



MOTHERS
FOR JUSTICE & EQUALITY

**Educating &
Engaging**

**Women, Youth, &
Families**

2025 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

Message from the President



Dear Friends,

This past year has been marked by both urgency and possibility.

Families across our communities continue to navigate economic instability, rising housing costs, food insecurity, and persistent racial and gender inequities. For the mothers and youth we serve, these challenges are not abstract. They shape daily decisions about safety, stability, and survival—and they demand responses that are both compassionate and strategic.

At Mothers for Justice and Equality (MJE), we meet this moment with clarity and resolve.

Our work is grounded in a simple truth: when mothers are supported, families stabilize—and when families stabilize, communities heal. This belief continues to guide our approach to serving youth, mothers, and families who are navigating trauma, poverty, and systems that too often fail to meet their needs.

Over the past year, MJE has strengthened and refined its impact. We deepened our trauma-informed programming, expanded pathways to education and workforce opportunity, and created safer, more intentional spaces for healing and leadership development. Our work recognizes that economic mobility and emotional well-being are inseparable—and that lasting change requires addressing both.

As our programs grow, so does our responsibility to operate with discipline and purpose. This year, MJE invested in strengthening internal systems, leadership capacity, and organizational accountability to ensure our work remains sustainable, mission-aligned, and responsive to community needs. We have been intentional about directing resources where they matter most—meeting basic needs, supporting families in crisis, and investing in long-term stability rather than short-term solutions.

Our model continues to center Education and Engagement as essential drivers of change. Through individualized service planning, workforce preparation, youth leadership development, and community-based healing practices, participants are making measurable progress. Mothers are securing employment and returning to school. Families are accessing housing, childcare, and critical supports. Youth are developing confidence, leadership skills, and a sense of belonging.

Beyond outcomes, we are witnessing resilience every day. We see it in young people finding their voice, in mothers reclaiming agency over their lives, and in families choosing hope amid uncertainty. These moments affirm the importance of this work—and the necessity of continuing to evolve and lead.

As you read this report, I invite you to reflect not only on the results, but on the collective effort behind them. Progress is made possible by dedicated staff, courageous participants, committed partners, and supporters who believe that equity, dignity, and justice are not optional—they are essential.

There is still much to do. But together, we are building pathways to stability, leadership, and lasting change for mothers, youth, and families.

In peace and purpose,

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

Board of Directors



Monalisa Smith – President

Monalisa founded MJE in 2010 following the loss of her nephew to local violence. She gathered fellow mothers to share their concerns about the gross amount of violence against children. The group agreed upon the mission to end neighborhood violence and that mothers can become catalysts for change in our communities.



Renée Omoladé – 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. Renée earned a BA in Sociology with a double minor in Africana Studies and Gender & Women's Studies from Emmanuel College.



Kavita Kurella – Director

Kavita is a growth-oriented senior leader recognized for mobilizing global teams and driving enterprise strategy across consulting and commercial banking. She combines entrepreneurial vision with disciplined execution to deliver triple-digit revenue growth and technology-enabled innovation. With 12 years at Deloitte and 13+ years at Citizens, she has led diverse teams through complex transformation.



Amanda Merricks – Director

Amanda, a public servant with over 23 years at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is committed to social impact, leadership, and entertainment. She holds leadership roles in Blacks in Government (BIG), produces a Stand-Up Comedy series, organizes events like the 5K Turkey Trot, and is actively involved with MJE.



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.



Nana Akomaa Kyerematen – Treasurer

Nana works for Clarity of Mind Mental Health, Inc. in Randolph, MA. She is the recipient of a Boston City Council Award for being an exemplary community mental health outreach provider. She received her first degree in Biological Sciences from the University of Southern California and her graduate degree in Counseling and Public Health from Tufts University.



William Rodriguez – Board Advisor (Finance & Audit Committee)

William is a senior lecturer at BU Wheelock College of Education & Human Development. He primarily teaches youth justice and advocacy, juvenile law, and positive youth development. He supported the original development of the MJE "You Matter" Program, and was instrumental in MJE obtaining space for the annual Mothers Against Violence National Conference at Boston University.



Cyntoria Grant – Board Advisor

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.

Violence of any kind Is Not Okay



Our Mission

The mission of **Mothers for Justice and Equality (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.



15
Years of
Empowerment



4,500+
Clients Served
Annually



1,350
Youth Served
Annually



30+
Partners

We at MJE believe that **poverty is the root cause of violence**. Our “You Matter” personal leadership and workforce development training support each participant’s recovery from trauma and future career and academic achievements. We aim to engage our participants in civic action so that they can be the voice of change in our communities.

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.

Mother to mother, family to family, block to block we can change the story of our streets.

