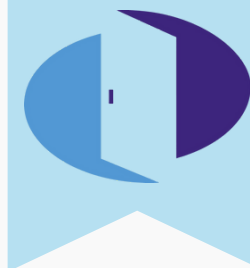


JANUARY 2024 Key Notes

Employee Kudos,
Events,
& beYond



pg. 1

Berkshire
Shoes &
Disney on
Ice

pg. 2

Christmas
@ PSG
Bridge &
Welcoming
New Staff

pg. 3

Santa comes
to Town &
Forging
with Friends

pg. 4

Interning at
a Firehouse
& Employee
Promotions

pg. 5

WJW
Scholarship
& Winter
Fun

pg. 6

Children's
Charter
Grant &
Thank You's

Decorating Shoes in the Berkshires!

Howard House transitioned into a latency aged program in early 2022, The Program serves a co-ed group of children 7-12 years old. With this age group we are always looking for fun, structured, and creative activities to engage and teach the children a variety of new skills.

Residential Caseworker Cortney Caron has been a great addition to the Howard House team with her positive attitude and creative thinking.

Recently, Cortney conducted an art activity where all staff and clients were able to exhibit self-expression on their own pair of shoes!

Clients and staff had blank canvas shoes and colored them with fabric and permanent markers, but also got to sit and have quality time talking and bonding as a group. Clients were able to share stories, laugh, and just enjoy being kids.

Clients were very excited to show off their sneakers at school and to absolutely anyone that would give them a moment of time after they finished the activity!



Right after Christmas, Southeast's Family Support Center organized a trip to the Amica Mutual Pavilion in Providence RI to attend a showing of Disney on Ice. Family Support Center clients and family members thoroughly enjoyed the show and outing. It was the first time any of the clients watched and attended a live Disney show. All were very appreciative of the opportunity.

Disney on Ice!



Christmas at PSG bridge

Submitted by Jessica Knight, RI Assistant
Regional Director

Christmas in a residential program can sometimes be a trying time for our clients. Each year I am grateful to see my staff go above and beyond their job duties to make the day special for our clients.



As a whole, the PSG Bridge staff worked together to plan a spirit week and activities for the clients to enjoy the holidays and Christmas break. I would like to extend a very special thank you to a few of our staff for going above and beyond this holiday season:

- **Andirena Ansah (ONA) and Jasmyne Jackson (RCW)**, who took it upon themselves to purchase gifts for each client.
- **Alyssa Lopes (SPS)**, for getting the clients gifts and coming in on Christmas Eve to provide them with a special Christmas Brunch.
- **Jillian Barnes (Clinician)**, who quietly added to an Amazon Wishlist of items clients casually mentioned they wanted. All items on the list were purchased as well as additional gift donations. This resulted in each client receiving approximately 8 gifts each! Jill then spent Christmas morning delivering the gifts and spending time with the girls. It was heartwarming to see the joy on the faces of each client and the dedication Jill has to the clients we serve.

Below is a message from one of our clients about their Christmas experience:

"I just want to thank you for the presents you all sent to us on Christmas with Jill and The Key Program. It made us feel special and make us feel like we are loved by a new family. We thank you guys for everything that was gifted to us. I appreciate it a lot, you guys are like family to us now we love you guys."

January is Mental Wellness Month

Mental wellness is defined as:

"A state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."

Doing things that make you feel good, happy, or meaningful will increase your mental wellness, resulting in a boost in your overall mental health.

Some activities that may improve your mental wellness include:

- Physical activities (hiking, swimming, biking, exercising, etc.)
- Artistic activities (singing, drawing, painting, dancing, etc.)
- Volunteering
- Enjoying time with friends and family
- Eating good food
- Completing personal goals

Welcome to the new staff members hired in November and December:

Berkshire Region-

- Matthew Cusa, Jonathan Hebert, Joseph King, and Phillip Symonds

Central Region-

- Kailey Corbett, Gabriel Ramos, Pete Vlahos, and John Wall

Children's Charter-

- Jessica Clark

Northeast Region-

- Marisa Potts

Rhode Island-

- Kayla Ramirez and Dominique Cotton

Southeast Region-

- Nathan Bluestein and Brianna Onessimo

Western Region-

- Kimberly Quinones, Brandon Rodrigues, and Joseph Vicente

A very warm Welcome Back to:

Central Region- Ashley Marra

Southeast- Kyle Desmarais and Eric Figaratto-Souza

Western Region- Stephanie Mejias-Francheschi

January Fun Facts

- The name for January comes from the Roman God Janus, who is always depicted with two heads. He uses one head to look back on the year before and the other head to look forward to the New Year!
- A historical name for January includes “Wulfmonath,” which came from the Anglo-Saxons because it was the month hungry wolves would come scavenging.
- Originally, the Roman calendar had only 10 months, and it excluded January and February.
- Garnet is this month’s birth stone.
- Snowdrops and carnations are this month’s flower.
- One of the most influential events in the U.S. happened in January – on January 1, 1892, Ellis Island opened, allowing for the immigration of over 20 million people!



