



MOTHERS
FOR JUSTICE & EQUALITY

HEALING THROUGH ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

2023 COMMUNITY IMPACT
REPORT





A Message from the President and CEO



Dear Friends,

We at Mothers for Justice and Equality (MJE) aim to be a source of strength, resolution, and support. We know that by lifting our community's mothers, we are lifting the communities as a whole. I am eager to share the work we've done to help mothers, youth, and families heal through Economic Empowerment.

Many single mothers in our communities living in poverty will endure poor mental health through social stresses such as health scares, job losses, homelessness, domestic violence, street and gun violence, and related issues. Sadly, so much of their world is out of their control, and these stresses affect the mother's ability to provide her children with a safe and nurturing environment.

Research teaches us that single mothers living in poverty are more likely to experience feelings of worry, nervousness, or anxiety. The mortality rate of the mother decreases, and this trauma is passed on to her children, which inadvertently leads to generational poverty and trauma.

At MJE, we help individuals of all ages to become empowered and ready for community involvement. Our operating model hinges on two fundamental mechanisms: **Education and Engagement**. This is our approach to delivering trauma-informed services, providing each individual with an Individual Service Plan (ISP), training, and case management. Our Health Equity and Community Engagement trauma-informed workshops are in a healing environment, and we provide a safe space for youth to challenge inequality and violence by fostering a sense of leadership and belonging.

Our approach to this problem is working. We are seeing clients obtain employment, return to school, and obtain affordable childcare and housing. Many clients are signing up for emotional health services to help alleviate some of their day-to-day social stresses.

I hope you will take some time to read through this 2023 Impact Report and share your thoughts with us. There is much work to do, but I believe together, we can see our families' quality of life improve through our Healing through Economic Empowerment model.

In Peace,

Monalisa Smith
Founder, President and CEO
Mothers for Justice and Equality



Board of Directors



Renée Omoḻadé – Board Chair

Renée is the Director of Boston Community Hub Schools. She focuses on Liberatory Education and aims to organize the assets and resources of school communities to improve the academic achievement of talented Boston Public School scholars. A South End native, Dorchester resident, and Boston Latin School alumna, Renée earned a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology with a double minor in Africana Studies and Gender & Women's Studies from Emmanuel College and is a candidate for her Master's in Public Policy at Northeastern University.



Cyntoria Grant – Treasurer

Cyntoria is the Associate Director, Public School Partnership Harvard Public Affairs & Communications for Harvard University. She holds a Master's Degree in Organizational Leadership from Ashford University, a Graduate Certificate in Health and Nonprofit Management from Suffolk University, and a B.A. from Eastern Nazarene College.



Eileen Paterson – Clerk & Secretary

Eileen, a retired Administrator, is a remarkably courageous black woman grounded in her Christian faith. She is a daughter, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Eileen has an Associate's Degree in Business Management from Fisher Junior College and a Compensation and Benefits Management certificate from Northeastern University. She has also volunteered at the Women's Shelter, Shattuck Hospital, and Missionary for Charity in Trinidad.



David Dolbashian – Director

David is the Executive Director of South Africa Partners and has a lifelong commitment to social and environmental justice. In addition to his board membership with MJE, he is a member of the board of the "League of Women Voters of the Worcester Area." David holds a B.A. from Colby College and an M.B.A. from Clark University.



Hannah A. Martinez – Director

Hannah is the Master's Clinician for Roxbury Multi-Service Center. She is the recipient of a Boston City Council Award for an exemplary community mental health outreach provider to the diverse population of inner-city Boston. Ms. Martinez received her first degree in Biological Sciences from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles and her graduate degree in Counseling and Public Health from Tufts University. A native of Ghana, Hannah focuses on post-traumatic stress experience and culture.



Who is Mothers for Justice and Equality?

WHO WE ARE

Mothers for Justice and Equality (MJE) aims to end neighborhood violence by empowering mothers and youth to challenge the normalization of violence.

We believe Mothers are fierce and nurturing protectors; when given proper tools, they can channel their energy to build neighborhoods where playgrounds are safe and sidewalks are non-threatening.

Since 2010, MJE's trauma-informed services have supported the academic, workforce development, health, and wellness needs of those impacted by community violence, including single mothers, youth, and their families.

