

# First Place for Youth

Annual Report 2008



# DEAR FRIENDS,

**T**his has been an incredible year for First Place for Youth as we marked our 10th anniversary. From a small, grassroots organization serving a handful of former foster youth in 1998, First Place has grown to become the largest provider of housing for transitioning foster youth in California. This year, we served 927 youth in four Bay Area counties — Alameda, San Francisco, Contra Costa and Solano. We also greatly expanded our housing program, supporting 239 youth and 97 children, a 70 percent and 149 percent increase respectively. Along with our expansion, we are proud to report that the quality of our programs is consistently improving, and our youth are living proof that an innovative blend of resources and accountability can help them achieve stable housing, gainful employment and educational success.

**I**n addition, we continue to leverage our position as a leader in the field by seeking improvements to California's foster care system, and making recommendations to national policymakers about the system as a whole. Our emphasis on results and proven track record was instrumental in securing a modest increase in this year's State public funding program for former foster youth, allowing us to serve even more youth.

**A**s we prepare for the inevitable economic slowdown, First Place's financial position remains sound due to years of responsible fiscal management. With your help, we are confident that we will be able to fulfill our commitments to the at-risk youth we currently serve and who need us more than ever.

**N**one of this would have been possible without our strong community of friends, colleagues and longtime supporters. Despite our successes, our work is just beginning. First Place has just completed an ambitious five-year Strategic Plan. As we embark on the next chapter, we look forward to continuing our partnership with you to ease the transition of youth from foster care into successful, independent adulthood. On behalf of the youth, staff and Board of First Place, we thank you!



Sam Cobbs, Executive Director and Tangerine Bringham, Board Chair





When I turned 18, I felt so alone, with no support or money and no one to care about me. It was a horrible feeling. But at First Place, I have a place of my own where I can study, find peace and be myself. I can talk to my youth advocate about anything and know that First Place really wants us to succeed. It's so wonderful to know that they are there.

— Sal



Without First Place I would be so stressed out! I'm in school, working full-time and a mom so having a place of my own to live is a huge relief. I can't imagine doing it without their support.  
— Jaleace

# SAFE & AFFORDABLE HOUSING



While 2 out of every 3 young adults face imminent homelessness as they transition from foster care, **92 percent of First Place youth maintain safe and affordable housing.**

As the first organization in Northern California dedicated exclusively to addressing the lack of affordable housing and resources for transitioning foster youth, First Place has become a nationally recognized model. First Place received numerous awards for its innovative programs and leadership this year, including: Neighborhood Builders Leadership Excellence Award (Bank of America); Non-Profit of the Year (Association for Corporate Growth, San Francisco chapter); and the Tipping Point Community Award. Some of our key accomplishments this year include:

- **Regional Expansion:** First Place opened our first standalone center in October 2007 and began housing 30 youth in Solano County. Later in the year, we were awarded an additional contract to provide supportive housing services to youth requiring greater mental health support.
- **New Housing Partnership:** In a first-of-its-kind collaboration, First Place partnered with non-profit housing developer, Affordable Housing Associates, to set aside 20 apartments for former foster youth in a brand-new apartment building in downtown Oakland. The green building is located at Madison and 14th Street and opened in May 2007.

- Youth paid nearly \$300,000 in rent last year
- 99 percent of parents retained custody of their children
- 93 percent of mothers delayed having additional children

# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

While housing former foster youth has always been the cornerstone of our programs, First Place has long recognized that sustaining permanent housing requires a strong educational foundation and living wage employment. This year, we expanded and enhanced our services by creating a distinct Workforce Development Program. Through a series of workshops and one-on-one counseling, youth practice their job readiness skills, explore careers, complete their high school diploma and enroll in college.

First Place is also proud of its newest effort to encourage youth to strive for financial independence by saving and building assets in order to move out of poverty permanently. First Place is providing youth with an innovative matched savings account known as an Individual Development Account (IDA). The IDA encourages youth to save up to \$1,000 through monthly deposits, which are then matched by First Place. These funds can be used only for specific purposes, such as purchase of a car, education or childcare costs, and starting a business.

- 87 percent of our youth enroll in post-secondary education
- 72 percent maintain a job or increase wages while in program
- The average wage of our youth is \$9.98 per hour



While 46 percent of California's foster youth drop out of high school, **77 percent of First Place youth attain their high school diploma or GED certificate.**



I've really learned how to become more independent and communicate better. My First Place youth advocate is like a guide in my life. I definitely take responsibility for myself and my actions but I know that she is there for me when I'm down and out. That's a big change in my life because I know she cares.

