



RESOLVE

STEADFAST IN THE
FACE OF CHALLENGE

STEP
BY_
STEP

healing & empowering
young single moms

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As many of you have experienced for yourselves, 2020 has been a year of overcoming challenges, standing with and bearing the burdens of those experiencing sorrow and hardship, and trusting a very big God to move mightily. For those of you who have experienced personal loss and hardship, please know that Step By Step has been praying for you and we offer our sympathy and hope to you during your grief.

We have also experienced a year of miraculously answered prayers as we forged new paths over unfamiliar terrain. Traditionally a service agency, we transitioned to an aid agency as the needs arose. We used the word “pivot” quite a bit in our conversations. It is an apt description. Step By Step did not move slowly as if in a daze when addressing the very real crisis of job loss, hunger, and basic need limitations for our young families already plagued with the challenges of poverty. We snapped to attention in another direction in order to respond, rather than react to overwhelming need.

We’ve taken our in-person programming virtual and created systems and opportunities to respond to crises. We’ve invested in our volunteers with a new level of training and preparation to answer the call.

I could not be more proud of my co-laborers. Our team has risen to the occasion of an increased level of care shrouded in uncertainty. When your work is about building strong relationships and avenues of support alongside young single moms and their children, and you can no longer see them face-to-face, the challenges are deep.

In the wake of the global pandemic, we encountered so much hurt, pain, and uncertainty with our young families. When a young mom is laid off, when a young mom is quarantined with her abuser, when the levels of anxiety and depression take hold... Step By Step is there. When some of our partner agencies on which our moms and kids rely were forced to close down temporarily, Step By Step answered the call and filled in the gaps, hand delivering basic need items to every affected home. We heard daily about struggles and loss as the desperate calls continued streaming into our office. In order to help our staff process not only what our moms and kids were experiencing, but our own struggles as well, we enlisted the services of a local therapist who walked our staff through secondary trauma recovery practices and care. As a result, we stayed focused, healthy, and able to continue serving.

Step By Step has our face set like flint. We will do what is needed to support our moms and kids during this global pandemic. We will continue to be fiscally responsible while making bold moves to impact this generation. It is an honor to serve our young single moms ages 12 to 24. It is an honor to serve our volunteers and supporters. It is an honor to serve our community.

Tanya Torp
Executive Director

OUR MISSION ...

**WE EXIST TO EMPOWER
AND EMBOLDEN YOUNG
SINGLE MOTHERS TO
IMPROVE THEIR LIVES,
THEIR FAMILIES, AND THEIR
COMMUNITIES THROUGH
HEALING, ENCOURAGEMENT,
FAITH AND EDUCATION.**

OUR VISION ...

**WE ENVISION A LEXINGTON
THAT FOSTERS BELONGING
AND EMPOWERS YOUNG,
SINGLE MOTHERS TO
POSITIVELY IMPACT
THEIR FAMILIES AND
COMMUNITIES.**

RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Emergency Response

The buzz was palpable around the office as we prepared for our largest annual fundraiser, Step Into Beautiful. The popular ladies tea and table decorating contest where our young single moms take the stage to share their stories and friends gather in support was sold out when we began to hear about potential cancellations due to COVID-19. In the midst of this, we were receiving frantic phone calls from our moms about employment, childcare, and more.

“Our childcare facility is making an emergency plan to close and told me they would not be able to help me find an alternative. My internship ended. I don’t know how I am going to pay my bills”

“I have been looking for a reliable babysitter but I just cannot find one. No one knows what is going on.”

“I have to stay home because my school-aged kids are learning online. How am I going to go to work and care for them when there is no childcare option?”

“My job is making major lay-offs due to COVID-19. I am living paycheck to

paycheck. There is no way I can live on unemployment alone.”

We received so many calls that we decided to survey our moms about what they would need if childcares, schools, and service agencies were to close. What we learned was devastating. If we did not act, we were sure that many of our young families would end up homeless.

The result was the forming of an Emergency Response Fund. We were able to take our large in-person event virtual and use the platform to raise funds and awareness about the emergency needs of young families.

