

Building UnSystems Across the Country

ALIA ANNUAL REPORT | July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019



THE MISSION OF ALIA:

To inspire and drive transformative change for the people and systems entrusted with the welfare and wellbeing of children.

THE VISION OF ALIA:

Families are upheld as the foundation of lifelong wellbeing for children.

FEARLESS INNOVATION

We take strategic risks to build a better way.

AUDACIOUS OPTIMISM

We hold a bold belief in the human capacity to transform and heal.

COURAGEOUS PARTNERSHIPS

We share knowledge and form deep, trusting collaborations believing that everyone has a part of the solution to share and everyone is a changemaker.

A SENSE OF URGENCY

We understand how brief childhood is and what is at stake for our youth.

RELENTLESS PURSUIT OF EVIDENCE

We are committed to learning from each other and our youth and adjusting practices; when we know better, we do better.



A Message from the CEO and Board Chair



Dear Friends of Alia,

We are delighted to share another year in the story of Alia. Every day we team up with child welfare innovators, building a new way of work we call *an UnSystem*. Our partnerships are built on the shared vision that we must keep children safely *with* their families, not *from* their families.

Collectively we can and must transition our current child protection system to one of primary prevention – we can't wait for abuse or neglect to happen before providing support! Alongside child welfare leaders, families, and communities, we are building a proof of concept. Our mission is to demonstrate that this transition is just, equitable, necessary, and possible.

The research is clear: children thrive when they experience an uninterrupted sense of belonging. This means we must commit to doing whatever it takes to safely preserve and strengthen family connections.

Building on this evidence, Alia commissioned two reports this year. A **Social Return on Investment Study**¹ performed by Ecotone Analytics shows that foster care offers a negative return on investment – between \$3.64 and \$9.55 lost for every dollar spent. Our second commissioned piece is a **Research Brief**² consolidating the current academic evidence for keeping families safely together. We now know that when we separate families and punish parents, it also punishes children.

The great news is that the tide is shifting and a national movement is gaining momentum! Passage of the Family First Prevention Services Act, messaging out of the Federal Children's Bureau, and state and local efforts to increase primary prevention and obsolete the need for out-of-home care make us more hopeful than ever that transformation is on the horizon.

Our deep belief in family preservation must never devalue the courage and commitment of loving foster parents; that is not what we mean to do. Recruiting more foster parents treats our challenge as a supply problem and that's not how we see it. Why are there so many children at risk of not living safely at home? Why is there so much demand for out-of-family placements? That's the problem we want to solve.

As we work with our partners to build UnSystems across the country, we gain momentum, recognition, and co-creators who believe we must treat relational connections as sacred. "Do what love would do" is our living motto, and what that looks like is dismantling systemic racism and building equitable practice both at Alia and with partnering agencies so that all families will thrive.

Families are not the problem; they are the solution! We know better and we must do better – our future depends on it.

As hopeful as ever,

Amelia Franck Meyer, CEO

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Rachel Zahn, Board Chair

¹ https://hiddencostsoffostercare.aliainnovations.org/

² https://researchbrief.aliainnovations.org/

Alia Milestones



DECEMBER 2015

Alia incorporates

JULY 2016

- Alia's founder started as the full-time CEO
- Launched Heartshare St. Vincent's Intensive Permanence Services Partnership

AUGUST 2016

Added Chief Innovation Officer

OCTOBER 2016

 Launched partnership with IDEO to design 10 of 10 For Kids national convening

DECEMBER 2016

Alia became an independent 501(c)(3)

MARCH 2017

 Added Chief Learning Officer

MAY 2017

 Kicked off 10 of 10 for Kids: Reimagining Child Welfare 4-day convening

OCTOBER 2017

 Hosted UnSummit: Beyond Policy & Finance 2-Day event

HOW WE CAME TO BE ALIA

With roots in therapeutic foster care and a history of recordsetting, award-winning outcomes for youth permanence, Alia's work is in movement-building. It is our goal to convene, support, challenge, and nurture leaders in child welfare to design and implement system changes needed for every child to have an uninterrupted sense of belonging.

