



**BRIDGES
HOMEWARD**
formerly Cambridge Family
& Children's Services

Impact Report 2022



From Bob's Desk

Dear Friends,

This past year was truly an eventful one at Bridges Homeward. Among the new and exciting developments, and one you've no doubt already noticed, was our decision to change our name from Cambridge Family and Children's Service. It was an important step in our evolution as an agency serving people not only in Cambridge but throughout Greater Boston. The name Bridges Homeward also reflects our mission, to be the bridge that connects children, youth and families to more stable lifelong and supportive connections. We help them go from where they are today to where they hope to be in the future.

In this report you will see how the staff of Bridges Homeward works to help those we serve overcome their challenges and build on their strengths to achieve better lives for themselves and their families. We continue to focus on helping each individual we serve find and maintain the permanent life-long connections that will sustain and nurture them so they can reach their maximum potential. You will also read a number of stories about those individuals we serve, stories about finding their permanent connections.

While our nation continues to face enormous challenges, we are dedicated to making a difference locally. You will see the stories about our impact in the pages ahead. Our staff have persevered and stepped up to carry out the mission despite difficult times. Whether it was adapting to a hybrid work environment or responding to the significant needs of clients in crisis due to increased trauma, staff have excelled once again, and I thank them.

Let me conclude by expressing my deep gratitude to all those who make our work possible. Many thanks to our committed and talented staff, our dedicated board of directors and all who support our work financially, as volunteers or simply through words of encouragement. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Robert Gittens
Executive Director



Our Mission

To provide high-quality support and advocacy for children, adults, and families to develop and nurture safe, permanent relationships and maximize individual growth.

Our Programs



Adoption

Our Adoption program works to ensure that all children and teens have the opportunity to grow up in a safe, healthy, loving family that provides unconditional love, a sense of security and a community for the child to call their own.

The Adoption program's small but mighty team managed the adoption cases of 49 children. 12 children were placed in new pre-adoptive homes, and 11 other children's adoptions were finalized. At the close of FY22, several additional children were awaiting adoption finalization dates from the court, and one adolescent girl was in the midst of a transition to her pre-adoptive family. A number of new referrals were received by the agency at the end of the fiscal year, and we look forward to helping those children to achieve permanency in the coming year as well.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act requires that states make efforts to facilitate children's placement with pre-adoptive families as quickly as possible, even if those families live out-of-state. In recent years, we have had great success in locating skilled, loving families from across the US to provide homes for the children we serve. This year, we placed three sibling groups of three – for a total of nine children – with families in other states. One of these sibling groups was placed with relatives, while the others were placed with unrelated pre-adoptive families.

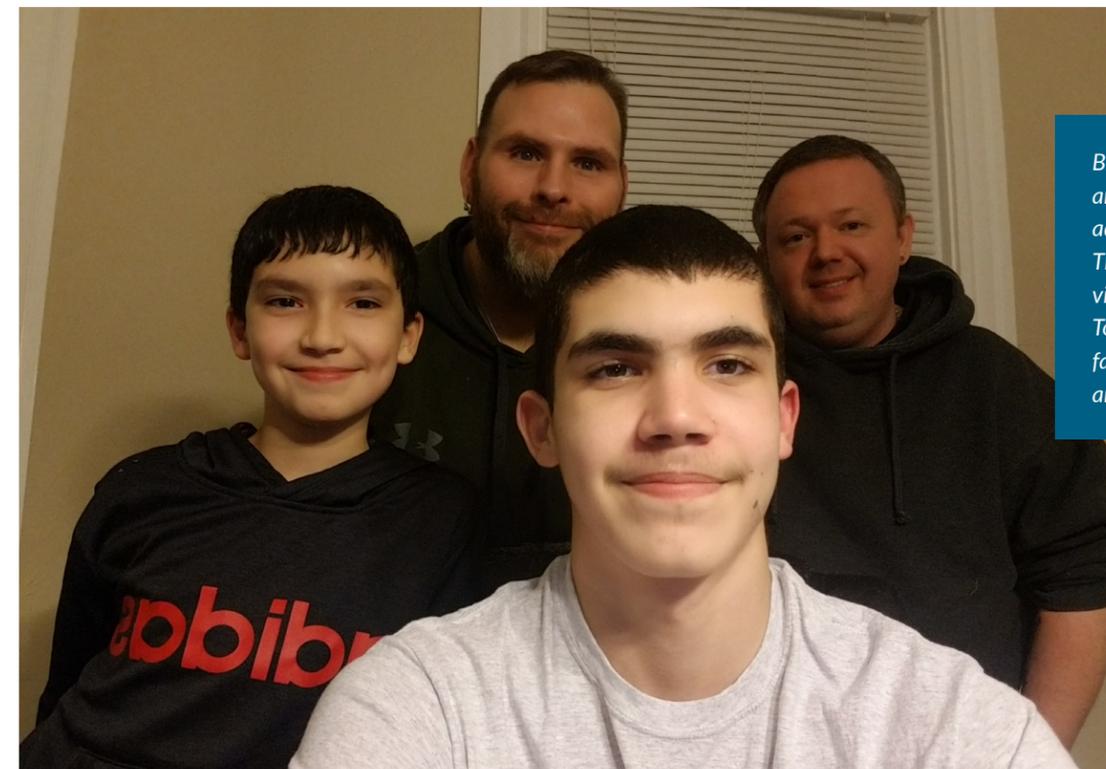
While moving children out of state brings additional challenges and logistical burdens, providing waiting children with the opportunity to find permanent family membership as soon as possible is a benefit that cannot be overstated.

