

THE PROVIDER

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Summer 2020

As campaign heats up, Kennedy and Markey commit to human services



Left: U.S. Rep. Joe Kennedy III delivers diapers to Square One President and CEO Joan Kagan during a recent visit to the organization's Springfield headquarters. Right: U.S. Sen. Ed Markey helps staff from Peabody-based Citizens Inn load food onto its Summer Eats lunch truck for local children.

Editor's note: With one of the nation's most high-profile Congressional primary challenges fast approaching a Sept. 1 election, the Providers' Council asked incumbent Sen. Edward Markey and his challenger, Rep. Joseph Kennedy III, to answer four questions about their plans to represent the human services sector as advocates for racial justice, improved salaries, additional COVID-19 aid and other federal reimbursements for Massachusetts' most vulnerable citizens.

We sent four questions, requesting their written answers in 150 words or less. We are printing their responses verbatim.

1. After the recent, brutal police-involved killings of George Floyd and other Black people, what steps should Massachusetts and our representatives in Congress take to end police violence, embrace social justice and promote racial equity in our communities?

Sen. Markey: This is a matter of values, and it is time we spend more on public health than punishment. We need to restructure our budgets away from simply policing Americans to building neighborhoods that are healthy, fair and equitable. We can start with banning the use of tear gas by law enforcement, and stop equipping police who are supposed to keep the peace with weapons of war.

The law makes it almost impossible for these victims of excessive force by a police officer to hold that officer accountable in a court of law. That must end. That's why I introduced legislation that would put an end to qualified immunity for police officers. It's time to end this racially and legally inequitable failing and give justice to victims and their families.

We can shift funding from law enforcement and toward more nurses and social workers in our neighborhoods who can respond to challenges such as

homelessness and opioid overdoses. Let's fund healing, not harming; education not incarceration.

Rep. Kennedy: Our leaders must do more than say Black Lives Matter. We must take immediate action to end police violence against Black Americans, dismantle systemic racism, and create an anti-racist society. Our first steps have to include ending qualified immunity, making it easier to investigate and prosecute civil rights violations, and ending the militarization of police departments. We have to listen to the voices calling on policymakers to divert overinvestments in policing to underfunded yet critical services, like housing, mental health and substance use treatment, and education. We have to recognize that structural racism is embedded into the fabric of all of our policies. We must work to reimagine and recreate more equitable systems across our society -- from economic op-

Q&A, see page 7

Council, members support BLM movement

The past two months - sparked by the violent May 25 death of George Floyd during a Minneapolis police stop — have brought sweeping, nationwide calls for immediate racial justice reform.

In support of these values, the Providers' Council took several actions, including participation in #Blackout Tuesday on June 2, where the office ceased regular business operations at noon and staff spent the remainder of the workday contributing to efforts to support racial justice, awareness and peace.

"As a human services sector, we know quite well about justice and equality. We fight for it every day for those seeking our support. But we have to speak it, practice it and live it for racial equity and justice. The work for social justice isn't the work for just brown and black people — it is, as author and activist James Baldwin said, "your progress." The Council has been helping to broaden understanding on race equity and helping us stay woke... Join us in becoming woke and then activate to make change," wrote Council president and CEO Michael Weekes, in a statement to membership.

As part of continued efforts to support communities of color, the Council also commemorated Juneteenth on BLM, see page 6

Council tees up virtual Convention & Expo for four days in October

Plans are underway for the Providers' Council's upcoming 45th Annual Convention & Expo: *SpeakUp4Equity*.

This will be an online event, beginning Oct. 27, and as in previous years will offer extensive opportunities to network, meet exhibitors and learn from thought leaders in the human services sector in Massachusetts and nationwide.

A wide variety of 90-minute workshops focusing on learning tracks such as clinical and direct care, executive leadership, human resources; personal growth and wellness, administration and finance, and supervision and management will be delivered online between October 27-30, 2020.

Issues of diversity, equity and inclusion will be a programmatic theme CONVENTION, see page 6

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With a grant from the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Complete Count Grant Program, the Human Services Providers Charitable Foundation hosted an educational webinar; gave mini-grants to human services organizations; and launched an awareness campaign with posters, postcards, targeted ads; and billboards. The above billboard can be seen on I-90 near Springfield and Route 146 near Worcester. Learn more about the U.S. Census at my2020census.gov.



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Cardinal Cushing Centers names Markowitz president and CEO

Cardinal Cushing Centers has appointed Michelle Markowitz as its new president and CEO.

Markowitz has 20 years of service to Hanover-based Cardinal Cushing Centers, and more than a decade serving on its senior leadership team, serving more than 600 individuals with developmental disabilities.



Michelle Markowitz

She began her tenure at Cushing as a volunteer and held a variety of positions within the organization, including the role of chief operating officer, before taking over as Interim President and CEO in January.

"We cannot envision Cardinal Cushing Centers without Michelle Markowitz at the helm," said Jeanine Mount, co-chair of Cushing's Board of Directors. "During her brief tenure as Interim CEO, she has made an incredible impact on the Cushing Community. Steadfast, resolute in the face of adversity, dedicated, compassionate, and understanding – she is exactly who we need to help us navigate the uncertain times of managing the impact of COVID-19 and beyond."

Alan Klein named new Turning Point president and CEO

Turning Point, Inc. has appointed Alan J. Klein as its new president and CEO. Klein spent a combined 36 years at Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps, where his roles ranged from program director to president of the organization.



