

18 DEGREES

BETTER TOGETHER

2026 IMPACT REPORT

A REFLECTION

FROM OUR PRESIDENT & BOARD CHAIR





At 18 Degrees, impact is more than a measure of what we accomplish. It is the momentum we create together when people have access to opportunity, meaningful support, and a community that believes in their potential. At the heart of this work is one of our agency values, **Better Together**—a guiding principle for how we support one another, collaborate, and advance our mission.

Over the past year, **Better Together** has taken many forms. Our Family Resource Center has partnered with students, families, and schools to address truancy and help young people reconnect with learning. Our Early Education programs extend beyond the classrooms to engage caregivers while they support their young learners. When we unite our strengths and share responsibility, real change for our children and community is possible.

Participants and community partners remind us that lasting change begins by listening, responding, and moving forward together. Across our services we support and respect one another, create opportunities for every person to shine, and recognize the unique strengths each person brings. As our communities have evolved, we have adapted alongside them while remaining steadfast in our commitment to champion all people on their journey toward community and belonging.

The stories in this report illuminate what is possible when barriers give way to access, connection, and belonging. They also affirm that meaningful impact is never created alone. Our staff, board, community partners, volunteers, and donors each contribute essential services and perspectives that help children, youth, individuals, and families throughout Western Massachusetts. Together, we share in the work, learn from one another, and celebrate the accomplishments that bring **Better Together** to life.

As we reflect on the year behind us, we are proud of how far we have come together and inspired by the possibilities ahead. Thank you for standing with 18 Degrees and helping transform possibility into progress—one person, one family, and one community at a time. We are truly **Better Together**.

With gratitude,

Stephanie Steed Ken Stark

WHO WE ARE

OUR VISION

In our new day, opportunities outshine barriers and all people feel a sense of community and belonging.

OUR MISSION

We champion access, opportunity, belonging, and well-being for all people on their journey, helping to build thriving communities.

SNAPSHOTS FROM THE YEAR



Kids 4 Harmony performed with acclaimed musician Ted Rosenthal at the 2026 Kids 4 Harmony Summer Gala Concert.

18 Degrees' Parents as Teachers program earned Blue Ribbon status, the highest level of recognition from the national organization for its evidence based model.





Congratulations to Paula McDermott on nearly 49 years of service with the agency! Paula has made an incredible impact on everyone at 18 Degrees, and we wish her all the best in her upcoming retirement. Thank you, Paula, for your many years of dedication and service!

In November, Brave Spaces program held a special event honoring National Transgender Day of Remembrance. The names of seventy transgender individuals killed in the United States in the past year were read and honored. City officials spoke in support of the transgender community, and the event stood as a meaningful moment of visibility, remembrance, and solidarity.





Critical improvements to 18 Degrees' childcare facilities at 480 West St. were made possible by key state capital renovation funding. This award from the Healey-Driscoll Administration, combined with support from The Jane and Jack Fitzpatrick Trust, a low-interest bridge loan from the Gilson Family Foundation, and financing from Greylock Federal Credit Union, brought the project to life.

In September, 18 Degrees co-sponsored and joined nearly 250 Caring Force members at Westfield State University for the regional Caring Force Rally, held in Western Massachusetts. The day was both a celebration and a call to action—lifting up the human services workforce while advocating for fair wages and student loan relief.



FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

Showing Up Together

When Maya was in third grade, she was a bright but withdrawn nine-year-old. She had missed 89 days of school that year, and truancy had already taken hold. By winter break of fourth grade, that pattern was accelerating: 51 more days gone. An intervention was needed and a partnership was formed between the 18 Degrees Family Resource Center, the family, and the school. As a result, from January through the end of the school year, **Maya only missed two days of school.**

Truancy is more than a school-related problem. Left unaddressed, it has a ripple effect that reaches far beyond the classroom, disrupting a child's social-emotional development, cognitive growth, and long-term success. Chronic absenteeism is linked to long-term academic setbacks, social isolation, and a significantly higher risk of difficulty later in life. For a child like Maya, every missed day meant losing the structure, relationships, and the sense of belonging that are necessary for a child's healthy development.

Abbie Callaghan, the 18 Degrees school liaison, brought Maya, her family, and the school into the same conversation, working to understand how to move forward, **better together**. Along the way, she also connected Maya's mother with other 18 Degrees resources, helping the whole family thrive. What emerged was a plan built on real communication and trust. Slowly, school became somewhere Maya wanted to be.

