February 2013 marked the 10th year of my service as the President and CEO of The Home for Little Wanderers. The past decade saw considerable change in our external environment: the business of child welfare, the national and global political landscape, the US economy, perceptions about the not-for-profit sector and its contributions and complexity, and the composition of today’s workforce and projections for the future.

As the Tony Robbins quote above states, it is possible for people to “underestimate what they can achieve in a decade.” But I don’t want us to do that. I want us to take a good look at what we have accomplished over the past decade and appreciate the results of the tremendous effort and discipline we have exercised that now makes us one of the most potent, well-run, well-resourced, respected and valued mental and behavioral health organizations in the Commonwealth. Our branding consultants scolded us that we have been remiss in not “tooting our own horn.”

This publication is going to do just that. If you are new to the agency, some of what you read may seem passé and just part of your work life at The Home. If you have been here throughout most of the last ten years, you know how far we have come in some key areas. What has been true throughout the entire ten years is that hundreds of people have made the accomplishments in this report possible. All of you have played a role in making The Home what it is today; and will play a role as we continue to strive for our best work on behalf of the children and families that we serve.

Ten Years of Service
Joan Wallace-Benjamin

“Once you have mastered time, you will understand how true it is that most people overestimate what they can accomplish in a year — and underestimate what they can achieve in a decade!”

—Tony Robbins

A Decade Ago...

Just prior to my joining The Home, the agency had completed mergers with Boston Children’s Services and Charles River Health Management. The “New England” was dropped from our name, and we became The Home for Little Wanderers. Six months into my tenure in 2003, we completed another merger with Parents and Children’s Services. With this merger, The Home had achieved the major objectives of its Strategic Plan at the time, which was to go to scale, create a continuum of services that were residential, community-based and preventive, serve children from birth to age 21, and become a significant force for change in child welfare with the state Legislature and cities and towns.

At the time we had 32 programs and over 800 employees. These mergers brought on many new advantages, but also new challenges. To address some of the more immediate challenges, we:

♦ Restructured the Board of Directors by rightsizing it from 65 people to 35, then down to the current 20; streamlined the board committee structure; moved from monthly to quarterly meetings; and made fundraising and resource development central to members’ commitment.

♦ Used the first Strategic Plan to clarify programmatic direction and transition away from programs that, although good and important, strayed from our mission.

♦ Acknowledged and articulated the mental and behavioral health work done by The Home in the mission statement and all public and internal communications.

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Advocacy and Innovation

In the last decade, The Home has become a respected public policy and advocacy leader in the state and has contributed to the creation of new legislation in several areas affecting children and their families. This commitment to advocacy furthers our goal of being a strong voice for all children and families, not just the ones we serve directly.

Enhancements to Human Resources

The Home's new size and complexity also required the professionalization of our Human Resources department. We:

- Hired seasoned HR professionals
- Improved benefits offering and management
- Improved performance and compensation management systems, updating job descriptions and the salary grade system
- Installed a new HRIS system (UltiPro is the most recent improvement)
- Created a Workforce Learning and Development department within HR
- Introduced manager self-service for benefits and employment, and enhanced customer service orientation of the department
- Hired new legal representation to handle the increased demands of a significantly larger workforce

Becoming Unified

After all the mergers were complete, we worked hard with senior leadership at the time to build a culture that respected and acknowledged the individual identities of the merging organizations, but moved them to an identity that believed the agency was one and not merely a combination of separate and independent entities. This was not a simple task, took longer than expected, and still requires attention and discipline within the organization.

