



# ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

IGNITING A RIPPLE EFFECT OF POSITIVE CHANGE IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE BY  
INSPIRING COMMUNITIES TO INFUSE COMFORT, COMMUNITY, CHARACTER, AND COMPASSION.

2023



COMFORT CASES®





# 2023 AT A GLANCE






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“I REMEMBER  
CARRYING A TRASH BAG  
AND FEELING  
WORTHLESS,  
LIKE NO ONE CARED ABOUT  
ME. **EVERY CHILD**  
DESERVES  
TO KNOW  
THEY MATTER.”

ROB SCHEER

*Letter from*  
**OUR FOUNDERS**





## IGNITING TRANSFORMATION - ONE BACKPACK AT A TIME

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Dear Comfort Cases Supporters,

As we reflect on the past year, we are overwhelmed with gratitude for the incredible journey we have embarked on together. Your unwavering support has been the driving force behind Comfort Cases' mission, and we are thrilled to share the remarkable achievements we've accomplished as a united community.

This past year has been a testament to the power of compassion and collective effort. Your support has not only directly impacted the lives of the children we serve but has also set in motion a profound ripple effect, inspiring others to join our cause and creating a wave of positive change throughout communities far and wide.

This past year's highlights include:

- 1. Expansion of Outreach Programs:** This year, Comfort Cases successfully expanded its outreach programs, reaching a larger number of foster care agencies and organizations across the country.
- 2. Innovative Collaborations:** Comfort Cases has pioneered an innovative collaboration with Amerigroup Georgia to support children in the foster care system. Through this partnership, Amerigroup Georgia is committed to ensuring that every child in Georgia's foster care system knows they matter by providing them with a Comfort Case®!
- 3. Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns:** This year marked a significant milestone in Comfort Cases' advocacy efforts. Through more than 70 speaking engagements, we've not only increased public understanding of the challenges faced by children in foster care but also garnered support for policy changes that promote their well-being. Our collective voice has resonated on social media platforms, in the press, and within legislative circles, sparking important conversations and laying the groundwork for positive systemic change.

Together, we have reached new heights, broken barriers and we have continued to create a ripple effect of positive change. Thanks to your generosity, Comfort Cases has been able to provide comfort and dignity to even more children entering the foster care system.

It's heartening to see how our shared vision has resonated with so many, transcending boundaries and bringing people together from all walks of life. Your dedication has not only filled our hearts with joy but has also inspired us to dream bigger and reach loftier goals in the coming year.

With heartfelt appreciation,

Two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The first signature is more stylized and the second is more legible.

**ROB AND REECE SCHEER**

Founders, Comfort Cases



**“BE FULLY PRESENT  
IN ALL YOU DO  
AND YOU WILL BE  
SURPRISED WHAT IT  
WILL BRING YOU.”  
- ROB SCHEER**

## *Our* **WHY**

At the heart of Comfort Cases lies the profound and personal journey of our founder, Rob Scheer. Rob entered the foster care system as a youth and was brought into a house with all of his belongings in a tattered and torn trash bag. As Rob and his husband Reece went through the adoption process for each their five children, who are now their daughter and four sons, they arrived on their doorstep through foster care experiencing the same undignified process Rob endured forty years ago.

Motivated by Rob’s own poignant experience, they embarked on a mission to ensure that no child endures the indignity of receiving their belongings in such a manner. Their determination and compassion became the driving force behind Comfort Cases to provide youth in foster care with thoughtfully packed, dignified backpacks containing essential items and comfort items. This symbolizes not only the tangible support they deserve but also the affirmation that their worth is immeasurable. Comfort Cases is committed to transforming the foster care narrative, creating a positive ripple effect that reverberates through the lives of countless children, offering hope, dignity, and the promise of a brighter future.





# Our MISSION

We inspire communities to bring dignity and hope to youth in foster care through Comfort, Community, Character, and Compassion.

On any given day, there are approximately 390,000 children in foster care in the United States. Most of them are removed from their homes with little more than the clothes on their backs. If they do have any personal belongings, they are given a trash bag in which to carry them.

At Comfort Cases, we believe that every child deserves to feel a sense of dignity. Every child deserves to pack their belongings in a special bag that they can call their very own. Every child deserves to have a cozy new pair of pajamas, a brand new warm blanket, and a new stuffed animal to hug during the traumatic transition into foster care.

