



Homeless Children's Playtime Project

Families Deserve Housing; Children Deserve Play

2013 Annual Report





Where to Find Us

Homeless Children's Playtime Project

1525 Newton Street NW • Washington, DC 20010
202.329.4481 • www.playtimeproject.org

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Playtime Project Shelter Partners

DC General**Emergency Family Shelter**

1900 Massachusetts Ave, SE

Managed by the the
Community Partnership (TCP)

Turning Point Center

1434 Harvard Street, NW

Managed by the Salvation Army

Hope Apartments

3715 Second Street, SE

Managed by the
Community of Hope

New Beginning Emergency Family Shelter

1435 Park Road, NW

Managed by the National
Center for Children and Families

DASH Cornerstone Building

Confidential Location in
Northeast

Managed by the District
Alliance for Safe Housing

Playtime Project Weekly Schedule

Playtime Project Weekly Schedule for 13 Weekly Playtime Programs

Mondays

Turning Point

Tuesdays

DC General Playtime

DCG Teen Program

DCG Pre-Teen Program

Hope Apartments

Wednesdays

New Beginning

DCG Teen Program

DASH

Thursdays

DC General Playtime

DCG Teen Program

DCG Pre-Teen Program

Turning Point

DASH



Homeless Children's Playtime Project

Annual Report 2013

Dear Friend of Children,

It is not an easy time to be a child. Nearly half of the children in the District of Columbia live in households with a high housing cost burden, up 45% from 25 years ago. Homelessness among families grew 130% last winter over the previous winter. Too many institutions still do not recognize the needs of children in shelters, and too many people exploit their vulnerabilities. Amidst this backdrop of dysfunction, Kamari just started solid foods. Morgan is learning to be potty trained. Richard is going off to kindergarten, and Darnaisha is trying to learn algebra. The teasing at school is really getting to Shawn; he is so behind. And he's wondering whether school is really for him.

Enter the Playtime Project. At five temporary housing programs across the city, children from babies through teens find a place to let their burdens down and be nurtured, challenged, inspired, and supported. Parents find staff and volunteers they can trust to help their children learn and heal through play, as well as offer them the time and place to be a child. At thirteen sessions each week, children receive the message that they are seen, they are heard, and their needs matter. Our volunteers, donors, and community partners make playtime magic happen as together we ignite change for children, families, and communities.

This Annual Report is dedicated to all those who dedicate their time, their voice, and their financial resources for children who are so richly deserving of a childhood and a safe, stable place to call home.

With gratitude,



Jamila Larson

Jamila Larson, LICSW
Executive Director, Co-founder
Homeless Children's Playtime Project





“I’ve always enjoyed children tremendously, but it wasn’t until my experience at Turning Point that I got a chance to build real relationships with them. That experience yielded an unprecedented level of gratification: those few hours a week were the only hours I wasn’t compelled to question how I was spending my time. I witnessed such rapid and significant growth in Turning Point’s Playtimers—I saw how impactful an adult’s concerted, targeted efforts could be on a child’s development. Ultimately I chose to be an educator: what better way to support, love, and learn from kids than as a teacher in a room full of them? My site manager and the Playtime organization put me in a strong position to compete for a spot in my current early childhood education certification program [and now I] just started my first year as a preschool teacher.”

Ian Pollack,
Volunteer Site Captain at Turning Point

The mission of the Homeless Children's Playtime Project is to nurture healthy child development and reduce the effects of trauma among children living in temporary housing programs in the District of Columbia.

We believe that play is a human right that all children deserve, regardless of housing status. We seek to create a city that provides every opportunity for children in homeless families to succeed by ensuring that children have consistent opportunities to play and learn, providing support services for families, and advocating for affordable housing and safe shelter.

Through thirteen weekly children's programs, volunteers provide structured activities; the freedom to explore; and opportunities to learn and heal through play. Children receive one-on-one attention and caring supervision, access to field trips, summer camps, and educational advocacy to help them stay on track. Families receive support services, and referrals, as well as donations of needed clothing, toys and school supplies throughout the year.