At 18 Degrees, we see these patterns as a chance to intervene early, before they become more serious. It's upstream work: the kind that rarely makes headlines but changes the direction of a life before a crisis ever has the chance to take hold. Thankfully, it's not work we do alone. It takes families, schools, and neighbors recognizing the signs together, and a community willing to show up for one child at a time.



455
home visits serving 40 families engaged with Parents as Teachers

2,960
services provided to 671 community members through our Family Resource Center

66
community-centered events with 1650+ attendees hosted by our FRC!

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

The Sounds of Leadership

Some people use their voice to tell their story. Others use it to inspire and uplift those around them. Desharie does both.

Desharie has been a long-time participant here at 18 Degrees, and throughout that time, one thing has remained consistent: he shows up. Whether it's meeting with his case managers, participating in groups, attending events, field trips, or volunteering at community cleanups, Desharie is someone who stays engaged and invested in both his own growth and the community around him.

That same instinct carried him to the State House in Boston earlier this year, where he represented the young people of 18 Degrees at Safety Day on the Hill. He didn't just speak for himself in that room, he spoke for other young people facing the same challenges, using his own journey as a way to advocate for theirs.

It shows up most clearly in his music. Desharie writes and records songs about his challenges and his growth, stories that speak to other young people who see their own experiences in his words. **His song and music video, "Paper Trails," is one of the clearest examples of his emerging leadership, using his own experiences and ambitions to encourage others to recognize their own potential.** In his song, Desharie says, "What it takes to be the greatest is in all of us. To make it, go as far as your dreams will take us."

That's the power of a young leader: not just what they accomplish, but who they bring up with them. Desharie's story is still being written. But the people around him, the peers who hear themselves in his lyrics, the officials he stood in front of on the Hill, are already part of it too.



***Paper Trails* by Rarari300. Scan to watch!**

228+
youth ages 10-24 in Pittsfield and North Adams supported by Community Connection programs

23
youth mentees received support from their mentors as they took sustainable steps toward their goals

DESHARIE (MIDDLE) AND COMMUNITY CONNECTION STAFF



EARLY EDUCATION & CARE

Beyond the Classroom

459
instances of individualized support for families of enrolled children

190
children enrolled in Early Education and Care

24
local high school and college students gained credited experience working in early education with 18 Degrees

In our Early Education & Care program, the walls of the classroom and the hours of the school day are only part of the picture. Some of the most important work for children happens in partnership with parents, before drop-off, after pick-up, and in the moments in between.

Nolan was in Pre-K and midway through the year, it became obvious he was struggling. His behavior in the classroom had become problematic, and staff were faced with tough decisions about how to best support him. It was a challenging situation for any family, and a harder one for those who knew there was more going on than just a stubborn four-year-old.

They noticed a pattern; on Nolan's hardest days, his mother Susie was having a hard day too. Behind the scenes, she was on the edge of losing both her car and her apartment, caught in an unstable job and housing situation. Staff connected her with Patricia, an 18 Degrees family-focused case manager, who began working with Susie.

Together, Patricia and Susie secured emergency relief for her immediate needs and brought in additional team members to help Nolan. By leaning on our classroom school liaison and coordinating with other community providers, the team provided Nolan with the resources he needed, both in the classroom and beyond. With some of Susie's immediate pressure lifted, she was able to start thinking about the future, exploring employment opportunities that would allow her to earn certifications to increase her income.

From there, a different pattern ensued. As things steadied for Susie, they steadied for Nolan too, and this spring, he reached a milestone that previously seemed far less certain: joining one of the many smiling faces graduating from Pre-K.

Wraparound support like Patricia's is just one example of how our Early Education program stands beside parents. It's one piece of a broader effort that includes seasonal outings, parent advisory groups, and family activities to bring families into the fold. The evidence is clear: parent engagement is one of the strongest predictors of a child's future academic, social, and emotional success. When we invest in parents, we're investing in their children, whether that shows up in a classroom, a job interview, or a Pre-K graduation.





HEALING HOMES

Celebrating Kecia and Teresa

Below is a first-hand account from a young woman who spent part of her childhood under Kecia's roof, one of our longest-partnered foster parents. Teresa lived with Kecia for three years, but their bond has lasted a lifetime. After many years as a foster parent with 18 Degrees, Kecia is retiring this year. This is Teresa's story, in her own words.

"When I was 15 years old, I moved into Kecia's home with my daughter. I stayed there until I was 18 and during those years, she became so much more than my foster mom. She became my mom. Kecia gave me something I desperately needed at that point in my life; stability, love and support. Her home was a safe place where I knew I belonged and it became a place I could always call home. While I was living with her, I experienced one of the hardest losses of my life, when my biological mom passed away. Having Kecia there during that time meant more than I could ever explain. She continued to love, support, and guide me when I needed a mother the most. Kecia helped me grow into the woman and mother I am today.