Alan Klein

During a brief respite from RFK, he served as deputy assistant commissioner for the Massachusetts Depart-

ment of Youth Services. Steve Deorocki, chairman of the board of Turning Point, Inc. said, "We are very pleased to have Alan leading the TPI organization. With his experience and management abilities he will positively impact our staff and the lives of all our individuals at Turning Point. Under Alan's direction we will be better positioned to expand our services in concert with DDS and focus on growing our Turning 22 Program."

Founded in Newburyport, Massachusetts in 1971, Turning Point is serves 150 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in 36 homes located in 12 communities across the Merrimack Valley and North Shore.

Bay Cove enters strategic partnership with Growthways, Inc.

Bay Cove Human Services has entered a new strategic partnership with Growthways, a nonprofit with close to four decades of experience providing high-quality services to individuals with developmental disabilities. Effective July 1, the organizations will be collaborating in an effort to increase and expand long term support services to men and women in the greater Brockton area.

"We are honored to be partnering with such a highly regarded organization, and very excited to work with the communities of Brockton and the surrounding area," said Bay Cove President and CEO Bill Sprague. "Both Growthways and Bay Cove have been offering high quality programs for decades, and by joining together, we will be in an even stronger position to provide the best possible services to the people who need them, now and in the years ahead."

Marty Berliner, President and CEO of Growthways, said of the new partnership, "As we look to the future of

'Say their names' mural unveiled in Springfield



MLK Family Services of Springfield in June unveiled a new mural on its community center building to honor victims of police brutality. The permanent art installation on an outside wall of the building contains dozens of names of people of color killed by police in the past year, organizers said.

services for the individuals we support, it is clear that we will continue to see shifts in approaches to program design and service delivery. Partnering through affiliations and strategic relationships will be increasingly important, and in Bay Cove, Growthways has a partner who shares our core values, and has the same dedication to high quality community services for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities."

Burke appointed new CFO of The Key Program

David Burke has been hired as the new chief financial officer of The Key Program, Inc.

Before joining the Framingham-based organization that serves youth and families involved with the juvenile justice, child welfare, mental health and educational systems, Burke held chief financial leadership posts at Duffy Heath Center in Hyannis, Nantucket Cottage Hospital and Outer Cape Health Services.



David Burke

He brings expertise not only in the health arena but also in the broader social service field to Key, which serves over 850 youth and families each day throughout Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Jeffries named executive director of King Boston

Imari Paris Jeffries, a Providers' Council board member, has been appointed executive director of King Boston, a privately-funded effort to create a new memorial and programs honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King in Boston.

Paris Jeffries, who most recently was executive director of Parenting Journey and serves as a University of Massachusetts system trustee, will replace Marie St. Fleur, a former state representative who helmed the organization.



Imari Paris Jeffries

"Marie has been a big sister, friend, mentor and leader for many of us, and I look forward to continuing the work and moving this project from vision to action both on the Common and in Roxbury, as we work to eliminate the social and economic injustices that have once again been made so visible in the COVID-19 pandemic and the killing of George Floyd," Paris Jeffries said.

Construction of the Boston Common memorial is expected to begin this summer.

WBJ: Jordan in Power 50 for 2020

Several nonprofit leaders were recently named among the 50 most pow-

erful leaders in central Massachusetts, people who wield influence in the region's economy, according to the Worcester Business Journal's annual Power 50 issue. Among those making the list was Dr. David A. Jordan, president, **Seven Hills Foundation**.

TBF awards grants to METCO and Victory Programs

The Boston Foundation announced it awarded \$1.4 million in general operating support grants to 48 area nonprofit organizations to aid their continuing response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Many of the grants went to nonprofits serving immigrants, communities of color, and seniors, with the majority going to organizations with annual budgets under \$5 million. Among those receiving grants for \$25,000 each from TBF's COVID-19 Response Fund, were council members **METCO, Inc.** and **Victory Programs**. TBF also announced general operating support grants to Council member **Old Colony YMCA**, which received a \$50,000 grant.

"Communities of color have borne a disproportionate part of the burden from the COVID-19 pandemic to date, both in health and economic terms," said Orlando Watkins, TBF vice president for programs. "The economy may be beginning to open up, but we know that the level of need in these communities around the region continues to grow, and locally-led, community-based organizations must be at the center of meeting those needs."

Advocates of Framingham awarded BCBS aid to fight COVID-19 Crisis

The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation last week announced it awarded nearly \$300,000 in grants to 20 nonprofits across Massachusetts to support their efforts to expand and adapt operations in response to the coronavirus crisis.

The Foundation said 10 of the grants, for \$25,000 each were awarded to nonprofits that predominantly serve people of color, rural communities, people experiencing homelessness, and other at-risk populations. The grants will support increased staffing needs, investments in IT infrastructure to abide by physical distancing guidelines, and changes in programs necessitated by the pandemic.

Council member **Advocates, Inc.** of Framingham was one of the awardees, receiving funding to address behavioral health access inequities for the Latinx population by investing in telehealth infrastructure and equipment for six newly hired bilingual clinicians and two medical assistants.

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PROVIDER PROFILES

SHED CHILDREN'S CAMPUS

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About the Agency

SHED Children's Campus is an independent, nationally recognized nonprofit offering Reggio Emilia inspired programs for children and youth ages 2.5 to 15 years.

Since its founding, SHED has been tightly connected with both the Andover Public Schools and the Andover Massachusetts Community. SHED began as a town program at Andover's Shawsheen Elementary School, first offering Kindergarten and later after-school care programs.

In 1986, SHED incorporated as a self-sustaining nonprofit, overseen by a board of directors, and licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. By 1991, it was serving a growing population with programs geared for kindergarten to fifth grade.

