



HELPING PAWS

THE FOSTERING FRIENDSHIPS
INITIATIVE

BUSINESS PLAN

Spring, 2021

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Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary	1-2
Overview	1
Success Factors.....	2
II. Organizational Overview	2
Who is Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative?.....	3
Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative's History.....	3
Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative's Services.....	3
III. Market Analysis	4
Market Statistics & Trends.....	4
IV. Customer Analysis	5-6
V. Competitive Analysis	7-8
Direct & Indirect Competitors.....	7
Competitive Advantage/ Differentiation.....	8
VI. Marketing Plan	9
Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative's Brand.....	9
Promotions Strategy.....	9
VII. Operations Plan	10
Functional Roles.....	10
Milestones.....	10
VIII. Management Team	11
Management Team Members.....	11
Hiring Plan.....	11
IX. Financial Plan	12
Revenue and Cost Drivers.....	12-13
Capital Requirements and Use of Funds.....	12
Key Assumptions & Forecasts.....	12

I. Executive Summary

Overview

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative, located at 1259 N. 18th St. is a non-profit organization that provides assistance to children in the foster care system as well as animals at local rescues in Southeast Wyoming. Since 2021, Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative is looking to connect regional children in the foster care system with animal rescues in their area.

Services Offered

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative works to provide children in the foster care system with meaningful and beneficial relationships with rescue animals in their area. We strive to be the bridge connecting a child with a rescue and rescue animal. We provide the funding for any activities that would help the animal and child bond (i.e. dog obedience courses, agility courses, etc.). If a child participating in our program needs help getting to a meet-up with their animal companion we would provide transportation.

Customer Focus

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative primarily serves the youth in foster care within a 50-mile radius of Laramie, WY with the hopes of servicing the entire state of WY in the future and possibly even surrounding states. The demographics of those in the state of WY are as follows:

- 1,091 children in foster care
- Since 2011 the # of children in foster care has grown by about 25% in WY
- Average length of stay in foster care before adoption/ reunification: 37 months
- % of WY children waiting for adoption that have been in foster care 5+ years: 11%
- # animal rescues in WY: 35
- % of households with a dog: 44%
- % of households with a cat: 35%
- % of households with other animals: 21%

Management Team

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative is led by Alexa Trees who has dedicated a large portion of her time to the non-profit world since the beginning of 2018. Alexa has successfully led and participated in multiple programs under the non-profit organization known as Laramie Animal Welfare Society (LAWS) for almost three years and has learned many aspects of the inner workings of a non-profit organization. Before that time, Alexa volunteered with many non-profit organizations and their leaders; therefore, acquiring connections throughout the animal non-profit world of Southeast Wyoming.

Alexa Trees is supported by a team which includes individuals from Laramie Animal Welfare Society, Frontier Veterinary Clinic, and other local organizations and businesses that have experience running both for-profit and non-profit ventures. Specifically, our team has solid experience in organizing events, marketing to the local community, and achieving key goals.

Success Factors

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative is uniquely qualified to succeed due to the following reasons:

- There is a massive need to serve youth in foster care in our community. Doing so will increase the quality of life for both them and the animals they spend their time with.
- There is no other organization supporting this critical need.
- The management team has a track record of success achieving the goals of our organization and other organizations for which we have worked.
- Members of our community fully support and believe in our mission.

II. Organization Overview

Who is Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative?

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative, located at 1259 N. 18th St. provides assistance to children in foster care and animals in a shelter/rescue situation in Laramie, WY and surrounding areas. Since its establishment in 2021, Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative aims to help the over 1,000 children in foster care in Wyoming make meaningful and life changing connections with the animals residing in a shelter or rescue situation in their area.

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative, offers group services as well as one-on-one programs for the youth that we serve. We also provide training, individualized coaching and support, and numerous group activities to supplement the one-to-one support.

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative's mission is to support 100% of the children in foster care in our community. We hope that through our programs involving courses such as training and agility, that all youth residing in foster care in our community will have the opportunity to form meaningful and deep relationships with the animals that they are partnered with.

