

B better
together

ANNUAL REPORT
2019



Keeping Families Together

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**Better Together
strengthens families
and communities
by promoting work,
protecting children,
and supporting
families in crisis.**



Hundreds of compassionate volunteers and church communities work with Better Together to build support systems that help families cope with hardships — job loss, substance abuse, homelessness, and even jail time — and ensure that children are cared for in a safe home until the family can be reunited.

A NOTE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

"As I reflect on 2019, three words come to mind: growth, opportunity, and gratitude."

Better Together was founded on the belief we could reduce the number of children entering foster care, strengthen marriages, and keep families together without the help of the government.

We saw messy national problems—the tragedy of welfare, the breakdown of families—and got to work finding solutions at the local level using private funds, a network of volunteers, and the power of the local church.

The success we have achieved has exceeded our wildest expectations. As I reflect on 2019, three words come to mind: growth, opportunity, and gratitude.

Our impact is larger than ever.

In 2019, our Better Families program served almost 600 children across Florida. Of those children, only two entered foster care.

Our Better Work program held 15 church-driven job fairs across 7 cities, serving 3,383 job seekers in 2019 alone.

We earned national recognition from the Manhattan Institute at the 2019 Civil Society Awards, which gave us a platform to share inspirational stories that prove civil society is alive and well.

Like most things in life, our success came with growing pains. We had to make some tough decisions, including closing offices outside Southwest Florida until the Better Families model was sufficiently mature to expand and, building a Better Work subscription program for churches that provides them all the tools and professional support needed to run professional, inclusive job fairs.

We began to work smarter. The new job fair package has greater impact, broad application and is user-friendly while reducing Better Together overhead cost.

This improved model enabled us to train 15 pilot churches in 2019. Their job fairs were very successful,



Megan, Mason, Emma, Ellie and Brady - August 2019

with outcomes similar to our staff-driven job fairs of prior years. Like the families we serve, our church partners have become self-sufficient in this ministry, allowing us to grow our impact exponentially.

Looking ahead, I'm excited to expand our Better Families program in Florida, starting in Sarasota and Manatee Counties. We are finishing plans for a Nationwide Day of Second Chances,

when we will partner with over 50 churches to hold simultaneous "Second Chance Job Fairs" across 20 major cities.

Together, we will connect 10,000 citizens returning from prison—and facing other barriers to work—with job opportunities over the course of a single day.

I am full of gratitude for our staff, volunteers, church partners, donors and other

community partners. Their compassion and selfless dedication allows us to see what is possible when people come together voluntarily to make communities and families stronger.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan Rose".

Megan Rose

REAL PEOPLE, REAL RESULTS



2,001

Children Served



17,998

Job Seekers



139

Church Partners



1,200

Volunteers





“

Our approach is scalable and proven. There is so much need. But we can build a society that we all want to live in, one that recognizes the power and potential of all people and families, one that is Better Together, with the church, philanthropists, and thousands of volunteers showcasing American compassion and restoring the American Dream.”

- Megan Rose, CEO

2019 CIVIL SOCIETY AWARD WINNER

As part of its longstanding effort to reinvigorate public understanding of America’s civil society and the important role it plays in improving our communities, the Manhattan Institute recognizes nonprofit leaders who bring together volunteers and private philanthropy to address social challenges and work toward a common purpose in their communities. These inspiring individuals and their organizations work outside of government to empower the poor and disadvantaged, build caring relationships to support those in crisis, prepare the next generation to realize their full potential, restore and revitalize struggling neighborhoods, and much more.

MANHATTAN
INSTITUTE



City Journal, 10 Blocks Podcast

BETTER FAMILIES

Keeping children out of foster care through safe and compassionate volunteer families.

When Brandi and Kenny had a baby girl, they decided not to get married. There would not have been many people invited to the wedding—both were struggling with opiate addiction and had burned bridges with their families.

Brandi and Kenny were ready to get sober, but they didn't have a support system. They were on the verge of returning to jail. They were homeless, addicted, and completely alone.