Solidifying Our New Identity

In the early days, there were other organizational and programmatic changes that marked our new scope and size and thus our presence in the broader community. We had grown, no doubt, but there was much work to do to become integrated into the Greater Boston and statewide landscape, and to become a respected leader among our colleagues who were also serving children and families. Some of the actions we took to solidify our new identity include:

- Created the Performance and Outcomes department to enable us to answer the question “Are we helping and how do we know,” and to measure the progress and effectiveness of our work. This Department is now called Risk Management, Evaluation and Outcomes (RMEO). We were unique at the time as the only organization in the Greater Boston area with a designated department for this function. Included here is the development and implementation of the Evolv database system. Though imperfect, its implementation prepares The Home to both collect data in an electronic way and ready itself for the 2015 federal mandate requiring behavioral health organizations and others to have an Electronic Medical Record.
- Successfully completed reaccreditation with the Commission on Accreditation (COA) twice with the third process to occur this spring (2013).
- With the necessity to play a greater external role in the community, moved the head of the Communications Department onto the Executive Management Team (EMT).
- Purchased a much-needed replacement for the Spring Park Place group home. The Home purchased the old Mission Convent on Allegheny Street in Jamaica Plain now called Harrington House, and received its first ever $500,000 grant to execute the purchase from Putnam Investments.
- Created the President’s Youth Council, a group of young people from our various programs to meet with the President on a monthly basis, not only to share their experiences of living and participating in The Home’s programs, but also to participate in a leadership development and public speaking program developed for them. To date, upwards of 80 young people have participated.
- Improved The Home’s image in the community, especially in communities of color. Worked to make us a true partner with other organizations.
- Championed diversity in hiring, clinical approach, and supplier procurement. Ongoing focus and attention is needed in this area to make continued progress.
- Built successful relationships with the office of the Governor, Mayor of Boston, officials of city and state government.

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Ten years ago saw the opening of Waltham House, a residential group home for GLBTQ young people living in at-risk circumstances and needing a safe haven. It was the first program of its kind in New England and only the third in the nation.

The Home has served as co-chair of the statewide Aging Out Task Force since 2004 and has distinguished itself as an advocate, leader, and provider of services to this population who are moving into adulthood with few, if any, resources and supports. All of our work in this area has represented “firsts” of their kind in programmatic innovation:

♦ Academic Support for College and Life, first at Pine Manor College and now at Bridgewater State University, provides young people with college preparatory and college-level academic instruction, as well as other types of support.

♦ Roxbury Village, provides young adults who have aged out of DCF care and are at risk of homelessness with affordable housing, together with support and community connections.

♦ YARN (Young Adult Resource Network) assists young adults who are involved with DCF in obtaining stable housing, employment, physical and psychological wellness and educational and community involvement.

♦ New Start, operated in collaboration with the Designers on Call at the Boston Design Center, provides furniture and housewares to young adults needing assistance furnishing their first apartment.

Growing Pains

From 2003 to 2008 was the period in which the growing pains of the organization were felt most greatly. Our efforts experienced fits and starts as new things were tried. Some were seamless and successful; others had real challenges. In the previous three years the country had experienced the devastation of September 11th, and the way we lived, travelled, and interacted with one another and our neighbors here at home and around the world was different and strained. Even so, the agency felt as though it was settling in.

And then... the US economy fell on unbelievably hard times, which affected everyone. Of course the people we serve at The Home always suffer the most in times of economic turmoil, and several of our agency colleagues and competitors were losing ground. Yet we were still around, still able to serve, still able to move forward. We were, however, forced to take the organization through 3 downsizing/ rightsizing cycles. This was difficult for the organization, as it had not needed to manage significant layoffs before. And in FY 2010, for the first time in many years, The Home did not award a salary increase to its employees.

The last five years ...

The financial challenges were real. But the EMT and the Board, while being fiscally responsible and cautious, decided to continue moving forward in some specific ways.

Changes in Child Welfare

One of the most significant differences over the past 10 years has been the way the field of child welfare has morphed and adapted to changes in local, state and federal funding and policy. The Home's revenue and expense model is today more similar to that of a hospital than it is to the traditional care and protection children's agency we were over a decade ago. The reduced reliance on providing mental and behavioral health services in residential settings and the increased provision of those services in community-based settings has been significant. Reading the handwriting on the wall, The Home made some intelligent bets and some specific decisions that have served us well through both tough economic times and these philosophical and financial changes in the field.

