Relationships Matter
because
Relationships Heal
Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As we edge toward our fifteenth anniversary we have much to celebrate, in particular the wonderful relationships we have forged over the years. We started A Home Within because children in the foster care system too often weren’t afforded the time they needed to develop the sustained relationship with a therapist that could help them overcome the deep sadness and anger stemming from too many losses. We wanted them to be able to have therapy “for as long as it takes.” And they do. The young people seen through a Home Within, on average, see the same therapist for over three years.

When I mentioned this at a recent gathering, one of our therapists spoke up. “I started working with my client when she was not quite six years old. She was adopted by her foster parents a couple of years later. Last year she graduated from high school. Now we’re all working hard to help her find the resources she needs so that she can go to college. It’s been over twelve years.” My colleague went on to talk softly about how meaningful this relationship has been to her personally and professionally.

I have heard her words echoed by so many of our therapists. They talk about how privileged they feel to have had the opportunity to develop a relationship with a vulnerable young person without externally imposed constraints of time or money. They do this work for love, offering foster youth the loving relationships they need in order to thrive.

Our therapists thrive as well because of the relationships they build with their colleagues in the consultation groups offered by A Home Within. They often cite these meetings as one of the highlights of their week, giving them a chance to really delve into the challenges and rewards of their clinical work and to grow professionally.

Over the years we have also built strong relationships with other professional organizations and agencies serving the foster care community. Through these we learned more about the need for education and training and about the importance of relationships in providing trauma informed care—not just in therapy—but throughout the foster care system. We responded by creating Fostering Relationships, a series of online trainings for caseworkers, foster parents, attorneys, and volunteers. We have also developed decks of Conversation Cards to help those working with vulnerable populations find easy and productive ways of talking with children and adolescents. We are very pleased that other organizations want to partner with us so that their members have ready access to these materials. This gives us a far greater reach than we would have alone, reminding me of the African proverb, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

We have come far because of the relationships we have built internally and with others. We know that relationships take time and attention to grow strong and serve us well. When we started fifteen years ago we had the idea of helping individual children. We have learned firsthand that in the process of helping a single child we can send a powerful message about the importance of relationships that ripples through the family, the school, and into the community. We are very excited to be expanding now to introduce that message directly to those

Toni Heineman
Executive Director & Founder
Our Mission

A Home Within is the only national organization dedicated to meeting the emotional needs of foster youth. We envision a world in which every foster child has a relationship with at least one consistent, caring adult.

Our Programs

Pro Bono Psychotherapy

- Volunteer therapists who commit to providing weekly psychotherapy for current or former foster children, free of charge, for as long as it takes
- Nationwide network of therapists organized into regional Clinical Chapters
- Leadership provided by a Clinical Director heading each Chapter
- Consultation Groups at each chapter, providing support and learning for therapists
- 43 Chapters in 22 states

Fostering Relationships

- Resources for adults working with or caring for vulnerable youth.
- Clinical expertise and relationship-based practices distilled into easily accessible trainings and tools.
- Online Trainings offer best practices to help children and youth overcome the effects of trauma.
- Conversation Cards help make important but difficult conversations a little easier.
- Launched in 2015

“I deeply appreciate this organization’s dedication to helping former foster care individuals thrive after foster care and adoption throughout their life. The consultation we receive as professionals is beyond measure as well. Our consultation group is a close knit group of therapists and psychologists who have established a gratifying relationship where we actively support, encourage, and challenge one another to the betterment of not only the client case, but the ever-developing therapist and therapeutic process itself.”

A Home Within therapist Randi Hennigan, PhD, LMFT, LPC

“With the Fostering Relationships trainings and conversation cards, A Home Within provides essential knowledge and skills to help parents, teachers, volunteers, and community members support foster youth and other children struggling with the effects of trauma. With Fostering Relationships anyone can understand and attend to the developmental needs of children, helping them grow into successful, productive, and caring members of society.”

Bill Bettencourt, Senior Associate,
The Center for the Study of Social Policy
2015 Highlights

Psychotherapy

- We added 6 new Clinical Chapters into our total of 44 Chapters nationwide, expanding our presence in New York City, Connecticut, Los Angeles and San Diego, and including our first online chapter to address a gap in access.
- We welcomed 13 Clinical Directors into our total of 57 Clinical Directors nationwide.
- We welcomed 77 volunteer therapists into our total of 400 therapists nationwide.
- We matched 73 new clients with therapists, serving a total of 300 current and former foster youth.

Fostering Relationships

Dr. Loong Kwok joined us as Director of Fostering Relationships, and under his leadership, we launched Fostering Relationships last summer. By the end of the year, the program offered Online Trainings for different age groups and on various topics.

The program also offers a library of 16 decks of Conversation Cards on topics such as Loss, Identity, Gender, and Sexuality.

In addition, we are proud to have secured distribution partnerships with organizations with a member base of adults who are the target population for Fostering Relationships:

- Child Welfare League of America
- National Foster Parent Association
- HelpPro
- FosterMore
- get R.E.A.L.
- Quality Parenting Initiative
- North American Council on Adoptable Children

Online Trainings and Conversation Cards are available for purchase through our website and via partnership organizations.

Dr. Loong Kwok, PsyD, Director of Fostering Relationships. Dr. Kwok is responsible for overseeing the development of training and education to support the foster care community. He has worked with traumatized children and adolescents for several years through local schools and his private practice in San Francisco. He teaches and supervises at various Bay Area agencies and presents to local and national professional groups.

Research shows that 4 out of 5 kids seen through A Home Within show significant improvement in psychological, social and behavioral outcomes.
Notable Mentions

A Home Within placed as a top three finalist for the Bay Area Bold Innovation Award. A Home Within’s Seattle Chapter received the Family Advocacy Award from the Washington Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.

Executive Director Toni Heineman released a new book, Relational Treatment of Trauma: Stories of Loss and Hope. In addition, her previous book Treating Trauma: Relationship-Based Psychotherapy with Children, Adolescents, and Young Adults was released in paperback edition.

Foundations that support A Home Within

- Andrus Family Fund
- Bella Vista
- Bill Healy Foundation
- Germanacos Foundation
- GGS Foundation
- Green Foundation
- May and Stanley Smith Charitable Trust
- Ralph Parsons Foundation
- Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange
- The Educational Foundation of America
We are only as strong as our supporters: our clinicians who volunteer their valuable time, and our donors who make our work possible.

We have a dedicated base of volunteer therapists who often go above and beyond the role of therapist to that of an advocate for their pro bono clients. One such story is that of A Home Within therapist Dr. Abby, and how she changed the life of her client, a little girl we’re calling Sara. Watch Sara’s story:

We shared Sara’s story at the end of the year in a call for donations, and our supporters did not disappoint us – we exceeded our goal of $50,000 by almost $10,000. One donation that particularly moved us was made by a class of fourth-graders, called the Dolphins. Watch the story behind this donation:

We have nothing but the deepest gratitude for our therapists and our donors. Thank you, for making a profound difference in the lives of foster children and youth, and for helping us create healthy relationships for individuals, families, and communities.

Looking Ahead at 2016

- Serve 500 kids
- Establish 5 new chapters
  - Reach 2000 people through Online Trainings
  - Reach 10,000 people through mass-marketed Conversation Cards