Santa Visits Methuen!

Submitted by Natalie Harrington, Assistant Regional Director, Northeast Region

In keeping with annual traditions, the New Directions Girls’ Program had a surprise visit from Santa (R/T Howard MacKenzie). Santa was greeted at the door by a VERY enthusiastic elf, Regional Clinical Director Nancy Fillio. Santa



arrived with a bag full of gifts, presenting each client with special holiday socks and unique stuffed animals. Clients and staff dressed in festive attire and engaged in many fun games coordinated by the clinical team. Thank you to the New Directions’ staff for making this a special event for the clients!

ho ho ho!

Submitted by Tori Aufiero

Forging with Friends

Central region Clinician Tori Aufiero had a great experience recently taking one of our clients, Enrique, to a forging lesson. Here's what she had to say about the experience:

“This was the third time Enrique was referred to Key and each referral highlighted the same problems: school refusal and lack of structure in the home. His most recent one was one was different though. This one included a short sentence: “Enrique has expressed interest in learning how to forge.” Lucky for him, I have the same interest.

Without hesitation, I googled forging lessons and found John Stevens at Dancing Hammer Forge in Spencer, MA. After gathering my information, I presented the opportunity to Enrique, and we decided we were going to take a class together.



Now, I’ve known Enrique for about three years. I’ve seen him have fun doing this and that at the program, but it’s hard to say if he was “happy” in those particular moments. I believe that Enrique was truly happy in the forge. He was inquisitive and engaged; you could tell it was tickling his brain. He and I explored this new activity together and walked out with handmade keychains.

Mr. Stevens contacted me after the lesson and said that teaching Enrique to forge was a rewarding experience. He also told me that he was impressed by how attuned I am to Enrique. He recognized the rich relationship that Enrique and I share, and how important that relationship can be.”





Interning at a Firehouse

Kaleidoscope ITR client BD has been participating in a year long internship at the Onset MA Fire Department. Client BD has been learning about firefighting, has attended department trainings, and has been hands on at many of the activities that take place in a fire department. It has been a great learning experience and our client has developed many friendships with his fellow firefighters. As a holiday surprise, the Onset Fire Department gifted client BD with his own department locker and fire gear. It was a very proud moment for our client. Pictured is the clients locker and fire gear.

Congratulations to the employees promoted in November and December:

Berkshire Region:

- Martel Williams (Shift Supervisor)

Central Region:

- Megan Brown (Assistant Program Supervisor)
- Robyn Johnston (Night Shift Manager)

Northeast Region:

- Mairelyn Polanco Liriano (Assistant Program Supervisor)

Rhode Island:

- Alyssa Lopes (Senior Program Supervisor)
- Juan Martinez (Program Supervisor)

Western Region:

- Francisco Alvarado (Program Supervisor)
- Joseph Theriaque (Assistant Program Supervisor)

Coming up in February..

- **February is Black History Month:** Every February, the U.S. honors the contributions and sacrifices of African Americans who have helped shape the nation. Black History Month celebrates the rich cultural heritage, triumphs and adversities that are an indelible part of our country's history.
- **February 2nd is Groundhog Day:** Dating back to the 16th century in Germany, tradition says that North America will get six more weeks of winter if the groundhog sees his shadow and an early spring if he does not.
- **February 10th is the Lunar New Year:** This event is celebrated by millions of people across the world on the first new moon of the calendar year.
- **February 11th is Superbowl Sunday:** Superbowl LVIII will be played in Las Vegas this year, with the halftime performer being Usher.
- **February 14th is Valentine's Day:** Named after Saint Valentine, it is known as a day to celebrate your loved ones.
- **February 19th is Presidents' Day:** A day to reflect on our nation's founding, its values, and all of the presidents who have upheld those values for the past 248 years.

New Year, New You!

Advance your career, or learn new skills by taking undergraduate and graduate level classes from Anna Maria College.

Did you know that the Key Program and Anna Maria College have an agreement that offers all Key employees a 15% tuition discount per course. Students may enroll in up to two courses prior to matriculation into a degree program. Anna Maria College will also waive the one time application fee of \$40. Anna Maria offers graduate degrees in counseling psychology (licensed mental health counselor) and Social Work along with many others. There are hybrid options that include in-person and online, both full and part-time. Visit annamaria.edu for more details or contact the Director of Agency Clinical Services, Karen Flannery, at kflannery@key.org

2024

William J. Wolfe Scholarship



The William J. Wolfe (WJW) Scholarship Program provides financial assistance to young adults pursuing education beyond high school.

