



THE CONNECTION 2014 ANNUAL REPORT

# Trauma-Informed Care, Recovery and Resilience

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Trauma-Informed Care, Recovery and Resilience

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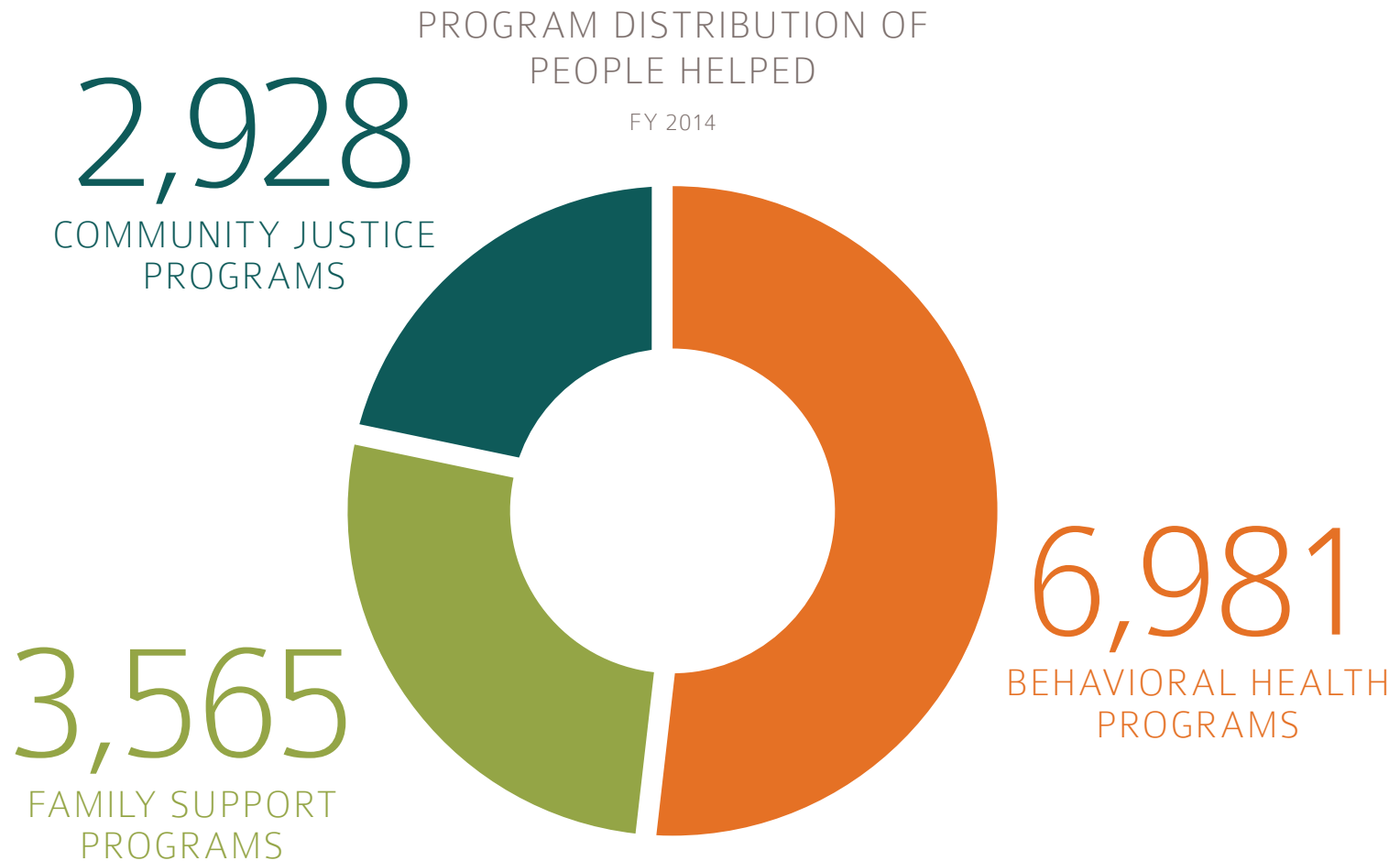
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OUR MISSION:  
BUILDING SAFE, HEALTHY, CARING COMMUNITIES AND  
INSPIRING PEOPLE TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL  
AS PRODUCTIVE AND VALUED CITIZENS.

WHAT WE DO:

THE CONNECTION IS A STATEWIDE HUMAN SERVICES AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY THAT HELPS THOUSANDS OF CONNECTICUT PEOPLE EACH YEAR WITH ISSUES OF HOMELESSNESS, MENTAL ILLNESS, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, AND COMMUNITY JUSTICE.

