2021 Annual Report

GROWING TOGETHER

RFK COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

OUR MISSION

Robert F. Kennedy Community Alliance is a comprehensive human services organization that serves individuals and their families from early childhood through assisted living and senior care. Our mission is to promote meaningful and sustained well-being for children, youth, and adults facing educational, developmental, mental health, and other challenges.

OUR SERVICES

Adoption · Adult Services · Behavioral Health
Community Services · Early Education and Care
Education · Youth Justice Transformation · Youth Residential Care

AT A GLANCE

Founded: 1896

Organization type: Private, nonprofit, 501(c)(3), Approved Private Schools

Structure: Board of directors, operational management by President & CEO

Annual budget: $44,757,610

Employees: 550+

Geography: Communities across Massachusetts and New England

National youth justice consulting and adoption services

People served: 1,500+ children, adults, and families annually

Dear Friends,

In a year full of ups and downs across the globe and in our own backyards, we are so proud of the program participants, team members, and communities we represent coming together as RFK Community Alliance. Born from two longstanding and recognized human services agencies joining together, we are strong and resilient as RFK Community Alliance.

In the information and stories included herein, you will see that at the heart of our work is the understanding that every person has value and deserves dignity. We aim to understand each person's full life story because context matters. And we work hand-in-hand with each person we serve, their family, and community to build on strengths and help develop networks of support.

This year has not been without major difficulty. The ongoing pandemic, widespread mental health challenges, social isolation, and the great resignation have all impacted RFK Community Alliance, our team members, and the people we serve, exacerbating existing issues and creating barriers to reaching important goals.

We are grateful and humbled that so many have continued to support the work of RFK Community Alliance. And excited that so many others are just joining us on this journey toward meaningful and sustained well-being for children, youth, and adults facing educational, developmental, mental health, and other challenges. Each of you contributes to caring communities in which everyone has value and purpose.

The work doesn't stop there. We will continue to grow together in providing high-quality care and support to people and families facing complicated challenges. RFK Community Alliance is proud to be on this journey with you.

Sincerely,

Michael W. Ames, PhD
President & CEO

Suzanne M. Frisch, Esq.
Previous Board Chair, Doctor Franklin Perkins School

Jim Geraghty
Board Chair, RFK Community Alliance
Previous Board Chair,
RFK Children's Action Corps

Adoption from Foster Care: A Journey of Love

Matt & Ryan knew early on in their relationship that they wanted to adopt. As a social worker and teacher respectively, they recognized the desperate need for foster and adoptive parents. The biggest questions for them were "when" and "how many."

Matt & Ryan connected with our Bright Futures Adoption Center in 2019, first meeting with Bright Futures' Director, Karen Cheyney. They had begun considering sibling pairs and learned about a potential match with Angel and Zavion in 2020. "What caught our attention most were our common interests, including video games and sports," Ryan recalled. "We each felt like we could find common ground with the boys and connect in a meaningful way."

After an initial virtual meeting, the four had their first in-person get-together at a park familiar to the boys. It happened to be Angel's birthday that day, so Matt & Ryan brought a cake. They also had planned a few activities, including soccer, Frisbee and Uno. Nonetheless, they were anxious when they first arrived. "What if they don't like us in person or don't want to take part in the activities with us?" Matt & Ryan worried. On the contrary, the four had fun getting to know one another, and the groundwork was laid for their developing relationships.

Matt & Ryan recognized that a structured environment would be important for the boys. They also wanted them to engage in activities that would support their physical and mental health. Angel took up karate and quickly progressed from white, to yellow, to orange belt. Zavion joined the Cub Scouts, quickly made friends in his den, and found out about a soccer league he could join where he could spend more time with them.

Over the past year and a half that they've been together, they've grown into a family. After a couple of months, Zavion began using Matt & Ryan's last name and calling them Daddy and Dad respectively. (Matt is sillier than Ryan, according to Zavion, so he gets called Daddy.) For his part, Angel came to wrap his arms around Matt & Ryan's necks or shoulders when talking with them and more recently began leaving notes for them signed "Love, Angel."

Matt & Ryan summed up their journey this way: "Bringing the boys into our family has been simultaneously the most stressful, most challenging, and yet the most rewarding thing we've ever done. It's hard to remember what life was like before they moved in."

Bright Futures Adoption Center, a program of RFK Community Alliance, is committed to helping families adopt sibling groups and older children from foster care. These children are often the hardest to place and the most in need of permanent, loving families. With older children, adoptive parents find themselves going back in time to help children have experiences they missed when they were younger (the first trip to the beach, first visit from the tooth fairy), while at the same time preparing them quickly to meet the challenges of older childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. With siblings, they also adapt to having two or more children at different developmental stages and with different memories or experiences in their first family.

The road is not easy, but we are amazed and moved by what the commitment and stability of family can give to children like Angel and Zavion, and the love and joy these children bring to the families they join. To learn more about adoption from foster care, please visit: https://brightfuturesadoption.org.

