

A LIFE IMPROVEMENT BUSINESS<sup>SM</sup>

# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

**LIFE IMPROVEMENT SPONSOR** 







### Mission Statement

Berks Connections/Pretrial Services improves lives and creates safer, more prosperous communities by providing services, support, and community reintegration to individuals involved in the justice system and to their families.

### Vision Statement

The communities we serve are safer and healthier because people in the justice system have the tools and support to live productive, law-abiding lives.











Berks Connections/Pretrial Services is proud to be certified by the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations (PANO) through their Standards for Excellence certification program. BCPS successfully completed this certification program by voluntarily opening itself up to scrutiny by a "jury of its peers" who examined our organization for compliance with PANO's Standards for Excellence: An Ethics and Accountability Code for the Nonprofit Sector.

Standards of Excellence are based on the fundamental values such as honesty, integrity, fairness, respect, trust, responsibility, and accountability. BCPS's programs and services, management, fundraising, and financial practices were examined in depth before the certification was awarded. BCPS is one of the first organizations to be certified under the Standards program that began in 2002.





# Welcome from our Co-Executive Directors

Dear Friends of BCPS:

While we are happy to share BCPS's accomplishments in 2019 we must address the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on BCPS and those we serve. In the course of carrying out our mission, our staff regularly come into contact with some of the most vulnerable citizens living in our community. Often BCPS programs are their sole source of support, stability, and direction. We work side by side with them to provide assistance with housing, mentoring, and stable employment. For our incarcerated clients, we help them prepare for their release and we work to keep them connected to their families. All that changed on March 16, 2020. Our office closed, services became 100% virtual, and we were unable to enter correctional facilities. Almost overnight we had to ask our dedicated staff to reimagine all aspects of delivery of our programs and services knowing that our clients would need us now more than ever. The stability that is so important to our clients' success is often fragile. Job losses, housing insecurity, food insecurity, substance abuse and mental health issues were instantly compounded by the closure of most in-person safety net services.

What we learned very quickly is that our staff are creative and resilient and our clients' connection to our services can survive virtually! We Zoomed from morning until evening, we established new referral processes with our awesome social service partners, we provided PPE to clients, and our relationships with employers became more important than ever, as we worked each day to track available positions in essential businesses to provide new opportunities for BCPS clients. Unfortunately, that is not the entire Covid-19 update. While we are continuing services and seeing successes as described above, we are also seeing that for some clients, job losses, even temporary ones, have caused financial hardships and their stability is weakened. Many of our clients experience behavioral health issues, and for some their support system they rely on has weakened. We have seen clients and their families become ill.

To say that 2020 has been challenging would be an understatement at best. Several funding streams have been reduced and our annual awards breakfast – our single biggest fundraiser – cannot happen in-person; however, for BCPS living the Life Improvement Business means rising to every challenge. Just as we ask those we serve to do, we will work hard, stay focused, and not let challenges get in the way of our success. We are committed to carrying out our mission, no matter what the next months have in store.

We are thankful to our Board of Directors for their leadership during these unprecedented times and to our amazing staff for rising to the challenge of providing hope, opportunity and second chances each and every day to those we serve. We are grateful to you, our friends and donors, whose support is more important than ever before to ensure that BCPS's essential services continue to be the source of hope, opportunity and second chances for those that need it most!

Nicolle Schnorel

Sincerely,

Peggy Kershner Co-Executive Director

Reggy Kerohon

Nicolle Schnovel Co-Executive Director



BCPS has operated Rebuilding Reentrants and Reading (R3) since 2017. This registered preapprenticeship program offers an opportunity for individuals with a criminal history to acquire skills in the construction trades that lead to gainful employment and assists with the renovation of some of the City of Reading's blighted neighborhoods. The program is funded through a U.S. Department of Labor Reentry Training Grant, the County of Berks and grants from the Berks County Workforce Development Board and PA Department of Labor & Industry.

BCPS partners with Habitat for Humanity Berks County (HFHBC), Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) and the Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center (RMCTC) to provide the three components of the training; career and technical education at RMCTC, hands on learning on site at HFHBC and NHS properties and an employment focused cognitive curriculum delivered by BCPS staff. BCPS developed this innovative model which is based on best practices of reentry programming and adult career and technical education. The Berks County Workforce Development Board has identified the construction trades as a high priority sector that provides employment opportunities at family sustaining wages. The combination of best practices - classroom learning, hands-on experience, and cognitive interventions — not only improves employment outcomes for participants, it significantly reduces recidivism as well. 133 individuals completed R3 between October 2017 and December 2019. 74% of graduates are maintaining stable employment and 93% have not recidivated!

