Second FAMILY FOUNDATION

PART II OF II

EVIDENCE OF A PROBLEM:

SERVICES AND APPROACHES DEDICATED TO IMPROVE FOSTER YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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Author's Note

This work is a compilation of research paired with Second Family Foundation experiences and interpretations. Any remaining errors contained in this report are the sole responsibility of the author. Correspondence regarding this report can be mailed to Second Family Foundation, 103 West Weaver Street Suite 6/C, Carrboro, North Carolina 27510.

Second FAMILY FOUNDATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: REVISITING THE PROBLEM

The child welfare system is an accumulation of services designed to promote the well-being of children by ensuring safety, achieving permanence, and strengthening families to care for their children successfully (Comprehensive Youth Services of Fresno, 2012). While this is a well-intentioned mission, the adverse impacts of the child welfare system on the nation, and especially its youth and families served, are abundant.[1] Finding permanence for youth, especially teenagers, has always been one of the system's greatest challenges.[2] This difficulty is complicated by a pattern of recurring issues within the system. Older youths' often disruptive behaviors, coupled with a shortage of foster care providers equipped to meet such high needs, greatly hinders placement stability and therefore permanence. Often due to a lack of permanence, the foster youth population does not fare well on most well-being domains, including those such as housing, education, employment, mental wellness, and physical health. Though the child welfare system is not necessarily the origin of such struggles, research indicates that foster care is not adequately supporting youth and families.

Eager to evolve its own program design and better understand supports and strategies to assist the development of foster youth, Second Family Foundation (SFF) has compiled relevant information into a three-part paper discussion. Part I of this series investigated the dynamics of

[1] The nation's total population of foster youth steadily declined over the past decade, decreasing by almost a quarter (23.7%) between 2002 and 2012, from 523,616 to 399,546 (Administration on Children, Youth and Families, 2013). However, the overall trend of decline appears to be ending. Reports from the fiscal year 2013 indicate 402,378 youth are in the nation's foster care system (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015). For the first time in 8 years, North Carolina has seen an increase in total foster youth (9,955 as of September 2014) (Stewart & Duncan, 2013). At the end of September 2014, there were 105 children under the custody of Orange County DSS. Of those 105 children, 25 are over the age of 12 (Duncan et al., 2014).

[2] While the nation's total foster care population was gradually decreasing from 2002 to 2012, the percentage of teenagers aging out of the foster care system increased; the total population of emancipated youth increased from 7% to 10%. One-third of the estimated 23,000 youth who recently aged out of foster care reported that their last placement was a non-family setting (Langford & Badeau, 2013).

North Carolina's foster care placement system.[3] Through this research, SFF was interested in learning innovative approaches to improve foster care placement experiences, which could include SFF becoming a foster care provider or agency equipped to license and train foster parents. Findings mostly led to what existing child welfare research already claims—the consequences and decisions associated with placing youth in the foster care system, on both national and local levels, are complex and unique; therefore the most effective interventions (including placement types) that encourage success in foster youth are not easily identified. The best fit for one youth is not necessarily ideal for another.[4]

Part II of this series (the current document) will first provide updated information on existing services (some of which offer residential care) devoted to foster youth development on all well-being domains and include analyses of each program's strengths and weaknesses. It will also review the original program approach of SFF as well as introduce trending approaches and models that key field experts are suggesting might improve outcomes for all adolescents. Lastly, it will reveal suggestions for child welfare improvements from local foster youth alumni, including youth having had involvement with SFF.

Findings from the Part I and II documents will lay the foundation for SFF's new pursuits. The decision for SFF to take a new approach was influenced by results from the current document, in particular. Conclusions from Part I lead SFF to believe that becoming a program to offer residential care does not make sense at this time. Discoveries from Part II lead SFF to

[3] For detailed information, refer to *PART I of II Evidence of a Problem: North Carolina's Foster Care Placement System and its Impact on Older Youth in Care* (Second Family Foundation, 2014b).

[4] Placement variables such as types (e.g. family foster homes, group settings, etc.), levels of care (e.g. supervision), and costs are amongst the many to consider when identifying a placement that will meet each foster youth's individual developmental needs.

consider that creating a character development program serving adolescent youth does appear to be a sensible move.

UPDATE ON EXISTING SERVICES

As mentioned by SFF Program Director Holly Kunkel in the SFF document, *The Learning Curve*, Dr. Mark Courtney, an expert in child welfare research and policy, contends that no specific type of existing program design or large-scale initiative is making a great enough impact to improve outcomes for older youth in foster care. He acknowledges that while there may be smaller-scale programs with remarkable accomplishments, they are either too small or too new to draw a formal analysis. Regardless of shortcomings, SFF finds it beneficial to review such services (especially local ones) working to improve well-being domains for at-risk youth.

EARLY INTERVENTIONS

Of the current programs serving youth in foster care, most services are often directed towards families with children birth to age five. Many of these early intervention programs focus on attachment, parenting, and strengthening families as well as overall child development. This is understandable, considering children age birth to five often enter foster care with a variety of developmental delays, such as speech, language, and gross motor deficits. Early intervention is critical.

Head Start is one example of a comprehensive program designed to address such delays.[5] Head Start, first established in 1965, uses community agencies to promote school readiness of young children from low-income families, including young children in foster care.[6] The Head

[5] Head Start and Early Head Start are grant-funded programs through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) and support the mental, social, and emotional development of children from birth to age five (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2015).

[6] In addition to education services, Head Start programs provide children and their families with health, nutrition, social, and other services.

Start Impact Study, an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of Head Start services, compares young children enrolled in a Head Start program to children not having access to Head Start services. Overall results indicate that providing access to Head Start led to improvements in the quality of the early childhood settings and programs children experienced.[7]

Launched in NC in 1993, Smart Start is a nationally recognized public-private partnership that also works to improve educational and health outcomes. Unlike Head Start, Smart Start focuses efforts and funds for *all* (not just low-income) young children under the age of six. Since Smart Start's implementation in 1993, NC has seen improvements with more children attending high-quality childcare, receiving developmental screenings, and succeeding in school.[8]

The Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program was established through a provision of the Affordable Care Act in 2010, which designated $1.5 billion over five years to establish and expand evidence-based home visiting programs (such as NC's Nurse Family Partnership (NFP)) for at-risk pregnant women and children from birth to age five (Paulsell, Avellar, Sama Martin, & Del Grosso, 2011).[9] Voluntary and locally managed, MIECHV programs are designed to help parents access community resources and develop the skills they need to raise children who are physically, socially, and emotionally healthy and ready

[7] On nearly every measure of quality traditionally used in early childhood research, children involved with Head Start had more positive experiences than those who were not involved. Specifically, both three-year-olds and four-year-olds involved in Head Start demonstrated major improvements in the cognitive, health, and parenting domains, and for three-year-olds in the social-emotional domain (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2010).