As things progressed, we also heard stories of moms walking to the bus line with their children, making it to the transfer station and riding another bus, walking to the grocery store from their stop, then standing in long lines at the grocery store only to find that the items they needed were sold out. We knew we had to do something. Staff and volunteers scoured the stores and put out calls about the basic needs of our families. Diapers, wipes, formula, cleaning supplies, and more poured into our conference room, a makeshift triage for basic supplies.

Continued on page 8 ...



KEEPING MOMS HOMED

JAZMINE’S STORY

Jazmine joined our program three years ago. Kind and generous with her smile, she quickly became one of the moms everyone wanted to sit near at our Revive Nights. Over the years she’s been working hard on her goals. She participated in a medical training program while working full-time to provide for her two children. With a lack of affordable housing, Jazmine

struggled to find her own apartment, instead having to live with several relatives in a one bedroom apartment while she continued to save up money. Thanks to a partnership with a local agency, we were able to advocate for Jazmine, assist her in completing her application, and eventually help her move into her own apartment where she and her children can have

their own rooms and thrive as she continues to reach her goals.

“I’ve never had anyone show they cared this much about me. I can’t believe what Step By Step has helped me accomplish. I can’t believe I reached my goal of having my own apartment after wanting it so badly for so long. My kids and I have our own home. It’s like a dream!”

We also knew the anxiety of caring for kids at home. Our Leadership Team began making phone calls to moms, completing screenings for depression and anxiety, and writing referrals for outpatient therapy. Being quarantined with an abuser was a very real risk for several moms. Staff developed code words moms could use if they were unsafe so that we could send help.

Surprising Interventions

Local fundraising giants partnered together to offer the “Coronavirus Response Fund.” They noticed the work Step By Step was doing and reached out to us. “You have been awarded a \$10,000 grant because you are touching the lives of these young women.” We were blown away to receive this funding at the very time our moms and kids needed it most.

Next, we were contacted by the Office of Homeless Prevention and Intervention of the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government with an opportunity. They also noticed the work and the fundraising we were diligently working on to keep our moms and kids homed. We were told that because of our capacity to reach this population, we would be awarded \$33,000 to keep moms from becoming homeless in light of Governor Beshear lifting the moratorium on evictions effective August 1, 2020. Landlords were not being paid because tenants just did not have the funding. But we knew our moms would still owe the rent, whether a moratorium was in place or not. This funding has not only kept moms out of debt but offered some relief to struggling landlords needing to pay their mortgages.

We never anticipated that we would receive funding from a tech giant and investor who

rubs elbows with the likes of Mark Cuban of “Shark Tank”, but we did! In her own words:

“... I tweeted that I wanted to be more helpful during this crisis and that the best thing I could do is support others working on the ground. I said I'd fund five non-profits with \$10K grants for a total of \$50K.”

Eventually, Halle Tecco raised \$450,000.

“We made a quick application for non-profits, and kept it open until Sunday at midnight. We received 362 (!!!) proposals from across the nation, far more than we ever imagined.”

Step By Step applied and received \$10,000 to serve our moms and kids! We were immediately able to provide emergency funding for rent and utilities as well as purchase basic necessities for our young families.

“2020 has been hard on women, and especially mothers. A record number of women became unemployed, more than the Bureau of Labor Statistics has seen since reporting data by gender in 1948. Schools have closed, leaving moms to take on even more childcare responsibilities. And a pandemic has not only threatened our health and wellbeing, but has also cut us off from our usual support communities. It's times like this when the work of groups like Step by Step is even more critical. I am so proud to support this organization and the critical work the Step by Step team is doing during these unprecedented times.”

—Hallee Tecco, Founder & CEO of Natalist

A portrait of Hallee Tecco, Founder & CEO of Natalist, smiling. She has long, wavy brown hair and is wearing a black turtleneck. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

**“I AM SO PROUD
TO SUPPORT THIS
ORGANIZATION.”**

—Hallee Tecco, Founder & CEO of Natalist

PIVOTING OUR PROGRAMMING

Gathering In A New Age: Online Revive

The scene is always vibrant, colorful, and LOUD. Vans arrive at the front door. Moms bustle in, sometimes with a hand on their bellies, others trying to corral several children. They are greeted by Echo and Resound mom leaders, then staff and volunteers, with smiles and OH SO MANY hugs. There is laughter and merriment, and this is what welcome looks like.