VISION FOR SUCCESS

To ensure our children a promising future, they must have the support of the entire community. MJE has the vision of a world in which it is never normal or acceptable for children to be murdered. We believe that change will occur as the internalized expectations of what is acceptable in our neighborhoods change. Mothers are influential changemakers in our communities, and when given the right tools, they become advocates for transformation.

WHO WE SERVE

Violence in our communities does not just impact direct victims. Our population is struggling with the impact of trauma due to community violence, homicide, domestic violence, and related issues. Grieving mothers, siblings, and families are often left behind. Studies have shown that this target population faces challenges in all aspects of life due to the impact of trauma and grief.

We serve Individuals & Families primarily in **Roxbury, Dorchester, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, & Hyde Park, Massachusetts**, who are:

1. Facing racial inequities
2. Endangered by community violence
3. Unemployed or at risk for job loss
4. Living in poverty
5. Homeless or risk of homelessness
6. Recent or undocumented Immigrants
7. ESL Speakers
8. Struggling with physical and mental health needs
9. Young parents
10. Opportunity Youth
11. Formerly Incarcerated community members (returning citizens)



Mission Statement

The mission of MJE is to end neighborhood violence by empowering mothers and youth to challenge the normalization of violence and become effective catalysts for change in their homes, schools, and communities. We engage mothers, youth, & families by providing targeted support, educational opportunities, and the opportunity to advocate for peace as a community.



Racial Equity

At MJE, we recognize how discrimination and trauma are intertwined. Our approach guides victims toward healing and empowerment, fostering community leaders from within. Our team mirrors the diversity of the communities we serve, including Spanish and Haitian Creole speakers in our offices. Through ongoing Multicultural Case training led by Hannah Martinez, MJE's Board Director and expert in Multicultural Therapeutic Response, we strive to meet our clients' diverse cultural needs.





What Matters Most

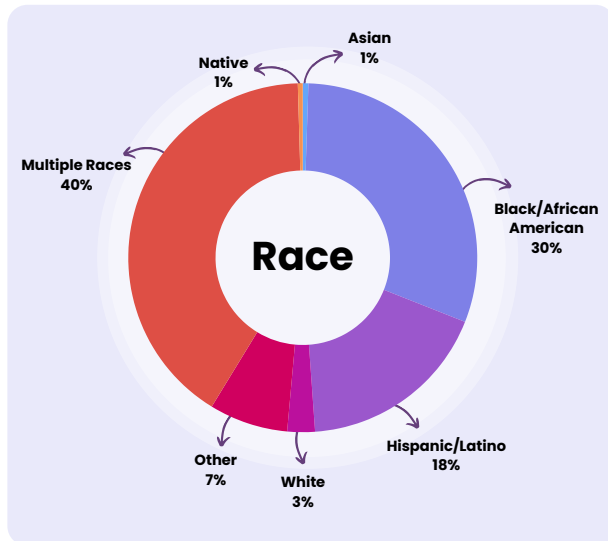
The school-to-prison pipeline is forthcoming for our young adults, youth, and families. A single mishap or misunderstanding can cost the opportunity to go to college or get a job because of inequities in the systems in which we live. Young adults, single parents, and teen parents in our communities do not see a bright future for themselves; they see poverty and a need to earn money. They experience racism in the networks in which they travel. Criminal activity and gang involvement become viable ways to make money and gain connections they lack. Many have few role models showing them another way.



MJE is founded on the model of **economic empowerment**. The main assets of MJE clients include a commitment to supporting one another and a strong desire to improve their circumstances. Participants realize they are not alone in their struggles. While setting motivating and attainable personal goals, they become empowered to advocate for change with their friends and family.

