

FAITH IN ACTION



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT + CEO

Dear FaithBridge Ministry Partner, Looking back at 2018 reveals a year of incredible impact. Together we have served more children than ever and continue to see growth. I've said in past years that we are better together and that continues to be true. We can't do this without our heroes: our staff, our financial donors, our prayer warriors, our church partners, volunteers and foster parents.

When we hear the word "hero" we often think of someone who has extraordinary abilities or has done something that no one else can do. We might think of first responders or comic book / movie characters.

In Hebrews chapter 11, often referred to as the "Hall of Faith," we read a long list of biblical heroes that includes all of the familiar men and women of God who did special or miraculous things. What do they all have in common? They lived by faith in obedience to God's calling on their lives.

While times have changed since Noah built the ark to save his family from the great flood, or since David faced Goliath with nothing but a slingshot, our God has not changed. He still calls ordinary people to do extraordinary things through the power of Jesus Christ.

As you read through this report, **I invite you to celebrate the "heroes of foster care,"** who have put their faith in action to share the hope, healing and unconditional love of Jesus Christ.

In the following pages you'll read about everyday people like the Tommasellos, who by faith, built a relationship with their foster child's birth mother to help her care for her son after reunification. And Carmen Abernathy, who by faith, rallies others to provide much-needed support for the foster families in her church. And like the Jernigans, who by faith, chose to invite an 18-year-old into their home and provide the support she needs to navigate into adulthood and independence.

While we could only share a few stories here, we celebrate all of you for the part you play in serving the vulnerable children of Georgia.

Because you have answered God's calling to serve, a record 414 children experienced the hope, healing, and unconditional love of Jesus in 2018.



Bob J. Bruder-Mattson
Bob Bruder-Mattson
President & CEO

HEBREWS 12:1-2 (NIV)

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses... let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith..."

P.S. Because of your support and your prayers, 2018 was an unprecedented year and we know that we can serve even more children in need in 2019. Thank you for helping these children experience the love of Jesus.

WHO WE ARE

Our Vision

Every foster child will experience the hope, healing, and unconditional love of Jesus Christ.

Our Mission

To mobilize, organize, and equip local churches to help solve their community's foster care crisis.

This results in inspired and growing church ministries, foster families who are answering God's call, and foster children who are placed in loving Christian homes.



Meet the Jernigans. If you told Lacy and Scott Jernigan a year ago that they would be foster parents with an 18-year-old young woman living with them and their twin toddlers, they probably wouldn't know what to think.

It all started when Lacey realized that something was not quite right with one of the young women in the small group she led at Browns Bridge Church. She knew action needed to be taken, which meant reporting some things about Morgan's current living situation. This resulted in Morgan's removal from her home.

Despite several attempts at finding a new home for Morgan, she was eventually placed in a group home and God started to nudge Lacey and Scott's hearts.

"I was having dreams about taking her in," says Lacey. "I felt like God wanted us to be involved in her life, but we didn't know what that meant."

Scott and Lacey got permission from the state to bring her to and from church so that she could keep some of the connections she had made there. Eventually they both knew what to do.

"I soon knew that I wanted to call her my own, but I was afraid to tell my husband that I felt like God wanted us to take her in," says Lacey. "I prayed, 'God if this is what you really want for her, you are going to have to tell Scott yourself.' How could I ask my husband to take in a teenage girl when our twin daughters had just turned one?"

Within a week Scott approached Lacey and said "OK. What do we need to do to keep her?"

"I lost it," Lacey said, **"I knew what God had already placed in my heart and He clearly placed it in my husband's heart too."**

There was only one barrier. They needed to become licensed foster parents – a process that often takes the better part of 6 months.

Enter FaithBridge and the Fostering Together ministry at church partner North Point Community Church.

Working together, they expedited the training and home study process so that the Jernigans were approved within two months, despite significant barriers, including a major flood in their home.

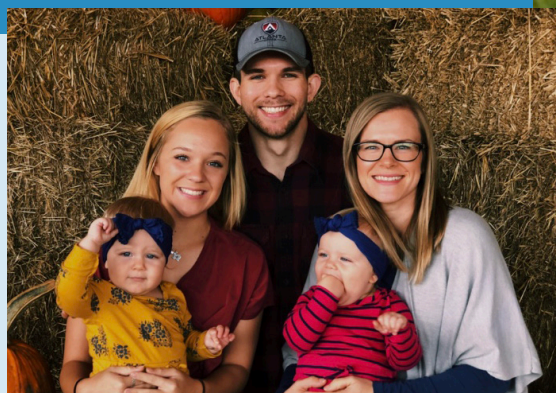
It took another three months, but on December 1 they finally brought Morgan home. Their Community of Care supported them in countless ways, including mentoring Morgan and a bedroom renovation project by their small group.

