



# ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

PETER & ELIZABETH TOWER FOUNDATION

2017



At the Tower Foundation, we make it a priority to reflect on our work. Our trustees and colleagues are always asking how we'll approach a project differently the next time around. These questions give us the opportunity to evolve, to be more inclusive, and to go beyond traditional grant making. Through this practice, we've discovered new ways to support grantees in building their capacities to be more effective and to bring their organizations together for the common good.

While we're open to novel approaches and understand our strategies may evolve, we are steadfast in our commitment to being a catalyst for change in the areas of intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, mental illness, and substance use disorders. We continue to engage these communities and others throughout our regions, and by listening, we've learned so much about young people—how to support them and how to help them create their unique version of success. This local perspective guides our work with national organizations that are often not as close to our communities.

In the year ahead, we will keep pushing ourselves to move out of our comfort zones, try new things, meet new people, and seek different perspectives. Through these interactions, we hope to continue to gain a deeper understanding of the aspirations of our young people, their families, and the communities in which they live. And with a more thorough understanding, we will accelerate change together.



Tracy A. Sawicki  
Executive Director

# OUR GRANTS

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES GRANTS

Direct grants to fund programs and services in the areas of intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health, and substance use disorders.

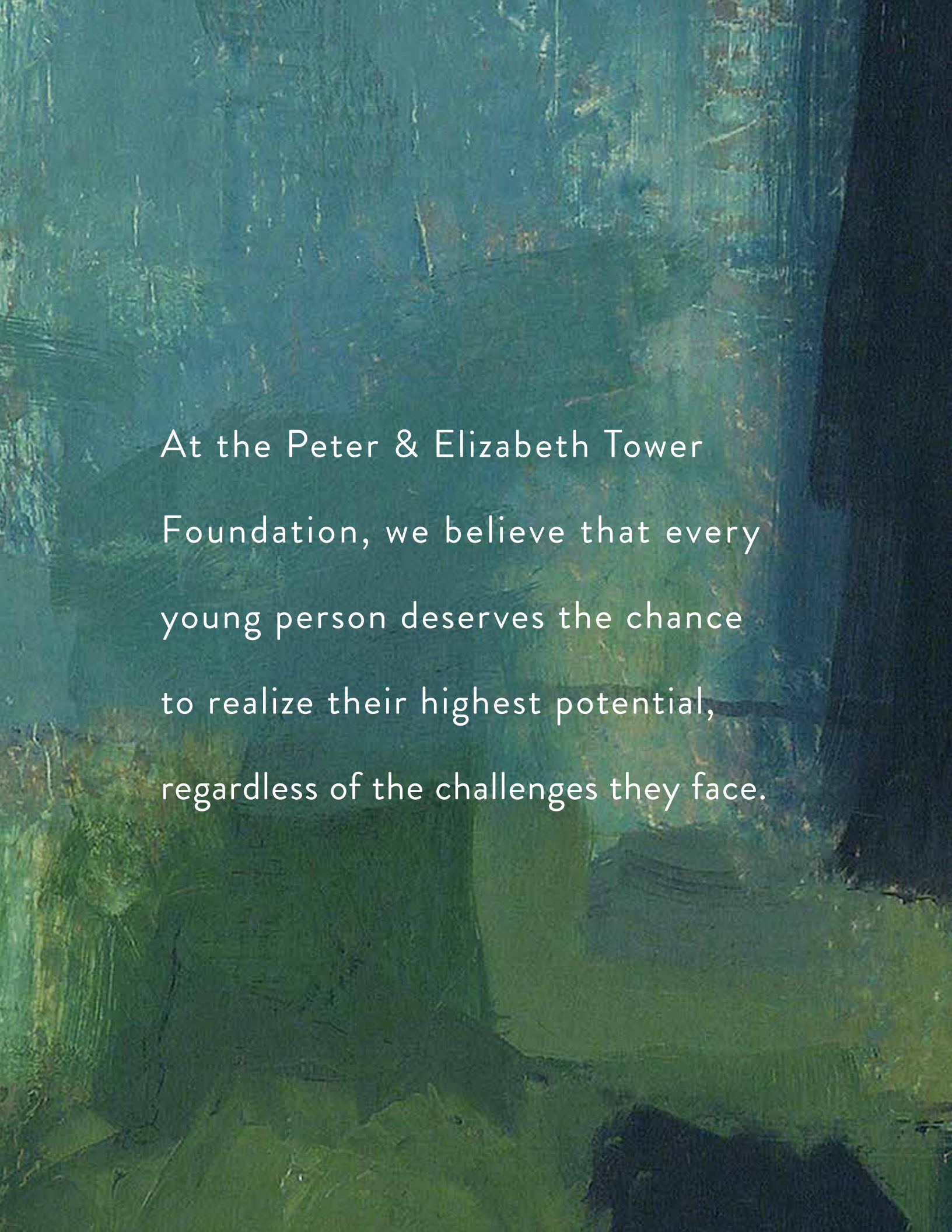
## STRENGTHENING PARTNER CAPACITY GRANTS