Sibling relationships are often the most enduring relationships of our lives. Siblings often have a set of shared experiences that allow them to understand one another in a way that is unlike any other relationship. It has long been a priority of our program to prioritize placing siblings together in adoptive families whenever possible. There are times when we serve children who have siblings who are not in DCF's custody – either because they've already been adopted by other families or are in the care of their birth parents. In those cases we focus new efforts on locating those siblings, inviting their caregivers to introduce the siblings to one another, and begin establishing relationships. In one case last year, we reached out to the adoptive parent of a teenage older sister of our toddler client. That parent told us about the impact that being given a chance to meet her younger brother had had on her daughter. The possibility for a new sibling connection lifted the teenager's mood considerably and gave her something to look forward to amid the many struggles of her own life.

Amy and Josh will proudly tell you that in October of 2021, their daughter Laura legally adopted them as her parents. Laura loves school and has made many new friends. Every night, she tells Amy and Josh, "I heart you!"



Families United Through Adoption



Brothers Zavion (age 10, left) and Angel (age 14, center) were adopted by Ryan and Matt. The fathers first met their sons virtually, during the pandemic. Today, they are a close-knit family that loves hanging out and being silly together!

This year, we...

placed 12 YOUTH in pre-adoptive homes

supported 49 CHILDREN, including 10 groups of siblings

legalized 11 ADOPTIONS

Finding Family Across the Country

When siblings Kelly (age 13), Kurtis (age 12) and Kaden (age 11) were referred to Bridges Homeward in June of 2021, they had been residing together in the same foster home for nearly seven years. While the children's foster family loved them and had played an important role in helping the children find stability and security, they were not able to make a permanent commitment to the siblings.

Finding an adoptive family for any sibling group of three is challenging, and finding a family for a sibling group of three adolescents is even more so. Statistically, the older children grow, the less likely it is that they will achieve permanency through adoption. Knowing this, Livi, the adoption social worker assigned to Kelly, Kurtis and Kaden, got right to work. She updated the siblings' profile with the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE), and on AdoptUSKids, a nation-wide listing of children awaiting adoption.

Livi also began the hard work of preparing Kelly, Kurtis and Kaden for adoption. Much of adoption social work involves helping children and teens to understand their own histories and the events of their lives that have resulted in their need for an adoptive family.

Within weeks of being registered with AdoptUSKids, several families had inquired about Kelly, Kurtis and Kaden. Livi carefully reviewed prospective families' homestudies and spoke with their social workers. The two final candidates were invited to participate in video conferences with Bridges Homeward. At Bridges Homeward, all decisions about children's permanent placements are made by the Adoption and Family Services teams, rather than by a single social worker and/or a supervisor. By including multiple voices and perspectives in our decision-making, we do our best to ensure that adoptive "matches" have been considered from every possible angle so that we can make the best decisions for the children we serve.

Our team discussed the needs of the children and the strengths of both prospective families. We ultimately concluded that Jamie and Mike, a young couple living in Idaho, were the right family for Kelly, Kurtis and Kaden.

Because Jamie and Mike lived in another state, an interstate homestudy was requested. The Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children is an agreement among the 50 states to provide courtesy services for children in foster care whose needs may best be served by placement with a family residing in another state. A request for an interstate homestudy was made, and in April 2022 Jamie and Mike were formally approved as the adoptive parents for all three siblings.

Transitioning children to a new home nearly 3000 miles away requires creative planning. Unable to meet Kelly, Kurtis and Kaden in person immediately, Jamie and Mike created "Welcome Books" for each child with photos of their new family, home, and community. Livi presented the children with their books, then facilitated a video introduction for everyone the following day.

A few days later Jamie and Mike flew to Boston to spend the next two weeks visiting with Kelly, Kurtis and Kaden daily. Several overnight visits took place at the couple's hotel, providing lots of time for the new family of five to get to know one another.

Finally, on June 11, 2022, the three siblings packed their brand-new luggage, grabbed their inflatable airplane pillows, boarded a plane for their first flight, and traveled to their new home in Idaho with their pre-adoptive parents.

