



NEWS FROM THE HOME FOR LITTLE WANDERERS FALL 2026

EARLY SUPPORT BRINGS CHILDHOOD SUCCESS

Full, child-centered care makes the difference at The Center for Early Childhood.

Christy Moulin, IMH-E®, Director of The Home's Center for Early Childhood, met Maria*, Emilio's* mom, outside of his preschool. Emilio was having a difficult time: his frustrations had flared, he was having trouble focusing, and aggression and "unsafe" behaviors had become a concern with peer interactions.

The school was threatening to expel Emilio, so Christy had come to observe him in the classroom setting and meet with the principal and school counselor. She brought a bag of sensory tools Emilio could use moving forward to help relieve his anxiety and stress, release energy and help him focus. At our Center, and for Christy, exclusion isn't the answer. Finding another approach is.

CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

Maria sought out our Early Childhood team for help because we knew Emilio, and she trusted us. When he was three, Emilio came to The Home for play therapy, and we found him to be a creative, playful child who responds well to nurturing and consistent boundaries.

Emilio was between providers (his clinician went on leave) when his struggles at school came to a head. "I called Christy nonstop," recalls Maria. She responded immediately, connecting the family with resources and putting next steps in place. "We were able to get Emilio

situated within months," says Maria. "That was a life-changer."

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Emilio received weekly clinical support to help him manage his anger and cope with emotional peaks, as well as neuropsychological testing and an Individualized Education Program (IEP)—much of which was new to Maria. "I didn't understand the tantrums. I didn't know what an IEP meant. I didn't know how to get evaluations," she explains. With The Home's services working in unison, Maria was able to build that knowledge, and Emilio now has the support he needs to thrive.

This awareness has made a world of difference, for Maria, Emilio and everyone in his orbit. "Now, we have concrete insight, so we can support him without being judgmental or dismissing his emotions."

Armed with this information, Maria enrolled Emilio in a new school with a Team-Based Learning program, exiting the setting that wasn't meeting his needs. The administrators there often praise her advocacy for Emilio. "It feels so good," says Maria, with pride and relief. "I know about these things because of The Home. Without The Home, I'd be walking blindfolded."

FEELING SUCCESS

Emilio, now 7, has been working with his clinician, Fantasia Fernandes, for two years,

and the two communicate well and share a bond. Fantasia has helped him through the transition, checking in with school counselors and Maria before her sessions with Emilio. Together, they play sports and fun, active games that work towards goals like impulse control and limit setting. Fantasia says, "When we're playing together, it's a special time for me, because I've seen his growth."

In many ways, the family's early crisis point became a turning point. Maria reflects, "If I didn't have those supports and services in place at that time, right now, it would be a different story. Emilio is doing so much better, and I truly believe it is because he has had so many people who have cared for him immensely." •



RESOURCES ACCESSED AT THE HOME

- ♥ Consultation/Guidance
- ♥ Play and SMART Therapy
- ♥ Temporary clinical support
- ♥ Family sessions
- ♥ Neuropsychological evaluation
- ♥ Therapeutic Mentor

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello from The Home!

Across our organization, we are serving a record number of children and families. This reflects both the growing needs in our communities and the importance of expanding access to high-quality care and support. Families today are facing significant challenges; they are grappling with behavioral and mental health needs, feeling great economic strain, and navigating complex systems that can be stressful for kids and caregivers alike.

We are addressing these needs with action—and have exciting news to share.

This fall, The Home will move our headquarters—and the hub of our Behavioral Health and Clinical Services—to Nubian Square in Roxbury. This new Center for Children and Families will provide a more inviting setting for our youth and families, positioning us in the heart of the communities we serve. Easily accessible by bus and by train, our new location will allow us to connect more children and families with the care, resources and services that help them thrive.

We have also begun a new chapter in Chelsea and have opened a location in this vibrant city that houses both our Community Service Agency and Family Resource Center. Together, these programs provide support that is family-driven, community-based and rooted in hope, stability and connection.

As you'll read in "Rise and Shine," our work also extends into the boroughs of New York City, where we provide mental health services and after-school support that strengthens students and communities. This year, The Home was named an official charity partner for the 2026 TCS New York City Marathon. We are thrilled to participate in the 50th running of this historic race, raising awareness of our critical services and their impact in the very communities we serve.

None of this happens alone. We are incredibly grateful for the support we receive from our community partners, organizations and leaders, and for you, for sharing our commitment to children and families.

