



Couch Family Foundation

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Couch Family Foundation Partners with Five Family Resource Centers in the Upper Valley to Improve Child and Family Well-Being

Foundation invests in collaboration and capacity building to strengthen family outcomes

Hanover, New Hampshire, March 9, 2021 – As part of its commitment to strengthen systems of care for young children and their families in the Upper Valley, the Couch Family Foundation has made multi-year capacity-building grants to all five family resource centers/parent child centers in the region.

The Upper Valley's five family resource centers—The Family Place, TLC Family Resource Center, Waypoint, Springfield Area Parent Child Center, and Orange County Parent Child Center—provide critical family support and strengthening programs that contribute to building strong and healthy communities.

"We have worked closely with each of these organizations for many years and they share our vision of a community where all children have the opportunity to thrive," notes Foundation trustee Barbara Couch. "They play a central role in ensuring that all families, particularly those with young children, can access supports when needed. These grants have allowed them to address organizational needs that ensure the sustainability of their critical work in the community."

Foundation grants address capacity needs specific to each organization, including new staffing, fundraising and administrative support, as well as provide organizational leadership the space to think deeply about programmatic work independently and as a network. These partnerships started prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and gave the family resource centers support to respond to the evolving needs of the community as a result of the pandemic.

"We have expanded our community footprint and the ways we are reaching and engaging with families over the years, and in many ways the capacity building work we are engaged in now is helping us 'catch up' to the size we are," observes Nancy Bloomfield (The Family Place). "It's really important to us to be positioned to respond to the community needs that align with our mission and expertise."

"The investment of the Couch Family Foundation in TLC's capacity comes at a critical time," says Stephanie Slayton (TLC Family Resource Center). "Without it, we would likely have to slow down our

programmatic growth and expansion as our administrative team and processes would not be able to support the increased workload."

"Having a foundation help us focus on capacity building makes it more possible for us to do work with families," adds Margot Holmes (Springfield Area Parent Child Center). Mary Ellen Otis (Orange County Parent Child Center) continued, *"capacity building allows leadership in an organization to visualize and achieve growth."*

For Waypoint, the partnership will allow for expanded programs that will fill identified gaps in services for families. *"Re-inventing our Upper Valley service model and becoming a Family Resource Center of Quality is critical for us and the community,"* notes Jeannette Birge (Waypoint). *"Because of the Couch Family Foundation funds, we've been able to hire a well-qualified coordinator for the center."*

For more than a year, the Couch Family Foundation has engaged the five directors of the family resource centers in facilitated networking to support cross-institutional relationship-building, trust, and collaboration. *"We all have a shared interest in seeing each other succeed for the benefit of families,"* notes Nancy Bloomfield (The Family Place). *"I believe it already means—but certainly WILL mean—that families will be better served as they move within our Upper Valley region."*

This relationship-building began prior to the COVID pandemic and helped foster a more coordinated response to the pandemic's impact on the community. *"Being part of the network is one of the most important things I do right now,"* Jeannette Birge (Waypoint) observes. *"The joint problem-solving with local folks who see the same issues is so helpful to all of us."*

"What is particularly unique about this cohort is that it crosses state boundaries, which provides for an even broader learning platform," says Stephanie Slayton (TLC Family Resource Center). *"At TLC, we can look at best practices in Vermont and think about how those might be integrated in New Hampshire. We can also talk about how to bridge gaps in border towns that may be underserved."*

The Foundation's investments in the Upper Valley family resource centers are part of a broader effort to foster greater collaboration and equity across all sectors that support the healthy development of young children, including early education and care, children's health, and child and family services.

"We are excited and humbled to partner with these five organizations and work closely with their leadership who share our vision for a community where all children can thrive," says Barbara Couch. *"The last year has taught us all a valuable lesson that we are able to do more as a community when we work together. The Couch Family Foundation is honored to play a role in this work."*

Founded in 2001 by Richard and Barbara Couch, the Couch Family Foundation's mission is to be a catalyst for change in the lives of children and their families by creating quality and equitable opportunities to help them learn, thrive, and lead healthy, fulfilling lives.

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For more information about the Foundation's work to improve outcomes for young children and their families, or other grant making, please contact Brooke Couch Freeland brooke@couchfoundation.org, Michael Bennett mbennett@mottphilanthropic.com, or Jessica Ratey jratey@mottphilanthropic.com.