

READY TO
LAUNCH

\$10M GROWTH CAMPAIGN

FIRST PLACE
FOR YOUTH

MORE IS POSSIBLE



“I’d been in foster care since birth. Going to college on my own was tough without any stability in my life. I came to First Place because I needed a place to live and help learning how to become independent.

First Place has showed me what it really means to be self-sufficient. Now I know how to take care of myself. I can pay my own bills, budget my money and make good decisions about my future.”

—Porchia



Turning 18: A Rite of Passage

Remember when you turned 18? For most of us, turning 18 was a defining moment. It was the year to find a date for the senior prom, prepare for graduation, register to vote, and choose a college or career. You felt like you were no longer a kid, but still weren’t quite sure how to be an adult. Mostly, it was an uncertain but exciting time to dream about future possibilities. And as you made the transition from child to adult, it’s quite likely you had a family standing beside you, cheering you on, and helping you when you faltered.

18 and Alone

But imagine turning 18 without a family to support you. Imagine the anxiety of not knowing where you’ll spend the night, how to find a job or stay in school. Imagine not knowing where your next meal will come from and who or how to ask for help.

At 18, thousands of young people leave their foster home with no place to call home, no one to call Mom or Dad, and no dreams beyond tomorrow. Homeless and hopeless, these are young people who live on the streets or in cars; who stop going to school and, worse, find themselves in jail. These are young people who have received no encouragement to develop their talents and skills, much less to pursue their dreams. With heartbreakingly little hope, they struggle to simply survive.

- ▶ Every year 26,000 teens age out of foster care, 4,000 of them in California.
- ▶ More than 40% will spend time homeless, living on the street, in a car, or couch surfing.
- ▶ 50% will drop out of high school.
- ▶ Fewer than 10% will go to college.
- ▶ More than 25% will be incarcerated before turning 20.
- ▶ 23% will have at least one child before age 19.

But More is Possible

In 1998, our founders, Amy Lemley and Deanne Pearn, came together with a simple dream. They were pioneers of what is now, 18 years later, one of America's great foster care organizations—a place where possibilities for former foster kids are endless.

From the beginning, our founders embraced the simple premise that all kids—no matter how difficult their life circumstances—could become responsible and productive adults; that they could be inspired by our support and our belief in them. Our founders believed that despite extraordinary odds, young people aging out of foster care could succeed in life—and succeed they have.

Hundreds of young people aging out of foster care—once homeless and hopeless—have succeeded beyond anyone's expectations. Today they are community leaders, ambitious professionals, and some are becoming parents themselves. They succeeded because of the character they possess and because First Place for Youth was there for them—to raise their sights, lift their spirits, to help them overcome obstacles, while holding them accountable for their commitments. To foster teens turning 18, First Place is not just another agency, **we are their family.**

And like a family, First Place surrounds young people with a safe and positive place to live, along with the steadfast support they need to succeed. First Place helps ensure young people graduate from high school and enroll in college. We help them secure short term jobs and provide longer term career counseling—the kind that leads to fulfilling and family-sustaining careers. Like a family, First Place helps young people develop independent living skills enabling them to maintain a home, manage their money, and make the right decisions about their future.

At the heart of every success story is the unrelenting commitment of the trained professionals and volunteers who make up First Place for Youth. We share an unwavering belief in the potential of every foster youth who walks through our doors. That belief inspires us to do more, to never give up, and never, ever let our young kids give up on themselves.



Remarkable Results

For 18 years, First Place has proven that with the right leadership and support, foster youth can dramatically defy the odds. By setting high expectations and by giving youth the courage to pick themselves up and keep trying, our staff ensure that young people at First Place are engaged and dreaming about their futures, continuing to prove that success is within reach. The astounding facts tell a story not only of survival, but of hope...

- ▶ Nationwide, fewer than 10% of foster kids enroll in college, while 91% of First Place youth attend college.
- ▶ Nationwide, only 21% of former foster kids find work while 86% of First Place youth are employed.
- ▶ Nationwide, 40% of youth leaving foster care experience homelessness, while 83% of First Place youth have a safe, stable place to live after leaving our program.

Today, First Place for Youth is the largest provider of housing and support services to foster kids, serving 1,600 youth annually in six California counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Santa Clara and Solano. But our work and our impact are just beginning.

A Time to Act

As much as First Place for Youth has accomplished, there is still a significant amount of work to be done. There are still thousands of foster kids turning 18 every year with no place to call home, wondering where their next meal will come from, and feeling alone in the world.

Because of our significant success and achievements, First Place is uniquely poised to make a difference on a grander scale.

Now is not the time to be complacent, it is time to be courageous.