## 200,000+ AND COUNTING

Comfort Cases® and Comfort XL's distributed since 2013. We cover all 50 states, DC, Puerto Rico, and the United Kingdom.





“

We serve children who are being placed in emergency care due to trauma or abuse. Many times those children come with very few of their own belongings, and often in garbage bags. We want to see those kids treated with dignity and respect and the Comfort Cases® have helped us do that.

*Staci Kropuenske*

Children's Inn  
Minnehaha  
SIOUX FALLS, SD





# Impact AT A GLANCE



Total Comfort Cases® sent in 2023:

**31,500**



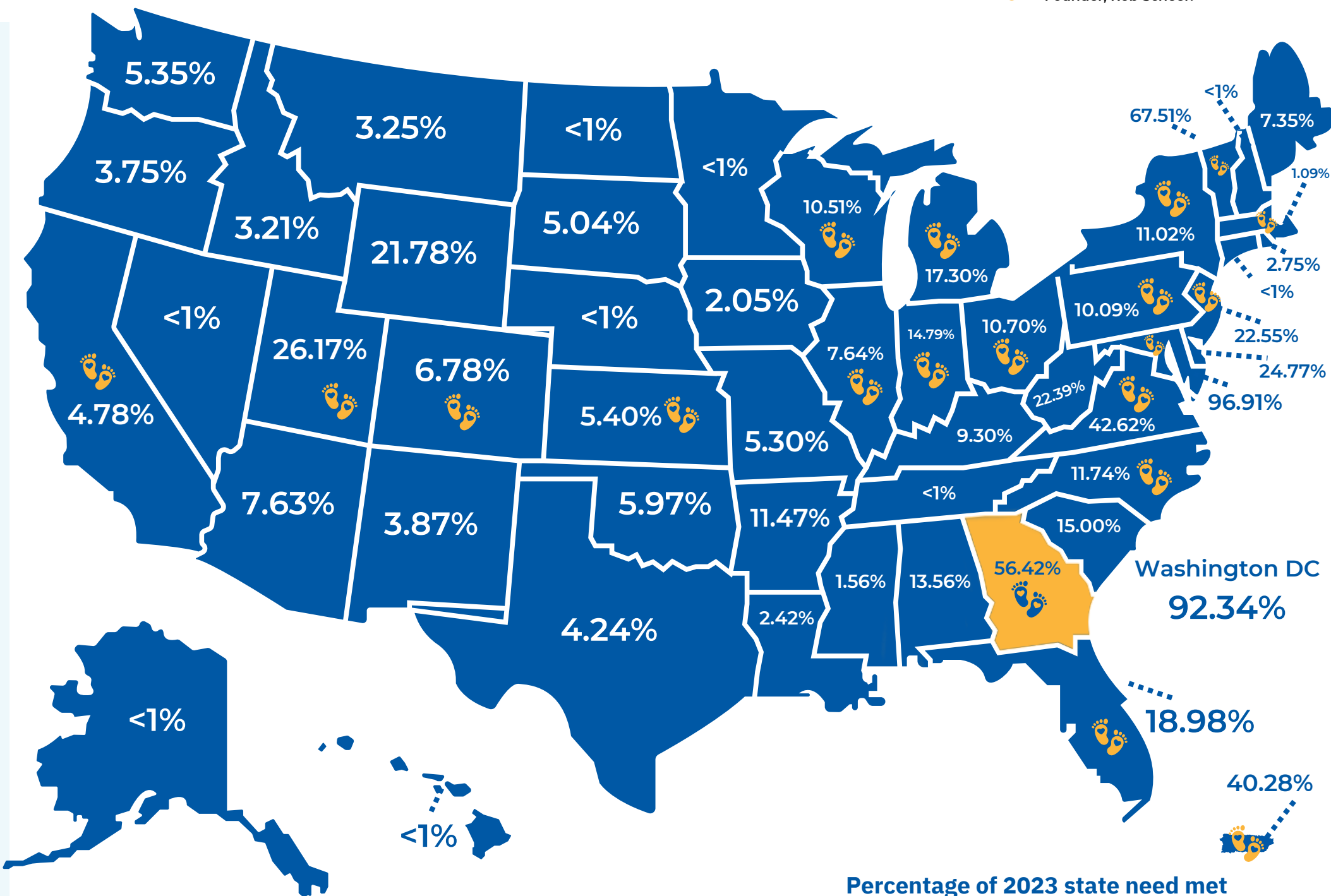
Total Comfort XL's sent in 2023:

**14,250**





Boots on the ground education!  
This symbol represents our footprint via  
one or more speaking engagements by  
Founder, Rob Scheer.



