

A little girl who went to her grandmother and asked, “Grandma, is it true that the lion is the king of the jungle?”

“Yes little one, he is,” she answered, “but why do you ask me such a question?”

“Because grandma,” said the girl, “in every story I read, people always hurt and defeat the lion, so how could he really be king?”

Her wise grandmother leaned down to hug her granddaughter and then softly whispered into her ear, “It will always be that way until the lion tells the story.”

Dear Friends,

I remember being told that story as a little girl. It is an adaptation of an old African folktale. I love stories because stories help us to remember. Even in our fast-paced, media-driven world, we long to tell and hear a story.

With this Narrative Report, we look at the story of Kinship Care. In particular, we draw attention to a special case that illuminates the growing demographic of grandparents raising families for a second time.

The emerging story of Kinship Care is one of inconsistency. Levels of excellence in both formal and informal Kinship Care are clearly not aligned when we address issues of safety, well-being and permanency. There are too many stories of children in unsafe situations and too many stories of children not thriving. I do believe, however, that there are stories of hope and struggle that give people the confidence they need to move their own lives in a new or more positive direction.

Over the last 19 years we have continued to build standards and advocate for the mission of Kinship Care - yet there is still more to be done. There are Kinship families with important stories to tell. We are here to listen.

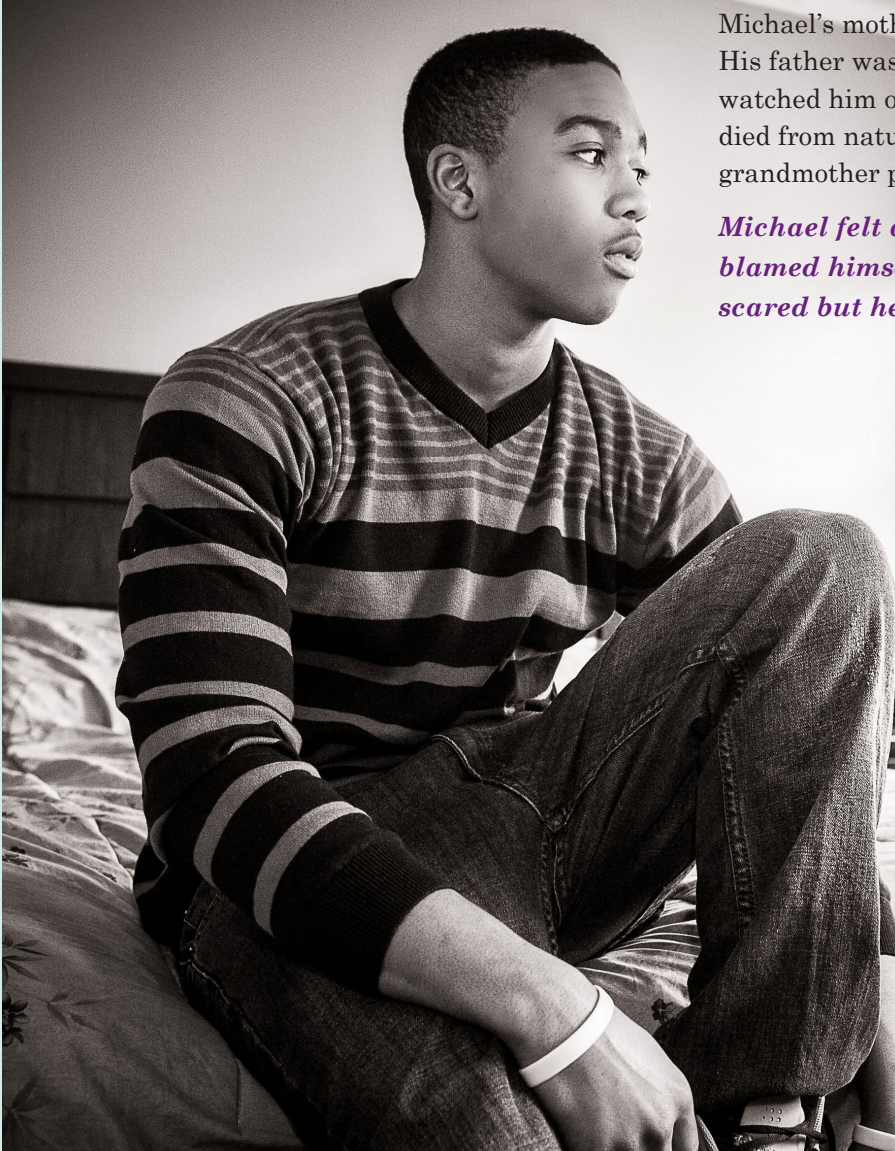
Dr. Sharon L. McDaniel

CEO and President, A Second Chance, Inc.

There is strength in every story.

Michael's mother passed away due to her alcoholism. His father was in and out of his life. His older sister watched him on and off. His maternal grandfather died from natural causes. He watched as his maternal grandmother passed away from Alzheimer's disease.

Michael felt alone but had courage. He never blamed himself for what was going on. He was scared but he always moved forward.



Our model of Kinship Care is built around a philosophy of hope and optimism.

We know that when given the choice, Kinship Care is the strongest answer to foster care.

The story of Kinship Care is ancient. It is a story told all over the world. It is an engaging story of families drawing strength from within. It's a story of grandparents, other relatives and even family friends stepping in to raise children whose parents can no longer do so.

Kinship Care works because more stability is given to the child, the family culture is maintained, the trauma is minimized and the community bonds are preserved.

At A Second Chance, Inc., we believe that formalized Kinship Care is the best practice to support children placed into the child welfare system. Our Kinship Care is a strength-based model, which builds and maintains family relationships. We recognize the challenges a kin-family faces; equally however, we recognize the strengths they also bring to the situation.