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative's History

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative was founded by Alexa Trees in 2021 because she felt that more could be done to serve the mental wellbeing and companionship needed by both the children in foster care and the rescue animals in her community. Alexa Trees was unable to sit by and watch while these innocent groups missed out on the potential to grow and heal alongside one another.

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative is in the process of being founded in the year of 2021 as a 501c3 non-profit organization and has plans to grow in terms of staff size and number of community members served.

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative's Services

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative has been dedicated to making a difference in the lives of youth in foster care and animals in a rescue situation since we began.

In order to achieve this, we offer many services including the following:

- Recruiting animal rescues to participate in our mission
- Agility programs through local animal training services
- Obedience programs through local animal training services
- Individualized coaching and mentoring with the trainers and members of our organization
- Group activities to build teamwork skills and self-confidence (i.e. group hikes with the animals)

In order to offer these services, we recruit adults from the community and surrounding areas who have experience in animal handling and animal rescue after completing a successful background check and with multiple positive references. We also recruit those from the community that have experience either being a child in the foster care system, or those who have a different experience with the system. We aim to build a training program for these volunteers to teach them how to work alongside the youth and these animals to help nurture a companionship and support system that may not be felt in the child and animal's current situation.

III. Market Analysis

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative operates in the U.S. foster care and animal rescue markets promoting social and emotional well-being.

Market Statistics & Trends

The following market size facts and statistics define the U.S. foster care market.

The 2018 US Census showed that the United States has over 35 million young people between the ages of 10 and 18. Every four minutes a child under the age of 18 is abused in America, and over 415,000 children and youth in the U.S. currently reside in foster care.

While all youth can benefit from mentoring and animal involvement, it is obvious that some young people, as a result of life circumstances, such as being in foster care, could benefit from these relationships more so than other children.

In order to determine the number of young people who need animal interactions the most we will actively work with the child's social worker/ mental health professionals working with the child to make sure the child would benefit from the interaction. Safety is top priority, so we would make sure the children and animals are in safe situations at all times.

As noted by U.S. Child Protective Services, in the foster care market of America, industry products and services focus on five main topics: foster and guardianship placement services, counseling and information services for youth and families, private and state adoption services, other social assistance services, and children/youth recreational programs.

Out of those five main programs and services, children and youth recreational programs have the least availability to those in the foster care system. This can be for many reasons, including but not limited to the inability for a foster parent to transport the child residing in foster care to and from extracurricular activities.

Due to circumstances out of their control, children in foster care struggle to gain a sense of normalcy. Just recently, Congress passed a law that requires states to develop a standard for what is reasonable and needed in allowing foster care children to engage in "extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities."

Specifically, in Southeast Wyoming there are no extracurricular services directed specifically and only for children in the foster care system. In surrounding states, there are few organizations that offer extracurricular services specifically for children in the foster care system. In the Midwest region of the United States, including Wyoming and its surrounding states there are no organizations found that provide services specifically for foster children that connect them with animal rescues and the animals in their care.

Unfortunately, for the foreseeable future there will always be children in the foster care system in the United States and more specifically Southeast Wyoming. Besides that, there will always be animal rescues with animals in need of human interaction. By combining two hurt and abused groups, a healing process can begin and a sense of normalcy for both groups can be achieved.

IV. Customer Analysis

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative will serve the residents of Laramie, WY and the immediately surrounding areas, as well as those in the general area of Southeast Wyoming.

The precise demographics of the areas in which we serve is as follows:

