

Impact Report 2021

Dear friends,

Spending the past two years looking deeply at the pain, inequity, access, and opportunity around us has sharpened our work at Born This Way Foundation and my own purpose in this world. In the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, we believe at the Foundation and I believe personally, in the power of kindness to help alleviate our individual and collective suffering. Born This Way Foundation has centered kindness, bravery, and community for the past ten years and will continue to do so for the next ten and beyond.

In 2021, our team found new ways to do what we do best; we followed the leadership of young people with whom and for whom we do this work. We supported them as they shared their stories, experiences, and needs, and we worked collaboratively – with our global community – to help meet unmet needs. Be they the needed mental health resources for young people in Las Vegas, the safe space for storytelling on Channel Kindness, or the life-saving, tangible suicide prevention resources of Please Stay. Together, we modeled healthy conversations about mental health, connected young people with resources and services, and built communities that understand, prioritize, and foster good mental health.

We took collective action – millions and millions of times over – to build a kinder, braver world. From launching our most epic #BeKind21 campaign to date and sharing vital research to help shine a light on the growing needs and lived experiences of young people, to hosting youth-led conversations about the importance of kindness and mental health, including in the recent film, *The Power of Kindness*, which featured brave young mental health advocates in intimate conversation with our co-founder, Lady Gaga. As we approach our 10th anniversary, I am proud to share our work continues to place young people at the forefront of our initiatives.

I am proud of you, I am proud of us, and I am proud of our team at Born This Way Foundation; Alex, Annie, Aysha, Emma, Josh H., Josh M., Mitu, Shadille, Shanice, Susan, Taylor, Terez, and of course, our co-founders, Lady Gaga and Cynthia Germanotta. Like many of you reading this letter, we continue to endure more than we believed we could take this past year. I hope you find a moment as we begin this new year to be proud of yourself and your loved ones because the kindness you share – with yourself and with the world around you – really matters. It adds up, it makes folks smile, and it saves lives.

In Love and Kindness,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Smith', with a stylized, flowing script.

Maya Smith (she/her)
Executive Director

Mission + Vision

Born This Way Foundation was founded in 2012 by Lady Gaga and her mother, Cynthia Germanotta, and we're committed to supporting the mental health of young people and working with them to build a kinder and braver world.

Together, we support the mental health and wellness of youth by:

- / Making Kindness Cool
- / Validating the Emotions of Young People
- / Eliminating the Stigma The Surrounds Mental Health



Meet The Team



Lady Gaga (She/Her)
Co-Founder + Board Member



Cynthia Germanotta (She/Her)
Co-Founder, President,
+ Board Member



Maya Smith (She/Her)
Executive Director



Alex Aide (He/Him)
Director of Programs + Impact



Mitu Yilma (She/Her)
Digital Director



Shanice Jackson (She/Her)
Director of Finance +
Administration



Susan Horrell (She/Her)
Director of Partnerships



Aysha Mahmood (She/Her)
Program Manager +
Channel Kindness Editor



Shadille Estepan (She/Her)
Communications + Creative
Manager



Terez Hanhan (She/Her)
Programs + Research
Manager



Josh Meredith (He/Him)
Chief of Staff



Joshua Hollin (He/Him)
Digital Associate



Taylor M. Parker (They/Them)
Program Associate



Alexander Roque (He/Him)
Board Member



Charles B. Ortner (He/Him)
Board Member



Sean F. Cassidy (He/Him)
Board Member



Tamika L. Tremaglio (She/Her)
Board Member

Advisory Board

A youth-led Advisory Board has always been a core part of Born This Way Foundation, beginning in 2012 when our founding group of 26 advisors launched our first Advisory Board to help establish our mission and scope. This year, we are proud to welcome a new cohort of 29 youth leaders from every continent (except Antarctica!) to guide and inform our research, programs, and initiatives. Their unique perspectives and keen insight continue to lead our work, and they serve as incredible ambassadors in their communities and beyond.

