Dear Families First Community,

For all nonprofit leaders, this year has been a call to action on several fronts. In addition to focusing our efforts on supporting families disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, Families First continued to innovate and find ways to advance racial equity and social justice.

Over the past fiscal year (July 2020 - June 2021), we expanded our Parent Leadership work across Greater Boston. Putting parents at the center of the work recognizes the importance and value of authentic family engagement as a powerful way to drive change. The latest Parent Leader Fellows [see page 7] contributed mightily to various agencies and local coalitions in Greater Boston.

This report demonstrates Families First’s efforts to ensure that Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging continue to be an integral part of what we do and who we are. This work highlighted the need to revamp human resources practices, to institute learning sessions for staff, and to embrace diversity at all levels of the organization. Our goal is to create a culture that fosters acceptance and community for all.

Lastly, I am excited for growth. Our high-impact programs will continue supporting families and partnering with parent leaders both locally and statewide. In fact, a plan to launch programming in Western Massachusetts in 2022 is already underway. This is further evidence of Families First’s commitment to scale up; next year, we will reach more families on the road to ensuring that all children’s earliest years are full of potential and promise.

Thank you for being a part of our community of supporters.

Sue Covitz
Executive Director
POWER OF PARENTING HIGHLIGHTS

PARENTS ENGAGED, BENEFITING OVER 600 CHILDREN

In our virtual Power of Parenting program, parents build strong, stable, and responsive relationships with their children, social support systems, and stress-management and self-care practices.

INCREASE IN NUMBER OF PROGRAMS

In FY21, Families First offered 22 Power of Parenting programs—our highest number of programs ever and a 38% increase from last year!

PROGRAM IMPACT

Families First outcomes are based on the PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK,* which includes:

- Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development
- Social & Emotional Competence of Children
- Parental Resilience & Family Functioning
- Social Connections
- Concrete Support in Times of Need

As a result of our Power of Parenting program, parents reported improvement in areas related to the Protective Factors and parenting stress—an additional metric added in FY21. Last year, 96% of parents improved in at least one area, 79% improved in two, and 61% improved in three areas.

*framework developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy
“The past year had many challenges for guardians and their children. [Families First's Leadership Fellows] stepped up as leaders in their community to empower and advocate for these families. The energy and knowledge that they brought to conversations and trainings was unparalleled. We thank them greatly for guiding parents, teaching us, and creating a sense of community for isolated parents.”

Rosie M. Batista
Director, Every Child Shines

PARENT LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Through our Parent Leadership program—which officially launched in FY21—we worked on a broader scale to elevate parents from the community to take the lead on projects at local agencies that impact families and children.

In our first year, we worked with thirteen Leadership Fellows who delivered projects with the potential to benefit thousands of additional families. Examples of past and current community impact partners include:
- Boston Opportunity Agenda
- Boston Public Schools Universal Pre-K (UPK) Program
- Every Child Shines
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health Young Children’s Council

PROGRAM IMPACT

As a result of the program, Leadership Fellows reported the following outcomes:

100% 100% 80% 90% 100%

- Have a stronger sense of who they are
- Believe their opinion is important
- Speak up more when they have something to say
- Have more goals for their future
- More often like to hear different points of view in a discussion

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DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING

OUR ROADMAP

DEIB COMMITTEE
Formed 15-member committee made up of board members, staff, and parents from Families First’s programs

DEIB CONSULTANTS
Hired two DEIB experts to harness the collective power of the committee and springboard DEIB assessment and planning

LEARNING SESSIONS
Initiated staff- and consultant-led learning sessions to support Families First’s collective understanding and exploration of DEIB topics

NEEDS ASSESSMENT
Conducted a comprehensive needs assessment to learn about Families First’s current culture of DEIB and areas for improvement

Families First is continuing its journey to improve DEIB and has identified key areas for concentration for the next fiscal year.
“Families First’s programs give parents an outlet to connect with other parents, share experiences, learn about your child’s development, gain parenting and self-care strategies, and grow both individually and as a community.”

Families First Program Graduate
THANK YOU!

FAMILIES FIRST TEAM

Carolina Abad
Rosemary Adorno
Pam Bailey
Shawne Blake
Jill Breivik
Yvette Cheeks
Sue Covitz
Carol Darcy
Stacey Ellsworth
Mariana Figueroa
Wendy Friedman
Shanelle Garland
Seth Goldberg
Beth Greenawalt
Mikeya Kirksey
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