

# Homeward

A Quarterly Publication of Centerboard

# Bound

Spring 2017

• **COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT** •

## Franklin Square House Foundation

Centerboard is excited to announce its new partnership with Franklin Square House Foundation. By awarding us a generous grant of \$100,000 to make crucial improvements on our Teen Parenting Program (TPP) located in Lynn, they are helping us provide needed services to this at-risk population.

Centerboard's TPP is intended to provide a variety of short and long-term services that meet the specialized needs of this population, in addition to providing shelter to teen parents and their children. Data collected on this population shows, 61% exhibited signs of depression, 48% of residents had a history of physical abuse, 68% had a history of neglect, 27% had a history of sexual abuse and 50% of residents reportedly witnessed domestic violence as a child. Through this program, Centerboard provides an environment where teen parents are able to focus on specific personal goals while ensuring the safety and healthy development of themselves and their children.

Residents served by Centerboard's Lynn TPP include pregnant and parenting girls between the ages of 13 and 19. Many of our referred youth have experienced the trauma of domestic violence, homelessness, abuse and neglect. They may have experienced multiple losses, including their biological parents, extended family or community supports.

Centerboard assists young mothers in obtaining the necessary education, job skills, and life skills to facilitate a successful transition to independent living and self-sufficiency. Centerboard's focus in this program is to reduce risk factors associated with domestic violence, social isolation, poverty, homelessness, repeat pregnancy, lack of education, and limited access to community based services.

For 20 years, Centerboard has rented this property and utilized it to create a safe place for teen mothers and their children. In recent years, we have made many strategic moves to grow our organization and strengthen our infrastructure, which has positioned us to begin acquiring properties. With the help of the Franklin Square House Foundation, we are able to finalize the purchase and remodeling of the TPP building. It allows us to make it a true home for these mothers by addressing both structural and aesthetic needs that have existed since the program's inception. Franklin House Foundation knows and appreciates the value of a safe and nurturing place to call home. They are a true community partner, helping families, children and young adults get back on their feet right here in Lynn!



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## Centerboard

### Empowering Families, Young People and Communities for Success!

Centerboard is a community-based organization that supports families and young people through housing, access to employment and education, and financial empowerment. We work with parents and teens to achieve independence by providing trauma informed care and case management. In addition, we work with local residents, businesses, and elected officials to increase economic opportunity in the community. Through these efforts, we serve over 1,500 people each year.

[centerboard.org](http://centerboard.org)

## A View from the Top



As CFO of Centerboard, my job is to coordinate all areas of financial activities within the organization. This includes accounting, budgets, payroll, service contracts, banking, capital purchases, insurance, technology, and property management. I advise the CEO and COO on the financial side of Organizational Operations, and work with the CEO to strengthen the financial structure of Centerboard. I report financial information on a monthly basis to senior staff, program directors as well as the Board of Directors.

I have been the Chief Financial Officer here at Centerboard for the last 10 years and have worked for a number of different organizations in the Greater Lynn community. I have also served on multiple boards including the Lynn Classical High School Council, The Lynn Municipal Finance Commission and the Community Development Block Grant Committee. I have more than 35 years of experience working in finance with nonprofits of all sizes in the Lynn and Boston areas.

Centerboard is primarily funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through its Department of Families, Children, Housing and Community Development. When I first came to Centerboard we were a Lynn organization which had a modest \$2 million annual operating budget with 25 staff. We have since grown into a \$14 to \$15 million annual budget with more than 150 staff having an operation that spreads across a quarter of the Commonwealth.

**The needs of the families and young people we serve continue to evolve and we must be ready to adjust services to meet these needs while properly managing resources in a responsible manner.**

This growth has allowed us to expand the number of people we impact as well as the scope of services we provide. The needs of the families and young people we serve continue to evolve and we must be ready to adjust services to meet these needs while properly managing resources in a responsible manner.

