



## 2021 Annual Report

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## Letter from the Executive Director

This year, when sitting down to write my letter, I have one thought. I am grateful. We, like the rest of the world, have experienced a major pandemic, and though we have had some illness, some loss, some extra work and have suffered some extra stress, we are still here. Even more so, the individuals and families we serve have thrived as well.

Our program has changed and we have made adjustments in our operations, but we are still meeting our mission and providing support to those who need it most in our community. We have worked hard over the past year to provide care to families during this extraordinary and unprecedented time. Last fall, we made the difficult decision to close our girls' home after years of decreasing enrollment. And in the spring, after much internal discussion and through difficult reflection, we closed our group boys' home and school as well.

This decision is not one that we came to lightly; however, it is one we feel best positions Youth Care and Beyond to continue to provide services to families throughout the community for years to come. Over the past year, we have seen decreasing enrollment in our group homes, and financial reimbursement models have not been sustainable to continue to provide care moving forward. Additionally, we have struggled to find qualified team members to work in our group homes, leading to increased turnover and putting a strain on our operating structure.

While this was a difficult decision to make, we are confident it was the right decision to position us for future growth, and it

better aligns our services with the state's mission to keep kids within their family homes. This change allows us to refocus our efforts and expand our capabilities to provide family support to a larger group of individuals within their homes. We have persevered throughout this turbulent time and I am reassured every time I see a family success story – a reminder of the important work we are doing to reunite families and teach parents how to build a solid, stable family unit. We know if we can keep kids together with their parents, we will create a stronger community. One such family impacted by our work was Carol, whose story in the pages ahead serves as a stark reminder of the impact we make and the community we serve.

Although the past year has been one of change, there has been one constant, and that has remained our commitment to helping those with developmental disabilities through our Best Friends and Opportunities programs. The support, friendship and mentorship created in these programs allows those with developmental disabilities to learn new life skills – to enable them to live as independently as possible. Our programs also provide a needed respite for caregivers – so they can recharge and refocus knowing their loved one is in good hands.

As we close out this year, I am confident we are on the right path and I look forward to growing our programs and sharing our success with you for years to come. Thank you for your continued partnership with Youth Care and Beyond.

*Tracey Pearson*



## FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Our goal is to help families stay together. We work with parents and kids – offering assistance and building parenting skills to create a more stable and safe environment for the family. Our family support team-teaches parents how to implement good parenting skills and instill strong values for their child. Through hands-on training with our specialists, we help a family communicate and learn how to best set boundaries and work through conflict in a positive manner. We create a safe space for a family to reconnect and do “normal” family activities – cook dinner, play games and spend time together without external pressures.

### Carol's Story

Carol went to court for neglect and was charged with child endangerment. She couldn't believe she allowed this to happen. Carol grew up in the system and knew how bad this was. As a street savvy, smart-mouth young woman of 23, she was just angry. Carol was charged after she found her then two-year-old intoxicated. She had left the children, ages three and two, unsupervised, and her youngest got into the vodka. Carol rushed her to the hospital when she realized what had happened. Her toddler had a blood alcohol level higher than the adult legal limit. The kids were removed from the home. In addition, when questioned by the police, Carol tested positive for marijuana and found her picture and story on the evening news. She was angry and because she grew up in the system herself, she didn't trust those that were supposed to help or the system itself. Carol's case was open for two years. The last step was to terminate parental rights. After six other agencies

failed to make progress due to Carol's tough and intimidating behavior, Youth Care was called in to provide family support services and teach Carol how to become a parent.

Through our work, we discovered the trauma in Carol's own upbringing and understood how this impacted her approach to parenting. Abuse and drug dealing were all Carol was ever shown growing up – with this foundation, how was she supposed to know how to parent herself? When we started, Carol had failed too many monthly drug tests to count. Youth Care and Beyond was considered her last hope.

The family support worker noted that initially there was a huge barrier with this family. Carol had built a high wall around herself, preventing others from getting in and helping. “I worked extremely hard to be consistent and let her know I was on her



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side. It took a while but once I was in, I was in,” said the family support worker. Once she earned Carol's respect, she was able to make real progress with Carol, who passed every drug test from that point forward.