The Anderson Family

"Bringing the boys into our family has been simultaneously the most stressful, most challenging, and yet the most rewarding thing we've ever done. It's hard to remember what life was like before they moved in."

Bright Futures Adoption Center placed

36 foster children

ranging in age from newborn to 15 years old, in loving, adoptive forever homes, including:

13 sibling groups

of two; and

10 single children

including one reunited with a sibling.

Last year, there were approximately

3,300 children

in the Massachusetts foster care system with a goal of adoption.

Source: DCF

Building Trust, Connection, and Inclusion at The Child Development Center

Early education and care has a profound and lasting impact on a child's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development, which is critical to building a foundation for learning. The long-running pandemic has disrupted every facet of education. However, the early childhood education sector has been particularly devastated. Over the past two years, young children experienced learning setbacks and fewer social experiences, while their educators endured uncertainty, stress, and associated mental health challenges. Many early education and care centers were forced to close their doors.

Our team at The Child Development Center has done everything possible to remain open and accept new children. They have been particularly focused on supporting normal young childhood experiences such as play, while also being attentive to each child's emotional and mental health.

For our infants, we start building relationships and trust with "I love you" rituals: rhymes and games for parents, teachers, and caregivers that support healthy relationships and development. These rituals are designed to prime a child's brain for learning by enhancing attention, cooperation, and self-esteem.

This approach carries through to our toddler rooms, where we further build on connections through activities like talking about our family trees and sharing family cultural traditions. In the preschool and pre-K classrooms, lifelike dolls from cultures across the world provide additional opportunities for exploration and awareness. We strive to build trusting relationships, a sense of self, and being a part of a caring community into all aspects of the program.

At a very early age, we help our young students develop their "voice." In the infant room, our youngest learners are pointing to their preference to express choices and interests for play. In addition, in our Pre-K classes, 4- and 5-year-olds work as a group to choose classroom activities or centers

throughout the day. Being part of the process gives each child choices, inspires ownership, and creates excitement for learning.

The past year, and the continuing pandemic, has brought incredible challenge. But, throughout this time, we are proud of the work our Center has done to meet the needs of young children and their families, and provide important experiences to help each child build a strong foundation for healthy development and future learning.

"We are all here to work together and keep each other safe, especially during these times. Routines are important for our little learners. At the beginning of each day, our kids make an oath for what they are going to work on that day and "put" it in our safe keeper box. This helps our kids focus on positive improvements each day while learning and playing together."

Samantha Lemoine,
Child Development Center Program Director

The Child Development Center served
82 children
last year

100% of parents/ guardians
reported a good relationship with teachers and staff

Staff Spotlight: Tim Hammond, COO

Longtime Chief Operating Officer Tim Hammond is leaving many indelible marks (and a lot of sad team members) as he prepares to retire from RFK Community Alliance this June (2022). Tim's solution-focused approach, optimism, and humor have steadily and positively guided this organization and our program team for decades.

When Tim took his first job in direct care for a human services agency 34 years ago, he had no inkling that he was starting a career which would culminate in the same field. But the camaraderie and energy he felt then as part of a team helping people overcome challenges was both stimulating and exciting as it still is today.

Along the way, Tim worked in secure treatment programs, vocational programming, case management, and program management. He earned his Masters degree in Human Service Administration. And he even ran a 21-day sailing trip aboard a 90-year-old schooner for Department of Youth Services-involved youth. "They hated it...I loved it," he recalls.

Not every experience along the way was positive. Before coming to the Doctor Franklin Perkins School (now RFK Community Alliance) in 2001, Tim worked for several other agencies. He learned firsthand how poor management, program oversight, and culture could negatively affect staff and clients alike. Perkins was different. There was an openness to new ideas and perspectives and staff took great pride in their work. At the outset, he worked primarily with the youth programs, but over time, he worked closely with Adult Services and other programs and benefited from his experience with a diverse group of professionals and service recipients.

"The kids especially have a way of keeping you humble – they are quick to mention my age, hair (or lack thereof), or bad jokes. And the adults – they light up whenever I (or anyone) walk into the room; there is nothing but love."

Tim Hammond, COO

"It's been a gift to work with so many different people," Tim reflected. "The kids especially have a way of keeping you humble – they are quick to mention my age, hair (or lack thereof), or bad jokes. And the adults – they light up whenever I (or anyone) walk into the room; there is nothing but love."

In the last five years, Tim has seen phenomenal growth at RFK Community Alliance. As he looks ahead to his retirement this summer, Tim is "ready for the unknown" and looks forward to more time for travelling, hiking (he and a group of friends will be hiking in the Alps in September), and being able to give back to his family and those that supported him along the way.

"It's amazing how quickly a career goes by," he said. "It's been fun and the positives have far outweighed the negatives. Most importantly, I feel like I have been part of something special here at RFK Community Alliance...what we've been able to accomplish and what we continue to do is incredible, and I'm grateful to have played a part in it."

