



FAMILY & YOUTH
INITIATIVE

2024 Annual Report



Connecting
teens and adults

Creating
families

Changing
lives





Still Together, after all these Years

David and Cierra's relationship started the way many do. They met at a party — a DCFYI St. Patrick's Day event. They made green desserts together, and she appreciated his blunt assessment of their baking efforts.

"It doesn't look good," she recalls him saying, "but it's got a lot of sugar, so everybody is going to like it."

That honesty characterizes their relationship to this day, eight years later. What began as a mentor-mentee pairing has evolved into a family of choice.

"Because I was older, I didn't know if I could get a mentor," says Cierra. Her journey to adulthood and through multiple foster homes was a difficult one that left her with an understandable distrust of adults and a deep uncertainty about whether she was good enough to ever have a close relationship with anyone.

David, a new DCFYI volunteer, didn't consider himself mentor material. He was busy at work and his lack of a car seemed like an obstacle to meeting regularly with a mentee. "I didn't want to be someone who abandons someone else. I just didn't necessarily see a commitment happening."

And yet, the two clicked so immediately they made it work. That they'd still be together eight years later would have come as a surprise to Cierra back then.

"I am not good at keeping people around," she admits. "I don't communicate well." But as she has matured, so have her communication skills, thanks in no small part to her relationship with David, who has watched her grow and evolve into a more mature, well-rounded person.

"She questions and evaluates herself, which is not something everyone does," he says. "It speaks to her character. She wants to be a good mother, sister, friend, partner. That introspection and desire to improve and mature and connect is really invaluable."

Aging out of the system and the "slap in the face of adulthood," as David calls it, proved to Cierra the practical value of having him in her life. She felt ill-prepared for life out of care — she didn't know how to read a lease or write a check — but she knew who could explain it all.

"When you age out, you get resources but you don't get community, so what do you have the resources for? It's a disservice. You can't reach your full potential because you don't have everything you need to be the best person you can be," she says. "I can't imagine being the person I am, the person who's healed enough to raise children, without David."

Cierra is a mom now. David, naturally, is her son's godfather. He was there for the birth, and it's to David's house that Cierra brings her son to play with the dogs, splash in a kiddie pool, and dig in the garden.

She can't picture her life without David. "I would have been very close minded about people and wouldn't have trusted. He was able to come in, toe the line and eventually pull me over the line. People need someone to see them for who they are and then help them be the best version of themselves."

David's role has evolved, too. "I see Cierra as a friend first before a mentee," he says, causing her to tear up. "It's grown to be more of a lifelong, deep friendship," and the feeling is clearly mutual.

"He has been with me through a lot of things. He's helping me put back together the pieces of my life. He wasn't there when the damage was done but he's been there for the repair," she says. "I do feel like I've found my forever family."

2024 was a year of deepening relationships.

DCFYI averaged two events each month — large events for the whole group and small events to help new teens get comfortable or to facilitate new teen-adult matches. Many teens built relationships with multiple adults, giving them a community of support.

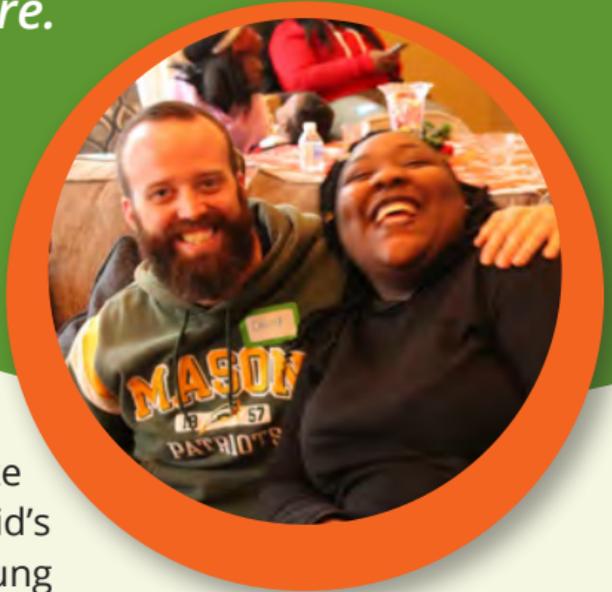
In January, we started working with DC Child and Family Services Agency toward a new form of permanency for youth 16 and older called SOUL (or SOUL Family). DCFYI is facilitating the involvement of young people with lived foster care experience who are leading the design of SOUL.

Because of support from generous donors like you, through the Fund for Critical Youth Needs, we assisted four youth who have aged out of care obtain their first apartments or keep from losing housing. We helped five other youth with transportation or materials they needed to obtain new employment, and helped three youth with emergency food needs.

	2024	2023
Teens in program	24	18
Young adults aged out of foster care in program	25	25
Prospective volunteers who attended orientation or info session	111	103
Youth (teens and young adults) matched with mentors	23	20
Teens matched with host families	1	2
Teens placed for adoption	0	1
Teens whose adoption was finalized	0	1
Youth newly matched with Open Tables	3	2

Our Mission:

Family & Youth Initiative creates a supportive community and lasting relationships for teens and young adults who are in or have aged out of foster care.



Connections like Cierra and David's are rare for young people aging out of foster care. One large study* found that fewer than half reported having someone they could count on over time. These enduring relationships matter and also reduce the likelihood of food insecurity, homelessness, and other economic hardships.

* Nathanael J. Okpych et al., "Relationships that Persist and Protect: The Role of Enduring Relationships on Early-Adult Outcomes among Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care," 2023, University of Chicago Press Journals.



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Thank You!

DCFYI
Income Statement
(Profit & Loss)

	2024	2023
REVENUE & SUPPORT		
Grants	\$180,352	\$44,500
Contributions from Individuals	\$174,810	\$143,281
Contributions from Organizations/Foundations	\$32,317	\$36,943
Contributions from Fundraising Event	\$72,086	\$67,736
Other Income (includes Employer Match and Interest)	\$10,974	\$15,212
TOTAL REVENUE & SUPPORT	\$470,359	\$307,672
EXPENSES BY PROGRAM		
Program Services	\$281,201	\$237,350
Management and General	\$17,703	\$17,931
Fundraising	\$111,644	\$86,029
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$410,548	\$341,310
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$59,991 (\$33,638)	

DCFYI
Cash Balance Statement

	2024	2023
END-OF-YEAR CASH BALANCE	\$211,209	\$182,427
CASH BALANCE AS % OF TOTAL ASSETS	83%	94%



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