



# FOSTERING MEDIA CONNECTIONS

## 2014-15 ANNUAL REPORT



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# HISTORY AND FUTURE IN METAPHOR

It is hard to imagine life before oil.

In 1859, Edwin Drake set down the first commercial oil well in the U.S. in Titusville, Pennsylvania. Within a dozen years, Pennsylvania's massive oil fields would be supplying the globe with all varieties of the substance, refined into petroleum, lubricant and many other applications.

Next to the genius behind drilling for oil, the use of pipes to move the black stuff from the wells to the railway lines was the industry's most important innovation. By 1872, as crusading journalist Ida Tarbell wrote in her epic description of the birth of Standard Oil, "the business had been developed, systematized, simplified."

The analogy fits FMC's current state of affairs quite well.

In the beginning, FMC was comprised of a journalist and a cameraman. In 2010, the two traveled to different media markets around the country, and interviewed experts—including children and youth—engaged in the field of child welfare. Then, the nascent FMC team would match the stories they heard on the ground with policy solutions being churned out back in Washington D.C. They went to any media outlet that would listen with "menus" of solution-based stories to share with other journalists.

Lo and behold, those media outlets then produced nuanced stories about the systems that serve children; stories that were as much about solutions as they were about problems.

This was a laborious affair, so we at FMC decided to systematize our efforts. Travelling from one media market to the next was a good tactic, but how much more powerful would it be if we were to create our own "army of solution-based journalists?"



## OUR MISSION

Fostering Media Connections is a nonprofit news organization that uses solution-based journalism to improve the lives of vulnerable children.

Solution-based journalism focuses not just on social problems but also on how those problems are being solved. We accomplish our mission by reporting and producing our own stories, which are published on our news website, *The Chronicle of Social Change*. Those stories are then distributed to mainstream and niche media outlets so that other journalists follow our coverage and thus change the overarching narrative of children in crisis.

We also train student journalists, policymakers and social workers in solution-based journalism, and share our expertise about policy affecting vulnerable children with professional reporters nationwide. Finally, we connect child welfare professionals through *The Chronicle of Social Change* to increase the field's collective impact.

In 2012, FMC launched the Journalism for Social Change program (J4SC) at U.C. Berkeley, which trains graduate students of journalism, public policy and social work to produce solution-based journalism. That program has since expanded to USC's Price School of Public Policy, and in the spring of 2015, was also launched as a Massive Open Online Course with thousands of students from across the country and all over the world.

FMC has now trained thousands of people in solution-based journalism. They represent what Edwin Drake found under the Pennsylvania earth: an enormous well of sheer energy, which, with systematization and tenacity, can be turned into something that changes the world.

In 2013, FMC launched *The Chronicle of Social Change*, a daily news website dedicated to coverage of the juvenile justice and child welfare systems and which, most importantly, provides a platform to drive mainstream media coverage of issues facing vulnerable children and families.

*The Chronicle of Social Change* is akin to the refineries, miles away from the wells. It draws its content from various sources: FMC staff writers, occasional freelancers, guest writers who provide commentary, paying members of our Blogger Co-Op<sup>1</sup>, and J4SC students who write stories either as assignments during the semester or during our summer fellowship.

Before the advent of sophisticated pipelines, oil had to be transported from Pennsylvania's "wildcat gushers" in barrels, often drawn in wagons driven by the Teamsters Union. Beyond extortion and graft, crude oil was routinely lost along the way.

This is where we are in our systematization. We simply have too much content to adequately edit and refine before publishing on *The Chronicle*.

In five years, FMC has grown into a machine, which has trained many hundreds of people in the tenets of solution-based journalism, produced thousands of stories and seeded hundreds more in mainstream media outlets. Along the way, we have started to shift how child welfare is covered in the mainstream media, and have driven policy change, sometimes quite dramatically, to the benefit of vulnerable children and their families.

But we still have a good way to go.

In this annual report you will come to understand how far we have come. We hope you will be inspired to support us in our efforts to bring a new journalism to the mainstream, one that focuses on solutions and lifts up the lives of the vulnerable in doing so.