Today, the program has an enrollment of more than 400 children and has grown to include pre-school, Kindergarten, before-and-after-school programs, nature immersion programs and summer programs on the grounds of Phillips Academy.

SHED's team of five directors and 23 staff members are hardworking, caring and dedicated individuals that help make the organization and programs so unique.

Their mission is centered on the belief that children deserve the right to explore and embrace their childhood.

What makes SHED stand out is the agency's dedication to five foundational pillars: the Reggio Emilia philosophy, mindfulness, gardening, nature and community.

Outdoor learning helps children thrive



SHED staffers enjoy preparing outside space for a return to nature-based curriculum.



When SHED is faced with a challenge, it falls back on its roots – namely the foundation of the child-centered Reggio Emilia teaching philosophy, which offers a set of guidelines that help create an environment in which all children can thrive during such a crucial time in their development. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and an interruption of services, SHED went to children via technology as they could not physically come to SHED.

Almost immediately, the team pivoted to remote learning. They created an online platform via Zoom and held staff meetings, classroom meetings, group meetings and one-on-one when needed.

Facebook allowed teachers to go live daily. A schedule of activities included story time, science experiments, cooking lessons, dance, games and a weekly meditation that was run by a staff member. Finding balance and integrating mindfulness is how SHED teaches children to approach their environment.

Over the past few months, the agency has collaborated with its community to stay connected. A local bookstore donated books to be read, a local photographer donated her time for a group photograph. SHED provided art and sewing kits for

the community kids to pick up and worked with local publications to help keep their profile elevated in the community.

Nature-based learning is an integral part of SHED's curriculum and is an essential part of what makes SHED shine. Most studies agree that kids who play outside are smarter, happier, more attentive and less anxious than kids who spend more time indoors.

SHED Children's Campus gives children two acres of nature to enjoy all year. Outside areas are where students and staff will spend most of their time this summer. The program offers 15 organic gardens in which local children can farm, play and learn.

Each dedicated area of the campus has something special to offer, and staff members have been hard at work creating spaces for the kids upon their return.

In other years, at the end of each summer classes traditionally harvest gardens and offer a farmers market for local families.

The hope is that this can continue again this year, as that the SHED's garden's salsa and pickles are highly popular.

Executive Director

Linda Shottes Bouchard began her career at SHED Children's Campus in 1992. She grew from her original role as school age coordinator to school age director and then to her current role as executive director.



Linda Shottes Bouchard

Bouchard has worked alongside her staff to grow this organization from a grassroots program to a thriving campus that serves over 400 families.

Bouchard's experience at Massachusetts Liberal Arts College, where she received a degree in sociology, gave her the foundation and skills for her life's work of developing best practices for children and families.

Her curiosity about the needs of children and families inspired conversations with her teammates to further programming at SHED Children's Campus focusing on the foundational pillars of the Reggio Emilia philosophy, mindfulness, organic gardening, community and nature.

Bouchard brings a passion and playful spirit to her leadership role at SHED. She encourages her staff to continue learning and growing and constantly question the world around them and challenge the status quo. Her staff likes to say that SHED's foundational pillars are alive inside Bouchard.

SALUTING THE CARING FORCE

Dixon is a STARR to young people

Jennifer Dixon, a program director at Gandara Center's Maple Short Term Assessment Rapid Reunification (STARR) program, has been with the agency for three years. Maple STARR is a 15-bed co-ed adolescent program for youth who have trauma, behavioral and mental health issues.

Dixon oversees daily operations at the Springfield-based program, working to maintain a safe and therapeutic environment for young people. She is also responsible for coordinating with staff and families to ensure youth receive treatment that enables them to transition to their next placement, which may be home, with kin, foster care or long-term treatment.

Dixon has worked in human services for more than 15 years and holds two Master's degrees; one in public administration and one in education with a focus on mental health counseling. She also holds a post-Master's Certificate in Trauma Informed Practice with Children and Adolescents.

Her initial start in the sector was working with adults with mental illness and in residential treatment programs for youth. She worked for nine years at

a local comprehensive foster care agency and also as a state social worker and as a clinician for crisis services and provided in-home family therapy.

"I have always enjoyed helping others and have a passion for working with at-risk youth and families to help them succeed," Dixon said. "I feel like I can help people see their own strengths."

"Jen is multifaceted and seeks out challenges in the workplace," said Kim Ritter, director of community services for Gandara Center. "She has a nice calm demeanor and goes above and beyond to provide trauma-informed services to youth and their families. Many families attribute accomplishing their goals to her."

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, Dixon has gone above and beyond working day-to-day to maintain the quality of care at her program. This includes filling shifts, working after hours and weekends when needed and transporting sick youth to get tested for the virus. Even while her assistant director, a supervisor and a number of other staff members were out, Dixon has managed to keep things running smoothly.



Jennifer Dixon of Gandara Center's STARR program inspires families.



Mother on a mission to help

Aretha Mauge, an outreach coordinator for Boston-based Mothers for Justice and Equality, is an example of resiliency and courage. She lost her 16-year-old son Devonte to street violence in 2008 when he was stabbed while on an MBTA bus. She struggled for many years with her grief and came to MJE for support with her mother, Eileen, in 2011. Mauge knew her remaining daughter needed her to be strong to lift her up through this awful loss.

MJE's mission is to end neighborhood violence by empowering mothers and youth to challenge the normalization of violence and become effective catalysts for change in their homes, schools and communities. By reclaiming the identity of their communities, they restore a sense of hope and purpose for children, youth and adults. MJE was founded in 2010 by mothers who had lost children to violence and serves residents of Roxbury, Mattapan, Dorchester and surrounding communities – neighborhoods facing the highest rates of community violence and home to the lowest-income families.

