Stories feed our souls and nourish our imaginations. They also have the power to influence change. What is culture but a series of stories that have been repeated over and over until they become ingrained in the fabric of our society? We take stories very seriously – and so does the It Gets Better Project. For the last nine years, the It Gets Better Project has been collecting and sharing inspiring stories of triumph and resilience from around the world with a single objective in mind: to empower LGBTQ+ youth everywhere.

Adolescence and young adulthood are difficult times for all of us, but they are acutely problematic for those of us struggling to embrace a sexuality and/or gender identity that challenges dominant social narratives. LGBTQ+ young people are more likely to experience bullying, familial and peer rejection, homelessness, and depression and other mental illnesses that contribute to, in worst case scenarios, a higher likelihood to consider suicide as a viable escape. These are unacceptable symptoms of what should be a beautiful and uniquely individual experience for all of us: the ability to embrace every aspect of our human experience.

We at the It Gets Better Project know from experience, as do the tens of thousands of people who have added their personal story to the It Gets Better movement, that life can and will get better with time. There are no insurmountable obstacles on the path to self-affirmation for a young LGBTQ+ person, and the It Gets Better Project is determined to share the stories that carry the proof of this knowledge. We shine a light on all that is possible for LGBTQ+ youth, and in the pages to follow, you’ll see exactly how we did it in 2019!

“"We can’t just tell young LGBTQ+ people that it is going to get better. We also have to make the world a better place.""
Our Mission

The It Gets Better Project exists to uplift, empower, and connect LGBTQ+ youth around the globe.

Our work focuses on two areas:

Storytelling. The It Gets Better Project connects young LGBTQ+ people with the global LGBTQ+ community by providing access to an arsenal of uplifting and inspiring stories of resilience and determination, as told by members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies.

Building Community. The It Gets Better Project cultivates a growing network of global affiliates that have embraced the It Gets Better Project’s mission to support LGBTQ+ youth in their home countries. Together, the It Gets Better Project and the It Gets Better Global Affiliate Network are engaging with young LGBTQ+ people both on-and offline and, when needed, connecting them to local community service providers that can provide on-the-ground assistance.

The It Gets Better Project envisions a world where all LGBTQ+ young people are free to live equally and know their worthiness and power as individuals.
Storytelling

Nearly a decade has passed since the first It Gets Better story went viral, and the It Gets Better movement is still going strong reaching hundreds of thousands of LGBTQ+ youth every year.

More than 70,000 LGBTQ+ people, and their allies, have contributed their stories of triumph and perseverance to validate our message of hope. And, in 2019, It Gets Better stories were viewed millions of times with a total of 11.4 million minutes watched – the equivalent of 21.7 years of screen time condensed into 12 months.

MINUTES WATCHED IN 2019

11.4 million

Harper Waters

Harper Waters, soloist at the Houston Ballet, is living proof that embracing your true self is the only way to live.

Queerbook

In honor of back-to-school season, the It Gets Better Project organized Queerbook, a glow-up campaign to show queer teens that high school is temporary and there is so much to look forward to in the future. (Kalen Allen, pictured)

Corey Rae

Trans model, influencer, and former high school homecoming queen, Corey Rae, proves there is more than one way to find your identity.

#TheirStory

During Pride season, the It Gets Better Project hosted #TheirStory, an influencer-driven campaign to recognize the people who inspire us to live our best lives. (Ingrid Nilsen, pictured)

J and Carolyn Weathers

During LGBTQ+ history month, the It Gets Better Project launched Highlighting the Story. The video featured queer non-binary makeup artist J and lesbian activist and writer Carolyn Weathers. Carolyn received a special Pride makeover while sharing her experiences during the early queer rights movement.
Media Partnerships

The It Gets Better Project is proud of its media industry partnerships which include initiatives with Archie Comics, Freeform, NBC, Netflix, A24, and 20th Century Fox — each formed to highlight exceptional queer talent and storylines that inspire hope for LGBTQ+ youth around the globe.

#ABetterUniverse with Archie Comics

Archie Comics continued its longstanding partnership with the It Gets Better Project with #ABetterUniverse, a National Coming Out Day comic series to promote a world where everyone is met with love and support when they choose to disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The series illustrates five different “coming out” scenarios in Riverdale where young people are doing the right thing by fostering a supportive and nurturing environment for their LGBTQ+ peers.

Script and Art: Dan Parent with Bob Smith

McKenna Palmer on TODAY

McKenna Palmer is a former all-star intern of the It Gets Better Project. In her TODAY show segment, she talks about her special relationship with our organization’s own Director, Education & Global Programming, Justin Tindall, a person she looked up to as a mentor and friend during her own coming out process.