This past year, The Connection's staff assisted more than **12,300 people** throughout Connecticut who have experienced trauma in their lives and are struggling with substance use, mental illness, homelessness and community justice issues. In addition, through The Connection's Institute for Innovative Practice®, we connect "research to practice" to better serve our clients, raise awareness of societal issues and promote sound public policy.



## DEAR FRIENDS,

The theme of this year's Annual Report is Trauma-Informed Care, Recovery and Resilience. According to SAMHSA (the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), "Trauma results from an event or a series of events that subsequently causes intense physical and psychological stress reactions. The individual's functioning and emotional, physical, social, and spiritual health can be affected. Some of the most common traumatic experiences include violence, abuse, neglect, disaster, terrorism and war." Unfortunately, traumatic events are all too common and many of our clients have experienced multiple traumas that have become life-altering experiences. Understanding trauma and its impact are crucial to providing compassionate and quality care.

Trauma-informed care is an evidence-based practice that teaches service providers about delivering services tailored to the needs of trauma survivors. It involves understanding and responding to people's expectations and needs, and minimizing the chances of re-traumatizing someone who is trying to heal. An individual's experience of trauma impacts every aspect of human functioning—physical, mental, behavioral, social and spiritual. Untreated, trauma can lead to a number of adverse consequences, such as substance abuse, mental illness and other health issues.

In order to be a trauma-responsive care agency, The Connection trains all staff on trauma-informed care practices. Staff participate in training sessions and attend conferences dedicated to the practice of delivering trauma-informed care and recovery-focused services. Trauma-informed care is also about creating a culture of sensitivity and awareness and encourages self-care—care for the care givers to ensure the best possible care for our clients.

The stories of trauma, recovery, and resilience contained in this annual report are a testament to the triumph of the human spirit. We are truly moved by these transformational success stories—and we hope you will be as well.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

John LaRosa  
CHAIR, THE CONNECTION, INC.

Stephen Angle, Ph.D.  
CHAIR, THE CONNECTION FUND, INC.





# The Power of Support

Joe, a 50-year-old client of the Norton Court program, has lived with chronic depression and addictions for more than three decades. He has also lived with chronic pain since 1993.

Born in South Carolina, Joe moved to New Haven with his mother and brother when he was seven. “I showed the symptoms of mental illness at a young age,” he says. “But it was undiagnosed. That led me into substance abuse and addiction.” He began drinking very young, started smoking marijuana at 13 and using cocaine at 18. By age 23 he was using crack.

In spite of his alcohol and drug use, Joe graduated from high school and went to technical school where he learned automotive repair. He worked as a diesel mechanic and drove trucks for many years. But in 1993, when he was just 30 years old, he became disabled following a work-related injury. This left him with chronic pain, which made it virtually impossible for him to hold a job, and not working added to his depression.

For years he would go through cycles of doing well and then becoming depressed and drinking. After several hospitalizations, staff at a respite house suggested that Joe find an agency that provides case managers to help with organization, goal setting and achieving a healthy lifestyle.

In early 2013, Joe joined The Connection’s Norton Court program, which offers supported apartment living with case management services. He began working to build his strengths and organizational skills. And he began attending groups at The Connection Counseling Center. One of Joe’s main goals was to maintain his sobriety—a constant challenge because whenever he became depressed he wanted to drink.

Joe has been living at Norton Court for over a year now and continues to do well. He says, “I make sure I take my medication and try hard not to isolate myself. That’s where my issues start....”

*I go to a lot of meetings, and I do groups. All the things I have in place—the supports I have—are making a difference for me.*





# Embracing Her New Life

Mary, a client of The Connection's PILOTS Permanent Supportive Housing Program in Norwich, is a woman who loves to give back. Now 55, she works for the Connecticut Pardon Team, which was founded in 2004

to help people who have been convicted of a crime and would like to have their records expunged.

Mary's job at the Connecticut Pardon Team fills her with joy and purpose. She helps people fill out their applications and coaches them on their oral presentations to ensure that they cover all the points they need to make. She is also a minister in her church and is president of the Women Empowering Women group.

But life was not always so positive for Mary. She has lost 20 years of her life to drugs and unhealthy relationships. "I was using alcohol, cocaine and crack as solutions to finding peace," she says. To maintain her addiction, she was a drug runner and was procuring drugs for rich people who did not want to buy directly from dealers. She has spent time in prison for use and selling.