Percentage of 2023 state need met  
through the distribution of Comfort Cases®.



# Our ADVOCACY

## 2023 Speaking Engagements

In 2023, Comfort Cases demonstrated unwavering commitment to advocacy through a multitude of impactful initiatives. From organizing over 80 nationwide Packing Parties, where volunteers come together to assemble essential Comfort Cases® for children in foster care, to proudly representing at the Hollywood Inaugural Kids Power Issue, our advocacy efforts reached new heights.

By actively engaging with communities across the country, we strive to amplify the urgent need for a better foster care system. Comfort Cases is dedicated to not only providing tangible support to children but also tirelessly advocating for systemic changes that create a more compassionate and dignified environment for those navigating the complexities of foster care.



## Fostering Change Podcast

With downloads from more than 30 countries, including Canada, England, Germany, Australia, Singapore, India and Sweden, our podcast is the #1 podcast featuring topics regarding foster care and adoption (Feedspot 2021-2023). In 2023, we aired 39 new episodes, showcased 13 “Best Of” episodes, and launched Season 5 of Fostering Change in September.

The Fostering Change Podcast was also awarded the **Silver W3 Award**, illuminating Brilliance in Digital Experiences, Content and Creativity by The Academy of Interactive & Visual Arts.



# GEORGIA

## Takeover



BENEFITING EVERY CHILD ENTERING FOSTER CARE THROUGHOUT THE STATE OF GEORGIA



## AMERIGROUP GEORGIA FAMILIES 360 TAKEOVER

The first-of-its-kind partnership between Amerigroup Georgia and Comfort Cases marks a historic moment in the nation's efforts to support children in the foster care system. Together, we are working together to provide comfort, personal care items, and duffle bags to youth entering Georgia's foster care system with the goal of eliminating the common occurrence of these youth carrying their belongings in trash bags from placement to placement.

## THE IMPACT SO FAR

Beginning in November of 2023, Comfort Cases provided a total of: **2,666 Comfort Cases® & 4,205 Comfort XL duffle bags** to the program. Of those totals, 916 Comfort Cases® and 1,797 Comfort XL duffle bags were placed through 20 agency orders. The remaining bags were distributed to agencies via packing parties held in different locations throughout the state of Georgia in October and November.

The program also gained recognition across **11 Television interviews** and **9 Print interviews**.





# Why Stop At One State?

For states eager to replicate the success of programs like the Georgia Takeover, we would love to collaborate to create a seamless and impactful way to make a difference in the lives of children in foster care. Express interest in establishing a similar initiative by reaching out to our team! States can work with us to implement tailored programs that ensure every child entering foster care receives a backpack instead of a trash bag for their belongings.

Through this partnership, states can leverage Comfort Cases' expertise, resources, and proven strategies to create a positive ripple effect within their own communities. By fostering such relationships, Comfort Cases empowers states to transform the foster care experience for countless children, promoting a sense of dignity, comfort, and hope.

**FOR MORE INFO:**

Call (301) 605-7813 or  
email [info@comfortcases.org](mailto:info@comfortcases.org)







# 20%

**OF YOUTH WHO  
AGE OUT OF  
FOSTER CARE  
EXPERIENCE  
HOMELESSNESS  
WITHIN THE FIRST  
TWO YEARS**

[SOURCE: NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS]



# What's In A COMFORT CASE?

Comfort Cases® are backpacks filled with comfort and personal care items for youth entering the foster care system. Typically, children are given a trash bag to pack up their belongings when they are removed from their homes. We are working to end this practice while providing the essentials for a child's first few days in foster care.

***"The children love the bags; it makes such a difference when the children are being moved from place to place. The families living in hotels love the bags and all the goodies inside."***

Donna Weinbel  
West Long Branch, NJ



## BABY UP TO 2 YEARS OLD

- Small Duffel Bag or Backpack
- Pajamas
- Baby Socks
- Baby Blankets up to 30"x40" or Receiving Blanket
- Baby Shampoo up to 5oz
- Baby Body Wash up to 5oz
- Baby Lotion up to 5oz
- Diaper Wipes (smaller, soft packaging)
- Diaper Cream
- Baby Bibs
- Baby Washcloths
- Baby Safe Stuffed Animal (12" or smaller)
- Board Book