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 management training** led by Nana Akomaa Kyerematen, MJE's Board Member and expert in Multicultural Therapeutic Response, we strive to meet our clients' diverse cultural needs.

We serve Individuals & Families in Boston who are:

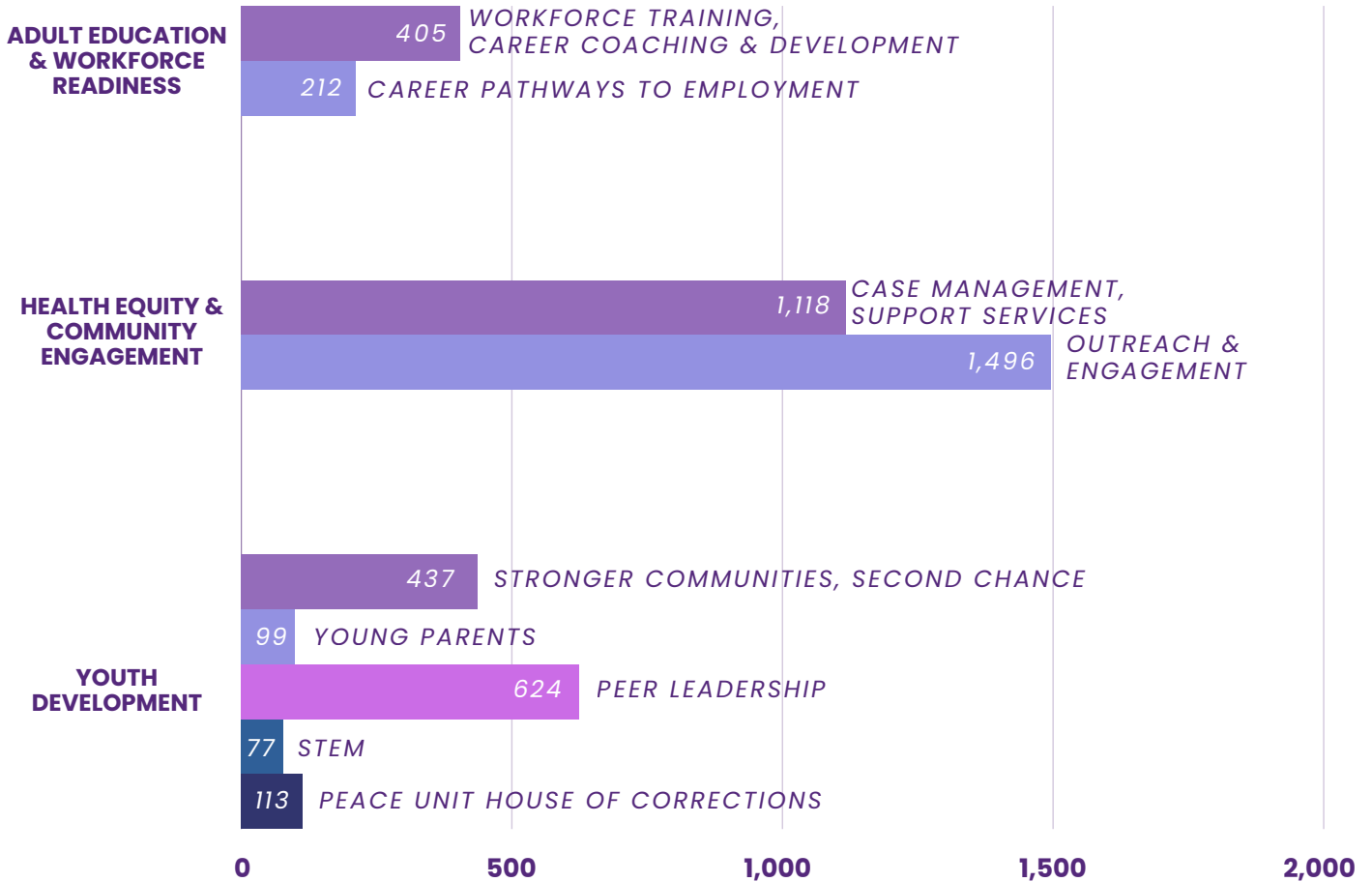
- Facing racial inequities
- Endangered by community violence
- Unemployed or at risk for job loss
- Living in poverty
- Homeless/risk of homelessness
- Recent/Undocumented Immigrants
- ESL Speakers
- Struggling with physical and mental health needs
- Young parents
- Opportunity Youth
- Formerly Incarcerated community members (returning citizens)