Population estimates, July 1, 2019, (V2019)	32,711	328,238,523
PEOPLE		
Population		
Population estimates, July 1, 2019, (V2019)	32,711	328,238,523
Population estimates base - April 1, 2010, (V2019)	30,816	308,758,105
Population, percent change - April 1, 2010 (estimates base) to July 1, 2019, (V2019)	6.1%	8.3%
Population, Census, April 1, 2010	30,816	308,745,538
Age and Sex		
Persons under 5 years, percent	△ 5.0%	△ 6.0%
Persons under 18 years, percent	△ 16.0%	△ 22.3%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	△ 8.9%	△ 18.5%
Female persons, percent	△ 48.0%	△ 50.8%
Race and Hispanic Origin		
White alone, percent	△ 88.3%	△ 76.3%
Black or African American alone, percent (a)	△ 2.0%	△ 13.4%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent (a)	△ 1.1%	△ 1.3%
Asian alone, percent (a)	△ 3.7%	△ 5.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent (a)	△ 0.0%	△ 0.2%
Two or More Races, percent	△ 3.3%	△ 2.8%
Hispanic or Latino, percent (b)	△ 10.4%	△ 18.5%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	△ 80.5%	△ 60.1%
Population Characteristics		
Veterans, 2015-2019	1,707	18,230,322
Foreign born persons, percent, 2015-2019	8.1%	13.6%
Housing		
Housing units, July 1, 2019, (V2019)	X	139,684,244
Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2015-2019	45.3%	64.0%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2015-2019	\$216,300	\$217,500
Median selected monthly owner costs -with a mortgage, 2015-2019	\$1,520	\$1,595
Median selected monthly owner costs -without a mortgage, 2015-2019	\$419	\$500
Median gross rent, 2015-2019	\$787	\$1,062
Building permits, 2019	X	1,586,048
Families & Living Arrangements		
Households, 2015-2019	13,350	120,756,048
Persons per household, 2015-2019	2.25	2.62
Living in same house 1 year ago, percent of persons age 1 year+, 2015-2019	63.4%	65.8%
Language other than English spoken at home, percent of persons age 5 years+, 2015-2019	11.7%	21.6%
Computer and Internet Use		
Households with a computer, percent, 2015-2019	95.5%	90.3%
Households with a broadband Internet subscription, percent, 2015-2019	87.0%	82.7%
Education		
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2015-2019	96.6%	88.0%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2015-2019	62.7%	32.1%
Health		
With a disability, under age 65 years, percent, 2015-2019	6.2%	8.6%
Persons without health insurance, under age 65 years, percent	△ 9.5%	△ 9.5%
Economy		
In civilian labor force, total, percent of population age 16 years+, 2015-2019	69.5%	63.0%
In civilian labor force, female, percent of population age 16 years+, 2015-2019	68.4%	58.3%
Total accommodation and food services sales, 2012 (\$1,000) (c)	73,782	708,138,588
Total health care and social assistance receipts/revenue, 2012 (\$1,000) (c)	D	2,040,441,203
Total manufacturers shipments, 2012 (\$1,000) (c)	D	5,696,729,632
Total merchant wholesaler sales, 2012 (\$1,000) (c)	127,630	5,208,023,478
Total retail sales, 2012 (\$1,000) (c)	470,773	4,219,821,871
Total retail sales per capita, 2012 (c)	\$14,860	\$13,443
Transportation		
Mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16 years+, 2015-2019	11.9	26.9
Income & Poverty		
Median household income (in 2019 dollars), 2015-2019	\$46,117	\$62,843
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2019 dollars), 2015-2019	\$26,255	\$34,103
Persons in poverty, percent	△ 23.9%	△ 10.5%

We primarily target the following three “customer” segments:

1. Older youth in foster care
 - a. Many times, these youth have been in the foster care system for a long time and need more one on one companionship.
 - b. For these youths, we offer more intensive one-on-one mentorship and training with their animal companions that they are paired with.
2. Tweens/ young teenage youth in foster care
 - a. These youth tend to be figuring out themselves and may struggle more so in the world of foster care than their younger counterparts.
 - b. These youths are also offered intensive one-on-one mentorship and training with their animal companions that they are paired with.
3. Young youth in foster care
 - a. These youths tend to have spent the least amount of time in the foster care system and need more of a friend than an equal in the animals that they are paired with.
 - b. Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative offers these youth training programs and mentoring to help support them and give them a base in friendship as they go through their experience with foster care.

V. Competitive Analysis

Direct & Indirect Competitors

There are no organizations in Wyoming or surrounding states that provide the exact services that we do. Though, there are some organizations that provide services to youth in the foster care system that promote mental well-being and emotional connections and companionship.

Together We Rise

Together We Rise is an organization that is recognized across the United States and works to better the experience of children in foster care through multiple programs and sponsorships.

