









### NEWS FROM THE HOME FOR LITTLE WANDERERS SUMMER 2025

### **MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED!**

### **CONGRATULATIONS TO SOMERVILLE VILLAGE'S 2025 GRADUATES!**

The Home's Somerville Village has reason to celebrate! In May, eight college students in the educational support program for young women experiencing or on the verge of homelessness, earned their bachelor's or associate's degrees. It is the innovative program's largest graduating class since opening in 2017; more than half of its 15 residents are now embarking on their next chapters.

"Many of these young women come from shelters, and their journey is a powerful reminder that with determination and support, anything is possible," explains Program Director Reanna Ross. "Here, they have earned a spot where they are able to thrive and become academic achievers. Now, they're on honor rolls, going for their master's degrees and ready to move on with their adult lives. It's just beautiful."

### **OH, THE PLACES THEY'LL GO**

The young women are ambitious and fiercely focused. One individual, who dreams of working at the United Nations, was unhappy with the B- on her transcript from the time she was homeless. "She could have paused on schooling, but she did not. She stayed full time when she was in shelters,"

says Reanna, marveling. "I told her: 'To receive a grade like that when you're going through that struggle? You have to think about that achievement, give it grace and pat yourself on the back." Reanna's words resonated with the student; she felt lighter, happier.

"That's the type of drive we try to bring here," Reanna continues. "It's those goal-driven young ladies who want to be successful in life, by going to school and achieving their short-term goals along the way." Life coaches, like Dorothy Grooms, who are the backbone of the program staff, help them get there.

Dorothy cheers on the young women, helps with schoolwork and job applications, supports their mental health needs, advocates for housing and more. "We plan out things for the day, the week, the month, and eventually have their path for the future," says Dorothy. The staff does

Research has shown that fewer than 3% of youth who age out of care with nowhere to go will earn a college degree by age 25. Somerville Village diverts this outcome by providing housing, therapeutic, emotional and educational support to women aged 18 to 25.

everything they can to ensure residents are set up for success when they leave.

### **MODEL STUDENTS**

Dorothy gets emotional when thinking about the grads, and their struggles and strength. "They are just amazing women," she says. "They deserve so much, because they're putting so much into themselves and out to this community, and into this world. I am so proud to even know them."

This graduating class has made their mark, and then some. "Their success gives hope to those who are continuing their education," says Reanna, "and to the next young women to come in."

## HATS OFF TO OUR GRADS!



Sail University, Creative Writing ♥ Liza - Bunker Hill Community College, Psychology ♥ Aria - Bunker Hill Community College, Health Science

### FROM THE PRESIDENT

#### Dear Friends,

Greetings! Spring is always a busy time at The Home! In addition to the work of our 30+ programs, there is another facet of our mission that is ongoing and critical, and that's our commitment to advocacy. This work takes The Home team out into the community, to advisory panels, task forces and to seats of government.

Our organization is invested in creating better, brighter futures, and we have found that one of the best ways to effect change is through advocacy. When we are in the rooms where public policy is shaped, lived experience is shared and professional perspectives are traded, we give voice to children throughout our communities who deserve to be heard. We lift up families, including those of our talented workforce, by doing our part to move the needle on legislation that would look out for those in the human services field, while they look out for others. So, we do this every chance we get.

We are committed to civic and governmental engagement and to collaboration, so I'm pleased to announce the arrival of Rick Musiol, Jr., The Home's new Chief External Affairs Officer. We are thrilled to have Rick aboard to expand what's possible for the children and families we serve.

The Home is a leader in the child welfare space, and we see this as an achievement and a responsibility. We were honored that Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll chose our Harbor Area Family Resource Center (see right) as the site to issue her administration's Child Abuse Prevention Month proclamation, and prouder still to watch her tour our facility, speaking with staff, children and families, to see our work in action. We are making a difference, and we couldn't do it without you. Thank you.

