



# ENDURE



**STEP  
BY\_—  
STEP**

healing & empowering  
young single moms

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

# CONTENTS

- 03 Letter from Executive Director
- 04 Mission & Vision
- 06 Step Into Freedom
- 08 Big Sisters & Mom's Advisory Committee
- 10 Echo & Resound Leaders
- 12 Basic Needs Packages
- 14 Mental Health
- 16 Volunteer Impact
- 18 Impact
- 20 What's Next
- 22 Thank You



## A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Helen Keller once wrote, “Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it.”**

At Step By Step, our vantage point has always been that of seeing the impossible become possible. We are astounded by the number of challenges young single women and children face, and awed by the tenacity it takes to stand in the tumultuous winds, bend but not break, and keep going.

The impact our young single moms make in our community is often invisible. They are the pharmacy technicians at the local drug store administering your flu shot. They are the cashier in the McDonald's drive-thru who barely has the time to count your change before the next customer is talking in her ear. They are the Amazon associates working 2nd shift ensuring that your packages make it to your doorstep on time. They are like many of you: hard working people. Yet they pull triple duty everyday to put food on the table, staying up with the baby all night, and still managing to make it to school on time and to work after.

All it takes is one hardship to rock the boat. A flat tire, an unexpected utility bill increase, or even missing work to stay home with a sick child from a job for which they have no benefits (such as vacation pay) means the rent may not get paid that month.

We have seen our young single mothers endure. We have seen them navigate a pandemic while pushing themselves to reach goals and to support other moms enrolled in the program. They have tackled financial literacy by attending our Step Into Freedom Program (read more on page 6). They have stepped up to support other young mothers through our Big Sister and Advisory Committee programs (read more on page 8). We have seen how consistent support can galvanize fervent boldness in these young women we are honored to walk alongside daily.

As an organization, we have endured because of your partnership. We have increased our reach to our families by 20% with the same number of Staff and with deeper wells of trauma and loss to navigate. As study after study shows them being the hardest hit financially by the pandemic and the hardest population to recover, we have seen an increase in domestic violence, suicidal ideation, and child abuse in our city, just as those numbers increase all over the country. And Step By Step has answered the call.

Thank you for your partnership.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tanya Torp".

Tanya Torp  
Executive Director

*\*Data from The Pew Charitable Trusts and The Brookings Institution, see information on our website at [www.sbslex.org](http://www.sbslex.org).*



OUR MISSION ...

**WE'RE HERE TO EMPOWER  
AND EMBOLDEN YOUNG  
SINGLE MOTHERS TO  
IMPROVE THEIR LIVES,  
THEIR FAMILIES, AND THEIR  
COMMUNITIES THROUGH  
HEALING, ENCOURAGEMENT,  
FAITH AND EDUCATION.**

OUR VISION ...

**WE ENVISION A LEXINGTON  
THAT FOSTERS BELONGING  
AND EMPOWERS YOUNG,  
SINGLE MOTHERS TO  
POSITIVELY IMPACT  
THEIR FAMILIES AND  
COMMUNITIES.**

When our three founders dreamed together about how to serve young single moms and their kids 27 years ago, they could not have possibly imagined where Step By Step would be now. Started as a ministry to support young single moms emotionally and spiritually through Bible Study, we have seen the needs of our population grow and change over the years. Step By Step has shifted to a trauma-informed holistic model and deepened our policies and practices, yet remain centered on loving Jesus and loving others.



# STEP INTO FREEDOM

We met Cheyenne a few months into her pregnancy. She found out she was pregnant the day after her boyfriend was murdered by a family member. Her pregnancy was high risk with many complications, and at one point her medical team feared the baby would not be born alive. It was at this point Cheyenne walked through our doors. She was navigating devastating loss and a troubled pregnancy and was feeling so overwhelmed and alone. Her beautiful miracle child was born medically fragile and falls ill often, and Cheyenne has found it difficult to maintain employment as she struggles to care for her child alone.

A gifted writer and speaker who is quick with an encouraging word for others, driven with big goals and dreams, she has had to admit that it has been difficult for her to get by and keep up with bills. When she's tried to apply for assistance she's told she makes too much, but she doesn't make enough to keep up, much less get ahead.

