The System Let Go. Rooted Forward Catches Them.

For young adults aging out of foster care, the 18th birthday isn't a graduation into adulthood. It's a free fall — and Rooted Forward reaches back to catch them.

THE FREE FALL

On the 18th birthday, a youth first wakes up in their childhood bedroom. Their family is downstairs. There might be a cake. Adulthood is approaching — but slowly, with a ready-made support system underneath the covers. College applications, a co-signed apartment lease, a parent's phone number for when the car breaks down or a job interview goes badly. For this young person, growing into adulthood is gradual — supported every step, even when they stumble.

The second young adult wakes up without the fanfare, knowing that by midnight they are on their own. At 18 plus one day, they may wake up in the street, in a shelter, alone. Today, by law, the system that has overseen their life stops. The caseworker closes the file. There is no gradual anything. There is a line on a calendar, and on one side of that line there was support — and on the other side there is nothing. The ground simply disappears.

This is not a metaphor for effect. This is the literal structure of the foster care system. Support is provided until a specific date, and then it ends — regardless of whether the young person is ready, regardless of whether they have anywhere to go, regardless of whether they have ever been taught how to open a bank account, sign a lease, or cope with the trauma they have carried their entire lives. They are, in every meaningful sense, in free fall. The only open question is whether anyone is positioned to catch them.

What Falling Looks Like

Within two years of aging out, roughly half of these young adults will experience homelessness. Nearly a third will develop PTSD — a higher rate than combat veterans. Half will have no income at all in their first four years on their own. This is not a metaphor for effect. This is the literal structure of the foster care system. Support is provided until a specific date, and then it ends — regardless of whether the young person is ready, regardless of whether they have

anywhere to go, regardless of whether they have ever been taught how to open a bank account, sign a lease, or cope with the trauma they have carried their entire lives.

YOUTH WITH FAMILY SUPPORT	YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE
✓ A bridge to adulthood	✗ A cliff at midnight on their 18th birthday
✓ Family still provides a safety net	✗ System support ends — no safety net
✓ Can move back home if things go wrong	✗ Nowhere to go back to
✓ Co-signers for apartments and cars	✗ No co-signer, no credit history
✓ Help understanding taxes, credit, leases	✗ No one to explain how any of it works
✓ A phone call away from advice	✗ No one to call
✓ Time to figure things out	✗ No time — the ground is already gone

The System Let Go. We Catch Them - Someone Has to

Rooted Forward exists to be the arm that reaches back when the system lets go. Free, trauma-informed programs in housing stability, financial literacy, mental health navigation, and career readiness — the exact things a supportive family provides invisibly, for free, over years.

We cannot undo the fall. But we can be there to catch it — meeting young adults where they are and giving them what they need to land on solid ground instead of hitting bottom alone.

We are not just talking about the fall. We are reaching back – starting with our first cohort of 20 young adults.

Every dollar given is used for the program. All donations are tax deductible. Thank you in advance for every nickel.

Help Us Catch Them.

$500 funds one young adult through our complete program — the catch they were never given.

[DONATE NOW] [LEARN ABOUT OUR PROGRAMS] [GET INVOLVED]