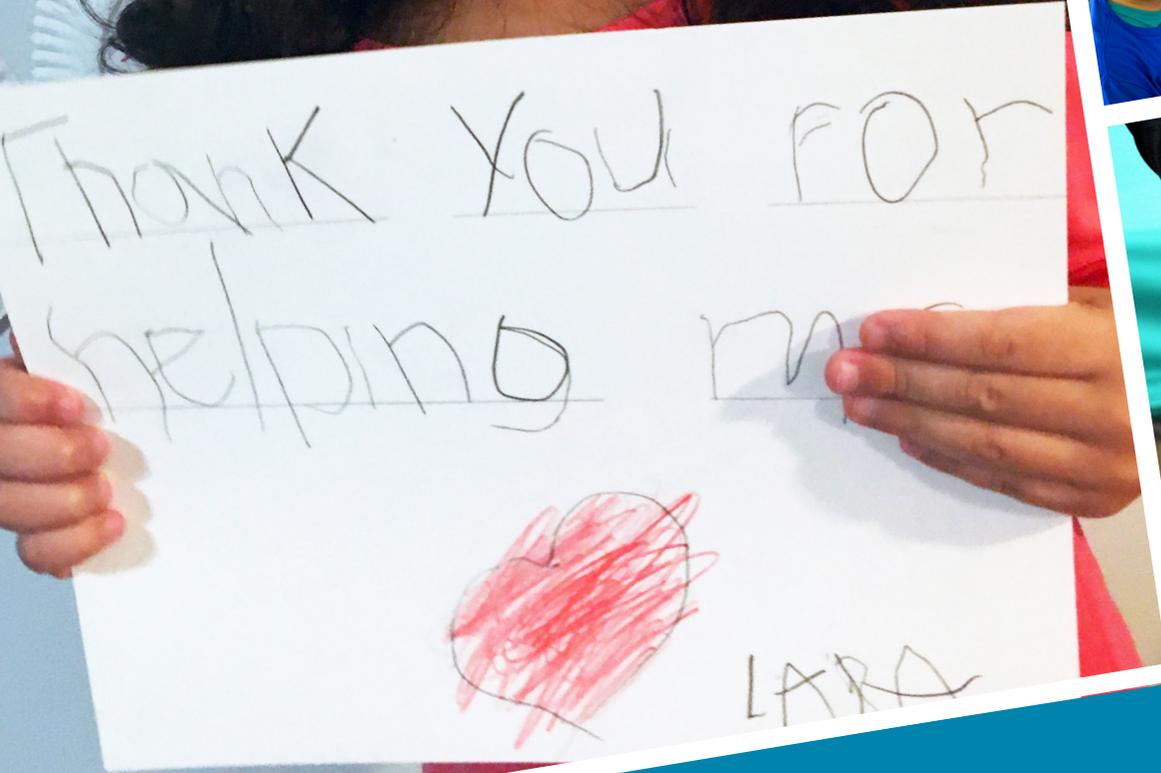




# Advocates

Caring Partners. Creative Solutions. Better Lives.



# President's

# Message



## MISSION

Advocates champions people who face developmental, mental health, or other life challenges. We partner with individuals and families to shape creative solutions to even the greatest obstacles. First, we listen. Then, together, we do what it takes to help people thrive.

Dear Friends,

Gratitude is such a simple word when my feelings are so profound. I am grateful for all of the people who make Advocates a special place:

- Staff who go above and beyond, every single day, to care for the individuals we support
- Wonderful neighbors who welcome people we support into the community
- Friends, funders, and partners who help make what we do possible
- Families who trust us to care for their loved ones
- Employers who help individuals gain job skills that improve independence

You are **all** committed to giving the individuals we support the best life imaginable. The life they deserve. You support them in the community, encourage their independence, and celebrate their successes. I am proud to be a part of this. And I am grateful to work with you.

Although this report celebrates 2019, we have experienced incredible challenges in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic is having a deep impact on our communities. Social isolation is contributing to depression, anxiety, and substance use. Families are struggling with caring for family members who are ill—and mourning those they have lost. Working parents have the challenge of balancing the demands of their jobs while trying to educate their children at home; others are experiencing loss of employment. These challenges will be with us for the coming months. It will be a difficult fall and winter.

