



ALLIANCE
FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Re: **NEW**

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MISSION STATEMENT

Incorporated in 1964, Alliance's sole mandate was to assist the underserved. Now called Alliance for Community Empowerment, Alliance concentrates its efforts and resources on identifying and eliminating the causes of poverty rather than only dealing with its effects.

Alliance's actions are directed toward promoting appropriate institutional change and enabling the underserved to become self-sufficient contributors to society.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Folson Almezy	Zenida Gonzalez	Jeff Mullins - Treasurer
Rev. Fred Belcher	Laurel Gross - Chairperson	Mercedes Mullins
Karen Bracey	Nettie Jenkins	Dean O'Brien
Lamond Daniels	Jessica Johnson	Sharon Skyers-Jenkins - 2nd Vice Chair
Monisha Gibson - Secretary	Ralph Jowers - 1st Vice Chairperson	Keith Williams

Re: **BOUND**



Executive Statement

This year has been a historic time for Alliance for Community Empowerment along with the communities we serve. The onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic had caused us all to dig deeper inside ourselves to ensure our loved ones and the people we touch everyday are able to not just survive but thrive during this time.

As I reflect over this last year, I am struck by the level of sacrifice our staff has made in the very face of uncertainty. I am humbled by the notes of encouragement from partners and friends who share Alliance's mission and goals. I am and always will be impacted by the death of many and the sickness that surrounds us but silently pushed to meet this challenge with success and emerge better than before for the many who need us now and will need us for years to come.

This year has been a year of regrowth and a renewal of our commitment to the communities we serve with pride and respect. We embrace the opportunity to restore our wellness and rebuild this agency to embrace the normal we have created. As we enter this phase of recovery, we are forever optimistic that our future will be even brighter than our past.

- DR. MONETTE FERGUSON



Dr. Monette Ferguson
Executive Director

Message from The Board Chair

As I look back on my tenure as Board Chair of Alliance, I am very proud of the work I have done. With the help of committed board members and staff we weathered the storms of transition and we made a wonderful choice in naming Dr. Ferguson our new Executive Director.

While I plan to remain on the board, the time has come to pass the torch. Our ability to accept new leadership seamlessly is a sign of a strong agency. Dr. Ferguson has put together a top-notch team and I am sure they will welcome my successor as they welcomed me.

I have appreciated Dr. Ferguson's transparent approach to further engage our board. I am proud of the agency's continuing strong and accurate financial position. I am delighted that Dr. Ferguson has taken initiative to form important community partnerships, especially important now that we have expanded our services to Norwalk.

I am especially pleased with our recent branding and awareness efforts which make us more visible and accessible to communities in need. Whether it's our presence at food giveaways, on Channel 12, or with other high-profile events, we want to make certain that people know about our spectrum of services.

Thank you to everyone who has made my time as Chair of Alliance so rewarding as we continue to serve those in need.

- LAUREL GROSS



Laurel Gross
Board Chair

Re:INVENT

Getting Back to Normal

Last year forced us to reinvent how we do things and it happened in the midst of our re-branding effort. Our brand unveiling was done virtually at a time when hope was at a premium. Uncertainty was the new norm. All we knew was that a deadly disease was lurking and striking. The first thing we had to do was understand what life during a pandemic is like and then regroup and safely communicate our new goals. Fortunately for us, the community embraced our new brand.

We renewed our commitment to the community and thought about what practices we could maintain safely. Our childcare programming was challenged to the point where we had to close it down for three months until we could regroup. During our reconstruction, if you will, we rebuilt according to CDC guidelines so staff and families could feel comfortable with going from remote learning to in-person activities again. Our Youth Program regulated by the City of Bridgeport went to remote service. Everything changed as our other services such as Energy Assistance and Supportive Services served our clients mostly through telephone contact.