Settling into life in Idaho has included both excitement and joy as well as feelings of grief and loss for the siblings. Adoption is never easy, but Kelly, Kurtis and Kaden now have what every child deserves: a safe, loving, nurturing family able to provide the care they need forever.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Every day, we talk about transracial adoptive placements and finding adoptive families who actively support and encourage healthy gender identity among LGBTQ+ youth. Themes surrounding religious diversity have also been explored by our team, as have our experiences with age and disability status. As a program, and as an agency, we remain committed to furthering our own knowledge, awareness and sensitivity with the goal of creating a more supportive, diverse and equitable workplace and community for all.

Developmental Disabilities Program

Our Developmental Disabilities Program (DDP) provides training, advocacy and social opportunities to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. We offer our clients skills and knowledge to help them strengthen the relationships they rely on, and opportunities to make their lives easier, richer and full of bright experiences.

DDP staff provided education and support to well over 300 individuals with disabilities this past year. We helped these individuals and their families set and achieve goals, assisted them with financial planning and housing issues, helped them navigate educational and medical systems, facilitated conversations regarding permanency, and so much more!

One of the most impactful aspects of our program are the trainings and events we organize. We were proud to offer nine virtual trainings this year, covering topics including budgeting skills, guardianship, how to avoid scams and fraud, sexual exploitation, and individual education plans.

For most of the year, COVID kept us from being able to sponsor safe in-person activities for families, but we did provide a wide variety of interactive and entertaining virtual events – the ever-popular virtual Bingo, a cooking class, a virtual tour of Fenway Park, an Escape Room Caper, a Virtual Game Show, a virtual Holiday Party and two virtual trips to zoos. Finally, in June, much to the delight of our clients, we finally held an in-person event: an ice cream social complete with the Cookie Monstah food truck!



Our team with our Executive Director Bob Gittens and the Cookie Monstah truck at our ice cream social!

This year, we...

impacted the lives of served

- 114 CHILDREN
- 316 ADULTS
- 397 FAMILIES
- 10% MORE PEOPLE than the previous year

Finding Independence

Diego was diagnosed at birth with fetal alcohol syndrome and accompanying cognitive and developmental challenges. When he was a small boy, he was removed from his parents' care and placed with a loving caregiver. Sadly, when Diego turned 20, his caregiver was no longer able to care for him. At the onset of the pandemic, Diego soon found himself homeless.

We had to help this young man find a home! Fortunately, Diego had a trusting relationship with his Bridges Homeward case manager and, although he felt abandoned by his family, he believed that he would not be abandoned again. He said: "I know you've got my back and will help make this better."

Once an apartment became available for Diego, we increased our work with him to provide significant and intensive life skills training, support, and an important emotional safety net. Diego's biggest personal goal was to decrease his anxiety and have more mastery of his own world.

Diego was determined to successfully live on his own. Some of the tasks we focused on were meal preparation, laundry, grocery shopping, making healthy eating choices, budgeting and bill paying, and homecare tasks. We helped Diego establish personal care and hygiene routines. We accompanied him to medical appointments. We worked with him on coping techniques and making safe decisions and made sure he saw his therapist each week.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We strive to apply Bridges Homeward's values and principles in diversity, equity, and inclusion to our daily practices. When we hire new staff, we take care to recruit and hire people from a more diverse range of backgrounds who hold the same DEI values as we do. And to better support the families we work with who primarily speak Spanish, we are working to translate more and more of our materials into Spanish. We continue to learn and grow in this area as we move forward.

We collaborated with his school to help him get and keep a job in a local store. As Diego became better at meeting his own needs, we were able to decrease some of our regular support.

Diego decided to keep in communication with his biological family, as well as with his long-time caretaker. He felt bolstered by those meaningful relationships, even if living with them was not an option.

Knowing that Bridges Homeward was available to help Diego problem-solve and talk through issues and upsets was very meaningful for him. His anxiety began to decrease and as his skills grew, his confidence bloomed. He was very motivated to prove to himself and his team that he could achieve success in becoming more independent.

Diego recently entered his second year of living on his own. He graduated from high school and has started a new job. He is very proud of himself and loves talking about his achievements! When we first met Diego, he was quite scared about his future. But today, he is confident about his life and knows where to go for support when he needs it.

Diego's success story illustrates some of the tenets of the Bridges Homeward mission. To be valued, to be an effective self-advocate, to be as independent as possible, to have trusted supporters, to be able to access opportunities and have happiness and hope in your life.... what everyone wants and deserves.

Family Services

Our Family Services program recruits, trains and supports adoptive and foster parents from the very beginning of their adoption or foster care journey to the very end, ensuring that they are prepared to offer a safe, loving and therapeutic home to the children they will care for.

The Family Services team worked alongside our foster, adoptive, and Weekend Family Connections families to provide high quality support, guidance, assessment and training. We were proud to support our families as they welcomed children, sibling groups, and teenagers into their families. With our guidance, our families created home environments where those youths' needs were met and where they were able to stabilize and heal.