In the wake of COVID-19, the scene is very different on Revive Nights. We distribute a virtual meeting link via email, post the link on our private Facebook Page exclusive to our moms, and schedule a text alert. One by one, faces appear on the screen. They try to speak but children scream or ask for toys or food. The young moms apologize and step away from the screen to care for them. There is no robust programming just for the kids, complete with music, dancing, stories, and crafts, giving these mommies a break. No hot meal provided by our community volunteers, no hugs. But when the mom returns to the screen, apologizing again, Alicia Sims, our

Program Director tells her, “Don’t worry. We are all having to shift and we understand the demands of children. You are safe in this space to do what you need to do. Join in as you are able.” Some moms have little ones who are unable to settle down and they log off before they are ready. Others stay on and voice their frustration, their anxiety, and their current hard circumstances as they share in support groups. It is imperfect, but it is all we have. We are thankful that these moms fight for moments of normalcy like these. Opportunities to hang out with their friends, to vent about life, to ask for prayer, and to receive encouragement. This is our new normal. For now.

THE VALUE OF RELATIONSHIPS

REFINE MENTORING PROGRAM MOMENT

Ashleigh joined our volunteer team two years ago. An attorney who had attended some of our fundraisers in the past, she expressed a desire to encourage a young mom. She completed our Refine Mentor training and we paired her with Paige.

Paige’s life has been peppered with people who leave. Like many of our moms, she experienced some hardships complete with burned bridges and having to start over and over again.

The first night Paige walked into a Revive night, her dyed jet black hair and stern face gave off the persona of a tough cookie as she

surveyed the crowd. Eventually, she settled into a seat at a table alone, far from anyone, with her arms crossed as if daring someone to talk to her. This happened over several weeks until she found her footing. She wanted to connect with other moms, but lacked confidence and didn’t really believe she could make real friends.

Pairing her with Ashleigh made such a huge difference! When Paige felt anxious, she would message Ashleigh, who would pray with her, laugh with her, and speak life over her. It allowed her to let her guard down and enter into the camaraderie with other moms.

We received a message from Paige one afternoon, sharing her joy and telling us how moved she was when Ashleigh showed up with a birthday cake and balloons outside of her house and celebrated with her for her Birthday. “I didn’t think anyone would remember or care. I mean, we are in a pandemic and so many people are hurting. I was completely shocked when my Mentor surprised me! I felt so loved.” A tenacious student, Paige has continued to push hard towards her goal of finishing her computer programming degree and is currently a straight A student. She has completed our discipleship course and her goal is to become an Echo & Resound mom leader.

DARE TO DREAM



Setting Goals with Popsicles: Dare to Dream Case Management

Case Management and Dare To Dream sessions are one of the main tenets of our program. Each mom is required to set and reach a goal of her choosing while in our program. Our Dare to Dream sessions are a series of interviews assessing barriers as well as motivations for success. Some of the goals they set are as complex as enrolling in college or completing a GED, or as close to home as potty training their child. Whatever their goal, we partner with them to help remove barriers and to encourage them weekly.

We visit their homes, land in their turf and walk around a bit in their shoes as we interview them about their pasts, triggers that would keep them from success, their supportive relationships such as healthy friendships or a therapist, and more. Oftentimes, we hear about abuse or hurts they have never shared with anyone else. It is intimate. It is a form of care.

So when we learned we would need to be proactive in keeping everyone safe, we elected to do them online, which is not exactly an intimate setting to receive care and prayer.

Pop-ins became a way for us to social distance while checking on our moms' mental health and building that intimacy that would lead to a successful Dare to Dream. Program Staff would bring a cooler full of popsicles, wear masks and gloves, and sit 6-feet away from our moms and kids outside on the porch, in the parking lot, in the park. The intimacy was still not as close as before, but that old familiar feeling returned with pop-ins. Moms let their guards down. They focused on the road ahead. They planned for success.

