



**Boys &
Girls Aid**

SPRING 2023

Connect



Permanency: *A sense of belonging*

Giggles explode from the playroom at Boys & Girls Aid's (BGAid) Nest Home in Portland, Oregon. A game of Candyland takes place between a four-year-old child in foster care and a BGAid staff member. On the surface, this activity may seem like a way to pass the hours, but it is the start of this child's journey to permanency.

"Children are confused about who their people are, and if they're going to move homes again [when they come to BGAid]. All these fears and unknowns are related to a lack of permanency," said Sarah Kopplin, Director of Adoption & Youth Permanency Services at BGAid.

Permanency is when a caring, loving adult is willing to make a permanent commitment to a child, and the child is prepared for this relationship. Our number one goal at BGAid is to prepare these children for permanency.

The key to moving forward in permanency-oriented work with youth is helping them understand their past life events and reconcile traumatic events or losses. The process often starts with BGAid Permanency Specialists building authentic relationships with clients through simple activities such as playing games, listening to music, or making art together. This leads to organic conversations about the child's feelings about the role of adults in their lives and what permanency means to them.

"It's a complex process and usually not a linear one. Our goal is to build rapport with kids so they can express those feelings of loss, talk about their parents, relatives, and past foster parents, and acknowledge the pain of being disconnected from the people in their lives," said Kopplin.

All staff are trained to serve youth through trauma-informed care and collaborative problem-solving methods. One type of trauma-informed care activity is to work through the following questions:

- **Who am I?**
- **What happened to me?**
- **Where am I going?**
- **How will I get there?**
- **When will I know I belong?**

As every child in foster care has unique, complex life experiences, working toward permanency can last weeks, months, or years.

"It's a common assumption that once a child has been placed with an adoptive family or has found a permanent living situation, that the child now has permanency," reflects Kopplin. "It can take years before a child truly feels, in their bones, that they belong- that their world is now stable enough for them to be vulnerable and trust that they will be cared for unconditionally." 



Dr. Suzan Huntington, President & CEO, with 2023 Gerlinger Award Recipient, Sandy Leong

Service & Philanthropy

Letter from Dr. Suzan Huntington, President & CEO

Throughout this issue you will find shining examples of parents, Boys & Girls Aid staff members and others, just like you, who support the children of our community through service and philanthropy.

Boys & Girls Aid operates from the core values of investing in relationships and making a strong impact in the community through innovative service and authentically valuing others. We believe without a doubt that when we care for others and serve them well, great accomplishments will be had. Because so many operate from the same core commitments, we created the Irene Gerlinger Award for Service & Philanthropy to highlight the good work of those making a difference. Irene Gerlinger was an Oregonian born in 1876 who supported large and small endeavors all with the hope of making a supportive community where others would thrive.

This year, in the agency's 138th year of service, we honored Sandy Leong as the 2023 Gerlinger Award Honoree. Sandy has a special connection with Boys & Girls Aid. In addition to serving on our Board of Directors, Sandy was adopted through Boys & Girls Aid and, two years later, so was her brother Allan. Sandy offers her support and volunteers with organizations making an impact across the globe.

I'm proud to lead an organization and be associated with people, such as Sandy, who support the core value of making a strong impact in the community through innovative service and authentically valuing others. Thank you for this support as we continue to make an impact on the children and families we serve.

With Gratitude,

Dr. Suzan Huntington,
President & CEO

Boys & Girls Aid operates from the core values of investing in relationships and making a strong impact in the community through innovative service and authentically valuing others.

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LOVE

is a powerful healer

MAE'S UPDATE

In 2016, Sena adopted Mae from foster care and they shared an incredible bond right away. So, what are Mae and Sena up to now?

Last August marked seven years since Mae has been home. She's now been with Sena longer than she was anywhere else.

Mae is now 14 and in 8th grade. Mae and Sena recently moved back to Oregon from Hawaii, where they loved swimming, paddleboarding and snorkeling. Now their hobbies have changed, but you can find them shopping, going to the park, playing volleyball and softball, and playing board games.

The two still get along famously.

