

Rep. Finn: Addressing
childhood trauma

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THE PROVIDER

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October 2021

Council seeks ARPA funds to help workforce

In the midst of a workforce crisis growing to epic proportions, a number of human services sector leaders and executives provided testimony in late September to a group of state legislators tasked with distributing more than \$5 billion in federal funding throughout the Commonwealth.

The Joint Committee on Ways and Means and the House Committee on Federal Stimulus and Census Oversight invited testimony from those working in the health care, mental health, substance use disorder, public health and human services sectors on Tuesday, September 21. Providers' Council President and CEO Michael Weekes led a panel of membership association executives from *The Collaborative* to request more funding for human services organizations that have provided essential services throughout the 18 months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specifically, *The Collaborative* requested \$174 million annually over five years for funding to recruit and retain workers to the workforce, which boasts more than 185,000 jobs. The request



Collaborative members requested ARPA funds to help human services workers. Clockwise, from top left: Michael Weekes, President/CEO, Providers' Council; Tammy Mello, Executive Director, Children's League; Lydia Conley, President/CEO, ABH; and Chris White, President/CEO, Road to Responsibility (representing ADDP).

also included \$27 million for a student loan repayment program and \$250,000 for a marketing campaign aimed at increasing the awareness of jobs available in the sector.

"Today, the workforce situation is

perhaps as bad as ever; some programs have turnover rates that are at historic heights," Weekes told members of the committees, who gathered virtually for the hearing. "When essential staff are

ARPA, see page 7

Gov. Baker to join Council at 46th Convention

With October being both Global Diversity Awareness Month and Emotional Wellness Month, it is fitting that the Providers' Council's 46th Annual Convention & Expo, Essential: Then, Now and Always, will feature two brand-new workshops that address both diversity and self-care within the workplace.

The annual event, once again taking place virtually in 2021 from Tuesday, October 19 through Thursday, October 21, will feature a number of guest speakers, panel presentations and special guests. In late September, Gov. Charlie Baker confirmed he would attend the event on Wednesday, October 20 at 9:30 a.m. to speak to an anticipated crowd of more



Gov. Charlie Baker

CONVENTION, see page 7

Council awards scholarships to human services workers

Four leaders in the community-based human services sector will receive educational scholarships totaling more than \$20,000 from the Providers' Council to further their education at local colleges.

The Council's Scholarship Committee awarded a Graduate Leadership scholarship of \$10,000, two Master in Public Administration scholarships of \$4,000 each in partnership with Suffolk University, and a \$3,000 Foreign-Born Leader Scholarship – given for the first time in 2021 – in partnership with the African Bridge Network.

Omar Irizarry, the regional director for community-based youth and clinical services at the Gandara Center, was awarded the Graduate Leadership \$10,000 scholarship for an employee entering or currently enrolled in a mas-

ter's degree program in Massachusetts. The Council's board of directors authorized the scholarship years ago as another approach to build leadership within the human services sector.

"I'm at a loss for words to help describe what this means for me, my family, and my overall leadership journey," Irizarry said. "This process was a great reminder of staying true to my purpose, always exercising gratitude and identifying even the simplest things to be joyous about, and never giving up perseverance."

Stephen Osei-Bonsu, a program coordinator for Open Sky Community Services and a Ghanaian-immigrant, is the first recipient of the Foreign-Born Leader Scholarship. He is pursuing a master's degree in Clinical Mental Health

SCHOLARSHIP, see page 8

Billboards, mobile ads highlight sector jobs



The Providers' Council's billboard over Route 146 in Worcester encourages folks to explore human services careers at Jobs with Heart. Other billboards are coming to Springfield and East Boston.

As the human services sector experiences its most severe hiring crisis in recent memory – depriving vulnerable communities of essential aid and placing existing staff under tremendous pressure – the Providers' Council is exploring a variety of strategies to attract new workers to fill some of the open positions in the sector with more than 185,000 jobs.

The latest approach has centered on utilizing billboards and geofencing.

In early September, the Council secured a billboard on Route 146 in Worcester, encouraging compassionate individuals to work in human services through a campaign urging them to "Speak Up For Him."

Two similar billboards urging workers to "Show Up For Her" and "Speak Up For Them" will run through November displaying the ads along William F. McClellan Highway in East Boston and Interstate 291 in Springfield.

While the Worcester billboard was slated to come down on Oct. 3, the East Boston and Springfield billboards will be up through Nov. 1 and Nov. 28, respectively.

"Many people are interested in a career where they can have a positive impact on others, and our campaign demonstrates that when you work for the human services sector, you are able to make that kind of impact every day," said Providers' Council President

BILLBOARD, see page 6



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New England Village names Stephanie Costa as new CEO

New England Village's (NEV) Board of Directors selected Stephanie Costa, MPH as NEV's new Chief Executive Officer in September. Costa succeeds Michael A. Rodrigues, who left the CEO position in August.



Stephanie Costa

Costa joined NEV in January 2019 as its first Chief Operating Officer. At that time, she had 18 years of combined leadership experience in both public health and human services. Previous positions of hers included Senior Project Director of Community Partner Implementation at MassHealth and Vice President of Administration & Finance at Newport Mental Health in Rhode Island. Costa holds a master's degree in public health from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Riverside Community Care names DiGravio new President

Riverside Community Care recently announced that it had named Vicker DiGravio III as its newest president, beginning Sept. 20. The role became vacant after Marsha Medalie rose to CEO.



