



**ALLIANCE**  
FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

**2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

# *In Action*



Fulfilling  
the Mission

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## MISSION STATEMENT

Alliance for Community Empowerment's sole mandate is to assist the underserved. Alliance for Community Empowerment concentrates its efforts and resources on identifying and eliminating the causes of poverty rather than only dealing with its effects. Alliance for Community Empowerment's actions are directed towards promoting appropriate institutional change and enabling the underserved to become self-sufficient contributors to society.



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Folson Almezy	Ralph Jowers - 1st Vice Chairperson
Rev. Fred Belcher	Jeff Mullins - Treasurer
Rev. Dr. Lindsay E. Curtis	Dean O'Brien
Lamond Daniels - Secretary	Sharon Skyers-Jenkins - Chairperson
Solomon Danquah	Shelley Sylvia Tomey
Laurel Gross	Keith Williams - 2nd Vice Chairperson
Jessica Baldwin	

# Taking Charge

## Executive Statement

Last year, we hit the ground running. With the pandemic in the rearview mirror and our transition out of the crisis complete, we were in full go mode. Our first course of action was outreach into the community. Feedback helped us in the designing of our programs to meet the needs of the unique communities we serve. As our theme suggests, we are In Action job training the next workforce, helping people stabilize their financial lives, and using technology to make our services more accessible than ever. Together, with our partners, we rolled up our sleeves and got busy providing clients education opportunities for a GED or a certificate for skill sets needed in their own communities.

I am most proud of our staff for stepping it up wherever the need arose. I need to thank our funders who believe in our mission. To our clients, kudos to you too for appreciating your own value and how we may help you and your families reach your distinctive goals.

Community action may look a little different today then in 1964 when we started, but it is just as important, and if our community looks a bit better today then let's all take a bow... and then get back to work.

All my best,

—DR. MONETTE FERGUSON

## From our Board Chair

It has been a great honor to serve on a board with so many dedicated people. Individuals who contribute solely because it's the right thing to do on behalf of the community. It also helps that we are directing Alliance leadership who are not only experienced and committed themselves but also so qualified to direct their teams. While it may sometimes be difficult to find the right people for those teams, the employees our leadership have tapped have worked tirelessly to create processes and engagements that allow staff to provide access and excellence of service to our clients.

Those activities have been critical in serving the people; moms, dads, students, and others who are the engine in our community businesses, places of worship, schools, and community groups. It's a cycle and I'm just happy we are part of the chain that keeps our community rolling along. Hopefully as we all move forward together, we can start working with a tailwind that moves us and our clients forward effortlessly toward a lifestyle that matches their most gratifying dreams.

—SHARON SKYERS-JENKINS



**Dr. Monette Ferguson**  
Executive Director



**Sharon Skyers-Jenkins**  
Board Chair

# Taking it to the Next Level

## About Alliance

Alliance For Community Empowerment is on the precipice of its 60th anniversary and with that an evolution of our services. For 59 years Alliance has worked to serve the most vulnerable. Today, we continue that mission, and we dare to dream of communities empowered, people providing the fuel for our region's success, as well as workers and thought leaders. Moving forward as jobs become available, we will work to open the pathway toward those jobs. Whether it is helping by using or providing technology that allows for those connections or by helping to develop the skills our people need to perform all the important tasks in our communities.

We will continue to pride ourselves in our responsive, seamless services that serve needs and help lift an entire region; from rural communities such as Easton, the suburbs of Trumbull and Monroe and urban centers such as Norwalk and Bridgeport. Add to that Stratford and Westport and you have a variety of communities with diverse needs. We look forward to working with all those communities to customize services that meet their individual needs. To accomplish that, we will continue to do outreach and ask the important questions, whose answers will help us in the creation of programming that is needed and effective at improving our clients' quality of living. Together we will soon see a year of peace and provision.

