



2021

ANNUAL REPORT



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January 1, 2022

"It was the best of times. It was the worst of times."

As we reflect on the past year, the above quote provides an apt summary. Kidsbridge has enjoyed some extraordinary successes this year, but we also recognize that the need for our programs and services for youth has continued to grow as the pandemic lingers.

In this report, you will see the positive impact we had on nearly 1000 children this year. The youth we reached saw marked improvements in social-emotional competencies like self-regulation, self-compassion, and respect for others. Educators and program directors shared how Kidsbridge programs helped their students navigate all the challenges they faced in the past year.

We invite you to read on to learn more about what Kidsbridge was able to accomplish in 2021 thanks to the support of Donors, Volunteers, and UPstanders like you.

Sincerely,

Lynne Azarchi

Lynne Azarchi
Executive Director

Cindy Ricker

Cindy Ricker
Chair of the Board

THE STORY OF KIDSBRIDGE

Kidsbridge was established in **1996** with a mission to educate and empower children and youth through bullying prevention, anti-bias, anti-racist, and social-emotional skills training. Our purpose is to create empathetic individuals and caring citizens who live their lives without prejudice or discrimination and who are positive advocates for themselves and others.

For the past **25 years**, Kidsbridge has provided imaginative, hands-on programs that focus on bullying/cyberbullying prevention; bias and stereotype awareness; diversity appreciation; respect, empathy, and empowerment; UPstander behavior; media literacy; mindfulness; and active listening. Our **UPstander Experience** and Life Skills programs are evidence-based, developmentally appropriate, and informed by the latest research.

Opened in 2006, the **Kidsbridge Center** continues to be the only youth-oriented center of its kind in the United States. To date, **more than 30,000** youth and educators have visited the Center to experience Kidsbridge programs. In recent years, as school budgets have tightened and funding for off-site field trips has become harder to find, Kidsbridge responded by creating the Mobile Outreach Program. Through this program, Kidsbridge facilitators bring our engaging programs directly into classrooms.

For Kidsbridge, 2020 dawned bright and full of promise. Little did we know, in one year we would change virtually every aspect of our organization. We closed the Center. Our **Mobile Outreach Van** was parked. We moved to a virtual platform to deliver our programs.

One thing did not change, however:

Our commitment to providing the essential social-emotional skills our youth need to become empathetic leaders and caring citizens...**to become UPstanders.**





KIDSBRIDGE IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

Multiple studies have shown the overwhelmingly negative impacts the pandemic had on youth in our State. The State of New Jersey Division of Children and Family Services reported a 30% increase in calls for assistance with anxiety and depression among young people, and three major medical groups declared a national "State of Emergency" with regard to pediatric mental health.

Students returned to schools in-person this past fall, but with masks on their faces and the fear of exposure, quarantine, and illness at the forefront of their thoughts. Educators across our State have been virtually unanimous in their feeling that the single number one priority for our youth this school year is restoring their social-emotional health.

That's where Kidsbridge comes in.

KIDSBRIDGE CONNECTS

Kidsbridge Connects was deployed in the fall of 2020, and it has been regularly updated and adapted to meet the needs of our youth. Like all Kidsbridge programs, Connects is based in social-emotional learning (SEL). Sessions are delivered by our team of trained facilitators, and post-program materials are given to teachers and program directors to help them expand on Kidsbridge lessons. Key social-emotional skills are built through Connects.



CONFLICT RESOLUTION

active listening *Self-Compassion*

EMPATHY

Self-Regulation

Responsible Decision Making

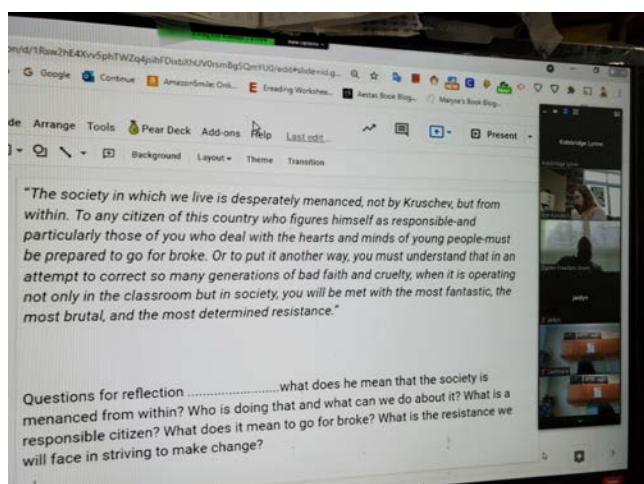
KIDSBRIDGE KIND: EVERYBODY SHINES!

