celebrating our accomplishments, growing our mission
What started as a dream in the days before smartphones and social media has become a life-changing program for nearly 1,000 girls in western Nevada County. Times have changed, but the far-reaching goal of The Friendship Club remains the same – a preventative program aimed at helping youth maintain good health and make good choices throughout their lifetime. After-school classes and hands-on programs, on-site counselors, mentors, and developing friendships and sharing peer-to-peer experiences have been a recipe for success since 1995. Today, almost 150 youth are enrolled in the year-round program, a dramatic increase from the 15 the first year. Just as The Friendship Club has grown, so has the community and its needs. We’ve expanded our efforts and introduced new programs to help all youth in the area, including those experiencing homelessness. Please review the following pages to learn more about our efforts and a few success stories. As always, we appreciate your support.
Expanding our mission to meet the changing needs of the community

The strength of our community depends on citizens who see a need and find a way to meet them. Addressing social problems is a tradition The Friendship Club has realized since 1995, when founder Mary Collier recognized that preteen girls needed connection, role models and a path to success. That tradition continues nearly 25 years later, as The Friendship Club expands its mission and vision in support of this community.

While our focus has been to provide academic, emotional and social support year-round through a far-reaching program for girls ages 11 to 18 in Nevada County, the last two years have been important for revisioning and creating a larger footprint in support of vulnerable youth.

We have increased the number of girls we work with, expanded to include young men and women ages 16-24 who are experiencing homelessness and provide more comprehensive services.

None of this is possible without our donors and volunteers. The needs of our children are increasing as they deal with more anxiety, depression and family trauma.

And, at times, those needs can change dramatically. For example, with the COVID-19 pandemic and shelter in place order in spring 2020, we had to quickly change how we connect with youth. The Friendship Club ensured the youth and their families had healthy meals, our staff and volunteers kept in contact with youth by phone and video chats, and we made sure therapy appointments continued via telehealth. It was not easy, but the efforts were necessary to meet our mission.

You can count on us, even under the most difficult times, to create opportunities for our youth and, in turn, for our community to thrive.

Jennifer Litton Singer
Executive Director

Building a better future by addressing current challenges

The Friendship Club is one of those uniquely wonderful organizations that if you ever get the chance to get involved, in any way, is a true blessing.

The board members, staff and volunteers are second to none in their heartfelt focus to make The Friendship Club the go-to organization for serving youth in our community.

Watching the young girls of The Friendship Club find their way to greater confidence, growing self-efficacy, blossoming creativity and persevering resourcefulness is pure goodness in action.

Having developed a stellar reputation during the past 25 years for carrying out its mission, community leaders have reached out to The Friendship Club in efforts to work together to find solutions to social problems. Nevada County has challenges – including some that were not issues when The Friendship Club started, such as young people experiencing homelessness at alarming rates – but we are committed to ensuring youth get the help and resources they need and deserve.

As one of our past board presidents, Marty Lombardi, says: “It takes kind and caring hearts to make a community thrive.” We are grateful for our many collaborations.

The Friendship Club is one of the gems in our community that helps others shine.

Thank you for your support of such a worthy endeavor.

Machen MacDonald
Board President
HOW WE ARE CHANGING LIVES

COMMUNITY | EDUCATION | WELLNESS
The Friendship Club is about community, in every sense of the word. From donors and volunteers investing in the next generation to our youth learning new skills and serving other nonprofit organizations, community is at the heart of The Friendship Club.

We are making a big difference in Nevada County. The Friendship Club has excellent community partners – including county departments, school districts and other nonprofit organizations – and a hardworking network of volunteers.

Friendship Club volunteers, from after-school drivers to mentors, donate an estimated 4,000 hours per year. And almost two-thirds of our budget comes from individuals and businesses in the community.

The Friendship Club is about everyday people doing extraordinary things for the community and its residents.

The Friendship Club has helped nearly 1,000 girls during the past 25 years. You’ve likely come across a girl who has benefited – or is currently being helped – by The Friendship Club.