2025 Data

Individuals Served: 4,581
Services Provided: 31,951*

**Average of 6 services per client*



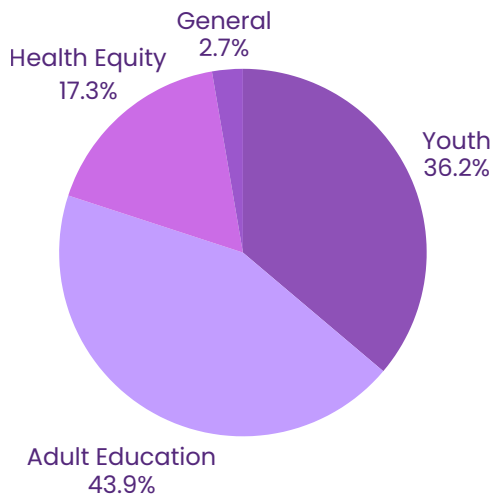
\$38,000
 Emergency Assistance



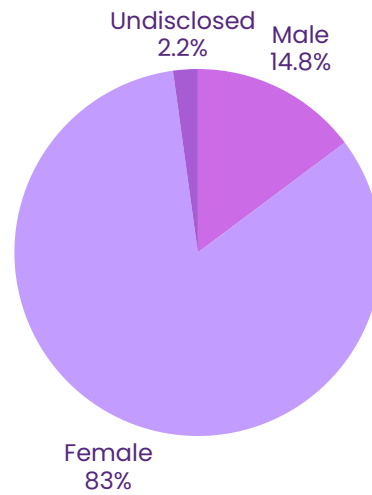
\$4,674.73
 Basic Needs Requests

Demographics

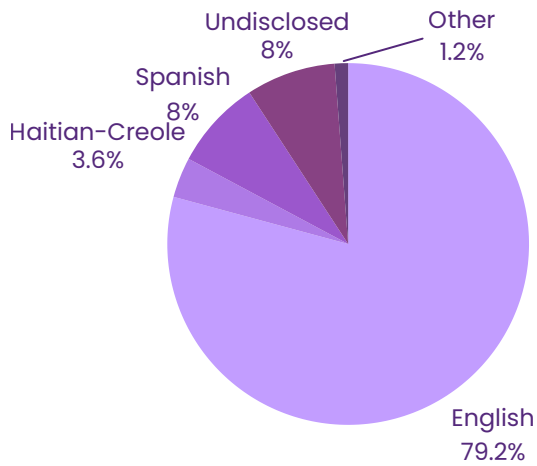
Workshop Departments



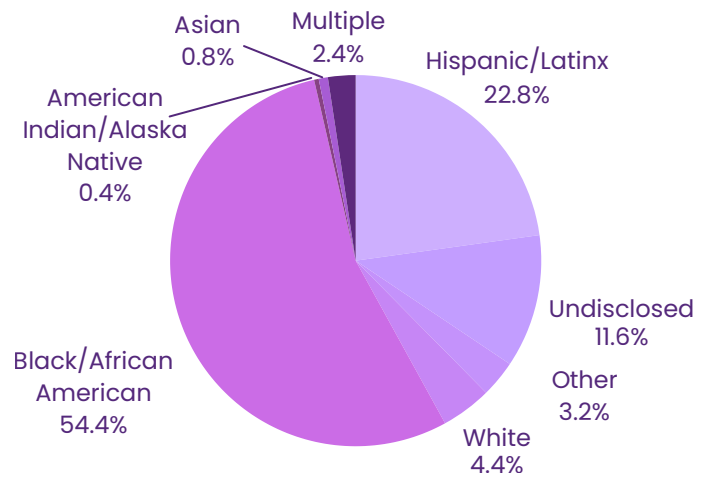
Gender Identities



Languages



Race/Ethnicities



Providing Emergency Relief to Families in Need

“FOOD SHOULD NEVER BE A CHOICE—IT SHOULD ALWAYS BE A GUARANTEE”

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

2025 was a difficult year for many, and we at MJE remained deeply committed to supporting the families impacted by benefit reductions. Following November SNAP benefit cuts, we received **two emergency grants of \$10,000 each** from **United Way of Massachusetts Bay** and **The Boston Foundation** to distribute **grocery gift cards** to families struggling with food insecurity. The funding provided immediate support to **dozens of households** facing reduced benefits and rising grocery costs. We also provided **150 food bags & hygiene products** during our Hyde Park Food Pop-Up, **100 turkeys to 100 families** during our annual Thanksgiving Turkey Drive, and **335 toys** during our Christmas Toy Drive.