Vicker DiGravio III

Prior to joining Riverside, DiGravio served as Vice President of Strategy at eHana, a leading health information technology company specializing in the Massachusetts behavioral health and human services marketplace. Before that, he was President/CEO of the Massachusetts statewide trade association for behavioral healthcare providers, the Association for Behavioral Healthcare, and served as Chief of Staff to Massachusetts Senate Majority Leader Fred Berry.

Council members receive Reader Raves 2022 nods from MassLive, Springfield Republican

Council members **Mental Health Association** and **Square One** both were honored in September by the *Springfield Republican* newspaper and MassLive.com as Reader Raves award winners.

For the fourth straight year, Mental Health Association – a Springfield-based organization that provides essential services to youth, adults, seniors and families – was voted the *Best Nonprofit* and *Best Place to Work*.

Square One, a Springfield nonprofit that provides a range of family-friendly education and support services, was voted the *Best Day Care/Preschool* and as having the *Best Charity Event* (One Square Tea Party).

For the 12th straight year, readers of MassLive and The Republican weighed in on their favorite people, places and things in the Readers Rave poll.

Seven Hills Foundation opens new integrated clinic

Seven Hills Foundation opened a brand-new integrated clinic on Sept. 20, located at 35 Gold Star Blvd in Worcester, to provide care for children and families in central Massachusetts.

The combined expertise of the behavioral health providers across their organization offers expanded accessible care, either in-person at one of their Department of Public Health-licensed clinics, in the home or community or through their telehealth options.

Mass. Bar Foundation gives funding to Council members

The Massachusetts Bar Foundation gave more than \$2.6 million to nearly 90 legal aid programs run by 59 nonprofit organizations, including Council

Senate President Spilka, Rep. Lewis attend SMOC Purple Passion Walk/Run



Senate President Karen Spilka and State Representative Jack Lewis attended the 10th Annual Purple Passion 5K Walk/Run, an initiative of Voices Against Violence at South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC). Spilka was the honorary chair of the event and was joined by Lewis as well as other local leaders devoted to ending sexual and domestic violence. The Purple Passion 5k raises the necessary funds to support survivors in the MetroWest community with free, confidential services.

members **Ascentria Care Alliance**, **Casa Myrna**, **JRI (Health Law Institute)**, **Pine Street Inn**, **Safe Passage** and **The Women's Center**.

Geller, Rheume join Providers' Council staff

The Providers' Council in September added two new staff members to bolster its communications and education teams.

Stefan Geller will serve as the Council's Public Policy and Communications Coordinator. Most recently, Geller worked for the Lowell



Stefan Geller

Sun, and the graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst has also worked for the Boston Herald. Geller will also act as editor of *The Provider* newspaper. Members can reach him at sgeller@providers.org.

Amanda Rheume, MSW, will serve as the Council's Education & Membership Coordinator – eLearning, providing lead support and oversight of Providers' eAcademy®. Amanda recently graduated Rhode Island College with a concentration in Macro Social Work and Certificate in Nonprofit Administration. Members can contact Amanda at arheume@providers.org.



Amanda Rheume

MAB COMMUNITY SERVICES AWARDS \$50,000 TO THE BEST DIRECT CARE STAFF

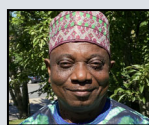
The award is named in honor of Maxo Joseph, a direct care staff who died of COVID 19. The award recognizes staff who:

1. Work hard to support co-workers
2. Do their best to partner with family members, medical providers, and state agency coordinators
3. Go above and beyond to help participants live the life they want to live
4. Strive for the highest quality in everything they do



Maxo Joseph

MAB is Proud to Honor Our 11 Award Winners and All 34 Nominees



Aderemi Aderinto

During COVID, Adermi worked for seven straight days, sleeping on the floor, taking care of participants when other staff were sick.



Kellie McFarland

Kellie gives her all. She has taught herself skills to match participant's interests, down to helping a participant build, install, and pour cement for a new mailbox.



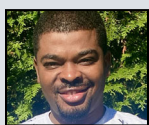
Juliana Arthur

Juliana is a force of nature. She has worked with these five participants for 18 years. They love her and she loves them. Working with the guys is the center of her life.



Johnson Folorunso

Johnson missed his father's funeral on Zoom from Nigeria in order to respond to a participant whose emergency Lifeline was activated. He missed his father's funeral but saved the participant's life.



Jude Pierre Philippe

Jude takes responsibility for everything. He loves cooking and making dinner every night to make sure the participants have a good meal.



Olusegun Anibaba

Before coming to the U.S., Olu was a banker in Nigeria. Today he finds more meaning in providing direct care to individuals who are intellectually disabled.



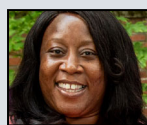
Foyeke Olanrewaju

She is the staff person who everyone trusts the most. When a long-time participant was hospitalized, Foyeke visited her every day to give her emotional support.



Marcelle Thompson

Marcelle has dedicated her whole life to the "Church Street Guys" She loves to cook for them and gives them the quality of care they deserve.



Margaret Sackey

During COVID she spent more time with the participants to keep them from feeling lonely, bored, and isolated. She took them on drives in the country and baked with them.



Georgia Utley

Georgia puts her whole self into everything she does. She works from the good of her heart. The participants are always talking and laughing when Georgia is around.

Frank Lavaud

The guys in the home love him. Frank is soft-hearted and knows exactly what each participant wants and needs. He always takes special care.

Do Good. Help Others. Work for Us.

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MAB Community Services provides residential and individual supports, transitional assistance, and vocational programming for individuals with developmental disabilities or brain injuries in Greater Boston and Central Massachusetts. Join our team as we do good by helping others.



