Dear Friends, Supporters, and Foster Care Change-Makers,

This past year has brought incredible learning and transformation to Amara and our work supporting kids and families experiencing the child welfare system. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to you for your commitment to improving the wellbeing of kids and families in foster care. We are honored to count you as a partner in our mission.

Amidst so much change – both at Amara and within the child welfare field as a whole – at our core, we remain rooted in caring for kids impacted by foster care. We have been working to ease the stress and trauma children experience for more than 100 years, and we’re committed to being part of innovative and effective solutions that ensure healing and stability for kids in foster care, their parents, and their temporary caregivers.

I’m so proud of the work we accomplished together this past year:

- Our Foster Care Program continues to lead the field in our work supporting foster caregivers and the children in their care. Amara’s supportive approach to relationship-building between foster families, children in care, and children’s family of origin continues to bring stability to kids and hope to parents during incredibly difficult times in their lives. Thank you to our 187 foster families providing unparalleled care to children during 2022.

- We expanded our ability to support relatives caring for their kin in foster care with two new kinship support programs. As Washington moves toward the goal that 80% of children in foster care will be placed with relatives, our kinship programs are critical to ensure families are supported to navigate the ordeals of the child welfare system.

- For the first time, we have created a program – in partnership with parents and the Department of Children, Youth and Families – to help parents stabilize before their children are removed into foster care. Our Parent FOCUS Program is piloting in Spokane and Aberdeen and is seeing early success keeping families together and out of the child welfare system.

- In Pierce County, we opened our first Family Resource Center with the goal of getting basic needs to any family that could use a little extra support. Free to any Pierce County residents, the Family Resource Center offers diapers, food, car seats, toys, and connections to other resources.

- We secured initial funding to start new youth development programming for kids who have experienced foster care. Launching this spring in King and Pierce counties, our new STAR Youth Program will help young people develop positive identities, build friendships with peers who have similar experiences, grow their social and emotional skills, and heal from trauma. We can’t wait to share more about this work in the year ahead!

Once again, thank you for your support, and please know that you have our deepest gratitude. None of this would be possible without the support of our steadfast community of supporters who walk alongside us on this journey to create lasting change in Washington’s child welfare system.

In partnership,

Scarlett Aldebot-Green
Chief Executive Officer
2022 IMPACT DATA

- **2,082** people impacted by Amara programs
- **354** children impacted by Amara programs
- **135** total volunteers
- **803** kinship families supported
- **996** supportive coaching sessions with parents and/or caregivers
- **477** adoption files reviewed by The Adoption Files Initiative (TAFI)
- **5** new programs started
- **27,984** times kids with Amara foster families were tucked in for a good night’s sleep
- **<1** Average child placement moves per 1,000 days in Amara foster homes (state average is 5.95 moves)
Love & Dedication
Tessa’s Fostering Story

Baby Lori* loves carrots to gnaw on as she’s teething, and she also loves them pureed. At six-months old, Lori is learning to sit up on her own, reaching for toys, babbling, and beginning to scoot around during tummy time. Her big, dark eyes light up when her Amara foster caregiver, Tessa Garrels, smiles at her.

Amara called Tessa about possibly caring for Lori temporarily right after she was born. Lori was exposed to drugs before birth and had to spend her first month in the hospital. While the long-term plan is for Lori to live with her grandparents out of state – where she will grow up rooted in her Native American culture – for now, she needs a local caregiver who can take her to doctor appointments and get her into therapies that will help her grow into a happy, thriving child.

When kids can’t live with their families, being with experienced and loving foster caregivers like Tessa is the next best thing. Tessa spent time with Lori during her first month in the hospital. Now she takes Lori to all her appointments and makes sure she has what she needs, including starting to build a relationship with her grandparents via calls and texts. Tessa knows her time with Lori is temporary, and she’s doing everything she can to help her build healthy attachments and have a great foundation for the rest of her life.

Baby Lori is the 9th child Tessa has cared for since becoming a foster caregiver in 2015. As a middle school teacher and single foster caregiver, juggling schedules and late nights has become the norm. She’s grateful for the support of her parents, sister, and her Amara caseworkers.