## CHILD 3 TO 10 YEARS OLD

- Small Duffel Bag or Backpack
- Pajamas
- Bombas Socks
- Blanket no larger than 30"x40"
- Toothbrush (1 - 3 pack)
- Toothpaste (travel size)
- Shampoo & Conditioner (travel size)
- Lotion (travel size)
- Soap or Body Wash (travel size)
- Stuffed Animal (12" or smaller)
- Coloring Book & Crayons (8-36 pack)
- Book



## TEEN 11+ YEARS OLD

- Small Duffel Bag or Backpack
- Pajamas
- Blanket no larger than 30"x40"
- Adult Toothbrush (1 - 3 pack)
- Toothpaste (travel size)
- Shampoo & Conditioner (travel size)
- Lotion (travel size)
- Soap or Body Wash (travel size)
- Deodorant
- Feminine Pads for girls
- Stuffed Animal (12" or smaller)
- Journal
- Pens & Pencils
- Book



## COMFORT XL'S

We offer Comfort XL duffel bags which truly replace the need for trash bags for children entering foster care. The Comfort XL is a 32-inch duffel bag that folds up to easily fit on an office shelf, in a desk drawer, or in the trunk of a car.

Our goal is for every social worker and police officer in the country to have a supply of Comfort XL duffel bags to give to children when they are removed from their homes.





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Every resident, even the few who discharge unsuccessfully, have their belongings packed in these beautiful brightly colored duffels. Parents and/or workers are just as delighted as the youth to receive these reusable versatile duffels. It's a great way for our agency to show how much we value them!

*Mitcha Shay*

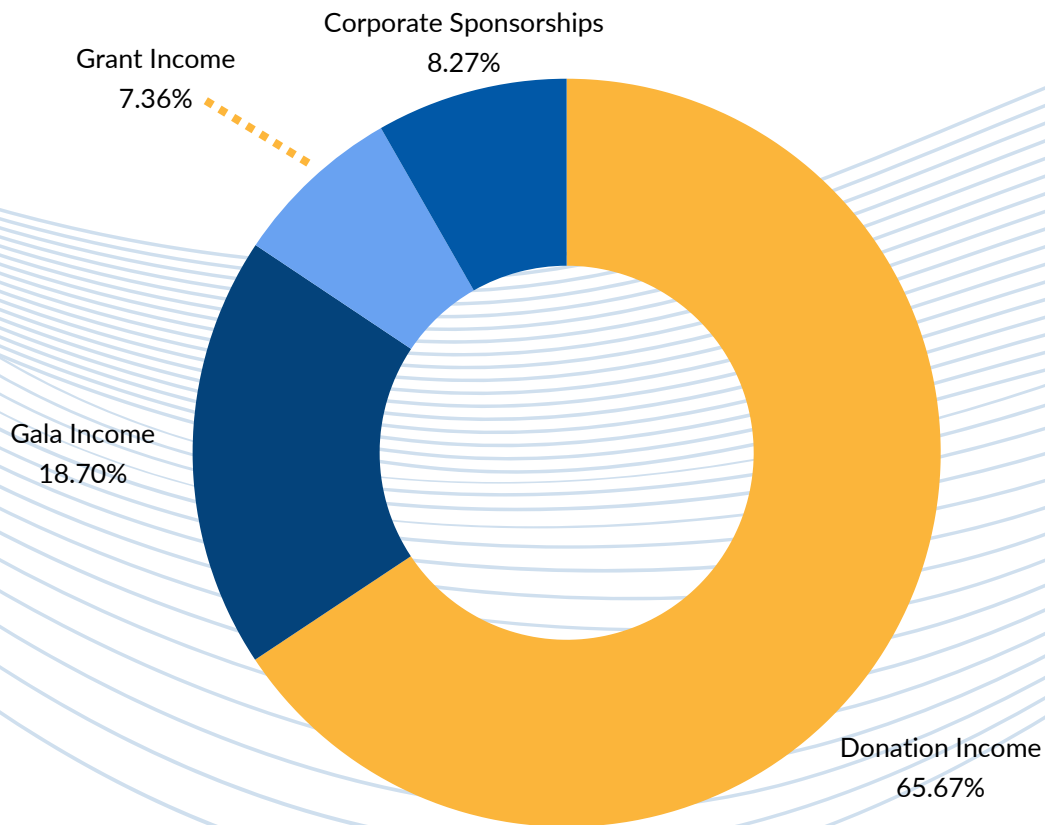
**Cedar Ridge Children's Home  
WILLIAMSPORT, MD**

# *A Look at* **OUR FINANCIAL REPORT**

Only 6% of every Program dollar is spent on Operating Expenses.