Meet our Advisory Board Members at channelkindness.org/welcome-our-2021-advisory-board.



Snapshots of Kindness

2021



January

Launched billboards with #PleaseStayPledge messaging, sharing urgent suicide prevention tools.



May

Released 'Kindness is Action' survey identifying how young people define kindness and its impact on mental wellness.



May

Fully funded 1,238 classroom projects focused on mental health in 793 schools through our partnership with DonorsChoose.



May

Welcomed a new Advisory Board cohort of 29 young people from across the globe to serve as ambassadors of our work.



June

Further supported LGBTQIA+ youth by amplifying organizations that serve them and creating live-event activations.



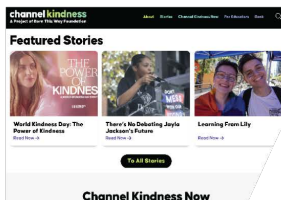
September

Launched fourth annual #BeKind21 campaign recruiting over 400 partners, 6.8 million participants, and 143 million pledged acts of kindness.



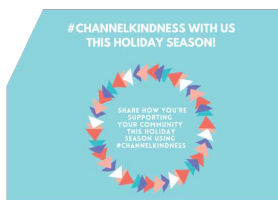
November

Released 'Youth Mental Health in Las Vegas,' a survey noting changes in prioritization, access, and preference of resources among young people.



December

Revamped ChannelKindness.org to include action steps and resources within each story, a 'For Educators' page, and an interactive map of stories.



December

Teamed up with our corporate partners to meet unmet needs of nonprofits across the country for our second annual Channel Kindness Holiday campaign.

Research

Together, with our partners Benenson Strategy Group and Harris Poll, we ensured that our programming is grounded in the needs of young people and the latest scientific evidence.

Please visit bornthiswayfoundation.com/research to learn more.

Kindness is Action

We sought to understand the impact of kindness on mental wellness and how young people are using kindness to cope with overlapping and ongoing crises. The results reveal a link to how kindness contributes to many aspects of mental wellness, from helping young people feel safe, confident, and less alone to changing the trajectory of their day and even their desire to stay alive. They also reveal that based on one's race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and financial security, young people experience and witness kindness in varying frequencies, which could have further implications for their respective mental wellness.

Youth Mental Health in Las Vegas: Understanding Resource Availability and Preferences

We conducted a two-year comparison of Las Vegas area youth resource access and preference. Findings show mental health remains a priority for most young people, yet cost has become the greatest barrier to accessing mental health resources, and fewer young people say they have access to deal with challenges such as bullying, online harassment, sexual harassment, or suicidal ideation. The report also includes a directory of actions, resources, and local organizations young people in the Las Vegas area can turn to for support.

Channel Kindness

Channel Kindness is a digital platform that invites everyone to put compassion into action in their own lives through community engagement and storytelling opportunities. As of launch in 2016, we've trained over 250 youth reporters to recognize and report on the heroic acts of kindness happening in their everyday lives. Each vibrant, youth-driven story includes in-person and online suggestions for how to channel kindness toward yourself and your communities through the 'Channel Kindness Now' and 'For Educators' pages, and on social media reaching over 6 million impressions as of 2018.

CHANNEL KINDNESS: Stories of Kindness and Community, which is a collection of inspirational stories written by young people as well as personal notes of empowerment from our co-founder Lady Gaga, is now available in US, UK, Canada, Italy, Spain, Germany, Russia, Taiwan, and Poland.

Visit channelkindness.org to learn more.



Featured Stories



World Kindness Day: The Power of Kindness

[Read Now →](#)



Not Being Hispanic Enough

[Read Now →](#)



Leadership, Mental Health, and the Environment: A Talk With Everett Najarian

[Read Now →](#)

[To All Stories](#)

Channel Kindness Now

Each story on Channel Kindness starts with one action. We invite you to join the kindest story ever told by learning about ways you can share kindness today in your own community.

