

The Felix Organization - Adoptees for Children

GuideStar Exchange Charting Impact Report * Last Updated on 07.08.2015

This report represents The Felix Organization - Adoptees for Children's responses to Charting Impact, a joint project of **BBB Wise Giving Alliance**, **GuideStar USA Inc**, and **Independent Sector**. Charting Impact uses five simple yet powerful questions to encourage strategic thinking and help organizations share concise information about their plans and progress toward impact.

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|  | The Felix Organization - Adoptees for Children |
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| | Mission: THE FELIX ORGANIZATION/ Adoptees For Children provides inspiring opportunities and new experiences to enrich the lives of children who are growing up in the foster care system. As adoptees, we were "taken home." We want to give back to those children who didn't get "taken home." |

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1. What are we aiming to accomplish?

The Felix Organization aims for all of our youth participants to leave Camp Felix with the following competencies: 1.Improved physical and cognitive skills 2.Improved awareness about healthy living 3.Improved self-esteem and sense of belonging 4.Heightened self-confidence including respect for self 5.Improved social skills including respect for others 6.Improved level of positive decision-making and leadership skills

2. What are our strategies for making this happen?

The Felix Organization uses the following strategies to achieve our goals at Camp Felix, our signature program: 1. Children will participate in physical activities including swimming, team sports, and climbing wall. Children will participate in cognitive and problem-based activities such as project adventure and scavenger hunt. 2. Children will eat three healthy meals and a snack daily and learn about good nutrition from our Food Service staff who implement a weekly nutrition orientation and cooking classes. 3. Children will participate in various group team-building activities. 4. Children will have the opportunity to overcome fears and experience success by participating in various physical and social activities and living independently from their families. 5. Through participation in various group and team building activities, children will have an opportunity to build social skills and respect for others. 6. Through their participation in various group and team-building activities, children will hone and develop positive decision-making and leadership skills.

3. What are our organization's capabilities for doing this?

For more than 25 years, Felix co-founder Darryl "DMC" McDaniels has had an influence on popular culture. The first rap group to grace the cover of Rolling Stone Magazine and the first to appear on MTV, Run DMC changed music and made history. Thirty million record sales later, DMC continues to create, inspire and motivate. DMC was born in Harlem, put up for adoption and grew up in Hollis, Queens. After discovering, as an adult, this part of his history, DMC began his journey down another life path in search of his birth mother. While his struggle was captured in the 2007 Emmy-winning VH-1 documentary, "DMC: My Adoption Journey", the process gave DMC tremendous insight and purpose, prompting him to become an advocate for adoption and children in foster care. He was invited to the White House by President Obama to address youth groups on responsibility and has appeared before Congress and State Legislatures in support of this cause. DMC has been the recipient of various awards including Hard Rock's Love All Serve All Award for his numerous philanthropic endeavors. DMC also sits on the board of directors of Children's Rights. Felix co-founder, Sheila Jaffe was born in Manhattan and grew up in the Bronx. At eleven years of age, she found out she was adopted. Today, she is an Emmy Award winning casting director whose body of work includes the HBO hit series, The Sopranos and Entourage. Her feature film resume includes: The Fighter, Rocky Balboa, and Ted. Although casting is her profession, Sheila's true passion is helping children. She started out with a simple idea to sponsor inner city boys and girls to experience their first Broadway play. As co-founder of The Felix Organization, Sheila is starring in her most rewarding and vital role. As she sees it: "Felix is like my child and watching Felix grow in its reach to help these children has been an indescribable blessing." Sheila currently sits on the board of the Mark Wahlberg Youth Foundation and the Advisory Board of the Savannah Film Festival. In 2013, she was honored at The Children's Rights Gala for her work with children in foster care. Amanda Simonetta, Felix's Executive Director, began her work with foster children when she was a Grant-Writer for an orphanage in Cusco, Peru. As a former School Counselor with a Masters Degree in Education, Amanda has worked with hundreds of children in need. As Director of Institutional Giving at The New York Foundling, one of New York City's largest social services agencies, she managed a grant portfolio of over \$3 million, supporting programs to help disadvantaged youth. Amanda became Camp Felix's on-site Camp Director and Program Administrator for its first five years. Our seasonal camp staff includes certified social workers and medical professionals who are highly trained to work with this population. Our medical team is certified to administer medications so that no child misses the opportunity to attend Camp Felix.

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4. How will we know if we're making progress?

The Camp Felix program and facilities are overseen and reviewed every summer by The Putnam County Department of Health, and its meals program is assessed by The New York State Department of Education's Summer Food Service Program. The Camp Director conducts a camper and parent survey as well as an annual review and debrief meeting that is attended by The Executive Directors of The Felix Organization and our partners, the New York Foundling, as well as The Co-founders of Felix and key camp staff members. In addition, Camp Felix is evaluated every three years by The New York Foundling's national accrediting body, The Council on Accreditation. Our short term indicators include:

- How many campers we send to Camp Felix overnight camp in Putnam Valley, NY each year.
- How many children we send to Camp Felix West Coast in LA each year.
- How much money we distribute in Beyond Camp mini-grants to allow children in foster care to follow their dreams. We distributed funds for such activities as dance lessons, gymnastics, college textbooks, sports leagues, photography equipment, tutoring, laptops for school and more.
- How many youth in the foster care system we send to cultural events in New York City each year including the Radio City Christmas Spectacular, other plays and professional sporting events.
- How many children we serve a delicious Thanksgiving meal during our annual feast-i-val where children decorated t-shirts, sing and dance at a restaurant in NYC.
- How much money we distribute in gift cards during the holiday season for teens in foster care, who often get overlooked at that time of year.

Long-term indicators:

- How many Camp Felix campers have become Counselors In Training
- How many campers have become camp volunteer staff
- How many former campers have moved into the role of Camp Felix employee.
- How many former campers move into administrative roles at Camp Felix such as Camp Director, Assistant Director and others.

5. What have and haven't we accomplished so far?

In the past year, in 2014, Felix made the following progress:

- Sent our 1,000th camper to Camp Felix overnight camp in Putnam Valley, NY
- Sent an additional 100 children to Camp Felix West Coast in LA.
- Distributed \$10,000 worth of Beyond Camp mini-grants to allow children in foster care to follow their dreams. We distributed funds for dance lessons, gymnastics, college textbooks, sports leagues, photography equipment, tutoring, laptops for school and more.
- Sent 100 youth in the foster care system to Brooklyn Nets games.
- Served 75 children a delicious Thanksgiving meal during our annual feast-i-val where children decorated t-shirts, sang and danced at Hill Country Barbecue restaurant in NYC.
- Send 100 youth in the foster care system to the Radio City Christmas Spectacular.
- Distributed over \$14,000 in gift cards during the holiday season for teens in foster care, who often get overlooked this time of year.

The impact of Felix's programs is life-long. To date:

- 30 Camp Felix campers have become Counselors In Training
- 5 campers have become camp volunteer staff
- 4 former campers have moved into the role of Camp Felix employee.

These opportunities help our youth build job experience, enhance their leadership skills, and expand their resumes to prepare them for their professional careers. What we haven't accomplished yet: we hope in future summers that our Camp Felix administrative positions, such as Camp Director and Assistant Director, among others, will be filled by former Camp Felix campers. We feel strongly that youth who have gone through the program will make the best role models for new youth who understand that these staff members were once in their position. We feel confident that, as our former campers continue to fill Counselor roles, they will move up the ranks to fill these higher positions. This will help those youth to obtain full time year-round positions and support them in leading healthy and positive lifestyles.