We began our work with teaching appropriate parenting skills. Carol's children were able to do or watch whatever they chose. Visits were wild; the children had lots of trauma and anxiety, and Carol was scared and angry. We worked with Carol to establish rules and guidelines to allow her children to have the childhood she missed by having to grow up too fast. Next, our parent coach modeled appropriate boundaries, voice tone and rules. Carol began to catch on and softened toward coaching. Carol learned how to prepare for visits and make them safe. Carol reports the most powerful thing was how the parent coach would text her things to say, so as to not undermine Carol in front of the children. With serious progress being made, semi-supervised visits started after eight months. Now when the parent coach arrived, Carol was excited to share how she planned the visit and her successes. Over time, Carol learned and demonstrated skill development – she softened her language and began to play with the children. She learned the importance of boundaries, setting clear expectations and following through with consequences. Slowly but surely the arguments became less frequent – the kids started listening and their behavior changed significantly.

Youth Care and Beyond had this case for a little over a year and, almost a year since our services, Carol stays in touch with her parent coach. The kids are now six and seven and flourishing. Carol states that if she had Youth Care and Beyond when the case opened, she would have had her children back sooner. She states she lost time and frequently wishes others had Youth Care and Beyond because “they don't make it just a job and are not part of the system. You guys really cared. Without you, I would not have my children.”





## BEST FRIENDS PROGRAM

Our unique Best Friends program assigns each person to a trained staff member who develops skill-building exercises that enhance their strengths and builds upon their needs. Our unique approach brings together our teachers and people with special needs for hours of fun and friendship. These shared experiences empower our special friends while enriching the lives of everyone involved. The staff serves a vital role in integrating individuals with special needs into our communities. The parents and siblings receive much-needed respite and support. And the individuals we serve learn important life lessons while gaining friendships that help them navigate and excel socially.



## OPPORTUNITIES

This program supports individuals who desire to live independently. Group Homes and Extended Family Homes are excellent options for some, but they do not fit the needs of everyone. Many individuals can live on their own with just a little support. Our Opportunities program is the answer in cases like this. Opportunities' staff guide and counsel individuals in all areas needed to maintain an independent lifestyle. In some cases, this may mean teaching them how to cook, clean the house and take medications on their own. Individuality is a hallmark of this program. No one is forced to do anything. Our staff works with each individual to determine their goals.

## Emmett's Story

We began serving Emmett, a seven-year-old boy with autism, who lives with his brother and parents, a year ago. Emmett's goal at Youth Care & Beyond was to improve communication, as it was difficult for him to express himself, leaving his family to often guess his wishes. This inability to communicate his needs and desires often caused frustration ending with Emmett crying and upset at his inability to express himself and his family exasperated with their helplessness to understand and assist. In addition, organization was hard for Emmett and an after-school routine was nonexistent causing daily irritation as he transitioned from school to home. Without consistency and routine Emmett struggled to hang up his backpack, use the restroom and ask for a snack. Bringing stability and order to this transitional time of the day was one of the first tasks Youth Care & Beyond undertook, teaching Emmett how to hang up his school supplies and use the restroom. To assist with communication, we set up a Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) to help Emmett visualize his desires and communicate clearly to his family. PECS is a well-established way for autistic people to communicate without relying on speech instead leveraging pictures, symbols, words or photographs to make requests and answer questions.

These efforts have made a world of difference for Emmett and his family, easing the strained communication and creating stability through routine. The PECS system provides Emmett with more independence thereby increasing his self-esteem and allowing the whole family to work together cohesively.



	Calendar Year 2020	Fiscal Year 2020-2021
All Clients	154	140
All Transitions	143	129
All Trust	11	11
Best Friends	5	5
Opportunities	6	6
Family Support	101	118
Reporting Center	23	0
All Group Home	19	11
Boys' Group Home	14	8
Girls' Group Home	5	3
Successful Program Completion	89%	94%
Individual Skill Building	9,569	9,376
Group Skill Building	503	125
Days of Care Provided	8,302	8,298
Nights of Care Provided	2,798	1,306



