

ANNUAL REPORT



2017

A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is exciting to present our 2017 Annual Report for the first time as **Families Forward Learning Center**. This past year was one of intense preparation for the transition to our new organizational identity. With over half a century of history and impact in the Pasadena community, we made a bold decision to affirm the holistic, inclusive approach of our **Two-Generation Learning Program** by changing our name to Families Forward, a name that communicates an invitation to learn and grow with us to all members of the family.

At Families Forward Learning Center, **growth** is a foundation of our mission. When I walked through the doors of our learning center for the first time in 2011 as the incoming Executive Director, Families Forward (then Mothers' Club) had recently conducted a capital campaign to purchase a permanent home. In the years that followed, we have seen our hard work and dedication bring growth of every kind. We have implemented new programs, added talented teachers and professionals to our growing staff, strengthened community partnerships, and even changed our name – all in support of our mission to **empower families**.

Studies find conclusive evidence that when families have a safe, supportive place to learn and grow, the whole community experiences the benefits. We welcome at-risk families struggling with isolation and poverty into an environment where they can access resources, strengthen social networks, and provide their young children with a quality education that equips them with the building blocks for success.

We believe that **an investment in the well-being of families is an investment in the future**. It is my privilege to witness the impact of our programs and my joy to share them with you.

From all of us at Families Forward, **thank you** for your support.



Hector LaFarga, Jr.
Executive Director



A HOLISTIC APPROACH

OUR VISION

All children are nurtured and educated during their first five years so they enter kindergarten ready and able to learn.

Parents are prepared for their role as their child's first and most influential teacher and encouraged to become lifelong learners.

Families work together to improve their education, the quality of their lives, and their community.

OUR MISSION:

Families Forward Learning Center prepares families living in isolation and poverty to succeed in school and in life through two-generation learning programs.

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

We provide free education programs and social services to disadvantaged families with children ages 0-5.

Our core **Two-Generation Learning Program** consists of a morning session and an afternoon session. Each session is offered Monday-Friday for 3.5 hours each day and serves 58 children and their parents. Both sessions include: Early Childhood Education (ECE), Parent Education, Adult Education, Mental Health Support, and Leadership Training.

Additional programming includes:

- Weekly **Teen Parenting Program** on Thursday afternoons
- Weekly **Fathers' Support group** on Wednesday evenings
- **Early Readers' Book Club** one Saturday morning a month



MEANINGFUL IMPACT



OUR GOALS Families Forward is built on two guiding principles: in order for significant, long-term change to occur within a family, you must reach both parent and child and educate them together; and, the most critical time to reach a family is when children are proven to be most vulnerable and impressionable, between birth and five years-old.

WHO WE SERVED

- **83%** are living at or below the federal poverty level
- **44%** of parents do not have a high school diploma
- **27%** have less than a 9th grade education
- **67%** are English language learners
- **44%** live in overcrowded, shared households

OUR PREVENTATIVE PROGRAMS ARE DESIGNED TO:

- Increase **school-readiness** of young children who are at risk for failure in school
- Increase **parenting skills** and **adult literacy** levels
- Teach parents to be **active advocates** for and **participants** in their children's learning
- **Prevent** neglect and abuse by **supporting** the overall well-being of families with very young children

IN THE 2016-2017 PROGRAM YEAR:

Children and parents met or exceeded their learning benchmarks, demonstrating children's readiness for school and parents' ability to support their education, as well as their own personal development.

OUTCOMES

90%

of infants and toddlers demonstrated appropriate developmental growth

63%

of adult learners showed gains in their English reading skills

100%

of children entering kindergarten possessed school readiness skills

72%

of parents took on a leadership role at Families Forward

LEADERSHIP & STAFF



ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Hector LaFarga, Jr., *Executive Director*
Julie Espinoza, *Education Director*
Andrea Huicochea, *Senior Program Manager*
Berit Anderson, *Manager, Communications & Events*
Johanna Clark, *Manager, Individual & Foundation Giving*
Paola Rodriguez, *Family Engagement Specialist*
Sarah Ojeda Kimbrough, *Volunteer Coordinator*
Martha Murillo-Spangler, *Office Manager*
Maria Lupe Vargas, *Nutrition Coordinator*
Rosa Martinez, *Kitchen Aid*
Guillermina Garcia, *Kitchen Aid*
Jose Amezcua, *Maintenance*

