



Brookline
Community
Foundation

BETTER TOGETHER

*CELEBRATIONS & LEARNINGS FROM THE PAST YEAR AT THE
BROOKLINE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION*





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TO/FROM

A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Last year at this time, I was on the precipice of making a decision that would change my life: the decision to join the Brookline Community Foundation (BCF) as the organization's new Executive Director. And as part of that decision, I thought deeply about where I was coming *from*, and what I was coming *to*.



At the time, I was working for a nonprofit dedicated to improving health and promoting equity—two issues that gained national attention during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the summer of 2020, amid lockdowns and Zoom meetings and deep uncertainty, I made the decision to join BCF not because I wanted to move away *from* focusing on health, but because I understand how deeply central community is *to* it.

Where we live, learn, work, and play helps shape every dimension of our lives. It didn't take very long for me to see that Brookline's commitment to constant learning and improvement would be a powerful force for local change. Robust community support when we need it—and the security that comes with knowing that support is there for *all of us*—is what makes it possible for us all to thrive. And it's what helped me make my decision to join BCF.

Community foundations are uniquely positioned to enhance that support by marshalling shared resources and moving them quickly and effectively to where they're needed most when that need arises.



We saw this firsthand during the pandemic when community foundations across the country raised, committed, and granted more than \$1 billion to support nonprofit coronavirus response efforts in 2020. **And locally, thanks to your generosity, since the start of the pandemic in 2020 BCF has awarded \$400,000 in grants through the Safety Net Grant Program** to organizations working to ensure that everyone in Brookline had the essentials we all need to be healthy. This milestone is only possible because of you—our community! And it is a testament to the transformative impact that is possible when we come together to address our shared challenges head on.

2020 was our most impactful year yet. We faced the “unprecedented” time and time again, and we pushed through. Along the way, I had the opportunity to have thoughtful conversations with thoughtful people about the present and the future of Brookline, and to celebrate the incredible diversity of thought, perspective, race, and background. All of this makes our community special, and why I chose to not only come to BCF but to make Brookline my family’s home.

When I think back on the last year and its lasting and profound implications, I ask myself where can we go by continuing to work together? This year-in-review captures a few of the highlights and learnings from the past year at BCF and celebrates all we’ve collectively accomplished. **And, as I look ahead to our new fiscal year—with the launch of our new strategy—I have never been more optimistic about what is possible when we work together to build a better Brookline for all.**

With deepest gratitude,

Giselle Ferro Puigbo
Executive Director
Brookline Community Foundation



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VISION & MISSION

The Brookline Community Foundation envisions a **better Brookline for all** who live, learn, work, and play in our community.

To make this vision a reality, **we create opportunity and promote equity through the transformative power of giving.**

VALUES

How we work is equally as important as the work we do. That's why we developed new organizational values to help guide our work:

- Lead by Listening
- Anchored in Equity
- Sustainable Support
- Community First

We look forward to sharing more about what our new values mean to us and how we're integrating them into our work in the coming months.



OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

\$1,016,232 Awarded Through 78 Grants & Sponsorships to 43 Organizations, Initiatives, and Community Efforts Supporting Friends & Neighbors

- ACE Mentor Program of Greater Boston
- Boston Pride Committee
- Boston Worker's Circle Center for Jewish Culture and Social Justice
- Boys for the Better, Inc.
- Brookline Arts Center
- Brookline Asian American Family Network
- Brookline Center for Community Mental Health
- Brookline Council on Aging/Brookline Multi-service Senior Center
- Brookline Early Education Program
- Brookline Food Pantry
- Brookline Housing Authority
- Brookline Hub
- Brookline Interactive Group (BIG)
- Brookline Juneteenth Celebration
- Brookline Office on Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations
- Brookline Public Schools
- Brookline Recreation Department
- Brookline Symphony Orchestra
- Brookline Teen Center
- Camp Lightbulb
- Carroll Center for the Blind
- Climate Change Action Brookline Inc
- Emerald Necklace Conservancy
- Family ACCESS
- FriendshipWorks
- Gateway Arts/Vinfen
- Jewish Family and Children's Services
- JLAU & Co
- Joana Chacon/ National Educator Anti-Racism Conference
- LEAP Self-Defense (dba Girls' LEAP)
- Lincoln Extended Day
- MAB Community Services, Inc.
- Puppet Showplace Theater
- Society of St. Vincent de Paul - St. Mary of the Assumption
- Springwell, Inc.
- Steps to Success, Inc.
- Studios Without Walls
- The Price Center
- Town of Brookline Finance Department
- Town of Brookline/Public Schools of Brookline
- VOICES Boston
- Women in Development
- Women Thriving, Inc.