What has helped was our timing on starting a social media livestream show called Alliance Allies so we could continue to communicate our messaging. We took on all issues including social justice at a time when our country was suffering through serious racial injustices. One of our show highlights was our Norwalk food giveaway show at Calf Pasture Beach where volunteers provided groceries to thousands. Today, we are in a post-pandemic recovery phase, a period when we may breathe a sigh of relief or at least afford ourselves to be hopeful again.



ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Dr. Monette Ferguson
Executive Director

Harold Gaines
Maintenance Coordinator

Indi Hayes
Director of Finance

Linda Kirkland
Executive Secretary /
Director of Youth Services

Tanya Lloyd
Director of Early Learning

Zeljka Trivunovic
Director of Operations

Kimberly Farrar-Powell
Director of Human
Resources

Re: BIRTH

Early Learning

Alliance's Early Learning Division (ELD) provides quality early childhood programs to children ages 0-5 throughout the Greater Bridgeport area and also includes services to pregnant women. ELD focuses on high quality school readiness programming and evidenced-based curricula that prepare children and families for continued educational success. Comprehensive services include health screenings for both vision and hearing, access to physical and dental exams, developmental and behavioral assessments, referrals to local community resources, and parenting information.

COVID-19, presented a myriad of challenges for ELD. In spite of the impact of the global pandemic, ELD continued to bounce back and meet the needs of children and families by adapting its educational and family support services from in-classroom learning experiences to a remote learning program. With generous support from local, state, and federal partners, ELD coordinated family distribution events providing families with remote learning opportunities, educational activities, diapers, formula, and other vital resources.

KINDERGARTEN PREPARATION

Alliance Early Learning Division prepares children for school readiness by implementing the Creative Curriculum approach to early childhood education. This research-based curriculum supports the development of the whole child and prepares them for kindergarten readiness. ELD's School Readiness goals articulate the program's expectations of children's progress across the essential domains of child development and early learning.

At the end of the 2019-20 program year, ELD transitioned 328 children to kindergarten. During the summer of 2020, ELD offered a summer enrichment program where rising kindergarteners attended an in-person six-week educational program to prepare for their transition. Kindergarten readiness workshops were held virtually for parents including advocacy, navigating the registration process, and supporting children with special needs.

OUR ANNUAL IMPACT

Alliance's ELD provided services to 1,470 children during the 2019-20 program year.

	Early Head Start	Head Start
Funded Enrollment	168	661
Cumulative enrollment of children & families served	296	873
Average monthly enrollment	80%	77%
Percentage of eligible children served	92%	91%
Percentage of children who received medical exams	94%	99%
Percentage of children who received dental exams	94%	44%
Percentage of children with health insurance	93%	95%

ENGAGING FAMILIES

ELD views parents as the primary educators of their children. We welcome and encourage family engagement on all levels acknowledging that the program is only as strong as the level of family engagement.

Our family engagement program focuses on culturally and linguistically responsive relationship-building with key family members in a child's life and is also inclusive of pregnant women. Alliance strives to keep families engaged on a virtual platform by offering a variety of activities, training, family events, and workshops. All families also have access to individualized family support services and mental health services for the entire family.



Re: **SURGENCE**

Energy Assistance

The Energy Assistance program is available to help households with their heating costs, for both utility and deliverable fuel heating sources. This program has also assisted clients who are in need of heating system repairs or replacement as well as furnace cleanings. All may apply, and if deemed eligible, an award is given based on the household's income and resident capacity.

This past season more households were found in need of energy assistance due to COVID-19. Alliance felt a responsibility to notify the public that, although we were in the throes of a pandemic, the energy program would still be available. By utilizing mailing and phone lists, we notified the areas served by Alliance (Bridgeport, Trumbull, Stratford, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Norwalk and Westport) with information as to how to apply for assistance. Applications were taken by phone, email or postal mail and the response was overwhelming. In 2020 nearly 10,000 applications were taken by Alliance's energy staff.

