



**Boys &  
Girls Aid**

SPRING 2022

# Connect



## *A Safe Place to Land*

**IMAGINE PICKING UP AND MOVING EVERY EIGHT MONTHS.** You are never told when or where these moves will happen. And it is always a move from one stranger's home to the next. New surroundings, new rules, and new people every time. This isn't the life of a traveling nurse or someone in the military. This is the reality for children living in foster care in the state of Oregon.

These are the children that Boys & Girls Aid serves.

The Nest is a Boys & Girls Aid program that works with and provides a safe landing place for young children in foster care who have complicated, traumatic backgrounds and tremendous needs. To help understand the clients in this program, we studied the past experiences of six of the children served at the Nest. These young children, between the ages of 5 and 9, collectively:

- Spent 4,347 nights in foster care
- Moved every 9 weeks
- They each had at least one parent incarcerated for drugs, domestic violence, identity theft, trafficking minors, or murder
- Encountered a combined 429 adult strangers in their lives.

**Permanency means  
these children will not  
be lost or forgotten.**

While these circumstances are awful, the reality of what outcomes face children in the foster care system is even more striking. Children in foster care who age out of the system have less than a 50% chance of graduating high school. They have a far greater chance of becoming homeless and an even greater chance of becoming addicted to drugs or incarcerated. There is only a 3% chance they will attend any college, compared with their peers where 46% will attend at least some college. These outcomes are unacceptable.

We are determined to change perspectives about what is best for children in foster care and what can be gained by helping children have permanency in their lives. Whether returning home or finding a permanent guardian or family—permanency means these children will not be lost or forgotten but instead supported and loved for a lifetime. As leaders in the field, with nearly 80% of children served exiting our programs to permanency, we know permanent loving connections must be the ultimate goal for youth in our care.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



Suzan with Alex Madkour (page 3) at Fostering Futures in 2018.

# Path to Permanency

*Letter from Suzan Huntington, President & CEO*

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter outlining our accomplishments and celebrations of the commitment to children and families. Your support this year has been astonishing, and I am grateful for your dedication to our work of ensuring children and young adults find permanency in their lives. We've talked about permanency before, and at Boys & Girls Aid, this means finding lifelong connections for children. Caring adults who will support, guide and love children, for a lifetime. We believe today as we did at our founding in 1885, children will do better and have better outcomes when supported by love.

It is an honor to share with you the stories of children directly impacted by forever families. Their life story had a rough beginning, but has taken a turn for a stronger future because of family. And, you've heard me say it before, while family is complex and imperfect, the love of a family is grounding and offers a haven when life can feel difficult. That grounding is the shift needed for children who, if not adopted would age out of foster care and when this happens, life becomes exponentially more difficult. These children have a higher likelihood of becoming homeless or incarcerated. They are less likely to graduate from high school or attend any trade program or college. These outcomes will take their toll and potential will be lost.

I'm proud that Boys & Girls Aid believes in permanency and that all children and young adults have value and worth and the potential to have success. Thank you for your support as we continue to make an impact on the children and families we serve. I wish you and those you love a wonderful and healthy summer.

With gratitude,

Suzan Huntington, Ed.D.  
President & CEO

**We believe today as we did at our founding in 1885, children will do better and have better outcomes when supported by love.**

## Board of Directors Executive Committee

- Fergal Donoher
- Jominee Hosek
- Matt Jung
- Ron Kasabian
- Gabe Nachand
- Aren Quaintance
- Suzan Huntington

## Board of Directors

- Janice Bangs
- Julie Barclay
- Sandy Leong
- Lora Lyons
- Andy McStay
- Noah Rabinowitz
- Marc Satterlee
- Sue Schweitzer
- Mary Stumpf
- Jason Waxman
- Eryn White
- John Windish

When youth enter programming at Boys & Girls Aid, we ask them several questions regarding permanency. They are asked these questions again when they leave our services. The progress and understanding children come to have is amazing:

Child understands adoption and the adoption process and/or understands the value of healthy connections.

**ARRIVAL AT BGAID**    **AT EXIT**  
**0%**                      **83%**

Child expresses feelings about belonging and is hopeful about long-term permanency.

