A Note From Our Leadership

Friends, Colleagues, and Community Leaders,
It is a new day at Amara.

In 2017 we worked hard to do more, much more, to help our community’s most vulnerable children. We are working to close the gaps between what children in foster care and their families need and what resources and support currently exist.

We won’t wait for state initiatives and funding. Instead, we’ve relied on the financial support of our community to dream big for kids. In 2017, we made outstanding progress on our five-year Comprehensive Campaign to double the number of kids served in our Emergency Sanctuary and Foster Care programs through our locations in King and Pierce Counties, to create lifelong connection and support for youth and adult adoptees and their families, and to centralize services to kids and families through our main campus in South Seattle.

Due to unprecedented support from the community, we increased the Campaign goal to $26.5 million – an even bigger dream than we’d originally imagined! We finished the year on track to exceed our goal and fulfill this critical promise of support for our kids.

We continue to fulfill dreams and develop bigger aspirations on behalf of our community’s most vulnerable children. In 2017, we made plans to construct another building on our Seattle campus where kids will find a safe and loving entry into foster care. This dream became a reality thanks to a lead grant of $1 million from the Harnish Foundation. We are breaking ground for this new facility which will house our King County Emergency Sanctuary, Grandese’s Place. This purpose-driven building has been designed with the needs of children at the center.

We are responding to the concerns of our community, recognizing the need for more African American foster families to provide culturally sensitive care for the African American and Black youth who are disproportionately represented in our foster care system. In 2017 we formed Amara’s African American Outreach Advisory Council whose leadership and guidance help us create awareness as well as build relationships and networks of support in the African American community. These two elements are crucial for our success in recruiting Black foster families. We are proud to share our African American Outreach video, Culture Matters, which will be an important tool as we work to find more foster homes for children of color in our communities.

We are creating a new Amara. An Amara deeply rooted in our 97 year history of protecting children and growing to reach as many children as we can. We don’t ask, “How can we afford to do this?” - rather we ask, “How can we afford not to do this for our community’s kids?”

With gratitude and appreciation for being a part of our extended Amara family,

John Morse
CEO

Robin Rothe
Board Chair
Our Programs

We work to ensure that every child in foster care has the love and support of a committed family - as quickly as possible, and for as long as each child needs.

Foster & Adopt

We find and provide high-quality training, services, and ongoing support for families on their journey to parent children in foster care. We prepare families for reunification or adoption, to ensure the smoothest transitions possible for children.

Emergency Sanctuary

We offer a safe temporary home for children who have been removed from their homes for their own safety.

Post-Adoption

We recognize that adoption is a lifetime commitment and continue to be a resource post-adoption for adoptees and those who love them.
In 2017...

23% of foster family applications identified as LGBTQ+ due to our active LGBTQ+ recruitment efforts.

50% of Amara foster families take in siblings (65% of children who stayed at the Sanctuaries arrived with siblings).

115 children found homes with Amara foster families.

34 children fostered in Amara homes reunited with their birth families.

42 children were adopted into Amara foster families.

159 days of respite care provided to Amara families.
Our Impact: Emergency Sanctuary

In 2017...

462 children stayed in a warm welcoming home rather than waiting in social workers offices or police stations

1,641 times children were tucked into bed

78% of children received a medical exam while at the Sanctuary
HIGHLIGHT:  
Post-Adoption Program

2017 was the first full year for the Post-Adoption Program. It was a year of immense growth, development and program alignment with multiple opportunities to define and implement our approach to the rapidly-growing Post-Adoption field.

Centering the Adoptee

We created this short video to highlight our mission to keep the child/adoptive in the center of all of our decisions. The video explores common intrusive, yet inevitable questions that adoptive families face, such as “who is her real mom?” or “they are so lucky that you adopted them!” The video encourages viewers to consider how the child is impacted by the questions.

STAR

In response to information obtained from Post-Adoption community surveys we collected in 2016, we launched our STAR Adoptee Mentorship Program. This year-long program allows teen and tween adoptees opportunities to meet each other and have their experiences normalized by adult adoptees. This program focuses on having fun together by participating in activities throughout the community. In 2017 we were thrilled to partner with the Seattle Art Museum, Not Without Salt Cooking shop, 5th Avenue Theatre and the Seattle Mariners to provide experiences and activities for our STAR youth. King 5 News filmed a special which featured one of our STAR youth.

Correspondence, Search & Reunion

For years, Amara has had a legal responsibility to act as a liaison between adoptive and biological families via a legal Communication Agreement. This responsibility includes assisting with setting up visits and forwarding correspondence to adoptive and birth families who don’t have direct contact with each other. In 2017, we identified an internal gap in this area where our services needed to improve to honor our mission and act justly toward adoptees and those who love them. We are committed to reviewing and creating new policies and procedures around correspondence, search and reunion in 2018.

Facilitating Open Relationships

Best Practices clearly state that open relationships between adoptees and their biological family members lead to healthier identities. In 2017 we hired a Family Support Specialist, who has a background in counseling, to support adoptive families around the maintenance of open relationships between adoptive and biological families. In addition to providing a mechanism for families to communicate confidentially, we desire to provide trauma-informed psycho-education to families about the importance of creating and maintaining openness. In 2018 the Family Support Specialist will begin offering support groups to birth-family members as well as adoptive parents.

Program Director Named Local Superhero

Angela Tucker, our Post-Adoption Program Director, was named a “Local Superhero” in ParentMap’s March issue. “After the finalization of an adoption, supportive resources can be tough to access. Amara is working to change that,” Angela says. “We’re recognizing that adoption is a lifelong journey.”

