



# ANNUAL REPORT 2016



# You Give Parents the Power to Improve Children's Lives

Parents have the power to shape their children's futures, but all parents need support to do this well—especially in the face of stressors like housing insecurity and community violence.

And we know that the earlier in children's lives parents get support, the better. In Boston alone there are thousands of parents with young children who are not getting the help they need. That's why Families First has launched *Power of Parenting*—its most comprehensive and highest touch program ever—and is embarking on a three-year plan to grow the organization and its impact.

Parents who participate in *Power of Parenting*:

- Spend 26 total hours learning knowledge and skills like the foundations of positive discipline and ways to use play as learning
- Get reminders, tips, and reinforcement between sessions through Families First's mobile app
- Attend support-group-style "Parent Cafés" to build relationships with other parents for ongoing support

With the knowledge, skills, and support you're helping them gain through your investment in Families First, parents are empowered to build the strong relationships with their children that are critical to children's success in school and in life.



**"I understand my kids better."  
—Jalitza, parent at Urban Edge**

## Jalitza's New Beginnings

In high school, Jalitza dreamed of becoming a veterinarian. After graduation, she was headed to college on a full rugby scholarship to make that dream a reality. Then she became pregnant and had to put off school. Now she has two boys, 5 and 3, both with challenging temperaments. Unable to afford a preschool program for her younger son, she rarely has time to think, let alone study.

With a housing voucher, she moved to an apartment managed by Urban Edge, one of Families First's partners. Among the supportive services offered there was Families First's 16-week *Power of Parenting* program.

Thanks to you, what she learned from the Parenting Educator, and from other parents in the program, has helped her make a new beginning as a parent.

Before *Power of Parenting*, she says, "I was impatient and quicker to lose my temper. I was speaking too much and not understanding. I was yelling a lot." Today she says, "I'm much more patient. I'm calmer when it comes to discipline, and I understand my kids better."

Jalitza hasn't given up her dream. When her youngest heads to kindergarten, she's planning another new beginning—at college.

*You can read more about Power of Parenting at: [www.families-first.org](http://www.families-first.org)*

# Powering Up to Increase Impact on Families

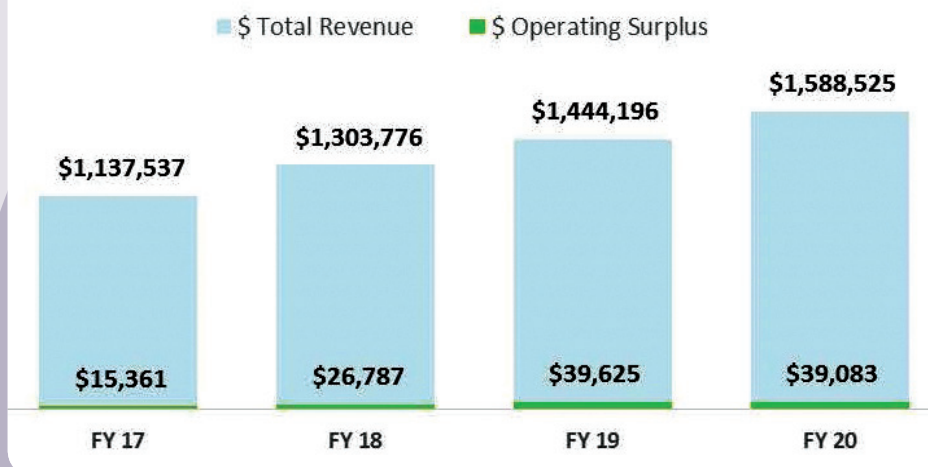
Families First has laid out an ambitious three-year plan to multiply its impact in the Greater Boston area.

Through strategic “cornerstone partnerships” with organizations whose relationships with parents are intensive and long-lasting, Families First will reach vulnerable parents of young children and engage them in *Power of Parenting* over 16 weeks. These new partnerships, with organizations such as housing developments and early education centers, will also lead to a more diverse funding mix for Families First.

