



2020 Final Grant Report

Presented to:

Arizona Women's Partnership

Kids in Focus (KIF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to giving at-risk kids the chance to see themselves and their world in a new light and equipping them with essential life skills to make the shift from surviving to thriving. Through ongoing evidence-based mentoring programs, KIF builds resilience skills and inspires confidence, trust, and hope in vulnerable kids starting at age 10.

When kids experience trauma, they often disconnect from themselves and the world around them. Through the restorative power of photography and the guidance of dedicated mentors, KIF gives kids the critical tools they need to reconnect with their environments, overcome their troubled circumstances, and become productive, caring and responsible citizens.

2020 Accomplishments

While 2020 has proven to be a challenging year, KIF still saw profound measurable success in building resilience in our community's most vulnerable children. Staff and counselors at our partner organizations reported improvements in kids' overall behavior, attitude, and self-confidence both during and after the programs. They also revealed that nearly all of the kids focus better in school and that the kids with anger issues showed drastic improvements in their behavior.

Programs and Number of Kids Served

This year, KIF increased the total number of kids served from 330 to 514 and focused on revamping and expanding the Grads in Focus program, creating a new live virtual program called Photo Studio Live, and redesigning and updating volunteer training and application processes. KIF also developed six new fall in-person programs designed to follow the CDC guidelines for social distancing and expanded the programs to 7, 8, and 9-year-old children. The ethnic/racial mix of the youth are 54% Hispanic, 23% Black, 20% Caucasian, and 3% American Indian. Below are some highlights of our 2020 expanded and new programs:

- **After-School:** 45 at-risk kids participated in three separate 9-week intensive programs in partnership with Children First Leadership Academy (CFLA), Boys & Girls Club, Guadalupe Branch, and Sequoia Deaf School. Although the Exhibit Opening event showcasing the kid's work was canceled due to the pandemic, each child received a 94-page hardbound book featuring their images, bios, and captions and plans are to include these kids in the Spring 2021 Exhibit Opening.
- **Grads in Focus:** 180 youth are now participating in the revamped alumni program providing quarterly team-building outings with mentors, private online forums, and monthly photo challenges with incentive prizes to keep them connected to their peers, mentors, and the exciting new world they have discovered. This program has gained incredible momentum with enrollment more than tripling in just a few weeks after the community-wide shut down through a targeted outreach effort by staff and mentors. The majority of kids are actively engaged in the program on a monthly, weekly, and sometimes daily basis.

- **Photo Studio Live:** 160 kids participated in this brand new innovative live virtual program in 10 Boys & Girls Clubs between May-August 2020 designed to help kids navigate the stressful, scary times associated with the COVID-19 crisis. This program features special contests and awards for the kids and will continue indefinitely.
- **Young Snapshots:** 39 at-risk and homeless youth ages 8, 9, and 10 from CFLA participated in a new fall in-person three-week in-school program under the direction of KIF staff, adult mentors, and six Jr mentors from the Grads in Focus program. The images that the kids create each week were then used in lesson plans by their teachers.
- **2-Week Walking Photo Exploration Program:** 30 at-risk youth, ages 10-17 from Boys & Girls Clubs (BGC) participated in a new two-week after-school program designed to help kids from underserved communities who are struggling more than before the virus build strong hearts, minds, and imaginations. The kids' photographs are on exhibit at the club, and the kids received awards for their efforts.
- **Traveling Exhibits:** The kids' powerful images were featured in nine traveling exhibits throughout our community, bringing awareness and inspiration to approximately 240,000 people. While KIF had to cancel two exhibitions due to COVID-19, we still gained valuable volunteers and supporters as well as provided a culturally-relevant art experience for the community. The 2020 venues include ASU Northlight Gallery, Black Cat Cafe, Biltmore Fashion Park, Burton Barr Library, Cartel Coffee Lab, Dr. Bob's Coffee, Kierland Commons, Scottsdale Civic Center Library, and Scottsdale Fashion Square.
- **Lifeline Emergency Program:** 60 kids and their families received critical emergency services through this new program. We provided food, clothing, housing aid and other support to kids whose parents lost jobs, or suddenly passed away. We also purchased graduation gifts for 41 students and hand-delivered their diplomas when graduation ceremonies were canceled and helped enroll several students in high-school when their parents refused to do so. We also partnered with Peoples Mortgage and CFLA to provide fully decorated Christmas trees, gifts, and a Fry's gift card to 12 needy kids and their families.
- **Mentor Training and Volunteer Database:** Integral to KIF's success is the 75 volunteer mentors who this past year spent over 4,000 hours of one-on-one time mentoring the kids and developing trusting relationships and giving them a new lens on life. To make the volunteer process more efficient and effective, KIF redesigned its website to include an online volunteer application, streamlined the background check process, and invested in a new database with upgraded systems for volunteer management. KIF also expanded the volunteer training program to provide a deeper understanding of the kids we serve, including ACES training in trauma-informed practices. The intensive training was very well received and helped the mentors better understand and serve the kids. We also established a monthly mentor meet up to help recruit and build ongoing rapport among the volunteers and staff.