“There is something you must always remember. You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think. But, the most important thing is, even if we’re apart... I’ll always be with you.”

Winnie the Pooh by A.A. Milne



Every story is about relationships.

Sometimes other family members must make the difficult decision of whether or not to step in and take over as parents. Never in her dreams did this grandmother think she would be raising her grandson as her own. Her name is Loretta but her grandson, Michael, calls her, *Granny Go*. She's raising a family for the second time in her life.

Loretta has the wisdom and knowledge of establishing, maintaining and growing countless relationships. She is strong people-person.

Our model of Kinship Care is built around building relationships.

We know that Kinship Caregivers need assistance to help them cope with their new roles as parents.

A Second Chance, Inc. is the only program in Pennsylvania that provides data to Allegheny County so that they are able to track formal Kinship Care. We are the only family-centered model that recognizes the significance of the kinship-triad, which includes the child, the caregiver and the birth parent(s).

Our Kinship Care model is carried out through our original Point of Contact program. It is a family driven model. It takes the family on a personal journey of empowerment to ensure safety for the child, maintain well-being and to plan for permanency.

Point of Contact is the main program in Allegheny County, in place to assist our kinship families in meeting State Department of Public Welfare foster care requirements. When a child is removed from their birth parent(s) and placed with a relative caregiver by the Department of Human Services, that case is referred to us so we can license the home for foster care.

Case Management begins immediately with a “24-Hour Intensive” so we secure the home for safety and addresses immediate needs. The next phase is the “60-Day Certification Process” where our client-centered services work intimately with the family to certify their home. After 60 days and successful certification, our service delivery typically moves to case maintenance and assisting the child with accomplishing their individualized permanency goals.



“It is only with the heart that one can see rightly. What is essential is invisible to the eye.”

The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint Exupert



No story is without need and conflict.

Loretta raised three sons as a single mother. She went back to college and earned a degree in psychology. Years later, she did remarry and find new happiness. Michael's older sister took care of him. One day Michael's sister dropped him off at Loretta's house - his paternal grandmother. She never came back.

Loretta and Michael have dealt with trauma, abuse and illness. There may be scars, but the scars are testaments to their resiliency and the strategies they have developed to overcome these adversities.