*"The Chronicle of Social Change is a recurring tab on my browser and serves as a daily 'go to' news source to keep everyone here at Camellia Network informed."*

*—Isis Dallis Keigwin  
Co-Founder, Camellia Network  
[www.camellianetwork.org](http://www.camellianetwork.org)*

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<sup>1</sup> Our Blogger Co-Op allows writers to buy a "membership" to be able to submit stories to *The Chronicle*. They pay \$60.00, \$40.00 of which goes to the "Co-Op," which is then split among the total roster of bloggers (currently over 30), based on the amount of traffic they generate.



# FROM SOURCE TO IMPACT

The following diagram illustrates how the Fostering Media Connections system works. Content enters *The Chronicle of Social Change* from various sources, illustrated below. After publication on *The Chronicle*, the next leg in the pipeline is the distribution of those “refined” solution-based stories for the mainstream media to follow, thus driving policy change that improves the lives of vulnerable children.



## HISTORIC MEDIA PICKUP

All that media production then has to be converted into follow-up stories.

The following charts describe the rate at which the storylines we generate are picked up by mainstream and alternative media outlets. The count represents the number of stories that we found using rudimentary Internet searches, and thus does not fully account for the total, which is likely higher.

Notably, the 2014–15 fiscal year marked our strongest media penetration to date. In 2011–14, the overall media penetration decreased from a high in the 2010–11 fiscal year while we launched the Journalism for Social Change program and *The Chronicle of Social Change*. Both were labor-intensive efforts, and diverted much of our time away from directly pitching media outlets with the stories we were finding.

Interestingly, the time devoted to pitching media in FY 2014–15 did not match the time devoted in 2010–11. What was the difference? The production of stories on *The Chronicle of Social Change* created a constant swell of coverage that required much less effort to get picked up in other outlets.

The system started yielding serious results that would have never been possible if we had stuck to our initial tactic without developing the full FMC machine, with its own training program and media platform.