Thanks to the community support, we’ve been able to expand our efforts through the years, from introducing life skills classes and longer summer camps to helping more youth.

But our community is changing. Our youth – including boys – are facing more challenges, from experiencing homelessness to struggling with substance abuse. The Friendship Club is looking at how best to meet those needs.

Of course, we can’t do it alone. It takes a community.
Education is a life-changing gift, whether it’s attending college and completing a degree or mastering a new skill.

And it’s the cornerstone of The Friendship Club, open to sixth- through 12th grade girls. From youth learning more about themselves and others to life-skills training such as cooking, our organization is deeply devoted to education.

Education is the key that opens many doors, including to friendship, happiness and, hopefully, a lifetime of success. So, The Friendship Club encourages and supports however necessary when it comes to school.

Now, as most adults know, school is just part of life’s many lessons. The Friendship Club has developed numerous learning opportunities beyond the traditional classroom.

For example, our summer camps, which are about learning new skills and working together. For many of our girls, traditional summer camp – almost a rite of passage for youth – is out of reach due to the cost for their families. The Friendship Club makes it accessible, easy and fun.

It’s just one of the many ways our staff and volunteers work closely with youth to build a solid foundation for life after high school:

- Summer camps and workshops
- Dozens of classes to learn valuable life skills
- Introduced to careers from those in the professions
- Assisting with loans, scholarships to higher education and trade schools
- Classes on drug and alcohol prevention, positive relationships and sexual violence prevention

Our girls attend summer camp where they learn life skills, teamwork and about nature.

95% of our graduates continue their education after high school.
The Friendship Club helps meet the needs of youth, from a healthy meal to a safe home. Many young people face extraordinary challenges, from a difficult home life to no home at all. Our far-reaching goal is to ensure that every youth gets what they need in order to succeed – and thrive.

Quite often, it’s a healthy meal.

We prepare more than 5,000 meals every year.

Sometimes, clothes or counseling are needed. On occasion, finding housing tops the list of needs.

And, far too often, our youth will need all those things, and so much more. Without assistance from The Friendship Club, a constant struggle becomes more likely than a lifetime of success.

For example, a healthy diet, something many of us take for granted, can have a dramatic effect on youth. Studies have found that a balanced diet helps children achieve better in the classroom and may even avoid depression. Plus, learning the benefits of a well-balanced diet and how to prepare healthier dishes – skills we teach through our cooking classes – can help youth reduce the risk of chronic health issues, from diabetes to obesity.

Once you help meet the most basic but far too often-overlooked needs — food, health, housing, safety and support — then you can focus on other areas, from education to planning for the future.

Of course, we can’t do it alone. The community, from donors to volunteers, and numerous organizations — county social services to local school districts — all play a vital role ensuring the wellness of our youth in Nevada County.

We open a world of opportunities and new experiences.

92% say The Friendship Club has helped them do better in school.

94% say The Friendship Club has helped them think positively about their future.

96% say The Friendship Club gives them a safe place to be.

Learning is an ingredient for life success.
FROM TRAUMA TO TRANSFORMATION
Creating a **STRONG FOUNDATION**

Trauma comes in many forms. Sometimes our girls face an extreme obstacle in their lives. Often, they face many more. What does trauma look like and how can we measure or define it? Trauma is poverty, hunger, neglect, abuse, parent incarceration, unaddressed parental mental health and/or drug addiction, and violence. Trauma can lead to anxiety, depression, substance use. It can also lead to chronic heart disease, diabetes and lifelong adversity.

The Friendship Club provides youth who have faced these traumatic life experiences with the resources and support to work through the pain. They find a path to healthy relationships, healthy coping skills and healthy outcomes. They enjoy an environment of safely, love and compassion through The Friendship Club.

When youth join The Friendship Club, they make a choice to be an active participant in their future. We provide continued opportunities for connection, education and support.

Youth begin to see they have control over their lives and can work hard to have the future they want. They gain skills that create a strong foundation for a healthy and productive life. Many attend college and career technical education. They become nurses and teachers, business owners and entrepreneurs. They become parents and raise their children with love, respect and compassion. They break the cycle of generational poverty and addiction, and they give back to their communities.