BCPS provides case management, mentoring, and support for one year following graduation. The comprehensive case management includes financial literacy and coaching as well as job search, placement, and retention support. Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc., Keystone Chapter (ABC) is the RA sponsor for this pre-apprenticeship program. R3 graduates are granted 6 months credit toward one of ABC's 7 apprenticeship programs. R3 is the only registered pre-apprenticeship program in PA exclusively serving reentrants!

R3 provides opportunities for some of Reading's most marginalized residents to not only improve their lives and that of their families, but to also have a profound and visible impact on a blighted neighborhood - literally rebuilding lives and a neighborhood simultaneously.

For more information about R3 or any BCPS program please visit our website <a href="www.berksconnections.org">www.berksconnections.org</a> or contact Peggy Kershner at <a href="pkershner@bcpsreentry.org">pkershner@bcpsreentry.org</a> or 484-260-3860.









A comprehensive registered pre-apprenticeship program in the construction trades supported through a U.S. Department of Labor Reentry Training Grant, the County of Berks and grants from the Berks County Workforce Development Board and PA Labor & Industry

R3 utilizes best practices to transform participants' lives by improving employment outcomes and reducing recidivism. BCPS created this comprehensive program model that utilizes best practices in reentry programming and career & technical education.

Each 8 week cohort of R3 provides participants with:

#### 53 hours

of an evidence based cognitive curriculum delivered by BCPS staff

### 48 hours

of hands on experience
working on Habitat for
Humanity and
Neighborhood Housing
Services Properties\*

#### 40 hours

career & technical education at Reading Muhlenberg Career and Technology Center

Participants also receive:

Case Management Mentoring

CPR, Flagger and OSHA Safety certifications

42 hours of additional workforce preparation, support, job placement and retention assistance

\*Since the program's inception in October 2017, participants have contributed 8,600 hours to Habitat for Humanity & Neighborhood Housing Services.

74% are currently employed 93% have not recidivated (As of 4th Quarter 2019)



# **Reentry Services**

#### Pre-and Post-Release Case Management

BCPS staff provides pre and post release services to the Berks County Jail System (BCJS) Reentry Program participants. Case managers work with inmates to develop their Transition Plan – a document that outlines needs, includes reentry goals and identifies supports – to aide in their successful return to the community. BCPS staff, through ongoing case management, provides referrals and information about housing, employment, drug, alcohol and mental health counseling and treatment as well as education and literacy. Upon release, Reentry Program clients have access to a multitude of services such as use of the CBLC, the benefits of the Employment Development Specialist's labors and potential entry into the R3 program.

#### **Workforce Development Services**

BCPS provides employment readiness workshops, job search assistance, and retention support for inmates in the Reentry Program at the BCJS (pre and post release), residents of the Wernersville Community Corrections Center, those on state parole, and Treatment Court participants. An evidence-based curriculum, Cognitive Behavioral Interventions for Offenders Seeking Employment (CBI-EMP), is delivered in two State Correctional Institutions. BCPS is also able to provide CBI-EMP in the Berks County Jail through the support of Justice Assistance Grant.

Community volunteers support BCPS workforce development programs and initiatives by serving as mock interviewers and by providing employment readiness assistance for participants in the Reentry Program at the BCJS, R3, and at our Returning Citizens Career Fairs.

#### Financial Literacy

BCPS provides financial literacy education in a group setting and one to one budget coaching and assistance for DOC Workforce Development and Housing program clients. In addition to educational sessions, BCPS staff provides financial coaching when employment is obtained to help individuals reach their financial goals.

#### **Housing Services**

BCPS provides Housing Services to individuals preparing to reenter the community from the Berks County Jail's Reentry Program, the Wernersville Community Corrections Center and those in the community on parole who are facing homelessness. Services include assistance in obtaining stable affordable housing, rent and utility assistance, case management, tenant education, and budget counseling.







#### Mentoring

In October 2018, BCPS began offering mentoring services through a contract with the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, which allows us to serve both individuals in State Correctional Institutions and individuals on State Probation/Parole who reside in Berks County. Our Reentry Mentoring Specialist aids clients in developing an individualized wellness plan, provides early intervention services to clients that are experiencing difficulties or exhibiting behaviors that are indicative to a backslide, and facilitates both group and one-to-one workshops. Mentoring services are also a critical component offered in our R3 program.

