

*The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago.
The second best time is today.*

Dear friends of Link House:

For many of us, spring is a time of new beginnings and Link House is no exception. This season, we welcome board member Jack Pramberg, as well as two senior staff members in new roles, Sharon Roberts, director of women's services, and Susannah Abbott, director of development. While Sharon is quite literally planning to plant a garden at the Maris Center for Women, Jack is working with me and the entire board to grow the Link House of the future. Meanwhile two of our most recently established programs, the Children and Teen Center for Help (CATCH) and Women's Independent Sober Housing (WISH) continue to grow and thrive.

All the programs at Link House, from our five residences to our outpatient services for children and adults, run on a combination of hope and the support of our community. Whether you are a current participant in our programs, an alumnus of many years, or a generous donor or volunteer, we are so grateful for your commitment and partnership. We would not be able to do our work without you.



Gary Gastman, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer
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John W. Pramberg, Esq. Joins Link House Board of Directors



John W. "Jack" Pramberg, Esq. has joined the board of directors at Link House, returning after an earlier term on the board in the late '80s and early '90s. He has seen the organization grow in the last 30 years from a single house for a dozen men in Newburyport to a continuum of care in three communities with five residences and two outpatient centers serving adults and children. "We are delighted to have Jack re-join the Link House board of directors. He has an inspiring, decades-long interest in our mission and his experience and expertise will be great assets as we plan for the future," says Chief Executive Officer Gary Gastman.

"It can be overwhelming to access care if you are facing substance use disorder challenges, mental health challenges, or both," notes Pramberg. "We sometimes forget that underneath the big issues are individual people who are struggling. Link House directly and effectively impacts the lives of individuals."

Pramberg was an elected and appointed official on both the state and local levels for more than 20 years. He has been a lawyer and CPA for four decades, serving as a life member and past president of the American Academy of Attorney-CPAs. Long active in the community, he is president of the Griffin Home, the Jackman Willet House, and treasurer of the Moseley Fund for Social Service, and a former president of the Custom House Maritime Museum.

New Children and Teen Center for Help (CATCH) Continues to Grow

Link House's Children and Teen Center for Help (CATCH), launched in November in response to a critical lack of local mental health services for young people ages five to eighteen, has become a valued community resource and continues to expand. The program empowers and supports children, teens, and their families to understand and nurture their mental well-being, with treatment for anxiety, depression, gender dysphoria, trauma, substance use disorder, and co-occurring mental health disorders.

"Link House has been growing and evolving to meet the needs of our community since 1972, and CATCH is no exception," notes Gary Gastman, Link House's chief executive officer. "From our conversations with families and community leaders, we knew that many children, particularly those with insurance through MassHealth,

were unable to access behavioral health services. Thanks to CATCH, we are able to offer kids lifelong skills for emotional well-being.

CATCH Program Director Carolyn Gayler-Romero, NCSP, LEP, envisions significant growth for the program in the year ahead. "We've already established partnerships with five area schools, and are looking to expand. When we see children in schools, we can work closely with the students' support network, including teachers and counselors. Thanks to a partnership grant from the Tower Foundation and the Essex County Community Foundation, we're starting a support group for transgender teens and partnering on an equine support program, and we're exploring programming for other groups."

CATCH's multi-disciplinary team includes a licensed educational psychologist, a licensed independent clinical social worker, three masters-level clinicians, a part-time nurse practitioner, a consulting psychiatrist, and executives with expertise in behavioral health.

To learn more, visit catchkidsnow.org.



Link House board members and staff gathered with over 100 members of the community at the CATCH ribbon cutting on January 18, 2023.
Photograph by Laura Kozlowski



New Senior Staff - Susannah Abbott



Susannah Abbott has joined Link House as the director of development, bringing more than 20 years of development experience to the role. Most recently Abbott served as the director of development for Nashua Soup Kitchen & Shelter, where she helped complete an \$8.6 million capital campaign to construct a new emergency shelter. Previously, she was

on the staff of the development office at Phillips Academy, Andover.