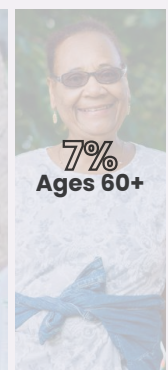
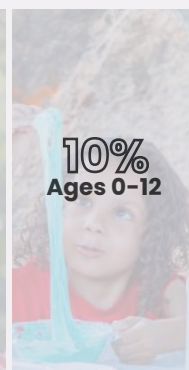
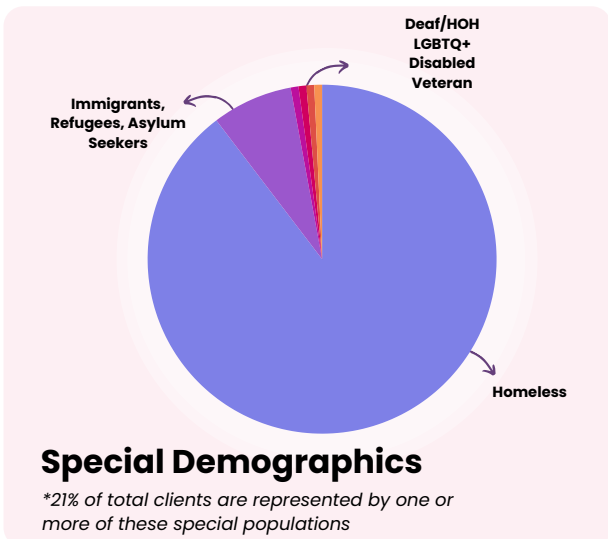


In 2023, we served over **3,600** clients



30+ Workshops

and touched over 3,000 more thanks to our outreach efforts!





Success Stories



Aretha Maugé

"I started out as a client here at MJE. I lost my son to violence on New Year's Eve 2008, and by 2011 I came to MJE to find a healing space and be around people who understood my trauma. I wasn't getting the care or resources after my son's death until I walked into MJE after losing my job for not being social enough. I decided to join the non-profit and start my journey of healing by helping mothers and families with resources and healing workshops to help get them through a traumatic time."

Nikia Shell

"Transitioning from a 17-year career as a chef, I pursued new skills at MJE as an intern. With guidance from MJE mentors, I embraced the new role of Stronger Communities Coordinator, supporting individuals transitioning from incarceration. Now, as a Family Advocate in the Health Equity department, I take pride in organizing transformative programs like Healing Through the Arts, Empowerment Chats, Job Fairs, and more. As a parent of two wonderful children, I'm committed to positively impacting my community through outreach efforts. With a strong passion for connecting with like-minded individuals and engaging in local initiatives, I proudly work to promote community empowerment."





YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Our **Youth Peer Leadership Program** teaches youth aged 14-18 how to be leaders in their community and form healthy relationships. They do so by partnering with youth programs throughout Boston to do **peer-to-peer workshops**, lead **STEM workshops** at elementary and middle Boston Public Schools, and organize **community events to promote peace**. Youth who participate receive a **\$15/hour stipend**, and we have a program for the school and summer seasons.

There were many highlights in 2023, from college tours to gardening to hosting community events and more!

Two of our most notable highlights in 2023 were the **STEM in the Park Program** and the **Youth Park Rally**. MJE Peer Leaders showed up for the community of young people, many of whom have lost family and friends themselves. They set up pop-up STEM tables at Norfolk Park for children to learn and enjoy, including painting, volcano making, slime creation, and candy DNA models. They engaged with other youth in the community to educate them on what MJE stands for, along with Outreach team members educating interested parents. One of the neighborhood children cheerfully exclaimed that this was a "surprise that came out of nowhere!"



“



CHECK OUT THE BOSTON
GLOBE ARTICLE: “For
Mothers for Justice and
Equality, being trauma
informed is key”

”



HIGHLIGHTS

★ Thriving Community Involvement ★

💪 Stipends for Empowered Peer Leaders 💪

☀️ School Year and Summer Adventures ☀️

🚀 Customized Case Management 🚀

🔥 Workforce Readiness Programs 🔥

🎓 Turbocharged College Prep 🎓

💜 Trauma Support 💜

YOUTH
SUCCESS
STORY

**Name has been changed to
protect client confidentiality*

Jeremy, 18, eagerly joined our Peer Leadership Program to learn about gun violence prevention and prepare for the workforce post-graduation. Through our workforce development workshops, Jeremy received valuable support and knowledge, transforming from a timid young adult into an intentional Peer Leader, driven to achieve his goals. Utilizing the tools provided, Jeremy secured a local part-time job within his community, showcasing his drive and willingness to take on more responsibilities. He has since reached out to share his success and expressed interest in continuing his involvement in the program, highlighting its effectiveness in empowering youth and fostering a sense of community.