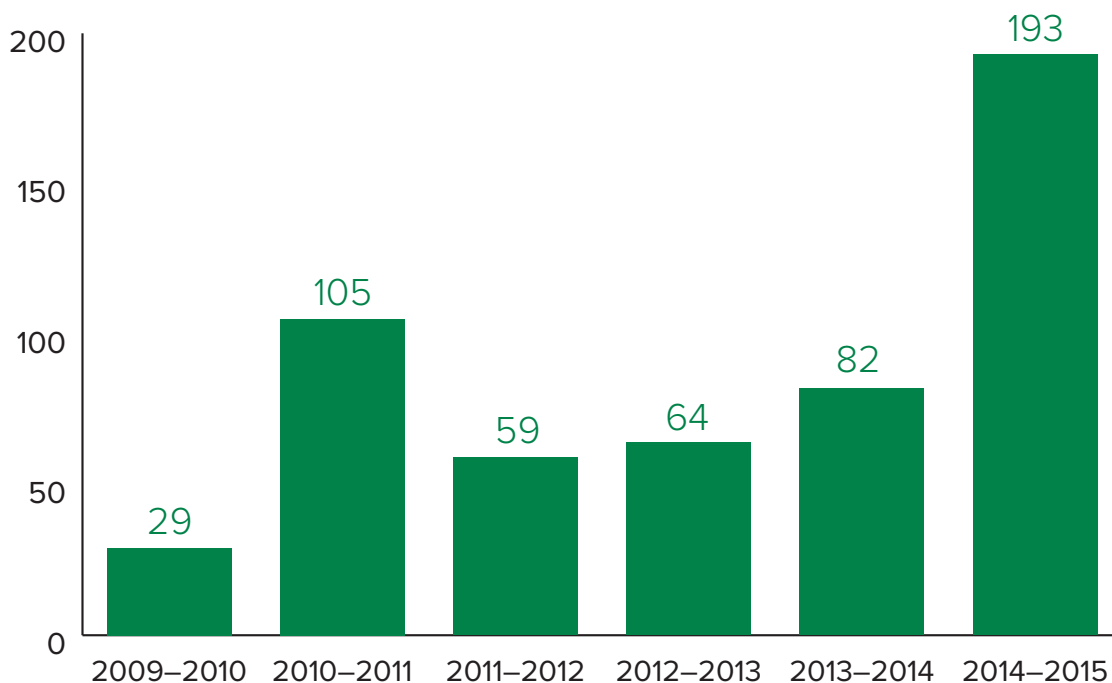
Los Angeles Times

StarTribune

KPCC 89.3  
Southern California Public Radio

OWN

### Total FMC Stories Picked Up By Other Media Outlets

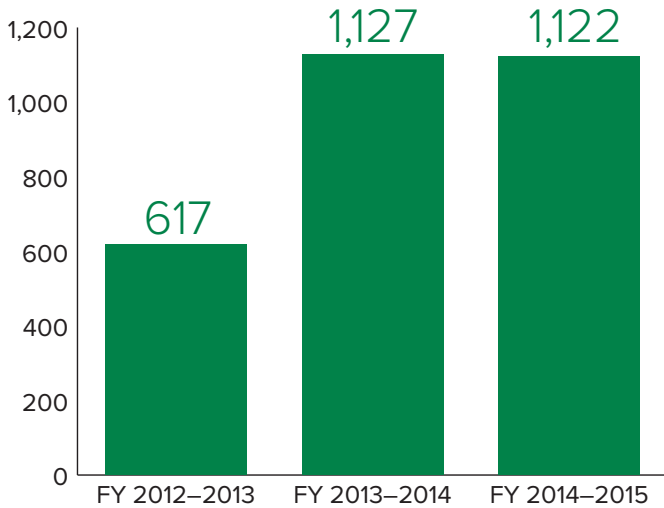




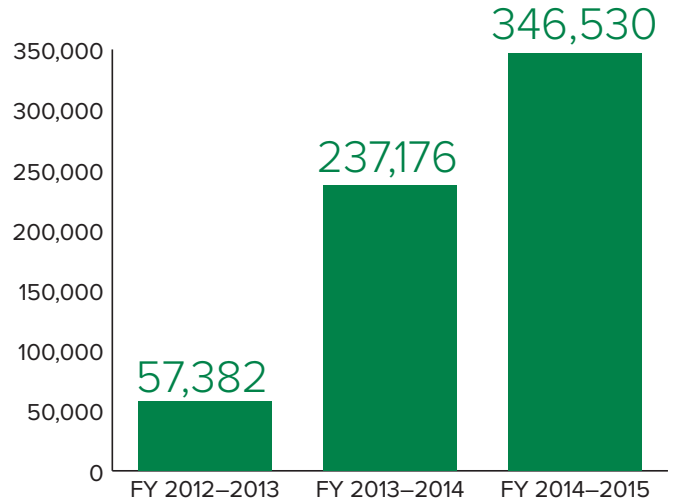
# OUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

FMC produces hundreds of news stories, opinion and analysis pieces, funder profiles, job and event listings and grant descriptions each year. Following is a breakdown of our site traffic and output by fiscal year.