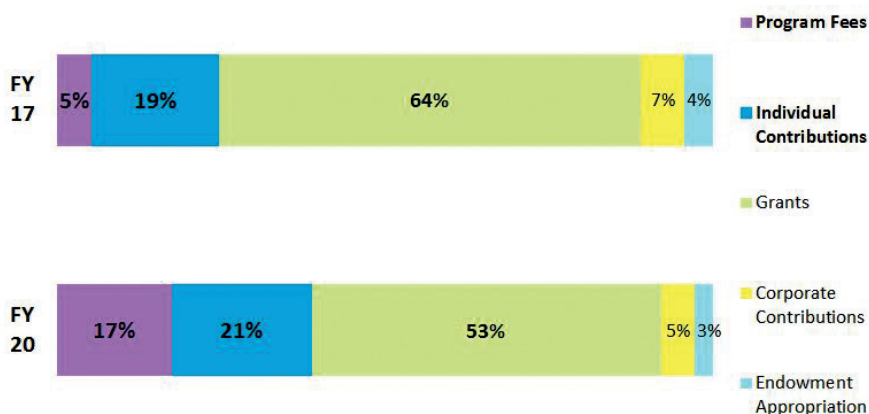
Under the plan, the organization will increase significantly the number of hours of parenting education and support it provides—tripling the impact made on 550-600 parents in need. In this way, Families First’s *Power of Parenting* will transform parents’ interactions with their children and ultimately improve their children’s lives.

All the while, Families First will be building a truly replicable social impact model to allow for future growth and someday ensure that all parents in need can get this support to set their children up for success.

## Projected Financial Growth FY 2017 - FY 2020



## FY 2020 Revenue Mix Improved with Greater Program Fees & Individual Contributions



# You Give Families First Staying Power



Social connections give parents emotional support and assistance that encourages them to keep using what they've learned long after programming comes to an end. In fact, a network of positive social connections is one of the Five Protective Factors endorsed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as key to promoting healthy child development and family well-being.

By donating to Families First, you help parents build these crucial

connections through *Power of Parenting* and other programs, giving Families First the staying power to change families' lives for good.

**"You can learn a lot from other parents."**  
—Joelle, parent at Urban Edge



## Celeste...Three Years Later

Celeste first attended two Families First programs in 2014. At that time, she was living in Project Hope's shelter, and her infant, Chris, was in daycare at Horizons for Homeless Children. Both are Families First partner organizations. Today Celeste is married and lives in an apartment with Chris, now three years old, her 16-month-old son, and her teenage brother, of whom she is guardian.

"A lot of parenting is just being yourself and being clear about what you want to accomplish. You have to listen to the child—it's a human being you're raising." In general she says, "All children really want is as much love and as much time as you can give them."

"I thought tantrums would be terrible, but when they started, I just got out the Families First handout. It's about figuring out what's behind the tantrum. Is he hungry, tired, wanting attention—what is it?" Now, after paying careful attention to her children's signals, Celeste can decide how to respond.

Celeste says, "No matter how old your child gets, you're still going to need help." And she has that. Four of the women Celeste knew in the Families First workshop at Project Hope live nearby in her apartment complex. They continue to support each other with parenting challenges. She says, "We help each other out."



## IMPACT

- 1,082 parents empowered
- 2,085 children benefit
- 90% reported improved confidence in taking care of their child
- 95% enjoy spending time with their child more

After participation in a Families First program, 7 out of 10 participants reported improvement in their connection with other parents.



## Michael Kohn, A Donor with Staying Power



Michael Kohn has served on the board of directors of Families First since 2011 and is a former co-chair.

**FF:** What brought you to

Families First?

**MK:** A work colleague invited me to an event back in 2007. I was very interested in the mission even though I didn't have kids of my own. Many of my close friends were raising kids, and I saw that it was challenging—even for people with means. I wanted to give back.

**FF:** I understand that now your family is changing...

**MK:** I've always loved kids. Never having my own kids, my friends' kids have always been an important part of my life. Now I'm getting married, and my fiancée, Debi, has a ten-year-old daughter. I'm looking forward to being part of a family with a child. Involvement with

Families First has given me a place to start the parenting process. I know I don't have all the answers when it comes to parenting, but I'm learning.

**FF:** What is most valuable to you about your involvement with Families First?

**MK:** Making sure parents have the right tools and resources will always be important. It's rewarding to be part of an organization helping to build the bond between parents and children—helping to make families stronger.

**FF:** Why should others get involved?

**MK:** This is an organization that anyone can relate to. If you value the family and recognize the challenges of being a parent, you'll feel good about getting involved. By supporting Families First, you're saying, "What I have, someone else deserves as well."

**"Making sure parents have the right tools and resources will always be important."**

# Families First's Donors

Fiscal Year 2016 (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016)

**THANK YOU!** We are grateful to have you as part of our community. Through your support in every way, you give parents the tools to improve their relationships with their children, their children's lives, and our wider Boston community.\*

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*\* Unfortunately, due to space constraints, we can't list all of our donors in our annual report. Our deepest gratitude goes out to all of our supporters who gave gifts up to \$149 over the past year.*

*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. 11 and accept our sincere apology.*

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