**ARRIVAL AT BGAID**    **AT EXIT**  
**8%**                        **83%**

Child articulates a sense of readiness for adoption and/or stronger connections.

**ARRIVAL AT BGAID**    **AT EXIT**  
**8%**                        **83%**

Children enter foster care at no fault of their own. They have hopes and dreams just like every other child. They want to grow up and to be athletes, teachers, singers, scientists—they want to make a difference and be noticed for good things. These children come from extremely difficult situations, but have the ability to be amazing. They just need a permanent source of care and support so they can dream about and have hope for their futures.

While the data regarding children in foster care is staggering, together we can make a difference. Continue reading to learn about Alex, and what exiting foster care to a loving family has meant to him. 🌱



## From 15 Foster Homes to a Forever Family

“It was almost too painful to hope for. It was just easier to be negative.”

These are the words of Alex Madkour about finding a family to love and support him.

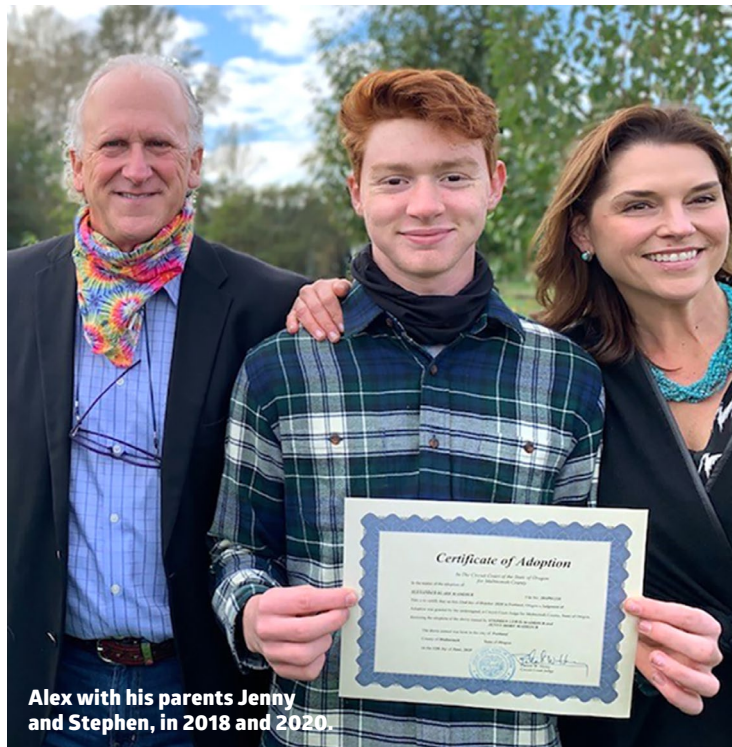
While tragic and awful, no one can blame Alex for feeling this way. After being removed from his birth family at age three due to abuse, neglect, and chaos, Alex became a child living in foster care. For more than 11 years, Alex bounced between 15 different foster homes, attending eight elementary schools along the way. A life of broken connections, instability, and unknowns left Alex frustrated, angry, and hopeless.

When Alex arrived at Boys & Girls Aid, he believed it was just another stop in his foster care journey. He was resistant to programming designed to help him deal with his years of past trauma.

“Trust was a really big issue,” remembers Alex. “And I honestly didn’t care what happened to me.”

At Boys & Girls Aid, these thoughts and actions are normal for children entering our therapeutic foster care programs.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Alex with his parents Jenny and Stephen, in 2018 and 2020.

“  
**I am breaking the cycle of abuse and instability.**  
 ”

These young people have experienced immense amounts of trauma, upheaval, anxiety, and stress in their short lives. Our staff is trained to build connections and approach each child they work with based on that child’s unique circumstances and needs.

Boys & Girls Aid staff saw the potential Alex had to offer the world and how he would thrive with the love of a family. Slowly, Alex began to connect with his case workers, his heart began to open to the thought of having a family of his own and an adoptive family was found.

“It felt right, like we had been waiting for each other,” says Jenny Madkour, Alex’s mother. When Alex met the Madkours, Jenny and Stephen, and began living on their farm in Western Oregon, everything began to change. “To have two people in my life that I can trust is a really big thing,” remarks Alex on his parents.