Alia incorporated in 2015 and started practice in 2016.

Alongside convening the UnSystem Innovation Cohort, Alia publishes materials and offers fee-for-service training and coaching projects on understanding trauma, leadership fortitude, and workforce wellbeing.

We are supporting and convening innovators in public and private child welfare agencies to transform the child welfare system. Alia has set out to obsolete child welfare as we know it by creating and supporting new approaches and environments where youth and their caregivers can thrive. There is an overwhelming amount of new information available to us that those who created our current child welfare system did not have. We know better about attachment, trauma, and healing, and it is our responsibility to do better. Author, philosopher, poet, and scientist, Dr. Margaret Wheatley has influenced how we understand systems behavior and evolution. This has helped us frame our approach toward building something new: UnSystems.

HOW WE SEE THINGS: OUR ROLE

Building off of the work of Dr. Margaret Wheatley, we understand that every system follows a predictable life cycle. The child welfare system was based on a set of assumptions we now understand to be false. However, once a system is established it becomes everyone's job to maintain the status quo of that system. This is when we begin to see innovators, pioneers, and trailblazers of a new and different way of thinking and operating begin to pop up. In order to more fully transition to a new way of work, we need to connect, align, and support people and organizations in shifting mindset to a new understanding of the core set of assumptions on which a new system is built.

This is where Alia comes in

We see our role at Alia as supporting and connecting the current changemakers in child welfare to help build a new just and equitable system. In order to more fully transition to a new way of work, Alia connects, aligns, and supports people and organizations in shifting mindset to a new understanding of the core set of assumptions on which a new system is built. It is Alia's goal — with humility and a pioneering spirit — to support leaders with everything we have and all that we can leverage, in order to prove that in a vast majority of situations, children can stay safely with their loved ones.

201820192020

MARCH 2018

• UnSystem Innovation Cohort kick-off

JULY 2018

• Staff grows by 80%

NOVEMBER 2018

- Moved into new office space, "Alia Innovation Hub"
- Alia's CEO named "One of 25 Women Changing the World" by People

JANUARY 2019

- Launched Next-Level Summit Series
- Released "The Unseen Costs of Foster Care: Ecotone Social Return on Investment Study"
- Released "The Innovation Cohort Case Studies and Early Data"

OCTOBER 2019

• Released "Evidence Base for Avoiding Family Separation in Child Welfare Practice"

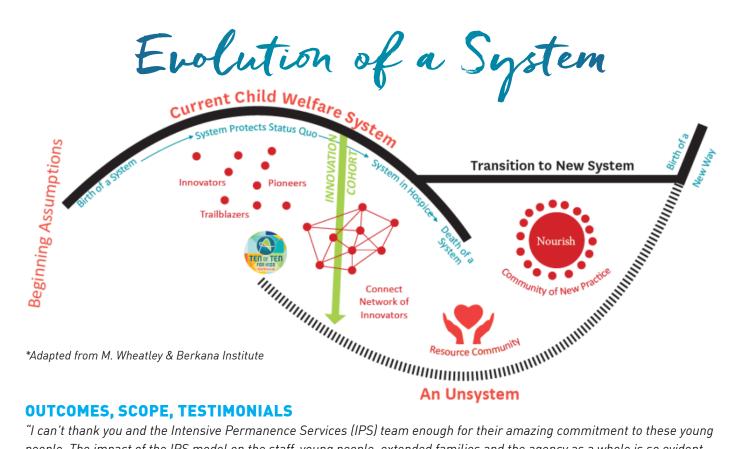
DECEMBER 2019

• Staff grows by 122%



TRADITIONAL CHILD





OUTCOMES, SCOPE, TESTIMONIALS

"I can't thank you and the Intensive Permanence Services (IPS) team enough for their amazing commitment to these young people. The impact of the IPS model on the staff, young people, extended families and the agency as a whole is so evident when listening to the team talk about the meaning they have found in this approach and the connections they've forged with and for these youth. I feel emotional about the potential for IPS to really transform child welfare practice and the system."

