

Horizons

A Publication for Seven Hills Foundation
Affiliates, Friends & Supporters

 **Seven Hills**
Foundation & Affiliates



REVITALIZING CROTCHED MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

SUMMER 2024

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO



Dr. Kathleen Jordan
President & CEO

Dear Friends,

Welcome to this edition of *HORIZONS*, a small sampling of the life-changing work underway throughout Seven Hills Foundation & Affiliates. Our community of 4,800 committed and compassionate professionals is supported by a growing corps of supporters who understand that, together, we are moving so many lives toward resilience, comfort, and happiness.

Our Core Values of Respect & Kindness – Integrity – Teamwork – Innovation – Service to Others, developed by our staff members, are the guiding light to all we strive to achieve.

Because of supporters like you, we can act on the creativity and determination of our incredible staff to deliver dynamic, exceptional services. Bringing **innovation** to support people in our care is a core value driven by **teamwork** as we collaborate and share best practices.

I am so proud of the leadership team we have in place, many of whom have decades of providing **service to others** by sharing their talents at Seven Hills. New members include Jennifer O'Brien, our chief information officer who is driving our industry-leading technology initiatives; and Leslie

Tellalian, our chief learning and development officer who leads the education of our team to ensure quality and staff career growth. Many of you spoke to me over the last year about providing more training opportunities. We welcomed our first director of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, Jacob Kelley, who ensures our staff and people we support are celebrated and embraced as vital members of our community.

Seven Hills' reputation for excellence is underscored by our reputation for **respect, kindness**, and dedicated **service to others**. Through the deliberate expansion of partnerships across Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island, Seven Hills is a sought-after resource when government and corporate entities look to create initiatives that help people in need—and we will continue to respond.

We believe Seven Hills Foundation & Affiliates is in a strong position to support people as well as to contribute to the collective good of society. In our steadfast efforts to achieve these aspirations, I invite you to join our team in

Answering
the call to care

Warm regards,

Dr. Kathleen M. Jordan
President & CEO

HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE



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Your gift brings immediate Hope and Healing. Make a tax-deductible donation, name Seven Hills as a beneficiary in your will, and learn how retirement plans make the most highly tax-efficient bequest to Seven Hills. Contact Kate Myshrall, vice president of Advancement, at 508.983.1302 or kmyshrall@sevenhills.org.

CAREERS ▶ sevenhills.org/careers

Seven Hills takes pride in being the Employer of Choice! Join our talented team of dedicated and compassionate staff. Contact Ginger Lavallee, talent acquisition manager, at 774.262.7205 or glavallee@sevenhills.org.

VOLUNTEER ▶ sevenhills.org/get-involved

Share your time and talents! See how you can volunteer at Seven Hills by visiting our "Get Involved" web page or email us at hr@sevenhills.org.

HORIZONS SUMMER 2024

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IN THIS ISSUE

IN THE NEWS

- 4 The Revitalization of an Institution
- 6 A 70th Anniversary Celebration to Remember
- 8 Career Pipeline Collaborative Builds Workforce
- 9 Respite Rejuvenation
- 10 Transformative Services for Youth & Families
- 12 48th Annual Lori Lajoie: Taking Turns at the Tee with a Twist
- 13 Curriculum for Creativity: Expanding Careers in the Arts
Aspiring to Showcase Creative Expression
- 14 Providing Care Coordination to MassHealth Members
- 16 Annual Day of Golf Creates Community Connections
- 17 Employment Matters
- 18 Patty's Garden
Anja's Light Shines Brightly for Children in Need

19 GRANTING GOOD WORK

20 SPOTLIGHT

THE REVITALIZATION OF A NEW ENGLAND INSTITUTION



Student smiles reflect school pride

For more than 70 years, Crotched Mountain School (CMS) has been a beacon of hope and opportunity for children with autism, disabilities, and/or other challenges better supported in an alternative, least-restrictive environment. Established in 1953 by Harry Allen Gregg, this cherished institution nestled in the heart of Greenfield, NH, has been celebrated for its pioneering practices in the field of developmental disabilities. From innovative educational approaches to compassionate residential care, Crotched Mountain School has exemplified the gold standard in serving its community.

However, the path to the institution’s preservation has not been without its challenges. In recent years, the original owner, Crotched Mountain Foundation, faced mounting financial obstacles exacerbated by shifting Medicaid policies and the disruptive force of the COVID-19 pandemic. These trials culminated in the closure of the campus. In 2020, Legacy by Gersh, a for-profit organization, assumed stewardship of the campus. Yet, when faced with the increasingly complex needs of its student base, the campus again was under the threat of closure, which Legacy by Gersh announced in November 2022.

When word of the closing reached his office, New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu recognized its significance and subsequent impact on the lives of the CMS students. With no time to waste, Governor Sununu extended a hand to Dr. David A. Jordan, then President of Seven Hills Foundation, who had led Crotched Mountain Foundation from 1985-1995. During his leadership, Dr. Jordan expanded the campus and lines of service, gaining national recognition for its exceptional programs catering to children with developmental disabilities.



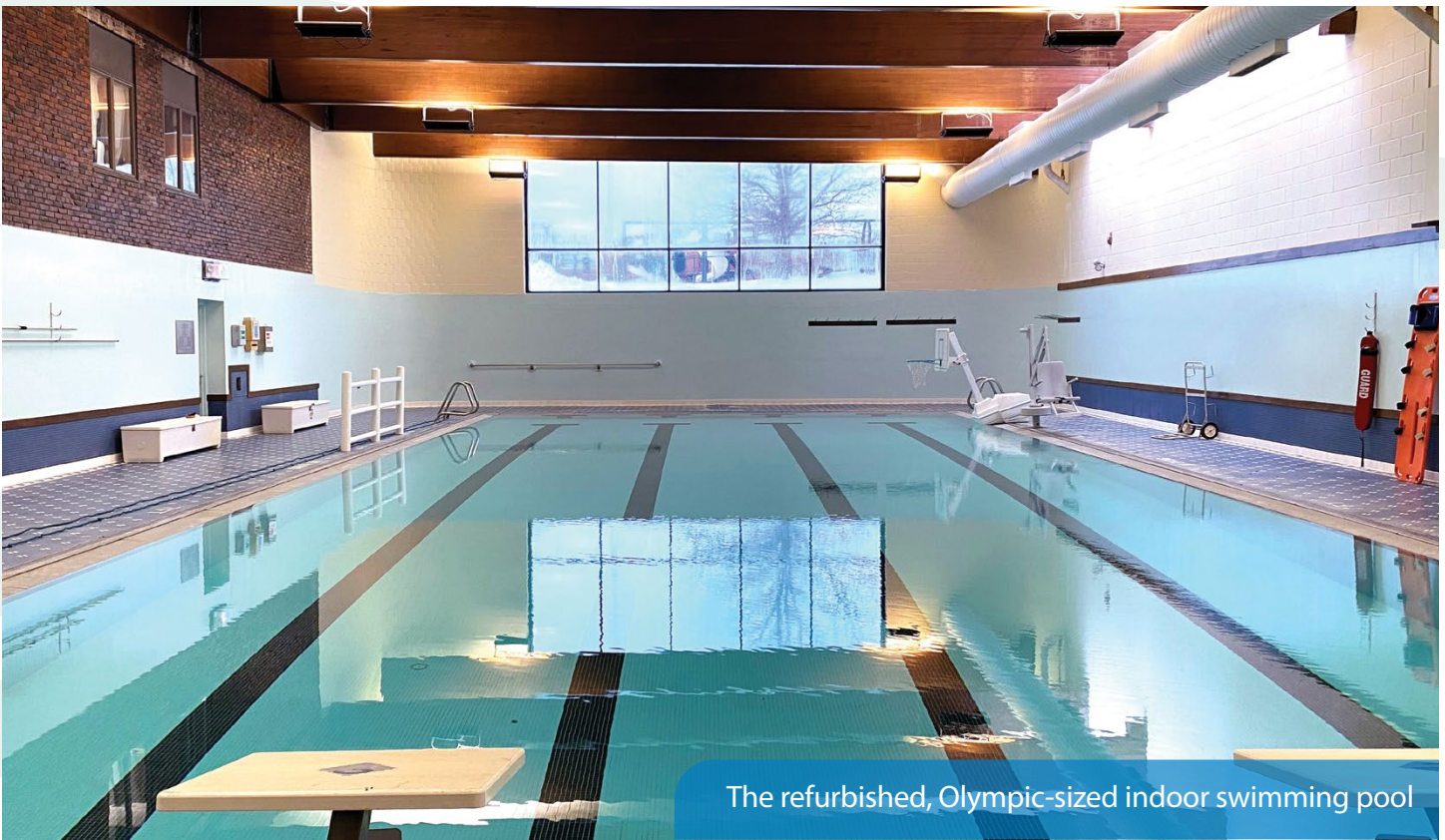
On November 18, 2022, after extensive negotiations and the securing of essential licenses, Seven Hills New Hampshire

commenced operations as the 15th affiliate of Seven Hills Foundation. The campus was renamed Crotched Mountain School and Village (CMSV), expanding the vision inspired by the Gregg Family to offer supports to adults with developmental disabilities through its Village component.