When Mauge came to MJE, she was suffering from deep trauma and grief.

Together with her mother, she attended MJE programs, support groups and participated in numerous training opportunities. Mauge found fulfillment through the work of supporting other women in recovery from trauma and transitioned back into the workforce as an MJE peer leader mentoring new participants.

Today, Mauge supports MJE's community outreach with new partners and recruiting new participants. During the COVID-19 crisis, she has been an instrumental member of the MJE team, keeping in close contact with clients in need through one-on-one video calls

providing continued support and referrals, and partnering with other agencies to help clients in crisis.

An advocate for mothers who have lost children to community violence and a parent advisor on Boston Public Health caregivers council, Mauge also leads MJE's work on the Mayor's Neighborhood Trauma Team. She is the proud mother of Toni, who has autism and recently graduated from high school with plans to attend MassArt and Ben Franklin Institute of Technology this fall.



From right to left, Eileen Patterson, Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, Aretha Mauge and Lola Alexander of MJE.

EDITORIAL



Michael Weekes
President / Publisher

The time is always right to do what is right

As an African American who bore witness to America's struggle for civil rights in the 60's, we are still not much further in our ascent for racial justice.

America asserts it takes "time." But as the brilliant author and activist James Baldwin so eloquently and simply asked white America, "How much time do you want for your progress?"

Physicists have long debated time and its relative dimensions. Aristotle asserted that "time is the most unknown of all unknown things." For many of us, though, time is intrinsically linked to change - or lack thereof. It serves to guide our movements, our progress and our beings in humanity.

Time is a measurement that can help us note change. We assume that time may be infinite, but our use of it and its meaning can, for individuals, seem as insignificant and un-noteworthy - unless it is monumental change recognized by many. This was evident on May 25, 2020 in Minneapolis, Minn. when George Floyd, an African American, senselessly suffered as a white 19-year police veteran, Derek Chauvin, thrust his knee and his nearly 200 pounds on Mr. Floyd's neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds. In the last two minutes, it was recorded he had no discernable pulse. Many of us witnessed the video as life ebbed from Mr. Floyd's body. Will this time a black man is killed by police be insignificant too?

It is too early to fully recognize the significance of these moments. While people of all races and color were horrified by the abject perversity inflicted on Mr. Floyd as he called out for his mother and children, while he gasped repeatedly, "I can't breathe", will real change occur after this moment of time?

Many in our nation - strike that - in our world are hoping, praying, wishing, marching, protesting and demanding for an advent of anti-racism to create a change in the dominant culture where black people are treated fairly, equally, and no longer subject to oppression and police terror.

Many silent and asleep voices are now demanding that laws, policies and procedures be reformed and true justice, at the very least, be instilled in this nation which declares in its doctrine of independence that "all men are created equal... with certain unalienable rights... life, liberty and the pur-

suit of happiness." is realized? Will this be the "right" time that many of us have advocated, fought, marched, bent a knee, supported and many others have died for? What will time tell about this moment in our history? Will it become a movement?

For many African Americans, we cannot wait for another so-called "right" time. "Right time" has come and passed through many generations in America for over 400 years, when the first ship carrying enslaved Africans arrived on America's shores in 1619.

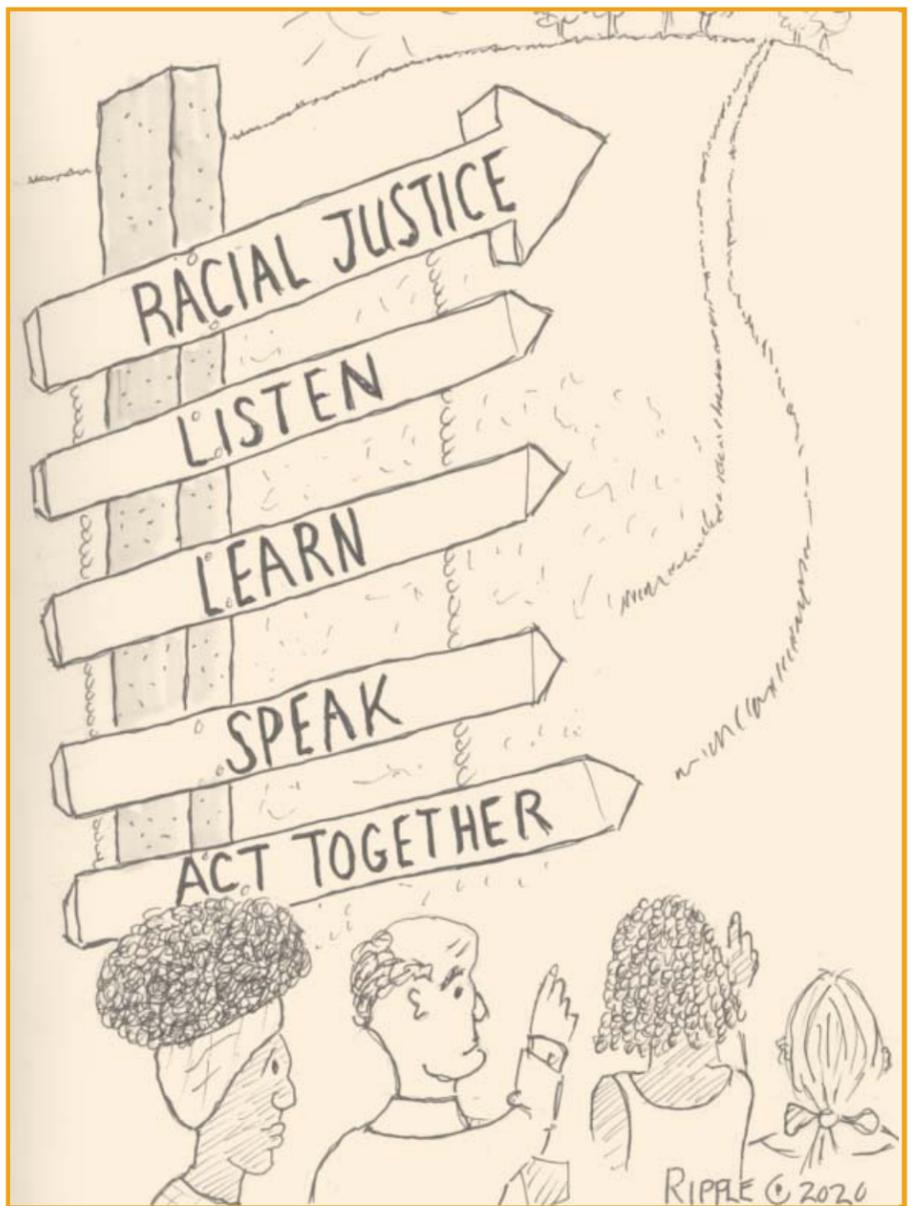
We've seen the time pass recently as captured in our Council's Call to Action, "... we witnessed the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery being gunned down on a daily jog, Breonna Taylor shot eight times by police in her home, and Sean Reed and Rayshard Brooks other unarmed men, shot by police. So was 13-year-old Antwon Rose, Stephon Clark, Tamir Rice, Philander Castile, Michael Brown and the list is long, un-nerving and unacceptable".

