

2014 CHAMPIONS FOR FOSTER KIDS LUNCHEON

On Tuesday, April 8th, Treehouse held its 13th Annual Champions for Foster Kids Luncheon at the Seattle Sheraton. During the inspiring hour, more than a million dollars was raised for the second year in a row thanks to the generosity of just under 1,200 supporters.

Event co-chairs Ann Doherty, Juli Farris, and Kristine Kruger set the tone for the afternoon with a warm welcome and thank you to all Treehouse supporters including the many legislative champions in the room. CEO Janis Avery presented awards to longtime Treehouse volunteers, the

Eva Family, corporate partner AT&T, and community partners, Representatives Ruth Kagi and Reuven Carlyle, for their outstanding support of Treehouse and youth in foster care.

Four brave Treehouse students and a devoted caregiver shared their moving stories of resilience and strength. Caregiver Karla Petersen described the importance of creating new healthy memories for the seven kids in her care, and how Little Wishes has made that possible for her. Siblings Lanek & Kenny shared how their Treehouse Education Specialist has provided critical support through all of their many transitions, lending an ear when they need one, engaging them in Summer Camp to help them bond after being separated, and encouraging them to stay on track academically.

Seventh grader Trinity described how Education Specialist Devin has helped her build confidence in her abilities after years without schooling. She now has above average grades and is taking steps towards her goal of becoming a veterinarian. Sophomore Leroy thanked Treehouse for a lifetime of support, from clothing at the Wearhouse, to music and sports fees covered by Little Wishes, to helping pave his way to high school graduation and beyond. Special guest speaker Jacqueline Estephan, principal at Stevenson Elementary School and Treehouse alumna, inspired all with the stories of her own champions.

Thank you Treehouse champions for investing in the futures of our community's youth in foster care!

LEROY'S GOAL: TO BE A HUSKY!

At eight-years-old, Leroy saw the outside world for the first time when he entered foster care. His mother had left the family a few years back and his father's grief had manifested into irrational, controlling, and abusive behavior. Leroy and his little brother Antwone had never been to school, watched TV, nor had a friend.

When the boys were placed with caregiver Vickie, they started attending regular school. While Leroy was on track academically due to homeschooling from his dad, he suffered severe anxiety and was prone to angry outbursts due to so many years of isolation. Unable to socialize and make friends, Leroy was picked on by kids at school. For years he had behavioral challenges that led to fights, suspensions, and ultimately a school transition.

In 6th grade Leroy was introduced to “Miss Nina” from Treehouse to address some of his behavioral challenges and improve his attendance and grades at school. She connected him with the Wearhouse to shop for “cool” clothes that would help him fit in. Knowing that his lack of social skills were the primary source of the problem, she also helped him think of ways that he could approach people and start making friends.

Leroy decided that he would join every after school activity he could think of so he would share some area of common ground with his peers. With Little Wishes supporting him, Leroy started having fun for the first time and learned that he had a natural aptitude for both music and sports! Miss Nina connected him with a music tutor and he started playing the saxophone and joined a band. He tried a bunch of sports, ultimately settling on wrestling, where he bonded with teammates, and coaches became his mentors. He gained self-confidence with his newfound talents and finally began to feel a sense of connectedness.

With his increased involvement at school, his behavior and grades started slowly improving. Whenever he felt himself taking steps backward he reached out to his Treehouse education team who always provided a safe space for him and provided emotional and academic support.



During summers, his team kept him engaged by enrolling him in summer camp where he came out of his shell, made new friends and learned what it felt like to be carefree.

On April 8th at the Champions for Foster Kids Luncheon, Leroy, now a sophomore at Renton High School, shared that he

has a 2.9 GPA and is not only still playing the sax, but also the trumpet and piano. He is working hard with his Education Specialist to raise his GPA to a 3.5 to attain his ultimate goal of attending UW in 2016. His Treehouse team knows he can do it!



THE ART OF BUILDING HAPPY MEMORIES

Karla Petersen has been a devoted caregiver for more than 20 years. What started as a calling to foster one child eventually evolved into a bustling household of seven kids! At the Champions for Foster Kids Luncheon, Karla shared the trials and triumphs of her ever expanding family. Like many youth in foster care, her kids harbor painful memories of their past. When asked how she helps her kids cope, she said: “My role is to help each child grow new, healthy memories, not to replace the past, but to help heal it and put it into a safe and useful place in their life.” Over the years Treehouse has helped Karla’s family create new memories by paying for things like gymnastics classes and swimming lessons, summer camp, rock climbing, soccer and track. And every holiday there is always a present for each kiddo under the tree thanks to Holiday Magic. With the support of her extended family, faith community, and Treehouse she is helping her family grow happy memories, new skills, and new hopes and dreams for the future.