Thank you to the amazing nonprofits, collaborative efforts, and community members making Brookline a wonderful place to live, learn, work, and play!





BETTER TOGETHER SPOTLIGHT

COLLABORATING FOR COMMUNITY THROUGH THE SAFETY NET GRANT PROGRAM

The COVID-19 pandemic strained every imaginable aspect of our lives and society--deepening existing inequities seemingly overnight. But in a period of isolation and separation, the Brookline community came together. Thanks to a generous outpouring of donations and support from community members, we expanded our Safety Net Grant Program to support more organizations and efforts aimed at ensuring everyone in our community had the essentials we all need to thrive.

Since then, we've seen incredible innovative collaborations between organizations begin, and grassroots community efforts grow to powerful, impactful movements. We hope you enjoy the stories below and throughout this report.

We're proud to support our partners' efforts, and ever grateful to be in this work together.

SMALL SUPPORTS = BIG DIFFERENCES

In times of crisis, ensuring everyone has access to the essentials we all need to thrive—housing, food, child care, transportation, and whole-person health and care—is the foundation of our shared recovery. **The Brookline Center for Community Mental Health** (The Center) has been a trusted community resource, advocate, and partner for individuals and families—working tirelessly to make sure our community's essential needs were met. In support of this work, the Brookline Community Foundation awarded a Safety Net Grant to The Center to fuel core operations and COVID-19 response efforts.

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The Center, with help from a powerful local referral network, used this funding to provide timely grants and crucial wraparound support. Through these efforts, **The Center supported individuals and families in applying for benefits and services, paying rent, covering utilities, accessing healthy food, acquiring computers to safely work remotely, and more.**

Thanks to this powerful partnership between Center staff and community members, our Brookline neighbors were able to stay in their homes, keep food on the table, and access the essentials they needed for themselves and their families during this crisis.

“When you are on the margins economically, it takes so little to knock you over. Just a little bit of support can make a huge difference. The Safety Net is that bit of glue that allows people to stabilize and helps hold the community together.” –Ian Lang, Executive Director, The Brookline Center

AROUND THE TABLE

Though the pandemic's economic aftershocks could be felt everywhere, they were especially devastating for small, local restaurants and the staff who bring joy to our community through delicious food. At the same time, individuals and families were experiencing increased difficulty accessing healthy, nutritious food—especially lower income households and elders. Knowing something needed to be done about these critical issues, a new set of partners gathered around the table to create a solution that would address both.

Restaurants for Brookline is an innovative program that connects restaurants to social service organizations to provide meals for Brookline residents. Together, **The Brookline Chamber of Commerce, The Brookline Food Pantry, and The Brookline Senior Center** partnered to bring this program—and delicious meals—to neighbors in need. Local restaurants were paid by The Chamber to create healthy boxed meals showcasing their signature cuisine. These meals were then given to the Food Pantry and Senior Center, who distributed delicious restaurant quality meals throughout Brookline. To date, Restaurants for Brookline has provided hundreds of delicious meals to friends and neighbors in our community, and BCF is proud to be supporting the continuation of this program through our Safety Net Grant Program.