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PROVIDER PROFILES

HEADING HOME

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About the Agency

Founded in 1974, Heading Home is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to end homelessness in Greater Boston by providing a supported pathway to self-sufficiency that begins with a home, together with critical services such as life skills, financial literacy, and job training. The organization has been supporting clients ending their homelessness for almost 50 years, and over the past 17 years, it has more than quadrupled in size in response to the growing demand for services in the community.

As an agency, its services are diverse; it provides emergency, transitional and permanent housing, as well as support services to extremely low-income individuals and families currently or formerly experiencing homelessness. It utilizes motivational interviewing, trauma-informed care and harm-reduction – all client-centered models that acknowledge client autonomy, choice and expertise in their own lives. Its footprint spans Greater Boston, supporting clients from birth to the elderly.

In fiscal year 2021, Heading Home served 1,472 men, women and children, and moved 101 households out of shelters and into permanent homes. Additionally, it served several hundred clients in emergency overflow shelters for the City of Boston and the state. Its retention numbers demonstrate its success; last year, 97% of Heading Home clients remained housed after one year.

Helping Bostonians head home



Heading Home staff at one of the single-gender emergency shelters in March 2021 (left) and a family is welcomed to their new apartment after living in shelter for three years.

As a human services and housing agency committed to supporting men, women and children navigate some of their most vulnerable, arduous days through and out of homelessness, Heading Home is intimately aware of the hardships our clients face. Homelessness is a result of all other systems failing, including access to vibrant neighborhoods, health care, strong schools and a broken incarceration system. As a result, its clients know trauma all too well. They are well versed in living with fear and safety issues every day for themselves and their families.

As a leading housing and service provider, Heading Home takes its responsibility to support those in need seriously and remain committed to taking actions that disrupt cycles of poverty and build systems that are more equitable and just.

Its philosophy is to support clients across their lifetime – from birth to the elderly – offering services that encourage early development, enhance families and assist aging in place. It approaches its work from an inclusivity perspective, taking into consideration the head of household and all family members. During COVID, it made essential pivots to meet needs such as food insecurity, learning



loss and family preservation. Heading Home also responded to the need for overflow shelter, overseeing two single-gender emergency shelters for adult individuals from December 2020 to April 2021.

As the organization reflects on the past 16 plus months, there are many takeaways. Moving forward, how Heading Home delivers its mission continues to be informed by several pillars:

- Mental health and anxiety will likely linger as clients regain their footing following the pandemic. Its approach to compassionate, trauma-informed care for all household members – adults and children – remains paramount.

- The return to the workforce and reclaiming lost income is a priority for many of the organization's clients. A pre-pandemic average income of \$19,000 fell to \$13,000 for a large percentage of its clients during COVID. Case management rooted in mobility mentoring provides an essential pathway to help clients achieve their goals.

- With 82 percent of clients identifying as non-white and/or Hispanic/Latinx, the organization's values remain paramount – to support all equitably and with dignity and stand tall against racial injustice.

Executive Leadership

Danielle Ferrier, MBA, LICSW, joined Heading Home as CEO in 2017 after serving as the Deputy Commissioner for Clinical Services & Program Operations at DCF. Ferrier has over 25 years of experience in human services and holds her MBA from Simmons School of Management and MSW from Boston University.

An innovative trailblazer committed to disrupting intergenerational cycles of homelessness and poverty, Ferrier's vision for Heading Home combines her trauma-informed, therapeutic background and her strategic business approach to prime Heading Home for exponential growth. In the past three years, Ferrier hired a senior leadership team with diverse backgrounds to execute the organization's mission in Greater Boston by providing shelter and support services.



Danielle Ferrier

Under her leadership, and with the agency's fiscal strength and leadership team, Heading Home was able to navigate challenges brought on by the pandemic and adopt practices that solved clients' basic needs. Collaboration with local restaurants, staffing agencies, corporate philanthropists, state and city officials and others was pivotal. Ferrier forged a partnership with Arbor Associates that arranged for childcare and kept the family intact, and Heading Home and others packed fresh foods and prepared meals that were delivered to over 250 households across Greater Boston, through a partnership with the Boston Resiliency Fund.

SALUTING THE CARING FORCE

Rodrigues enjoys a 'rewarding' job

Belisa Rodrigues has been a Youth Service Coordinator at **Roxbury Youthworks, Inc. (RYI)** since December 2017. In this role, she provides supports to youth committed to the Department of Youth Services, as well as those receiving voluntary services. Rodrigues was thrilled when offered this position, as it is community-based and the youth she works with are all male. Prior to coming to RYI, Rodrigues worked in a residential program with all girls and she was very ready for a change.



Rodrigues goes "above and beyond" according to colleagues.

There isn't anything Rodrigues won't do for the young men with whom she works. Larionnie, one of her youth, shared that she is "helpful and nice." She tirelessly teaches them pre-employment skills and assists them with finding jobs. She makes sure they have the proper clothes for work and that they have transportation. Rodrigues has made endless trips to the RMV to assist her youth with getting a Massachusetts ID or replacing the one they have lost. She celebrates when any of her youth gain a driver's license, earn a HiSET, graduate from high school or just make curfew every night. Rodrigues never forgets there is a family

behind the young men she serves. She is a caregiver's go-to person if they need assistance with food, housing or other resources, and she always takes care of them around the holidays.

While other RYI programs went remote during the pandemic, Rodrigues – who is considered essential – had no choice but to report to the office. She never complained and began visiting and transporting youth before being asked to do so.