OUR ANNUAL IMPACT

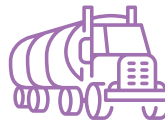
10,000

ENERGY ASSISTANCE APPLICATIONS



1.9

MILLION GALLONS OF FUEL DISTRIBUTED



11,400+

FUEL DELIVERIES MADE



MAKING AN IMPACT

A client who applied for oil assistance was living in the car in front of the house. They explained that although there was oil in the furnace, the furnace was not running. Alliance's energy staff communicated with a vendor and sent a technician out to the client's home to assess the issue. The furnace was 30+ years old and the technician knew that although he was able to get the furnace running it would be a short-lived solution. A recommendation for furnace replacement was made and the process of replacement began. This client is now happily back in the house with a newly installed furnace.



Re:VITALIZE



Self-Sufficiency Supportive Services

Alliance's Self-Sufficiency Supportive Services (SSSS) Department focuses on providing services and resources to families and individuals to reach and maintain self-sufficiency. While thousands of clients lost their jobs amidst the current health crisis, Supportive Services caseworkers have still been able to provide an array of services to community members in need, such as long-term case management, emergency rental, utility, food, education, and most importantly employment, as unemployment was at an all-time high. Alliance Supportive Services has also been able to take its financial literacy workshops and G.E.D classes virtual.

Despite Covid-19, Alliance was still able to provide free tax preparation services to our community members. This year Alliance's staff prepared close to 200 tax returns and refunded over \$400,000 to the community. This year Alliance's staff was recognized for its hard work by Congressman Jim Himes at the opening of tax season.

2020 CENSUS CAMPAIGN

To continue serving the community throughout the pandemic, Alliance worked closely with the U. S. Census Bureau to promote registration. We created a robust marketing campaign that included advertising in print, hosting events, and producing videos in both English and Spanish. It was abundantly clear that Alliance had to help its community members be counted and fill out their surveys, especially in low-income and immigrant communities, where it has been notoriously hard to count.

PARTNER COLLABORATIONS

In collaboration with several partners including Optimus Healthcare, Career Resources, Bridgeport Firefighters, CT Foodbank, and Housatonic Community College, Alliance was able to organize in-person events featuring COVID-19 vaccinations, books and bookbag giveaways, census support, food giveaways, and free ice cream. Throughout Alliance's catchment area, more than 700 households received a food box in the midst of the pandemic.