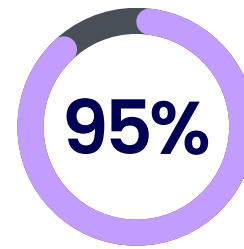


Adult Education

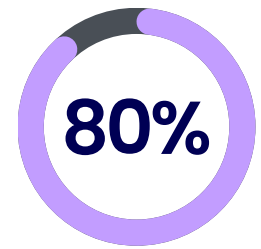
In 2023, MJE had big changes and big wins! Our programs such as **Career Readiness, Technology Series, PCA Fundamentals, Financial Empowerment, College Tours**, and more, all geared towards preparing our clients for the workforce and higher education. We also offered incentives for their hard work, such as **\$250-\$500 stipends** and **chromebooks** upon workshop completions. Our most popular workshops this year were those that handled career readiness, which covered everything from resume creation to securing employment and everything in between.

Additionally, our workshops discussed vital topics such as creating business plans, attending career fairs, and certificate and undergrad programs. For those who still prefer one-on-one guidance, we continued to offer open hours where clients could call in to speak with one of our Family Advocates.

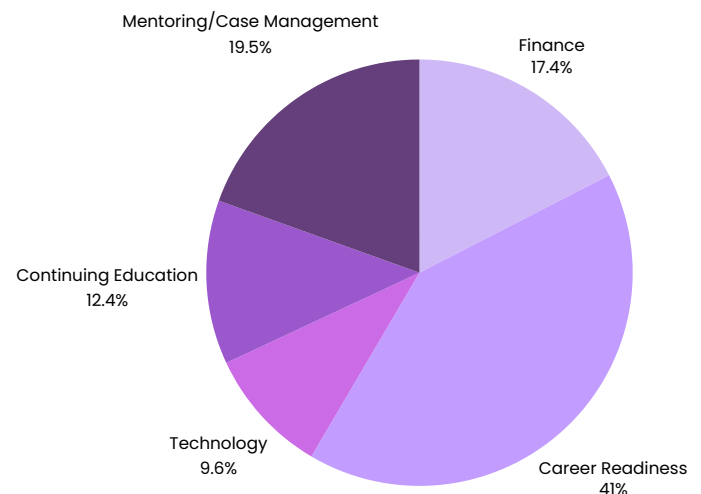
We've also seen a notable increase in clients seeking case management assistance at MJE, underscoring the trust placed in our comprehensive support services. With that, we're also delighted to see a surge in client engagement across programs and events between our Adult Ed and Health Equity departments, indicating the positive impact of our initiatives. We are cooking up more courses surrounding employment and obtaining GEDs and certificates for 2024!



Of Adult Education Clients Graduated our courses



Of Adult Education Clients Secured Employment





Inspiring Entrepreneur

MJE believes that poverty is the root cause of violence. Beginning in 2023, the Inspiring Entrepreneur 4-week training program aims to engage women of color and underserved communities in civic action so they can be the voice of change in their communities and slow the growth of poverty. The program provides a safe learning and healing space to receive entrepreneurship training to mothers who have CORI records, are heads of household, have an in-home business, or have expressed interest in starting their own business. The program includes coaching, mentoring, and workshops to help social individuals move beyond concepts and business models with SWOT analysis and create an Action Plan. We are thrilled to say that in our first year we had **23 graduates receive a \$500 stipend to invest in their businesses!**

CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

**Name has been changed to protect client confidentiality*

*Sarah came to MJE while working a corporate job and raising 2 kids. After completing our Technology Workshop and receiving her free Chromebook, she went straight to the Inspiring Entrepreneur program. She became fully immersed in the course and successfully graduated with her SWOT analysis and business plan in hand. Sarah then used the **\$500 graduation stipend** to start her business, manage her social media, and fulfill orders.*