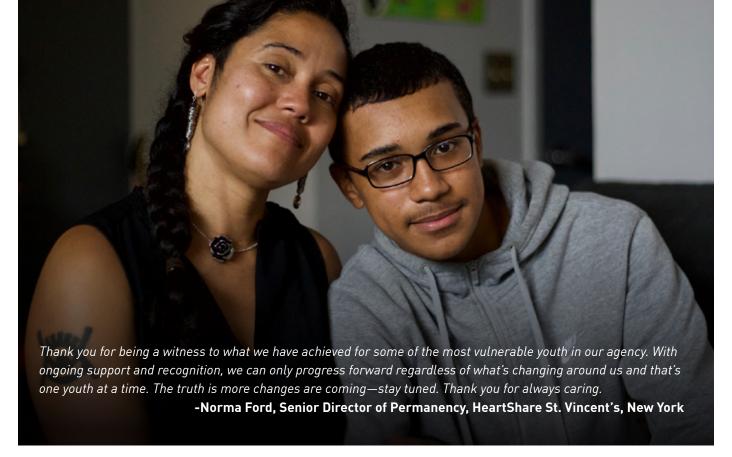
-Sarah Kroon Chiles, Executive Director, Redlich Horwitz Foundation

It is moments likes these and people like you, that are a constant reminder of not only why this work is so crucial but that I am doing something right. These are the same moments that teach me how to take a break and process and then show up with humility, grace and genuineness. I am forever grateful to be working with you because you are a perfect example of what Alia exemplifies. -Marlene Spence, Intensive Permanency Specialist, HeartShare St. Vincent's, New York

IMPACT 2018-2019 Projects, Trainings & Keynotes

Total people impacted = 3,500





REDLICH HORWITZ PARTNERSHIP STORY

Many youth at HeartShare St. Vincent's Services (HSVS) are long-term residents with tenures of over three years living in foster and/or group homes. Their challenges are multi-faceted and begin with a goal of independent living. Many of the youth residing at HSVS' foster and/or group homes find that the lack of affordable housing is a significant barrier in youth seeking independent living. They rely on housing assistance provided by HSVS to navigate the housing market in New York City. To reunify youth with family members or permanent connections requires a culture shift in their case plans. If the youth desire independent living and proceed with this after discharge, significant work around finding and building permanent connections is done with them prior to their discharge. HSVS, partnering with Alia, is helping youth to build tethers to permanent connections.

The Redlich Horwitz Foundation supports and works collaboratively with service providers and government agencies in NYC to ensure that every child exits the foster care system into a permanent, loving family. Sarah Chiles, Executive Director of the Redlich Horwitz Foundation, and Alia CEO, Amelia Franck Meyer, first met in 2014. After hearing Amelia speak on several different occasions on permanency and healing work with youth, Sarah saw a clear organizational alignment in values and vision. Redlich Horwitz funded a new partnership between Alia and HSVS to begin IPS — Intensive Permanence Services — with some of their youth with the deepest wounds and greatest need for trauma healing and permanence.

The partnership between the Redlich Horowitz Foundation, HSVS, and Alia focuses on finding permanent resources for all youth. These resources are built and nurtured so that they can show up for the youth in a way that supports them as they grow and heal their trauma histories.

Youth demonstrated true healing by successfully reconnecting with family members, living with relatives, and using their voice in various situations. Through intensive healing and connection, youth were able to sustain living with great aunts, mothers, and in one case a school para-professional with whom the youth had a special connection.

With stability in their living situation, youth remained connected to their IPS worker for ongoing support as they entered college, gained employment, and began to advocate for themselves in a variety of situations.

Because IPS workers *never gave up* on the youth they served in some of the most discouraging circumstances, the Redlich Horwitz Foundation/HSVS/Alia partnership made it possible for youth to trust, connect, grieve, heal, and make lifelong connections to adults.

OUTCOMES

67% of youth advanced their permanency goals; they were reunified, adopted, placed with kin, secured relational permanency or stepped down.

