

June 2022



YouthLaunch

Building a bridge to self-sufficiency with families in Pittsfield

Program Report
August 2019 - June 2022

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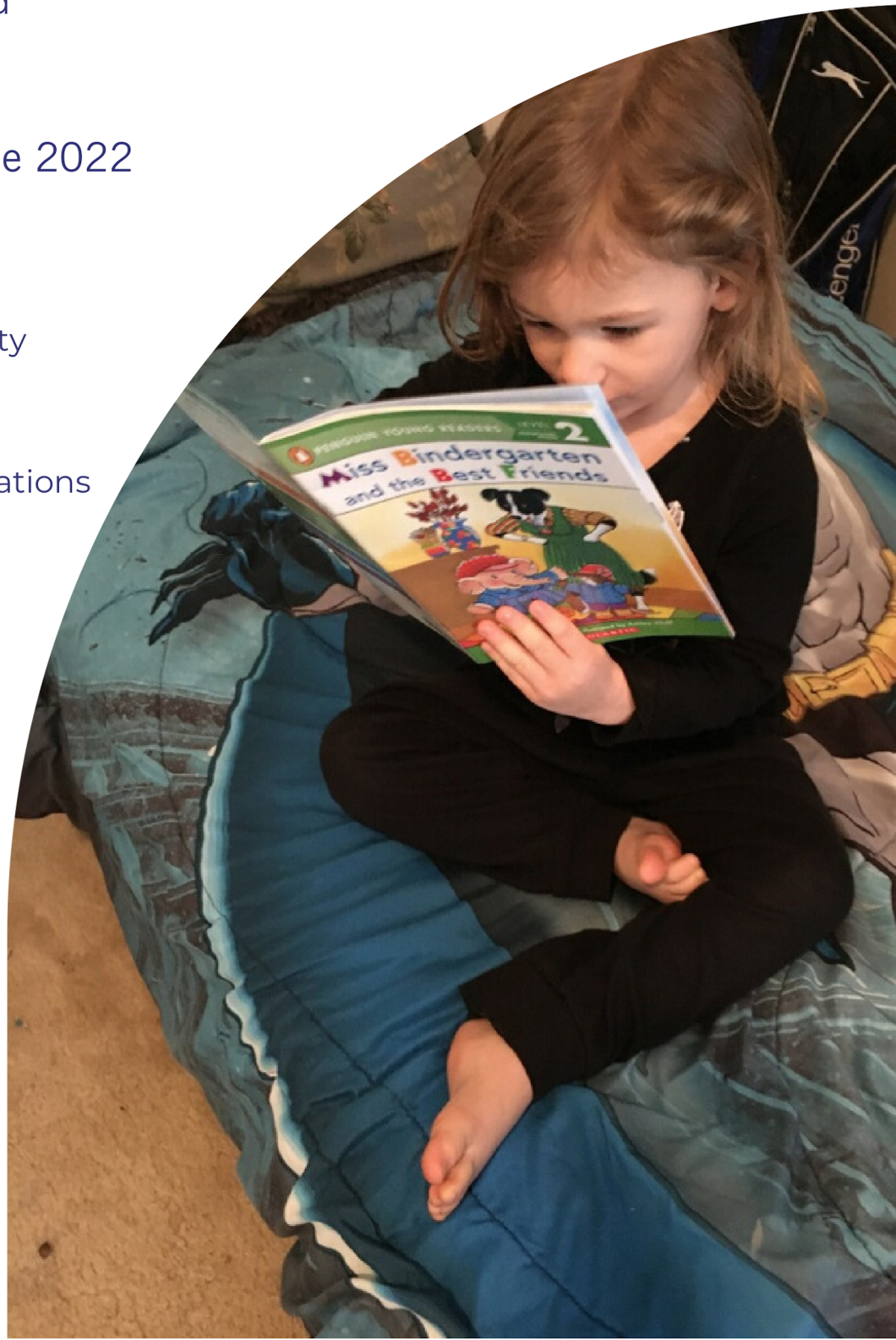


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About YouthLaunch

The YouthLaunch program was a three-year pilot that focused on early engagement for families with children zero to ten years old. Using a holistic approach with the EMPATH Economic Mobility Pathways (EMPATH) model, we further integrated a focus on parent and child interactions, as well as early and preliteracy skills for children, including cultural enrichment activities to foster overall well-being.

EMPATH is an evidence-informed, brain science-based approach to help coach families to move out of poverty and toward self-sufficiency. We implement this model to help families think about their lives across the four areas of the Bridge to Self-Sufficiency.

This multifaceted tool serves as a conversation guide as well as a means for assessment and tracking progress. These self-administered Bridge assessments help participants identify strengths and obstacles to success.