[8] Childcare centers can receive up to a five star rating. The percentage of children in four and five star childcare programs increased from 33% in 2001 to 73% in 2013. The average star rating for children receiving subsidized care rose from 2.6 to 4.3 during the same time period (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2010).

[9] NFP provides services to vulnerable first-time mothers and exists in 32 states. Since implementation of the first NC site in 2001, the NFP yields positive statewide results; out of 2,500 NC families served 89% of babies were born full term and at a healthy weight, 72% of mothers enrolled in NFP faced no subsequent pregnancies upon the 2.5 year program completion, and 44% of NC mothers have earned a high school diploma since being involved with NFP (Nurse Family Partnership, 2012).

to learn.[10] These programs also help to reduce child maltreatment and family violence and encourage family economic self-sufficiency and positive parenting. While decades of scientific research have shown home visiting improves child and family outcomes, MIECHV is the first nationwide expansion of home visiting and, in many ways, is just getting started. Researchers acknowledge there is still a great deal of analysis yet to be conducted in order to fully understand the impact of this program, but early findings indicate positive result trends.[11]

Overall, early intervention services are helpful to at-risk children. However, these provided services are not always enough to prevent involvement with the child welfare system. Despite having received early intervention services as a young child, many of these children enter foster care at some point throughout adolescence. These are often the children who express difficulty meeting well-being domains during adolescence and are unable to find permanence. Therefore, this population relies heavily on transitional services as they near adulthood and prepare to age out of foster care.

HOUSING AND INDEPENDENT LIVING

Housing and the skills to acquire and manage a home are one of the most critical but challenging transitional services for adolescent and young adult youth in foster care. Researchers estimate that 11% to 37% of emancipated foster youth have experienced homelessness and are even more likely to experience unwarranted housing arrangements.[12] The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is committed to achieving the goal of ending

[10] Health Resource and Service Administration funds states to develop and implement MIECHV programs using models that are proven to improve child health and to be cost effective (Supplee & Adirim, 2012). Early Head Start services are under this umbrella.

[11] The March 2015 report to Congress indicates positive results in the early findings of MIECHV. Local programs are serving the high-needs groups MIECHV funding is intended for, and said programs appear to be designed to aid families in overcoming severe hurdles (Michalopoulos et al., 2015).

[12] Studies estimate that 25% to 50% of aging out foster youth couch surf, double up, move frequently within a short period of time, have trouble paying rent, and face eviction (Dion, Dworsky, Kauff, & Kleinman 2014).

homelessness and recognizes emancipated foster youth are amongst the most high-risk groups. HUD's key programs that support housing for former foster youth include the following:

- Public housing and the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program (formerly known as Section 8) subsidizes rent so that tenants generally pay rent equivalent to 30% of their adjusted gross income.[13]

- Continuum of Care is a conglomerate of local providers and agencies that addresses homelessness through a coordinated, community-based process of identifying needs.[14]

- Family Unification Program (FUP) is a relatively small, special-purpose HCV program for child welfare–involved families for whom a lack of adequate housing is the primary reason for imminent out-of-home placement of children or delayed reunification.[15] Youth ages 18 to 21 who left foster care at age 16 or older and who do not have adequate housing are also eligible if supported by the local housing authority.[16]

ReGenesis Rising is a unique organization based in California that attempts to merge residential stability and relationship building in emancipated foster youth. ReGenesis Rising places residents between the ages of 18-22 years old in an independent apartment and then surrounds residents with positive circles of support, such as a Life Coach, a Budget Coach, and an individual mentor. Mentors try to empower residents to work hard, live truthfully, and build character. [17]

The unique combination of providing a mentor and also housing to emancipated foster youth is remarkable, as these areas are two of the biggest hurdles for this population. However, noted drawbacks to this program are also abundant. Funding comes with limitations; ReGenesis

[13] Local public housing agencies (PHAs) may give preference to former foster youth on their public housing waiting lists, which are often very long. PHAs rarely include supportive services former foster youth need to address other well-being needs. A variety of housing options are needed to support the differing development of each youth.
[14] HUD competitively awards annual grants to providers.
[15] Near the end of 2013, approximately 20,500 FUP vouchers were in circulation, being administered by 242 PHAs across the nation (Dion et al., 2014).
[16] FUP vouchers offer up to 18 months of rental subsidy and supportive services to help emancipated foster youth gain independent living skills. Families utilizing FUP vouchers face no time constraints (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2015). Orange County does not utilize FUP vouchers for foster youth.
[17] As a distinctly Christian organization, ReGenesis Rising's core values highlight Christ, dignity, growth, character, and community. Coaches and mentors help address residents' needs including housing, spiritual formation, financial literacy, and life skill training (ReGenesis Rising, 2015).

Rising is led by volunteers and relies solely on donations. Stringent requirements placed on residents, who are of adult age, likely interfere with enrollment and retention; residents are required to pay monthly increasing rent, meet regularly with their support circle, volunteer monthly, maintain a clean and safe apartment, and respect the program's values; smoking and alcohol is prohibited, as are overnight guests of the opposite sex (unless preapproved).

While maintaining a healthy lifestyle is paramount and all organizations need guidelines, others might argue that regulating what adults place in their bodies or how they choose to pursue intimacy is taking away their rights of independence-- the main trait ReGenesis Rising and others serving this age bracket want to instill. On the contrary, these regulations also allow ReGenesis Rising to retain only young adults willing to put in the effort to be successful and healthy as defined by the program's core beliefs. Indeed, research on mentoring does suggest narrowing the program to create the population you wish to serve (Garringer, 2011).

The approach of ReGenesis Rising is creative and possibly groundbreaking. However, the program also falls into the category Dr. Courtney references: ReGenesis Rising is too new and too small to formally evaluate impacts on the population served. SFF looks forward to seeing this program evolve.

A stand-alone program that also takes a creative approach to build supportive personal relationships in the foster care community as well as providing housing is Bridge Meadows in Portland, Oregon. Bridge Meadows is a multi-generational living program that serves former foster youth, adoptive families, and low-income elders in the community and works at the intersection of child welfare, aging, and affordable housing to overcome societal challenges

(Bridge Meadows, 2015b). Families must agree to adopt or become the guardians of children from the Oregon foster care system within one year of moving to Bridge Meadows.