"This is a period of tremendous growth for Link House and need in our community. Susannah's commitment to our mission and her extensive fundraising experience will help make it possible for us to build crucial resources to continue to serve those in need in the months and years ahead," says Link House Chief Executive Officer, Gary Gastman.

It's a WISH Come True for Residents of Women's Independent Sober Housing

"I love living here. It's one of the best decisions I have made in my life, besides moving into the Maris Center for Women," says Nina R., a resident of Women's Independent Sober Housing (WISH). WISH, established in March of 2020, is home to 16 women who live together and sustain their recovery in a supportive, safe, and sober space.



New Senior Staff - Sharon Roberts



Sharon Roberts has been named director of women's services at Link House after serving as a recovery coach at our Center for Behavioral Health & Addiction Treatment Services. She brings more than 16 years of experience to the role and is a licensed alcohol and drug counselor. She also

served as program director, assistant program director, and senior counselor at Glenice Sheehan Program at Lowell House and was a case manager at Inn Transition and Project Cope.

"Sharon has a genuine passion for women's treatment and building a strong culture of connection. Sharon has helped hundreds of women through her heart-felt approach to recovery. Her experience, warmth, and positivity will be enjoyed by the women in our programs and the Link House team," says Chris Turner, senior director of services at Link House.

Many of the residents come to WISH as graduates of the Maris Center, Link House's 40-bed residential program for women in recovery, and continue their therapy at Link House's outpatient Center for Behavioral Health & Addiction Treatment Services. Senior Director of Services Chris Turner notes that the three programs work closely together to support women at every stage of their recovery. "Graduates of the Maris Center who come to WISH are ready to continue to work on their recovery with more independence, but still welcome the supportive services that are readily accessible here. Being in a community with other women with shared goals and life experience is particularly important."

WISH also responds to an urgent need for affordable housing on the North Shore. "The waiting list for affordable living is years long," continues Turner. "Without WISH, I worry that some of the women would not have a roof over their heads." WISH residents pay an affordable monthly rent that is significantly below market rate. While for some WISH is a stepping stone to a place of her own, residents may stay at WISH for as long as they need to.

Link House's Director of Women's Services Sharon Roberts plans to plant a flower and salsa garden with the women this spring. "It will be a great place to come home to after work," says Roberts who notes that the women also enjoy a weekly book club, a yoga room, swimming pool, and relish in the ease of going out to the kitchen and sharing stories, enjoying a pizza, and watching a sporting event on TV. "It's nice to have a light on when you come home," adds Roberts.

"When you put in the work, life is good," shares Nina. She adds that while life is not always as sweet as ice cream, living at WISH is a dream come true. "It's full of laughter and sometimes tears but we are all here for each other."





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SPRING 2023

NEWSLETTER



Link House Expands Recovery Coach Services with a \$100,000 Grant from the Cummings Foundation

The Cummings Foundation has awarded Link House a three-year grant of \$100,000 that will enable the agency to expand its recovery coach program.

"We are deeply grateful for the Cummings Foundation's generous grant for the expansion of our recovery coach services, which helps remove barriers and obstacles to recovery. The grant will enable us to expand the program to help individuals who are struggling with substance use disorders to manage their substance use challenges and improve their mental well-being," said Gary Gastman, chief executive officer.

Link House received the award as part of the Cummings Foundation's \$25 Million Grant Program, which supports Massachusetts nonprofits that are based in and primarily serve Middlesex, Essex, and Suffolk counties. "We are so fortunate in greater Boston to have such effective nonprofits, plus a wealth of talented, dedicated professionals and volunteers to run them," said Cummings Foundation Executive Director Joyce Vyriotes. "We are indebted to them for the work they do each day to provide for basic needs, break down barriers to education and health resources, and work toward a more equitable society."