94% of Program Expenses contribute directly to advocacy, education, and supplies for Comfort Cases® & Comfort XL's.

## **2023 TOTAL CASH FUNDING\*** (\*EXCLUDES VALUE OF IN KIND DONATIONS)



## **2023 PROGRAM EXPENSES**



-  **6% Operation Expenses**  
Funds spent on rent, electricity, Internet and other bills
-  **94% Distribution Expenses**  
Funds spent on Comfort Cases® & Comfort XL bags



# A Drop in Our Ocean

## OUR VOLUNTEERS



**\$398,136**

**EQUATED IN  
VOLUNTEER SUPPORT\***

The Volunteer Program at Comfort Cases stands as the cornerstone of our organization's success, embodying the spirit of selfless dedication and collective impact. With the equivalent of hundreds of thousands of dollars in support generated through the invaluable contribution of volunteer hours, our volunteers play a pivotal role in ensuring that more donation dollars can be directly channeled toward our mission. Their unwavering commitment allows us to maximize the efficiency and reach of our initiatives, making a tangible difference in the lives of countless children in foster care. We extend our deepest gratitude to each and every volunteer, recognizing the profound and lasting impact they have on both our organization and the vulnerable youth we serve. Their efforts illuminate the path toward a brighter future, and we are immensely grateful for their ongoing support.

\*The latest value of a volunteer hour determined by Independent Sector, with the Do Good Institute



## Volunteer Spotlight

While we cherish all our volunteers, we want to give a special shoutout to our longest, steadfast volunteers supporting our mission.

- **Anne Manners** - One of the founding volunteer members
- **Kim Deserio** - Began the night of our 24 hour packing marathon, Nov 2019
- **Gerry Baill** - They just celebrated 7 years with us in November!
- **Bruce Ragusa** - Began in 2018 and has driven endless miles as a volunteer driver
- **Ginger Easley** - Began with us in 2020





## #KidsHelpingKids

According to a Parents Magazine survey, 73% of moms say the most important value they can instill in their children is kindness. If our young supporters are any indication, you moms, dads, and caretakers are doing a great job!

The Kids Helping Kids volunteer program stands as a testament to the boundless generosity and creativity of young hearts dedicated to making a difference. Numerous #KidsHelpingKids contributions originate from compassionate children who simply decided they wanted to extend a helping hand to their peers in need. Whether designing bracelets or arranging vibrant flower bouquets, these young volunteers channel their talents and interests into impactful initiatives that raise funds for Comfort Cases.

We celebrate the ingenuity and compassion of our young contributors, and we invite more budding philanthropists to join our cause. If your child has a unique idea, reach out to us, and we'll provide the support to help them get started on their journey of spreading kindness! Our overarching goal is to nurture and inspire the next generation, fostering the joy that comes from giving and encouraging them to make a positive impact on the lives of others.



**In total, we hosted 82  
Packing Party events in 2023!**

“

We use these backpacks on an **almost daily basis**. We have children coming into foster care on a regular basis and have little to no items with them. Really helps the child feel a bit more comfortable.

*Susan Haggerty*

Mobile County DHR  
MOBILE, AL





# 2023 BBQ BENEFIT

We strive to make each Annual BBQ Benefit more impactful than the last, and this year was no exception.

During our SOLD OUT event, we were able to raise **\$325,000** from the support of **over 300 individuals** who came out to show their support to bring dignity and hope to youth in foster care.





# AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS

**Keynote Speaker** - Kimberly Raff,  
Founder & Executive Director of Foster Alumni  
Mentors

## Scholarship Winners:

**Hope Scholars** - Trinity Utnage & Aaliyah Henderson

**Elevance Scholar** - Charles Alderdice

**Scott Isaacson Scholarships** - Cyrus Harshbarger &  
Taylor Novak

## Award Winners:

**3rd Annual Milton S. Hershey Award** - Childhelp  
accepted by Michael Medoro

**Alice O'Sullivan Volunteer of the Year Award** -  
KPMG

**Kids Helping Kids Award** - Annabella Brown

**The Barbara Harrison Award** - Jen Lilley







## COMFORTCASES. 2023 BBQ Benefit Sponsors

BAG BUSTER PREMIER SPONSOR:



COMFORT CREATORS SPONSOR:



CHARACTER CULTIVATORS SPONSORS:



Dave Thomas  
Foundation  
for Adoption®

Finding Forever Families for Children in Foster Care



HYUNDAI



INTEGRITY  
STAFFING SOLUTIONS



For a complete list of sponsors, go to [our website](#).