"Belisa goes above and beyond when it comes to anyone in her life, including the youth, their families and her coworkers. Belisa makes sure no one is left out or left behind by ensuring everyone is included, and that is such a great quality of hers," said Provider Contract Manager Kianesha Reeves.

Rodrigues is considering what's next. She has a bachelor's in psychology from Pine Manor College and graduated from the Certificate Program in Nonprofit Management at Suffolk University in May. For now, she is happy.

"I enjoy working with youth because it is a very rewarding job," she said. "I feel very fortunate to be able to support so many youth and families day in and day out."

Taylor-Mitchell plays critical role

Cameisha Taylor-Mitchell is an Assistant Program Manager for a home operated by **Pathlight**. Since March 2017, Taylor-Mitchell has worked for the Springfield-based organization, first starting as an individual support specialist with Pathlight's Family Based Living Department. Taylor-Mitchell transitioned to residential in May of 2020 and was promoted to assistant manager just a year later.

As the assistant manager, Taylor-Mitchell is responsible for ensuring the program runs smoothly, the staff she works with feel motivated and appreciated, and that the individuals she supports are living fulfilling lives. She is always happy to help in any way she can.

Taylor-Mitchell started her journey in helping others by attending college in her home country of Jamaica, focusing her studies on nursing. When she moved to the states, she continued her work in healthcare by obtaining her Certified Nurses Assistant license. Taylor-Mitchell has worked in home care,

respite, day services and residential. The skills she has learned by being a CNA have helped support the people she works with at Pathlight.



Taylor-Mitchell ensures smooth operation of programs at Pathlight, where she helps people by "making their day a brighter one."

Taylor-Mitchell played an important role in helping some of our residential homes during the spike in COVID cases at the beginning of the year, volunteering to stay at a site for a full two weeks. Throughout that time, she always had a huge smile, a wonderful sense of humor, and was enthusiastic to make the best of such a difficult time. Additionally, Taylor-Mitchell planned and went on a vacation with the group of individuals she works with to

Cape Cod, going to the beach and helping the individuals explore new things.

Staff thank Taylor-Mitchell for her continued dedication and passion for what she does. Her vibrant personality is contagious and makes everyone happy to work with her every day.

When asked why she enjoys working in human services, Taylor-Mitchell said, "I love helping people and making their day a brighter one."

EDITORIAL



Michael Weekes
President / Publisher

Do we have the will to fight hunger?

Upon receiving the Noble Peace Prize in 1964, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated in his address, *“There is nothing new about poverty. What is new, however, is that we have the resources to get rid of it.”* That statement continues to ring true today in America – and certainly here in Massachusetts.

According to the American Community Survey conducted by the US Census Bureau, Massachusetts has the third highest median household income in the United States. In the past year, the state has collected more than \$5 billion in revenue above benchmark, creating a surplus, with an additional estimated \$4.8 billion in America Rescue Plan Act money that must be allocated.

There are many needs that can be effectively addressed, and human services should be among the very top of the list. Funding should be immediately invested to strengthen the workforce, who are among the lowest paid and often eligible to receive services themselves. And with one in eight earning at or below 150 percent of the poverty level, human service workers are more likely than other working populations to be food insecure.

The Mass. Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) manages the state’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which saw a huge increase in caseload throughout the pandemic. From March 2020 to July 2021, there has been a 27 percent increase in caseloads, and this as the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children caseload declined. In accordance with a report by Feeding America, one in five children in Massachusetts are food insecure – a number that is unacceptable. And that, Dr. King, isn’t “new” either.

As I pen this editorial, it is the midst of Project Bread’s *Free School Meals Visibility Week* effort from Sept. 27 to Oct. 1. It notes that children attending schools in Massachusetts this year – and throughout the nation – can receive free breakfast and lunch at school with *no income requirements*. You don’t have to prove you’re poor at school to get a meal.

Project Bread is on the front lines connecting people with resources and advocating for better policies and approaches with a simple vision: *“A Massachusetts where hunger is permanently solved.”* The Council – understanding the importance of defeating food insecurity in the lives of the people served by human services and the people who are helpers – supports this ambitious goal and those of our members in the fight against hunger.

Food insecurity in Massachusetts rose to 23 percent in December 2020, encompassing nearly one in four households with children. While that number decreased over the past six months, there is now a slight trend upward. And according to Project Bread, there is a racial factor pointing to a disparity in households that are food in-

secure. From February 2021 to July 2021, one in nine white households with children faced food insecurity, compared to nearly one in four Black and Latinx households, according to data from the US Census Bureau.

The city of Boston’s Office on Food Access Director Catalina Lopez-Ospina told the Boston Globe in August that *“food insecurity is a silent problem.”* Perhaps it is – but we can make, as the late John Lewis said, “good trouble.” And in doing so, we join with our members across the state who are battling against hunger every day. Martin Luther King Jr. Family Services in Springfield has delivered over five tons of food on a one day per week schedule that now includes making home deliveries to those at high risk. The Amherst Survival Center, which serves a largely rural community, has a full choice grocery pickup on site that has recently reopened after it was doing curbside, prepackaged pickups and deliveries earlier this year that, at their peak, served nearly 1,300 people per month. Of course, they have had to keep their showers, lockers, laundry and mail service open when all else was closing.

Rachel’s Table, a program of the Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts has been providing food and life sustaining materials for over 30 years. Through a growing partnership they delivered 140,000 pounds of food monthly. South Middlesex Opportunity Council’s Open Pantry has also expanded its services and is considering finding a larger site to meet the growing need. Also, Central Boston Elder Services that focuses on our older residents saw a 50 percent increase in home delivered meals going up to 12,000 a day which is now lessening.