OUR ANNUAL IMPACT

1,408

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED



500+

FAMILIES HELPED WITH EMERGENCY RENTAL & UTILITY ASSISTANCE



220

GIFTCARDS DISTRIBUTED FOR FOOD, RENT OR UTILITY BILLS



700+

BOXES OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED



200

TAX RETURNS FILED

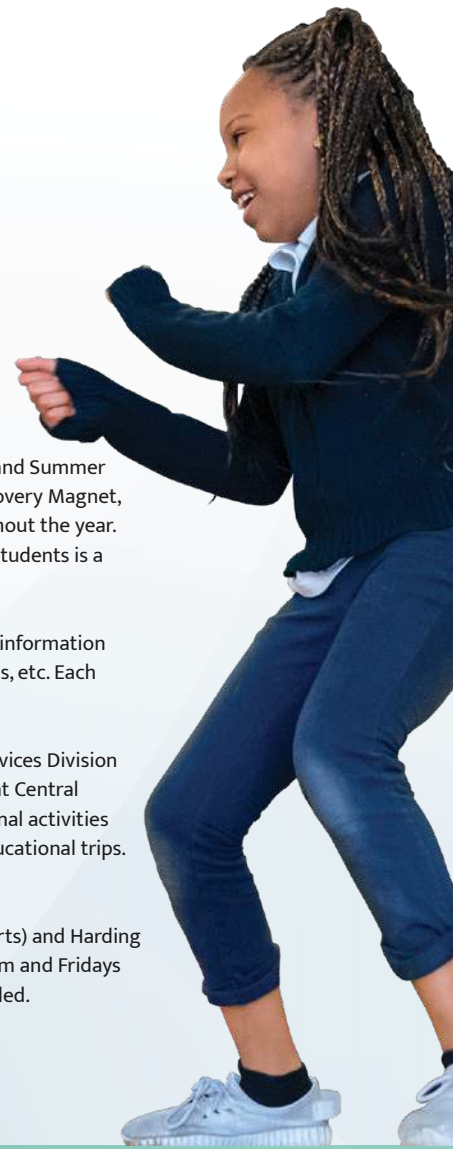


\$400,000

IN TAX REFUNDS FOR CLIENTS



Re: **IGNITE**



Lighthouse in the Community

Alliance continues to serve as a provider for the City of Bridgeport's Lighthouse Before School (7 sites), After School and Summer Programs located at ten schools throughout the City of Bridgeport: Blackham, Black Rock, Cesar Batalla, Curiale, Discovery Magnet, Geraldine Johnson, Hallen, Jettie S. Tisdale, John Winthrop and Roosevelt Schools; serving over 1,600 students throughout the year. The Bridgeport Youth Club - Inspire Motivate Prepare Accelerate Creative Teens (BYC IMPACT) for 7th and 8th grade students is a popular component of the program.

Family Engagement Sessions take place at least once a month with diverse activities such as Health Wellness (COVID information also included) & Nutrition, Line Dancing, Canvas Painting, Zumba, Literacy/Science/Math Nights, Themed Arts & Crafts, etc. Each activity ends with a healthy family meal, accompanied by music.

Friday Night Live – a free pilot program made possible by the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (CSSD) and the City of Bridgeport (Police/Youth Services/Board of Education Departments), started in January 2020 at Central High School. It is a drop-in center available to Central's students offering structured educational assistance, recreational activities (basketball, game room, fitness classes) a lounge, media center (computer classes), theater arts, movie nights and educational trips. A social worker is on site for assistance with health/social issues students may be experiencing.

Due to its success, the program has been expanded this academic year to include Bassick (concentrates on Theatre Arts) and Harding (run by Neighborhood Studios) High Schools. The program now operates on Tuesdays / Thursdays from 2:30 – 5:30 pm and Fridays from 6 – 10 pm. Bus tokens are available for students using public transportation. In addition, a healthy meal is provided.

Human Re: **SOURCE**



Department Spotlight

KIMBERLY FARRAR-POWELL, Director of Human Resources

The Spotlight this year falls on Kimberly Farrar-Powell and her staff in Human Resources. Kimberly, Alliance's new Human Resources Director, was charged to take over the department in the middle of a pandemic. She led her team in making certain Alliance staff had all the updated information they would need to stay safe on the job. She also utilized all the available technology to open the lines of communications with current staff while reaching out to new applicants. Her use of Powerpoint and video brought attention to the benefits Alliance has to serve its employees. Currently, she is working on a marketing campaign to let the community know about the advantages of working for Alliance For Community Empowerment. Kimberly says she took the job because of Alliance's (formerly ABCD) history in the community and its reputation. While much of her staff, like her, are relatively new on the job, she gives them much of the credit for what they collectively have accomplished.

Re: **COGNIZE** Community Awardees



COLOR A POSITIVE THOUGHT LEADERS

**Harry Bell (Founder), Ivan De Irish (Co-founder),
Stephen Nelson (Senior Advisor), Malik Abdul Nelson**

Color A Positive Thought (C.A.P.T.) started as a children's coloring book series promoting a positive outlook. Today it is a massive movement of positivity and empowerment for underserved inner-city youth in greater Bridgeport. This was accomplished by providing the youth with activities and essential skills that prepare them for life after graduation while also providing meals, toys, and jackets to those in need. These community leaders teach how to look at life with a positive view and are living examples for the children they serve. C.A.P.T. wants the Bridgeport youth to know that they are not alone and that in every negative situation there is a positive way out.