# Becky and Karl:

## A Heartfelt Journey with Comfort Cases

Nestled in the heart of Mechanicsburg, PA, Becky and Karl Heimbach, former teachers, and administrators, discovered a shared passion that set them on a profound journey with Comfort Cases. Their time in the education system unveiled the hardships faced by students in the foster care system, compelling them to contribute to the well-being of vulnerable children. Three years ago, Becky and Karl pioneered their inaugural "Backyard BBQ" to support Comfort Cases, marking them as the first couple to embrace this distinctive approach for raising awareness and funds for the organization.

2021 Event

### Why Comfort Cases Matters:

Upon discovering Rob Scheer's narrative and understanding the mission of Comfort Cases, the Heimbachs were stirred by a profound sense of duty to assist. Rob Scheer's story, characterized by adversity and resilience, along with his survival and unwavering dedication to preventing any child from enduring his past experiences, deeply motivated them to fully commit to the cause.

It served as a poignant reminder of the significance of empathy, compassion, and the transformative influence of kindness.



Meet Becky and Karl



2023: Becky with Heidi Webb, who represents Comfort Cases every year at the event.



# The Backyard BBQ Initiative

2022 Event

Fueled by boundless enthusiasm for the cause, Becky and Karl launched the Backyard BBQ within their 55+ community in Mechanicsburg, PA, just two hours away from Comfort Cases' Center in Rockville, MD. The event has evolved into a cherished tradition, drawing the active participation of over 100 neighbors who eagerly contribute and attend. Beyond serving as a significant fundraiser for Comfort Cases, the gathering is infused with a sense of enjoyment. Featuring a live DJ and a potluck of delectable food and beverages, the event has become a source of both support and fun. The couple values the opportunity to involve their community in aiding the younger generation. Over the years, they've discovered that Comfort Cases' mission resonates beyond their own experiences, with several guests sharing personal stories of growing up in or fostering a child from the foster care system.

In 2023, Eastern Pennsylvania received a significant boost as over 50 Comfort Cases® were assembled and promptly distributed.



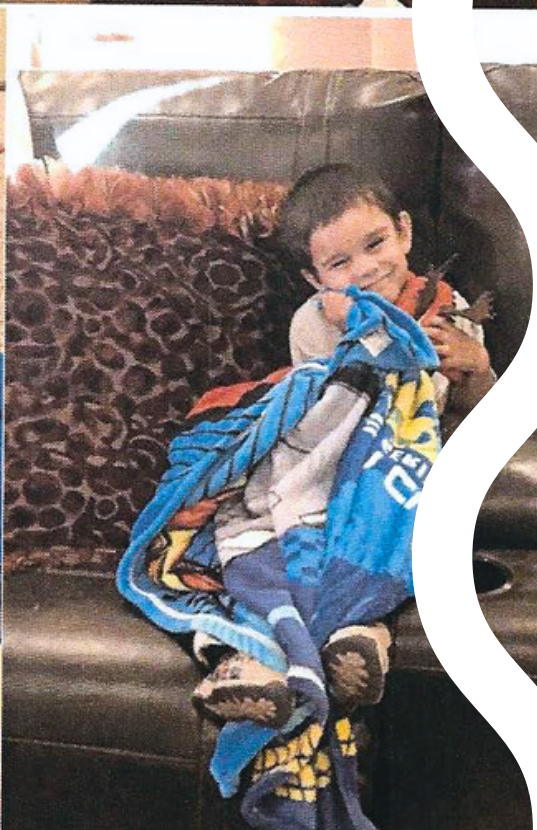
The party guests crafted more than 100 heartfelt hand-written notes to be included in the cases, while generous cash donations of nearly \$1,000. Additionally, the event garnered over 50 extra blankets and 100 additional books that were donated. The Comfort Cases® were promptly and equally distributed between Families United Network and Diakon Adoption & Foster Care. Notably, when Comfort Cases initiated the Backyard BBQ program in 2021, the Heimbachs were the first to enthusiastically embrace the opportunity.