Recently, we launched Step Into Freedom, a trauma-informed financial literacy course, and Cheyenne enthusiastically applied to participate. She and the other 15 mothers in the program attend weekly skill-building meetings and complete homework assignments that boost the skills they learn. Upon completion of the course, Cheyenne and the other participants will open an Individual Development Account, a special savings account where she can deposit funds and practice saving by leaving the funds to accrue over time. After she has

spent time saving for several months, Step By Step will match the funds she saved, dollar for dollar or, in some cases, two dollars for every dollar, so she can reach a financial goal of her choosing. Program participants can start an emergency savings account, pay off school or other debt, or save for a car or a house down payment.

This program will allow Cheyenne to have enough latitude to save towards a goal of her choosing and not only practice skills but actually gain an emergency savings fund for the times her daughter is sick.

Cheyenne is excited to save, reduce debt and start reaching other financial goals — she's seeing how the trauma she's experienced has affected where she is now and learning that her future can still be bright for herself and her child.





# BIG SISTERS & MOM'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Isolation has been a recurring throughline of many of our stories over the past two years. A pillar of our program is COMMUNITY. Many single moms call us for the first time just feeling lonely and looking for friendship and connection. Our Revive nights were a great place to cultivate that community through our family dinners and support groups. When we had to cancel Revive nights going forward for the safety of our volunteers and families, that community element became difficult to sustain. We continued to receive calls from new moms wanting to join Step By Step, but it was clear that making genuine connections with other moms via a group Zoom call would be a challenge.

As the number of new moms continued to increase, we knew moms who have longevity and take ownership of our program would be the perfect people to introduce them to the program and to one another.

Anytime a new mom entered our program, we connected her with a mom who has been coming to Step By Step and has received some training in boundaries and healthy friendships.

We paired Princess as a Big Sister with her Little Sister, Miche. Nervous at first and not sure what they would have in common besides being moms, Princess and Miche found that talking with one another was easy. They started meeting regularly by phone and then met up at the park with their children. One day we received a call from Princess.

"How did you know? How on earth did you know Miche and I would get along so well? It's like we've known one another all of our lives. We are so close!"

In her own words:

"I've always been kind of shy and it takes me a while to open up to people. Being a big sister puts me in the position to make relationships with people. It has pushed me out of my comfort zone and made me grow towards my dream career of being a social worker. I am so grateful Step By Step opened up this opportunity and chose me for this position. I feel like I have a super power now. I can help others feel less alone while also being able to be supported. It isn't just a one-sided relationship where I give more and more. Step By Step teaches us to have healthy boundaries and I get to practice them by being a Big Sister."

Watching moms empower one another and create connections where none existed before has impacted everyone at Step By Step in positive ways and raised up new leaders in our program. It was out of this group of leaders that we formed the Mom's Advisory Committee.

The Mom's Advisory Committee grew from a desire to continue centering the voices of moms in our programming. When we say we exist to empower young mothers, we cannot fulfill our mission if we do not give them opportunities to lead us as an organization.

The Staff worked with the committee to teach them skills such as a S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses,

Opportunities, Threats) analysis, vision casting, and culture shifting.

"I have never been a part of a program that asks me my opinion and takes it seriously. They really listened to our feedback and we see it in some of the new programs that will launch next year. Step By Step is teaching me that I have a voice and that my voice actually matters."

These leaders offered insight and suggestions into how to make Step By Step better. Our Board Of Directors is currently writing our new Strategic Plan and these young women are instrumental in crafting the direction Step By Step will be going next. We believe these young women and their children are the future of Step By Step and the future of Lexington. It is an honor to have them on our team.

**"I FEEL LIKE I HAVE A SUPER POWER NOW. I CAN HELP OTHERS FEEL LESS ALONE WHILE BEING ABLE TO BE SUPPORTED."**





# ECHO & RESOUND LEADERS

We launched our Echo & Resound Leadership Program two years ago. The program takes moms who are close to graduating our program or who have graduated our program who take leadership initiative and provides them with skill development and opportunities to lead. This intense training program provides not only spiritual formation courses, but tangible job training skills they can use in the workforce such as public speaking and curriculum development.

This summer, we hosted cookouts outdoors, allowing our moms and kids to gather safely and build community. The well-trained Echo & Resound leaders mobilized, helped Step By Step Staff plan and then later took over the summer cookouts on their own! They planned games, personally invited young women and their children, and even planned a Step By Step Staff appreciation night organizing gifts and sharing in public speeches just how much the program means to them.

"You all believe in us and taught us that we are leaders...not just moms. We know we contribute not only to Step By Step but to this community. We can do this because you all believed in us, gave us the skills, and now...there is no stopping us."

