

Celebrating 125 Years of Impact at MCH

Dear Supporters,

As we begin to celebrate our organization's 125th anniversary this month on April 10, I am thrilled to share the latest edition of our newsletter with you. This milestone serves as a testament to our ongoing commitment to serving and uplifting our community.

In this edition, we explore the theme of supporting young families through the lens of the **Five Protective Factors**. These factors are vital for fostering positive outcomes for both parents and their children, and programs like Maine Children's Home's Journey Program are instrumental in providing the necessary support and resources to young parents.

One inspiring example is Allison Grady, whose journey from facing the prospect of dropping out of high school to becoming a successful individual, partner, and parent showcases the transformative impact of our programs.

As we celebrate our anniversary and reflect on 125 years of service, we are reflecting on the wonderful support of our community that makes these efforts to empower and uplift young families possible. Your continued support makes a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication to our organization and our shared mission of creating a brighter future for all.

With gratitude,



Candace A. Murrin
Executive Director

APRIL IS SPECIAL!

Not only is April our birthday month, it's also **Child Abuse Prevention Month** and **Volunteer Appreciation Month!**

We are proudly partnering with the **Maine Children's Trust** to spread awareness of abuse prevention efforts such as the strategies outlined by the **Five Protective Factors**.

Thank you so much to our dedicated volunteers who make much of the work we do possible!

CONNECT

Our website expands on the work that we do to help strengthen families in and beyond Maine.

MaineChildrensHome.org



@mechildrenshome



In this photo are some of the Maine Children's Home volunteers who support Christmas / Winter Essentials Program. 36 volunteers put in 1,014 hours to thoughtfully pack boxes for 1,181 children whose families were facing financial hardship during the 2023 season. The program served 541 families across the state of Maine thanks to volunteer and donation efforts.



Unlocking Success for Young Families

Young parents, like all parents, benefit from having supportive resources and environments to help them navigate the challenges of parenthood and promote positive outcomes for both themselves and their children. Due to their early start, however, young parents may not yet have a foundation of life experiences and social connections that bolster what we call the **“Five Protective Factors”** that support healthy children and families. In this article, we’ll discuss the five factors and why they are important for young families.

- 1. Parental Resilience:** Building resilience helps parents cope with stressors, ensuring a stable environment for children. How parents handle adversity impacts both mental health and parent-child relationships.
- 2. Social Connections:** Support networks offer emotional aid, advice, and resources, reducing isolation and enhancing parenting skills.
- 3. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:** Access to parenting, child development education, and group support like Maine Children’s Home’s Journey Program provides vital knowledge to help parents make informed decisions.
- 4. Concrete Support:** Financial instability and housing insecurity strain families. Access to resources like housing assistance and childcare can alleviate stress.
- 5. Social and Emotional Competence of Children:** Promoting healthy parent-child interactions and emotional development is vital for children’s well-being.

By addressing these five protective factors for young families, parents in their teens and early 20s can enhance their capacity to provide nurturing and supportive environments for their children, promoting positive outcomes for both generations. This is why programs like MCH’s Journey Program exist: to provide parents who are in their teens or early 20s with the knowledge, tools, skills, and support they need to be academically, financially, and emotionally successful individuals and parents. In the program, participants are provided with information through prenatal classes, parenting classes, assistance with resources, and one-on-one support that can help them on their unique journeys through parenthood and adulthood.

*<https://preventchildabusenc.org/resource-hub/protective-factors/>

Journey Program at MCH provides young parents in their teens or early 20s with the knowledge, tools, and skills they need to be academically, financially, and emotionally successful individuals and parents.

MaineChildrensHome.org/journey-program



Former Journey Program participant Allison Grady (top right) and her family in 2023.

“I don’t think I would have been a good person in society if it wasn’t for their support.”

Allison Grady participated in Maine Children’s Home’s young parent program, Journey Program, from August 2014 to June of 2017. In a recent interview, Allison shared her experience in the program and what it has meant to her:

When I discovered I was pregnant, dropping out of high school seemed like the logical choice. It broke my grandmother’s heart to think I might never graduate, so she insisted I find an alternative. She ended up doing some research and found Journey Program at Maine Children’s Home. So, in the summer of 2014, I toured the program and signed up.



Allison and her son Kadin in 2017 just before Allison graduated from Journey Program.

Starting in August 2014, pregnant with my son, Kadin, who arrived in October, life became a juggling act of school, sports, and parenting. The program became a consistent support in my life.

The staff treated me and other parents in the program like adults from the get-go, understanding the weight of our responsibilities. There was no coddling; we had to mature quickly, and I needed their straightforward approach and transparency.

Parenting class was tough; it felt relentless to parent at home and then learn about parenting during the day. But the lessons on the Period of PURPLE crying, illness management, and navigating relationships were invaluable.

Whenever I faced challenges, the program coordinators were there, assisting with everything from finding health insurance and dental care to signing up for WIC support. Their support was steady and constant. I honestly trusted them more than most other adults in my life.

Without the program, my life would have taken a completely different path. Everything would be different. I owe my high school diploma, subsequent opportunities, and even my friendships to the program and guidance from the coordinators. They helped me with literally every obstacle, ever. I don’t think I would have been a good person in society if it wasn’t for their support.

I’ve always been resilient, having had a tough-love upbringing. But the stability and support provided by the program were crucial, especially as a young mother and someone who didn’t always have steady places to be. It was so reassuring to always have the program there.

Journey Program shaped me into the person I am today. Without it, I doubt I’d be as successful or well-adjusted as an individual, partner, and a parent.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

“Something I look forward to every week.”

“I’ve been volunteering throughout my community for the last decade and my passion for giving back continues to grow.

I’ve had the opportunity to watch young parents grow and mature through the resources provided through MCH. Providing care for their little ones to allow them to better focus on the lesson is something I look forward to every week.”

- Erika LeClair

Erika is a childcare volunteer for MCH’s Journey Program, as well as a volunteer for Christmas / Winter Essentials Program.



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