Seven Hills leadership worked with the State of New Hampshire and Commissioner of Education Frank Edelblut to secure \$6.8 million in ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds to address the years of deferred maintenance on campus. Additionally, Seven Hills Foundation contributed \$7 million toward Phase I of the renovations, which included the meticulous refurbishment of student and staff residences, the indoor swimming pool, and the campus heating system —infusing every endeavor with purpose and dedication.



Students share a special bond with staff who cheer them on toward achievement and growth



The refurbished, Olympic-sized indoor swimming pool

Joe Allred, vice president of Children's Congregate Care at Seven Hills, oversees the operational, academic, and clinical work at CMSV. With a profound commitment to the students and families, Allred and his team institute evidence-based curricula and therapeutic models to deliver person-centered care. The school is fully licensed and approved to serve up to 105 students and operates on a 220-day school year. The school's diverse student profile, stellar academics, and state-of-the-art therapeutic environment offer an exceptional destination that is unparalleled throughout the state.

Students have the option to live year-round in the appointed residences on campus, with access to CMS amenities that include a gymnasium, multiple therapy rooms, the indoor swimming pool, therapy pool, art room, media center, bowling alley, farm program classrooms, professional kitchen, dining hall, Sunset Lake, greenhouse & gardens, nature trails, and recreation areas.

Crotched Mountain School and Village has much to offer staff as well. A national effort is underway to recruit the best talent in educators, clinicians, and direct support specialists. With a steadfast resolve to uphold its legacy of excellence, CMSV is revitalized to foster growth, independence, and empowerment among its students.



Spirits soar in the great outdoors



Many Voices performing for the 70th Celebration

A 70TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION TO REMEMBER

The Seven Hills Anniversary Celebration at Mechanics Hall in June 2023, reflected on the 70 years of community care the Foundation provided for so many people in need. The event was a dedication to the families, caregivers, staff, leadership, supporters, and more who made this care possible.

The event opened with the beaming faces of the Many Voices Mechanics Hall Youth Singers, a diverse group of students from the 5th and 6th grades in Worcester to sing, “build friendships, and work toward excellence—together and in harmony.” (manyvoices.choirgenius.com, 2024)

The evening was led by master of ceremonies, James T. Brett, president and CEO of The New England Council and a lifelong champion for people with disabilities. Brett was chair of the President’s Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities under three U.S. Presidents, and chair of both the Governor’s Commission on Intellectual Disability and the Massachusetts Disabled Persons Protection Commission. Brett shared his personal family story that honored the fierce advocacy of his Mother for a loved one with a disability—like the mothers in the group that demanded rights and services for their children with disabilities and founded the Worcester Area Association of Retarded Children (WAARC), the forerunner of Seven Hills.

Incoming President and CEO Dr. Kathleen Jordan and Seven Hills Board Member Peter Stanton led a rousing Fund-A-Need for the Communities of Care Fund, highlighting the needs in many of the services provided by Seven Hills.

The event culminated in a tribute to the legacy of Dr. David A. Jordan who, for 28 years, carried on the work of WAARC by growing Seven Hills into a preeminent organization supporting over 60,000 people across three states. His vision sharply focused for near and far, Jordan took expansion to the global level honoring Seven Hills’ diverse staff and paying homage to their countries of origin through the affiliate, Seven Hills Global Outreach. Since 2010, Jordan has partnered with communities in eight nations around the world on sustainable improvements in social, education, and health initiatives. The tribute was memorialized in a video, with his story told by past



From left, Charlie Washburn, Beryl and Paula Rosenblum, and Tom Myshrall



Dr. Kathleen Jordan addresses the crowd

colleagues, board members, and advocates. In speaking to the attendees, Jordan underscored the significance of the past, but sagely advised to always look to the future and to keep progressing forward.



Scan the QR Code to view Seven Hills' 70th Anniversary video.

The celebration was made possible, in part, by the generosity of our major sponsors:

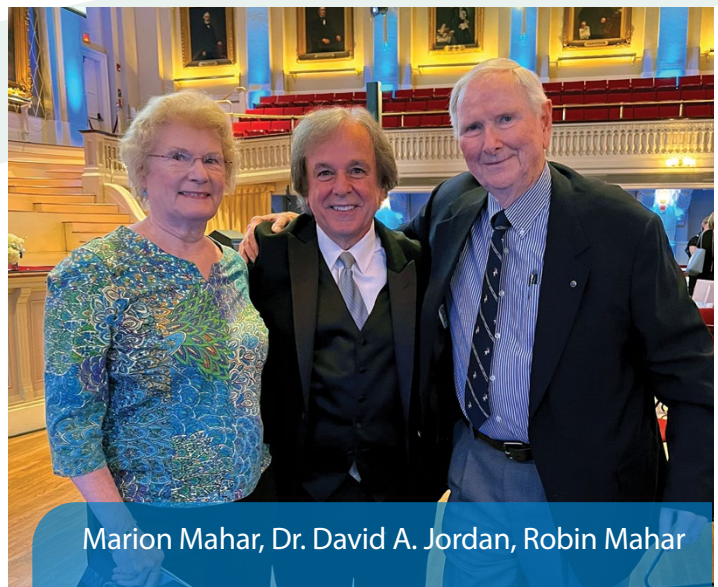
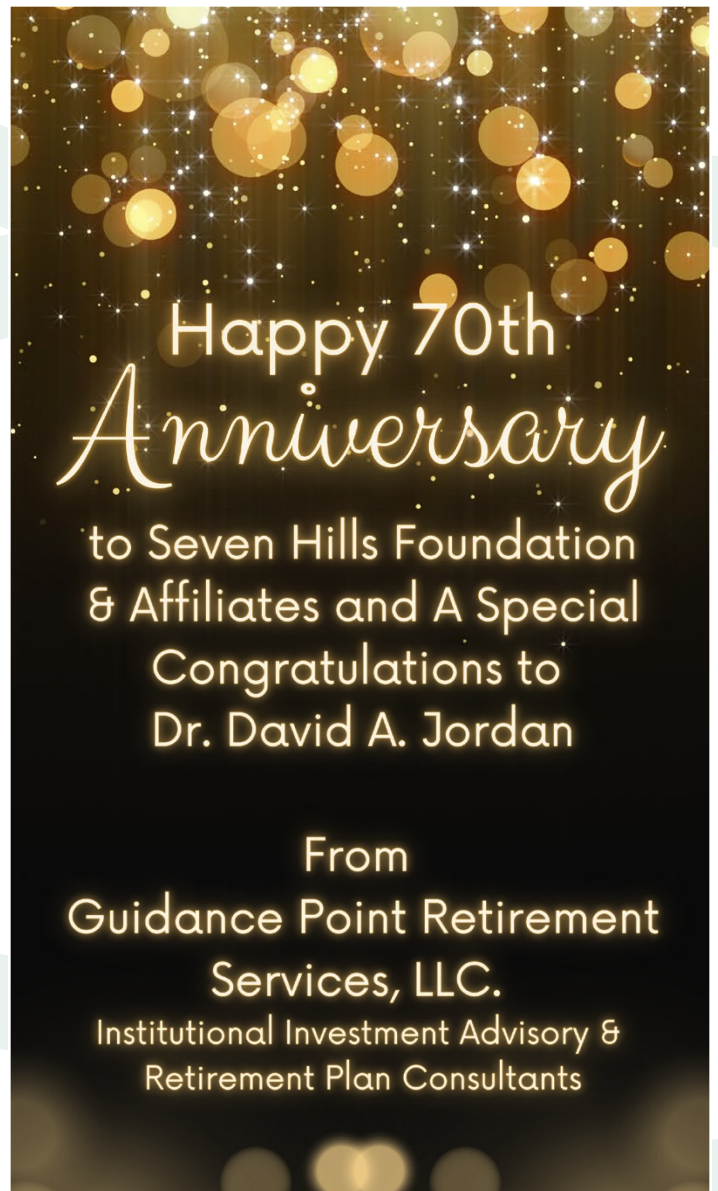
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Marion Mahar, Dr. David A. Jordan, Robin Mahar



CAREER PIPELINE COLLABORATIVE BUILDS WORKFORCE

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) is essential to one in ten residents who rely on the sector to protect, nurture, teach, house, and provide rehabilitative services for optimum wellness and quality of life. With over 180,000 jobs in the field and only 150,000 filled at any given time, the industry faces significant sustainability threats. Turnover rates average 30% and recruitment challenges perpetuate the sector’s revolving-door cycle of employee shortfall.