Our model of Kinship Care believes that the family is the “agent of change”.

We know that Kinship families must be supported in order to thrive.

Knowing that there are others in the same situation as you is helpful. Support services are central to the ASCI Kinship Care Service Delivery Model. Our goal is to bring people together around the challenges of Kinship Care by providing them with concise, up-to-date information and services.

We design our support programming so it is very kin-specific. Our support services are oriented towards assisting families in becoming self-reliant. When families have a built-in support system, they are less likely to need or rely on formal public services. We approach clients as collaborators who can offer personal wisdom, knowledge and experience.

Our model incorporates four areas where Kinship families may need support:

- *Educational Enhancement* is offered through our parenting workshops
- *Practical Support* is provided through our respite services, clothing bank and computer lab
- *Interpersonal Communication* in regards to relationships is addressed in our support groups for caregivers, grandparents and birth-parents
- *Emotional Guidance* and mental wellness are the root of our in-home clinical services



“I am not afraid of storms, for I am learning how to sail my ship.”

Little Women by Louisa May Alcott

Our stories always take us on a journey.

Loretta has made numerous sacrifices in order to provide a better life for Michael. Children at any age are a serious commitment of time, energy and attention, not to mention the financial and legal issues that have to be considered. When Loretta agreed to take Michael into her home, personal lives were changed forever. Her well-earned independence and freedoms changed overnight.

Both Loretta and Michael had the courage and character to visualize the possibilities and promise of their new relationship.



Our model of Kinship Care conveys our belief in the integrity of the family.

We know that there are issues specific to Kinship Care that require special tools.

Kinship families entering the child welfare system have kin-specific needs. We differentiate ourselves from the traditional foster care service plan in the use of diagnostic enrichment tools that speak directly to Kinship Care.

Standards for Assessing and Recognizing Kinship Strengths (SARKS) is our training curriculum for Kinship Caregivers. The Kinship Strength Assessment (KSA) is used to assess and plan for the permanency needs of the child/youth.

The role of the Kinship Caregiver is pivotal in successful case management. We have developed a training curriculum that is written specifically for them. A Kinship Family is a transitioning family. There are changing roles, so accordingly, the family needs information and strategies to adapt and thrive. SARKS addresses the behavioral, psychological, educational, social and emotional well-being of the kin-family.

The KSA is a clinical tool used to assess and evaluate the Kinship Triad from a strength-approach. There is input from the entire Kinship Triad. Using the tool is vital in helping the family identify their strengths and understanding how they can use them to cope with issues that will naturally arise in any family dynamic. It plays an important part in moving a family towards wellness.



“The moment when you doubt whether you can fly, you cease forever being able to do it.”

Peter Pan by Sir James Matthew Barrie

The setting will always affect our story.

Michael says that in his new home, he finally has the freedom to be himself. Both he and Loretta are empowered. Kinship Care is designed to support and provide opportunities for families. It can be as modest as Loretta taking Michael to his favorite restaurant for BBQ or going grocery shopping. It can be as complex as dealing with legal requirements, financial constraints and even emotional disputes.

Loretta and Michael have an environment that is full of people. Family and friends from her workplace, their church and the community are there to help.



Our model of Kinship Care emphasizes dialogue and collaboration.

We know that there is a need for every child to feel part of a family - to have a forever home.

Permanence usually means that a child will exit the formal child welfare system to a preferred long-term placement option. But it is so much more than that; it means that someone meets that child's physical, emotional, social, cognitive and spiritual needs. Our permanency program revolve around three services.

Our commitment to permanency is a philosophy that permeates all aspects of our Kinship Care model. We believe the emotional connections to birth-parents and caregivers are life-long. Children deserve a forever home and the opportunity to establish lifetime relationships.

FACT– FAMILIES AND CHILDREN TOGETHER: A Reunification Specialist works to provide short-term, intensive services to prepare birth-parents for the eventual reunification with their children. This process includes a review of the Family Service Plan and the creation of a specialized ASCI Birth-Family Goal Plan.

