

**A BRIEF REPORT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON THE PROGRESS OF PRINCIPAL PROGRAMS OF BUILD HOPE INCORPORATED FOR FY2020**

  
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Jenny Scanlin, President

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**Purpose:** Build Hope, Inc. (“BHI”) is funded entirely by grants and the in-kind support of staff at the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles and centers its work and resources on supporting residents living government-assisted housing. As a companion our look forward at the FY2021 program and budget, this report provides the Governing Board with a review of the activities and program successes for FY2020.

**Issues:** This year BHI stretched its partnerships and increased its resources more than any year since establishing its mission in 2002. Working collaboratively with over 30 donors and over a dozen distribution and service partner organizations, BHI pushed the envelope to bring new and varied resources to residents in response to the COVID pandemic and through its established programming.

*Pathways to Higher Education.*

In 2020, KPI held its **8<sup>th</sup> Annual Scholarship** event. Challenged to complete financial assistance applications and college acceptance during the pandemic, BHI extended its timeframe for accepting scholarship applications and held a successful virtual event in July connecting and congratulating our twenty-nine graduating high school seniors who received academic scholarships totaling \$38,000. Our scholars received awards between \$500 and \$2,500. Each of their roads to college told of their resilience and tenacity; with an average GPA of 3.4, our scholars are currently attending school on campuses such as Yale University, UC Berkeley, Cal Poly Pomona, UCLA, UC Irvine, CSU Chico, Texas Christian University, San Francisco State, as well as El Camino College and Los Angeles Southwest College. This year, BHI awarded its first Continuing Scholarship to one of our 2019 recipients, who attended the event and shared her experience and advice having completed her first year of college. This year scholarships were funded through the generosity of the Price Philanthropies Foundation, the County of Los Angeles Probation Housing Based Day Supervision (HBDS) Program, and various other businesses comprising HACLA’s Section 3 program.

BHI understands that the path to higher education begins at a young age and for many years has aligned with the **Grade Level Reading Campaign** led by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. This initiative seeks to improve third-grade reading outcomes through leveraging strategic partnerships and resources to improve reading levels. With generous book donations from the National Book Foundation’s Book Reach Environment initiative, BHI was able to distribute 15,000 books targeting mothers of newborns and encouraging reading as a bonding experience to our adventurous

young adult readers. Creating access to books is a foundational initiative for BHI and this year we found two new ways to do this. In partnership with teachers in Watts, BHI assisted in hosting book fairs at our public housing sites and donated books and bookcases to our Bridge housing facility run by the Salvation Army on Imperial. In 2020, BHI sponsored new outdoor community libraries/book exchanges at HACLA's fourteen public housing sites and senior sites in HACLA's Asset Management portfolio. BHI purchased Little Free Libraries, which will be placed in high public traffic locations around HACLA properties and will be regularly replenished with books for adults and children of all reading levels. In 2021, BHI hopes to host a competition to bring on local artists to help decorate these libraries to add visual appeal and peak resident interest.

### *Bridging the Digital Divide.*

The pandemic has revealed the need to address the digital divide more than ever. Knowing the limitations on connectivity at many of HACLA's public housing sites including those with Wifi networks already in place, BHI focused on increasing internet connectivity, providing access to computers and devices, and ensuring young learners at our sites have the opportunity to keep up with school work despite school closures, youth program stops, and distance learning.

Thanks to partnerships with Human I-T and Starry Internet, the generosity of private donors and the efforts of our partners and staff, BHI has been able to perform mass distribution of devices at our sites:

- **751 Chromebooks** were distributed between summer and year end to our Project SOAR college students and families with children three (3) or more school-aged children living in the household. With continued donations coming in, BHI expects to have 40 more Chromebooks to be available by early 2021.
- **2,500 headphones** and headsets were distributed alongside these Chromebooks and made available in HACLA's active Computer Labs for students and adults who came in to utilize Computer Lab resources.

In June, Starry announced a new partnership to expand access to affordable, **high-quality broadband internet** to the more than 600 households in Mar Vista Gardens. The partnership has given residents the option to subscribe to low cost-service plans (\$15/month) with high-speed broadband and no data caps or extra fees. Starry announced the extension of free internet service through the end of the calendar year to all Mar Vista residents. Assessing the success of this program, in October, Starry announced the expansion of internet connectivity throughout most of HACLA's public housing sites and is addressing digital deserts in our communities of Imperial Gardens, Jordan Downs, Nickerson and Pueblo Del Rio this fall and will bring the program to Rancho San Pedro, Pico Gardens, Estrada Courts and William Mead in early 2021. Sites not slated for Starry's program are being served with individual hot spot distribution being paid for through HACLA's CARES Act funds. BHI is assisting in the planning efforts and educating residents on the opportunity.

*Financial and Resource Security.*

During this public health crisis, many households across HACLA's sites were affected physically, socially and financially. As one of our response efforts, BHI partnered with a national non-profit called the **Family Independence Initiative (FII)**, which raised funds to support low-income families during the pandemic. In late spring/early summer, 200 heads of household for families who have experienced financial hardship, such as unpaid leave, care of a vulnerable or infected relative, loss of wages due to involuntary cancellation of work, or unpaid leave of absence due to school and daycare closures were randomly selected via a lottery to receive \$500 in financial support. In 30-days BHI was able to distribute a total of **\$100,000 in financial support** to HACLA's vulnerable families. In addition, BHI partnered with El Nido who provided similar support to 15 families in San Fernando Gardens and 115 families in Jordan Downs accounting for **\$65,000 in additional financial support**. Two donors, Top Dawg Entertainment and the ThinkWatts Foundation have been working through BHI to provide rent payments to public housing residents providing a month of **rent relief** to seniors and large households.

Through partnerships with Baby2bay, Mending Hearts and A Children's Dream, BHI provided more than **50,000 diapers, 7,500 backpacks, and over 3,000 educational toys** to support public housing and Section 8 households. Some initiatives were targeted, including a duffel bag filled with hygiene items, clothes, blankets and toys provided to over 200 foster youth living in public housing. These items were given away through knock and drop events and through the recreation and after school partners at public housing sites as well as public housing management offices.

As COVID took hold in our communities, BHI pivoted to address the primary needs of residents and found the greatest included household supplies, PPE and food. **Raising close to \$400,000 in just a few months time**, BHI was able to organize the delivery of over **77,000 meals to seniors and disabled** households; ran **free farmer's market deliveries** for two months at Nickerson Gardens, serving every household; and co-hosted multiple **grocery bag deliveries** bringing fresh food, meat and produce to thousands of larger families at public housing sites in South Los Angeles and Rancho San Pedro.

With resource delivery in such high demand, BHI was awarded a grant to purchase a delivery van which will assist with current and future resource efforts moving forward.

This year has truly spoken to the enormous collaboration that BHI has built over the years and the magnitude of lives that have been touched throughout this critical time. The work ahead remains to be seen but based on our ability to deliver, we are ready for the challenge.

**Funding:** The stated programs receive in-kind grant support from external organizations

**Attachments:**

1. KPI Scholarship Brochure
2. 2020 By The Numbers
3. 2020 COVID Response Summary