They have three main programs, including: Sweet Cases, Building Bikes, and the Family Fellowship Scholarship Program. Sweet Cases provides duffle bags to the children so that they don't have to bring their belongings with them from home to home in trash bags. Building Bikes provides new bicycles to children aging out of the foster care system. This is to help these children that don't have vehicles be more prepared and able to get to work, the grocery store, etc. Their Family Fellowship Scholarship program is a scholarship award that benefits youth that are successful in their lives after aging out of the foster system. It is the largest award in the United States for youth that have aged out of the system.

Since their founding in 2008, Together We Rise has engaged more than 339,000 volunteers across the nation, and they have impacted more than 400,000 children in the United States foster care system.

With the start of COVID-19 they started a new program called the Safer at Home Project in which they provide service projects for the foster children and their families to work together on from their homes.

Love Fosters Hope

Love Fosters Hope, as many foster enrichment based non-profit organizations, is a state-based organization that has helped thousands of children in the foster system in Texas through enrichment and mentorship programs.

This organization has four main programs: Royal Family Kids, Teen Reach Adventure Camp (T.R.A.C.), Love Fosters Hope Mentors, and REACH. Royal Family Kids provides enrichment activities for those in foster care between the ages of 7-11 by outdoor recreational activities, arts and crafts, a talent show, and a shared birthday party. Their Teen Reach Adventure Camp is for the kids between the ages of 12-15 to build a positive community through outdoor recreation. Love Fosters Hope has a mentorship program for children between the ages of 12-19 to offer support, counsel, and friendship. Finally, their REACH program goes to residential treatment centers with fun group activities and activities to help these youth learn skills needed in adulthood.

They are a relatively new organization founded in 2014, but are a main foster enrichment non-profit for the state of Texas.

Competitive Advantage/Differentiation

Together We Rise and Love Fosters Hope are excellent organizations. However, neither organization has programs that accurately compare to the enrichment programs that are provided by Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative. Specifically, Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative offers the following advantages to our community:

- **Location:** Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative's location is near the center of town, giving members of our community easy access. Also, all transportation to the animal rescues and animal training centers that we partner with is provided for by our organization if the foster parents are unable to transport the youth in their care. There is no physical Together We Rise organization in Southeast Wyoming, and Love Fosters Hope, one of the only comparable foster enrichment organizations is located in Texas. No other foster organizations focused specifically on foster care enrichment are located in/around Southeast Wyoming.
- **Animal based enrichment:** Neither Together We Rise nor Love Fosters Hope offers animal-based enrichment programs for youth in foster care. Animal-based enrichment and an animal connection has shown to be beneficial for emotional growth and connection in children and teenagers which is why this is the basis for our non-profit organization. This is especially helpful for youth in foster care who do not have access to animal companionship in their foster home.
- **Service to the community while receiving support and companionship:** Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative allows youth in foster care a chance to build a friendship with the animals they work with. At the same time, they are providing a service to the community by prepping these animals for adoption and giving these animals love while they wait for their forever homes. The children can connect and relate to these animals in ways that other animal rescue volunteers can't. Besides that, the animals provide a non-judgmental listening ear and support that sometimes mentors to these youth cannot do. This act of service is not something that accurately translates through programs under either Together We Rise or Love Fosters Hope.

VI. Marketing Plan

The Marketing Plan describes the type of brand that Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative seeks to create and the Organization's planned promotions and pricing strategies.

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative's Brand

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative brand will focus on the Organization's unique value proposition:

- Providing companionship to animals in a rescue situation and to youth in foster care.
- Offering one-on-one mentorship and training programs.
- Providing a safe haven for youth and the rescue animals they work with.

Promotions Strategy

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative promotes itself to the community in order to reach youth in foster care, their foster families, those in animal rescue, and potential donors. The Organization's promotions strategy to reach these individuals includes:

Direct Mail

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative will blanket neighborhoods with direct mail pieces. These pieces will provide general information on Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative, and discusses program offerings and donation and volunteer opportunities.

Public Relations

We will frequently contact local and area newspapers and television stations to tell them about the unique value proposition of Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative.

Advertising

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative plans on low-cost advertisements in local newspapers and sponsorships of community events in order to gain awareness.

