



## Mission Statement

**T**he mission of Friends Outside is to assist children and families, prisoners, and former prisoners with the immediate and long-term effects of incarceration, and to act as a bridge between those we serve, the community at large, and the criminal justice system, thereby enhancing the character of justice.

### FOUNDER

Martha Jane Dowds

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mary Weaver

### ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

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## From the President of the Board Jamie Graves, J.D.



**2021**

continues to be a difficult year, as we still face an ongoing pandemic.

This makes

us especially proud of the accomplishments the hard-working staff of Friends Outside in Los Angeles County has achieved this year. However, we know how much more there is to do.

Although it continues to be a difficult time in our world, together we can emerge from this challeng-

ing moment by focusing on our mission and the successes of those we serve.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Friends Outside in Los Angeles County, we would like to thank our generous supporters. You are the reason we are able to continue to help so many of our clients.

We are also grateful for Mary Weaver's continuing dedication and extraordinary leadership.

The work is not easy, but, when successful, it can be life-changing and have a ripple effect for generations to come.

## Featured Partner: Good + Foundation



Donations awaiting delivery for fathers and their families from the Good + Foundation

**F**ounded by Jessica Seinfeld and based in New York City, the Good + Foundation provides generous donations of new and gently used items for children. This picture depicts one of their recent donations which our staff

picked-up from their offices in Los Angeles. Safety car seats, diapers, toys, and much more were distributed to fathers and their families who are enrolled in the Dads Back! Academy F.I.R.E. program.

# “The Character of Justice”

The first time I heard about “sex offenders” (I have since learned to refer to them as “registrants”) was about 20 years ago. A parole agent said to me, “Mary, do you realize that an African-American man who visits a city that has a reputation for not being welcoming to persons-of-color might leave a bar at closing time with his buddies, realize that he should have used the bathroom, urinate in a nearby alley, get slapped with an indecent exposure charge, and just like that he would be on the sex offender registry for life?” That seemed wrong. The second time was from a client who had a sex offense and told me that he had no place to sleep because it was hard for him to find a suitable place because of his restrictions. That seemed inhumane.

Friends Outside in Los Angeles County’s Mission Statement (*see page 1*) ends with the purpose of “*enhancing the character of justice.*” Those words have always resonated with me and have never let me forget the reason Friends Outside exists.

Non-profit guru Peter Drucker said that a Mission Statement should fit on a t-shirt. Perhaps. I have had well-intended people tell me over the years that we should just call ourselves an anti-recidivist group, thinking it summarized the totality of our work and would make our mission easier to articulate. And, admittedly, it would fit on a t-shirt better. However, the work of Friends Outside is about so much more. Our work with children of the incarcerated is to help them cope with their uniquely difficult situations, with hopes that their life trajectories will be better than if their needs were left unattended. Our services for the families help them cope with the absences of their incarcerated loved ones, with challenges that often include financial hardship, struggles to maintain family ties, trauma, and reunification. Our work with the incarcerated

is to give them hope, help them maintain family ties, and take steps that increase their chances of a successful return to their communities. And, our services for the formerly incarcerated, including registrants, are to help them reunify with their children and families (*when mutually desired*), become self-supporting, and not to recidivate.

I would welcome a slicker way to say all that we do in a few brilliant words. But, enhancing the character of justice is about much more than released prisoners not returning to jail or prison. It is about the little girl in elementary school who misses her daddy and doesn’t even know where he went, wondering if it was her fault? It is about the mother whose son is in prison and who stays up at night worrying about him. It is about trying to make things better for as many people who have been affected by the criminal justice system as we can. And, that doesn’t fit on a t-shirt.

Sincerely,



Mary Weaver



# Back to Work Academy

*So Effective, We've Received a Third Grant!*

The United States Department of Labor-funded **"Back to Work" Academy** is an employment program for justice-involved adults. The program provides services on-site at the America's Job Center of California in Inglewood with a focus on providing career training that leads to industry-recognized credentials in high-demand jobs and then assisting clients to become employed.



Bernice Elizarraraz  
Program Manager



Alexandra Hernandez  
Case Manager

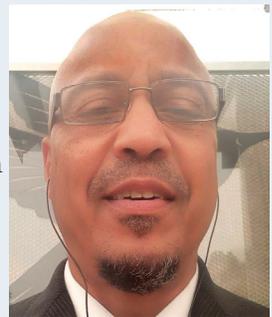
### *Program Manager Bernice Elizarraraz...*

**A** mission-driven community advocate, Bernice Elizarraraz joined FOLA in the spring of 2021 and was quickly promoted to Program Manager. Born and raised in South Los Angeles, Bernice brought with her more than 10 years of experience in social services, including in workforce development, projects that address barriers to those experiencing homelessness, and program development. Her analytical abilities, "can do" attitude, and innovative approaches to challenges fortified the program as it weathered the "storms" of the pandemic. Her relentless efforts helped clients move from a place of loss and grief when they came to the program to a place of hope and action towards their goals. A favorite saying of hers, "You may not be able to change the world, but you can change the world for someone."