We were able to pay these young women stipends for their work, especially when the needs grew so large that our small staff needed to focus on the emergencies. Step By Step has raised up leaders who are ready for the task.



**"... THERE IS NO STOPPING US."**



# BASIC NEEDS PACKAGES

Step By Step began delivering Basic Needs Care Packages in 2020 during the quarantine when most of our moms could not make ends meet. We have continued to provide monthly deliveries with toiletries, clothing detergent, feminine products and more.

This past year has been a struggle financially for LaTaesha. It has been difficult for her to keep a job, and her finances have been unsteady. Though many have returned to work and are receiving assistance, for some it is just not enough to make ends meet.

This fall, LaTaesha signed up to participate in our Step Into Freedom financial literacy class, where she is learning new budgeting skills that she is implementing into her life. She shared during one of our budgeting sessions.

"My family has been able to budget for other things because I can request monthly items from Step By Step. There have been times when diapers and wipes arrived just as I was about to run out. My kids also love getting the monthly delivery of a brand new book and activity through Step Into Reading. I literally do not know how we would make it if we had to pay for these items too right now. I mean, without Step By Step I have sometimes had to make the choice to pay the light bill or buy diapers."

We are grateful so many of you have partnered with us to allow us to continue this important service.

**"I LITERALLY DO NOT KNOW  
HOW WE WOULD MAKE IT IF  
WE HAD TO PAY FOR THOSE  
ITEMS TOO RIGHT NOW."**



# MENTAL HEALTH



When Yolonda (name changed to protect our mom's privacy) called us on the phone she was screaming so loudly we couldn't understand her. Her words were not making any sense but we knew she was in trouble. Our Program Director, Alicia Sims spoke soothingly to her as the rest of the team jumped into action finding the number for her emergency contact and looking for the contact information of the therapist to whom we had previously referred her. Yolonda's life had seemed so much more stable. We connected her with a housing partner and she went from unhomed to homed. She was doing great at work and had managed to save up for a reliable car. But, there was no trace of her jovial nature during this call.

"I can't do this. I don't want to live anymore. Somebody needs to help me. I want it all to end."

"Where are the children?" Alicia asked calmly. They were present as their mother was sinking deeper and deeper into a depressive episode. She had fed them lunch and just collapsed. The only thing she could think to do was call us and ask for prayer.

We confirmed there were no weapons in the house and as Alicia talked to her, Kelli, our Program Administrator, and Tanya Torp, our Executive Director, called her sister and her children's father to tell them they would need to get the children immediately. We

also called her therapist to let her know what was happening. We kept her on the phone as Alicia made her way to her home to sit with her and wait until her therapist arrived. All of this happened in the span of 15 minutes.

An hour later, Alicia was still with Yolonda, when Maria (name changed to protect our mom's privacy) called Kelli.

"I'm having racing thoughts and I just can't do this anymore. I don't want to be here. My children are better off without me."

"Maria, where are you?" Kelli asked calmly.

"I'm at work."

"Do you have a plan for hurting yourself?"

"Yes. I can do it here at work."

"Where are your children?"

"They are still at daycare."

"Who can we call to pick them up?"

"My mom, I guess."

Kelli flagged down Tanya, and Tanya called Maria's mother on her cell phone and 9-1-1 on the office phone. There were 3 active phones for this young woman.

As she worked at a large factory, Tanya had to use another line to call the factory to direct the ambulance.

Kelli said softly, "We have to take this seriously

and we are sending an ambulance. You have told me you are going to hurt yourself. We love you, and we have to call.

Your brain is lying to you right now. The chemicals in your brain are not aligned, and it is making you feel as if your life is not worth living. But we are going to do everything in our power to help you."

Tanya continued on the phone asking the factory for the supervisor to sit with the mom until the ambulance arrived.

In the span of 30 minutes the children were safe, the ambulance arrived, and the supervisor had started procedures to provide paid time off for Maria.

The entire country has seen an increase in suicidal ideation and we have seen so much devastation here at Step By Step. In an effort to be proactive, we created a new "Crisis Response Team", partnering with Inner Solace Counseling Service to provide rapid mental health follow-up to our moms who have experienced a crisis. If they already have a therapist, Inner Solace will work with them to provide mindfulness tips and will communicate with the therapist. If they do not, this is an opportunity for them to be evaluated by a licensed professional. This partnership is so beautiful because owner Amanda Parsons has been a partner with Step By Step over the past 6 years. She understands our population and has often spoken at Revive nights about mental health and self care.