“These are not abstract numbers—these are families making hard choices every day,” said Monalisa. “We want our families to know: **“love is here, you matter, and your community is standing with you.”**”

AT A GLANCE:



\$20,000

Emergency Grants
Received & Distributed



355

Christmas Toys
Distributed



150

Food & Hygiene
Products Distributed



100

Thanksgiving Turkeys
Distributed

MJE Success



Janelle

"My name is Janelle, I'm so grateful for the opportunity to work with this organization. Firstly, I want to say a warm thank you to MJE, this is my second home. I came to MJE just to do one program I dearly enjoyed PCA. Fortunately, I never left. It brings me so much JOY every time I have a class to attend. I just want to say THANK YOU these three special women Nikia, Leah and Aretha never forgetting all the support and FUN! Thank you all!!!"

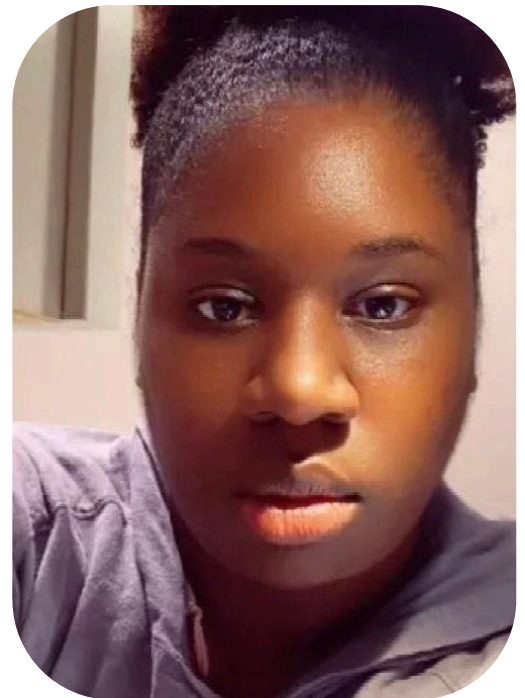


Christa

"While interning at Mothers for Justice and Equality, I had a moment that truly shifted my perspective. During one of our community events, I listened to a group of mothers speak openly about the pain of losing their children to violence and the strength they found in each other to turn that grief into purpose. As a mother myself, I felt their stories in my heart. I realized how often mothers carry the weight of injustice in silence, and how powerful it is when that silence is broken in a safe, supportive space. That experience made me more determined to use my voice not just for my own child, but for every mother who's fighting to keep their families safe and seen. It shaped my belief that advocacy starts with listening, healing, and standing together."

Amanda

We are proud to spotlight Amanda, a remarkable member of our community! Amanda has consistently demonstrated the ability to overcome challenges while remaining true to herself. She shows up fully—engaging in discussions, offering thoughtful advice, and providing a genuine listening ear to her peers. Her presence reflects compassion, strength, and a deep commitment to personal growth and community support. Amanda has recently applied for the DTA Internship, and we are keeping her in our thoughts as she moves forward in this exciting opportunity!



Zha'mil

We're proud to celebrate Zha'mil, a former Youth Peer Leader and Intern, who has secured a position as a Transit Ambassador with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority - MBTA while also taking online classes at UMass Dartmouth. This opportunity came through ongoing career readiness conversations and goal-setting support with our team. This milestone reflects our "Youth on the Move" approach—supporting young people as they transition into their next chapter, whether that's employment, college, or continued education!



Adult Education & Workforce Readiness

Our philosophy is that the recovery of the individual is essential for the recovery of the family and the community. At the heart of our work, we aim to move “pain into purpose” for mothers, youth, and community residents. We believe those who are impacted by community violence and trauma can recover with support from MJE.

2025 Stats



325

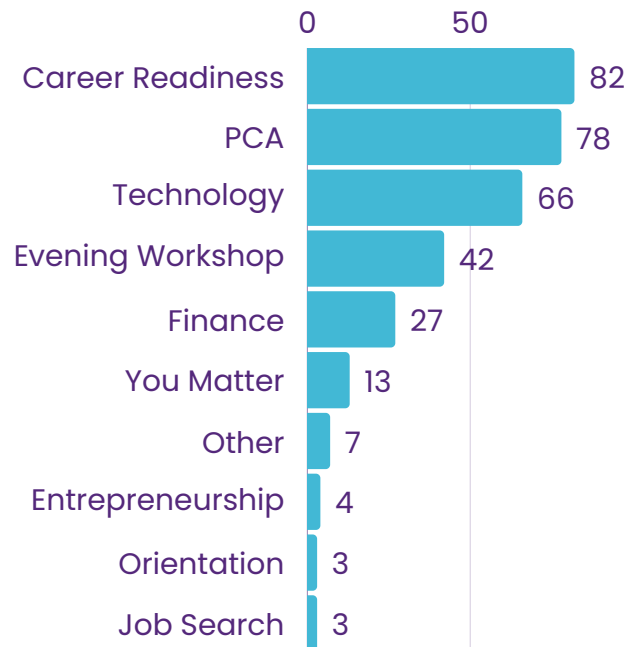
Workshops



61

Graduates

Workshop Types



121

Certifications



53

Employments



Health Equity & Community Engagement

We believe that the recovery of the individual is essential for the recovery of the family and the community. After experiencing trauma, one may intellectually understand the event without recognizing its true impact on their state of being. Trauma can disrupt a person’s sense of balance and requires a positive healing environment to restore equilibrium. Community Outreach is conducted to bring awareness to the community on the programs and services available at MJE. Our mission is simple: to help victims of trauma transition from instability to stability.