They escape trauma and have more opportunities for success in every aspect of their lives.

*See pages 11 and 12 to see how we helped to change two girls’ lives.*
Our community, like many others statewide, has a hard-to-ignore issue that has become increasingly worse in recent years – homelessness.

More than 400 families and individuals were experiencing homelessness in the last point-in-time count in December 2019. There are likely many who were not counted. Some people are couch surfing or staying with a relative or friend, a short-term fix for a long-term problem. Many who experience homelessness – whether it’s living in a car, sleeping on a couch or even on the street – are children and young adults.

Nevada County had 341 students in kindergarten through 12th grade experiencing homelessness in the 2017-18 school year, a 36% increase since 2014. Half of the children were in elementary and middle school.

Many of these older children and young adults do not have access to local or state funding, and there are few nonprofit organizations that can help.

So, The Friendship Club established SAFE (Stability, Access, Foundation, Empowerment) in 2019. The program helps transition-age youth, 16 to 24 years old, experiencing homelessness – boys and girls.

The Friendship Club – thanks to your support and grants – is providing academic, social and emotional support and life-skills training for youth. Career education, counseling and health care are also available to these young people, aimed at preventing chronic homelessness throughout their lives.

Perhaps, just as important, the program offers a safe place to meet with others experiencing the same challenges.

So far, SAFE is helping about 25 young people. We know there are many more who could benefit from the program.

The Friendship Club appreciates your support for the program. SAFE’s success will build a better community and improve the lives of many young adults.
An elementary school teacher’s interest in a sixth-grader dealing with the death of her stepfather and getting into occasional disagreements with classmates led to a “life-changing” program – and the foundation for a better future.

“I was really hesitant when I started, a little nervous,” said Ashley White, recalling her initial experience with The Friendship Club. “They were asking all of these questions.”

Those questions were about getting to know Ashley – and learning what the then-sixth-grader needed to succeed. The answer was, in part, The Friendship Club.

“It was such a good bonding experience,” said Ashley, now a 26-year-old family support counselor for Victor Community Support Services in Grass Valley. “It was amazing to have that group of girls who have some of those same experiences.”

She also benefited from mentors and programs through The Friendship Club, from attending summer camps to touring colleges.

“I had a lot of opportunities that I wouldn’t have had,” she said. “The role models, it made a huge impact. They’re always there for you, and they genuinely care about you. They challenge you, but in a caring way. I learned so many things.”

From being more comfortable speaking in large groups to learning how to deal with peer pressure, The Friendship Club has helped Ashley succeed – and thrive.

“I got used to being in leadership roles and public speaking,” Ashley said. “It really teaches you good boundaries and taking care of yourself. You gain a sense of self and being a more positive person. You learn to stand up for yourself.”

Her mentor had a huge role, opening her heart – and home – to Ashley.

“She was a very positive role model,” said Ashley, who would often go over to her mentor’s house for dinner. “We spent a lot of time together. She was like family.”

Ashley’s Friendship Club “family” continues today, as she stays in contact with some of her friends from the program. After Ashley graduated from high school – and The Friendship Club – she enrolled at Sierra College in Grass Valley, where she earned associate degrees in Behavioral and Social Sciences and Administration of Justice.

Today, Ashley works with families and children dealing with numerous issues, including anger and stress management, with the goal of “changing the whole family dynamics ... so (children) don’t need outside placement.”

She works with about 15 children every week, from 5 to 18 years old. It’s a difficult but rewarding career.

“I love working with the kids,” she said. “There are some days when it takes a toll. You have to be in a good place, and you need to take care of yourself. But we’re really great at building relationships with families.”

It’s something that she experienced firsthand with The Friendship Club. On occasion, she will refer the children she works with to The Friendship Club.