We have many other community partners we refer to for mental health, but having our own Crisis Response Team ensures an extra level of care for our moms experiencing significant trauma right now.





Our Mentors have certainly endured during this past year. Monyce and Mary have a special bond. Mary is a long term volunteer who has worked in different capacities with us over the past 15 years. Her desire is to see young women grow in their faith, and she uses her background in domestic violence prevention to relate to some of the situations our moms come from.

Monyce has been with us since October 2017 — in those 4 years she has graduated from the University of Kentucky, started graduate school, maintained a steady job, and is currently working to purchase her own home. She was hitting her goals and doing well, but wanted more guidance, specifically in growing in her faith. She wanted to know more about God and understanding the Bible, and she seeks to lead her own daughter spiritually. We paired Monyce with Mary and they began to study the Bible together weekly, sometimes over Zoom and sometimes at the park.

As they studied the Bible together, they shared, Monyce opened up to Mary and they built a deeper connection. They continue to stay connected and share life with one another.

# VOLUNTEER IMPACT



THE RESULTS

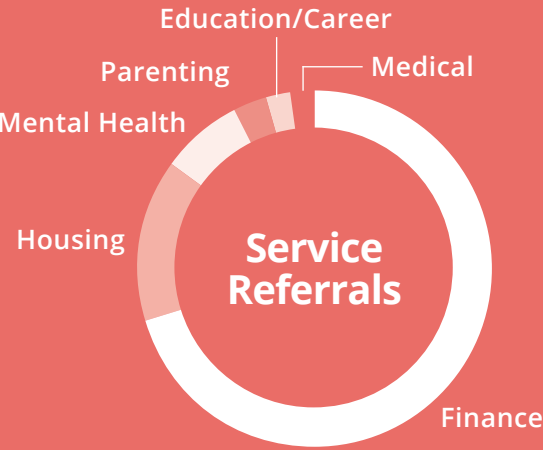
# OUR IMPACT

919

Basic Needs  
Items Delivered

303

Moms and Kids  
Served

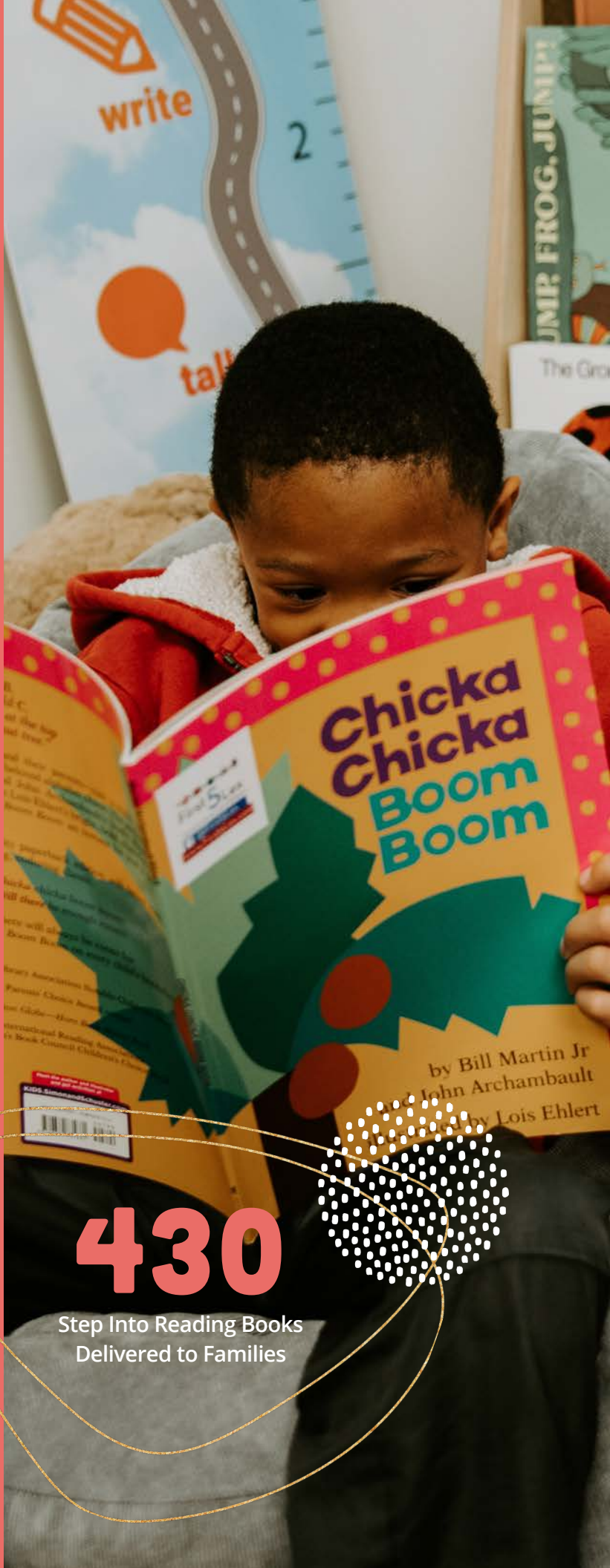


\$34,076.03

Funds Paid to Keep Moms Homed and Bills Paid

1,400

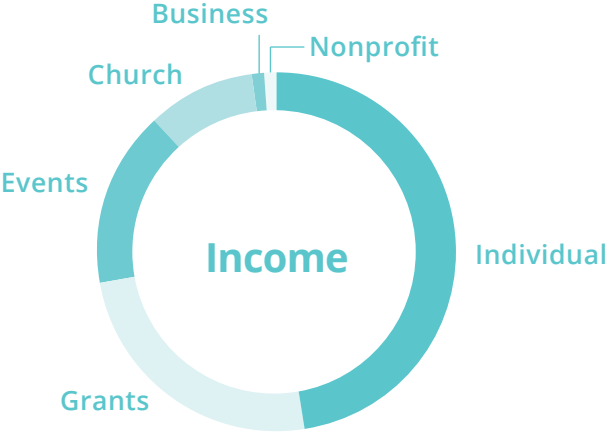
Interactions with Young Single Moms  
(Includes 1:1 meetings, case management, and mentor relationships)



430

Step Into Reading Books  
Delivered to Families

THE NUMBERS



Income Distribution Raised to Date

87%

\$284,137.63

Total Funds Raised to Date

\$327,895.98

Operating Budget

\$98,933.03

Endowment Balance

\$231,355.43

Joseph Fund Balance

*\*This fund includes at least three months of operating expenses held in reserve in case of unforeseen emergency circumstances.*



# WHAT'S NEXT

## Step By Step Christmas Store

At Step By Step, our young single moms ages 12 to 24 work hard to earn Christmas gifts for their children through our incentive program. Through program participation, our moms gain an incredible sense of pride and accomplishment by earning and then “shopping” for gifts for their children in our Christmas Store.