Playtime Project Makes an Impact in 2013



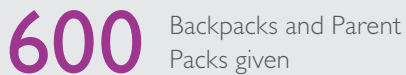
Children and teens were served



Playtime families participated



Volunteers made a commitment to Playtime



150 referrals were made to outside programs and services to support families' goals such as housing, employment, child care, health care, developmental assessments, clothing, computers, adult education, transportation, school uniforms, summer camps, transportation, school uniforms, summer camps, food, and furniture.

According to Playtime Parents

100% of parents surveyed feel their child is happy at Playtime

94% of parents are satisfied with how well Playtime is supporting them as parents and making them feel respected and welcome

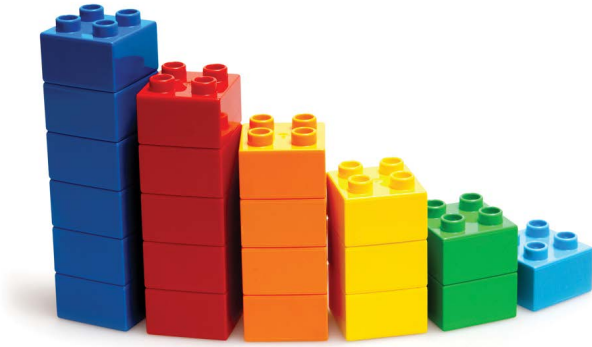
93% are satisfied with how well Playtime is helping their child to grow and develop

77% feel that their child is less stressed because of Playtime and that their child learns new skills that help in school and in life

100% of Teen Program participants would recommend it to other teens at DC General

100% of Teen Program participants feel safe in Playtime's Teen Program

Revenue and Financials

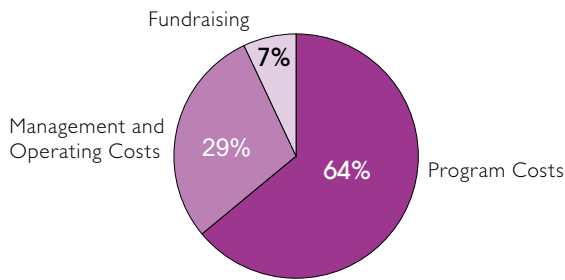


2013 Revenue: \$582,128

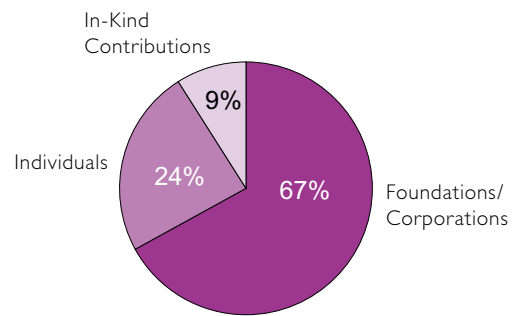
2012 Expenses: \$444,642

(\$52,000 in-kind donations distributed)

Budget Breakdown



Donation Sources

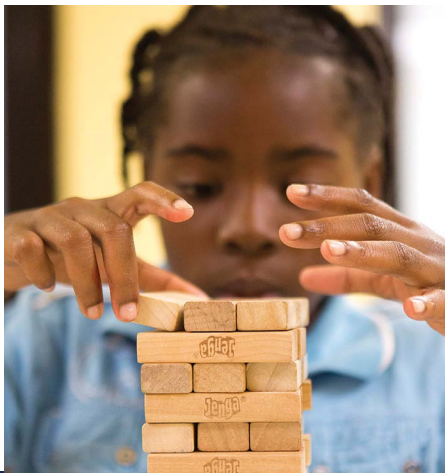
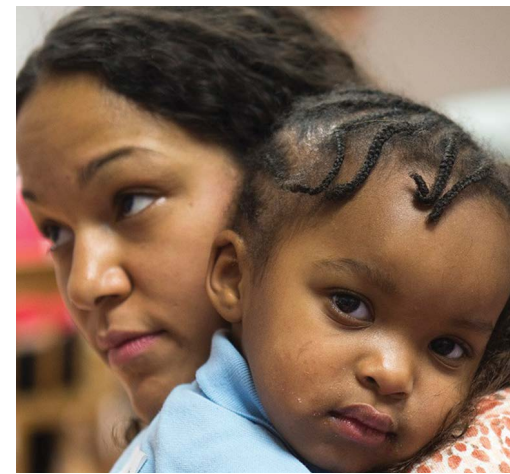