“I love The Friendship Club, it’s an amazing program,” she said. “I’m so grateful that my teacher referred me. It’s been life-changing.”
Bart Riebe: Friendship Club is the ‘jewel of the community’

When business owner Bart Riebe first heard about The Friendship Club from a longtime customer and friend years ago, it piqued his curiosity to learn more about the organization. His friend thought it was one of the best organizations in the community, said Riebe, owner of Riebes Auto Parts in Grass Valley. The company has 22 auto parts stores in the region.

“I needed to find out more about it.”

Riebe had a meeting with The Friendship Club executive director Jennifer Litton Singer to learn about the organization and its impact on the lives of girls in Nevada County. Riebe knew Singer’s mother, Janeille, and her commitment and integrity.

“I knew it was a legit organization, Riebe said. “It was fun to see that tradition from mother to daughter.”

Now, Riebe calls The Friendship Club “the jewel of the community,” helping girls and young women learn new skills, share experiences and grow together. As a parent of three daughters, from pre-teen to one in her early 30s, Riebe knows firsthand the importance of organizations like The Friendship Club. He is a frequent donor to the organization.

“I know how scary it can be, especially without a strong family foundation,” he said. “The Friendship Club is meant to support and help girls at risk. They need to get into something. Otherwise, you just kind of muddle along.”

Riebe applauds The Friendship Club’s pro-active approach, introducing new programs to connect with new – and more – girls.

“We want to help the girls ahead of time.”

Maya knows firsthand the power of friendship – and The Friendship Club.

Maya was battling depression after moving to Nevada County from out-of-state, enrolling in a new school and the death of her much-beloved grandmother.

“My life had many hardships and I dealt with it by secluding myself,” said Maya, who preferred online school and avoided people. “I decided I was better off without all the drama and work of being a friend.”

The depression – and never-ending pain – was too much for Maya.

“I didn’t think there was a solution to my problems, but eventually I realized that my suffering was temporary and did have a solution,” she said. “I saw a therapist and she recommended The Friendship Club.”

The Friendship Club was just what Maya needed, when she started as a ninth-grader.

“At the first meeting, I saw a group of seemingly carefree girls,” she said. “Everyone was laughing. I was awestruck. Nobody seemed unhappy or hated life.”

The Friendship Club helps girls address issues, learn new skills, make new friends and provide much-needed – and appreciated – support.

“The Friendship Club is a place where girls can talk about their problems with other girls or staff members,” Maya said. “I love seeing everyone joking, laughing and having fun.”

Maya has made the most of The Friendship Club, from the art workshops and college tours to summer camps. She graduated from the program in May 2020.

The activities “help strengthen the bonds of friendship,” Maya said. “Through these activities, we also learn more about what we like, and don’t like, about ourselves. It’s a place where making time for yourself and helping others is encouraged.”

And Maya is committed to helping her friends and others struggling with life’s many challenges.

“I want to help others like The Friendship Club has helped me,” said Maya, who plans to get her nursing degree. “I don’t want anyone to feel the way I felt when I was depressed.”
VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR: ‘I knew there was magic happening right here’

Volunteer Nanci Mason knows the gift of education.

A college degree opened the door to a great career for Mason, including being one of the first 200 employees at Cisco Systems. “It gave me the impetus for a very successful life,” said Mason, who moved from Silicon Valley to Nevada County in 1995, when The Friendship Club was just starting.

A decade later, a friend and Friendship Club board member introduced Mason to the nonprofit organization. It’s been a perfect match since.

“When I experienced how dynamic Friendship Club founders and staff were, how brilliantly they articulated their message, passion, tears, deep and direct understanding,” she said. “Well, I knew there was magic happening right here in this small community.”

Mason has definitely been part of the “magic.” As a volunteer, she started as an after-school driver, carrying girls to meetings and other events. Soon, she was deeply involved, from creating art and teaching cooking classes to serving as a mentor.

“It’s a big responsibility,” said Mason, who was named Volunteer of the Year in 2019. “These young people are facing huge obstacles. We make a difference in their lives, even if we don’t always see it at the time.”

Quite often, a big difference. Friendship Club girls may be struggling with emotional and personal issues, from a death in the family to a single-parent household where money and one-on-one time can be in short supply.