When they found a treatment center, the young couple faced yet another setback—the program would be an entire year, and didn't allow children. There was nowhere for Jayde to go.

We found Jayde a host family who attended the same church. They agreed to welcome her into their home for a year.

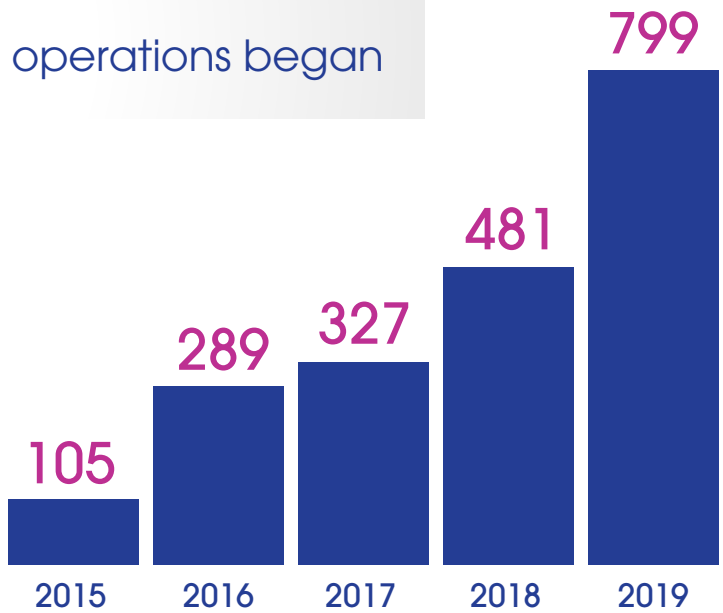
Meanwhile, church members dedicated both emotional and material support. Some donated clothing and meals.

The volunteer host family embraced Jayde as one of their own and kept her safe. After a year of treatment and several months of transition, Jayde was finally reunited with her family.

The support didn't stop there. The host family encouraged Brandi and Kenny to continue to be a part of their family. Brandi and Kenny are now married.



2,001 children served since operations began



96%
of families stay together without any further DCF involvement

Average Cost:

Average Stay:

Better Families

\$1,300
private dollars per child

41 Days

Florida Foster Care

\$30,000
taxpayers dollars per child

596 Days

Referral sources

62% of referrals come from the Department of Children and Families

Other referrals

come from hospitals, schools and community partners

BETTER JOBS

Equipping local churches to host a community job fair right where it's needed most.

Life had been hard on Lawrence. He spent most of his life overworked and underpaid. When his wife passed away, Lawrence had been jobless for three years. Heartache chipped away at his humorous and warm personality. But Lawrence didn't lose hope. He brought his best attitude with him to a Better Jobs job fair. He was ready to turn his life around.

His moment came when Lawrence met the team at Omni Hotels. On paper, Lawrence did not check all the boxes. However, after learning his story and receiving encouragement from our volunteers, the hiring director knew Lawrence was ready to work; he just needed a chance.

Shortly after the Better Jobs job fair, Omni Hotels hired Lawrence as a bellman. His job led him to meet his future wife. Lawrence is now happily married and living in Kentucky, where he continues to be a valued employee at Omni Hotels.



Lawrence is one of almost 18,000 people who have come to one of more than 80 Better Jobs job fairs hosted in the last three years. He, like so many others, came seeking gainful employment and a second chance.



Ernest Clover, Executive Director of the DC Dream Center, a job fair host location, congratulating a job seeker who had just been hired.

Our interview rate **exceeded 100%** at each job fair.

1 in 4 attendees received a job offer on the spot.



We have created a formula for economic opportunity that works, and it is restoring hope to families nationwide.

- Leah Hughey

Case Study: Church Cohort in Washington, DC

In 2019, we hosted intensive, in-person trainings for church partners in four cities. Our very first training was in a location where we had only hosted one previous job fair: Washington, DC. After training four local churches at the beginning of the year, three hosted job fairs (the fourth assisted another church), and we met and served over 500 job seekers in this new market where we have no on-the-ground staff.