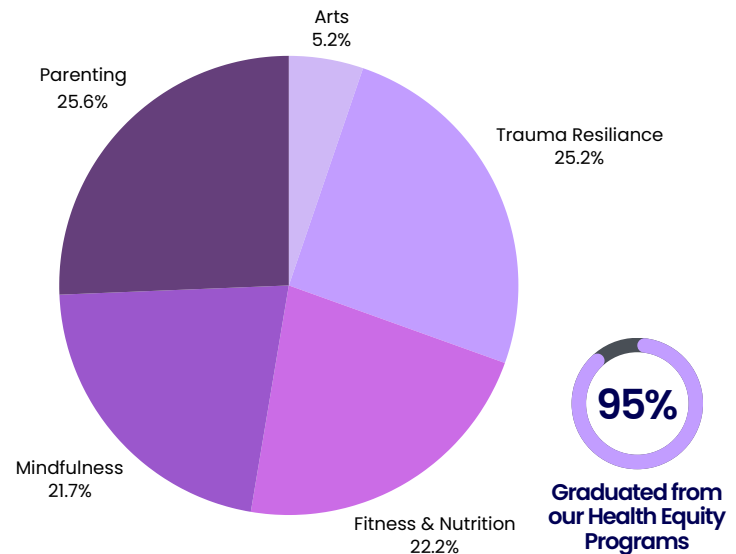


Health Equity & Community Engagement

In 2023, MJE experienced significant transformations and notable successes! Our Health Equity Department had over **15 workshops** in 2023, which were all built with trauma-informed care. In each class, MJE clients created art or had empowering community discussions, all while safely discussing feelings surrounding trauma and learning how to process those feelings.

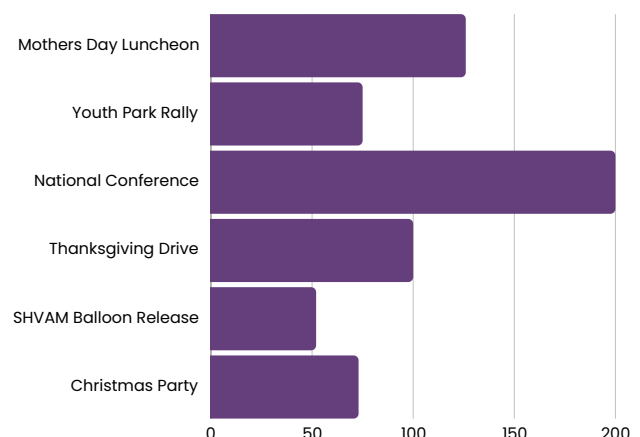
This year, we partnered with **Brigham Women and Mass General** in providing education and resources to our **Young Parents Program (aged 14-24)**. Graduates from this program completed courses on leadership, healthy relationships, financial literacy, and more throughout the 8-week program. Upon completion, the graduates celebrated with a party and received **\$100 gift cards** for their contribution efforts.

When the favorable warm weather arrived, we seized the chance to enjoy the outdoors to its fullest! One notable workshop was our **Community Walks** at Norfolk Park for our MJE seniors. The heat could not stop that crowd – they walked a half mile each session with smiles on their faces, including our oldest participant at **89 years old**. They supported each other by ensuring everyone had snacks, water, and a great time.



With the reuniting of in-person events, our community events and outreach efforts skyrocketed! It's important to us to engage with our local communities and leadership to not only remind them that violence **IS NOT OKAY**, but that MJE is here and ready to help spark positive change.

In 2023, we hosted 6 Public Empowerment events with more than 600 attendees!





SERVICES

Case Management
Job Placement
Mentoring and Coaching



FAMILY SUPPORT

Trauma informed workshops
Career Readiness Training
CORI friendly housing and
sealing support



WE HELP PEOPLE WHO ARE:

1. Facing racial inequities
2. Endangered by community violence
3. Unemployed or at risk for job loss
4. Low Income
5. Homeless/ or at risk of homelessness
6. Recent or undocumented Immigrants
7. ESL Speakers
8. Struggling with physical and mental health needs
9. Young parents
10. Opportunity Youth
11. Formerly Incarcerated community members (returning citizens)

Stronger Communities

In 2023, MJE continued its strive to cultivate a stronger community. The Stronger Communities initiative nurtures connections, advocating for inclusivity and igniting collective growth for individuals and families re-entering society from incarceration. Through a range of services, support, and advocacy efforts, we are dedicated to addressing their extraordinary challenges, empower them to build fulfilling lives, and positively contribute to their communities.



