care. You'll connect with other prospective parents, hear from youth in foster care, and get advice from professionals about next steps.



**VOLUNTEER** Engage with YGB leadership and staff in a more meaningful way through committees, Board Service, and other activities.

Reach out to us at [info@yougottabelieve.org](mailto:info@yougottabelieve.org). We cannot wait to hear from you!

## Does your employer offer a matching gift program?

Your donation tonight may be eligible for matching dollars! Contact your HR team to find out **more**.



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## 30 YEARS OF FAMILY: AN ANNIVERSARY FUNDRAISER HOST COMMITTEE

*This volunteer group has played a crucial role in making tonight's event possible. We thank these individuals for their time, commitment, and partnership!*

**SHRINKHALA BASNET**  
YGB BOARD MEMBER

**BRIGITTE MCCRAY**  
YGB BOARD MEMBER

**JOANNE STERN**  
ADOPTIVE PARENT

**MICHAEL DARNELL\***  
YGB PARENT

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ADVOCATE

*\*Designates former foster youth or adoptive parent of former foster youth*

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SENIOR DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS

**Monica Rolston**  
OFFICE MANAGER, BOOKKEEPER AND HR COORDINATOR

### TO THE INCREDIBLE YOU GOTTA BELIEVE TEAM:

Thank you for the heart, dedication, and compassion you bring to this work every day. Your commitment makes family and belonging possible for so many.



*from YGB's Board*

# 30 YEARS OF BUILDING FAMILIES

**Congratulations to You Gotta Believe  
on three decades of life-changing work.**

We are honored to support your mission because we believe that everyone — especially our foster youth — deserves the love and stability of a family.



**ELLEN & RICHARD NEWMARK,  
LESLIE DUBIN, and DOUGLAS TROKIE**

**We are proud to celebrate  
30 years of You Gotta Believe—  
30 years of ensuring that no young person  
ages out of foster care without the love and  
support of a permanent family.**

**Being part of this community has been  
deeply meaningful for our family.  
The dedication, compassion, and persistence  
behind this mission inspires us every day.**

**With heartfelt congratulations,  
The Llerena Family**

**EVERY CHILD DESERVES A FAMILY!**

**THANK YOU**

to the entire team at

**You Gotta Believe**

and the incredible

**SETH RUDETSKY**

and

**JAMES WESLEY JACKSON**

for all that you do. What a milestone!

**SABRINA GLASER**

Board Member

Congratulations to **You Gotta Believe**

on 30 extraordinary years of

**IMPACT!**

It is an honor to celebrate  
such a meaningful mission.

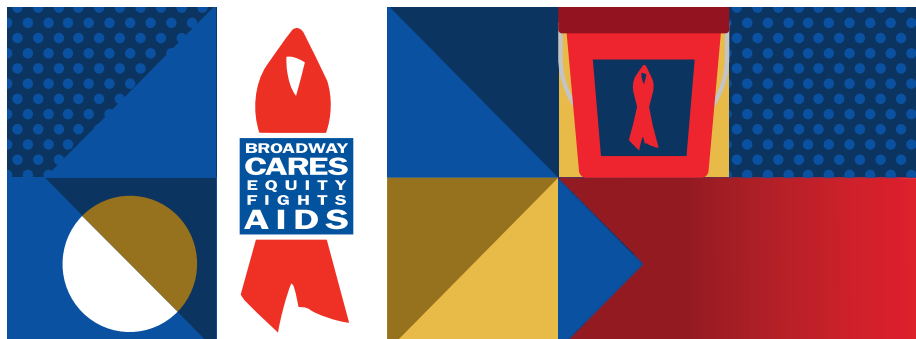
*And a special thanks to*

Seth Rudetsky and James Wesley Jackson

for their incredible contributions to youth and families.

**Thank you for all that you do!**

**SHRINKHALA AND BHAV BASNET**



We congratulate our friends and champions  
**Seth Rudetsky** and **James Wesley Jackson**  
for their spectacular support of You Gotta Believe.

We stand with their commitment to helping older  
foster youth find permanent, loving families.

Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS  
[broadwaycares.org](http://broadwaycares.org)

## THE TAITZ FAMILY

*proudly celebrates the extraordinary work of*

**YOU GOTTA BELIEVE — over 400 adoptions  
and many more to come — and honors the  
lasting contributions of SETH RUDETSKY and  
JAMES WESLEY JACKSON.**

**We are deeply grateful for your steadfast  
commitment to our mission.**

**THE COQUILLETTE FAMILY  
CONGRATULATES  
You Gotta Believe  
on its remarkable 30 Year Milestone.**

**Thank you for all you do  
for youth and families!**

Dear Seth and James,

On behalf of all of us at **You Gotta Believe**, it's my great honor to celebrate both of you for your extraordinary commitment to our mission and the young people and families we serve. Your passion, creativity, and unwavering belief in the possibility of permanent families for older youth have transformed countless lives and inspired an entire community to take action. Through your leadership and the incredible platform you have built, you have not only raised vital resources, but also amplified the voices and stories at the heart of our work. We're deeply grateful for your partnership, your friendship, and the lasting legacy you continue to build with us.

With admiration and appreciation,  
**Jennifer Pinder, Executive Director**



**Warner Bros. Discovery  
is proud to support  
You Gotta Believe  
and celebrate 30 years  
of family!**



**WARNER BROS.  
DISCOVERY**

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## Family is possible only because of YOU.

Be part of the **30 Years of FAMILY Celebration** legacy — your support helps You Gotta Believe connect foster youth with the loving, permanent families they need and deserve.

To make a gift, simply **scan the QR code** below or use the donation card in your program.



*Thank You!*

[YOGOTTABELIEVE.ORG](http://YOGOTTABELIEVE.ORG)

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