Hello All,

Happy New Year I hope that you all enjoyed the holidays with your loved ones. I know that I am looking ahead to 2026 with excitement and pride.

First, let me start by saying Thank You to all who have participated in our board give/get in 2025. For some, contributions may have been in the form of a personal gift, and for others it was through introductions, conversations and relationship-building with new donors who believe in our mission. We value and celebrate *all* of these contributions. We are grateful for your leadership, your advocacy, and the many ways you already show up for the families we serve.

Thank you for meeting with Catalyst Campaigns for a discovery call and for expanding our network and inviting new partners. 2026 is about connection, shared purpose, and collective impact, and not transactional fundraising.

Please refer to the new BOD Webpage for all meeting prep, fundraising progress, meeting minutes, and more. You can add comments about any of the materials within the form on the webpage after you have reviewed. **Please bookmark this page!**

WHEN WE LAST LEFT:

With Justin's leadership, we created the first Round Up partnership with the restaurant El Jefe, based in MA, PA, and NJ! Additionally, End of Year Giving reached its $25,000 goal, with thanks to Abby Hennigan, Communications and Community Engagement Manager, for identifying the It Takes a Village concept and social media and newsletter implementation. The stories of love and loss told by Empower Mentors, guardians, and participants was everything. As Donnette (Guardian to her three beautiful nieces) bravely shared, "*Empower has been the only place that they can actually feel safe and free to talk about their mom in a way that someone is not going to pity them, but really understand what it means to lose a mom, to lose someone that is the nurturer, the caregiver."* That connection is what it is all about – the understanding that even through profound loss, kids can still find belonging, joy, and purpose when they have community.

In our work with Catalyst, we have utilized Catalyst's expertise and staff input to create a 1-page "Why" document and case for support. This "Why" document will be integrated in all collateral helpful for board members who are ready to share with their networks. Please read and provide your comments or questions in the dedicated section on our Webpage. They also shared early results from their donor screening, which yielded 22 high-quality matches identified from the initial list of 30 names from the list we gave them, with ~50 total prospect profiles to be built. Catalyst will lead outreach and conduct up to ~30 discovery calls between now and February. Additionally, we will convene a virtual donor focus group in February to build peer excitement and connection. The data integration is nearly complete, and we will start to learn and use the LGL (Little Green Light) software to manage our donor data. Catalyst will spend the next 7 weeks in these discovery calls, LGL onboarding, focus groups, and ongoing Major Donor support.

WHY THIS BOARD MEETING IS IMPORTANT:

During our meeting, we will be discussing the Mentor applicant requirement to have lived experience, and in trying to reach a decision, we ask that you read the summary on the webpage and share your questions or concerns to discuss as a group and offer food for thought for our program team. We will discuss removing the "shared experience" requirement. In other words, in instances such as mentor matching for boys, where male mentors with lived experience may be lacking.

Additionally, during our meeting, we will be discussing Catalyst's next phase and the 30+ discovery calls with our donors. We will be joined by Catalyst for a brief summary. In advance of the board meeting, it would be great if you would read their summary on the webpage and generate a list of questions you think we should be asking as we discuss.

Lastly, we will be taking a deeper look at our mission statement as discussed at the Board Retreat in which it was suggested we include an explanation about why our programs are so critical to avoiding the negative impacts of bereavement on children and young adults. For instance, we will discuss a proposed mission statement, *"Empower's mission is to support, connect, and empower children and young adults up through age 24 who have experienced the death of a parent, helping to address the negative impacts of early parent loss."*

A brief discussion will ensue regarding trademark findings from Ropes & Gray regarding the nonprofit organization that former ED Jeff Kimball formed, called Empower Change. Concerns were shared with Ropes & Gray; the findings are on our webpage. A decision may not need to be made today, but may prompt future discussions and considerations. The Board should be made aware, simply put.