Through the use of the camera and guidance by caring mentors, the kids reconnect with the people and world around them and reframe their current situations. They also learned to be more patient when things did not go their way and communicate with others in positive ways. Perhaps the best measurement of success can be witnessed through the words of the kids during their interviews.

"I believe in myself now. I put myself out there instead of being shy." - Ruby

"I'm going to be a Marine and I will take pictures all over the world." - Jason

"The mentors showed me how to try new things and see things in different ways." - Lexi

COVID-19 Impact and Response

COVID-19 has caused a significant decrease in KIF revenue and has significantly and directly impacted the kids we serve; however, we have remained committed to being a life-line for these at-risk kids. The financial losses include a decreased number of individual gifts, the cancellation of grant cycles from several previous funding partners, and the cancellation of our annual fundraising event. KIF also incurred unexpected expenses with the development of new COVID-19 programs.

The unprecedented community-wide shutdown was particularly devastating for our kids because, for many, school and their after-school activities were the only safe, stable, and positive things in their lives. The spring after-school programs abruptly stopped in March, allowing us to complete only seven of the nine sessions. KIF was also forced to cancel the spring Exhibit Opening event, four summer camps that would have served over 200 foster kids, a fall 9-week after-school program for kids at the Boys & Girls Club. In addition, we postponed two photography exhibits scheduled to open in April at public venues in Phoenix and Scottsdale.

Knowing the importance of staying connected to these kids, KIF and its volunteer mentors went into overdrive to adapt our programs and remain in contact with kids on a daily and weekly basis, providing them a caring connection and a valuable sense of belonging. KIF implemented new methods for interacting with the kids, including telephone calls, email messages, and a safe, private online forum. The volunteer mentors also created weekly videos, speaking directly to the kids with words of inspiration. KIF also amplified its Grads in Focus program and reached out to all current and past participants one-by-one to get them enrolled and engaged on a deeper level. Kids from as far back as eight years ago are now active on a weekly and sometimes daily basis interacting with their mentors and peers and participating in weekly photo challenges.

KIF also worked with partner organizations to help provide much-needed emergency services to their kids through an expanded Lifeline program. KIF helped CFLA bring their canceled graduation celebration to 41 kindergartners and 8th graders. Because these kids come from all over the Valley, KIF and its mentors traveled hundreds of miles delivering gift bags and diplomas, one-by-one to each child, and captured these special moments on camera. Due to the strong trusting relationships that the kids built with their mentors, KIF learned that several kids had not enrolled in high school. KIF worked with the high schools, tracked down parents, and in some cases older siblings, to get the kids enrolled. Had it not been for these relationships, these kids would have slipped through the cracks with no further education.

KIF also created brand-new live virtual programming, called Photo Studio Live, to serve as a much-needed life-line to kids at BGC. This fun virtual curriculum was implemented at ten BGC branches in just the first six weeks after the community shutdown. Due to the program's success, KIF continues to provide enhanced versions of this program, reaching more children than ever before.

In October, KIF became one of only a few organizations to resume in-person programming through six new programs for underserved kids from BGC and CFLA. When these kids lost access to school and their social programs, many became stuck in unhealthy home environments and are experiencing increased stress, anxiety, and depression. These new programs are designed to meet the COVID-19 guidelines, including working with smaller groups of kids, having all mentors and kids wear masks, sanitizing the equipment, and taking walking field trips instead of using bus transportation when possible. Our new programs retain the essential field trip element to get kids outside and moving using their imaginations and interacting safely with the world again after a long and detrimental absence. At the same time, we are deepening our Grads in Focus program by providing opportunities for 6th-8th grade graduates of our after-school programs to serve as Junior Mentors for their younger peers. KIF will continue offering this program indefinitely.

A new lens on life.

Opening the eyes of at-risk youth to their own potential.

info@kidsinfocus.org ● 3104 E. Camelback Road, Box 831, Phoenix, AZ 85016 ● 602.753.6339 ● www.kidsinfocus.org