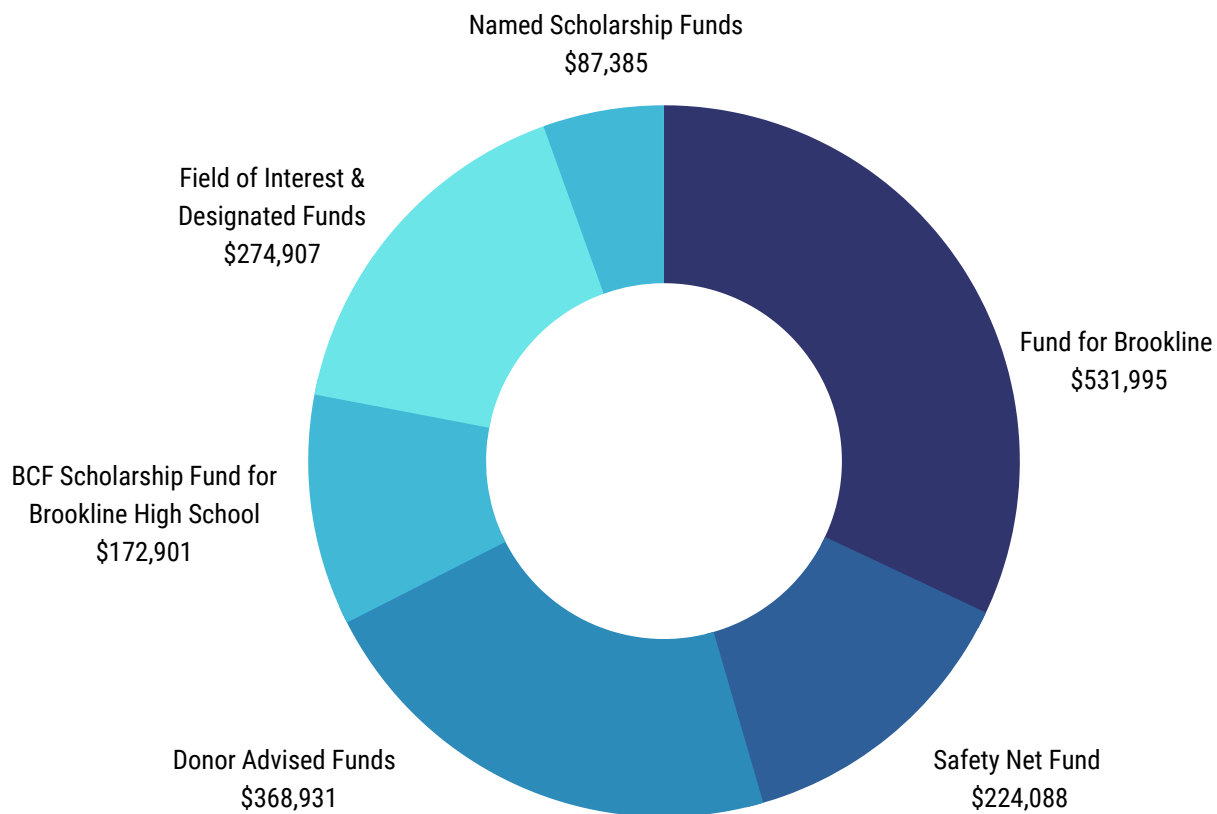




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OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

This past year, **900 donors** worked together to build a better Brookline for all by **giving \$1,600,000+ in donations** to address our shared challenges together!



Thank you to our incredible donors for stepping up to support Brookline!



BETTER TOGETHER SPOTLIGHT

A LEGACY OF LIFELONG LEARNING: SPOTLIGHT ON THE PILTCH FAMILY

Ask any of the Piltch siblings we had the chance to talk with - Cynthia, Kineret, Steve, Neal, Rich, Stuart, Debbie, and Stan - about a transformative moment from their childhood in Brookline, and they'll tell you about education. More importantly, they'll tell you about how they see education as a communal effort. "I applied to AFS as a junior in high school because my teachers and mentors said, 'It doesn't matter if you can't afford this. We'll raise the money to make sure you can go,'" said Cynthia. "And I got selected. I went to Indonesia and it changed my life." Their brother, Rich shared a similar story. "There was one teacher at BHS named Mead Reynolds that made a big difference in my life. He took me to tour colleges he thought would be a good fit for me. Without him, I don't think I would have gone to college." And Steve affirmed that their eldest brother Howard - who was unfortunately unable to join the conversation - would share similar sentiments about his time at Brookline High School.