PROGRAM

What's happening now:

- 22 most impactful mentor matches in FY26 (since July 1, 2025) and a heartwarming story HERE
- Both the Mother's and Father's Day Committees have commenced, and planning is underway. Mark your calendars - Please join us as a volunteer:
    - Mother's Day Event (UK): Sunday, March 15th in London
    - Mother's Day Event (US): Sunday, May 10th 11am - 4pm EST in downtown Boston
    - Father's Day Event (US): Sunday, June 14th 11am - 4pm EST in downtown Boston
- A Focus Group of Mentor Alumni will come together to identify trends in mentor recruitment and ways we can improve our mentor recruitment efforts, as laid out in our Marketing Plan
- Mentor Required lived experience (as stated above) will be discussed with the Board

What's on the Horizon / How you can help:

- Mother's & Father's Day event planning is underway; if you would like to volunteer at either of our Mother's or Father's Day events, click HERE to sign up!

COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

What's happening now:

- Abby Hennigan is wrapping up our end of year giving campaign with her team of interns. This was her first big campaign at Empower, and we are looking forward to hearing her recommendations for the 2026 campaign.
- Abby is very successfully managing an internship program (4 interns to manage social media, communications, and web development) to create all social media, newsletters, graphic design, and SEO.

What's on the Horizon / How You Can Help:

- We are strategizing an Empower podcast in 2026. If you have anyone in your network who is experienced in podcast production, please email Cara HERE.
- We will begin to send a dedicated newsletter to our donors, based on historical engagement and new information from donors that Catalyst Campaign has gathered.
- Senior leadership, along with Abby Hennigan, Communications & Engagement Manager, will begin to write the Marketing Plan. Do you have anyone in your network who is an experienced Marketing professional and may have time and talent to lend to the process? Please email Cara HERE.

ADVANCEMENT/DEVELOPMENT

What's happening now:

- Click HERE to view the fundraising tracker (this is updated weekly)
- We are full steam ahead with Catalyst and the CRM (called Little Green Light) which will be built by January
- We have a 1-page Why document for all BOD members to save on their laptop. You can find it on our dedicated BOD Resource page HERE.
- Our 4-month engagement with Catalyst is set to end at the end of February. Staff and Board will discuss next steps and options for continuing the engagement.

What's on the Horizon / How you Can help:

- The Empower round-up pin-pad donation program is LIVE at El Jefe. It will run in 9 El Jefe restaurant locations in MA, PA, and NJ from 12/15 - 3/31.
- LUMINARIA planning is underway and will be held in Boston in Spring 2026. We have notified all of the other cities' leadership and will begin to send out communications to all supporters and previous bag purchasers regarding our plan to host only 1 event this year.
- Catalyst will finalize the list of donors for the donor exploration calls in January + February
- We are looking for introductions to LUMINARIA Sponsors ($1,000+). Would you suggest 2-3 companies or individuals who may be interested in sponsoring LUMINARIA and help us reach out $50,000 sponsor goal? Look at Sponsor benefits here and come to the meeting with your suggestions for sponsorship HERE.

ORGANIZATIONAL

What's happening now:

- Trademark findings: Due to some recent developments, we reached out to Evan at Ropes & Gray regarding a potential trademark question related to Jeff Kimball's organization, Empower Change, last fall. Evan has since reviewed the situation and shared his perspective with us, and he's now asking whether we'd like to move forward in any way.

  Based on his initial feedback, it does not appear that we currently have a strong position from a name or logo standpoint. Evan mentioned that this would not be a "slam dunk." I do, however, see a potential future threat if Empower Change receives enough funding to perhaps develop an app through technology that would allow them to serve kids through his mentor program. As of now, it seems to be a mentor program for adults and caregivers. You can see the full timeline and information on the webpage HERE.

Financials:

Budget to Actuals

FY26 Income Goal: $735,000
FY26 Income Actual: $340,000

FY26 Expense Goal: $735,000
FY26 Expense Actual: $385,000

YTD: Income Goal: $346,000
YTD: Income Actual: $340,000

YTD Expense Goal: $360,000
YTD Expense Actual: $330,000

What's on the Horizon / How You Can Help:

- Help transition this board into a fundraising board
- We are always brainstorming new Directors and non-directors and as always, please share your nominations on the nomination form on the webpage

INTERESTING READS / AUDIOS:

- Because we are introducing a new format for our Board meetings and pre-reads (Board Pack), I have included a link below to a terrific video from Edward Norton's (actor turned philanthropist) company, Zeck. We were inspired by Edward's philosophy about board meetings and how to make them impactful and strategic. Click HERE to learn more – it is worth the watch!