Playtime Creates a Trauma-Informed Environment

Most children and parents we serve have faced multiple traumas over the course of their lives, including the most obvious traumatic experience of housing instability. When not addressed, traumatic experiences can have lasting impacts on the wiring of the brain, mood, and behavior. Children may exhibit difficulty trusting others or trust too easily; others experience dysregulation, anxiety, and poor executive functioning skills. By teaching coping skills and encouraging self-expression in our programs, we help children build resilience and bounce back from, rather than be bound by, trauma. Children who learn to self-soothe and bring down their heart rate when they are stressed, for example, are less likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Playtime also seeks to help ensure families are not re-traumatized following their entry into shelters by providing a trauma-informed play environment. We strive to create trauma-informed playrooms by:

- Giving as much choice and autonomy to children and families as possible
- Recognizing families' strengths and engaging them as partners in implementing programs
- Allowing children to express themselves, relate to each other and find validation for who they are
- Creating a comfortable, safe and welcoming physical environment
- Maintaining clear and consistent boundaries while respecting a child's unique needs
- Using positive language and helping children develop a feelings vocabulary
- Giving appropriate praise and encouragement





“Playtime is a safe place for parents and kids. I think that is our greatest strength. Being at DC General [can be] a stressful experience for anyone who lives here. Our impact is that we get to be a safe place and give parents and kids a resource and people they can trust. When you are in the position in which they find themselves, it is important to have people on your side. I once was cleaning up after crafts and there was a parent to one of the Playtime kids who was clearly stressed out [about something that had happened in the building]. She turned to me and thanked me and anyone else from Playtime for being [one] good thing about DC General.”

Justin Feltman,
Volunteer Site Captain for the Preteen Program



“The Homeless Children’s Playtime Project is on the front lines of serving the most vulnerable children of our city. About a dozen volunteers in our church serve with HCPP each week and their lives are much richer for it. HCPP has earned the right to speak for the most vulnerable children of this city because of the dedicated way they serve week in and week out. If you don’t already serve or give to HCPP, you need to!”

Aaron Graham, Lead Pastor,
The District Church



New Initiatives in 2013



Established a year-round program for preteens at the DC General Shelter

The Preteen Program includes our Girls on the Run team, homework help, and a curriculum on active living, experiential learning, wellness, and empowerment for children in grades 3-8.

Expanded our Teen Program at DC General to provide three evening programs per week

The Teen Program at DC General Shelter provides individual, social and academic support and mentorship to youth to help them achieve their goals in school and life.

Offered developmental assessments in each of our sites

Knowing how children who experience homelessness face an increased risk of developmental delays and disabilities, we asked Early Stages to train each of our Site Managers so now we offer free developmental screenings at each of our sites.

Expanded our team to build our capacity

As we continue to improve the quality and deepen the impacts of our programs, we hired our first full-time Program Manager in June (now Deputy Director) to oversee Site Managers, programs and partnerships. We also brought on board our first full-time Development Manager in December to manage grants, individual donations, and fundraising events.



“You have been a blessing to our family in more ways than one. [My daughter] looks forward to an opportunity to fellowship with her peers and engage in the activities you plan. Thank you so much for the bookbag you gave her. She will certainly use it in the fall. God is using you to bless us and we are incredibly grateful for every gift and every person who makes your program possible. Thank you!”

Playtime parent

Playtime Does More Than Play

Supporting school success: Through our Playtime Curriculum, children have the opportunity to participate in structured learning activities that reinforce critical skills. Children under five have access to developmental assessments, older children are offered homework help and tutoring, and Site Managers serve as educational advocates to help families get their child’s needs met.

Provide Healthy Snacks: We supplement dietary needs of undernourished youth by serving fresh fruits, vegetables, and other healthy snacks, keeping in mind that childhood obesity and other nutrition-related health deficiencies disproportionately affect our youth

Field Trips: We give children the freedom to escape the stress of shelter living and experience life outside the shelter on a regular basis by going to fun and educational destinations that they have never been before! We provide monthly field trips for teens and every-other-month field trips for Playtime youth.

Referrals: Our social work interns and Site Managers connect families to needed services with our trusted partners providing child care, computers, housing, employment, training, clothing, eyeglasses, developmental assessments, therapy, and other critical needs.

