



BERKSHIRE

FARM CENTER & SERVICES FOR YOUTH



**STRONGER
TOGETHER
2023
ANNUAL REPORT**



A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

As we embark on another chapter in our journey to serve and strengthen children and families, I am humbled and inspired by the resilience and strength that permeates our collective efforts. In ever-changing, and sometimes challenging times, it is clearer than ever that we are truly stronger together.

The theme of togetherness has never been more important than it is today. In every corner of our organization, from the dedicated staff members who work tirelessly to the invaluable support of our community partners, and in collaboration with fellow child welfare organizations, we are witnessing the transformative power of unity.

Now, more than ever, we see the impact of that unity. Together with our community partners, we are breaking down barriers and creating pathways to success for children and families in need.

Together with our staff members, we are providing unwavering support and guidance to those who need it most. And, together with other child welfare organizations, we are amplifying our impact and creating lasting change that reverberates throughout our communities.

But our work is far from done. As we reflect on our 2023 annual report, we do so with a renewed sense of purpose and determination. Together, we will continue to champion the cause of children and families, advocating for their rights and striving to create a world where every child has the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for joining us in this mission-driven work. Together, we can create a ripple effect of positive change that extends far beyond our organization and touches the lives of countless individuals. Together, we can build stronger communities, stronger families, and a brighter future for our youth.

With gratitude and determination,

Brian Parchesky

BRIAN PARCHESKY, LMSW
PRESIDENT & CEO

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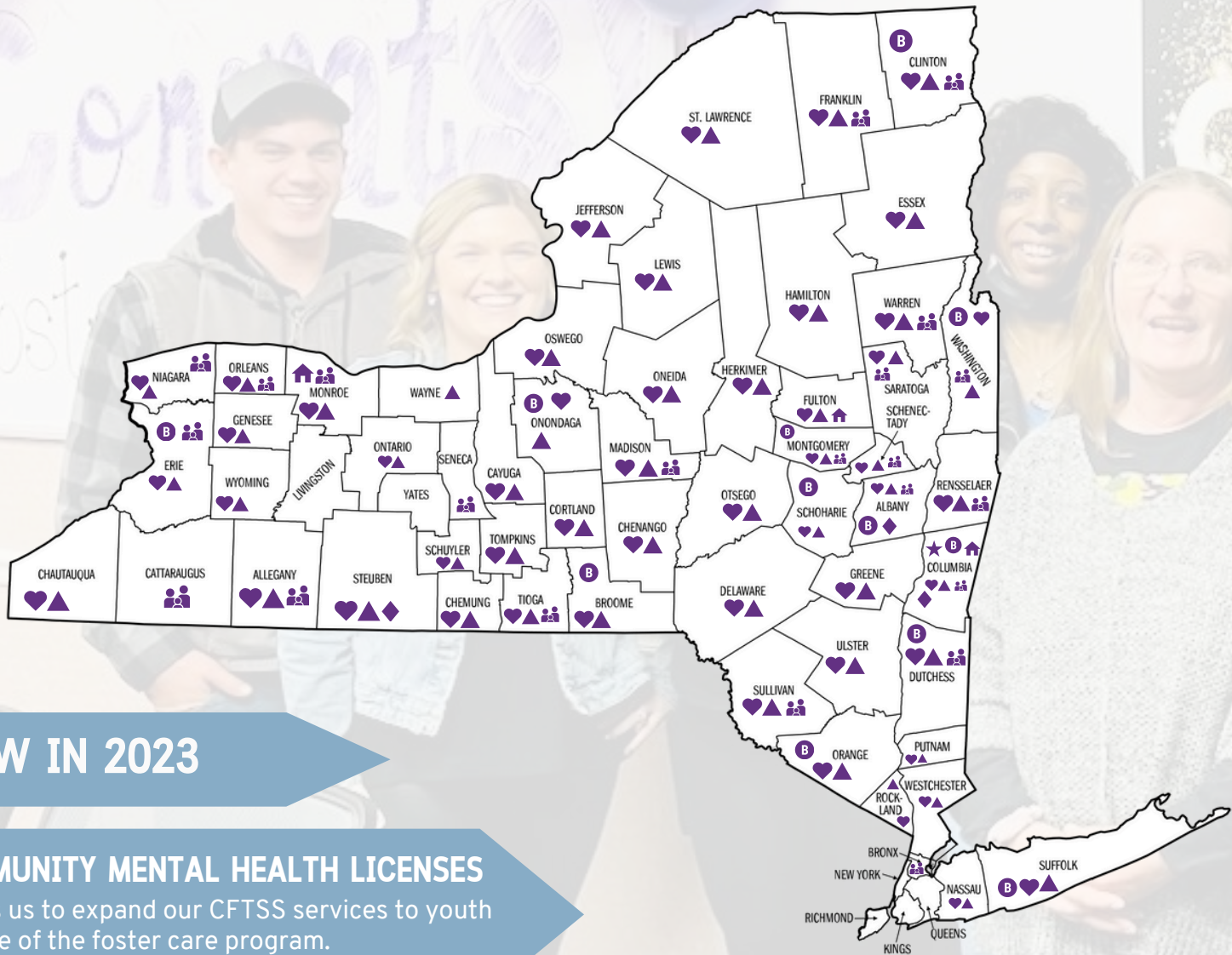
James Matison

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Alessandra Angarita

OUR SERVICE MAP

- ★ Corporate Office
- B** Berkshire Office
- ♥ Foster Care Programming
- ▲ Behavioral Health
- 🏠 Group Home
- 👨‍👩‍👧 Family Preservation Services
- ◆ Detention Services (Secure & Non-Secure)



*NEW IN 2023

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH LICENSES

Allows us to expand our CFTSS services to youth outside of the foster care program. (Montgomery and Dutchess Counties only)

SENECA COUNTY PREVENTION PROGRAM

A Pathways program to help families maintain safety in their home and reduce the risk of foster care placement for families throughout Monroe County.

TFCO FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

Treatment Foster Care Oregon (TFCO) is a short-term treatment program offered in the Greater Capital Region that gives a child the opportunity to grow and learn positive behavior techniques in a home environment instead of a residential facility or group home.

