Right off the bat, Andre knew Friends of the Children-Boston was different. As one of the Friends who joined us in 2017, Andre was matched with our newest class of kindergarten Achievers. A native Bostonian from the neighborhoods of Dorchester and Roxbury, Andre knows firsthand that the odds are stacked against the boys he is matched with. “What drew me to Friends of the Children was the long-term commitment we make and our focus on children facing the highest risks,” Andre said. So when the opportunity came to join our team of professional mentors, Andre didn’t hesitate.

Welcoming new Achievers and Friends like Andre is the result of our strategic growth plan to increase our organizational impact in the greater Boston region. With a significant investment from the Social Innovation Fund administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, Friends-Boston received a commitment of a $300,000 matching grant over the next three years to implement a number of growth initiatives. The growth comes at a critical time as the demand for long-term support for high-risk children has increased drastically. The news of our growth plan was enthusiastically received by our partners and the communities we serve.

As for Andre and his Achievers, their stories have just begun. Even though he has only worked with his boys for a few months, he already sees tremendous progress in all of them. One of the boys he works with had multiple suspensions last year as a result of his challenging classroom behavior. Each week, they set incremental goals using Friends of the Children’s 9 Core Assets, and they celebrate the positive efforts he puts in to improve his behavior. Recently, they went on a field trip to the Aquarium—a task that was not possible last year due to his behavioral challenges. “Every milestone matters because they lead to more opportunities,” said Andre, “I look forward to helping all of my Achievers realize their greatest potential”.

The investment from Social Innovation Fund will enable Friends-Boston to grow in the following ways:

- **30% growth**
  Increasing the total number of Achievers served

- **3 new schools**
  Increasing our selection partners

- **5 new Friends**
  Increasing organizational capacity
We catch up with Mary Kate, or as her Achievers call her “Mary Cake”, about Friends-Boston’s unique selection process and what it means to be a Friend.

Can you tell us what your days look like?

I start my day spending time with my Achievers in their schools. They love having me in their classes! I also work with their caretakers connecting them with critical resources. After some planning and data entry time, I pick up my Achievers for our outings! We do homework and work on goals they chose, like learning how to rollerblade or completing a puzzle!

You were involved in the selection process of the newest class. Do you now work directly with the children whom you observed?

Yes! Five of my girls were on-boarded through the most recent selection process! I remember noticing one of the kindergarteners really struggling during our observation. At one point, she was so upset that she threw herself on the floor screaming. She was selected and I am now her Friend! She is bright and funny. I am glad that I can help others see the positive side of her.

What do the relationships with your Achievers mean to you?

They are very special to me—different from anything I have ever experienced. I am involved in every aspect of their lives, I look forward to seeing them every week, and I love seeing them hitting the milestones and crushing them. It’s hard to describe how special that is!

What are your hopes and aspirations for them?

I hope they find something that makes them happy, and they are able to achieve the goals they want to achieve. I want them to know that they can be anything they want to be. Not many people, aside from their caretakers, believe that’s possible for them. So it means a lot to me that I can be one of the people who believe in them unconditionally.
Partners played a pivotal role in our work in 2017, and that was evident as we launched our partnership with Santander Bank. A partnership that would not only lay the foundation for financial literacy programming at Friends, but also redefine partnerships at Friends-Boston.

The Achiever Entrepreneurship Program—a hands-on financial literacy program engaging more than 60 of our elementary and adolescent Achievers and their Friends to learn about entrepreneurship was introduced in 2017. While the younger Achievers took their shot at being a business owner through their annual Lemonade Day, our adolescent Achievers participated in a 14-week entrepreneurship boot camp to develop a business idea, create a business plan that will yield both financial and social returns, and compete with each other in a business plan competition. Throughout the program, Achievers earned money to be deposited into a savings account in their name by learning certain key competencies and skills.

The results from the first year of the program were beyond our expectations. The Achievers successfully wow’d the judges with their professional business plans, and they walked away with a better understanding of the role that many small businesses play in revitalizing under-served communities. Equally as impressive, the Achievers collectively saved more than $18,000 through the “earn while you learn” portion of the program. Friends-Boston commits to matching their savings up to $1,500 when they graduate from high school.

“We are very excited to partner with Santander Bank,” said Yi-Chin Chen, Executive Director of Friends of the Children-Boston. “Too often, our Achievers are left out of opportunities to participate in programs like this. It is critical that they have an equal shot at successful adulthood, and we are proud to have found a partner that understands that.”
Our Results are remarkable, given the challenges faced by our Achievers:

- **62%** of Achievers experience homelessness
- **54%** of Achievers don’t have enough food at home
- **48%** of Achievers have parents who’ve been incarcerated
- **25%** of Achievers were born to a teen parent
- **52%** of Achievers are impacted by the child welfare system

In 2017, our Achievers have exceeded our expectations:

- **91%** avoided school suspensions
- **100%** avoided early parenting
- **97%** avoided the juvenile justice system
- **92%** were promoted to the next grade
- **100%** of alumni enrolled in post secondary education or are gainfully employed

Thank You for Investing in our Achievers and Believing in Our Ability to Help Them Write a New Story.

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**Total Unrestricted Operating Revenue**

- Foundation ........... $399,500  27%
- Individuals .......... $334,033  22%
- Special Events ...... $330,794  22%
- Corporate .......... $304,542  21%
- Other ......................... $63,753  4%
- Government ............ $53,128  4%

**Total Unrestricted Operating Revenue**

$1,485,750

**Total Operating Expenses**

- Program Services ............ $820,824  72%
- Fundraising ................... $205,991  18%
- Administrative ................ $110,032  10%

$1,136,847

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