Established in 2000, Mary Graham Children’s Foundation turns 20 years old on July 21, 2020. Looking back at 20 years, much has been accomplished. Starting in the late 1990’s, a small group of local concerned citizens came together to discuss building a new shelter for foster youth. The Foundation was launched, the Mary Graham Children’s Shelter was built, and the Foundation turned to enriching foster youth lives and providing scholarships for college and trade school. Today, the Foundation has provided over $1.6 million in scholarships to help over 160 emancipated foster youth while providing enrichment activities for youth currently in foster care.

At the heart of our story is the simple truth that all children should have a fair chance at success, that no child should have to beat the odds simply to get a good education, to live a productive life free from abuse and neglect and to pursue their dreams. And they certainly should not feel alone as they try.

A former Mary Graham scholarship recipient summed it up well remarking that he doesn’t believe that foster youth should be expected to just pull themselves up by their bootstraps. We all have a commitment to children in our communities, and it’s in our ability to make positive change happen for children in foster care. He added that our foster children don’t belong to Stockton or San Joaquin County or the State. They belong to all of us.

Throughout the years, the support of many individuals, families, and businesses have had a tremendous impact on our outreach. This backing has made it possible for us to provide life-transforming opportunities for foster youth in our community.

Join us as we celebrate our anniversary milestone this year. And here’s to another 20 years championing youth from foster care to success.
Mary Graham Children’s Foundation is celebrating 20 years! That’s two decades working to provide foster youth pathways to success. In that time, we have financed scores of former foster youth’s college education and trade school training, provided hundreds of hours of mentoring and coaching, and sponsored countless enrichment opportunities.

Thank you all for everything we have been able to accomplish together. We know that education and training breaks the cycle of poverty that often leads to hopelessness and despair. Education leads to stable employment at a living wage, and roots and reroutes young adults who have been in foster care in our community. They can go from traumatic childhoods to triumphant adults - raising their own children, volunteering, donating time and money to others and so much more.

Change happens when communities take action and invest in our most vulnerable youth. And you have. For the 2019-2020 academic year, 32 young adults are pursuing their post-high school educational dreams through our scholarship program. And overall, Mary Graham has provided over $1.6 million in college and vocational training scholarships to more than 160 young people.

As we wish you great health and to be safe, due to COVID-19 we have tabled our Great Chefs event and will delay our 20th anniversary celebration. However, we invite you to be on the lookout for our Fostering Growth newsletter over the months ahead to keep up with what’s happening.

We’re looking forward to celebrating together soon and let’s keep this beautiful work moving forward.

Warm regards,
Emily
Emily J Ballus

Our mission is provide enrichment, experiences & scholarship support to benefit San Joaquin County foster youth.

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MARY GRAHAM CHILDREN’S FOUNDATION
PO BOX 792, Stockton, CA 95201
(209) 403-5654
MaryGrahamFoundation.org

Student Scholar SNAPSHOT

MY NAME IS ISAIAH,
I am 21 years old and a business administration major with a concentration in accounting at CSU Stanislaus. I am currently a junior and plan on graduating in May 2021.

I like to play football, exercise and play with my dog, Milo! I work with high risk foster youth and I enjoy what I do because it gives me the opportunity to not only share my story, but to give back and have a positive impact on kids’ lives as well!
FOSTERING Growth
HELPING FOSTER YOUTH SUCCEED IN LIFE

Creating A FOUNDATION
A CONVERSATION WITH OUR FOUNDER JOHN R. VERA

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Mary Graham Children’s Foundation. We thought it appropriate to have a conversation with the person who was instrumental in creating this private not-for-profit organization, John R. Vera.

"John, how did all this happen? What was the impetus?"

Well, it started when the Board of Supervisors commissioned a feasibility study to determine if the community would be willing to participate in a private-public partnership to create a much needed new shelter for the County. There was agreement that this could be done, but that a non-profit should be created to receive funds from the community rather than being directed by the County. We did this and received almost $1 million in contributions and the County set aside enough funds to build the shelter, which was completed in 2003.