Funding to build strong organizational infrastructure needed to deliver high-quality programming and promote organizational sustainability.

## HEALTHY COMMUNITIES GRANTS

Support for initiatives that bring organizations and communities together, pool resources and expertise, and develop collaborative and creative solutions.



The background is an abstract painting with dark teal and green tones. It features thick, expressive brushstrokes that create a textured, layered effect. The colors are deep and somewhat muted, with some lighter green highlights interspersed throughout the darker areas. The overall composition is vertical and fills the entire frame.

At the Peter & Elizabeth Tower  
Foundation, we believe that every  
young person deserves the chance  
to realize their highest potential,  
regardless of the challenges they face.

# A TRANSFORMATION FROM WITHIN

## BUILDING ON OUR FOUNDATION

While our days and months are typically filled with excitement for our grantees to realize their full potential, this year, we took a little more time to determine who we are as Foundation and how we, too, can reach our full potential.

As part of that process, we are working on a refresh of our 2012 strategic plan. Once complete, it will be sharper, more specific, and more collaborative—a reflection of the way we truly work with each other and the organizations and communities we support. In addition to our inner workings, we refreshed our outward identity, bringing Elizabeth Tower's art to the forefront and featuring portraits of the individuals who are impacted by our grants. It all comes together at [TheTowerFoundation.org](http://TheTowerFoundation.org), our brand-new website.

The optimism around here is palpable lately. We hope you'll feel it, too, and that you'll join us for this new chapter, starting with the impact stories on the pages that follow.





## REIMAGINING LEARNING IN MASSACHUSETTS

Nearly six years ago, the Tower Foundation began working with Reimagine Learning, a sprawling network of social entrepreneurs, funders, policymakers, and researchers working to transform the way learning happens in America. The goal was clear: create learning environments for all students, particularly those with learning disabilities. In addition to the overall aim, it was a priority to bring these efforts to a Tower region. Today, two districts in Massachusetts—the Lawrence School District and the Salem School District—are supported by Reimagine Learning and experiencing significant transformations.

In Lawrence, the first school district to be taken over by the Commonwealth for poor performance, the introduction of Acceleration Academy has made a dramatic impact on student achievement and teacher buy-in. During an Acceleration Academy session, students in grades 3–12 are paired with exceptional teachers in intensive, hands-on learning environments, and results from the program have been impressive. Test scores and graduation rates are up while dropout rates are down. Before leaving his post to become the State's Commissioner

of Education, Lawrence Superintendent Jeff Riley said, “We did not set curriculum, instead, we trusted our teachers to do what they do best and they have been able to accelerate a month of learning into one week. This has made a huge difference for our kids.” Plus, with the Foundation’s support, Reimagine Learning created a multimedia case study called The Golden Ticket, codifying the model so it can be shared and implemented in other districts.

Not far away, the Salem School District was struggling with achievement gaps, declining enrollment, high teacher turnover, and low morale. This incredible challenge was no match for Salem’s new Superintendent Margarita Ruiz. She and her team were ready to develop and implement a bold vision for change.

In partnership with the local mayor, the district engaged in a community-wide strategic planning process that gave ownership to all involved. The process, facilitated by Reimagine Learning, pushed teachers, parents, administrators, and city officials to think boldly and to get out of their comfort zones. The Salem

School Committee approved the plan in May of 2017 and the District has now moved into the implementation phase. As with the Lawrence District, Reimagine Learning codified all the tools and processes so others may benefit from this successful work.