## Faces of Success

### Edwin H.

It is no surprise that the year 2020 came with many challenges for many of us. And, it was especially challenging for those released from incarceration. After serving 21 years in federal custody, Edwin was released just as the pandemic was hitting. In addition to dealing with the impact of the pandemic, he had to learn to navigate the outside world, to obtain a cell phone and learn how to use it (!), and figure out how to obtain his social security card to seek employment. He learned about FOLA from his transitional housing, Beacon House. He completed the requirements of the Back to Work Academy and created a plan to get himself back home to his family in northern California (his "ABC Plan"), get a career, and become self-sufficient. Edwin worked as an essential worker, balancing two jobs so he could save money and taking public transportation at a high-risk time during the pandemic. After sharing an apartment with five roommates for several months, Edwin was eventually able to get his own apartment and buy a car.



**Update:** Edwin made it home to his family! He has established a career in the re-entry field and is well on his way to becoming self-sufficient. Supported and motivated by FOLA staff and fueled by his own determination and hard work, Edwin is a Face of Success. He developed a plan, took action, and steered his life toward his goals. Today, Edwin continues to be a person of service and has offered himself as a resource for the Back to Work Academy.

## Dads Back! Academy F.I.R.E. (DB!AF)

*Such Good Results, We Received a Third Grant, too!*

Initially funded in 2011 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, we were thrilled to receive a new grant in 2020 to continue this re-entry fatherhood program. Now named the Dads Back! Academy F.I.R.E., this specialized program helps re-entry fathers further develop their fatherhood skills, develop and maintain healthier relationships, and learn the skills necessary to get and maintain employment.

With program services that began in April, 2021, we are off and running:

CONTRACTED GOAL	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	@ JUNE 30, 2021
Enrollments	100	40 (40%)
90% Workshop Completion	65	42 (65%)

Did we hear you ask what the acronym F.I.R.E. stands for? According to our funder, the Office of Family Assistance, which created it, “F” is for “fathers.” “I” is for “interconnected” such as interconnected families, interconnected services, interconnected to communities. Released persons are more likely to be successful on release if they are connected to something positive. “R” means “Resilient.”

Being resilient is also a quality shared by many people who are able to move from adversity to success. And, “E” stands for “Essential.” There was a time when the essential parent was considered to be the mother. However, more current research has demonstrated the tremendous (and essential) impact fathers have on their children, even if they are not able to live with them. Those impacts include cognitive and social development and an overall sense of well-being and self-confidence.



From left to right: (Back Row) - Derrick Hill, Outreach Specialist/Peer Navigator; Osbert Owuor, Case Manager; (Front Row) - Aileen Hongo, MSW, Case Manager; DaJohnai Vincson, Program Manager; Gina Franco, Data Manager; Sandra Martinez, Job Specialist; Donald Hurst, Group Facilitator.

### *Program Manager DaJohnai Vincson...*

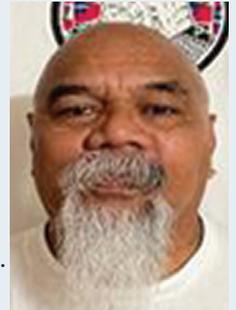
**D**aJohnai Vincson joined FOLA as the Data Specialist for the Dads Back! Academy in 2016 and was promoted to Program Manager in 2020 for the new grant. Born and raised in South Los Angeles, DaJohnai was raised along with five siblings in a single-parent household. She experienced first-hand what it is like to have an incarcerated parent. Wanting to help other similar children, she began working in her community while completing her education in human services. DaJohnai's positive outlook, passionate desire to help re-entry fathers and their families, and a meticulous attention to detail have helped this outstanding program withstand the challenges of the pandemic. One of DaJohnai's favorite quotes, which fuels her daily is, "Make improvements, not excuses. The more you feed your mind with positive thoughts, the more you can attract great things into your life."

# Dads Back! Academy *(Continued)*

## Faces of Success

**Bell T.** When he joined the Academy, program alumni Bell had served 30+ years and had been home for four years. He was especially interested in the financial curriculum of the program. During the final phase of the Academy, Bell was motivated to complete a training program for professional community institutional intervention. Shortly thereafter, he reconnected with his family, children, and grandchildren.

**Update:** Today, Bell sits on the executive board of the F.O.U Movement which assists formerly incarcerated South Pacific Islanders in southern California. He says that he was able to apply what he learned in the financial workshop and has been able to build greater financial security for himself and his family. He says, "The Dads Back! Academy taught me so many great skills that I was able to transfer over into my everyday life. I am grateful to have had this opportunity and I will continue to help others in my community with the new skill set that I have learned."