This trust was obvious to his parents, “Alex jumps in with both feet to most circumstances, and he did that with the farm and animals.” Alex quickly became the caretaker of a dog and horses and learned all about farm chores, including how to drive a tractor. He was thriving with a family and full life.

With Alex’s adoption finalizing in 2020, he found stability in his life that he had never known. This empowered him to start making choices and plans for his future. As a senior in high school, Alex will be graduating early and studying architecture in college. When looking back at his past and realizing how far he has come in 15 years, Alex is excited, “I will be the first person in my biological family to earn a college degree. I am breaking the cycle of abuse and instability.” 🌱

▶ WATCH ALEX'S VIDEO:  
[youtube.com/boysandgirlsaid](https://youtube.com/boysandgirlsaid)

# Every child deserves a family.



Nick  
& Jamie  
ADOPTED  
2018

Tekoa Rose Photography

## Learn about your impact: *Fostering Futures 2022*



Scan the  
QR code

OR VISIT  
[youtube.com/  
boysandgirlsaid](https://youtube.com/boysandgirlsaid)

We look forward to events such as Fostering Futures every year because it allows us to share the impact you are making. If you missed this year's event, you can still learn about the impact you are making by scanning the QR code.

It is important to note that our service contracts do not cover all

our costs to provide superior care. In fact, they only cover 80% of our expenses. There remains a need to raise \$1.5 million annually to ensure the strength of our organization.

Thank you for continuing to support our work.



**Boys &  
Girls Aid**

*Support a child in need.  
Give today.*

[boysandgirlsaid.org/donate](https://boysandgirlsaid.org/donate)

# Spotlight on Safe Place

This year we are celebrating 15 years of operations at Safe Place shelter for youth.

Starting in 2007, after consistent feedback from the community, Boys & Girls Aid responded to a need to serve homeless youth in Washington County. Since then, we have been working with adolescents who have experienced trauma and disruption in their lives by providing services in the areas of adoption, foster care, and prevention programs.

As more families become homeless in Washington County and the children of those families seek shelter at Safe Place, we have opened our doors to also help the parents of our youth clients by offering food, laundry services, shower access, phones, computers, and recreational activities. This enables youth and their parents to support one another despite not having a place where they can live together.

We are proud to be a long-time provider of 24/7 shelter services, family mediation, and transitional housing services for homeless and runaway youth in Washington County.



The ribbon cutting ceremony at Safe Place's opening in 2007.

## Because of you: Cypress House Volunteers

Thanks to the amazing work of our dedicated volunteers, children in The Nest program will be moving into our beautifully updated home, The Cypress House. The Nest serves children 4–10 years old living in foster care who come from challenging living situations and extremely traumatic experiences.

The Nest is thoughtfully designed to be a safe place for children to land while they receive the support they need to heal and grow.