#### Job Development

The BCPS Employment Development Specialist works within the community to develop and maintain relationships with employers to encourage opportunities for workforce development program clients who successfully complete the program. This position helps ensure that individuals referred for employment are a good match for the employer's needs, serves as a liaison between case managers and employers and provides ongoing retention support and assistance to the employer.

#### **Reentry Support Services**

For returning citizens, obtaining valid identification, transportation and work- specific clothing often stands in the way of seeking and securing employment. BCPS is committed to assisting clients with removing barriers to their success and covers the cost to obtain the required identification, bus passes or work attire necessary for employment.

#### Computer Based Learning Center (CBLC)

The CBLC is available for use by BCPS workforce development, R3, housing, mentoring and county reentry program clients to search and apply for jobs, create, update and email resumes, conduct apartment searches and improve basic computer skills. Staff is available for guidance and assistance. The CBLC is funded in part by the United Way of Berks County.



# Programs for Children and Families – Volunteer Opportunities

#### Mother's/Father's Voice Program

The Mother's/Father's Voice program allows incarcerated mothers and fathers of young children to record a story on video. The child receives the book and DVD as a gift from their parent. The child can then watch the video of his/her parent reading while following along in the book. Birthday and holiday cards may also be included to celebrate milestones in their child's life. This provides a sense of closeness between the parent and child that would otherwise not be possible. In 2019, 571 recordings were made that served 862 children!



#### **Family Connections Events**

BCPS staff and volunteers host social events each year that join incarcerated parents with their children and caregivers. Our Family Connections Picnic is held in September at the BIG Vision Sports Complex and

serves as a United Way Day of Caring site. Children spend quality time with their parents by sharing a meal, playing games, making crafts, and enjoying the outdoors. Our annual Family Connections Holiday Party allows families to enjoy a delicious holiday meal, games and crafts and the children get a special visit from Santa Claus! Generous contributions from United Way volunteers allow us to provide gifts for all the children in attendance. These events provide the opportunity for much needed contact between children and their incarcerated parents within a positive environment.



#### **Holiday Gift Drives**

BCPS enlists volunteers and volunteer groups throughout the community to provide holiday gifts for children of parents who are incarcerated or involved in the criminal justice system. The gifts are collected and distributed at a special holiday event hosted by West Lawn United Methodist Church. In 2019, 1,010 children received gifts from hundreds of volunteers. 420 children and 305 adults attended the Care & Share Holiday Party at West Lawn United Methodist Church. Families who are unable to attend the party pick up their gifts in our office.

#### Family & Friends Coping with Incarceration Support Group

BCPS staff and volunteers lead a monthly support group for the families and friends of individuals involved in the criminal and juvenile justice systems. Meetings are held on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month from 7 to 9PM. The group provides mutual support in a caring, confidential environment.

For more information about BCPS programs and how you can volunteer to help, please visit www.berksconnections.org or contact Vanessa Starr at vstarr@bcpsreentry.org



#### **Pretrial Services**

#### **Pretrial Interviews and Assessments**

Pretrial Officers conduct post-arrest interviews and assessments of criminal defendants and furnish the verified assessments to the judiciary, either prior to bail being set or at the preliminary hearing. BCPS utilizes the Pretrial Assessment Tool of the Ohio Risk Assessment System (PAT-ORAS) to assess the risk of a defendant committing a new offense while under pretrial release or failing to appear for court. BCPS also assists with jail population management. Pretrial staff conduct a monthly review of the jail population to assure that low risk defendants are not needlessly incarcerated due to their inability to post bail. We are pleased to see that on average, the true pretrial population (those held only on a bail) hovers around 20%, which is well below the national average. For those defendants that are classified as low risk and are deemed appropriate for pretrial release, Pretrial Officers will provide the assessments to defense counsel and recommend that a motion is made to modify the bail to release the defendant on an unsecured bail. In 2019, Pretrial Officers conducted 1,800 interviews and provided 1,164 assessments to the court.

#### **Pretrial Supervision**

BCPS provides supervised release for criminal defendants who would otherwise remain in jail until the final disposition of their case. Pretrial Officers utilize the results of the PAT-ORAS to set conditions that are based on the risk that individual poses and to ensure both court appearance and public safety. Pretrial Officers provide drug and alcohol program referrals for individuals facing drug related charges and for those identified as having a drug or alcohol problem. BCPS also oversees the Community Release Bail Program, which was designed to ensure that the economic circumstances of a person will not subject him/her to punishment before trial. In 2019, Pretrial Officers supervised 652 defendants. The appearance rate for defendants under our supervision was 97% and the re-arrest rate was 4%.