Since April 2011, a remarkable 100% of youth at Bridge Meadows have remained with the same caregiver, remained in the same school, and attended school regularly. Seventy-three percent of youth have improved school performance and 63% have had a reduction in mental health issues (Bridge Meadows, 2015a). Twenty-nine elders live at Bridge Meadows and provide over 10,000 hours of service each year to the 24 former foster youth. Services range anywhere from tutoring to serving as surrogate grandparents. Although not serving current foster youth, Bridge Meadows should be commended for using flexible thinking to combat the challenge to permanency for foster youth of all ages.

Despite extraordinary efforts of housing programs like Bridge Meadows, ReGenesis Rising, and HUD, little is known about the effect housing programs have on actual youth outcomes (Dion et al., 2014). It is undetermined whether any of these housing programs are preventing homelessness or reducing housing instability for the aging out population. However, researchers are learning that there are many incentives of supportive wrap-around services. Several multi-service programs serving aging out foster youth also encompass housing arrangements and emphasize relationship building. Independent living programs (ILP) are amongst this group.

With housing often the priority, the main objective in most ILPs is to simultaneously address the many self-sufficiency obstacles the youth present. While this overlap in services is not necessarily a drawback, it naturally demands a great amount of time, resources, and partnerships on behalf of community programs to ensure success.

The Hope Center at Pullen in Raleigh, NC is an example of a broad ILP offering services separate from those offered by DSS. The Hope Center works with young adults between the ages of 16-24 who have aged out of Wake County foster care, or are at risk of aging out, without appropriate support. They describe themselves as the hub of all services. By identifying people and resources in the community and building a support team of paid professionals and volunteers for each individual, they create plans for each person to transition into adulthood and achieve independence. Areas of focus include housing, education, employment, financial management, physical & mental health and support networks (The Hope Center at Pullen, 2014). A program such as The Hope Center takes a great amount of collaboration from community partners. Because of this positive collaboration, the Hope Center serves its population well.[18]

SFF would like to see a similar program as The Hope Center available to Orange County foster youth. To date, the primary independent living services for Orange County foster youth are offered through NC LINKS, which is a statewide program operated under each county's DSS.[19] SFF has observed many OCDSS youth express an unwillingness to participate in or even drop out of NC LINKS simply because of the stigma of being involved with DSS. This is unfortunate since NC LINKS services are abundant and funding is available. The desire to not be viewed as a part of DSS is understandable considering this age group cares deeply about how they are socially perceived and most often is already in the minority amongst their peers.

RESIDENTIAL EDUCATION

Another novel approach to the housing realm for foster youth are residential education

[18] As of 2013, The Hope Center helped almost 30 individuals secure employment and safe and stable housing. Nineteen individuals enrolled in post-secondary education (The Hope Center at Pullen, 2014).

[19] Orange County's NC LINKS program provides services to youth who have spent time in foster care between the ages of 15 and 21. In order for youth to receive NC LINKS services, s/he must be an active and willing participant in the planning and implementation process. (There are different standards for funding.)

(RE) institutions. RE programs for foster teens**,** often referred to as foster care boarding schools, create a setting where youth can live and learn with their peers within stable, supportive and educationally enriching environments (Coalition for Residential Education, 2011). At the core of RE programs for foster teens, the state of California proudly identifies San Pasqual Academy (SPA) in San Diego as being the first established RE campus in the nation. SPA encompasses a unique public-private partnership addressing four components of the campus: residential, education, work readiness, and child welfare services. This overlay of services was designed to address the needs of a large volume of San Diego foster teens who were experiencing high numbers of placements, lacking independent living skills, and leaving foster care without earning a high school diploma.[20]

Even though success at SPA (which is legally classified as a group home) has actually renewed debate among researchers that certain models of group homes could outperform other foster care placement types, challenges still exist.[21] SPA has difficulty maintaining high enrollment numbers because the state of California (similar to NC) discourages the use of group homes for foster youth.[22] High expectations placed on SPA students also contribute to enrollment and retention hindrances.[23]

[20] Since opening its doors in 2001, SPA has served over 700 foster youth in San Diego County with a capacity to serve 184 at a time. Impressively, the 238-acre campus features individual family-style homes, an on-site, accredited high school, a cafeteria, a technology and career information center, an auditorium, recreation fields, a gymnasium, a Health and Wellness Center, a Day Rehabilitation Clinic, and a swimming pool. The San Pasqual Fire Department is also on the campus and provides internship opportunities for the youth (San Pasqual Academy, 2014).

[21] For the past several years, SPA has maintained a high school graduation rate of around 95%, which is almost double the national average for foster youth; 50% of foster youth complete high school by age 18 (American Bar Association, 2014). One in three SPA graduates go on to attend post-secondary education. SPA recognizes their success is made possible by the many collaborative partners working on-site to create such a well-rounded environment for foster youth.

[22] Reasoning is primarily cost-driven; in the state of California, group homes are much more expensive than private foster homes. A financial cap is placed on how long a foster youth can remain in a group home. Unfortunately, this financial cap can disrupt a youth's stay at SPA and therefore disrupt educational and placement stability (Vargas-Cooper, 2013).

[23] Youth with a violent history or substance abuse problems are usually deemed ineligible for enrollment. Those accepted have to want to be at SPA and be willing to demonstrate such a desire through requesting admission, participating in extracurricular

A similar establishment to SPA located in NC is The Crossnore School of Avery County. Situated on 83 acres in the Blue Ridge Mountains, Crossnore is a 101 year-old private non-profit Christian residential and boarding education program that also has a child welfare focus. Serving abused/neglected children ages one to twenty-one, Crossnore establishes an environment that guides and develops character, educational life, cognitive skills, responsibility, respect, managing emotions, and planning for the future by way of forward positive movements. Similar to SFF, Crossnore's theory of change model focuses on the mind, body and spirit.

Crossnore is the only residential foster care group home in NC that has a public K-12 charter school on campus and has a 100% high school graduation rate and college acceptance rate (The Crossnore Mountains of Hope School, 2015).[24] For young adults still in high school (age 17 to 21), Crossnore has an ILP that affords students the opportunities to maintain a dwelling with little supervision, obtain employment (on or off campus) and utilize his/her own transportation.

RE programs such as San Pasqual Academy and The Crossnore School have many appealing elements to take under consideration when thinking about program design. These institutions involve services specifically intended to address poor outcomes for youth aging out of foster care by using strengths-based initiatives in areas such as education, health and wellness, character development, and positive thinking. Hard work is expected but also rewarded. Such concepts are aligned with current SFF initiatives.

Elements of RE programs that are not easily scalable to SFF are the physical makeup of campus-like sites to include an accredited school and the high number of youth served (often

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activities, undergoing job training, and applying for college while a resident of SPA (San Pasqual Academy, 2014).

