



WINTER 2025

HOW OUR “PROGRAM WITHOUT WALLS” IS REACHING YOUTH WITH THE MOST CHALLENGING MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS.

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,
Happy New Year!

It is my great pleasure to share news of The Home's impact with you. As a friend of The Home, you are integral to our success, so we strive to keep you informed not only at the outset of our endeavors, but all along the way.

In this spirit, we bring you a series of updates. Our cover story speaks to the difference our Program for Assertive Community Treatment for Youth (PACT-Y) is making in its second year of service. This breakthrough program is based on a time-tested model that has helped adults experiencing severe mental illness, and it is heartening to see that it is working for kids who haven't found help elsewhere. To be able to offer this service to youth in dire need of care fills me with pride.

Janice Edith, an extraordinary young woman at our Somerville Village program, is also checking in. Janice came to The Home five years ago, and she has been making the most of her opportunities ever since. She was featured in this newsletter in 2021, and we're happy to be back with her latest achievements.

We also profile Jake Mikalauskis, a runner on our 2025 Boston Marathon team. As a teen, Jake benefited from the services of The Home in Walpole. Now an adult, Jake will soon be going the distance for kids in our care.

Lastly, thank you to everyone who contributed to our Big Wishes Gift Drive. During the challenging holiday season, one of our clinicians told a mother, new to The Home's programs, that we could help give her children a happier holiday. Every day this mom advocates for her family, but here we were approaching *her* with access to presents and essentials, unasked. With disbelief and gratitude, she made a small wish list. For our families to have one less worry, one less disappointment and to feel the care of this community? That's not just a gift. That's magic.

Gratefully,

Lesli Suggs, LICSW
President & CEO

A FULL-CIRCLE MARATHON MOMENT

A FORMER RESIDENT OF THE HOME LACES UP TO SUPPORT YOUTH IN OUR CARE.



For someone like Jake Mikalauskis who experienced a troubled adolescence, it would be very easy to want to run from one's past. Jake, however, has boldly chosen to run *for* it, by taking on the 129th

Boston Marathon® presented by Bank of America to pay tribute to his personal experience at The Home and support its vital work.

As a teenager, Jake struggled to stay out of trouble. He was impulsive and short-tempered, and no stranger to getting into fights at school or having run-ins with the local police and juvenile court system. His behavior led him to be committed to the Department of Youth Services. During his freshman year of high school, the agency released Jake from its care and secured him a placement at Longview Farm, now known as The Home in Walpole.

In his six months at the private residential school for youth with behavioral, emotional and educational challenges, Jake developed relationships, benefited from the structure of campus life and developed life skills that he appreciates to this day.

"Longview taught me a lot about responsibility, which I didn't know much about at the time, but I also had a lot of fun," says Jake. Some of his best memories include enjoying weekly visits from his favorite volunteer and playing on the basketball team. He can still vividly recall traveling with his lively teammates to play against youth at another school in Plymouth. "When you are a kid in a program like that, you can feel so detached from the outside world," Jake admits. "But now, I am able to look back and see how much The Home taught me about real life and appreciate how it gave me those experiences. That's why I'm so happy to fundraise."

Now 26 years old, the Braintree resident and father is eager to get out on the running course to bring visibility to the organization's 30+ programs that work to make a difference in the lives of 15,000 kids and families each year. •



VISIT thehome.org/run to support The Home's marathon team and meet our other runners!

JANICE'S NEXT CHAPTER: FINISHING STRONG!



Janice Edith makes a habit of living her dreams.

You might remember reading about Janice in this very space, a few years ago. She is the remarkable young woman at The Home's Somerville Village program who, after growing up watching Miss America pageants as a girl, bravely stepped onto the stage herself to compete in the 2021 Miss Massachusetts pageant. She did so not only to realize her childhood dream, but to use the platform to inspire other young women who have suffered abuse not to give up on theirs.

One year prior to the pageant, when she was 18, Janice left everything she knew to come to Somerville Village, our residential program for young women who are at risk for homelessness and driven to pursue higher education. She made the difficult decision to sever all ties with her physically and psychologically

abusive family for a setting that would support her educational and professional goals. If she hadn't, college wouldn't have been a part of Janice's future.

TOMORROW BEGINS TODAY

At Somerville Village, Janice found coaching and unwavering support from Home staff Maggie Gravely and Rehena Rana; they helped her build practical life skills and strive for previously unattainable goals. Janice completed high school at the top of her class and enrolled at Suffolk University, where she is majoring in business.