PROOF OF CONCEPT



We believe child welfare agencies can function primarily to prevent child abuse and neglect (primary prevention) rather than intervening to prevent continued maltreatment once child abuse and neglect has occurred (secondary prevention). The Alia UnSystem Innovation Cohort is identifying what steps it will take to make this systemic shift.

Through our work with this group of deeply caring and tenacious people, we are developing the process it takes to shift from business as usual in child welfare (classic case management, investigation, removals, court hearing, paperwork, etc.), to a new way of work which meets our aspiration to "Always preserve and strengthen family connections."

HOW DID THE COHORT COME TO BE?

Based on Ten of Ten for Kids, a 3 ½-day human-centered design event we held in May 2017, a broad and deep cross-section of those who care about and are affected by the child welfare system were asked to answer the question, "How might we build a child welfare system that actually works for children and families?" In fact, they answered this more poignant query: "When families struggle, how can we best help keep them safely together?" When they work well, Families are the perfect design of a "child welfare system," and we see now that our job as a community is to support the systems children are already born into – their families.

Out of Ten of Ten for Kids' resounding theme of strengthening families, the concept of an UnSystem was developed with these characteristics as Guiding Principles:

UNSYSTEM GUIDING PRINCIPLES



PROTECT RELATIONAL CONNECTIONS AS SACRED



NUTURE THE CAPACITY FOR JOY



INSIST ON RACIAL EQUITY AND RADICAL INCLUSION



DARE TO SHARE POWER



COMMIT TO INTERGENERATIONAL WELLBEING



TRUST THE WISDOM
OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TO
DESIGN THEIR OWN FUTURES



DO WHAT LOVE WOULD DO



HOW DOES THE COHORT WORK?

Guiding Principles in hand, Alia issued a Request for Innovators to fully implement these concepts – no pilots, just leaders wanting to **fully transform their systems**. Five of the agencies that applied and were selected: Eau Claire County, WI; Cass County, ND; Waupaca County, WI; Washington County, MD; and the Eastern Iowa Service Area.

The Cohort meets 10 times per year, 5 of which are in person, and is comprised of 10 child welfare leaders representing 4 states, 5 jurisdictions, and 14 counties. Each of the 5 jurisdictions in the Cohort includes the Director and Deputy Directors (or equivalents) from each of the 5 jurisdictions plus lived experience and professional guides to offer ongoing constituent voice and veteran child welfare wisdom. Each Cohort agency has received the **blessing of their state child welfare leadership** to participate, which we believe has contributed to leader stability and greater traction in practice change.

We see this as 5 simultaneous experiments in creating and discovering the concrete steps it takes to becoming an UnSystem. Overlapping themes have emerged in the first year

of the Cohort, and one of the most profound is the power of **shifting mindsets**. Each of the 5 Cohort agencies spent countless hours the past year with their staff and leadership teams collectively challenging their assumptions about birth families, considering the harm of removal and benefits of family, and questioning all assumptions about what's possible.

Alia's role

It is Alia's goal — with humility and a pioneering spirit — to support leaders with everything we have and all that we can leverage, in order to prove that in a vast majority of situations, children can stay safely with their loved ones and avoid stranger care. It is our charge and deep responsibility to ensure, to the extent humanly and systemically possible, that every child is safe in their home and safe in their heart.

Part of our commitment to the Cohort and to the child welfare industry is capturing what we've done and what we've accomplished. The outcomes we see are signals that we're moving in the right direction, and there is still so much more work to do. We will continue to convene and support this group of changemakers as long as they will have us.



"Being involved with the Cohort has restored my faith in the system and in humanity. I could see so many ways that the system was broken and I didn't know how to fix it or whether it could even be fixed – now I see people with forward thinking get out-of-the-box to fix things."

