



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

HomeBridge Youth Society

Fiscal Year April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023



Vision

All youth and their families living in health, safety and harmony

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Board governance is essential to the effective functioning of an organization like HomeBridge. We are a volunteer Board representing various professions that are needed to understand the work that goes on at HomeBridge. The commitment and dedication required to undertake a directorship is not to be taken lightly and I am impressed and appreciative with the work our Directors completed this year. As the stewards of this organization, we are responsible to ensure that ethical, respectful, integral and effective activities are regularly occurring within the HomeBridge Community.

In addition, we are also responsible to ensure our Board composition has the required professions to help safeguard our decision-making. As important, our cultural diversity also needs to reflect the young people HomeBridge serves. To that end, our recruitment goals this year will be continuing to pursue greater racial diversity on the Board as we are not where we want to be.

Recruitment is a difficult task and the last few years has made many reprioritize their volunteer capacity given the commitment and responsibility required to be a Board Director. We remain committed to finding the candidates who can help us best support our vision. Our Board committees worked on strategies and frameworks to help formalize the recruitment process. Our continued focus will be on recruitment and training. We also significantly streamlined our Board packages to only include the information we need now and moved much of the content to an online "Board Portal" allowing for better access to information we are interested in.

Throughout this year HomeBridge Executive Director, Ernie Hilton brought forward a number of obstacles to services. These challenges were presented with the request for consultation as well as seeking, on several occasions, for a release of funds to ensure essential services remained in place. Money is often an answer to problems however releasing funds is not a simple decision. Oversight boards have to ensure that such release of funds will support effective functioning and increase or maintain services to the youth served in the HomeBridge Community.

This year, Board agreed to fund release funds for two significant initiatives,

1 The construction of a large portable building creating an examination space for the Pediatrician who supports HomeBridge youth

2 Financial support to fund the positions of a Cultural Program Advisor and a Recreational Therapist

These requests were granted after considering the powerful impacts this expansion of service could have on the youth HomeBridge serves.

As a non-profit, there are many limitations on our ability as a service provider to be responsive to the needs of our funder. The greatest obstacle is our inability to generate funds to expand our youth care settings through expansion of additional facilities. However, this year we are supporting the Executive Director to explore new, creative and innovative funding structures and partnership opportunities. If accepted, this model will allow HomeBridge to grow in response to the needs of the Department of Community Services and will allow us to do so more quickly. This would create a pathway to accomplish something that we have not been able to do in over 40 years.

Expansion cannot be done without the engaged staff to take on the challenges and our Executive Director is also in the process of creating a learning academy to provide in-house training for prospective Child and Youth Care Workers. This will better position HomeBridge to recruit and be more reflective of the communities they serve, meet current and future staffing demands, and provide a level of training and employment opportunities to individuals who would not currently have access.

It's been a challenging year, but one where I feel we have made some great strides forward. I would like to thank my fellow Directors, and especially the management and employees of HomeBridge for their relentless devotion and dedication to improve the lives of youth-in-care. This is tough work and we thank you for your continued efforts.

Sincerely,
Jim Perrin,
Board Chair



HOMEBRIDGE YOUTH SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Jim Perrin, Board Chair
Physical Security Manager, J.D. Irving Limited



Lyn Frankton RN, BScN, Vice-Chair
Manager, IWK Health Centre,
Mental Health and Addiction Services



Jalen Sabean CPA, Treasurer
Senior Manager, Assurance & Accounting, BDO Canada LLP



HomeBridge

MEMBERS AT LARGE



Chantelle Cadeau CPA
Senior Manager, Assurance,
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP



Daphne Huff-MacLeod
Director Integrated Youth Services
Nova Scotia - IWK Health Centre



Kim MacLean MSW, RSW
Social Worker, Nova Scotia Health
Authority and Trauma Specialist,
Homewood Health



Dr. Herb Orlik
Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, IWK
Health Centre, Department of Psychiatry



Shawn Carter
Director of Research, Analytics &
Information Management, Nova Scotia
Legal Aid



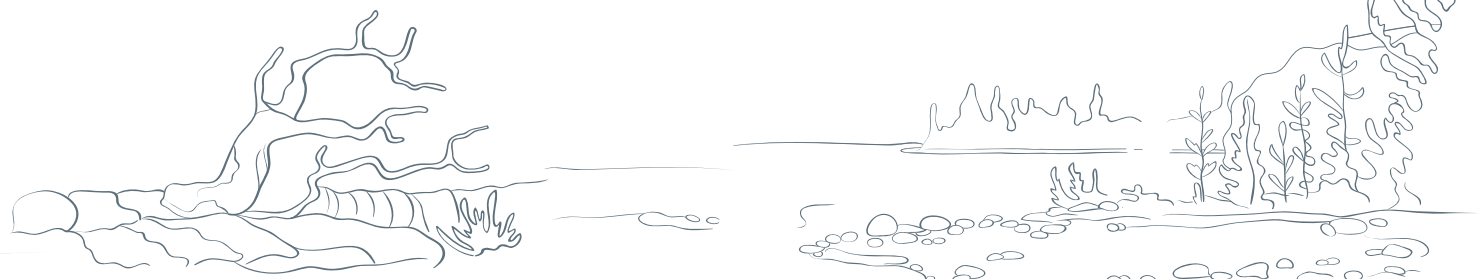
Angela Kelly
Account Manager, Bell Media



Sara Nicholson BSc, JD
Associate, Stewart McKelvey



Brandon Rolle
Senior Legal Counsel, The African
Nova Scotian Justice Institute



We acknowledge we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) people first signed with the British Crown in 1725.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Expectations on service providers, like HomeBridge, have increased. We are expected to be more flexible, adaptable, and innovative within our service realm. We are expected to be thought leaders, system changers and of course strong advocates. The world has changed and evolved seemingly overnight with more demands, greater chaos, unrest, uncertainty, and even more limitations. These global shifts notwithstanding, HomeBridge services need to respond to what was and remains, the ever-changing and evolving expectations of providing care to vulnerable youth. The term “pivoting”, albeit an overused cliché, has become a worn-out strategy in the last year to ensure we remain operational. There has been so much change, difficult decisions and sacrifice just to keep services running. HomeBridge has not been an easy place to work.

Among these challenges was the possibility of losing valuable positions that support the young people and our therapeutic programming. While we remained hopeful the government would fund these positions permanently, it was time to take action. Our Board of Directors agreed to use some of our surplus to once again fund these positions. These are not considerations taken lightly as there are many risks associated with such a decision, but there are risks associated with doing nothing as well.

Our Board is also supporting our efforts to explore innovative partnerships and new funding structures to address an urgent need for new services and facilities to avoid youth becoming homeless. As a not-for-profit we have significant limitations when trying to grow our services swiftly. However, we are exploring creative strategies, including partnerships, that can allow us to provide a responsive solution to more effectively serve the needs of youth and families in Nova Scotia.

Like nearly every human service industry, such as nursing and education, our ability to provide 24/7, year-round services for youth has been hard hit with an ever-waning amount of qualified and trained employees. Without our direct care employees in each of these sectors, Nova Scotia would and in some cases does, have one heck of a mess. I applaud the response from our Premier with financial support and incentives for nurses to help our critical health care concerns. I would also say that equal recognition is needed in other sectors, including child and youth caring programs like HomeBridge to encourage the same retention. I am aware there is limited funding but this is the second time our sector has been overlooked with regards to such incentives and recognition. Investing in children and youth is preventative and saves reactive, expensive interventions (mental health, addiction, justice and unemployment) in adulthood, when sometimes it can be too late.

Amidst the challenges of the year, there have also been victories. We have had some very supportive actions from our government and other partnerships. Last year, we shared confident hopes for new pediatric support to our services. I am proud to advise, the IWK Health Centre is now providing this community-based support to youth-in-care in the HomeBridge Community. We acted quickly and renovated a storage closet and a room to create a doctor's examination room and waiting area. While not ideal, it served as an interim space where Dr. Tania Wong was able to open her practice for the young people. She has changed their lives! Having access to health care services has enhanced the physical well-being and mental health of the young people we serve. We are participating in a study commissioned to officially monitor and measure these efficacy outcomes. It needs to be noted that Dr. Wong's success is not only due to her training and competency. Her ability to connect with young people is such a perfect match with our approach. It is uncanny.

Of course, having the doctor in a closet is unacceptable. Once again, our Board supported our proposal to have a modular space built at the Reigh Allen Centre. This will not only be a proper clinic, but also creates additional office space. This is timely given the provincial government has newly funded a Recreational Therapist and Occupational Therapist position for HomeBridge. With our understanding of the long-term clinical value of these positions and the documented outcomes of their expertise, we are pleased they are now permanently funded.