OUR SERVICES

**Numbers equate to total number of youth and family members served in each program area in 2023.*

FOSTER CARE

***909**

The main objective of our Foster Care Program is to collaborate with foster families in the safe and prompt reunification of children with their biological families. In instances where reunification is not feasible, our dedicated team diligently strives to find "Forever Families" for the youth eligible for adoption.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

***2,385**

Our Behavioral Health Services empower families to make informed decisions regarding their care. We offer nursing, clinical, and care management, coupled with mental health and substance abuse services, aimed at preventing emergency room visits and hospital stays.

FAMILY PRESERVATION

***3,691**

Our Family Preservation Programs work with families experiencing crises and facing potential separation risks. We join forces with parents to provide education, support, and reinforcement in the areas where families need assistance the most—within their homes, schools, and communities.

DETENTION SERVICES

***281**

Our Detention Programs offer a secure and safe environment for youth based on their choices and circumstances. Through our trauma-informed program, we provide the necessary support and assistance for youth to opt for a more positive path, including new educational and vocational opportunities, as well as fostering stronger connections within their homes and communities.

GROUP HOMES

***36**

Our Group Homes offer trauma-informed care for youth facing challenges in their homes and communities. By focusing on life skills, we empower these young individuals to reach their full potential, encouraging them to strive towards future goals and achieve independence.

SHELTERED HEARTS PROGRAM (UC)

***704**

Our Sheltered Hearts Program offers temporary shelter for unaccompanied children, during which our team works diligently to identify family members or sponsors within the United States.

8,006

*services provided to children
and families in 2023*

5,853

*individual youth and families
served in 2023*

**Names and photos in some stories have been changed to protect the identity of our clients.*

A group of five diverse youth are smiling and posing outdoors in a park-like setting with trees in the background. From left to right: a young boy in a teal shirt, a young boy in a blue and white checkered shirt, a young girl in a blue and white floral dress, a young man in a red t-shirt, and a young woman in a white top and blue shorts. The text "STRONGER TOGETHER FOR YOUTH" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

**STRONGER
TOGETHER
FOR YOUTH**

Before coming to Berkshire in 2021, Jasper described himself as unsure of what his future would hold. He was an overzealous youth who couldn't stay focused on his studies and struggled with mental health issues. As one of three boys being raised in a household by a single mom, it was challenging to prioritize Jasper's mental health. He was acting out, arguing with his coaches, teachers, and mom, and finding ways to get in trouble.

Jasper reflects on his time before Berkshire and says, "It wasn't mine or my mom's fault, we just had a lot going on." As concerns grew about Jasper's mental well-being and as his disruptive behavior escalated, he eventually found himself under the care of Berkshire's Group Home Team. Upon coming into care, Jasper received structured guidance and established both routines and clear behavioral expectations. The team at the group home provided him with individualized support and assistance tailored to his needs.

Within just a short period, Jasper's behavior improved, leaving a positive impression on both the Berkshire team and fellow youth in the group home. With the dedicated care of his team and stabilized mental health, he continued to actively participate in cherished activities, particularly sports. Being an athlete, he takes pride in recounting his accomplishments in basketball, football, and even a bit of soccer, showcasing his commitment outside of school.

Jasper credits his Berkshire team for their support, recalling times from the past when he felt lost and lacking any direction. Now, thanks to their guidance, he finds relief in activities like sports and leans into the coping skills he has developed, which aid him emotionally.

Additionally, he attributes much of his growth to group meetings held within the group home. These sessions have played a crucial role in making him prioritize his mental well-being, seek support from friends, and gain independent living skills like money management.

Jasper now feels confident in outlining goals for himself and his future because of the help from his team. He excitedly shares his plans to attend college in the fall where he'll be majoring in Sports Journalism.

"Jasper has demonstrated increased self-confidence, self-awareness, and self-determination while playing sports. He serves as a role model for younger residents within the group home," said Jamie Whalen, Assistant Director of Group Home & Transitional Services.

Before Berkshire, he wasn't sure if college would be a reality. Now, with plans to begin college and eventually launch his sports journalism career, he says, "I want to help my family in every way that I can. I want to make my mom proud."

"I want to help my family in every way that I can. I want to make my mom proud."

With newfound clarity and determination, Jasper now looks ahead to a promising future. His journey serves as an inspiring reminder of the power of community, overcoming adversity, and the relentless pursuit of one's dreams. As he embarks on this next chapter, Jasper remains committed to making his family proud and embracing the opportunities that lie ahead.

90% of children in group homes achieved their treatment goals



FATE BROUGHT THIS FAMILY TOGETHER

The Heartwarming Story of the Charlonis Family



Edward and Nicole Charlonis, a couple from Orange County in New York, whose longing for a family set them on an unexpected and heartwarming journey.

Their story begins with a dream to conceive naturally and after a few years, faced the harsh reality that it might not be possible to have biological children.

Let's rewind to 2017, a pivotal year when Nicole was working a second job in sales – or her side hustle as she dotingly called it – and found herself tabling at a church in Port Jervis, New York. On this particular day, she wasn't feeling especially enthusiastic, anticipating an uneventful tabling session. Little did she know that destiny had something extraordinary in store for her.

As Nicole packed up her cart to leave, a seemingly insignificant event unfolded. The cart appeared to be stuck, but upon closer inspection, nothing was obstructing its movement.

What caught her eye was a foster parent recruitment flyer for Berkshire Farm Center, a subtle twist of fate that would alter the course of her and Ed's lives.

Having lost her father a few years prior, Nicole often felt his presence in subtle signs. This time, she couldn't shake the feeling that this was her father sending a signal for them to become foster parents – it felt like fate.

Excitedly, Nicole rushed home to share this experience with her husband. Within ten minutes, they made the life-changing decision to embark on the foster parent journey. Enrolling in foster parent certification classes in late 2017, the Charlonises were driven by a deep desire to make a lasting impact on the lives of children in care.