“Connecting at the local level, especially in a smaller region, was new for Reimagine Learning,” says Tracy Sawicki, Tower Foundation Executive Director. “We pushed for this and it has proven to be beneficial to making change that will improve learning outcomes for students, especially those with learning disabilities, that can be shared with similar communities.”

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## SEEING EYE TO EYE THROUGH MENTORSHIP

Anyone who's been there will agree: Middle school is hard. And for middle school students with learning disabilities, it can often feel like they'll never quite measure up, leading them to feel isolated and to struggle in silence. To help address this tough stage in life, the Tower Foundation provided funding to bring Eye to Eye, a national organization that's run by and for those with learning differences, to Western New York.

The arts-based program connects college kids with learning disabilities with middle school kids with learning disabilities. Students from Buffalo State College, Daemen College, Niagara University, and Villa Maria College go through training and meet at local middle schools once a week to share their experiences and connect with their young mentees.

"The program is really not about art, but instead a way to work together on something where there are no grades, no right or wrong, and as an avenue to get kids talking and sharing," says Stephanie Whitham, Eye to Eye National Program Coordinator. "It can be very affirming for the middle school kids to realize that the older students have gone through similar challenges and that college, among other types of success, is possible."



# STIMULATING DIALOGUE AROUND MENTAL HEALTH

How 16 community groups and leaders created an anti-stigma movement.

Understanding that the shame associated with mental illness keeps many people from seeking help, a small group of mental health professionals began developing an idea for a public campaign to raise awareness about the issue in 2015. From there, it was not long before many more joined the effort, including the Tower Foundation as a lead funder, to form the Erie County Anti-Stigma Coalition.

Launched in the spring of 2017, the Join the Conversation/ Let's Talk Stigma campaign invited the community to take a pledge to end stigma and encouraged dialogue around mental health. The campaign included a healthy mix of billboard advertising, digital advertising, social media, and events. To date, the campaign has engaged more than 13,000 on social media, driven strong website traffic at LetsTalkStigma.org, and has been covered extensively in the local news.

"This has really been an organic and collaborative process," says Max Donatelli, now retired from Baker Victory Services, who was part of the founding group. "By joining forces we have been able to be far more effective. The Tower Foundation has been a real anchor of the program, providing expertise and relevant data, in addition to funding. They did not hesitate to get involved as they understand how important it is to demystify mental health issues."

# CARING FOR MOMS-TO-BE WITH SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

Catholic Health steps in on the opioid epidemic.

Women with substance use disorders come from all walks of life. The disorder does not discriminate and can be hard to identify. This can make neonatal care difficult for doctors and nurses who unfortunately aren't able to identify a patient with the disorder before it's too late, which is what happened at Catholic Health. When staff at the system's Western New York hospitals began to witness a staggering increase of neonatal abstinence syndrome in newborns, they took action immediately, partnering with the Tower Foundation to formulate a program to handle the issue.

The two-year pilot program includes trauma-informed care and screening training for OB/GYN providers and emergency room staff. The initiative also creates no-judgement, wrap-around services that connect all aspects of care and needed services for the baby and the mother, including medical care, substance abuse counseling, medication-assisted treatment providers, neonatal intensive care staff, and other community-based services. With the Tower Foundation's assistance, Catholic Health was able to hire a full-time service navigator to develop and implement screening, provide counseling, and offer referrals at Sisters Hospital, Mercy Hospital in Erie County and Mount St. Mary's Hospital in Niagara County.

Aimee Gomlak, Vice President of Women's Services at Catholic Health, notes: "Because the Tower Foundation had already been working with Erie County and with the provider community, they were way ahead of the game on the opioid issue. They have been a great partner for us as we developed tools for screening and sensitivity training to better serve moms and babies."



# UNIFYING STUDENTS THROUGH SPORTS

Special Olympics of Massachusetts (SOMA) connects young people with disabilities to sports and activities designed to build their skills, confidence, and social connections. The Tower Foundation is a longtime supporter of SOMA's work on the Cape, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket, and it seemed only natural for the Foundation to support additional efforts in Essex County.

SOMA's Inclusive Essex County initiative aims to increase athletic opportunities for students with disabilities. Its major focus is Unified Champion Schools, an inclusive high school basketball program that brings those with intellectual disabilities and those without together on the same team. More than 50 students in six Essex County high schools are participating with hopes of changing the exclusion culture in high schools to one of inclusion. The program brings students together, creating a sense of unity and building social relationships.