Being foster parents was never something they thought of, according to Lacey. "We tend to think of the foster parents we know as superheroes and we could never live up to that."

They have since learned that it has nothing to do with having any special talent, just faith in God.

"None of this has been easy by any means," said Lacey, "but we have never felt more purpose in anything we have done. All it takes is to be obedient to that one next step God calls you to, and He will take care of the details and carry you through."

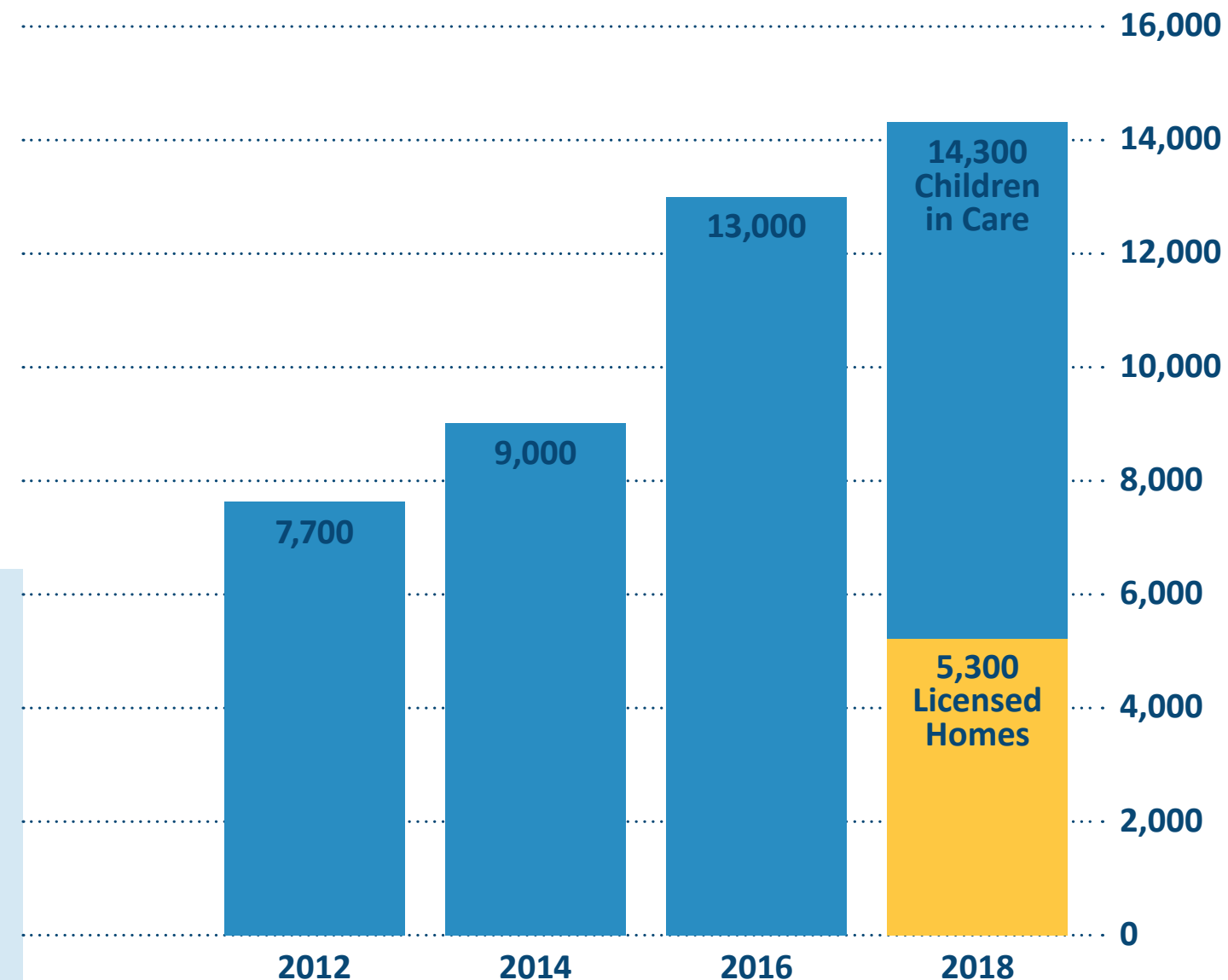
"We have been overwhelmed with all the support. This has been the most amazing journey."