Special visitors: We bring new ideas, experiences, and energy to our children. Favorite visitors this year included yoga instructors, pet therapy animals, a NASA astronaut, musicians, and more!

Holiday parties, gifts, and Halloween costumes: We try to bring joy to families amidst crisis. We offer birthday presents and Halloween costumes to every child, and personalized Christmas gifts that parents present to their children.

Backpack distribution: Each fall and spring, we pass out sturdy backpacks with all the needed school supplies and toiletries, personalized based on age and gender. (Even babies get stuff!)

Meeting material needs: From baby bathtubs and potty chairs to school uniforms, prom dresses, and professional clothing—thanks to our network of donors and supporters, Playtime is able to make the connections and meet a range of immediate needs quickly and efficiently.

Advocacy: Volunteers speak out about the need for affordable housing and shelter funding to ensure services that prevent homelessness and help families return to self-sufficiency remain a priority each budget season. We also help families advocate for themselves all year long!

Playtime to Go!

Field Trips in 2013

- 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington
- Oxon Hill Farm
- American History Museum
- Air and Space Museum
- National Zoo
- Frederick Douglass House
- Gravenstein Haunted House
- George Washington University
- Ice Skating
- Busboys and Poets Open Mic Night
- Howard University
- Garfield Park
- SYEP Headquarters to apply for summer jobs
- College and Career Expo
- National Mall



"At first I didn't like being [at DC General], but now I don't want to leave because I'd miss the Teen Night volunteers too much."

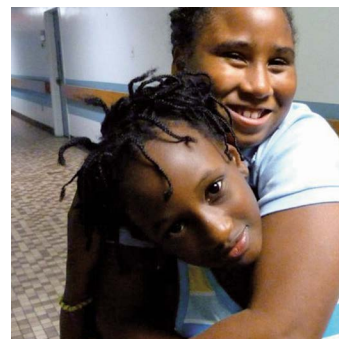
–Teen Program Participant, age 14

"They are good people and funny people too. I hope to be like them when I get older"

–Teen Program participant, 13 yrs old

"Even after I move out, I'm still coming to Teen Night."

–Teen Program Participant, age 17



“I joined Playtime Project because, even though it's not my main profession, I have years of experience volunteering with younger children. And while it's been my job to teach the kids new things, they always seem to teach me something new in the process as well. I enjoy working with Playtime Project specifically because this organization focuses more on the welfare of children than any other organization I've ever worked with. We are definitely here for the kids, first and foremost, and are strong advocates for both their physical and mental health. What better way is there for kids to exercise their right to have healthy minds and bodies than through play?”

Cynthia Pope, Volunteer Baby Room Captain at DC General Playtime



“The Homeless Children’s Playtime Project (HCPP) is one of a kind. It’s an all-too-rare bright spot in the lives of my city’s most vulnerable children and a strong advocate on their behalf. Not only is it an organization with a big heart, but it also has some serious brain power behind it. It is led by highly qualified mental health professionals who are armed with the latest in brain science, along with markers and popsicle sticks. HCPP is executing proven interventions that make a lasting difference in the lives of homeless families. They are constantly innovating and caring for kids, and I’m proud to do anything I can to help them shine.”

– Liz Voyles, Playtime donor and supporter

What Do Parents Like About Playtime?

Partnerships that make a difference for children

Just nine months into his life, Kenny’s development was already beginning to lag behind that of other children because of the stress of growing up in constant transition and lack of developmentally appropriate activities available to him. His family spent the months prior to arriving at a shelter couch surfing and sleeping in Laundromats when they ran out of other options. .

Shortly after arriving at the shelter, Kenny enrolled in Playtime and program volunteers quickly realized that he was not crawling. Delays in the first years of a child’s life can affect them for life if they are not addressed quickly. Playtime’s Site Manager administered a developmental assessment and referred his family to the Strong Start DC Early Intervention Program, which provides therapeutic services for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and resources to their families. Kenny’s mother reported that these services were “changing his life” and helping her learn how to encourage her child’s development at home.



“The ability to learn and play at the same time, and the fact that they have very healthy snacks.”

“I appreciate Playtime. Not only do my children love it and look forward to it, but it gives me a chance to catch my breath.”

“The volunteers are very respectful and helpful.”

