



ANNUAL REPORT 2014





25 + 1: Multiplying Our Impact on Families

Last year, Families First spent its 25th anniversary year charting a course for the future with an ambitious new strategic plan.

Most of the time, people don't pay much attention to the 26th year, but it is the year we're choosing to celebrate.

We're calling it 25 + 1.

In this first year of the rest of the organization's history, we are making some big changes to our parenting education programs so that Families First can make an even greater impact on families and children.

With investments from our donors, we are strengthening our program by:

- Offering workshop series focused on each developmental stage, providing a continuum of support for parents as their children grow
- Choosing partner organizations strategically to target high-need communities
- Adding new enhancements to make learning more concrete
- Launching FUSE—a new initiative to build capacity in schools so they can better involve families in their children's education (read more on page 3)
- Building our evaluation system to ensure we are reaching our goals

Now more than ever, Families First's work empowers parents struggling with poverty to create a firm foundation for their kids, enabling the children to develop healthy self-esteem, learn well in school, avoid risky behavior, and—ultimately—enjoy successful lives.

3,400

**children of participants
benefited from
parenting education**



Families First in the News

Reporter Stephanie Hanes observed a Families First workshop series at Urban Edge—a partner site in Roxbury—and interviewed Families First Executive Director Elizabeth Cohen, Parenting Educator Pam Bailey, and participants, including Pamela Williams and Taina Guerrero. The following is an excerpt of her May 2014 cover story in the highly respected *Christian Science Monitor*, “Can Parenting Be Taught?” (reprinted with permission).

“I got a problem,” [says Guerrero] glumly.

The women break into laughter. *Of course* she has problems—she has a 3-year-old and a 4-1/2-year-old at home. Besides, that’s why she and the others are gathered here—to share problems and get advice they hope will alleviate their stress as moms, help them build better relationships with their children, and generally turn them into something that has become a sort of American obsession: a better parent.

The stakes are high. Parental improvement might seem like a national pastime these days, given the unprecedented volume of advice books, blogs, and lectures coming at moms and dads across all demographics. But for lower-income women like those in this classroom, and others like them across the country, improved parenting skills can not only increase a family’s happiness, it can also dramatically improve a child’s long-term educational achievement, lower the chances of juvenile delinquency, improve health measures, and reduce poverty, according to a growing coalition of child-development experts and scientists.

“Research has shown that the one piece that helps children come out the other side and achieve is a strong relationship between the parent and child,” says Elizabeth Cohen, executive director of Families First.

A groundswell of new science linking caregiver behavior in a child’s early years to behavior and biology in later years has bolstered this perspective. And as policymakers bemoan the failures of other social interventions intended to alleviate poverty, such as welfare and school reforms, they are increasingly putting faith—and funds—into parents such as Williams and Guerrero, and parent instructors such as Bailey.



“The first class you learn about parenting skills, but after that first session I thought, ‘Oh, I want more’...Each time I learn something different.”

—Maria Baker, participant

Celeste's New Beginning

At 19, Celeste was living her dream. She was attending Brandeis University on a full scholarship, but when her mother became ill, she suddenly found herself in an emergency shelter, with full responsibility for her two brothers, then 9 and 11. As the boys grew, the problems of being homeless were compounded by the challenges of adolescence.



Later, after her own son, Chris, was born, Celeste became seriously depressed. Chris was colicky, and she thought his constant crying meant he didn't even like her. In different circumstances, Celeste would have turned to her mother for help, but that wasn't an option. She felt very much alone.

Celeste found Families First after securing a placement at a full-service shelter called Project Hope, which is a Families First partner. A Parenting Educator taught her little tricks that helped calm Chris down. And that parenting adolescents meant listening and learning who they are, not just telling them what to do all the time. She says, "Families First was the mother I needed."

But ask Celeste what she learned that really transformed her life, and she'll tell you about a core theme of all Families First workshops: self-esteem. The workshops helped Celeste grow stronger and more resilient so she could be there for the kids. She says she learned how much her own self-esteem mattered to good parenting: "I had to love myself to love those I was bringing up."

Families First partners with many organizations around Greater Boston, ensuring we reach the families most in need. When Celeste had the chance to attend a second Families First workshop through her son's daycare provider, Horizons for Homeless Children, she jumped at it.