Sincerely,



Lesli Suggs, LICSW
President and CEO



Massachusetts Department of Children and Families Commissioner Staverne Miller; Program Director Kristina Peralta, LICSW, of our Harbor Area Family Resource Center; and President & CEO Lesli Suggs, LICSW

RISE AND SHINE

Morning check-ins are just the beginning of student support at The Home's NYC partner schools.



It's 8:10 a.m. and Advocate Counselor Roberto Quezada of Wediko New York at The Home makes the first of his student check-ins from his desk at our partner school.

"Good morning, Junior*," he texts. "Just making sure you're up."

At 8:30, he texts again. "It's me. I'm expecting you here—make sure you're on your way, okay?" If he hasn't heard from Junior by 8:50, he'll text again.

Roberto has 27 more of these conversations going simultaneously, and so do his colleagues. He tailors each message to the student's needs and situation, utilizing whatever tactic is most likely to get a reaction. He sends text stickers and even sings his morning message to one youth, leaving voice notes. While his outreach is sometimes met with sighs, eye rolls or a "leave me alone," more often than not, students are in class by 9:15, when the school day begins.

"If they're not," says Roberto, "I'm making calls."

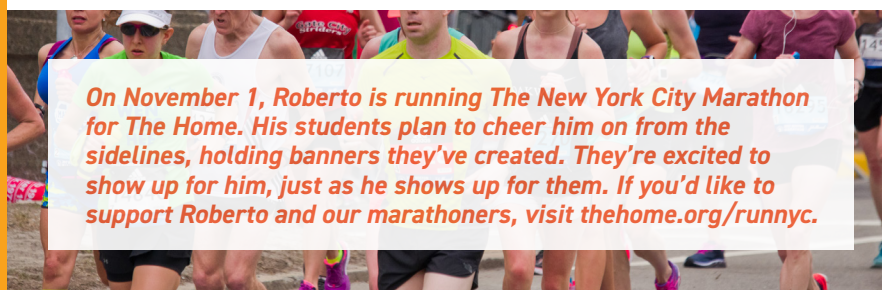
What makes these exchanges so powerful are the unspoken messages behind them. "While the goal is to check in on the youth, see how they're doing and whether they're coming to school," says Community School Director Jules Jimenez, "more importantly, it's that connection of knowing they belong here. That they're part of a community. That somebody misses them, is looking for them, and that they're valued here."

Wediko NY at The Home partners with schools to provide mental health services to New York City youth that promote well-being and improve engagement and outcomes. Our supports align with each school's goals, including reducing absenteeism, while addressing barriers that prevent students from succeeding.

Building relationships that help students persevere and recognize their worth is what makes the difference. "We show students that we want them here not only because it's good for them, but because we look forward to seeing them walk through the door," says Clinical Program Manager Delilah Nieves-Jenkins. "We want to engage with them."

When a student who doesn't want to go to school sees that it matters to Roberto, it begins to matter to them. "First, they show up for him," adds Delilah. "Eventually, they're showing up for themselves." •

**The student's name has been changed for privacy.*



On November 1, Roberto is running The New York City Marathon for The Home. His students plan to cheer him on from the sidelines, holding banners they've created. They're excited to show up for him, just as he shows up for them. If you'd like to support Roberto and our marathoners, visit thehome.org/runnyc.

PREPARING FOR HER BABY BOY

The Home helps bring young moms—and their new arrivals—a hopeful path forward.

During a recent visit with Program Director Autumn Nall, Bayley sits in the quiet of her own apartment, sharing ultrasound photos of her baby boy. She lights up as she gazes at his tiny features. “I can already tell he has my nose,” she laughs.

Bayley is 34 weeks pregnant and has just come from a doctor’s appointment. She happily reports that her baby passed every test and is measuring as they had hoped. “He is 4.6 pounds,” says Bayley. “He didn’t grow as he should have at first, but he’s on track now, so that’s good.”

Just a few months earlier, Bayley’s living situation grew increasingly volatile. Some nights, the homeowner told her not to come home, warning that violence in the house made it unsafe. Without a car and wary of the stress and potential threats that can come with adult shelters, she was often left scrambling to find another place to sleep.

Bayley resolved to put her baby’s well-being—and her own—first. So, she sought out our Hillsborough Village program, which provides housing support and life coaching to young adults in New Hampshire who have aged out of the foster care system and have nowhere to turn. “I didn’t want to go into a shelter,” she explains. “I have been in and out of placements my whole life. I’m tired of living that way. That’s why I chose to do The Home for Little Wanderers until I have my baby.”