But we will get through this. We always do. And we will be stronger after it passes. Thank you for your commitment to creating a stronger community. I would love to hear from you and see how you're doing. Please reach out anytime—[DGould@Advocates.org](mailto:DGould@Advocates.org) or (508) 628-6658.

Warmly,

*Diane Gould*

Diane Gould  
President and CEO



# STRATEGIC PLAN

In July 2019 Advocates launched our new four year Strategic Plan. Thank you to our Board of Directors, staff, people we support, families, healthcare experts, and community partners who helped develop and provide feedback on the plan. This document is dynamic and will be modified as needed with the changing times.

**Our vision** is to provide robust, culturally competent, integrated services to enhance the health, well-being, and quality of life of individuals and families affected by a broad range of physical, behavioral health, and developmental needs. We will grow to a size which ensures sustainability and be widely recognized as an influential thought leader and expert in the evolving health and human services environment. We will be a values-based, financially stable partner, provider, and employer of choice.

Our goals are:

## TALENT INVESTMENT

**We will be the employer of choice** with a well-trained, competitively compensated, highly engaged, culturally competent, and satisfied workforce, firmly grounded in the Advocates Way.



## ADVOCACY INFLUENCE & IMPACT

**As a thought leader and industry expert**, Advocates will advocate and partner to influence legislation, policy, and practice that support our mission and impact our service delivery, the people we support, and their communities.



## ENGAGED & EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES

**We will disrupt the stigma and lack of understanding** that accompany differences by minimizing social isolation through the creation of welcoming opportunities with community focused supports leading to an improved quality of life and ultimately creating a stronger community for all.



## STRATEGIC GROWTH

**Advocates will increase in size through fiscal year 2024** through continued expansion of current programming, merger, acquisition, philanthropy, and new business opportunities.



## ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS

**Advocates will build the capabilities and skills** necessary to achieve organizational excellence, optimize efficiencies, and meet growth targets. We will assess our current state of readiness, build a road map, and manage change in a deliberate, collaborative manner with a focus on ensuring high quality programming.



The reason for these goals is to **enhance the health, well-being, and quality of life for individuals and families**. These individuals and families are the reason we come to work each day. The reason we fight so hard. The reason we want to grow and thrive.

# WE ALL WANT TO BE ACCEPTED

Rebecca is a single mom of three. Riley, her oldest, is 16. His big brown eyes twinkle when he grins, and his smile lights up the room. He loves animals, zombies, and giving hugs. Riley has autism spectrum disorder and has attended Autism Alliance activities for more than 10 years.

"I was in crisis mode for so long," Rebecca said. "Then we went to Kite Day and I realized I wasn't alone. Other families understood me. They understood my kids."

The Autism Alliance, a program of Advocates, provides support, programs, and resources for families impacted by autism. Last year we received funding to train businesses to help families feel more welcome in the community.

"We are so excited about the relationships we've developed over the last two years," said Allison Daigle and Pam McKillop, Executive Co-Directors of the Autism Alliance. "We've trained staff at 16 local businesses, including the New England Aquarium, APEX Center, Burton's Grill and Bar, and Barnes & Noble. Now they understand that simple accommodations like dimming the lights, turning down the music, or offering 'quiet hours' makes a big difference for someone with autism. Simple gestures like these make families feel more welcome and included."

"Barnes & Noble is Riley's favorite place," Rebecca said. "Some of the events have therapy dogs and his face lights up when he sees them. Working with these dogs and going to stores and restaurants where staff understand our needs has really helped make Riley more comfortable."



The more that businesses understand autism, the better equipped they will be to support families. Educating the community is critical and we are excited to continue these trainings.

"We were in the checkout line at Walmart and Riley was hooting and swaying back and forth," Rebecca said. "People were staring. I was hurrying to leave and overheard a teenage girl sternly tell her friend to stop staring—that Riley had autism. Moments like that make me smile. They make me think that maybe some people are more sensitive and more understanding of Riley's needs."

The Autism Welcoming Initiative is funded by Becker Center for Advocacy at The Arc of Massachusetts and The Sudbury Foundation.