"There's nothing I don't like about her," Mae laughed. "I like how she's always there for me, how smart, funny, kind and beautiful she is."

"I love her resilience and how she's centered in who she is," Sena said. "She has come into a more open and funny personality."

One of their favorite memories together was Mae's official adoption day, which they still celebrate with ice cream on August 10th each year.

"That's a tradition that we're going to keep forever, even when she's gone away somewhere else," Sena said.

"We'll Facetime each other eating ice cream!" Mae added.

Mae is growing into a strong and capable young person and Sena has settled into her role as a parent naturally.



LESSONS LEARNED

"I guess I've been overwhelmed by how powerful love is to heal," Sena said.

She said that at first, she had doubts about whether they could do this, but the pair has made huge progress in their seven years together, and the doubts have melted away slowly as they've worked through things. Mae is growing into a strong and capable young person and Sena has settled into her role as a parent naturally.

"Love is an amazing thing," Sena said. 🌱

Permanency

Permanency connects youth long-term with adults who can provide support and help them form healthy attachments. Boys & Girls Aid works with each child served to understand and find permanency.



Child understands adoption and its process.

0%

On Arrival at BGAID

83%

At Exit from BGAID



Child articulates a sense of readiness for permanency.

8%

On Arrival at BGAID

83%

At Exit from BGAID



Child expresses feelings about belonging and is hopeful for permanency.

8%

On Arrival at BGAID

83%

At Exit from BGAID

Youth who don't experience permanency



...are more likely to be incarcerated.



...will make less income per year than their peers.



...are less likely to graduate high school or attend any college.

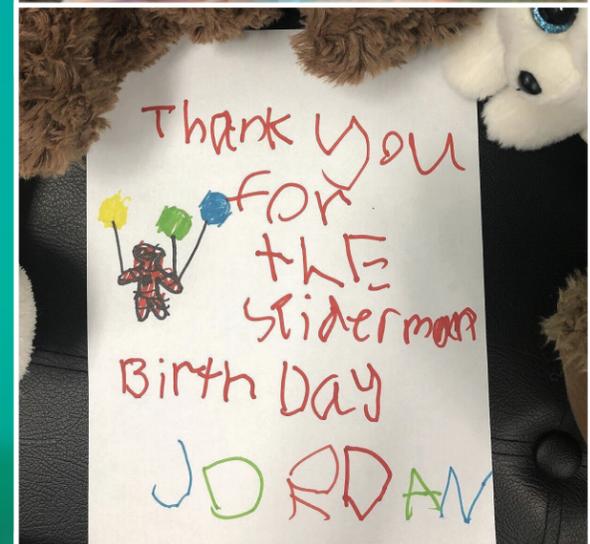
EVERY CHILD deserves to be celebrated!

Some of the children in our foster care programs have never gotten to celebrate their birthday. Boys & Girls Aid Birthday Club members make it possible for these children to have a birthday party of their own.

Your gift of **\$15 a month provides more than a party**; it makes a child in foster care feel like they matter and they are worth celebrating.



Join the Birthday Club at BoysAndGirlsAid.org/birthday-club



A Lifetime of Adoption Advocacy

Meet Julie Barclay, one of our newest board members at Boys & Girls Aid.



Raised in Grants Pass, Oregon, Julie did a lot of babysitting in her teen years. A lot of the families she helped adopted children from Holt International. Julie decided then that someday, she would build her family through adoption and have her own Holt Baby.

Years later, Julie and her husband Jeff had two children, Hannah and Nick. When they wanted to grow their family further, they decided to act on Julie's dream. In 2002, Julie traveled to Korea to meet their first adopted son, Sam, who was four months old.

While still adjusting to life as a mother of three, their adoption agency's monthly newsletter caught Julie's eye. A story about a 6-year-old boy with a heart condition waiting to be adopted in China captivated her, but she didn't think her family was ready for another child. She put the newsletter in the recycling bin.

The next morning, the newsletter was back on the kitchen counter.

"Jeff pulled it out and said, 'This is our son,'" Julie said.

Within a year, Julie met Zachary in China.