The journey wasn't without its challenges, marked by waiting and uncertainty. However, the Charlonises persisted with unwavering patience. It wasn't until 2018 that Nicole and Ed started welcoming foster children into their home, marking the beginning of a transformative experience.

Their lives took a significant turn when they received a respite request for three young siblings—three months old, a little over a year old, and four years old. Stephen, Zoey, and Aiden became the names etched in their hearts forever. Although the initial intention was temporary care, Nicole and Ed couldn't ignore the bond forming between them and these kids.

90% of children in foster care achieved their treatment goals

The journey continued, and on June 7, 2022, the children were freed for adoption following the unfortunate passing of their biological mother. Nicole, confronted with the devastating truth, keenly felt the intricate web of connections—this woman wasn't just a mother; she was also a sister and a daughter.

The epic loss would weigh heavily on her family members. Nicole, acknowledging the inevitability of loss, describes how everyone has their unique way of conveying it to children. Driven by this realization, Nicole has dedicated herself to ensuring Aiden, Zoey, and Stephen will forever comprehend the profound love still present in their lives, amidst the overwhelming sadness of losing their biological mother.

Fast forward to December 15, 2023 – adoption day. The Charlonis family officially welcomed Stephen, Zoey, and Aiden into their forever home. Aiden's joyful proclamation,

"God gave me you, Mama! It's adoption day, it's adoption day!"

Nicole reflects on the incredible reality that these once-foster children are now an integral part of her family. She says, "It's so surreal that these kids are ours, now. They've been in care with us for four years, nine months, and 26 days. We couldn't be happier to finally bring them home."

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The Charlonis family's story embodies the essence of Berkshire Farm Center, and their journey will continue to inspire and uplift us!



CREATING THEIR OWN MASTER PLAN

A Journey of Discovery and Hope



In the winter of 2023, a transformative spark ignited within the walls of our juvenile detention center as our youth had the opportunity to meet Chris Wilson, the author of 'The Master Plan: My Life in Prison to a Life of Purpose.' Each young individual was gifted a copy of his book, setting the stage for a profound journey of self-discovery and transformation.

As the pages of Wilson's life unfolded in the dorms, a new dialogue blossomed among the youth. Ambitions and dreams sprouted, fueled by the desire to carve out a purposeful life beyond their current circumstances. Witnessing this remarkable shift, we recognized the profound impact of Wilson's book and resolved to bring its transformative power to New York through a groundbreaking partnership with the Chris Wilson Foundation.

In collaboration with the foundation, we secured a joint grant to introduce the Master Plan Program to New York, specifically tailored for the youth in our juvenile detention center. This program, proven successful in two other states, has become a roadmap for our youth, empowering them to envision a future beyond the confines of their past and create their own master plan.

The Chris Wilson Foundation generously funded this program, granting Berkshire the first Master Plan pilot program in New York State. A unique aspect of the Master Plan Program is its insistence on facilitators who have themselves been formerly incarcerated, individuals with backgrounds mirroring those of the youth in our care. These "credible messengers" became the linchpin in our endeavor to bring about lasting change.

Enter Angelo Maddox Jr. and Tammar Cancer, two extraordinary individuals reshaping the narrative in New York's capital region. Angelo, a successful entrepreneur, business owner, and author of 'Change the World by Changing Yourself,' and Tammar, who works for the Center for Community Alternatives and is a strong advocate for youth in the juvenile justice system, wholeheartedly embraced the challenge. Both underwent intensive facilitator training, earning their certifications and becoming driving forces behind the Master Plan Program.

"As I immersed myself in the training, I became acutely aware of how unresolved trauma has a negative impact on a person's life – even more so on people in the black and brown communities where the trauma is deeply rooted in social injustices," shared Angelo Maddox Jr., reflecting on the profound impact of the program.

"It was moving to know that my lived experiences were now going to be utilized to serve youth in a positive way – by showing them my journey and my growth, I was hopeful it would inspire them to make positive changes in their lives."

The 13-week program started with initial hesitancy from our youth, as it tackled challenging topics like the effects of trauma on the brain, the privilege wheel, and other crucial discussions previously unexplored in their lives.

Tammar Cancer, reflecting on the unfolding impact of the program, stated, "It was a journey of self-discovery for these young people. Witnessing their growth and awareness was truly inspiring."

This journey was marked by a joyous graduation celebration. Chris Wilson graciously agreed to be the guest speaker, and after receiving their certificates, the youth enjoyed a catered lunch.

"It was an incredible feeling to see how inspired they had become to create their own master plans. They told us how much the time we spent mattered and had a positive impact on their lives. In some cases, we were the only men that have ever shown up for them in their lives – I felt grateful to have given my time to them" – said Angelo.

"It was an incredible feeling to see how inspired they had become to create their own master plans. They told us how much the time we spent mattered and had a positive impact on their lives."

- ANGELO MADDOX JR.

Tammar was proud of the change he saw in the youth and reflected on the power of facilitating a program that goes beyond rehabilitation, sparking genuine, lasting change.

"In those moments of connection, I saw potential, resilience, and hope," shared Tammar, encapsulating the profound impact the Master Plan Program had on him as a facilitator.

By joining forces with our community partners in this endeavor, we affirm the resilience of the human spirit and the potential for positive change, proving that through collaboration, inspiration, and empowerment, we can truly change the trajectory of a young life when we come together for our youth.

95%

of youth reported that the program made them think about their experiences differently.

95%

of youth reported that this program taught them the importance of developing a plan to achieve their goals.

100%

of youth reported that they could identify at least three goals for themselves, after completing the program.

80%

On some measures of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, youth reported a significant (80%) increase in their ability to handle unpleasant feelings like sadness, fear, and anger.

MOTIVATION & HOPEFULNESS

After completing the program, a 23% increase in participants who reported motivation to work to achieve future goals and a 23% increase in their hopefulness about the future.

A JOURNEY OF TRIUMPH FOR A YOUTH IN OUR MONTGOMERY STEPPING STONES PROGRAM

Over the past year, the story of a resilient young man has unfolded, revealing his struggles with adversity both at home and in his academic environment. Battling with impulse control, this young man, Adam, showed heightened aggression and hovered close to being placed in care.

