

## **Austin Angels: Changing the way children and families experience the foster care system.**

Austin Angels is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to walking alongside children in the foster care system, as well as their caretakers, by offering consistent support through intentional giving, relationship building, and mentorship. Austin Angels began in December 2009 when founder and CEO Susan Ramirez decided, along with her friends, to volunteer once a month. In 2010, while working full-time in the real estate industry, Susan was invited by one of her clients to attend a conference called “Together for Adoption.” Susan attended the conference and was encouraged by her client to go to a presentation on foster care. After initially telling her client that she wasn’t interested because she didn’t feel called to foster, Susan decided to attend that workshop, and her life and career were changed forever. At the presentation, Susan heard the words that have now become Austin Angels’ mantra: “Not everyone is called to foster, and not everyone is called to adopt, but anyone can make a difference in a child's life.”

Our programs utilize a trauma-informed, wrap-around service model that strengthens relationships between foster families, children and youth in foster care, and bio families. Austin Angels has several programs that cultivate our core values of community, empowerment, and hope. The Love Box program provides foster families with community and holistic support so they can continue to do the important and meaningful work of being a foster parent. The Dare to Dream (for youth ages 15-22) and Dare to Dream Jr. (for youth ages 11-14) programs offer an opportunity to individually serve an aged-out or at-risk to age out youth in foster care. Lastly, our Entrepreneur Workshop is a semester-long course focused on equipping and empowering youth ages 12-18 in foster care with business knowledge, entrepreneurial skills, and financial literacy—real life knowledge, skills, and experience they need to reach their fullest potential. Each of these programs were designed with one thing in mind—changing the way that children, youth and families experience foster care. Susan says, “We believe that community changes everything. And that change starts with one person—you.”

Our vision is to create sustainable change in the foster care system; and to see every child in the foster care system supported by a Love Box group, and every youth supported by a Dare to Dream mentor. There are currently over 4,400 children in foster homes or substitute care services in Central Texas alone; we currently serve just over 250 children on a monthly basis. Our dream is to open chapters in every major metropolitan city in the nation (as of now there are 20) so every single child in foster care in the United States will be supported and empowered to succeed. For more information about Austin Angels, visit [www.austinangels.com](http://www.austinangels.com).

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