Mary was homeless for a several years. In 1998, she became one of the first clients of The Connection's Elm City Women and Children's Center and was discharged to a transitional housing program in Norwich. It was there that she met PILOTS case manager Marlene Clark. Soon after they met, Mary and Marlene filled out a Shelter Plus Care application to place Mary's name on waiting lists for permanent, supported housing. And they began working together.

“Marlene pushed me to wake up and face life on life’s terms,” she says. “It was a ten-year struggle to learn acceptance, and ways to handle my life journey, and being the best that I can be.”

“I’m extremely healthy today,” Mary explains.

*My greatest happiness is that I am safe and reborn—having a renewed mind, having the ability to help myself support my children and help others. I can’t forget the truth of my sordid history, but I can embrace the new light and new life.*

Being president of The Connection’s Women Empowering Women group helps. “I have learned that everyone faces challenges that will defeat them somehow in their lifetime, especially when temptation and tribulations become overpowering,” Mary says. “The women’s group helps me remember that I still have work to do. I know that I can lean on (the other women) to face the future one day at a time. I’m thankful that I can lean on The Connection and God. You have to be an active participant in your own life.”



# A Second Chance

Justin, the first client of Logano Place, The Connection's newest transitional housing program, is a survivor. He has been at Logano Place since September and hopes to graduate from the program next summer.

Justin has struggled with depression for most of his adult life, and for a time was addicted to cocaine. But when he recognized the negative impact his addiction was having on his life, he stopped using. Until last fall he had been clean and sober for over seven years. But last December, Justin found himself at the doors of the Eddy Shelter, looking for a bed.

Born in Hartford, Justin moved to Wethersfield with his family when he was a boy and graduated from Wethersfield High School. After graduation he held a succession of odd jobs, working as a cashier, at machine shops, for landscaping companies, and in warehouses.

A few years ago he moved into a condo in Middletown with a friend. But over time, the depression came back and he began struggling. He began drinking. One day he lost his temper at work and lost his job. His lack of work added to his depression, which had a negative impact on the relationship with his friend. Eventually they agreed he should move out.

When he arrived at the Eddy Shelter, Justin began working with case manager Martina Hutley. "Martina really made a difference," he says. "She knew how to talk to me-and she really got to me." Martina, who has herself struggled with addiction and depression, encouraged Justin to take advantage of the many programs offered at The Connection Counseling Center. "Therapy really helped. Before when I got stressed out I'd stay stuck in my head and become very secluded. Now I'm able to

take myself out of the situation, and evaluate it with a clear head (to arrive at) a solution.”

Justin moved into Logano Place last summer. Soon after, he began working at a local grocery store and has been working very hard to save the money needed to move into his own apartment. “My goal is to move out of here in nine months,” he says. I need to get my driver’s license back, and find another good job working in a warehouse.” He pauses a moment and says, “But I’m also thinking seriously about becoming an alcohol and drug education counselor. I’m someone that people like to confide in. Making a difference in other people’s lives is very appealing...”

*“When you hit rock bottom, you get a chance to decide whether you want to survive, or to give up in general. I prefer to get busy living.”*



# From Trauma to Triumph

Diona, a graduate of The Connection’s Supportive Housing program in Norwich and the Hallie House program in Middletown, is a proud and loving mother, model employee, and ambitious career woman. She

works as an Independent Living Skills Trainer with brain-injured individuals, helping them re-train their brains so they can live as independently as possible.

She is a woman driven to breaking what she perceives as her legacy of poverty, neglect and substance use. When Diona was still a child, her adoptive mother told her that her birth mother was a drug addict. “It was pretty clear that she didn’t expect me to be anything either.”

Because Diona is strong-willed and articulate, as she grew older, she was frequently in conflict with her adoptive mother. As soon as she was old enough, she dropped out of high school and moved in with her boyfriend, who is the father of her two oldest children. “There were a lot of drugs and police,” she says.

By the time she was 21, she was addicted to crack. “I bounced around from program to program—and my children were taken from me because of neglect. I didn’t understand that I couldn’t keep doing drugs and keep my job and my children.”

Three years ago Diona found herself pregnant again and living in a crack house. “I had a spiritual awakening then,” she says. “I told myself, ‘I can do better than this.’” She found a detox program, did well, and on the advice of the social worker there, decided to find a residential recovery program. It was the second time she had been a client at Hallie House.

“When I got out of Hallie House, I was like a rocket,” she says.” Her determination propelled her into the workplace. She found a job working as a companion to brain-injured adults. After a year she was promoted to Living Skills Trainer and then was promoted to Lead Independent Living Skills Trainer.