The reduction in our reliance on residential service revenue through the sale of the Knight Children's Center and its consolidation with the Longview Farm program, the restructuring of how our community-based and clinic services would be delivered using a third party billing model with insurance companies and other payers, and our pursuit of other models of service to generate revenue (BTR, CBAT etc.) by utilizing our available beds, were all among the actions that we took to create the service continuum we now have, and a mix of revenue sources that positions us well for the future. Some other specific actions we took include:

♦ Created the Director of Business and Strategic Partnerships position to develop new governmental and contractual relationships.

♦ The Rosie D vs. Romney case and the formation of the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative resulted in our doing business differently and being awarded two Community Service Agency contracts.

♦ Developed and implemented Cognitive Behavioral Therapy as the best clinical practice model for the entire agency.

♦ Improved and developed The Home's educational program offering for its special education schools, and for its interaction with schools, public and private. This work is still in progress.

(continued...)
Contributors to our philanthropic growth include:

- Built a high-performing development team, moving the agency toward a major gifts structure and away from pure transactional fundraising.
- With Board support and stewardship, professionalized the management of the agency’s considerable endowment.
- Consolidated Development and Communications into one department under the leadership of one Vice President.
- Completed The Home’s largest-ever capital campaign that raised $23 million, allocating $18 million of that to the building and renovation of Longview Farm into a state-of-the-art living and learning environment for our children.
- Worked with Communications team to sophisticate all internal and external collateral materials for The Home.
- Completed the agency rebranding and new messaging process, changing the agency logo, tagline, and color palette to reflect The Home as a strong and competent organization.

**Strengthening Agency Communications**

To reinforce our objective of unifying the agency and improving communications, we put in place several administrative enhancements:

- Created the Town Hall meeting format held twice a year.
- Created the President’s Cabinet of agency senior leadership.
- Created the Quality Council, an interdisciplinary team of employees from across the agency who work with the president to maintain quality and encourage innovation.
- Implemented a new and much-improved employee intranet called The HomeBase.
- Added to management a Director of IT to provide internal technology expertise to The Home’s programmatic and administrative efforts.

**Growing Our Philanthropy Base**

Over the past eight to ten years, The Home has experienced tremendous growth in its ability to generate resources from private philanthropy, helping us to stay ahead of the trends in governmental funding that have failed to provide stability for our long-term well-being and forward progress. Ten years ago, The Home raised very little from corporations, for example, and now the department raises over $1 million each year. Ten years ago, our annual fundraising event, Sailing Home, raised $20,000–$30,000; now our signature event, Voices & Visions, breaks $1 million and we have introduced other regular events to attract donors.

Last year, our development efforts raised in excess of $12 million from private, non-governmental sources, with the majority of those funds coming from individuals. This is more than most other agencies in the human services arena. Even so, our administrative costs fall solidly at the median among our competitors — not too high and not too low. The Home is also fortunate to have a significant endowment that is well managed and continues to recover from the downturn it experienced in this last recession, and from which we have been able to draw to help support operations.

That’s quite a list of accomplishments for a decade and, as I said at the beginning, everyone played a key role in getting us to where we are today. But what about our future? We are leaner than we were ten years ago and, in adapting to changing landscapes in child welfare, we have learned a lot. We are well positioned to continue playing a leadership role in caring for the most vulnerable children and families in our Commonwealth. But, we cannot rest on our laurels; we cannot — as perhaps we have done in the past — rely on our 200-plus years of history to get us through. Things are different now: we face competition as never before, not just from other non-profits but from national for-profit organizations. We must strive to continue to deliver the best possible services while dealing with federal and state budget cuts; and we must respond to an ever-more sophisticated donor base that insists on outcomes data.

We have the staff, we have the expertise and we have the tools to face our future with confidence. I look forward to continuing to serve at the helm of this great organization and am proud to have you all as partners in that endeavor.