The future is full of challenges for Centerboard, that include meeting the many and growing needs of our clients and the community we live in, providing a strong positive work environment for staff, keeping up with technology and meeting the requirements of State and Federal mandates within our service areas.

**The key is to look forward to the future, with a strong vision of where we are and where we want to go.**

Centerboard will continue to act as a reliable compass leading the way and continuing to persevere with the knowledge that allows us to assist people every day who have been entrusted to us for care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Bransfield".

Keith Bransfield, Chief Financial Officer

• RECEPTIONIST SPOTLIGHT •

## Kathleen Doucet



**“I always tell our families not to give up, to keep going and that it will get better. Usually when families get to my window they have gone to other places and they feel defeated, so when they get here I try to tell them not to give up.”**

Kathleen Doucet, Receptionist

**A**s Centerboard’s receptionist, Kathleen Doucet is the first face the public sees when coming into our organization. After over 19 years of experience at Centerboard there is no better person to manage the constant flow of traffic and high call volume on a daily basis. Kathleen started at Centerboard in February 1998 working part time at the housing authority and was eventually hired as receptionist when the opportunity came about. Kathleen is impressed in how far the organization has come since her starting. “When I first came it was called SPIN, we had a total of 25 staff and the Housing Department had one computer which they shared using floppy disks. **I never expected the organization would become what it is today,” she says.**

“In 19 years we’ve seen a lot together. I think of these people as my daytime family because we experience so much together,” Kathleen explains. With such an emotionally driven job, it is important for the Centerboard staff to relax whether it is over a game of charades during lunch, celebrating Thanksgiving together, or collecting donations for families in need through the holidays. Kathleen goes on to say, “We are all very close and even have a dog friendly office, because let’s face it, everything’s better with animals around!” She has especially loved the diversity within Centerboard as an organization and not just the population we serve. Kathleen points out that we are all so different, but we all have the same goal, and that is to help people. For her, the work environment at Centerboard is very understanding and management recognizes their staff as people, and not just punch cards. For Kathleen, that is one of the best benefits of being at Centerboard, **“We all experience a lot together and it is stressful, but it is very rewarding.”**

As one of the prominent faces of Centerboard, Kathleen sees a lot; including families who come back to thank her and tell her that she and her team changed them and saved their lives. She always tells the families who walk through the door that, “I know you are struggling, it isn’t always going to be this way and there are going to be benefits. I see a lot of people every day who need help and if we can’t help them I try to direct them to the right place. I’ve always said we are here because we belong here and that’s why we are still here.” Kathleen recognizes that Centerboard is very unique in that, **“it’s natural for everyone to want to help people, but to what extent they are willing to help is the difference, and with the staff here, it’s endless.”**

Kathleen finds it most rewarding when families can talk to her without fear. She points out that when they come to Centerboard they don’t know what is going on and they are either scared or upset. “When I had my son I was homeless and these resources did not exist. I finally got housing, saved and bought a house. I know that the people we help have that ability; you just have to fight, push, dream and believe. **I don’t know where I would be without Centerboard,” Kathleen says.**

...you just have to fight, push, **dream** and **believe.**

• RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT •

## Ebony White



Ebony White, Program Director and School Liaison, speaks highly of the diverse environment at Centerboard and states that, “everyone’s differences come together and we are all accepted for who we are which is so powerful. I think that says so much about Centerboard and how far we have come throughout the years.” One thing that truly stands out to Ebony about Centerboard is the way we resolve issues,

**“I think the voice of reason here is what makes us stand out. I love the way we problem solve. I don’t believe people plan mistakes but things happen, and here you get that space to talk it out to understand yourself and how you impacted others. It’s just a wonderful thing.”**

Ebony has also appreciated the way the staff culture has evolved. “We were always a family but the way we have brought all departments and people together is powerful. We have so many people from different backgrounds and putting them all together in one pot makes magical things happen.”

“That’s how we do such great things for our families,” Ebony stated with a grin on her face.