SWAN – STATEWIDE ADOPTION SERVICES: The family has decided to adopt the child so that the child is no longer in the child welfare system. Now the child is stable with a family that has made a permanent commitment.

SPLC - SUBSIDIZED PERMANENT LEGAL CUSTODIANSHIP: This is an option for families who have decided not to choose adoption when reunification is no longer a viable option. An assessment of the family is conducted to ensure that they are stable and able to provide permanent care without the assistance of the child welfare system.



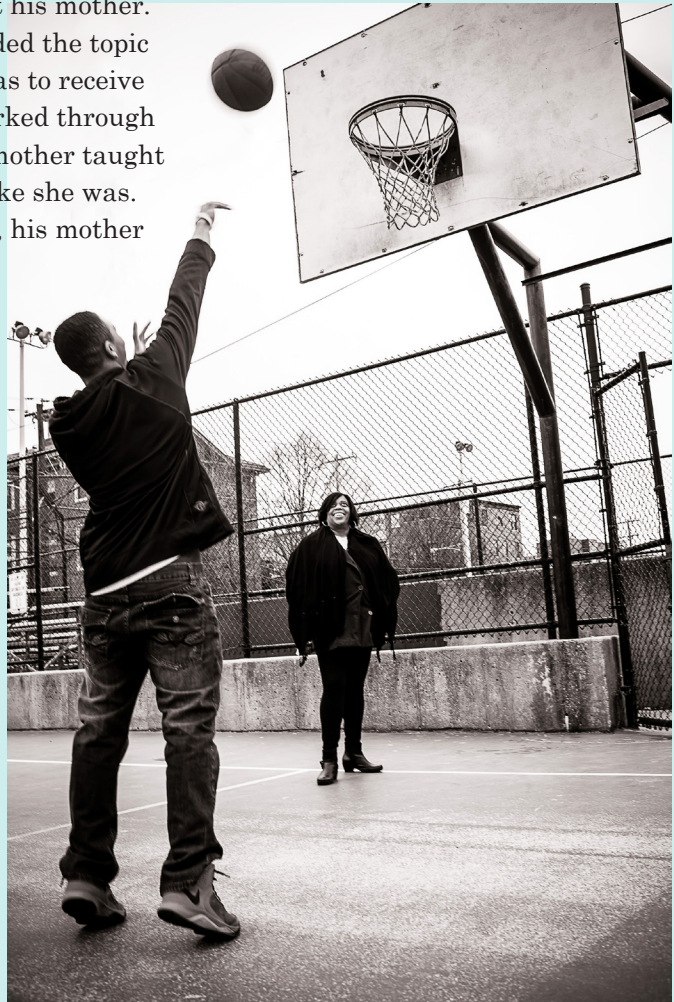
“If you become a bird and fly away from me, I will be a tree that you can come home to.”

The Runaway Bunny by Margaret Wise Brown

Emotions enter into every story.

In the beginning, Michael didn't really talk about his mother. When the subject was brought up, he either avoided the topic or quickly moved on. Part of Michael's journey was to receive clinical services. Michael and his family have worked through a lot. He now says he appreciates that his birth-mother taught him how to be kind, generous and caring – just like she was. Loretta reminds Michael that despite everything, his mother loved him dearly.

Loretta and Michael's voices were heard at all times. Not only were they heard, their voices were valued. Loretta and Michael are taking care of each other.



Our model of Kinship Care operates under the premise of flexibility and adaptability.

We know that there is a need to advocate for the importance and necessity of Kinship Care.

THE PHILADELPHIA REGIONAL OFFICE

Currently, we are the recognized lead provider in Philadelphia that licenses Kinship Caregivers. Our model of Kinship Care has been designed so that we could work together with any government or community agency to implement our principles and strategies. The model works because it remains relevant and engaging not only with Kinship Families but also to those who work in the field of child protective services. We expanded our services into Philadelphia County in 2005. These kin-specific services range from certification to permanency,

The driving force of the Philadelphia Regional Office (PRO) is our Kinship Emergency Response Program (KER). Through KER we service families of Philadelphia and the Department of Human Services (DHS). The program mirrors Point of Contact in its delivery and philosophy while adhering to contractual differences in eastern Pennsylvania. Our KER model is a creative and decisive answer to dealing with emergency situations so that Kinship Caregivers can bring their homes into compliance and safely provide for children.