Of those job seekers, 65% came to us completely out of work and 77% came

from households, in one of America's highest cost of living areas, with an average income of less than \$25,000.00.

Through our job fairs, more than 120 job seekers left with opportunities to work and an average of one-and-a-half interviews was conducted per job seeker through the doors.

We are excited by these incredible results, and the success of this pioneering cohort who has helped us to develop a new approach which we will scale and grow in the coming years.



SECOND CHANCES

“

The reason this is so important to me is when I was 19 years old I was convicted of a felony and I spent three years in prison. When I was released from prison the most difficult part was finding a job. The reason why I'm so passionate about employing felons is that I've had to go through this myself.”

- Britton Boshenski, Second Chance Employer



Britton with a job seeker.



Neil with Pastor Jared from Next Generation Church, a volunteer, and a job seeker who had just been hired on the spot.

“

When I moved to Florida I had gotten a felony conviction and I had blown up my life. I had made some mistakes and I was starting over. It was really hard to get a job. It was that first job that really helped springboard me into all that God had in store for me. To be here at the job fair and talk to individuals who have gotten jobs is really overwhelming because I know what a transformative impact that can have on people's lives and the direction they're going in.”

- Neil Volz, Volunteer and Community Partner

2020 STRATEGIC GOALS



SERVE
600
children
Through Better
Families

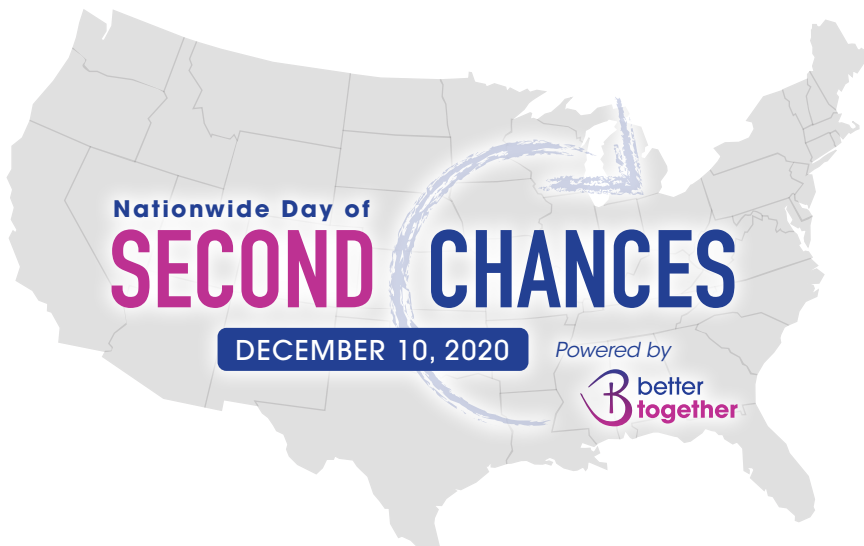
RAISE
\$1.4
million

TRAIN
100
churches
On Our Unique
Job Fair Model
to Help More
Job Seekers Find
Opportunity



Grow & Expand

Better Families into Sarasota,
Manatee and Desoto Counties



Impact 10,000

people on a single day
through our Nationwide
Day of Second Chances

QUOTES AND HEADLINES



“ One can only hope for an experience that brings them closer to their spouse, enhances the relationship, and even takes the marriage to another level. Better Together has provided this priceless opportunity to further God’s Kingdom together

as a couple. The bond it can create by serving together for the same purpose, God’s purpose, has been unbelievable. The whole family has shared memories of enhancing other people’s lives together. We have worked hard, laughed, and even cried on each other’s shoulders... but we did it all together. The reward of helping another family has been great. Being able to look in my family’s eyes and know we did it, and did it together, has been even greater..”