In short time, another dream took flight: studying abroad. A summer trip to Spain fueled her curiosity about other cultures. "I wanted to go for the education and to grow personally and as a professional," says Janice.

DREAMING NEW DREAMS

Maggie and Rehena fully backed the idea. They told her she can do it. "They not only support my education," says Janice, "they encourage me to finish it and finish it strong!" Besides, continues Janice, "Somerville Village advocates for young women like me to have an opportunity to get an education in any shape, way or form." France was her top choice, but, when she applied as a sophomore, she wasn't accepted. Determined, Janice met with her advisor and the study abroad department and tried again—this time to Sweden. "I insisted," says Janice, smiling brightly. "I thought if I have support at The Home, I'm not

going to stop dreaming." She was admitted and spent the spring of her junior year at Stockholm University School of Business.

EXPLORING NEW HORIZONS

In Sweden, Janice immersed herself in the culture, its diversity, food and music, engaged with locals and other international students, and marveled in the postcard-perfect scenery. She went skating and skiing after class and traveled by bus to Finland and by cruise ship to Estonia.

Janice wouldn't call the semester easy, however. "It's beautiful," she reveals, "but it's hard to be a new student in a new place with new people and challenges." There are elements you can't prepare for, like adapting to a new language and negotiating a foreign academic system and teaching styles—an education in and of itself.

Janice's time abroad expanded her worldview and opened her eyes to what she left behind. She cried when she returned to familiar terrain, she admits. "I was like, 'Wow, I'm grateful to be back home. I'm grateful to be an American citizen with the opportunity of education and resources, like Somerville Village.'"

"...If I have support at The Home, I'm not going to stop dreaming."

This May, Janice will graduate from Suffolk University with a degree in global business with a concentration in finance, and we can't wait to see where the future takes her. "I see my education as a passport to a better life and to success," says Janice. "Let's stamp it and get it full!" ●

THE IMPACT OF BIG WISHES!

The Home's 2024 holiday gift drive was a triumph, thanks to the generosity of our big-hearted community. Individuals, families, volunteers, companies and corporate partners not only showed up for the children and families we serve, they spread joy, wrapping those who need it most in the spirit of the season.

Together, we granted:

- ♥ The wishes of **5,324** children and young adults
- ♥ Collected **20,000** toys!
- ♥ Distributed grocery and department store gift cards to **1,324** kids and families
- ♥ Raised nearly **\$120,000** for our programs

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR BIG WISHES PARTNERS:



THE HOME FOR LITTLE WANDERERS | TJX VOICES & VISIONS

SAVE THE DATE!

Join The Home this spring for a special evening celebrating—and powering—our mission to help children and families build permanent, positive change. This festive, inspiring gala raises critical funds to help create better, brighter futures for kids! Hope to see you there!

Voices & Visions

Thursday, May 15, 2025

Fairmont Copley Plaza,
Boston, Massachusetts



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AS SEEN IN OUR TOY ROOM...

At The Home's hub of gift giving, these are a few of the many wonders we witnessed this year:

- A first-time giver without kids of her own, who shops sales all year long to collect toys for children in the community. She took the week off to stop in multiple times with bags overflowing with toys, jewelry and toiletries.
- A clinician collecting treasures for a family she has come to know well with five excited kids yet very little to put under the tree—and her delight to deliver Barbies for the twins, a model airplane for the 7-year-old, and more!
- The arrival of a special bicycle, earmarked for a deserving (and thrilled!) eight-year-old, thanks to employees at Landry's Bicycles, who pooled their funds to provide this memorable, meaningful gift.
- Donations coming in by the dozens from a boho-chic business and a favorite burger chain because employees on their teams utilized our agency's services when they were young... and it changed their lives.
- A mother and her son, newly homeless and living in a shelter this holiday, supported by a family who gives anonymously each year. The kindness of their "Secret Santa" left Mom speechless when they received quality blankets and clothing, gas and grocery gift cards and two PS5 controllers for her gamer!

1. L-R: New England Council's Colleen Fitzgerald Frank, Ashley Rose Løkken, Konah Brownell, Bill Beach, Pauline Speekas and India Clark; 2. Citizens CBEX volunteers, standing L-R: Jonathan LaDuke, Miles Barrett, Meryl Bosse, Aaliyah Tamart, Alex Turco and Bella DeSouza, kneeling L-R: Dan Bango, Krysten Dipollino and Caroline Robinson; 3. A two-wheel delivery, courtesy of Landry's Bicycles.

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