His involvement in sports teams at school was threatened by potential expulsion, and his academic performance dropped to concerning depths, with one grade dropping to the low 30s. He displayed blatant disrespect toward authority figures, with no end in sight to his troublesome behavior. As his misconduct continued to escalate, his mother's concern worsened and she struggled to navigate the challenges of parenting her rebellious son.

Recognizing the importance of early intervention, the Montgomery County DSS Prevention Unit directed this young individual to a Berkshire Family Specialist, Jennifer Yestremski. This marked the pivotal beginning of his story.

Jennifer has been an integral part of Berkshire's team since 2022, contributing significantly to the Amsterdam & Montgomery Stepping Stones program. Having been paired with this particularly challenging youth, Jennifer began a journey with Adam and his family, witnessing remarkable progress over the course of the year.

Each week, Jennifer would sit down with Adam, addressing his impulse control concerns, and guiding him toward the development of essential life skills.

While initially wrestling with accountability, Adam has since embraced responsibility for his actions. Proactively completing his chores without being asked, submitting his homework on time, and exhibiting newfound respect toward authority figures, he has made significant strides.

Employing healthier coping mechanisms, he communicates his need for independent reflection rather than resorting to abrupt disappearances, shouting, or aggressive behavior.

Adam invests extra time with his teachers each week to enhance his academic performance. Incredibly, the grade that once nosedived to the low 30s is now in the mid-90s, a testament to his incredible progress!

The positive outcomes of their relationship are evident as Adam has nearly reached the goals set during his and Jennifer's time together. While the journey was not without its challenges, he is now on a path toward growth.

One outstanding aspect of this success story is the involvement of Adam's entire family in the community. In late 2023, Adam and his family came together to volunteer for the Amsterdam adopt-a-family food program that provides food to financially insecure families in the Greater Amsterdam school district. Not only is Adam positively engaging at home and school, but also in his community. He has found ways to give back and support others.

Adam's journey over the past year highlights the impact of resilience, effective intervention, and dedicated support. Despite grappling with impulse control issues and the threat of expulsion, Adam has shown remarkable progress in academics and behavior.

Adam's story underscores the power of early intervention and encouragement in fostering growth and resilience. Jennifer couldn't be prouder of the strides Adam has made and the bright future that lies ahead for him.





MORE FAMILY VISITATIONS FOR OUR STEUBEN YOUTH SAFE CENTER

Berkshire Farm Center's Steuben Youth Safe Center was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Edith Saxton Fund for Steuben County Youth Services this past October. This grant is administered by the Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes, Inc.

The award will support our work in providing essential services and resources to youth and their connection with their families at the center.

This grant will help fund the expansion of visitation areas, both indoors and outdoors, provide additional technology for when in-person visits are not an option, and relieve some of the financial stress on families who struggle with paying for gas.

Expanding our space and providing gas cards will enable the center to facilitate a more regular and reliable series of visits, ultimately strengthening its efforts to promote family connections.

By eliminating barriers to family visitations, the reunification of children with their families will be expedited.

The increase in family visitations has a direct positive impact, leading to increased participation in programs and notably improved behavioral outcomes. Erica Covert, Berkshire's Director of Non-Secure Detention in Steuben expressed gratitude, saying:

"This grant will be extremely valuable in facilitating consistent family visits between youth and their families. This support will enable us to expand our efforts and provide even more vital resources and services along with really enhancing the family experience in the center."

This Edith Saxton Grant will provide further aid for our youth and families who lean on the center for support and care. Gas cards will now be available to enable families coming to visit by removing barriers like the expense of gas, ensuring that physical presence is not an obstacle to connection. The grant will equip us with additional technology, enhancing the capacity to facilitate and streamline virtual visits, and making it easier for families to stay closely connected, even from a distance.

**Pictured here are some of our Steuben Youth Safe Center staff.*

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Berkshire Farm Center and The House of Good Shepherd Join Forces

In a significant stride toward advancing community care and support, we announced a strategic affiliation with The House of Good Shepherd in the fall of 2023. This collaboration signified a concerted effort to drive the missions and growth trajectories of both organizations forward, with a dedicated focus on meeting the expanding needs of children and families.

While maintaining autonomy, The House and Berkshire will persist as separate entities, each governed by distinct operating boards. However, we will stand united under the banner of a joint parent company named Stronger Communities NY (SCNY).

This innovative parent company structure has been meticulously crafted to streamline administrative services and harness the strategic planning capabilities inherent in both of our organizations.

Looking toward the future, Brian Parchesky, our President & CEO, envisions the partnership as a catalyst for a more comprehensive system of care. He has outlined a strategic goal of extending our reach to more children and families through a diverse and culturally sensitive array of service options.

This collaboration stands as a testament to our unwavering commitment to enhancing the well-being of communities across the state.



**Pictured above are Brian McKee, The House of the Good Shepherd's President & CEO and Brian Parchesky, Berkshire's President & CEO.*

OUR COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, & BELONGING (DEIB) IS STRONGER THAN EVER



91%

of our employees feel Berkshire is taking steps to create a sense of belonging for all, here at our organization.

Learn more!



At Berkshire Farm Center, we firmly believe that embracing diversity and fostering an inclusive environment is not just a goal, but a fundamental value that drives our work every day.

In the spirit of this commitment, we have taken significant steps to strengthen our DEIB efforts. In 2023, we focused on implementing inclusive hiring practices, ensuring that our workforce reflects the rich diversity of the communities we serve. We also focused on creating a culture where every team member feels valued and empowered to contribute their unique perspective.

Our work, however, was not just inside the walls of our organizations. We recognize the value of creating partnerships with other community-based organizations. In the spring of 2023, we joined forces with The Pride Center of the Capital Region and Nathaniel Grey, their executive director.