THE CRISIS

We are starting to see some stabilization in the numbers of children in foster care, but with approximately 14,300 children still in care and 5,300 licensed foster parents we are still facing a crisis for the children of Georgia.

As Georgia's largest Christ-centered Licensed Child Placing Agency, FaithBridge Foster Care's model of partnering with churches creates growing and sustainable foster care ministries. We partner with local churches offering both traditional and therapeutic programs and we help recruit, train, license, and support foster families within each ministry. By placing children in loving Christian homes, providing Biblically based training, guiding our churches to develop a Community of Care for each family and providing a FaithBridge Family Consultant (our version of a case worker who partners with each family on their fostering journey) our families never foster alone.



**Georgia Division of Family and Children Services*

Meet the Tommasellos. Foster parents, Jaime and Craig Tommasello where very cautious about meeting Haley at first. They started getting to know her during pick up and drop off of her son, their foster child, Andrew. They quickly realized that she was open to having a relationship with them.

Soon, Jaime was sharing a picture of Andrew every day since Haley worked six days a week and only got to visit him once a week. Craig admitted that he was more cautious at the beginning but when he saw that Haley was taking responsibility, it helped him to let his guard down.

“She took full responsibility and acknowledged that we were just the foster parents, we didn’t take her son away” Craig reflected, “Haley didn’t fight us or view us as a part of the system.”

By the time Andrew left the Tommasello home to be reunited with Haley, Jaime and Craig were intentional about letting her know that she could still reach out to them if ever she needed support.

“I would send letters home when children in our care would visit with their biological parents,” Jaime explained. “**When baby Andrew returned home, we sent a letter to say Haley**

can call us if she needed anything. We did not know if she would respond but we hoped she would.”

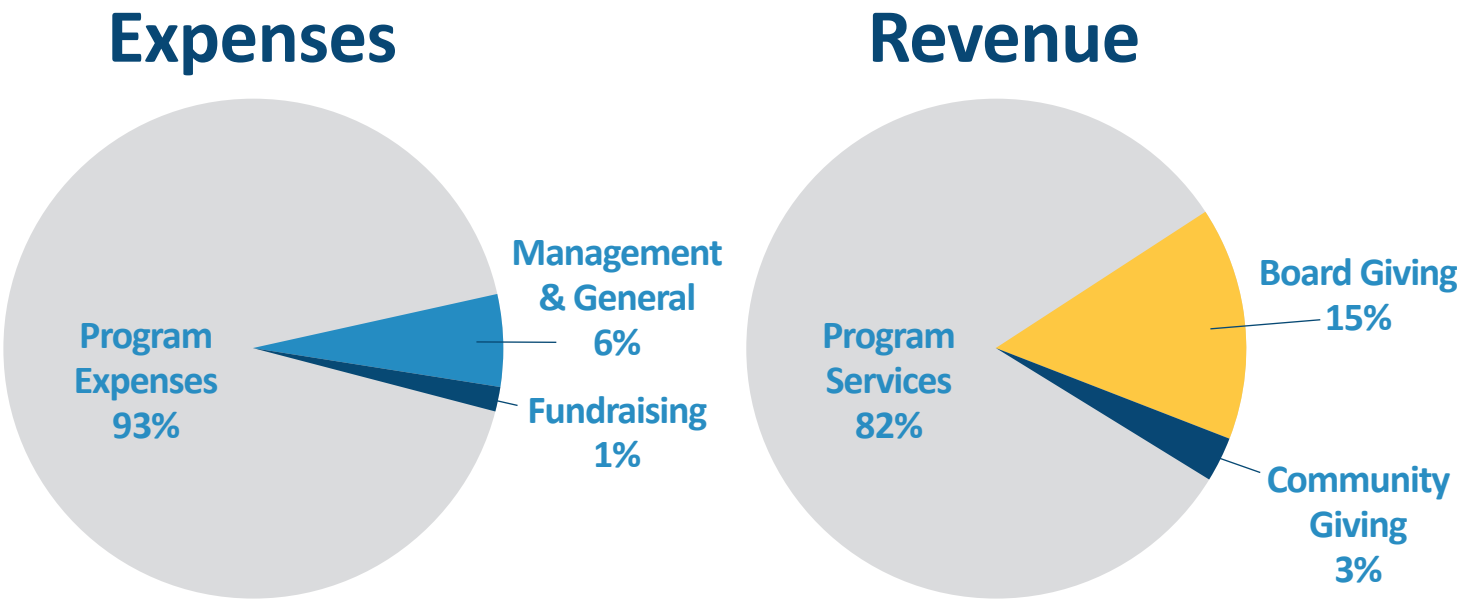
The next week, she did.