– Tracy Thurwalker

“

Better Together has diverted many children from entering the state foster care system. They are always available and ready to bring hope and warmth to families in a situation that can feel helpless. They continue to provide emotional support and guidance while families remedy their situation. I am grateful for our continued partnership and shared goal to keep families together.”

- Ryan Lukosavich, Child Protective Investigator
Department of Children and Families



**“Job Seekers Hit Paydirt at
Second Chance Job Fair in Fort Myers.”**

- News Press

“Why the Church is the Best Place for a Job Fair.”

- The Gospel Coalition

**“Better Together Provides Temporary Solutions
with Lasting Results.”**

- Florida Weekly

SUPPORTERS, VOLUNTEERS, AND FRIENDS

As our name implies, we cannot do this great work alone. In recognition of our partners, and the power of collaboration, we host an annual celebration reception to share stories of impact and express our gratitude for the volunteers, churches, community partners, and donors who empower us to serve vulnerable families.



DCF and the Better Together Team



Doug Campbell - board director,
Megan Rose, Leah Hughey



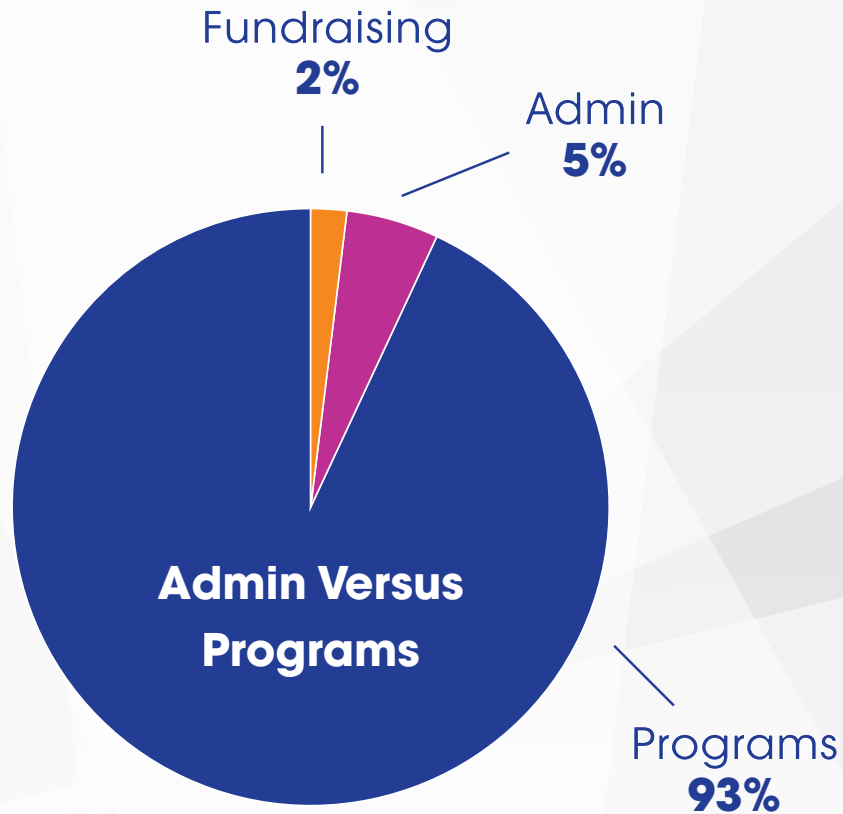
Megan Rose, Senator Kathleen Passidomo, Representative Ray Rodrigues, Randy Brock



Sarah Zaiser - NCEF, Lindsey - placing mom, Megan Rose

FINANCIALS

100%
Privately Funded

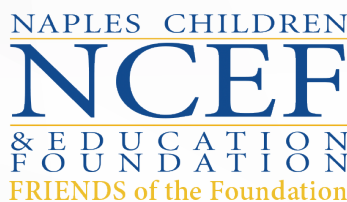


Major Donor Retention

98% Better Together
52% Standard

Thankful

for our generous supporters!



Farrell Family
FOUNDATION

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