In 2019, Seven Hills Foundation partnered with Open Sky Community Services, MassHire, and local cultural organizations to launch the Central Mass Behavioral Health/Human Services Career Pipeline Collaborative. A feasibility study and planning process led to funding for the initiative by the Fairlawn Foundation of Greater Worcester Community Foundation. The Collaborative’s approach to the HHS staff shortage features the following coordinated recruitment/retainment strategies:

- 1) Attract immigrants and refugees to the field
- 2) Increase racial equity in provider agencies
- 3) Attract and engage youth in high school to consider human services careers
- 4) Increase support for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) staff to pursue leadership and clinical advancement in provider agencies

The strategies are channeled through an evolving suite of programs gaining traction within targeted communities:

Clinical Pathway/College Partnerships (CP2) provides paid internships for BIPOC undergraduate and graduate students needing practical experience to complete their clinical degree programs. In a featured partnership with Framingham State University’s Accelerate the Future, CP2 cohorts earn their Master’s in Counseling Psychology. Graduates are eligible for clinical licensure and commit to working at their agencies for a minimum of three years.

BIPOC Clinical and Leadership Pathway promotes the recruitment, retention, and training of BIPOC and under-represented staff in the central MA Behavioral Health/ Human Services workforce. This model aims to mitigate barriers and enhance access to education for eligible staff seeking certificate-level achievement, college credit, advanced degrees, and leadership training.



Human Services Career Support (HSCS) provides training for BIPOC, refugees, immigrants, and other underserved groups to gain employment in direct support and home/community-based long-term support in the central MA HHS sector. Eligible participants receive five months of paid training, peer mentorship, internships/job rotations, and a certificate of completion. Newly certified staff is guaranteed career placement in one of the program's career tracks in a partner agency.



Dynamic Futures was launched by UMass Chan Medical School in summer 2022, to introduce high school students, underrepresented in medicine, to careers in mental health. The program is supported by the Worcester Division of Youth Opportunities, Worcester Public Schools, Worcester State University, and Behavioral Health and Human Services providers including Seven Hills Foundation.

The Career Pipeline Collaborative's cultural navigators from African Community Education (ACE) and Southeast Asian Coalition (SEAC) have been significant factors in achieving recruitment and retention benchmarks for BIPOC and other underserved groups. Similarly, the career support and advancement navigators play a critical role in ensuring participants have the support they need to succeed.



Tashiani Foreman, Seven Hills' career support and advancement navigator/internship coordinator for the Career Pipeline Collaborative, has been instrumental in its success. Her leadership acumen and experience in health and human services have significantly contributed to the

program's outstanding progress. Foreman's own career pathway exemplifies the model for which participants strive to achieve their full potential in the workforce.

The Career Pipeline Collaborative is funded in part by the MA EOHHS, a Senator Kenneth J. Donnelly Workforce Success Grant funded through the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund, the City of Worcester (American Rescue Plan Act or ARPA), and in-kind support from Seven Hills Foundation and Open Sky Community Services.

RESPIRE REJUVENATION

Caregivers are the backbone of individuals supported. They can be family members, shared living providers — non-legal guardians who often provide 24/7 care with very few breaks. Now, Seven Hills Family Services (SHFS) is offering caregivers a restorative pause for self-care and to replenish the reservoirs of empathy and compassion.

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services awarded SHFS with a grant for Rejuvenate: Customized Respite (RCR), which offers innovative, flexible options, such as in-home, drop-in, evenings, and weekends, for families to create their own recipe for respite. Fun Brought to You is an in-home option for individuals who can't participate in traditional respite due to their complex needs. 1:1 support is provided for 3-4 hours. Weekend Respite Retreats provide individuals and caregivers with a two-night stay in an inclusive, novel environment. The retreats focus on underserved groups such as older caregivers and non-English-speaking families.



A challenging experience at a respite retreat

SHFS offers the Transition Respite program to transition-aged individuals and their families through a grant from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Special Education and the Department of Developmental Services. This respite option offers group evening and weekend programming tailored to young adults, including a Dungeons and Dragons Club, Boys 2 Men, Life Skills, Yoga, and a lineup of Saturday bus excursions.

Visit sevenhills.org/programs/respire-supports to learn more. For Rejuvenate Respite, call Jayne Bowler, 508.963.1425. For Transition Respite, call Noreen Alves, 774.688.4095.

TRANSFORMATIVE SERVICES FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES

YOU, Inc. has long been at the forefront of programming for youth involved in the state’s juvenile justice and child welfare systems. In 1971, the agency commenced operations with its groundbreaking Intensive Juvenile Probation program in partnership with the very first Juvenile Court in Worcester. YOU, Inc. now offers more than thirty clinic- and community-based behavioral health and education programs supporting Worcester’s youth and families in need.



Young Parent Support

THE DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES COMMUNITY SERVICES NETWORK

YOU, Inc. has served as the Department of Youth Services (DYS) since 2009, with program sites in Worcester, Southbridge, and Fitchburg. The agency was recently selected to implement the Department’s redesigned Community Services Network model for the Central Region. Within this contract, YOU, Inc.’s DYS program manager, clinical team, youth service coordinators, and parent partners work alongside DYS regional caseworkers to deliver restorative, culturally responsive services and supports to children and families involved with DYS.

Youth and family engagement is a central focus of the DYS Community Services Network model. From intake through all phases of the program, youth and their family members are meaningfully involved in assessments, service plans, and referrals for additional services such as family partners, intensive-care coordination, and in-home therapy.

Together, YOU, Inc. and the DYS Central Region team are working toward the Department’s mission to foster positive outcomes for youth, build safer communities, and collaborate for an equitable and fair justice system.

DELIVERING VITAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR WORCESTER’S STUDENTS

Building on more than five decades’ experience delivering comprehensive behavioral health and educational support services, YOU, Inc. was awarded a three-year contract to provide mental health services to Worcester Public School students enrolled in Pre-Kindergarten through grade 12.

In accordance with the contract, licensed YOU, Inc. clinicians deliver on-site services to the students, including individual counseling, mentoring, assessments, restorative practices, and behavior management. When needed, the team coordinates emergency mental health care and makes referrals for additional services such as family therapy, child psychiatry, and substance use services.

This significant partnership ensures that students are equipped with strategies and supports to thrive in their schools, family, or caregiving systems, and the community.

HELPING YOUNG PARENTS TO SUCCEED

YOU, Inc. was selected by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health’s Office of Sexual Health and Youth Development to provide essential services to expectant and parenting youth, aged 14-24, and their families. The Massachusetts Pregnant and Parenting Teen Initiative (MPPTI) model is designed to increase life opportunities for young parents, enhance family stability, and promote housing stability in priority communities. Within this contract, YOU, Inc. works with Latinx families in the state’s identified priority communities of Worcester and Southbridge.

YOU, Inc. has notable expertise providing community-based, supported living, and preventive services for pregnant and parenting teens and young adults. From case management to childbirth education, positive parenting training, budgeting, household management, and community connections, the YOU, Inc. team is supporting young families to achieve a safe, healthy, and productive future.



Southbridge Family Resource Center staff



Bi-Lingual Welcome Center reception & waiting area

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO CARE

In YOU, Inc.'s service area, cultural and linguistic inequities, poverty, and transportation challenges prevent children and families in need from receiving vital behavioral healthcare services, and the wraparound supports that promote healing and stability.

To address these significant barriers in South County, the Health Foundation of Central MA made a generous grant from their Activation Fund to develop a Bi-Lingual Welcome Center at YOU, Inc.'s Southbridge Behavioral Health Center and Family Resource Center. Collectively, the Centers provide individual and family therapy, parent education groups, information and referrals for safety-net supports, and cultural and recreational opportunities for children and families.

The Health Foundation's investment provides translation services, linguistically accessible facilities, and culturally aligned therapeutic tools and furnishings, and answers an urgent need in Southbridge and the surrounding area.



Bi-Lingual recreation room



48TH ANNUAL LORI LAJOIE: TAKING TURNS AT THE TEE WITH A TWIST

The 48th Annual Lori Lajoie Charity Golf Tournament was held on August 7, 2023, at Worcester Country Club (WCC)—with a twist. The course was undergoing major restorations by Gil Hanse, shortening the tournament to a 16-hole affair. A special Par 3 hole was set up in the practice range where the golfers used Ogg-mented irons designed for Wilson Sporting Goods in the 1930s by former WCC head pro, Willie Ogg, and a putter designed in the 1950s by Ogg’s WCC successor, John Bernardi. Golfers enjoyed taking a swing with the historic clubs and left thankful for the technological improvements over the last 94 years!

Despite the twists, the tournament remained a resounding success. With fewer players necessitated by fewer holes, the event still raised \$370,000 for the work of Seven Hills

Foundation. Sponsorships remained high, as did the auction bidding due to the steadfast commitment of the WCC members and their guests to the individuals supported by Seven Hills.

The volunteer Lori Lajoie committee’s relentless advocacy and creativity ensure the Tournament’s success each year. Seven Hills extends a heartfelt thank you to these heroes of the 48th Tournament:

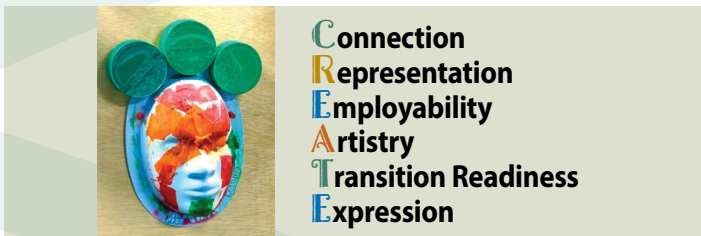
Co-Chairs Jan Fuller and Tom McNamara; Members Lyn Bartholomew, Diane Brazelton, Chris Campbell, James Ciociolo, Mark Fuller, Cathy Gusha, Dean Hickey, Mary Knox, Jackie Lajoie, Susan Lajoie, Margaret McKenna, Marcy Reed, and Kelsa Zereski.