The three-year, \$100,000 grant also funds sports programs through Northeast Arc and a Young Athletes program for children younger than eight years old who are not yet old enough for traditional Special Olympics programs.

"Tower is the ignition switch that we needed to expand and showcase new programs directly in local communities," says Steve Huftalen, Vice President of Corporate Development and Special Events for SOMA, adding that these sports programs can also showcase the year-round work of SOMA that helps with additional fundraising efforts.

# RESTORING A LONG-LOST LANGUAGE

The Wôpanâak Nation seizes an opportunity to use words for good.

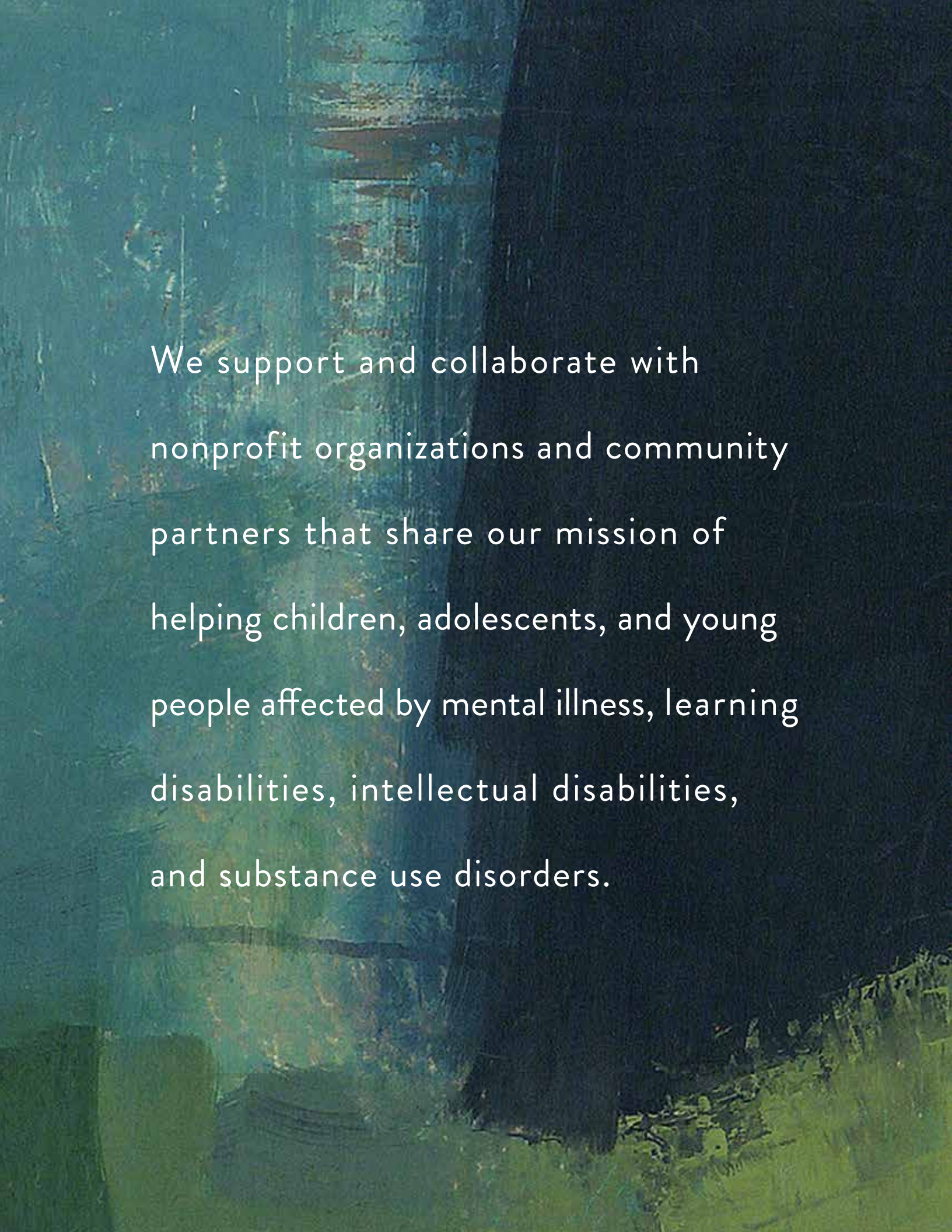
Finding the right words to express yourself in the face of stress can be difficult enough. But not having the actual words to describe the experience in the language of your culture can be even harder. For the Wôpanâak Nation in Mashpee, Massachusetts, where there's only a handful of people left who speak Wôpanâak fluently, that's what's happening. And to make matters worse, the opioid crisis has escalated in the community as well.