*I’m part of society, part of the community. I’m not somebody taking from the community. I can hold my head up.*

Diona’s story is a testament to her own strong will to survive, to do the right thing, and to the importance of the caring support provided by agencies like The Connection. She currently has custody of her two-year-old daughter and will soon regain custody of her nine-year-old child. She is also on good terms with her two oldest children—her 18-year-old daughter, who is now in college and her 17-year-old son who will be entering college next year.

“Right now I feel I’m trying to play catch up to where I should be in life. If the best I can give my children is to show them that you can pick yourself up after having been knocked down constantly, then I’m going to do it.”

The Connection Institute  
Studies Peer  
Mentoring Program



THE CONNECTION WILL UNDERTAKE A STUDY ON THE  
EFFECTIVENESS OF PEER MENTORING OF CLIENTS  
OF OUR **REACH PROGRAM**  
THANKS TO A **\$295,000 GRANT**  
FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE.



THE GRANT FUNDS, AWARDED OCTOBER 1, WERE RELEASED UNDER THE SECOND CHANCE ACT OF 2007, INTENDED TO ENCOURAGE AGENCIES TO DEVELOP MENTORING AND OTHER PROGRAMS TO ALLOW THOSE RELEASED FROM PRISON TO REINTEGRATE SUCCESSFULLY INTO THE COMMUNITY.



The study is a two-year randomized trial involving 110 ex-offenders in New Haven, Bridgeport and other Connecticut cities — 55 will receive mentors, and 55 will not.

“We will recruit clients from prisons, where mentors—who are former prisoners themselves, with at least five years of stability behind them—will meet with them two to three times, pre-release. Mentors will then meet weekly with clients, once released, for six months to a year,” said Charles Barber, Director of The Connection Institute. The Connection Institute for Innovative Practice<sup>®</sup> is the research arm of The Connection.

The mentors will use evidence-based practices to facilitate community reentry for the newly released clients. At their weekly meetings, the mentors will offer psychosocial support and practical guidance toward reentry into the community.



“We will then follow these clients to see if the mentoring has an impact on recidivism in six months, one year, and three years post-intervention, as well as look at other measures such as criminal risk, substance use, engagement in treatment and services,” Barber said.

THE CONNECTION FUND DEVELOPS STATEWIDE INNOVATIVE HOUSING SOLUTIONS AND ALLOWS THE CONNECTION TO OWN A RANGE OF FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT.

AS PART OF THE CONNECTION'S DEDICATION TO BEING A TRAUMA-INFORMED AGENCY, WE SEEK TO CREATE POSITIVE LIVING SPACES THAT WE WOULD LIVE IN OURSELVES.

HERE ARE JUST A COUPLE OF THE LATEST CONNECTION FUND INITIATIVES...



PROFILE:

# JEFFERSON COMMONS

In September, The Connection opened Jefferson Commons: twelve beautiful garden-style permanent supported apartment units for low-income individuals and families with mental health issues who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Located in a centrally located area of New London, The Connection has created a vibrant community for some of our neediest citizens. Supportive housing projects are a classic ‘win-win’—they provide quality services and raise property values, while reducing the burden on taxpayers by preventing higher costs like hospitalizations. The Connection case management staff at Jefferson Commons will collaborate with our local nonprofit service providers to ensure access and delivery of vital services to the region. Jefferson Commons is an energy-efficient, Silver LEED-certified development.



# PROFILE: HOWE STREET ENERGY IMPROVEMENTS



Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro and New Haven Mayor Toni Harp recently joined Connection staff and community guests to celebrate at an Open House showcasing energy efficiency improvements made at The Connection's 48 Howe Street New Haven property.

The attendees of the Open House celebration included (left to right) Tri-Phase Owner, Angelo Delucia; The Connection Facilities Manager, Dave Kyle; New Haven Mayor Toni Harp, The Connection President and CEO, Peter Nucci, The Connection Property Manager, Lou Rogowski; and Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro.



In March 2014, The Governor's Office announced that The Connection received **\$880,250** in funding from the State of Connecticut's Nonprofit Grant Program. The funding has allowed the Property Management Department to perform energy efficiency and structural improvements to our 48 Howe Street property in New Haven. In addition, Connection House in Middletown and Pendleton House in New Haven each received **\$14,000** in funding to purchase back-up generators to ensure that those programs can continue to function in the event of power failure.

