



2017-2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Our Mission

Montachusett Opportunity Council's mission is to empower families to achieve economic security by eliminating barriers and creating opportunities.

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To Our Community,

Montachusett Opportunity Council has always been a safe and welcoming place for vulnerable families of North Central Massachusetts. It's a place where they can feel comfortable and trust that our team will embrace the opportunity to work with them toward economic stability. We are dedicated to understanding families' needs, strengths and goals so that we can provide services and connections that will lead them to self-sufficiency.

Many human service agencies focus on a "whole person" approach to service delivery that connects clients to services and supports that touch upon all aspects of their lives. At MOC, we take this a step further and use a "whole family" approach. We address the needs and goals that are unique to each member of a family so that all of them, from the youngest to the eldest, can reach their potential. Our comprehensive services target the complex needs many low-income families face: quality child care, education and employment opportunities, housing support and more. We are the link to resources that help establish and maintain stability in their lives.

We know that when children are safe and well cared for, parents are able to reach their goals. We know that the more stable the parents, whether through work, education, or connections to others, the more a child will thrive. And we know that for us to do what's most critical - break the cycle of multigenerational poverty - we must work with all



Kevin Reed & daughter, Ava

members of a family to break barriers and build better tomorrows.

As you'll read in our 2018 Annual Report, our work has grown exponentially from our roots as a Head Start provider but our focus on family is stronger than it has ever been. This past year provided the perfect opportunity to highlight the many other MOC programs that work with families every single day to reduce the impact poverty has on their lives and help our community thrive.

I'm proud to lead MOC in its fifth decade of helping families become stronger and more resilient. We are grateful to those who join us on this journey - as a partner, donor or funder - but most importantly, we thank the families for allowing us to be a part of their lives, especially during some of their most vulnerable times. It takes a strong person to open his or her life to us, and it's an honor to open our doors to you.

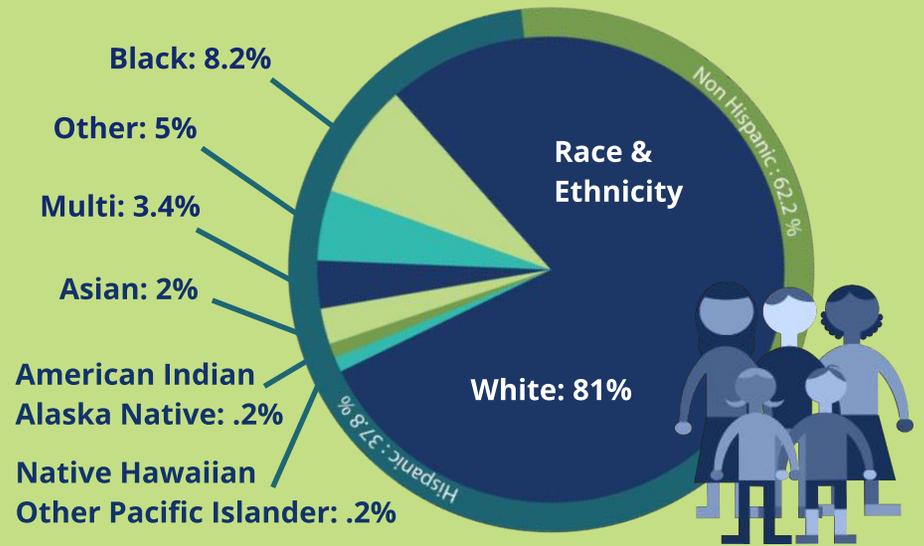
Kevin Reed, Executive Director

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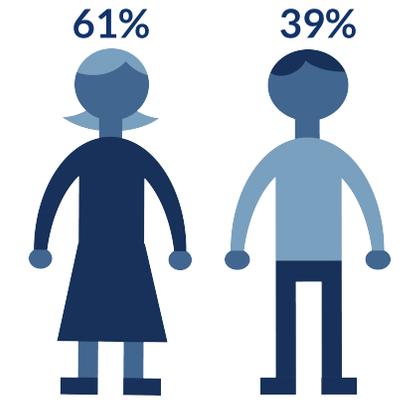
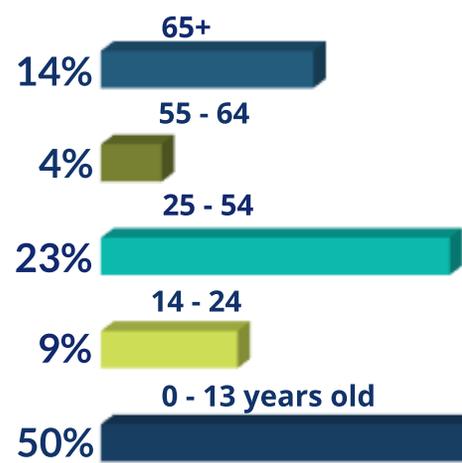
Our Clients



Percent of families living at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level



Percent of families living at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level



847



parents were able to maintain employment, become employed, or enroll in training because their children were cared for and safe

677



children improved their cognitive, social, and emotional development through Child Care & Head Start programs