CURRICULUM FOR CREATIVITY: EXPANDING CAREERS IN THE ARTS

For over 40 years, Open Door Arts (ODA) has increased access, representation, and participation in the arts for people with disabilities. ODA works with students, teaching artists, educators, and leaders of cultural organizations to make Massachusetts more inclusive through innovative programming, training, events, and gallery exhibits.

This year, ODA was thrilled to pilot the CareerCREATE program for high school students with disabilities to develop artistic skills and explore career pathways in the arts. The curriculum was designed in partnership with artists, educators, and youth career transition specialists to promote:



CareerCREATE offers visual arts, music, or drama instruction for one hour a week during the full school year (32 weeks); visits and lessons from artists with disabilities and cultural staff; and excursions to arts and cultural organizations, including the Museum of Fine Arts and Wheelock Family Theatre.

Five Boston Public schools are participating in the program this year: Boston Green Academy, Community Academy of Science and Health (CASH), Fenway High School, Brighton High School, and New Mission High School. To learn more or apply to be a CareerCREATE school, please email education@OpenDoorArtsMA.org.

ODA is grateful for the generous funding of this program by BPS Arts Expansion Fund at EdVestors, Hestia Fund, Linde Family Foundation, Someone Else's Child Foundation, Deborah Munroe Noonan Memorial Fund, Liberty Mutual Foundation, Wellington Management Foundation, Genesis Inspiration Foundation, Beker Foundation, and a VSA Arts Connect All Workshop/Residency Contract.

ASPIRING TO SHOWCASE CREATIVE EXPRESSION

The Open Door Gallery (ODG) at the Worcester Art Museum (WAM), ODG @ WAM, showcased the work of individuals in the Seven Hills ASPIRE! program who participated in art classes through the Open Door Arts (ODA) partnership with WAM. Each class begins with a tour of installed artists' work, during which the ASPIRE! artists note materials, textures, and perspectives. In the classroom, they are given full creative control of their artwork within a set of guidelines.

The ASPIRE! exhibit was a culmination of observation and interpretation. During the opening reception, the artists discussed their creative journeys.

Ryan's neon green swirl was inspired by an album cover. Ryan suggested that art is "a test;" not like a quiz, but more of an experiment. Ryan used different materials and colors to test what worked best for his style.



For his masterpiece, Alex was inspired by the sky. He placed blue fabrics on white canvas accented with a blue zipper midway, and butterfly fabric at the bottom. A swatch of shiny aluminum represents the clouds. Alex disclosed to viewers that he could, hypothetically, unzip the artwork and reveal what was beyond, right in front of them.



ODG @ WAM inspires people of all abilities to create and share art with the Greater Worcester community. Programming is made possible through generous funding from Greater Worcester Community Foundation, UniBank, Webster Five Foundation, Worcester Arts Council, and the J. Irving England and Jane L. Charitable Trust.

ODG @ WAM LOCATION, HOURS, ACCESSIBILITY

- Higgins Education Wing, 55 Salisbury St., Worcester
- 10am-4pm, Wednesday–Sunday
- 10am-8pm, third Thursday of every month
- Accessibility: worchesterart.org/visit/accessibility/

PROVIDING CARE COORDINATION TO MASSHEALTH MEMBERS



Care coordination includes in-home visits

Massachusetts Care Coordination Network (MCCN) operates as a collective partnership among leading health and human services agencies covering a broad geographic area in the northern, central, and southern areas of Massachusetts. MCCN provides integrated and comprehensive care coordination to individuals with complex lifelong needs who are enrolled in MassHealth. MCCN excels in strategically harnessing the most effective resources to tailor support to each individual's specific requirements. Empowering individuals with essential tools, the agency fosters self-directed and fulfilling lives.

MCCN's care coordinators adopt a comprehensive approach in collaboration with valued partners such as Seven Hills Foundation, Advocates, BAMSI, Boston Center for Independent Living, Springwell, and NuPath. The collaborative team considers a spectrum of health services, education, early childcare, early intervention, nutrition, housing, transportation, wellness coaching, and other human services essential for enhancing the overall quality of life for individuals. Through proactive outreach, meaningful engagement, and seamless connections to social services and community resources, the knowledgeable MCCN staff plays a crucial role in assisting members and their families to navigate the intricate landscape of Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) in Massachusetts.

MODEL ASSESSMENTS YIELD BENEFICIAL INSIGHTS

MCCN has successfully executed various Technical Assistance projects, including Advanced Data Analytics, Predictive Model Assessment, and Re-admission Predictor. Leveraging its sophisticated data collection and reporting capabilities, MCCN gauges the effectiveness of services and identifies significant health trends. Proficient delivery of quality metrics fosters streamlined communication between healthcare providers and patients, and insights into specific conditions and support requirements. This comprehensive data provides a holistic perspective of each patient, enabling MCCN to tailor treatments and optimize health outcomes based on individual needs.

CONSUMER ADVISORY BOARD

MCCN operates an active Consumer Advisory Board (CAB) featuring engaged enrollees, family members, and diverse caregivers, collectively reflecting the demographic richness of MCCN's population. The CAB is instrumental in advising MCCN's leadership, providing regular feedback on contract management and the delivery of long-term services and supports. The valuable insights derived from this collaborative effort play a critical role in informing decisions aimed at maintaining and enhancing the exemplary standard of service offered by MCCN.



Monitoring health includes preventive care visits

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO BETTER HEALTH OUTCOMES

MCCN is always on alert to pinpoint participant needs that fall beyond the agency's typical care parameters. The following examples show MCCN's ability to step in and solve a problem that could lead to discomfort, insecurities, or a full-blown crisis:

FACILITATING STRATEGIC RESOURCES

When a pediatric member was diagnosed with autism, the member's guardian faced challenges in finding support for the diagnosis. During a consultation, MCCN and the guardian explored potential resource options. The guardian ultimately obtained official approval for autism supports from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), marking a significant milestone in her advocacy for the child. MCCN played a crucial role in providing detailed information about DDS supports and fostering collaboration with a DDS worker. The guardian expressed visible relief and gratitude for the support she received from MCCN.

ADVOCATING FOR ESSENTIAL MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

An adult female member who relied on her manual wheelchair to aid with her physical disabilities, launched a personal quest in pursuit of an electric wheelchair. After her manual wheelchair broke, her MCCN care coordinator promptly arranged for a donated manual wheelchair as a temporary solution. Six months later, through perseverance and collaboration with MCCN, the woman received the electric wheelchair and the much-needed relief she had been seeking.

TAKING THE LEAD TO SECURE CRITICAL CONNECTIONS

During a regular home visit with a pediatric member, the MCCN care coordinator addressed an urgent matter that went beyond typical healthcare support: the family needed fuel assistance. MCCN collaborated swiftly with SMOC, (South Middlesex Opportunity Council), expediting the family's application and ensuring a prompt oil delivery. Care coordinators proactively contacted local resources and secured a cord and a half of wood for the family's wood stove. This rapid response addressed the family's immediate and ongoing fuel challenges, highlighting MCCN's dedication to ensuring the well-being of the members supported and their families.

MCCN KEY STAFF



LESLIE COURTNEY, MPA, LEND, VICE PRESIDENT

Leslie Courtney earned her bachelor's degree from State University of New York and Rhode Island College. She completed her Master of Public Administration (MPA) from Suffolk University and certificate in Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center.

"I have a passion for providing resources and community connections to underserved populations. MCCN positions me on the forefront of care coordination innovation to support families across the Commonwealth."—Leslie Courtney



**STEPHANIE PEREZ BERRIOS, MSW
DIRECTOR OF INTEGRATED CARE MANAGEMENT**

Originally from Puerto Rico, Stephanie Perez Berrios earned her Bachelor of Arts in Social Work from UAGM (Universidad Ana G. Méndez). Hired as MCCN's first Spanish-speaking care coordinator in 2019, Berrios witnessed members' limited access to community resources. This inspired her to complete her Master of Social Work (MSW) in Administration and Community Practice in 2022, and was promoted to the program director shortly thereafter.

"It is exceptionally rewarding to hear the gratitude of our members for the positive impact our program has had on them and how highly they speak of our staff."—Stephanie Perez Berrios



GIANNA SAMIA, MSW, PROGRAM MANAGER

Gianna Samia earned her Bachelor of Science in Social Work from the University of New Hampshire and pursued her Master of Social Work at Salem State University. Samia has worked as an MCCN care coordinator supervisor since the program's inception in 2018. With prior experience in elder and end-of-life care, Samia sought to expand her skills and impact in a different way.