***"I'M DOING IT
AND I'M SO PROUD
OF MYSELF!"***

REACHING GOALS

KAHLILAH'S STORY

When we met Kahlilah, she was a 17-year old in the early stages of her pregnancy and determined to graduate high school a semester early. She came to Revive looking for community and quickly became part of the sisterhood with her bright energy and sense of humor. When Kahlilah sat down with our Program team to set her Dare to Dream goal, she knew exactly what she wanted to do, move

into her own apartment and start college. We connected her with community partners to complete housing applications and offered support and encouragement along the way, including a Letter of Recommendation required for enrollment. This summer, just three weeks after giving birth, Kahlilah moved into a scholar house (housing for single parents enrolled in college full-time)

and began her first semester of classes pursuing a degree in nursing. When setting her new Dare to Dream goal she told us, "My support system has grown so much this year. I was nervous about becoming a mom, living on my own, and keeping up with school, but I'm doing it and I'm so proud of myself!"

OUR WORK

LEADERS FORGED IN FIRE

Echo & Resound

Last year, we piloted a Leadership Development Program for our young moms who have graduated from our program. Participants completed an intensive year of discipleship and training, and were to begin their second year completing additional training with an emphasis on spiritual formation. Throughout the program, these young leaders received skills they could use in the job field, such as public speaking, curriculum planning, and group dynamics.

In response to the crisis, these leaders have assisted staff as we have connected with donors, checked in with moms, and have even facilitated our weekly online support groups on Revive nights. Chelsea who was laid off from her job during COVID-19 is completing

Non Traditional instruction (NTI) with her two children, and has still made time to serve other moms. Brittany, who is enrolled in college has been calling moms, completing a depression scale questionnaire with them and encouraging them. Shamairi, who has a 6 year old child with a learning disability and struggling with NTI, has stayed on top of her daughter's education while making time for other moms. The pandemic has certainly put a strain on her own GED studies, but she persists. She will complete her final course work in early 2021.



Chelsea was recently featured in an article about Step by Step by Resolve Magazine (resolvemagazine.org). [Photo by Jennifer Swanson]



REACHING OUR LITTLES: REVIVE KIDS

Step Into Reading Literacy Program

In the wake of the closing of local libraries, schools, playgrounds, and other non-profits, Step By Step was able to continue providing books to our moms and kids through our literacy program, Step Into Reading. Our third year running, in partnership with our young moms, we have been able to be a part of creating a life-long love of reading for Revive Kids. Each month, moms log the time they spend reading to their children. They submit their logs and Step By Step presents them with a brand new age-appropriate book. We often provide a craft to go along with the book to reinforce the concepts.

Additionally, in our basic needs delivery runs, we always include activities for the children. Lacking resources and social distancing, the kids were so excited when they received packages just for them. Our supporters helped us provide family board games, bubbles, balls, and puzzles. We had a blast with Candy Mountain Music, who along with sticks, shakers, and other musical equipment provided musical activities on Facebook for free to our families.

A portrait of Victoria Jackson, a Black woman with short, curly dark hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a black top and a pearl necklace. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

LEGACY, FROM TODDLER IN OUR MINISTRY TO A LEADER LEAVING AN INDELIBLE MARK

VICTORIA JACKSON

Victoria and Larae have been a part of our Step By Step family since they were toddlers. They are accomplished musicians, youth advocates, scholars, and leaders not only at Step By Step, but throughout the community. Their mom, Rhonda Jackson, was a participant in our program as a young mom and since her graduation from our program has been our most loyal volunteer. Rhonda has gone on to earn two Master's Degrees and is an educator in our local schools. She

teaches workshops with and for our young moms and is a shining example of achievable goals! Like their mom, Victoria and Larae have never shied away from service and never miss a Revive night!

Victoria and her sister became leaders to other children in our Revive Kids program, then joined our staff as Room Leaders last year.