Our staff, families, and youth have adapted to a new, post-COVID environment. The technology we relied on during the early phase of the pandemic continues to be integral to our jobs and now allows us to communicate with families and community partners with greater ease and efficiency. The ability to host trainings on a virtual platform was essential during the pandemic, and it continues to remove barriers to participation for many families.

Weekend Family Connections

This was the second year of operations for the Weekend Family Connections (WFC) program, a collaboration between Bridges Homeward and the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE). We continue to accept applications from people interested in becoming mentor families and adoption advocates for older youth in residential care at St. Anne's Home in Methuen, MA.

Over the past year, two of our WFC families have expressed interest in adopting their mentee. Though permanency planning efforts will continue for both youth, we are excited to support our families in parenting their mentees full time. It is an outstanding opportunity for these youth to experience life in a family setting, outside of residential care, for the first time in many years.

Vivienne Campbell Award

This year, the Vivienne Campbell Foster Parent of the Year award was given to Sarah Thomas and Aldric Henry. Sarah and Aldric are both experienced parents who provide a loving, nurturing, fun home environment where kids are encouraged to "just be kids."

Sarah and Aldric's amazing commitment really shined during their time fostering two particular young boys who stayed in their home for over four years. Sarah and Aldric enthusiastically welcomed both boys into their family and integrated them into their community. Sarah advocated for their needs and wants and raised up their voices in meetings with providers. She also helped to facilitate visits with their birth parents and other relatives. Sarah and Aldric gave them many normal childhood experiences that are often not available to youth in foster care, and gave these boys hope for their futures.



From left: Aldric Henry, Sarah Thomas, Executive Director Bob Gittens, Family Services Program Director Sarah Medrano-Palmer, and Intensive Foster Care Program Director Laqunda Nystrom at Bridges Homeward's 2022 Annual Meeting.



Sarah Thomas, Laqunda, and Sarah Medrano-Palmer share a laugh.

This year, we...

approved 12 NEW ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

graduated 10 FAMILIES from our Massachusetts Approach to Partnerships in Parenting training

supported 16 ACTIVE FOSTER HOMES

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Elevating DEI conversations and issues across the agency had a positive impact on the Family Services program and the work that we do with foster and adoptive families. Our team is responsible for coaching and guiding families so that they have the skills and comfort to engage with youth about their many identities, including race, ethnicity, religion and LGBTQ+ identities. Many of the youth that we place in foster and adoptive homes do not share the identities of the families. Staff have worked closely with families, providing psychoeducation and support so that families have the tools that they need.

Increasing the diversity of our team, including broadening language capacity has long been a goal of Family Services. As we head into the coming year, we are excited to be welcoming a Family Resource Coordinator who is fluent in Haitian Creole. Apart from English, Haitian Creole is the most commonly spoken language among IFC families.

Finding a Bridge Between Families, New and Old

The Family Services team was honored to work in partnership with many foster and adoptive families this past year to help youth in foster care achieve permanency through adoption and reunification. One of the many dedicated foster families we worked with is Mr. and Ms. Richards, a married couple from metro Boston. The couple were approved as foster parents in 2020 and began caring for Sheila, a 13 year old girl, in 2021.

Sheila had experienced numerous placements in foster care, including several pre-adoptive placements that had not been successful. Sheila's permanency goal remained adoption, and she desperately needed a family where she could grow up without worrying about moving and starting again. However, she did not trust that the foster care system could help her find such a family.

Mr. and Ms. Richards welcomed Sheila into their family and helped her to stabilize and grow in their care. Over time, Sheila came to trust the couple and was able to have important conversations with them about what she wanted for her life.

After Sheila was matched with a pre-adoptive family in early 2022, the Richardses and the Bridges Homeward team worked closely with Sheila and our state partners to create an adoption plan for her. The goal was for Sheila to move in with her adoptive family after she graduated from middle school. Mr. and Ms. Richards provided a stable "home base" as Sheila slowly developed a relationship with her permanent family.

As the transition continued, Sheila expressed worry about the role her birth mother would play in her life after she moved to her adoptive home. Bridges Homeward worked closely with the Richardses to provide Sheila with reassurance that her relationship with her birth mother would continue.

Soon, the school year drew to a close and Sheila prepared to move. Mr. and Ms. Richards and Bridges Homeward made arrangements for Sheila to be joined at her graduation ceremony by her foster family, her future adopted family, her birth mother, and her stepfather. It was an emotional day and a beautiful way to demonstrate for Sheila that all of the relationships she has are important and valued.



Family Stabilization

The Family Stabilization program provides services designed to stabilize families as well as young adults transitioning out of foster care. We ensure that they have the skills, resources and family connections they need to be successful.