After leaving foster care at 18, my life changed in a lot of ways. I was no longer living with Kecia and I was now responsible for building a life for myself and my daughter. Becoming an adult while also being a young mother came with challenges, and there were times when I had to figure things out as I went. But the things that Kecia taught me stayed with me. She taught me how to take care of myself, be responsible, handle everyday life, and make decisions for myself and my daughter. Those lessons helped me become more independent and gave me the confidence to keep moving forward even when life became difficult. I have experienced losses, struggles, and difficult moments since leaving Kecia's home, but I also grew. I had another baby, built my own family, worked, learned from my experiences, and continued creating the life I wanted for myself and my children.

What means the most to me is that our relationship didn't end when I left her home. She is still my mom today. We talk, we see each other often, and she continues to be there for me. She also has become a "grandma" to my children, which means so much to me because they get to experience the same love I received growing up.

My experience with Kecia taught me that family isn't always about who you are related to by blood. Sometimes family are those who choose to love you, support you, teach you, and continue to show up for you. If I could tell Kecia my mom one thing today, it would simply be thank you. Thank you for everything you did and everything you are still doing. You are appreciated in a way that words cannot describe. I will always be grateful that you became my mom."

25
children received intensive foster care services with Healing Homes

14
additional children experiencing foster care received supportive services and mentoring

280
assessments written supporting adoption efforts statewide

4
children achieved permanency through adoption and family reunification



KECIA (LEFT) AND TERESA



In Their Own Words

Miguel picked up a cello for the first time two years ago, shortly after moving to the United States. He has since grown into a skilled, committed cellist, and after graduating high school this spring, he is continuing music education at Berkshire Community College. His teacher, Jorge, and Miguel himself reflect on the journey.

Kids 4 Harmony is inspired by Venezuela's El Sistema movement, an ensemble-based music program for social change. Kids 4 Harmony focuses on musical excellence, student well-being and development, and family support, building the skills, access, and support for participants to succeed in music and beyond.



"Music has taught me a lot throughout this journey: the insights, the lessons, the challenges, the friendships, and the opportunities have all shown me that I can reach my goals."

–MIGUEL '26



"Miguel began his journey just over a year and a half ago and has been a perfect example of what can happen when talent meets opportunity. In just a short period of time with his cello, he has mastered technique and brought music to life. Miguel's dedication, constant curiosity, and willingness to challenge himself have inspired not only his peers, but also myself as an educator."

–JORGE SOTO, KIDS 4 HARMONY TEACHING ARTIST

Jorge Soto is a Venezuelan conductor and violinist who grew up through El Sistema and has been with Kids 4 Harmony for 14 years. He is the currently Music Director of the New Philharmonia Orchestra in Newton, Massachusetts.

86%
of students felt that K4H helped them improve their leadership skills

88%
of students felt that K4H gave them ways to express themselves through music by performances, composition, and collaboration

16
beginner-level students welcomed

58
students and their families served

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Tyler Blake
Janis Bowersox
Pamela C. Breslin
Deborah Buccino
Nancy Bullock
Jill Cancellieri
Claudia Vance Cass
Tiffany Chang
Lisa Chen
Nicole Chernisky
Jeanne Chivers
Nancy Cohen
Sandra Cohen
Claudia Coplan
Nathan Cracolici
Michael Dooley
Sophia Duclos
Kari Lisa Dupuis
Shirley Edgerton
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Ava Elfont
Maria Encalada
Grace L. Enchill
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Amy Guachione
Linda Gunderson
Allison Prion Gundler
Jennifer Gwatkin
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Amy Herring
Katie Higgins
Michael Higgins
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Jalisa Jessup
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Alexis Johnson
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Mario Kelsey
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Heather King
Paula Jane Kurasch
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Brenda Landes
Jamie Laprade
Maureen Lee
Daniel Lenois
Jessica Lesure
Judy Levin
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Ebony Lumford
Susan Magazine
Maria Maisonet
Audrina Maloney
Kas Maroney
Khloe Martin
Brandon Mauer
Kate Mayne
Ava McCaul
Nancy J. McIntire
Marissa Dubecky Meehan
Kaitlyn Milette
Joan Morgan
Alison Mulcahy
Elizabeth Neiderman
Alejandra Nozyce
Lesley Oransky
Jason Ostrander
Alan Perlman
Zoelie Prairie
Kari Proskin
Camlyn Qiaofang Smith Allen
Julie Quain
Mary Jo Ramos
Gretchen Rennell Court
Cheryl Richards
Karen Richards
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Dorothy Altman Weber, *Co-Chair*
Edward Bride
Sheila Heffernon
Susan Lombard
Jane Mayer
Philip McKnight
Carolyn Newberger
Penny Pincus
Elizabeth Selkowitz
Carole Siegel
Ken Stark