I want to thank our Board of Directors for having the confidence in me to take the financial risks to support the evidence-based decisions to expand our services. We can now focus on new solutions to new obstacles for increasing the efficacy of our services.

We are however exploring creative strategies, including partnerships, that can allow us to provide a responsive solution to more effectively serve the needs of youth and families in Nova Scotia.

Likely one of the greatest partnership endeavours with the provincial government, specifically the Department of Community Services this year, has been the financial support to develop a learning academy. This initiative will provide free training to candidates to become qualified as entry level Child and Youth Care Workers. This will allow HomeBridge to directly tackle our province's critical human resource shortage. With a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and the underrepresentation on our employee teams, we look forward to recruiting diverse candidates to strengthen our team and better represent the youth we serve. The province's support has provided us with new means to create a pathway to ensure our employees culturally represent all the young people we serve.

We are all very motivated by the resources and trust to make a difference in significant ways in our industry and in the lives of youth and families.

I want to close by saying that our Board of Directors, managers and employees have sacrificed so much in the last five years, more than any time I can remember. Balancing that hardship has been the increased support from our cornerstone partners; The Department of Community Services, St. Paul's Home Board, the IWK Health Centre and the Department of Education. I would be remiss to not also thank all of our amazing donors who fund our therapeutic and life skill building programs and even funded the purchase of a vehicle to transport youth to Rec Therapy activities. It is as if we are mattering differently, which means the young people we serve will matter differently and benefit greatly. Finally, I want to thank in advance the incredible community of local and international experts who have already signed up to help HomeBridge educate and train new Nova Scotian learners to become much needed Child and Youth Care Workers. Their generosity is humbling and in alignment with the goals of child and youth care.

Ernie Hilton MSc. CYCA.

VISION

All youth and their families living in health, safety and harmony

MANDATE

Using an inter-disciplinary approach to youth care HomeBridge provides youth with experiences of stabilization, emergency placement, therapeutic programming, educational opportunities and longer-term interventions in a youth care setting.

This mandate is achieved through a collaboration with stakeholders, a community orientation, a commitment to youth education, continued professional development, implementation of current evidence based interventions and therapeutic programming.



This year saw us start to return to some pre-COVID practices, such as having our youth participate in our Youth Farmer's Market over the summer, as well as an in person Holiday Coffee House, and of course the AGM. Although I am grateful for the advances in our tech skills through virtual platforms, I can't tell you how happy it makes me to be back together as personally I appreciate the level of connection that comes with being in the same physical space as someone else that cannot be replicated on a screen. While we enjoyed getting back to 'normal', this year also saw us adopt some new practices to ensure we are evolving with our ever changing world.

Part of that ever changing world includes changes in our workforce. Unfortunately, HomeBridge is not immune to the current staffing challenges seen in many sectors throughout the province. This year we saw unfamiliar struggles in recruitment of qualified staffing for all of our employee categories. This challenge created ripple effects, not the least of which was an inability to grant some of the requested vacation time to Youth Care Workers. Despite the challenges we saw Youth Care Workers continuing to go above and beyond, creating positive experiences for the young people in the form of birthday celebrations, favorite meals for them upon a return to the program after a period of time away, and amazing holiday celebrations to name a few. While the Youth Care Workers were digging deep, the Supervisor Team worked to adjust our scheduling practices in an attempt to match the changes we are seeing in the labor market. Unfortunately, these attempts were not enough and, as we know, we had to make the difficult decision to close Johnson House and relocate that program to Sullivan House. As we continue to make Youth Care Worker recruitment a focus the Supervisor team continues to look at alternative ways to attend to scheduling concerns, while always prioritizing the quality of care to the youth in our programs.

Scheduling practices were not the only changes the Supervisor Team focused on this year. The team worked on a pilot project for Reigh Allen Centre, Hawthorne House and Sullivan House to share the leadership duties within those programs. This pilot project created a Service Delivery Department, Supervision Department and Operations Department with a team of four Supervisors and an Assistant Supervisor sharing the responsibilities within those areas. This model allows Supervisors to maintain the day-to-day operations of each program, while also attending to the professional development of the Youth Care Workers both individually and as a team.

Throughout all the changes, this year also marked the return of some in-person training for our employees. Through ongoing mask wearing and physical distancing, we were able to offer Indigenous Mental Health Wellness and Addictions Training, Fire and Life Training, ASK Suicide Prevention Training, Non Violent Crisis Intervention, and First Aid to name a few. Thanks to Zoom we were also able to participate in Supervision Training and Consultation with Dr. Lorraine Fox in California, and various modules on Relational Youth Care Practice with Dr. John Digney in Ireland. Myself and two Supervisors were also privileged to attend the first in-person National Child and Youth Care Conference since the pandemic, in Canmore, Alberta. As part of the conference, I partnered with Jack Phelan from MacEwan University to present on "The Use of Self in Child and Youth Care Practice".

As we saw ourselves start to open back up to pre-COVID fashion, we took the opportunity to grow our services. We have recently been able to hire our Recreational Therapist in a full-time capacity. Over the last two years our Recreational Therapist, Rob Grandy, has been working individually with our youth creating Individual Activity Plans to engage them in both individual activity, as well as group activity. While it may seem like Rob spends his day 'playing', this is so much more. This play is filled with intentional, purpose driven actions to build Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity. We will continue to expand our services since recently receiving funding for a full-time Occupational Therapist position. This position will create interventions for youth to help maximize strengths and minimize barriers that impede engagement with the occupations of everyday living.

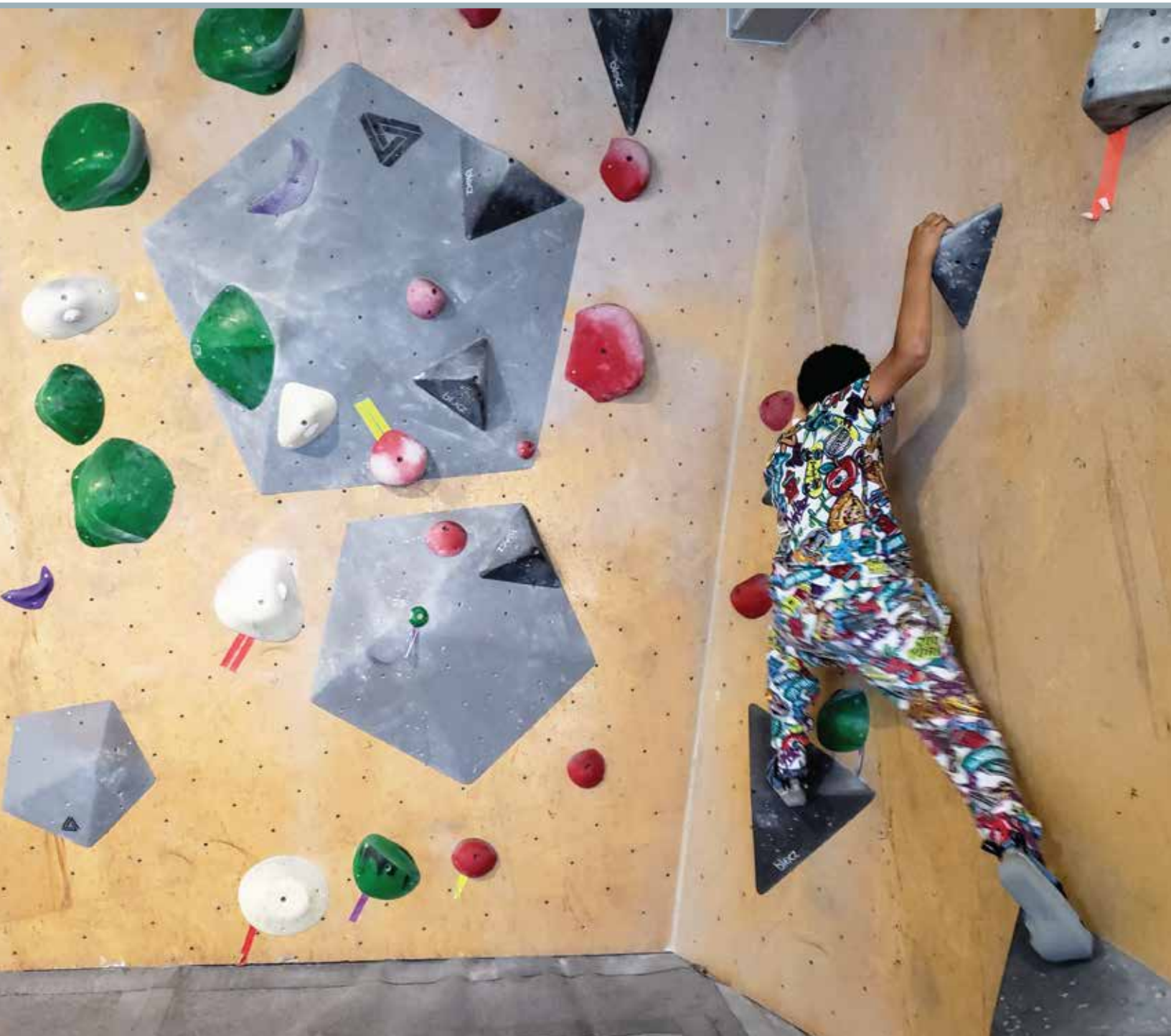
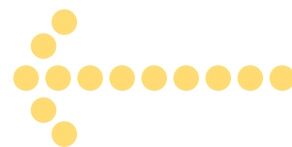
With the addition of IWK Pediatrician, Dr. Wong we have been able to provide on site, much needed access to medical services for youth in all of our programs. Dr. Wong has been an incredible addition to HomeBridge which is evident in the number of youth accessing her services, on many occasions repeatedly. The success of this service is not only due to the accessibility, but also from Dr. Wong herself as her kindness and passion for our youth is evident in every interaction.