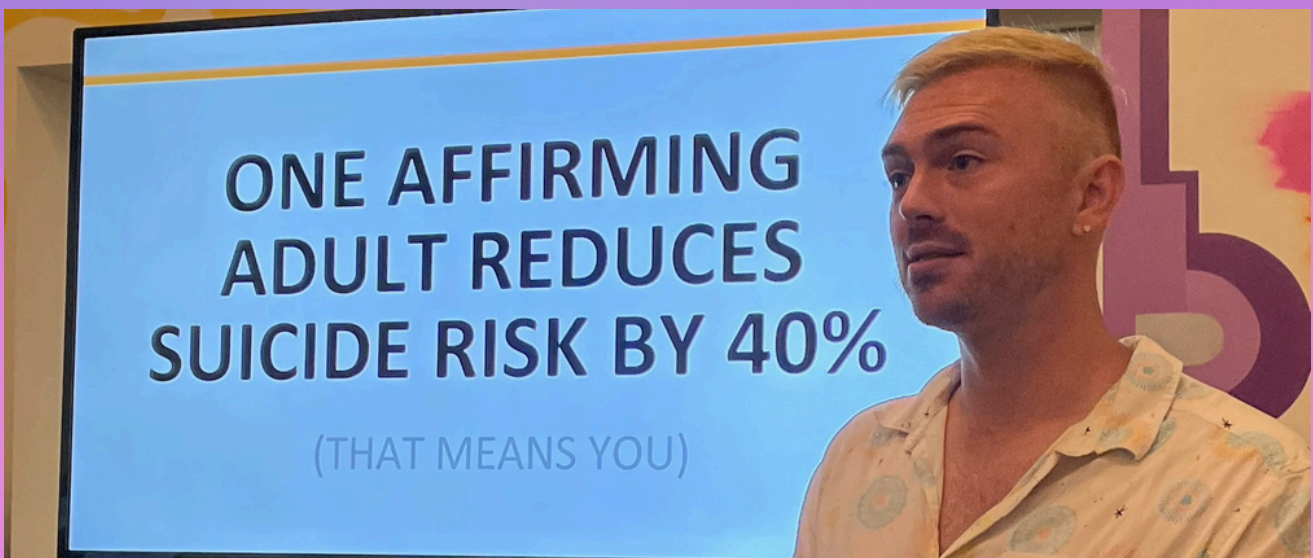
Our partnership led to increased trainings, educating us on how we can better serve youth in our care who identify as LGBTQ+.

Together, we also identified ways to attract foster parents from the LGBTQ+ community as we know representation matters, and diversifying our foster homes remains a top priority.

As we move forward, we will strengthen our relationships with current community partners as well as identify other partnerships that align with our mission.

Our annual retreat for our DEIB committee members was instrumental in deepening our understanding and commitment to this important work. Through engaging workshops and discussions, we have explored ways to foster inclusivity at every level of our organization and identify areas for growth.

Together, we are building a culture where everyone feels like they belong, where diversity is celebrated, and where equity and inclusion are not just ideals, but realities.



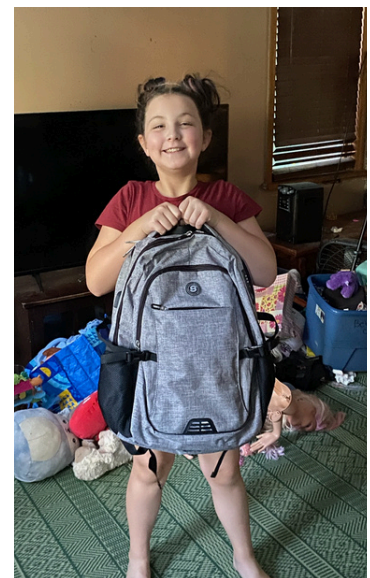
Berkshire proudly recognizes the Upstate Chevy Dealers as a passionate community partner.

In 2023, the Upstate Chevy Dealers proudly sponsored both *A Summer to Remember* and *The Best Christmas Ever*. The Best Christmas Ever generously supported our Holiday Angel Program. A few members of the Upstate Chevy Dealer team paid a surprise visit to our Gloversville Group Home (pictured below).

"It just makes me happy, just to get something, from somebody who cares about me," says Jasper, a youth at our Gloversville Group Home (pictured on the right).



UPSTATE
CHEVY DEALERS



STRONGER TOGETHER FOR FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES

STRONGER TOGETHER IN OUR LEADERSHIP



WHY BERKSHIRE?

720+

Staff Members
Across NYS

“

Things have gone so well at Berkshire. This is the healthiest culture I've ever worked in. Words match actions here!
- Berkshire Team Member

“

As a TFCO Home Finder, I am dedicated to identifying, training and supporting families to create a safe and nurturing environment for youth in need. I really do love my job and can't believe I've been with the agency for 5 years.

- Sara A.

96%

of our employees report having had opportunities to learn and grow in the last year.

“

Berkshire supports my professional values of prioritizing growth and progressive change within our community. As a Berkshire clinician, I feel that my work creates a lasting positive impact for those we serve.

- Chelsey C.

Working for Berkshire has been an amazing journey!

Having opportunities to participate in all aspects of service delivery, from planning to implementation, has provided unique opportunities and expanded my passion for working with adolescents and their families.

- Jenifer G., Berkshire's Bronx Power Project



96%

of our employees report having had the opportunity to do what they do best every day.

“

This Agency has changed my life for the better. I love this job, the culture, and the people here.

- Berkshire Team Member

89%

of our employees report that they have someone at work who encourages their professional development.

"Leadership is not about being in charge. It's about taking care of those in your charge."

– Simon Sinek



In 2023,
Berkshire promoted

55

team members from within.

Berkshire's statewide leadership team is deeply committed to advocating for the individuals and communities we serve.

Recognizing the importance of caring for those who care for our children and families, our leaders also advocate for our 700+ staff members, ensuring they have the support and resources they need to be successful.

Staying ahead of the challenges children and families are facing across New York State, our leaders are actively engaged at the table of every county we serve, consistently identifying needs and devising effective solutions to support children and families optimally.

Beyond our organizational boundaries, we extend our expertise as mentors and advisors to other nonprofits, aiding them in creating and enhancing service delivery.