### ALLIANCE 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

**Yasmine Rodriguez**  
Director of Human Resources

## Jump into Action

### Early Learning Division

Alliance remains committed to core Head Start values that guide our priorities and commitment to children and families. Despite the many challenges and changes, educators continue to provide results-oriented planning and instruction that focus on creating safe, nurturing learning environments. The need for Head Start and Early Head Start services is apparent within the community as parents and guardians began to recover from the pandemic and return to work. The existing workforce crisis in early childhood education has resulted in closed classrooms and reduced enrollment during the recovery process. However, Alliance remains committed to returning to full capacity and serve our most vulnerable population.



Alliance’s Head Start and Early Head Start programs provide high quality comprehensive services to eligible pregnant women and children ages 0-5 through a variety of educational activities that reflect best practices in early childhood education. The Early Learning Division (ELD) provides a learning environment in each of the 14 Early Learning Centers that support children’s growth in language, science, literacy, mathematics, and social emotional development. ELD also emphasizes the parent’s role as the child’s first and most important teacher by building a partnership with the family. 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.

## KINDERGARTEN PREPARATION

Alliance collects child outcome data through Teaching Strategies Gold. The results of these outcome measures are shared with parents and used to support the curriculum. Alliance’s School Readiness goals articulate the program’s expectations of children’s progress across the essential domains of child development and early learning that improves children’s readiness for kindergarten.

Child assessments indicate that most children who transitioned to kindergarten in the Fall of 2022, were on target and meeting expectations. At the end of the 2021-22 program year, 283 children successfully transitioned to kindergarten. To prepare children and families, activities were provided including kindergarten transition events and workshops, assistance with registration process, kindergarten visits, and additional support for children with special needs. Virtual and in-person meetings, as well as individualized sessions were held to ensure a smooth transition process.

## 2022 EARLY LEARNING IMPACT

Alliance’s Early Learning Division provided services to a total of 955 children in all funding sources during the 2021-22 program year.

	Early Head Start	Head Start
Funded Enrollment	160	661
Cumulative enrollment of children & families served	200	606
Average monthly enrollment	73%	74%
% of eligible children served	92%	90%
% of children with health insurance	93%	97%
% of children w/ continuous, accessible healthcare	99%	98%
% of children w/ preventative & primary healthcare	70%	83%
% of children w/ accessible dental care from dentists	74%	92%
% of children w/ preventative & primary dental care	42%	51%

## ENGAGING FAMILIES

Alliance’s Early Learning Division understands the significant role parents play in their child’s life and view them as partners in the educational process. 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 and expectant families, mothers, fathers, grandparents, and other adult caregivers. All families also have access to individualized family support services and mental health services for the entire family.

The program engages in a process of collaborative partnerships with the individual families to develop true support systems. The process builds on information obtained from the family and helps to identify family goals, strengths, and services needed. Parents are encouraged to attend parent meetings, various trainings and workshops, and have an active voice in program decision-making by serving on the Policy Council.

# Amped Up

## Energy Assistance

The Energy Assistance program is designed to assist households in our area with heating costs for their gas, electric, and deliverable fuel heating sources. This program also assists with water, sewer, heating system repairs or replacements, and yearly maintenance cost. The award is based on family size and income level. More households are seeking assistance due to rising utility costs or change in their family dynamics. We offer Energy Assistance services in Bridgeport, Easton, Monroe, Fairfield, Trumbull, Stratford, Norwalk, and Westport.



### SERVICES PROVIDED

- **Water and Sewer Bill Assistance:** Alliance can now assist with past due water and sewerage bills.
- **CEAP:** When a heating system is unsafe or inoperable, repair or replacement is available for CEAP eligible single-family homeowners.
- **Conservation Program:** Clean Test and Tune-up services (CT&T) for heating systems are available for CEAP/CHAP households.
- **Matching Payment Plan / Forgiveness:** Eligible households are enrolled in a monthly budget payment plan with the gas and electric utility companies during the winter months.

