

**CULTURE BOOK**



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## WHAT IS CULTURE?


Culture can be defined as the "way of life" for a group of people, or how they do things and why. Culture can be passed on through generations by way of teaching and sharing, regardless of genetics. We work **collaboratively** with our volunteers, staff and board members to ensure the best service delivery to the children we serve. The Felix Organization is a family to many, whether chosen or discovered, and we intend to cultivate a culture of compassion, generosity, and reliability.

## OUR STORY

The Felix Organization was founded in 2006 by iconic Hip Hop musician and Rock & Roll Hall of Famer, Darryl "DMC" McDaniels, and Emmy Award-winning Hollywood casting director, Sheila Jaffe after they connected through their shared experiences as adoptees and were inspired to share their good fortune with children who had not been "taken home" as they had.

## OUR MISSION

The Felix Organization provides inspiring opportunities and new experiences to enrich the lives of children who are growing up in the foster care system.



# WHO WE SERVE

There are roughly 400,000 children in the US in foster care on any given day. Over 10,000 live in New York City. Foster children fare poorly in our society. Most of them have witnessed abuse or were themselves abused or neglected. They ended up in foster care through no fault of their own, yet they are burdened with higher rates of mental and physical illnesses, more learning disabilities, and a disproportionate number of teen pregnancies. As adults they fail to complete high school, they must frequently depend on welfare and social services and often end up in jail.

Studies have shown that for youth who age out of the foster care system with no permanent family, approximately:

**20% struggled with homelessness**

**50% did not complete high school**

**40% are unemployed**

**36% are arrested**

**2% are incarcerated**

**50% of girls are pregnant within 12-18 months of leaving foster care.**

The statistics are clear - we are not doing enough as a society to help foster children succeed.

## OUR VISION

Our programs, Camp Felix in particular, give our youth the chance to leave behind their difficult circumstances to explore the natural world, gain independence and make new friends. Camp Felix allows these children, so many of whom work with social workers, therapists, special educators and lawyers throughout the year, to simply be children. Through our programs, the children we serve are able to overcome fears, try new activities, and form meaningful bonds with others.

### Experts in the field report that:

- Camp nurtures social skills.
- Camp models healthy living.
- Camp eases the summer academic slide.
- Camp enhances self-confidence.
- Camp helps kids unplug and build friendships.
- Camp reintroduces kids to nature.
- Camp fosters teamwork.
- Camp encourages personal growth.

## TIMELINE



In August 2006, we hosted the first summer at Camp Felix in Putnam Valley in partnership with the New York Foundling to serve youth growing up in the foster care system.

After 5 successful summers of Camp Felix in Putnam Valley, we launched Camp Felix West in 2011 to serve the Los Angeles foster care population in partnership with Happy Trails for Kids and the Harold Robinson Foundation.



In 2012, we launched the Beyond Camp grant program to support our youth in pursuing their interests and goals throughout the school year to remove any barriers to success our youth may experience outside of Camp Felix.

In 2013, we began our Secret Santa fundraising campaign asking Felix supporters to donate gift cards to distribute to older youth in foster care who are often overlooked during the holiday season.



In 2017, we expanded our reach by launching a Camp Felix program hosted at Club Getaway in Kent, CT, to serve teen girls in partnership with Good Shepherd Services.

In 2018, we launched our 5th camp, Bryan's Camp Felix, to serve teen boys in the foster care system in partnership with the New York Foundling and the Bryan Jacobson Foundation.



In 2021, we will partner with the Fresh Air Fund to launch Camp Felix Pride, a new overnight program uniquely designed to serve LGBTQ+ youth growing up in the foster care system.



Most kids, they don't really get a lot of chances in life. At Camp Felix, you could feel like one of those kids who gets opportunities.

Marquis, Camp Felix Camper

## OUR VALUES

The RESPECT Values program drives our culture at Camp Felix and The Felix Organization.

These values offer a simple guide for leading a more positive life.

**R** Respect for self and others

**E** Engage in positive decision-making

**S** Support each other at camp  
(and beyond)

**P** Peaceful conflict resolution

**E** Experience something new

**C** Care for your environment

**T** Teamwork in celebration of  
differences

# OUR VALUES

## **Respect for self and others**

- Have sensitivity to the feelings of others.
- Do not endanger your own life.
- Treat your body well; it's the only body you will get.
- Act on your convictions and stand up for your beliefs.
- Tell the truth even when it's not easy.

