Dear Friends,

As we ended Fiscal Year 2020, the world around us was spinning with the pandemic, racial injustice, and political divisiveness. When we look back on this year, that will likely be what we remember most.

But stepping back to take the whole year in view, the months leading up to the pandemic held important moments in the history of New Moms. Foundations were being laid that, unbeknownst to us, would prove to be strong in the face of a crisis.

As you read through this annual report, you’ll learn how in the first half of this fiscal year we innovated and shared our learning with other organizations so we could touch more families. This work continued to grow, even with the constraints of the pandemic. You’ll celebrate with us as we share about a historic fundraising year—a true testament to the faithfulness and generosity of a community that has stepped up even more to support our young moms and children since the pandemic. And we’ll spotlight New Moms’ long held commitment to racial equity and how this has informed the formation of our programming from the inside out.

While the pandemic created challenges to how we worked with young moms and their children, we knew an essential truth as we navigated through the past year: our mission matters, now more than ever.

Young moms faced incredible challenges with courage, finding ways to care for their children while coping with the impact of COVID-19. Our staff team adapted quickly and has continued to walk alongside (albeit 6 feet away) young families, despite all the changes it has necessitated. And our Board of Directors, Associate Board, community volunteers, and donors have all rallied to the cause, spurred on by the urgent needs we are confronting.

What we will never forget about this year is the tremendous community of support that showed up in major ways.

The mountains of donated diapers, the outpouring of generosity to raise critical funds to support our work, and all the encouragement and prayers you sent our way this past year allowed us to show up and move with stability into the next year. Thank you for being part of the New Moms community.

Grace & Peace,

Laura Zumdahl, Ph.D

PRESIDENT & CEO
Executive Skills at New Moms

Everyone has Executive Skills—the 12 brain-based capabilities that act as an “air traffic control system” to help us organize things, plan things, and get things done. This basic architecture of the brain begins to develop before birth, with its largest period of growth in early childhood through adolescence. Emerging scientific evidence shows an additional period of rapid brain development when people become parents—therefore this period of time is a huge opportunity for re-wiring the brain. Strong Executive Skills development, coupled with supportive relationships and reduced stress, can mitigate obstacles and help us achieve our individual and community-wide goals.

In 2016, with support from The Annie E. Casey Foundation, New Moms piloted Executive Skills-based coaching for young moms in our Job Training program. The pilot was so successful for young moms and for the Job Training program that we gradually scaled the strategies into our Housing and Family Support programs. Now, all staff and all young moms identify their Executive Skills and learn how to incorporate this knowledge into their own life and work.

We partnered with Global Learning Partners to conduct an intensive implementation case study of New Moms’ Executive Skills approach in our Job Training program, and develop an Executive Skills implementation toolkit for peer Job Training organizations. In Fall 2019, we released New Moms’ Executive Skills Implementation Case Study and Implementation Toolkit publications, and began to offer training and technical assistance for peer organizations, in Chicagoland and around the country, that are interested in learning more about implementing Executive Skills coaching in their programs.

Read more about our Executive Skills Implementation case study, toolkit, and training and technical assistance offerings here.

Research, LEARNING & Innovation

Learning and Innovation is a foundational mindset at New Moms, baked into all that we do. We maintain a spirit of inquiry with young families at the center, asking: in what bold ways can we support the well-being of young moms and their children?

Since 2016, we have incorporated principles of brain and behavioral science into New Moms agency-wide operations and programming. Research-based initiatives in our Housing, Family Support, and Job Training programs lay the groundwork for strong families and thriving communities. Developments this year include:

• With coaching from our partners at Harvard Center on the Developing Child, we created a study design template for planning, piloting, and iterating on innovative new strategies in our programs.
• We developed an agency-wide Theory of Change to articulate and align our strategies to support family economic mobility and well-being.
• We began to co-design new program strategies with a clear study design process that uses fast-cycle iteration to center on our coaches and participants’ expertise quickly and adapt nimbly for improved outcomes.

Our learning and innovation has only accelerated during the pandemic. Responding to urgent priorities of safety, health, security, and connection, we have become experts in PPE procurement and surface sterilization, creating online order forms for young moms to order free essential supplies from New Moms with regular contact-free deliveries, emergency cash transfers, and training all staff on new technologies to enhance virtual coaching. Such rapid shifts fast-forwarded learning and testing for many of our planned, longer-term innovation initiatives, including virtual coaching enhancements, direct cash transfers, and broader agency technology strategy.

