



## 2009 Core Messages

- > **THE MAGNITUDE:** Currently, nearly half a million children in the United States are in foster care because their own families are in crisis and unable to provide for their essential well-being. Reports of abuse and neglect have already increased in some areas of the country due to the difficult economic times and are expected to rise as the economy worsens. In addition, there are an estimated 12 million alumni of foster care in the U.S. representing all walks of life.
- > **THE NEED:** No matter their age, all youth in foster care need a meaningful connection to a caring adult who becomes a supportive and lasting presence in their lives. Without families or stable relationships, too many of these formerly neglected and/or abused children and teens will end up facing life's challenges all alone.
- > **THE FACES OF FOSTER CARE:** Child welfare issues arise in families of every race, ethnicity, culture, and age group. Even though research shows that there is no difference in the incidence of abuse and neglect according to racial group, children of color comprise a disproportionate percentage of youth in foster care.
- > **THE CONSEQUENCES:** Research shows that young people who age out of foster care are far more likely than their peers in the general population to endure homelessness, poverty, compromised health, unemployment, incarceration and other adversities.
- > **THE PRIORITY:** Older youth are in most urgent need of attention. Nearly half of the young people in foster care are over the age of 10. Each year, 26,000 young people in the United States age out of foster care, most without the appropriate resources, family connections, skills or options they will need to live healthy adult lives.
- > **THE FUTURE:** If nothing changes in the United States between now and the year 2020:  
*Nearly 11 million children confirmed cases of abuse and neglect will be reported;*
  - *18,000 children will die of abuse or neglect;*
  - *7.2 million children will experience the foster care system;*
  - *240,000 youth will age out of foster care with inadequate support, resources, family connections, skills or options to compete in the workforce and build successful lives.*
- > **THE SOLUTION:** Children and youth in foster care are capable of overcoming the repercussions of previous neglect and/or abuse. Those aging out of the system can become successful, productive adults when provided with educational opportunities, career training and emotional support. With supports, most families can address the challenges which caused their children to be placed in foster care so that they can be safely reunited with parents or relatives.

Across the country, people just like you are:

- Raising their voices to educate federal and state public policy leaders on the issues facing children and families.
- Serving as foster parents, relative caregivers, mentors, advocates, social workers and volunteers.
- Sponsoring scholarships enabling foster youth to go to college and trade school, as well as professional internships to prepare them for the workplace.
- Encouraging their employees to volunteer their time as mentors, professional coaches, and role models for foster youth or young families with children in foster care.
- Donating gift cards, school supplies, household gifts and other items to brighten a young person's life in foster care.
- Collaborating with foster care agencies to “adopt a social worker” and provide for the unique needs of families in need of services to reduce the time that children spend in foster care.
- Visiting [www.fostercaremonth.org](http://www.fostercaremonth.org) to find out more about the many ways to get involved and make a lasting difference for America's children.

Thanks to these unsung heroes, many formerly neglected or abused children and teens will safely reunite with their parents, be cared for by relatives, be adopted by loving families and/or make a successful transition to independent living.

Communities are urgently seeking many more everyday people to come forward for our nation's most vulnerable children so they may realize their full potential. No matter how much time you have to give, you have the power to do something positive that will *CHANGE A LIFETIME* for a young person in foster care.

**May is National Foster Care Month.** Now is the time to show we care.