## Faces of Success

**Steve J.** Incarcerated for 2 years and at home for 14 months, Steve gained employment with a construction union during the final phase of the Academy.

**Update:** He now has two plus years sober. The co-parenting skills he learned during the program helped to close his child support case and reunite with his son. He has his own place, his own transportation, and got back his California Driver License with the help of the program staff. He says, "I am not afraid to ask for help now. I have a job that I enjoy. I am truly living my best life with the help I got from the Dads Back! Academy F.I.R.E. program."



## Faces of Success

**Kevin W.** A go-getter, Kevin was five years out of prison and became the co-founder and CEO of the Dream, Live, Hope Foundation while he was still completing the DB!AF program!

**Update:** Today, Kevin manages a transitional house for 25 men that operates under his foundation and where he now helps DB!AF clients with housing. He is also the Board President and Chairman of the Ten Toes organization. He credits his successful marriage of five years to the teachings of the DB!AF. He says, "This program is so amazing, and the staff make it even better. Being a part of this organization gave me hope that I could do anything that I desired, no matter what my past looked like. I will forever and always stay connected to DB!AF."



## Programs

# LA: Rise *A Comprehensive Partnership in its Seventh Year!*

A partnership of the City of Los Angeles, County of Los Angeles, and REDF (The Robert Enterprise Development Fund), the LA:RISE collaboration is a comprehensive partnership that brings together America's Job Centers of California (aka "One-Stops"), social enterprises, and nonprofits to support community members with high employment barriers to acquire and maintain employment. FOLA's LA:RISE services are co-located at Goodwill Industries' Northeast Worksource Center in Los Angeles and our role is to support working clients to maintain employment

by providing workshops, supportive services, guidance, and lots of motivation!



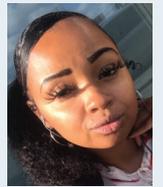
Sonia Bell  
Program Manager



Giovanie Diaz  
Case Manager

## Faces of Success

**Avery B.** Avery B. enrolled into the LA:RISE program at a difficult time in her life. A single mother, Avery had difficulties gaining employment and limited resources. She had faced several hardships in life including being incarcerated, which had affected not only her but her loved ones, too. Avery was very active in the program, participating in FOLA's financial literacy workshop and taking full advantage of other program services including case management services, job leads, and supports to gain employment.



**Update:** Avery completed all her court-mandated classes and has stayed out of contact with law enforcement for more than two years. She is now allowed to participate in monitored visits with her children. She completed her paid work experience hours at Goodwill of Southern California where she then gained employment. She expressed thankfulness for the assistance that the LA:RISE program provided.

# Project Warm Hand-Off *(or as We Affectionately Call it, Project WHO)*

Funded by the State of California, Board of State and Community Corrections, Project W-H-O serves recently-released parolees. Along with a "Welcome Home Kit" (e.g. toiletries, gift cards, socks), clients are provided guidance and peer support to assist with their reintegration back into the community, including connecting them to other needed services such as employment, housing and helping them obtain their identification. Services are offered on-site at the Alameda Parole Office and the America's Job Centers of California located in Inglewood and East Los Angeles. FOLA will have served 375 recently-released clients by the end of the program (in 2023).



Richard Richard  
Case Manager

## Faces of Success

**Jerry** served 41 years and was living in a transitional facility. Richard enrolled him in the program and gave him a much-needed incentive for doing so – FOLA's Welcome Home Kit. Jerry needed the gas cards to travel to the job interviews he had lined-up, the result of which was that he landed a job! He expressed to Richard that he had had empty promises from "so many groups and organizations who failed to deliver." Richard says, "He became very emotional and started crying, hugging me repeatedly and telling me that my help proved to him that there are people who are sincere about helping. He even shouted this out loud in front of others, saying how thankful and excited he was for FOLA's generosity."



## Prison to Employment (P2E)

**Prison to Employment (P2E)** is a state-funded program that assists clients with vocational training and employment. P2E is provided at the America’s Job Center of California which is on the grounds of program partner, the Watts Labor Community Action Center (WLCAC). FOLA’s role is to provide a Peer Navigator to the clients who provides motivation, emotional support, and guidance during their transitional period.



James Agnew  
Peer Navigator

## Project imPACT South LA

*Such Good Results, We Received a Second Grant!*

**P**roject imPACT South LA is located on the Los Angeles Trade-Technical College campus. Project imPACT provides comprehensive employment services to justice-involved individuals who also have a mental health and/or substance abuse background, in partnership with the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA) and Arming Minorities Against Addiction and Disease (AMAAD).