“I looked at what other people in the community were doing so that we could offer services that stood out here at the Family Resource Center (FRC),” said Ebony emphasizing that offering unique services to those in need was a big part of her vision once promoted to her Director position. “The cool thing about us is the way we view success. Any family that comes in and asks for help is a success, because it takes a lot for a person to ask for help. You aren’t going to leave here without an answer, and if we don’t have the answer we are going to find the resources you need to succeed,” Ebony stated. As a 10 year employee at Centerboard, Ebony is a pivotal part of our staff in charge of overseeing the FRC. Part of her role is to manage the day to day operations of her department, making sure that families’ needs are met, her staff is trained, and that they are prepared to handle any situation. Anyone from any place is eligible to come in for services at the FRC.

In Ebony’s time on staff she reflects on when Centerboard began offering a multitude of diversity trainings as well as trauma informed trainings. In her eyes, this was a huge turning point for the organization. “When we started these trainings I feel like we were able to do personal work within ourselves, as well as with our teams.” As the trainings continued, Ebony says, “We always had the same goal but it was all about how we reach

that goal knowing we all were so different. These trainings transformed the way we did and saw things. It opened our minds encouraging us to dig deeper and peel back the onion in order to get to the root of the problem.”

When asked what advice she would give fellow employees, Ebony encourages to “put your deposits in. Do more than what your job description says. It’s about getting involved when there are events, meeting new people in different departments, get to know people. Knowing the right people will take you a long way.” Ebony recognizes that she has come a long way in her time here at Centerboard both personally and professionally explaining,

**“I always knew I had the potential to be a great leader but didn’t know what that really meant or looked like. Now I can say I am a leader and I know what it takes to be where I am.”**

Ebony is also in the process of earning her Nonprofit Human Services Management Certificate through Suffolk University thanks to a Centerboard scholarship.

“Professionally and personally I have learned so much from fundraising to business plans. It opened my eyes to the day to day of what goes into a successful nonprofit.”

Not only is Ebony a crucial resource for Centerboard but she is an influential member of the Lynn community and was recently inducted into Lynn Tech’s Hall of Fame. Ebony is also actively involved with Stop The Violence





in Lynn. Ebony goes on to say, “A lot of powerful people are coming together to make an impact in our community. They are raising awareness surrounding the violence and involving the youth in order to keep them safe. A lot of us are running our own nonprofits and coming together to unite the efforts.”

“One valuable lesson I’ve learned in my position is that sometimes you may want more for a person than they may want for themselves. You can’t want more than they are willing to achieve. When you can meet someone where they are at you can find success. I used to have a lot of expectations because I saw the good in people but I realized my expectations may not be something they are willing to give in that moment due to the challenges they are overcoming. Going on the journey with them is important in helping them find their success. We want to see change immediately and sometimes you don’t see it until years later and that’s okay because eventually you will.”

**“ Let your families know that they are not alone and that we are going to do our best to ease their mind and help them. ”**

Ebony White, Program Director and School Liaison, Family Resource Center

• PARTNER SPOTLIGHT •

## George Banos



**A**s a landlord to over 15 Centerboard housing sites, George has seen many people struggle to get on their feet and has taken admiration in their triumph when they finally gain their own independence. “One gentleman stands out” he said, “he was from Africa and I got to know him pretty well because he had a couple of children, and a wife who got very sick and eventually passed away. Not only did he deal with the burden of understanding a new country, but he was now a single father trying to make it on his own.” George appreciated this particular tenant’s work ethic and determination to get his portion of rent paid on time while juggling work and being a single father. George pointed out, “despite everything, his apartment was always immaculate and he was always a pleasure to deal with.”

George and wife Patricia reside in Lynn and have three successful children, the eldest son an orthopedic surgeon, a daughter who is a mental health counselor in Virginia Beach for military families, and his youngest daughter is an event planner for Vertex Pharmaceuticals. Regarding his children George remarked, “They turned out to be really good, successful kids and I am very proud of them.” As a Lynn native George watched his grandfather, a Greek immigrant, work hard every day of his life whether he was in the local shoe factories, or after retirement religiously tending to his large Boston Street garden behind his home. As a real estate broker, and former high school teacher of 34 years George noted, “I think it was my grandfather that inspired me to get into real estate and become a landlord.” He commended his grandfather’s work ethic and saw his own father inherit that same gift.