Participant Name: _____ Date: _____ Next Review Date: _____ Program: _____

	Family Stability		Financial Management			Well-Being		Skills & Education
	Housing	Dependents	Expenses	Savings	Debts	Physical & Mental Health	Social Connections	
Empowered Thriving 10	I have unsubsidized permanent and safe housing.	My family's needs are met; no barrier to school or work.	I have enough income to cover my expenses. I am not receiving assistance and I am saving.	Savings of one month and more.	No debt other than mortgage, car, or educational loans.	My physical and/or emotional health is not a barrier to my activities and responsibilities.	I can always rely on people I know to provide useful advice, guidance, or support.	I use my strong workplace skills and education to enhance my career advancement and future goals.
Secure 8	I have subsidized permanent and safe housing.	My family's needs cause minimal disruption to school or work.	I have enough income to cover my expenses and I am not receiving assistance.	Savings of one month.	Current in all debts and making more than minimum payment on 1 or more debts.	My physical and/or emotional health rarely interrupts my daily activities or responsibilities.	I can often rely on people I know to provide useful advice, guidance, or support.	I have strong workplace skills and/or education that enhance my employability.
Stable 6	I have subsidized stable and safe housing.	My family's needs cause some disruption to school or work.	I have enough income to cover bills and other expenses and I am receiving assistance.	Savings of less than one month.	Making minimum payments on all debts.	My physical and/or emotional health sometimes interrupts my daily activities or responsibilities.	I can sometimes rely on people I know to provide useful advice, guidance, or support.	I have workplace skills and/or education that help me maintain employability.
Vulnerable 4	I have unstable housing and I am at risk of eviction.	My family's needs cause significant obstacles to school or work.	I do not have enough income to cover all of my bills and expenses.	Set up savings account with some savings.	Behind in payments of 1 or more debts.	My physical and/or emotional health regularly interrupts my daily activities or responsibilities.	I can rarely rely on people I know to provide useful advice, guidance, or support.	I have limited workplace skills and/or education that affect my employability, and I would like to obtain new skills.
Crisis 2	I am homeless. Living in an emergency shelter/friends.	My family's needs are not met and require additional attention.	I have no income and am unable to cover bills and expenses.	No savings.	Currently not making any payments.	I have very limited engagement in my daily activities or responsibilities due to physical and/or emotional health.	I can never rely on people I know to provide useful advice, guidance, or support.	I do not have the workplace skills or education I need in order to obtain employment.

Adapted from EMPATH's Bridge to Self-Sufficiency

100% of surveyed participants strongly agree with the statement, "The Bridge is a helpful tool in helping me plan for the future."

At a Glance



25

Families served



47

Children served



717

Home visits



197

Books distributed



13

Families increased their income



89

Goals reached

Key Successes



5 Parents started college



9 Adults obtained employment for a total of 16 families with jobs



21 of our families had an open DCF case when they enrolled. One-third of the cases have since been closed.

Participant Highlight

Individual Impact - L.A.'s Story

 **28%**

In just six months, L.A. increased her family Bridge score by 28% while working with YouthLaunch.



When L.A. joined YouthLaunch in July of 2021, her three children were in foster care, and she was overwhelmed by the tasks she had to complete for the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to be reunified. Working with our program specialist, she attended parenting classes through the Family Resource Center. With her newly learned skills, she was able to fill out a parenting and crisis plan and prepare for her children to return home. With YouthLaunch support, L.A. was able to set and achieve goals for organizing a family schedule, including daily routines for her children. When her children returned home in September of 2021, she continued to work toward the goal of having her case with DCF closed. Additionally, she used the books and reading logs supplied by the program specialist to nurture her relationship with her children.

L.A. was re-awarded full legal custody of her children in November of 2021. We celebrated this achievement with a \$100 gift card and more books for her to read with her children.

Gaining stable employment was essential to L.A.'s continued success. With the guidance of our program specialist, she filled out applications for jobs that aligned with her desire to work in the nursing field. L.A. was offered a position at Fairview Commons as a CNA. L.A. is furthering her education, planning to go to college to get her nursing degree.

Like 50% of YouthLaunch participants, L.A. utilized Parenting Classes through the 18 Degrees Family Resource Center to strengthen her parenting skills.

Participant Highlight

Individual Impact - E.F.'s Story



Like E.F., 30% of YouthLaunch participants opened a savings account to save for the future or create a safety net for life's twists and turns.



In November of 2019, we met E.F. At that time, her 3-year-old daughter was in foster care, and E.F. was looking for support to help her navigate the steps to reunification and create a long-lasting stable environment. Our Program Specialist listened to E.F. with a compassionate ear and helped her set individual goals to move forward.