For the better part of my career here, Tim has been my supervisor, and for the last five years, our offices have been footsteps apart from each other. At least a couple times a week, I find myself in his doorway asking "Tim, you got a minute?" I can't remember a time he didn't have a minute (more like many minutes) for me. He's such a great teammate, person, supervisor, and problem-solver. I'll miss our minutes together."

Joe Mantha, Director of Residential Operations

"Tim is a natural at connecting with people from team members to program participants, and families and has mentored thousands of staff and youth in his career. He is a special person and we will sorely miss him."

-Michael W. Ames, President and CEO

"Our first meeting he did way more listening than talking, sharing as much info as I could about the adult programs. It wasn't long after that meeting that the division had one of our family events, a large gathering of family and friends. I am sure it was overwhelming because of the number of people, but he rolled up his sleeves and asked how he could help. Ten years later, when he shows up he doesn't ask how he can help, we just hand him an apron. He will be missed."

-Linda Alger, VP of Adult Services

"I have enjoyed both working for and with Tim. He is easy going and smiles easily, enjoys humor, and is amazingly unflappable in the midst of a crisis. What is always heartwarming is that he starts each individual meeting asking about each staff member individually and following up to check in on any struggle or challenge they may have been facing to ensure that they were doing better. I will miss working with him."

-Dianne Walsh, VP of Community Services

Addressing Barriers to Youth Success and Equity: On the Ground in Hennepin County

In spring 2020, the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice (RFK National Resource Center), a program of RFK Community Alliance, completed a comprehensive probation system review in partnership with Hennepin County, Minnesota. For Hennepin County, as is true in many jurisdictions, our partnership included providing recommendations, training, and technical assistance intended to reduce disparities (racial and otherwise) in the juvenile justice system, increase public safety, engage and support families, and promote evidence-based practices that improve outcomes for youth. The importance and need for this work became clear in the wake of George Floyd's murder, when protests erupted across Minneapolis, Hennepin County's largest city.

Jerald Moore, Division Manager for Hennepin County Juvenile Probation, shared: "We knew a full juvenile system review from the RFK National Resource Center would be beneficial to the system, staff, youth, and families. The review hinged on our ability to partner and demonstrate courageous leadership across the system, including engaging our relationships with stakeholders in the court and attorney's offices to examine ways in which we are creating barriers to youth success and equity. The technical and adaptive support we received from RFK National Resource Center's team identified patterns and barriers we could not always see ourselves, and supported our desire to engage in continued justice reform."

As part of the system-review process, the RFK National Resource Center provided Hennepin County a comprehensive set of recommendations to create and mobilize meaningful and sustainable reform within the community. As the work continued, the RFK National Resource Center assisted Hennepin County in identifying steps and activities to put the recommendations into action. The work is ongoing, but so far, with the support of the RFK National Resource Center, Hennepin County has:

· Implemented juvenile justice probation policies and practices that are positive for the youth, rather than punitive, and also lead

"The techical and adaptive support we received from RFK National Resource Center's team identified patterns and barriers we could not always see ourselves, and supported our desire to engage in continued justice reform."

Jerald Moore, Division Manager, Hennepin County Juvenile Probation, Department of Community Correction

to reduced recidivism and increased public safety;

· Added a supervisory coaching model to improve consistency in the delivery of services, supervision, and expectations;

· Integrated more thorough "quality assurance" protocols to measure and track the effectiveness of the services delivered to youth and families, as well as the impact on the community; and

· Created a Youth Justice Council in partnership with the juvenile bench, which gives voice to community members in the transformation of youth justice within Hennepin County.

The RFK National Resource Center has been privileged to work on the ground in Hennepin County and alongside its leaders and stakeholders who are innovative, passionate, and steadfast in their commitment to serving children and families in their community. Hennepin County is well positioned to create meaningful change—the type of change that makes a positive impact on its most vulnerable populations and ripples throughout the community.

Shown above, at the Symposium: RFK National Resource Center Executive Director John Tuell with colleagues Sorrel Lewis, Jodi Martin, and Michelle Darling.

The RFK National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice assists local, state, and national leaders, practitioners and youth-serving agencies in improving system performance, increasing public safety, and creating better outcomes for youth involved with, or at risk of becoming involved with, the juvenile justice system.

To date, the RFK National Resource Center has served more than 40 state and local jurisdictions, both nationwide and internationally. We are presently active in 28 state or local jurisdictions to guide and support efforts to enhance system performance and improve outcomes for the children and families these systems serve.

Last fall, the RFK National Resource Center held the Transformation of Youth Justice Symposium & Training Institutes, which attracted more than 300 people from 30+ states. Co-sponsored by the State Justice Institute, the event offered participants a wealth of information and tools for improving outcomes for youth and families by improving youth-serving systems.

Chyrl Jones, Acting Administrator for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, offered virtual remarks on the Symposium's first day, stating "I am confident you will leave this event with a clearer understanding of how to inspire hope and provoke change within your jurisdictions so that every child has the opportunity to realize the kind of future that we dream about for our own children."