AMANDA BROWN, Lived Experience Guide for Eastern Iowa Service Region

Lead Parent Partner for the Cedar Rapids Service Area,
managed by Department of Iowa Children & Families

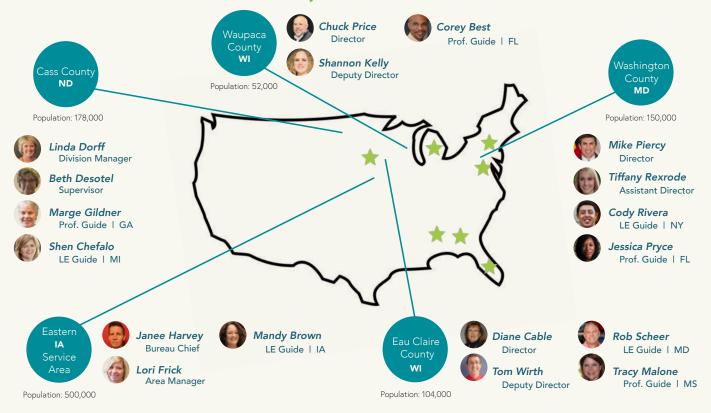


READ THE FULL CASE STUDY FOR DETAILS

https://www.aliainnovations.org/ unsystemcohortyearone

YEAR ONE COHORT AT A GLANCE

Alia UnSystem Innovation Cohort



March 2018 - October 2019

Special thanks to our former Cohort guides: Margo Kemp Johnson, Franco Vega, Ashley McCullough, Lien Bragg, China Darrington & Brian Clapier. **LE Guide** = Lived Experience Guide **Prof. Guide** = Professional Child Welfare Guide ★ = Guide locations

TOP FIVE KEY INSIGHTS FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

- 1 Prepare and take care of yourself and your team
- 2 Think differently about the work
- 3 Make the old way harder
- 4 Trust families as the safe bet
- 5 Expand the group of helpers

COHORT OUTCOMES

₹12%

total decrease of youth in foster care

37%

decrease of youth in residential care

CASS COUNTY

The number of youth in stranger foster care decreased by 43% in the past year.

EAU CLAIRE COUNTY

The number of youth in residential care dropped 40%.

EASTERN IOWA SERVICE AREA

Child Safety Conferences avoid removal for 94% of the youth involved.

WAUPACA COUNTY

3 full-time prevention social workers were hired through decreasing deep-end services, focusing on permanency, and shifting funds toward up-front work.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Compared to FY18, in FY19 the number of children removed dropped 61% - from 96 to 37.



MARCHING TOWARD A CULTURE OF ANTI-RACISM AT ALIA

One of the <u>UnSystem Guiding Principles</u> is, "racial equity and radical inclusion," and as we shared in a <u>Special Newsletter</u> in April 2019, we are deliberately examining our own biases and candid missteps as we strive to embody an identity of anti-racism and systemic equity for all people. We are committed to sharing our process with vulnerability and transparency in the hopes that our work can inspire courageous conversations across the field and that others can learn from both our stumbles and our triumphs.

We are moving forward with an internal effort to create a culture of self-reflection, organizational improvement, and dedication to confronting and dismantling white supremacy and valuing inclusion. Recently, it came to our attention at a Board meeting that not all of our team understood why we believe our internal work is necessary for rebuilding a just and loving system of child and family wellbeing.

Our Board and staff reacted in different ways to the question posed and some excerpts from those reflections are included here.

OUR "WHY": Child welfare was based on the assumption that if a system removes children from "bad families" and places them with "better families," they will thrive, do better and have a better life. Over time, implicit in this assumption is that "bad families" are often black, brown, indigenous and poor. The system is embedded in implicit bias and historical policies of explicit racism. We believe it is our moral and ethical obligation to put racism and discrimination as a central focus of our work, because **once we know better, we must do better**.

Racist ideas churn racist ideology and policies. They are not micro by any stretch of the imagination. They're abusive. The power [dynamic] and oppressive practices are what we're attempting to unravel and rid ourselves of. In an anti-racist world, there are no grey areas. It is or it isn't. Alia must begin to understand, and tackle head on, these racist ideas that are embedded in our nation's child welfare systems and to work to discontinue perpetuating white supremacy. We have no other choice.

Corey Best, Board Member



INSIST ON RACIAL EQUITY AND RADICAL INCLUSION



DARE TO SHARE POWER

What I am learning at Alia through our endeavors to bring race equity to the forefront of our vision is that this journey is messy, full of tension, and that the human capacity for taking a step towards someone for reconciliation is astounding.