#StrongerTogether

Check out our:

2023 SPRING & FALL LEADERSHIP DAYS

Twice a year, over 120 Berkshire leaders come together for a focused leadership development event. Through collaborative discussions, workshops, and training opportunities, they exchange insights and strategies to drive positive change statewide, inspiring innovation and empowering one another for impactful leadership.



STRONGER TOGETHER IN OUR LEADERSHIP

MEET SAHOUTAH CAREY-LANIER: NURTURING FUTURES, DEFYING LABELS

A JOURNEY FROM FOSTER CHILD TO BERKSHIRE LEADER

In the heart of Berkshire, Sahoutah Carey-Lanier, Supervisor of Berkshire's Gloversville Group Home, stands as a beacon of compassion and resilience. Her journey, born in the foster care system, weaves through adversity, shaping her into a dedicated force at the group home, where she passionately molds the futures of youth in care.

Sahoutah's early years were steeped in uncertainty and challenges within the foster care system. Navigating an uncertain path, she initially avoided any connection with the system that defined her childhood. Fate, however, had different plans. Celebrating her fifth year with Berkshire, Sahoutah's journey began as a direct care staff member, overcoming hesitations to step into this transformative chapter of her life.

As a direct care supervisor, Sahoutah's daily mission revolves around imparting vital life skills to the youth under her guidance. Cooking becomes a lesson in independence, and individual programs serve as roadmaps to self-discovery. She can draw from her past personal experiences to understand the pain-based behaviors they exhibit.

Beyond her professional role, Sahoutah wears the hats of a proud mother and grandmother, extending her care not only to her biological children but also to those embraced through the foster care system. Reflecting on her unexpected journey, she humorously acknowledges that life led her to a place she initially sought to avoid, stating, "Everything that I ran from, I ended up doing."

"Everything that I ran from, I ended up doing."

Sahoutah's connection with these youth surpasses conventional roles; they affectionately call her "grandma." Her approach involves genuine conversations, active listening, and sharing her journey of overcoming challenges. Encouraging youth to embrace mistakes as part of life, she inspires them to be the best versions of themselves each day.



The stigma attached to youth in group homes and those labeled as juvenile delinquents deeply troubles Sahoutah. Both within and outside Berkshire's walls, she actively works to dismantle this stigma, utilizing her genuine care and deep empathy as powerful tools against societal judgments.

In her five-year journey with Berkshire, Sahoutah's evolution from direct care staff to supervisor showcases unwavering dedication. Her impact transcends professional duties as she imparts life skills and fosters resilience. Drawing from personal experiences, Sahoutah's empathy guides interactions, helping youth rise above societal labels.

Reflecting on her path, Sahoutah recognizes this field as her true passion. Her past, once marked by trauma and uncertainty, now serves as a source of strength and understanding. Speaking a revelation aloud for the first time, she shares, "This is where I am supposed to be. I needed that time to heal from the traumatized child in care."

Sahoutah's journey with Berkshire transcends professional ascent; it's a narrative of healing and growth. She has found her true calling in making a positive impact on the lives of those she serves. Berkshire expresses profound gratitude for having Sahoutah as an invaluable team member, a beacon of hope for the lives of youth in care.

MEET OUR 2023 GAME CHANGERS

There are those who make a positive impact and then there are those that change the game.



In a commemorative gathering at the iconic Saratoga Race Track, we hosted an event made possible by the gracious sponsorship of Mohawk Insurance. This event served as a platform to honor and celebrate the outstanding individuals chosen as the 2023 Game Changers.

The distinction of being a Berkshire Game Changer is reserved for remarkable individuals who generously devote their personal time to champion our mission and contribute to the well-being of the communities we are dedicated to serving.

To the 2023 Berkshire Game Changers, we extend a profound salute for your unwavering dedication, innovative contributions, and the profound impact you have had on the communities we serve.

Your selfless efforts and commitment serve as a beacon of inspiration, reminding us all of the positive transformations that can be achieved when we join together to better the lives of those we serve.

**Pictured from left to right, our 2023 Game Changers: Tammar Cancer, Trent Griffin-Braaf, Daquetta P. Jones, Angelo Maddox Jr., Norina A. Melita, and Justin Riccio*

STRONGER TOGETHER IN LEADERSHIP

Shout out to our event sponsor!



HOW ONE BOARD MEMBER'S MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE SUPPORTED BERKSHIRE'S BRONX POWER PROJECT

At Berkshire, we believe that our strength lies not only in our mission but in the meaningful connections we forge within our communities and dedicated board members. We are immensely grateful for the unwavering support and collaboration that have become the cornerstones of our organization's success. These partnerships have not only fueled our growth but have also allowed us to extend our reach and impact. Together, we are working towards a brighter future, driven by our shared commitment to our mission and the values that unite us.

One of our board members, Alessandra Angarita, went the extra mile and sought a corporate donation to supply teens at Berkshire's Bronx Power Project with mental health kits.

The mental health kits include items like sanitizer, deodorant, ChapStick, and coloring books designed to help de-stress. Alessandra, Director of Volunteerism at the United Way of New York City and a member of our board of directors, was thrilled to bridge the partnership between our organizations.

Having helped plenty of young children during her time at the United Way, specifically those aged five and under, Alessandra's enthusiasm grew as she sought out additional resources for teenagers. She saw the Bronx Power Project as an ideal chance to contribute to the empowerment and support of teenagers within the community.



Pictured above are UWNYC team members assembling the kits for youth at the Bronx Power Project. (Alessandra, back row/white blazer)

Alessandra stresses the importance of finding gaps in the community and the importance of perspective when talking to community members. By having various conversations with teens, she was able to find out specific items they needed – items like nail clippers. She finds herself on the ground floor, always asking questions to ensure young people have the advocacy they need. She's delighted by the pride that lives in the Bronx community.

There has been an uptick in teens with mental health issues and she is working toward providing more resources for these youth. Her next project with Berkshire will be to generate awareness surrounding this topic and provide teens with mental health kits that include community resources, journals, words of affirmation, stress clay, and more.

She jests that her two favorite words are "partnerships" and "community," but her genuine commitment speaks volumes! We take great pride in having Alessandra as a valued member of our board and eagerly anticipate witnessing the impactful advocacy efforts she is spearheading within our communities.