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) is one of the hallmark programs of the Philadelphia Office of ASCI. The program is a planned process in which parents and caregivers are joined by family, friends and providers of community resources to decide what is best for the children and families involved with the child welfare system. FGDM is a practice championed across the state of Pennsylvania and ASCI is thrilled to be the premier FGDM provider in Philadelphia. Building upon our strong belief and commitment in this process, in 2012, we expanded our FGDM services into neighboring Delaware County.

We believe that it is important to raise public awareness about the importance of Kinship Care. Demonstrating to others in child welfare how to respond effectively to Kinship Families is paramount. We strongly advocate for forming partnerships that directly benefit the advancement of Kinship Care.



“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You’re on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the one who’ll decide where to go...”

Oh, the Places You’ll Go! by Dr. Seuss



We all face an antagonist in our stories.

Michael had a mother who chose alcohol until her death. Michael had a sister who chose a boyfriend over caring for him.

Michael has a grandmother that chose him over her care-free golden years.

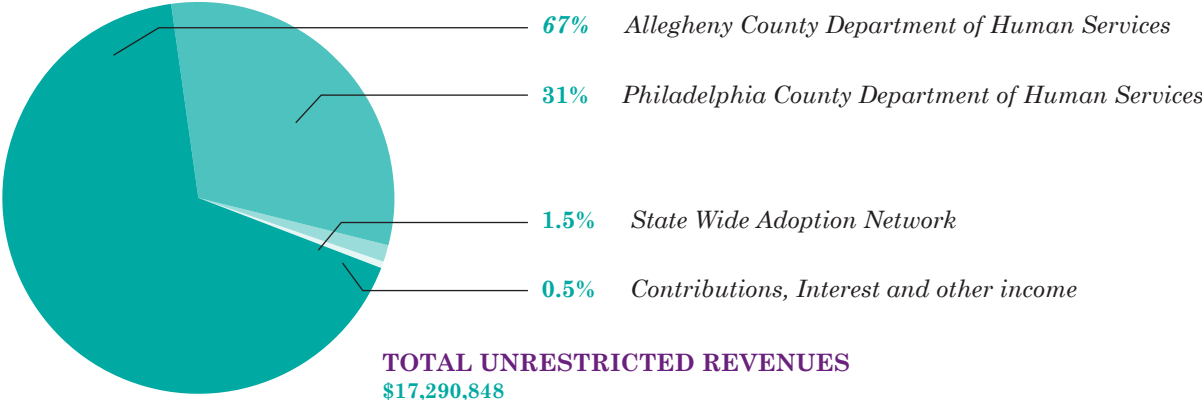
Loretta had worked hard, raised her children to adulthood and when the time came in her life to relax and reap the benefits of a life well lived, she stepped in to raise her grandson. Granny Go not only stepped in to raise Michael – she adopted him.

Loretta and Michael's resiliency grew out of the adversity they faced. They have developed personal strategies to overcome life's difficulties.