— Travis

# VISION FOR THE FUTURE

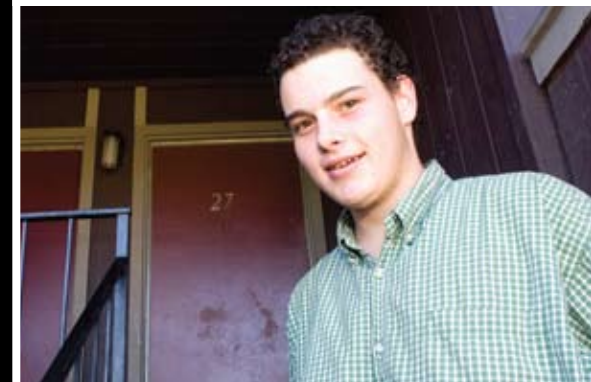
While helping record numbers of young people make a successful transition to independent living this year, First Place also spent considerable time developing a plan to guide our work over the next five years. The intensive planning process was built on input from a wide variety of stakeholders, including Board, staff, youth, funders, and other community partners. It lays out an ambitious, yet wholly feasible plan for increasing our impact with vulnerable transition age foster youth in California. Specifically, the plan sets forth three organizational goals:

**Help youth achieve and sustain higher measures of success.** First Place will strengthen its core programs; expand education and employment services; add next generation “alumni” services; ensure highest-risk youth receive priority for services; and conduct an external evaluation to further demonstrate program effectiveness.

**Effectively advocate for transition age foster youth.** First Place will work at the federal, state and local levels to fundamentally improve the system in which our youth live. We will leverage our expertise to inform policy creation, remove barriers to providing high quality support for youth, secure and expand public funding for transition age youth, and ensure public expenditures are targeted to support best practices.

**Expand our presence to fill more need across the state.** First Place will continue to serve youth in our four Bay Area counties and will look to expand our services in new regions as opportunities arise. Currently, the need is greatest for transitioning foster youth in Southern California.

To find out more about First Place’s Strategic Plan, please visit our website, [www.firstplaceforyouth.org](http://www.firstplaceforyouth.org).



# FINANCIAL INFORMATION

## Support and Revenue

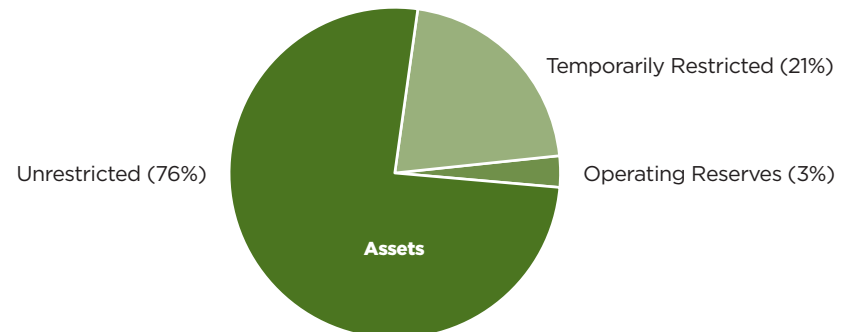
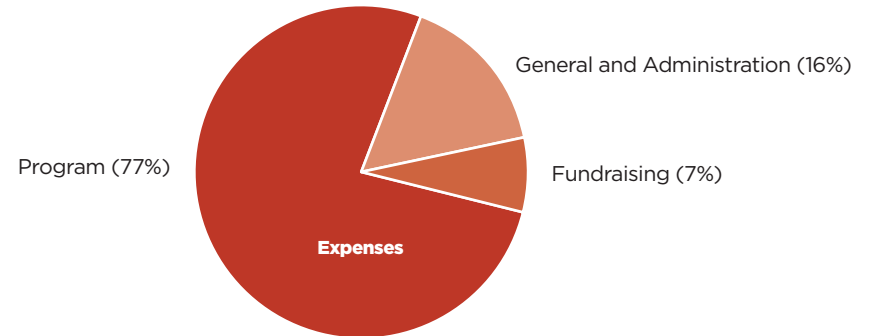
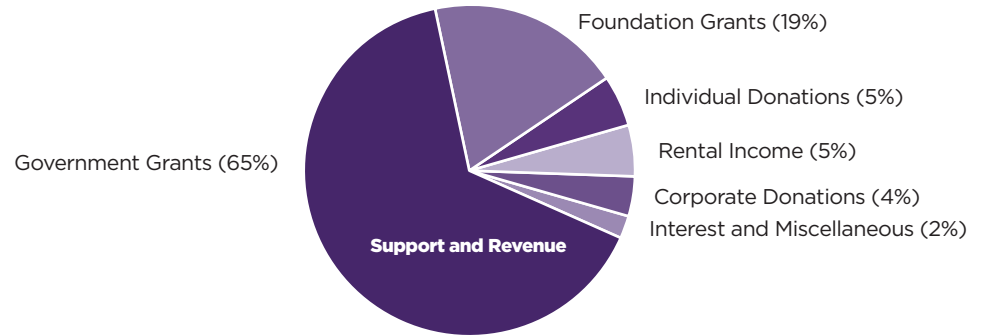
Individual Donations	\$308,319
Corporate Donations	\$205,000
Foundation Grants	\$1,141,777
Government Grants	\$3,880,369
Rental Income	\$298,836
Interest and Miscellaneous	\$100,419
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$5,934,720</b>

## Expenses

Program Expenses	\$3,986,125
General and Administration	\$848,271
Fundraising	\$363,868
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$5,198,264</b>

## Assets

Unrestricted Funds	\$2,873,661
Operating Reserves	\$100,000
Temporarily Restricted	\$794,295
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$3,767,956</b>



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