With gratitude,

Lesli Suggs, LICSW, President & CEO

### MEET THE HOME'S NEW CHIEF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS OFFICER



Welcome to Rick Musiol, Jr.! Rick's appointment to the new role of Chief External Affairs Officer reflects our agency's commitment to innovation and our belief that meaningful, lasting change is rooted in community. Rick brings a wealth of leadership experience in external affairs and civic engagement to The Home and oversees

government relations, external partnerships and community engagement efforts in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and New York, deepening our connections and impact.

# MAKING A SPLASH IN THE HARBOR AREA

In July of 2023, The Home opened the Harbor Area Family Resource Center (FRC) in Chelsea, Mass. It is the second program of its kind for our agency and part of a network of 32 centers across the Commonwealth. On average, an FRC works with 610 families per year. **Our Harbor Area Family Resource Center has served 1,599 families since its inception.** 

Some families come once a month, others multiple times a week. They first arrive seeking support with a basic need, like food, housing or help navigating a difficult situation or system. Within moments, our staff makes them feel comfortable and seen. They're addressed by name, offered coffee and discover they have access to services, support groups and programs tailored to help them reach their goals, and they spread the word.

School Liaison Leslie Flores, who was born and raised in Chelsea, speaks to the FRC's hospitality. "I don't know of another organization that is so homey or interpersonal. We really connect with every person we see."

The scope of the work is broad. The FRC supports families whose children are struggling through referrals, family support plans and parenting education, connects families to resources that address their unique needs and helps them navigate systems, such as housing and education. They assist with materials, like produce, clothing and diapers, and offer a wealth of programs, from a young parent support group to special education workshops to computer classes.



Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll with staff and families at our Harbor Area Family Resource Center

The small staff extends their reach by nurturing connections within the community. "We try to be an open door, not only to families but to community partnerships,"

says Program Director Kristina Peralta, LICSW. Thinking strategically allows them to say "yes" when new needs arise. So, they table at schools and attend trainings and meetings in the area. "We're always everywhere," explains Leslie. "We have to learn more, in order to give more."

The regard our new FRC holds in the community is a result of this commitment. So is its considerable impact. Says Kristina, "There are a lot of places people could go for support, but they are making the choice to come here." •

# TAPPING STUDENT PASSION AND SKILLS







# AT WEDIKO. KIDS DISCOVER NEW PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS THROUGH MAPLE SUGARING

It's Saturday morning at The Wediko School in New Hampshire, and Joshua Stanton and Brendon Meyette have risen early. It's maple sugaring season, and they are eager to boil the sap they've collected from more than a dozen maple trees around the wooded campus. Since arriving at The Wediko School one year ago, Josh has taken his passion for maple sugaring to new heights. With the support of school staff, he's created Stanton's Syrup Shack, a small business and 20-tap producer that has become a hands-on learning experience for him and his peers.

As students at The Home's residential treatment school, Josh and Brendon have seen their share of struggles, but standing by the tank, skimming off the foam that rises to the surface, some of that pain dissipates into the steamy, scented air. The two good friends will work outdoors until 6pm with the goal of making a gallon

# THE SWEET PRODUCTS OF MAPLE SUGARING:

- Leadership and entrepreneurship
- Community and camaraderie
- **♥** Teamwork
- ♥ Patience and persistence
- Time spent in nature
- Happy and lasting memories

of pure amber syrup by day's end. Here, life is sweet: they'll laugh, talk and enlist other kids to get involved, savoring the rewards of a yearlong effort and the slower pace of the boil.

### **MAKING HIS PITCH**

Josh got into maple sugaring at his previous program, where he learned about the process from a mentor and received a scholarship to launch his own project. When he came to Wediko, he advocated to continue his work and made a persuasive pitch to the administration. He'd budget and do the research, handpick trees on campus, discover more about the art and science of tapping and teach other students how to make maple syrup. The staff said "yes." Josh was thrilled that they were willing to listen, learn and allow him to share his interest with others.