Without seeking acknowledgment or praise, Becky and Karl's involvement with Comfort Cases showcases the profound impact of empathy and community involvement. Their commitment to positively impacting the lives of children in foster care through the Backyard BBQ initiative stands as an inspirational model for others. In the essence of compassion, they underscore that modest deeds have the potential to bring about meaningful and positive transformations in the lives of children.



2021 Event





“

Thank you from  
the many kids at  
Pepper's Ranch!  
You are helping  
make a difference  
- one backpack at  
a time!!!

Peppers Ranch Foster  
Care Community  
GUTHRIE, OK



# 2023 AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

- ★ 2023 Top-Rated Nonprofit (**GreatNonprofits**)
- ★ 2023 Platinum Seal of Transparency (**GuideStar**)
- ★ 2023 Top NGO and Social Enterprise Organization (**GreatCompanies**)
- ★ #1 Podcast Featuring Topics Regarding Foster Care and Adoption (**Feedspot 2021-2023**)
- ★ Silver W3 Award (**The Academy of Interactive & Visual Arts**)



WINNER





# Isaiah Hodgins:

## Charity of Choice for "My Cause My Cleats"

Not only did the Giants secure a victory at their game, but Isaiah also scored a sensational touchdown rocking his exclusive One of One Comfort Cases cleats!

Isaiah's choice to represent Comfort Cases for "My Cause My Cleats" speaks volumes about his commitment to making a difference. This initiative allows NFL players to showcase customized cleats, each reflecting their dedication to a charitable cause. We were beyond grateful for Isaiah's support and thrilled to be the charity of choice for such a remarkable player and good human.





# Welcome HOME

The end of 2023 brought an exciting development in the Comfort Cases community - our new headquarters location!

None of it would be possible without the incredible support of volunteers and our generous community of supporters like you making this move seamless and successful.

**Our New Address:**

**9300 Gaither Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20877**





“

Very positively - these cases give comfort and dignity to children when they are at one of the most vulnerable moments of their lives - a transition into another home.

*Christina Kaiser*

Communities Connected  
for Kids  
FORT PIERCE, FL



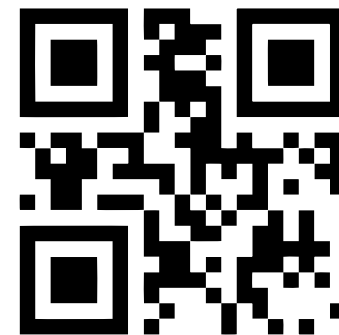


# Our 2024 PLAN

Each year, we like to aim even higher in our pursuit to help the population of youth in foster care around the world.

With the support of our donors and partnerships, we have a goal to send out:

## 45,000 Comfort Cases® & 20,000 Comfort XL's



**Donate To Support  
Our Mission**

### SHOP FOR GOOD

By partnering with DailyKarma, an online platform, Comfort Cases can convert your shopping into a compassionate act that directly supports our vision: ensuring every child receives the dignity and hope they deserve during what may be the most traumatic time in their lives.

With new retailers added quarterly, shop with purpose, shop with heart, and become part of the change that brings dignity and hope to children in foster care with a percentage of each order directly supporting our mission.



### Gifts that Give Back

Up to 15% of your purchase will be donated to Comfort Cases!

### BAG BUSTERS PROGRAM

Your monthly contribution of just \$10 can make a powerful difference. As a Bag Buster, you join a community of dedicated supporters committed to eliminating the distressing practice of handing a child a trash bag upon entering foster care.

**This year, our goal is to double our Bag Busters!**

Play a crucial role in transforming the foster care experience and providing comfort and support to those in need. Share with your friends and families and be a part of the change! <https://bit.ly/42OdSCc>



### STATE-WIDE TAKEOVERS

Georgia is only the start of the impact we want to have on the nation's foster care system. We continue to work with State Officials in multiple states throughout the country. We want what we've always wanted:

**For the practice of handing a child a trash bag to go away and be replaced with the distribution of Comfort Cases®.**

Have advocacy and/or fundraising experience and want to volunteer to help make this a reality in your state?

Reach out to us today: [info@comfortcases.org](mailto:info@comfortcases.org).





TOGETHER, WE CAN CREATE A POSITIVE RIPPLE EFFECT  
OF KINDNESS IN OUR COMMUNITIES.  
THANK YOU FOR HELPING US PROVIDE:

Character

Comfort

Community

Compassion