Six years later, the Barclays adopted Musse, an older boy from Ethiopia, and their family was complete.

While raising her family, Julie was an educator at Sherwood School District and served as the first female football coach in the state of Oregon. As a teacher, she learned about Boys & Girls Aid as a supportive option for teen mothers to create adoption plans. When the opportunity arose, Julie was excited to join the Board of Directors.

Through her work with Rainbow Kids, an organization that seeks permanency for children with special needs, Julie is a strong adoption advocate. She will support and guide Boys & Girls Aid in our adoption work. Julie also understands the trauma adopted children can have, as such, she will be an ally to the children served by the agency.

Boys & Girls Aid is honored to have a lifelong adoption advocate like Julie serving on our Board of Directors and we look forward to her leadership and support during her tenure. 🌟



Stopping Youth Homelessness in Oregon

We believe safe and stable housing is a human right. Our housing services programs are designed to serve youth ages 16-24 currently experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness in Washington County.

"Housing is a critical component in many areas of an individual's life, including access to education, physical and mental health, and a quality of life that every person in our community should be afforded," said Drew Williamson, Director of Housing Services at Boys & Girls Aid (BGAid).

Housing instability takes many forms. Youth may be couch-surfing, staying in overcrowded homes, sleeping in places not meant for human habitation (cars, abandoned buildings, parks, transportation stations), or already living in emergency shelters like BGAid's Safe Place for Youth.

"One of the biggest misconceptions is that youth are houseless because they have chosen to leave home, are lazy, or have simply found a rough patch in the road. This completely minimizes the systemic and generational barriers that individuals face which could lead to housing instability," said Williamson.

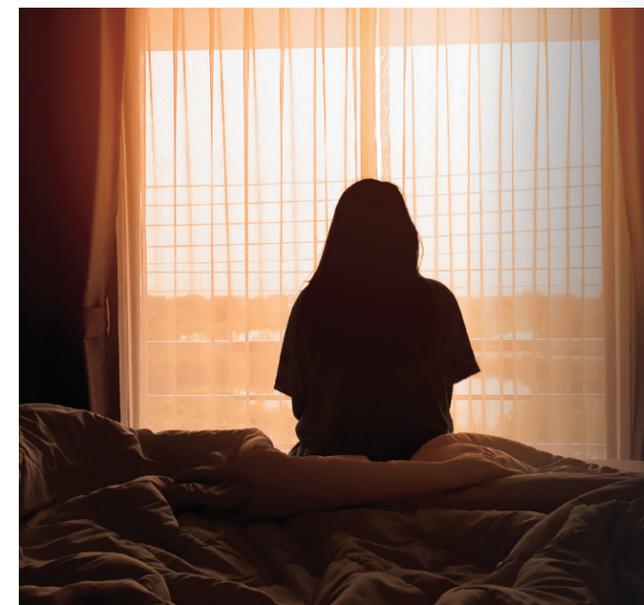
Services youth receive at BGAid can last from 18-24 months and initially focus on meetings with staff and skill-building classes and opportunities. Our goal is to help bring youth out of crisis, meet their basic needs, and then equip them with the skills to live and thrive independently. As youth progress in our programming, they may require fewer intensive services as they start leading their lives as successful and healthy young adults.

While we are focused on homelessness issues facing young people, we know the services we provide do much more to solve a critical problem in Oregon.

"We know for a fact that unaddressed youth homelessness leads to adult homelessness. We absolutely cannot end homelessness without ending youth homelessness," said Williamson. 🌟

The path to youth homelessness is nuanced and complicated from a personal and community-wide perspective:

- There is an extreme lack of affordable housing options in Washington County.
- LGBTQ+ youth in our community are sometimes forced from their homes when their gender identity or sexual preferences don't match their parents' values.
- BIPOC youth are often failed by the systems of care put in place to support them and they are left to fend for themselves without the skills to do so.
- Severe and persistent mental health challenges are increasingly affecting youth and their ability to complete their education or maintain employment.





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Foster Love



Please join us in recognizing that we each can play a part in enhancing the lives of children living in foster care. More than 5,000 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

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