



# “Key”munications

Volume 3 Issue 61

November 2018

Key Program, Inc. is a not-for-profit agency serving children and families in Massachusetts and Rhode Island through residential and community-based intervention services. Key’s mission is to assist youth and their families with developing positive life skills and life experiences so that they may pursue productive and rewarding lives. **To learn more, please visit us at [www.key.org](http://www.key.org)**

PUBLISHED FOR EMPLOYEES AND FRIENDS OF KEY PROGRAM, INC.

## Key Cycles Through Another “Ride”

Submitted by: **Kelly Farrier-Glennon**, Executive Assistant to the President & HR Administrator, Main Office

On September 22, 2018, 37 Key employees, family and friends rode in the 28th Annual Rodman Ride for Kids (The Ride), a 25-, 50- or 100-mile non-competitive cycling tour beginning and ending in Foxboro, Massachusetts. The Rodman for Kids Organization is an umbrella matching-gift charity that raises funds for youth-focused social service organizations that support at-risk youth in Massachusetts. The Ride for Kids is the #1 single-day athletic fundraiser in the nation supporting at-risk kids. Key also had volunteers helping with event set-up and at the Start Line to cheer on the riders as they departed. Thank you to all of the riders, volunteers and donors for helping Key raise money for this event! Funds raised through The Ride will be used to provide special opportunities for the kids and families we serve. Past activities have included summer camps, horseback riding lessons, the Canobie Lake Family Fun Day and tickets to numerous educational or entertaining events.



## RAVE (Recognizing a Valuable Employee) AWARD

Submitted by: **Kristy Buck**, Clinical Care Manager, Northeast Region

The Northeast Region is long overdue in giving a shout-out to Old Methuen Girls’ Program Supervisor **Natalie Balletta**! Natalie started as a Therapeutic Mentor in 2014 and moved over to the Methuen Girls Program as a Shift Supervisor in late 2015. Since then, Natalie has progressed to Program Supervisor and has developed a strong team that keeps the program running smoothly. Natalie puts in extra effort on a daily basis; assisting with clinical cases/groups, managing in-shift responsibilities, developing/running trainings all while performing her own tasks in a timely fashion. Natalie always comes in to work with a positive attitude and is ready to help with whatever is needed. She always prioritizes the well-being of her team by holding team-building activities and being accessible and understanding as a supervisor.



Natalie Balletta

Due to her efforts, Natalie’s team is not only efficient, but also has excellent communication, appreciation for one another and a desire to give our clients the best treatment possible while they are in our care. The Old Methuen team could not be more grateful for her presence and everything she does for our team and our girls. We all look forward to working with Natalie and seeing where her incredible potential and dedication might lead her.

## A Message From the President



*William Lyttle*

In recent weeks, news outlets have reported a significant number of hate crimes occurring across the country; some maybe motivated by race, some by religion and some by politics. No matter the misguided motivation, the fact that such acts are being committed – and that they seem to be increasing – is incredibly disturbing.

I have had the pleasure to work, collaborate and socialize with a wonderfully diverse group of people. I've enjoyed learning about their beliefs and customs and sharing mine in return. There is no doubt that my life has been more full, meaningful and joyful because of them.

Have you ever watched a group of young children at play? They give no regard to whether someone looks, speaks or dresses differently. That they may have different religious observations or cultural practices or live within an unconventional family “just is” without needing explanation. They don't assume a child with a disability is less capable and they don't judge one another. Children know instinctively that we are

all the same inside and are equally deserving of love, dignity, compassion, and respect.

Sadly, some among us “unlearn” this truth or distort it into bigotry and discrimination. There should be no room in the world for such people and their heinous actions, yet they persist. Key's workforce and client base is made up of individuals (from all over the world) representing a multitude of races and ethnicities, religions, identities, cultures and practices. Each person is unique and contributes something special that makes the Agency stronger as a whole. It is up to each one of us to combat hatred and look out for one another.

As you go about your life both in- and outside of work, help to ensure that people don't forget or “unlearn” the lessons that we are all equal, that we all want and deserve the same things for ourselves and loved ones – and that we are much better together than apart.