By breaking larger goals into smaller steps, E.F. was able to keep moving forward. By January of 2020, E.F. and her daughter were reunited. She continued to work with the program specialist to increase her family's stability by establishing new routines with her daughter and, more importantly, new ways to nurture and connect with her daughter.

E.F. then went to work on her financial and educational goals. With additional support, E.F. obtained her needed transcripts and applied for financial aid and scholarships. She began classes at Berkshire Community College in the fall semester of 2021, working to receive her nursing license.

The first step to reaching her financial goal was to save \$250. We celebrated this achievement with an incentive check of \$50 to add to her savings. E.F. continues to work toward her goal of having three months of expenses saved. She increased her family's income by negotiating additional hours with her daycare provider allowing her to work more.

She says the support she gets from YouthLaunch has helped her move forward with her goals.

Participant Highlight

Individual Impact - I.A.'s Story



Like I.A., 28% of YouthLaunch participants secured stable housing since enrolling. Now 100% of our participants have stable housing.



I.A. entered YouthLaunch in July 2021, pregnant with her fourth child and without stable housing. Working with our YouthLaunch program specialist, she secured an apartment with enough room for her whole family. With a safe living situation, I. A. was able to focus on overcoming the barriers getting in the way of her moving forward.

After her baby was born, I.A. initially struggled to return to work as she did not have reliable family support to help with the baby. She overcame this challenge by enrolling her child in childcare at 18 Degrees. With the guidance of our program specialist, she prioritized obtaining the needed documents to receive the child tax credit. Once she received these funds, she achieved her goal of reinstating her driver's license after paying off past tickets and started saving for a vehicle, which she has since purchased.

Currently, I.A. is attending Berkshire Community College to receive her associate's degree in culinary arts. She is now employed at two different restaurants to obtain the needed hours to sustain her family's income. Her goal is to remain in the restaurant industry and become a restaurant manager. She has also found a supportive community through a local church.

I.A. is now enrolled in a savings match program through Greylock Federal Credit Union to help her work toward her goal of saving for a house. Her children are all enrolled in daycare or school and are thriving.

Financial Summary

As of June 30, 2022

	FY'20	FY'21	FY'22	3 year total
Funds Received	\$90,000	\$103,229	\$90,614	\$283,843
Program Expenses	\$69,594	\$80,318	\$85,159	\$235,071
Program Surplus	\$20,406	\$22,911	\$5,455	\$48,722

The additional revenue received will continue to fund YouthLaunch into FY23.



30%

is the average increase in Bridge scores for our YouthLaunch participants who have been engaged with the program for at least six months.