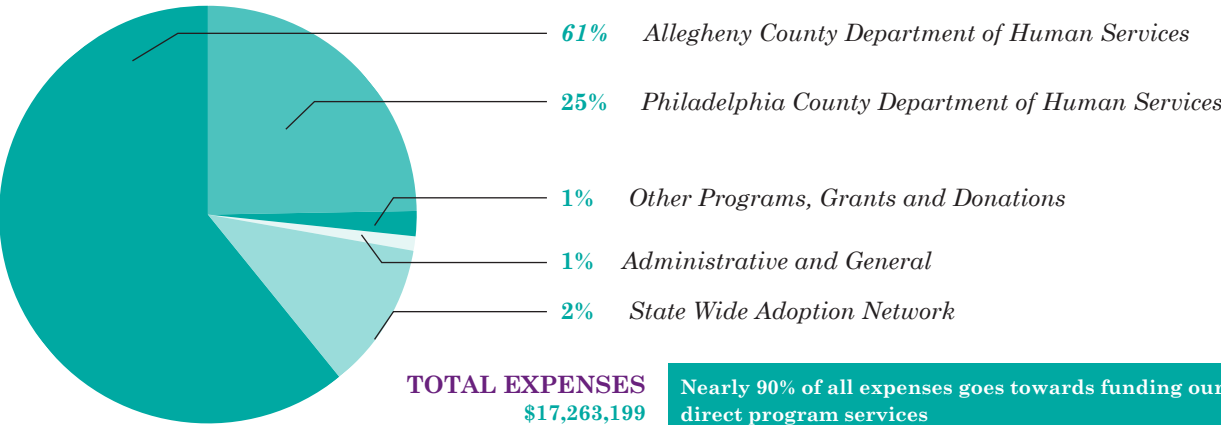
Our model of Kinship Care places trust in the wisdom and perspective of the family.

We know that best practices in Kinship Care require financial stability in both programming and operations.

REVENUES



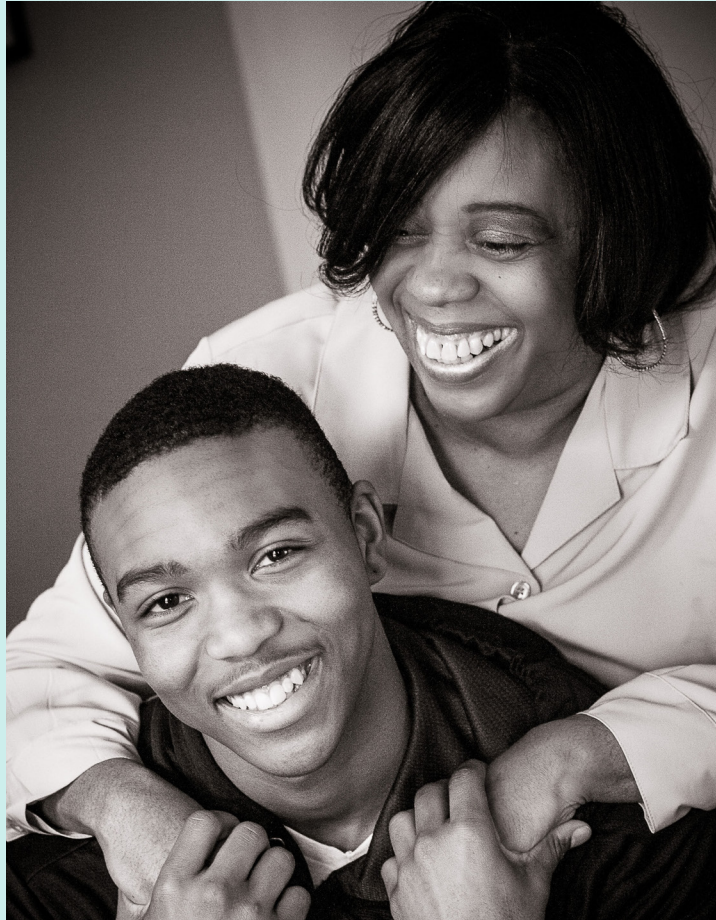
EXPENSES



Nearly 90% of all expenses goes towards funding our direct program services



“There’s no place like home!”
The Wizard of Oz by L. Frank Baum



Stories are meant to be shared.

Michael no longer dreams of finding a home where he is safe and loved – Granny Go made that dream a reality. Michael can set new goals. His passion for fixing things have his family envisioning college where he can study to become an engineer. For now, Michael has the time to dream about weekends, birthdays and computer games. Loretta’s dreams now include Michael. Sometimes an unexpected chapter is added to your life story and your dreams change.

Loretta and Michael... Their story goes on!