[24] The Crossnore School offers 19 forms of therapy ranging from family and play therapy to substance abuse and equine therapy.

over 100 youth at a time). Making such grand but necessary investments in such an establishment are difficult to justify on a small scale. Moreover, while researchers and testimonials indicate success in private RE programs, such as less placement disruptions for older youth, youth are still faced with obstacles. These youth often transition into adulthood in the absence of both a traditional family setting and an identified positive adult relationship.

MENTORING

Overall, mentoring interventions are viewed as effective strategies to support disadvantaged youth and build positive adult relationships. Heightened interest in mentoring models over the past two decades has increased the desire to expand mentoring programs, but insufficient resources and inadequate relevant research has hindered this expansion (Garringer, 2011).

Past mentoring research does, however, point out many considerations for existing mentoring programs desiring to serve foster youth more effectively. One obvious to SFF includes the importance of working closely with the wide range of professionals involved with these youth, such as school personnel, caseworkers, therapists, and placement providers. This collaboration will help mentoring programs determine which methods will best serve the youth and also provide feedback on identifying the right mentor match.

Studies show that finding the right match is the critical component in ensuring that little to no damage is done to an already disadvantaged population. Research has also demonstrated that regardless of a mentee's age or personal circumstances, the quality of the time spent between a foster youth and his/her mentor is more influential than the frequency of the face time. In addition, researchers also note that volunteer relationships ending in less than 3 months can often cause more harm than good (Garringer, 2011). A short-lived relationship with a mentor that ends

abruptly is similar to placement instability experienced by foster youth. Inconsistencies in relationships for these youth have great impact on their decisions moving forward and their willingness to trust others. Researchers also suggest that recruiting mentors who demonstrate healthy attachments in their own lives are most advantageous to foster youth and have greater chances of building a consistent high quality relationship with a mentee (Garringer, 2011).

Youth Initiated Mentoring (YIM) is a new model developed as a response to enhancing recruitment and retention efforts in the mentoring arena for at-risk youth. YIM empowers youth to identify and engage potential mentors within the constellation of caring adults in their lives (Dare Mighty Things, 2013). Mentoring programs using the YIM model train each youth on effective ways to identify natural mentors and then also provide nominated candidates with screening, training, and support. YIM believes the combination of such youth engagement and "natural mentoring" leads to stronger outcomes. The YIM model requires fewer resources, costs less, and yields more durable relationships between the mentor and mentee. However, SFF assumes that this approach can be challenging and intimidating for foster youth who often lack strong social networks, motivation, and self-confidence.

Using the traditional mentoring model and serving as the nation's largest donor and volunteer-supported mentoring network, Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) is a community-based program that matches disadvantaged youth ages six to eighteen with well-educated adult volunteer mentors (Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, 2015).[25] Collaboration between a BBBS caseworker, the mentor, the mentee, and the mentee's parent/guardian contribute to establishing

[25] Mentors are usually college graduates between the ages of 20 to 34.

a successful and meaningful mentoring relationship.[26] BBBS encourages time spent between the mentor and youth to focus on interests and activities of the youth's choosing, rather than on behavior modification.[27] By spending time this way, BBBS aspires for their youth served to experience educational success, develop self-confidence by building better relationships, and avoid risky behaviors. According to the first-ever nationwide impact study of a mentoring organization, BBBS is staying true to their vision and making an impact.[28] Interestingly, further evidence from the study revealed the youth did not place emphasis on the specific activity shared with the mentor, but rather that they were simply spending time with a caring adult (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 2000).

Another successful local mentoring approach is Blue Ribbon Mentor-Advocate (BRMA). Established in 1995, BRMA is a strengths-based comprehensive mentor program that provides minority students in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Schools with tutoring, advocacy, enrichment, leadership training, and scholarship support services (Blue Ribbon Mentor Advocate, 2015). BRMA's goal is to support youth for eight or more years. Therefore, students are referred in the fourth grade and can remain in the program through post-secondary education.

Indications of BRMA's success include reports that 97.5% of students have graduated high school and 100% of those students have enrolled in post-secondary education (Blue Ribbon

[26] The youth's parent or guardian must submit a written application to BBBS, participate in a parent/child interview with a BBBS caseworker, and ultimately approve the assigned mentor after meeting him/her. The BBBS caseworker also conducts background checks, an interview, and a home visit with the mentor before matching him/her with a youth. Once matched, frequent meetings between the parent, mentor, youth, and BBBS caseworker occur to address progress/changes in the relationship of the mentor and youth.

[27] On average, mentors meet with their mentee about two to four times a month for at least a year.

[28] In the mid 1990s, Public/Private Ventures, an independent Philadelphia-based national research organization, followed almost 1,000 youth from 8 BBBS agencies across the country selected for their large size and geographic diversity for an 18-month period. Half of the youth were assigned a mentor and the other half were placed on a waiting list. When comparing the two groups, the youth in the group matched with a mentor were 46% less likely to begin using drugs and 27% less likely to begin using alcohol. They were 52% less likely to skip school and reported feeling more confident about their school performance. Youth in this group also noted building better family relationships since being involved with BBBS (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 2000).

Mentor Advocate, 2015). Most significant to SFF is that reportedly 60% of BRMA graduates had the same mentor from fourth through twelfth grade. SFF appreciates the longevity and wrap-around educational focus BRMA has to offer, as well as the responsibility placed on the mentor-advocate to ensure educational success for the child. Even though BRMA is not foster care-focused, the mentoring program ends up serving some youth in the child welfare system since many youth in foster care are also minority students.

Mentoring is used in the child welfare system and increases support for young people of various backgrounds, not just minorities. Mentoring is a direct approach to serving foster youth that can work well when a quality mentor/mentee match is found. If the mentor and youth are not the best fit, it is up to the program to have the capability and resources to mend any damage done and reestablish trust with the mentee. However, there continues to be a shortage of quality programs due to a lack of research into the best practices for developing, implementing, and sustaining said programs (Garringer, 2011).

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

As referenced in Part I of this series, 84% of foster youth ages 17 or 18 express a desire to attend college, but only 3% to 10% actually attend and graduate (Second Family Foundation, 2014b). According to a 2010 Chapin Hall study evaluating the educational impact of extending foster care beyond the age of 18, only six percent of former foster youth had earned a two- or four-year degree by age 24 (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010). A study tracking the lives of about 700 foster children in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin, found that extra support services, including funding, make a difference in educational and employment attainment for foster youth.[29]

[29] Foster youth from Illinois, which has long allowed youth to remain in care until age 21, were more likely to have completed at least one year of college than their counterparts from Iowa or Wisconsin, where the age of emancipation at the time was 18

Recognizing this need, several colleges have created extensive support and funding programs designated for emancipating foster youth.