“I’m very impressed with New Moms and how they turned this around. We got access to all this technology so fast. It’s just been amazing how we hit the ground running.”

– Shree Topps, Oak Park Family Support Specialist

1 Ideas42 Poverty Interrupted and EmPath Using Brain Science to Create Pathways out of Poverty
2 https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/current-frontiers-innovation-portfolio-projects/

94 young moms obtained permanent employment (surpassing our goal of 80), a 10% growth from the previous year.
NEW MOMS in the time of COVID

Ensuring the physical safety and health of New Moms staff and young families has been the number one priority throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We also know that experiences of ongoing spatial distancing, job loss, lack of childcare, and other issues related to the pandemic can negatively impact mental health and well-being in a young family. Our programs have operated continuously throughout the pandemic, providing young moms with reliable social support through their New Moms Coach(es), including via:

Virtual Coaching

Most 1:1 interactions between young moms and their New Moms coach(es) shifted to virtual platforms (Zoom, text, phone call, etc.) in March 2020. We surveyed young moms in March to better understand their access to technology and wifi in their homes, and worked hard to provide additional access and tools for young moms as needed, distributing tablets or Wi-Fi hotspots. Coaches shifted scheduling, tried new and different ways of engaging young children in activities during parent-child interaction coaching, and we adopted new technologies internally to decrease our reliance on physical paper materials and resources in coaching.

Spatial Distancing

Some aspects of our work are not possible to conduct virtually. Our social enterprise, Bright Endeavors, sells hand-poured soy candles made by young moms in our Job Training program, gaining paid work experience in Bright Endeavors’ manufacturing space. To meet the increasing customer demand for Bright Endeavors’ candles throughout the pandemic, our Job Training program reorganized the Bright Endeavors workspace, enacted physical distancing and mask-wearing procedures, and limited the number of young moms enrolled in and working at Bright Endeavors. Young moms are now at Bright Endeavors three days of the week, meeting virtually on the remaining two days of the week for their group workshops, job search, and coaching.

Essential Items Delivery

We created an online order form for young moms to select essential items their coaches deliver to them in a monthly, contact-free drop off. Coaches have distributed thousands of diapers, wipes, cans of formula, feminine hygiene products, body care products, and toiletries so young families can focus on other aspects of parenting, access necessary items that may be out of stock on store shelves, and continue to see their coaches—even from a distance greater than 6 feet!

“I’ve been really impressed with how my participants have been so flexible with communicating virtually. They’re really focusing on parenting, focusing on that parent-child relationship. It’s just great to see them interact with their children and still find the positive sides of things.”

– Andrea Serna, Oak Park Family Support Specialist

“Now that I have to come to work, I’m getting more done. I’m more focused. It was just really hard for me staying in the house with my child, so thank you for letting us come back to work!”

– Infiniti, Job Training alumnus

“We pretty much try to keep 6 feet apart, if we’re in a group talking we all have our masks on and we keep our hands clean. I love this job, it’s like a second family.”

– Marchelle, Job Training alumnus

“‘It’s kind of been helpful. Since it’s virtual, I’m at home so I’m still able to get some of the business done that I need done at home while I’m on my Zoom call.’”

– Shakira, Job Training alumnus

“It’s been really impressive how my participants have been so flexible with communicating virtually. They’re really focusing on parenting, focusing on that parent-child relationship. It’s just great to see them interact with their children and still find the positive sides of things.”

– Andrea Serna, Oak Park Family Support Specialist

Right: New Moms’ Director of Chicago Family Support Luecendia Reed (left), with the help of Chief Program Officer Melanie Garrett (right), deliver essential goods to participants.
Our Family-Centered Coaching mindset recognizes and believes in the inherent strength and potential of all New Moms families; young moms are the experts of their own lives. Our Family-Centered Coaching practice frames every interaction young moms have with New Moms and ensures young moms' goals, voice, and choice drive the agenda.

Systemic discrimination and other experiences of trauma have far-reaching, generational impact on economic mobility and family well-being. Staff at New Moms create a safe and equitable, healing-centered community by understanding the brain and behavioral science of decision-making, effects of scarcity and institutional racism, and probing implicit bias. We continuously center on families' strengths, goals, and choices every step of the way, from program strategy to individual coaching conversations.

Family-Centered Coaching in practice means coaches ask young moms open-ended, powerful questions that support the exploration of their hopes and dreams for themselves and their kids. We partner with moms to share resources, tools, and encouragement as they build momentum by taking first steps toward achieving their goals.