"MCCN has proven to be resilient in its compassionate approach to care coordination. I have enjoyed the opportunity to transform professionally as the program transforms—there is no better place to be than at the forefront of this shift in statewide supports."—Gianna Samia



ANNUAL DAY OF GOLF CREATES COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

On the Thursday leading into the Memorial Day Holiday each May, the New Beginnings Charity Golf Tournament draws a field of golfers who understand the importance of this annual event for thousands of children and adults with disabilities in central Massachusetts.

Hosted at Highfields Golf & Country Club in Grafton, MA, New Beginnings has been the primary funder of the Community Connections program of Seven Hills Family Services. Community Connections offers a vast array of activities for people with disabilities to cultivate their interests and expand their social circles. Programming includes arts, music, dance, health and wellness, and competitive Special Olympic and recreational sports.

Community Connections is made possible, in part, through our dedicated corps of volunteer coaches, many of whom return each year for the team building, camaraderie, and lifelong relationships that are forged through this meaningful opportunity to mentor and motivate.

“Community Connections at Seven Hills has significantly transformed my son Michael’s life, allowing him to highlight his ‘abilities’ without being defined by his ‘disability.’ Witnessing the priceless expression on his face when he sinks a 3-pointer or scores a touchdown in flag football is heartwarming. The coaches and volunteer partners play a huge role in Michael’s and his teammates’ success.” —Lynn Lynch, parent

Thank you to our generous sponsors who helped Seven Hills exceed its \$75,000 tournament fundraising goal for 2024. Special gratitude is extended to our Presenting Sponsors who went the extra length to chip in for this worthy cause:

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Contact Xandra Bouray, 508.796.1551, xbouray@sevenhills.org.



EMPLOYMENT MATTERS

Employment Matters, a program of Seven Hills Rhode Island (SHRI), is designed to help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) build the skills needed to join the workforce. The program is funded by the Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals (BHDDH), and encompasses a holistic approach to employment that identifies potential jobs based on each participant's interests and skill sets with the incentives to make friends, make money, and make a difference. Participants learn that their work and personal goals matter, and their voice, including their thoughts, feelings, unique challenges, and concerns, are heard. This process helps participants establish a personalized career plan to succeed and achieve their best life.

The SHRI team teaches best practices for customized employment, including the use of assistive technology and adaptive equipment. Additional components include peer-to-peer support and skill building for independence. Business connections and networking, real-work experience, and job coaching complete the advanced training. SHRI staff works with family members to build a strong support system at home for encouragement, guidance, and motivation.

FROM NEW EMPLOYEE TO EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Larry had been hired for a few retail jobs, yet did not remain employed. He was just not ready to work —not prepared to present his “best self,” said Aaron Miller, Larry’s job developer at SHRI. With honesty and compassion, Aaron addressed Larry’s need to improve his professionalism, socialization, and communication.

Aaron accompanied Larry, “assisting him every step of the way, especially at first.” From applications to interviews, Aaron manages the customized employment process well, having 20 years of experience. He explored local businesses to determine if their needs matched well with Larry’s skills. Eventually, Aaron met with Sarah, the store manager at Price Rite, to discuss a customized employment arrangement for Larry. Price Rite offered Larry a job stocking shelves and corralling carts, expecting that his responsibilities would evolve as he gained experience.

The store’s onboarding process included coordinating paperwork with the Office of Rehabilitation Services for the 40-hour Community Work Based Employment underwriting of the first phase of Larry’s employment.



Aaron was present for every shift during the first month and routinely checked in with Larry’s supervisors to ensure his success. He quickly discovered how eager Sarah was to make the customized employment program work for Larry. It did, and Larry’s initial 40 hours of trial employment turned into a direct hire. A bona fide employee, Larry commuted to work by bus arriving early for every shift. His polished professionalism and performance expanded his role into the produce department. Gaining confidence, his friendly demeanor with coworkers and customers resulted in recognition as “Employee of the Month” and a Safety award among his employment accolades.

“Larry is proud,” Aaron said, noting that Larry’s picture is on the wall in the employee lounge. Steadily employed for more than a year at Price Rite, Larry has many reasons to be proud. Price Rite store manager, Sarah, notes that when Larry is given a task, she is confident that it is going to get it done promptly. “He does not procrastinate,” she said.



Helen and Alan Shuster

PATTY'S GARDEN

Helen Shuster's sister, Patty, attended the Seven Hills ASPIRE! Adult Day Health program at Hope Ave. in Worcester, daily, for over 30 years.

Patty was beloved by program participants and Hope Ave. staff for her kind, caring nature and the friendly conversation she exchanged with her signature English lilt. Sadly, Patty passed in January 2022, leaving a void in the hearts of all who knew her. Today, "Patty's Garden" has filled that void. Helen had the garden created through an established planned gift in gratitude for the care Seven Hills provided to Patty all those years. Rutland Nurseries' landscape architects installed beautiful patios, plantings, raised garden beds, a pergola, and a bocce court along with plenty of seating and an accessible WhisperGLIDE swing. The dedication was attended by staff and participants, who enjoyed the first of many opportunities to mingle, play bocce, and share memories of Patty.



"I am thrilled with the creation of this beautiful outdoor area that is improving individuals' experiences at the Adult Day Health Program. I am so appreciative of all that Seven Hills staff do that it pleases me to know that they also can enjoy this attractive area." —Helen Shuster

ANJA'S LIGHT SHINES BRIGHTLY FOR CHILDREN IN NEED



Anne and Brian turned their grief into action when they established the Anja's Light Fund to support the needs of children with significant cognitive and medical challenges residing at Seven Hills Pediatric Center (SHPC) at Groton. The couple shared information about the fund with their

daughter, Anja Fjeld, was born on June 2, 2022, and passed away 11 days later due to complications during her birth.

Seven Hills is fortunate to connect with courageous, inspiring people who offer their time, treasure, and talents to support others in need. Anne Joseph and her husband, Brian Fjeld, are two such people. Their beautiful

vast network of friends and family, and, in just five days, raised over \$57,000 for the Anja's Light Fund.

With the money raised, a multisensory room, named in Anja's memory, has been designed and installed at SHPC. The sensory room is improving the engagement and relaxation of the 82 residents, most of whom are children.

SHPC staff anticipate the ongoing impact this state-of-the-art, therapeutic space will have on the children. Affiliate Vice President Cindy Andrews is profoundly grateful to Anne and Brian for their generous gift.

"We are grateful to Anne, Brian, and their friends, family, and colleagues for this significant support of SHPC. This special space will honor the memory of Anja and be a beautiful oasis, bringing joy and peace to the children as they visit with their families and staff." —Cindy Andrews

To learn more about supporting Seven Hills through planned giving, please visit our website at sevenhills.org/giving or contact Kate Myshrall, vice president of Advancement, at 508.983.1302 or kmyshrall@sevenhills.org.

GRANTING GOOD WORK!

Seven Hills Foundation leverages grant and other local support to strengthen and expand our work across 15 affiliates located in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. Grants support programs not typically funded through traditional sources, providing opportunities to develop and implement initiatives that enhance the lives of people faced with significant life challenges. Following are highlights of recently funded projects:

TRANSPORTATION EXPANDS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ASPiRE's Worcester and Devens Day Habilitation programs purchased accessible vans through a recent \$135,000 award from the **Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) Community Inclusion Transportation Grant Program**. The fleet is promoting accessibility and increasing community engagement for participants with disabilities. Integrating this mobility into their routine expands socialization, enriches cultural experiences, and encourages the practice of learned skills in applied settings.



BUILDING SYSTEM CAPACITY TO ENHANCE FAMILY CHILDCARE

The proposed **Family Childcare Success Project**, funded by the **Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts' Synergy Initiative**, aims to increase the number of accessible, linguistically/culturally responsive licensed Family Childcare programs in central MA. The Project will train, support, and advocate for potential educators from initial interest through program operation. Still in its planning year, the Project will conduct a local pilot, then expand throughout the region and potentially the state.

ARPA FUNDS ASSIST YOUTH & FAMILIES IN NEED

Nearly \$488,000 in **American Rescue Plan ACT (ARPA)** funding granted by the **US Department of Treasury** and the **Commonwealth of Massachusetts**, and administered by the **City of Worcester**, has been invested in the following Seven Hills affiliates to promote access to behavioral healthcare, reduce foreclosures and prevent homelessness, and address staffing shortages in the childcare industry.

YOU, Inc. received an ARPA grant of \$108,031 to fund the comprehensive, Bi-Lingual **System Navigators project**, which provides clients with a single point of entry for information and connection to behavioral health and community services.

Family Services of Central Massachusetts (FSCM) received \$81,227 to fund a **full-time, bilingual mediation and diversity coordinator**. This position assists tenants and landlords in mediating and resolving lapsed payments and other housing issues to stabilize tenancy and avoid eviction. The **Project Flourish Child Development Apprenticeship Program** received \$100,000 to train and support entry-level and under-skilled workers seeking employment or advancement in early education and care.