While 2020 was a very challenging year for many programs Project imPACT South LA continued to soar, delivering its comprehensive re-entry employment services virtually through a second grant from the City of Los Angeles Mayor’s Office. Our justice-involved “Fellows” received intensive employment, behavioral health, and mental health services in support of



Arthur Smiley  
Program Manager



Michael Tompkins  
Job Specialist

their goal of employment. At six months into the new grant and with 23 months left in the grant, the terrific program staff had accomplished the following by June 30, 2021:

CONTRACTED GOAL	GOALS TO BE REACHED BY 5.31.23	OUTCOMES AT 6.30.21	% OF GOALS ATTAINED AT 6.30.21
Participants to be Served	210	85	40%
Enrolled Fellows	99	34	34%
Employed Fellows	56	10	18%

### *Program Manager Arthur Smiley...*

**P**rogram Manager Arthur Smiley calls his employment at Friends Outside in Los Angeles County the “place to be.” He says working for FOLA gives him a chance to ensure that not just people-of-color who are heavily represented in the criminal justice system get a fair chance after release but that all people and their families affected by incarceration get a fair “second chance.”

## Programs

### Project imPACT South LA *(Continued)*

#### Faces of Success

**Anna J.** joined Project imPACT in February 2021 after being referred to us by Project 180 for employment, legal, and behavioral health services. For the last two years, Anna has struggled with securing employment, regaining custody of her children, and managing her stress.

**Update:** Since her enrollment in Project imPACT, she has taken full advantage of all the services offered. Six months into the program, Anna is now employed in a Customer Service position at a restaurant. She is working closely with our legal partner, the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, to regain custody of her children. Anna is also participating in regular therapy sessions offered by our behavioral health partner, the AMAAD Institute. Anna told the program staff, "You guys are very professional. Thank you all for the great help".

#### Faces of Success

**Armondo T.** All roads lead to Friends Outside in Los Angeles County (FOLA) according to Fellow Armondo T. Armondo joined Project imPACT South LA in 2020 after being referred by his housemate, an alumni of the program. Armondo had reached a low point after enrolling into various programs that either made false promises or under-performed. As a "290 Registrant (Penal Code for a sexual offense)," there was a need to share some very sensitive information without judgment and the Project imPACT staff provided that outlet for him. He saw the program as something that addressed all of his immediate needs which included employment assistance, legal guidance, and behavioral health.

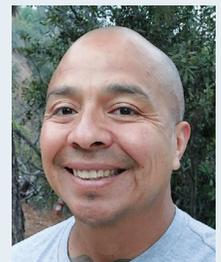
**Update:** Since his enrollment in Project imPACT, Armondo has taken full advantage of all the services offered. He is now employed and working as an Assistant Manager for a sober-living facility where he is also a resident. He is working closely with our legal partner to have his status as a 290 offender reviewed based on new legislation and actively participates in therapy sessions with the program therapist. Fellow Armondo was quoted saying "Project imPACT has made an imPACT in my LIFE."

#### Faces of Success

**Oscar R.** Released from prison in 2019, Oscar R. joined Project imPACT after serving 25 years in prison, having entered the criminal justice system at the age of 17. Born and raised in South Los Angeles, Oscar says he grew up in a "relatively normal household," which included two parents and seven siblings. He attributes many of his problems as a young child to his gang affiliation.

Oscar was introduced to Project imPACT while living at Beacon House, a transitional program. After he completed the program, Oscar secured employment with the United Parcel Service (UPS) as an on-loader, sharing that it was because of his engagement with the program that he was able to recognize his talents and do something with them.

**Update:** Today, Oscar is living independently, owns a car, and works at two jobs. He told us, "I never thought as a kid that I would own a car, be paying my bills, have my own apartment, and be enjoying it!" He credits his success to Project imPACT South LA.



# Incarcerated Parents Project (IPP)

## *Overcoming Obstacles to Help Keep Families Together*

*“The biggest predictor (of a child’s well-being) is the strength of the parent-child relationship. For example, if the parent lived with the child, provided social and financial support, and developed a strong parent-child bond, the long-term negative effects of parental incarceration may be mitigated if the child receives support throughout the incarceration period and is afforded opportunities to maintain contact with the parent. Correctional facilities can support the relationship by providing the child with easy access to and visitation with the parent in a child-friendly environment. (National Institute of Justice).*

**T**he goal of the Incarcerated Parents Program (IPP) is to help incarcerated parents develop and maintain positive relationships with their child(ren) who are in foster care. The cornerstone of the project is monitored visits conducted by our Case Manager (CM). The CM prepares the mothers, caregivers, and children for the visits (e.g., what to expect) and then debriefs with them after the visits to help ensure that any issues raised during the visits are properly addressed. The CM is also the liaison between the children’s social worker and the incarcerated parents, facilitating communication and helping the mothers complete their court-ordered case plans (e.g., attend parenting classes). Other services include helping parents develop release plans, including hoped-for reunification with their children when that is possible.

