

# 50 for 50 Campaign

Fifty years ago, foster and adoptive parents across the state came together seeking support and services for their children. From this, the Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition of New York was formed. We unite foster, adoptive and kinship families, giving them a voice and providing support, information and advocacy. Working with one family, one child at a time, the Coalition strives to ensure the stability and well-being of all children touched by the child welfare system. Our goal, with our 50 for 50 Campaign, is to raise \$50,000 in support of our state's most deserving children and families by November.



18,613

Children in the New York Foster Care System

49 months

Average length of time in foster care to be adopted or safely return home

75,000

Adopted children living in families in New York State

## FAMILIES NEED HELP

Our foster care system is complex. Relatives who care for children often receive little support. Adoptive families cannot find meaningful, relevant support for themselves and their children. Our programs fill an essential need:

275%

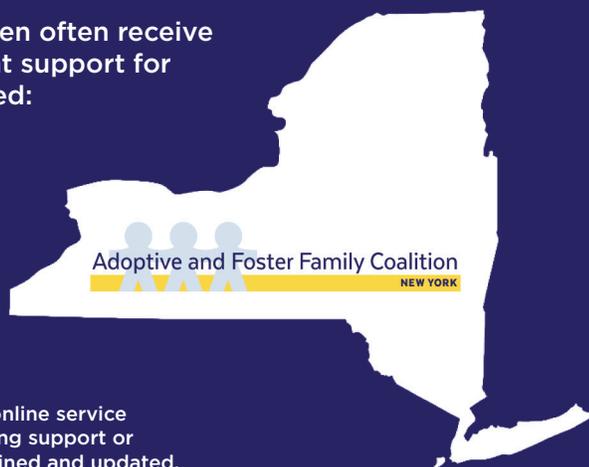
Calls to our free, 24/7 HelpLine are up 275% over this time last year.

1,500

Our 60 affiliated foster and adoptive parent groups provide peer support to over 1,500 families and children, but more communities need parent groups.

6,000

Over 6,000 unique individuals visit our website and online service directory each month — the first stop for those needing support or answers. This essential resources needs to be streamlined and updated.



Your support for our 50 for 50 Campaign, which is capped with Youth INC's Celebration on November 9th, will help us sustain this support and grow to meet the needs of our state's most vulnerable children and families. All stories on the following pages are based on true events, names and personal details have been changed to protect identity.

# OUR IMPACT

**ELLEN** was one of the foster parents awarded a scholarship to the Coalition's New York Foster Care and Adoption Conference this year. She was coming for the first time at the urging of the Western New York Foster and Adoptive Parents Association. Prior to attending, she had been caring for Eric, who had several challenging behaviors. Ellen admitted during the conference that she was at the end of her rope and seriously ready to call her foster care agency and demand they remove Eric from her home. Ellen felt she had no choice. Ellen shared this at the conference. The response was immediate, knowing support from other foster parents. This support, along with the training and information she received at the conference, inspired Ellen to not give up on Eric. Instead, she was fiercely empowered to be a strong advocate for Eric and to be the home and family he so desperately needed. Because of the support and training Ellen received at the conference, Eric did not face another potentially harmful move and has a chance at permanent home with Ellen and her family.

**BETH** called the Coalition's HelpLine on a Thursday looking for information on how to search for biological family including her birth mother and known biological siblings. As an adult adoptee born and adopted through foster care in New York, she had already registered with the state's Adoption Registry and had received her non-identifying information. Beth had her birth mother's name from her adoptive mother, but was unsure of the spelling. She had tried to search on her own for fifteen years, only to reach a dead end again and again.

The Coalition put Beth in touch with the Search Squad page on Facebook to connect with one of the many Search Angels who participate there. The next morning, the Coalition received a return call from Beth with an update. Within an hour of first asking for assistance, Search Squad had located Beth's birth mother and

passed on her contact information to Beth.

That very evening, Beth contacted her birth mother and her newly found siblings – a reunion thirty years in the making.



# OUR IMPACT

**SAM** was born three months premature and had been with Angie since he was five weeks old. After foster parenting for eight months, Angie legally adopted Sam. Angie had raised many children over the years, some biological and some fostered and later adopted. Angie was experienced, but now Sam, at sixteen, was really testing both her parenting skills and patience. Angie tearfully admitted to “being done,” ready to surrender Sam back into the foster care system out of frustration and desperation.

Angie contacted the Coalition, and began working with a Family Support Specialist in our AGAPE post-adoption support program. Together, they determined that a combination of typical teen behaviors and years of parenting on her own, with very little to no support, were really taking their toll. While Angie loved Sam, she was now bracing for impact when he came home from school.

Sam presented as a fairly normal teen coming home and needing to decompress alone, rather than sharing all his day’s events with his mom. Angie’s demeanor physically changed when he walked in the door as she was viewing

his behavior as disrespect and apathy. She needed to be reminded that Sam’s behavior was normal and reassured that she had done nothing wrong. She was assisted to see that this is a stage when children may not come in with a hug, ready to share all their day’s events, but this was okay.

AGAPE staff continued to work with the family and learned that Sam enjoyed and was good at writing stories. This discovery opened the door for Angie to reconnect with her son and see him in a different light.

Over time, and with the assistance of their Family Support Specialist, the relationship between Sam and Angie steadily improved. Both relaxed, remembering that there is love here. Guided role playing, along with other supportive methods, provided Angie and Sam with several tools to handle the situation and the opportunity to address conflicts in a healthy way.

Angie was also connected with a Coalition affiliated parent support group to ease her sense of isolation.

As a result, Sam is secure in his home and family.



# OUR IMPACT

**ROSA** wanted some advice about how she could adopt Monica, age eight, and Louisa, age six. Rosa was their foster parent. She had a good relationship with Diana, the girls' mother, but Diana could not parent due to her mental health issues. The girls' father had abandoned them several years ago.

Adopting would not be simple. It required filing abandonment proceedings against the father. Diana would either have to conditionally surrender her daughters or a court who have to legally terminate her parental rights. Rosa primarily spoke Spanish and had no funds for legal counsel.

Coalition staff arranged a meeting with Rosa and a Spanish-speaking case manager so Rosa could best understand the process. Next, the Coalition's reached out on social media to its network of local parent support groups and professionals.

Rebecca, a family law attorney, responded to the call for help. She agreed to represent Rosa pro-bono. Rebecca noted the important work the Coalition does and saying she wants to "pay it forward." Rosa now has proper legal direction. Monica and Louisa, whose legal status as immigrants made them vulnerable to deportation

from the only country they have known, will now have a permanent, stable adoptive parent and secure legal status.

**ANGIE** is a grandmother who was in a two-year struggle to gain guardianship of her grandsons Michael and Jeremy. Months earlier, Angie had moved from North Carolina to New York when she learned that Michael and Jeremy were in foster care.

Angie called the Coalition's Foster and Kinship Care Specialist one day in tears. Each time she thought that bringing the children home was in sight, the foster care agency demanded another item, document, or training. The Coalition facilitated the cooperation of the Administration for Children's Services, Catholic Guardian Services and others.

Once the Coalition got involved, it took just two weeks for Angie to bring her grandsons home.

As a final step, the Coalition informed Angie about the financial support available to help raise her grandsons, something no one else had done. Our Family Support Specialist went with Angie to her local Department of Social Services to apply for a monthly stipend that would help her with the unexpected expense of raising Michael and Jeremy.