### The Chronicle of Social Change Total Stories & Entries

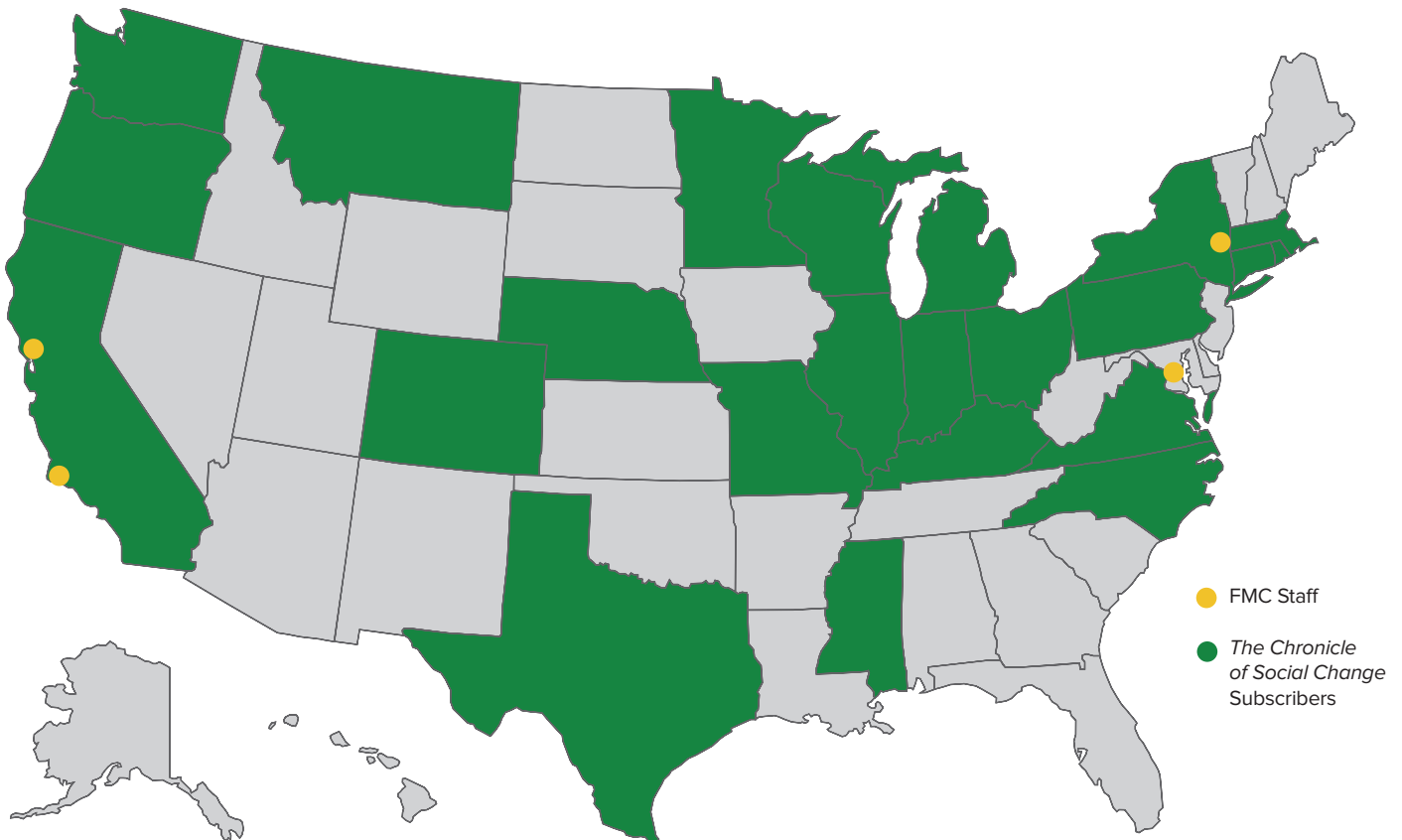


### The Chronicle of Social Change Site Traffic



## The Chronicle of Social Change Subscribers

Our readers come from all over the world. This map shows the locations of our paying subscribers who get access to all of our content, including expert analysis, our grants database, and more.



## Relative Caregivers in Los Angeles

Despite research that shows that living with family members translates to better educational outcomes for foster youth than congregate-care placements like group homes, many relative caregivers in California receive a paucity of funding that lags behind the support given to unrelated caregivers. Our coverage of this issue in Los Angeles County, home to more foster youth than anywhere else in the nation, led mainstream media outlets to also focus on equal pay for relative caregivers. Ultimately, the county opted into the largely state-sponsored program and payments began going out in June of 2015.