MJE's Annual Mother's Day Luncheon

At MJE's annual **Mother's Day Luncheon** on May 13, 2023, at Faith Christian Church in Boston, we paid tribute to resilient mothers who've faced the devastating loss of children to street violence. Mayor Michelle Wu graced us as keynote speaker for our **125 guests**, and we honored outstanding mothers with **Courage and Conviction Awards** for their relentless advocacy for at-risk children's safety. Throughout the event, we tackled vital discussions on addressing neighborhood violence and supporting affected families. Notable guests like Mayor Michelle Wu, City Councilors Julia Mejia and Ruthzee Louijeune, State Representative Russell E. Holmes, and others highlighted our collective commitment to building a safer, more supportive community.



MJE's Youth Park Rally

After the tragic shooting of 12-year-old Mattapan resident **Savion Ellis**, MJE Youth hosted the **Youth Park Rally** in Ellis's neighborhood to bring the public together and remind them that gun violence **IS NOT OKAY**. The rally had activities for the whole family to enjoy, including tie-dyeing, tug-of-war, double-dutch, and more! The youth educated the public of **over 75 people** on what MJE stands for and created thought-provoking art pieces on gun violence, one of which had an alarming amount of news headlines on shootings in our neighborhoods for just that year.





9th Annual Mothers Against Violence National Conference

On October 12-13, 2023, we held our **9th Annual Mothers Against Violence National Conference**. Our goal with this conference is to empower women, helping them turn their pain into purpose. Over those nine years, we addressed tragic losses from community violence while promoting peace. We heard inspiring stories from mothers and leaders nationwide who make a difference everyday, offering hope to underserved families. We also honored four individuals with the **MJE Courage and Conviction Awards** for their outstanding advocacy in protecting at-risk children from street violence. This year's conference, with **over 150 guests**, provided essential training, mentoring, and support for women nationwide affected by loss and violence. Over nine years, we've seen **over 600 attendees** take their learnings home to positively influence **thousands** of lives. Together, we make a difference and bring hope to communities nationwide, and will continue this tradition for the 10th time in 2024.

