The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members.

— Coretta Scott King
Dear Friends,

I was delighted to begin my tenure this year as the Volunteer Chair of Alternatives’ Board of Directors. Looking back over the past twelve months, I can say with certainty that I had good reason to be excited. We have seen a year of successes for the people we serve, innovative initiatives and new opportunities for the organization.

Here are just a few examples of what the individuals we serve, hardworking staff and dedicated leadership were able to accomplish in 2017:

- Joining together with four other agencies as the Central Community Health Partnership, we successfully applied for two contracts to provide Care Coordination for MassHealth recipients with Behavioral Health and Long-Term Service needs. These contracts will provide new revenue, help individuals served successfully navigate the healthcare system and improve service coordination.

- We developed 11 new Shared Living placements and added 32 new families to our Adult Family Care program. That’s 43 more people living in their communities in safe, welcoming and comfortable homes.

- We also saw 73 individuals hired in new jobs, gaining self-respect and being valued as an employees for making real contributions.

- We joined with 12 other agencies statewide as part of “Pathways to Friendship,” a 2-year, Department of Developmental Services project focused on helping people with developmental disabilities establish a real friendship with someone in the community.

Of course, we have no intention of slowing our pace or our commitment. We count on you, our supporters in the community, to help make Alternatives’ important work possible. In return, you can count on us to make certain that we are prepared to meet the challenges ahead and grab hold of the opportunities that are presented. That’s a promise!

Now, I hope you’ll take just a few minutes of your time to read our Annual Report and enjoy the wonderful stories your generosity helped produce. We thank you.

Sincerely,

Mary Ellen Larkin-Root
Volunteer Board Chair
Our belief has always been that the people we serve can live successfully in the community. In fact, community integration or membership is now recognized as playing an important role in an individual’s growth and recovery.

Actually, the research is clear – social relationships and community membership contribute to healthier lives for all of us!

Dr. Mark Salzer, Director of the Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion, says that Community Membership “can best be understood as comprising two essential, and deeply intertwined, societal commitments.”

The first commitment is making sure that everyone, whether or not they have a disability, has an equal opportunity to fully participate in the community.

The second is to build communities that encourage and welcome the participation of everyone, “valuing each individual’s uniqueness and potential contribution.”

This is where you come in. Communities are healthier when they cultivate the contributions all their citizens have to offer. If each of us opens our eyes, hearts and lives to those who are different from us, our communities will become stronger and more welcoming. Opportunities will become available for everyone to be included, to participate, to be valued.

Will you accept the challenge? We hope so!
Alternatives 2017 Annual Report

It's hard being a young adult. If you're finishing up high school or college, there are so many questions to be asked and choices to be made. What do you want to be when you “grow up?” Where will you live? This newfound freedom can seem both exciting and a bit frightening. Now, imagine facing all that uncertainty while also navigating the challenges of mental illness. One word comes to mind: Overwhelming.

Almost two years ago, the Department of Mental Health asked Alternatives to develop specialized services for young adults aged 18-25 living in the North County. The 25 individuals who became part of Alternatives’ Transition Aged Youth program (TAY) were no longer eligible for the Commonwealth's

Alternatives is driven to be a SERVICE of choice

Developing trusting relationships and earning valued roles for individuals within the community

Christian and Jasmine, members of the Pearl Street Band
Transition Age Youth Program helps young adults work towards a future full of possibilities

array of children’s services. But, they and their families needed support as they worked on their recovery from mental illness while navigating the bumpy road to adulthood.

The model we developed includes a residential program that also has attached apartments for those taking their first steps towards living on their own, as well as services for those living with family or in their own apartments.

There are groups offered to help them develop the skills and tools they’ll need to be successful at work, at school and at home. There are also plenty of opportunities to try out new experiences, like taking an art class or going to the Big E.

Jasmine, one of the TAY participants can see the program’s positive impact. As she explains, “I’m learning social skills, daily living skills – I learn something new every day!”