### OUR ANNUAL IMPACT

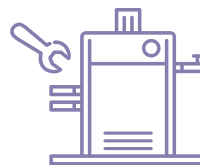
10,800

HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVED ENERGY ASSISTANCE TO HEAT THEIR HOMES



62

HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVED FURNACE REPAIRS OR REPLACEMENT



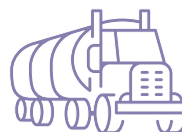
850,000

TOTAL GALLONS OF OIL DISTRIBUTED



\$3,121,697

TOTAL VALUE OF OIL DELIVERED



### TESTIMONIAL

"Gerard was so helpful scheduling my appointment, telling me what I needed to bring, etc. When I arrived he was very welcoming. I worked with Vanessa today, she is very nice, helpful, kind, and considerate. Both Gerard and Vanessa clearly go above and beyond to welcome and help clients. I had no idea what to expect as I have never used any assistance like this until last year. As a client, I felt seen, respected, and helped. Great service."

—GABRIELLA M,  
AN ALLIANCE CLIENT

# Course of Action

## Supportive Services

The Supportive Services Department delivers a holistic approach that uses case management to assist individuals and families in setting and achieving goals, while providing clients with the tools needed to become self-sufficient. Alliance partners with over 200 organizations in Connecticut to provide clients with support in the areas of housing, food, employment services, education, and much more. Supportive Services provides help to eligible households and individuals who reside in Bridgeport, Easton, Monroe, Fairfield, Trumbull, Stratford, Norwalk, and Westport.



### SERVICES PROVIDED

- **Case Management**
- **Rental / Mortgage Assistance**
- **ESG / GED Education:** Classes to earn a Connecticut High School Diploma.
- **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)**
- **Financial literacy education:** Household budgeting, saving, credit building.
- **Employment search:** Resume development, employment training, job search.
- **DSS pre-application assistance:** SNAP / Health Insurance, TANF.
- **Referral services**
- **Computer training**

### OUR ANNUAL IMPACT

507

HOUSEHOLDS OBTAINED SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING



\$352,000

IN TAX REFUNDS WERE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS IN THE COMMUNITY BY VITA VOLUNTEERS



160

INDIVIDUALS PARTICIPATED IN ALLIANCE'S FINANCIAL LITERACY PROGRAM



38

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES RECEIVED ALLIANCE'S SCHOLARSHIP



### TESTIMONIAL

"I just wanted to thank you for the excellent work you did with providing my client Mr. M W and his daughter with housing. We are really appreciative of your hard work and effort to make this happen. We value our collaboration with Alliance and continuously look forward to future collaborations to serve our community."

—DA'EE M,  
AN ALLIANCE PARTNER

# Lighthouse in the Community



Alliance continues to serve as a provider for the City of Bridgeport's Lighthouse Before School (seven 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; serving over 1,600 students throughout the year. The Bridgeport Youth Club - Inspire Motivate Prepare Accelerate Creative Teens (BYC IMPACT) for 7th/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 & Nutrition, Line Dancing, Canvas Painting, Zumba, Themed Arts & Crafts, Literacy / Science / Math Nights, etc. Each activity ends with a healthy family meal, accompanied by entertainment.

**Friday Night Live** – a free program funded by the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (CSSD) and the City of Bridgeport (Police/Youth Services/Board of Education Departments) takes place at Bassick and Central High Schools. It is a drop-in center offering structured educational assistance, recreational activities (basketball, game room, fitness classes) a lounge, media center (computer classes), theater arts, movie nights, & educational trips.

## Keynote Speaker

**ERIK CLEMONS, CEO and President of ConnCORP**

Prior to founding ConnCORP, Erik was the founding CEO and President of the Connecticut Center for Arts and Technology (ConnCAT), a non-profit organization based on the model of Bill Strickland's National Center for Arts and Technology, which is dedicated to creating empowering art-based educational environments for at-risk public-school students and workforce training programs for under and unemployed adults.