California, having the largest population of foster youth (approximately 54,000), is one of the seven states considered to have a strong post-secondary educational funding program for foster youth. For example, UCLA has gone so far as to include scholarships, year-round housing in the dorms for those who have no other place to live, academic and therapeutic counseling, tutoring, health care coverage, campus jobs, bedding, towels, cleaning products, toiletries and even occasional treats (Winerip, 2013). North Carolina also represents one of the seven states to have strong funding programs for college-bound emancipated foster youth.

As mentioned in paper I, the federal government assists foster youth with post-secondary educational costs utilizing Educational Training Vouchers (ETV). This funding stream, in combination with Federal Pell Grant funds and the state-funded program called NC REACH, will cover the entire cost of college for emancipated foster youth.[30] NC Reach is offered to qualified applicants for up to four years of undergraduate study at NC public colleges and universities.[31] The NC Reach program provides comprehensive student support, including mentors, care packages and internships.[32] If needed, the Academic Success Program (ASP) matches NC Reach students with qualified, trained coaches who work intensively with students to help them improve their GPA to a 2.0 or better over the course of one academic term (Foster

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(Winerip, 2013).

[30] ETVs cover $5,000 of associated costs; Federal Pell Grant amounts can change yearly but contribute a similar amount as ETVs ($5,775 is the maximum amount for the year 2015-2016.); and NC Reach funds cover the remaining costs. Youth should not have to pay back any of these funds. One exception is that the Federal Pell Grant Program will report applicants to collections should they fail out of the school for which they are using Pell Grant money and not have paid back said funds.

[31] Eligible applicants must be legal NC residents and adopted after the age of 12 from NCDSS foster care or have aged out of NCDSS foster care at age 18. They must enroll in one of the 74 NC public community colleges, colleges, or universities and will remain eligible for funding up until their 26th birthday.

[32] NC Reach funds may be used for tuition, on- and off-campus housing, meal plans, textbooks, school transportation (not to include the purchase of a car) and childcare.

Care to Success, 2015). Three of SFF's eldest youth have utilized all three funding streams.

In addition to continuing education, foster youth and emancipated foster youth need early and consistent work experience, employment training, career assessment, and job placement programs that specifically target their needs. A recent longitudinal study conducted at The University of Maryland's School of Social Work investigated employment outcomes for aging out foster youth in three states: California, Minnesota, and North Carolina, and followed these young people to age 30. Findings indicated low employment and earnings continued to age 24 for young people in all three states. Poor earnings persisted to age 30 in North Carolina. However, employment outcomes did improve if the foster youth had been connected to the workforce prior to age 18 (Stewart, Kum, Barth, & Duncan, 2014).

Recognizing the importance of exposing teenagers to the workforce prior to age 18, President Obama launched My Brother's Keeper Initiative (MBK) in September 2014. MBK is designed to address the persistent opportunity gap faced by boys and young men of color but contends that *all* young people can reach their full potential if they are willing to work hard to get ahead (My Brother's Keeper, 2015). Through this initiative, the Administration joined with communities and partners to connect young people to mentoring, support networks, and the skills they need to find stable employment or attend college and work their way into the middle class.[33] The Administration is hoping to gain investments of up to $200 million with the help of national partners such as The Annie E. Casey Foundation and The W.K. Kellogg Foundation.[34]

[33] MBK is focused on six milestones: getting a healthy start and entering school ready to learn, reading at grade level by third grade, graduating from high school ready for college and career, completing post-secondary education or training, successfully entering the workforce, and keeping kids on track while giving them second chances (My Brother's Keeper, 2015).
[34] The Annie E. Casey Foundation is located in Baltimore, MD and is related to Casey Foundation, the major private player in foster care research. Casey Foundation, located in Seattle, WA was the site of the SFF board visit in 2006.

Considering that implementation has just begun, much time is needed before the Administration can evaluate the success of MBK.

Along the same lines of interest as MBK and also funded by Congress, Job Corps is the nation's largest career development program offered to at-risk youth. Job Corps offers a comprehensive array of career development services to low income youth, ages 16 to 24, to prepare them for successful careers. Job Corps' program design engages in a holistic career development training approach. This method combines instruction in academic, vocational, employability skills, and social competencies through a mixture of classroom, practical, and based learning experiences. Job Corps participants are given a basic living allowance that increases as they advance in the program and is extended upon graduation from the program. Job Corps' length can vary from 12-18 months with job placement services extending another 6 months for an approximation of 2 years with the program. The end goal is to prepare youth for stable, long-term, high-paying jobs (Job Corps, 2013).

Job Corps works hard to reach out to foster youth and the foster care community. It is not uncommon for eligible aging out OCDSS youth to be presented with the opportunity to participate in Job Corps, especially considering most sites have a residential component. In fact, one SFF youth is currently applying to Job Corps. If accepted, she has the intentions to seek a high school degree equivalent and enter into a training program. Job Corps has a zero tolerance policy for misconduct, substance use, repeated absences, and unkempt appearance. Youth who choose to participate in the program must be serious about career building and advancement.[35] The most successful students generally stay in the program for one to two years.

[35] Job Corps has a zero tolerance policy for misconduct, substance use, repeated absences, and unkempt appearance.

Building on career development and post-secondary education are financial asset programs. Research shows that young people who have assets at age 23 have better outcomes in employment, marriage, and health (Bynner & Paxton, 2001). One program worthy of attention due to its great success and innovation is the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative and the implementation of the Opportunity Passport. The Opportunity Passport is a matched savings program or Individual Development Account (IDA) for extremely disadvantaged youth. Thus far, more than 3,000 young people aging out of foster care have collectively saved more than $3.1 million.[36] This savings program assists aging out youth to purchase life-altering assets such as cars, safe and stable housing, and computers for college. The chances for youth obtaining a full-time job more than double when they are involved with the program (Peters et al., 2012). The Opportunity Passport is a unique IDA approach because it takes into account the developmental stage of each youth, recognizing which assets are appropriate in transitioning to adulthood.

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

One area of interest that SFF believes is particularly important to at-risk adolescent youth is physical health and wellness. Participation in structured physical activity has the potential to enhance youth development through programs designed to promote positive mental, physical, and academic outcomes (Pettee, Gabriel, DiGioacchino, DeBate, High, & Racine, 2011). Newer youth-focused programs have included wellness elements into both program design and education. Most youth are responding positively and excited about building character while also building a stronger mind and body.