## **Engage in positive decision-making**

- Make choices that will positively affect your future (even if your future means this afternoon).
- Make choices that will positively affect the lives of others.
- Think about what you are about to do before doing it.
- Do not let others make negative decisions for you.
- Think about whether an action will lead you towards your goals or prevent you from reaching your goals. Then decide if you want to do it or not.

## **Support each other at camp (and beyond)**

- No name calling or put-downs.
- Absolutely no violence.
- If you see someone who looks down or who is not participating, encourage them to join in the fun.
- Be an ally. If someone is being picked on, let them know you saw what happened and that you don't think it was right. Notify someone if bullying continues.

## **Peaceful conflict resolution**

- Conflicts should not be resolved with violence.
- It is okay to stand up for yourself if someone says or does something offensive to you, but remember to stay calm and treat the other person with respect.
- Try to prevent conflict. Identify your triggers and try to avoid them.
- If you feel yourself getting angry, walk away, take some deep breaths, count slowly to ten, visualize something you like doing or someplace you like going and focus on that rather than the conflict.

## **Experience something new**

- Take a risk and try something you have never tried.
- Encourage other campers to try something new without forcing them.
- Give yourself a pat on the back if you try something new.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help.

## **Care for your environment**

- Treat your environment well.
- Keep your personal space clean.
- Treat supplies as though they were your own possessions.
- Treat the buildings and the grounds with respect.

## **Teamwork in celebration of differences**

- Think of how boring the world would be if we were exactly the same. Be yourself.
- Accept and respect all people regardless of their culture, ethnicity, religion, or gender identity.
- If you do not understand something about someone else's culture, ethnicity or religion, ask them about it politely. It's okay to ask questions as long as you do not put that person down.
- If someone asks you about your culture or ethnicity, try to share something with them.

# THE CAMP FELIX MODEL

## Creating Camp Culture and Community

**Morning Circle:** A time when the group gathers together before breakfast to kick off the day with “shout-outs” and a simple teambuilding exercise, usually led by the Camp Director. It's also a great time to set expectations for the day!

**Devotions:** A group activity practiced before bedtime during which the counselor presents a topic for discussion or each camper has a turn to share their “rose and thorn” of the day. This a time for the campers to reflect on their camp experience and express their thoughts. It is a good time for counselors to listen to their campers’ feelings and consider what is working or not. This time can also be used to revisit expectations or address more serious topics.

**Team Huddle:** An exercise to practice after each activity in which the group gathers and discusses the strengths and challenges of their performance during the last activity. This serves as a great way to provide positive feedback and also to hold campers accountable for their behavior as a team.

**Awards:** Awards are a fun and helpful way to incentivize the RESPECT values program.

- **Most Spirited Cabin Award** - A certificate given to the cabin who shows the most teamwork and positive attitude during activities throughout the week.
- **Golden Dustpan Award** - A certificate and dustpan spray-painted golden given to the cabin with the highest score for cleanliness. (Camp Director does a walkthrough of each cabin every day.)
- **Early Bird Award** - A certificate given to the cabin who is on time for morning circle and all activities including meal times.

**Posters (and other decorations):** A simple and fun way to decorate the cabin and display positive messages and reminders for the campers, including cabin expectations. Other decorations may include pictures and Christmas lights to make the cabin space feel unique and comfortable.

# ANNUAL EVENTS

## Fundraising Events

- **DANCE THIS WAY:** Our biggest annual fundraiser of the year. Prior to the big celebration, guests create teams to raise money from friends and family to send kids to Camp Felix. At the party, everyone gathers to eat, drink, and dance for three hours!
- **OM THIS WAY:** A unique Hip-Hop yoga class and performance hosted in partnership with Equinox Sports Club in several US cities including New York, San Francisco, LA, DC, Boston, and Miami to benefit Felix. The two-hour event includes a special yoga class followed by a live performance with Darryl “DMC” McDaniels!
- **LAUGH THIS WAY:** Laugh This Way is a night of comedy hosted by comedian and writer, Chris Spencer and Darryl McDaniels featuring a variety of comedians.
- **GOLF THIS WAY:** A golf invitational where Felix supporters of all skill-levels play a round of golf at the beautiful Dyker Beach Golf Course and also enjoy delicious food and a live performance by DMC!
- **ROCK THIS WAY:** A concert fundraiser where Felix friends and supporters gathered at The Cutting Room NYC to enjoy incredible live performances by the classic rock band, The Stuff, and our co-founder Darryl's band, DMC and The Hellraisers.