George became involved with Centerboard in 2008 when he connected with Director of Housing Robin Tobin. Laughing he stated “Honestly, I don’t remember how it happened but it has been a pleasure working with Robin ever since. I worked closely with Robin and she has always been there through any housing issues.” When reflecting on his dynamics with Robin, George said, “Robin has been great to work with and I can’t imagine working with anyone else. She tells it like it is and she is always there to help you.” George is grateful to work so closely with Centerboard in making a difference stating, **“I can’t say enough how hard the people at Centerboard work. They are dealing with tough and sometimes heart wrenching situations. I admire the workers at Centerboard.”**

As the focal point for families who have no other resources, we at Centerboard are more than grateful for our partners in the community like George who help make what we do possible.



## LIFE EVENT

Over 50 motivated individuals gathered at Centerboard's Visionspace Life Event held on May 1st. Attendees enjoyed raffles, resume workshops, career driven and motivational speakers as well as a catered lunch. 90% of the event came from donations through local partnerships that we are honored to have. Teens in our program, community members and Centerboard staff left the event feeling enlightened, driven, and ready for success. A sincere thank you to Centerboard intern Dominique Grasso for planning and hosting this event as well as the local establishments who supported Visionspace Life Event; Salem State University, Chartwells, Gorilla Printing, Dress For Success, The Egan Family of Lynnfield, North Shore Career Center, Girls Inc of Lynn, North Shore Community College and Lynn Community Health Center.



## CINCO DE MAYO FIESTA

Centerboard held a successful fiesta including craft beers from Down The Road Brewery located in Everett and all you can eat Mexican buffet from Lynn's own Taqueria Mexico Lindo. Both establishments went above and beyond to help support the efforts of Centerboard for this festive fundraiser and guests enjoyed live music, a fun atmosphere and good friends. The night ended in the hitting of the pinata by Centerboard's very own Chief Operating Officer Heather Hildebrand. Proceeds from the event supported Centerboard's mission to help those in need in the community and all extra buffet food was donated to Centerboard's local Teen Living Shelter.



### • Visionspace Gallery

16 City Hall Square  
Lynn, MA 01901  
(339) 883-1375

[www.facebook.com/  
VisionspaceGallery](http://www.facebook.com/VisionspaceGallery)

### **FUTURE EVENTS** Spring Baseball Deck Party, Lynn MA • June 14th 6:00pm

Enjoy a fun night at Fraser Field cheering on the North Shore Navigators with friends and family while supporting Centerboard's community efforts. Fun games, great food, raffles and prizes will be available! Get your tickets now: [www.centerboard.org/events](http://www.centerboard.org/events)

Artists – for submission information contact Mandy Pleshaw at (339) 883-2062

• HOUSING SERVICES SPOTLIGHT •

## Oriana De La Rosa



When asked what her motivation is in her career, Oriana smiled and without hesitation said, “The kids.” “What a child does while in a shelter reflects on their parents and when their kids succeed, it reflects on me. We all are very happy when our kids succeed.”

Oriana De La Rosa  
Family Housing Advocate

Over her ten years at Centerboard, Oriana has noticed growth and change within the organization that she is very proud to be part of. “Centerboard is investing in its own staff growth and utilizing us as resources. It’s amazing how they help us; we grow with them and the long term employee’s help train new employees. What’s better than that?” Oriana goes on to talk about Centerboard within the community stating that, “now Centerboard is all over the city. We don’t just work with homeless families, we work with everybody.” She pointed out that no two days are the same in her role as Family Housing Advocate, and that’s just one of the many things she loves about her work.