This year, New Moms scaled our Family-Centered Coaching approach from an initial pilot with a few coaches. Now all staff, Board members, and volunteers get trained on our Family-Centered Coaching framework and principles of racial equity, scarcity, and healing-centered resilience. We adapted many of our hiring and onboarding procedures to align with our Family-Centered Coaching mindset and practices. We convened a group of coaches to co-design additional, ongoing Family-Centered Coaching tools, skill-building resources, and trainings to support young moms. We are now all Family-Centered Coaches at New Moms, and invite you to join us with a Family-Centered Coaching mindset into 2021.
Social Enterprise Rebrand

In September 2019, Bright Endeavors, New Moms’ social enterprise, launched a rebrand. The new look of Bright Endeavors elevates a beautiful, high quality candle product while sharing its purpose boldly—partnership with young moms as they embark on their parenting and career journeys. You’ll continue to see Bright Endeavors launch beautiful new product lines in the months and years to come! 100% of proceeds support our mission to empower young moms, their kids, and our communities. Visit brightendeavors.org to purchase candles today!

2019 Gala: There’s No Place Like Home

New Moms 2019 Gala: There’s No Place Like Home was held on October 18, 2019 and was the most successful New Moms event ever.

Over 400 attendees gathered at Morgan Manufacturing in downtown Chicago to honor our young moms as they create strong families and thriving homes. Through the generosity of our community, we raised $217,000 to support our mission.
New Moms Wins Prestigious Alford-Axelson Award

In May, New Moms was selected as the winner of the 2020 Alford-Axelson Award for Nonprofit Managerial Excellence. In their public announcement, the review committee highlighted that New Moms “integrates research, learning and innovation, thinks creatively about solutions, and tests promising ideas.” By using rigorous program evaluation, New Moms sees outcomes that dramatically exceed national averages for similar programs.” The committee also highlighted our social enterprise’s innovative model. We are honored and humbled by this recognition of the hard work we do to fulfill our mission.

In 2020, we completed our three year strategic plan. The plan’s goals included building our unique model, expanding our Housing program, increasing job opportunities for young moms, growing our capacity to serve families in our Family Support program, and raising revenue to support expansion and enhance sustainability. Over this time we have seen instrumental growth as a result of the hard work and dedication of our staff, participants, board of directors, and myriad of supporters. The graphic above celebrates some of the significant achievements that have been accomplished from the plan. Thank you for helping make this feat possible!

We provided 49,044 nights of shelter to 75 families.

84% of young moms retained stable housing for 12+ months after exit (surpassing the national benchmark of 60%)

81% of young moms exited New Moms to stable housing (surpassing the national benchmark of 64%)

Kitchen Talk

In a creative pivot instigated by the arrival of the pandemic, our annual Kitchen Walk fundraising event became Kitchen Talk 2020. Creative local design professionals shared, by video, their expertise on all things kitchen design. From creating the ‘feel’ you want in your space to selecting colors and countertops, Kitchen Talk gave all viewers a Kitchen Walk experience from the comfort of their own homes. With the help of faithful event sponsors and donors, we raised over $35,000.

Kitchen Talk 2020

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HIGHLIGHTS

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Lauren Anderson
Floyd and Lee Ann Anderson
Lauren Anderson

Eden Ames
Andersen

Aimee and Aaron Balsam
FY20 NEW MOMS BOARD

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PWC
Deborah Gillespie
Vice Chair
DGCB GROUP
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FIFTH THIRD BANK
Latoya Tatum
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TELETRACKING TECHNOLOGIES
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LinkedIn
Angela Grover
METOPIO
Madra Guinn-Jones
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS
Stephanie Kiesling
NATIONAL RUNAWAY SAFELINE
Edward LaRocco
KIPP CHICAGO
Cody McSellers-McCray
AMITA HEALTH
Kim Moreland
MÉRIEUX NUTRISCIENTES
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Jason Quiara
Stephanie Reis
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Katy Shea
Colleen Sikorski
Jordan Stellakis
Catherine Topolinski
Kathleen Vamos
Nan Walicki
Kenna Welch
Lakecia Whimper
Bianca Yarborough

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President & CEO
Melanie Garrett
Chief Program Officer
Pamela Bozeman
Chief Operating Officer
Lizveth Mendez
Chief Financial Officer
Jenna Hammond
Director of Development & Communications

Design: Lidia Varesco Design
Photography: Anjali Pinto, Ren’s View Photography, and Mark Wright