Banding together, the Tower Foundation, the Wôpanâak Language Wellness Institute, and the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project have partnered to help the Nation restore its native language as a means to help young people cope with substance use disorders and mental illnesses.

The Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project initially recognized a need to create words, prayers, and other native cultural expression that could help young people cope and heal. An arm of the larger Project, the Wellness Institute focuses its efforts on children who may be impacted by a family member's addiction or mental illness. While the group works primarily with school age children, drawing on tribal elders' knowledge of traditions and cultures is also an important part of their work. The group works with linguists to develop new words and prayers to give expression to some of the terms needed to describe aspects of addiction, giving young people an alternate way to share their experiences.







We support and collaborate with nonprofit organizations and community partners that share our mission of helping children, adolescents, and young people affected by mental illness, learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and substance use disorders.



# GRANTS AWARDED

## CORE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

### MASSACHUSETTS

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<b>Achievement Network, Ltd.</b> <i>Access for All Students to Rigorous Instruction</i>	<b>\$158,000</b>
<b>Anna Jaques Hospital</b> <i>Taking a Stand Against Substance Abuse —Giving Every Baby the Best Start</i>	<b>\$150,308</b>
<b>Behavioral Health Innovators, Inc.</b> <i>Recovery BUILD—An Alternative Peer Group for Adolescents in Recovery</i>	<b>\$97,854</b>
<b>Cape Cod Challenger Club</b> <i>POP (Playing On Purpose) Family Play Sessions</i>	<b>\$52,560</b>
<b>Cape Cod Healthcare Foundation</b> <i>Transitional Youth Intensive Outpatient Program</i>	<b>\$50,000</b>
<b>Cape Organization for Rights of the Disabled</b> <i>Bridges to Success</i>	<b>\$125,000</b>
<b>Fairwinds—Nantucket’s Counseling Center, Inc.</b> <i>Urgent Behavioral Healthcare and Substance Abuse Clinic</i>	<b>\$75,000</b>
<b>Fidelity House, Inc.</b> <i>Crowdsourcing Approach to Respite Care</i>	<b>\$89,814</b>
<b>Health Law Advocates</b> <i>Juvenile Court Mental Health Advocacy Project (J-MHAP): Year Six</i>	<b>\$282,366</b>
<b>Martha’s Vineyard Community Services, Inc.</b> <i>Island Wide Youth Collaborative</i>	<b>\$149,937</b>

<b>NAMI Cape Cod</b> <i>The Challenging Child Project</i>	<b>\$90,000</b>
<b>Northeast Legal Aid, Inc.</b> <i>Caretakers Of Children At Risk Project</i>	<b>\$100,000</b>
<b>Permanent Endowment for Martha’s Vineyard</b> <i>MVAEMT: Tutoring for EMT Students with Learning Challenges</i>	<b>\$27,610</b>
<b>Special Olympics Massachusetts, Inc.</b> <i>Inclusive Essex County</i>	<b>\$100,005</b>
<b>The Pettengill House, Inc.</b> <i>Mental Health and Substance Addiction Crisis Response Training</i>	<b>\$39,960</b>

### NEW YORK

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<b>Buffalo Hearing &amp; Speech Center, Inc.</b> <i>Floortime Training</i>	<b>\$123,700</b>
<b>Center for Employment Opportunities</b> <i>Mental Health &amp; Prosocial Support Services for Formerly Incarcerated Young Adults</i>	<b>\$140,000</b>
<b>Edge Foundation</b> <i>Edge Training and Coaching for Niagara Falls City Schools</i>	<b>\$99,890</b>
<b>Empower</b> <i>Startup Costs: Empower at Home</i>	<b>\$52,460</b>
<b>Kenmore—Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District</b> <i>Building Capacity for Trauma Informed Educational Practices</i>	<b>\$135,940</b>
<b>Kids Escaping Drugs</b> <i>Narrative Exposure Treatment: Integrating an Evidence-based Trauma Intervention with Residential Substance Abuse Treatment for Adolescents</i>	<b>\$77,932</b>