Now Celeste and her family have a new apartment. As she ends the shelter chapter, she is starting her family's new life on a strong footing. "Families First is my Bible," says Celeste. "I still have the handouts on my refrigerator. When I'm second-guessing a decision, I go back to the workshops. I thank Families First for giving me knowledge I'm going to take with me for the rest of my life."

92%

of parents report
greater enjoyment
of time spent with
their children

Powerful New Work: Engaging Families in Schools

Families First's work has always been grounded in research.

What we know is that family engagement in schools has a significant impact on children's success.

When parents are active in schools, their children are less likely to take part in high-risk activities and their social skills, grades, attendance, and high school graduation rates all improve dramatically. When families and schools work in partnership, children can reach their full potential.

Our school partners are aware of these benefits and have been asking us for help connecting with students' families for years. For all of these reasons, we began developing a program to support family engagement.

FUSE (Families United with Schools for Education) is an exciting new initiative that promotes positive collaboration and communication between families and schools.



Through FUSE, Families First provides schools with assessment, professional development, and coaching to increase family engagement. Innovative strategies help create a positive and inclusive school climate for everyone. By building on their strengths in targeted leadership workshops, parents can become leaders in school communities and advocates for all children. The comprehensive nature of FUSE ensures all members of the school community are included, that lines of communication are kept open, and that decisions are shared.

To learn more, visit bit.ly/family_engagement

"Boston Arts Academy High School went from reaction-based family engagement to being a school with a vision of how to better welcome and support their students' families."

**—Stacy Calhoun,
Family Engagement Coordinator,
Boston Arts Academy**

88%

**of parents understand
better how to partner
with their child's school**

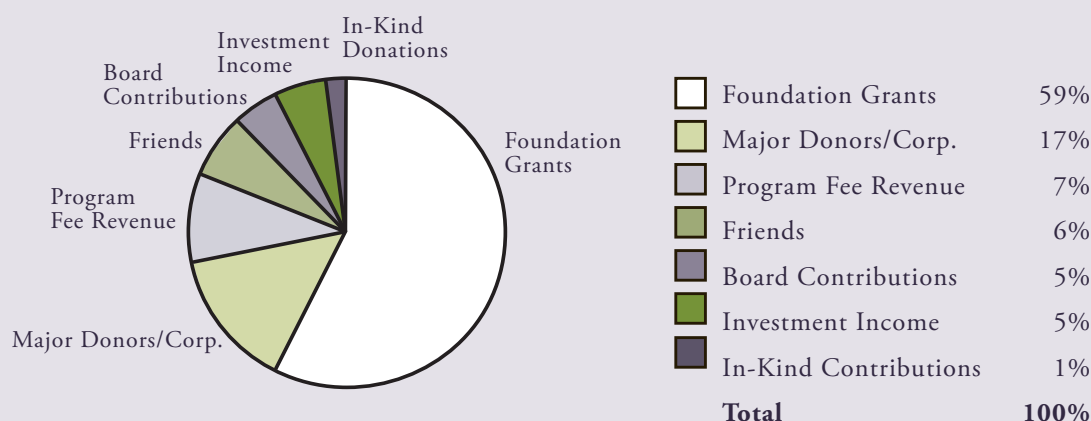
Selected Financial Information

YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2014

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
Operating Revenues:				
Foundation grants	\$388,435	\$218,500		\$606,935
Individual contributions	288,864			228,864
Corporate contributions	57,942			57,942
Program revenue	73,577			73,577
In-kind donations	15,081			15,081
Investment income appropriated for operations	51,600			51,600
Net assets released from restrictions	160,514	(160,514)		
Total Operating Revenues	\$976,013	\$57,986		\$1,033,999
Operating Expenses:				
Programs	\$697,161			\$697,161
General and administrative	145,040			145,040
Development	187,175			187,175
Total Operating Expenses	\$1,029,376			\$1,029,376
Changes in Net Assets from Operations	(53,363)	57,986		4,623
Non-operating revenues (expenses)	101,291			101,291
Total Changes in Net Assets	\$47,928	\$57,986		\$105,914
Net assets, beginning of year	\$540,743	\$133,264	\$565,250	\$1,239,257
Net Assets, End of Year	\$588,671	\$191,250	\$565,250	\$1,345,171

SOURCES OF REVENUE (FY 2014)



This page represents selected financial data from the FY14 (year ending June 30, 2014) audit. Complete copies of the audited financial statements are available upon request.

