



## Three People. Three Journeys. Endless Open Doors.

Dinorah, David, and Cierra, three very different people, turned to Victory Programs at points in their lives when they knew they had to find a way to overcome some overwhelming challenges. They have each successfully carved their own path toward achieving their goals. Today, as we get ready to ring in a New Year, we wish them, and all of the people on similar journeys, a very happy 2022.



### DINORAH

Twelve years ago, Dinorah discovered she was HIV positive. After a few difficult years struggling to cope with her diagnosis, Dinorah found the Boston Living Center and she's been a member ever since. The welcoming community of peers, stable routine, and the opportunity to grow and learn were exactly what was missing from her life. She no longer feels like she is just surviving, but instead, thriving. The BLC helped her get free English classes, and Dinorah is thrilled. "I never imagined I'd be learning a new language at the age of 70!" she told us. Dinorah hopes that her new language skills will help her to help more people in turn. "At my age, it's hard to feel useful" she says, "and I feel like the BLC does exactly that for me."



### DAVID

David readily admits that he struggled when he first moved into our New Victories recovery program. "It was my first time in this kind of situation. You're in a place with a bunch of new people, all with their own set of problems. It was tough," he explains. But once he opened himself up to participating in the groups and connecting with others in the program, everything began to fall into place. He started rock climbing again, going to the gym, and building strong friendships with others in the program. Today, David has a new job in Civil Engineering and Landscaping and plans to move into his own home very soon. "Starting next year, my life is going to be totally different," David says, "I just plan to thrive. I want to continue finding joy in my life, which I couldn't do for a really long time."



### CIERRA

Cierra calls 2020 "the perfect storm." COVID-19 disrupted her recovery process, preventing her from going to meetings, and the ripple effect from this caused her life to unravel. And then she relapsed. Having graduated from Victory Programs' New Joelyn's two years prior, Cierra knew she had to go back and New Joelyn's welcomed her in. "This house can help you with anything, but you have to put the work in. Nobody's going to do it for you," explains Cierra. With 2022 around the corner, Cierra hopes to continue on her recovery journey and work towards becoming a recovery coach so she can be part of the support system that helped her open doors to new possibilities.

# Growing into a “Seed to Harvest” Volunteer

Anna Bensted had certainly heard about urban farms but had never been to one, so she didn't quite know what to expect on her first day volunteering with Victory Programs' ReVision Urban Farm in Dorchester this past spring. Anna has given a lot of thought to the concept of urban farming. “Over the years, I realized how privileged I am to have access to fresh food,” explains Anna. “The notion that expense and accessibility might prevent families from getting fresh food... It really speaks to the importance of urban farms.”

Anna was looking for a way to combine her growing interest in urban farming with giving back. She also loves the outdoors, gardening, and, most of all, cooking. When she came across ReVision Urban Farm, she signed up to volunteer, and was ready to do whatever manual labor was needed. But the experience turned out to be a lot more meaningful to her. On her first day, she was pleasantly surprised when our Farm Grower Conor gathered all the volunteers together to explain the mission of Victory Programs and how ReVision Urban Farm fits within the organization by providing affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food to our programs and the extended community. Anna observed that “On the first day, they didn't rush. They took the time to put it into context and that made all the difference.”

Anna kept coming back to volunteer and soon enough, she was a “regular.” She was drawn to the sense of community — not only on the Farm and amongst the volunteers, but with the larger Dorchester community as well. She says, “I live in a great community, but it's a different one. The community in Dorchester is so welcoming. Every day, the same person would walk by the Farm saying ‘Good morning! Have a blessed day!’ Being at the Farm as often as I was made me feel part of the community there too.”

Every Wednesday, you'd find Anna at the Farm helping the Farm staff and fellow volunteers pack produce for our CSA members. “I always looked forward to Wednesday afternoons because that meant time to work alongside and talk with Anna,” reflects Conor. “She has a very calming, yet thought-provoking presence about her. Anna took her role very seriously, as she truly understood and respected the importance of the Farm's mission of food access.”

As the growing season came to an end, so did Anna's time at the Farm. The experience taught her more than she ever expected.



*Todd Sandstrum, Farm Manager, has nothing but high praise for Anna: “No matter what the conversation was, her love and passion for people shined through. She is one of those volunteers that has left her mark on the Farm.”*

“It really made me rethink my idea of a team working together, how important it is to be part of a team,” explains Anna. “It also made me think more critically about food — how we think of food, how it's grown, who has access to it.” Anna now tries to educate people whenever she can on urban farming. “I don't think enough people know that there is a place like ReVision in their neighborhood that nourishes the community and gives back and develops relationships with those who don't typically have access to fresh food.”

What started as a simple way to give back turned into an unforgettable experience. “If someone told me you're going to be washing broccoli, listening to some sort of mixtape by [the Farm manager] Todd with a bunch of strangers, I never would've thought that'd be my idea of fun,” she says, “but it was a blast.”

As for advice for anyone interested in volunteering with the Farm, Anna says, “Don't be nervous. They will look after you. It will be a great collaboration.”

**With the cold weather upon us, volunteer opportunities at ReVision Urban Farm will resume in the spring. But there are many other ways you can volunteer for Victory Programs right now!**



Help prepare and serve meals at the Boston Living Center.

Donate items or host a drive to collect items that help our clients. Check out our wish list for ideas!

Have a special skill? Our residential clients would love to learn from you! Art, fitness, wellness, and job readiness classes are always useful. If you have an idea for a class, get in touch.

Contact [volunteer@vpi.org](mailto:volunteer@vpi.org) with questions and to learn more.