<b>Learning Disabilities Association of Western New York</b> <i>Learning, Education, and Academic Development (LEAD) Program</i>	<b>\$196,878</b>	<b>Essex County Community Foundation</b> <i>Grant Resource Center and 2018 Institute for Trustees</i>	<b>\$28,660</b>
<b>Mid-Erie Mental Health Services, Inc.</b> <i>SBIRT and Medication-Assisted Treatment Training for Youth-Serving Primary Care Providers</i>	<b>\$65,742</b>	<b>Express Yourself, Inc.</b> <i>Small Grant</i>	<b>\$15,300</b>
<b>National Center for Learning Disabilities, Inc.</b> <i>Understood for Educators</i>	<b>\$100,000</b>	<b>Landmark School, Inc.</b> <i>Small Grant</i>	<b>\$4,200</b>
<b>Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center</b> <i>Collaborative Care at Work</i>	<b>\$146,938</b>	<b>Lynn Shelter Association</b> <i>Small Grant</i>	<b>\$30,000</b>
<b>Positive Emotional Development and Learning Skills (PEDALS 3.0)</b> <i>Positive Emotional Development and Learning Skills (PEDALS 3.0) Program</i>	<b>\$130,000</b>	<b>Martha's Vineyard Boys &amp; Girls Club</b> <i>Small Grant</i>	<b>\$17,000</b>
<b>Project HEAL: Help To Eat, Accept, and Live</b> <i>Communities of HEALing: Essex County</i>	<b>\$50,000</b>	<b>Martha's Vineyard Donors Collaborative</b> <i>Non Profit Resource Center and Professional Development</i>	<b>\$15,000</b>
<b>Say Yes to Education, Inc.</b> <i>Say Yes Buffalo School-Based Preventive Program</i>	<b>\$100,000</b>	<b>Monomoy Regional School District</b> <i>Small Grant</i>	<b>\$4,477</b>
<b>Sisters of Charity Hospital Foundation</b> <i>Center of Excellence—Opioid Use Disorder &amp; Pregnancy</i>	<b>\$95,820</b>	<b>North East Association of Learning Specialists</b> <i>Small Grant</i>	<b>\$10,000</b>
		<b>Rising Tide Therapeutic Equestrian Center</b> <i>Small Grant</i>	<b>\$14,100</b>
		<b>Riverview School, Inc.</b> <i>Riverview School Needs Assessment and Technology Plan</i>	<b>\$27,600</b>

# STRENGTHENING PARTNER CAPACITY

## MASSACHUSETTS

<b>Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention Nantucket</b> <i>Small Grant</i>	<b>\$12,800</b>	<b>The Cape Cod Foundation</b> <i>Institute for Nonprofit Practice (INP)</i>	<b>\$15,000</b>
<b>Cape Cod Children's Place</b> <i>Small Grant</i>	<b>\$30,000</b>	<b>The Children's Hospital Corporation d/b/a Boston Children's Hospital</b> <i>Early Dyslexia/Reading Disability Screening App Planning Grant</i>	<b>\$25,000</b>
<b>Children's Center for Communication/ Beverly School for the Deaf</b> <i>Small Grant</i>	<b>\$8,400</b>	<b>The Island Autism Group, Inc.</b> <i>Small Grant</i>	<b>\$30,000</b>
<b>Community Action, Inc.</b> <i>Small Grant</i>	<b>\$9,600</b>	<b>The Plummer Home for Boys</b> <i>Small Grant</i>	<b>\$14,319</b>
<b>Danvers Public Schools</b> <i>Small Grant</i>	<b>\$14,300</b>	<b>Regional Capacity Building Initiatives</b> <i>Barnstable, Dukes, Essex &amp; Nantucket Counties</i>	<b>\$9,450</b>
<b>Endicott College</b> <i>Small Grant</i>	<b>\$5,000</b>		

## NEW YORK

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**Autism Services, Inc.** \$56,364  
*Workstation Replacement*