Let us not forget Sandra Bland, found hanged in a Texas jail. She was arrested for failing to signal a lane change. Botham Jean was eating ice cream and shot, without warning, in his apartment by a police officer who thought it was her apartment. Also violinist and massage therapist Elijah McClain was walking home from purchasing iced tea and was considered "suspicious" - he was put into a police chokehold and died three days later in intensive care. The list goes on and on... all marking time - a time that is long overdue for real change.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. professed "The time is always right to do what is right." This we know to be the indisputable truth. Our Call to Action is for all in human services to assume their leadership position and achieve racial justice **now**.

Please do not wait for the second coming of Dorothy Height, Dr. King, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X or others to lead the way. Nor expect that the work is for Black folks to do. America needs those with white privilege to use it effectively toward achieving racial justice. Listen, learn, speak up and act out.

Right now, the time is to lead from your seat if you have too. Get informed, woke and engaged. We know differently than Aristotle - the time for change is known and this is the right time.



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Looking through the mask

By Sandra McCroom and Andy Pond

On Monday, May 25, 2020 the world witnessed the cruel, inhumane and brutal death of 46-year old George Floyd. Sadly, Mr. Floyd's death is the latest of countless other unarmed African Americans whose lives were taken at the hands of those who hate and seek to divide and destroy the human right to enjoy peace of mind, civility and equal opportunity.

The eight-minute and 46-second-long execution of George Floyd unleashed a deep guttural anguish, not just in the Black community, but across humanity, sparking protests around the world. The determination to be heard and to demand justice and recognition that Black Lives do matter superseded the risk of becoming ill with the coronavirus. In fact, we are reminded that this nation's original sin — racism — has been and continues to be the most pervasive epidemic in our American story.

Providers' Council President and CEO Michael Weekes was intentional when he asked the two of us to co-chair the Council's Race, Diversity and Inclusion (RDI) Committee some four years ago. One of us is a Black woman who has experienced the cumulative weight of racism. She is part of a proud history of multi-generational civil rights activists steeped in the struggle and success gained against the white supremacist foundations of this country.

The other is a white man who has had to listen, to learn, and face up to his own privilege—and commit to do his part to heal the moral injury to our entire society that those racist structures have inflicted. Black people must not bear the burden of fighting racism alone, and white people cannot advocate effectively without being equal partners with people of color. The conversations between us, and among our colleagues at the Council, have sometimes been difficult, but have always been productive. It is a gift to shoulder the work together, learn from one another and create spaces to advance racial justice. Most importantly, we see hopeful signs that a growing share of people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds are ready to join us—and translate sympathy into action!

The COVID-19 epidemic brought the impact of structural racism into sharper focus. People of color are disproportionately impacted by the inequities of poverty, health disparities, poor educational systems, generational trauma, a biased criminal justice system and community violence. Com-

bined with undeniable video evidence of race-based violence, how could anyone question or not understand the hurt, anger and disappointment displayed in the streets across this country and around the world? We all have to look through the mask — not just the one protecting us from COVID, but the mask society uses to cover up institutional racism, inequality, injustice and even murder.

In February 1968, sanitation workers in Memphis went on strike. They marched with simple, yet powerful, signs that read: "I am a man" demanding the respect for their humanity. Today, communities of color demand that we all, "Say their names: Emmet Till, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Trevon Martin, Tamir Rice, Atatiana Jefferson..." and so many more. Saying their names humanizes these victims whom even in death, have to justify their right to live.

In the midst the uneasiness of the historical times in which we are living, we want you to recognize that as member of this frontline sector, you are the solution. You are doing the work. Be encouraged that while many are just now waking up to the prolonged injustices — you and your organizations are and have been doing the work of lifting up the humanity and dignity of poor, vulnerable, abused and overlooked people. This is the work of justice. Your talent, leadership and advocacy is what this moment demands.