Haley called to say that Andrew had the flu and the daycare wouldn’t take him for the day. The Tommasellos where there to help.

“I was just so happy she called,” Jaime explained. If Haley couldn’t find a sitter, she wouldn’t be able to go to work that day. The Tommasellos were happy to take baby Andrew while he recovered. Shortly after, Haley caught the flu. In between coughs and sneezes, she told Jaime that she would be on her way to get Andrew.

“We can keep him until you recover,” Jaime shared. She could hear the relief in Haley’s voice.

It can be difficult for biological parents to reach out for support when they need it but the Tommasellos made it that much easier for Haley by sending a simple letter of support to open the door for Haley to connect to them even after her baby returned home. This is the type of support that *all* parents need. When a parent does not have these resources and family support their chances of success are reduced.



Source: 2018 Audited Financial Statements

Contributions from our Board of Directors cover all management, general, and fundraising expenses.

100% of every dollar donated goes directly to help foster children!

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What if more foster parents could support families in this way and offer hope, healing, and unconditional love even beyond the parameters of traditional foster care? The church is poised to play a part in completely transforming foster care and providing support to families in need.



Meet Carmen Abernathy. The foster care experience is filled with moments that can leave foster families feeling overwhelmed. There are many ways to be the back-up support for children and families in need. There are moments when this back-up support can save the day.

Carmen Abernathy and her Sunday School class do just that. They work with Mt. Bethel's "Called to Care" ministry and provide priceless ongoing support to foster families.

The class – launched in 1990 by Carmen and her husband – is made up of about 35 retirement-age people who have consistently met every Sunday for 30 years.

"We have always done different community projects and mission projects," Carmen explained, "About three years ago we decided that we wanted to have one primary focus."

Carmen met with Stephanie Watts, the "Called to Care" Ministry Liaison, and asked what this group could do to support the church's foster care ministry.

Carmen's Sunday School group is now dedicated to support foster parents wherever they are needed.

Here are some ways they support the "Called to Care" Ministry:

1. Get-to-know-You Picnics. Carmen's class brings picnic food and games for this event during which families and their foster children get to know each other.

2. Date nights. There is never a wrong way to offer a foster family a night out! The class members offer babysitting to give foster parents much-needed time off.

3. Handy-Man Day and Handy-Man Projects. Carmen's Sunday school group connected with a carpenter to help with building projects. They have helped with bedroom updates for foster children, organizing garages, spring cleaning, and plumbing.

4. Cutting Grass. The group heard that someone's lawnmower was broken so they went out and cut the grass.

5. Valentine's Day Meal Trains. What better way to say "I love you" than free food cooked by someone else! They helped cook dinner for 8-10 foster families and made Valentines goodies for the children.

6. Celebrations Events. They host church-wide celebration events for foster and respite families throughout the year. In the summer they host pool parties for families.

7. Christmas Parties. They host an annual Christmas party at the Mt. Bethel Community Center and provide gift baskets and crafts for the children.

Carmen and her Sunday school group are just one example of so many among our church partners who choose to use their time, talent, and treasure to be a blessing to foster families and children.

Thank you for being everyday heroes to our foster families and the children in their care!

"We are behind the scenes supporting the foster parents. We help coordinate fellowship events and provide additional support whenever it is needed," says Carmen.



*Based on 2018 actual costs

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THANK YOU

JAMES 1:27 (NIV)

**“Religion that God our
Father accepts as pure and
faultless is this: to look
after orphans and widows
in their distress and to
keep oneself from being
polluted by the world.”**

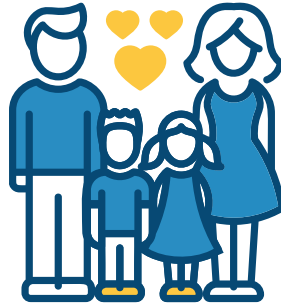


*Thank you for your
support of Georgia's
vulnerable children!*

OUR 2018 IMPACT

124

reunified with family

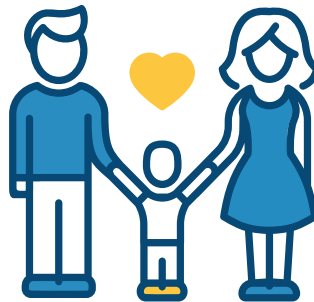


414

children served

1,050

individuals introduced
to foster care



110

new licensed
foster families

74,986

days children have been
in Christian homes

*27.8% increase from 2017



23

adoptions

3

new partner
churches



Contact Us

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