Partners

FISCAL YEAR: JULY 1, 2013 – JUNE 30, 2014

EARLY CARE & PRESCHOOL

Boston Higher Ground, Roxbury
Cambridge Baby University
Center for Families, Cambridge*
Coordinated Family and Community
Engagement of Brockton*
Countdown to Kindergarten
Dorchester House Multi-Service Center
East Boston Social Centers
Greater Boston Early Childhood Resource
Center, Cambridge
Julie's Family Learning Program
Malden Family Network
Nurtury, Boston*
Old Colony YMCA:
Striar Branch, Stoughton
PACE Head Start, New Bedford
Project Hope Family Child Care Business
Enterprise*
South End Community Health Center,
Boston*
Urban Edge: Pre-K Readiness Program,
Roxbury*

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Cambridge Community Center

HOSPITALS/COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Family Resource Center, Mass General
for Children at North Shore Medical
Center, Salem*

PARENT AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Army Community Services, USAG Natick*
Cambridge Senior Center
Children's Services of Roxbury
Dare Family Services, Somerville
Dept. of Veterans' Services,
Chelsea Soldiers Home*

Dept. of Veterans' Services, Haverhill*
Eliot Community Service Agency, Malden*
Lynn DCF Grandparent Support Group
MSPCC KINnections & Kid's Net,
Jamaica Plain
Mattapan Elderly Church Group*
Mothers for Justice and Equality, Roxbury*
North Suburban Child & Family Resource
Network, Stoneham
Parent Placentin, Randolph
Worcester Housing Authority*

SCHOOLS / EDUCATION CENTERS

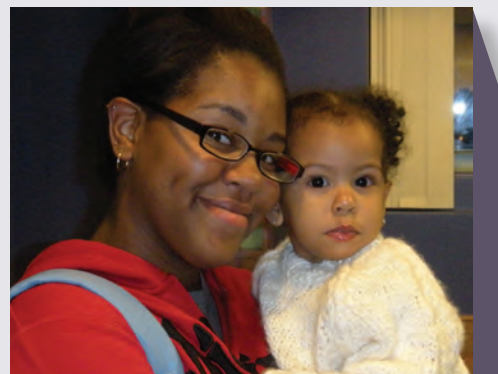
Adams Elementary School, East Boston*
Bellesini Academy, Lawrence
Bentley Elementary School, Salem
Boston Public Schools Parent University
Bradley Elementary School, East Boston
Brockton Parents Academy
Cambridge Upper School*
Curtis Guild Elementary School
East Boston High School
Edwards Middle School*
Harvard Kent Elementary School,
Charlestown*
Holland Elementary School, Dorchester
James Otis School, East Boston
Lilla G. Frederick Pilot Middle School,
Dorchester*
M.J. Perkins Elementary School, South
Boston*
Mario Umana Academy, Boston*
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McKay School, East Boston
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Center, Dorchester
The Murphy School, Dorchester
Orchard Garden School, Roxbury
Patrick J. Kennedy School, East Boston*

Quincy Elementary School, Boston
Salem Academy Charter School
Warren Prescott K-8 School, Charlestown

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING SITES

Bethany Hill School, Framingham
Cambridge YWCA Family Shelter
Casa Myrna: Teen Parenting Program*
Coordinated Family & Community
Engagement of Brockton
Crossroads Family Center, East Boston
Elizabeth Stone House, Roxbury
Family Promise Metrowest, Natick
Granada House, Allston
Horizons for Homeless Children, Roxbury.
Jamaica Plain, and Dorchester*
Project Hope Adult Education Program,
Roxbury*
Project Hope Family Shelter, Dorchester
RESPOND, Inc.*
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The Second Step, Newton
Transition House, Cambridge
Transitions at Devens

**New Sites in FY14*



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1,700
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in workshop series

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*Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this report. If we have inadvertently made an error or omission, please notify **Families First** at 617-868-7687 ext. 24 and accept our sincere apology.*



A gift in tribute is a particularly thoughtful way to celebrate a birthday, anniversary, or other joyous event, or to honor the memory of a relative or friend. We thank all who chose to support *Families First* in this way. Listed are people in whose honor or memory gifts were received.

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510

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