

Neighbors



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100+ Women supports foster youth helpers

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Progress Guest Writer

Friends of Ohana is a transformative force for foster youth in Arizona.

Rooted in a deep commitment to breaking cycles of trauma, neglect, and despair, this organization is bringing new hope, healing, and a powerful sense of community to those who need it most.

Friends of Ohana is more than just a nonprofit – it's a lifeline for foster youth striving to overcome their circumstances and build brighter futures.

At its core, Friends of Ohana recognizes that the foster care system, while necessary, often leaves children and young adults feeling isolated and unsupported.

The statistics are grim: a significant number of foster youths are at risk of homelessness, dropping out of school, and becoming involved in the criminal justice system as they age out of the system.

But here is where Friends of Ohana



Celebrating 100+ Women's support for Friends of Ohana are, from left, Reina Robles, Kimberly Sutherland, Greer Saylor, Kendall Hospenthal, Libby Murphy, Ryan Senters and Mandi Lawson. (KimTarnopolski)

steps in, determined to rewrite that narrative by fostering a sense of belonging, resilience, and opportunity.

The organization's programs focus

on providing the emotional and practical support that every young person deserves.

Through mentorship programs, self-

esteem initiatives, and employment resources, Friends of Ohana nurtures growth in the areas that matter most – self-worth, emotional healing, and independent success.

Their Mentorship Program creates lasting adult relationships with people who can strengthen their resilience and inspire hope for a bright future.

Meanwhile, their Workforce Development and Job Placement Programs equip youth with the tools needed to secure stable employment and thrive as independent adults.

These are not just services; they are pillars that help to shatter the historical cycles of abandonment and neglect.

The impact of Friends of Ohana ripples throughout the Phoenix community.

By advocating for foster youth and giving them the tools to succeed, the organization is strengthening the social fabric, ensuring that these young individuals are

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not left to struggle on their own.

The results are tangible: higher graduation rates, healthier relationships, and more empowered young people who are stepping into their futures with confidence.

But perhaps the most powerful aspect of Friends of Ohana is its focus on community.

The organization's name, "Ohana," which means "family" in Hawaiian, speaks to the foundational belief that no one should ever have to face life's challenges alone.

Friends of Ohana is proving every day that by creating a sense of belonging, we can help foster youth break free from the cycles of the past and build lives full of hope, promise, and possibility.

Friends of Ohana is lighting the way for a brighter, more inclusive future for all young people. Through hope, healing, and community, they are breaking the chains of the past—one life at a time.

In April, Kendall Hospenthal shared the mission of Friends of Ohana with her 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun group in Scottsdale. The members were moved by her presentation and selected the charity to receive their quarterly donations of \$19,257.

"It is truly inspiring to see so many women come together to uplift and empower the foster youth we serve. Your support sends a strong message that they are valued, supported, and capable of achieving their dreams," said Mandi Lawson, Friends chief development officer.

"We are incredibly grateful for your generosity and the lasting impact it will have on their journey to a brighter future."

Since the chapter's inception in 2015, 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun has donated over \$1.4 million to local charities. To learn more or to register for their upcoming giving circle on April 16: 100wwcvalleyofthesun.org. Guests are welcome.

To learn more about Friends of Ohana: ohanafriends.org. 