Erik has an extensive background in nonprofit management and organizational leadership. For more than 20 years, Erik has committed himself to serving the best interests of diverse and traditionally underserved communities.

Erik serves as an Education Fellow at the Aspen Institute, Yale-New Haven Hospital Trustee, member of the Connecticut State Board of Education, Board Chair of the Housing Authority of New Haven (HANH), Board of Trustees at New Haven Bank, Quinnipiac University Board of Trustees.

Erik holds a Bachelor of Science in Sociology from Southern Connecticut State University and a Master of Arts in Theology and Ethics from the Hartford Seminary. He is also a recipient of an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters, Albertus Magnus College, New Haven, CT.



**Erik Clemons**  
ConnCORP CEO

Erik is co-founder of Connecticut Community Outreach and Revitalization Program (ConnCORP), a subsidiary of ConnCAT designed to explore and implement opportunities for economic development and investment in New Haven.



# Community Awardees



## **BOBBI BROWN, Board of Education, Chairwoman**

Bobbi Brown is a strategic communications and mass media professional. In 2019, Bobbi became the youngest candidate ever to be elected to the Bridgeport Board of Education where she served as the vice chair of the board. In 2022 she was elected as chair of the Bridgeport Board of Education. Although Bobbi wears many hats, her most passionate cause is #100GirlsLeading. #100GL is an all-girls Bridgeport based non-government organization she founded to mentor young girls in career path development and positive civic engagement. She is currently the senior communications community liaison and director of development at WorkForce Alliance in New Haven. She has received many awards including, 100 Women of Color, Black Pride, the Mayor's Community Leadership award and was featured in Peoples Magazine for her pursuit to promote social justice. Her past activities also include her leadership in the local, state, and national level of the NAACP.



## **CARMEN COLON, Vice President, Bridgeport YMCAs**

Carmen Colon is responsible for all Bridgeport YMCA programming and administrative governance. She manages the Supportive Housing Program at Alpha Community Services YMCA, the largest provider of supportive housing in Fairfield County. She initiated the Annual Walk to End Homelessness in Bridgeport. She is a board member of many community organizations including the Barnum Festival, Bridgeport Prospers (tri-chair), Bridgeport Rotary (chair), Goodwill of Western and Northern CT, and the Housatonic Community College Foundation. Awards include the NAACP Community Service Award, the Women of Distinction Award from the Girl Scouts of Housatonic Council, the Woman of the Year Award from the CT Post, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Community Service Award, the Al-Aziz Islamic Center Humanitarian Award and the Puerto Rican Parade's President's Award. She was named 2016 Barnum Festival Grand Marshall, the first Latino woman to be so honored.



## **CATHY DECESARE, Co-Chair of Norwalk Early Childhood Council**

Cathy DeCesare started her work life in 1972 after completing a B.S. degree in Elementary Education from the University of Connecticut. She started her career working as a human resources professional for several Fortune 500 corporations. She joined United Way in 2005, first in Norwalk and later in Bridgeport. During her 14 years with United Way, she worked closely with area non-profits and others to address issues impacting readiness for kindergarten, early reading achievement, access to affordable housing, food insecurity and high school completion. Cathy retired from United Way at the end of 2019. In retirement, Cathy volunteers as the Co-Chair of the Norwalk Early Childhood Council. She serves on the board of Norwalk ACTS. She Chairs the local EFSP Board that is responsible for managing federal Emergency Food and Shelter Funds in the Norwalk area. One of her passions is giving all children access to books and creating a love of reading at an early age.