**Pictured on the left are some of our youth with items from their mental health kits.*



**STRONGER
TOGETHER
WITH YOU**

GO PURPLE FOR KIDS IN FOSTER CARE!



May is National Foster Care Awareness Month and each year we bring awareness to the need for more foster parents across every community within New York State through our #GoPurple initiative.

Individuals, groups, and businesses can all show support and help bring awareness by pledging to Go Purple for Kids in Foster Care throughout the month of May!

In 2023, over

500

individuals, businesses, and groups
pledged to #GoPurple!

Get involved!



In 2024, we're aiming for 550 pledges!

BERKSHIRE FARM CENTER FOSTER HOPE

Lace up your sneakers to show support for our children and families across New York State as we come together for our 5th Annual Foster Hope event. This year, Foster Hope will be a month long!

You can walk, run, or roll your way into completing 31 miles in 31 days. By registering today, you can help support the continuation of our mission.

Foster Hope is more than just a fundraiser; it's an event for individuals of all ages. All proceeds from this event go directly to Berkshire's Mission Fund, providing essential, unrestricted support where it's needed most.

Join us as we unite virtually, leaving a positive impact on our communities and fostering hope for a brighter future.



Get involved!



HOLIDAY ANGEL PROGRAM

Our Holiday Angel program helps us provide gifts for children in our care across New York State. Individuals, businesses, and families come together to provide the gift of joy for a child in care by becoming one of our Holiday Angels and 'adopting' a wish list. This program celebrates all holidays, guaranteeing every child in our care feels cherished and included. All wish lists are distributed at the beginning of November each year.

In 2023, 835 individual children's wish lists were fulfilled.

In 2023,

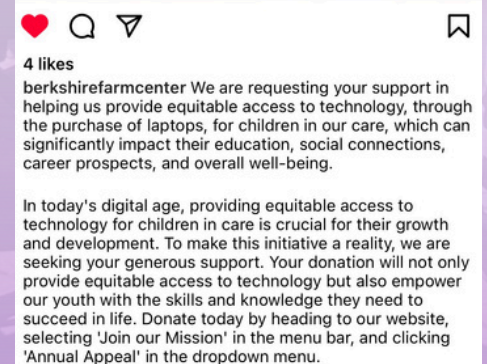
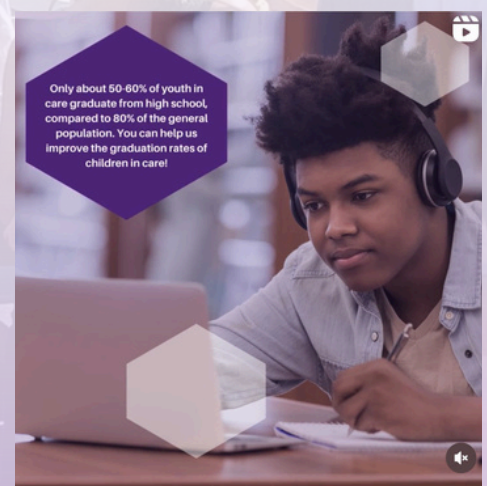
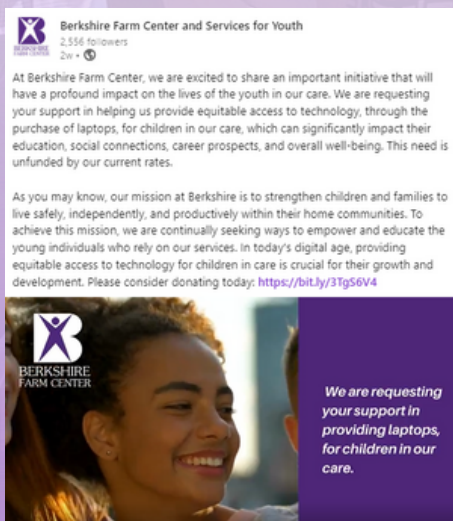
100%
of wish lists were adopted.



Get involved!