Laura Witham, Staff Member

It was powerful to experience how 'whiteness' manifests itself in a real life conversation in a way, which under normal circumstances I would not have registered. Thanks to [a Board member's] thoughtful deconstruction I really understood, perhaps for the first time since I have been in the US, why anti-racism work includes deep and intentional work on oneself. I loved that the conversation demonstrated how we can be mirrors to each other in order to make the subconscious conscious and evolve as individuals and as a group. To continue the work we will have to have courage - courage to ask for help, courage to share how words and actions show up and affect others, courage to name what we perceived whether it is articulated directly or between the lines. Thank you ALIA for doing the real work.



ALIA SERVICES, RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

At Alia, we are laser-focused on building a body of evidence that demonstrates that the prevention of child abuse and neglect can be the primary role of child welfare. This bold vision to keep children safely *with* their families, not *from* their families, requires a new way of work. We offer a variety of services, materials and resources to shift mindsets, impact practice and support transformational systems change across the field.

Alia supports child welfare jurisdictions through long-term, in-depth projects that include:

- Systems Redesign Supports to bring the latest innovations in child welfare to assist leaders in day-to-day implementation, as well as the development of long-term change strategies.
- Leadership Coaching designed to build a leader's capacity to drive innovation and develop agency-wide alignment by creating a culture of wellbeing for staff, the agency and families they serve.
- Workforce Wellbeing Groups comprised of small groups of leaders who are equipped with the tools to achieve and maintain wellbeing and to reduce turnover and burnout.
- Micro-Learnings designed to engage staff agency-wide in a short, Ted Talk-style format in areas related to individual and organizational health and wellbeing.

Alia also supports child welfare jurisdictions through shortterm engagements, including:

- 3-day Next-Level Learning Summits to provide handson, bias-toward-action immersive experiences for leaders and practitioners in areas such as Helping Your Youth Find Permanence, Innovative Leadership & Sharing Power with Families.
- Workshops/Trainings/Retreats/Keynotes designed to support the skills, knowledge, and experiences necessary to engage in transformational systems change.
- Breakthrough Solutions Sessions that bring together national experts with small groups of leaders as they bring forth their toughest challenges to offer breakthrough solutions and quickly identify strategies for moving forward.

Now Available! Resources and Materials

www.aliainnovations.org/resources

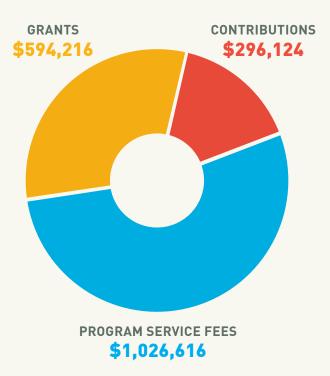
- Research Brief Evidence Base for Avoiding Family Separation in Child Welfare Practice
- Ecotone Report The Unseen Cost of Foster Care: A Social Return on Investment Study
- Alia UnSystem Innovation Cohort Case Studies and Early Data
- Coming Soon! Alia UnSystem Innovation Cohort Year 1 Outcomes

ALIA STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

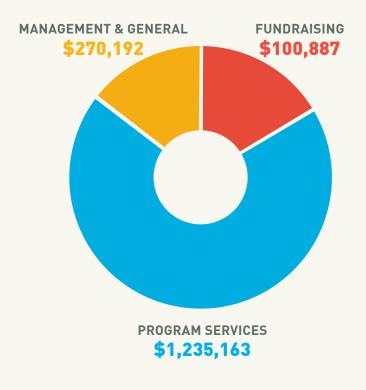
Year Ended June 30, 2019

REVENUES AND OTHER SUPPORT	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total
Grants	\$246,382	\$347,834	\$594,216
Contributions	\$236,141	\$59,983	\$296,124
Program Service Fees	\$1,026,616	-	\$1,026,616
Net Assets Released from Restriction	\$32,018	(\$32,018)	-
Total Revenue and Other Support	\$1,541,157	\$375,799	\$1,916,956
EXPENSES			
Program Services	\$1,235,163	-	\$1,235,163
Management & General	\$270,192	-	\$270,192
Fundraising	\$100,887	-	\$100,887
Total Expenses	1,606,242		\$1,606,242
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	(\$65,085)	\$375,799	\$310,714
Net Assets – Beginning of Year	\$99,483	\$104,043	\$203,526
NET ASSETS – END OF YEAR	\$34,398	\$479,842	\$514,240