This year Victoria graduated high school and is off to college at Northern Kentucky University. The Step By Step family feels as if we

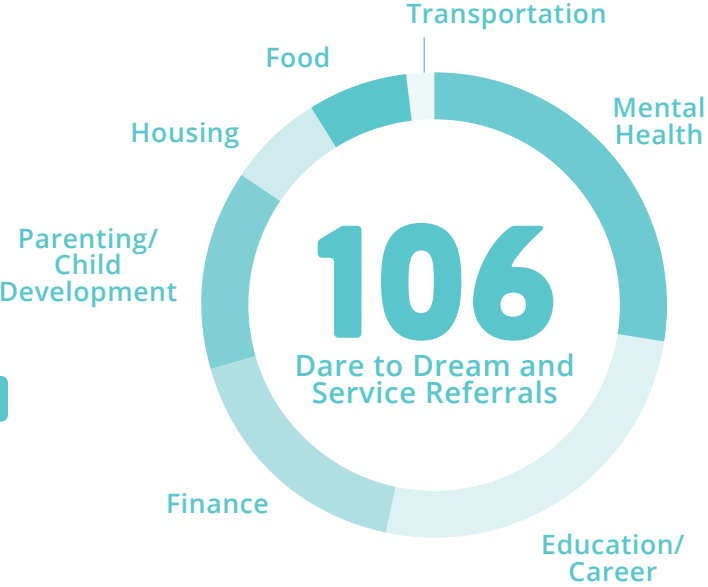
have sent "our" baby off to school, even though it is Rhonda who has done all of the heavy lifting.

We are so proud of this compassionate young woman imbued with integrity and grit ... just like her mom.

The potential for every single Revive Kid is illustrated by the success of Larae and Victoria. They grew up in an atmosphere of service and leadership, and have paved the way for other kids just like them.

THE RESULTS

OUR IMPACT



106

Dare to Dream and Service Referrals

735

basic need items delivered since March

Includes toilet paper, diapers, cleaning supplies, kids activity packs, backpacks, etc.)

224

active volunteers

1,892

interactions with moms by staff, volunteers, and ER leaders



537

hours of mentoring

\$26,400

towards moms' bills and rent since March

202

moms and kids active this year

Does not include emergency referrals for moms who did not become active.

GIVING BACK

Unveiled

With a staff of 4 serving over 200 moms and kids, we knew we would need some strong backup. We decided that if we poured into our most seasoned volunteers, we would see the returns as they worked to help us connect the dots.

Twenty women, from Mentors and Revive Night leaders to Board members, gathered online and in small socially distanced groups completing an 8-week Bible Study together. These women, with a deeper understanding of the staff philosophy and practice, are now front line workers with us.

“The Lord has been preparing me for this study for the past two years. He has taught me that I am not lacking. I have everything I need in Him. Now it’s time to GO and be Kingdom-minded.”
— Unveiled Leader

Remnant 2020

Every year we have a scavenger hunt fundraiser in the fall called LexGoHuntin. It is a fun time for gathering friends and running around downtown Lexington solving clues. Because of COVID-19, we knew the event would be impossible. So, the staff decided to embark on our first ever women’s conference, and Remnant was born.

We expected our young single moms and participants from Lexington and surrounding areas to join us. We were delighted to learn

that women from all over the country would be joining us; our first ticket was purchased by a woman in Tallahassee, FL. But we were shocked when women joined us from Australia, the UK, South Africa, Costa Rica, Samoa, and more. We were international for our very first conference!

Remnant was about developing an unshakable and immovable faith during times of trial, something the Bible talks a whole lot about. We wanted to address how people of faith have a hope and a purpose during these times and to inspire women to stand firm. With incredible speakers, dynamic worship, and a compelling platform, our partners like Studio46 helped us simulcast the event around the world.

The result is a community of women engaged with our mission, ready to serve their own churches and communities, and deepening their own relationships with God. We are ready for 2021!

‘And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.’

EPHESIANS 1:13-14, NIV



“Thank you for lifting up the Church and pointing out the truth that the Bible is pro-Church, and that we need to be using our gifts in the Church and doing it together with others.”