For more information about the RFK National Resource Center's work, please visit: www.rfknrcjj.org.

Youth Residential Care: Marcus D. Pritchett

Marcus D. Pritchett's strength of character, integrity, and belief in the young people he works with have changed numerous lives over the course of his career in youth residential services. Marcus has worked for RFK Children's Action Corps, now RFK Community Alliance, for eight years, establishing and nurturing trust with the young people in his care. During the pandemic, he came to work not grudgingly, but with a smile because he knew that's what the youth he worked with needed most.

Marcus grew up in the South Bronx and faced many personal challenges. As a young kid, he wore braces on both legs and, at age 6, he was diagnosed with epilepsy. He also had difficulty paying attention – today he probably would have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder – had anger issues, and was discriminated against. But Marcus had an incredible support system around him that began with his single mother who was a constant in his life and surrounded him with positive role models. Importantly, his mother remained his mother – smart enough to know she couldn't be his dad and humble enough to know that he needed strong male mentors in his life.

An "oppositional and defiant" young person, Marcus was slated to attend military school, but ended up in a private special education school on Long Island. There, he recalls, he broke the record for NOT doing homework and spent a lot of time after school and on weekends in study hall. Yet, he would help others with their homework and had a protective nature. "I could take being picked on, but I couldn't tolerate seeing others picked on," he shared.

The following year, Marcus decided he liked getting his assignments done ahead of time and set the record in grades 8-12 for COMPLETING his homework. He came to accept school, and then learned to like it. And he learned to be responsible. A friend of the family helped him get a job as an in-house messenger at a law firm. Here, he came to honor the trust that was placed in him. That law firm ended up sponsoring his education and, from then on, he has always worked with children.

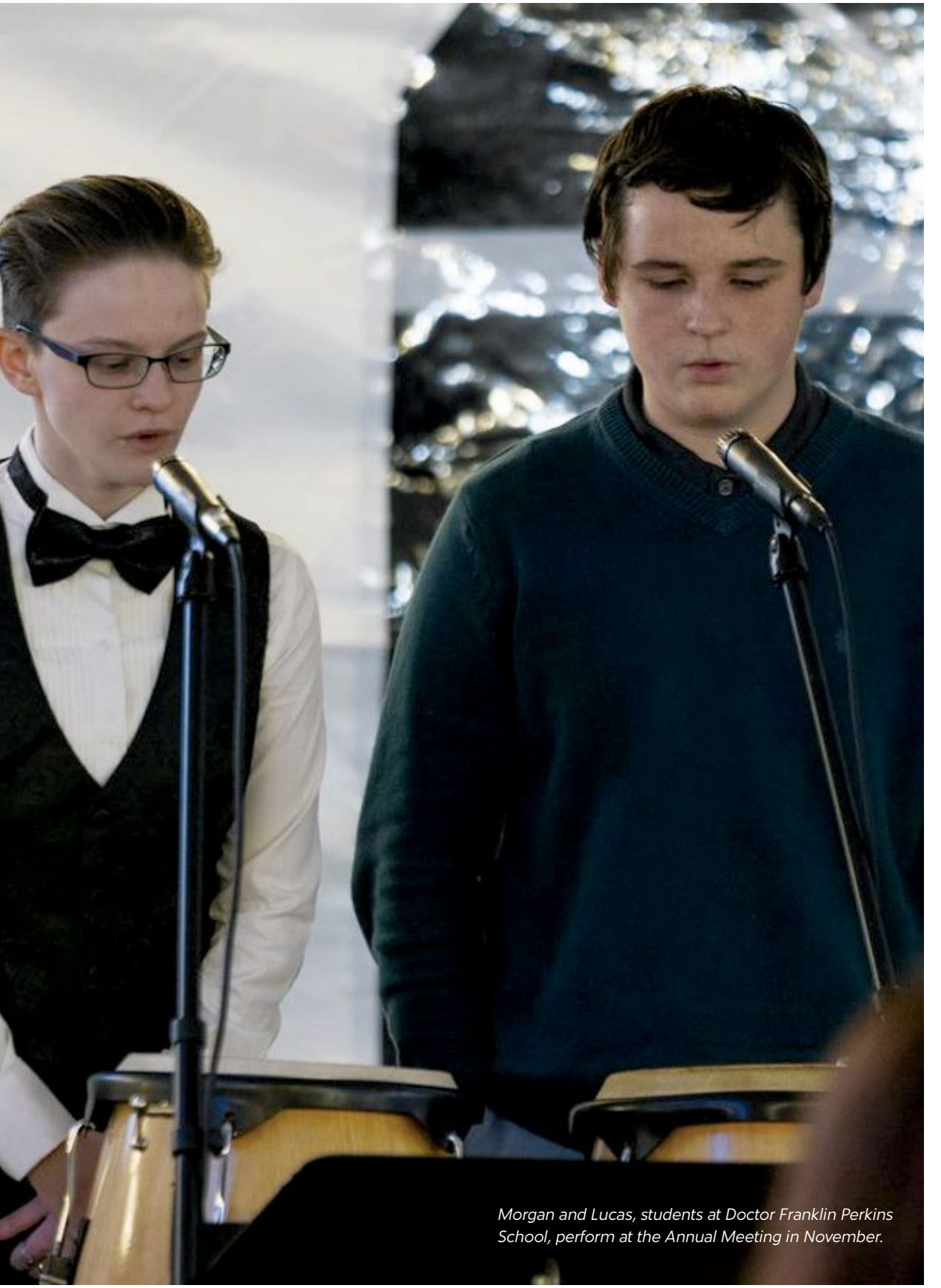
Marcus learned many important lessons along the way. He was trained that "it's always in the relationship," that people needed to know he could be trusted and would listen. Above all else, he values his integrity with his employers, the young people he works with, and their families. "If you lose a kid's trust, it has a ripple effect in a residential community," he observed. "You can't compromise their integrity."