**9/4/14**  
[L.A. County Weighs Accessing New Money for Relative Caregivers](#)

**9/7/14**  
[The L.A. Times Editorial Board, Don't Miss Out on This Foster Care Fix, L.A.](#)

**9/9/14**  
[KPCC, Should L.A. County Opt in to Change Foster Care?](#)

**9/30/14**  
[Los Angeles County Opts into State Relative Caregiver Funding Program](#)

## Locked Up & Locked Out: A Saga of Three Brothers

In October 2014, we released our first story on the Bakhit brothers. The youngest, Joseph, was able to access extended foster care, while his brother Terrick was effectively locked out of the life-changing program.

Why? Terrick was in juvenile hall on his 18th birthday.

Our coverage spurred State Senator Jim Beall (D-San Jose) to introduce a bill that would prevent this from happening to other youth in Terrick's situation.

Beall's Senate Bill 12 continues to work its way to the governor's desk. The bill would allow extended foster care benefits for foster youth who were either locked up or on probation when they turned 18.

**10/14/14**  
[Three Brothers, Three Paths Out of Foster Care](#)

**3/26/15**  
[Widening the Door of Extended Foster Care for Probation Youth](#)

### JULY 2014

#### Children of the System

The Oprah Winfrey Network aired an episode of its docu-series, "Our America with Lisa Ling" focused on Los Angeles County's child welfare system. FMC Executive Director Daniel Heimpel served as a co-producer of the episode. In June 2015 The National Association of Social Workers gave "Children of the System" its award for "Best TV News Program."

Photo: Billy Pena



The OWN crew on-site shooting "Children of the System." Viewers heard inspiring stories of foster youth whose lives have been positively changed by FMC's work.



# 2014-15 TIMELINE 0



When told that a State Senator had read his story and was taking action, Terrick Bakhit was appreciative and surprised.

“Wow, that is really cool,” Bakhit said. “All that was worth something— it made a difference.”

“When you take away benefits, it is telling the kid, ‘You’re not going to college,’” Beall says. “We’re going to fix that. That is the intent of [Senate Bill] 12.”

## Predictive Analytics

Thanks to coverage in *The Chronicle of Social Change*, the application of predictive analytics in preventing and assessing child abuse has become a hot topic not only in child welfare circles, but the mainstream media. Our coverage has driven an important debate about the concerns and benefits of applying Big Data to preventing child abuse.

*Armand Montiel, spokesman for Los Angeles County’s Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), agrees that using data to determine risk is critical, and also thinks that predictive analytics’ real potential lies before a call of abuse is ever made.*

*“Instead of predictive analytics, lets do preventive analytics,” Montiel said in an interview. “DCFS is not the proper agency for social engineering. The school system, mental health, public health, probation, law enforcement, they all see these families before we do.”*

10/27/14

[Preventive Analytics](#)

1/13/15

[KPCC, Can an Algorithm Predict Child Abuse?](#)

4/10/15

[New Zealand Crunches Big Data to Prevent Child Abuse](#)

5/9/15

[Bloomberg, From New Zealand to Pittsburgh, A Moneyball Approach to Helping Troubled Kids](#)

10/16/14

FMC’s Annual Fundraiser

We hosted Late Night with FMC at our headquarters in San Francisco’s

Presidio. Our emcee was widely acclaimed TV-journalist Lisa Ling, executive producer and host of CNN’s docu-series THIS IS LIFE.



## JANUARY 2015

### Journalism for Social Change

FMC’s Executive Director Daniel Heimpel continued to teach in-person versions of Journalism for Social Change at USC and U.C. Berkeley for the third consecutive year. At USC, the course is called Media for Policy Change and became a permanent offering in the Sol Price School of Public Policy in 2015.



# F IMPACT AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS



**Journalism for Social Change**

Join the Free Course Online  
Learn to create solution-based journalism and drive public policy

**Register Now**

**Course Information**

- ▶ Classes start January 8, 2015
- ▶ Course duration is 6 weeks
- ▶ Estimated time required 2-4 hours / week
- ▶ Enrollment limited to 150 registrants
- ▶ Course is entirely online at edx.org
- ▶ Click here to [watch the video overview](#)

"All the time reporters spend asking about problems should, and can, be matched with an equally rigorous examination of solutions."  
- Daniel Heimpel, Course Instructor

Sponsored by:    

**1/8/15**  
**Launch of Journalism for Social Change Online**

FMC launched an online version of the Journalism for Social Change class as a small private online course (SPOC). A select group of 200 professionals from the child welfare and youth services fields were invited to participate in the course, which ran for seven weeks. Participants learned how to use journalism to drive change within the child welfare system. Some participants were invited to have their best stories published on *The Chronicle of Social Change*.