As co-chairs of the RDI Committee, we want to lift you up and yet also challenge and push you to intentionally and continually look through the lens of racial justice, equal justice and equity in virtually every decision you make as nonprofit leaders, managers, and direct service workers.

Finally, please know that your work is part of the larger struggle for social justice. That serving our communities is serving the greater good. We stand—and act—in solidarity with the most vulnerable individuals impacted by this COVID-19 pandemic, and by the related epidemic of racism.

We wish all of you—and our extended community—the peace and safety that we all deserve in these troubled times.

Sandra McCroom, president and executive director of Children's Services of Roxbury, and Andy Pond, president of Justice Resource Initiative, are the co-chairs of the Providers' Council committee on Race, Diversity and Inclusion.

Racist systems must be dismantled

By Richard Johnson

New North Citizens' Council, Inc. has been a provider of essential services for 46 years in the greater Springfield area. In that time we have been witness to many turbulent times and challenging situations, some of which mirror events of the present, such as the march led by agency founder Barbara Rivera from Mason Square to the Department of Transitional Assistance on Byers Street in demand of equitable access to public assistance for Latino and African American mothers and families.

We worked with many residents adversely impacted by the killing of community icon, youth coach and mentor Booker Washington after an altercation with the Springfield Police Department. Then and now, these conditions exist because structural and patriarchal institutions which are often rooted in systemic racism and implicit biases are allowed to flourish unchecked. These entities failed time and again because they are fatally flawed.

We have advocated on behalf of many who have faced discrimination in housing, employment and even exercising the basic right afforded every citizen to gather together in public spaces free of speculative assumptions of illicit contemplations and or posing an inherent danger to others.

NNCC has maintained a constant presence in the North End as well as the Mason Square sections of the city. As a multi-service agency, we have been uniquely positioned to be intimately aware of many of the achievements and barriers Black and Latino residents have faced along the way.

Scores of families work through unconscionable layers of racism and systemic oppression while educating their children in a public school district where the majority of the administrators and teachers reside outside of it.

Many of these teachers are very good and embrace the opportunity to educate our children. There are also a large number who openly demonstrate their inherent privilege and show disdain for the district and its children, but happily take the money paid by the district to contribute to the economy of the communities in which they reside in. In addition, their composition neither reflects the community nor possess the cultural humility to effectively prepare students of color to become better positioned to successfully partic-

ipate in every field of endeavor.

Many find that after preparing themselves diligently to matriculate upward within the institution and organization, they are still denied opportunities for advancement. Yet again, this speaks to the generational realities of systemic oppression. One need only look at the top five employers in the Valley and count the number of African American or Latino persons in senior leadership positions.

As we look boldly and honestly at inequities and racism, one simply cannot justify systems that are established in ways that structurally disadvantage African Americans and Latinos over white persons or those of other backgrounds. Systems and legislation that purposefully demonizes black and brown men and criminalize youth to populate prisons must be addressed through restorative justice. The mass incarceration and disenfranchisement of a generation of black and brown families.

In comparison to the crack cocaine epidemic decades earlier, the current opioid epidemic has resulted in an outpouring of empathy and enormous levels of funding from every level of government. There are two obvious differences in the approach to these epidemics: the level of sympathy and addictions designation as a disease, the number of white people impacted, their subsequent designation as victims and the creation of treatment facilities. In contrast, the crack epidemic was characterized by legislators and pundits who used every derogatory reference imaginable to dehumanize those most identified as crack addicts, offering no sympathy or treatment. It also desensitizes the public, as images of black and brown crack addicts were used to terrorize white America and incarcerate scores of individuals with outrageously long sentences.

All of these things, and more, contribute to the current demand for social justice. A central question we must face is: Do we have the will to move beyond the obligatory submission of facts as sufficient to acknowledge existing institutionalize, systemic and structural racism and begin the process of deliberately dismantling systems towards that end?

Richard Johnson is the director of health and prevention services for the Springfield-based New North Citizens Council.

School integration: The path to an equitable future

By Milly Arbaje-Thomas

Boston's streets, packed with people of all ages, carrying signs and shouting demands for equality. A movement led by Black women and men, inspiring diverse crowds, including white people from wealthy suburbs. Policy changes long dismissed by the establishment as too radical, suddenly on the threshold of reality.

This is today's world. It was also the world in the mid-1960s, when the movement to desegregate Boston's schools reached a critical mass. The grassroots organizers of the civil rights era achieved ground-breaking change in Massachusetts: They got the state legislature to pass the Racial Imbalance Act of 1965; they created a community-based busing program within the city called Operation Exodus; and they formed a groundbreaking coalition called the Metropolitan Coun-

cil of Educational Opportunity (METCO), which brought suburban white students and urban students of color together, across district lines, to share the most richly appointed classrooms.

For 54 years, with the support of taxpayers and legislators across the state, METCO has demonstrated that voluntary school integration is possible and effective. Multiple studies have shown that METCO's students of color graduate from their rigorous suburban high schools at the same near-universal rate as their white peers, going on to higher education and varied careers in all fields. As we like to put it, "METCO works."

Furthermore, we know that nobody should be educated in isolation. Our learning environment shapes our values and beliefs, and building relationships with other children who are different is a powerful way to inoculate against bias. This puts school integration,

and METCO, in the center of the solution to dismantle racism in America.