#### **Treatment Courts**

BCPS provides personnel and support for the Berks County Treatment Courts, which include DUI, Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health Courts. BCPS interviews and assesses most treatment court applicants and provides referrals for drug and alcohol testing and treatment. Our Reentry Coordinator provides case management and workforce development programming for participants of the DUI, Mental Health, and Drug Treatment Courts. The Treatment Courts provide an intensive combination of court-ordered treatment and regular interaction with the Treatment Court Judge and the team, including the Public Defender's Office, Adult Probation Office, TASC, SAM, Inc., the District Attorney's Office, treatment providers and BCPS.





# **Collaborative Community Initiatives**

#### United Way of Berks County

As a United Way partner, BCPS receives funding support the Reentry Program at the Berks County Jail System as well as ongoing funding to staff our Computer Based Learning Center. Over the years, many BCPS initiatives and events have been made possible thanks to the generous financial and volunteer support of the United Way of Berks County. Our annual Family Connections picnic serves as a United Way Day of Caring site.



#### Berks Community Resources Network

BCPS is a founding member of the Berks Community Resources Network (CRN), a coalition of over 45 social service, faith based, and government agencies that work with individuals involved in the Berks County criminal and juvenile justice systems. The CRN meets several times a year.

#### Be Bold Take Charge and Goodwill Keystone Area

These two organizations teamed up to coordinate a clothing drive for BCPS workforce development program clients. Goodwill provided gift cards to BCPS for job seeking and work appropriate clothing. *Be Bold Take Charge*, an initiative coordinated by a Penn State Berks faculty member and students, was created in 2015 as a Call to Action to improve the health and overall well-being of Reading's community members.

#### Hope Rescue Mission

BCPS and The Hope Rescue Mission (HRM) partner to assist clients in common. The HRM generously donates clothing and winter coats for our program participants and offers a safe living environment for returning citizens who are working to support themselves.



# **Employment Development-Connecting to Success**

BCPS Workforce Development programs equip returning citizens with the tools and skills necessary to become productive members of our community. Obtaining stable employment at a living wage is important to one's reentry success. BCPS partners with area employers to connect program participants with employment opportunities. Our Employment Development Specialist learns about employers' specific operations and provides referrals of individuals who are a good match for their hiring needs.

We also deliver ongoing support after placement to ensure a successful experience.

One of our main community initiatives is hosting Career Fairs for returning citizens. BCPS holds two fairs a year at the DoubleTree by Hilton Reading that allow individuals with criminal records to network with second chance employers.









Thank you to the 40 employers and service providers who attended our last Career Fair to provide hope, second chances and community resources to those looking to improve their lives. Additionally, 50 volunteers were on hand throughout the day to provide support and encouragement as well as mock interviews and general assistance to more than 200 job seekers!

Hope, Opportunity & Second Chances

# 2019 Fiscal Statement

# BCPS Revenue and Expense For the Calendar Year Ended December 31, 2019

| Revenue: Total Revenue: | Public Support<br>Investment Income<br>Other Income               | 2,259,093<br>(19,136)<br>1,000<br>\$2,240,957 |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Expenses:               |   |   |
|                         | Program Services – 92%  |   |
|                         | Pretrial Services<br>Community Release<br>Total Pretrial Services | 524,630<br>524,630                            |
|                         | Reentry<br>Reentry<br>Department of Labor<br>Total Reentry        | 1,181,446<br>488,970<br>1,670,416             |
|                         | Total Program Services  | \$2,195,046                                   |
|                         | Support Services – 8%   |   |
|                         | Management & General<br>Fundraising<br>Total Support Services     | 95,016<br><u>95,528</u><br><b>\$190,544</b>   |
| Total Expenses:         |   | \$2,385,590                                   |
| Decrease in Net Assets: |   | \$114,633                                     |

### THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDES
HOPE, OPPORTUNITY AND
SECOND CHANCES

FOR OUR CLIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES
WHEN THEY NEED IT THE MOST!