Despite the challenges we saw Youth Care Workers continuing to go above and beyond, creating positive experiences for the young people in the form of birthday celebrations, favorite meals for them upon a return to the program after a period of time away, and amazing holiday celebrations to name a few.

The growth continued as through our partnership with the IWK, we were able to add Johneen Kelly, Youth Court Mental Health Liaison to our team, to work alongside Jeff Thoms, Mental Health and Addictions Counsellor, providing consultation to Supervisors and Youth Care Workers within the scope of formulation of case planning. These new services are in addition to the continued work by our Cultural Program Advisor, Tony Smith, who has been working both directly with the youth, as well as in consultation for Supervisors and Youth Care Workers.

The return to being together with each other in person, as well as continued training through virtual platforms, and the focus to grow our services has allowed us to further build our connections with each other as well as enhance our Youth Care practices. I continue to be a proud member of the HomeBridge Community, and continue to be humbled by the work done by our employees, despite the challenges we have encountered this year.

Sincerely,
Caroline Moore, MSc. CYCS
Director of Youth Care Services



OUR FACILITIES

HAWTHORNE HOUSE



Part of the HomeBridge Community since 1979
Owned by HomeBridge Youth Society
Operating Costs Covered by the Department of Community Services

Mandate:

Hawthorne House is located in Dartmouth and focuses on providing care for six youth 12 - 18 years of age.



JOHNSON HOUSE



Part of the HomeBridge Community since 1981
Owned by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal
Operating Costs Covered by the Department of Community Services

Mandate:

Johnson House is located in Dartmouth and focuses on providing care for four youth 12 - 18 years of age.



JUBIEN HOUSE



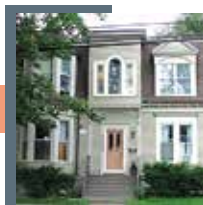
Part of the HomeBridge Community since 1982
Owned by St. Paul's Home Board
Operating Costs Covered by the Department of Community Services

Mandate:

Jubien House is located in Halifax and serves six youth 12 - 18 years of age.



SULLIVAN HOUSE



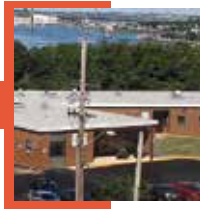
Part of the HomeBridge Community since 1993
Owned by St. Paul's Home Board
Operating Costs Covered by the Department of Community Services

Mandate:

Sullivan House is located in Halifax and focuses on providing care for youth 12 years of age and over who are or have been involved in sexual exploitation. The program has been in operation since 1993 but adjusted its mandate in 2020 to work exclusively with sexually exploited youth.



REIGH ALLEN CENTRE



Part of the HomeBridge Community since 1999
Owned by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal
Operating Costs Covered by the Department of Community Services

Mandate:

The Reigh Allen Centre is located in Dartmouth and is licensed as an emergency placement and crisis stabilization center. It focuses on providing care for up to 14 youth 12 - 18 years of age who are in need of a stabilization, respite, or short-term placement. The center utilizes an inter-disciplinary approach to create opportunities for cognitive behavioral changes within a safe environment allowing young people to experience themselves differently.



CHILD WELFARE SPECIALIST BEDS PROGRAM

Part of the HomeBridge Community since 2009
Located in the Reigh Allen Centre
Operating Costs Covered by the Department of Community Services

Mandate:

A separate two-bed unit designed to focus on providing care for youth with extraordinary needs that cannot be met in a standard group-care setting.

COGSWELL HOUSE



Part of the HomeBridge Community since 2003
Owned by St. Paul's Home Board
Operating Costs Covered by the Department of Community Services

Mandate:

Cogswell House is located in Middle Sackville and focuses on providing care for four youth 12 - 18 years of age.



It's good to have someone (Youth Care Workers) there because I know they're there if I need help.

-HomeBridge Youth

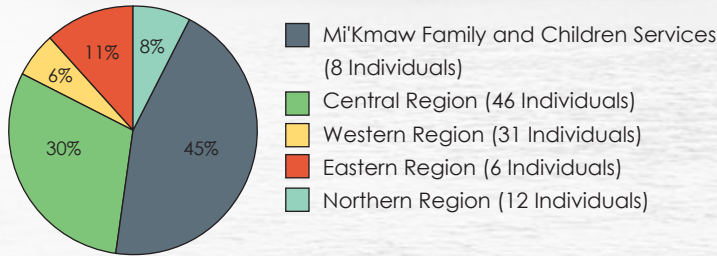
I like colouring with Youth Care Workers.

-HomeBridge Youth

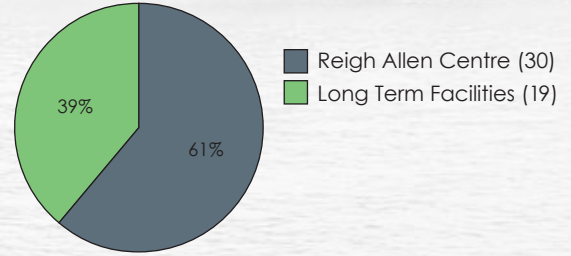


HOMEBRIDGE YOUTH SOCIETY ANNUAL STATISTICS

Individual Youth per Department of Community Services Region or Child Welfare Agency Residing in Facilities - 103 Total

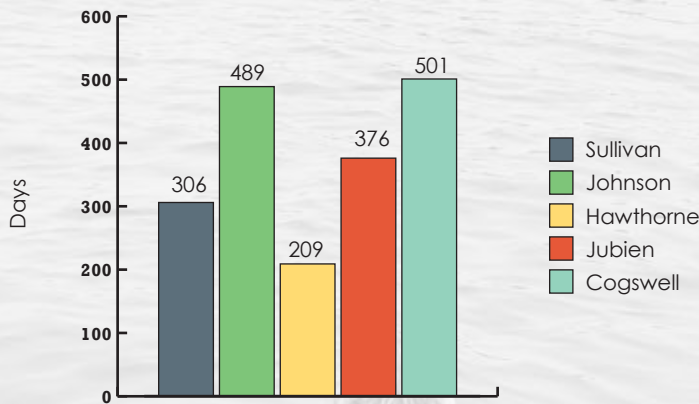


Facility Placements of Youth from Outside the Central Region - 49 total individuals

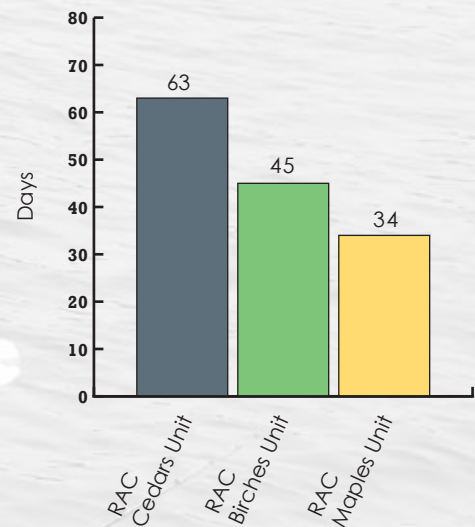


103 individual youth were served during 2022/2023, however there were 131 total youth admissions to all facilities, which includes a number of youth who had multiple admissions and were served by more than one HomeBridge facility.

Average Length of Stay in Residential Care - Long Term Homes



Average Length of Stay Requiring Emergency Stabilization at the Reigh Allen Centre (RAC)



I wish people understood that we are not your stereotypical group home kids and that this is the best placement for us at the time.