The siblings credit this shared commitment to education to their parents, Roy and Mildred Piltch. Both Roy and Mildred believed deeply in the power of education to open doors, create opportunities, and transform lives. "My father believed every woman needed an education and that there were no limits to what my education should be," said Kineret. "There were no boundaries in terms of what we wanted to do and who we wanted to be." Crucially, their parents were advocates of each of their children's individual learning styles, and encouraged them to follow educational pathways that felt authentic to them. Combined with a strong belief in being welcoming members of their community, these values have defined how their children view their roles as community and world citizens. "That's the amazing thing," said Stuart, "We all have similar values systems but really different views and ways of expressing those values." Neal also explained, "Our parents really instilled in us to leave things better than we found them. It's basically the family philosophy."

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The values that comprise that family philosophy - learning, kindness, and community - combined with the steadfast belief that all students deserve the opportunity to learn and grow their strengths through their personal learning styles, led the family to begin supporting Brookline High School students more than 25 years ago in honor of their parents. Over 15 years ago, they established the The Piltch Family Scholarship Fund, and in 2020 moved the scholarship fund to the Brookline Community Foundation in celebration of the fact that Mildred and all nine of her children graduated from Brookline High School. Through this partnership with BCF, the family is providing scholarships to support students as they take the next steps in their educational journeys - creating a legacy of lifelong learning in Brookline. "All kids need opportunities regardless of their wealth and their backgrounds," said Stan. "I got a scholarship from Brookline to go to college," Cynthia explained. "And I remember thinking that someday, I wanted to do this for someone else."

Because of the Piltch Family's generosity, Brookline students have new opportunities to continue the legacy of lifelong, whole-person learning inspired and enabled by Roy and Mildred Piltch. "All of us have tried to work in communities and as educators, and tried to minimize barriers to entry for students who don't come from resource rich communities," Deb explained. "I hope people realize that there's no one correct path they have to follow, but that whatever path they do follow, they have an obligation to look beyond themselves and to try and see the interconnectedness of the communities and world we live in." And while all the siblings have taken unique paths in their lives and careers, they all agree on what they want for Brookline students today and well into the future. "We're all hoping that we can provide students with what we had when we were younger," said Steve. "Opportunities to experience whole-person education, opportunities to respect and celebrate differences, and opportunities to be part of something greater than ourselves."





FOR THE FUTURE OF BROOKLINE

A PREVIEW OF OUR NEW STRATEGY

For over 100 years, The Brookline Community Foundation (BCF) has been a trusted community partner—supporting Brookline by adapting to meet emerging needs, serving as a steadfast community convener, and marshalling resources to address our shared challenges.

We are proud of the work we've done alongside every one of you, and prouder still of the positive impact our combined efforts have had in our Brookline.

But our work is far from over. In addition to the pandemic widening inequities locally and nationally, we know structural barriers that prevent every person from thriving remain entrenched in our systems—from housing and transportation to education and philanthropy.

Today, BCF has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to refocus our efforts on the root causes of these barriers to make our vision of a better Brookline for all a reality. To realize this vision, we're announcing our new strategic plan ***For the Future of Brookline***, which aims to:

1. Surface barriers to opportunity and equity in Brookline.
2. Engage community members in collaborative solution-building.
3. Inspire transformative giving that supports a thriving Brookline.
4. Advance opportunity for those most impacted by inequities.

Throughout this, we will continue adapting organizationally to meet community needs while maintaining the vital role we've always played in Brookline: a connector, convener, and collaborator.

We're excited to share more about this plan in the coming months, get your input to strengthen our efforts, and continue building a better Brookline for all together.



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THANK YOU!

Thank you to our community for making this our most impactful year to date! The unique and diverse roles you play are instrumental to our shared success. Truly, we do better together.

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