**3/17/15**  
**Drugging Our Kids**

Investigative reporter Karen de Sá joined the Journalism for Social Change class at U.C. Berkeley to screen "Drugging Our Kids," a 2015 award-winning documentary she and photojournalist Dai Sugano produced for *The San Jose Mercury News*. The documentary focused on the over-reliance of psychotropic drugs in the foster care system. It came on the heels of a searing series in *The San Jose Mercury News* under the same name, which resulted in the California State Legislature introducing numerous bills to address the issue.

**3/4/15**  
**Launch of the MOOC**

After a successful run as a SPOC, FMC launched the Journalism for Social Change massive open online course (MOOC) in partnership with the Goldman School of Public Policy, the California Social Work Education Center, the Berkeley Resource Center for Online Education and EdX. The class drew 7,700 students, many of whom created strong solution-based stories for *The Chronicle of Social Change*.

**Angel Enters Foster Care through Probation's Door**

In this story, *The Chronicle* explored how probation youth are eligible for extended foster care in California, but are routinely left out or underserved by probation departments loathe to take on the responsibility of these young people. Through Angel's story we were able to understand how California's 4,000 probation foster youth are served at the murky intersection of foster care and juvenile justice.

*"I thought it was very unfair," Angel says. "I hadn't done anything wrong, but was being treated like a criminal."*

**4/13/15**  
**Angel Enters Foster Care Through Probation's Door**

**4/13/15**  
**Witness L.A.: Who's Watching Out for Angel?**



**4/30/15**

**Media for Policy Change Child Welfare Solutions Symposium**

Students from USC's Media for Policy Change class host an annual Child Welfare Solutions Symposium to present their semester-long work to members of the media, faculty and leaders in the Los Angeles child welfare community. The 2015 class featured Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and Fesia Davenport, interim director of the Office of Child Protection, as guest speakers.



**6/19/15–6/21/15**

**The Foster Youth Questival**

For the past four years, FMC has helped a group of former foster youth and their supporters exercise their unique strengths by leading them up the slopes of Mt. Shasta, a 14,179-foot peak in northern California, to raise funds for youth-led advocacy dedicated to improving the foster care system.

Each year, Questival participants return from the mountain having come face-to-face with their own self-doubt and determination, and having seen the world, literally, from the top of a mountain. It is a powerful, life-changing experience that the staff at FMC is honored to facilitate.

Mt. Shasta sees about a 50 percent success rate among those who attempt to reach its summit. To date, Questival climbers have been successful about 80 percent of the time, and the former foster youth are always the most committed of the group.



**6/15**

**The CommLab**

FMC started production on a series of videos and online learning tools meant to strengthen and enhance the written communications of social work students at the University of Southern California's prestigious School of Social Work. The work is an outgrowth of FMC's experience developing the Journalism for Social Change Program, and will bring the tenets of solution-based journalism to the myriad types of writing required of social workers.



*CA State Sen. Holly Mitchell with Gary Wood of 2U, and Christie Renick and Daniel Heimpel of FMC, during the filming of one segment of the USC Social Work CommLab.*

**5/13/15**

**KCBS: Senators Stall Bill Funding More Benefits for Foster Kids**

**6/3/15**

**Bill That Would Close Loophole for Crossover Youth Advances**

# THE CHRONICLE OF SOCIAL CHANGE COVERAGE AREAS

## Positive Youth Development

“Positive Youth Justice: Curbing Crime, Building Assets” is a seven-part series that imagines an entire continuum of juvenile justice services built on the positive youth development framework. The series profiles successful programs and organizations involved in different juvenile justice systems. It features artwork from photographer Max Whittaker of Prime Collective and was funded in part by the Sierra Health Foundation.