## ANNUAL EVENTS (cont.)

### Program Events

- **CAMP FELIX OPEN HOUSE:** An annual talent show where friends and family are invited to visit Camp Felix in Putnam Valley to enjoy a delicious barbecue and watch our Camp Felix campers perform their talents on stage.
- **THANKSGIVING FEAST-I-VAL:** Every year, we serve 100 children a delicious meal with friends and family in partnership with Hill Country restaurant in Manhattan. The kids take home a special art project and a goodie bag filled with treats and gifts!
- **JAM THIS WAY:** A talent show featuring performances by our Felix kids where friends and family gather to enjoy food, drinks, and sweet treats to celebrate love a few days before Valentine's Day.



Thank you for the cabins, rock climbing, art class, therapy dogs, and so much more. All of this made me learn so much, it even helps me for school.

Camp Felix Camper

## FELIX LOGOS



Official logo of The  
Felix Organization.



Official logo of the original  
Camp Felix in Putnam Valley.



Official logo of Camp Felix  
Girls Getaway.



Official logo of  
Bryan's Camp Felix.



Official logo of Camp Felix  
Pride at the Fresh Air Fund.



Official logo of Camp Felix  
West in Los Angeles.

## FAQ

### Is there someone named Felix?

Our co-founders, Sheila Jaffe and Darryl McDaniels, created a story about a dog named Felix who was taken in by a cat family as a sweet and simple metaphor about finding family no matter the differences. The word "Felix" also means "Happy" in latin. Sheila and Darryl chose "Felix" to symbolize the joy of childhood and family we hope to provide for children growing up in the foster care system despite the challenges they face on a daily basis.

### What do you do the rest of the year when Camp Felix is not in session?

From a single summer camp hosted for the first time in 2006, the Felix tree has blossomed into five camps and a variety of year-round programs: Beyond Camp, Felix Friendship Circle and our holiday celebrations that support children during a very difficult and lonely time of year. Together, these programs have served over 10,000 children!

- The **Beyond Camp** program awards funding to youth in foster care for extracurricular and academic activities they wish to participate in throughout the school year.
- **Secret Santa** is a gift-giving initiative that provides holiday cheer in the form of gift cards, toys, and other items to older youth in foster care who are often overlooked at that time of year.
- **Felix Friendship Circle** is a volunteer program that offers free cultural experiences for foster teens such as theater tickets, film screenings, sporting events, the Radio City Christmas Spectacular, and an annual Thanksgiving Feast-i-val hosted at Hill Country Barbecue Market in NYC.

## ACCREDITATIONS



We are honored to be a Better Business Bureau Accredited Charity Seal Holder, providing the public with a clear and concise symbol that Felix adheres to the BBB Foundation's strong and comprehensive standards for charity work.



Each year, we earn a Platinum Seal of Transparency from Guidestar, their highest form of recognition, by sharing metrics about our organization that prove the results of our commitment to serving youth in foster care.



It is truly special to receive a Top-Rated badge from Great Nonprofits every year as it is earned from receiving 5-star reviews from staff, volunteers, donors, and supporters who believe in our mission and recognize the work we are doing to accomplish it.



*Camp Felix gave me memories  
that I am going to keep for the  
rest of my life.*

Sarah, Girls Getaway Camper

## HOW WE COMMUNICATE

All staff work remotely and therefore communicate during work hours primarily by email and through iMessage on the macbook. When necessary, staff will arrange to speak over the phone if a project or task requires more elaborate discussion or further explanation. Feedback of any kind is ongoing and in real time.

Felix staff keep a record of all files, including letters, grant proposals, receipts, photos, videos, and more in Dropbox. As soon as a file of any kind is finalized, it is uploaded directly to the "Felix Organization" folder on Dropbox and categorized into the appropriate sub-folder where all staff can access it and download again when necessary.