During the past year, which had the pandemic cloud hovering over it, IPP staff prided themselves on achieving success through the continuation of services at such a difficult time. Living in close confinement, incarcerated mothers were particularly threatened by the pandemic. Our Case Manager, Celina Ruiz, worked closely



Celina Ruiz, B.A.  
Case Manager



Kay Ramsey, Ph.D.  
Program Manager

with the staff at the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department and the Department of Children and Family Services to provide visits. Visiting behind glass, Celina provided the children with Personal Protection Equipment and practiced masking and social distancing protocols to help ensure that the visits were safe for all concerned. In doing so, 67 incarcerated mothers and their children were able to maintain and strengthen their family bonds while behind bars and even during the pandemic.

### *About Program Manager Dr. Kay Ramsey...*

*Program Supervisor Dr. Ramsey is a former foster youth and adoptee. Her upcoming book set to release in 2021, Persevering Beyond Adversity: The Blueprint, details her gritty personal story about being born from sexual violence in a prison, put into foster care and then experiencing homelessness after her adoptive mother died.*

## SECTOR

*Off to an Impressive Start!*

SECTOR was launched in January, 2021, funded by the Los Angeles County Office of Diversion and Re-entry, Department of Public Health, with “Prop. 47” funds that originated from the Board of State and Community Corrections. The program provides soft skills workshops and vocational training in high-growth sectors which result in career pathways with family-sustaining wages for people impacted by the justice system. SECTOR is headquartered at the America’s Job Center of California in Inglewood, co-located with our program partners the South Bay Workforce Investment Board and New Opportunities Organization.



From left to right: Sonia Bell, Program Manager; Jerome Holland, Case Manager; Chris Cooke, Job Specialist; Sithy Bin, Case Manager; Rafael Quiroz, Outreach Specialist/Peer Navigator

At six months into the first project year, our dedicated staff had accomplished the following:

Participants Enrolled	59/56%	Goal: 105
Completed P2P Job Readiness	53/56%	Goal: 95
Job Placement	26/41%	Goal: 63

### *Program Manager Sonia Bell...*

**P**rogram Manager Sonia Bell started her career as a K-12 teacher in the San Fernando Valley during which she realized that there was so much happening outside the classroom that was negatively impacting her students’ education inside the classroom. So, she pivoted to civic service and non-profit work, hoping to find a way to support children’s growth and learning with a family-centered approach. Coming to FOLA was an ideal match for her as FOLA’s programs take into consideration the negative impact that incarceration has on generations and whole communities and seeks to support individuals and families from that vantage point.

## Faces of Success

**Rudy C.** completed SECTOR and says that it helped to build his confidence to interview and be successful at a job. He said that when he first came to SECTOR that he had only been recently released from being incarcerated for 16 years and felt unprepared for the interview process, let alone to join the workforce. He credits the SECTOR team for creating a “peaceful” environment where he could practice his “elevator speech” and talk through how he would answer interview questions so that he wasn’t as nervous “when it counted.”

**Update:** Rudy says proudly that with the practice and preparation he did during the workshops, he was able to interview and land his first job as a solar panel installer! He is also currently attending college to get his bachelor’s degree and wants to pursue further education as well as obtain his license as an electrician. Rudy encourages anybody who might also be intimidated by the prospect of interviewing and starting a full-time job to “nurture what you do” and “don’t give up.”



# Donors: Thank You for Your Generous Support

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# Financial Summary as of 6/30/21

Total Assets .....	\$835,863.89
Total Liabilities .....	\$329,757.38
Total Income .....	\$2,327,109
Total Expenses .....	\$2,245,594

## FUNDING SOURCES BY TYPE

Government Contracts.....	93%
Foundations/Corporations, Individual Donors.....	4%
In-kind Donations.....	3%

## FUNDING SOURCES

### GOVERNMENT GRANTS

- City of LA, Mayor’s Office
- City of LA, Economic and Workforce Development Dept.
- County of LA, Department of Children and Family Services
- County of LA, Department of Public Social Services
- County of LA, Department of Health, Office of Diversion and Reentry
- State of California, California Workforce Investment Board
- State of California, California Arts Council
- Board of State and Community Corrections
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- U.S. Department of Labor

### FOUNDATIONS AND CONTRACTS WITH OTHER NON-PROFITS

- Pasadena Community Foundation
- St. John’s Well Child and Family Center
- South Bay Workforce Investment Board

### IN-KIND

“In-kind” donations are goods and services which support programs at no cost to FOLA. They include the following: Jackson Lewis LLP (legal services); International Institute of Los Angeles (bus tokens, taxi vouchers); Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (office space); Good + Foundation (baby supplies/clothes, toys); South Bay Workforce Investment Board/America’s Job Center of California/Inglewood (vocational trainings).