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## Framingham Office Has Surprise Visitor



Front row: Ron Ardine, Carmen Rosado, Rose Sullivan, Jack Araujo, Candy Coolidge  
Back row: Bill Lyttle, Wes Cotter

In late August, Key's Main Office was treated to a surprise visit from former employee Rose Sullivan and her son, Patrick. Both Rose and her late husband, Jack, worked for Key for many years; Rose as a Bookkeeper in Framingham and Jack as an Overnight Awake Shiftworker in the Central Region. Patrick was still just a teenager and is now a dad himself (hard to believe!).

Rose and her family relocated to Texas almost 20 years ago, but Rose has always kept a place in her heart for her Key “family;” checking in by phone or email every once in a while. We were all very happy to see Rose looking and feeling well and really enjoyed catching up with her. We wish her continued health and happiness!

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***“THERE IS ONLY ONE THING BETTER THAN MAKING A  
NEW FRIEND, AND THAT IS KEEPING AN OLD ONE.”***

***ELMER G. LETTERMAN***

## Spot of Sunshine on Douglas Ave.

Submitted by: **Kimberly Lundin**, Regional Clinical Director, Rhode Island Region

On busy Douglas Avenue in Providence, RI lies a little unsuspecting spot of sunshine cultivated by the Rhode Island Region's STARR Program *Clinician Nicholas Robenhymer* and program clients. Last year, Nick designed and built a raised garden bed to be used throughout the seasons located in the front of the RI STARR program.



Nick, along with the residents and staff at STARR, have taken great pride in caring for their lively garden which provides a warm welcome to those entering the program. In the spring "Nick's Garden" held fully bloomed tulips. In the summer the garden was home to peppers, corn stalks, eggplants, tomatoes, green beans and the house favorite - cucumbers! As summer ended, bright yellow sun-flowers grew to symbolize the start of fall. Most importantly, the garden has been a useful tool in building rapport with residents, teaching life skills and creating an opportunity for residents to witness new beginnings and the growth that comes with nurturing. Being in a group home can be difficult for teen-agers, but Nick and the staff at STARR/ RI Region strive to find creative ways to implement trauma-informed practices that not only strengthen coping skills, but spirit as well.

## Alumni Profile



**Kate Bianchi**  
(Rhode Island Region)



I first learned about Key through an employment ad in a local newspaper – a long time ago when that was the most common way of advertising for open positions! I was hired and worked as an Outreach and Tracking Caseworker in the Rhode Island Region for 18 months.

I found the work to be challenging, exciting, and exhausting. It was an eye-opening experience for me to meet and work with people from all walks of life and circumstances that I had not encountered before.

Some of my best memories are the bonds I had with my co-workers. We were all just starting out in our careers at the same time and were learning and growing together. I also remember going on some really great outings with the clients after we got to know them and they grew to trust us.

Working at Key helped me to get out of my comfort zone and learn how to work directly with adolescents and their families. It helped me gain the confidence to provide guidance to parents when I was only a young adult myself with no children of my own. I was also able to establish a rapport with community providers, schools, and learn how to navigate the state's court system.

After leaving Key, I worked as a DCYF (Department of Children, Youth and Families) Social Worker and a Child Protective Investigator. Recently, I was promoted to a supervisor of the DYCF child abuse and neglect hotline. Although I am no longer going out in the field on a daily basis, I am working collaboratively and communicating each day with service providers, schools, and the courts. As much as I miss seeing families daily, I am challenged by my new position.

I am still in touch with a number of former Key teammates who have followed similar career paths or worked together at DCYF and still connect with others through social media. We all agree that our time with Key was one of the best times of our lives.

I would encourage new employees to work hard, be open to learn, know that you will be humbled, moved and challenged. I will tell you that you will never be bored and your career may take you in unpredictable directions. You will make a difference every day even with small gestures and that you will build connections with providers and agencies that will possibly expand your career beyond Key.

Enjoy your time at Key - it goes by quickly. It is a wonderful and supportive place to begin a career in the social service field.

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## Bragging Rights

Want an opportunity to brag about the great goings-on in your region? Consider writing an article for inclusion in the next newsletter! We love hearing about the fantastic, innovative ways Key employees are engaging youth and families to make a positive impact on their lives; and perhaps another program could benefit from some of the ideas you share. Please submit articles to your region's Administrative Supervisor or designee.

## Geographical Tour of Key Happenings

### CENTRAL REGION

*Following is a message to the Central Region's Regional Director **Mike Brennan** from former Key employee **Randy Holmberg**, who worked as the Clinical Director at the Oakes D Girls' Program:*

Mike,

I hope this email finds you well. While I am no longer working full time at DYS (Department of Youth Services), I have stayed on in a per diem role to help complete 68A evaluations (a mental health evaluation to determine recommendations for future services or placements). I wanted to pass along that in the past 3 or 4 assessments I have completed, all youth were Key Outreach & Tracking clients at one point. When interviewing the youth and families, one of the things I always ask is "were any of the services helpful to you?" And in every scenario both youth and parents have given very positive feedback about their Outreach services. Some youth examples include comments like "they helped me work towards my goals, not just DCF's goals" or "I liked Key because out of all my services, they were the only one to know me as a person." Parents as well talk about the support and helpfulness of the Key O/T team. Far too often in this field service providers hear only the complaints or frustrations, so I figured I would pass along the feedback and tell your O/T team to keep up the great work!

Sincerely, Randy Holmberg

*The region also received a very nice message from the parents of a former Lincoln Street STARR Program (LSSP) client addressed to Clinician **Helen Shoemaker** and Regional Clinical Director **Jackie LeSage**:*

We just wanted to say thank you to you both for all of your help and support with "B!" I know we had a unique situation and at times things were rough, but you didn't give up. Helen, we know that the reason things changed for the better is because you took over our case. Your effort and the work you did with B and in our family sessions made a huge difference. I know we were a challenge and we are grateful that you kept fighting for us. We would also like to say thank you for treating us with kindness and respect throughout the whole process. The fact that you could see and understand how difficult this was for all of us truly helped. We're not sure what magically seemed to change towards the end, but it wouldn't have happened with you. We know we still have work to do in building our relationship and we hope things will keep moving forward. I think this has been the best things have been with B in a very long time. It is wonderful to see him so positive and even with a new attitude towards school. Currently he has all A+ grades after the first few weeks, which is amazing! We didn't mean to wait so long to say thank you, it seemed so rushed at the end when he came home. Keep doing what you are doing and know that you are making a difference with children/families that need you the most. If you helped us be successful then there is certainly hope for others!

With our sincere gratitude, J and J L

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## Painting the Night Away

*Submitted by: **Kim Baczko**, Administrative Supervisor & HR Representative, Central Region*

On September 18, the Worcester Outreach & Tracking team held their 2nd Annual Paint Night to raise funds towards the Central Region's goal for the 2018 Rodman Ride for Kids. Program staff, friends and family met at the Compass Tavern in Worcester where two volunteers led the group in step-by-step instruction on painting a fun autumn scene. Prizes were given in three categories: Most Artistic (showing the most potential and best execution), Best Listener (following the instructions the most accurately), and Most Effort (putting forth his/her best attempt). Participants expressed how much they enjoyed the night and together sold nearly 30 tickets, raising over \$900.



## NORTHEAST REGION

### Planting Positive Experiences

Submitted by: *Sue Spitale, Regional Director, Northeast Region*

*This past summer, the boys at the New Directions program were asked by a community organizer to help plant flowers in a local park just down the street from the program. Several of the boys jumped into action and donated hours of their weekend free-time to help with the new flower beds. AYF (the Alternatives for Youth Foundation, a supporting foundation for Key) assisted with this valuable project by donating the plants, flowers and other materials. Below are excerpts from an article submitted by one of the boys that helped with project that is now the pride of the neighborhood. The boys that were involved are keeping a watchful eye on their garden beds and showing off their hard work and green thumbs to family members and social workers by frequent tours and visits. We really appreciated being sought out to be a part of something so positive in our city.*

To start things off, I'd like to thank the Key Program for the opportunity to be of assistance in planting flowers at our local park and getting out in my community to do something beautiful and positive and even meet the coordinator for the Methuen Park Gardening Project.

The project was just absolutely phenomenal in every way, from the idea of planting in our very own Methuen public park to actually doing it and successfully getting the job completed. We even had young kids and adults working together making the community a better place with beauty and unity. Last but not least, we got a lot from our ability to be leaders of the project. It was a good experience, one to never forget, but to cherish and carry on and spread to teach others.

If I could do it again, I would. If I could spread it to other places and other people, I'd do that, too. Thank you to everyone who helped and invited my peers and me to join and feel at home.

