Message from the CEO

Dear Friends,

I’ll never forget Friday, March 13, 2020. That was the day I realized that the pandemic would change our lives and the way that The Opportunity Alliance operates forever.

As the pandemic spread and panic grew, teams across TOA’s 45 programs pivoted to meet the changing needs of our clients. We made sure children had access to electronic devices for online learning, delivered food to neighbors in quarantine, and worked swiftly to keep families in their homes. We taught our senior volunteers how to use Zoom so that they could still communicate with each other during an especially isolating time.

We promptly set up telehealth so that clients in our mental health and substance use programs could access care, but my colleagues and I soon looked at each other with alarm. Many of our clients didn’t have phones or devices - how would they access telehealth? We quickly organized a mass phone purchase and got them in the hands of clients outside of our Lancaster Street office in downtown Portland.

For months afterwards, that’s how we operated: stumbling, learning, growing. In my 20 years with the organization, I’ve never experienced a more difficult time, or been prouder of the remarkable lengths our employees, board members, volunteers, and partners took to ensure our clients felt safe and cared for.

For more than 55 years, The Opportunity Alliance has worked to support vulnerable Mainers during their toughest times. For individuals and families that were already struggling with housing and food insecurity, substance use, and access to basic needs, the health and economic impacts of the pandemic were greatly magnified. Over the past several months our Board, leadership, and staff worked tirelessly to ensure that we continue to provide critical services and access to basic needs to our community’s most vulnerable individuals and families. It is with great pride that I report we never closed one program during the pandemic.

I like to think of this report— the stories, successes, and data highlighted— as a bright spot in a grueling time. It’s my hope that you’ll feel as inspired as I am by the strength and compassion showcased by everyone involved in the mission of this great organization.

I hope you and your loved ones stay safe and healthy. And if you need support, help starts here.

Sincerely,

Joseph Everett
President & CEO
About Us

Our History:
The Opportunity Alliance (TOA) was incorporated in 1965 as the Community Action Agency for Cumberland County, Maine. TOA works in partnership with organizations and community members to identify and address barriers for individuals and families to thrive and create a strong community fabric. As an integral part of this work, TOA is committed to helping individuals and families advocate for the resources and support they need to achieve positive outcomes. TOA has at its foundation three organizations with long histories of serving communities throughout Maine: Ingraham, Peoples Regional Opportunity Program (PROP), and Youth Alternatives. The three organizations merged in 2011 to form The Opportunity Alliance.

Our Mission:
The Opportunity Alliance works with people to build better lives and stronger communities. We provide advocacy, leadership, and support to identify the goals and address the needs of individuals, families, and communities.

Statement of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
At The Opportunity Alliance, we are resolute in our efforts to address racial disparities and injustices that we see in our workplace and in our community. Here's what we're doing:

- We're going to keep talking, sharing data and resources;
- Review hiring practices and program operations to ensure they prioritize diversity and inclusion;
- Promote fair and anti-racist practices among our community and business partners;
- Advocate for public policy that addresses systemic and institutional racism, disparities, and oppression;
- And we're going to embrace the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities' Values Statement on Equity.

Social justice is not only a pillar of our work, it's what's right. We are asking everyone to make the commitment to join us in learning, listening, sharing, and taking action.
Our Programs

Community Building

Programs and services working with youth, families, neighbors, and partner organizations to build strong networks and healthier communities.

- Lakes Region Collective Action Network (LRCAN)
- Maine Youth Action Network (MYAN)
- Public Health Program (PHP)
- Resident-Led Community Building (RLCB)

Economic Resources

Programs and services designed to increase income and basic needs by ensuring access to food, safe and stable shelter, utilities, and volunteer opportunities.

- Cumberland County Homeless Prevention Program (CCHP)
- Central Heat Improvement Program (CHIP)
- Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP)
- Foster Grandparent Program / Senior Companion Program
- Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)
- Weatherization
- Wrap Funds
- Work Life Advisor
Family & Early Childhood Education

Programs and services working in partnership with families and the community to ensure children are ready for school.

- CDA Development Center
- Early Childhood Education
- Parent Education
- Maine Families
- Women, Infants, Children Program (WIC)

Mental Health & Wellness

Community and residential mental health services for children and adults.

- Behavioral Health Home (BHH)
- Broadway Crossings Adult Crisis Stabilization Unit
- Children's Behavioral Health Home (CBHH)
- Mobile Crisis Response Services
- Hi-Fidelity Wraparound
- Homeless Youth Services
- The Maine Crisis Line
- Opioid Health Home (OHH)
- PATH Program
- 7 Residential Programs
Continuing the Resident-Led Community Building work that TOA began back in 2016, Prosper builds strong, trusting relationships with residents and service providers, increasing connections to community resources. Fluent in several languages including English, French, Swahili, and Lingala, Prosper has been able to remove a critical barrier for a large number of non-English speaking residents in the neighborhood.