REVEREND ELIZABETH "PASTOR LIZ" C. ABEL

Lead Pastor at Cornerstone Community United Methodist Church of Norwalk

When people are in need, Pastor Liz is fearlessly one of the first in line to provide assistance. Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, she has stepped up to help the families in her congregation and has teamed up with the City of Norwalk to provide meals to the whole Norwalk community. Pastor Liz received her Master's of Divinity Degree from Drew Theological Seminary in May 2016, and served 12 years with the US Air Force. She also has significant experience with youth and families and is the founder and developer of the Timothy Project: A Rites of Passage for Young Men, and Deborah's Academy: A Rites of Passage for Young Women. Alliance is honored to have worked with her distributing food in Norwalk via drive-thrus during these pressing times.



DEANNA D'AMORE

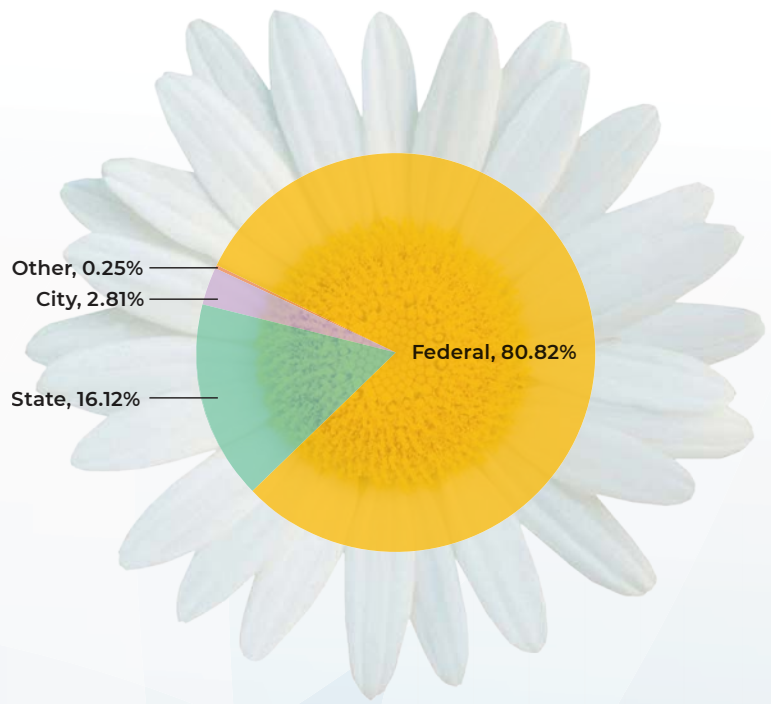
Director of Health at Norwalk Health Department

When Ms. D'Amore became the Director of Norwalk Health Department (NHD) in 2018, she could not have known a pandemic was over a year and a half away. But with her 15+ years of experience in public health, including 6 years as Project Coordinator at NHD from 2010-2016, she has been able to keep Norwalk prepared while at the forefront of the crisis. Within the first days of Covid-19 she was educating policymakers, setting up testing and later vaccination clinics, investigating violations, and much more. Without her dedication to public health and Norwalk as a whole, during a time of uncertainty and misinformation, we would not be where we currently are without her.

Re:VIEW

Agency Budget

2020-2021



FEDERAL

CT Energy Assistance Program (Passed through The State)	\$11,571,561
Community Services Block Grant (Passed through The State)	\$1,991,988
Social Services Block Grant (Passed through The State)	\$103,979
Human Services Infrastructure (Passed through The State)	\$224,534
FEMA (Federal grant passed through The United Way)	\$60,702
CDBG / ESG Grants (Federal grant passed through The City)	\$30,000
Head Start	\$7,387,447
Trumbull / Monroe	\$321,681
Early Head Start	\$3,165,151
TOTAL	\$24,857,043

STATE

Human Services Infrastructure	\$502,276
State Head Start	\$496,277
Therapeutic Child Care	\$305,583
Child Day Care	\$2,420,099
School Readiness	\$1,233,641
TOTAL	\$4,957,876