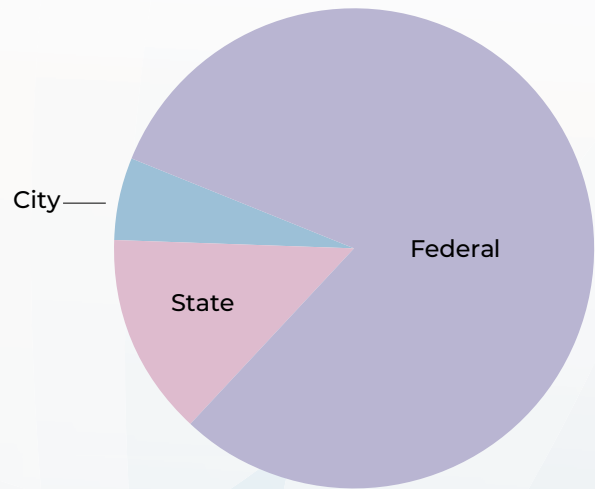


## **PIERRE D'HAITI, Educational Assistant, Housatonic Community College**

Pierre d'Haiti came to America when he was 12. He graduated from Sacred Heart University with a BA in business administration. Pierre served on many boards including the Southern Connecticut Regional Sickle Cell Association and the International Institute of Connecticut. He served as chairman and president of Haiti Works, Inc. an international non-profit organization. In 2007 he completed Clinical Pastoral Training at Saint Francis Academy. In 2009, he earned a master's in biblical studies. Pierre is the author of "Left In The Garden," earning a nomination for best author. He is currently the senior pastor of Faith Community Baptist Church of Bridgeport. In his present role as Educational Assistant for Community Engagement & Academic Affairs at Housatonic Community College, he provides support to international students seeking to better their lives through education. He is also pursuing an MA in Higher Education Student Affairs from Grand Canyon University.

# Agency Budget

2022—2023



## FEDERAL

CT Energy Assistance Program (passed through the state)	\$14,037,538
Community Services Block Grant (passed through the state)	\$1,185,663
Social Services Block Grant (passed through the state)	\$103,979
Human Services Infrastructure (passed through the state)	\$227,618
FEMA (federal grant passed through the United Way)	\$60,702
CDBG / ESG Grants (federal grant passed through the city)	\$30,000
Head Start	\$8,201,065
Trumbull / Monroe	\$325,773
Early Head Start	\$3,202,943

**TOTAL** \$27,375,281

## STATE

Human Services Infrastructure	\$539,004
State Head Start	\$496,277
Therapeutic Child Care	\$309,049
Child Day Care	\$2,232,201
School Readiness	\$1,037,223

**TOTAL** \$4,613,754

## CITY

Youth Services Program	\$1,873,356
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**TOTAL** \$1,873,356

# Community Partners

## 4-CT CORP

Administration for Children and Families  
 Alpha Community Services/YMCA  
 American Red Cross  
 American View Productions  
 Arthur J. Gallagher & Company  
 Books A Million, #894  
 Books for Kids Foundation  
 Bridgeport Board of Education  
 Bridgeport Caribe Youth Leaders  
 Bridgeport Fire Department  
 Bridgeport Firebird Society  
 Bridgeport Health Department  
 Bridgeport Hospital  
 Bridgeport Islamic Community Center  
 Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust  
 Bridgeport Prospers  
 Bridgeport Rescue Mission  
 Bridgeport Rotary Club  
 Bridgeport Veterans Affairs  
 Captains Systems  
 Career Resources  
 Caroline House  
 Chapin Hall @ University of Chicago  
 Child and Family Guidance Center  
 Child First  
 City of Bridgeport – Veterans Affairs  
 City of Bridgeport Dept. of Health & Social Services  
 City of Bridgeport Housing & Community Development  
 City of Norwalk  
 Community Health Network of CT, Inc.  
 Connecticut Association for Community Action  
 Connecticut Association of Foster & Adoption Families, Inc.  
 Connecticut Basket Brigade  
 Connecticut Breast Feeding Coalition  
 Connecticut Department of Social Services  
 Connecticut Dept of Labor  
 CT Foodshare  
 Connecticut Head Start Association  
 Connecticut Institute of Refugees & Immigrants  
 Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport  
 CT Association for Human Services  
 CT Birth to Three System