“It allows my child a safe space to interact with other kids.”

“It gives single parents like me a break.”

“I love the environment Playtime provides for my children. I’m very comfortable with my kids being with the volunteers.”

“My child feels so loved; she never wants to leave.”

Volunteers are the Heart of Playtime



"I joined Playtime because I wanted to do something after work that would add meaning to my life. Playtime has become my reset button; no matter how crazy or hectic my week is, when I walk into Playtime I'm 100% focused on the kids and everything that's going on. (I think it's impossible not to be). And by the time I walk out, I'm happy, focused and ready to tackle whatever comes my way."

Jackie Borowski
Volunteer Site Captain at Turning Point

"Playtime connects me with my community-with kids in a part of my neighborhood who just don't have the opportunities that they should. Playtime means being a part of their lives and learning from them as much as they learn from us."

Melinda Good
Volunteer Site Captain for the Teen Program

"I had just begun law school and there was a shooting in my NW neighborhood that left a teenager paralyzed. I became outraged that something like that could happen in my community, but then asked myself what I was doing to better my community and searched for a way to help my community's children. Playtime did just that and allowed me to affect so many of our city's most vulnerable and precious resources—our Playtime kids."

Kathleen Fawcett
Volunteer Site Captain at DC General Playtime

"I love that Playtime gives kids a safe space and time to let their imagination and creativity run wild. The accomplishment of a perfect imaginary cake, floor puzzle, or train setup can literally make a kid's and then a volunteer's night."

Anna Hurley
Volunteer Site Captain at DC General Playtime

"I joined Playtime so that I would have a hands-on connection with children in DC, because for most of my adult life I've spent time volunteering or working with all kinds of children. However, Playtime has come to mean so much more to me, and since I've joined I've become an advocate for the children, their families, and all of those who find themselves homeless in DC and around the country."

Garet Fryar
Volunteer Site Captain at DC General Playtime

"One of the most important things kids learn at Playtime is that they are valued and worthy of the time and attention of caring adults in the community. I love watching kids' confidence grow as they get that message week after week!"

Lauren Waterhouse
Volunteer Site Captain at DASH

"Three words: laughter, celebrations, and patience. Working with young children and families can be difficult at times and requires a lot of patience. But then you see the joy on a child's face when they come into the room, or the pride a mother has when she finds stable housing. There's nothing better than knowing you have supported a family through a difficult time and are now able to celebrate their successes."

Sabrina Nettles
Volunteer Site Captain at Turning Point Center

Thanking Our Supporters

The Playtime Project is grateful for the support of the following individuals, foundations, corporations, and organizations whose generous contributions make our work and play possible. This list reflects all gifts received in 2013.