According to our most recent Form 990 which was submitted to the Internal Revenue Service for fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, the most recent year for which the Form is available, 89.31% of Friends Outside LA’s budget was used for our programs. The 990 Form is available on our website or by contacting (626) 795-7607, ext. 105.

\*Most recently completed audited financial statement

## Behind the Scenes – Finance Department

### Financial Manager, Marilu

**Claridge**, says, “Contrary to popular opinion, I think accounting is about more than balancing one’s checking account. Everything in life moves around finance. Accounting tells a story as well as gives you a puzzle to solve with some challenges along the way. Budgets help dreams come true, one just has to understand the language of the situation in front of them. At FOLA, I definitely have experienced all of these phases that accounting offers and one thing for sure is that I never get bored! Every day is a new day to discover, learn, and appreciate the language of numbers.



Marilu Claridge, BS  
Financial Manager



Coralito Arambula  
Administrative Assistant

Content to be working out of the limelight where very important things happen as well, Ms. Claridge and her assistant **Coralito Arambula** are the glue that holds Friends Outside’s operations together. As grant, financial and reporting requirements become increasingly more demanding, this very small but very able, bright and dedicated duo make sure that payroll is on time, bills are paid, and that all of this is done while following countless regulations! Federally-required annual audits say it all – “No findings!”

# Alan-Michael Graves

*Fatherhood Program Director, Good + Foundation, and Children's Advocate*



Alan-Michael Graves

**A**lan-Michael Graves is one of the early fatherhood leaders in Los Angeles County. An “acolyte” of Dr. Hershel Swinger at Children’s Institute International (CII), Alan-Michael now works on the national stage with the Good+ Foundation. Alan-Michael has been a friend to Friends Outside LA for years. He raised the profile of our re-entry fatherhood program by selecting us to

present at CII’s annual fatherhood conferences and once again when he recommended us to partner with the Good + Foundation, from which we receive items to give to the children of the fathers who participate in the Dads Back! Academy F.I.R.E.

### **Q. Tell us a little about yourself.**

I am a single father with three children. Professionally, I thought I was going to be the next Johnny Cochran and went to law school but realized it was not for me. I took a temporary assignment at Children’s Institute International (CII) when I was home-schooling my son. CII asked me to extend my assignment and I was still there 12 years later. I switched my educational pursuits and got my Master’s Degree in Public Administration.

### **Q. You were fortunate to work under Dr. Swinger. What was that experience like?**

I was in a leadership academy at CII when I met Dr. Swinger who recruited me to work on Project Fatherhood. I hesitated at first, telling him that I wanted to help families. His response was, “You can help families by helping fathers.” This was 2004. Fathers were the overlooked, less important, undervalued parent. Dr. Swinger stressed the importance of the father in the family, not just as providers but also their importance to their children’s development. I began interacting with the social workers at DCFS (Los Angeles County Department of Children’s Services) and the dependency courts while getting educated about what it was like

for families to raise children within these systems.

### **Q. Having a job you loved, why did you leave CII to work at the Good + Foundation which was founded in New York City by Jessica Seinfeld?**

Yes, I loved my job but day after day, I saw fathers coming for help while also seeing the systemic problems they faced. There was a bias against them, especially fathers-of-color. The value of fathers was not being lifted up to persons who were affecting their lives such as teachers, social workers, and judges. I never met a man who said, “I don’t want to be in my child’s life” but the system worked against them in so many ways. Instead of blaming and judging the fathers, I wanted to find ways to engage fathers and be a part of long-term change. In 2017, Jessica Seinfeld recruited me to work for the Foundation. Originally called “Baby Buggy,” Jessica observed her friends in New York City discarding expensive items after their babies got older and thought these items needed to get to people who needed them. She is a real advocate for fathers and has taken a leadership role in this area. She is very involved at the ground level, not just in the board room.

### **Q. How well is LA County doing in this area?**

I think the County has finally recognized the need to do something different with regards to father engagement and that they cannot do it well by themselves. I am doing some training for personnel such as at DCFS, probation, the Los Angeles Unified School District and judges. A few collaborations have formed. But, the only funding for fatherhood work in the County is the federal grant that Friends Outside LA and CII have. The County needs to allocate intentional funding for this work.

### **Q. What is the nexus between Friends Outside LA and the Good + Foundation?**

Both organizations understand the value and meaning of meeting the fathers “where they are,” without labeling, without judgment. We highly value our partners, recognizing that they provide vitally important services and supports to the fathers. Our role is to make long-term change happen.