2025 Stats

Workshop Types

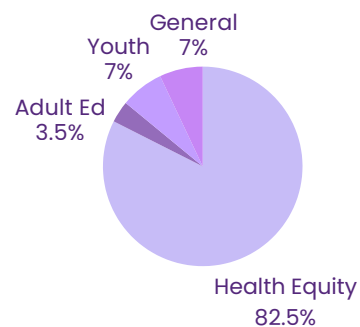


128
Workshops



57
Outreach Events

Event Types



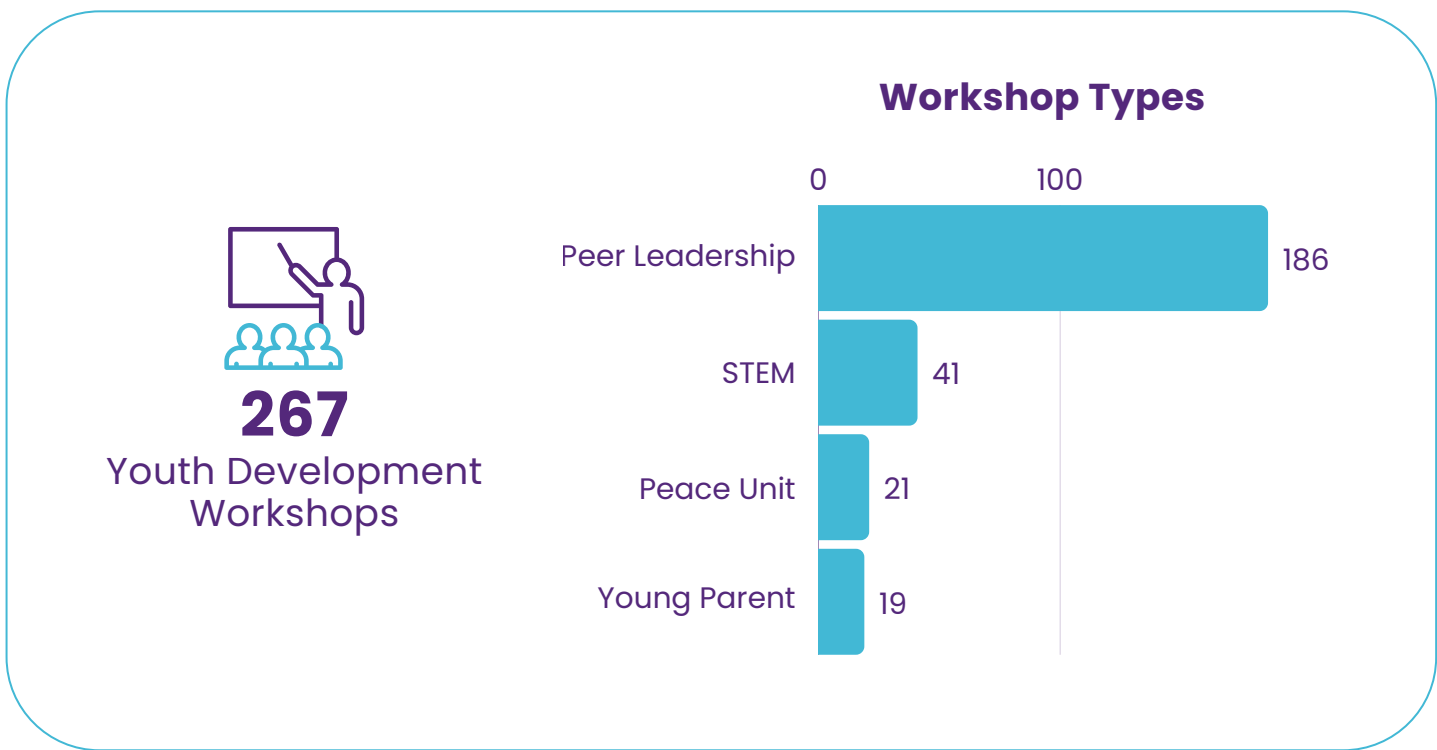
1,496
People Reached



Youth Development

Our youth engagement and education programs address the root causes of violence by empowering youth to lead, heal from trauma, and enter the workforce. Through relationship building, civic engagement, and leadership training, we equip youth with the skills and experiences to create positive change.