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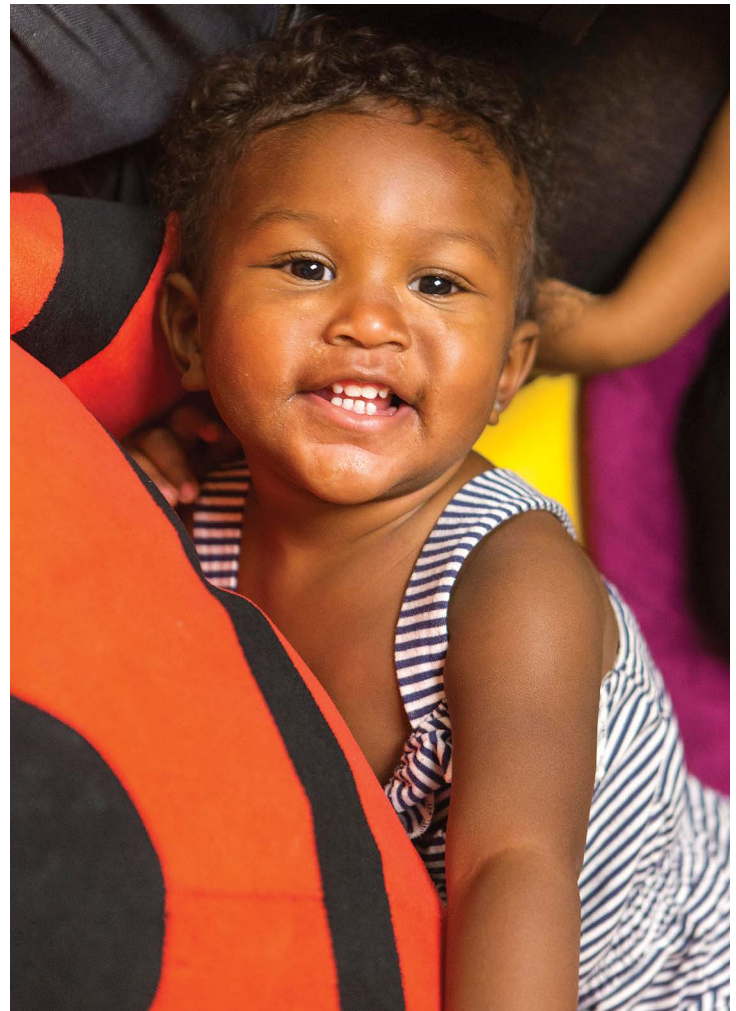
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- Jamila Larson, LICSW: Executive Director, Co-Founder
- Tashira Halyard, JD: Deputy Director
- Karen Hammann, MS: Operations and Financials Manager
- Joel Schwarz, MA: Development Manager
- Kelli Beyer: Communications and Outreach Manager
- Heather Wade, MA: Site Manager for DC General Shelter
- Morgan Ray: Pre-teen Program Coordinator at DC General Shelter
- Julie Colatrella: Teen Program Coordinator for DC General Shelter, Field Trip Coordinator
- Zewiditu Ruffin: Site Manager for Turning Point & New Beginning Shelter, Volunteer Coordinator
- Annie Weiser: Site Manager for DASH & Hope Apartments

Volunteer Site Captains

DC General Playtime

- Garet Fryar and Anna Hurley
- Alice Lowy and Cynthia Pope
- Lauren Conley and Kathleen Fawcett
- Melissa Dahlin and Mallory Schwarz

DC General Pre-Teen

- Justin Feltman

DC General Teen Program

- Micah Backus
- Melinda Good
- Sarah Bedy

DASH

- Alaina Smith
- Lauren Waterhouse

Hope Apartments

- Stephanie Marrone

Turning Point

- Ian Pollack
- Lauren Waterhouse
- Jaclyn Borowski and Sabrina Nettles
- Laurie Richardson and Elena Hoffnagle

New Beginning

- Lauren Geoghegan

Special Thanks To

Danielle Rothman began volunteering with Playtime Project in 2010 at Turning Point. After months of service in her site and in the office, she was hired as our first Site Manager for the DC General Shelter where she served from 2011-2014. Danielle currently resides in New York where she is completing her doctorate in clinical psychology. **Lexie Herman** was hired as Site Manager for Turning Point and New Beginning Shelter in 2012. She served two years for Playtime Project and is currently pursuing her doctorate in clinical psychology at George Washington University. **Carrie Beaudreau** served as Playtime Project's first Development officer for three years. Much of our growth and improvements we made in our programs in those three years are a testament to her dedication and hard work fundraising just part-time. We are so grateful for her service and continued support. **Andy Miller** was our first-ever Teen Program and Field Trip Coordinator. Under his leadership, the program blossomed from providing just occasional field trips to a positive youth development program which provides three nights of supportive programming each week. **Rebecca Kellett** and **Alissa Tombaugh** served as Catholic University master's-level social work interns for Playtime last year, helping connect parents to valuable resources in the community like school uniforms, baby supplies, help with transportation, job and job training resources, and housing. Rebecca continues to volunteer today as she completes graduate school and Alissa now works for Bright Beginnings. **Genevieve Fugere** was a Site Captain for DC General Playtime from 2011 to 2014. We are grateful for her long-time dedication and wish her the best of luck in law school at Georgetown University. **Bhavik Patel** served as a Teen Program Captain and popular volunteer who made a twice weekly commitment from 2012 to 2014. He mentored many young people and left DC in 2014 to start medical school at the University of Illinois.

“The Playtime Project provides a critical source of compassionate care and engaging play to children. Their team creates lasting relationships with children who so often go unserved and unnoticed in our community, where youth homelessness is on the rise. FAIR Girls greatly appreciates our partnership with us a dynamic and thoughtful agency.”

Andrea Powell, Founder & Executive Director, FAIR Girls



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