2023 Courage and Conviction Award Winners

Lois Jones Myles
Safer Foundation, Chicago, IL

Milagros & Rafael Burgos
Imani Dream Angel/Rincon, Chicago, IL

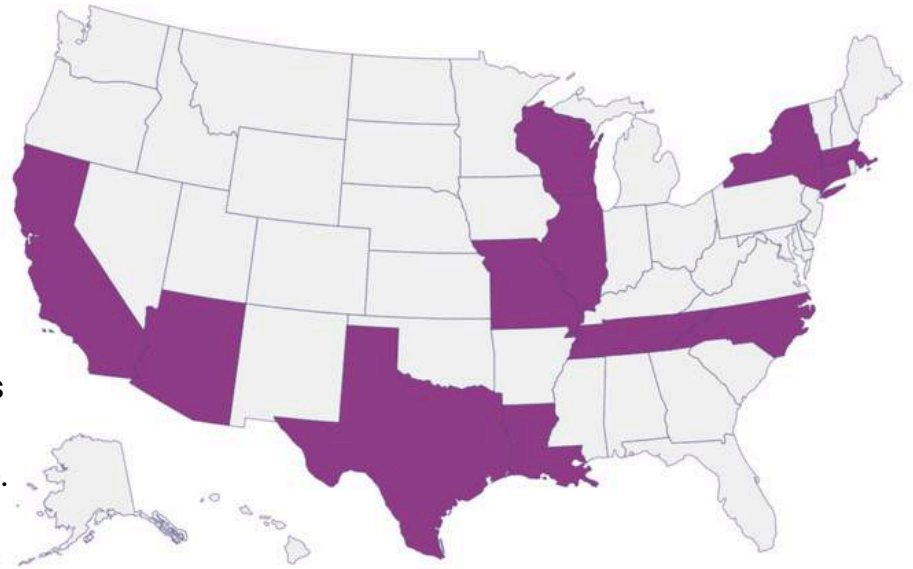
Michelle Wu
Boston Mayor, Boston, MA





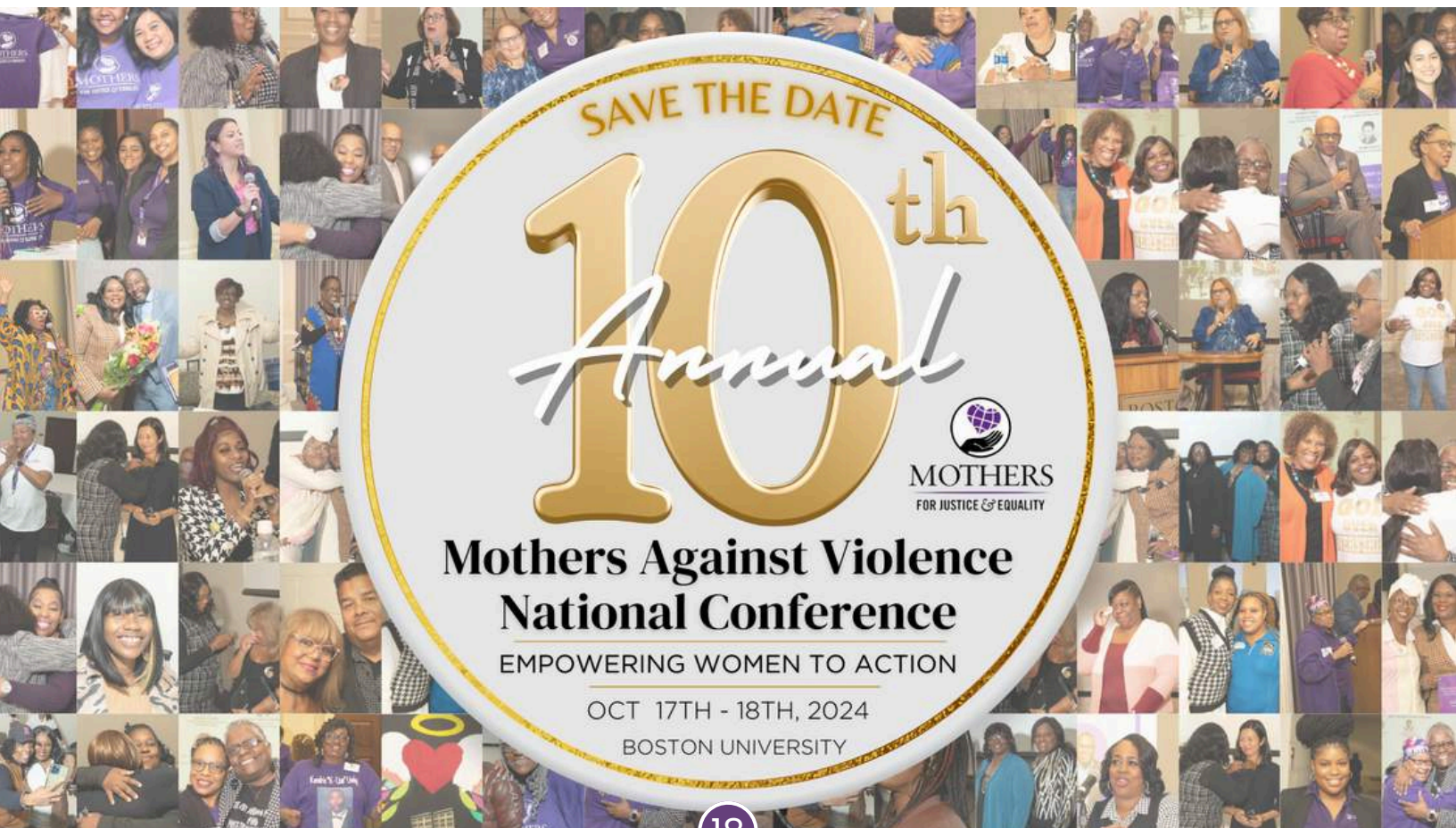
MJE is not just local. We touch communities nationwide!

As part of our **“Heal. Restore. Rebuild.”** initiative, we invite mothers and guests from across the country who have put their pain into purpose. Many of them have lost a child to gun violence and started their own organizations to combat this crisis.



In 2023, we had National Attendees from **Arizona, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, North Carolina, New York, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin.**

By broadening our outreach efforts and leveraging digital platforms, we anticipate welcoming attendees from more states who are fueled by a common goal: **Ending Gun Violence.**





"For every one homicide victim, there are at least ten surviving family members, resulting in an average of over 130,000 new survivors of homicide victims each year."