## Board of Directors



**President, Jamie Graves, J.D.** Jamie Graves holds a bachelor's degree in Communication Studies after which she earned her Juris Doctor. Jamie gained experience with the criminal justice system through an externship program with the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office. She has been working as a Senior Contracts Manager with a real estate start-up and brings to her role at FOLA a passion for the underserved, particularly with reentry programs.



**Vice-President, Eunice D Howe, Ph.D.** "Euni" came to Los Angeles for a one-year job at the University of Southern California in 1977, and she never left. She was born in Boston, lived for a time in Italy, and earned her Ph.D. with distinction at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. She is now Professor Emerita at USC. She considers joining the FOLA board in 2017 one of her smartest decisions. She has moved from teaching to learning, made possible by skilled people at FOLA.



**Treasurer, W. Elizabeth Watts, MSA, CPA** Liz Watts was born in Munich, Germany. She completed a Master of Science in Accounting and has been licensed as a Certified Public Accountant since 1983. It was in 1984 that Liz was introduced to Friends Outside.

She strongly supports its mission and believes that people should be given a "second chance." She counts it a blessing to have been a part of an organization that has had a positive impact on thousands of lives.



**Jessica Xie** is a conscientious and resourceful Business Information Security Officer in the financial services industry. Xie has 6+ years of successful problem solving across corporate, city government, non-profit, and social sectors. In

her spare time, she applies her engineering background to identify systemic problems and designs innovative strategies and sustainable solutions for social issues. Xie is the Chair of the Human Services Commission for the City of Pasadena. She holds a B.S. in Technology Information Management from UC Santa Cruz and a M.S. in Entrepreneurship and Innovation from the University of Edinburgh.

## Providing Services (still) during a Pandemic . . . What an Incredible Staff!

Perhaps it was naive to assume that the pandemic would have abated enough by summer of this year that we would be back to life as "normal," but such has not been the case. With every development of rising cases, diminishing cases, hospitalizations, new variants, comes a new calculation as to what is safe for our clients and for our staff.

For the most part, we have served clients the same since March 6, 2020. This is to say that the staff works mostly from home, serving clients who are mostly in their homes or their temporary places of residence such as transitional living. Our managers travel to the administrative headquarters in Pasadena as needed to submit reports and obtain needed supplies.

Staff works from their office occasionally to do work that needs to be conducted on-site such as data-entry, scheduling their visits through their supervisors to control the number of staff who are in the office at any one time. Instead of asking our clients to travel to us via public transportation, our staff drives to them to deliver items such as documentation that needs their signatures and gift cards which recognize attainment of a program milestone such as getting a job. For the most part, our staff has provided services via a Zoom platform (e.g., orientations, workshops), telephonically (case management services), and via text and emails throughout the pandemic.

We have purchased PPE for the

staff and for the clients, including air purifiers for our offices. On the positive side, I am "only" aware of one of 30 staff members who has tested positive for COVID-19. This person stated that it was contracted during a family event and, fortunately, this person had light symptoms.

Incredibly and with endless kudos to the staff, almost all services that were being provided pre-COVID have been provided throughout the pandemic and our contracted goals are being met! That statement reflects better than anything else I could say about their dedication, hard work, and commitment to our clients.

With greatest admiration and appreciation to each of you!

– M. Weaver



## Laura Aalto, J.D. *Past-President, Board of Directors*

**B**oard president Laura Aalto was an exceptional person, sometimes seeming like a person of opposites.

She had very well-developed right (creative)- and left-brain (analytical) skills. She was compassionate but, as a Deputy District Attorney in Los Angeles, she had the backbone to convict the accused. Whip smart and decent down to her marrow, Laura worked in the Major Fraud Division where, amongst other cases, she helped to prosecute the case against Frank Abagnale whose life of deception inspired the movie “Catch Me if You Can.”

Laura was born in the Midwest and spent

her early years in Waukegan, Illinois. She met her to-be husband, Cal, when they were students at Duke University. They eventually migrated to New York City where her husband worked on Wall Street and Laura attended law school at New York University.

According to their son, Jamie, Laura moved to Los Angeles “in the 1970’s” and became a Deputy District Attorney in 1981. A gourmet cook, Laura had exquisite taste. Her beautifully decorated home was a showcase where she exhibited carefully selected purchases along with some of her life’s treasures, from her son’s first little pair of shoes, to a kimono, to samplings of antique lace.

Laura brought her keen intellect to FOLA’s

board of directors, eventually becoming the board president and overseeing FOLA’s operations with competency and kindness. Among other accomplishments, Laura spearheaded FOLA’s “Blast-off for Kids” fundraiser at the Old Mill in San Marino. When we moved our offices to our spacious space on Colorado Boulevard, Laura helped us create a comfortable space and gifted us with items from her home to make it more attractive.

Laura was a class act of generosity, forgiveness, refined taste, and understated intellect. People like her seldom come into our lives and we were fortunate to have her support and guidance for the time that we did.