[36] The Opportunity Passport is available to youth who have been in foster care on or after their 14th birthday and up to the age of 24. Approved assets are matched dollar for dollar up to $1,000 a year depending on the amount the participant has saved (Peters, Sherraden, & Kuchinski, 2012).

The just keep livin' Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization started by Matthew and Camila McConaughey designed to work with the nation's schools to reach teenagers with the greatest needs by setting up fitness and wellness programs in inner-city schools where students might not otherwise have the opportunity to learn about body and mind connection. Through after school programs, the Foundation encourages students to make positive life choices to improve their physical and mental health through exercise, teamwork, gratitude, nutrition, and community service. Serving over 2,000 students in 24 schools/sites in Southern California, Dallas, Austin, New Orleans, and Washington D.C., the Foundation has seen significant academic results, including 91% of students who improved or maintained school attendance; 82% of students who improved their grades; and 96% of students who improved or maintained excellent behavior in class (just keep livin Foundation, 2015).

Second Round is a local program in Wake County, NC that uses boxing, weight training, and other forms of exercise to teach delinquent youth ages 10 to 21 self-discipline, teamwork, leadership, healthy living, and other pro-socialization elements (Haven House Services, 2011).[37] Program participation requirements include being in school or maintaining employment. Compliant attendants are eligible to participate in public speaking opportunities and travel to compete in boxing competitions. Developed in 2006 as an effort to keep teens out of youth detention centers and instead rehabilitated in their communities, Second Round is credited for succeeding in its efforts, contributing to the reduction in NC's juvenile delinquent crimes, and

[37] Delinquent activities among participants often include past or current gang involvement, substance abuse, and assaultive behaviors.

saving the state money.[38]

Established in 1996 in Charlotte, NC, Girls on the Run (GOTR), a physical activity-based positive youth development (PYD) program for girls in third through eighth grade, teaches life skills and self-confidence through running activities.[39] GOTR is now internationally recognized and serves over 150,000 young girls. Upon completion of the program, the girls are physically and emotionally prepared to complete a celebratory 5k-race event. In 2013, GOTR hosted 258 5k races across the U.S. and Canada (Girls on the Run, 2015). GOTR has been evaluating program efficacy since 2002 and overall findings indicate a positive impact on youth development, particularly for those girls less likely to be physically active outside of the program and those scoring lower on the PYD model's 5Cs.[40]

Perhaps one of the most intriguing fitness-led PYD programs is Friend Fitness, Youth Mentoring Partnership's signature mentoring program based in Pennsylvania. Friend Fitness is unique in that it uses volunteer mentors to work with teenagers of various backgrounds and of mixed groups (high-risk, at-risk, and pro-social) by combining intense weekly strength training workouts with challenging physical, academic, and social goal-setting and achievement. Friend Fitness' curriculum designs a "moment of choice" where youth have to make the decision to quit

[38] In 1998 the state was locking up 1,400 children each year in training schools. Today, there are approximately 300 youth at the state's four youth detention centers. The yearly cost for one youth in a detention center averages around $100,000 compared to $750 for a year's involvement in community wrap-around services like Second Round (News & Observer, 2012).

[39] PYD models are strength-based initiatives that aid young people to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to become healthy and productive adults while building on their strengths and recognizing their unique contributions. Elements of PYDs are commonly referred to as the 5Cs: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring. Researchers believe when the 5Cs exist, the sixth C of contribution is realized by the youth and success can be achieved (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008). Although SFF does not identify itself as a PYD program, the 5Cs very much correlate with SFF's code of ethics.

[40] Girls who began with lower scores on each construct showed statistically significant and meaningful improvements on the 5Cs +1, physical activity, and sedentary behaviors. For the total sample, percentage improvement across constructs was 31% to 50.5%, whereas 55.4% to 74.1% of girls improved who began with lower pre-season scores (Girls on the Run, 2015).

or persevere, therefore "testing" grit, or the ability to sustain interest in and effort toward very long-term goals. Friend Fitness claims they are seeing measurable results in developing grit.[41]

Physical health and wellness awareness is gaining popularity across the nation with programs developing in the nation's schools and workplaces.[42] Considering nearly 90% of young children entering the foster care system have physical health problems, and 55% have two or more chronic conditions, SFF would like to see more of these programs directly targeting the foster care population (Allen & Hendricks, 2013).

EXISTING APPROACHES

ORIGINAL SFF APPROACH

Since its inception in 2006 SFF maintains its original objective to do no harm while also promoting the self-development of select foster youth of Orange County. SFF works to instill ways of life relevant to the giving back message by encouraging physical, intellectual, and spiritual self-improvement. Youth are encouraged not to lie, cheat, or steal. By following these principles, SFF believes youth should be prepared to make lives better for others around themselves and ultimately pay it forward to similar youth in the future.[43] Reflecting on the past seven years of direct work with these youth (11 to date), SFF is able to recognize many successes within the organization and its youth as well as daunting challenges that remain.

[41] In a 2013 study conducted by Temple University Sport Industry Research Center, participants' mean Grit scores rose from 3.25 to 3.55 after a three year duration in the program (Major, 2013).
[42] According to the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans' 2015 Workplace Wellness Trends Survey, over 45% of 165 U.S. employers polled in October 2014 indicated using health-contingent incentives tied to their employees' group health benefits and 60% offered wellness incentives (Dunning, 2015).
[43] Conducting weekly discussions of the seven SFF tenets and providing opportunities to participate in multipurpose experiences foster this work.

SFF continues to make strides in creating positive opportunities for each youth, such as pairing with skills trainers, providing regular mentor-like relationships with SFF staff, and taking youth on experience trips of their choice. Through these opportunities laced within the seven SFF tenets, SFF hopes to widen these youths' frame of reference, expose youth to life outside the foster care system (which includes differentiating SFF from DSS when possible), and instill a desire to pay it forward when the youth are prepared to do so in the future. Although these approaches are making a difference for SFF youth, the youth are not demonstrating consistent effort and/or interest in the program. Program development changes are needed for optimal success.

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

Well-being remains a critical gap in the field of child welfare. SFF has seen first-hand that this is an issue of particular importance for older youth currently in and transitioning out of foster care who are faced with crucial decisions. The Youth Transition Funders Group (YTFG) is a national collaboration of funders dedicated to support the well-being and economic success of vulnerable young people age 14 to 25.[44] YTFG's Foster Care Work Group (FCWG) works to ensure that youth leaving foster care have lifelong family, personal, and community connections. They have also completed a decade-long research project evaluating the framework for well-being in this population (see Appendix A). FCWG determined that increased investments by program leaders in social, emotional, and physical well-being contribute to increased success of transitioning foster youth in education, employment, housing, and permanence (Langford & Badeau, 2013).

