

30 YEARS  
OF TRANSFORMATION



SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES  
ILLINOIS

30 YEARS OF  
**BUILDING  
COMMUNITIES  
OF HOPE**

ANNUAL  
REPORT

**20  
20**

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# ABOUT US

**SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES ILLINOIS IS BUILDING A BETTER TOMORROW FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.**

At SOS Children's Villages Illinois, we build Villages that unite brothers and sisters in foster care, surround them with a community of hope, and help them grow into caring and productive adults. For 30 years, SOS Illinois has offered an innovative alternative to traditional foster care in emphasizing the following five components:

1. Children live together with their siblings;
2. Children receive care and support from a full-time, professionally trained Foster Parent;
3. Children grow up in a private, single-family home;
4. Children are supported by the Village, designed as an intentional community of care;
- and 5. Children and families in the community are supported through preventive services and resources.

**SOS Illinois operates as its own 501(c)3, with four sites in Illinois:**



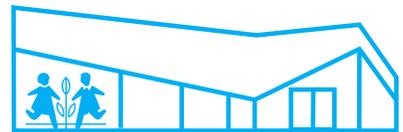
LOCKPORT VILLAGE



CHICAGO VILLAGE



CASA TEPEYAC



ROOSEVELT SQUARE VILLAGE

## RECOGNITION:

We are an accredited non-profit organization recognized for its transparency and fiscal responsibility.



# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



**"At no time were we ever alone."**

Where were you 30 years ago?

It was just three decades ago that the first SOS Children's Village in Illinois opened its doors in Lockport, Illinois. Since then, we have expanded our mission to include three additional service sites in the city of Chicago that together now serves 500 children each year.

In listening with those who were part of the original vision to create an SOS Children's Village, there are three key concepts that motivated our founders to build the first Village: *allow each child to heal; keep children and families safe; and ensure our homes are a stable source of physical and emotional nourishment, so each child can maximize their potential.*

Those simple yet profound foundational principles that built the first Village were especially true in 2020 for all our Villages.

As you will see in this report, we designed new systems and structures to support ways for each child to prosper even while remaining socially distant from others. I hope you will see how together we worked to strengthen our commitment to honor the founders of SOS Children's Villages Illinois.

In 2020, opening our new and innovative Roosevelt Square Community Center became a most tangible and visible sign of strength and resilience for so many.

In addition, realizing the detrimental impact the pandemic would have on children, who are oftentimes already struggling in the education system, we expanded our Education Department and made it more comprehensive.

In the most creative and innovative ways we prioritized support systems to ensure that wherever possible families would be reunited to ensure children were not delayed on their pathway to return home.

In 2020, we were able to formalize our Racial Justice Committee. This group of dedicated staff built from past efforts to address the various levels of social injustices, racism, and discrimination.

For all the many activities that occurred in 2020, I am most grateful and proud of the support I received from the Board, specifically, Jim Wolfe, for his support and direction especially when there was so much unknown. I also am most grateful to our many loyal and generous donors, the business community and community partners who all responded each time we reached out to them. However, each day children were safe and thriving due to the work of our senior leadership team and every staff member we turned to during these formidable challenges.

At no time were we ever alone. Together, SOS Illinois was able to create a spirit that drove us all to tireless moments of activities and actions to keep everyone safe. This combined effort ensured that SOS Children's Villages Illinois would not just survive this virus but would remain strong.

I thank each of you for the gift of your presence, support, and guidance that got us through this most challenging time. I look forward to the next 30 years and beyond as we continue to fulfill this sacred and life-giving mission.

# COVID-19 & FOSTER CARE: LESSONS LEARNED



Nearly a year after the routines of our lives have been turned upside down, we still find ourselves grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic. Even with vaccines now available and restrictions being lifted, we continue to wonder when will things get back to “normal.”

This level of challenge we each faced for months in many ways has been trauma. This level of uncertainty is all too often part of what occurs for children entering the foster care system. While this past year created a sense of instability in our lives, there are some very important things we learned from foster care during these unprecedented times:

1. Even Though We are Separated, We are Together
2. Uncertainty, Fear, and Brokenness are a Source of Hope
3. We Are All Looking to Establish Stability and Security Once Again
4. Unconditional Love is a Force Far Stronger than Any Virus
5. We Need Our Institutions to Behave with Moral Authority

As we reflect on this past year, let us remember the emotions and experiences we have each endured connects us on a greater level to the children and families. We provide care and support in an effort to mediate uncertainty and fears. The important reminder is that no one stays in foster care forever; and we will not be isolated forever.

There is great hope, love, and strength in our togetherness. Our Village Model of Care is a collective force that heals and inspires. Together, we journey as a Village toward permanency, stability, and a “new normal” once again.

# TOP 3 HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020



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We are grateful for the immense support of our corporate partners and donors, some of which included TV Stars and Chicago Bears Players, who found new ways of supporting us in a most unprecedented year. As COVID-19 interrupted every facet of life, we were grateful our services were recognized as essential; and therefore, continued without interruption.



2

SOS Illinois reacted rapidly to successfully navigate the pandemic to ensure children and families were safe, as well as provided appropriate personal protective equipment. From there, SOS Illinois had a strategic focus on safety, education, behavioral health, and diversity, equity & inclusion at our Villages and sites.



1

The Roosevelt Square Community Center was completed this year. Even amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, we were fortunate construction was deemed an essential service. Thanks to the tireless work of the construction teams, the Center was completed on time and on budget.

Visit our website to read the entire blog at [sosillinois.org/connect/](https://sosillinois.org/connect/)

WE CELEBRATED 30 YEARS OF SERVICE TO ILLINOIS' MOST VULNERABLE FAMILIES.

# 2020 KEY OUTCOMES

## HOPE IN ACTION

### 57,685 DAYS OF CARE

This equates to 1,384,440 hours of service to the children in our care.

### 497 CHILDREN SERVED

Nearly 500 children were served through our programs and services.

### 41 REUNIFICATIONS

We reinforced our commitment to help children connect and find their “forever home” even while staying apart.

### 22 FOSTER PARENTS

A record number of Foster Parents were hired in 2020.

## NOTABLE INITIATIVES

### COVID-19 RESPONSE



### RACIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE



### EDUCATION DEPARTMENT



# 100%

*High School Graduation Rate Compared to the National Average of 50% for Children in Foster Care*

*In 2020, we celebrated for the 16th year in a row all of our high school graduates successfully completing their secondary education. All seniors went on to secure full-time employment or enrolled in a college or university.*



# BUILDING HOPE

In October 2020, SOS Illinois opened the doors to its new Roosevelt Square Community Center. Despite the pandemic, construction continued. The project was completed on time and on budget. For the safety of all, we did not gather for a traditional grand opening, but created a virtual tour of the Center on our website. Visit us online to see the building and its features that make it a first-of-its-kind for Chicago.

# INSIDE THE COMMUNITY CENTER



Visit our website to tour the entire building.

**THE CENTER REPRESENTS OUR COLLECTIVE  
TRIUMPH AND WILL STAND AS A BEACON  
OF HOPE FOR YEARS TO COME.**



**SOSILLINOIS.ORG**

