

Transform

HELP, HOPE, AND HEALING

These are difficult times and FamilyForward is doing whatever it takes to support our clients, participants, and community. Our four non-residential sites are operating remotely to prevent illness and the spread of COVID-19. Our team is securing household supplies for families and pivoting to meet changing needs. Money raised through our COVID-19 Emergency Fund has been and will be used to purchase items like diapers, food, and technology and compassionately support those who are struggling. This crisis is ongoing and our donors continue to positively impact lives.

Parenting is stressful even in the best of situations and at-risk families are profoundly impacted by social isolation and financial hardship. Experts predict the COVID-19 public health crisis will result in increased incidents of family violence, including child abuse and neglect. If you

have concerns about the safety of a child, call the Missouri Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1.800.392.3738. Victims of domestic abuse and their loved ones can call the Safe Connections 24-Hour Crisis Helpline at 314.531.2003.

We are checking in with those we serve by calling, texting, and video conferencing. We are creating and sharing video content to meet the specific needs of individual kids and support their caregivers. Virtual therapy sessions are being tailored to address issues related to loss and uncertainty. We are helping families stay regulated via telehealth, but know that children who have experienced trauma and women who have survived domestic violence can be triggered by the effects of this pandemic. Not only will they come back to us for therapeutic and educational services, but they will need more help, hope, and healing than ever before.



Our overarching philosophy is based in the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT), developed by Dr. Bruce Perry. Dr. Perry and our partners in practice and research at the Neurosequential Network have put together a series on

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THE CEO**

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Dear friends,

I hope you and yours are coping well and staying healthy. I also hope you are practicing compassion – for yourself and others – since these are uncertain times filled with new pressures.

FamilyForward is not a relief agency, but you know what? Our clients and participants need relief. If we can assist with rent and utility payments, we are. If we can buy laptops so children can do their homework, we are. If we can safely deliver toilet paper, we are. If we can provide telehealth services to help parents stay calm for their struggling kids, we are. We are and we will, thanks to your support.

Our administrative departments are diligently making sure employees stay connected to each other and can continue to provide help, hope, and healing. Communicating with stakeholders like you and keeping our partners informed is important to us. I believe we will come out on the other side of this public health crisis stronger, more creative, and with a renewed perspective.

We are future-focused but the present is hard. There are kids and teens who are hurting, parents and caregivers who need guidance, women who have been impacted by domestic violence, and children with developmental disabilities who call FamilyForward home. The pandemic is causing trauma for everyone and even more so for the vulnerable populations we serve. We understand the effects of trauma and we know how to treat it.

We might not be able to predict what tomorrow will bring but together, we are moving in the direction of hope. You have been here for us and we are here for you. Want to chat? Please email me at karen.nolte@familyforwardmo.org and we can set up a phone call or video conference. FamilyForward values our strong network, which was built on a foundation of meaningful relationships and the shared desire to strengthen our community.

Take care,

Karen



Karen Nolte
Chief Executive Officer,
FamilyForward

CONTINUE FROM P.1

stress, distress, and trauma in response to COVID-19. They are also hosting virtual office hours so professionals utilizing NMT and their other models can ask Dr. Perry questions and participate in discussions. These valuable tools (posted to neurosequential.com/covid-19-resources) have been extremely helpful to our staff. Together, we are navigating a new landscape. As we continue to shift our pattern and stay creative, FamilyForward will keep walking alongside those we serve on their journeys.

The health and safety of the kids and staff at our Children’s Homes continues to be a priority. Our employees are making sure the children’s nurturing home environment is maintained. They are managing extra pressures personally and professionally, covering additional shifts in order to mitigate risk and limit germ

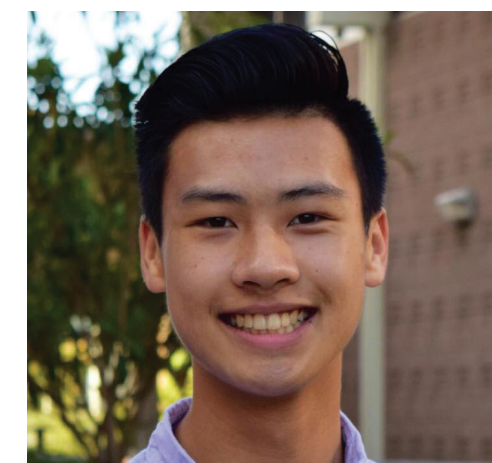


exposure. Contributions to our COVID-19 Emergency Fund have been used to purchase extra cleaning and medical supplies, as well as personal protective equipment. Thank you for giving hope.

Timely COVID-19 updates are available at familyforwardmo.org. FamilyForward

is committed to staying connected with supporters like you and vulnerable children and families who need our help.