[44] YTFG members include several national leaders such as Annie E. Casey Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

To invest in these well-being domains and enhance outcomes for foster youth transitioning into adulthood, FCWG recommends modeling a PYD approach while also taking into account the developmental stage of emerging adulthood. This is a critical time when all youth are developing a sense of identity, making more independent decisions, generating career goals, embracing a value system, and increasing impulse control. When everyday challenges such as those faced at school, with a roommate, or in the workplace are coupled with the absence of stable emotional and social networks (an absence often felt by foster youth), adolescents find it easier to disconnect from support circles (Langford & Badeau, 2013). Without healthy coping skills, it can be incredibly difficult for at-risk young adults to form and then sustain relationships that create the foundation for lifelong permanence.

Using similar components to PYD models, another theory in the positive psychology literature that can be helpful to the SFF approach is described in *Application Framework for Self Esteem*, another SFF research effort. Nathaniel Branden and others have developed a framework using the experience of mastery-bound activities (MBAs) for participants to develop higher levels of self-esteem. The experience of mastery requires a degree of persistence and resilience to move through early stages of learning into mastery. Priming participants with positive emotions can increase persistence and resilience levels. Witnessing success in the process of MBAs can be used to initiate interest in pursuing other activities when the mechanics of effort and success are understood. A community with a common orientation in priming and mastery-bound activities will reinforce and support the experience. Finally, activities that support the cognition of the priming and MBA experience will solidify the overall knowledge that the

participant is worthy and capable and therefore build character (Second Family Foundation, 2014a).

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

SFF perceives self-development as the key to an individual's success. Youth cannot make or seek their goals without the capacity to understand that they are worth the action of hard work and genuine effort. Enhancing self-development requires determination and frequent practice but can result in acquiring positive coping responses needed in times of struggle. SFF believes, and research strongly supports, that if youth are able to develop character strengths over time, they are more likely to lead productive lives into and throughout adulthood and overcome hardship.

Paul Tough (2012), educator and author of *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character*, claims the basis for young people's success begins with character, emphasizing traits such as resilience and grit. He hypothesizes that these character-based traits have more influence on achievement than IQ. Tough suggests that rebuilding character, which is created by encountering and overcoming failure, is the key to improving the lives of troubled youth, such as those in the foster care system.

Dr. Angela Lee Duckworth, Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, studies these non-IQ competencies that Tough identifies as predictors of success. Through extensive research conducted in The Duckworth Lab, Duckworth and her colleagues concluded that grit coupled with self-control, or the ability to regulate emotions, thoughts, and feelings in the service of valued goals, is the key to any individual's success, both academic and professional. In her research statement, Duckworth (2015) describes using an expectancy-value framework to understand the desire to demonstrate grit; she understands goal commitment to be a function of perceived benefits, costs, and likelihood of achievement, suggesting that gritty

individuals should therefore perceive the importance of their goal to be extremely high, the costs of attainment acceptable, and the probability of realization high.

Duckworth also characterizes individuals who possess more grit as having a developed "growth mindset." According to Carol Dweck, the Lewis and Virginia Eaton Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, growth mindset is the belief that one's success is based on hard work, learning, training, and determination. This mindset inclines individuals to seek possible causes of their current problems. Those with a growth mindset recognize their ability to make room for change. On the contrary, those of a "fixed mindset" fear failure and assume nothing can be done to change their traits, causing them to try less to overcome hurdles (Dweck, 2015). Youth facing adversity are more likely to have a fixed mindset than a growth mindset. Dweck discovered that children who are praised for their effort and flexible thinking are much less likely to give up on difficult tasks, therefore demonstrating more grit. Dweck believes operating under a growth mindset leads to a less stressful and more successful life.

Evidence-based practices indicating how to test grit and other character traits to at-risk youth are not as prominent as child welfare advocates would hope; practices on how to instill grit specifically to this population appear nonexistent.[45] Duckworth's best idea for assessing grit in anyone is to infer passion and perseverance for long-term goals from an individual's track record (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). While this makes sense to SFF, gaining

[45] With interests in strengthening character in the educational setting, together with David Levin (co-founder of the KIPP Schools) and Dominic A.A. Randolph, Duckworth has founded The Character Lab, a non-profit designed to develop, disseminate and support research-based approaches to character development. One tool created by the Character Lab, the Character Growth Card, is designed to assess seven traits identified as character strengths: grit, optimism, self-control, gratitude, social intelligence, curiosity, and zest (see Appendix B.). By using this tool and other resources within the Lab, Duckworth hopes to spark dialogue between educators, students, and caretakers about what it takes and means to develop character skills.

measurable results takes a substantial amount of time—time that aging-out youth often do not have.

All of these developmental approaches provide a great background framework for SFF when considering program redirection. Also key to the program's transformation is the foster youth alumni perspective.

SUGGESTIONS FROM FOSTER YOUTH ALUMNI

As mentioned in Part I of this document series, SFF conducted a previous research effort *Reflections from Foster Care Experiences* that included interviews with Orange County foster youth alumni about their foster care experiences. Discussions focused on improvements to these experiences. While the most frequent suggestions related to finding better quality foster homes, the 39 alumni also presented many worthy ideas for SFF to consider.

A common theme heard from all alumni was the need for a voice, a choice, and to be nurtured. Most participants indicated that better outcomes as adults might have been possible had they simply been asked their opinions while in foster care. Past experiences that led to foster care placement, feelings about being in foster care, and future aspirations were all topics of discussion that alumni wished would have occurred while in foster care but did not. All of these young adults expressed feelings of loss, low self-confidence, and disappointment. Those alumni who did not claim to have a positive adult connection while in foster care indicated they would have appreciated the presence of an adult mentor during adolescence.

Additionally, alumni expressed the desire for all foster youth to be afforded opportunities to partner with non-foster youth in group settings outside of a school environment. Participants believe this would have reduced stigmas and stereotypes of what it meant amongst their peers to be in foster care. On the contrary, they also acknowledged the safety and comfort felt when

participating in activities with foster youth; therefore it was a recommendation that having extracurricular activities with a mixed population would have been most beneficial.

SFF admires the passion felt and openness shared from this focus group. Most interesting is that many of the participants unveiled a great amount of grit and character growth when sharing their stories. How participants fostered these traits is unique to the individual, but SFF can note that all of the focus group participants have endured many failing moments and still persevered through a system that by most accounts, failed them. By their own aspirations, alumni selflessly wish for a better future for today's foster youth. Views and opinions of the focus group about improving the child welfare system warrant the attention of SFF.