The FSCM **Center for Childcare Careers, Seven Hills Behavioral Health, and Children's Friend** partnership received \$112,732 to address challenging behaviors, delayed social skills, and COVID-19-related stressors being seen in children at the **Early Learning Center** in Worcester. Funding will provide clinical supports, staff training and on-site coaching, and parent support and training.

TRANSFORMING PERSON-DRIVEN CARE AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

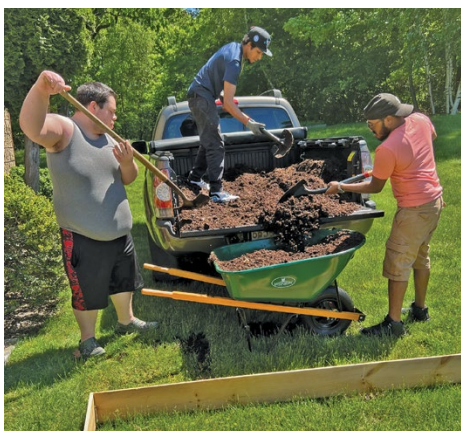
The **Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals (BHDDH) Transformation Grant Fund** award of over \$342,000 is helping **Seven Hills Rhode Island (SHRI)** shift to person-driven care and community integration. Further, SHRI will connect its internal support systems to work with the state's strategic plan. Training on person-driven supports, community mapping, and assistive technology will identify individual's interests, skills, needs, and barriers, then customize supports to optimize independence and community engagement. SHRI will also raise community awareness and forge relationships that offer experiences for people supported.

SPOTLIGHT

SEVEN HILLS ASPIRE!

At **Devens CBDES** (Community-Based Day & Employment Supports), contractors have completed work for the installation of commercial food processing equipment that will be used for vocational exploration, skills training, and employment for participants. Devens CBDES will partner with local farms, and use commercial dehydrators and packaging equipment to process and preserve produce and other food to make dehydrated soups, spices, seasonings, and healthy snacks that will have a long shelf life. The program plans to make the newly processed food available to areas of the community in need, and for sale at Café Seven Hills locations.

Longtime Seven Hills program site, the **Carl Gordon Lodge**, has been re-branded as the **Career Resource Center**. Renovations to accommodate commercial hydroponic gardening, work development equipment, and community partner, **2Gether We Eat**, are almost complete.



Work crews have installed outdoor gardens to expand and enhance existing sustainable hydroponic gardening for the day habilitation and employment programs. Participants will train with 2Gether We Eat

followed by paid work opportunities growing fresh local produce that will be available to those in need. Job training is underway in landscaping, lawn care, and more to come.



The **Group Supported Employment Worcester CBDES** program has launched a new partnership with the **Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center at UMass Chan Medical School**. The proud workforce is learning to collate and package training kits for the medication administration program (MAP). To date, two crews have joined UMass staff in this integrated setting.

ASPIRE! hosted an **Earth Day event** at Coes Park, collaborating with volunteers from National Grid and the Regional Environmental Council to clean the park and prepare the community gardens for another season of sustainable farming and horticulture programming.

SEVEN HILLS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH (SHBH)

The **clinical team** at Seven Hills Behavioral Health is successfully dismantling the barriers to mental health treatment for children, adults, and families in central MA.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a nationwide shortage of counselors, psychologists, and licensed social workers. Many clinical operations, including Seven Hills Behavioral Health, were faced with a growing waiting list of people in need.

Motivated by the mantra, "where there is a will, there is a way," the SHBH clinical staff under the leadership of

Anne Fine, SHBH vice president; Emily Swalec, director of clinical access; and Betsy Cheyne, senior director of outpatient services, created a system that impressively converted the numbers on the waiting list to active patients receiving services.

To achieve this feat, the team reviewed then connected each case to a therapy group or individual clinician. They launched an "open access" model that offers walk-in hours three days a week. During open access, bilingual clinicians conduct screenings, complete intake forms, and schedule services the same day, or in one to seven days.



This outstanding transformation in care also came as the result of an extraordinary **clinician recruitment effort**. Seven Hills Behavioral Health now boasts a staff of 92 clinicians, supervisors, and interns providing the central MA region with exceptional therapy, care coordination, and community resources.

For many of the youth supported at Seven Hills Behavioral Health, traumatic life experiences such as abuse, neglect, and violence have attributed to mental health challenges. Many struggle to safely process their experiences and express their emotions. **Multisensory environments** integrated into traditional therapy settings can significantly improve a youth's ability to replace trauma-related behaviors with healthier responses. Sensory rooms have proven to help youth self-regulate, feel grounded, repair

relationships, understand emotions, and recreate healthy brain patterns.

Through the generosity of the Annual Lori Lajoie Charity Golf Tournament donors and the bequest from the Jean Trayer McDonough estate, multisensory rooms have been installed at the SHBH Worcester, Southbridge, and Milford outpatient clinics. Funding also provided a “Zen Den” for clinicians at the Worcester clinic. Clinicians, who also carry the weight of trauma histories during treatment, decompress and refresh their focus in the Zen Den to provide the best possible care for their clients.



“We are thrilled with all our new sensory equipment. Clients love when they can use the space, and clinicians have access to high-quality, unique materials that enhance client care. These tools offer sensory experiences that help kids regulate, such as deep pressure, calming visual images, and tactile feedback. We are so grateful for the generous donations that made our sensory spaces possible!” —Betsy Cheyne

SEVEN HILLS COMMUNITY SERVICES (SHCS)

Staff at the **SHCS residence** in Wenham, MA, collaborated with local businesses, Kinship Farm and Coastal Maine Products, to create a raised garden on the property using two raised beds donated by Kinship Farm. In late April, the staff assisted the residents to plant cold-weather, hardy vegetables including lettuce and spinach. As the temperatures rise, more vegetables and herbs will be

added. The residents look forward to consuming their harvest and sharing surplus with the local food bank. This project is a great example of the affiliate’s endeavors to:

1. Collaborate with the community.
2. Engage in meaningful activities in the home.
3. Provide for healthy meals.
4. Teach ongoing skills and responsibilities.
5. Give back to the community.



Dan McCarthy opened the Woo Sox game on April 7, as the Home Town Hero. His first pitch was a strike, much to the delight of the cheering crowd.

Dan has been receiving in-home supports through SHCS since 2016. He was chosen for this honor by his Westminster, MA, community in recognition of his extraordinary volunteer service to residents and local organizations that include:

- The Knights of Columbus, Lions Club, Neighbor Helping Neighbor, and the Cracker Festival.
- Two churches whose members prepare meals and teach Haitian immigrants to speak English.
- Other building tenants, especially seniors and those with disabilities.

Dan has been employed as a dishwasher at the Colonial Hotel in Westminster since 2006. He enjoys working with his boss and colleagues, and is known in town for his wicked sense of humor. He is proud of his achievements and

Seven Hills is proud to spotlight Dan as he champions the abilities of us all.



Brian Boyle, area director of SHCS Individual Supports, was recognized with the award for Problem-Solving at the **Provider Recognition event** in the Northeast on June 4.

The SHCS **Pine Ridge team** received an Inclusivity Award at the event. Cheryle Roy, Olasunmbo Adelayun, William Kajubu, Adelye Fatunsin, and Michael Mburu accepted the award; Dominic Nwokeji, a member of the winning team, was unable to attend.



Jennifa Nolan-Jackman, SHCS assistant vice president, remarked that her team sets the standard for care in excellence, compassion, and inclusivity. “I am incredibly proud to have such amazing staff here in the Northeast Region,” Nolan-Jackman said. “I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Brian Boyle and the entire Pine Ridge team for these well-deserved recognitions!”

SEVEN HILLS FAMILY SERVICES (SHFS)

Creative Minds, a collaboration of Seven Hills Family Services and Open Door Arts, fuses elements of both affiliates to stimulate creativity, increase community integration, and deliver a myriad of benefits when people with brain injury engage in the arts.



Creative Minds is generously funded by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP). Eligible participants, aged 18+, meet at the Worcester Art Museum every 2nd Saturday of the month from September to June. The two-hour session begins with a museum “walk-through” of an exhibit that is then expressed artistically through the creative process during the second hour.

Each masterpiece is a tribute to the healing power of the arts and the brain. View the ongoing virtual exhibit at <https://www.artsteps.com/view/654bc09a53b690211d139cc0>



The SHFS **Community Connections** program sent The Barracudas swim team to the Special Olympics Summer Games in Boston, June 8-9. After a season of training, the athletes brought home four gold medals, seven silver medals, three bronze medals, three fourth-place finishes, and one fifth-place finish. The relay teams brought home a gold medal and a fourth-place ribbon. Barracudas

athletes improved their times and skills throughout the season with unwavering love for the sport.

Thank you to Ann Marie Dawes for her incredible coaching and wealth of knowledge she shares with everyone. The team thrived from her leadership! Thank you to Rachel Lindberg and Dylan Deese for going above and beyond in assisting Ann Marie, and teaching special skills such as flip turns. Thank you to the incredible families and supporters who helped, cheered, and supported the athletes during this outstanding season.