### Special thanks to:

Apple Employees

Cypress Branch Auxiliary

Boys & Girls Aid Board of Directors

Boys & Girls Aid Board of Ambassadors



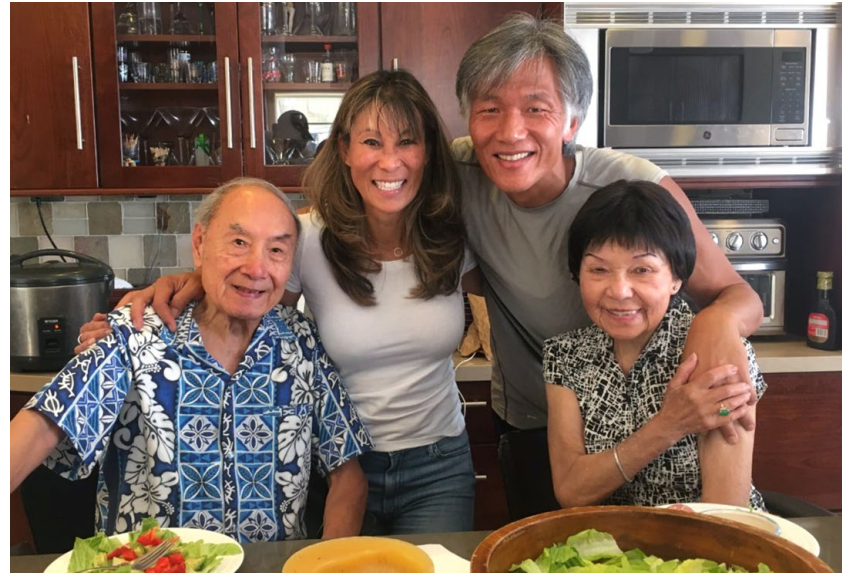
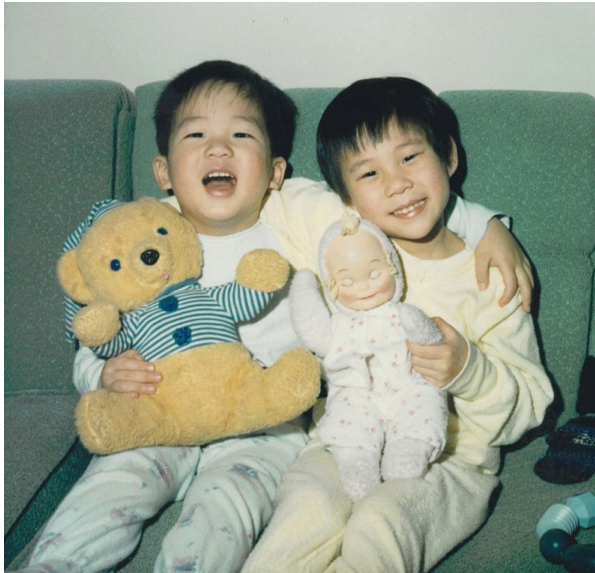
Boys & Girls Aid Board of Ambassadors  
Katie Schenk, Michelle Navarro and  
Jenna Boyer decorate a room.

## BOARD PROFILE:

# Sandy Leong

*Boys & Girls Aid  
Adoptee and Leader*

**Sandy and Alan as children, and with their parents Dot and Rudy.**



*Sandy Leong's connection to Boys & Girls Aid runs strong and has been consistent in her life. She currently serves as a member of the Boys & Girls Aid Board of Directors, and we are honored to share Sandy's birth and life story with you.*

Sandy was born to a college student who made the brave and selfless decision for Sandy to be adopted and loved by another family, Dot & Rudy Leong. This adoption was facilitated through Boys & Girls Aid.

When it came time to add to their family a couple of years later, the Leongs returned to Boys & Girls Aid.

“My earliest childhood memory is walking down the hall of the agency, holding both my parents' hands,” recalls Leong. “I was so excited to have a baby brother.”

This solidified the love and bond of the Leong family. “I adored my baby brother, Alan. And from the beginning, we felt really connected and I have always treasured this relationship,” says Leong.

When Alan and Sandy were in their 30s, they returned to the agency to learn more about their birthmother. Their adoption story took a big twist when they learned Alan and Sandy share the same birth mother. They now knew they were related by love and blood.

Sandy's unique path with Boys & Girls Aid has given her a strong understanding of the mission of our organization.

“Because of my family's love and support, I'm living my best life. I have a wonderful family to call my own, and the true belief that family can make a difference,” notes Sandy. “I'm so honored to be a part of Boys & Girls Aid because we believe kids should not be lost. They should be seen, cared for, and loved. Family is so vital to ensure the best outcomes possible.” 🌱

WATCH SANDY TELL HER STORY AT OUR VIRTUAL EVENT,  
FOSTERING FUTURES 2022, STARTING AT 30:13:



[youtube.com/boysandgirlsaid](https://www.youtube.com/boysandgirlsaid)



**Boys &  
Girls Aid**

9320 SW Barbur Blvd. #200  
Portland, OR 97219

NONPROFIT ORG.  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PORTLAND, OR  
PERMIT NO. 623

# Foster Love



Please join us in recognizing that we each can play a part in enhancing the lives of children living in foster care. Nearly 8,000 Oregon children are living in foster care.

Our gratitude goes out to all the foster parents, volunteers and donors who make the commitment to support the most vulnerable children in our communities. Thank you!



#fosterlove