But what do we mean by school integration? Is it just sitting children of different races next to one another? No. True integration comes when schools use this physical proximity to open up a deeper transformation. True integration means that students of color are fully accepted, welcomed, included, and reflected in all the materials and norms that make learning possible. Teachers must be diverse and culturally responsive. Discipline practices must be equitable. Curriculum must reflect the diversity of our nation — and the painful truths of our history.

These changes, too, are familiar: they are the same transformations that have been requested by METCO every decade. In fact, they are virtually the same demands that Ruth Batson, chair of the education committee of the

Boston NAACP, listed for Louise Day Hicks and the Boston School Committee in 1963.

It was in the face of Boston's denial that Batson partnered with suburbs to launch the METCO experiment. But from the start, she knew that just signing up to participate was a shallow commitment without radical institutional change. "Business as usual' as a way of life must be totally discredited," she wrote. Let us heed her words. I ask the leaders of the 33 communities in Massachusetts where METCO exists to lead the way.

Abandon "business as usual." Use the power you have, and the legacy you inherit, to redefine how your school community raises the next generation of our youth. Let us fulfill the promise of the movement that our forebears began, compelled by the historic crisis of today. You can't just say you do school integration. You need to do school in-

tegration. Hold yourselves, your community, your staff and your suburban students and their families accountable to make this society a more welcoming and inclusive place to live and thrive.

Only then can students of color reach their full potential to learn, released from the burdens of exclusion and tokenism. Only then can white students grow up to be compassionate and accepting human beings, understanding that differences are to be valued and that there is beauty in all human beings. When "METCO works" on the difficult — but essential task — of true integration, we are enabling future generations to break from the centuries-long cycle of racism, bigotry, bias, stereotypes and discrimination.

Milly Arbaje-Thomas, MSW, is president and CEO of METCO, Inc.

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BLM: Providers must act on racial justice issues

Continued from Page 1

June 19 — an annual holiday commemorating the end of slavery — by supporting local, black-owned businesses and purchasing goods and services.

The Council's Race, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, co-chaired by Sandra McCroom and Andy Pond, also issued a call to action on racial justice for all those in the human services sector. The full call to action is available on the Council's website.

In the call, to committee asks human services providers to: educate themselves, their staff and communities on systemic inequity and racial oppression; develop an organizational strategy for combatting systemic racism and oppression; institute a diversity, equity and inclusion committee to discuss issues, press for change and

advance the efforts of your organization on racial equity; support the efforts of staff, clients, consumers and communities in advocating for their rights and racial justice; and work to end all systems of oppression within their communities.

(A commentary from McCroom and Pond, "Through the Mask," runs on page 5 of this month's Provider.)

The RDI Committee has also collected dozens of statements and calls to action on racial justice from across the membership.

The Council has also compiled the statements of more than two dozen members and a list of black-owned businesses and resources to support racial justice on our website's Race, Diversity and Inclusion section at www.providers.org.

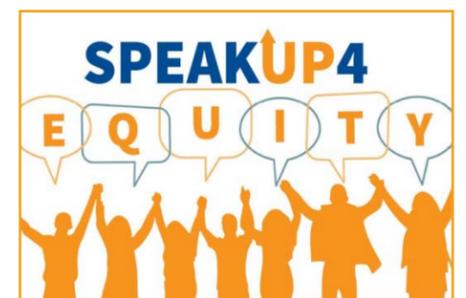
CONVENTION: Annual event themes focus on diversity, equity

Continued from Page 1

throughout the four-day event.

The 2020 Awards of Excellence for individuals who have made a difference to the sector will be presented. Member entries from the Council's *Broadcast Your Love of Human Services* photo campaign will also be featured.

More details on speakers, exhibitors and workshops are coming soon, along with registration information.



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Q&A: Markey/Kennedy on supporting human services

Continued from Page 1

portunity to voting rights, health care to education, and housing to criminal justice. That process must be led by BIPOC voices that have for too long been locked out and left behind.

2. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all Massachusetts residents, and community-based human services nonprofits have certainly been impacted. What items have you championed on Capitol Hill to try to help human services and other nonprofits in the Commonwealth as they resume business operations and work to restart their programs?

Sen. Markey: In Congress, my colleagues and I are fighting to ensure that there is adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) for everyone returning to work, especially educators, nurses, and home health aides among others. I've called for clear guidance for these frontline workers to ensure that they have appropriate access to PPE as they return.

I have also called for \$310 billion in additional lending authority with Paycheck Protection Program to expand loan access to more small businesses and nonprofits. This plan includes \$60 billion set-aside for small and mid-sized banks and credit unions, as well as community-based banks to guarantee that small community businesses and service providers can access desperately needed funding.

Rep. Kennedy: Community-based human services nonprofits have been some of the hardest hit by this economic shutdown. When COVID-19 first emerged, I joined my colleague Rep. Jayapal in introducing the Paycheck Guarantee Act, designed to keep businesses' and nonprofits' doors open and eventually resume operations. The bill would give direct assistance to employers to keep workers on payroll, cover employer-sponsored benefits like health care, and cover essential expenses like rent. I have called on Con-

gress to expand access to small business protections and loans, and was proud to pass legislation included in the HEROES Act that would rectify the exclusion of business owners with even a minor criminal offense from critical relief. I was also one of the first of my colleagues in Congress to call for a workers' economic recovery plan that would guarantee immediate, universal cash payments to all Americans, while also fast tracking and increasing access to unemployment insurance.

3. Community-based human services workers in Massachusetts are among some of the lowest paid workers in the state and they have incredibly complex jobs. Their pay significantly lags behind state workers doing similar jobs. What initiatives will you advocate for to ensure those providing critical human services care are able to receive livable wages in Massachusetts?