**“BARNES & NOBLE IS RILEY’S FAVORITE PLACE,”** *Rebecca said. “Some of the events have therapy dogs and his face lights up when he sees them. Working with these dogs and going to stores and restaurants where staff understand our needs has really helped make Riley more comfortable.”*



## I USE MY TRAUMA TO HELP OTHERS



I grew up in Roxbury," Ebony said. "My friends were in gangs. From age 8-17, I was sexually abused. For years I physically hurt myself, I ran away from home multiple times, and lived on the streets. Then I became a single mom in my early 20s."

Living through trauma can be debilitating for many. But Ebony used her trauma as motivation. She wanted to give her daughter the best life possible. She knew she needed to help herself first, but spent years fighting with therapists. Then one day she stopped and listened.

"I was shocked that what they suggested actually helped me," she said. "I was ready to commit. I realized I could use my trauma to help others."

Ebony took every training she could—Hearing Voices, Alternatives to Suicide, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, Emotional CPR, and more. She got a job

at Advocates as a Peer Specialist and now she helps people like her—people who experienced trauma and are struggling. As a Peer Specialist, Ebony helps others achieve their hopes, dreams, and goals—at their own pace.

"I remember when I had just started working in a respite home," Ebony said. "This one woman hadn't bathed in weeks. She had been sexually assaulted in a shower and was terrified. I knew she really wanted to shower again, but she just couldn't do it. She was petrified. I sat next to the woman on the couch, over a few days, and just listened. I didn't tell her what to do. I didn't tell her she had to shower. After a few days, I offered to stand in the bathroom, if and when she was ready to shower. The woman smiled, said she was ready, and we both cried when she turned on the water. It's moments like that I know I'm making a difference."

Ebony loves her job. She's not afraid of her past. She uses it to heal. The tattoo on her left arm exemplifies her motivation. "I'm proud of my scars for they give the testimonies I've faced, fought, and won."

## I WAS SO ANXIOUS—SO I ASKED FOR HELP

In 2013, Harriet was working as a guidance counselor and planning her retirement. But when her elderly mother's health decreased, Harriet was forced to quit her job and move in with her mother to provide round-the-clock care. It was overwhelming and not something she ever imagined doing.

"I felt guilty because I wasn't happy taking care of my mom," she said. "I was overwhelmed, frustrated, and couldn't take it anymore. One day I walked into the Advocates clinic in Framingham and told them I needed someone to talk to."

Harriet met with a Caregiver Support Specialist every week for a few months. She learned how to stay calm while caring for her mother. And she learned it was



important to take care of herself, too.

For a few years, Harriet was happy reading, painting, and going on walks. But earlier this year she became anxious and called Advocates again for help.

"My cat died, I had medical bills, and I was so upset with the turmoil everywhere," she said. "I was anxious, overwhelmed, and needed help."

"My new therapist is easy to talk to—she's so sweet and checks in on me. She's given me references for guided meditation, books to borrow from the library, and has truly helped me feel better."

Elder support services are funded in part by Avidia Bank Charitable Foundation, Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts, Foundation for MetroWest, John W. Boynton Trust, and MutualOne Foundation.



**MY NEW THERAPIST IS EASY TO TALK TO—*she's so sweet and checks in on me. She's given me references for guided meditation, books to borrow from the library, and has truly helped me feel better.***

# Celebrations & shoutouts!

## 2019 Donors

### \$250,000+

MetroWest Health Foundation \*

### \$25,000 - \$50,000

Anonymous (2)

Digital Federal Credit Union

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### \$10,000 - \$19,999

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Greater Worcester Community Foundation \*

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Cathy and Kevin Boyle (∞)

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Harvey Home Modifications

Sean (§) and Ali Huse

Thank You

"You were so helpful. I was so discouraged after trying therapist after therapist with no luck. Trying to find the best support for your kids and feeling like you're always coming up short is such a stressful situation... You took that stress away."

- Mother of 2 teenage girls

Maria Krokidas and Bruce Bullen (∞)

The Learning Center for the Deaf \*

Judith Leary

Keith and Tara Neal

Public Consulting Group

Reliant Medical Group

Supportive Living, Inc.