The **Adult Family Care** and **Shared Living Programs** of SHFS were well represented at the **Pride Festivals** held in both New Bedford and Taunton, MA. David Aguiar, AFC nurse administrator, and Raquel Brightman, AFC/SL nurse, networked with the crowd and promoted the programs. Seven Hills supports the communities in which we work and was excited to celebrate Pride Month with the South Coast LGBTQ+ community!

SEVEN HILLS GLOBAL OUTREACH (SHGO)

Kibera is a government-owned region of Nairobi, Kenya, that is recognized as one of the world’s largest and most densely populated slums. It has a population of more than a million people living in an area smaller than Manhattan’s Central Park. Due to high

unemployment, extreme poverty, and a lack of infrastructure, the future continues to look bleak for most residents, especially orphaned youth.



Recently, the Kibera children were given hope with the construction of the Kibera-Bethel Primary School, nestled in and accessible to the shanties they call home.

Through the effort and generosity of individual donors and SHGO’s key partners, FOCUS Dream Center, Angels of God Ministry International, and Saba, International, the path to quality education and promising futures has been cemented firmly in place.

The grand opening of the Kibera-Bethel Primary School was held on June 23, 2024, with SHGO’s director, Dr. David A. Jordan, in attendance to celebrate. The school will help to reduce the disproportionate school-to-student ratio in this challenged land that measures just shy of one square mile.



MAKE AN IMPACT
To support children’s education in Kenya or life-saving SHGO initiatives in eight countries around the globe, visit shgo.org and select **DONATE**.

SEVEN HILLS NEW HAMPSHIRE (SHNH)



The '24 **Prom at Crotched Mountain School and Village (CMSV)** was nothing short of spectacular as students stepped into the glitz and glamour of a Hollywood Oscars night. The kids were over the moon, rocking out to fantastic music and indulging in delicious, themed treats. The night sparkled with gowns and tuxedos, and a fun twist featuring flip flops and shades. It was an unforgettable evening of elegance, excitement, and cherished memories forever preserved in posed photos, captured candid, and signature selfies.



Summer on Sunset Lake beckons the "inner kayaker" of our students to go outdoors and glide on the glistening waters of this campus gem. Whether solo or in tandem, the activity challenges physical strength

and builds endurance, coordination, balance, and more. Yet, it is fun and freeing for the students to develop independence, confidence, and navigate their front-row seat to the endless wonders of nature.



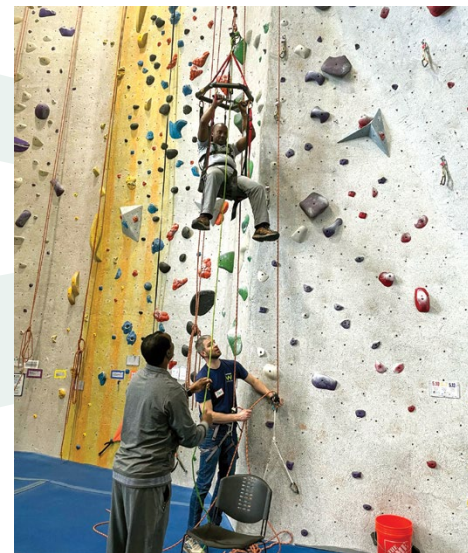
The **Annual Awards Day** is all about celebrating our amazing students and their academic achievements, social skills development, and positive behaviors; and the incredible staff who go above and beyond with daily dedication. The campus-wide event welcomes families to join in the festivities, and breathe the fresh, pride-filled air that invigorates new aspirations for the year to come.

SEVEN HILLS NEUROCARE (SHNC)

Taryn Palmieri, SHNC clinician and behavioral analyst, and Trudy Dould, SHNC assistant director of clinical services, teamed up to achieve their strategic goal, "Excellence in Care." By increasing meaningful activities in and out of SHNC residences, Taryn and Trudy aim to overcome a lack of vision for the people supported, a common barrier often facing residence staff. The dynamic duo organized a series of field trips designed to widen staff's vision of what is possible.

Taryn explained that they plan to disrupt the status quo and be the engine, not the anchor. Individuals are encouraged to make purposeful connections to their communities and find freedom in new experiences. By providing exposure to various adaptive activities, Taryn and Trudy hope to challenge limiting beliefs about what people with disabilities can do and empower staff and supported individuals to think bigger, try new things, and ask themselves, "why not?"

On a recent excursion, the team visited Central Rock Gym in Worcester. A staff member who participated in the activity shared that, initially, he did not believe the residents, or even HE, would be able to rock climb. When they used the adaptive equipment and "rocked" the experience, however, he now believes they can do anything and is excited to prove it in their future adventures.



SEVEN HILLS PEDIATRIC CENTER (SHPC)

The SHPC **Academy at Groton** staff have been busy keeping the students engaged, educated, and entertained. The students recently participated in the inaugural "Invention Convention." This SHPC Academy spin on the Science Fair challenged all classrooms

to brainstorm inventions that, in theory, solved a problem (the inventions didn't actually have to work). Staff and students voted on the inventions to determine the winning problem-solver: the Robot Hand, invented by the Upper Class. Congratulations to the SHPC Academy's innovative thinkers!

When it comes to education and creativity, the **Academy nursing team** is not to be outdone. Each month, the school nurses decide on a topic to educate students and staff. They decorate their bulletin board with a theme that describes the topic and includes an activity for the classrooms to complete. Past and upcoming topics include Hygiene and Ventilators/Equipment.



Academy students and staff recently welcomed visitors from the **Mass Audubon Society** who discussed and read stories about wildlife; **Animal Adventures (Bolton) Traveling Program** who brought a variety of animals for students to see and touch, including the favorite floppy-eared bunny, pictured above; and **Hearts & Noses Hospital Clown Troupe**, "specially trained to engage, empower and give choices to children in a medical environment." (Hearts and Noses, 2024, What We Do, para. 1)

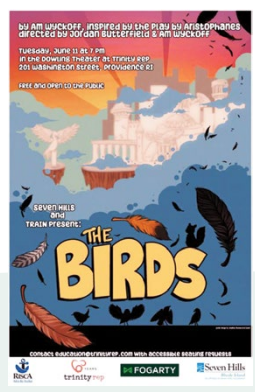
SEVEN HILLS RHODE ISLAND (SHRI)

On June 12, the longstanding partnership between **Seven Hills Rhode Island** and the **Trinity Repertory Company** continued with a performance of *The Birds*, an adapted play inspired by Aristophanes.



Jordan Butterfield, Trinity Rep director of education & accessibility, recognized Lauren Fagnant, SHRI treatment coordinator, as "incredible to work with." This was Fagnant's first production with the SHRI cast, and Butterfield is looking forward to working together on future performances.

"I truly loved being the coordinator for this performance group. To see every actor shine in different ways was indescribable. Each person came out of their shell and became better friends. During the performance, if someone was nervous or forgot a line, you'd hear, 'It's okay, you got it.' This group formed positive, meaningful relationships and that is what this program is all about. I am so proud of every person on that stage!"
—Lauren Fagnant



To view the performance, scan the QR Code, above.

The **Early Intervention (EI)** program is thriving! The ever-expanding team of professionals currently supports 455 families statewide in striving to achieve developmental milestones for their young children, from birth to age 3, who are experiencing delays.

In early spring, EI held its first "Hear to Help" group for families whose children have mild to moderate hearing loss. The group, facilitated by a speech therapist and educator, provided professional advice as well as the opportunity to ask questions such as "How do I get my toddler to keep their hearing aids in?" Families shared their experiences and practical tips. The first session was deemed a success and families look forward to a follow-up session this summer.



Staff supported 115 individuals in SHRI's **Annual Fishing Derby** hosted by the Wallum Lake Rod and Gun Club on June 8. The Derby has become a highly anticipated opportunity to engage with the community and explore natural resources. SHRI Adult Services is working with individuals supported to reduce the risks associated with sedentary living by increasing activity levels with fun and engaging adventures.

Isaac Adusu, area director of Adult Services, identifies key factors that motivate people to move. "Fishing has positive physical, mental, and emotional therapeutic benefits. The residential teams have fun coordinating the activity and putting smiles on the faces of the people we support."

CHILDREN'S AID & FAMILY SERVICE (CAFS)



Kim Dion, photo right, assistant vice president of Seven Hills **Child Care Resources**, and Marybeth Brown, photo left, assistant director, were invited to talk with EdSurge about child care funding in Massachusetts. The Commonwealth leads the nation in supporting early education and care providers, beginning with the provision of monthly Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) grants by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) in addition to ongoing base funding.

Families' child-care costs are being capped at a maximum of 7% of their income while their access continues to expand. EEC-licensed and operating child care providers are eligible for C3 funds, which help defray the costs of daily operations and staffing. The ongoing financial—and morale—boost to providers has resulted in the addition of more than 10,600 child care slots to date in 2024.

"Coordinated advocacy throughout our field has been instrumental in encouraging legislators to continue to increase funding for child care in Massachusetts," Dion said. Brown noted, "More and more programs are reaching out to us to enroll in the financial assistance program because of the recent changes that the state has funded."