CITY

Youth Services Program	\$865,000
TOTAL	\$865,000

OTHER

Southern CT Gas Company	\$75,000
TOTAL	\$75,000

Re:CONNECT

Community Partners



Administration for Children & Families	Connecticut Association for Community Action	Literacy Volunteers	Stratford Board of Education
ADP, LLC	Connecticut Association of Foster & Adoption Families, Inc.	Maritime Odyssey Preschool	Stratford Health Department
ADT	Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS)	Me & The Boyz	Stratford Parents Place
American Red Cross	Connecticut Basket Brigade	Minority Business Association	Stratford Public Library
Arthur J. Gallagher & Company	Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness	Monroe Senior Center	Stratford South End Community Center
AT&T	Connecticut Department of Labor	Monster.com	Tauck Foundation
Blackbaud	Connecticut Food Bank	Music Together of Fairfield County	TD Bank
Blessings of Hope	Connecticut Head Start Association	Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company	The Center for Family Justice
Books A Million, #894	Connecticut Institute for Refugees & Immigrants	New England Head Start Association	The Connection, Inc.
Books for Kids Foundation	Peter DiNardo Enterprises	New Hope Missionary Baptist Church	The WorkPlace, Inc.
Bridgeport Board of Education	Dress for Success	Norwalk Senior Center	Town of Easton
Bridgeport Community Islamic Center	Early Childhood Alliance	Office of Early Childhood	Town of Fairfield
Bridgeport Department of Social Services	Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP)	Operation Fuel	Town of Monroe
Bridgeport Fire Department	Easton Senior Center	Operation Hope	Town of Stratford
Bridgeport Health Department	Eisenhower Senior Center	Optimus Health Care, Inc.	Town of Trumbull
Bridgeport Hospital	Fairfield College Preparatory School	Panera/Fairfield	Town of Westport
Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust	Fairfield County Community Foundation	Park City Communities	Trumbull Board of Education
Bridgeport Prospers	Fairfield University School of Nursing	Partnership for Early Education Research (PEER)	Trumbull Social Services
Bridgeport Rescue Mission	Bridgeport Firebird Society	People's United Bank	United Illuminating Company
Bridgeport Rotary Club	Fones School of Dental Hygiene	Person to Person	United Way of Coastal Fairfield County
Bridgeport Veteran Affairs	Hall Neighborhood House	Principal Financial	University of Bridgeport
Captain Systems	Hispanic Information & Telecommunication Network (HITN)	PT Partners	US Department of Health & Human Services
Career Resources	Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church	Sacred Heart University	Verizon Wireless Foundation
Caroline House	Housatonic Community College	Securitas Security Company	Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)
Chapin Hall @ University of Chicago	Indeed.com	SHRM	VOYA Financial Services
Child & Family Guidance	Info Line 211	Sikorsky Credit Union	W. B. Mason
Child First	Jewish Family Services of Stamford, Inc.	Social Security Administration	Women, Infant & Children (WIC)
City of Bridgeport	Lakeshore	Southern Connecticut Gas Company	Workers' Compensation Trust
City of Bridgeport Housing & Community Development	LifeBridge	Southwest Community Health Center	Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence
City of Bridgeport Department of Health & Social Services	Lions KidSight USA	State of CT Department of Children & Families	Yale Hospital
City of Norwalk		State of CT Department of Social Services	Yale University
Colonial Life		State of CT – DSS Child Support Enforcement	YouGiveGoods
Community Health Network of CT, Inc.		Stepping Stones Museum for Children	YMCA Alpha Community Services (Norwalk/Westport)
Concentra			

THANK YOU!

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Kate Bruce
Janet & James Carruthers
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Vivienne P. Daley/Family
Jennifer DeLeonardo
DiBella's Subs/Milford CT
Jere C. Eaton
Edward J. Dillon & Son Florists

Fairfield College Preparatory School
Fairfield County Community Foundation
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Estate of F. Richards Ford
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Isabel Nichols
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Carolyn Wright
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