By signing up to provide toys for a Step by Step kid you are committing to purchase \$50 of new and unwrapped gifts.

\*Please no clothes, toy weapons, glitter, or makeup. Individual items not to exceed \$25 each. Sign up to volunteer or provide toys and supplies at [sbslex.org/christmas2021](https://sbslex.org/christmas2021)

## GoodGiving Challenge

Every year Step By Step participants in the Blue Grass Community Foundation’s “GoodGiving Challenge”, a week-long online giving challenge for over 130 local nonprofits. This year’s dates are Tuesday, November 30 through Monday, December 6 and our goal is \$33,000. Approximately 15% of our overall budget is raised yearly by this event. Please sign up and create an Ambassador Page at [bggives.org/stepbystep](https://bggives.org/stepbystep)

## Staff Update

You have seen that with only four staff members, demand for our services has continued to increase exponentially. We have increased the number of families we reach by 20% this past year. Such a demand means we need additional staff. Step By Step will be hiring a Program Coordinator to work directly with moms in case management, but this role will also be responsible for helping us to launch two programs we are particularly excited about.

### Love Notes

Love Notes is a program that reduces domestic violence and repeat pregnancies. Developed right here in Kentucky, this evidence-based program has proven to be effective all over the country. Our employees will be trained in the program and the Program Coordinator will help launch the program with some of our partner agencies.

### Parenting Classes

There has been a demand for parenting classes outside of regular business hours. We will use trauma-informed curriculum to provide evening classes for our moms, providing a hot meal, childcare and transportation.

### Step Into Freedom

Our pilot program is going well and we will expand the program to include more partners and additional opportunities for young single moms to learn skills and receive matching dollars in their savings accounts to reduce poverty.





# THANK YOU!

Thank you to ALL the many individual donors who have chosen to support the young mothers and children of Lexington. We are so appreciative of you and what you have made possible!

Donate to Step by Step at [sbslex.org/donate](https://sbslex.org/donate) or scan the QR code below.





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