"I want to work with people before they are in crisis. I want to help develop relationships and help them in their development."

Marcus D. Pritchett

Marcus continues to play an incredible role in the lives of the young people he works with. Recently, when he was on vacation, a youth in his program ran away. When Marcus returned, the young person came to him to tell him this and said that he wanted to get out of "that rut." That conversation happened because of the trusting relationship between Marcus and this young person.

And the best gift of all? Nurturing and hugs, he says. We are proud to have Marcus as a member of our team.



Morgan and Lucas, students at Doctor Franklin Perkins School, perform at the Annual Meeting in November.

Putting Mental Health First

The 2021 State of Mental Health in America report confirms that mental health in the U.S. continues to worsen. One in five adults in America experience a mental illness, and nearly one in twenty-five (10 million) adults in America live with a serious mental illness. One-half of all chronic mental illness begins by the age of 14; three-quarters by the age of 24.

Recent research compiled by the Kaiser Family Foundation shows that children are also facing worsening emotional and cognitive health. More than 25% of high school students reported worsening emotional and cognitive health, and over 20% of parents with children ages 5-12 reported similar worsening conditions for their children. The poor mental health of parents was also considered a contributing factor in negative mental health outcomes for children.

"Our clinicians are responding to an increase in demand for services and are reporting that our patients are showing more severe symptoms."

In our own practice, we are seeing the impacts that the research shows. Our clinicians are responding to an increase in demand for services and are reporting that our patients are showing more severe symptoms. Since FY19, the program has seen a 14% increase in clients diagnosed with Trauma- and Stressor-Related Disorders. Clinician Amanda Levitan, LICSW, noted while we are seeing unprecedented numbers of referrals, particularly in schools, it is evident that "the administration and teachers are supporting our work with the children, and putting their mental health first."

Last year, The Center for Behavioral Health served

409 people

This includes

186 children

under the the age of 18

More than

25%

of high school students reported worsening emotional and cognitive health

(Source: Kaiser Family Foundation)

> **“I feel great about doing my work every day.”**
>
> Chris Ricci

Adult Services: Growing Skills and Confidence

Chris Ricci, 29, arrives to Barlow, Adult Services' hub in Clinton, every morning with a wide smile on his face. A day participant, Chris is always eager to check the schedule for the day's tasks, collect his supplies, and begin his work. On a typical day, you'll likely find him spending the morning with a small team cleaning the common areas at Main Street Campus in Lancaster. In the afternoons, Chris and his fellow participants might engage in creative projects or educational work. On Fridays – to celebrate the end of the week – they enjoy watching movies together. Chris loves all movies, but horror movies and the Fast & Furious series are some of his favorites.

In 2021, many of the usual Adult Services activities in the community, such as Meals on Wheels, Food Bank pick-ups, and cleaning local businesses, remained on hold due to continued COVID-19 precautions. These opportunities benefit the local community, but also the program participants' socialization, sense of self, and skill development. The work experiences provided through Adults Services enrich the program participants lives, by giving them meaningful responsibilities and hands-on projects to take pride in. They've been sorely missed, and our program staff has responded to this loss by creatively identifying new opportunities for the participants to grow their confidence and skills. In the past year, we've added more educational experiences. Participants have been able to research a topic of their choice or watch an educational lesson, and then create a mini-report to share out with their peers. Egyptian Pharaohs was a popular unit, as were lessons on different countries, holidays, or food. When asked about this new addition, Chris enthusiastically discussed the reports he'd written on different animals, noting the vibrant orange-and-black Oriole as a particularly appealing animal.

Another highlight for Chris in 2021 was working in the horticulture program. During the summer, Chris – who describes himself as someone who likes to be outside and "get [his] hands dirty" – worked in the garden at the Clinton Senior Center. In addition to weeding and prepping garden beds, Chris helped plant tomatoes, cucumbers, and zucchini. A smaller greenhouse program was also started at Barlow this year. Participants, including those who temporarily engaged remotely, grew windowsill herbs and flowers.