## The Los Angeles County Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection

Los Angeles County’s Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) fields 220,000 allegations of child abuse a year, oversees the cases of 30,000 families whose children have been victims of substantiated abuse and takes care of 15,000 children who have been removed from their biological parents. It is the largest child welfare system in the world.

The headlines of local newspapers paint a system that is “broken,” “embattled” and “in crisis.”

Those very headlines drove the county to create a Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) on Child Protection in June 2013, which issued its final recommendations in April 2014. By admission of some of the commissioners themselves, the BRC—never given any power beyond a bully pulpit—failed to implement a cogent media strategy.

The county supervisors then appointed a transition team to implement the BRC recommendations. The transition team was “sunsetting” in January 2015 with the hiring of an interim director of the Office of Child Protection.

Over the past year and a half, our reporting and coverage of the BRC reform efforts have spurred follow-up media coverage and increased interest and political will in the proposed reforms. Our coverage seeded the use of the term “child welfare czar” in Los Angeles County. We were also pleased to learn that, following our coverage of L.A.’s underfunded electronic child abuse reporting system in February 2014, the District Attorney’s office requested four dedicated personnel to utilize and maintain the system.

We have also looked at the feasibility of the commission’s final recommendations, uncovering potential roadblocks and their solutions, and issued three quarterly progress reports on the L.A. County Board of Supervisors’ efforts to implement these recommendations. We have heard from county staff that our progress reports—and *The Chronicle of Social Change* as a whole—are valuable resources and are closely read across divisions.

“As Executive Director of a nonprofit juvenile justice organization, I am constantly seeking the latest news and information involving children and youth around the country. *The Chronicle of Social Change* provides me with just that, and I was captivated the first time I visited the site. I would recommend it to anyone interested in children and youth issues.”

—Wm. Chuck Jackson, Ph.D.  
Executive VP & Chief Clinical Officer,  
Starr Commonwealth, [www.starr.org](http://www.starr.org)



## Children’s Mental Health

California is home to more than nine million children and youth under the age of 18, about 13 percent of minors nationwide. A decade ago, a troubling chasm existed in the mental health services offered to the state’s most vulnerable children and youth: those who were either in foster care, or in danger of entering foster care.

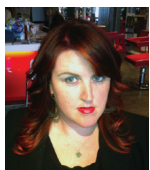
Most were not screened and treated for mental health needs, state officials now admit. And those who were treated often received services in the confines of a hospital bed, away from any shred of normalcy and support present in their lives.

*Katie A. v Bonta*, a class-action lawsuit filed in 2002, was meant to change that. It yielded two settlements—one with the state and another with Los Angeles County. Both required all California counties to provide coordinated, home-based services for at-risk children and youth with serious mental health challenges.

*The Chronicle* published a three-part series examining what has been accomplished under *Katie A.* and what challenges persist.

## BLOGGER CO-OP

The first of its kind, our blogger co-op provides a platform for diverse voices within the child welfare and juvenile justice community to express their views and experiences. Members of the co-op range from former foster youth and foster and adoptive parents to academics and professionals in the field. Bloggers pay a nominal annual membership fee, and earn money back based on the number of clicks their posts get.



*“The Chronicle of Social Change has provided me with an invaluable platform that allows me, an older former foster youth, to*

*speak on issues that you can’t find anywhere else. The site is the perfect blend of personal stories, provocative commentary and the latest research in the field of child welfare.”*

*—Georgette Todd  
author of Foster Girl, a Memoir  
[www.georgettetodd.com](http://www.georgettetodd.com)*