Though these organizations do incredible work, some are advocating that an effective resource with the broadest reach has been SNAP, which recently stated it will make a 21 percent increase in benefits permanent so that nearly 950,000 Massachusetts recipients will benefit. However, the so-called “SNAP Gap” estimates that nearly 660,000 state residents are eligible for benefits but aren’t currently enrolled; nearly 38 percent comprise of seniors or children under 18.

We encourage our members to learn more about SNAP eligibility and share the information with their staff members and clients. More of our staff, clients, friends and neighbors are in need than ever before. The largest increase in SNAP the past few months has been for working adults with children, who just aren’t making enough to make ends meet. So let’s not have food insecurity remain a “silent problem.” We must deal with the underlying problems of wage disparity, racism, housing costs and underemployment to make a substantive change in food insecurity. Dr. King wisely said 57 years ago, we now have the resources to eliminate poverty – **but I ask, do we have the will?**



EDITOR’S NOTE: The Council is deeply appreciative to our longtime cartoonist Michael Ripple, who drew his last new cartoon for us last month. As we explore how to use this space in the future, we are honored to share some of Michael’s “greatest hits,” including this one from April 2017, which is still just as appropriate today.

Letters to The Provider

TO THE EDITOR:

I just finished reading this month’s Provider and wanted to thank you and your team for all the great work you do on behalf of your members and the people we serve. I don’t say that enough!

Sincerely,
Robert Mills
Chief Executive Officer
Middlesex Human Service Agency, Inc.



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The Women's Center steps up to help throughout the pandemic

By Pamela MacLeod-Lima

Last year was a frightening time for almost everyone on the planet. The first pandemic in over a century had most people fearing for themselves and their loved ones while retreating into their homes for safety. Imagine, then, what this unprecedented time was like for victims of domestic violence. These victims of violence and abuse were afraid to go out and risk illness or even death from the virus, and they were also afraid to stay in their homes with the ongoing risk of harm from their abusers. They were locked in with the violence.

So what happens in these awful times – when danger is all around us but violence is also in the home? Where is sanctuary? Where is safety? For domestic violence victims on the south coast of Massachusetts, the answer is The Women's Center. Our three shelters never closed during the pandemic; in fact, they were full throughout 2020 and into 2021. We provided sanctuary to victims seeking a place to stay safe from abuse. When we had an opening, we took in someone from the hotels where we had housed them while they waited for a shelter room.

Our community-based services, including individual and group counseling, were provided virtually and in-person when needed. We had constant radio ads running on local pop and talk radio and on the Spanish and Portuguese-language stations. We had flyers in four languages dispersed anywhere someone might look up and see that help was still available, that The Women's Center was still here for victims of abuse. Our Child Trauma Department was open for traumatized children, as our specialized counselors recognizing that very young children are not well served by virtual sessions or tele-counseling.

We were able to continue to provide these services by instituting careful infection prevention protocols, including requiring vaccines and mask-wearing for staff. Supplies and food were deliv-

ered to our doors. In March 2020, a board member who is a doctor at the community health center visited all three of our shelters to talk to our staff and residents about COVID-19. Her sobering presentation of the number of victims of the virus that we might expect to see on the south coast, and the reality of the limited number of hospital beds available to serve them, caused staff and residents alike to limit their activities in the community to emergency medical appointments for many months. During the worst months, our shelter staff traveled between home and work without making stops, to avoid the potential spread of the virus.

The important thing that we all must remember, however, is that COVID is not over for any of us and the danger is certainly not over for victims of domestic violence. Bristol County, in particular, still has a high infection rate and a low vaccination rate.

Every year during October – Domestic Violence Awareness Month – we take the time to remember those who have died by this violence and those who live with it every day. Please remember them and help to spread awareness about this equal-opportunity plague that cuts across all socio-economic barriers, races and cultures.

We are fortunate that, in Massachusetts, we have domestic violence programs like The Women's Center that serve victims across the Commonwealth. Please get to know the agency in your area and make a note of their hotline number. If you suspect someone in your care, or someone you care about, may be suffering from intimate partner violence or abuse, make sure that they find their way to the trauma-informed care available in these centers. Help them find safety and sanctuary.

Pamela MacLeod-Lima is the executive director of The Women's Center in New Bedford.

Re-setting Rachel's Table through partnerships and a rhythm of rest

By Jodi Falk

As we all navigate the next wave of the pandemic, I find it important for Rachel's Table (RT), the nearly 30-year-old food rescue and redistribution program of the Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts, to re-set itself by acknowledging and reviewing what we've learned over this past 18 months as a local program working on a global concern. As we continue to feed more people in the Pioneer Valley, we also look to address some root causes of hunger and seed sustainable options for food security in partnership with local organizations. We can learn from traditions; both Rachel's Table's tradition of reducing landfill gases that break down food waste while feeding people – thus taking care of our planet and people – and the Jewish tradition of *Shmita*, or rest for the land every seven years, beginning September 2021.

Shmita, or “release” in Hebrew, means that we break down actual fences that separate land from animals – or it could mean any regular barrier we put up – and let land rejuvenate and sustain itself. We at Rachel's Table aren't resting, but we are rejuvenating our work to support those who don't have ready access to healthy food, because of “fences” or barriers that have been erected. Our Growing Gardens program is one of the ways we are facilitating access, by supporting our agencies to grow food along with their constituents. We also have access now to 20,000 square feet of land in Northampton, or Nonotuck land, where we can facilitate many communities to come together for the purpose of growing food without fences – food for those left out.