In fact, Tessa isn’t sure she’d still be fostering at all if she didn’t have the dedication and support of her caseworkers. Without Amara, “I would sometimes feel alone in certain situations. As a single caregiver, it would be isolating. Fostering can be a wild ride sometimes,” Tessa said.

For Tessa, the “wild ride” has included fostering a set of toddler siblings for three years who were just 18 months and 2 ½ years old when they arrived. At first, “it was controlled chaos” as the kids adjusted to a new home and caregiver. The older sibling had a harder time with the transition and experienced frequent tantrums. Tessa knew he was working through a lot of trauma. “You can see it in their eyes that their body is doing something they can’t control.” Over time, the three of them built a routine and the kids were able to settle in and feel more secure as they grew into preschoolers.

Amara caseworkers have offered advice and counsel as Tessa has navigated all the ups and downs of caregiving within the foster care system. They’ve been the calm voice on the phone when Tessa has called the after-hours emergency line. “People at Amara know who you are when you call,” she said.

Amara has also helped Tessa through the grief of saying goodbye when kids reunite with their families. All the kids Tessa has fostered have reunited with their parents or moved to be with other members of their families. And while she knows her job is to provide a temporary and loving home for kids until they can get back to family, she recognizes that “letting go is still really hard, but I’m getting better at managing my emotions.” She shared that the heartfelt cards her caseworkers have sent during these times have meant a lot to her.

Being a trusted partner for parents

Tessa also knows how important it is to keep kids connected to their families whenever possible, and appreciates how Amara encourages connection. She’s built relationships with many family members over the years. When she’s first getting to know a child’s family, Tessa starts by sharing a little journal with notes and pictures about what their child is doing. From there, if family members are interested, Tessa moves on to calls and texting.

“Kids just want to see all the people who love them getting along,” she explained. In addition to being in touch with baby Lori’s grandparents, she’s friends on Facebook with the mom of the siblings she cared for for three years. Tessa also became part of another mom’s support system after she reunified with a little girl Tessa fostered for two years. This mom had no local support, and Tessa was able to be there to offer advice whenever she needed it. This mom grew to trust Tessa so much she listed Tessa as the emergency contact at her daughter’s childcare. On a recent Friday night, Tessa received an unexpected call from the childcare when the little girl’s mom wasn’t able to pick her up before closing. Tessa picked her up right away, and she ended up staying with her for nearly two weeks while another family member arranged to care for the little girl long-term.

Tessa recommends fostering because it’s an incredible way to have a lifelong positive impact on kids who deserve safe and loving homes and families. “It feels good to help kids feel safe and loved and to get to do things that other kids get to do,” she said. She’s reminded of this every time she tucks a child in at night. “That’s my favorite part of fostering,” she explained. “They’re so sweet and peaceful.”

*Not her real name to protect privacy.
**Thank you Amara Supporters!**

Thank you to all our donors, volunteers, and supporters who made our impact in 2022 possible. Your commitment to Amara helped us provide stability and assistance to families facing some of the most stressful times of their lives, and helped us launch new programs to reach more families.
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It takes courage to reach out for help. And we’re honored a grandparent caring for their two school-aged grandchildren in King County entrusted us to help their family through our new Kin Connections program, which is funded with generous support from local donors and family foundations.

Soon after reaching out to us, the grandparent shared that one of their family’s greatest needs was new tires because the family drives hundreds of miles each week from King to Whatcom County to keep the kids connected to their siblings. In a happy coincidence, Amara received an unexpected and very generous monetary donation from our nonprofit partner Ticket-to-Dream. Because of this, Amara provided the funds this kinship family needed to get new tires and some minor car repairs. Now the whole family can stay safe as they make their long weekly trips.

“It is like a super deep, cleansing exhale of relief,” said the grandparent.

We’re happy to know this grandparent can make the drive feeling a little less worried thanks to their steadfast commitment to their family, the incredible generosity of Amara’s donors, and the dedication of our Kinship Care team.