The Executive Director arranges for the team to meet in person approximately once a month to discuss upcoming events and ongoing projects. While working remotely is an effective model for us, we value face-to-face communication and spending time together.

## OUR TEAM

Felix values diversity and strives to ensure we have representation from all ethnicities, races, nationalities, gender identities and backgrounds on our leadership teams.

In addition to over 100 volunteers and an active Board of Directors, Felix has a diverse Advisory Board as well as a Junior Board of dynamic young professionals, all of whom spread awareness about our mission and raise critical funds to support our programs.

## **OUR TEAM** (Cont.)

### **Board of Directors:**

The Executive Director arranges three Board of Directors meetings per calendar year that are conducted in person to discuss essential details of program operations and progress on fundraising.

One such meeting is hosted at the annual Open House BBQ at Camp Felix Putnam Valley where friends, family, and Felix supporters gather to enjoy a talent show featuring performances by the Campers.

The Executive Director also keeps the Board of Directors regularly informed throughout the year by sending a monthly "Board Update" featuring pictures of the children we serve, information about events, new partnerships, and more.

### **Advisory Board:**

The Advisory Board is a team of thoughtful professionals with varied backgrounds who offer strategic advice and consultation to Felix Staff regarding general operations. The Executive Director also keeps the Advisory Board regularly informed throughout the year by including them in the monthly "Board Update" email.

### **Junior Board:**

Members of the Junior Board are socially responsible young professionals from many walks of life who use their talents and multi-layered experiences to be ambassadors for the Felix children. The Executive Director and staff communicate with the Junior Board by email and occasionally through Zoom Video conferencing for face-to-face time. The Junior Board also meets in person 1-2 times a year when possible and connect at fundraising events.

### **Youth Board:**

The Youth Board program engages and inspires the youth we serve to be included in our mission work, becoming stewards of social service representative of their communities, with the skills and abilities to be problem solvers and create a positive impact in the world. The Program Coordinator communicates with the Youth Board by organizing meetings with the staff at their school through email. The Youth Board meets approximately twice a year.

### **Volunteers:**

Staff keep a list of people who have shown interest in volunteering and those who volunteer regularly to reach out to when needed for events.

Staff communicate with volunteers by email to share important information regarding event location, time shifts, and dress code.

### **Felix Friends and Supporters:**

The Felix Organization has an email list of nearly 4K subscribers and over 4.8K followers across our social media platforms.

Felix sends email blasts to our subscribers list several times throughout the year with invitations to upcoming events, updates on program operations, and also simply to thank them for their generosity and support.

Felix posts to social media on a regular basis including posts about upcoming events, inspirational quotes, #throwbackthursday pictures from Camp Felix, and fast facts about Felix on Fridays to keep our followers informed and to give them a sense of community and being part of our #FelixFamily.

## **HOW WE CELEBRATE AND SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER**

We immediately express gratitude for support we receive on our tasks and projects. We give each other praise for working hard and achieving something big.

We give each other a "shout out" in front of others whether in person, on a conference call, or by email to highlight exceptional work on a project.

We celebrate birthdays by sending an email Birthday greeting card from Punchbowl.com and also posting on social media for others to send their wishes. On special occasions, we send flowers to express gratitude and share our well wishes.

We host a holiday lunch for staff every year at a restaurant where we catch up with each other over food and drinks and also exchange gifts

## **HOURS AND DRESS CODE**

Full-time staff generally work Monday through Friday from 9AM to 5PM.

Part-time staff generally work Monday through Friday from 9AM to 1PM.

On occasion throughout the year, staff will work events that take place outside of the office after 5PM or on the weekends.

Dress: Some occasions call for wearing dressier attire such as board meetings, speaker engagements, and fundraising events. Around the office, clean, casual, and comfortable attire is appropriate and welcomed.



The Felix Organization is a tax-exempt 501c3 grassroots organization. Every donation made is tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Should someone wish to donate, a check can be made payable to:

The Felix Organization  
43 Oyster Bay Road  
Locust Valley, NY 11560

## FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



The Felix Organization



@felixorganization



The Felix Organization



@Felix4Change

For more information, please reach out to us at:

**[info@thefelixorganization.org](mailto:info@thefelixorganization.org)**

**646-761-7159**

**[WWW.THEFELIXORGANIZATION.ORG](http://WWW.THEFELIXORGANIZATION.ORG)**