A MESSAGE FROM JANIS AVERY, CEO



At Treehouse, the spring is one of the most meaningful and rewarding times of the year as we celebrate National Foster Care Month in May and prepare for our youth to achieve a great milestone – high school graduation. While making it to graduation day alone is a remarkable accomplishment for youth in foster care, we are especially delighted to hear the stories of students’ post-secondary education plans. This year, 13 of our students have been awarded Washington State Governors’ Scholarships, and every

week there is a new beaming face of one of our Education Specialists proudly announcing that another one of our students has received a college or trade school acceptance letter. We are so proud of our kids’ hard work, perseverance, and determination, and know they are on their way to a bright and promising future.

At the 13th annual Champions for Foster Kids Luncheon earlier this month, we experienced some of these stories firsthand. Our students’ words of courage, strength and resilience moved us to laugh together, cry together, and make an incredible difference together. I want to express my deepest thanks to our event co-chairs, Superhero Challenge Pool donors, event sponsors, table captains and all 1,200 guests who helps us raise \$1,082,957 investing in the future of our

community’s youth in foster care.

For those of you who were unable to attend this year’s event, I invite you to be inspired by our youth speakers and learn more about how Treehouse is pursuing equity for youth in foster care by clicking the YouTube icon on our website to watch video clips of the event. I also invite you to consider new ways that you can engage with Treehouse this year. This newsletter lists a multitude of meaningful and rewarding ways for you to engage your personal and professional networks to help raise awareness and direct support for kids in foster care.

One way that many Treehouse supporters made a difference this past legislative session was by being a voice for youth in foster care. Together with champions

Representatives Kagi and Carlyle, HB 1651 (Youth Opportunities Act) and HB 2335 (Extended Foster Care) were passed and recently signed into law by Governor Inslee. This legislation will have a transformative impact, helping foster kids remain on track to graduation, and have access to the financial support required to pursue a post-secondary education plan.

Thank you for your continued support. Together, we are leveling the playing field for kids in foster care.

Blessings,

Janis Avery, CEO

CHARLIE IS BACK ON TRACK FOR GRADUATION SUCCESS

Senior year brings change and uncertainty for all students, but for youth in foster care, the prospect of heading out on their own without a family to fall back on can create mixed feelings about graduation.

Seventeen-year-old Charlie entered foster care when he was 13. He was moved three times, which meant he had to adapt to a new family and a new school every single year. Fortunately, his interest in playing football enabled him to get involved in school and socialize with peers quickly after each transition. Peer support coupled with encouragement from his Treehouse Education Specialist, Taji, helped him stay engaged academically as well.

This year, Charlie started 12th grade at Renton High School on time and on track with his school credits. While meeting with Taji to review first quarter results, both were disappointed to learn that he was failing almost every class. At first, Charlie didn’t really take this downturn seriously. He blamed it on wanting to be done with school- a classic case of senioritis. He thought he could rebound in time. Taji agreed and the two worked together on a step by step plan to get back on track.

As the weeks went by, Taji didn’t see Charlie making progress so she reached out to the school counselor.

The counselor met with Charlie and as it turned out senioritis was not the only culprit. He was not focusing on the steps needed for graduation because graduation meant he was on his own with no place to come home to. While he was proud of his academic abilities, his fears about living independently were crippling him. Armed with this knowledge, Taji got to work to help Charlie feel more confident about his future.

She started by reengaging him with his Independent Living case manager so that he could learn the basics of living on his own like how to set up a bank account, pay bills and secure housing. She also helped him fill out community college and financial aid applications. Next, Little Wishes helped Charlie get excited about graduation again by ordering his yearbook and cap and gown. Feeling hopeful about the future once again, Charlie started focusing on his classwork. Empowered by the step by step plan he worked on with Taji, he began self-advocating with his teachers to make up missing assignments.



By the semester, Charlie successfully improved his grades to all B’s & C’s. He is staying on top of his classwork and has even started setting schedules, goals and priorities for himself. He is feeling confident about his future and is on track to attend Seattle Central Community College in the fall to pursue his dream of becoming a mechanic.

ONE EIGHTY FOUNDATION: GIVING THE GIFT THAT GROWS

At Treehouse, it’s no secret that we believe one of the greatest gifts we can give our kids is equal access to and opportunities to succeed in education. So we were thrilled when long-time Treehouse supporter One Eighty Foundation announced that they shared this vision. They invested \$250,000 toward our 2017 graduation goal for youth in foster care, in addition to annual gifts from their successful Rally in the Alley and KIRO Kids Classic Golf Tournament fundraisers!

As one of our early investors, the Foundation’s gifts were instrumental in enabling us to complete the necessary

research to develop the Graduation Success program and fully implement it last year. And this multi-year gift will keep on giving as Treehouse expands the Graduation Success program, providing academic planning, mentoring and coaching support to more than 800 students by 2017.

The employees and residents of One Eighty’s Leisure Care retirement communities share the Foundation’s passion for helping youth in care, and for the past eleven years, they have helped ensure that thousands of foster kids have a cozier holiday. Through individual donations and employee-run

drives they have collected more than 10,000 pairs of pajamas! These efforts ensure that every Treehouse kid has year-round access to new pajamas.

