



State Anniversary: Louisiana

May 1 marked two years since Louisiana's official incorporation.

This small but mighty team currently consists of two employees along with the help of a seasoned NYAP team member in West Virginia. The state is based out of a small room within a suite on Westfork Drive in Baton Rouge. Only becoming licensed last year, the one program they offer is Therapeutic Foster Care. While things are still getting started, Program Director Robin Guillmette always remains incredibly optimistic. It is easy to look to states like Ohio and Indiana who boast many years of service and compare them to newer programs like Louisiana, but it is important to remember every NYAP state started off the same exact way.

Before Robin, there was Kristin Tordoff, current Executive Director of Nevada. Kristin was instrumental in getting Louisiana off the ground and developed a great understanding of the area.

The team is proud to have one open home who cares for a pair of siblings including a teen. This family has been very consistent throughout the licensing and fostering process and is even exploring the possibility of adoption. At the moment Licensing Coordinator Christian Kelly is looking to finalize additional homes. Coming from a background with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and recruiting blood donors, Christian is no stranger to asking people to donate their time to meaningful causes. She is also originally from Louisiana which gives her a great advantage when it comes to connecting with individuals and partners in the community.

Robin also has extensive experience with recruitment as she previously worked with Girl Scouts of America. She admittedly tries everything and does not have a problem with waiting to find the right people, despite there being no shortage of placements requests from the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). When it comes to foster homes, Robin is fully committed to finding quality individuals who would be the best fit for local youth.

Current goals for the Louisiana program include building a solid foundation in the greater Baton Rouge area. The team has connected with DCFS, Chamber of Commerce, Baton Rouge Area Youth Network, local churches and teachers. Christian has met with several local pastors and Robin has spoken to a community congregation.



NATIONAL
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The ultimate target for the year is to recruit three more foster homes and place an additional four youth. To do this, the team emphasizes the need for increased awareness and accurately demonstrating the advantage NYAP has over other foster care agencies in the area.

Overseeing all of these efforts is Renee Ellenberger-Brady, Corporate Vice President and Executive Director of West Virginia, who has been with NYAP for almost 29 years. Functioning as a supervisor, Renee has been part of Robin's NYAP journey from day one. While the women live in different states, they have nailed down an extremely effective style of communication that has allowed them to become strong colleagues. Meeting in person for the first time two months ago, Robin explained it felt like they had known each other their whole lives.

According to Robin, Renee supports her by bringing "a wealth of knowledge and great ideas." Renee knew Robin was the right fit for the team because of her go-getter attitude. Renee shares, "In six months, you are going to see a program that really grows."

Louisiana: congratulations on your anniversary and all the success to come!