Every day, Prosper works with families who are struggling by delivering basic necessities such as diapers, food, clothing, and personal care products, connecting one neighbor to another, or simply checking in on a resident to spread a little joy.

While the pandemic has changed almost every aspect of community building work, and in many ways made life more difficult for residents in the neighborhood, Prosper has found ways to safely foster connections. Currently, contact is maintained with residents by phone, via Zoom, and if necessary, by home visit, observing CDC guidelines. Prosper shares that:

“The needs in this community have certainly increased in light of the pandemic. Many people live with frustration and fear of sickness despite the vaccine. The pandemic has resulted in the loss of jobs for many and the back-log at immigration services makes it near impossible for newcomers to obtain work permits due to a standstill in immigration processing. While new online teaching and training methods are available, the language and technology barriers make it very difficult for New Mainer families to utilize the tools and learn. Despite all of these challenges, individuals and families here are happy and relieved when they learn I can serve as a bridge to connect them to the vital resources they need.”

Since joining TOA, Prosper has helped facilitate the integration of 19 new families into the Frenchville neighborhood. These families feel supported and know where to go when they have special needs. Many long-standing members of the community look out for newer residents and help cultivate a friendly neighborhood where multi-culturism is respected and honored.
TOA partners with Amber Lombardi of Mainely Teeth to bring community access to quality dental care. There’s a large gap between private insurance and government-funded insurance. Amber and her mobile dental trailer helps close this equity gap by breaking down the barriers to oral health care. Between February and June of 2020, Mainely Teeth treated 251 patients via their mobile trailer at 50 Lydia Lane in South Portland.
Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the dedicated staff at The Opportunity Alliance have worked tirelessly to keep young Mainers and their families in safe and stable homes. Their focus has been on assisting clients with financial barriers such as security deposits and working to address the systemic oppression, racism, and lack of equity that compounds the experience of homelessness. Our case managers work alongside youth and families to support them. And while that work may look different because of the pandemic, the impact has remained: families are able to stay in and/or find housing.

While TOA’s Homeless Youth Services program specifically supports youth and their families at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness, the reality is that housing insecurity touches all our youth-serving programs, including High-Fidelity Wraparound and Children’s Behavioral Health Home. Our work focuses on the vision a family holds for themselves, whether that is maintaining safety in their current environment or finding housing elsewhere.

Hailey Virusso, Director of Youth Services at TOA, shares: “Our Youth Services team embodies what it means to be adaptable and collaborative in this time of Covid. We continue to serve families in record numbers in all three programs, became more tech-savvy than we ever dreamed over the past year, and learned that connection can happen, regardless of space. Families found housing, young people were reunited with families, and people still found ways to cultivate gratitude and joy.”

Despite the obvious challenges physical distancing had on our work, the Youth Services team forged new partnerships with Quality Housing Coalition’s Project Home, working to overcome barriers to housing, and the YMCA of Southern Maine, offering families free memberships to participate in several of our programs focused on homelessness. This year also highlighted the deep disparities and systems gaps in our community. Out of this recognition, we began to see community members caring for one another in innovative ways. For instance, one of our partners, Maine Needs, created a space for providers to access the needed basics in the most sustainable way.

To meet the unique needs of clients during the pandemic, The Homeless Youth Services program purchased dozens of phones and thousands of minutes to ensure families could connect with their case manager, their child’s school, or potential housing opportunities. We have helped families pay for over $10,000 in security deposits to dismantle the barriers that financial security poses.

“Covid-19 has highlighted disparities in our community, state, and country that have always been known, but has also highlighted the incredible resiliency, creativity, kindness and love that our community possesses, which is what our youth-serving programs seek to embody,” says Virusso. “The case managers and care coordinators who work in our Youth Services programs are tireless advocates, champions of social justice and amplifiers of young people’s voices. I witness community resilience in both my colleagues and those we walk alongside.”
Over the last year, TOA helped more than 100 youth and their families through our Homeless Youth Services program, working with them and listening to what they need to engage in our services and find a place to call home. During the last three months, almost 90% of the families that have worked with Homeless Youth Services have achieved at least two of the goals they have outlined for themselves.
Revenue | Fiscal Year 2020

- Government Grants: $16,532,533
- Medicaid: $12,758,884
- United Way & Other Grants: $1,466,656
- Private Revenue-Fee For Service: $1,250,550
- Individual & Private Support: $1,268,112

Total Revenue: $33,276,535

Expenses | Fiscal Year 2020

- Staff Expenses: $24,040,796
- Physical Plant: $2,951,971
- Client Support: $2,159,135
- Program-Related Costs: $1,867,417
- Purchased Services: $1,512,646
- In-Kind: $275,766
- Equipment & Vehicle: $75,662

Total Expenses: $32,883,393

To view a more detailed accounting of our revenue and expenses for fiscal year 2020, please see the financial documents posted on our website: www.opportunityalliance.org.