No matter the project, Chris is energized and motivated by his ability to flourish in the program. When asked about the best aspect of being part of Adult Services, Chris beamed with pride and said, ""I feel great about doing my work every day." He also noted

Adult Services worked with

85 adults

last year.

The most common diagnoses for Adult Services receipients were:

Neurodevelopmental Disorders (99%; a 12% increase from the prior year), specifically Intellectual Disabilities (87%; a 10% increase) and Autism Spectrum Disorders (13%; a 1% increase).

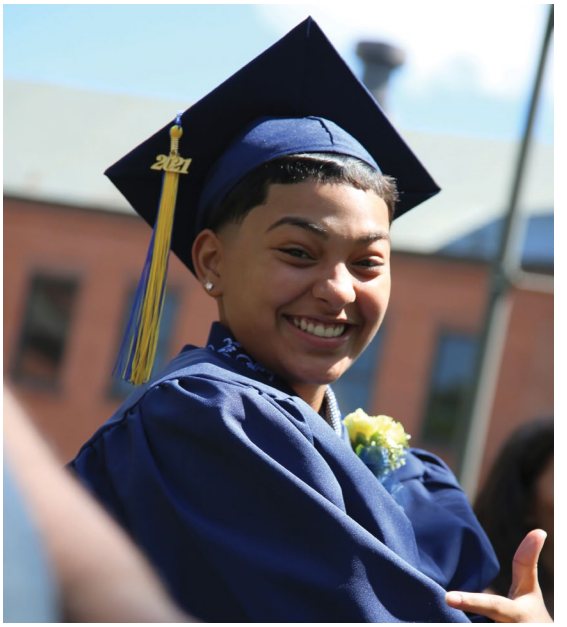
the valuable social component the program provides since he gets to work alongside and see his close friends. Both program staff and his peers were universal in their praise of Chris, describing him as patient, polite, fun, and kind. As fellow participant Amanda put it, he's simply an "overall good coworker to have around." Unsurprisingly, Chris is also a standout peer mentor for others in the program. He's often paired with newer participants or residents to model tasks and chores. As he explained, "I love that they're learning new skills for themselves and get excited when they can do it." A few years ago, Chris was even honored with "Best Employee of the Year" in Adult Services.

In the new year, Chris is looking forward to continuing to thrive. He's interested in working in the Clinton Senior Center Garden once again, and hopeful about the return of off-campus field trips. Remembering an excursion to Boston a few years ago, Chris loved the restaurants, shops, and Quincy Market. And, as an avid sports fan, he'd love to attend a game.

A Salute to Our Resilient Graduates

We know that just being a child and going to school can be hard, and even more so for students with special education needs. This past year was even more challenging given the pandemic, the renewed fight for racial justice, remote learning, and the uncertainty hanging over everything.

This past summer, we were grateful to finally be able to gather again and, in this special graduation year, celebrate the achievements of both our 2020 and 2021 graduates. RFK Academy mentor and math teacher, Melanie Blood, gave a moving speech and her words truly encapsulated the path to reaching this amazing achievement. We thought it fitting to share some of her message to the students with our community.



Jesania, RFK Academy class of 2021

Your path has been perpendicular and parallel with your fellow graduates,
How many schools did you fly to before you landed here?
How many classrooms did you blow out of?
How many people tuned their ears out of your radio frequency?
How many people had you tuned out?
How many times did you ask yourself, "Why did I come in today?"
And do you remember the one definitive moment you decided to take a chance on us?
You committed to take a chance on yourself?

You have taught me that you are the stars in the universe
Every light reflects with different tones
Every star is present, whether faded or brilliant with light
In your own space, in one collective body
And stars always recognize each other,
Acknowledging the energy of your twinkle...

Remember this moment.
Breathe it in.
You are standing at the top of this mountain,
Already seeing the next mountain in the distance.
Embrace all you have done to get here,
And while you are present in this moment -
Do nothing - sometimes it is the most productive thing to do.

Last year, our education programs served a total of

252 students

199
at Doctor Franklin Perkins School

31
at Don Watson Academy

22
at Robert F. Kennedy Academy

“Remember this moment. Breathe it in.”

Melanie Blood

Despite all of the challenges, we believe that each student can, with the right supports, discover their strengths, write their own stories, and reach their goals. And this past year, our school staff worked tirelessly to continue to engage, teach, support, and learn.

Our three schools offer comprehensive special education services and are grounded in the principles of trauma-informed care that promote healing and a sense of self-worth – with quality of life for each individual prioritized.

· Doctor Franklin Perkins School in Lancaster provides residential and day education services to students ages 8-21.

· Don Watson Academy, also in Lancaster, provides day education services to students ages 8-21.

· Robert F. Kennedy Academy in Springfield offers day education services to students ages 10-21.

Every day, we greet with a handshake and good heart.