2025 Stats



Youth Programs

Youth Peer Leadership

MJE empowers youth through leadership, trauma recovery, and workforce readiness. Our YPL program, ages 14-18, inspires and equips young leaders for meaningful community impact through skill-building, community engagement, and educational outreach.

STEM

MJE's STEM Program supports students by combining service learning with academics in science, technology, engineering, and math, alongside leadership development.

Second Chance

Our Second Chance program is designed specifically for young individuals aged 17-24 who may be navigating challenges such as incarceration, alternative schooling, homelessness, or street involvement.

Young Parent Program

The Young Parent Program supports parents ages 24 and under through an 8-week parenting support program offering case management, housing assistance, HiSET/GED support, and career and employment readiness. In partnership with Healthy Families at Catholic Charities Boston and St. Mary's Center for Women and Children, the program helps young parents build confidence, community, and a path toward a stronger future.

Stronger Communities

The Stronger Communities initiative nurtures connections, advocating for inclusivity and igniting collective growth for individuals and families re-entering society from incarceration.

Marketing Communications

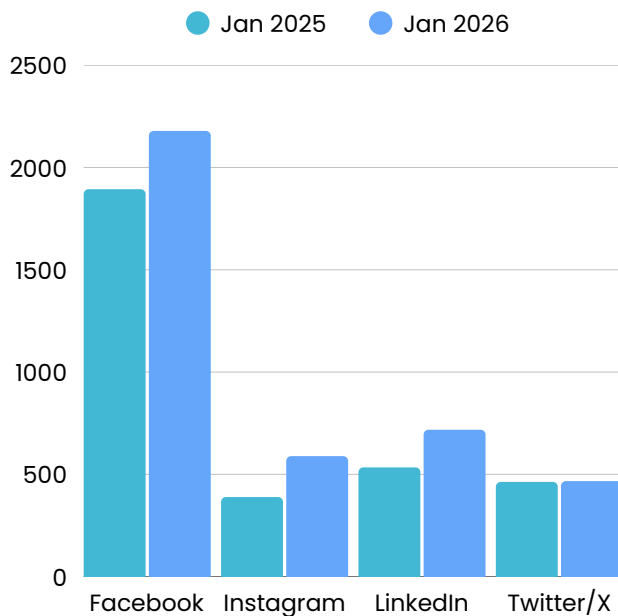
At MJE, Marketing Communications are key to our outreach. Using strategic tools and platforms, we communicate our mission, build networks, and foster healing. Thoughtful marketing helps raise awareness, create collaboration, and amplify our impact. In 2025, we've been expanding our platforms to engage with even more communities and create stronger connections!

This year, we launched a new website, featuring user-friendly and inclusive updates such as:

- Easier program registrations
- Multi-language options: Spanish, Haitian Creole, & Portuguese
- Sleek, user-friendly design

www.mothersforjusticeandequality.org

Social Media Follower Growth



In this digital world where youth are surrounded by social media and technological advancements, we found it vital to provide our **Youth Peer Leaders educational guidance on media and safety**. We held two **Media Programs at Boston University**, focusing on topics such as storytelling, photography, video, writing, social media safety, and marketing communications for non-profits. They were challenged to create powerful storytelling pieces to show the world what real change, peace, and power looks like in our community. The Youth Peer Leaders ventured into their communities, documenting their surroundings and conducting interviews. By the end of the programs, they created emotional and important presentations about **gentrification, redlining, and racism they face in their communities**.

"The MJE Living Room Conversations" Podcast

This year, we proudly launched our podcast. **The Living Room Conversations** is an intimate dialogue hosted from MJE's Blue Library—a space that symbolizes reflection, wisdom and collective healing. Inspired by the 'Red Table' concept, this new MAV X MJE series brings grassroots leaders, community healers, and advocates together to explore the question: **Where do we go from here?** Fresh from the MAV National Conference, we'll gather for a heartfelt conversation about sustaining healing, building leadership capacity, and strengthening our national network of women leading community transformation. Join Monalisa Smith, Founder of Mothers for Justice and Equality and the MAV Learning Community, as she leads this open conversation with special guests who are shaping the next chapter of our movement—from momentum to model.