STORIES OF KINDNESS AND COMMUNITY

H K P
K K N
C H A N N E S
K I N D N E S
L O V E
G A G A

HERE
FOR
YOU

LEARN THIS WAY FOUNDATION REPORTERS WITH LADY GAGA

teen Mental Health First Aid

Together with the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, we introduced teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA), an in-person training that equips high school students grades 10-12 with the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to identify whether a peer is struggling with their mental health or substance use and offer support.

To learn more visit mhfa.org/teen.

890

**Instructors are
certified to teach
across the country**

600

**Sites have
adopted the
tMHFA program**

42,403

**Teens have been
trained in tMHFA**



#BeKind21

Born This Way Foundation hosts #BeKind21 annually, which calls on participants to practice an act of kindness each day from September 1st to September 21st with the mission of building kinder, more connected communities that foster mental wellness. In 2021, #BeKind21 returned for its fourth year, recruiting over 400 partners, 6.8 million participants, and 143 million pledged acts of kindness. Below is an overview of the overall reach since the inception of #BeKind21.

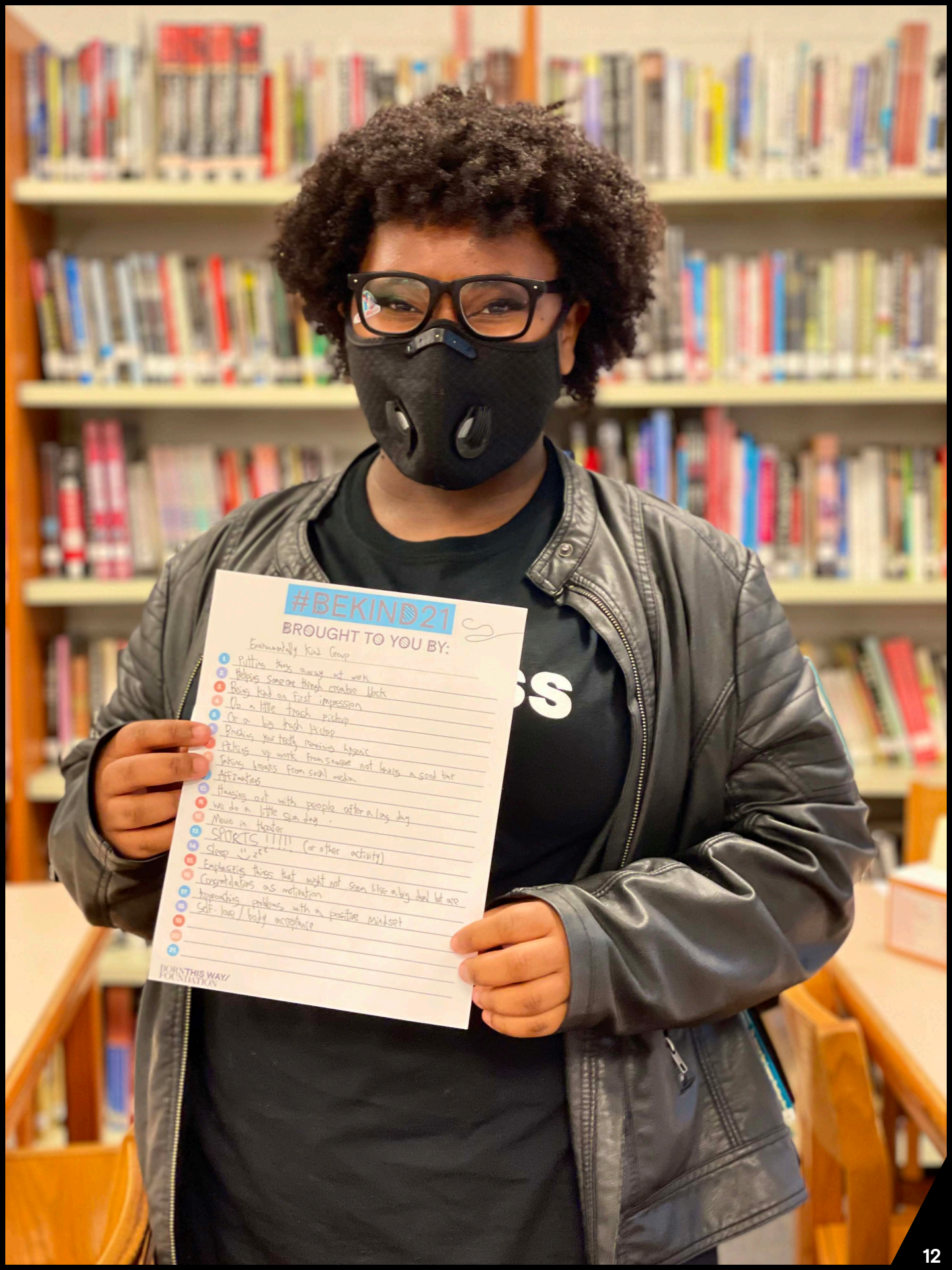
To learn more visit bornthisway.foundation/bekind21.



