



Ready for Life  
Changing Lives Beyond Foster Care

# 2021-2022 IMPACT REPORT

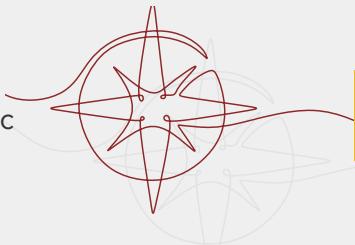
Ready for Life provides support, resources and guidance former foster care youth need to successfully transition to adulthood. At RFL's Skill Center, young people aging out of the foster care system (ages 15 to 25), participate in comprehensive, solution-based programs, focused on crisis stabilization, lifeline & support services, and life skills to level up.

## 55% of the former foster youth RFL served in 2021-2022 were homeless. Unfortunately, trends show that number is on the rise.

We can't solve the homelessness crisis, but we can and DO create stability for former foster care youth. We support youth during crisis, aid in filling in life skills and learning gaps so they are not forever in crisis, remove barriers to progress like education and transportation, and help youth build a healthy, successful future.

## Their journey starts with one brave day.

Day One of the RFL journey is typically about crisis stabilization. Former foster care youth often arrive at the Skill Center with very few of their basic needs met and either homeless or in unstable housing situations. We focus on what a young adult needs **that day** to get back on their feet:



**1. Food:** the Emergency Pantry is one of the most crucial pieces to crisis stabilization. Youth find day-to-day emergency food that can be prepared with or without a kitchen, as well as disaster preparedness items. A successful future starts with a full stomach.

**2. Hygiene:** youth can take a hot shower with a clean towel and do their laundry at the Rays Clean Sweep Day Stop, and can find new clothing, undergarments, and shoes at Beth's Corner, sponsored by the Beth Dillinger Foundation.

**3. Safety:** youth can store their valuables for safe keeping in our Suncoast Voices secure lockers, as well as pick up items from the Santa's Angels Good Day store to ease the challenges of homelessness, such as a backpack, sleeping bag, flashlight, and hygiene items.

### BY THE NUMBERS

**113** new intakes   **222** total youth served

**347** visits to the Emergency Pantry

**450** Heat & Eat Meals provided by our BayCare/Feeding Tampa Bay program

**162** uses of the Rays Clean Sweep Day Stop shower and/or laundry facilities

**55** visits to Beth's Corner for new clothing

**129** youth obtained a **1-year PSTA bus pass**

## What a difference a day makes for Jack.



Jack came to Ready for Life feeling very low and a bit lost. He was homeless and hungry after spending the majority of the prior three weeks sleeping literally everywhere—indoors and out—after losing both his job and his apartment. He had no money and was running short on hope. Jack, in crisis and feeling discouraged, **made a brave choice to come to RFL that day** and begin his journey.

During his first day at RFL, Jack talked with a youth specialist and together they formed an action plan to help him get back on his feet. This plan included: a hot shower at the **Rays Clean Sweep Day Stop**, a meal from the **Emergency Needs Pantry**, and hygiene items from the **Santa's Angels Good Day Store**. Jack attended an intake appointment at a shelter, got connected with an interview at one of our partner companies, received job coaching for the interview and proper interview attire from **Beth's Corner**. Before leaving, Jack received a **1-year PSTA Bus Pass** to get to the interview. With his needs met and his confidence and dignity restored, Jack aced the interview and got the job!

Our team moved mountains when Jack hauled himself through our door that morning, and by 4:00 that same afternoon he was clean, had a place to sleep, a full stomach, new clothes, reliable transportation, and new income. **In just one day Jack was well on his way to self-sufficiency.**

**72%** of the young adults (18+ years old) served at RFL are **currently employed\***

## Breaking the cycles of foster care.

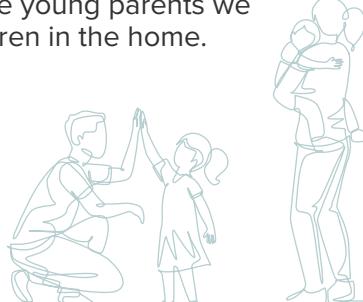
Young parents raised in foster care are at increased risk for losing custody of their own children, therefore RFL focuses a great deal of attention on helping the young parents we serve break the generational cycle of child abuse and keep their children in the home.

**65** young parents received services at RFL this year

**30** young parents attended our Mommy and Me and Wingmen parent support groups

**89%** of young parents at RFL have custody of their children\*

**93%** of young parents attending Mommy and Me and Wingmen **have custody of their children**



## We didn't do it alone! Because of YOU...

**\$41,000** in Volunteer Hours   **\$112,000** in In-Kind Donations   **\$883,615** total funds raised

You'll notice that we have an asterisk next to some of the statistics. These stats are a bit of a "moving target" and can change between times we see the young adults.