11th Annual Mothers Against Violence National Conference



Legacy Award Winners:

Eileen Paterson, Aretha Mauge, Milagros & Rafael Burgos, Nortasha Stingley, Rev. Dr. Janie Dowdy-Dandridge & Rev. Dr. John Dandridge



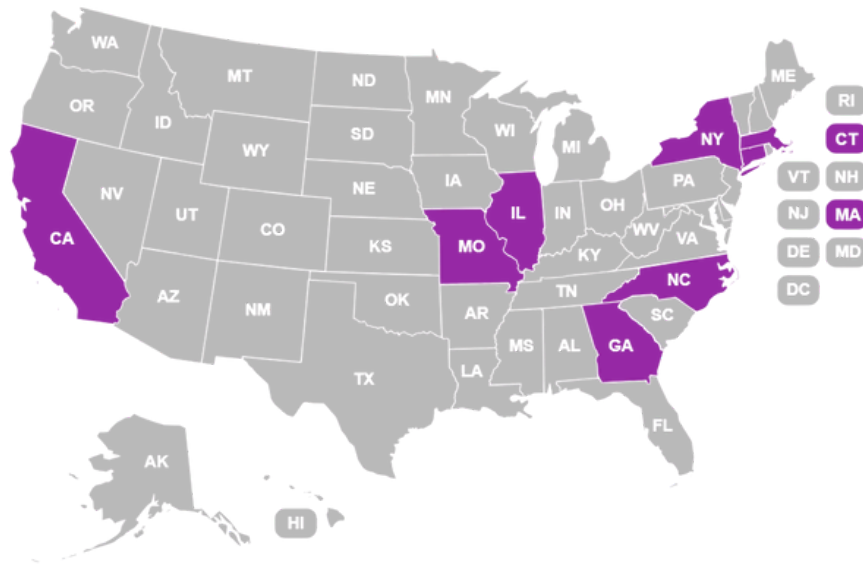
"From the very beginning, we embraced MJE's mission: to give voice to the voiceless, transform grief into advocacy, and stand with families as they rebuild hope from tragedy."

On **October 9th-10th**, we held our **11th Annual Mothers Against Violence National Conference (MAV)** at Boston University. Our goal with this conference is to **empower people to action**—helping them turn their **pain into purpose**. Over the last **11 years**, we've addressed tragic losses from community violence while promoting peace. We've heard inspiring stories from mothers and leaders nationwide who make a difference everyday, offering hope to underserved families. This year, we honored individuals with the **MJE Legacy Awards** for their outstanding advocacy in protecting at-risk children from street violence.

This year's conference, with over **175 guests**, provided essential training, mentoring, and support for women nationwide affected by loss and violence. Collectively, we have touched **200,000 lives across the United States**. We have convened workshops, organized marches and rallies, and started foundations and organizations. Through our work together, mothers who lost children to violence receive a space to **Heal, Restore, and Rebuild**; neighborhoods that lost hope receive a sense of hope.

Mothers Against Violence Learning Community Cohort

**MJE is not just local – We touch
communities nationwide!**



MAV Learning Community is an online space dedicated to fostering psychological safety, healing, exploration, and connection. This supportive environment empowers individuals to learn, share resources, and build meaningful relationships with others who share similar experiences. Through training, resources, and growth opportunities, the community encourages members to connect and thrive together.

If you lead a women-led nonprofit focused on healing and sustainable growth, we invite you to join us! Become part of a community of like-minded changemakers dedicated to impactful movements and personal wellness. Together, we support one another through unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.



11th Annual Mother's Day Luncheon

We proudly held our 11th Annual Mother's Day Luncheon on May 10th, 2025. We hosted this day to **honor and celebrate mothers** who have led by example, overcome trauma, and are consistent role models to their children and communities. To support the mothers in their recovery, MJE recognized six local moms with **Courage and Conviction Awards**. These awards are given to women who have demonstrated extraordinary leadership in advocating for the safety and well-being of children at risk of falling victim to street violence.



Courage & Conviction Award Winners:

Porsha Abrams
Timya Blake
Leneise James
Leslie Milton
Nikia Shell
Christa Torres



"When moms are hurting, that impact ripples out across the entire community. When moms find a way to heal, they turn the pain into passion and purpose."

- Boston Mayor Michelle Wu



Women's Empowerment Brunches



We launched a series of **Women's Empowerment Brunches** to foster **unity, healing, and collective well-being**. For generations, mothers have carried the weight of concern for their families' safety. These events—with special guests and dynamic panel discussions—created an **emotional safe space** where women could gather, uplift one another, and share ways to heal and build stronger, more resilient communities. We concluded the series in June with a beautiful **Graduation Ceremony**, honoring **61 Adult Education students!**



Family Fun Day & 3v3 Basketball Tournament

As spring approaches and the warm weather emerges, for many, it's a beautiful time of year when families are naturally drawn to outdoor, public spaces. On one side of the city, cherry blossoms bloom in Boston Gardens, and families enjoy the beauty of the spring flowers. But on the other side, *our* side, **fear emerges** instead. As the warm weather rises, so does the **anxiety of community violence**.