Like many others, we have had to improvise in order to fluidly respond to the global crisis on a local level. Meeting the moment, seeing what was needed and creating solutions is akin to improvisation and choreography, something I am familiar with from my past as an artist. Dutch Leonard, a Harvard professor who spoke to a cohort of leaders in the

Wexner Heritage program in the fall of 2020, also aligns this improvisation with general business problem-solving – understand a situation, create options, predict outcomes, choose the best approach and repeat. Our growing partnership with the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts (FBWM) is one of those approaches.

With its 200 volunteer drivers, RT has been transporting healthy meat, produce and dairy directly from designated grocery stores to FBWM agencies, filling the gap where agencies lack transportation or when its volunteers were needed elsewhere.

“Our teams met and it made sense to match our agencies' needs with RT's operations,” said Shirley DelRio, FBWM's director of Food Operations.

RT thanks the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts for a \$7,000 grant in 2019 that helped purchase 100 blankets and thermometers to keep food safe while in transport.

This is not the only partnership born out of leveraging each agency's most important assets and sharing in the reward of helping others. Our most recent delivery of close to 75,000 pounds of lasagna was also born of partnerships we now cherish with Timberland Trucking, Climate Engineering, J. Polep, USA Waste and Recycling, CT Foodshare and the Springfield Rescue Mission.

Partnerships with many new people and organizations have helped Rachel's Table rejuvenate and sustain itself and our mission by giving us the ability to do more for more people. The 140,000 pounds of food we delivered each month for a long time during the pandemic was in part possible because of our larger network of partners, grown out of breaking down fences and collaborating in new ways. The pandemic, as well as ancient tradition, has been teaching our 30-year-old program how to stay nimble, sustainable and connected.

Jodi Falk is the director of Rachel's Table, a program of the Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts.

Preparing to help those looking for a fresh start in the United States

By Jeffrey Kinney

As employees of non-profit, community-based organizations, each of us gets up in the morning ready to take on tasks that will, even in some small way, further our mission and impact the lives of others.

Then one morning, you wake up and realize there is an international humanitarian crisis brewing. Not only will you need to continue the important work for those you serve, but you and your colleagues must now must prepare to welcome and help provide refuge for over a thousand people fleeing their country in order to escape war and persecution.

Still, Ascentria Care Alliance and other refugee resettlement agencies are ready to assist in the effort as best we can. Ascentria is called to respond not only to the Afghan crisis, but also to the needs of all refugees. It is core to our mission, as we are called to strengthen communities by empowering people to respond

to life's challenges.

Resettlement agencies will face challenges of their own as we strive to provide support for those arriving in the United States.

The last four years of dramatically increased restrictions, and reduced refugee admissions have left many agencies with inadequate staffing due to reduced federal funding. Meanwhile, Massachusetts is expected to welcome an estimated 1,000 Afghan citizens fleeing Afghanistan in the wake of the Taliban's takeover. As they arrive amid COVID-19 and the associated economic fallout, it is critical for the Commonwealth to support these refugees, as well as the resettlement agencies.

One of the keys to ensuring that refugees are successful in their transition to the United States is to provide wraparound support services through resettlement agencies. These services include support to secure housing and food, employment counseling,

training and job placement, English language classes and interpretation services, just to name a few.

Another challenge unique to the crisis in Afghanistan is that the U. S. State Department has classified most evacuees as “humanitarian parolees,” meaning that they are ineligible for many federal resources available to those arriving as “refugees.” This will put increased pressure on resettlement agencies to provide support and assistance while these individuals work through a process that can often take years.

Agencies across the state are currently lobbying the Massachusetts Legislature for long-term supplemental funding, as traditional federal funding is inadequate. The Commonwealth traditionally trails other states in both the number of individuals resettled as well as wraparound support services. We need to change that.

Another serious challenge to resettlement is the lack of

affordable housing. When we resettle refugees, we do it with the intent of helping them become financially self-sufficient. The scarcity of affordable housing in many cities and towns is contributing to financially untenable situations. The impossible cost of housing will force refugees to leave Massachusetts and move to more affordable parts of the country. We are anxious to partner with others to make affordable housing more available and keep these people in our communities. Their departure is a loss we cannot afford, as research shows that refugees contribute to the well-being of the economy.

One of the contributors to our current labor shortage is the lack of refugees resettled over the last four years. New refugees are critical to filling the gaps. Many businesses and nonprofits are struggling to remain viable given significant worker shortages, and historically, refugees have been more than capable of filling these positions. As we

work with new arrivals to improve their professional and language skills, we must keep the pipeline of refugees from Afghanistan and other countries open to do our part in the global humanitarian effort and support our economic growth here at home.

While it may sometimes feel like an impossible task – to prepare so quickly, resettle so many and do it all with greatly reduced resources – it is unthinkable to do anything less. Like our fellow resettlement agencies, Ascentria's heart and soul were built for this moment. If you are so inclined to join us in our work to welcome Afghan individuals, Afghan families and refugees from many other countries, please know that your offer of time, talent or treasure is much appreciated.

Jeffrey Kinney is the chief of strategic development for Ascentria Care Alliance.



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A VIEW FROM THE HILL

*A commentary from a
legislator on human services*



Addressing childhood trauma throughout the Commonwealth

By Representative Michael Finn

The recent start of the school year brings a fresh reminder of the trauma children have experienced over the past year and a half. This pandemic has been particularly hard on children: they have been cut off from existing support systems, some have seen family members die of COVID, and others have faced increased food and housing insecurity, on top of which communities of color and low income communities have been hit disproportionately hard. Unfortunately, even in non-pandemic years, many children in Massachusetts experience trauma from things like abuse or neglect, natural disasters, economic hardship, or violence. From schools to health care, trauma can change the way children interact with important systems and can cause difficult and often misunderstood behaviors.