\*Upon last contact with RFL

## Years later, you'd never know from where I came...

Meeting Ashley today, you would never know she is the same young woman who, several years earlier, was hungry, homeless, had just gotten out of jail after being arrested for petty theft, and had absolutely no plan. Ashley had great potential, but had taken a wrong turn and couldn't find her way forward. **Then she found Ready for Life.**

Ashley smiles as she remembers getting involved at RFL. "I started to come to the events. **I just wanted a family, and I found it here.**" At RFL, Ashley received assistance with food, clothing, and transportation, learned the life skills she was missing, was coached for job interviews; and so much more.

When Ashley turned 21, Mary Pat McLain came into her life as a mentor and her whole world began to come together. "I didn't like her...at first, but I love her now," Ashley chuckled. "She wouldn't go away. She kept calling me and inviting me to weekly dinners..."

Today, Ashley is Director of the Angels Visitation Center and achieved her bachelor's degree in Health Services Administration and Human Services. She lives in a condo in Countryside, owns a car, and has a beautiful 19-month-old daughter Journee and two wonderful stepchildren with her partner Curtis, who is an electrician. Ashley has a credit score over 700, money in the bank and \$0 in debt. **Ashley will be volunteering to co-lead the RFL Mommy and Me program with staff, and plans to be a mentor one day, just like Mary Pat has been to her.**

To read the full interview with Ashley, please visit [readyforlifepinellas.org](http://readyforlifepinellas.org)



**RFL currently has 63 Active Alumni:** those who are over the age of 25 and stay a part of the Ready for Life Family to help the youth coming up through the system behind them.

## Removing barriers and forming connections.

RFL assists youth on their journey by removing the barriers to success such as legal documents, transportation, or counseling; filling in life skills and learning gaps including meal planning, financial literacy, and health navigation; and forming connections between youth and the community, fully wrapping them in support and encouragement. Some of the community partners providing invaluable resources at our Skill Center:

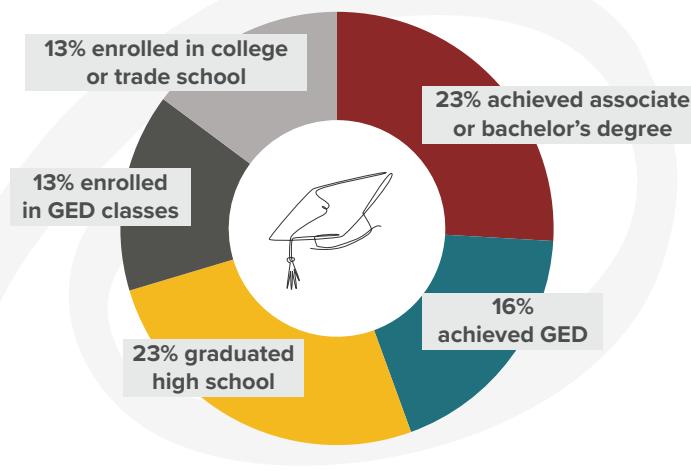


## All things are possible because anything can be learned.

National statistics show that 50% of youth aging out of foster care do so without finishing their high school education, and that less than 3% of people in foster care will earn a college degree in their lifetime. **Of the 113 new intakes at RFL this year, 36% had not completed their GED.**

RFL supports the education goals of the young adults we serve through volunteer mentors and tutors, transportation assistance, financing lab and testing fees, and immense encouragement to overcome the odds stacked against them.

We surveyed RFL youth on their education status, goals, and achievements:



## Transportation Security

Roughly \$100,000 was saved this year through the RFL Bus Pass Program.

**129 young adults received an annual Photo ID Bus Pass from RFL's PSTA UPass partnership program** which costs just under \$10,000 annually. If we had to purchase those bus passes individually, the cost would be \$108,360.

A bus pass provides youth with the basic and critical need of safe, reliable transportation—allowing them easy access to jobs, interviews, school, appointments, grocery stores, childcare, and so much more.

**Stepping forward...** We could provide youth with food and clothing for forever, but a successful future only comes from self-sufficiency.

**30 people attended our Cooking with Kate meal planning classes!**

In addition to learning how to plan for and cook a healthy meal, youth received the pots, pans, mixers, dishes, utensils, and food supplies to stock their own kitchens. Learning the crucial life skill of meal planning ensures youth can fulfill their needs and stay on budget.

**\$17,737 matched in Opportunity Passport™!**

Youth aging out of foster care often lack basic financial skills. In Opportunity Passport™, youth receive a matched savings account that gives them a pivotal chance to manage finances, interact with the banking system and set aside money for large purchases like rent, a car, or tuition.

**\$38,000 of dental care was received through our Dr. David Zabrocki Dental Program!**

The Dr. David Zabrocki Dental Program provides dental care, treatment, and education to youth who have received little or no dental care prior. Access to proper dental hygiene instills confidence, relieves pain, and improves overall health and wellness.