Saludamos con un apretón de manos y un buen corazón. (Spanish)

בוט בלבו די תציחלב מיכרבמ ונחנא (Hebrew)

Pozdrawiamy z uściskiem dłoni i dobrym sercem. (Polish)

χαιρετάμε με χειραψία και καλή καρδιά / chairetáme me cheirapsía kai kalí kardiá (Greek)

Saudamos com um aperto de mão e bom coração. (Portuguese)

Cante' waste' nape ciyuzape ksto. (Lakota)

Melanie Blood, Mentor and Math Teacher, to RFK Academy Graduates, speaking in the languages of many of the graduates' families or ancestors.

Community Services/Legacy Mentoring

RFK Community Alliance's Legacy Mentoring program serves Hampden County youth at risk of, or already affected by, commercial sexual exploitation. Through our trained Mentors, the Legacy Mentoring works with teens and young adults to help them become empowered and courageous survivors who have the capabilities to change their own lives. This program also seeks to reframe the narrative around exploitation, moving away from victim-blaming and punishment.

Our Legacy Mentoring program is strong and impactful because of its staff, a Program Coordinator and team of Mentors. This story is theirs. The team is all women, who were both chosen for and drawn to this work because of their own personal, lived experiences with commercial sexual exploitation. This gives them a unique perspective to offer mentorship and support to others who've faced similarly harrowing situations, while simultaneously healing themselves. Program Coordinator Sacha has previously worked in social services but didn't identify as a survivor of sexual exploitation until she started to read about the different forms it can take. As parts of her own history emerged in her research, Sacha realized she needed to be in a role where she could help others with similarly traumatic backgrounds. In mentoring other survivors, Sacha has found power in drawing from her own story to affirm theirs.

Mentors understand firsthand the circumstances which can lead to exploitation, as well as the support needed by those affected. Kyanna, a Mentor, describes the powerful work she can accomplish in her role as a "middle-person" between the survivors and state agencies that also may be working with Mentees. Being able to fully understand and empathize with both sides makes her a

Sacha, Legacy Mentoring Program Coordinator

stronger, more trusted advocate and ally. In her own words, "I'm more confident and can gain respect faster with a youth because we share similar experiences and I understand the nuances of the system." Using their personal knowledge and connections to bridge others' healing can also be therapeutic for Mentors.

Mentors utilize their strong intuition and interpersonal skills to deftly respond to each Mentee, adjusting their approach or style as needed. The process of moving a Mentee toward being independent and empowered begins with establishing a strong foundation and trusting relationship. The Mentors agree that one of the most powerful ways to do this is by sharing their own journey. Progress and growth next continue in a series of small steps and successes, often through goal setting. Kyanna described how she encourages her Mentees to envision their

In mentoring other survivors, Sacha has found power in drawing from her own story to affirm theirs.

Legacy Mentoring served **21 individuals** last year

Kyanna, Legacy Mentor

best self, and then work together to identify a path to that end.

Mentoring survivors of commercial sexual exploitation is emotionally intense work, even more so when it comes at the potential risk of re-traumatizing a Mentor. While sharing their personal stories enhances their work, it can, at times, take a toll. Prioritizing self-care, setting boundaries, and paying attention to potential triggers are critically important habits that the team not only practices regularly, but is built into their full-time responsibilities. The Mentors also rely on each other for support, whether it's to seek insight on challenging cases or help pre-emptively manage their own feelings. The women have a clear, strong bond amongst them, one that's grounded in mutual trust and respect.

Reflecting on their own growth in these roles, the women acknowledged their increased confidence and professionalism. When advocating for Mentees, they're proud to see how their credentials and perspectives are valued. Both Sacha and Kyanna credit the perseverance that was required to get there – but also the immense gratification of being seen as a valuable, sought-after colleague. When asked about their future journeys, all agreed that they saw themselves continuing to develop as professionals in similar roles. Kyanna envisions expanding her range to include working with children whose parent(s) have substance abuse issues; another Mentor would like to focus more on teen mothers. For her part, Sacha is confident that this is her life's work. She aims to broaden her reach and platform through speaking engagements and has plans to begin writing a book.

Most of the participants (Mentees) in the Legacy Mentoring program are teenage women, 15-17 years old, however, the program supports victims both older and younger, and of all genders. Every Mentee comes with their own story, experience, and personality, and at a different place in their healing journey, making a "typical" profile difficult to identify. Most program participants have experienced some type of abuse or neglect and were made vulnerable to sexual exploitation at a young age, but the specific circumstances differ greatly. One Mentor clarified an important, overarching commonality, "no matter what a Mentee's situation is, they likely don't know what a healthy, loving relationship looks like."

Donor Spotlight: The Progin Foundation

George K. Progin was a private man, but his will revealed that he had a big heart. At the time of his death, he lived in Lancaster, and when he passed, he left his financial resources to the children of Worcester County. His wishes were fulfilled with the formation of the Progin Foundation in 2001, his lasting legacy.