Sen. Markey: Many human services workers put their lives on the line during this crisis—often for low wages and few benefits—we must act with urgency to protect, support, and compensate them. These essential workers face many of the same challenges and risks as our frontline medical workers. They are putting themselves, and ultimately their families, at risk and just as we owe it to our medical workers, we also owe it to all of these essential workers to provide the protection needed to safely do their jobs.

I have called for a \$15 federal minimum wage and I am an original co-sponsor of Medicare for All. These two initiatives are critical to guaranteeing that low-wage workers, who undertake some of the most difficult jobs, are able to earn a living wage.

Rep. Kennedy: Human services workers who provide critical services for

our Commonwealth and country must be treated with dignity, with livable wages and access to essential benefits. I've been an unwavering advocate in the Fight for 15, a livable minimum wage indexed to inflation. I've fought to protect organizing and collective bargaining rights, to expand worker protections against discrimination or wage disparities, and to crack down on corporate corruption that exacerbates our country's growing wage and wealth gaps.

I'll continue to fight for a progressive tax system in which the wealthy pay their fair share. Beyond wages, we must improve access to essential benefits that every American worker deserves -- universal health care, paid family and medical leave, retirement and unemployment benefits, and universal child care. We also have to do more to make our Commonwealth more affordable, from tackling our housing crisis to finding sustainable solutions to our transportation challenges.

4. Can you describe how you would advocate for additional federal reimbursements for the most pressing human services needs in Massachusetts FY '21, particularly concerning programs directed towards homeless, mental health, early education and other human services for vulnerable residents?

Sen. Markey: We need to make sure that we are properly funding our cities and states. I have introduced legislation calling for \$4 billion in additional funds for the E-rate program I authored that would expand access to the Internet and wifi program I authored that would expand access to the Internet and wifi, to ensure that we close the digital divide during the coronavirus pandemic and so that we do not leave our students and teachers without the internet access they need to succeed.

We must ensure that mental health-care resources are accessible and coverage is widely available. Mental health must be treated as a priority.

Finally, we must make bold steps to invest in public and affordable housing. One of the greatest barriers to financial security is the skyrocketing cost of rent in our cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth and our 2021 budget should secure funding for sustainable, affordable housing.

Rep. Kennedy: I have continually called for increased funding to states to support critical programs that protect our most vulnerable. I have pushed for an infusion of emergency funds into our child care and early education sector, to ensure providers' doors stay open and families can weather this storm. I'm proud to have introduced the Medicare Crisis Program Act, to guarantee access to health care during COVID-19 by enhancing federal funding to states, expanding eligibility, and limiting out-of-pocket costs. I passed legislation to stabilize Medicaid and CHIP, protecting Americans from losing coverage, and I introduced legislation to increase federal reimbursement rates for behavioral health care. I have fought to increase funding for services that help people experiencing homelessness, and have introduced a resolution to guarantee access to legal counsel in eviction cases. I will continue to fight for progressive reforms to guarantee access to essential services — from health care to child care to housing — that every American deserves.

The Council thanks Senator Markey and Representative Kennedy for submitting responses to The Provider.

The Providers' Council and our CareVote campaign encourage residents who care about human services to register to vote at www.sec.state.ma.us/OVR/ and to take part in the Sept. 1 Primary Election and Nov. 3 General Election in Massachusetts.

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The Providers' Council is pleased to offer two outstanding educational opportunities to members and their staff. Applications are now being accepted on a rolling basis:

Certificate in Nonprofit Human Service Management Program

This year-long, graduate-level program offered in partnership with Suffolk University in Boston is designed for mid-career human service professionals who seek to strengthen their management skills and learn in specialized, sector-specific classes with peers from other human service agencies.

This year, we have added an additional **online-only** cohort to our certificate program with Suffolk. This will fill on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more information, including the 2020-2021 application, please visit the Certificate Program page on our website at www.providers.org.

Tuition Remission Program

Registration is now underway for the upcoming 2020-2021 academic year. Human services workers participating in the Providers' Council's Tuition Remission program may be able to attend a Massachusetts state-supported undergraduate class at any state community college, state college or at the University of Massachusetts on a tuition-free basis if there are available seats in the class.

Since the program's inception in 2000, more than 400 organizations have participated in Tuition Remission, helping over 3,700 workers attend more than 22,000 undergraduate classes tuition-free at Massachusetts state colleges.

Visit www.providers.org for more information and a registration form.

Questions about these programs? Please contact Eliza Adams at eadams@providers.org or call 508.598.9700.

Help shape the future: *The Leadership Initiative* now accepting applications

Join us as a mentor or mentee for our inter-agency mentoring program, *The Leadership Initiative*, which aims to grow the future leaders of the human services sector and to help address the leadership vacuum that will form as many senior leaders retire over the coming years.

This program contributes to the professional development of the human services sector by matching mentees with mentors who have similar interests, strengths and career objectives. The pairs connect either in-person or virtually each month over the span of a year at their own convenience.

This program is open to employees of Providers' Council member agencies. Mentors are senior management-level professionals who have knowledge and

expertise to share with an emerging leader. Mentees are employees with supervisory responsibilities that would like to grow within their organizations.

Mentees will be matched with mentors from an agency other than their own based on their professional development goals. Each mentor/mentee pair will meet regularly for a year-long period. This will include hour-long meetings at least once a month (meetings may be in-person or virtual).

Mentors and mentees are paired based on career goals and day-to-day job challenges.

For more information on *The Leadership Initiative*, please see its page at www.providers.org or contact Eliza Adams at eadams@providers.org or 508.598.9700.

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