

THE BRICK HOUSE

COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER



FALL 2022
ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

STAY IN TOUCH

If you would like to be added to, or taken off, our mailing list please let us know at: brickhousecommunity.org/contact or (413) 863-9576.

Greetings, friends and supporters of the Brick House Community Resource Center!

We're putting together this annual newsletter at an exciting time. Staff and volunteers are keeping busy, our building is in full use and receiving some desired work and attention – including, as you can see above, a new roof – and we are launching a search for the first full-time Executive Director our organization has had in over 20 years.

A debt of gratitude is owed to outgoing Executive Director Kwamane Harris, who came to us just as the news of COVID-19 was setting in, and whose calm confidence and big-picture thinking brought us through what could have been a very difficult stretch leaving us stronger, better-funded, and feeling clearer about the road ahead. We wish Kwamane the best in all his future endeavors, and believe our community will be receiving the benefits of his time at the Brick House in the years to come.

We know it is not an easy time for organizations seeking executive leadership, but we have reason to be optimistic. We've been able to plan ahead for this moment with Kwamane's thoughtful input, and support from the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts has allowed us to bring professionals into our search effort. And, most of all, we are strongly motivated to find the right full-time Executive Director.

Because it's not an easy time to be growing up, either, in this neighborhood or in the world beyond it, and it's not an easy time to be a parent. It's not even an easy time to be an adult, out there on your own.

We think every town needs a place like the Brick House, where people can go when they need some extra support and resources, or to learn something new, or even just to be around their neighbors. More often than not, it's in places just like this that positive change is born.

Read on to find out more about what's been going on here on Third Street, and reach out if you're interested. It's a good time to get involved.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Jackson".

Mike Jackson
Interim Executive Director.
The Brick House Community Resource Center

Youth Programs

THE TEEN CENTER

Over the winter months, programming at our Teen Center focused on expressive arts, workforce development, and a good dose of fun! Teens participated in a resume workshop, and in the spring we hosted a series of fun Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) programs and partnered with MassHire to provide a seven-week employment opportunity with landscape designer Peter Wackernagel.

The summer was a time of change and transition. We welcomed a new Youth Programs/Project Amp Coordinator, Hannah Bertrand, who is working with local schools to provide Project Amp mentorship as an alternative to punishment (see below). We were also joined by two new DIAL/SELF AmeriCorps service members, Eamon Rudel and John Camerota, who are serving as youth mentors and role models.

We are already reaping the rewards of this strong, full team! In addition to our regular after-school programming the Teen Center has hosted a back-to-school backpack giveaway, a cyanotype workshop with photographer Ezra Distler, a Dungeons & Dragons campaign, and a month-long film workshop in partnership with MCTV. The Teen Center is busy, and the future is looking bright!



PROJECT AMP

The Brick House is offering a new program for the area that can have a large positive impact on local teens: Project Amp!

Project Amp is a brief, youth-driven, non-punitive mentorship program. Over 4 to 6 sessions youth explore their interests, develop their goals, and navigate through any pressures and risks that might impact their well-being. Sessions are about one hour each and can be held here at the Brick House, over Zoom, at school, or in any public place the participant feels comfortable. This program will foster a relationship of empowerment to help youth reach their goals and strive towards self-resiliency.

For more information, reach out to Hannah at hbertrand@brickhousecr.org or (413) 432-9522.

GOT FOOD?

Feeding hungry teens is a tall order! The Teen Center has always been a place where youth know they can drop by to get something to eat after school. We are seeking regular donations of snacks and meals to keep our shelves stocked this year. If you are interested, please contact Megan at mrichardson@brickhousecr.org.

Thank You to Our 5K Race Supporters!

ANGELS: Gilmore & Farrell Insurance Agency, Inc., The Montague Village Store

DONORS: Buckingham Rabbit Vintage, Loot, Franklin Community Co-op

PRIZES PROVIDED BY Artisan Beverage Cooperative, Aubuchon Hardware, Casey Williams, The Country Creemee, Great Falls Harvest, Loot, Magic Wings Butterfly Conservatory & Gardens, Nova Motorcycles, Peterman's Boards and Bowls, the Rendezvous, Rock Fossil & Dinosaur Shop, Subway of Turners Falls, Swanson's Fabrics, The Upper Bend, The Wagon Wheel, Yankee Candle

EVENT SUPPORT: Sugarloaf Mountain Athletic Club; Massachusetts DCR; the Town of Montague; The Montague Reporter; Big Y

ARTWORK BY Opertura

VOLUNTEERS: Sean Durham, Kali Freeman, Deborah Frenkel, Annie Harris, Laura Heisig, Anna Hendricks, Mike Jackson, Jim Katsoulis and Family, Will Kennedy, Fran Ludington, Maggie Martin, Alex McGuigan, Dawn Montague, Sarah Noble, Wendy Podlenski, Chip Sisson, Midori Soderberg, David Theoharides, Barbara Zaccheo



Parent & Family Services

Our Parent & Families program has had a busy year! Early in 2022 we received funding to run two different parent education programs, Nurturing Families and Strengthening Families, both of which are evidence-based, meaning that they have been proven to be effective. We were able to run both, from late winter through the end of June. Participating families offered positive feedback, and some wanted to continue getting together to share parenting tips and support each other. Thus our Parent Support Group was born, open to parents and guardians of kids of all ages. This informal drop-in group now meets twice a month!