Partnered with 1,000+ schools and school districts, 900+ companies, and 400+ nonprofit organizations

Generated over 30,000 unique social media posts and reached 2.8 billion impressions.

Engaged more than 13.8 million participants, pledging over 291 million acts of kindness across the globe.



#BEKIND21

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

Environmentally Kind Group

- 1 Putting things away at work
- 2 Helping someone through creative blocks
- 3 Being kind on first impression
- 4 Do a little trash pickup
- 5 Or a big trash pickup
- 6 Picking your teeth, removing lipstick
- 7 Picking up trash from someone not having a good time
- 8 Taking breaks from social media
- 9 Affirmations
- 10 Hanging out with people after a long day
- 11 We do a little gym day
- 12 Movie in theater
- 13 SPORTS!!!! (or other activity)
- 14 Sleep 7-8 hours
- 15 Emphasizing things that might not seem like a big deal but are
- 16 Congratulations as motivation
- 17 Responding positively with a positive mindset
- 18 Self-love/body acceptance
- 19
- 20
- 21

BORN THIS WAY FOUNDATION

Please Stay

We partnered with our friends at Find Your Anchor to create Please Stay – an interactive and accessible mental health resource. On the site, you'll find links to mental health resources and evidence-based self-care tips, inspiration to help identify the anchors in your life, and most importantly, a reminder to you and those you love that you're here to stay and that you matter. To ensure this message reached far and wide, we placed Please Stay billboards across the country (even in Times Square!), and shared about the resource through a variety of media outlets and global social media campaigns.

Learn more at pleasestay.us.



BTWF Talks/ + #TeaWithMrsG

Our BTWF Talks/ are virtual discussions hosted across our social media platforms with the mission of centering and highlighting perspectives that are too often left out of conversations about mental wellness. Through these virtual discussions, we affirm, inform, represent, and validate the emotions of everyone who tunes in while also providing resources for support.

This year, we hosted 11 talks and 5 #TeaWithMrsG live conversations generating over 900k impressions, and partnered with notable platforms and organizations including POPSUGAR, Upworthy, and GivingTuesday to cover themes of kindness, mental health, community, and more.

Tune in to our talks on our Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram accounts.



Digital Community

Our digital platforms act as a vehicle for us to share vital, life-saving messages, anchorage dialogue around topics that matter to the young people we serve, and uplift the work of our nonprofit partners. In 2021, we grew in numerous ways and below are several highlights:

34M

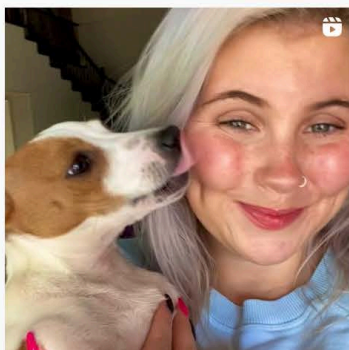
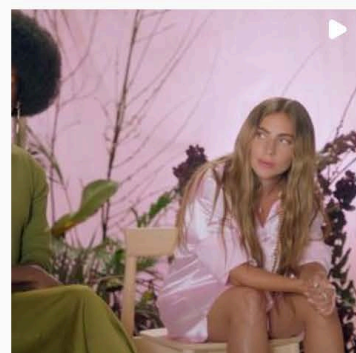
Online impressions
across Born This
Way Foundation
accounts

33M

Online Impressions on
Channel Kindness
Accounts

91.1%

Growth in followers for
Channel Kindness
Accounts



Kindness in Community

Our Kindness in Community (KiC) fund allows our team to respond directly to the emerging and changing needs of our nonprofit partners working to support youth wellness.

Here are a few examples of how we've supported their efforts:

During #BeKind21, team members were given \$700 to lift up nonprofits including IRIS – Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services, Trans Lifeline, Black Girls CODE, and more.

Youth advocates working with us on “The Power of Kindness: A World Kindness Day Event” documentary were given \$1,000 each to support the mental health nonprofit of their choice.

In response to our report on the mental health experiences of young people living in Las Vegas and as part of our continued work in the area, Born This Way Foundation was proud to donate \$10,000 each to local organizations supporting the mental health needs of young people including: The LGBTQ Center of Southern Nevada – Las Vegas, Project 150, and NAMI Southern Nevada.

Channel Kindness Holiday Campaign

Along with our corporate partners, we set out to identify and help meet the unmet needs of nonprofits across the country to ensure their workforce and the communities they serve have one less thing to worry about as they build a kinder, braver world. Some of the needs we were able to meet include:

- / 1,000 winter coats from Aritzia to 9 of our nonprofit partners
- / 500 shoes from Sarah Flint to residents of shelters entering the workforce
- / 100 HugSleeps and 150+ pairs of CareBear pajamas gifted to promote comfort and healthy sleep habits
- / Wishlist gifts and ComfortBags to 70 young people at NYC shelter as part of Precious Dreams Foundation's 10,000 Gifts of Comfort holiday campaign



Press Highlights


We prioritize sharing about the importance of kindness, mental wellness, and the deep relationship between those two forces as widely as possible.

Here are a few press highlights for spaces where we were able to share that message:




Washington Post's The Optimist: A Conversation with Cynthia Germanotta -


Cynthia Germanotta participated in a 30-minute Washington Post LIVE conversation with Frances Stead Sellers about staying optimistic and emotionally centered in the challenging times we live in.




TODAY: Lady Gaga's mom talks about Born This Way Foundation's kindness campaign - Cynthia Germanotta joined TODAY to discuss our #BeKind21 campaign and the Harris Poll survey results to spread the importance of kindness on mental wellness.



Cheddar News: Born This Way Foundation Kicks Off 4th Annual #BeKind21 Campaign - Maya Smith spoke with Cheddar Wellness on the first day of this year's #BeKind21 campaign to discuss the creative ways people can give back to their communities and how such acts benefit one's mental health.



Mashable: How to improve LGBTQ mental health care post-pandemic - Juan Acosta represented the Foundation and in a Mashable panel amongst other expert voices to discuss how to improve LGBTQIA+ mental health care.



PAPER Magazine: How Born This Way Foundation Is Making Kindness Cool and Meet Born This Way Foundation's Youth Reps Changing the World - Collaborated with PAPER Magazine for multiple stories on Born This Way Foundation's mission and the 2021 advisory board announcement.

Our team thanks you for an incredible 2021
and looks forward to all we'll accomplish
together in 2022!

Lady Gaga Cynthia Germanotta M. Q. T.

Mitzy Khan Alex Lile Susan Horrell

Shanice Jackson Aunt A J. S.

Shadille Estepan Lynn Mah Terez Hanhan

Joshua
Hollin Taylor M. Parker Emma Casper