Bayley knew her time at Hillsborough Village would be temporary (the program isn’t designed for young children), but she wants to do all she can to ensure the health of her unborn son. In the weeks leading up to his birth, our program provides a safe haven where she can rest, plan and prepare.

Without parents to lean on, Bayley is navigating much of this transition on her own. But, while there aren’t doting grandparents waiting in the wings, she isn’t alone. Autumn and Assistant Program Director Taylor Goncalves—Bayley’s “lifelong mentors,” says Autumn—are helping her tackle her to-do list and take the next steps toward stability.

As Bayley tucks away her photos, Autumn reminds her to complete the housing voucher application she sent over. Together, they are working on finding a home for mother and son, and have their sights set on an apartment in Keene. The unit would be a short walk to the park, schools, and the shops and job opportunities in the town center, and there are plenty of sidewalks for her stroller.

Now that her daily challenges aren’t all-consuming, Bayley can almost picture it: a place where she and her boy can build a life together, finding both a warm welcome and a fresh start. •



TO-DO LIST

Before the baby comes...

- ☒ Get a safe apartment
- ☒ A clean kitchen for healthy cooking!
- ☒ Pick out his name
- ☒ Set up car seat
- ☒ Get bassinet and pack and play
- ☒ Assemble stroller
- ☒ Sterilize bottles and wash his new clothes
- ☐ Buy diapers, wipes and formula
- ☐ Fill out housing paperwork
- ☐ Meet with my team to find a safe, longer-term home for me and my boy!



Breaking a Cycle that Spans Generations

- ♥ 1 in 4 young women in foster care become mothers by age 19.
- ♥ Up to 22% of children born to former foster youth will spend part of their childhood in out-of-home care.
- ♥ The Home's programs for young parents help families build stronger foundations and futures, together.

THE DRIVE TO GIVE

Every year, when The Home holds its **Big Wishes Gift Drive**, we receive a few unexpected gifts. Occasionally, someone dropping off toys for youth in our care reveals that they, too, were served by The Home. Some remember receiving our special holiday deliveries and how much they appreciated the kindness of our community; others share their stories.

Photographer and videographer Megan Farretta, who manages the bridal department at Anthropologie in Chestnut Hill, is a recent example. As a child, she worked with one of our clinicians during her transition from foster care to adoption. Through play and art therapy, she learned how to manage the swirl of emotions she was feeling, as her journey, which was rooted in pain and loss, bloomed into a new life filled with stability, possibility and love.

Megan credits that support with helping her build the foundation, tools and relationships that allowed her to heal and thrive. Twenty years later, she has returned to The Home on her terms, spearheading toy drives for our organization through her store's community relations efforts.

When collecting gifts, Megan is open about why she has chosen to give back. Colleagues and customers are moved by her experiences and courage. When they see her—a model of kindness, talent and success—they see thousands of other children deserving of the same opportunity. So they give.

Those efforts were just the beginning. Last spring, Megan shared her story on a larger stage in a video premiere at Voices & Visions, The Home's signature fundraiser.



Megan, President & CEO Lesli Suggs, and the Farretta family at Voices & Visions, 2026.



Megan's Big Wishes holiday drive, 2025

In shining a light on the journeys of foster care adoptees, Megan captured the hearts of everyone in The Fairmont Copley Plaza

ballroom. Her contribution helped to inspire a remarkable \$1.2 million raised for The Home.

That kind of impact goes beyond spreading holiday joy. It is the spark that lights transformative change to be felt for generations. •

Scan here to watch Megan's story.



COMING SOON!



BIG WISHES GIFT DRIVE

December 1 - December 22, 2026

Help us ensure that our youth have a gift to open at the holidays!

➞ Visit thehome.org/bigwishes to get involved.



GINGERBREAD HOUSE DECORATING CONTEST & FUNDRAISER

December 13, 2026

A sweet, family-friendly tradition of kids helping kids!

➞ Learn more at thehome.org/gingerbread.

HELP CHANGE A CHILD'S STORY

- ♥ **Join The Home's Monthly Giving Program.** Be there for a child through every step of their journey!
 - ♥ **Become a member of The Better, Brighter Futures Leadership Giving Society.** As a philanthropic leader, your deep commitment helps sustain and grow the critical services youth and families count on!
 - ♥ **Leave a lasting legacy.** Make a bequest to The Home through your will or trust to help build better, brighter futures.
- ➞ Visit thehome.org/personalgiving to learn more.