We also offer a drop-in Coffee Hour each Thursday from 9 to 10 a.m., open to all community members. Coffee, tea, and snacks are available, and the only agenda is for people to get to know each other and enjoy some time together.

We also run occasional events, such as our Brain Architecture game, which helps players explore how negative childhood experiences can affect brain development. While this sounds technical, it's easy and fun to play, and there's always a good discussion after the game.

We hosted several COVID-19 vaccine clinics this year, as well as a Racial Justice conversation circle and a Parent Café for parents and guardians working on recovery from addiction.

Our Community Connections Coalition Steering Committee will be focusing on workplace equity challenges, inviting experts in this area to help us plan informational sessions on this topic for the community.

More workshops on topics relevant to parenting are also still in the works, as well as inviting colleagues to hold sign-up

sessions at the Brick House for basic needs programs such as fuel assistance, particularly important this winter. We also continue to offer support to individual families as needed.

Our staff is available to provide assistance with SNAP, unemployment applications, housing, and other concerns.

For more information contact Stacey Langknecht, Parent & Family Program Director, at: slangknecht@brickhousecrc.org or (413) 800-2496.

The Building

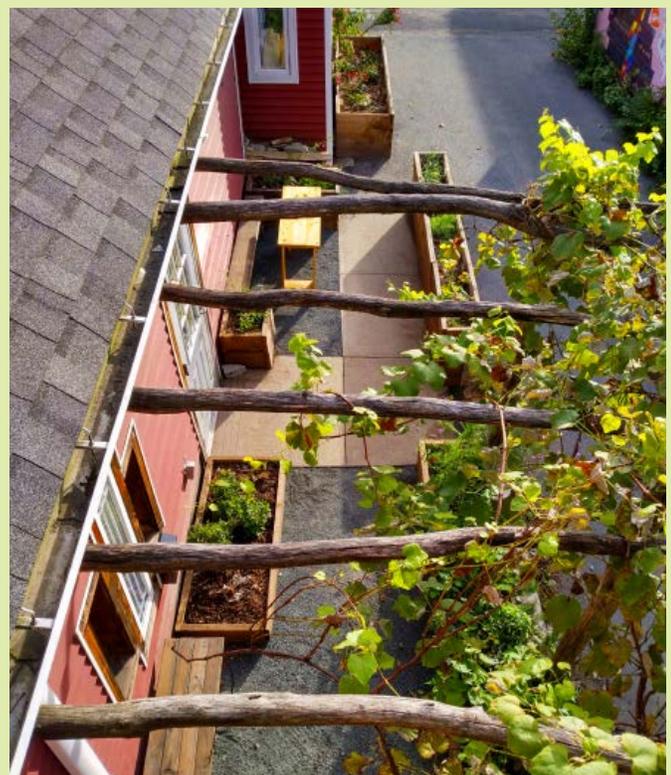
This summer eight youth constructed new gardens at The Brick House with landscape architect Peter Wackernagel. Funded by a grant from the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, the team built and installed nine planters, four benches, and a table. The two gardens -- one in front of the building, and one adjacent to the alley -- will allow Brick House community members to work, gather, and otherwise enjoy the building's outdoor spaces.

In other news: our Building Committee is rolling! Board members and other volunteers have been assessing the needs of our historic Third Street firehouse and setting priorities for maintenance and repair. Toby Briggs, a community member and contractor who oversaw our extensive renovations back in 2008, has returned to chair the committee. The first order of business: a new roof!

If you are interested in getting involved — whether you are a skilled tradesperson or just a neighbor with time on your hands to help cut brambles or shovel snow — reach out to Mike at mjackson@brickhousecrc.org.

Space Use

This past year we have shared our building with more groups and individuals in the community than ever before! Our Movement Studio is home to Great Falls Creative Movement, offering children's dance classes year-round. Downstairs, the Wildflower Alliance runs two weekly peer support groups and the Young Shakespeare Players have been rehearsing for their winter production. We have hosted a Latin Zumba Cardio class series, a meditation group, and one-time events including a mosaic workshop, a well-attended day-long "skill share," film screenings, and birthday parties. Several folks use our space regularly for private rehearsals and gatherings. And our space rental program is entirely volunteer-run! If you are interested in using our space yourself, or helping us share it with others by joining our space rental committee, please get in touch at space@brickhousecommunity.org !



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24 Third St., PO Box 135
Turners Falls, MA 01376

**Save the date:
Nov. 29th is
Giving Tuesday!**



The Brick House Community Resource Center supports youth and family well-being by providing a place in Turners Falls for creativity and learning, growth and leadership, and strengthening community connection.

24 Third St., Turners Falls | brickhousecommunity.org