Earning the Director's approval meant that Josh and other students would build confidence and life skills while making maple syrup, create positive childhood memories and deepen their connections with peers and staff, which is foundational to Wediko's philosophy. Maple sugaring became an anticipated activity for students who don't go home on weekends. During the week, you might see students in a group therapy session collecting sap with their clinician.

#### PLEASURE IN THE PROCESS

"It's really neat to share my passion with kids like Brendon and get others interested. I think it's important they have an opportunity to learn. Most people don't realize how hard it is to make maple syrup. It's a process. The last boil, it took seven hours to make three pints, but it was so worth it!" gushes Josh.

Brendon is quick to agree, and adds that he is grateful to Josh, who has helped him through a lot. "This is honestly one of the best things I've done," shares Brendon, reflecting. "It has kept me from causing trouble. Ever since I started doing this, I've been able to keep myself under control. It brings me back to when I was younger and always outside with my friends."

The students' success with maple sugaring flows into school, their treatment and into forming genuine connections. "Our students have a lot of challenges they've experienced prior to coming to Wediko," explains Director Toby Iselin, M. Ed. "Finding those areas of success to build from is critically important. Students are setting and achieving short- and long-term goals. This goes beyond maple sugaring; it's helping them to be successful in all parts of their lives." •

# A SINGULAR SENSATION!

The Home's 2025 Voices & Visions annual spring fundraiser was moving and magical, and raised over \$1.1 million towards better, brighter futures for kids! The ballroom of The Fairmont Copley Plaza positively vibrated with community and possibility, as youth and young adults served by our organization mingled with sponsors, supporters, board members and staff.

Speakers who have lived The Home's mission were the heart of the program. An inspirational young woman from our Somerville Village program, a gold-star foster parent who has cared for 17 kids in 18 years and a recent graduate of The Wediko School captivated those in attendance with their stories, vulnerability and courage.

Other highlights included a show of support by honored guest Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll, who joined us during the reception to commend The Home's programs, eight-yearold Bobby Atchinson's acceptance of this year's President's Award for his entrepreneurship and kindness, and heartfelt recognition for Board Chair Tim Miner, who is stepping down from his leadership role. Tim was surprised by a tribute video, with appearances by President & CEO Lesli Suggs, LICSW, former and current board members, and his family, which captured his commitment to kids within our organization and in his own home.

The event ended on a high note, as friend of The Home Chuck Dukas led the Fund-a-Future bidding, compelling everyone to open their hearts and Be the Reason that youth throughout the Northeast have the resources, services and opportunities they need to thrive. The crowd matched his energy, holding their paddles high to help fund the critical work of The Home.

One staff member, who was attending for the first time, said she was astonished by the generosity of the bidders and grateful "to witness such kindness in people." We couldn't agree more. Thank you to Title Sponsor The TJX Companies, Fund-a-Future Sponsor The Thrift Shop of Boston, and patron sponsors Christopher and Jean Egan, Deborah and Charles Gray, Damon and Kathy Hart, and Liberty Mutual Insurance for your partnership, to our Board of Directors and event committee and to everyone who joined us. You all are the reason it was a night to remember!

# THE HELL ME **VOICES & VISIONS**









1. Board Chair Tim Miner and his family 2. President's Award winner Bobby Atchinson with President & CEO Lesli Suggs 3. Speaker Joseph Pech-Buzek, a graduate of The Wediko School 4. Fund-a-Future!

### **SAVE THE DATE!**

The Wells Cup, The Home's Golf Invitational, is SEPTEMBER 8, 2025. Join us on the beautiful fairway of Black Rock Country Club for a day of play, networking and purpose to benefit the work of The Home. At this hole-in-one event, we pay tribute to tournament founder and cherished supporter Harry "Skip" Wells and continue his legacy of working to give every child a fair shot at the starting line of life!

FOR MORE INFORMATION, visit THEHOME.ORG/GOLF



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