The Connection also received a **\$372,000** bond funding award from the State of Connecticut's Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

(DMHAS), to install equipment to make energy efficiency improvements and create stand-by power generation in the event of a power disruption. In addition, more than **\$150,000** in funding for other energy efficiency improvements over the past four years has been secured through the State of Connecticut's Neighborhood Assistance Act (NAA). This funding has allowed The Connection to install energy-efficient vinyl-clad windows throughout the building and an Energy Management System (EMS) to control heat in the building. The EMS allows the Connection's Property Manager to control, operate and regulate the building's two boilers and 276 radiators' sensors 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through the use of a laptop computer. Other noteworthy improvements include an upgraded

building security system, painting and refurbishing projects and a new, efficient air conditioning system.

The 90,000 square-foot building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was built in 1929 by the YWCA of New Haven. The Connection acquired the building in considerable disrepair in 1997 and began a process of restoring the public spaces, individual rooms and mechanical systems. Today, the building houses a number of Connection programs, including Roger Sherman House, SIERRA Center, Recovery House, The Connection Lodge, The Connection's Intervention and Prevention Programs, The Connection Counseling Center, and Elm City Women and Children's Center.

# Partners in Success

## Joey Logano Supports Second Chances at The Connection



Joey Logano (left) cuts the ribbon to open Logano Place with (left to right) Middletown Mayor Dan Drew; State Senator Dante Bartolomeo; The Connection President and CEO, Peter Nucci; and Executive Director of the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce, Larry McHugh.





NASCAR Sprint Cup Series star and 2015 Daytona 500 champion, Joey Logano—a Middletown native—supports second chances through his foundation’s charitable work. Logano recently participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony for The Connection’s newest program, named Logano Place in Joey’s honor. Logano Place is a new transitional housing program for up to 28 homeless adult men and women who are actively working on their recovery from behavioral health and substance abuse issues. The goal of the program is to provide supports to these men and women so that they can successfully re-enter the workforce and permanently exit from homelessness. The program, located in Middletown on The Connection’s Eddy campus, offers assistance to those who are working to achieve independence in their lives. Funds raised through Joey’s inaugural Connecticut-based Hometown Showdown event were donated to the program.







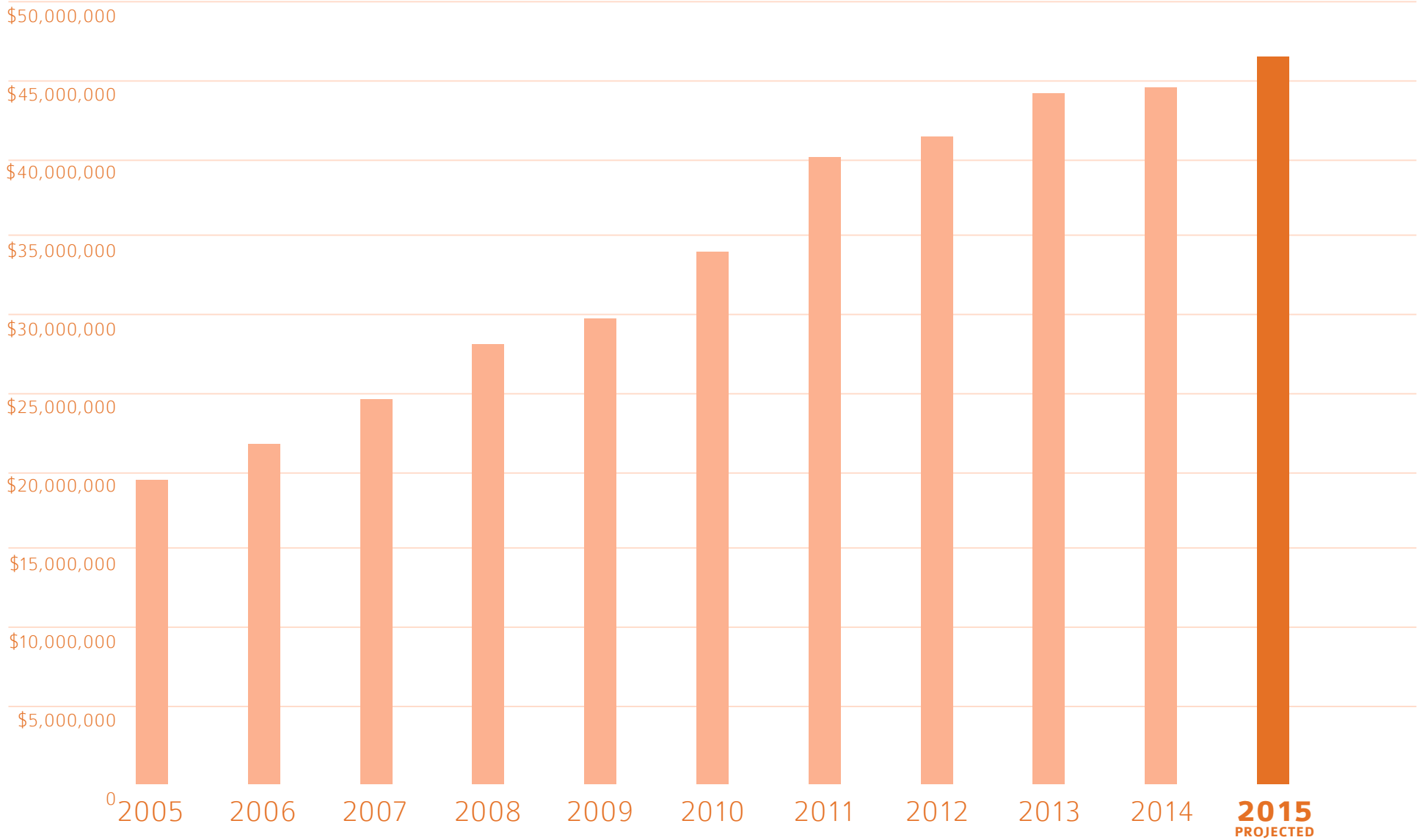
The inaugural Joey Logano Hometown Showdown took place at On Track Karting in Wallingford on September 18, 2014. The night provided an opportunity for fans to test their racing skills against Joey in a fun competition along with other racers while raising money for The Connection.