You must have had considerable support from the community to make this happen. Without a question, the County Board of Supervisors and the community were key contributors. The new shelter recommendation came from the Grand Jury led by Robert Talley, M.D., chairperson, as the one in use dated back to 1921. Concurrently, the County recognized that a new shelter was essential for the care of children in safe and humane conditions. It was a great day when the new shelter opened featuring progressive services and worker-to-resident ratios that allowed for superior supervision in a state-of-the-art facility.

What happened next?

After raising the money for the new shelter, we had funds left over. So we decided to create a scholarship fund to support foster youth who wanted to continue their education in college or trade school. And 20 years later, this is where we are. We’ve had over 160 students receive scholarships and go to college or vocational training and graduate. This represents an investment of over $1.6 million. We have been fortunate to raise enough money each year to provide these scholarships and set aside more for a rainy day. But it has been the generous outpouring from the community that has allowed us to do this work. Without the community support, we could not be where we are or be able to provide foster youth this support.

Twenty years ago, I never imagined we would still be doing this work. It is gratifying to know this non-profit is still going strong supporting former foster youth from San Joaquin County. With all of your continued support, we will be here for the needs of foster youth for another 20 years and more.

Flashback + FAST FORWARD

GAME DAY WITH TIM FLANNERY
OCTOBER 2019

Former Major League Baseball infielder and third-base coach for the three-time World Series champion San Francisco Giants Tim Flannery performed with his band, Tim Flannery and the Lunatic Fringe, for the Mary Graham Children’s Foundation’s Game Day Dinner and Benefit Show in October at the Waterloo Gun and Bocce Club in Stockton. The evening included ballpark-inspired food prepared by Paul Ratto, sports games and tunes from Flannery’s band.

Game Day is one of three fundraisers held annually for the Foundation, which assists youth transitioning out of foster care to attend college and trade school.

COMMUNITY CORNER

STORE MANAGERS PRINCESS + KOU AWARD MGCF ONE OF TWO WALMART GRANTS.

YOUR SUPPORT IS CHANGING LIVES

Walmart awarded two grants to MGCF in November and December. We’d like to thank Kou and Princess from the March Lane store and Richard from the Hammer Lane store. Both donations made for a bright holiday for our foster youth!

UPCOMING EVENTS | SAVE THE DATES!

GREAT CHEFS
Thank you for your support. Coming back in 2021 CANCELED

MG KIDS CLASSIC GOLF TOURNAMENT
Stockton Golf & Country Club August 31, 2020

GAME DAY DINNER & CONCERT
Waterloo Gun & Bocce Club October 16, 2020

Thank you for your support. Coming back in 2021 CANCELED

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ESMERALDA MASCORRO  
**Grand Canyon University graduate**

Esmeralda graduated from Grand Canyon College in December 2018. Her mentor and MGCF board member Claudia Pruett told us, “We are very proud of Esmeralda! She has persevered through many setbacks and challenges due to childhood abuse. With MGCF support, Esmeralda has the determination to earn success, the desire to help others and hope for a joyful life.” Esmeralda is currently working for Honigman law firm in Michigan and is preparing to take the LSAT this Fall.

**INVESTING IN OUR FOSTER YOUTH SUCCESS**

$1.6 million invested in San Joaquin County foster youth, with **over 160** college and trade school scholars. Your donations make a difference, your investment leads to success. Our scholars graduate at a rate **8 times higher** than the national average!

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**Mary Graham Children's Foundation**

P.O. BOX 792  
STOCKTON, CA 95201

**IN THIS TURBULENT TIME**  
**KEEPING THE LIGHT STRONG FOR OUR FOSTER YOUTH**

Our organization earned a 2020 Gold Seal of Transparency from GuidesStar, highlighting the difference we help to make in the world.