

# 2018 Annual Report

“

No one does what Let It Be Us does. They are game-changers for children in foster care and those awaiting adoption.”

— CAROLINE OSTERHEUS  
Adoptive Parent

Let it Be  Us



# Five Years of New Frontiers

*Let It Be Us* is a rare Illinois child welfare nonprofit focused on securing adoption and permanency for our children who are patiently waiting. We were formed in December of 2014 and as we just began our 5th year of work, I can tell you that 2018 was an exciting year! Our work is unprecedented because, literally, no one does what we do. In these fast paced years, we have changed the outcomes of countless numbers of our children's lives and we have introduced a new landscape for foster care and adoption in Illinois that is full of potential.

In this Annual Report, you'll see stunning statistics, read quotes from parents who have filled their homes with children through foster care and adoption, and learn about the ways that we have helped our most vulnerable population of children in Illinois. Your donations have paved the way for all of our work to be achieved and, as always, your donations and your support mean the world to us and to the children we serve. Thank you for investing in the lives of all of our children.

You can always reach me at [susanmcconnell@letitbeus.org](mailto:susanmcconnell@letitbeus.org) or 847-764-5428.

Susan McConnell  
Founder and Executive Director

TARGETED  
RECRUITMENT  
PROGRAM

This program is used to aid in finding foster/adoptive parents for children in emergent need or who are challenging to place. We offer a customized solution for each child referred to us, creating a new database of parent resources for each child. We reach thousands of licensed and waiting parents in our aggregated and growing network.

Using social media strategies, a subscription-based blog, and our registry of over 900 waiting families, our experienced recruitment team finds homes for these children who, without us, would have no one.

## In the 2018 Targeted Recruitment Program:



We placed **68 children** in safe and loving homes, the majority of whom were headed for a shelter

**100%**

**100% of the time,** we were able to find licensed parents in a geographic area with certain parameters



We worked with **62 different caseworkers**

**80%**

**80% of the time,** the children were matched with our parents



We recruited and submitted **340 licensed and waiting homes**

THE HEART GALLERY  
OF ILLINOIS

We curate and manage the state’s only gallery of photos and stories of children awaiting adoption, which lives on our website. It’s the number one page viewed on our website and we are significantly increasing these children’s chances of adoption.

In 2018 we had 103,000 hits on our website and 757,000 page views.

When we built the Heart Gallery in 2016, it was home to only 10 waiting children. Today, it is working for 60 children, and that number is growing.



“

This organization has helped many children find permanency in their lives. My family learned about a child on Tuesday. We met the child on Thursday and started the transition process shortly after. If it wasn’t for them, my new son would be living in a shelter. We are so grateful for Let It Be Us.”

— KYLE ELLIS  
Adoptive parent

**ADOPTION AND  
FOSTER CARE  
INFORMATION  
FAIRS**

We host events which recruit foster and adoptive parents that are designed to solve the problem of Illinois simply not having enough homes for her waiting children.

In 2018, we hosted 8 of these events throughout Illinois with 900 parents registering for multiple events held throughout Illinois covering Chicago, Springfield, Champaign, Joliet, McHenry, Rockford, and Barrington. These events are the critical first step in licensing foster and adoptive parents so they may become families for our waiting children.



“

We attended an Adoption and Foster Care Information Fair - what an amazing sense of community we felt. We left with our heads held high. Today helped us solidify what our family wants to do. What a great feeling!"

— LINDSEY ELLIS  
Adoptive Parent

“

Wonderful organization that increases community awareness about foster care and helps connect people to improve the child welfare system and outcomes."

— AMBER RAKOCZY  
Caseworker

## PROJECT DIGNITY

We fill duffle bags full of new school supplies, personal care items, and a comfort blanket for children coming into foster care with absolutely nothing.

Project Dignity bags are distributed to child welfare agencies across the State of Illinois.

## OUR CLOSET

We stock “Our Closet” in the Waukegan, Illinois DCFS office with everything a child coming into foster care needs: formula, diapers, fresh jammies, warm coats, and some healthy snacks to take the edge off the wait for a new home. All agencies in the Northern Region of Illinois are welcome to share in “Our Closet.”



“

This organization is changing the lives of children.”

— LESLIE CLAY  
Social worker

# Some Special Things That Happened in 2018

We provided special software for a boy in a group home struggling with autism so that he could better learn in school.

We found the perfect family for an LGBTQ teenage girl who now feels like she belongs and feels safe being herself.

We found the perfect home for a boy who is 15 and has never been given the attention he needs.

We found a single mother for a little baby who was abandoned at the hospital and was waiting for days because no one wanted her.

We provided a basic wardrobe for a 13 year old girl who came into foster care with only the clothes on her back. We also provided a new backpack with school supplies and a planner.

## Important Facts from 2018



Over **100,000 visitors** to our website with over **757,000 page views**



**The premier** foster and adoptive parent recruiters in Illinois



Over **6,500 followers** on Facebook



Over **\$300,000 value** in volunteer hours

## Founder and Executive Director

Susan McConnell

## Board of Directors

**Bob Noonan**

Board Chair

**Susan Stoga**

Vice Board Chair

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**Nadiya Ali**

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**Rick Smith**

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Mentorship

**Doug Locke**

Mentorship

**Kyle Ellis**

Parent Recruitment

**Brandon Verwijst**

Vice Treasurer

**Jennifer McAndrews, *chair emeritus***

## Advisors

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Norma Machay

Janet Ahern, ESQ

Bob Lee

Peter Yankala

Samantha Crockett

Alex Montgomery

Beth Sherman, PsyD

Bill Braithwaite, ESQ

Ann Liston

## Child Welfare Advocates

Wendy Noonan

Amy Averbuch

Ilana Forbes



Amazing organization! They provide top-notch education about the industry and change the world for our children."

— JENNIFER MARSH

Adoptive parent and support group organizer

### Let It Be Us

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Barrington, IL 60010

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[LetItBeUs.org](http://LetItBeUs.org)

Let it Be Us is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization under the US Internal Revenue Service Code and your donation is 100% deductible.

Let It Be Us recognizes, respects, promotes and celebrates the value of cultural diversity and will ensure that your ethnic or cultural customs, practices, and beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, disability, and/or community differences will be respected by agency staff.