Since 2003, The Foundation has supported both of our legacy organizations, Doctor Franklin Perkins School since 2003 and RFK Children's Action Corps since 2008, providing grants to strengthen our programs and services for children – from technology upgrades in our schools, capital improvements to our facilities, and supporting important and unique therapeutic programs like Rein in a Dream through the pandemic.

In addition to the support for RFK Community Alliance, the Progin Foundation supported the creation of the largest soccer complex in New England located in Lancaster, Progin Fields. This is just one more example of his commitment to the children in our region.

Progin Foundation Trustee, Brian Bixby enjoys his role in fulfilling Mr. Progin's wish to positively impact the children of Mr. Progin's community. "It is a privilege to make annual grants to worthy organizations, large and small, to help children and teens from all different backgrounds. Grants to the Doctor Franklin Perkins School, and RFK Children's Action Corps, now combined into one as RFK Community Alliance, have been among the most satisfying and rewarding."

Brian Bixby, estate planning attorney

He also points out "You don't have to be extremely wealthy to do this. Every donation helps. It's often more satisfying to give than it is to receive."

We imagine that Mr. Progin would be proud to see the lasting and positive impact of his legacy for the children of Central Mass, particularly through the pandemic. Altogether, the Progin Foundation has been a committed donor to RFK Community Alliance for nearly 20 years, generously providing more than $500,000. We are truly grateful for all the Progin Foundation has made possible for the children in our care.

George K. Progin was a founding partner of Union Plastics in Leominster, MA – famed for producing the iconic pink flamingos.

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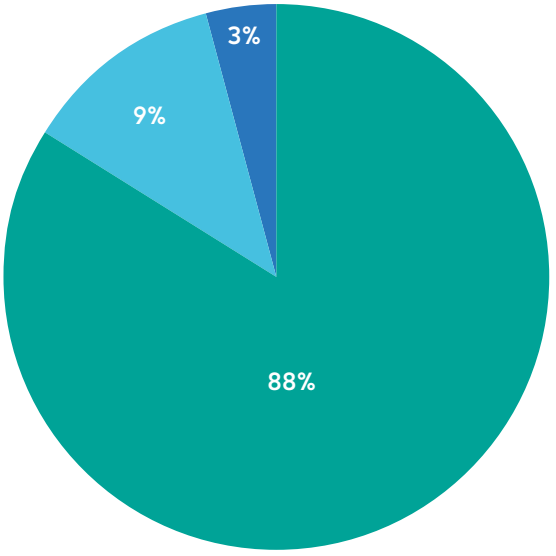
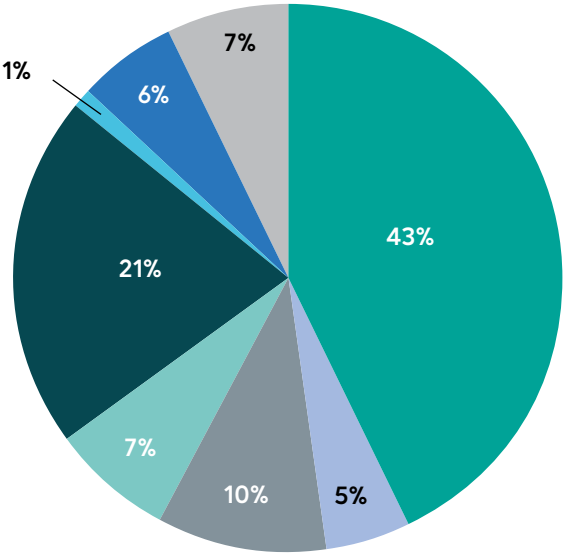
Financials

Expenses



- Program
- General Administration
- Fundraising

Source of Revenue



- Local Educational Agencies
- Third Party Payers
- DYS
- DDS
- Department of Children & Families
- DMH
- Grants & Fundraising
- Other

Financials July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

Total Revenue	$43,994,924
Total Expenses	42,408,865
Net Revenue	
Unrealized gain in	$1,586,059
Investments	$3,374,357
Surplus/(Loss)	$4,960,416
Balance Sheet	
Total Assets	$55,281,212
Total Liabilities	29,307,509
Net Assets	$25,973,703

This information reflects the combined financials for Doctor Franklin Perkins School and Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps.

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Special thanks to The Hanover Insurance Group and Melissa Begley, Creative Director, for the design of this year's report.

We can't wait to see you!

Embracing the LEGACY
2022

Wednesday, October 26, 2022

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA

RFK COMMUNITY ALLIANCE OPEN

Tuesday, May 17, 2022

Sterling National Country Club, Sterling, MA

RFK COMMUNITY ALLIANCE FAIRWAY FOR KIDS

Monday, June 13, 2022

Myopia Hunt Club, Hamilton, MA

RFK COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

RFK Community Alliance
971 Main Street, Lancaster, MA 01523
(978) 365-7376
www.rfkcommunity.org