- City of Boston

MJE's Memorial Balloon Release for Survivors Against Homicide Victims Awareness Month

Statistics from The City of Boston underscore the far-reaching impact of community violence. Our population is struggling with the impact of trauma due to community violence, homicide, domestic violence, and related issues. The results of violence and murder do not just impact direct victims, but the grieving mothers, siblings, and families who are often left behind. Studies have shown that this target population faces challenges in all aspects of life due to the impact of trauma and grief. Recognizing this, there's a growing awareness of the need for **Survivors of Homicide Victims Awareness Month (SHVAM)** to provide support and acknowledgment for those affected by loss, aligning with our priorities at Mothers for Justice and Equality (MJE). On December 9th, 2023, **52 community members** of all ages gathered with us for a **Memorial Balloon Release** at Norfolk Park, honoring lost loved ones by writing messages on balloons and releasing them into the sky. The event fostered moments of prayer, sharing impact statements, and comforting conversations over warm cocoa and donuts, offering solace amidst remembrance.





MJE's Thanksgiving Turkey Drive

The **Thanksgiving Turkey Drive** is a cherished tradition at MJE, where the spirit of giving back shines brightly. With everyone coming together, we were able to make a difference in the lives of over **100 families** in need. The smiles on their faces and the gratitude in their hearts reminded us of the power of community and compassion. As we reflect on this year's drive, we are filled with a sense of joy and fulfillment, knowing that our collective efforts brought warmth and nourishment to those who needed it most. This is more than just a drive; it is a symbol of unity, kindness, and the true essence of the holiday season.





MJE's Christmas Party

Our client-centered Christmas Party was an absolute blast, catering to the enjoyment of all ages! Guests were greeted with a festive atmosphere, adorned with twinkling lights and holiday decorations. Craft stations provided a space for unleashing creativity. The air was filled with the irresistible aroma of hot cocoa and the sweet scent of holiday treats, tempting everyone to indulge in the seasonal delights. Laughter and merriment echoed throughout the venue as guests danced and sang along to beloved Christmas tunes, spreading cheer and warmth. And to top it all off, the highlight of the evening was Santa's special visit, spreading holiday cheer to all who attended!



Strategic Partnerships

ABCD Head Start Mattapan
Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology
Boston Public Health Commission
Boston Public Schools
Boston University
Brigham and Women's Hospital
Children's Services of Roxbury
Community Resources for Justice
Day and Evening Academy
Department of Transitional Assistance
Department of Youth Services
Dimock Center
Epiphany Child Care Center
Justice Resource Institute
Massachusetts Attorney General's Office
Mattapan Neighborhood Trauma Team
Mattapan Health Center
Massachusetts Office of Victim Assistance
McGrath House
New England Culinary Arts Training Program
Partners Health Care
St. Mary's Center for Women and Children

Contracts

Boston Public Health Commission
Boston Police Department – Charles Shannon Award
City of Boston Community Development Block Grant
City of Boston Neighborhood Jobs Trust
City of Boston Youth Fund
Department of Early and Secondary Education – ASOST
Department of Public Health – GVP
Department of Transitional Assistance – CIES
Executive Office of Health and Human Services – Stronger Communities
Executive Office of Health and Human Services – Community Empowerment
Commonwealth of Massachusetts Restorative Justice Award
Mattapan Community Health Center NTT
Massachusetts Office of Victims Assistance
SNAP

**MJE wants to express our
immense appreciation for your
continued support. Thank you.**

Foundation and Corporate Grants

Anna B. Stearns Foundation
Boston Children's Hospital
Paul and Edith Babson Foundation
Brigham and Women's Hospital Second Generations
Bushrod H. Campbell and Adah F. Hall Charity Fund
Cummings Foundation
DCU For Kids Foundation
Fish Family Foundation
Imago Dei Fund
John Hancock MLK Summer Fund
JP Morgan Chase
Liberty Mutual Foundation
Massachusetts Convention Center Authority
Needham Bank
Once Here Foundation
Philanthropy MA Summer Fund
Rockland Trust
Carl and Ruth Shapiro Foundation
Skill Works
State Street Foundation
Suffolk County DAs office
TD Bank Foundation
United Way of Massachusetts Bay
Yawkey Foundation





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Mother to Mother,
Neighbor to Neighbor,
together we can
change the story of
our streets.