The scholarship is named after one of Key's founders and is made possible through the Alternatives for Youth Foundation (AYF), the mission of which is to support initiatives that are consistent with Key's mission to assist children and their families with developing positive life skills.

To be eligible; applicants must:

- Be current or former recipients of services from Key Program, Inc., the MA Department of Children and Families (DCF) or the RI Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)
- Be under the age of 24
- Be entering or continuing an educational or vocational training program after high school graduation or completion of a GED/HiSET exam

Applications for the 2024-2025 academic year will be distributed to the regional offices in early February. If you are working with a client (or qualifying household member) that is or will be attending a 2 or 4-year college or vocational/certification program, please obtain and help them with an application.

Typically, awards are granted for tuition assistance and purchasing necessary items like laptops, books, and other educational supplies as well as help with rental and daycare expenses.

Since its inception in 1998, the WJW Scholarship Program has helped hundreds of students obtain degrees, licensure, or certification in educational programs ranging from Business Administration to Social Work and Cosmetology to Veterinary Technician.

Thank you in advance for your advocacy and assistance on behalf of "our" kids!

Follow us on Social Media!

WE know that you are amazing and do incredibly impactful work with kids and families - and we'd like everyone else to know, too! If you haven't already, be sure to follow Key on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn to spread the word! Like and share posts with your friends and families and invite them to follow us as well. Give yourselves the pat on the back that you deserve!



Winter Wonderland in the Northeast Region!

Submitted by Francesca Lonardo, Administrative Supervisor

The Northeast Region got to witness a very special "first" this season! Our former client "LC" got to experience snow for the very first time in her life! LC was a 17 year old who was born and raised in Haiti. She and her family spent time migrating through Chile, Brazil, and Mexico before arriving in the States in August of 2023. In typical New England fashion, a winter snow storm barreled through Methuen the very first week of January, leaving almost a foot of thick, fluffy flakes. LC did not let the fact that she did not own a pair of snow boots yet stop her from enjoying the flurries! She bundled up in her winter coat and jumped right in with the other clients. With the pictures taken of her that day, APS Jerrid Kenney was able to get them printed on canvases for LC, so she could always remember this frigid yet merry day!

Children's Charter Grant

At the end of the year, we were honored to receive a grant from the Community Foundation for MetroWest for our Children's Charter Division. The funds from this grant will assist with the following initiative:

Through this grant, we will be able to continue to provide the youth and families we serve with the high level of comprehensive services that we are committed to delivering. This funding will assist us in covering the costs of continued services for clients who are struggling to pay for their treatment when health insurance issues arise.

About Community Foundation for MetroWest:

The Community Foundation for MetroWest is a community foundation that improves the quality of life in 30+ MetroWest communities. Since 1995, the Foundation has been providing financial and educational resources to local nonprofit organizations, sharing essential data about the region to inform decisions, and partnering with donors to help guide and align their giving with the areas of greatest need in the community. The Foundation is supported by a range of businesses, individuals, and other philanthropic organizations. Currently the Foundation stewards more than \$25 million in charitable assets for immediate needs and future impact.

Thanks from an Intern



While we know how important our caseworkers, supervisors, and everyone else who works along with our interns are, it's nice to hear it from one of our interns themselves! This message from Southeast intern Carestin Stewart was a good reminder of the impact we can have on our interns:

"Dear Key Program Staff,
I wanted to express my appreciation for the wonderful experience I've had working alongside such dedicated and knowledgeable caseworkers and supervisors. The guidance and support from this internship has not only made my time here enjoyable but also opened my eyes to this line of work and the importance of it. The work is inspiring and I'm grateful for this opportunity to learn from everyone.... Thank you for making this experience interesting, informative, and eye-opening."
She also included a Starbucks gift card for the staff to enjoy!

Thank you to our incredible staff for providing our interns with the best experience possible!

Thanking our First Responders

Submitted by Meghan Bailey, Regional Director, Northeast Region

This holiday season, APS Jerrid Kenney (along with some clients!) dropped off some very thoughtful gifts to the local Methuen Fire and Police Departments. But he didn't stop there! He also made snack bins for the Emergency Department staff at Holy Family and Lawrence General Hospitals, including coloring books and crayons for kids who have long stays at the ER. The fire department and hospitals were beyond grateful. Jerrid also always makes it a point to bring clients so they have an opportunity to thank our community partners that we so often utilize. Pictured below is some of the firefighters with the gifts Jerrid gave them! Thank you Jerrid!

• You're •
AMAZING