Oriana says a big part of her role is earning the trust of the families she works with. **“I am not here to judge them; I am here to help them. I am their voice and their advocate. I translate for them, and protect them. We have our ups and downs, but we always manage to work together and move forward,”** says Oriana. As a Family Housing Advocate Oriana receives the family referral from the Department of Transitional Assistance and helps them balance their life and work towards becoming independent. “I am the person on the other side who is helping them after they are on the street for whatever reason. I become a part of their good future,” Oriana says.

Years ago a child in one of Oriana’s families was very sick and granted one last wish through Make-A-Wish Foundation. His wish was to see Disney World with his family and without Oriana the trip would never have been possible. Oriana traveled with the family and acted as a translator and driver for the family during their trip. “We went to every park, and anywhere the kids wanted. They had an amazing time and I was a part of that dream. This family was going through a lot and just wanted to see their dreams come true. Centerboard helped me do that for them,” Oriana said, with tears welling in her eyes looking back on the memories.



As Oriana walks through the Centerboard offices it isn’t uncommon to see her with a big smile on her face. While explaining her work she states that it’s seeing people change that is most rewarding. When people come to her, they are completely lost, their kids are hungry and she is their first contact. Oriana starts by telling her families that everything is going to be ok and it is her goal that when they hear her voice, they hear hope. Seeing her families a few weeks after their initial meeting is when she gets to view firsthand the progress they are making with her guidance. When they enter Centerboard they are often times hungry, worried, sad and confused. “Seeing these people closer to earning their independence is something I take pride in. They are able to start saving, going back to school, paying their bills and living more independently. These are all things they didn’t know how to do without being coached, and I help them with those life skills,” Oriana says with pride.

## Become a Donor

Your thoughtful support provides much needed care: it assists families to obtain access to housing, employment and education, and financial empowerment services. Your gift helps further our work with local residents, businesses, and elected officials to increase economic opportunity. And more, it supports the growing arts and culture movement by helping Centerboard to continue spearheading public art projects and operating our nonprofit art gallery, Visionspace.

Please consider partnering with Centerboard by including us in your philanthropic giving. Your support will help us forward our mission to support families, young people and the community we care about!

**Centerboard is grateful to donors who wish to support its ongoing mission to revitalize communities by investing in their people and places.** Many forms of charitable giving are appreciated and can be done online or by contacting Centerboard.

### OUTRIGHT GIFTS

All gifts made to Centerboard are 100% tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. They include gifts of:

- Cash
- Check
- Credit Card
- Stock (avoid capital gains on appreciated security)



### PLANNED GIFTS

Please contact your personal financial advisor and discuss your philanthropic intentions. Also please contact Centerboard so we may recognize your thoughtful generosity. Centerboard welcomes the following types of Planned Gifts that are 100% tax deductible to the fullest extent of US law:

- Bequests – Gifts through a WILL.
- Charitable Remainder Trusts – Pays beneficiaries an income for life; funded with cash, appreciated securities or real estate, and providing significant current tax benefits as well as reducing probate and estate costs for your heirs.

- Life Insurance – Existing or new policies can be a vehicle for providing a meaningful gift. Insurance can also be used to replace assets that have been earmarked for a charitable gift.
- IRAs or Individual Retirement Accounts – Current regulations allow the transfer of certain IRA assets to Centerboard.

**For more information on Planned Gifts, contact Ray Pasciuto, Director of Development at (339) 883-1383.**

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## ● Empowering Families, Young People and Communities for Success! ●

**Homeward Bound** is a quarterly publication of Centerboard.

We'd like to keep you informed, however, if you no longer wish to receive this newsletter or you'd like to receive this by email, please let us know by phone (339) 883-1375 or email [lmccormack@centerboard.org](mailto:lmccormack@centerboard.org).

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Thank you to our Centerboard staff for sharing their inspiring stories.

Do you have a Centerboard success story you want to share with us? Contact Mandy Pleshaw at [apleshaw@centerboard.org](mailto:apleshaw@centerboard.org) or call (339) 883-2062.