All of Amara’s Post-Adoption initiatives are supported by a hand-selected Post-Adoption Advisory Team that meets quarterly. The seven advisors include a mix of adoptive parents, adoptees, child welfare academics, and pediatricians.

We look forward to even more growth and development in 2018!
FEATURE STORY: The Davidsons

Nolan Davidson is a force of nature.

Vibrant, lively, and quirky – his personality is infectious and much bigger than you’d think would fit in a 4-year-old body.

Nolan is 150% in the game, all the time; he approaches life as though he’s walking into a room, looking around with expectant energy and asking, “What’s next?!”

Nolan, his mom Ashley, and his dad Jason became a family through foster care at Amara. The Davidsons came to Amara because they appreciated Amara was a local, non-profit agency with a long history of advocating for children. They also liked the idea of the support and training Amara offers for foster families which struck them as the perfect way to ensure kiddos placed in foster care are with families who are well-informed and committed to the child’s well-being.

That training and support would prove essential to the Davidson’s ability to navigate the foster care system and build open relationships with Nolan’s birth family; enabling them to tackle complicated and uncomfortable situations while keeping Nolan’s best interests at the center, rather than their own feelings.

Just One Day At A Time

There is a great deal of uncertainty when parenting children in foster care. The Davidsons were always hoping to adopt but knew that the #1 goal of foster care is reunification – meaning the child returns to live with their birth family. Of course, sometimes children in foster care cannot return home and, in that case, foster parents are offered the chance to adopt. Yet this outcome is not guaranteed, and it can be emotionally challenging for foster parents to live with uncertainty while caring for a child they grow to love deeply.

For Ashley and Jason, they managed this uncertainty by intentionally remaining in the moment, instead of living in the future. This was not always easy. Unlike other parents they knew with kids the same age, they weren’t guaranteed future activities like his first day of kindergarten, recurring holidays with extended family or a vacation to Disneyland the following year. They weren’t discussing saving money for college like their friends. And it was sometimes difficult emotionally: Ashley realized early on that she couldn’t sing “You are my Sunshine” to Nolan because the line at the end, “please don’t take my sunshine away” just hit too close to home.

To manage these challenges, Jason and Ashley chose to think of fostering as providing support and stability for Nolan every day and just one day at a time. Their mantra was “to love him as much as we can, for as long as we can, because he needs it.”
True Openness

The Davidsons were able to meet with Nolan’s birth family right from the beginning. Jason says they could never have broken the ice with Nolan’s Aunt and Grandma without the support of their Amara social worker, Kristina. At first Nolan’s birth mother was not able to meet much or do many visits, but his Aunt and Grandmother were very involved, and the Davidsons began forming a relationship with them quickly.

This open relationship has proven to be beneficial for everyone. While sometimes awkward, the Davidsons could tell it was a relief for Nolan’s family to meet them and get to know them. “They could tell we loved him and were taking good care of him,” says Ashley. Ultimately, they believe, it was this trusting relationship that led to Nolan’s being adopted.

After about 19 months of caring for Nolan as his foster parents, Ashley, Jason, Nolan, and Nolan’s maternal grandmother all attended court together where Nolan was officially adopted into the Davidson’s family.

A Constellation of Family

Even after Nolan’s adoption, the Davidsons continue to see themselves as part of a constellation of family surrounding Nolan, recognizing the important role Nolan’s birth family plays in his life, even if they aren’t in constant contact. As Jason notes, “all family relationships wax and wane” but the Davidsons believe in keeping the lines of communication open. They know that as Nolan gets older his birth family will be important to him in different ways and at different times.

For example, Nolan’s birth mother has made major strides in changing and improving her living situation and health and is now raising Nolan’s half-brother in a safe and stable environment.

Ashley and Jason talk about her success with pride and are looking forward to the right time to introduce Nolan to his brother.

They are carefully choosing how and when to do so – and they aren’t making that choice on their own. Keeping in mind Nolan’s developmental stage, and both birth and adoptive parents’ readiness, Ashley, Jason, and Nolan’s birth family are working together to determine the best timing and approach for the boys to meet. Still, they expect to introduce them this year. Says Jason, “We’re navigating it together.”
### 2017 Financial Review

#### ASSETS
- Cash & Equivalents: $1,943,471
- A/R & Current Pledges: $3,473,030
- Prepaid & Other: $179,021
- Pledges, Long Term: $973,051
- Fixed Assets: $6,465,051
  **TOTAL ASSETS**: $13,033,624

#### LIABILITIES
- Current Liabilities: $686,531
- Long Term Liabilities: $4,342,460
  **TOTAL LIABILITIES**: $5,028,991

#### NET ASSETS
- Unrestricted: $3,030,169
- Temporarily Restricted: $4,974,464
  **TOTAL NET ASSETS**: $8,004,633

**TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS**: $13,033,624

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### 2017 Revenue

- **CONTRIBUTIONS**: $2,041,536
- **IN-KIND**: $47,887
- **PROGRAM FEES**: $197,285
- **GOV’T CONTRACTS**: $754,607
- **FOUNDATIONS**: $2,228,407
  **TOTAL REVENUE**: $5,292,074

### 2017 Expenses

- **MGMT & GENERAL**: $202,689
- **FUNDRAISING**: $657,253
- **PROGRAM**: $4,005,502
  **TOTAL EXPENSES**: $4,865,444
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Walt Zabriskie was our Board Treasurer and dear friend of Amara for over 10 years.

His commitment to children and our community was incomparable and he will be forever missed.

In this image, Walt observes the beautiful bench at Amara’s headquarters thanking him for his devotion to the children Amara serves.
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