—Remnant Attendee

“The ladies at Step By Step really put together an incredibly thoughtful and powerful message through this conference, and I’m thankful I got to experience it alongside some of my closest.”

—Remnant Hostess

“Having a small group made it feel like it was almost an in person event. With such infrequent times of fellowship these last few months, I really appreciated being part of a small group.”

—Remnant Attendee

THE NUMBERS

FINANCIALS

Total Funds Raised to Date: \$235,350.04

Operating Budget: \$258,140.31

Endowment Balance: \$70,907.45

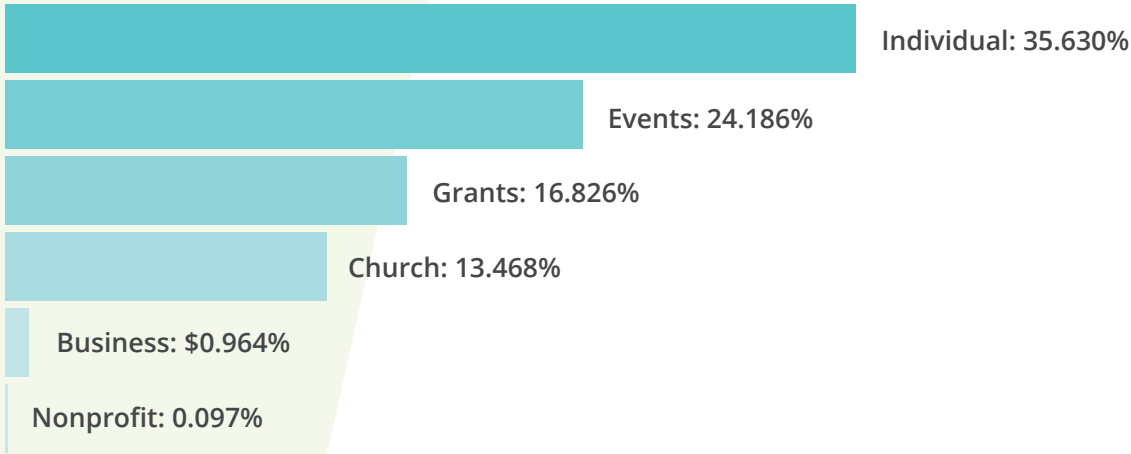
Joseph Fund Balance: \$194,807.06

**This fund includes at least three months of operating expenses held in reserve in case of unforeseen emergency circumstances.*

Note: Took out emergency funds, COVID response funds, and housing stabilization funds from Grants and Operating Budget.

Income Distribution Raised to Date

91%



UPCOMING

WHAT'S NEXT

Step By Step Christmas Store

At Step By Step, our young single moms work hard to earn Christmas gifts for their children through our incentive program. Through program participation, our moms gain an incredible sense of pride and accomplishment by earning and then “shopping” for gifts for their children in our Christmas Store.

By signing up to provide toys for a Step by Step Revive child you are committing to purchase \$50 of new and unwrapped gifts.

*Please no clothes, toy weapons, glitter, or makeup. Individual items not to exceed \$25 each.

Sign up to volunteer or provide toys and supplies at sbslex.org/christmas2020

GoodGiving Challenge

Every year Step By Step participants in the Blue Grass Community Foundation’s “GoodGiving Challenge,” a week-long online giving challenge for over 130 local nonprofits. This year’s dates are Tuesday, December 1st through Monday, December 7th and our goal is \$30,000.00. Approximately 15% of our overall budget is raised yearly by this event. Please sign up and create an Ambassador Page at bggives.org/stepbystep



Seven Days of Christmas

In conjunction with the GoodGiving Challenge, Step By Step is partnering with local businesses to encourage local shopping and these businesses have agreed to share their profits with Step By Step. Please watch our [website](#) and social media for information on key days to shop!





THANK YOU!

Thank you to ALL the many individual donors who have chosen to support the young mothers and children of Lexington. We are so appreciative of you and what you have made possible!

Scan to donate to
Step by Step or visit
sbslex.org/donate



**STEP
BY_—
STEP**

healing & empowering
young single moms