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### \$1,000 - \$2,499

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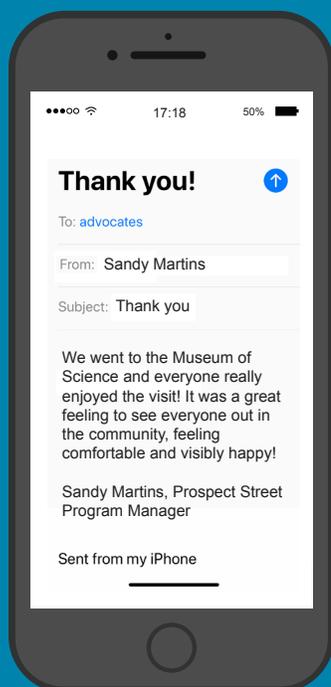
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Genoa Healthcare



\* denotes restricted gift (§) denotes board member (∞) denotes gift from family receiving services

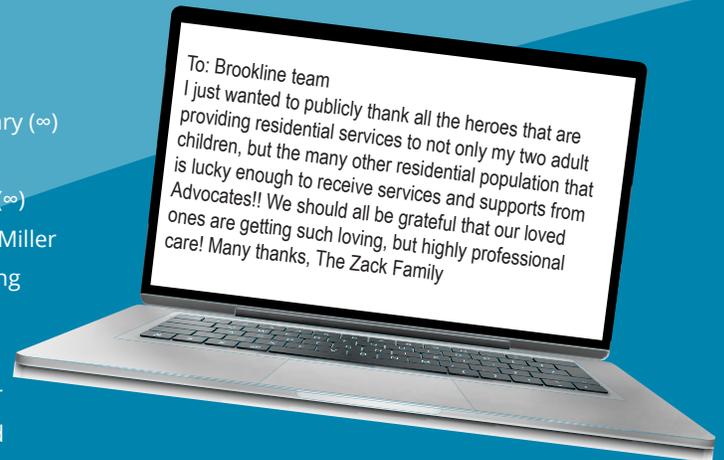


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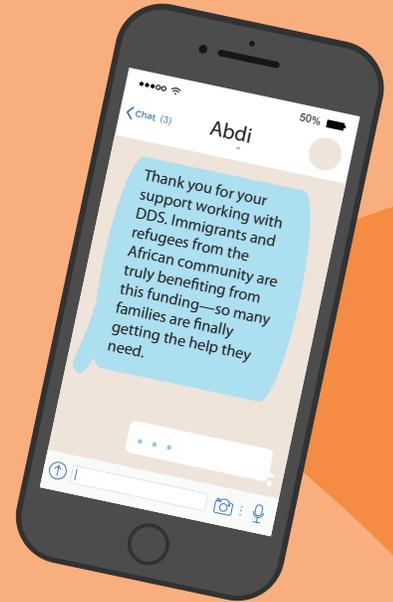
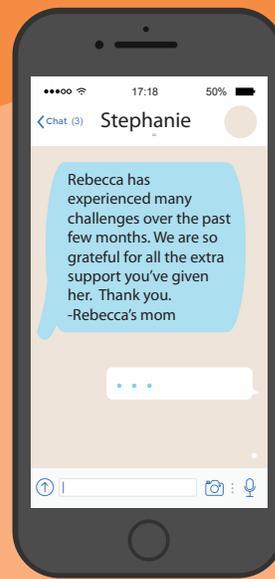


*Your generosity allows us to provide critical programs and services to thousands of children, adults, and families.*

To make a donation, please call (508) 628-6300 or go to [www.Advocates.org/Support](http://www.Advocates.org/Support)

## 2019 FUNDING PARTNERS

Ashland Police Department  
 Beacon Health Options  
 Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts  
 Boston Medical Center  
 Brandon School and Residential Treatment Center  
 Commonwealth Care Alliance  
 Community Bridges  
 Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center  
 Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
 Fallon Health  
 Framingham Community Development Department  
 Framingham Police Department  
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 Harvard Pilgrim Health Care  
 Marlborough Hospital  
 Marlborough Police Department  
 Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership  
 Mass. Commission for the Blind  
 Mass. Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
 Mass. Dept. of Children and Families  
 Mass. Dept. of Developmental Services  
 Mass. Dept. of Housing and Community Development  
 Mass. Dept. of Mental Health  
 Mass. Dept. of Public Health  
 Mass. League of Community Health Centers  
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 MassHealth  
 Medway Public Schools  
 MetroWest Medical Center  
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### Advocates Main Office

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[www.Advocates.org](http://www.Advocates.org)

Since February, the world as we know it has been turned upside down. But one thing has remained constant—the incredible dedication and perseverance of our staff. Thank you for going above and beyond to protect and support thousands of individuals and families. Here are just a few of the many creative ways you kept everyone happy, healthy, and having fun over the past few months.