This past year has been full of growth for the FSS program, having received a high number of referrals for all our many services.

We continue to make permanency a priority across all our services – whether our focus is on helping a family through challenging, strengthening a parent’s resilience, helping resolve conflict, increasing social and community connections, or supporting family reunification!

In our Family Time Visitation services, we advocated for additional visits between biological parents and their children when it was safe to do so. And when reunification is an option for youth and parents, we do everything in our power to provide clear documentation and advocate for the parents.

Our Parenting Journey series, which helps parents build resilience, identify parenting strengths, and increase community support and access to resources, was needed more than ever this past year. Because of the pandemic, we offered this series virtually, helping 12 families increase their skills.

Our Young Parents Support (YPS) program continues to thrive. This program supports up to 30 parents, all under the age of 23, who live in Boston. Our YPS specialists meet with young parents in their homes or another comforting space to teach them parenting skills and offer them other training and resources. We also offer them Parents’ Night Out events, which give these young parents a chance to engage on social skill building activities, receive additional parenting education, and gain access to other resources they need.

Our Independent Living program continues to grow. To meet the needs of the program and address the challenges associated with permanency efforts for transition-age youth, we hired a Permanency Life Skills Specialist for our Independent Living team. This new position has helped the youth we serve to focus on their jobs and school, while also receiving support as they maintain safe, healthy relationships with important adults in their lives, reconnect to caring adults who may have lost touch, and identify new connections who can support them after they transition out of foster care.

Lastly, we were awarded a new contract with The Children’s Trust to offer Healthy Families Massachusetts (HFM) Services in the Greater Boston Harbor area! We are excited to offer coaching and support to parents aged 23 and younger in Chelsea, East Boston, Revere, Winthrop, and Charlestown as they navigate the ups and downs of parenting.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Our greatest strength comes from the diverse staff who make up our team. We strive to continually elevate underrepresented groups and marginalized populations as we recognize the importance of advocacy and their voices being heard. We are intentional about having conversations about race, systemic racism, and racial injustices and recognize the importance of sharing the same values while being aware of our own biases as we support our clients.

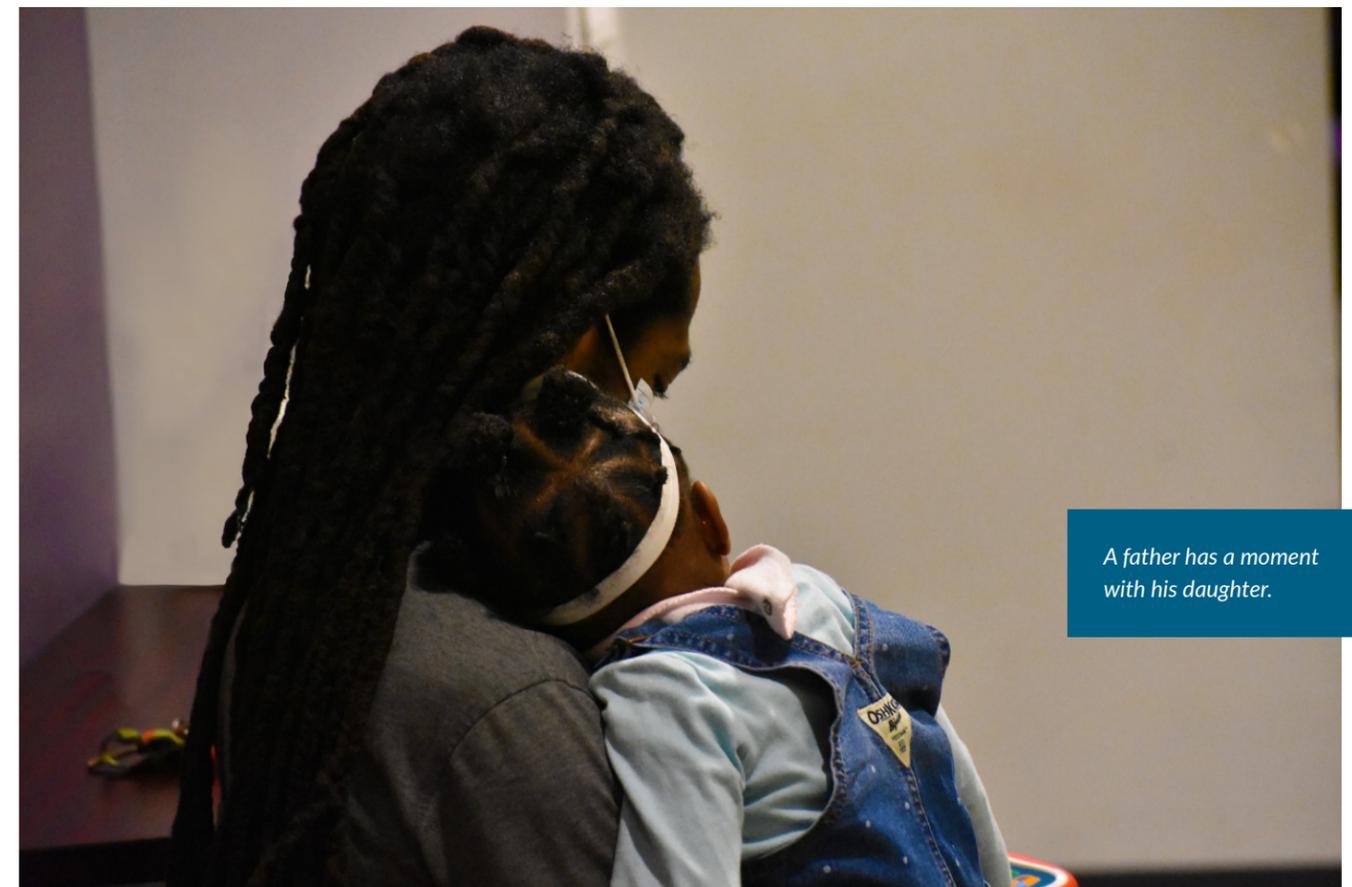
Being one of the largest programs at Bridges Homeward, we aim to exemplify our commitment to DEI in the make-up of our staff. This past year, we were able to promote three staff of color to management positions on the FSS team. Of our 22 staff members, 17 speak a second language, 18 identify as persons of color, and we also have staff who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. Each member of the management team is committed to building and sustaining an equitable and inclusive team where we celebrate the diversity existing among us.