TAY participants can see the program share characteristics common to just about all young adults. They don’t look favorably on being told what to do, and they tend to want things to stay relaxed and light. That’s exactly the attitude the staff who work in the program need in order to make a meaningful connection. Once those connections are forged, the hard work can begin – building hope and confidence.

As Amy Mahoney, clinician for the TAY program explains, we are “empowering them to make their own decisions, with the knowledge that we’re always going to be there for them.”

Many of the TAY participants have made great strides. Seven have transitioned to less restrictive living situations. Four are working at paid jobs, while two are volunteering. And, six are enrolled in higher education. These represent milestones that any twenty-something would be proud to achieve!
Alternatives has a long-standing commitment to sponsoring art and culture events that people of all abilities can enjoy together. For example, at Alternatives’ Whitin Mill in Whitinsville, we host gallery shows for local and regional artists and exhibits that explore the history of the Blackstone Valley and beyond.

We offer free summer concerts, plays in the Singh Performance Center, and performances by Worcester Shakespeare on our Community Plaza. There are also art classes and exhibits open to the public offered at other Alternatives’ locations. All of these events provide opportunities for the people we serve to connect with others in the community around shared interests.

Alternatives strives to be a NEIGHBOR of choice.

“Our weekly art workshops have grown in popularity every passing week.”

Over the years, Alternatives has had many chances to work with the Blackstone Valley Art Association.
Alternatives 2017 Annual Report

(BVAA) – an organization that, since 1957, has fostered interest in, and provided an inclusive environment for the arts in the Blackstone Valley. This year, we decided to take our relationship with the BVAA to another level. Alternatives’ Community Gallery in Uxbridge will now be home to art shows, classes, open studios and special events organized by the BVAA. The Gallery, which shares the space with one of Alternatives’ employment centers for individuals with developmental disabilities, is located in a prominent storefront in the center of Uxbridge. Lisa Shea, Vice President of the BVAA says that the advantages of being in the heart of town are already apparent. “Local residents walking down the street have looked in the gallery, been impressed by the artwork on display, and come in to explore. Our weekly art workshops have grown in popularity every passing week.”

We are delighted to be able to give local artists a place to exhibit their work and to provide aspiring artists the chance to explore their creativity. It’s particular wonderful that some of those aspiring artists just happen to be among the people with disabilities we serve.

Forging stronger connections with local artists

Linda Nelson, winner of the BVAA’s juried art show
Alternatives strives to be an ORGANIZATION of choice

Collaborating to generate community solutions

Collaboration is alive and well in Worcester, fueled by the needs of the people we serve and nurtured by the commitment of Alternatives’ staff and community partners.

It all started a year ago at a meeting of Alternatives’ Worcester Advisory Council, one of three regional councils tasked with creating opportunities in the community for the people with disabilities we serve. It was clear to the Council that one of the greatest needs experienced by individuals with psychiatric or developmental disabilities is for a real job. But as is true for all of us, before you can achieve meaningful, gainful employment, you need to build relevant skills.

Council member and Worcester Tree Initiative Executive Director, Ruth Seward was inspired by the meeting. In the spring of 2016, aided by Alternatives’ Worcester Mental Health Services’ Employment & Community Connector, Penny Wood, the Worcester Tree Initiative led a six-week training to help individuals we serve develop tree and plant care skills that could lead to a job in a nursery or with a landscaping company. The tailored training consisted of in-classroom as well as hands-on learning opportunities.

“Never had I seen this group so engaged and so motivated,” said Penny. This year, Ruth and Penny grew the training program further by inviting the Massachusetts Audubon...
Partnering to support the environment and build skills for “green” jobs

Society at Broad Meadow Brook to join in the collaboration. It was a natural connection, as some of the individuals we serve were already volunteering regularly at Broad Meadow Brook.

Guided by experts from both environmental groups, the program evolved into a series of workshops that invited participation from people we serve and members of the community alike. Together, individuals from Alternatives and gardeners from the community learned about trail care and the environmental forces at work in our local ecosystems.