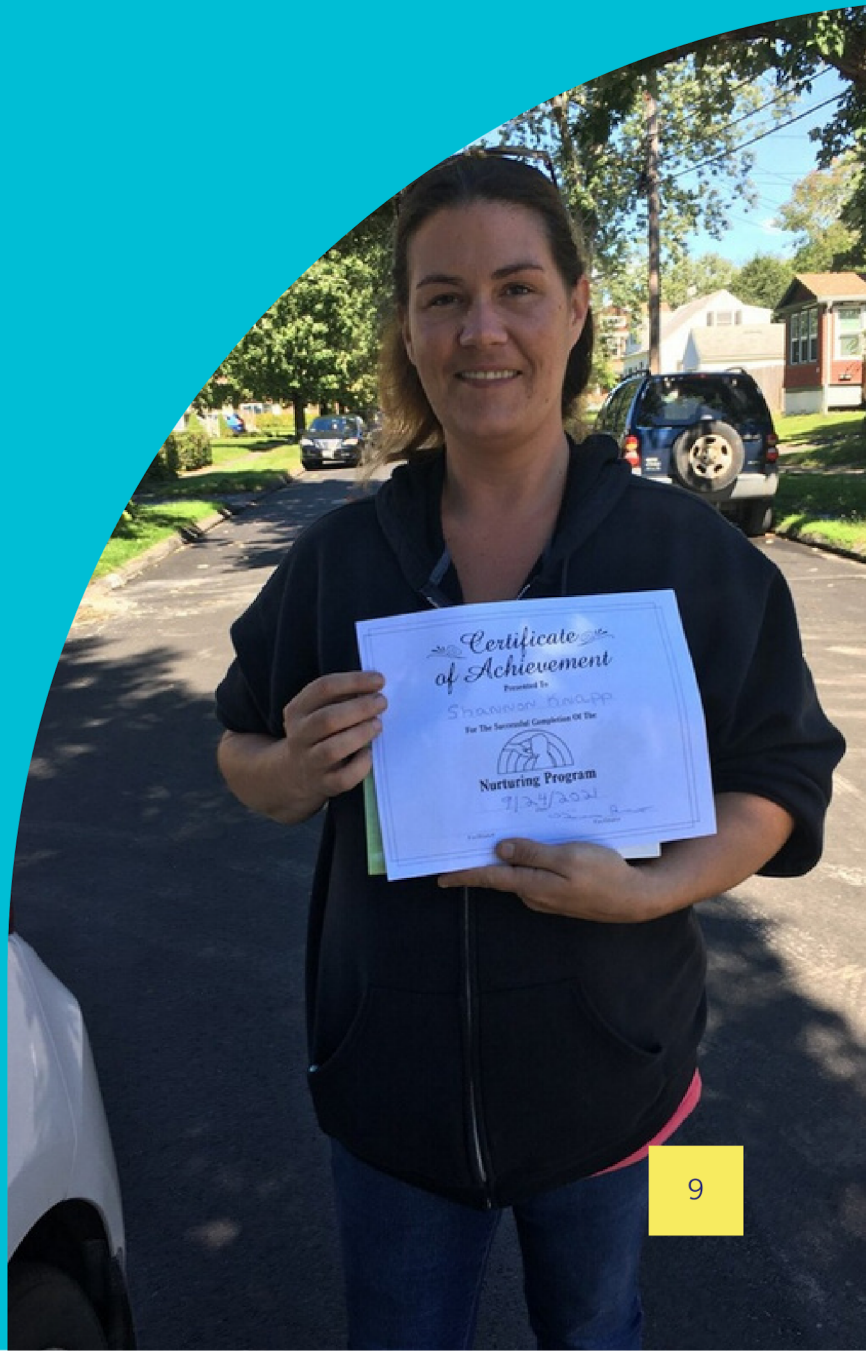
The Future Is Bright

Following our three-year pilot period, YouthLaunch will be incorporated into our operations in our Early Education and Care classrooms. We will continue to support positive and adaptive development and behaviors for children and families.

In its new iteration, YouthLaunch will be partially supported by an American Rescue Plan Act grant from the City of Pittsfield.

100% of surveyed participants strongly agreed with the statement,

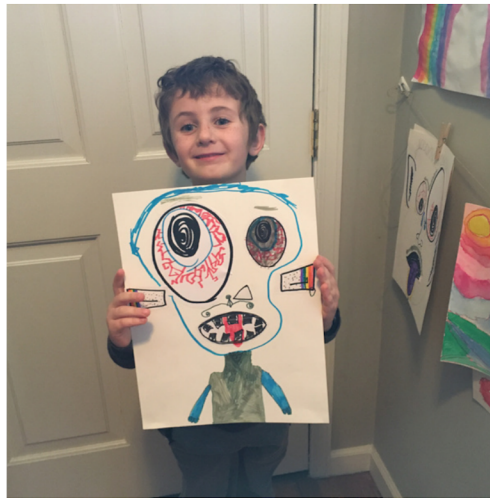
“As a participant of the EMPATH program, my life is changing for the better.”



Enrichment Highlights

YouthLaunch incorporated a number of enrichment activities to help foster and strengthen the family connection.

- Family Game Night Baskets
- Virtual Dance Lessons
- Art Enrichment Classes
- Field Trip to the VIA Aquarium
- Field Trip to Mass MoCA
- Parents as Reading Partners
- Pumpkin Carving Party
- Summer Outdoor Fun Activity Basket



Meet Our Program Specialist

Patricia Russo



Patricia Russo, Program Specialist for YouthLaunch, has worked with families in New York State and in Berkshire County for more than 16 years. Before joining 18 Degrees in September 2019, Patricia worked at the Family Resource Network as a Peer Advocate for two years and brought her lived experience as a parent of a child with mental health diagnosis to her work with families.

Patricia amassed many certifications during her career. She received her Professional Family Peer Advocate Certification through Families Together in New York State. She is certified as a peer recovery coach, attending courses through the Academy of Peer Services, and has completed coursework through the New York College of Direct Support. She is a trained Nurturing Parents Facilitator and EMPATH Mobility Coach. Patricia brings a wealth of knowledge and strong engagement skills to her work with YouthLaunch.

"Frequently, my adult participants come to me feeling overwhelmed and defeated. To both my clients and myself, this program, and Ms. Russo in particular, have been a godsend, providing services in an area of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts which are scarce and at a premium. We are very lucky to have 18 Degrees and Ms. Russo here in Pittsfield!"

-Judith A. Procopio, Esq.



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