



## Neighbors Helping Neighbors | As Coronavirus Recovery Begins, Communities Provide Support to Foster Youth

**#Inthistogether**

*As communities combat the coronavirus outbreak, HUD is highlighting stories of communities coming together to help their neighbors in need.*

**Johnson City, Tennessee** – Youth Village, a local non-profit in Tennessee is making sure children in foster care have everything they need during the coronavirus pandemic. *“We haven’t stopped providing services,”* said Jessi Bernardini, a foster parent recruiter trainer for Youth Villages. Services such as the Youth Village’s Scholars Program are still helping children apply to college. *“We have a few that are right at that transition period where they are about to be going to college in the next year to two years and so just working with them in trying to get all off their credits,”* said Megan Bailiff, a foster care counselor. The organization has also provided laptops, is helping youth find apartments, and providing life skills training they need before starting college. [Read more from WJHL.](#)



[Photo courtesy of Youth Villages Facebook page](#)

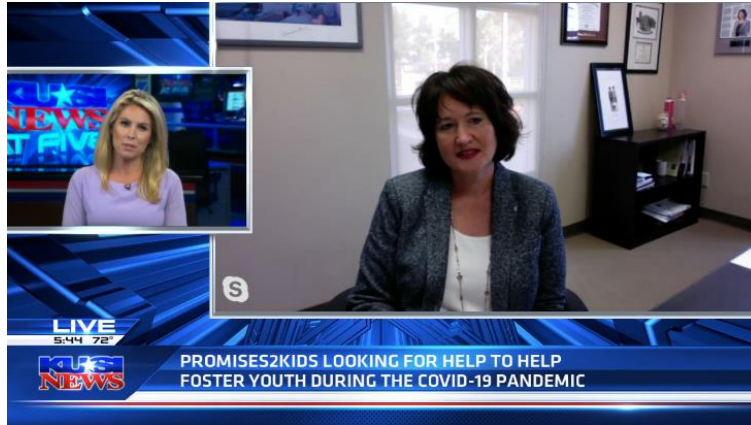
**San Antonio, Texas** – Trulight Youth Village, a foster care campus that houses up to 20 children, has had to get creative during the coronavirus pandemic. Since Child Protective Service home visits are on pause right now to keep staff and families safe, the

village has been completely full. *"We saw a lot of our families and kids who could go to kinship, who could go to grandma and grandpa but because of COVID and things not being safe, they couldn't go out there to do all the walk throughs so things slowed down to a halt with that,"* said Sondra Ajasin, who runs Trulight. The team has been finding ways to keep the kids busy with fun activities such as holding a cookoff. It was a fun activity for the kids but also educational with math and home economics lessons. *"We had the kids come up with their own recipes,"* said Ajasin. *"It had to be made from scratch."* Now that restrictions are starting to ease in Texas, families are coming out of isolation and children can safely leave the village to a safe home. [Read more KSAT 12.](#)



[Photo courtesy of TruLight127 Ministries Facebook page](#)

**San Diego, California**— Promises2Kids' mission to help provide foster youth with the resources necessary to create a successful future is facing unexpected challenges due to coronavirus. Through mentorships, scholarships, and a variety of collaborative partnerships, the initiative promotes higher education and self-sufficiency for former foster youth, but is in need of food supplies and other items and is asking members of the community for support to continue their noble mission. [Read the full article from KUSI news](#)



*[Photo courtesy of KUSI News San Diego](#)*

**Salt Lake City, Utah:** The Utah Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) is witnessing an inspiring outpouring of support from local families amid the struggles of COVID19. *"We've also had more inquiries in people wanting to Become foster parents during this time. I think that's one of the nice things about Utah is, we do kind of rally around each other and support each other,"* said Crystal Vail the Program Support Administrator at the Utah Division of Child and Family Services. [Read the full article from KUTV 2](#)



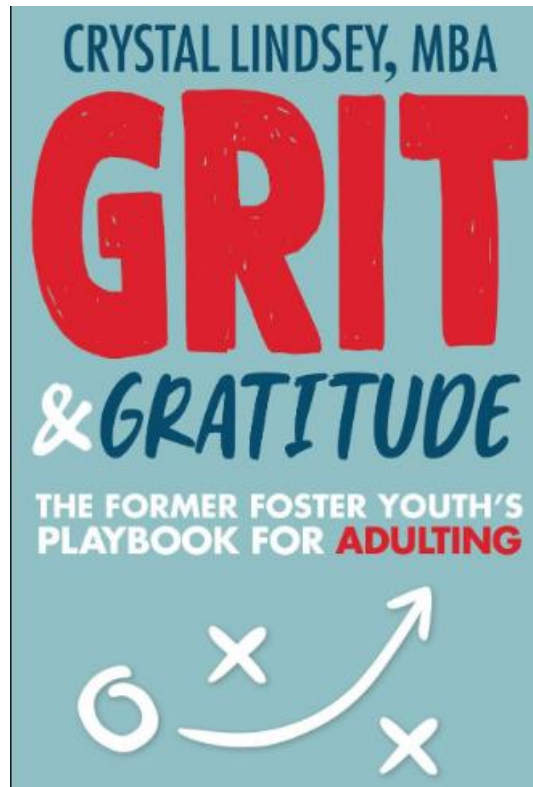
*[Photo courtesy of KUTV news](#)*

**Atlanta, Georgia** - ONE Matters is an organization based in Georgia that serves foster youth. Amid the coronavirus outbreaks, ONE Matters is providing special care packages to youth aging out of foster care, as well as meals and emotional support. The organization has also continued their work in providing duffel bags filled with clothing to foster youth in transition between homes. *"A lot of these kids were in a dorm, they had a job onsite so a lot of them have been misplaced, they have been negatively impacted by COVID-19,"* President Andrea Barclay told FOX 5. *"The only income they've had, they've lost their jobs...We want to still show them that we care about them and we know that they are going through a difficult time right now, but there's someone out there who still cares about you."* [Read more from WAGA Fox 5 Atlanta](#)



[Photo courtesy WAGA Fox 5 Atlanta](#)

**Victoria, Texas** – Former foster youth and Texas author, Crystal Lindsey, published a new book to show her fellow foster youth how they can take care of their mind and body to stay strong during the coronavirus pandemic. *Grit & Gratitude: The Foster Youth's Playbook for Adulting* points out that the pandemic is creating an environment where foster youth are more likely to experience a mental health crisis as a result of illness, homelessness, and a lack of food. The Victoria Advocate reported, “Lindsey’s heart remains with her fellow former foster youth who may have been forced to exit the foster care system on the verge of homelessness during a pandemic....Her goal for this book is to equip others with the same bio hacks she has used to become successful in dealing with the challenges of adult life.” [Read more from the Victoria Advocate](#)



*[Photo courtesy The Victoria Advocate](#)*

**HUD Resources** – [May is National Foster Care Month](#). Last year, Secretary Carson established HUD's new [Foster Youth to Independence \(FYI\) initiative](#), which target housing assistance to young people aging out of foster care and who are at extreme risk of experiencing homelessness. The FYI initiative offers housing vouchers to local public housing authorities to prevent or end homelessness among young adults under the age of 25 who are, or have recently left, the foster care system without a home to go to. [Learn more on HUD.gov](#)

*Read more stories of #NeighborsHelpingNeighbors by following @HUDgov and @SecretaryCarson online or by visiting HUD's coronavirus [website](#).*

*Visit HUD's coronavirus resources website at [HUD.gov/coronavirus](https://www.hud.gov/coronavirus) to find information specific to the Department and the work of the White House Coronavirus task force.*

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