124 volunteers gave 5,930 hours



JULIE QUAIN
Volunteer & Legacy Donor

A LASTING IMPACT

"Leaving a planned gift for Kids 4 Harmony is one of the most meaningful ways I can make a difference. It's not only an important program, but one with proven results! I'm more than proud–and honored–to follow my Mother's example by leaving a legacy gift for Kids 4 Harmony."

By including 18 Degrees in your planned giving, you help secure a brighter tomorrow for those we serve. Contact Sarah Frederick, Vice President of Advancement, at (413) 448-8281 ext. 233 to learn more.

DONORS

Thanks to our contributors who generously supported our mission between July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026.

$25,000+

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$500 - $999

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Our printed donor roll reflects donors who gave $500 or more as well as notable memorial tributes received in Fiscal Year 2026. For our full list of donors, please visit 18degreesma.org.

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Mass Mentoring Partnership
Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership
Northern Berkshire United Way
Williamstown Community Chest

Public Funding

City of North Adams
City of Pittsfield
MA Department of Children and Families (DCF)
MA Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)
MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)
MA Department of Public Health
MA Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Massachusetts Cultural Council

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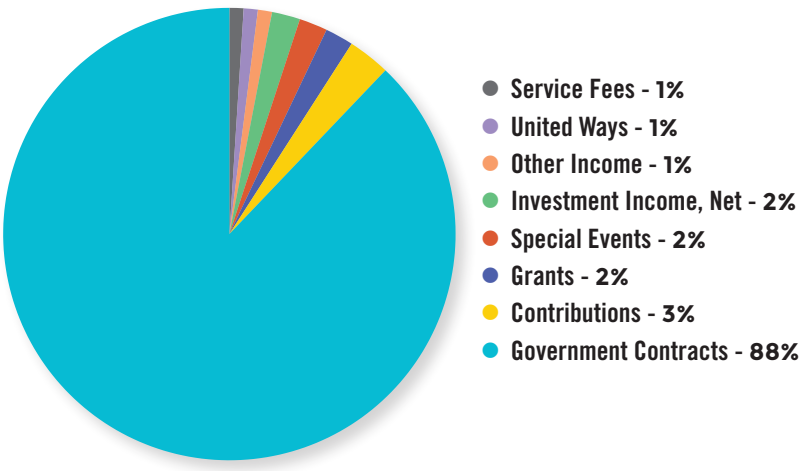
FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

Income and Expenses for the Years Ending June 30, 2026 and 2025

	FY26	FY25
INCOME		
United Ways	$79,500	$122,930
Contributions	$421,221	$457,109
Grants*	$277,299	$638,949
Government contracts	$10,848,293	$11,007,832
Service fees	$85,042	$82,007
Investment income, net	$286,255	$184,692
Special Events	$229,113	$237,479
Other income	$173,447	$53,488
TOTAL INCOME	**$12,400,170**	**$12,784,486**
OPERATING EXPENSES		
Program expenses	$9,450,929	$9,438,281
Core mission support	$1,701,870	$1,568,459
Fundraising	$226,304	$188,324
Total Operating Expenses	**$11,379,103**	**$11,195,064**
TOTAL EXCESS	**$1,021,067**	**$1,589,422**

The above is an excerpt from 18 Degrees' financial statements for the years ending June 30, 2026 and 2025. A complete audit report is available upon request.
**FY25 grants include multi-year pledges to be received in subsequent years.*

2026 OPERATING SUPPORT



OUR LEADERSHIP

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OUR STORY

Our name, 18 Degrees, reflects on where the sun stands just below the horizon at daybreak. It's our privilege to meet people in moments of life where it may be more dark than light with a promise that for them and for all of us, the light will grow from the start of each new day.

WHAT WE DO

18 Degrees promotes the well-being and strengths of people in Western Massachusetts. Through education, resources, support, and advocacy we serve our communities in four areas:

- **Early Education & Care**
- **Foster Care & Adoption**
- **Child & Family Well-being**
- **Youth & Community Development**

SUPPORT OUR MISSION

SCAN THE CODE TO DONATE.

For more ways to give, please visit our website.



18 DEGREES

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