(July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021)

Victory Programs' accomplishments for Fiscal Year 2021 reflect the challenges of working through the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, we are serving more people, especially the growing numbers of homeless individuals on our city's streets, while also addressing the increase in opioid use and HIV infection. In some programs, at certain times, COVID forced us to limit capacity; in others, our numbers mirror the pandemic's economic, psychological, and purely practical tolls which prevented people, especially women, from connecting with our services.

Thanks to our caring supporters, our red doors remained opened. And we are growing our programs to serve more individuals and families in crisis. We will keep you up-to-date on all that we're doing and the impact of your investment in our work.

Total number of people served: **3,803** – up 22% over FY20



**3,100** total clients served by our Mobile Prevention Team – up 50% over last year. Syringe distribution doubled, from 20,000 in FY20 to 44,200 in FY21.



**193** clients graduated from our recovery programs. While our graduation rate was stable compared to recent non-pandemic years, the overall number was down due to lower occupancy as a result of the pandemic (e.g., quarantines, bed restrictions, pandemic-related gaps in referral pipeline).



**57** formerly homeless families moved into permanent housing including 43 children – up 43% from the most recent non-pandemic year.



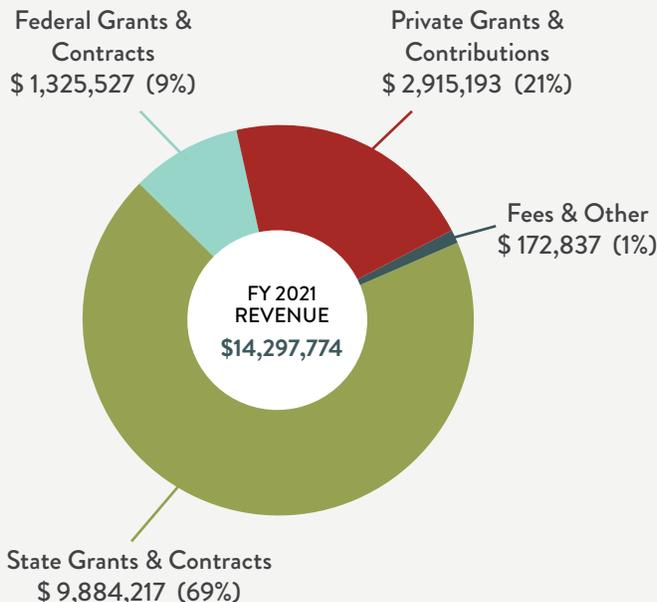
**46** new Boston Living Center members were brought in, up 30% from last year, and on par with the most recent pre-pandemic years. Individual Peer Support hours were up 20% from last year, and up slightly even from most recent pre-pandemic year.



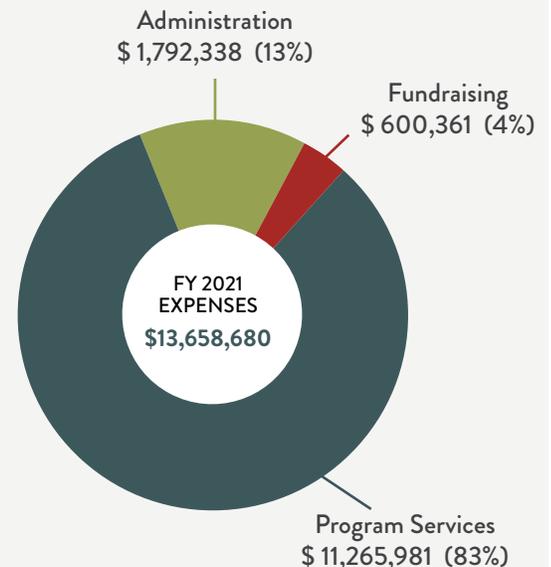
**20,721** meals served at the Boston Living Center. This number represents 75% of a typical non-pandemic year, despite dining room operating at service capacity of 30% for most of the year.

## Financial Summary FY 2021

### REVENUE



### EXPENSES



To view our FY 2021 audit and Form 990 visit [www.vpi.org](http://www.vpi.org)

# No events? We're bidding on you to make a difference.

It's hard to believe that it's been almost two years since Victory Programs has held an in-person fundraising event. We always looked forward to these events – Dinnerfest, Celebration of Life, Drive for Victory, the Summer Sports Tea Dance – they were always wonderful opportunities to connect with our caring community, to thank our supporters and partners, to make new friends, and to shine a light on our good work, our staff, and the people in our programs who have transformed their lives.

Prior to the pandemic, one-third of our private revenue came from these events. Needless to say, we were nervous about how we would make up for that money in our budget. But our supporters, even those who traditionally give through our events, have stepped up. They have responded generously to our communications and our requests for vital supplies for our clients and programs (please keep the socks and underwear coming!). We have been truly moved by our community's pure and caring concern for individuals and families in crisis who turn to Victory Programs for housing, health, recovery and hope.



While we dream of getting together with you, we have no definitive plans as of yet. We are, after all, a public health organization and thus committed to ensuring your safety, along with the safety of our staff and clients. To those of you who have given to Victory Programs over these last many months, know that you have our sincere appreciation. If you haven't made a gift recently, please consider making a year-end contribution to ensure that our Red Doors remain open to all.

## DONATE

Visit [www.vpi.org](http://www.vpi.org) to make a gift today. Questions?  
Email [development@vpi.org](mailto:development@vpi.org)

## VOLUNTEER

Visit [www.vpi.org](http://www.vpi.org) to learn more or email [volunteer@vpi.org](mailto:volunteer@vpi.org)

## CONNECT



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The Doorway: Your access to Victory Programs news & information