This year, we...

served 164 FAMILIES
252 CHILDREN

enrolled 40 PARENTS in our Young Parent Support program

supported 13 YOUNG ADULTS in our Independent Living Program



A father has a moment with his daughter.



Finding Stability, Staying Together

Jose and Dani Martinez each have two children from prior relationships. When we first met the Martinez family, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) was considering removing Jose's children, Lucia (14) and Diego (10) from their father and stepmother's care. Jose had hit Diego several times with a belt, leaving marks. Lucia and Diego were spending every weekend at their mother's home and said that they wanted to live with her, even though her home was not a stable home environment; their mom was caring for a newborn and would often get into arguments with the baby's father. It was reported that Lucia and Diego often left Jose's home without permission and were disrespectful to him and Dani. Diego also struggled with wetting the bed almost every night, lacked a general hygiene routine, and had no motivation for doing well in school.

Lisnalda, one of our Family Support Specialists, worked with Jose and Dani on strengthening their parenting skills. They talked about how to administer positive discipline, the importance of spending quality time with Lucia and Diego, and a safety plan for when Jose and Dani felt overwhelmed. Jose worked hard and spent long hours away from home in order to support his children.

With Lisnalda's help, Jose learned about the importance of both self-care and spending time with his family. Over time, Jose came to understand that his children just wanted to feel loved and cared for, which he learned to communicate through spending quality time just the three of them together.

Meanwhile, our Assistant Program Director Maggie quickly built rapport with Lucia and Diego through playing soccer, talking about video games, and playing card games. As they bonded, she worked with the siblings on how to communicate effectively with one another and with their parents, practicing how to identify and communicate their needs, and identifying positive coping skills to use when they were upset. They also explored Lucia and Diego's complex relationship with their stepmother Dani, who often chose her own children (who also lived in the home) over them and had not developed any kind of personal relationship with them.

Near the end of our time working with them, Lucia and Diego's biological mother became more distant with her children. She did not reach out to Diego on his birthday or in the following weeks. Eventually, she sent Lucia a message on Facebook telling her that she was moving. The children were understandably disturbed and upset, but by that point, their relationship with Jose and Dani had grown. They were able to turn to their father and stepmother as parents they could count on to love and support them.

By the time we were finished working with the Martinez family, DCF was confident that Lucia and Diego could remain in Jose and Dani's custody, because their relationships had improved exponentially. With our support, Jose was able to stick to his goal of actively communicating his love to his children by spending quality time with them each week. Diego had stopped wetting his bed, made it a point to work on his art, practiced positive coping skills, and started playing soccer and lacrosse at school. Lucia became an advocate for herself, improved her social skills, and improved at managing her sometimes extreme stress.

Making changes can be very difficult, but when we create the space for families to explore, communicate, and learn how to meet their needs, they can develop a safe, supportive, and stable home life. The Martinez family is a great reminder that with intentionality, creativity, collaboration, and care, we can provide a safe space for families to take the next steps in their process. We are proud of the work we accomplished with this family and with so many other families who have partnered with us.



Intensive Foster Care

Our Intensive Foster Care (IFC) program provides youth who were born exposed to substances, who were subjected to abuse and/or neglect, or who have complex medical needs the opportunity to live and thrive in a safe, nurturing family and community.

