

Field of Interest and Unrestricted Funds Increase the Power of Giving

The financial support of area nonprofits that assist with foster care, adoption, aging out of the foster care system, and housing for emancipated youth in northwest Ohio is a great example of the power of unrestricted and field of interest funds.

The Adopt America Network, which locates permanent housing for children in foster care, is one of several area nonprofits that have benefited from these types of funds through the Greater Toledo Community Foundation. In 2018, Adopt America finalized 46 placements, completed nearly 2,000 referrals, identified 32 new prospect families and registered 193 new children.

Wendy Spoerl, executive director of Adopt America Network said “The \$70,100 grant we received from the Foundation’s Community Funds is being put to great use for our Ongoing Adoption and Kinship Support program (OAKS).”

“The OAKS program provides ongoing family preservation services for families who have adopted a child,” she says. “It’s so important to help these families build resilience. We want the children to heal and the families to thrive.”

The Foundation’s financial support of the OAKS program helps Adopt America provide support groups, including child and family mentors, home-based education and coaching, resource and referral services and home-based therapy.

“Many children who are adopted have suffered trauma which affects their ability to attach and interact,” said Wendy. “Giving families support systems and guidance in how to navigate this process is essential. Adopt America strives for permanency in our placements. The OAKS program is so beneficial for families united through adoption, kinship, custodial arrangements and guardianship.”

Adopt America also received funding from two field of interest funds: the Bill Rowles Youth Foundation Fund and the Katherine R. Smith Funds for Youth of the Waterville Community Foundation for its Love and Luggage program. The Rowles Fund supports programs that enhance the lives of young people under the age of 21, particularly youth with behavioral issues, who have had contact with the juvenile justice system or have been expelled or suspended from school. The Katherine R. Smith Fund supports programs that enhance the lives of young people under the age of 18, particularly children with developmental disabilities or abused children.

The Love and Luggage program provides youth who age out of the foster system with items they need for independent living. The program is offered in conjunction with Lucas County Children Services and provides youth who have lived most of their



Love and Luggage Program of Adopt America

lives in foster care and have little to no belongings with a duffel bag with hygiene items and gift cards for home furnishings.

“Youth who emancipate from the foster system may be entering college, working or starting an apprenticeship,” said Wendy. “There are often children who emancipate without a high school education which makes starting an adult life very challenging.”

The Love and Luggage program not only provides these youth with a duffel bag and gift cards, it also launches a supportive relationship with mentors who continue to meet with the youth and provide additional guidance and support. The program is the brainchild of Sarah Otis, whose family adopted

a daughter through Lucas County Children Services. Sarah learned that many children from foster care carry their belongings from place to place in a garbage bag.

Lucas Housing Services Corporation (LHSC) also received funding related to foster care and emancipated youth that addresses a gap in services for young adults at risk of being homeless through the Stranahan Supporting Organization of the Greater Toledo Community Foundation. LHSC was awarded a \$31,000 grant for the Bridge to Independence and Success Housing Program, a short-term housing and wrap-around services program for emancipated youth who have had contact with the Lucas County Juvenile Justice Center.

The program is a collaboration between LHSC, Lucas County Juvenile Court and the Ohio Teaching Families Association. The Bridge to Independence program provides six months of housing and supportive services to three individuals at a time. The goal is to prepare young adults who are exiting the juvenile justice or foster care systems to obtain permanent housing and live independently.

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Youth who age out of the foster care system and want to attend college get a helping hand through the Sluhan Family Scholarship Fund of the Greater Toledo Community Foundation. As well, the James Halapleus Fund of the Greater Toledo Community Foundation, a field of interest fund established in 1981, was created to benefit orphan children in Lucas and Wood Counties.

These are just a few examples of the impact of field of interest and unrestricted funds. Many of our donors share similar interests and choose to support a particular community need. If you would like more information on establishing such a fund, please contact Mike Greer, vice president, Philanthropic Services & Advancement, at 419.241.5049 or Mike.Greer@toledocf.org.