**Bornhava, the Specialized Early Childhood Center of Western New York, Inc.** \$90,000  
*Increasing Fiscal Sustainability through Improved Organizational Structure*

**Boys & Girls Clubs of the Northtowns of Western New York** \$6,200  
*Small Grant*

**City Mission Society, Inc.** \$67,940  
*Cornerstone Manor Technology Implementation*

**Community Concern of Western New York, Inc.** \$60,000  
*Community Concern of Western New York and Hamburg Counseling Services Merger*

**Community Health Worker Network of Buffalo, Inc.** \$10,000  
*Western New York Mindfulness Conference*

**Community Services for the Developmentally Disabled** \$125,000  
*Community Services Technology Plan Implementation*

**Cradle Beach Camp, Inc.** \$19,740  
*Upgrading Technology to Increase Service Capacity*

**Family Help Center Inc.** \$92,683  
*Technology Implementation*

**Gerard Place Housing Development Fund Company** \$5,000  
*Small Grant*

**Gliding Stars, Inc.** \$5,985  
*Small Grant*

**Greater Niagara Frontier Council, Boy Scouts of America** \$14,805  
*Greater Niagara Frontier Council Boy Scouts of America Project Technology Initiative*

**Kaleida Health Foundation** \$9,195  
*Small Grant*

**Lake Shore Behavioral Health, Inc.** \$224,500  
*Child and Adolescent Treatment Services—Lake Shore Behavioral Health Merger*

**Mental Health Association of Erie County** \$5,000  
*Small Grant*

**New York State Association for Retarded Children Inc., Erie County Chapter** \$13,095  
*Small Grant*

**Niagara University** \$232,800  
*Niagara County Early Child Care Quality Improvement Project (QIP) Phase III Focus on Kindergarten Transition*

**Parent Network of Western New York, Inc.** \$1,000  
*Western New York Family Engagement Conference*

**Plymouth Crossroads United Church Home, Inc.** \$6,205  
*Small Grant*

**St. Amelia School** \$16,443  
*Small Grant*

**Summit Educational Resources** \$79,361  
*Behavioral and Mental Health Consortium (BAM) Project*

**The Dale Association, Inc.** \$13,381  
*Small Grant*

**The Research Foundation of SUNY** \$7,150  
*Fall 2017 Continuous Quality Improvement Building Certificate Program*

**The Research Foundation of SUNY** \$4,950  
*Spring 2017 Continuous Quality Improvement Building Certificate Program*

**Regional Capacity Building Initiatives** \$13,600  
*Erie and Niagara Counties*

# HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

## MASSACHUSETTS

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**City of Gloucester Health Department** \$330,000  
*Moving Prevention Forward Across the North Shore; Reduce Youth Substance Use. Promote Healthy Development.*

**City of Newburyport** \$378,792  
*Regional Prevention Coordination*

**Community Catalyst** \$72,000  
*The Power of Prevention: Addressing Youth Addiction*

**The Children's Hospital Corporation  
d/b/a Boston Children's Hospital**      **\$300,000**  
*Evaluation of SBIRT in Massachusetts Public Schools*

**Wôpanâak Language &  
Cultural Weetyoo, Inc.**      **\$63,840**  
*Wôpanâak (Wampanoag Language)  
Wellness Initiative*

## NEW YORK

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**Mental Health Association of Erie County**      **\$200,000**  
*Join the Conversation: Anti-Stigma Campaign*

**TOTAL DISCRETIONARY GRANTS**      **\$490,000**



Elizabeth C. Tower (1920-2013), *Tree Trunk and Ground Space*, 1961  
Oil on Canvas, 16 ½" x 21"

## FEATURED ARTWORK

As a prolific painter, Elizabeth C. Tower loved everything about art—exploring it, talking about it, and spending time with those who make it. Her artwork was exhibited frequently throughout the 1960s and 1970s but rarely available commercially. Her work, displayed above and on the cover, is also featured on the foundation's new website at [TheTowerFoundation.org](http://TheTowerFoundation.org).

# THE TOWER FOUNDATION

The Tower Foundation is shepherded by a dedicated, seven-person team and a supportive board of trustees. Our work is based in Western New York and Eastern Massachusetts, areas where the Tower family resided and raised their children.

## STAFF

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