10,195

hours were volunteered by Head Start parents



families increased knowledge about childhood lead safety

21



youth increased job skills and earnings through the Summer Youth Works employment program



35

1,000

individuals received case management and information & referrals through the Fitchburg Family Resource Center



351

adults improved their parenting skills through the Fitchburg Family Resource Center

71

youth received mental health assessments

6,077

women, infants and children improved their health and nutrition through the North Central WIC program



730

individuals were provided with food through the Emergency Food & Shelter Program

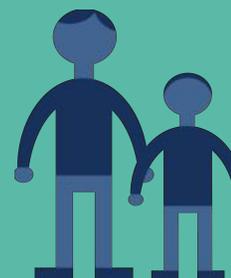


74

homeless mothers and children were moved into stable housing

family homes became more energy efficient through Weatherization, Utility Conservation or Heating System Repair programs

1,777



359

households received free tax preparation through VITA equaling \$473,002 in federal funds returned to the region, of which \$218,343 was Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC)

115



individuals received case management and support from CARE AIDS programs

1,990



elders increased access to nutritious food through Elder Nutrition Services





Young Parent Program

Destiny has an important role at MOC. She's one of the first clients to participate in our new Young Parent Program (YPP) that supports young parents as they return to their educational journey. Not only is Destiny one of our first clients, but she's paving her way to the finish line with amazing determination and speed. The single mom started her journey this fall and is already on her way to finishing her general studies at Mount Wachusett Community College with a 3.85 GPA.

She credits her success to the program, and particularly the many ways staff encouraged and worked with her to coordinate child care, transportation, and the college enrollment process. Today, weekly check-ins from the staff keep her motivated and on track, ready to tackle anything

that tries to stand in the way of her next step -- the Radiologic Technology degree program at Quinsigamond Community College.

By the end of this summer, with more than 12 credits achieved, Destiny will have reached one of the highest outcomes for the Young Parent Program. We couldn't be more proud, and she knows that our YPP staff is here for her as she continues her journey!

"Having the staff's support means a lot. They encourage me to do better and if I need help with anything they are there to support me...and with the right support, you can do anything." -Destiny F.



FIRST Steps Together

When Jenna was struggling to beat her Opioid Use Disorder, she had little hope that she'd one day consider herself a success. As a daughter of addicted parents, her disorder began at a young age and spiraled as she got older. She lost many things as a result of addiction, but gained something special: the person who believed in her, Sam. She credits her recovery to him because of his unconditional belief in her during those difficult moments when she didn't even believe in herself. With his support, and her own perseverance, she freed herself from addiction and rebuilt her life and family.

Jenna is now that person for others. Her experiences, though painful and challenging, have led to her new role as a Family Recovery Support Specialist for

MOC's newest program, FIRST Steps Together. The program provides peer-led support specific to mothers in recovery from Opioid Use Disorder.

Jenna, along with three other family recovery specialists, know firsthand the struggles that come with being a parent in recovery – the heartache, the challenges, and the setbacks. With experience under her belt and compassion in her heart, she is more than prepared to be the person who believes in these mothers when they are having difficulty believing in themselves.

We're looking forward to hearing more about the many lives that Jenna and our family recovery specialists will help change in the FIRST Steps Together program.



North Central WIC

When Brittany first met our WIC staff, she had no idea the impact the program would have on her life. She was a newborn with a smart mom who knew that North Central WIC could provide huge benefits to her as a new parent. Brittany's mother was counseled by a nutritionist, nourished her daughter with nutritious food offered through her WIC benefits, and now gets to reap the ultimate benefit: a healthy, smart child all grown up.

When Brittany had her own daughters and found herself struggling while getting her degree, she knew exactly where to turn for help keeping her own girls healthy and strong. Now a nursing student, when Brittany had an opportunity to select an internship site, she knew immediately where she wanted to spend her time: back in the

comfort of the WIC office that she credits for helping her and her children thrive. So many aspects of health are touched upon in our WIC program – from breastfeeding to nutritious foods that are optimal for young brains and bodies. Importantly, the program builds amazing connections with moms as not only a resource, but a caring person who wants what's best for them, their babies and young children so they can have amazing futures, just like Brittany.

"I loved everything about WIC. They offered great support so I could be the best parent I could be while attending school to better our lives.

-Brittany G.



Family Resource Center

MOC's Fitchburg Family Resource Center continues to be one of the city's greatest assets for families. Every mother, father, grandparent or guardian that comes through our doors is taking important steps to enhance their family dynamics. One of the most important resources families receive at our FRC is our connection to others. Through our peer support groups, evidence based classes, workshops and events, families are fostering meaningful and relevant bonds as they share their successes, challenges and lived experiences in a safe, supportive and comfortable atmosphere.

This past year's Fathers Group is a shining example of the power of our FRC. Nearly 60 fathers successfully graduated from our Nurturing Fathers program that

strengthens family relationships and child development. These fathers not only learned new skills and parenting techniques to be the best fathers they can be, but they also developed bonds with each other – rooting for each other's success, supporting their journeys, and offering insight to help one another on what we all know is one of life's most challenging and rewarding jobs – parenting.