Our IFC program, reinvigorated by the hiring of a new program director, continued to boost our efforts toward permanency. All our new staff received training in the components of the Massachusetts Permanency Practice Alliance (MPPA) Model, including Family Search and Engagement, Permanency Readiness, and Youth-Guided Family-Driven Teaming. Our team continues to engage in weekly permanency coaching and monthly permanency consultations with Bridges Homeward's Permanency Coordinator to ensure all our youth are on track in their permanency goals. In the past year, 44% of all youth in our Intensive Foster Care program met their permanency goals.

Bridges Homeward's continuum of care and the collaboration among our programs continued to yield great benefits for the youth and families we serve. IFC collaborated with our Adoption program to find loving, nurturing families for youth in intensive foster care. Working with staff in our Family Stabilization program, we were able to provide consistent, holistic support to families going through the sensitive process of reunifying.

We were happy to work with Family Services to support Weekend Connections families as they transitioned into becoming Intensive Foster Care families with our agency.

Our team continues to use careful, thorough matching practices to ensure our youth are placed in high-quality foster homes that will fit their individual needs. When youth in foster care stay in one home longer, without their lives disrupted by constantly moving from home to home, it results in better outcomes for youth and their families.

Finding Reunification

In 2018, three brothers (aged 6, 9, and 11) were placed in two separate Bridges Homeward foster homes. The permanency goal for the brothers was for them to be adopted, but the oldest brother made it clear he wanted to reunify with his biological mother. He showed resistance to adoption through unexpected behaviors in the home and school. Unfortunately, when his mom missed several scheduled visits with him, his behavioral difficulties increased.

Genevieve, the social worker for the brothers, had been working to ensure that the trio had regular contact with both their biological parents and encouraged their parents to attend any meetings, events, or celebrations for the boys that DCF deemed appropriate. Meanwhile, the brothers' foster parents ensured they had regular visits with each other, even though they were in different homes. Their social worker and foster parents also worked together to ensure the brothers attended the same school.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We are focusing on increasing visibility and representation for youth and families who historically have been underserved by federal programs. We are also increasing our efforts to support youths' cultural identity while they're in foster care by ensuring that each youth sees and spends time with their family. We advocate for youth to maintain connections to their culture, whether it's by placing them with culturally supportive foster families or advocating for them to continue attending school in their community.

We are also continuing our advocacy for families of color in regard to kinship care. We wish to help eradicate policies that disempower families of color due to their history with DCF or minor criminal records that often dismiss them as a family resource.

In 2020, the brothers' father, who lives in New Hampshire, was consistent with his weekly visits with his sons. Thanks to their father's dedication and exemplary behavior, the permanency goal for the brothers was changed from adoption to reunification with their dad. As soon as the goal was changed, our social workers dove into facilitating the reunification process for this family.

We collaborated with providers in New Hampshire and Massachusetts to ensure a safe, smooth transition for the boys and their father. After two years of careful work, the oldest child reunified with his father in June 2022, and his two brothers returned home one month later.

Since reunification, the brothers have been in touch with their foster siblings and foster parents, with whom they lived for a significant portion of their lives. The boys are reported to be doing very well. They always enjoy speaking with their foster families, and they're so excited to be living with their dad!



This year, we...

placed 24 YOUTH in safe, nurturing foster homes

discharged 6 YOUTH to pre-adoptive homes or kinship placements

reunified 3 YOUTH with their parents

Residential Services

Putnam Place is a group home for young adults ages 16 to 21 who are transitioning out of foster care and need a safe space where they can live and learn. With our guidance, our residents strengthen their relationships with family members and committed adults as they pursue their education and employment.

The Residential Program underwent a significant restructuring this past year. Our group homes, Putnam Place and Teens Learning Choices, are now operating as one program under one Residential Program Director. This unified leadership is streamlining the homes' processes and make systems more efficient and effective. Although the transition has been challenging, we are hopeful to see the rewards it will bring long term. Our restructure will provide further growth opportunities for staff, more consistent trainings and oversight, and additional support. Our plan is for our two homes to be in consistent communication with each other about everything, and even for our staff to be able to work at either home interchangeably. Enabling the group home staff to integrate and share ideas and experiences together will help improve the care we provide to all our residents.

We are in the process of revising our trainings, and while this change is still happening, we are already seeing the benefits of a more highly trained staff in our group homes. Our Residential Program Director and Residential Clinical Coordinator are collaborating and developing virtual and on-the-floor trainings that provide professional development and improve performance.

We're developing trainings on a number of topics, including proper documentation and instruction on our many policies. But we're particularly excited about our trauma-informed trainings, which will cover such topics as how to use trauma-informed and sensitive language with residents, knowledge around historical events of the youth's life, permanency, safety, and overall approaches to use to better support to residents in the group homes.