CONCLUSIONS FOR SFF

Part I of this series discusses the components and trends of North Carolina's foster care placement system, which include a multitude of poor outcomes faced by older youth in care. Part I concludes that the entire nation's foster care placement arena continues to exhibit many insufficiencies and less working solutions. These conclusions lead SFF to believe the grave uncertainties of success associated with operating a foster care placement or a child-placing agency outweigh the desire to create a better placement option(s) for local older foster youth.

While SFF could possibly afford to make such personal and financial investments on a very limited scale, limitations placed on those operating a placement do not merit taking the chance. For example, operational and risk management liabilities and state licensing restrictions

may hinder many innovative strategies SFF would wish to establish.[46] Also, the likelihood of unavoidable placement disruptions (such as those determined by DSS) occurs in even the most stable placements. As SFF has learned, these disruptions interrupt the much needed face time for positive change and lead to a multitude of negative outcomes for youth leaving foster care. SFF is not powerful enough to reverse such a process.

Findings from Part II of this series have provided SFF with information to consider in creating program changes. The ideal types of programs are difficult to determine. After listening to local foster youth alumni, it is clear foster youth do not always feel heard and at times do not wish to be heard out of fear of being stigmatized. SFF can see potential in investing in positive youth development programs that emphasize character development, build grit, and generate the framework for well-being.

The latest child welfare research explains that when character is developed and nurtured, youth are more likely to make better decisions on all well-being domains and persevere through failure moments, increasing their chances of a successful adulthood. Regulated self-control also prepares youth for the future and sets the stage to give back to their community, ultimately revealing the 6th C of the PYD model: Contribution.

The SFF Program is an innovative intervention dedicated to improve foster youth development. There are no other programs in Orange County of its kind. While there might be overlap in services between SFF and other local programs, self-development and character growth are not typically the focus of other programs. SFF should continue to emphasize self-development and character growth, but should also explore crafting a more refined character

[46] A costly policy ($1 million for one local mental health agency) is necessary to fully insure child-welfare placement agencies/providers. General liabilities include, but are not limited to, abuse/molestation procedures, supervisory plans, staff background screenings, and training curriculums.

development program using the PYD model to test grit. Perhaps even a program that branches out from the foster care arena might maximize SFF's own contributions to the community.

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Second FAMILY FOUNDATION

APPENDIX A

Toward a Common Definition and Framework of Well-Being

Framework for Well-Being for Older Youth in Foster Care

All young people should have the opportunity and support...

Focus of Investment Agenda: Social, Emotional, and Physical Well-Being

... to maximize their intellectual ability and functioning	... to cultivate a strong and resilient self-identity and nurturing relationships and to feel hopeful about life and the future.	... to manage their mental health and wellness	... to maximize physical health, strength, and functioning	SAFETY ...to ensure they are physically and psychologically safe and free from abuse and neglect	EDUCATION ... to achieve educational success to their fullest potential, including secondary and post-secondary completion
Are exposed to stimulating learning environments	Have a strong sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem	Are able to manage mental distress in a healthy way	Have access to a spectrum of healthy activities that reflect their interests and capabilities	Have tools to cope when they feel unsafe	Access to education that matches interests and abilities, ignites passions, and inspires lifelong learning
Have the opportunity to participate in activities that spark their interests	Have a positive experience of living in, connecting with, and belonging to a family	Are able to access resources to manage mental health diagnoses in a healthy way	Have access to information to make informed health-related decisions	Make informed choices related to risky behavior	Acquire education and training that enable them to attain marketable skills that can lead to steady employment
Have appropriate critical-thinking, problem-solving, planning, and decision-making skills	Have the capacity to make good decisions about and engage in physically and emotionally healthy relationships	Are full participants in treatment decisions	Engage in healthy behaviors	Take reasonable precautions to avoid becoming victims of crime and/or violence	EMPLOYMENT ... to obtain and retain steady employment that provides both a living wage and a career path
Are able to set and commit to realistic and productive goals	Cultivate healthy and supportive social networks that help them achieve their goals	Have health insurance for mental health	Have health insurance for physical health	PERMANENCY ... to belong to a family for a lifetime	Gain work experience that matches interests and abilities and contributes to their needs
	Are able to communicate effectively	Have access to mental health services to meet needs, including access to non-pharmaceutical treatments	Have access to health services to effectively meet needs	Have at least one adult to rely on for a lifetime	HOUSING ... to obtain safe, stable, and affordable housing
	Are able to use healthy coping skills	Are provided trauma-specific education	Have information about and access to reproductive health	Feel connected and a sense of belonging to a supportive family network	
	Are able to self-manage and regulate emotions		Have a connection to a primary care physician and a medical home	Have a sense of belonging to their culture and community	
	Are able to engage in positive social behavior		Are able to and have support for living with a physical challenge or limitation		
	Have support for their spiritual journeys				

Community Context

Young people are supported by communities that:	
	Cultivate healthy, safe, and inclusive environments
	Seek to grow resilient local economies
	Cultivate opportunities that are culturally rich and vibrant
	Support healthy parenting and caregivers
	Cultivate opportunities for civic engagement

12

Second FAMILY FOUNDATION

APPENDIX B

CHARACTER GROWTH CARD

Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4

STUDENT NAME

GRADE SCHOOL DATE

1 = Almost Never · 2 = Very Rarely · 3 = Rarely · 4 = Sometimes · 5 = Often · 6 = Very Often · 7 = Almost Always

	SELF-ASSESSMENT	AVERAGE TEACHER SCORE	TEACHER 1	TEACHER 2	TEACHER 3	TEACHER 4	TEACHER 5
GRIT Finished whatever s/he began Stuck with a project or activity for more than a few weeks Tried very hard even after experiencing failure Stayed committed to goals Kept working hard even when s/he felt like quitting							
OPTIMISM Believed that effort would improve his/her future When bad things happened, s/he thought about things they could do to make it better next time Stayed motivated, even when things didn't go well Believed that s/he could improve on things they weren't good at							
SELF CONTROL *(school work)* Came to class prepared Remembered and followed directions Got to work right away instead of waiting until the last minute Paid attention and resisted distractions							
SELF CONTROL *(interpersonal)* Remained calm even when criticized or otherwise provoked Allowed others to speak without interrupting Was polite to adults and peers Kept temper in check							
GRATITUDE Recognized what other people did for them Showed appreciation for opportunities Expressed appreciation by saying thank you Did something nice for someone else as a way of saying thank you							
SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE Was able to find solutions during conflicts with others Showed that s/he cared about the feelings of others Adapted to different social situations							
CURIOSITY Was eager to explore new things Asked questions to help s/he learn better Took an active interest in learning							
ZEST Actively participated Showed enthusiasm Approached new situations with excitement and energy							