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TEACHERS

Bianca Alvarado	Yolanda Martinez
Lucy Alvarado	Sandra Mora
Denissa Barrera	Margarita Morales
Marina Bendy	Daisy Pedraza
Judy Bustamante	Marisela Perez
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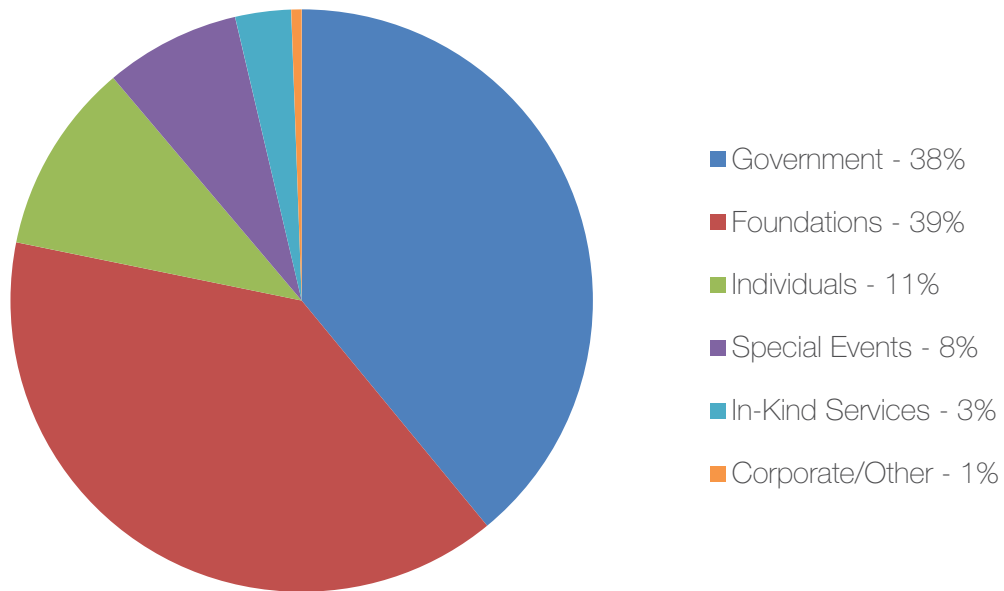
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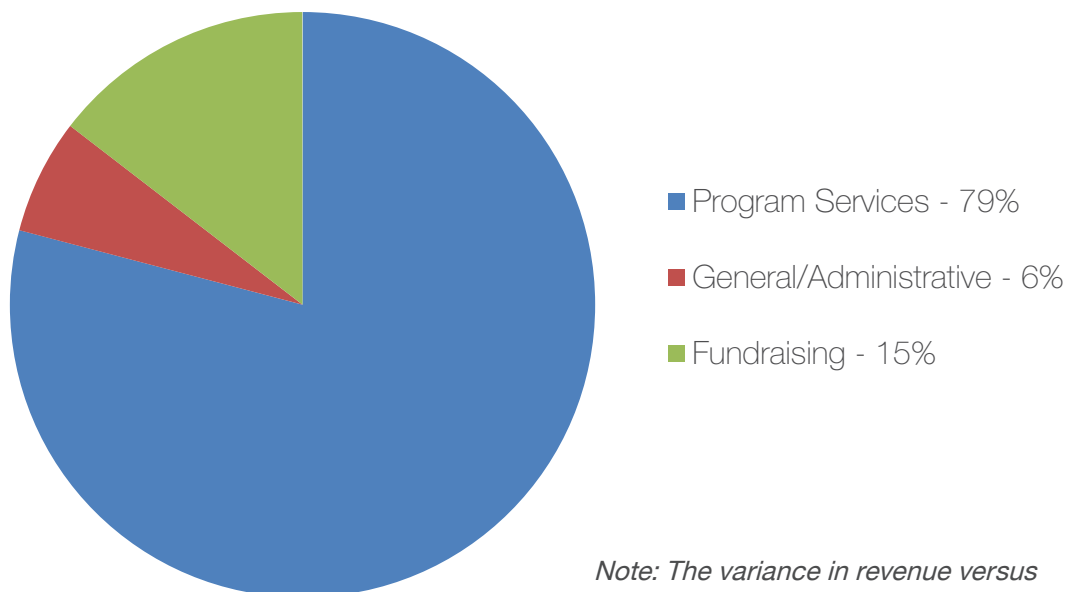
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Ellen Knell	

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

REVENUE: \$1,882,680



EXPENSES: \$1,936,291



Note: The variance in revenue versus expenses is primarily due to depreciation.

FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS	2016-2017
Cash	\$358,931
Investments, at fair value	\$1,294,187
Grant receivables	\$250,175
Prepaid expenses	\$2,698
Property and equipment, net	\$5,148,570
TOTAL ASSETS	\$7,054,561

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$56,169
Net Assets	
Unrestricted	\$6,239,659
Temporarily restricted	\$498,105
Temporarily restricted – Capital maintenance reserve	\$100,000
Temporarily restricted – Kujawa staff development	\$37,128
Permanently restricted	\$123,500
Total Net Assets	\$6,998,392
TOTAL LIABILITES AND NET ASSETS	\$7,054,561

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

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Every effort was made to ensure accuracy and proper acknowledgment of gifts we received. If you find an error, please accept our apologies and call our Development Office at (626)792-2687 ext.122.

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We also want to thank the hundreds of individuals who made donations less than \$199 to support our work with families!

Special Thanks to our Name Change Donors

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Marcia Goodstein
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Nurit & Ron Kotick
Judy & Stephen McDonald
Susan & Paul Miller
Elsa Macias & Ricardo Rivas-Plato

A FAMILY'S STORY



My name is Perla Castellanos. I have been married to my husband Jaime for 21 years and have four beautiful, bright girls: they are 20, 15, 10 and four years old. My oldest daughter is studying to be a medical assistant; my 15 year-old will be a Junior in high school; my 10 year-old will be entering middle school; and Luna, the youngest one, will be in PreK next year at Families Forward.

In 1997 I tried to enroll at Families Forward (then Mothers' Club), but there were no spaces available and after that, life just went on. When Luna was a baby, friends encouraged me to try again, and this time there was space. We began at Families Forward in August 2014 when Luna was a toddler.

At Families Forward, **I have been able to fulfill my dream of going to school** – something that I know I would not have been able to do by myself. This spring, with the encouragement and support of the Families Forward staff, I earned my high school diploma.

A high school diploma might not seem like a big achievement, but to me it was a goal that I didn't think I would ever get to do. I have

had many challenges in my life, and the people around me were not supportive. My own mother gave me up at seven months old. I was raised by my grandmother in Mexico. I lived with her until I was 18 years old. My dream was to study and work in the travel industry or become a teacher. But **we were so poor that going to school was not an option** for me. I remember sometimes having to share one plate of food with three cousins and my grandmother. Other times we would be given a tortilla with some salt just to fill our stomachs.

These experiences made me want to go to school even more. I knew that many people were not born with money but if they worked hard and had careers, they were able to have the things they needed for a good life. I wanted this for me and my daughters.

Before I came to Families Forward, I tried to go to English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to learn English, but often children or work or life stopped me from continuing. Finally, at Families Forward, I was able to start in the Level Three class while my baby was taken care of by the teachers at the center. I was very happy.

I was encouraged by the staff at Families Forward to continue to go to school at the Community Education Center and get my high school diploma. It has taken me almost two years to do this. During that time, there were many challenges that almost stopped me. My husband didn't always understand what I was doing. I often had to drop off the kids at school, get Luna to Families Forward, take the bus or get a ride to the Community Education Center, and then arrange for someone to pick

up Luna and take care of her until I got back on the bus from classes. Then I would cook, clean, and try to spend time with my family. Usually, I was doing homework until 1 a.m., especially, when I was studying math. I tried not to be an added financial burden for my husband, so I found a job cleaning houses.

Often I would have to argue with Jaime because he didn't understand why I was pushing myself so much. Sometimes I didn't even understand, but I knew I needed to finish. I needed to try to make a **better future for my family**, to be a **role model for my girls**, to **keep my dreams alive**.

I believe that everyone should take advantage of the opportunities that are available, and Families Forward was giving me a big opportunity. I could not waste it. Besides supporting my education, I was learning to be a better parent, my husband attended the Father's Group, and Luna was learning so much.

Now, I am not sure what I will be studying in the future but I know I will continue my education. I'm thinking about studying to be a radiologist or something in the medical field. **I know I can complete the goals that I set.** My time at Families Forward has proven that.

Thank you for your help, support, and for keeping the center open so families can achieve their dreams. We need it.

-Perla Castellanos

Families Forward Parent Participant

Perla's story was transcribed from a speech delivered at the 2017 Guardian Event.

Perla's youngest daughter, Luna, will graduate from Families Forward this spring and start Kindergarten at Webster Elementary School in the fall. Perla recently recieved her Cemetary Salesperson License and is employed as a Pre-Need Family Counselor.





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Editor: Berit Anderson

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