Human service workers have been and will continue to work with children experiencing trauma. However, the Commonwealth does not currently have a system in place to support the workers interacting with these children. Massachusetts lacks a statewide definition of childhood trauma and does not have a way to provide guidance or resources on the best way to work with children who have experienced trauma. This gap leaves child-serving state agencies and organizations on their own to navigate such a complex topic. Ensuring that we can help providers to identify best practices for working with children who have experienced trauma is another important way we can support some of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable residents.

The Legislature is acutely aware of the importance of addressing childhood trauma. In 2018, we created a Childhood Trauma Task Force that has been making recommendations to address the Commonwealth's response to childhood trauma. In the Fiscal Year 2022 budget, we set aside \$1 million for the creation of the Massachusetts Center on Child Wellness and Trauma. Most recently, the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities heard a bill, H.238/S.81, that would codify the Center on Child Wellness and Trauma into statute.

I believe that this Center is an exciting step to better support our children and empower those working with children across all sectors, including child welfare, juvenile justice, education, and health care. The goal of the Center is to serve as a resource for

child-serving organizations for topics related to childhood trauma and suggest ways these organizations can support children who have experienced trauma. The Center would do things like provide training to specific organizations on trauma-informed practices, collect and distribute information related to childhood trauma, evaluate best practices for working with children who have experienced trauma, and create learning communities for providers to share their experiences working with children who have experienced trauma.



*Representative
Michael Finn*

We've seen the impressive effects that evidence-based training can have. Through a program called "Building Resilient Children," the Massachusetts Office of the Child Advocate and University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School have been piloting a system of training early childhood educators in Worcester on trauma-informed responses to their students. The results have been impressive: instances of children exhibiting trauma-related behaviors have dropped, as have the rates of suspensions and expulsions. The Center on Child Wellness and Trauma provides a chance to bring these opportunities to a larger audience in a diverse range of sectors around the Commonwealth.

In a number of ways, COVID has highlighted gaps in our society. Childhood trauma is no exception. This has been a devastating year and a half for children. This term, we have the opportunity to meaningfully build on steps the Legislature and community partners have already taken to improve the response to childhood trauma in Massachusetts. As we return to in-person services, the Center on Child Wellness and Trauma can not only help address the needs of children suffering from trauma related to the pandemic, it will be a vital resource for those serving children affected by all types of trauma in years to come.

Representative Michael Finn is the House Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities. He serves the 6th Hampden District, which includes West Springfield and parts of Springfield and Chicopee.

The opinions expressed in A View from the Hill and Viewpoints from Across the State are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the Providers' Council or its members.

BILLBOARD: Council marketing campaign in full swing this fall

Continued from Page 1

and CEO Michael Weekes.

The Council also introduced a mobile version of the ad for use in geofencing efforts. The mobile ads ran near Boston University and UMass Boston last month, with the aim of enticing local college students who want to make a difference in people's lives.

Geofencing is when someone creates a virtual geographic boundary, enabling software to trigger a response when a mobile device enters or leaves a particular area. For the Council, this

has meant mobile ads appeared on internet-connected devices on the respective campuses.

Both the geofencing and the billboard ads pushed people to the Council's job site, jobs.providers.org, where Providers' Council members can post an unlimited number of ads for free. In the past, similar ads have appeared on the MBTA, social media and the MassLive.com website. The site is also free to use for job seekers, who can create free accounts, upload a resume and more.

ARPA: Workforce remains top priority

Continued from Page 1

missing from human services, the safety and health of clients and residents are immediately at risk.”

Lydia Conley of the Association for Behavioral Healthcare, Tammy Mello from the Children’s League of Massachusetts and Chris White, president and CEO of Road to Responsibility and representing the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers, presented on a panel alongside Weekes about the workforce situation in their respective subsectors.

Weekes told the committees that such funding is desperately needed, as research studies commissioned by the Council and performed by the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute and the Public Policy Center at UMass Dartmouth found that the need for human services jobs is growing at an unsustainable rate across the Commonwealth, and that state contracts supporting low median salaries create a significant hiring disadvantage for the sector.

“These positions are historically underpaid, and many (human services workers) earn less than what they can get at a local grocery store or a coffee shop,” Weekes said. “These funds will help us recruit the best and the brightest.”

White noted that the workforce shortages currently being endured by the sector “are of truly epic proportions” and are the worst he has seen in his 41-year career in human services.

“It is critically important that this funding be appropriated and disseminated to the sector in a rapid manner,” he said. “Individuals with disabilities and their families are suffering due to workforce-related service disruption. We need your help now.”

Mello, too, stressed the “urgency in investing in the human service workforce now.”

“The consequence of not investing in the human service sector will have a devastating impact on some of the most vulnerable children and families in the Commonwealth,” she said.

Sen. Cindy Friedman, vice chair of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, called the rates paid to direct care providers the “greatest barrier to moving to where we want to move” during the hearing, and she asked Executive Office of Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders – who also testified – about a possible timeline to addressing them.

“Do you have a plan or can you see a way that we can address this problem over the next five years with ARPA money, knowing that what we do has to be sustainable? I just can’t see our way out of this if we don’t increase our rates,” Friedman asked Sudders.

Sudders acknowledged the issue and pointed to the funding the state was already allocating to providers, including a 10 percent lift for most purchase-of-service programs that would be given to community-based human services organizations for July 2021 through December 2021 and is to be used primarily to compensate staff at those organizations.