# \$2,000 - \$4,999

Emerald Advisers, LLC
Bradley and Barbara Hall
Performance Toyota
Craig and Melissa Poole
Peter and Mary Terranova
United Methodist Women, Eastern
Pennsylvania Conference

#### \$1,000 - 1,999

**Anonymous Boscov's Department Store** Council On Chemical Abuse **Customers Bank** East Penn Manufacturing, Co. Penn State Health St. Joseph Queen City Family Restaurant Scott and Yvette Rehr Rentschler Law, LLC RKL, LLP Nicolle and Leroy Schnovel Spark Solutions & Support, Training and **Facilitation UGI Energy Services** Weik Capital Management, Inc. West Lawn Quoiting Assocation

# \$10,000 +

BB&T Economic Growth Fund (Berks County) Berks County Community Foundation Henry Janssen Foundation United Way of Berks County Wyomissing Foundation

\$5,000 - \$9,999 Freedom Toyota Jeanne and Eric Savage

### \$500 - \$999

Linda Bell **Berks County Bar Association** Complete Healthcare Resources, Inc. Connectrex Craig and Virginia Dodge First Unitarian Universalist Church Fox Rothschild LLP **Kip Frasso Habitat For Humanity Berks** Megan and Matthew Huesgen Immanuel United Church Of Christ Peggy and Lee Kershner Morgan Stanley Robert Myer Dan and Heidi Nickischer Omega Systems Consultants, Inc. PrimeCare Medical, Inc. Shane and Rebecca Remp Lawrence Snow St. John's Lutheran Church Stone Financial Anthony and Michelle Tomczak

**Tompkins VIST Bank** 

# Thank You!

# **BCPS** Board of Directors

| Daniel Nickischer, CPA                            | President             |  |
|---|-----------------------|--|
| Shane Remp  | Vice President        |  |
| Larry Snow  | Treasurer & Secretary |  |
| Abhi Amatya                                       |                       |  |
| Sharon Mast                                       |                       |  |
| Samir Naber                                       |                       |  |
| Brian Pinto, CFRE (Serving since                  | 2020)                 |  |
| Alexia Pursley (Serving since Jan                 | uary 2020)            |  |
| Thomas Rentschler, Esq. (Serving since July 2020) |                       |  |
| Karissa Rodriguez, Esq.                           |                       |  |
| Jeannie Savage                                    |                       |  |
| Matt Spezialetti, CFA, CFP                        |                       |  |
| Peter Terranova                                   |                       |  |
| Ron Velez   |                       |  |
|   |                       |  |

# BCPS Staff

| Administration                   |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Peggy Kershner                   | Co-Executive Director                             |
| Nicolle Schnovel                 | Co-Executive Director                             |
| Denise Myer                      | Finance Manager                                   |
| Mark Myers                       | Finance Analyst                                   |
| Patty Bell, SHRM-CP              | Human Resources Director                          |
|                                  | -   |
| Development/Community Outreach S | Statt   |
| Vanessa Starr                    | _ Development Director (Joined team in July 2020) |
| Julia Ganter                     | Community Outreach Coordinator                    |
| Kathy Galtere                    | _ Volunteer Program Coordinator                   |
| Pretrial Services Staff          |   |
| Andrew Cochrane                  | Pretrial Officer (Joined team in August 2020)     |
| Emily Martin                     | Pretrial Officer                                  |
| Michelle Little                  | Pretrial Officer (Joined team in February 2020)   |
|                                  |   |
| Reentry Program Staff            |   |
| Christine Guistwite              | _Reentry Director                                 |
| Jessica Moore                    | _Deputy Reentry Director                          |
| Jason Mensch                     | _R3 Program Director                              |
| Kathleen Stone                   | _ Employment Development Specialist               |
| Michelle Tomczak                 | _ WIP Case Manager                                |
| Willie Colon                     | _Reentry Mentoring Specialist                     |
| Chad Moyer                       | _DOC Reentry Coordinator                          |
| Ashley McGee                     | _DOC Reentry Coordinator                          |
| Erin Brown                       | Reentry Coordinator – Treatment Court             |
| Erinn Smidga                     | _Reentry Coordinator                              |
| Sara Robinson                    | _ Reentry Coordinator                             |
| Deanna Madison                   | _Reentry Coordinator                              |
| Jay Gibson                       | _ R3 Prep Mentor                                  |
| Kristi Byrne                     | _R3 Case Manager                                  |
| Lindsey Hessmiller               | _ R3 Case Manager                                 |
| Kip Frasso                       | _ Group Facilitator                               |
| Mike Keiser                      | _R3 Job Site Instructor                           |



# **BCPS Life Improvement Ambassadors**

# 2020

Dr. Ann T. Gundry

2019

Megan Heusgen

2018

Scott Rehr

2017

Eric Savage Mark Stone

2016

Althea Harmon Craig Poole

# 2015 Inaugural Class

Hamid Chaudhry Dr. Constance P. Dent Elsayed Elmarzouky Linda Faye Epes, Esq. Kate Hoh Paul J. Hoh



CELEBRATING 45 YEARS IN THE LIFE IMPROVEMENT BUSINESS<sup>5M</sup>