We cannot thank the One Eighty Foundation enough for their vision and their incredible commitment to improving the lives of kids in foster care. We are proud to call them our partner!

Interested in learning how you and your company can support Treehouse? Contact Aaron Anderson at aaron@treehouseforkids.org.



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MAKE A DIFFERENCE THIS SPRING

May is National Foster Care Month, a time when we give special acknowledgement to the people who make a difference in the lives of foster kids by serving as foster parents, relative caregivers, mentors, advocates, social workers, and volunteers. It's also a time when we are often asked our favorite question: how can one person make a meaningful impact on the life of a foster child? Here's how you can make a difference if you have...


A minute:


**Spread the word**
Share a Treehouse post on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, sign-up for Treehouse eNews, or subscribe to our Blog (details at the bottom of this page).


**Add Treehouse to Your Shopping List**
Pick up an extra outfit for a foster youth and donate it to the Treehouse Wearhouse.

**Be a Voice for Youth in Foster Care**
With Treehouse's Action Center tool, you'll be able to quickly contact your legislators and stay informed!


A few hours:


**Host a Party**
Throw a theme party to collect items that foster kids need most, like "Jeans for Teens." You can also host an informational event or name Treehouse the beneficiary of your event.


**Write a Letter**
Write your newspaper editor or congressman asking them to support foster kids.


**Attend a Treehouse Event**
Have fun and support Treehouse by joining us at an event in our community.

More time:

**Volunteer**
Work at the front desk or sort donations in our Wearhouse.

**Collect Clothing and Toys**
Host a summer or back-to-school donation drive.

**Stay Informed Year-Round**
Be a change agent and join leading child welfare agencies and individuals across the country in improving the lives of youth in foster care.

**Become a foster or adoptive parent!**

To learn how you can make a difference in the life of a foster youth this May visit us at treehouseforkids.org/get-involved.

TREEHOUSE EVENTS

May 6

GiveBIG
May 6, MIDNIGHT-MIDNIGHT
The Seattle Foundation Website
seattlefoundation.org

Join The Seattle Foundation and Treehouse in a community-wide online giving challenge. When you make a gift to Treehouse through The Seattle Foundation's online Giving Center, part of your gift will be matched by generous local sponsors. Watch your donation grow throughout the day! For each gift made to Treehouse by donors like you, Treehouse will also be entered to "win" an additional \$1,000 from GiveBIG sponsors.

For more information, contact us at donate@treehouseforkids.org or 206.267.5143.

May 21

Open House
May 21, 6:00-7:30PM
Treehouse Wearhouse

In appreciation of your support, please join us for a gathering at the Treehouse Wearhouse. You can take a tour of our facility, talk one-on-one with staff, learn more about our mission and see how we put your donations to work. Light appetizers and refreshments will be provided, accompanied by live music! Feel free to bring family, friends and colleagues.

Please RSVP to this complimentary event at <http://treehouse.kintera.org/openhouse>

**May 23
June 27
July 4**

Scooter Rally Series
May 23, June 27, & July 4, 8:00PM
Cafe Racer in Roosevelt

Scoot on down to Café Racer if you like having a good time and supporting Treehouse foster youth. With great live music and a chance to win your very own scooter, you can't go wrong!

June 1

Rat Patrol & Piston Packin' Mamas Spring Opener
June 1
Elysian Brewery, Georgetown Location

Come on down to Georgetown for this fantastic event featuring a car show, live music, beverages, and more. Proceeds benefit Treehouse, so stay tuned for more details soon!



August 20

FORE! Foster Kids
August 20, 5:30-9:30PM
Interbay Golf Course

It's where happy hour meets mini-golf all for a good cause. Team up with four to six of your friends to raise money and compete for awesome prizes and that warm fuzzy feeling of helping foster youth.

There is a \$50 entry fee per player. The entry fee includes: drink tickets, live music, good grub, and admission to one very happenin' shindig. There is one wave of golf at 6:30 pm. Space is limited! You must be 21 or older to participate.

For more information, contact Shaunessy Jones at events@treehouseforkids.org or 206.267.5122.

For a complete list of events, please visit our website at: www.treehouseforkids.org/events

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THANK YOU TO OUR HEROES

The April 8, Champions for Foster Kids Luncheon was a huge success due to 1,200 caring and committed members of our community supporting youth in foster care. The support that Treehouse received from our corporate sponsors and Superhero Challenge Pool donors made it possible for Treehouse to not only ensure that every dollar raised goes directly to supporting programs for foster youth, but also matched every gift of \$300 or more. Thank you to our sponsors and challenge pool donors for leading the way in being champions for kids in foster care!

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With your support, foster youth in King County will graduate high school at the same rate as their peers with a plan for their future in 2017.

Let's Stop Duplicate Mailings

If your household receives more than one copy of this publication, please contact Melissa Stuart at melissa@treehouseforkids.org or 206-267-5143. Thank you for helping us spend money wisely.

Spring 2014

GiveBIG MAY 6th

Give foster kids
a childhood and a future.
See inside for details.



treehouse™

give
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The Seattle Foundation