-HomeBridge Youth



BridgesforLearning

In the 2022-2023 academic year we received 29 applications and had 24 admissions to the Bridges for Learning (BFL) program. This is a lower number of applicants than we typically have in a school year which may be reflective of more students attending their community school. The ongoing support of the Nova Scotia Department's of Community Services and the Education allowed the program to operate with a capacity of 18 students in the classroom, as well as the opportunity for the BFL Team to provide educational services to young people in an outreach capacity. This is an invaluable service as we make every effort to engage the young people in their education.

The team had a busy start to the school year with numerous applicants seeking a school placement, but that slowed down considerably after the first semester. There was, however, an increase in school placement requests from residents at the Reigh Allen Centre. These residents are in short-term placements so we had a number of students in class for a shorter period of time than in previous years. This, coupled with very few returning students who attended last year, presented challenges in establishing a core student body. The new students settled into the structure and routine of BFL, but the student make-up changed regularly as the students' care plans changed and they were moved outside of the HRM. This created disruption and made it difficult to create a sense of belonging and comradery in the classroom which is often what brings stability and helps to create a safe learning space for the students. The BFL Team did their best, however, to be a consistent presence and forge relationships with the students while they had them.



Attendance and changing care plans have been ongoing obstacles for many of the students to feel a sense of success with their academics. The outreach component of the program was used with a number of students in attempts to re-engage them in their education plan on a permanent outreach basis or temporarily to support them to return to the classroom. The relational approach that is used in BFL has allowed the team to be creative and flexible, and meet the students where they are at. For many students that means providing them with an educational plan that is facilitated outside of the traditional classroom.

Our Cultural Program Advisor also joined the BFL Team this year to facilitate a weekly sharing circle in a safe space that the students created. The objective of this group was to have the young people share their perspectives on numerous relevant topics from their own personal lens. They created their own safe space and developed guidelines for the discussions so everyone had the opportunity to speak or simply listen to the discussion. This sharing circle used the talking piece 'Sankofa Bird', a Ghanian word that translates as 'to reach back and get it'. The principle of Sankofa is that one should gather the best of what the past has to teach in order to succeed in the future. The students and the facilitators used this as an opportunity to learn from each other. Reflective thought was encouraged so the young people could think about the learning that has happened prior to coming into care and the growth they have experienced while in care. This was a meaningful experience for all involved.

The students also continued to enjoy participating in the Expressions Program of the Arts. They consistently participated in weekly Music and Art Therapy sessions. They were also able to participate in Recreation Therapy as part of their curriculum this year which was a great addition. Our Recreation Therapist worked with the BFL Team to provide the students with recreation and leisure opportunities both in and out of the classroom. As a result, the team was able to increase the students' access to activities that are meaningful to them as part of their Physically Active Lifestyle 11 coursework. The students participated in lots of outings including the Millbrook Cultural and Heritage Center, rock climbing, several museums in the HRM and workouts at various gyms.

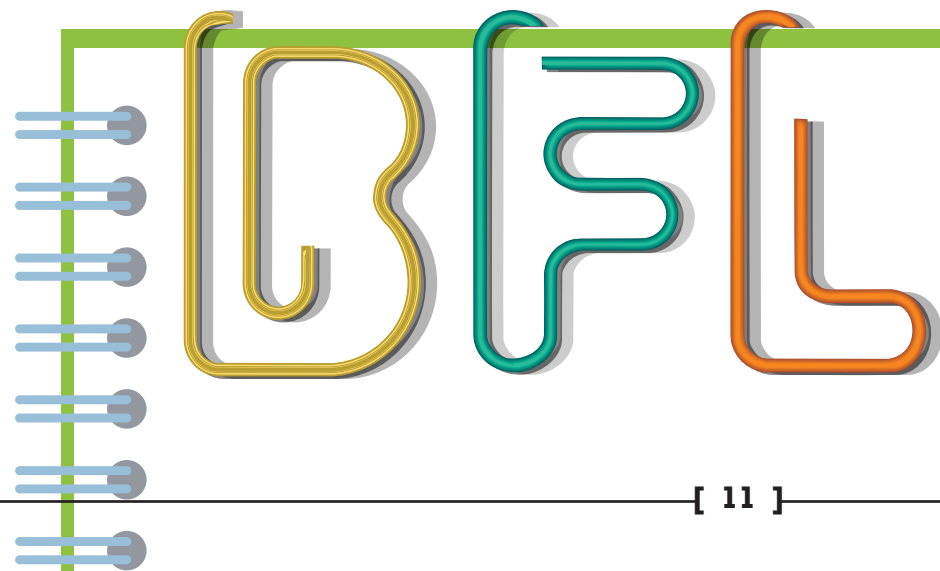
“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

-Nelson Mandela

All of these opportunities are part of the unique learning environment that is BFL. The team does their very best to create an environment that meets the unique needs of youth-in-care and helps them experience academic success while also learning valuable life skills. The BFL team continues to engage the students in meaningful activities that are strength based, that are facilitated in safe spaces, and that attend to the four domains in the Circle of Courage Model of Practice.

Garfart et al. state "learning opportunities and the purposeful use of activities enable children and young people to experience safer places where new experiences can happen, and important learning can be nurtured" (2018). Researchers in the child and youth care sphere claim that investing and prioritizing in the development and facilitation of therapeutic programs will likely result in better long-term outcomes for vulnerable young people in care. The students were offered another opportunity to participate in the **Safe Spaces and Relationships** program this year to add to their experience. This boat building program is a collaboration between **Mount Saint Vincent University, Maritime Museum of the Atlantic** and HomeBridge. The students are supported not only by the facilitators, but also by the BFL Team and Recreation Therapist. This year they repaired a 21' power boat that will be used as a safety boat for upcoming rowing and sailing programs. During the program, the students put the decks on the boat, they installed combings, rubrails and they learned about the electrical system with a trained electrician. They also earned certification in a pleasure craft operator's license.

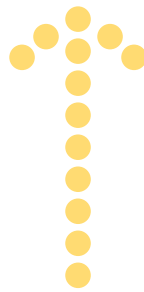
We may have had a lot of new students and lower numbers this year, but it was still a very productive year in the classroom. The students learned a lot, gained valuable life skills, earned credits and hopefully developed a new appreciation for the learning process. We are grateful for the commitment of both the Nova Scotia Department's of Education and Community Services. Their unwavering support for some of the most vulnerable youth in our province does not go unnoticed and this support has played a valuable and necessary role in the growth and success of the youth.



I like that I pretty much know everybody here and it's small so that's good.
-HomeBridge Youth

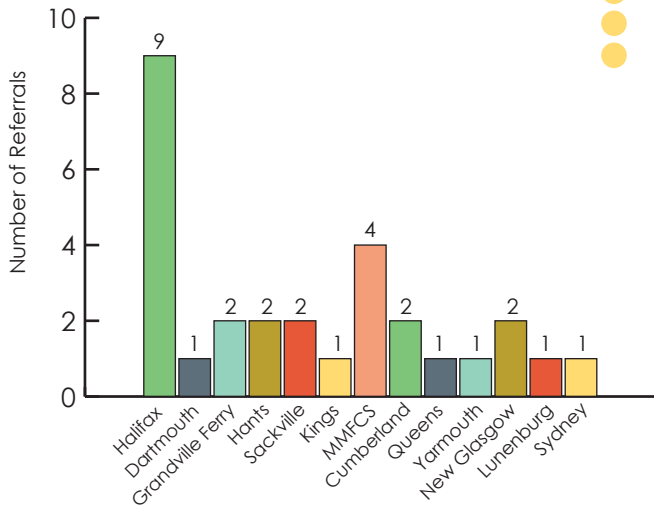
Community Schools connected to Bridges for Learning September 2022 to June 2023:

Dartmouth High School
 Citadel High School
 Millwood High School
 J.L. Ilsley High School
 Barrington Municipal High School
 Eskasoni Elementary and Middle School
 Cunard Junior High School
 Bedford Forsythe Education Center
 North Queens Community School



Child Welfare Agency Referrals

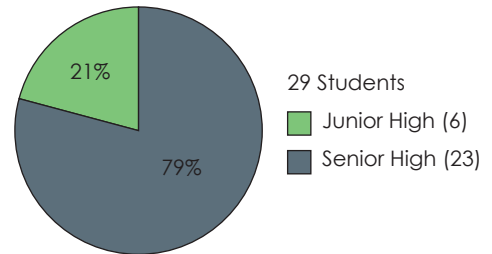
August 2022 - June 2023



DCS Agencies

BFL Applicants from Junior High and Senior High School

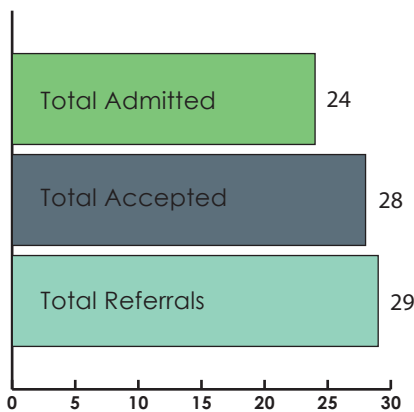
August 2022 - June 2023



29 Students
 Junior High (6)
 Senior High (23)

BFL Referrals/ Accepted/ Admitted

August 2022- June 2023



The Bridges for Learning Team



“We cannot separate the importance of a sense of belonging from our physical and mental health. The social ties that accompany a sense of belonging are a protective factor helping manage stress and other behavioral issues. When we feel we have support and are not alone, we are more resilient, often coping more effectively with difficult times in our lives. Coping well with hardships decreases the physical and mental effects of these situations” (Theisen, 2021).