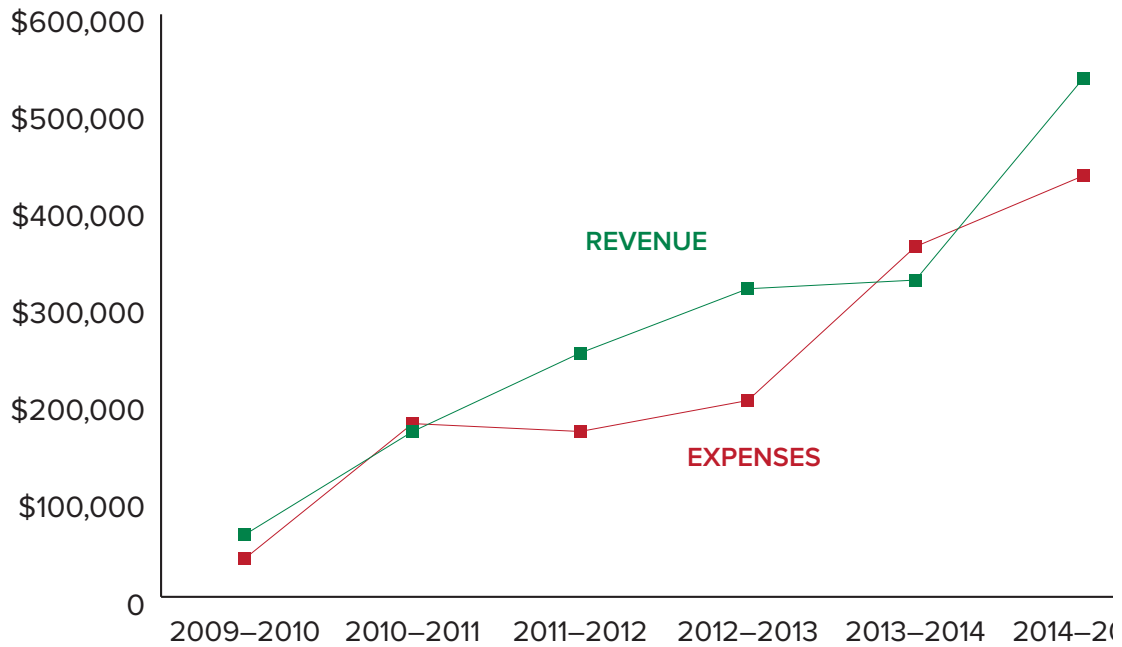
*“Being a part of The Chronicle of Social Change is not only important, but necessary. It allows me to have a voice in*

*the movement to change people’s minds, thoughts and feelings about important issues such as foster care, adoption and supporting the sanctity of the American family system. From a grassroots organization such as this one, change is inevitable. It’s not a matter of how any more, it’s a matter of when.”*

*—Jeanette Yoffe, M.F.T.  
executive director, Celia Center  
[www.celiacenter.org](http://www.celiacenter.org)*

# FINANCIALS

	2009–2010	2010–2011	2011–2012	2012–2013	2013–2014	2014–2015
REVENUE	\$64,103.87	\$170,231.22	\$251,128.90	\$317,308.73	\$326,270.55	\$533,807.57
EXPENSES	\$39,465.87	\$178,433.89	\$170,321.13	\$202,236.77	\$360,711.25	\$433,601.94
PROFIT	\$34,638.00	-\$8,202.67	\$80,717.77	\$115,071.96	-\$34,220.70	\$100,205.63





## OUR 2014-15 SUPPORTERS

Walter S. Johnson Foundation  
The California Endowment  
The Dave Thomas Foundation  
USC School of Social Work  
The Anthony and Jeanne  
Pritzker Family Foundation  
The Ralph M. Parsons  
Foundation  
The May and Stanley Smith  
Charitable Trust  
The Zellerbach Family  
Foundation  
The Law Offices of Semha  
Alwaya  
Jamel Perkins  
Lindsay and Henry Ellenbogen  
The Sierra Health Foundation  
Ford Foundation  
Tackett Mull Nicolai LLP  
Natasha and David Dolby  
Sum of All Numbers  
California Alliance of Child and  
Family Services  
Beth Fraker  
Keith E. Fraker  
and Dorothy Fraker  
Plum Organics  
Fenton Communications  
LoBue & Majdalany  
Management Group  
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Kathleen Strottman

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*The* **CHRONICLE**  
*of* **SOCIAL CHANGE**

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