“My eyes were opened for the first time to what generational poverty is, as well as other forms of poverty, like poverty of imagination, opportunity and hope,” Mason said. “Being a small part of bringing positive change – education, resources, kindness and growth for youth – which then spreads like roots throughout the family of that youth ... has changed my life.”

Planting those roots can also change the lives of youth.

“I happen to have the most delightful mentee,” Mason said. “She has excelled, handled adversity and become a real leader.”

Mason stresses the success stories – and there are many, with hundreds of girls going through The Friendship Club since 2006.

The quarter-century-old organization gives “a lift, a boost ... and that helps improve your self-confidence and self-esteem,” Mason said. “There are girls here with so much potential. Each girl has something amazing to offer.”

And every volunteer has something special to offer the girls and The Friendship Club.

In turn, volunteers will gain “friendship, connection and a feeling of having value and a purpose in life. And watching the girls eagerly attend, learn and be silly ... just be girls without judgment, run through their gamut of emotions and form lifelong friendships is so rewarding.”

Those are the many reasons that Mason donates about 40 hours per month to The Friendship Club, including serving as Secretary of the Board of Directors for a second term.

“This is where I fit and put all of my focus.”
In 2019, The Friendship Club made a strategic decision to significantly invest in our infrastructure, operations and programs.

2019 Income: $822,000

We greatly appreciate the donations from individuals and businesses, foundations and grants that fund our critical programs.

2019 Expenses: $849,000

Delivering Effective, Quality Programs

We are committed to advancing our mission, investing in youth and doing the essential work to achieve our goals.

BY THE NUMBERS

ASSETS as of December 31, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Assets</td>
<td>$176,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed Assets</td>
<td>$173,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Assets</td>
<td>$262,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Assets</td>
<td>$611,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liabilities &amp; Equity</td>
<td>$611,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FRIENDSHIP CLUB MILESTONES

25 Years of Changing Lives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Milestone Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>The Friendship Club launches with a summer pilot program with 15 girls in a classroom at Deer Creek School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Establishes monthly cultural field trips and Camp Friendship</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Obtains nonprofit 501(c)(3) status; Expands to three staffers working in office at Nev. County Superintendent of Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Establishes after-school program for high school girls at Nevada Union H.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Doubles office space to 900 square feet, including an area for computers and tutoring, located in a professional building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Serves 65 girls; First girl graduates from high school; Credentialled teacher hired to run middle school program; Summer enrichment program begins; Endowment/scholarship planned giving program starts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Moves to a 2,000 sq.ft. space on Providence Mine; Four girls graduate, apply for college scholarships; Credentialled teacher hired to run high school program; volunteer coordinator hired; 1st Annual Graduation &amp; Scholarship Celebration Dinner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Volunteers**

The Friendship Club’s success depends on active and committed volunteers, who do everything from driving girls to the program after school to serving as mentors.

**Youth Served**

The Friendship Club continues to help more youth every year, with an estimated 145 students in 2020.

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**FRIENDSHIP CLUB MILESTONES | 25 Years of Changing Lives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Summer program includes 15 clinics, in addition to Camp Friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Founder Mary Collier retires as Executive Director • Jennifer Litton Singer named Executive Director • First Power of the Purse event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Moves to 4,000 sq. ft. office that includes kitchen, two classrooms, computers &amp; library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Receives a multiyear federal grant and works in partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters to create the Sierra Mentoring Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Dena Valin hired as Associate Director to expand education efforts</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>More than 600 girls have been in the program for at least one year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Moves to current 8,000 sq. ft. campus on Litton Drive • Prepares &amp; provides 5,000 meals/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Establishes SAFE program to help 16-24 year old boys &amp; girls experiencing homelessness • Expands health &amp; wellness program, emphasizing nutrition education • Adds on-site mental health services and provides dental clinics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Celebrates 25th anniversary • Plans to serve 145 youth • Plans to construct commercial kitchen for education, hands-on cooking programs and training for culinary jobs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>