Belonging means acceptance, inclusion and an identity as a member of a group or community. Such a simple word for a huge concept. A sense of belonging is a human need, just like the need for food and shelter. Feeling that you belong is most important in seeing value in life and in coping with intensely painful emotions. After more than 40 years of working with traumatized and disadvantaged young people we did not need medical research to understand the importance of belonging when it comes to healing, but it certainly is comforting to see clinical evidence to support our efforts. The University of Michigan also conducted a study in this area and found when people lack a sense of belonging, it is a strong predictor of depression and other mental health struggles (Brower, 2021).

All of that to say that belonging is a basic human need and it is one that many youth-in-care struggle with as a result of their life circumstances. Their young lives have been filled with trauma, insecure attachment, victimization, and ostracism which has damaged their self-esteem, self-worth and belief that there is anywhere in this world where they will be accepted and fit in. That is a narrative that we refuse to accept as we see the strength and resilience each one of the young people possess and the Expressions Program of the Arts is one of our greatest tools to help them see this as well. For this reason, this year’s theme for the program was **“Creating a Space to Belong”**.

The facilitators that make up the Expressions Team guide and support the young people through creative processes that challenge them to focus on their strengths and the qualities that make them unique and special. No matter how withdrawn or reluctant they are when they come to our care, the highly skilled facilitators of this program seem to be able to connect with the youth and draw them into the program. Learning to play the guitar or juggle has the “cool factor” that seems to get them, and art and photography have universal appeal. For this reason, Expressions is often the first program youth will engage in when they come to the HomeBridge Community.

Once they give the program a try they see that the environment is supportive and free of judgement. The facilitators lead them through activities that help them experience success and find a sense of belonging and connectedness with the group. This is where change happens. Identifying as a youth-in-care, or “group-home kid” as they are often labeled, does nothing to improve the self-worth of these young people. After taking part in the program, however, many proudly identify as a guitar player or photographer. Group sessions also foster a connection with not only the facilitators, but their fellow residents. This builds a sense of belonging and slowly, but surely the young people realize they are not alone – they are accepted and fit in.

“Belonging has been shown to have a significant impact on a range of factors associated with well-being. These areas include life satisfaction, general well-being, clinical depression, cognitive performance, academic outcomes, and physical health. Belonging is an important aspect of psychological functioning.” (Allen & Bowles, 2012)

Increased self-esteem, a sense of belonging and engagement in extra-curricular activities are all protective factors when it comes to reducing substance misuse and other risk-taking behaviours. By helping the young people see their potential and worth, we will not only be boosting their self-worth, but also setting them up with the necessary foundation to make healthy choices, move from simply surviving to thriving.

“We are essentially social creatures, raised by family, friends, and community. When the connections to the people that matter to us are threatened, we lose our sense of belonging and acceptance. We feel unsure of ourselves.” (Schofield, 2019). Youth-in-care face this challenge acutely. Our facilitators, however, promote a creative environment that encourages their free expression and energy, reinforcing their agency and choice.

The facilitators that make up the Expressions Team guide and support the young people through creative processes that challenge them to focus on their strengths and the qualities that make them unique and special.



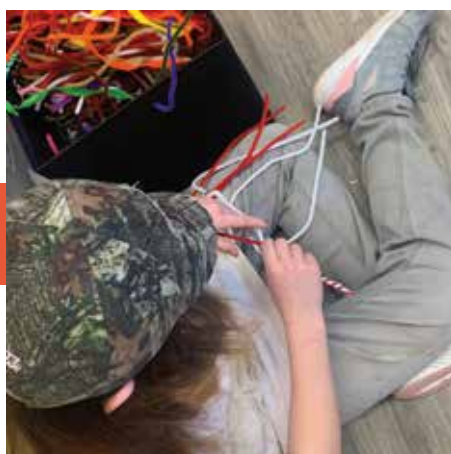
While our Art Therapist does the work to plan and curate diverse artistic experiences, she offers the opportunity for the youth to give their input, creating an opportunity to pursue their own interest in the art. She is always present and knowledgeable in the art materials, so they are able to seek assistance and support when needed. This helps the youth build agency and belonging, knowing that their opinions and ideas are accepted and valued. Art Therapist, Evie Dunville said an example of this was "One youth at Jubien suggested "Bob Ross Finger Painting". Translation – watching Bob Ross painting tutorials and using our fingers to follow along. This led to weeks of painting sessions (and even some crossover into other houses, as well as BFL), some finger painting, some with Q-tips, some using brushes. We'd chat, realize that we are not nearly as quick as Bob Ross (often pausing the video to catch up), brainstorm paint blending mixtures to create the perfect shade, and we'd paint. The impact of working alongside one another reinforced connection and community, building up a sense of belonging where their opinions, skills, ability and presence matters."

This same attention to individuality was applied to Music Therapy sessions this year. There were many one-on-one sessions which allowed the focus to be 100% tailored to each youth's unique interests and learning styles. Participants learned skills on flute, clarinet, voice, guitar, piano, and drums.

One youth really bonded with the guitar and spent many hours learning with the assistance of a Music Therapist as well as on their own. They started learning some favourite songs and then began writing their own songs. They even mentioned that one day they would like to play music professionally. On difficult days this provided a positive outlet to express, create, shine and belong. Another youth continued to write rap music and began working towards earning a high school music credit. The music provided focus for their learning and gave them a sense of accomplishment. Although they moved on from HomeBridge before completing the school year, it was reported that they spent more time in their regular class working on focused tasks associated with the music credit. Being successful at this allowed them to feel they belonged in the class and that if they put their mind to something they could accomplish it.

Group music games and activities were updated this year to capture a more diverse and broad scope of people and music sources so that all youth could see themselves represented in the games and music they engaged with. By adding pronouns to a musical charades game, youth were able to engage in meaningful conversations regarding gender identity and its role in pop cultures. By creating musical bingo cards with people of all different cultures, races, ethnicities, gender/sexual identities and abilities, youth were able to engage with a game that included role models they could see themselves in, fostering a space to belong. All of this led to a very good year for the facilitators and participants.

The Expressions program continues to offer Art Therapy, Music Therapy and Photography. Sessions run from September through June throughout the entire HomeBridge Community, including our on-site school program, Bridges for Learning. This program is entirely funded through corporate and community donors. We would like to thank those generous supporters (listed below) as this meaningful program would not be possible without them.



The Expressions Program of the Arts Team



References:

Allen, K.A., & Bowles, T., (2012), "Belonging as a Guiding Principle", Australian Journal of Education of Adolescents., Vol. 12, pp. 108-119
 Brower, T, (2021), "Missing Your People: Why Belonging Is So Important and How To Create It", Forbes
 Fulcher, L, (2007), "Postcard from Saskatchewan", CYC-Net online.
 Schofield, Sally. (2019). Group Art Therapy, Aesthetic Experiences of Difference and Belonging. Language and Psychoanalysis. 8. 1-39. 10.7565/landp.v8i1.1591.
 Theisen, A, (2021), "Is Having a Sense of Belonging Important?", Mayo Clinic Health System.

In the Spring of 2021, HomeBridge added a full-time Recreational Therapist to our care team thanks to the support of the IWK Health Centre. By integrating evidence-based Recreation Therapy practice into our relational care model, Rob Grandy has worked hard to develop a culture of care in the HomeBridge Community that values the role of recreation in the development of young people. Not only has Rob taught us a lot about the important role of Recreation Therapy, but he also shared his expertise with other by presenting about Recreation Therapy at HomeBridge at the *Teaching With Small Boats Alliance* Biennial Conference in Port Townsend, Washington, and also at this year's *Nova Scotia Therapeutic Recreation Association* Annual Conference.