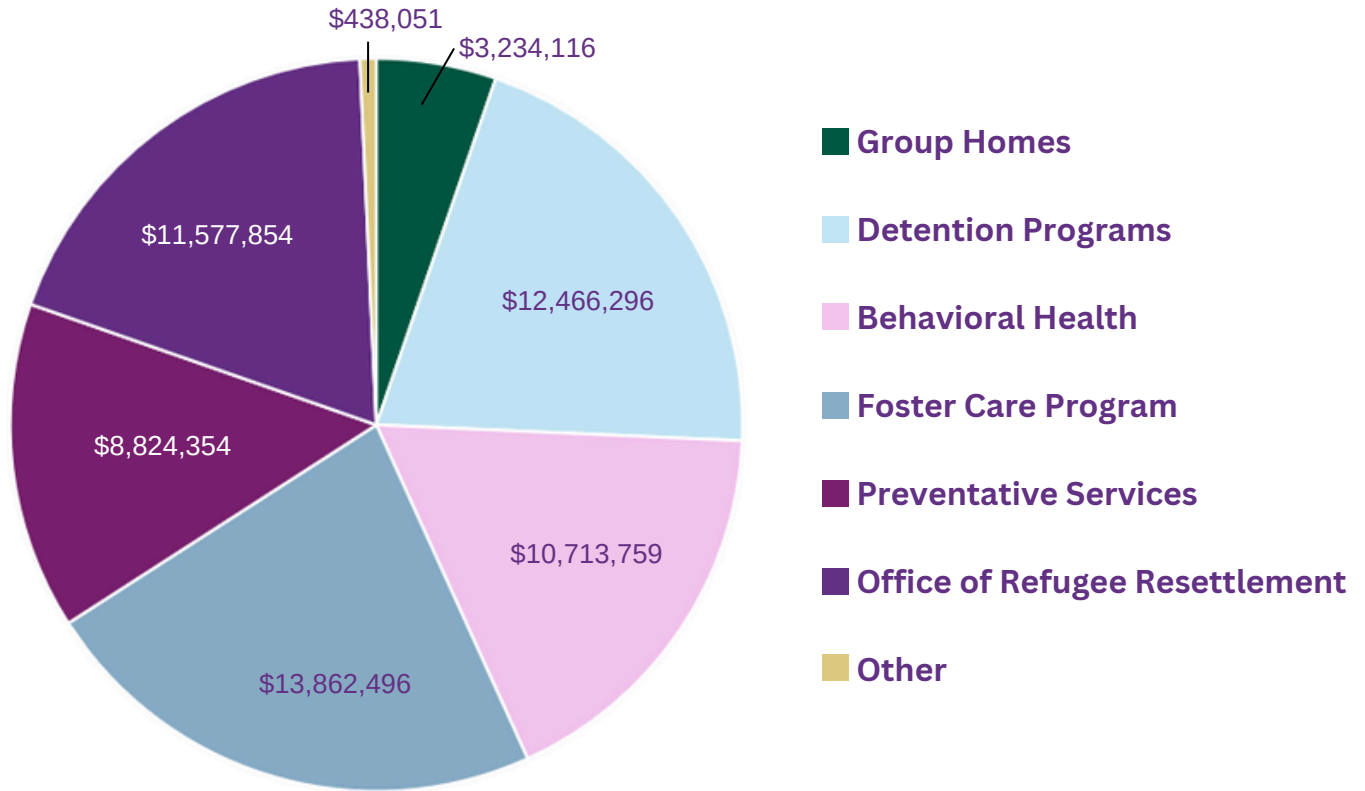


Check out: BERKSHIRE ON SOCIAL

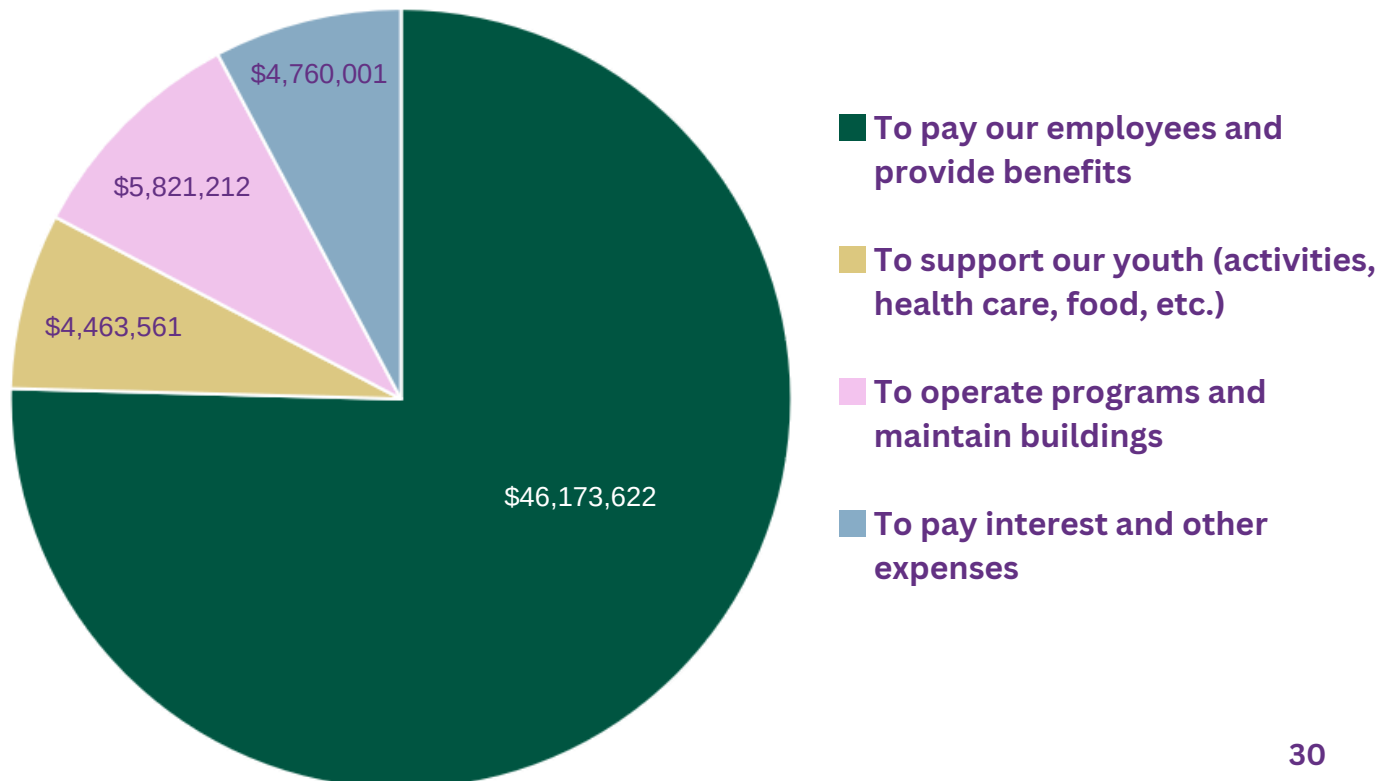


REVENUE & EXPENSES

Fiscal Year 2022 - 2023 Revenue



Fiscal Year 2022 - 2023 Expenses



**Totals based on pre-audited financials.*

"Individually, we are one drop. Together, we are an ocean."

- Ryunosuke Satoro

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Big News in 2024!

As we approach a significant milestone in our journey, we are thrilled to share some exciting news with you. After 138 years of dedicated service in the realm of child welfare, we are preparing for a monumental change: a new name!

This upcoming May, we will unveil our refreshed identity, marking a new chapter in our organization's rich history. While our commitment to improving the lives of children and families remains steadfast, our new name will better reflect our evolving mission and values.

We invite you to stay tuned and follow us on social media for the official announcement. Your continued support has been instrumental in our ability to make a positive impact, and we are immensely grateful for your unwavering dedication.

Thank you for being an integral part of our journey. Together, we are creating brighter futures for children and families in need.

With gratitude,

Your Friends at Berkshire Farm Center



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be sure to follow us:



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WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER

