

PURPOSE

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Photo by Hans Pennink

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Cover: Staff member Amelia Haigh helps Aaliyah Manning with her homework at Girls Inc. in Manchester

THE NEW HAMPSHIRE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION is New Hampshire's statewide community foundation, founded in 1962 by and for the people of New Hampshire. We manage a growing collection of 2,000 funds created by generous individuals, families and businesses, and award more than \$50 million in grants and scholarships every year. We work with generous and visionary citizens to maximize the power of their giving, support great work happening in our communities, and lead and collaborate on high-impact initiatives. Learn more at www.nhcf.org or call 800-464-6641.

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HOW'S OUR CIVIC HEALTH?

By Richard Ober, president and CEO



Compared to other states, New Hampshire scores well in many measures of well-being. But it's usually the averages that get the headlines. And averages obscure gaps, inequities and important questions.

The latest NH Civic Health Index from the Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire is a good example. (Visit carsey.unh.edu to read the full report).

It reports that Granite Staters give, vote, volunteer and attend public meetings at relatively high levels. Most of us feel we matter to our communities and can make a difference. That's all good.

A deeper look into the data and Carsey's analysis, however, raises important questions:

- As a state we rank 5th in connecting with friends and family, but 46th

in connecting with people of different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds. How do we build social capital across difference as our communities become ever more diverse?

- We rank 5th for the percentage of people who report giving at least \$25 per year to charity. But the data has long shown that New Hampshire is close to the bottom among states in average giving as a percentage of income. How do we better match our generosity to our capacity to give?
- People with more moderate incomes help their neighbors and contact public officials more frequently than people with higher incomes, but are less likely to vote. Why?
- Education is the best predictor of civic engagement, and high immigration in previous decades helped improve our ranking as a well-educated state overall. But other studies show that the capacity of our public K-12 systems varies widely by district because of inequitable funding, and we rank 50th in funding higher education. How can we ensure that everyone receives a world-class public education, no matter what district they live in?

We didn't need a report to tell us about rising polarization, disinformation and

caustic rhetoric in recent years. All of that is pervasive. Hate crimes are on the rise. I know people in New Hampshire who have been targeted with racist and sexist comments in the street, online and even in the State House. And declining trust is affecting democracy itself: According to the Pew Research Center, 64 percent of Americans trusted the American people to make good political decisions in 1997. By 2019, that had declined to 34 percent.

Civic health undergirds every issue and is a good in and of itself: People are more productive and happy when they are informed, welcomed and respected. That's why the Charitable Foundation supports initiatives that provide trusted news, host community conversations, lower barriers to voting, advance civics education, help people understand systemic inequity and racism and more. A partial list is here: www.nhcf.org/civicengagement.

The musician and activist Daryl Davis asks: "Do you want to sit back and see what your country becomes? Or do you want to stand up and help your country become what you want to see?"

If we do the latter, the state we love could also be the healthiest, civics-wise. Let's aim for that when we get our next civic check-up. ■



Alexandra Gimby of Hudson graduated in 2019 from the microelectronics “boot camp” program at Nashua Community College

GIFT TO NEW HAMPSHIRE’S HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2021

The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation and The Foundation for New Hampshire Community Colleges are partnering to give New Hampshire students a head start on their college careers: a free class at any of New Hampshire’s seven community colleges in the fall.

Any student graduating from a New Hampshire high school or home school program in 2021 is eligible to take a course of their choice, including courses that are part of certificate programs that prepare students to enter skilled trades, at no

cost, at any New Hampshire community college.

“Today’s graduating seniors have endured unprecedented disruption,” said Michael Turmelle, director of education and career initiatives at the Charitable Foundation. “They have been separated from all of the usual in-school experiences and services that graduating seniors can usually count on. We wanted to create an easy way for students to take an important step toward their future success.”

Visit [GiveNHCC.org/ClassGift](https://www.givenhcc.org/ClassGift) to learn more. ■

WE’RE NOT SAYING “GOODBYE,” TYM

Tym Rourke, recognized as a state and national philanthropic leader in the area of substance use disorder prevention, treatment and recovery, is joining Third Horizons Strategies, a national healthcare consulting firm working with healthcare industry experts to advance health equity and integrated behavioral healthcare.

During his 13 years at the Foundation, Tym oversaw the Foundation’s grantmaking to address substance use disorder, chaired the Governor’s Commission on Substance Use, and directed the Foundation’s New Hampshire Tomorrow initiative to increase opportunities for children and families. He led in the creation of the state’s youth substance use prevention plan and spearheaded the Foundation’s partnership with the Conrad Hilton Foundation, which resulted in medical providers implementing a proven youth screening and intervention protocol for substance use. We wish him all the very best in the next chapter of his life’s work. ■





Families enjoy a warm spring day at Rochester Common

NEW HEALTH FOUNDATION FOR GREATER ROCHESTER

The Greater Rochester Community Health Foundation, created with proceeds from the sale of the nonprofit Frisbie Memorial Hospital, has become a “supporting organization” of the Charitable Foundation, and will draw on the Charitable Foundation’s community knowledge and financial and investment expertise to meet its mission.

GRCHF’s mission is to improve the health and well-being of the people in Strafford County and surrounding communities. It will award grants, make program-related investments and provide other financial assistance to health and social service programs, organizations and projects that benefit the community.

For more information and updates about the Greater Rochester Community Health Foundation, please visit www.nhcf.org/GRCHF. ■

HELPING PUBLIC SCHOOLS FUND HEALTH SERVICES

Public schools can bill the federal Medicaid program for health and behavioral health services provided to eligible students by school-based providers. But the billing and reporting processes are so complex that many schools do not have the staff time or training to manage them, leaving schools without a critical revenue stream. A Foundation grant to the JSI Research and Training Institute is helping to establish a technical assistance center for schools to help with the Medicaid billing process, unlocking access to federal dollars intended to help children in need. The initial pilot project will focus on some of the state’s highest-need school districts. ■

KUDOS



Courtesy photo

Foundation Director and City Year NH Executive Director **Pavn Nitichan** was named one of NH Business Review’s 2021 Outstanding Women in Business.



Former Foundation Board Chair **Barry Brensinger** received the NH Center for Nonprofits’ 2021 Board Impact Award for his board service and leadership with nonprofits including the Manchester Boys & Girls Club, Catholic Medical Center and City Year NH.



The **NH Food Bank** was named Nonprofit of the Year by Business NH Magazine. The Foundation sponsors this award and presents the recipient with a \$5,000 grant in honor of Walter J. Dunfey, NH entrepreneur and philanthropist.

THE NEXT SURGE

New Hampshire nonprofits address COVID's mental health fallout

By David Tirrell-Wysocki

When COVID turned her business and her life upside-down, a New Hampshire small-business owner reached out to Seacoast Mental Health Center for help. The nonprofit provided emergency therapy via telehealth that helped her cope with stress, feel better overall with her life direction and put her business back together. She transitioned to non-emergency therapy, also through telehealth, scheduled around her demanding business commitment. Now, she is back to managing her life and her business in good health — one of thousands of people who continue to be helped by New Hampshire nonprofits during this extremely challenging time.

COVID has affected the mental health

of people of all ages, from all walks of life. New Hampshire nonprofits have adapted while facing a surge in need, and are looking ahead at needs still to emerge as the full effects of a year of social isolation, loss of loved ones and the stress of living through a global pandemic continue to unfold.

Nonprofits turned to high-tech telehealth and low-tech camp chairs to face a mental health crisis that existed before the virus, then grew like “mushrooms after a rain.”

“All of the issues and diagnoses that we were treating before are still there,” said Jay Couture, president and CEO of Seacoast Mental Health. “Then, we began seeing an increase in anxiety, depression, risk of suicide and isolation.”

The surge taxed an understaffed system. Community mental health agencies hired staff and offered more group sessions to address the larger caseload. Mental health advocates worked with policy makers and providers to build collaborations that expanded mental health support and paved the way for future improvement. “The biggest struggle is the demand for care,” Couture said. “Seacoast Mental Health’s emergency services clinicians at Exeter Hospital are so incredibly busy — busier than I think we’ve ever seen. Our treatment teams are seeing the same thing.”

Foundation grants have supported nonprofits that are addressing this crisis — from early-COVID response grants to



Seacoast Mental Health Center providers meet with clients outdoors at the organization's Portsmouth location

“All of the issues and diagnoses that we were treating before are still there. Then, we began seeing an increase in anxiety, depression, risk of suicide and isolation.”

–Jay Couture, president and CEO of Seacoast Mental Health

A new study from researchers at the University of New Hampshire showed that before the pandemic, more than half of children in mental health distress (and nearly two-thirds of 10- to 17-year olds) were not receiving appropriate care. There are no concrete figures for how COVID has affected that shortfall, but providers say the number of children facing anxiety and stress has only increased.

Mental health centers, schools and the state are working to find ways to address student needs.

JoAnne Malloy, director of UNH's Institute on Disability, offers mental health training to schools and mental health centers.

“One of the things I've said to a couple of counselors and teachers is 'It would be helpful to ease up on the academics a little bit,'" Malloy said, "allowing students a chance to process (their experiences). And schools need tools to identify kids who are really struggling and respond to that.”

Some school districts are working with nonprofit community providers to help children stay healthy.

Concord school counselors meet regularly with providers from Riverbend Community Mental Health to review how to support students who are Riverbend clients. Before COVID restrictions closed school buildings, Riverbend had an office at Rundlett Middle School. Come fall, plans are to resume that service and add an

office at the high school.

Concord High started programs to help students re-establish school habits, reconnect and cope.

“Routines are hard to establish after you haven't necessarily had a routine for some time,” said Concord High School psychologist Margie Borawska. “There was a new surge of students being stressed. It was like mushrooms after a rain.”

Around the state, some children and adults in crisis are taken to hospital emergency departments. Too many are “boarded” there, waiting for beds to become available in an appropriate mental health facility.

The state Supreme Court ruled in May that involuntary “boarding” in emergency departments without allowing patients' court hearings violated patients' rights.

At the Foundation for Healthy Communities, Nancy Fennell leads the Behavioral Health Clinical Learning Collaborative, which includes members from all of New Hampshire's acute care hospitals, in-patient psychiatric hospitals, community mental health centers and other partners. The collaborative was formed a year before COVID-19 to help hospitals and mental health centers address the ED boarding crisis by partnering on clinical improvement initiatives that better support patients experiencing

(Continued, p. 8)

establish telehealth practices to ongoing operating support, support for advocacy and for change in systems to better address behavioral health statewide.

Community mental health providers turned quickly to telehealth, connecting with patients by phone or video. In residential group homes, providers and patients donned PPE to meet in person.

Seacoast Mental Health's outreach staff brought folding camp chairs to meet in clients' yards. Providers scheduled sessions at picnic tables instead of conference rooms.

The pandemic's effect on children has been alarming, as their normal coping mechanisms — seeing friends, playing sports and other school activities — were curtailed overnight.



“There are a lot of positive innovations and changes coming to the mental health service delivery system,” including the continuation of telehealth services which began during the early part of COVID.

—Ken Norton, executive director, NAMI NH

mental health crises in emergency departments. Then, COVID-19 deepened the crisis for patients of all ages.

Pre-COVID, the highest average number of children waiting in emergency departments over a three-month period was seven, in 2017. By the last three months of 2020, the average was 16. On one weekend in February, 51 children were waiting for a mental health bed.

Funded by the Charitable Foundation and the Endowment for Health, the Collaborative has helped develop a more coordinated approach to identify patients in need of mental health services and connect them with resources before they face issues serious enough to warrant an emergency department visit.

Through the Collaborative’s efforts, some New Hampshire hospitals and community mental health centers have begun implementing trauma-informed care practices and training to prevent mental trauma to staff and patients in emergency departments. A standardized suicide-risk screening with appropriate follow-up care protocol is now in widespread use.

As mental health providers and advocates look forward, they see obstacles — and cause for optimism. Fallout from COVID-19 continues to affect mental health care, they say, pointing out that first responders, healthcare workers, teachers, delivery people, grocery clerks

and others deemed essential workers need attention.

“Everyone knows someone, maybe not in a crisis, but who is dealing with a mental health challenge,” said Peter Ames, executive director of the Foundation for Healthy Communities. “We must encourage people to talk about mental health. The more people share their stories, the more it empowers others to do the same, which will help end the stigma around mental illness.”

Ken Norton, executive director of New Hampshire’s chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, said despite the current and looming challenges, he is optimistic that changes championed by NAMI NH and others will improve care.

He expects a federal law creating a special three-digit 988 suicide prevention/mental health crisis line next year will revamp crisis care for mental health.

Also, Norton said, New Hampshire community mental health centers are establishing mobile mental health crisis response services, offering more care that integrates mental and physical health and a comprehensive system of care for children and support for families.

“There are a lot of positive innovations and changes coming to the mental health service delivery system,” he said, including the continuation of telehealth services which began during

the early part of COVID. For patients with limited mobility, transportation or time, being able to access support online is critical.

Improving New Hampshire’s mental health system has long been debated among lawmakers. Michele Merritt, president and CEO of New Futures, a statewide health advocacy nonprofit, is encouraged that heightened awareness because of the boarding crisis, mental health staff shortages, access to care and other COVID-related issues have created new commitments from legislators and state leaders to re-envision how to better deliver mental health services — evidenced in the state’s latest 10-year Mental Health Plan, which includes children for the first time.

At Seacoast Mental Health, Couture sees hope in lessons from the past, specifically the 1918 influenza pandemic.

“The number one thing I try to remind people of is that pandemic ended and we moved forward,” she said. “We know we can recover, it’s just that while we are in it, you need a reminder that this, too, shall pass.” ■

If you or someone you know is struggling, help is available. Please reach out for support: Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or if you’re in New Hampshire, just dial 211 for referrals to services.



LOCAL NEWS MATTERS

A conversation with Eileen O'Grady, a Report for America fellow and the education reporter at the Concord Monitor. A grant from the Charitable Foundation is helping to support her position.

In the "Report for America" model, journalism is akin to national service. Talk a little bit about that philosophy and how it works.

Report for America is a nationwide team of 225 reporters stationed at local news outlets helping to boost local coverage. It's a model that has given a great boost to local news at a time when local outlets are facing funding issues and staff cuts. Having local news is important for communities because without it, residents can't understand critical issues to make decisions for their families and hold officials accountable.

Recent studies have shown that local news has a profound effect on communities — including increasing community satisfaction, decreasing polarization and increasing and voter turnout...

I'm always hyperaware of the impact that local reporting has on a community. I have seen civic engagement increase as a result of reporting done by news outlets I've worked for, whether it's people organizing politically around an issue

they read about or showing up in high numbers to vote when a contentious topic they read about is on the ballot. That makes me approach my work seriously and carefully, knowing the impact it can have, but it also shows the value of being informed — when people are informed, they can take that knowledge and use it to make their own choices in their own lives. It shows the direct correlation between an independent press and the democratic process.

You cover education. There's a lot to it, and you've had a lot of news happen on your watch. What has surprised you about that beat in New Hampshire?

Education has been reinvented like never before this year. It has been fascinating as a reporter to follow it and see school leaders make some tough and unprecedented decisions. One thing that has struck me about New Hampshire is the fact that everything is very locally controlled and each school district makes very independent decisions.

U.S. newsrooms employ about half

the number of people they did in 2008. You certainly knew that and went into journalism anyway. Why?

I've always been interested in local news and telling community stories and helping people share their stories about issues that matter to them.

There are a lot of organizations like Report For America and a lot of cool new models that are looking to turn that around and boost local journalism in really interesting ways.

What are some of those models, for an industry reinventing itself?

The Poynter Institute does a similar thing to Report for America, and locally, the Granite State News Collaborative is really innovative and it has been cool to see VT Digger grow and be so successful. [Note: The Foundation also funds the News Collaborative.]

How can people help save local news?

Subscribe to your local newspaper! Sign up for your local newspapers' newsletters! And generally just don't be afraid to engage with us. I am always encouraging people to tell me the things they would like to see covered. ■

IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Nonprofits are improving the quality of life in every corner of New Hampshire



Photo by Deb Cram, Seacoastonline and Fosters.com. Used with permission.

NEW REPORTING SERIES ON RACE AND EQUITY IN NH

Foundation funding is helping to support the nonprofit Granite State News Collaborative's multiyear reporting project examining race and inequity in New Hampshire. The nearly 20 media and educational partners are pooling efforts to cover issues from economic opportunity to health equity, policing/criminal justice, education and access to civic engagement — and to report on ways in which the diverse communities that make up New Hampshire are vital to the state's economic and cultural health. Visit www.collaborativenh.org/raceandequity to learn more.

OUR FUTURE WORKFORCE

Grants will help support a long-time partnership between the **Jobs for America's Graduates** program in Berlin and the **Appalachian Mountain Club** that gives students meaningful, paid summer employment, skill-building work in environmental stewardship and exposure to careers in conservation and land management.



Courtesy photo



Photo by Michael Moore, Keene Sentinel. Used with permission.

HOUSING STABILITY FOR ALL

The COVID pandemic and related economic fallout have exacerbated the state's struggle with housing and homelessness. Homelessness rates have increased, some supportive housing programs have been forced to close, and many people and families are newly facing housing insecurity. Grants from the Charitable Foundation and Endowment for Health are helping the State's **Council on Stable Housing** to create a comprehensive strategy for New Hampshire to address all aspects of housing and homelessness.



Courtesy photo

BETTER TOGETHER

Global Awareness Local Action’s vision of creating a community building space is closer to reality with a new name and location in Wolfeboro: **Makers Mill**, Carroll County’s first makerspace and vocation hub. An unrestricted operating grant will help the organization put the finishing touches on the new space and open its doors this summer.



Courtesy photo

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Project Shakespeare in Jaffrey provides an immersive experience into the world of Shakespeare plays for elementary, middle and high school students. Despite COVID-19, the organization was able to successfully produce two virtual and two in-person performances. A donor-advised fund grant will help support its 2021 performances, which include A Midsummer Night’s Dream and Merchant of Venice.

EVERYONE EATS
Vital Communities, in partnership with the City of Claremont, is piloting Everyone Eats, an innovative program launched last fall in Vermont that pays local restaurants to make meals for people in need. A Charitable Foundation grant is helping to purchase an estimated 1,800 meals from three Claremont restaurants. The meals are being distributed through the Claremont Soup Kitchen.



Courtesy photo



Courtesy photo

HEALING HORSES

Back in the Saddle Equine Therapy in Hopkinton offers horse riding and equine activities to people of all ages living with disabilities. A Foundation grant is helping to support its programming for teens struggling with mental health issues.



HELPING FAMILIES ADAPT

Girls, Inc. shifted operations to create a safe, supervised space for girls to do remote learning — plus get three nutritious meals a day and after-school care

Jess Cummings had just started a new job when COVID hit. Her six-year-old's school closed initially, then went to a hybrid model for kindergarten. Jess is a Head Start teacher, a job she was still required to do in-person — so that the parents of the preschool-age children she teaches can, in turn, go to work doing other essential jobs in the community. She could not manage Keira's remote schooling from home.

Girls, Inc. provided this family — and many others in similar circumstances — with a lifeline during incredibly difficult times.

The nonprofit, which provides girls ages 5-18 with a variety of programming year-round, quickly shifted its operations at its centers in Manchester and Nashua. The centers had been the site of mostly after-school programming, and were equipped with only a couple computers — and unreliable Wi-Fi. They were converted in a matter of weeks to add remote-learning “Smart Cafés” for pandemic times, fully wired and equipped with computers for girls to use for remote learning, PPE and partitions for safety, new staff to help

guide girls in their schoolwork and a ramped-up meals program to feed kids a nutritious breakfast, lunch and dinner. They switched from being open after school only to opening in the early morning, so parents could drop girls off before work.

“When schools opted for remote learning, we thought, ‘what is the best way to fulfill our mission and serve families?’ That is where the Smart Cafés came about,” said Girls, Inc. CEO Sharron McCarthy. “Families really needed the help, and we didn’t want girls to struggle or be home alone.”



Staff member Amelia Haigh helps Aaliyah Manning with her homework at Girls Inc. in Manchester

Jess drops Keira at the Girls, Inc. location in Nashua every school day at 7:45. Staff there help Keira sign on to her computer to connect with her class, and help guide her through her school work. And when school is over, they switch into “after-school” mode (Girls, Inc. has long provided after-school programming) and Keira stays with the same group and participates in activities until her mom collects her at 5. (Even though Keira’s school does offer in-person learning, after-school care remains complex, and would involve her

“I love being a working woman. I want to work. I am thankful that Girls, Inc. can provide this. They have been my saving grace.”

—Parent Jess Cummings, whose daughter, Keira, attends Girls, Inc.

‘bubble’ being much larger.)

“I really feel like they’ve got my back,” Jess said of Girls, Inc. “Keira loves it there, she loves her ‘teachers,’ she cannot wait to get there every day.”

The Girls, Inc. center in Nashua will continue to offer this service through the end of this school year for families who choose to use it, and the Smart Cafés will continue to be used for homework support, STEM programming and a summer program to combat learning loss.

A grant from the Foundation in the early days of the pandemic helped Girls, Inc. make the leap to being able to provide what families needed in that moment. Foundation staff reached out to a donor with tech expertise, who recommended a grant from his donor-advised fund to support the Smart Cafés, raised another \$10,000 among his own friends and colleagues for new computers, and then helped the nonprofit with purchasing the machines in bulk. The wider community also rallied: BEI Networks rewired both locations with high-speed internet, gratis; BAE Systems and Dartmouth Hitchcock provided more Chromebooks and supplies — and more. Earlier this year, the Foundation made a three-year, \$60,000 operating grant to support all of the work of Girls, Inc. in New Hampshire. Other Foundation donors have also been longtime, generous supporters of Girls, Inc.

Girls, Inc. is a nationwide

organization that focuses on inspiring girls to be strong, smart and bold. Sixty percent of the families served by Girls, Inc. in New Hampshire come from households with incomes of \$25,000 or below. Most girls live with one parent, and a high percentage of those parents have jobs that have required them to work outside the home throughout the pandemic. Many work in health care, child care, as cleaners or in restaurants. Many families do not have computers or internet access at home — making remote learning at home impossible. Some parents, who speak languages other than English, struggled to oversee their children’s daily lessons.

Like most parents managing remote and hybrid learning, the Girls, Inc. staff members are not certified teachers, and — also like parents — they are doing their best. On any given day, staff might be helping girls with everything from metric conversion to lessons about the solar system to New Hampshire history and chapter-book assignments — and making sure everything is completed and ready to be turned in on time.

For parents like Jess Cummings, that has made a very stressful time a lot easier.

“I love being a working woman,” she said. “I want to work. I am thankful that Girls, Inc. can provide this. They have been my saving grace.” ■

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WWW.GIRLSINCNEWHAMPSHIRE.ORG



SUPPORTING LGBTQ YOUTH

Mentoring partnership between Big Brothers Big Sisters and Seacoast Outright gets help from the Respect for All Youth Fund

William Tuthill was in his mid-20s when he came out to his parents in 1985.

His parents became fervent allies to him, and to LGBTQ youth in general — speaking in schools and in the press, helping start a local chapter of PFLAG. They eventually opened a donor-advised fund at the Charitable Foundation in his honor, named the Respect for All Youth Fund, to support projects and organizations serving LGBTQ youth, young people of color and those from struggling families.

When Foundation staff received a proposal from Big Brothers Big Sisters of New Hampshire and Seacoast Outright for a new partnership to better serve LGBTQ youth, they brought it to Tuthill and his brothers, who now advise that fund.

“It was very heartening to see Big Brothers Big Sisters focus specifically on LGBTQ youth,” Tuthill said. “My brothers and I were immediately on

board and thrilled that the Foundation had found this.” They recommended a grant from their fund for the full amount requested by the organizations.

The new project, called PRISM (for Pride, Respect, Identity, Safety, Mentoring) is giving all mentors information and training on how to handle conversations about gender identity and sexual orientation with compassion and appropriate language.

JoAnna Kelley has been involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters since she was a seven-year-old “Little.” When Kelley got married recently, her “Big” walked her down the aisle. Kelley signed up to be a Big Sister right after she finished college.

When Kelley’s teenage “Little,” with whom she has been matched for almost six years, came out to her recently as transgender, she knew she needed some resources and guidance to be the best ally she could.

“My biggest thing was, I want to be educated. I always wanted to be the best

advocate I can for him — on anything. But I was nervous...what do we do? I spent a lot of time on the phone with my match support” specialist from Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Kelley is glad that the new program will give mentors proactive education and training.

“For me, all that has changed is that he is more comfortable in his skin and he knows who he is,” Kelley said of her “Little.”

Big Brothers Big Sisters has seen an increase in young people asking questions about gender identity and sexual orientation — and wanted to make sure that their mentors were ready to field those questions with empathy and understanding, and to be strong allies for their “Littles.”

“Every child needs to know they have someone who has no biases toward them,” said Jen McLeay of Big Brothers Big Sisters, who is overseeing the program. “It’s important that they know

“If any kid can get the kind of support they need that early and not spend their teenage years in silence and shame, that’s a win. If it makes a difference in one person’s life, it’s all worth it.”

—William, Tuthill, Foundation donor-advised fund holder

that they’re not alone.”

The moment when a child asks questions or comes out to a trusted adult is a potentially perilous one — and how that adult responds matters.

“If the mentor has the background and the training and the emotional intelligence and the vocabulary, the trajectory [of a young person’s life] can turn on that encounter,” Tuthill said. “And that’s why this makes it all worth it.”

LGBTQ youth are especially in need of compassionate and competent adult support: Overall youth suicide rates have increased in the U.S. in the past decade; LGBTQ youth are more than four times as likely as their cisgender and heterosexual peers to attempt suicide. *[Suicide is not the answer. If you, or a loved one, are thinking about suicide, please call the Trevor Project, a national 24-hour, toll free confidential suicide hotline for LGBTQ youth. Call 1-866-488-7386 to connect with a trained counselor.]*

“Our goal is to see that statistic change,” said Hershey Hirschkop, executive director of Seacoast Outright. “They are all by themselves out there, and this will give them someone to talk to.” Seacoast Outright is referring kids who need mentors to Big Brothers Big Sisters, and helping to recruit mentors for the program. A grant from the Tuthills’ fund, in partnership with the Foundation for Seacoast Health, will

also support a part-time program officer at Seacoast Outright focused specifically on the mental health needs of kids and families.

The pandemic necessarily shifted how “Bigs” and “Littles” spend time together. A grant from the Respect for All Youth Fund is also helping Seacoast Outright keep young people engaged in online programming while in-person meetings are not possible.

Big Brothers Big Sisters plans to take the training statewide after the pilot on the Seacoast.

William Tuthill remembers his own adolescence — and what a difference it would have made to have a trusted adult to help him navigate those years.

“If that had been available it would have been a really good thing,” he said. “Anything that lessens the isolation and the feelings of being different and alone.”

Kelley and her “Little” go for walks together, play chess (online now) and eat a lot of frozen yogurt. And, she said with a broad smile, she tells him this a lot: “I will love you no matter what. You are stuck with me forever.”

“If any kid can get the kind of support they need that early and not spend their teenage years in silence and shame, that’s a win,” William Tuthill said. “If it makes a difference in one person’s life, it’s all worth it.” ■

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ENGAGE YOUR FAMILY IN GIVING

The Foundation works with many generous families, across generations, to craft personalized giving plans that work for the whole family. Foundation staff will:

- Help families identify philanthropic goals and prioritize their giving, and craft the giving plan that is right for them.
- Provide tools and strategies for parents to teach children about philanthropic values and about managing a family’s philanthropic funds.
- Facilitate family meetings, learning first from parents about their goals for involving the next generation and then facilitating meetings with the extended family.
- Share knowledge about the nonprofit organizations that are doing great work on the issues families care about.
- Coordinate site visits to nonprofits. Site visits are a great way to learn more by seeing the great work of nonprofit programs in action.

To learn more about how the Foundation works with families on their charitable giving, please contact Laura Rauscher, director of philanthropy, at 800-464-6641 ext. 274 or Laura.Rauscher@nhcf.org



NEW HAMPSHIRE
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

37 Pleasant St.
Concord, NH 03301-4005

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

HELPING PEOPLE ACHIEVE THE AMERICAN DREAM

Khaleel Shreet helps people like Nellie, who got an immediate raise at the landscaping company where she works when she finished her degree. And Dramane, who worked as a cleaner until he graduated — and now teaches middle-school French.

Shreet is director and senior coach at the New Hampshire Duet Program, a nonprofit which helps people enroll in and complete online degrees at Southern New Hampshire University.

“We meet them where they are,” says Shreet, “and get them where they need to be.”

Shreet’s own story is an American Dream in-progress: Forced to leave war-ravaged Syria, he sought asylum in the United States. He pumped gas and worked fast-food jobs — and earned Master’s degrees in teaching English and in Organizational Leadership at SNHU. Now, he is finishing his doctorate.

Shreet’s cell phone is never off. A student might need something — the loan of a computer, advice on a project, referral to a tutor — and needs can become barriers.

He never lets up because he understands the stakes.

“Through my education, I was able to transform my whole life,” he says. “I feel privileged to enjoy the life I have with my wife and daughter and I look forward to helping others reach their potential.” ■