*“It’s an honor for me to host this event in Connecticut where my racing career began and give back to the community which helped me get where I am today,” said Logano. “I have wanted to do something like this for a long time and seeing it come together is really exciting for me. Thanks to AutoTrader.com partnering with us for the event, it has become a reality.”*

The event featured adult and junior division team-based races, a silent auction, and raffles. Participants also competed against one another in the “Dash 4 Cash” race, with the first place receiving \$2,500; second place, \$500; and third place, a GoPro camera. While Logano spent time talking to numerous people and helped the staff set up the different races, Joey also raced against the participants, and everyone was excited to have the opportunity to meet and talk with him.

## THE CONNECTION, INC. ANNUAL SUPPORT

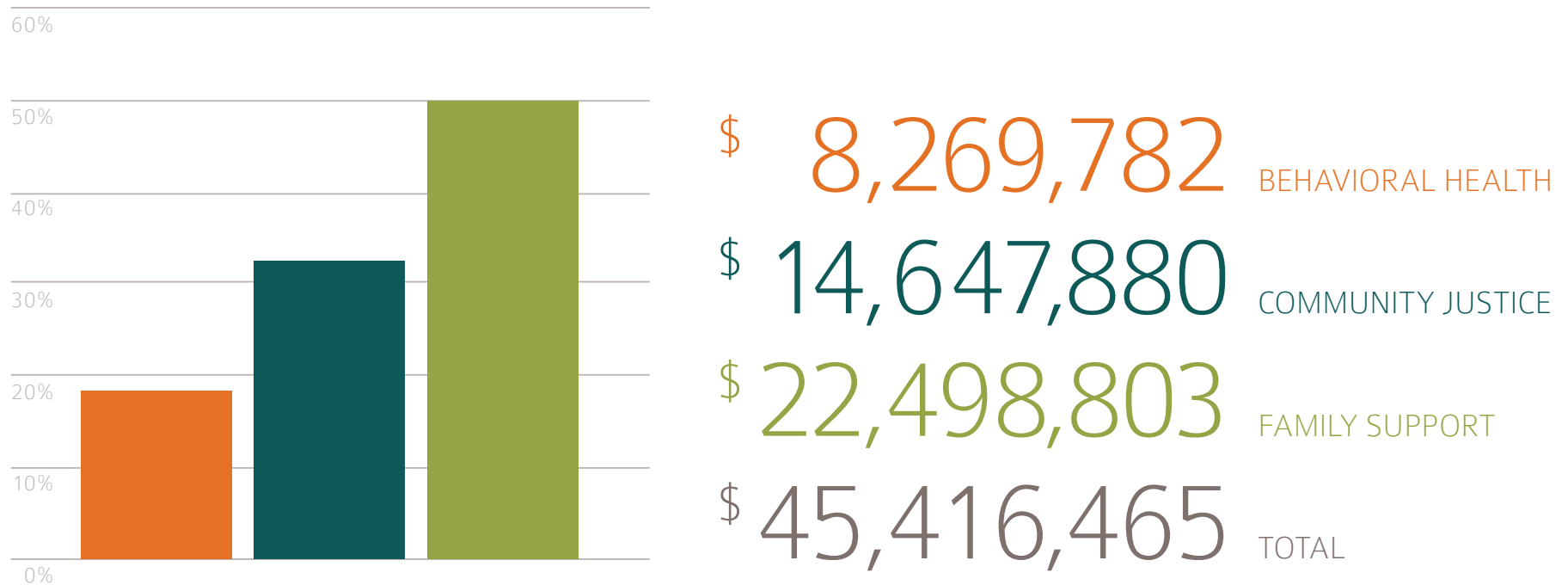
FY 2005 TO FY 2015





## TOTAL GRANT EXPENDITURES BY SERVICE AREA

FY 2014



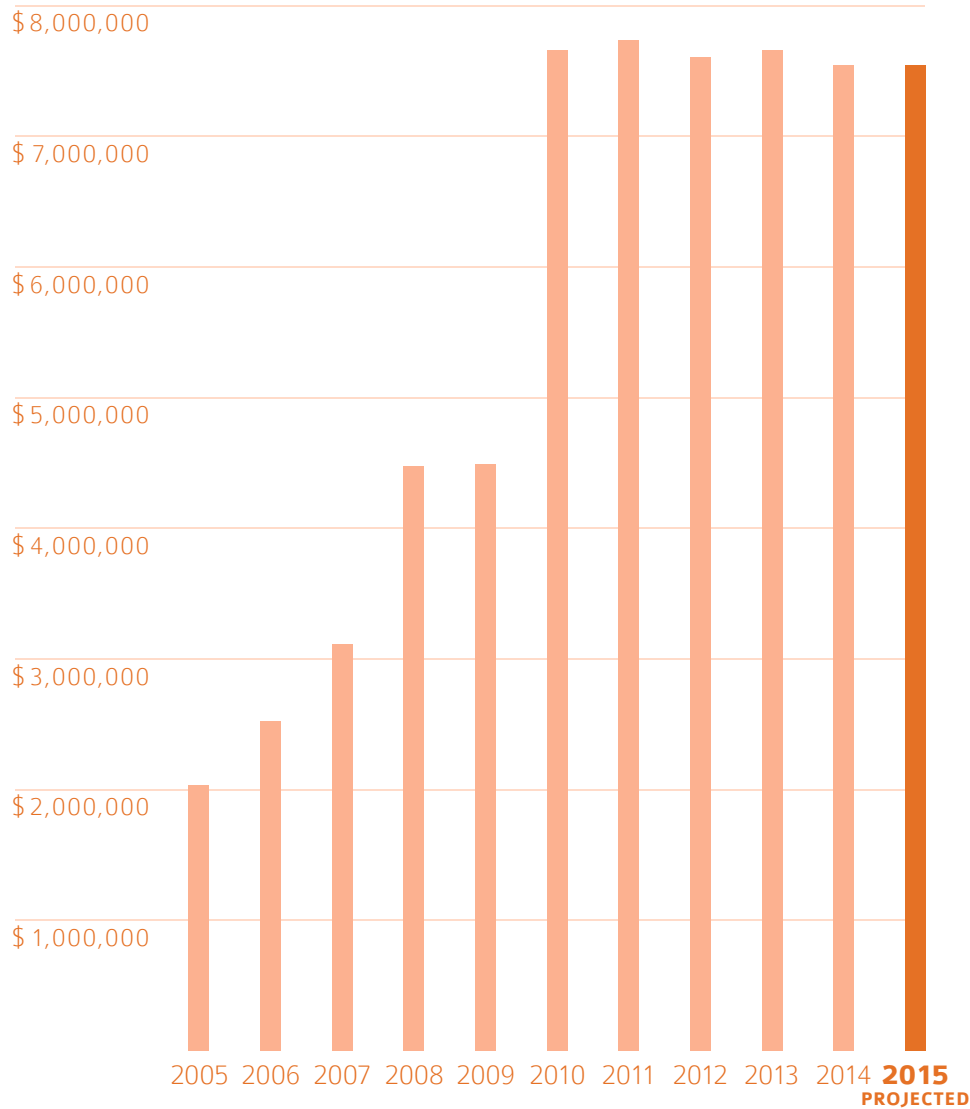
### HOW WE USE THE DOLLARS

**88%** **DIRECT** Services to clients and communities, including Counseling, evaluations, community service work, food, housing, care, guidance, supervision and monitoring.