The FRC provides support services and advocacy for families to promote parenting and child development, encourage social connections and provide concrete supports in times of need. Activities include: support groups, parenting programs, and educational workshops for residents and social service providers.



Coordinated Family & Community Engagement

Rhianna was a preschool teacher before she decided to spend her days home with her children, so she knew how important it was to embrace the role as her children's first teacher. She began attending Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) events when her first daughter, now 14, was a toddler – and continues to this day with her 5 year old. While her kids loved the creative crafts and outdoor activities, she admits that as an educator, she appreciated the educational skills they gained by being in the program – including help with speech delays, motor skills and socializing. Rhianna has been a “regular” at our Barre CFCE events, enjoying the adult connections she’s made along with the confidence she’s gained in understanding milestones and how to teach her kids at home.

"The amount of enthusiasm and pride I see in the MOC staff during playgroups is amazing to me! You can really see how much time and effort is put into the program to help families be the first step in their child's learning."

-Rhianna B.

MOC CFCE supports parents as their child's first teacher through a number of parent child activities including local play groups, early literacy programs, transition support, school readiness and developmental screenings. It also serves as a central point of information to connect families to their local community throughout North Central, Massachusetts.



Child Care & Head Start

Estephany knows firsthand the impact our Child Care & Head Start programs have on both students and parents. As a single parent looking to get back on her feet after her military service, she knew that education was key. A tour of Mount Wachusett Community College's Gardner location led her to MOC's Garrison Center offering child care right on campus. Estephany was able to have both of her sons just steps away from her classes while she earned her criminal justice and legal studies degrees. Today, MOC is still providing opportunities to her and her sons. As a teacher for our school-aged youth, her sons are still just a room away, learning in our after-school program while mom takes the lead for other parents looking to better their lives, just like her.

School-age care is an important part of what we do. Parents rely on us as they juggle busy schedules with work or their own schooling to move them toward economic stability. We're proud to provide an important solution to their time constraints by welcoming their children in our program before and after school for healthy food, homework help, and fun social and recreational activities.

"MOC gave me a chance to attend classes, all while my children were next door. They learned all they needed to be ready for school, and without MOC, I wouldn't have been able to gain my degrees."

-Estephany R.

Community Partner Profile Enterprise Bank

For more than fifteen years, MOC has relied on the expertise of Enterprise Bank for much more than cash management or commercial lending for our facility expansions. A look at last year serves as a prime example of the ways in which Enterprise Bank fulfilled their role as a genuine community partner. With new projects on the horizon, including the acquisition of a struggling community organization, Enterprise provided us with strategic guidance, not as

financial experts, but as community experts vested in the success of our programs and, more importantly, our clients. We're also grateful to have a trusted advisor from Enterprise serve on our Board of Directors to share expertise and strong governance practices. It's clear that Enterprise's investment in MOC is in our success and not just our finances, and their contributions and dedication are priceless as we work together to enrich our communities.



The Enterprise Bank community celebrates the grand opening of their new Leominster location at their ribbon cutting ceremony.

MOC Financials 2017-18



CHILD CARE & HEAD START

MOC's Child Care & Head Start **52%** component continues to serve as the core of our programs serving families and children of North Central MA.

HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES

MOC's Housing & Community Services encompasses a wide range of programming that fulfills basic needs like housing to the more complex including workforce development, education pathways and financial education.

24%

ENERGY

MOC's Energy component includes the Weatherization program, a staple of our services for low-income residents.

15%

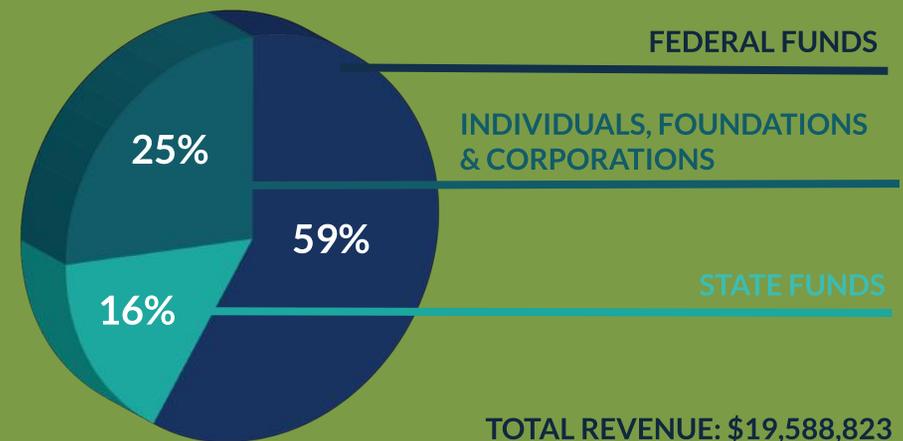
GENERAL & ADMINISTRATION

Operational expenses required to administer high quality programs.

9%

TOTAL USE OF FUNDS: \$19,732,325

Source of Funds





Central Administration

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