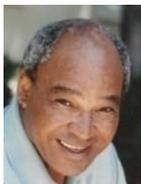
## Barry Schwam *Volunteer and Staff Member*

**B**arry volunteered for Friends Outside in Los Angeles County as a clerical assistant in the early 1990’s, eventually becoming a paid staff member. In these capacities, he answered FOLA’s ever-ringing telephone lines, greeted office guests, responded to letters from the incarcerated, and sent discount vouchers to families for visits to see their incarcerated loved ones. Barry did it all with his wonderful brand of humor, while putting his creative spin on everything

including the “Martians” he made to be the centerpieces for one of FOLA’s fundraisers.

Barry graduated from California State University – Northridge, and spent some years in Portland, Oregon, where he was a disc jockey on KBOO-FM. An artist from his head to his toes, his work on KBOO got the attention of the musical group The Residents and Barry was the first artist (other than the Residents) to release a record on Ralph Records (“Aphids in the Hall”). He was once offered the steps to the starship from Star Trek and even Frank

Zappa put out an invitation to meet him. He was the voice of Colonel Sanders at the Yum Headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky, and organized the Kosher Pickle International Dill Team entry for Pasadena’s annual Doo-Dah Parade. He played the “only musical instrument that is not touched” (the Theremin), including during a show with the Caltech-Occidental Jazz Band and a gig on the Gong Show when he played the Theremin with his feet. A Los Angeles native, the world lost a true original when he died.



## Wendell Watts *Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night!*

**I**t is hard to say good-bye to Santa Claus but we had to do just that this year. Wendell Watts, who attended many of

our Annual Thomas Fleming Rhodes Holiday Parties for Children and brought Santa Claus to life for hundreds of excited children, died earlier this year at the age of 84.

Hailing from Grand Rapids, Michigan, the long-time husband of our board treasurer, Elizabeth Watts, CPA, Wendell could easily portray Santa because he was the embodiment of laughter, love, and goodwill. In fact, the only false representation was his “bowl full of jelly.” One of his proudest accomplishments was writing a children’s Christmas story, “Jiminie, the Christmas Tree,” and recording the album and video that went along with it.

From his obituary in the Pasadena Star-News, “Wendell lived life to the fullest and found great joy and fulfillment in meeting and befriending people along his journey. Wendell had many talents and was well

Wendell volunteered for us when our holiday parties numbered about 550 guests, about 400 of whom were children who waited in long lines to get a candy cane and talk to Santa



about their Christmas wish list. That singular act spoke volumes about his giving spirit and love for humanity.

Wendell did not see people through their class, their pocket-book, or their skin color. In giving of himself so freely and unselfishly, he brought many times more love back to himself.

Wendell, on behalf of the 2,000 or so children to whom you gave great joy when they were separated from one or both of their incarcerated parents, we say, “Thank you, Santa. We hope you just rode your sleigh right up on into heaven.”

known for his entertainment career which brought him numerous and unusual opportunities from meeting President Ford and other celebrities, building pools for famous actors, singing, writing, and recording songs, hosting his own television show in Grand Rapids, and acting in television, film, theatre, music videos and national commercials.”

## Planned Giving – Ensuring Future Success

One of the easiest and most frequently used methods to make a planned gift to Friends Outside in Los Angeles County is through a bequest. A simple statement in your will or living trust is all it takes.

For example:

“I give to Friends Outside in Los Angeles County, a non-profit corporation located in Pasadena, California,

the sum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

or

\_\_\_\_\_ % of my estate

or

the sum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

or

\_\_\_\_\_ % of my estate, whichever is greater (or) smaller

or

all the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate to be used as follows: for the organization’s general endowment fund

or

however the Board of Directors chooses to use this bequest.”

An unrestricted bequest-the last example-is of special value because of the flexibility it provides the organization.

Should you have a special interest or would like to give to a particular project, please discuss your bequest intention with the Executive Director, Mary Weaver, to ensure your objectives can be met.

You can reach Mary at (626) 795-7653 or [mweaver@friendsoutside.la.org](mailto:mweaver@friendsoutside.la.org).

**Charity Navigator** keeps track of non-profit charitable organizations to ensure that your donations serve legitimate purposes. It is consulted by a spectrum of individual donors and philanthropies. Founded twenty-five years ago by the American Institute of Philanthropy, CharityNavigator is the chief watchdog dedicated to monitoring how efficiently a U.S. non-profit uses your money to fund programs that you care about. Friends Outside in LA County, a 501(c)(3) organization, is proud to have achieved a maximum ranking of 100 %. [see [www.charitynavigator.org/ein/953557032#finance-details-section](http://www.charitynavigator.org/ein/953557032#finance-details-section)]

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