

A photograph of a family of four in front of a white house. A man is sitting on the steps, a woman is standing behind him, and two young children are standing on the steps. The house has a black door, a black mailbox, and a black light fixture. The title 'THE FRONT STEPS PROJECT' is overlaid in large red letters on the right side of the image.

THE FRONT STEPS PROJECT

How Communities Found Connection
During the COVID-19 Crisis

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and CARA SOULIA



Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Tobi Gomez



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THE FRONT STEPS PROJECT

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“We’re so glad you’re here!”

“So am I! How are you guys doing?”

These words, in any other context, seem basic. An everyday casual greeting, right? But in the spring and summer of 2020, they meant more. These words were exchanged hundreds of times among photographers and their neighbors as #TheFrontStepsProject, a grassroots social mission to connect communities through philanthropy, roared through cities and towns across the globe. These greetings provided a brief lifeline to normalcy.

Traveling through suburban neighborhoods, city streets, and rural towns, photographers participating in The Front Steps Project captured faces of people stepping outside for the first time in days. Most participants, thrilled to see a friendly face, were simply happy to have something to do! Even from ten feet away, these quick connections offered a jolt of positivity.

Through this endeavor, photographers captured the myriad ways people sought to feel normal in an isolating time. They documented anniversaries, birthdays, graduations, senior prom outfits, last days of chemotherapy,

pregnancy announcements, newborn joy, and more. And the costumes. Lots of hysterical costumes.

Participating photographers witnessed so many amazing moments: impish smirks on young faces; giggles after being tickled to elicit a smile; toddler meltdowns; chuckling parents; folks admitting they'd taken their first shower in days; decorations, especially rainbow art; and relieved smiles after a loved one returned home from a shift as a healthcare worker.

Scour the hundreds of images that The Front Steps Project produced (only a fraction of which are featured in this book) and you'll notice themes of **CONNECTION** and **UNITY** in the smiles. Take a closer look and you'll see the fundamental fabric of **COMMUNITY**—the ways people connect emotionally even during the most difficult times, and the ways people show **RESILIENCE**, even when separated. *The Front Steps Project* documents life in isolation and touches on many emotions in the human experience.

**LOVE • HOPE • KINDNESS • COURAGE • HUMOR • PLAY
JOY • COMPASSION • PRIDE • SACRIFICE • PERSEVERANCE**



Needham, Massachusetts
Cara Soulia



“ We collaborate on ways to grow our businesses and juggle our ever-changing lives. **On March 12, our latest plans evaporated when our Boston suburb reported its first case of COVID-19.** Six days later, we launched #TheFrontStepsProject. Our intention was to keep busy, spread some smiles, and raise money for the Needham Community Council, our town’s most impactful nonprofit. We posted the first image on March 18 and our inboxes overflowed with interest. Thanks to fellow creatives Topher Cox, Caitrin Dunphy, Kate King, and Lily Weitzman, **we connected with close to 800 families and raised over \$50,000. But that was only the beginning...**

Cara Soulia and Kristen Collins, Needham, Massachusetts



Needham, Massachusetts

Cara Soulia



Needham, Massachusetts
Kate King



Needham, Massachusetts

Cara Soulia



Needham, Massachusetts

Cara Soulia



Needham, Massachusetts

Cara Soulia



Needham, Massachusetts

Caitrin Dunphy



Needham, Massachusetts

Topher Cox



Needham, Massachusetts

Caitrin Dunphy



Needham, Massachusetts

Caitrin Dunphy



Needham, Massachusetts

Cara Soulia



Needham, Massachusetts
Caitrin Dunphy



Minnetonka, Minnesota

Shari Fleming

“ During the first week we juggled remote learning, spouses permanently at home, toilet paper shortages, and constant requests for Front Steps photos. Messages poured in from fellow photographers: “Can I do this, too?”

In the spirit of philanthropy, we shared our simple steps for creating a Front Steps Project. Within days, the hashtag multiplied on social media: New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, Colorado, California, Hawaii. Then Australia! New Zealand! Scotland! Hundreds of photographers from around the world voluntarily replicated our program, bringing thousands together despite being—and probably feeling— isolated themselves. We were unprepared, yet incredibly grateful, for the overwhelming response.

Cara Soulia and Kristen Collins, co-founders of The Front Steps Project



Grapevine, Texas

Rachna Agrawal



Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Laura-Lee Gerwing



Santa Rosa Beach, Florida

Sue Gamba



Columbus, Ohio

Erin Brown



Edina, Minnesota
Molly Andresen

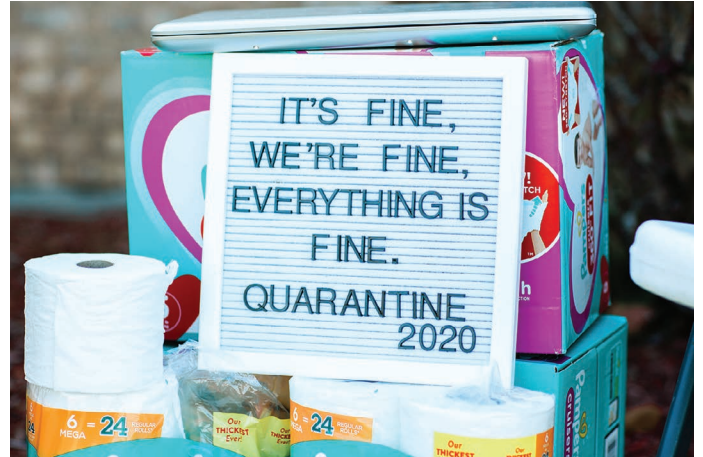


Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
Laura-Lee Gerwing



Tauranga, New Zealand

Kelly O'Hara



Faxon, Oklahoma

Stacy Pearce



De Winton, Alberta, Canada

Anett Meszaros



Hamilton, Massachusetts

Jen Maguire

“My takeaway from this experience is that no matter how broken the world may seem, humanity will always find a way to love intentionally, support unconditionally, and overcome any obstacle that stands in our way... these photos tell us that **LOVE** lives here.”

Abigail Blalock, Alexandria, Louisiana



St. Louis, Missouri
Kelli Morrell



South Amboy, New Jersey

Amy McLaughlin



Somerville, Massachusetts

Kristen Fuller



Woodbury, Minnesota

Sigrid Dabelstein



Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Eva Eariello



Butte, Montana

Hunter Blodgett



South Hamilton, Massachusetts

Tracey Westgate



Gonzales, Louisiana

Tony Parker