The Canadian Therapeutic Recreation Association defines therapeutic recreation as "a health care profession that utilizes a therapeutic process, involving leisure, recreation and play as a primary tool for each individual to achieve their highest level of independence and quality of life." Recreational Therapists use forms of recreation, leisure, and play as treatments modalities to support purposeful and meaningful interventions that are based on individual strengths and values, and are guided by assessments (CTRA, 2023). This covers a wide variety of therapeutic interventions that address an individual's emotional, social, physical, and mental needs. Moreover, it's often used in rehabilitation settings to allow young people to experience a deeper level of self-understanding and healing. This has proven to be a very helpful intervention for the vulnerable youth served in the HomeBridge Community.

The body heals with play, the mind heals with laughter, and the spirit heals with joy.

- Proverb

Rob Grandy, CTRS

Over the past year it has been exciting to continue to grow the role of Recreation Therapy in the HomeBridge Community. Building upon therapeutic relationships with the young people is the foundation of this therapeutic service, and it has been incredibly rewarding to see these relationships develop through my second full year as part of the team. We have seen first-hand how recreation can be a vessel for young people to cultivate positive self-identities, develop healthy lifestyles, build positive relationships, and learn healthy coping skills.

Summer Recreation

2022 was our busiest summer yet in the HomeBridge Community. The youth had lots of great ideas for new activities to try, along with some favorites from past summers that we were excited to pick up again. In total, the young people participated in **172 hours** of organized one-on-one and group recreation this summer. On average **3-4 youth** attended each group activity or outing.

The Summer Recreation program would not be possible without the continued support of our generous donors, including The Home Depot Canada Foundation who funded the purchase of a van for us to go on outings and Seven Bays Bouldering for allowing the young people to discover the world of indoor climbing. It's been great watching the youth expand their comfort zones, and see themselves in new ways through the lens of recreation.

Some of the highlights of the past year include:

Youth from every program had the opportunity to develop their entrepreneurial skills at this year's Farmer's Market. We worked together to pick fresh vegetables in the valley, package customers' orders, and make special treats and crafts to sell. Here is a youth from Johnson House showing off her fantastic customer service skills!



A graduate of the boat building program returned to the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic for a row around George's Island with Eamonn Doorley who guided him through the building process. An unforgettable afternoon!

Sunset kayaking in Lower Prospect was great to get out of the city for an evening of exercise, learning about seabirds, and sharing lots of laughs together!



Lots of excitement and big catches during a deep sea fishing trip!

A great afternoon on a trail ride along the Kennetcook River with Evangeline Trail Rides. Lots of patience and trust goes into learning to ride a horse.



Individual Activity Plans

Every young person we have the privilege of working with has a unique set of strengths, interests, goals, and hopes. By connecting young people with activities that are personally meaningful to them, it is exciting to support them to learn about themselves, connect with their communities, and develop healthier lifestyles.

Over the past year, it has been gratifying to have the opportunity to connect with the young people through the following activities:

- Photography
- Dog Walking
- Setting up an Aquarium
- Fitness Classes
- Bouldering
- Rock Climbing
- Geocaching
- Going to the Gym and Using a Membership Independently
- Joining a Soccer League
- Hiking
- Exploring the Beach
- Spending Time in the Community
- Touring the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
- Dance Classes
- Yoga
- Skateboarding
- Skiing
- Snowboarding
- Lily Pad Cat Lounge
- Shubenacadie Wildlife Park
- Fishing
- Playing Pool
- Beach cleanups
- Disc Golf
- Embroidery
- Pottery
- Taking the Ferry
- Basketball
- Workshops at The MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning



Last summer I did Tidal Bore Rafting and zip lining and it was fun, so I'd like to go with Rob and do more.
-HomeBridge Youth

THERAPEUTIC PROGRAMMING

Therapeutic programming in the HomeBridge Community is designed to teach youth skills that will encourage effective daily living and to help them be able to adapt these skills in a variety of life settings. Skill development is implemented through a unique blend of Activity Based Therapeutic Life Skill Development enriched with Service Learning opportunities. Our program planning also remains deeply rooted in our Care Planning Framework, the Circle of Courage, which includes Mastery, Generosity, Belonging, and Independence.

Daily Life Skill Programs are constantly changing and evolving because they are planned and implemented according to the needs of each individual group of young people. Some groups benefit from structured programs such as Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) which uses, Mindfulness, Distress Tolerance, Interpersonal Effectiveness and Emotional Regulation, to assist them with learning how to live in the moment. This helps the young people develop healthy ways to deal with stress and to regulate their emotions so they can improve their relationships with others. However, some of the youth we serve do not have the capability to participate in this type of program in the traditional format. In these instances, we are challenged to incorporate the core learning of these programs but facilitate them through brief, hands-on interactive activities. For example, instead of sitting down talking about mindfulness techniques, we may go to the park to demonstrate and practice the prescribed methods. Learning emotional regulation through activities such as exercise, yoga for anxiety and addictions, HeartMath (BioFeedBack program) and experiential programs, also allows the young people the opportunity to solidify the skills through practice. This seems to be the most effective method of supporting them to retain the information and develop the necessary skills for healthy living.

Cooking Toward Independence, funded through the **Children's Aid Foundation of Nova Scotia**, has been a long running program which focuses on teaching the youth skills for healthy living, as well as, employability skills. Basically, the participants are supported to plan and prepare a full meal for everyone at the Reigh Allen Centre once a week. This allows them to learn basic cooking and food handling skills in a fun and supportive environment. Since the cost of groceries skyrocketed, there was also a focus on budgeting and conserving food this year.

The meals they prepare need to feed approximately 20 people, therefore the youth are challenged in ways that mimic more of an industry cooking experience than cooking for themselves. Through participating in this program, they get a taste of what it would be like to work in the food industry and gain experience in some of the necessary skills for this type of employment. One young person was even inspired to apply for culinary school as a result. Of course, they also learn how to cook for themselves which is an invaluable skill to have no matter what career choice they make.

The holiday season is a challenging one in the HomeBridge Community, but we try to keep the young people busy and engaged with lots of programs and activities, including our Holiday Coffee House. This fun and festive event gives them the opportunity to show off some of the talents they discovered in the Expressions Program of the Arts by performing or selling arts and crafts during the event. It's also the season to encourage the development of generosity. This year, youth participated in making homemade turkey soup for the residents of Herring Cove Apartments. This residence is a part of Shelter Nova Scotia that houses homeless individuals. The youth also put together gift bags with treats, winter gloves and hygiene products for the residents. This initiative was connected to the Cooking Toward Independence program and funded by contributions made by employees who enjoy the meals prepared by the youth.

Spring and summer are a time for gardening, and getting outside to experience new things and make positive memories. Deep Sea Fishing and Tidal Bore Rafting are often among the favorite outings we share with the young people. Days spent exploring McNab's Island and trolling the beaches looking for treasure also create memories though and encourage the development of healthy stress relievers. The youth seem to forget the stress and anxiety surrounding their current situation when they are given the opportunity to be in nature feeding the squirrels, experiencing a cook out or participating in a guided meditation on the beach. It may not last long, but any opportunity to let go and have fun is a welcome break.



This year marked the 11th consecutive year that HomeBridge has facilitated a week-long, youth operated Farmer's Market as well. In order to be selected for this project the youth are expected to participate in an interview process as well as an orientation. They are responsible for gaining pre-orders for produce, picking and purchasing items at wholesale, baking, processing all the orders and facilitating the actual market. The Youth Farmers Market is funded by the Youth Development Initiative and is a great way for participants to gain experience they can list on their resumes. The experience, pride, and employability skills that this program offers has a very positive impact on the young people who take part.

All therapeutic programs offered in the HomeBridge Community are designed to assist the youth in developing skills to enhance their lives both now and in the future. It is made possible through the generosity of all our funders and supportive partners. Please see below for a complete list of structured programs offered.

- Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)
- The 5 Agreements Personal/Moral Development
- Conflict Resolution- ART Aggression Replacement Training
- Drug and Alcohol Awareness
- Smoking Cessation
- Healthy Relationships
- Sexual Health
- Cultural Awareness
- Caring for Your Body (Hygiene/Puberty)
- Cooking Toward Independence (Nutrition, Budgeting and Culinary Skills)
- Self-esteem
- Recreation and Leisure Development
- Communication Skills
- Assertiveness
- Peer Pressure
- Understanding Your Emotions
- Visual Arts
- Music
- Yoga
- Gardening
- Aromatherapy
- Sleep Hygiene
- Production of Natural Products (Cleaning and Personal Care Items)
- Tai Chi
- HeartMath (Bio-Feedback)
- The Stress Reduction Workbook for Teens
- The Anxiety Workbook for Teens
- The Anger Workbook for Teens
- Entrepreneurial and Service Learning
- Volunteering with Feed N.S
- YWCA Discovering Life Skills
- What Have I Done? A Victim Empathy Program for Young People
- MAPSTARS Conflict Resolution – Bully Prevention Program
- The Six Pillars of Character Development (Trustworthiness, Responsibility, Respect, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship)



Respectfully Submitted
Shelley Morgan
HomeBridge Youth Program Coordinator
Dr T.C.M., Dr. A.C., R. AC



As we ease back into some sense of normalcy after years of public health restrictions and uncertainty, we are working on reconnecting with our some of our important stakeholders. Physical distance has not made our commitment to being good neighbours any less of a priority. Out of sight, out of mind did not apply here.

We understand living near a youth care setting can have its challenges. We strive to be good neighbours and hope by connecting with those who live around us, we can lessen any concerns they may have. It is very important the vulnerable youth we serve live in a community setting that is accepting and open. They have experienced significant physical and emotional trauma and need support to heal and move forward. Nothing about their current living situation is normal. For this reason, it is important for them to live in a typical looking home, in a typical neighbourhood. This helps to create some normalcy in their lives and also helps them experience the sense of belonging and connectedness that comes with being part of a community. We have highly trained employees who are with the young people 24/7 to help them work through their pain and sadness. Healing from complex trauma however takes time; change does not occur overnight.

Every year we produce a **Report to the Community** which is typically hand delivered to the neighbours who surround all of our facilities to keep them informed about the happenings in and around the HomeBridge Community. This is an important part of our neighbourhood relations strategy as we truly value the opportunity to connect with members of the community and to hear their feedback. The report which includes information on our programs and the work we do with vulnerable youth. For the past three years we have simply dropped the report off in mailboxes in an effort to keep everyone safe. We are very happy, however, that this year we resumed the practice of meeting with our neighbours so we can continue to build our relationship.

Interdisciplinary Support Team



Maintenance and Housekeeping Team



Kitchen Team



Supervisor Team



We understand both the privilege and responsibility that comes with working with vulnerable youth. These young people come to us during a very challenging time in their lives and allow us to be an important part of their personal journey. This is not something we take lightly and therefore our practice is constantly evolving as we continue to learn and grow.

The employees who make up our teams range from those who have been with the organization for decades to some who are only at the beginning of their career with us. All of these hard working and dedicated practitioners bring different experience and expertise to the work we do and this is something we are happy to share as we help to build capacity in future professionals. Offering student placement opportunities is one of the many ways that we try to support the profession of Child and Youth Care. This is also beneficial to us as we know the learning goes both ways. We often learn as much from the students as they do from us.

HomeBridge offered placements to 17 students looking to gain some hands-on experience in human services this year. Each student is matched with a HomeBridge Student Field Advisor to guide them on their educational journey and ensure their individual learning objectives were met. This year's student placements came from the following institutions and programs:

Nova Scotia Community College, Ivany Campus - Child and Youth Care
Nova Scotia Community College, Truro Campus - Child and Youth Care
Mount Saint Vincent University – Child and Youth Care
Eastern College – Child and Youth Worker

HomeBridge employees also contributed their time and talents by sitting on the following Boards and Committees outside of the organization:

- Association of Children's Residential & Community Services Board (ACRC)
- Relational Child and Youth Care Practice Journal Advisory Board
- Curriculum Advisory Board: Holland College Child & Youth Care Worker Program
- International Child & Youth Care Network Board (CYC-Net)

Memberships:

- Project Management Institute, Nova Scotia Chapter
- Association of Fundraising Professionals, Nova Scotia Chapter
- CPA Canada (Chartered Professional Accountants)
- CPANS (Chartered Professional Accountants of Nova Scotia)
- Nova Scotia Child and Youth Care Workers Association
- Chartered Professionals of Human Resources Association of Nova Scotia (CPHR Nova Scotia)
- Trafficking an Exploitation Service System (TESS)
- Association of Children's Residential Centers
- International Child and Youth Care Network (CYC Net)
- National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC)
- Nova Scotia Therapeutic Recreation Association (NSTRA)



Nelson Mandela said “education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” and we agree whole heartedly. Our world never stops changing so we need adapt and adjust as well as we strive for best practice in all areas of our work. This can't happen without constantly researching and learning the latest practices for therapeutic interventions for vulnerable youth as well as the other professional jurisdictions that make up our multi-disciplinary team. This year employees have been involved in the following educational opportunities to keep our knowledge current and provide the best possible service:

External training:

- ACRC (Association of Children's Residential & Community Services):
 - Workplace Wellness: Redefining a sense of community in the wake of COVID
- Association of Fundraising Professionals:
 - Maritime Fundraising Conference
 - Winning the Competition for Connection: The Case for Using Advanced Technologies to Personalize Your Fundraising Practices
- Canada Helps - Cyber Security and Data Storage
- Carters Professional Corporation - 2023 Carters Spring Charity & Not for profit law webinar
- CPANS (Chartered Professional Accountants of Nova Scotia):
 - Mental Health in the Workplace
 - Creating an Organizational Culture with Greater Gratitude
 - Examining Ethics
 - ASNFPO Disclosure and Presentation
 - Be the lighthouse through change
 - Communication and Relationship Building
- CPA Canada - Money and the World Virtual Conference 2022
- CPHRNS (Chartered Professionals in Human Resources Nova Scotia):
 - Annual Conference
 - Advancing Equity and Supporting Mothers at Work
 - Annual Labour Law Conference
- Department of Community Services - Youth Sexual Exploitation Training. Understanding and working with youth who have been sexually exploited/trafficked
- Dr. John Digney – Youth Car Practice Modules
- Fire Marshall's Office – Fire and Life Training
- Dr. Lorraine Fox - Supervision Training and Consultation
- James Freeman - 25 Characteristics of a Relational Child and Youth Care Approach - A Global Discussion
- Life Circle Consulting:
 - Restoring your Story (Indigenous Cultural Awareness Training)
 - Indigenous Mental Health and Wellness, and Addictions Training
- Marsha Linehan - Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Skills
- Mount Saint Vincent University - Psychology as a Social Science
- Non-Profit Hub - Digital Marketing, Filling in the Gaps and Transforming Digital Content Gaps Into Success
- Jack Phelan & Caroline Moore - Use of Self in CYC Practice
- #SocialEast - Digital Marketing Conference
- The Youth Project - Moving Beyond the Binary
- Workers Compensation Board – Workplace Wellness



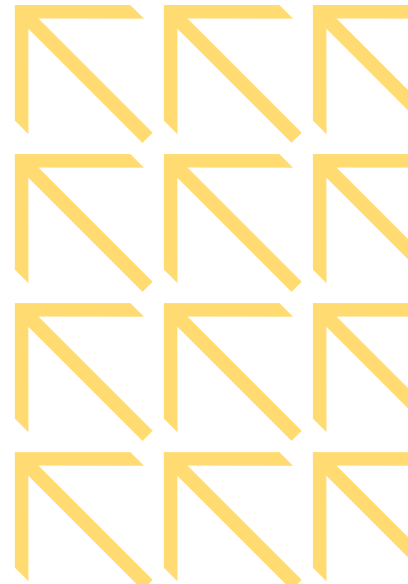
Internal Training:

- Cross Cultural Safety Awareness (to ensure we are respecting the needs of all cultures and beliefs)
- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety
 - Basic fire safety
 - WHMIS
 - Introduction to Occupational Health and Safety for new employees
- Non Violent Crisis Intervention
- First Aid
- Student Advisor Training
- The Purposeful Use of Daily Life Events

HomeBridge continues to use various virtual meeting platforms to make consult, mentoring and learning opportunities possible with out of region experts with minimal cost. Whether it is one-on-one consults with experts in the field of Child and Youth Care from around the globe or group training that would typically require flights and accommodations for the facilitators, and the rental of a venue, this technology has made training and consult opportunities much more feasible. The use of this communication technology has also allowed us to continue with group trainings during times in the pandemic when it was not safe to gather or meet in person.



Non Violent Crisis Intervention Training



Restoring your Story

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The IWK Health Centre has been an invaluable community partner for HomeBridge for many years now, providing us with clinical support for both our employees and the young people served in our programs. Last year that support expanded to include access to a pediatrician, on-site at the Reigh Allen Centre.