“TG,” former New Directions client



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### Lemonade For Animals!

Submitted by: *Francesca Lonardo, Assistant Program Supervisor, Northeast Region*



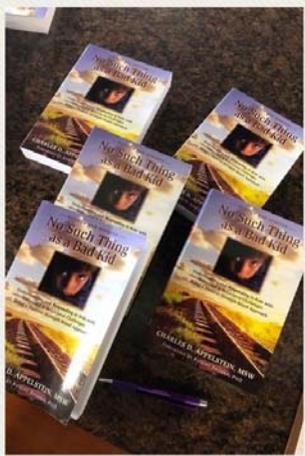
What better way to cool down on a hot summer day than with a nice cold cup of lemonade? The Northeast Region Girls' STARR Program operated a very special lemonade stand fundraiser at the MSPCA (Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) Nevin's Farm in Methuen, MA. To prepare for the big event, the girls designed their own signs to display all over the farm, and helped staff gather all the necessary materials needed to make and serve the lemonade. The girls spent all afternoon handing out colorful cups of fresh lemonade to the families visiting the farm. They even put out bowls of cold water for the four-legged pets that visited, too! At the end of the day, they raised over \$175, all of which was donated to the MSPCA to help care for its furry residents. This was a very meaningful event for the girls at the Old Methuen Program, as they visit the farm often and enjoy spending time with all of the animals.

## Staff Appreciation Day

Submitted by: **Kim Nguyen**, Recruiter Trainer, Northeast Region

On October 22, the Northeast Region hosted a Staff Appreciation Day at Home Comfort Care in Methuen (special thanks to Katie Cook for donating the space for the event). Our Master of Ceremonies, *Regional Director Sue Spitale*, kicked off the event with her usual eloquence, recognizing the hard work of our staff on behalf of the adolescents we serve. After acknowledging how challenging this field can be and the amazing efforts put forth by the employees, our MC took us through a game of trivia tailored around inside jokes between the programs. Everyone reminisced and laughed about the memories and traditions created.

Before digging into a hearty lunch, all staff who were awarded “Employee of the Month” for 2018 were recognized and applauded. The “Helping Hand” award was presented to the Northeast’s Outreach & Tracking team for the consistent help they have provided the programs recently. Many of the Outreach & Tracking staff have worked shifts and sleep-ins and provided transports to appointments when the residential programs needed assistance.



Even though clients were not present for this function, a touch of their presence was felt. *Office Manager Susan Mokray* and a client put together appreciation goodie-bags for every staff member in the region. Copies of Charlie Appelstein’s books “The Gus Chronicles” and “No Such Thing as a Bad Kid” were available for staff to take among other “freebies” to show just how much they are valued.

Nothing was more riveting than when *Assistant Program Supervisor Jerrid Kenney* led the group through several games. A few of the many favorites were “Hygiene Toss”, “Heads-Up, Key Program Edition”, and “Walkie-Talkie Lego Build.” Through these games, many staff members that don’t usually work together had the opportunity to team up and unleash their competitive natures. The region would like to thank Jerrid for always putting in 110% fun and creativity into all he plans for the clients on a regular basis; and in this case, the staff.

The 2018 Staff Appreciation Day ended with a lot of laughs and a reminder of the reward in working with a team that constantly appreciates one another.

## WESTERN REGION

### Caution: Zombie Crossing

Submitted by: **Breana Swain**, Program Supervisor, Parkwood Group Home, Western Region

As the weather cools down and hot cocoa replaces slushies, there is an air of thrill and enthusiasm surrounding the Parkwood IGH (Intensive Group Home). *Residential Caseworkers Isis Simmons* and **Vivian Nguyen** and I gathered up the nine clients and informed them that it was time to start preparing for Halloween! Chatter about Halloween costume ideas, décor needs, and plans for seasonal activities commenced right away. The clients were grouped into teams to conquer different areas of the program—and not a room was spared! The most time and effort, however, was spent decorating the outdoors so that clients, staff, visitors, and passers-by could take in the festive aura that enveloped the program.

The Parkwood IGH prides itself on many things, and decorating for seasonal events is one of them! This gives clients the opportunity to get their minds off whatever may be troubling them and direct positive energy into making their living space festive and comfortable. This also gets everyone in the holiday spirit. No matter the holiday, you can expect to see this program decked out to the nines. The benefits of decorations are innumerable! People are naturally drawn to businesses, stores, homes, etc. that are well-kept and well-decorated as opposed to those that are not. There is a feeling of contentedness when we see a carved pumpkin smiling from a porch or holiday lights glimmering in a window. Many clients have voiced that they feel happy as they approach the program and see the hard work they put into making their space festive. The decorations also remind them of all the exciting program activities that surround whatever occasion is being celebrated. One thing that is largely within our control is the environment in which we are providing services to those in need. This is one example of how we can reinvigorate our work spaces and program settings to create positive life experiences and memories for years to come. Each holiday is an opportunity to get clients and families excited and involved, and it is these little touches that make the Key Program exceptional.

## A “Little” Change in Greenfield

Submitted by: *Lynn Meffen, Clinical Supervisor, Western Region*

The Greenfield, MA STARR Programs underwent significant changes as of October 16, 2018. The Park Street STARR Program was newly licensed to accept children from newborn to age 12 and the former DYS-funded “Our House” Program was newly minted as the Shelburne Road STARR Program licensed for children ages 12 to 19.

Much hard work went into preparing for these changes; including multiple inspections; some rigorous trainings including diaper changing, toilet training, early developmental needs, attachment concerns, special needs for young children on the Autism Spectrum, play activities, pre-school learning; SIDS and having all staff certified in infant and child First Aid/CPR.

The Park Street STARR Program is now equipped with a gorgeous crib, pack ‘n play, Legos, Lincoln Logs, picture and early reading books (like Dr. Seuss), bottles, step-stools, potty seats, children’s eating utensils, etc. The sensory room is colorful and includes a 3-D rug (a big hit with a little boy with autism!), colorful balls, sensory lights, and stuffed animals. It has been an adventure to say the least, especially with a very active and playful 3-year-old tyke placed within days of receiving licensure.

The Shelburne Road STARR Program serving adolescents offers similar fare, with a new recreation room and a very soothing and cool sensory room. Staff have done a remarkable job embracing the changes and seem to enjoy the opportunity to work with a greater degree of client diversity.

Thank you very much to everyone who helped to make the transition seamless--our dedicated and passionate staff, a really phenomenal supervisory and clinical team, an incredible nurse who provided trainings specific to younger children and an Agency that spared nothing to provide all that is needed to care for these children.



- \* Keep a winter supply box in your car “just in case.” Include a flashlight, road flares, first aid kit, blanket, extra gloves, ice scraper, high energy snacks, a portable phone charger and sand/kitty litter for traction.
- \* Check your vehicle’s antifreeze, motor oil and windshield wiper fluid levels to ensure they are sufficient.
- \* Ensure your tires have enough tread for winter driving. Try the “Lincoln Test:” Insert a penny in your tire with the top of Lincoln’s head pointing towards the center. If you can see all of his head, you should consider replacing your tires before winter travel.

# THINK SAFETY!

## December is “Safe Toys and Celebrations Month”

The month of December hosts a number of religious and cultural holidays. Help to keep them joyful for everyone!

- Choose toys and gifts that are age appropriate
- Select toys that have an ASTM (American Association for Testing and Materials) approval
- Consider food allergies when gifting and receiving food items
- Hang glass, sharp or electrical decorations out of the reach of young children and pets
- Charging electronic devices should be supervised by an adult
- Be conscious of fire safety by avoiding open flames and keeping trees and other flammable decorations away from heat sources
- Read warning labels!
- Remember to provide safety gear (helmets, goggles, etc.) when gifting sports-related items
- If out celebrating, ALWAYS have a sober designated driver or use a transportation service (taxi, Uber, Lyft, etc.)

## The month of January is “Cervical Wellness Month”

Nearly 13,000 women in the United States are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year, but the disease is largely preventable with vaccination and regular screening.

Many cases of cervical cancer are linked to HPV (human papillomavirus) exposure. HPV vaccinations can greatly reduce this risk! Girls and young women can be vaccinated as early as age 11 and up to age 26.

Boys and young men should also be vaccinated because HPV can cause reproductive and other cancers in men as well!

Regular Pap screenings can detect changes that may indicate cervical cancer and lead to early diagnosis and treatment, so don't neglect annual examinations and screenings!

Prevention and early detection are the most important ways to fight this disease.