Child Enrichment Center (CEC) staff endeavors to increase awareness and support for the diverse backgrounds of the children enrolled and their

families. CEC's kitchen manager, Kim, researches the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) recipes and creates meals that represent the children's diverse cultures.

The CACFP reimburses for nutritious meals and snacks served to eligible children and adults enrolled in participating child care centers, family child care providers, after-school care programs, and adult day care centers.



Kim's culinary creativity reflects her ability to explore cultural cuisine that is healthy, delicious, *and* deserving of a thumbs up from the CACFP and her toughest critics, the mini munchers from the CEC classrooms.

Kim also hosts "Taste it Tuesdays," where kids have the opportunity to taste wholesome foods that may otherwise never pass their palates.



CHILDREN'S FRIEND (CF)

Summer at the **Early Learning Center (ELC)** features morning splashes in the sprinkler, then special games, activities, and snacks. On Friday, June 28, parents joined their Pre-K children for a lunch and graduation that celebrated achievements and entrance into Kindergarten in the fall.

Children's Friend **Adoption and Family Services** recently finalized the adoptions of two brothers under the age of three who were substance-exposed newborns placed in the

care of the Department of Children & Families (DCF) shortly after their births.

The CF adoption team believes in honoring all important relationships and minimizing losses that children experience when placed in foster care. The siblings were matched with a foster family who was also approved as an adoptive resource. The CF team worked with the foster family to maintain a connection with the boys' birth family.

This resulted in an Open Adoption Agreement and the birth mother tearfully but willingly surrendering her parental rights in court. During the proceedings, the adoptive mother gave the birth mother a heartfelt and reassuring hug. The adoptive father joined in the embrace and everyone present understood the profound exchange of precious lives, from heavy hearts into caring hands and promising futures.

Present on adoption day were the boys' maternal birth grandparents who were invited by the adoptive parents to be a part of the celebration and their lives moving forward.

FAMILY SERVICES OF CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS (FSCM)

RSVP Volunteers of Central MA is part of AmeriCorps Seniors, one of the largest volunteer networks in the nation for people, aged 55+.

The program's volunteers share their time and talent in areas that include:

Supporting children through advocacy, literacy, and tutoring.

Nutrition & hunger, working in a community garden, food pantry, or collecting and distributing food.

Health & Wellness, on a hospice team, reading for the vision impaired, or assisting with fitness/balance training.

Elder Justice and **RSVP's Senior Fraud Prevention Initiative** that help seniors recognize, resist, and report

fraud. Volunteers can join the Fraud Brigade or Fraud Squad to help fight this rampant crime against seniors.

Senior Fraud HELPLINE
800-297-9760



Senior Fraud Helpline volunteers are trained to assist seniors in recognizing, resisting, and reporting fraud. As compassionate confidantes, volunteers lend an ear and help to allay fraud fears. The line is open Monday–Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The **Fraud Squad Players** volunteer “actors” travel to Worcester County senior centers and living facilities, educating their peers on the warning signs and manipulative ways scams and frauds are implemented. From imposter scams to financial exploitation, the performers show how to avoid getting scammed.

Government agencies and law enforcement are reporting an alarming uptick in scams and fraud targeting seniors, highlighting the importance of these programs.

OPEN DOOR ARTS (ODA)



Nicole Agois, managing director of Open Door Arts, spoke at the Massachusetts State House during a legislative briefing on the importance of creative economy. The briefing was held by MASSCreative and co-sponsored by Senator Liz Miranda

and Representative Tony Cabral to support four bills receiving favorable reports by legislative committees: The Accessibility in the Creative Economy (ACE) Act, the Downtown Vitality Act, the Creative Space Preservation Act, and the PLACE Act.

“This afternoon I co-hosted a legislative briefing at the State House to highlight the importance of the creative economy in Massachusetts. We’ve been working with MASSCreative & MassINC on the Downtown Vitality Act. The bill I filed would funnel 5% of online state sale [sic] tax into a fund for small businesses, cultural districts, & the like, to support thriving downtowns and creative space-making. I like this bill and I think it’s [sic] time has come. Let’s get it done this session!” —Representative Tony Cabral



ODA works annually with hundreds of students, teaching artists, educators, and leaders of cultural organizations through innovative and inclusive programming, training, events, and exhibits designed to improve access, expand participation, challenge the status quo, and share practices to ensure equitable representation of people with disabilities in the arts.

STETSON SCHOOL

On May 15, Stetson School dedicated its new state-of-the-art fitness center and playground. Dr. David A. Jordan, Seven Hills president emeritus, worked to bring his vision for this initiative to reality, ultimately achieved through

generous donations from The Estate of Patrick Sullivan, who was supported by Seven Hills; the Stoddard Charitable Trust; the Fletcher Foundation; and donors at the 48th Annual Lori Lajoie Charity Golf Tournament.



The heart of the dedication was reflected in the outpouring of appreciation from students, staff, and special guests. During the ceremony, Stetson students Jacob, Matt, Akari, and Adrien all expressed their gratitude and enthusiasm for the new facilities’ impact on their fitness journeys, confidence, and self-esteem.



Joe Allred, photo left, who oversees Stetson School as vice president of Children’s Congregate Care, and Dr. Kathleen Jordan, photo right, president and CEO of Seven Hills, presented the Barre Police Department with a \$2,500 grant from the Student Council in recognition of the department’s support of Stetson and the greater Barre community.

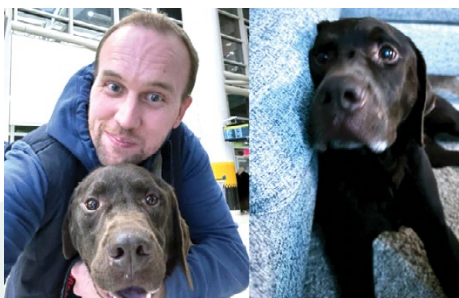
The Stetson Stingers mascot, handing out new t-shirts, sweatbands, and cookies, added a touch of school spirit. The perfectly timed arrival of a fully stocked ice cream truck treated attendees to a sweet finale.

YOU, INC. (YI)

Answering the Call to Care comes naturally to Jason, a family support worker at YOU, Inc.'s Worcester Family Resource Center (WFRC). A new client, and mother to twins, was challenged with maintaining the demand of specialized baby formula and diapers for her bundles of joy. Jason found two stores that regularly carry the brand of baby formula as well as diapers the twins needed. He also helped the new mom successfully apply for Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) cash benefits for further assistance.

Another client's life circumstances changed, which made him unable to afford the rent for his apartment. The client struggled with completing the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) application independently. Jason stepped in and guided the client through the process, enabling him to stay in his apartment. The client called the WFRC to express his gratitude to Jason and to thank the staff for their life-changing work.

In his personal life, *making* the call to care came just as naturally for Jason when he rescued a 6-year-old retriever, Iron, from the Chinese meat trade. After a long journey to the States, Iron is adapting to his new life with Jason, his superhero caregiver.



Seven Hills is profoundly grateful to Digital Federal Credit Union (DCU) and everyone who participated in the **DCU Paper Shredding event** on Saturday, April 6. Donations of cash



or diapers and wipes were collected in exchange for shredding services. The generosity and enthusiasm of the DCU team and the help from EL Harvey truly made a difference for the families supported.

YOU, Inc. is the fiscal agent for the DCF-funded **Community Connections Coalitions (CCCs)** in Worcester and Southbridge. The CCCs develop and sustain community infrastructure that responds to the needs of families, intending to prevent child abuse and neglect. The core coalition functions are family support, family preservation, and adoption promotion and support. The Worcester (WCCC) and Southbridge (SCCC) provide a safe, neutral setting for residents and service providers, including DCF, to communicate, make decisions, share resources, and coordinate action planning.

The **Zero Fare Worcester Coalition** is a group of grassroots activists, bus riders, local agencies, elected officials, and community leaders united in their mission to make the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) permanently fare-free.

The WCCC and its partners have created a ripple effect of positive change within the community. By eliminating fare barriers, the Zero Fare Coalition is promoting social equity, environmental sustainability, and economic growth. This initiative demonstrates the tenacious power of community collaboration and the

impact of targeted advocacy. As the WCCC and Zero Fare Worcester Coalition move forward, they intend to serve as a model for other communities to create more equitable and accessible public transit systems.



A tradition of excellence continues with the 2024 graduating class of YOU, Inc.'s **John S. Laws Dynamy Youth Academy**. Every student has been accepted to college in the fall, each with multiple scholarships and awards in recognition of their significant academic and personal achievements.

The Youth Academy is a five-year, after-school leadership and college access program for promising Worcester high school students whose low-income, first-generation status puts them at risk of not reaching academic, career, and personal success.

The program's Academic Advising and Mentoring component supplements the efforts of school guidance counselors. Each student is paired with an advisor to track progress and provide guidance. Students engage in MCAS and SAT preparation sessions, and workshops covering writing, study skills, time management, and technology literacy. Mentoring is facilitated by professionals from local agencies, businesses, college students, alumni, and older peers.

The Youth Academy staff and students are profoundly grateful to the generous donors, including the Lloyd G. Balfour Foundation and its recent grant of \$25,000 to the program.



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