Finding a Support System

Lucy came to Bridges Homeward's TLC group home in 2020 as an unaccompanied refugee minor. She had overcome incredible obstacles during her journey to the US from Central America. Arriving at our group home at the peak of the COVID pandemic, it was not an easy transition for her, especially because she spoke little English at the time.

At first, it was quite difficult for Lucy. She was recovering from her traumatic journey to the US, including the trauma of leaving her family behind. She felt isolated, depressed, and angry. As a result, she got into fights in school and didn't receive very good grades. But we offered Lucy support in all areas of her life. We encouraged her to pursue whatever truly interested her.

When she realized that she loved art and loved to learn, Lucy began to work tirelessly to learn English, excel in school, and adapt to an entirely new culture. Lucy showed significant progress each academic year, going from making Ds to straight As. Lucy explored every creative outlet she could find, including the culinary arts, music, and ceramics. She realized she has a natural talent for "throwing pottery." In addition to displaying her artwork in shows, she has even made a small side-business out of selling her beautiful artwork to members of her community (including Bridges Homeward staff!).

Lucy was awarded two scholarships from her high school for her drive, motivation, resilience, and dedication to her education and artwork. This fall, she began attending Bridgewater State University as an art education major. Lucy hopes to inspire others through art just as she was inspired by it. She also plans to play volleyball at college and find a local pottery studio to join.

Lucy came to the US with no one, but she left TLC with a huge support system of more than 12 adults who have committed to supporting her for the rest of her life. Despite what she has been through in her early adolescent years, Lucy was never deterred from accomplishing what she is capable of.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Residential Program is committed to Diversity Equity and Inclusion. We've been having hard conversations at our program team meetings about race, gender identity, and sexual orientation. When we hire new staff, we are now ensuring our new hires have their own commitment to DEI and are able to work with residents of diverse identities and from different walks of life. We are also focusing on hiring staff who speak our residents' languages, so that they feel comfortable and heard in their own language.

Our residents pursued...

education TWO GRADUATED from high school
THREE ENROLLED in college

careers SEVEN RESIDENTS became
or remained employed

independence TWO RESIDENTS transitioned to an
Independent Living program



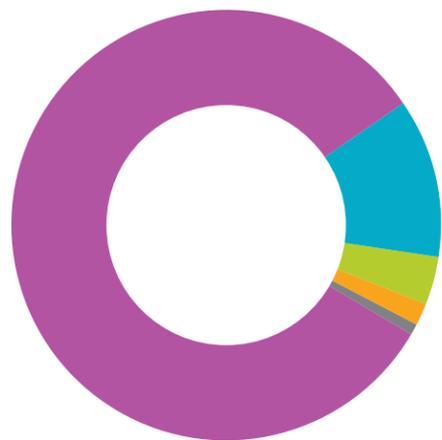


Our Financials

FY22 Financial Breakdown

Sources of funds & expenses for the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2022.

FY22 Income



Program Revenue
82%

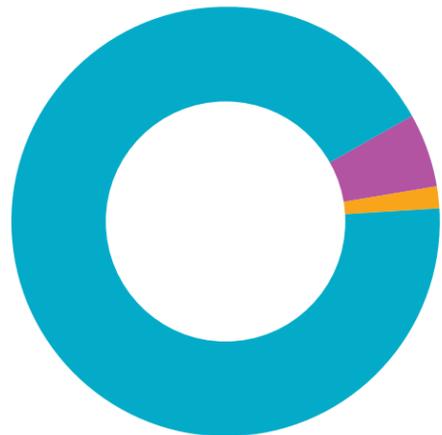
Donations and Grants
12%

Investments*
4%

Rent
1.5%

United Way
.5%

FY22 Expenses



Program Expenses
93%

Advancement
5%

Rental Expenses
2%

Total: \$7,236,000

* The agency maintains funds in an investment portfolio with an annual draw down of 4.75% of the previous 3 years balance. An annual audit is available upon request.

Our FY22 Board of Directors

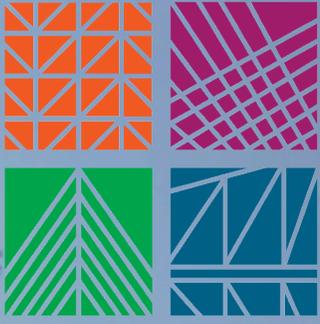
Ruth Whitney, President & Chair of the Board
Erika Eurkus, Vice President
Debra Wekstein, Vice President
Dennis Scannell, Treasurer
William J. Mostyn, III, Assistant Treasurer
Sally Martin, Secretary

Debjani Banerji
Claudia Garcia
Joseph Giso
Kimberly Green Goldstein
Lajiah Kirby
Patricia Welbourn Lorsch
Sean Murphy
Lisa Rodericks
Beth Simon
Susan Spurlock
Heidi Steinert
William Tsoules
Selam Woldeeslassie



Thank You to Our FY22 Visionary Partners!





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