Isabella Gomez of “One Day at a Time”

The stars of the Netflix hit “One Day at a Time” discuss the queer storylines featured in the show.

Ryan O’Connell of “Special”

We sat down with queer writer and actor Ryan O’Connell to discuss his new Netflix+Stage13 show, “Special.” The semi-autobiographical series chronicles the upward trajectory of O’Connell’s life, from living in denial to coming to terms with his disability.

Zuri Adele of “Good Trouble”

Zuri Adele from the groundbreaking Freeform show “Good Trouble” discusses the importance of LGBTQ+ representation in media.
It Gets Better EDU

The It Gets Better Project is constantly exploring new ways to reach young LGBTQ+ people with its life-affirming message. It Gets Better EDU takes that message into the classroom by converting popular It Gets Better content into EduGuides designed to facilitate discussions about the LGBTQ+ experience.

With an unprecedented investment made by longstanding partner, American Eagle, It Gets Better EDU will expand its reach across the US and abroad!

Global Affiliate Network

The It Gets Better Project cultivates an international network of independent organizations and volunteers who share a common mission to uplift, empower, and connect LGBTQ+ youth around the globe.

The It Gets Better Global Affiliate Network now spans four continents with storytelling initiatives in six major languages making the It Gets Better Project the world’s largest storytelling effort to empower LGBTQ+ youth everywhere.

As of December 31, 2019, the It Gets Better Global Affiliate Network includes Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Greece, Guatemala, India, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Russia, Spain, and the United Kingdom.
Global Grantmaking

The It Gets Better Project presents an annual, competitive grant opportunity to members of the It Gets Better Global Affiliate Network. The program provides much-needed financial support for LGBTQ+ youth empowerment efforts abroad.

ACTIVE GRANTS IN 2019

BRAZIL
“Getting Better” video series documenting the creation of Brazil’s first GSA networks in Curitiba and Rio de Janeiro.

PARAGUAY
Ten-part web series focusing on local and international LGBTQ+ holidays and celebrations.

PORTUGAL
Second season of “Vamos Falar?”, an interview-style show focusing on the experiences of LGBTQ+ young people in the region.

MEXICO
Five-part video series highlighting LGBTQ+ history in Mexico starting with the 1901 raid on the “Dance of the 41 Faggots” in Mexico City.

SPAIN
Six-part series documenting the lives of LGBTQ+ people who have experienced homelessness.

CANADA
Interactive Get Help tool to ensure LGBTQ+ youth and their parents have access to direct services.

It Gets Better Global Summit

During WorldPride NYC and the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, the It Gets Better Project held its first comprehensive It Gets Better Global Summit, a multi-day training and social event that convened the It Gets Better Global Affiliate Network’s most dedicated LGBTQ+ leaders and allies. The Summit, hosted at the New York office of Nixon Peabody, provided attendees with opportunities to network with peers and potential funders, share best practices in storytelling and community engagement, and learn about the issues impacting LGBTQ+ young people around the world.

Special guests of the It Gets Better Global Summit included Fabrice Houdart (United Nations), Kimahli Powell (Rainbow Railroad), Kristen Beck (veteran and trans activist), Fran Tirado (journalist and influencer), Noah Galvin (actor, Booksmart), Patrick Aitcheson (SAGE), Michelle Garcia (editor of NBC BLK), Raquel Willis (writer and trans activist), and more than 35 other subject matter experts who came together to fuel the two-day effort.
Pride on the Horizon, the It Gets Better Project’s signature youth event, celebrated its second year with standout performances from young drag and ballroom performers Katastrophe Jest, Desmond is Amazing, Zenith Labeija, and Obscura.

Guests ages 13-20 enjoyed makeovers at the Morphe beauty bar, photo ops with The Sims, crafts and temporary tatts, games, the musical stylings of DJ Alice Longyu Gao, and special appearances from beloved drag veterans Chelsea Piers, Jiggly Caliente, and Yuhua Hamasaki – high above the streets of Manhattan in The Standard East Village’s penthouse suite.
Catalyst Club

The It Gets Better Project exists because a foundation of investors believes in the potential for a world where all LGBTQ+ young people are free to live equally and know their worthiness and power as individuals.

Members of the Catalyst Club make annual contributions of $1K or more to support the life-affirming work of the It Gets Better Project.