To help relieve the tension of community anxiety, our **Youth Department** hosted the **Family Fun Day & 3v3 Basketball Tournament** at Norfolk Park in Mattapan. We infiltrated a space where crime and violence are high to establish a sense of **safety and community** and remind the public that violence **IS NOT OKAY**. The free, family-friendly, public event brought **over 100 members** of our community together. Community youth shot hoops in a thrilling Basketball Tournament and families enjoyed games, crafts, and engaging interactive conversations around gun violence prevention.



Hyde Park Food Pop-Up



In an effort to help local families in need of food assistance, we hosted our first Hyde Park Food Pop-Up event. In collaboration with **Hyde Park Food Pop Up** and **Dana-Farber Cancer Institute**, we proudly provided **150 vital food bags & hygiene products** to our Hyde Park residents. Together, this meaningful partnership reflects our ongoing commitment to supporting our community by ensuring our neighbors have access to essential resources and compassionate support.

Annual Thanksgiving Turkey Drive

At MJE, we believe food should never be a choice—it should always be a guarantee. Each year, we distribute turkeys and Thanksgiving fixings to help combat food insecurity and ensure families can enjoy a warm holiday meal.

This year, we proudly provided **100 turkeys to 100 families in need**. 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.



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 MJE. **Over 40 community members** of all ages gathered with us for a **Memorial Balloon Release** at Norfolk Park in Mattapan, honoring lost loved ones by writing messages on biodegradable 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.



10th Annual Christmas Toy Drive

We hosted our 10th Annual Christmas Toy Drive at Faith Christian Church, welcoming more than **100 Dorchester families** and distributing **335 toys** donated by **Toys for Tots**. For many parents facing financial strain, the event offered a rare moment of relief and celebration during an otherwise difficult season.

Following November SNAP benefit cuts, MJE received a two emergency grants of **\$10,000 each** from **United Way of Massachusetts Bay** and **The Boston Foundation** for distributing **grocery gift cards** to families struggling with food insecurity. The funding provided immediate support to dozens of households facing reduced benefits and rising grocery costs.

“We want to acknowledge that the holidays are not joyful for everyone,” commented Monalisa Smith, “but we want our families to know: love is here, you matter, and your community is standing with you.”

Now in its tenth year, MJE’s holiday outreach reflects its role as a trusted community organization responding not only to seasonal needs, but to the broader economic pressures facing our community.



Strategic Partnerships

ABCD Head Start Mattapan
Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology
Boston Public Health Commission
Boston Public Schools
Boston University
Children's Services of Roxbury
Citizens Bank
Community Resources for Justice
Day and Evening Academy
Department of Transitional Assistance
Department of Youth Services
Dimock Center
Epiphany Child Care Center
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
State Street Foundation
The Boston Foundation

Contracts

Boston Public Health Commission
Boston Police Department – Charles Shannon Award
Center for Community Health Education Research and Service, Inc. (CCHERS)
City of Boston Success Link
City of Boston Digital Equity
City of Boston Community Development Block Grant
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
Suffolk County House of Correction

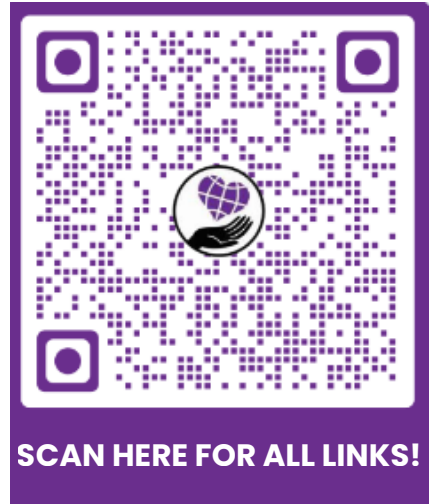
MJE wants to express our immense appreciation for your continued support. Thank you.

Foundation and Corporate Grants

Anna B. Stearns Foundation
Blue Cross Blue Shield Corporate Giving
Boston After School and Beyond ASOST
Boston Children's Hospital
Bushrod H. Campbell and Adah F. Hall Charity Fund
Carl and Ruth Shapiro Foundation
Castle Square Trust
Citizens Bank
Cummings Foundation
DCU For Kids Foundation
Eastern Bank Foundation
Fish Family Foundation
Imago Dei Fund
JP Morgan Chase
Liberty Mutual Foundation
Life Sciences Cares
Mass General Brigham
Massachusetts Convention Center Authority
Needham Bank
Once Here Foundation
Paul and Edith Babson Foundation
Perpetual Trust for Charitable Giving managed by Bank of America Philanthropic Trusts
Philanthropy MA Summer Fund
Santander
State Street Foundation
Suffolk County DAs office
TD Bank Foundation
TJX Foundation
United Way of Massachusetts Bay



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



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