Ongoing Customer Communications

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative will maintain a website and publish a monthly email newsletter to tell constituents about new events, accomplishments and more.

VII. Operations Plan

Functional Roles

In order to execute on Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative's business model, the Organization needs to perform many functions including the following:

Executive Functions

- General management of the organization
- Meeting with key constituents including local government officials
- Hiring and training staff
- Maintaining the vision of the organization

Administrative Functions

- General & Administrative functions such as bookkeeping, etc.
- Tactical functions such as legal and marketing

Service Functions

- Recruiting and training volunteers
- Scheduling activities for the youth and their animal companions in our program

Special Functions

- Putting on annual fundraising events

Milestones

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative expects to achieve the following milestones in the following 13 months:

Date	Milestone
May 31, 2021	Achieve official status as a 501c3 non-profit
November 30, 2021	Serve 15 youth in our area
December 31, 2021	Recruit and train our 30 th volunteer
March 31, 2022	Launch our first animal foster to adopt promotion program with the help of the youth in our program
May 31, 2022	Reach \$5000 in annual donations

VIII. Management Team

Management Team Members

Alexa Trees currently serves as Executive Director for Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative.

Prior to joining Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative, Alexa Trees led and sponsored different programs and groups within non-profit organizations in her community for well over ten years, but she really delved deep into volunteering the past three years.

Alexa Trees graduated from the University of Wyoming with her bachelor's degree where she majored in Animal Science with a focus on Pre-Veterinary Medicine. She also obtained a minor from the Honors program at her university.

Alexa Trees furthers her education at Lincoln Memorial University's Doctor in Veterinary Medicine Program.

Other team members come from backgrounds in communications, backgrounds of working with animal non-profit organizations such as Laramie Animal Welfare Society, backgrounds of managing a veterinary clinic and volunteering with CASA, and a background of being in the foster care system.

Hiring Plan

In addition to our current team, upon successfully getting more donations, we plan to hire the following personnel:

- Public relations director
- Volunteer coordinator
- Finance director

IX. Financial Plan

Revenue and Cost Drivers

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative's "revenues" come from donations and the solicitation of donations from both individuals and corporations.

Capital Requirements and Use of Funds

Helping Paws: The Fostering Friendships Initiative is currently seeking donations totaling \$20,000 in order to take more children into the program and expand its program offerings.

Specifically, these funds will be used as follows:

- Salaries: \$0
 - No paid employees, all employees are of a volunteer nature
- Administrative Expenses: \$35,000 to pay for training/agility costs, vehicles/ gas for transport, insurance

Key Assumptions & Forecasts

Below please find the key assumptions that went into the financial forecast and a summary of the financial projections.

Key Assumptions

Donations	
Year	Dollars Raised
FY 1	\$30,000
FY 2	\$40,000
FY 3	\$50,000
FY 4	\$60,000
FY 5	\$70,000

Startup/Other Costs

Based on a 15 children/15 animal outline for the first year.

Administrative Costs

- Permits (no added permits needed in Wyoming to run a children's taxi service): \$0/year
- Licenses (in Wyoming only a general driver's license is needed): \$0/year
- Insurance (at the top end): \$100/ month= \$1,200/year

Equipment and Set-up:

- Work phone (added to executive director's phone plan to save money): \$20/month= \$240/year
- Vehicle for transport (fits 10 including driver): \$20,000- \$25,000
- Stationary, business cards, mailing supplies, etc.: \$100-150/month= \$1,200-\$1,800/year
- Promotional costs: \$900-\$1,000/ month= \$10,800-\$12,000/year
- Gasoline (based on statistics by AAA): \$1,681.50/year

Activities (Rockin' E Dog Training):

- Training courses
 - One on one (5 children and animals)(5 sessions...8 sessions/year): \$180/pair= \$7,200/year
 - Group (5 children and animals)(6 sessions... 8 sessions/year): \$100/pair= \$4,000/year
- Agility courses (5 children and animals)(6 sessions... 8 sessions/year):\$100/pair= \$4,000/year

Miscellaneous:

- Other fees/ cushioning: \$200/year

Total

\$30,521.50-\$32,321.50/year

\$20,000-\$25,000 additional for first year cost of a vehicle