Being able to offer the young people mental health and addictions support as well as access to a doctor right in the HomeBridge Community where they live has been amazing. Since 2014 a Clinical Social Worker has been seconded to HomeBridge half time, in the role of Mental Health and Addictions Counselor. We have benefited from his expertise in the area of substance misuse, specifically harm management approaches, by working directly with the young people we serve and through his work with the youth care teams. This year, this has changed slightly as Jeff Thoms, MSW, RSW is moving on to another project and Johneen Kelly, MSW, RSW is transitioning into the role. We also welcomed pediatrician, Dr. Tania Wong to the HomeBridge Community this year.

The young people can pre-schedule appointments with Dr. Wong and she is also accepting patients on a walk-in basis when she is on site. She has a clinic space set up at the Reigh Allen Centre where she sees patients once a week. We are hoping that this service will impact such outcomes as improved health care, prescription / medication reviews, early diagnosis for sexual health concerns, etc. and have already seen indicators that this is happening.

The IWK offers many community resources, but the fact that they brought some of those services directly to the HomeBridge Community has made a profound difference. Getting youth-in-care to appointments is often challenging for a number of reasons, but these resources are now offered where they live. The consistency of these professionals being on site regularly also makes a big difference as they are familiar to the young people and therefore they are more open to meeting with them. We cannot thank our friends and partners at the IWK enough for this meaningful support.

Support comes in many different forms. When you work or live in a congregate living setting at a time when COVID-19 is still very much a reality, essential support can also look like PPE and antigen rapid test kits. The **Canadian Red Cross** and their "Stop the Spread and Stay Safe" program has been supplying HomeBridge with KN95 masks and COVID-19 rapid test kits for over a year now. This has allowed us to offer everyone in the HomeBridge Community two regular testing days per week to help determine when anyone is ill with the virus and masks to help reduce the spread. This has been a very helpful resource as we continue to do our very best to keep everyone safe and healthy.

We have also been very fortunate to be part of the Orange Door Project through **The Home Depot Canada Foundation** since 2014. The foundation started this initiative to help prevent and end youth homelessness in Canada. Their campaign raises money to provide vulnerable youth with the housing, support and hope they need to live safe, healthy and productive lives through a number of initiatives including an instore campaign where customers can purchase an "orange door" to contribute to the project. The team at **The Home Depot Dartmouth Crossing** support HomeBridge through these campaigns and have raised more than \$100,000 over the years. This money has supported life-skill building, therapeutic programming including our Recreation Therapy program. Last year, they raised so much money during the spring campaign that we were even able to purchase a van to take the young people on outings. This removed transportation as a barrier from getting the youth involved in community activities and experiencing things that were not previously possible. This support has made a very positive difference in the lives of young people who have often had more negative experiences in their young lives than positive ones.



Many of the positive opportunities and experiences we are able to offer the young people are only possible through the support of our community partners. This includes the **Halifax Youth Foundation**. They have been supporting the Expressions Program of the Arts for a number of years now, but this year they offered extra financial support to also make two new initiatives possible. Thanks to their financial contribution we were able to offer a version of the “Cooking Toward Independence” program in our long-term programs. Supported by a member of our Kitchen Team and the Recreational Therapist, the young people learned basic cooking skills as they planned, prepared and served a meal in their facility. This was an excellent way for the participants to learn valuable life skills while building positive relationships with their fellow residents and our employees who are here to support them during this time in their lives.

The other exciting opportunity funded by the Halifax Youth Foundation was the purchase of Virtual Reality Headsets for each of our programs. VR creates an entire digital environment, a 360-degree, immersive user experience that feels real. In a VR setting, the youth can interact with what they see as if they were really there. In addition to providing them with immersive learning experiences, other benefits of virtual reality as an education tool include the ability to inspire the youth's creativity and spark their imaginations. Without leaving the program youth can go on virtual field trips to places ranging from the Roman Colosseum in ancient times to outer space to cellular-level passageways inside the human body. These experiences are educational, but also fun therefore it's easy to engage the youth in this age-appropriate, healthy activity.

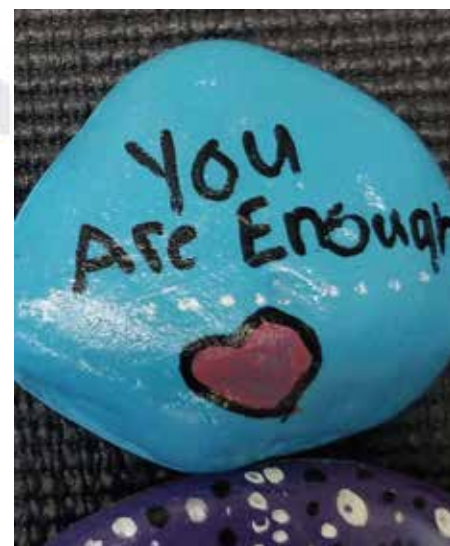
We strive to provide the best services possible for the youth we have the privilege of serving and we are grateful that we do not have to do this alone. The old African proverb is true. It takes a village to raise a child and we have some incredible partners in our village.



IT TAKES A VILLAGE

I learned lots – like how to call a cab and get better at bus routes and I'm also learning to ride a bike.

-HomeBridge Youth



OUR CORNERSTONE PARTNERS

Department of Community Services - fund HomeBridge's operating budget

St. Paul's Home Board - own Sullivan House, Jubien House and Cogswell House

Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal - own Johnson House and the Reigh Allen Centre

Department of Education - fund two Teaching positions for our school program, Bridges for Learning

IWK Health Centre - provides mental health, addictions and pediatric support



DONATIONS/FUNDRAISING - FISCAL 2022/2023

Bridges for Learning (personal donors).....	\$ 360
Recreational Therapist – IWK Grant.....	\$ 3,462
General Donations.....	\$ 3,624
Youth Development Initiative (YDI): Farmer's Market & Safe Spaces & Relationships Grants.....	\$ 7,029
Cooking toward Independence/Culinary Skills Program.....	\$ 9,000
Holidays of Hope (Including St. Paul's Christmas for Youth).....	\$ 20,446
Expressions Program of the Arts.....	\$ 30,774
Recreation Program.....	\$ 88,719
Bridges For Learning (Department of Education grant).....	\$140,000

HomeBridge received/fundraised over \$303,414 in fiscal 2022/2023



Thank you to those who contributed to the Annual Report:

Jim Perrin, Ernie Hilton, Caroline Moore, Renee Stevens, Jackie Woodford, Colleen Clark, Carol Lethbridge, Jillian Nordin, Hayley Pye, Shelley Morgan, Rob Grandy, Anna Plaskett, Evie Dunville, and Margaret Lawton.

HOMEBRIDGE YOUTH SOCIETY - OPERATING INCOME STATEMENT (UNAUDITED)

For the year ended March 31, 2023

	ACTUAL 2023	BUDGET 2023	ACTUAL 2022
REVENUES			
Grants	\$ 7,486,619	\$ 7,486,619	\$ 7,290,730
Per diem (occupancy)	1,071,903	1,101,250	1,060,384
Other DCS Funding	101,574	-	-
Investment income	14,216	-	4,144
Donations	3,624	-	2,464
COVID Funding reimbursements	-	-	23,310
	8,677,936	8,587,869	8,381,032
EXPENSES			
Wages & benefits	7,474,193	7,926,735	7,244,909
Food	192,645	155,001	174,958
Repair & maintenance	140,973	83,000	129,565
Office	129,468	38,249	122,877
Light, Power, Cable	97,262	82,601	99,424
Insurance	80,111	40,500	64,524
Travel	52,119	51,401	45,453
Professional services fees	51,903	32,810	83,782
Household & cleaning supplies	46,374	26,100	39,907
Household furnishings	38,342	14,213	41,025
Staff Training	38,060	23,200	70,438
Telephone	38,008	23,999	34,742
Fuel	36,393	39,500	33,329
Youth Life Skills Programming	30,742	14,619	26,883
Water	12,990	11,999	14,294
Pharmacy	10,210	8,701	9,573
Property Taxes	8,473	4,000	7,223
Board development	4,725	-	3,802
(IBP) Incentive Based Programming	2,565	6,241	1,691
Psychological testing materials	-	5,000	-
Total Expenses	8,485,556	8,587,869	8,248,399
Net Income (loss)	\$ 192,380	\$ -	\$ 132,633

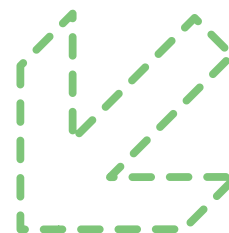
For a copy of HomeBridge Youth Society's audited financial statements please contact Colleen Clark, CPA, CA HomeBridge Director of Finance at (902) 466-1439 x 224 or cclark@homebridgeyouth.ca

HomeBridge Donor List - Fiscal 2022/2023



18 Dartmouth Air Cadets Squadron
Advent Gift Bag Program (St. Peter's Parish church groups)
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