Since the onset of the pandemic, statistics around hate and bias crimes and cyberbullying among our youth are staggering. The FBI reported in November 2020 that hate crimes in the United States hit the highest levels in a decade. In his annual report, New Jersey's Attorney General reported a 75% increase in bias crimes from 2019-2020. What is more alarming, however, is this statistic included in the same report: children and young adults account for 53% of known offenders!

The time is now to have a frank conversation with our youth about issues of bias, racism, and discrimination. Research says the earlier we start, the more success we will have in reducing bias for teens and young adults.



Our youth are living through an historic opportunity to address racism in America. Kidsbridge Kind helps students understand the moment and strategize to participate in positive change. We foster an interactive learning environment where youth collaborate with diverse, trained facilitators to develop skills in empathy, self-empowerment, and respect; to explore identity; to get comfortable talking about racism; and to actively practice anti-racist UPstander strategies.



ASPIRE: A LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM

Thanks to generous funding from our partners at **Janssen Pharmaceuticals**, Aspire is a weekly program held at Kilmer Middle School in Trenton, NJ that focuses on social emotional learning (SEL). Cooperation, peaceful conflict resolution, empowerment, and bullying prevention are some of the topics included in the program. Aspire builds confidence, self respect and - most importantly - hope in each student.

"Kidsbridge helped me to know that I was not alone. I did not understand that other kids were having a hard time being stuck at home for a year." - Bruce, 10 years old

"I learned that it is ok to take care of myself. Mindfulness stuff helps my anger slow down." - Salim, 8 years old

"Kidsbridge taught me what an Upstander is. It is a person that helps others. Now I know when my friend is bullied, I can do something about it." - Katie, 7 years old



KIDSBRIDGE IS SUSTAINED THROUGH YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT.

UPstander (\$7500 and up)

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Church & Dwight EGF
Janssen Pharmaceuticals
NJM Insurance Group
Wawa Foundation

Hero (\$5000 to \$7499)

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PNC Foundation
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Wells Fargo Foundation

Kidsbridge is proud that 100% of our Board of Directors supports our mission with an annual gift.

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My fourth graders benefit from learning calming techniques from Kidsbridge. Students can better manage their emotions and make positive choices. Students use the calming strategies discretely without others seeing the strategies being implemented and apply them more often during the day. A calm classroom supports the social and emotional well-being of both students and teacher.

Kelly Henryk Vogel, 4th grade teacher



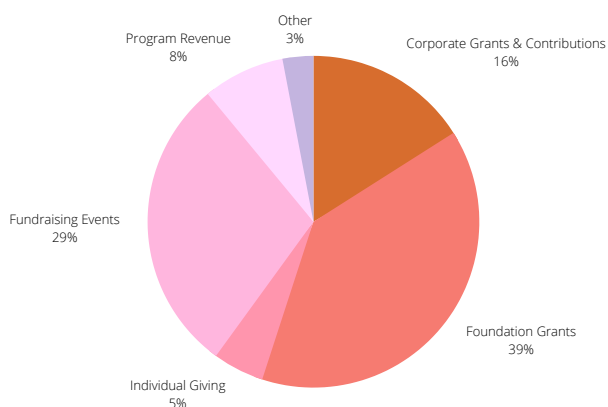
PROGRAM PARTNERS



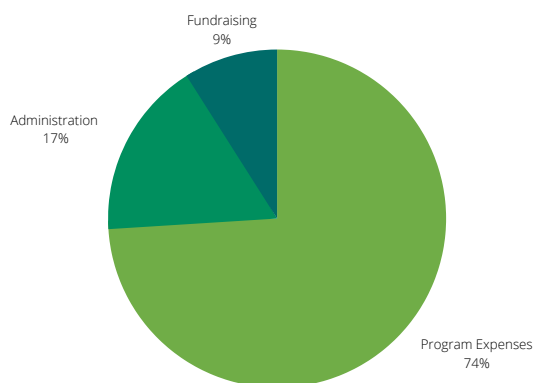
United Way
of Greater Mercer County



2021 FINANCIAL REPORT*



INCOME \$282,339



EXPENSES \$298,190

961

**TOTAL NUMBER OF
CHILDREN SERVED BY
KIDSBRIDGE THIS YEAR**

7

**TITLE I SCHOOLS
RECEIVING
DONOR-FUNDED
PROGRAMS**

250

**EDUCATORS, PARENTS,
CAMP COUNSELORS &
SOCIAL WORKERS
REACHED THIS YEAR**

***UNAUDITED**



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