No other organization has a vision as big or as bold. No other organization has our level of proven effectiveness. First Place is committed to step boldly forward and help solve a major national problem that is costing thousands of young lives and billions of dollars. With the solution in hand, it is time to act. With your investment, we are ready to launch the next big phase of First Place for Youth.

A ONE YEAR INVESTMENT IN OUR PROGRAM COSTS SIGNIFICANTLY LESS THAN THE ALTERNATIVES.



¹Source: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), 2011
²Source: Economic Roundtable, for the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, 2009

Our results- and data-driven program has been recognized nationally as an outstanding example of the outcomes that can be achieved with at-risk populations.

- ▶ **Moneyball for Government** selected First Place as one of the country's most innovative and highest-impact organizations.
- ▶ **Social Impact Exchange** selected First Place as one of the top 100 nonprofits creating scalable solutions to America's most significant social problems.
- ▶ **National Alliance to End Homelessness** officially recognized First Place's housing program as a Best Practice, and called the program a national model.

Introducing the Ready to Launch Campaign

With the unprecedented goal of raising \$10 million in gifts from individual donors over four years, the Ready to Launch Campaign will enable First Place for Youth to invest in three transformational strategies:

1. **GROWTH:** Double the number of teens served by First Place.

- Expand our proven model within California, growing programs in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area where there is the greatest need.
- Replicate our model outside of California by establishing affiliates in at least three additional states where we can have the biggest impact.

2. **IMPACT:** Ensure that teens aging out of foster care have the opportunity to become healthy, productive and responsible adults.

- Deepen our programs in educational counseling, career awareness and job placement services so that foster kids can build family-sustaining careers.
- Provide mental health services and wellness training so that young kids can develop healthy living skills as they transition to adulthood.
- Intensify our individualized independent skills training including financial literacy, and parenting support and training.
- Guarantee basic needs continue to be met including food, clothing, shelter and transportation to school and work.

3. **NATIONAL LEADERSHIP:** Ensure that First Place for Youth can effectively lead a national movement to reach and adequately serve teens who are aging out of foster care.

- Build an even greater level of evidence for First Place's nationally-recognized program model.
- Provide information, technical assistance and training on proven principles, programs and practices to child welfare providers on a national scale.
- Collaborate with national coalitions in order to share knowledge and resources as First Place becomes nationally known as a trusted resource and ally for key state and federal policymakers.



An Exciting Ripple Effect

Turning 18 can be a time of hope and opportunity for foster youth. No longer do they have to worry about where they'll spend the night or how they'll survive on their own. Upon leaving First Place, the overwhelming majority have a safe home and a good job. They have finished high school and are enrolled in college. They are no longer facing a lifetime of poverty and instead can look forward to a bright future filled with potential.

These young people will become the leaders of tomorrow. They will build careers and form strong bonds in our communities. And as they begin their own families, they do so knowing that their children will not become part of the intergenerational cycle of foster care that plagues so many young people who grew up in the child welfare system.



Why Invest in First Place?

- **We do what it takes, with intensity, for every kid.** We are a learning organization, relentlessly committed to supporting every young person and making sure they meet our high expectations.
- **We know what works.** We are data driven. Through rigorous evaluation, we have identified the kind of services a young person needs to get the best results.
- **We know that this is more than just a local issue—our programs can have a national impact.** We use our demonstrated program model to influence the field and help foster kids across the nation succeed.
- **We understand the impact of falling short of our goals.** Without support, foster kids are more likely than their peers to end up living on the streets, dropping out of school, becoming pregnant, or going to jail. On average, this costs taxpayers \$300,000 over a foster youth's lifetime.

Join Us

The promise of opportunity appears out of reach for teens who've grown up in foster care. But with your support, we can solve this problem.

Our hope is that you will consider a leadership gift enabling First Place for Youth to make an even greater impact on the thousands of foster teens who need us most, putting them on the path to becoming the productive, caring, responsible leaders of tomorrow.

As we open our arms and our hearts to young people in need and commit to their well-being and futures, we do so knowing what this means not just to them, but for America. We hope you will join with us as we move forward and undertake this challenge.

Together, We Will Change What Turning 18 Looks Like for Foster Kids

By expanding our programs, deepening our impact and building a movement, First Place can successfully solve the national problem facing foster kids: every 18-year-old who has grown up in foster care can have the support they need to become self-sufficient and healthy adults. We've demonstrated that with the right guidance, they can defy the odds that are so stacked against them and reach their full potential in school, work and life. Please join us as we show foster kids that we are there to believe in them, and that with our support, more really is possible.

“First Place did what no one else had done before—they held me accountable for everything I said I wanted to do. They guided me, listened to me and talked me through it all. Securing my own apartment took a huge burden off my shoulders and helped me learn to think about life after graduation. Today, as a proud college graduate, I know I couldn't have made it there without First Place.”

—Darryl





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