**12%** **INDIRECT** General leadership and management services including planning, program and fund development, accounting, audits, legal and personnel support, board support and community relations.

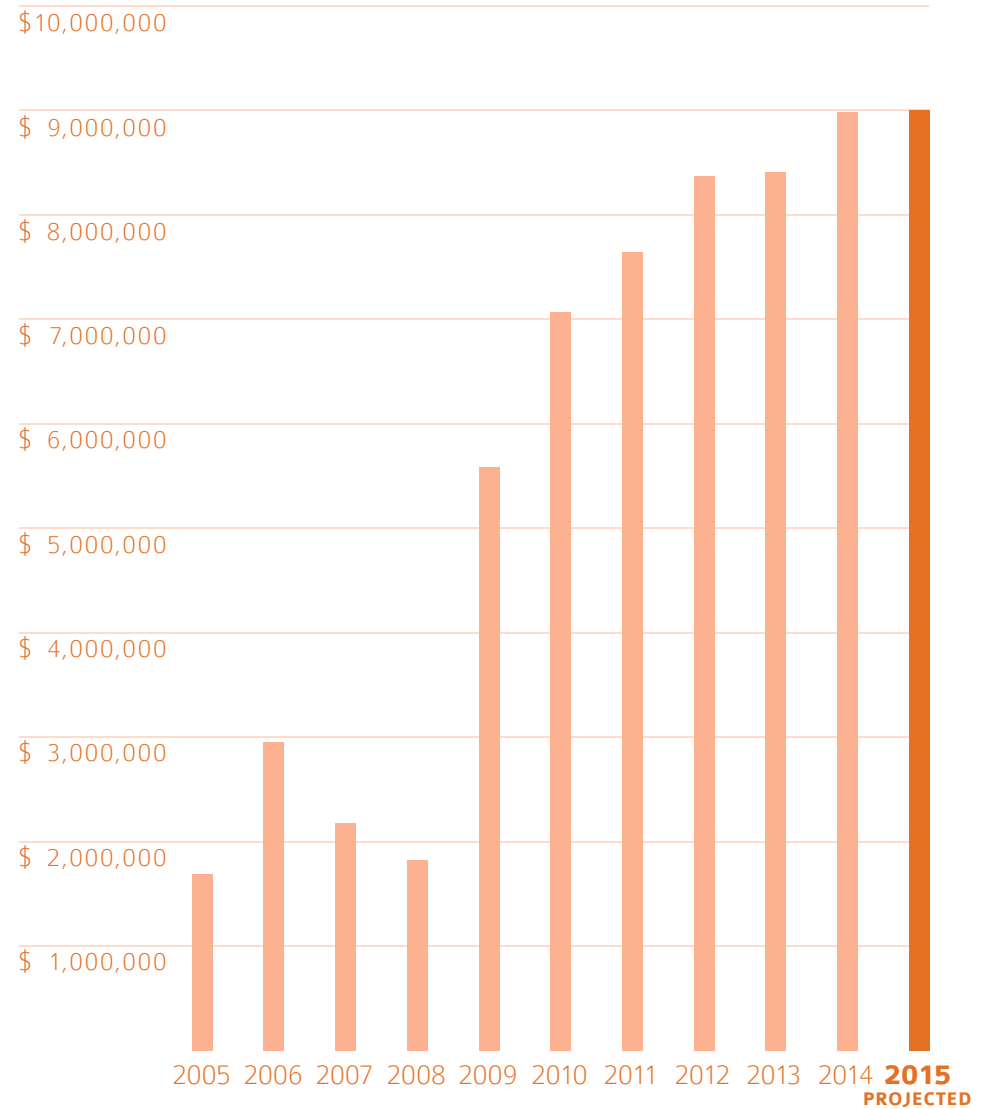
## THE CONNECTION FUND, INC. NET ASSETS

FY 2005 TO FY 2015



## THE CONNECTION FUND, INC. ANNUAL EXPENDITURES

2014–2015 DATA BASED UPON AGENCY BUDGET, FY 2005 TO FY 2015



THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING CARING INDIVIDUALS,  
COMPANIES AND ORGANIZATIONS WHO SUPPORTED  
THE CONNECTION'S MISSION BY MAKING A CONTRIBUTION  
TO OUR AGENCY IN FISCAL YEAR 2014\*.

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