CT Coalition to End Homelessness  
 CT Fair Housing  
 CT Natural Gas  
 Dress for Success  
 Early Childhood Alliance  
 Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP)  
 Easton Senior Center  
 Eisenhower Senior Center  
 Eversource  
 Fairfield College Preparatory School  
 Fairfield County Community Foundation  
 Fairfield University-School of Nursing  
 Fones Dental School of Hygiene  
 Griffin Hospital  
 Hall Neighborhood House  
 Hispanic Information & Telecommunication Network (HITN)  
 Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church  
 Housatonic Community College  
 Indeed.com  
 Info Line 211  
 Jewish Family Services of Stamford, Inc.  
 Kitchen of Hope Feeding Ministry  
 Lakeshore  
 LifeBridge  
 Lions KidSight USA  
 Literacy Volunteers  
 Maritime Odyssey Preschool  
 Mayor's Initiative for Re-Entry Affairs  
 Me & The Boyz  
 Minority Business Association  
 Monroe Senior Center  
 National Head Start Association  
 New England Head Start Association  
 New Hope Missionary Baptist Church  
 Norwalk Community Health Center  
 Norwalk Senior Center  
 Office of Early Childhood  
 Operation Fuel  
 Operation Hope  
 Optimus Health Care  
 Panera/Fairfield  
 Park City Community (BHA)  
 PEER (Partnership for Early Education Research)  
 People's United Bank (M & T Bank)  
 Person-to-Person

Peter DiNardo Enterprises  
 Principal Financial  
 PT Partners  
 RC Bigelow Inc.  
 Read to Grow  
 Sacred Heart University  
 Salvation Army  
 Social Security Administration  
 Sonitrol Security Systems  
 Southern CT Gas Company  
 Southwest Community Health Center  
 Southwest Healthcare Hospital  
 State of CT - Department of Children and Families  
 State of CT – DSS Child Support Enforcement  
 Stepping Stones Museum for Children  
 Stratford Board of Education  
 Stratford Health Department  
 Stratford Library  
 Stratford Parents Place  
 Stratford South End Community Center  
 Tauck Foundation  
 The Center of Families Justice  
 The Connection, Inc.  
 The Workplace, Inc.  
 Town of Easton  
 Town of Fairfield  
 Town of Monroe  
 Town of Stratford  
 Town of Trumbull  
 Town of Westport  
 TransACT  
 Trumbull Board of Education  
 Trumbull Social Services  
 United Illuminating Company  
 United Way/BAYC  
 University of Bridgeport  
 University of Massachusetts (Amherst)  
 US Dept of Health & Human Services  
 VCL Consulting Group, Inc.  
 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)  
 Women, Infants, & Children (WIC)  
 Workers' Compensation Trust  
 Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence  
 Yale New Haven Hospital  
 Yale University  
 YouGiveGoods

# Thank You!

**WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE TO ALLIANCE  
FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT BY THE FOLLOWING:**

Alan & Betty Feldman  
American View Productions  
Arthur J. Gallagher  
Bigelow Tea  
Boys & Girls Village Inc.  
Bridgeport Caribe Youth Leaders  
Bridgeport Farmers Market  
Collaborative  
Cardinal Shehan Center  
Elements of Illusion  
First Baptist Church of Stratford





Grace Baptist Church  
Greater Bridgeport NAACP  
Kiffy Naturals  
Lakeshore  
M & T Bank  
Maritime Chevrolet  
ME and The Boyz  
New Hope Missionary Baptist Church  
Optimus Health Care  
Ritter's Family Foundation  
Securitas

Southwest Community Health  
The Gross Family  
The Work Place  
Thought Partners  
TRIO Community Meals  
(FKA Lindley Caterers)  
Vazzano's Four Seasons  
VCL Consulting Group, Inc.  
Wades Dairy  
WC McBride Electrical  
Yale New Haven Health



**ALLIANCE**  
FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

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