REVENUES & OTHER SUPPORT



EXPENSES





GRATITUDEJuly 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019

Team Alia is forever grateful for the support, commitment, and passion of changemakers who kick up our game and make our work possible! Your belief in Alia's mission allows us to leverage, grow, and sustain world-changing work for children and families. We love every one of you! We make every effort to include all of our valued supporters; however, if we have inadvertently forgotten you, please forgive us and let us know at info@aliainnovations.org so we can ensure it won't happen again.

\$100,000 - \$499,999

Otto Bremer Trust

Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies Redlich Horwitz Foundation

\$50,000 - \$99,999

Carlson Family Foundation

\$25,000 - \$49,999

GHR Foundation

Hubbard Broadcasting Foundation

McVay Family Foundation

Moxie Foundation

\$15,000 -\$24,999

Serimus Foundation

\$5,000 - \$14,999

Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen

Foundation

Mark Meyer & Amelia Franck Meyer

Sauer Family Foundation

Todd Spichke of Riverbrand Design

\$2,500 - \$4,999

Debi Grebenik

Keyhubs/Vikas Narula

Medtronic Company Match

\$1,000 - \$2,499

Trudy Gross

Dennis & Kay Prchal Family Charitable

Trust

Western Bank

Rachel & Peter Zahn

\$500 - \$999

Anonymous

Corey Best

Elizabeth Black

Stacie Buchanan

Mandy Ellerton

Duane & Nancy Fier

The Greg and Linda Johnson Charitable

Fund

DaWayne Judd

Margo Kemp Johnson

Katie Miller

Gifts up to \$499

Amazon Smile

Elizabeth Barnhart

Karen Brooker

Molly Fuller

Elena Imaretska

Nerée Jackson

Esra Kucukciftci

Anna Kytonen-Coffman

Amber Messner

Josie & Noah Meyer

Stefan Meyer

Dana Mortenson

Ramón Pastrano & Shelly Hokel Pastrano

Judy Sandler

Vicki Selmecki

Eliza Severson

Steve Smith

Laurie Tochiki

Colleen Wolak

Carol White

Laura & Micah Witham

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Alia Board of Directors are growing hope and bringing light into the world. Thanks to their commitment, expertise, and fortitude, we are igniting child welfare innovators to revolutionize the child welfare system.



Rachel Zahn, MD Child Advocacy Consultant San Diego, CA



Jen Aspengren Minnesota Lead ChangeX Minneapolis, MN



Brad Ballinger
Principal/Owner
Cincinnatus
Minneapolis, MN



Corey B. Best
Family Engagement
Consultant and Speaker
Washington, D.C.



Elizabeth Black
Senior Associate,
Child Welfare
Center for the Support
of Families
Little Rock, AR



Stacie Buchanan Child Welfare Professional and CASA Volunteer Waterloo, IA



Mandy Ellerton
Community Innovation
Director
Bush Foundation
St. Paul, MN



Stephanie Hammes-Betti Senior Vice President Innovation Design US Bank Minneapolis, MN



Elena Imaretska Chief Innovation Officer Brave New Workshop Minneapolis, MN



DaWayne Judd
Director, Financial Planning
& Analysis
Columbia Sportswear
Portland, OR



Ashley McCullough Change Management Consultant National



Esra KucukciftciFounder
Pricing Innovations
Minneapolis, MN



Dr. Ramón Pastrano *CEO/President*Impact Lives
St. Louis Park, MN

"We are on a journey to change the world."

Elena Imaretska, Alia Board Member

