

PROVIDER PROFILES

CENTERBOARD

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About the Agency

Founded in 1988, Centerboard sprang from a collaborative effort among Lynn's public and private business communities to address the problem of homelessness in the city, which was growing at that time as a result of job losses, industry closures and declining community investments.

In the 30-plus years since then, Centerboard has grown into a \$21 million organization, serving over 4,500 people annually via a range of services that support family stability. To accomplish its mission, Centerboard focuses on creating strong, sustainable catalysts for change and development.

The nonprofit sees Lynn as a vibrant, urban center that supports the entire region through a vital creative economy, safe and stable housing, jobs and schools for all residents. Such a belief requires bringing community attention and resources to the city's most vulnerable residents, including low-income youth, young adults and families. Centerboard is primarily funded through contracts with DCF, DHCD, MOVA and the Department of Justice.

Centerboard supports family stability in Lynn



For over 30 years, Centerboard has been committed to supporting the people of Lynn.

Centerboard's Family Forward Resource Center (FRC) is part of a statewide network of community-based providers offering multi-cultural parenting programs, support groups, early childhood services, information and referral resources and education for families whose children range in age from birth to 18 years of age.

Any family member can walk into the FRC and receive assistance with any human services-related issue. If services cannot be provided to a family member onsite at the FRC, staff will provide information and referral to a network of service providers affiliated with the program.

Centerboard's T.R.U.E Mentor program aims to provide academic and social support for boys ages six to 18 by helping them increase their motivation and confidence, achieve new goals, give direction to their academic and future career choices and gain leadership roles. The program is community-based, heavily involves parents, and all family members have access to an array of services at the FRC.

In addition, Centerboard's We Rise program brings together survivors of commercial sexual exploitation with key community allies in order to prevent, intervene against and promote recovery from the commercial



sexual exploitation of children (CSEC).

The nonprofit's Housing Services program works with families throughout the North Shore that are homeless. The organization offers home-based stabilization services with intensive case management, and its housing programs build on residents' strengths by offering classes, workshops and clinical support, as well as by providing a compassionate recognition of family challenges.

Centerboard's youth programs serve individuals from ages 12 to 22 by offering a range of services to foster independent living and financial self-sufficiency. It operates nine residential programs in Lynn, Chelsea and Melrose to support young people and their families. Each program provides Trauma Informed Care – a compassionate, accurate understanding of kids' behavioral and developmental challenges.

The racial breakdown of Centerboard's client population is about 48% Hispanic families (Spanish is the primary language for about 75% of these families), 37% Black, 10% white and 5% other races. All families seeking services self-identify as low income and about 85% are single parents. For about 25% of the families served, the parent(s) recently immigrated to the United States.

Executive Leadership

Mark DeJoie is the CEO of Centerboard and has led the organization since 1998. Since assuming leadership, the nonprofit has overseen tremendous growth, including an increase in the number of housing services offered and the creation of the organization's youth services and community programming, all of which have become mainstays for Centerboard.



Mark DeJoie

DeJoie's unique vision for Centerboard allows for creative and collaborative processing with all staff, allowing for a collective approach to serving families, youth and the community.

One of the major accomplishments that Centerboard has achieved under DeJoie's leadership was the purchase of the 16 City Hall Square building in 2014 for administrative offices and the Housing Department. In addition, in 2015 Centerboard expanded youth services to Chelsea and the Lynn Family Forward Resource Center opened.

DeJoie is a graduate of Stonehill College and Massachusetts School of Law.

SALUTING THE CARING FORCE

Falk leads the way with kindness

Since January 2019, Jodi Falk has served the **Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts (JFWM)** as the director of Rachel's Table (RT), a program that has been providing food to those in need in Western Massachusetts for nearly 30 years. When JFWM was founded in 1926, its purpose was to serve as a central fundraising and planning agency for the Jewish community in Greater Springfield, and over the decades this purpose has evolved to include interfaith work, fundraising and endowment building for local nonprofits and direct service programs like RT.



For the past three years, Jodi Falk has helped the Jewish Federation of Western Mass. give food to people in need.

Likewise, RT began as a women-led food rescue project in Hampden County, connecting sources of surplus food with local agencies directly serving the community, saving food that would otherwise have been wasted and giving it to the hungry.

"Jodi's passion is apparent in everything she does, and we are lucky to have her leading the way with kindness and compassion, bringing together many partners and resources in the

fight against hunger," JFWM CEO Nora Gorenstein said. "She has the depth of commitment that makes it clear that we can make a measurable difference despite the overwhelming needs of our community."

Under Falk's visionary leadership, RT now serves three counties, rescues and purchases a larger and healthier variety of food and has created many community-engagement initiatives. Among such initiatives is Growing Gardens, a food justice and equity program where agencies that serve the food insecure can grow their own food alongside their constituents.

Falk's daily focus includes catalyzing dedicated groups of volunteers for hands-on work in every project area, seeking out funders and partners and managing a dedicated team of staff to make it all possible. Falk is dedicated to this work because, "each individual needs to be treated with dignity, as we serve and recommit for the next 30 years to not only alleviating but hopefully eradicating hunger in our community."

Selman is a caring and steady force

Joyce Selman has served as direct care counselor for **Communities for People's** Ten Hills group home program for over eight years, where she acts as an indispensable and professional "den mother" to the six young men that live in the Somerville home.

Ten Hills is an integral part of Communities for People's mission to support youth and families so they can become independent, active members of the community. Growing up in the West Indies as one of eight children in a close-knit family, Selman has always been drawn to working with youth.

"After immigrating to the United States as a young girl, I realized early on that I needed to get a higher education to move forward in life," Selman said. "I am grateful that I was encouraged by friends and mentors who realized that my passion for working with youth would create a pathway for me to go to college and then get my master's, which led me to a job that I love."

Selman oversees every part of the independent group home. She is a car-

ing and steady force, ensuring that the 16- to 20-year-old young men in the program transition as seamlessly as possible from foster care into group home living, and ultimately onto independent living. "My goal is to help make them as self-sufficient as possible so they can move forward," Selman said.

"Joyce gives new meaning to going above and beyond. She is patient and reliable in coaching the young men in the program with life skills such as cooking, conflict resolution and healthy communication," said Sandra Pyram-Loyer, LMHC, regional director of Communities for People. "The youth come to her with ease and can trust her to be fair and supportive. CFP is extremely fortunate to have Joyce as a constant advocate and supporter of our youth at Ten Hills."

Selman holds a bachelor's degree in human services and a master's degree in mental health and education from Cambridge College. She is also certified in the Medication and Administration Program (MAP).



Joyce Selman has always been drawn to helping youth, which led her to a job that she loves.