“With some funding through an Alternatives’ Bridging Grant, they even restored a bridge on one of the trails!

Martha Gach, Conservation Coordinator for Mass Audubon, saw the partnership as benefiting everyone involved. “It was a creative endeavor that introduced members of the Alternatives community to Broad Meadow Brook and the Worcester Tree Initiative and helped them gain experience while completing projects that were sorely needed here at the sanctuary.”

“What started small has grown into something really inspiring,” said Penny. “It’s a collaboration where the people we serve are not only learning new skills, but giving back at the same time. All the while they’re making connections that may lead to real jobs!”

Roy Lebeaux learns how to measure water height in a vernal pool from Mass Aububon Conservation Coordinator Martha Gach
Karen Palmieri certainly has a very varied collection of interests: live theater, second hand shopping and the environment. Fortunately for the individuals we serve at Alternatives’ mental health services in Milford where Karen is a Team Coordinator, she’s more than happy to share. Having worked at Alternatives since 2002, Karen has had ample opportunity to see firsthand the important role that community connections can play in a person’s recovery from mental illness. So, when Karen finds out that an individual at the program is ready and willing to check out what the community has to offer, she’s ready and willing to help make that happen.

Karen coordinates Alternatives’ collaboration with the Friends of the Milford Upper Charles Trail. We became an “Adopt a Trail” Sponsor more than 10 years ago and Karen’s interest in the environment meant that she was pleased to play a significant role in the project. She volunteers alongside individuals served who are also interested in this important project. In fact, Guru Simran Kaur Khalsa-Bob, one of the volunteers that
Karen Palmieri helps individuals we serve tap into community resources

Karen encouraged has gone on to serve on the “Friends” Board of Directors!

Outside of work, Karen really enjoys taking her granddaughter to see live theater in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. So, when one of Alternatives’ counselors mentioned an individual served who was a theater buff, Karen was happy to help the gentleman, who was living in nearby Blackstone, attend performances in Woonsocket accompanied by Alternatives staff. Now that he’s moved to Oxford, we’re working to connect him with local volunteer opportunities in community theater.

Karen’s guilty pleasure? Browsing second hand shops for antique furniture bargains. Her love of the “hunt” meant that when Pavel (Pasha) Parson, a young man we serve, moved to Milford she knew all the local shops he could scour for the old jewelry and coins he liked to collect. With Karen making the introductions, Pasha soon became comfortable enough to start making connections at the shops on his own. Now, they’ve moved beyond Milford, with Karen introducing him to her favorite haunts in Mendon!

From environmental action, to the stage and the world of antiques, Karen Palmieri takes advantage of opportunities in the community that match her interests. What makes her our Employee of Choice, is her commitment to making sure that the people we serve have the same opportunities.

Karen and Guru Simran with a Certificate of Recognition from the Friends of the Milford Upper Charles Trail.
### Financial Statement 2017

#### Revenues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Mental Health</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Developmental Services</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
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<td>Medicare / Medicaid / Mass Health</td>
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<td>Transportation Services</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fees / Rent Subsidies</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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#### Operating Expenses

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<td>Residential</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day &amp; Employment Supports</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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#### Expenses by Function

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<td>General &amp; Administrative</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>$44,973,846</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you to our Donors

We would like to thank all of the individuals, corporations and foundations who made a donation to Alternatives during the past Fiscal Year (July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017).* Your generosity makes it possible for us to give the people we serve the support they need to build a better life. Thank you for caring.

Debra Abate
Thomas and Lois Abel
Everett Adams
Janet Adams
Lee Dillard Adams and Paul Adams
Lonnie Adams
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Graycare Precision Components
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Hopedale Airport Industrial Park
Horton Furniture
J & R Realty Trust
J & S Motors
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Rich Business Solutions
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Ted Tonna Remodelers
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The Bridge of Central Massachusetts
The George I. Alden Trust
The Jewish Community Fund
The Lakin Company
Realtors
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The Rhodes Family
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The Shop @ Whitinsville
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Seafood and Spirits
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