



Footsteps to the Future

Supports the 52nd UN Commission on the Status of Women

It is the intention of Footsteps to the Future, Inc to heighten awareness of what is happening here in the United States with young people, especially women, who grow up in and are emancipated from the Foster Care System. We created our organization to provide tools of empowerment to these young women so they can make positive choices on whatever path in life they decide to follow. We provide positive, mindful mentoring and life coaching.

We saw an urgent need to become pro-active in our community as we watched many of these “girls” walking towards an abyss and falling thru the cracks

Here are a few facts for you to ponder...

In the State of Florida, where we established our non-profit agency seven years ago, there are 4,642 youth in foster care.

- Only 31% of 17 year olds and 22% of 18 year olds have drivers licenses
- 55% of 17 year olds are below grade level
- 63% of teens in foster care experience an average of 2 different foster homes one year

Although foster care was originally designed to be a temporary situation for our youth, there are currently over 800,000 youth served in foster care across the US.

- 50% of “Aged Out” ** foster youth will re-enter the “system” thru criminal activity, drug and alcohol abuse, unplanned pregnancies or homelessness.
- 33% of 17 year old foster youth report having 5 or more school changes
- 54% of “Aged Out” foster youth have completed high school.
- 3% of “Aged Out” foster youth obtain a bachelor’s degree with in a few years
- Only 30% of youth finish high school before “Aging Out” from care
- Only 47% of 23 year old emancipated foster youth have full time employment

* for fact citations visit www.casey.org/friendsandfamilies/partners

For the children and youth served in foster care each year in the United States, a quality education is vitally important. It not only provides children with a roadmap for future success, it can also serve as a positive counterweight to abuse, neglect, separation and instability.

** “Aging Out” is a term used for when a youth is emancipated at age 18 from foster care

Unfortunately, for youth in foster care, a change in home placement frequently results in a change in school placement. The educational impact of every school change is significant. The young person must adjust to these changes and that is many times very difficult. Positive, stable school experiences enhance youths' well-being, and helps them make a more successful transition to adulthood, and increases their chances for personal fulfillment and economic self-sufficiency, as well as their ability to contribute to society.

As we observe the *girl child* all over the globe we know that an education can be a passport out of poverty... that is why we approach the subject of education as an essential step in the transitional goals for our young women in Footsteps to the Future. We know the importance of coaching them to identify their goals and to stand by them as they strive to achieve them. We provide one-on-one mentoring to let them know there is someone who cares about and believes in them. We established our program with the intention of providing a portal to all the resources available to them in the community be it scholarships, housing, employment, mental health care and so much more. It is a proven fact that having a mentor is one of the most significant ingredients in becoming successful.

We have come to find that one of the key factors in why emancipated foster youth fail is not just because they have no "family" to rely or fall back on; ...they have no safe or affordable place to live. Transitional housing is an answer to this growing problem. Many communities across the US, including our community here in SW Florida, have no such place available to this young population. Footsteps to the Future is a stakeholder in obtaining this transitional housing to provide a safe haven as these "girls" move from foster care towards self-sufficiency and independent living.

The biggest and most significant roadblock to achieving our goal is funding...we are dependent on private foundations, grants and individual donations to provide what is needed to insure the success of emancipated foster youth, not only in our own backyard, but across the United States. One of themes of this 52nd CSW is funding women's projects. So, we invite you to contact us to see what you can do to make a difference in the life of a *girl child* here in the US.

Please know if you are interested in seeing how you can develop a project like ours in your community we are willing and able to share all our information with you as we are a "Pilot Project for the Nation" and invested in the success of all youth across the Planet.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.
Margaret Mead

For additional information visit www.abanet.org/child/education, www.casey.org and www.FloridasChildrenFirst.org