- 1 | ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF** organized 20 car parades to 80 group homes as far north as Rockport and as far west as Paxton to cheer on the individuals who were social distancing at home and staff who kept them safe.
- 2 | LIFE SKILLS AND LEARNING CENTER** staff handed out Sensory Bags to help individuals stay busy and happy at home.
- 3 | OUR MARLBOROUGH OUTREACH TEAM** took 14 individuals on a social distanced field trip to a farm in Framingham—yee haw!

- 4 | THE AUTISM ALLIANCE** coordinated a drive-thru Zoofari at Southwick Zoo. More than 85 families enjoyed the sights and sounds of animals like giraffes, chimpanzees, and tigers from the comfort of their own car!
- 5 | THE SOUTH COASTAL FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER** kept everyone busy with virtual breakfast talks, mindfulness and meditation, art classes, dance parties, and fitness training all spring and summer.



## THANK YOU FOR BEING A FRIEND

None of us knew what to expect when COVID-19 hit. We watched other communities struggle, but didn't understand the true realities until we were in it. But despite the challenges, the outpouring of support we received has shown how strong we are and how much we care about each other.

**We are a strong community. We will get through this. We will do it together and we will be stronger because of it.**

**“**  
**thank you!**  
To those who donated masks, toilet paper, paper towels, and cleaning supplies  
**”**  
To those who called to check in on someone—**thank you**

To the foundations who gave us emergency funds—**thank you**

To those who grocery shopped for individuals at our group homes—**thank you**

**Thank you to the families and individuals we support for your perseverance during these difficult times**

To those who dropped off dinner for staff caring for sick individuals at our isolation homes—**thank you**

To those who donated to Advocates to help keep our programs going—**thank you**

# STEPPING UP AND SHARING STRENGTH

"I had Dial soap caked in my hair," said Hanifa. "My skin was dry and cracked from washing and sanitizing my hands constantly. I reeked of Lysol. I took my temperature multiple times a day and triple checked that I was wearing a gown, booties, face shield, N-95 mask, hair net, and gloves before walking through the doors at work. When I got home, I had to strip down at the door, shower, and use sanitizer again before I could hug my daughter. It was so emotional. But it was the right thing to do and I was happy to do it."

When the pandemic hit, Advocates opened two isolation homes to reduce the spread of the virus. Hanifa manages four group homes for individuals with developmental disabilities or brain injuries. When she heard about the isolation homes, she immediately volunteered. Hanifa knew that everyone living in this home tested positive for COVID-19—and that they were all very sick.

"It sounds silly, but I was the lucky one! I went home to my family every night. The other staff lived in the house for weeks at a time. They volunteered to quarantine away from their own families," said Hanifa.

Between March and July, Hanifa and her colleagues cared for 20 adults with developmental disabilities who were sick, scared, and away from their homes, housemates, and routine.

Staff cared for these individuals as they would have for their own families. One staff even sang and clapped for an individual before every meal, every dose of medicine, and every sip of water to help him relax enough to eat and drink.

"It was very emotional," Hanifa said. "We were all on call 24/7, providing hands on care to very sick people. There



was a tray full of supplies outside every room with a box of gloves, Lysol, hand sanitizer, a thermometer, blood pressure cuffs, a pulse oximeter, Tylenol, and other medication. It felt like we worked in a hospital."

"I spent a lot of time talking with families, which was really intense," Hanifa said. "Everyone was on edge. Families were so scared. They thought their loved one was sent here to die."

Before arriving at the house each morning, Hanifa called to see what she could bring to support her colleagues—sometimes someone wanted coffee, a breakfast sandwich, or groceries. Others wanted to go for a walk or take a shower after she arrived.

"Picking up comforting items was so simple and made a big difference," said Hanifa. "It was incredibly lonely for staff and the individuals living here. I did my best to make everyone as comfortable as possible and I couldn't have asked for a better team. It was incredible to work with people who chose to be here—who wanted to help and make a difference."

Advocates direct support staff continue to keep the individuals we support safe, happy, and healthy throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. They work in our group homes and wear masks and gloves all day. They rigorously clean the houses multiple times a day. And they continue to show up day after day. ***We are so grateful—thank you to each and every one of you.***