SLU STUDENT GIVES BACK



Trenton Gin traveled home to California when Saint Louis University suspended in-person classes in March. Once he was settled, he reached out to FamilyForward and said he would like to sew fabric face

masks for our staff. With help from a team of volunteer seamstresses from First Chinese Baptist Church of Los Angeles, Trenton sewed 50 masks and shipped them to our Children’s Homes. Before beginning the project, he even asked if we had a specific pattern in mind and used one that we provided with a nose wire and interfacing to protect our essential workers. When Trenton emailed us with shipping confirmation, he closed his message with: “Thank you again for giving me this opportunity to serve.” Trenton, we appreciate your generous spirit – you have made a difference during these difficult times.

FamilyForward Children’s Homes remain open but access is limited to essential

personnel only. The teams in Brentwood and St. Charles are heroes who are working around the clock to keep themselves and the children with developmental disabilities in our residential care healthy. Children’s Homes staff, thank you for dedicating yourselves to the medically fragile kids who depend on you every day. You are heroes to them and to us.



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Want to join this generous group of people? Donate securely online at familyforwardmo.org/donate



TICKET TO DREAM FOUNDATION PROVIDES RAPID SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE



“Are you serious? This is my very own tablet? I’ve never had anything like this.”

Generous emergency response donations from Ticket to Dream have allowed us to supply laptops and tablets to kids in foster care so they can complete schoolwork remotely, provide grocery gift cards for older teens who lack traditional support systems, and help struggling families pay bills.

After one of our case managers ordered a tablet for an eight-year-old girl, her foster mom called to share her reaction when it arrived: “Are you serious? This is my very own tablet? I’ve never had anything like this.”

Thanks to Ticket to Dream gifts, our staff has been able to distribute 20 laptops to children in foster care. Technology enables them to keep up with their peers academically and stay in touch with loved ones outside of the home while sheltering in place. A FamilyForward supervisor creatively purchased educational games for one family that was having a difficult time keeping three kids under the age of 12 – one of whom has special needs – occupied and engaged. The family enjoyed bonding together as they learned and played the new games.

We also have used funds to bridge paycheck gaps for caregivers who have been furloughed as a result of COVID-19. This support has been instrumental in preventing crisis situations and ensuring families stay safe.

The graduating class of 2020 has endured a great deal of heartache because of missed experiences and canceled events, but our friends at Ticket to Dream Foundation kept their annual Cards for Grads program going through the pandemic. FamilyForward received 15 cards congratulating teenagers in foster care on their high school graduation, complete with gift cards to retailers like Target and Amazon.

Thank you, Ticket to Dream, for providing hope and opportunity for children in foster care, so they can just be kids.



EDITORIAL INFORMATION

FamilyForward *Transform* is published to further our mission and to acknowledge our partners in achieving this mission. Client confidentiality is essential: names of clients have been changed and photos are stock photos, unless we have received client authorization to do otherwise. For corrections or questions, please email meghan.robinson@familyforwardmo.org.

Jessica Dederer
Chief Development Officer

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Marketing and Communications Manager



REMINISCING ABOUT THE ROCKET BALL

The Rocket Ball reached new heights on Saturday, February 22, 2020 at The Ritz-Carlton, St. Louis and just weeks post-event, everything changed. We are incredibly grateful that we were able to host a fun and transformative event for 560 FamilyForward supporters.

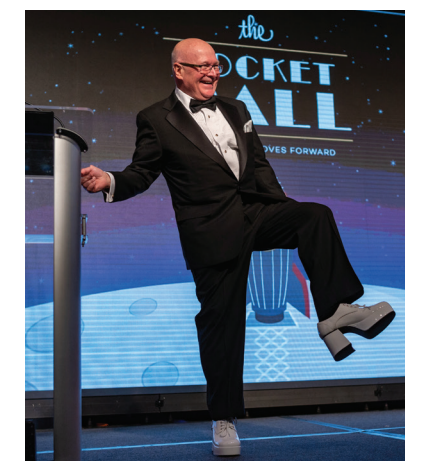
Together, we raised over \$640,000 – a record-breaking amount – to advance safer, healthier relationships for children and families. These funds enable FamilyForward’s highly skilled staff to create partnerships with parents – and the many other people who care for kids – so they can meet children where they are, understand their needs and behaviors, and nurture them. This work helps vulnerable children become successful adults.

Remember dressing up and going out for a cause (not just food and paper goods)? We promise browsing photos and watching videos from the event will make you smile. Relive the out-of-this-world evening at familyforwardmo.org/rocket-ball. Thanks to you, the mission moves forward.

Save the date for next year: Saturday, February 20, 2021 at St. Louis Union Station Hotel



Brian Clevinger (left) and Steven Goldstein (right) present Jan L. Hess with the Pott Child Advocacy Award



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Thank You!

Families who regularly endure hardship are struggling even more now. Because of you, FamilyForward can serve our clients and community safely and responsibly during this public health crisis. As we moved to shelter in place in March, a child in our Therapeutic Preschool asked, “Will you pinky promise that I can come back after the germs are all gone?” We cannot wait to welcome her back but until then, FamilyForward is still here. We simply could not do it without you.

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FamilyForward moves vulnerable children in the direction of hope by delivering comprehensive therapeutic and educational services to support biological, foster, and adoptive families.



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