Investor Highlight

American Eagle has been a dedicated partner of the It Gets Better Project since 2017, and in 2019 solidified its position as the single largest investor in the organization’s history. Over the last three years, the beloved retailer has contributed more than $1.8 million to sustain the It Gets Better Project’s efforts to uplift, empower, and connect LGBTQ+ youth everywhere.

These critical funds have been leveraged to expand the It Gets Better Global Affiliate Network to Russia, United Kingdom, Dominican Republic, Argentina, India, and Guatemala — in addition to enhancing the reach of our core storytelling efforts with an infusion of support for It Gets Better EDU, the It Gets Better Project’s education program to bring empowering media content to classrooms around the world.

Legacy Partner $1,000,000 or more
Ground Shaker $100,000 – $999,999
Thought Leader $50,000 – $99,999
Social Innovator $25,000 – $49,999
Catalyst $10,000 – $24,999
Change Agent $5,000 – $9,999
Influencer $1,000 – $4,999
### Statement of Activities for the Year Ended December 31, 2019
with comparative totals for the year ended December 31, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2018</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revenue &amp; Support</td>
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<td>$915,468</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expenses</td>
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<td>$774,568</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change in Net Assets</td>
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<td>Net Assets - Beginning of Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Assets - End of Year</td>
<td>$1,466,700</td>
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</table>

### Statement of Financial Position, December 31, 2019
with comparative totals at December 31, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2018</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
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<td>Liabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Assets</td>
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### Statement of Functional Expenses for the Year Ended December 31, 2019
with comparative totals for the year ended December 31, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programs &amp; Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
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<tr>
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<td>$30,688</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$1,243,672</td>
<td>$774,568</td>
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**Legacy Partner**
- American Eagle
- Converse, Inc.
- Huda Beauty

**Social Innovator**
- Anonymous (1)
- Electronic Arts
- Riot Games
- The Rona Jaffe Foundation
- YouTube
- Zenni Optical

**Catalyst**
- Ad Age
- AriZona Beverages
- Call It Spring
- County of Los Angeles
- DavidsTea Inc.
- Hinge
- Jack & Jones
- Lime
- MeUndies, Inc.
- Nixon Peabody LLP
- Showtime Networks, Inc.
- The Kilmer Gandrud Family Fund
- Toyota Motor North America

**Change Agent**
- Anomaly
- Loyla Blitz
- Brown-Forman Corporation
- Carat USA
- Fifth Generation Inc
- Kendo Brands
- Rachel Kropa
- Morphe
- Sugar Bear Hair Care
- The Raben Group
- Visa

**Influencer**
- Archie Comic Publications
- Christine Barbour
- Baxter International Foundation
- Bill Chids
- Lisa Dazols & Jennifer Chang Donlan
- Sharon Fay
- Flash Merch LLC
- Eugene Hawkins
- International Flavors & Fragrances Inc.
- Reino S. Soully Fund
- 10th Retail
- Jenny Koenig
- Soth Levy & Brian Pines
- Jeffrey & Susan Lubatkin
- LunchboxWax
- Nicola Maguire
- Scott Parra Matthews
- Northwest Surrogacy Center
- Only Human
- Rightpoint Consulting LLC
- Stephanie Ruyla
- David Schleicher
- Patrick Schriver
- Robert Schwartzman
- Tim Sharp
- Small Girls PR
- Spare the Rock Records
- SoulCycle
- Chasies Stohalski
- Charlotte Stone
- David Strikler
- The Shari and Los Biller Family Foundation
- The Stephen S. Smith and Paula K. Smith Family Foundation
- Lisa Townley
- Gail Triggs
- Turner Broadcasting System Inc
- Harry Vinson Jr. & Kyla Dore
- Washington Department of Health PrEP Survey Respondents
- Ricardo Zabaneh

**Fundraising** 5%

**Administration** 9%

**Programs & Services** 86%
An unprecedented year of impact leads us into a new decade and milestone moment for the It Gets Better Project. On September 21, 2020, we reach our tenth anniversary as the world’s largest storytelling effort to empower LGBTQ+ youth. Although we are proud of this moment, it will not be honored through celebration alone – it will be marked by a major investment in our quest to find a relevant and inspiring story for every single LGBTQ+ young person who may be feeling isolated and alone in their search for identity. Through the passion of our volunteers, the vital financial resources provided by our supporters, and the spark of hope we see in the eyes of those we serve, the It Gets Better Project will thrive once again in 2020!

Our Team

Board of Directors

Seth Levy, Chair & President
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Stephanie Ruyle, Member
Julie Tarney, Member
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Ariella Assouline, Operations Coordinator