“We have to invest in our workforce,” Sudders added. She noted, too, that there must be a longer-term solution to fix the issue of low wages for human services workers.

“The governor will file in January a bill that you’ve seen pieces of before to really invest in primary and behavioral health care because that is the way forward and it can’t be once every 10 years,” Sudders said.

CONVENTION: Event takes shape confirming speakers and workshops

Continued from Page 1

than 1,000 attendees.

Additionally, nonprofit leader and advocate Vu Le will deliver the keynote address on Tuesday, October 19. Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders and Suffolk County District Attorney Rachael Rollins will also join the event to deliver a special message to attendees.

“We’re honored to once again welcome Governor Baker and Secretary Sudders to our Annual Convention & Expo, and we’re excited to be joined by Vu Le and Rachael Rollins as well,” said Providers’ Council President & CEO Michael Weekes. “With such incredible speakers and a number of great workshops lined up, the annual event will feature something for everyone.”

This year’s convention will feature nearly 30 workshops, two awards ceremonies and a number of exhibitors to help save attendees time and money. The Diamond Sponsors of the event are once again USI Insurance Services and Citizens.

Among the new diversity-related workshops are Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion: Creating safe spaces for the most marginalized people in America, DEI in Policy and Practice: How to be an ally as an employer and The Hands That Help: A Performative Memoir of a Black Female Service Provider.

Regarding emotional wellness, the convention’s new workshops on the subject include Trauma in Boys and Men Who Have Been Sexually Exploited, Nature as a Therapeutic Intervention, Completing the Stress Cycle with Music and Creative Expression

and Preventing Burnout, Compassion Fatigue, and Vicarious Trauma Post Pandemic.

Aside from diversity and self-care, one panel that is sure to generate buzz is Cybersecurity and Nonprofits, which among its three presenters will be a Special Agent from Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The workshops being offered this year – half of which are new -- fall into six tracks: Executive, Administration and Finance, Supervision and Management, Clinical and Direct Care, Human Resources and Personal Growth and Wellness.

They will be led by local and national experts in the fields of health and human services, finance, law, IT and data collection and more, and the quality of these professional development opportunities are supported by the accreditation of several national associations.

Like the 2020 convention, Essential: Then, Now and Always will be conducted entirely over a virtual event platform, ensuring attendees are able to meet safely.

Award-winning journalist Vanessa Welch of the Boston 25 News will also return to host the annual Peer Provider awards presentation, leading each award recipient in a conversation about their organization and its accomplishments over the last year.

Online registration is open through Thursday, Oct. 14 or until the convention is sold out. Complete information is online at providers.org. Workshop questions may be emailed to Mesa Merritt at mesa@providers.org.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS • FALL 2021

What: Certificate in Supervision Services – Fall 2021
When: Thursdays, (10/14, 10/28, 11/4, 11/18, 12/2, 12/9)
Time: 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Presenter: Jim Ognibene, Visioneer Consulting LLC; Comma Williams, Comma Williams Enterprises; Ginny Maglio, Optimum Development
Where: Online via Zoom
Cost: \$600 for members; \$900 for non-members
CEUs: An application has been submitted for this program for 18 social work continuing education credits.

What: 46th Annual Convention & Expo:
Essential: Then, Now and Always
When: Tuesday, October 19 through Thursday, October 21
Time: 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. daily
Featuring: Vu Le, Keynote Speaker
Governor Charlie Baker
Suffolk County DA Rachael Rollins, Special Guest
EOHHS Secretary Marylou Sudders, Welcome Remarks
Where: Online via our convention platform
Includes: Nearly 30 workshops on a variety of topics, award ceremonies, panels and more
Cost: \$110 members, \$160 non-members (closes 10/14)
Discounts available for sending 10+ and 20+ staff

Pre-registration for these events is required unless otherwise noted. Please visit providers.org/events to learn more and register for the event you wish to attend.

Questions? Call 508.598.9800 or email Mesa Merritt at mmerritt@providers.org.

SCHOLARSHIP: Council makes awards to four sector leaders

Continued from Page 1
Counseling at William James College.
“One of my goals is to complete my graduate education with as little debt as possible, and by reducing my financial burden, this scholarship has allowed me to focus on my schoolwork, rather than worry about how I would have covered part of my tuition,” Osei-Bonsu said. “I am very hopeful this scholarship award will inspire other foreign-born members of the human service community to pursue further education or professional development.”
The two Master in Public Administration (MPA) scholarships were awarded to Lucy McKinnon, the director of Home Care at Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley and North Shore, and Kianesha Reeves, a provider contract manager at Roxbury Youthworks, Inc. Only graduates of the Council’s Certificate in Human Service Management Program with Suffolk University are eligible to apply for the MPA scholarships.
“I feel very lucky to have this opportunity and to continue to do what I love to do at Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley and North Shore,” McKinnon said.
“I look forward to continuing my journey with the help from all of you,” Reeves added.
The Council’s Scholarship Committee is made up of Chair Joseph Leavey, president of Communities for People; Mia Alvarado, executive director of Roxbury Youthworks; Shaheer Mustafa, president/CEO of HopeWell, Inc.; Emmanuel Owusu, founding executive director of the African Bridge Network; and Nicole Rivers, associate director of the Moakley Center for Public Management at Suffolk University; and Michael Weekes, President/CEO of the Providers’ Council.
All four recipients will be honored at this year’s Convention & Expo, *Essential: Then, Now and Always*, on Oct. 21 at 1 p.m.

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