

## ANNUAL REPORT

The Better Homes Foundation

1992 Annual Report



The Better Homes Foundation was funded and sponsored by the publication of the same name. It's good works were based in Boston, and it's benefits were extended to homeless and battered mothers and families in other states...

When the company requested an annual report, the budget was low and the eventual product was purposely printed economically in black ink on inexpensive matt stock.

The cover featured actual drawings by beneficiary children.

Parenting

In 1982, The Better Homes Foundation launched parenting programs for homeless mothers in three cities: Los Angeles, New York and Chicago.

These programs teach parents how to contribute more effectively to their children's emotional and physical growth and how to help them learn. The programs also make sure families receive assistance with basic and special needs. The Foundation is especially



*"Parents need to be supported and nurtured so that they can support and nurture their children."*

*Jack Shostoff, M.D.,  
Chief of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, MA*

pleased to add parenting to its programs for homeless families. While parenting programs exist across the country, few have been designed to consider the special circumstances of homeless parents. After working with homeless families for several years, the Foundation has learned what components such a parenting program should contain. Programs at all sites are flexible, combining group education and support with

home visits.

Homeless mothers need the same skills all mothers need. But even the most routine challenges they face as parents are compounded by the stress, isolation, and uncertainty of homelessness. Unlike most mothers, homeless mothers rarely have close relatives they can count on for advice or practical help. Some are themselves victims of an impoverished childhood; some are also the children of poorly skilled parents.

The Foundation's parenting programs work to break these cycles for today's homeless children.

In addition to teaching parenting skills, staff at parenting programs help mothers recognize whether their children's behavior is appropriate for their age and situation, and assist with referrals for counseling and education as needed.

Like most mothers, homeless mothers are eager to give their children better lives. While poverty and homelessness put children at

risk for delayed physical and emotional development, healthy mother-child relations can go a long way toward protecting children from the most serious problems. The Foundation's parenting programs help mothers improve those aspects of their children's environment that are within their control. The programs capitalize on the mothers' greatest incentive to change their own lives, the well-being of their children.

Training

Staff members at homeless shelters and transitional facilities surely rank among America's most unsung heroes. They are expected to function, often in rapid succession, as skilled administrators, compassionate counselors, crisis managers, childcare experts, tough managers and gentle friends. They're overworked, underpaid, and isolated from other care providers.

The Staff "burn-out" and rapid turnover are common problems.

Over the past four years, the Better Homes Foundation has built a reputation for providing high-quality assistance to staff working with homeless families. Our training program (called TAP, for Technical Assistance Package) uses videotapes, role playing and problem-solving exercises to help care-providers sharpen their skills.

TAP offers a 15-session curriculum which can be tailored to specific local needs. It is offered in training sessions ranging from a few hours to three days.

In 1991, Master Trainer Robert Stains joined the Foundation and launched our

training program for caregivers in Oklahoma City. We've since responded to requests for training nationwide, including the University of Michigan School of Social Work, Louisiana Department of Education, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, Volunteers of America of Kentucky, and the

Jacksonville, Florida YWCA. In recognition of the Foundation's technical knowledge and training expertise, the Department of Housing and Urban Development recently awarded the Foundation and partnering agencies a federal contract to provide technical assistance at numerous sites across the country.

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The Better Homes Foundation Annual Report included photography of beneficiary mothers and their families.



*"I was desperate for a healthy, happy way to live, and needed help giving my daughter all she deserves. My Parent Aide brought light and support to my life, and showed me how to be a real parent to Amanda"*

*Client at the New London Parent Aide Program, New London, CT 1992 Grantee*



## Where have all the flowers gone?

Sometimes it's hard for the children of homeless families to find the words. Homelessness is hard to talk about.

But their drawings speak volumes. The children draw houses. Then they draw flowers and trees and grass. They put fences around fantasy gardens. Sometimes they draw happy children playing inside.

If a single word can describe the overwhelming feelings of families without homes, it is surely rootlessness. For parents and children alike, there is no sense of belonging — no home, no neighborhood, no community. The wrenching experience of being uprooted — time after time — takes its terrible toll.

Yet like the flowers in real gardens, the children of homeless families sometimes show remarkable resilience. At The Better Homes Foundation, we have witnessed the dramatic difference basic care and nurturing can make to small children. We know that early intervention can save children who would

otherwise suffer irreparable damage. We believe that a next generation of homeless families can be prevented.

In 1992, The Better Homes Foundation provided financial and technical support to family assistance programs in communities nationwide. In only four years, the Foundation has now given a total of 131 grants to 90 programs in 32 states. These programs all work toward the same goal: stabilizing families in permanent housing and helping them put down roots as part of mainstream community life.



The charming children's drawings that grace our office walls energize our efforts each day. Their trees and flowers remind us that the smallest, saddest child still yearns for roots. Our dreams are filled with children who are smiling again, and our fondest wish is for the next gift of a drawing to be lovingly captioned: my home.

The Better Homes Foundation Annual Report included actual drawings by beneficiary children and were featured inside and on the cover, along with excellent photography.