

Celebrating the Humans who make our work possible



Michelle Ottaviano

“Michelle—Director of Operations at Maple Star—has worked diligently to create more structure, efficiencies and support throughout the organization. She has managed multiple projects and is always very mindful of how our decisions impact staff, youth, and families we serve. Michelle played a key role in Maple Star’s mental health certification which expands the services we are able to offer communities.

She has a unique ability to simultaneously see the bigger picture and the small details, which allows her to build new programs and fine tune current services which creates better outcomes for youth and families and increases employee satisfaction. We are incredibly fortunate to have her, and the Maple Star team is better for her efforts.”

Anna Pulliam

“Anna Pulliam, Administrative Services Coordinator at Boys & Girls Aid, deserves recognition for her commitment to our Core Values: Cultivate Healthy Environments, Invest in Relationships, Authentically Value Others, Innovate and Continuously Improve. For almost a decade, Anna has embodied these values in her work across BGA programs and services.

Anna operates behind the scenes; keeping us organized, tracking information, and managing systems that are critical to program operations. She is collaborative, conscientious, innovative, and always eager to help. We appreciate and celebrate Anna for the many ways she uses her role to support staff and advance the mission of Boys & Girls Aid.”

Kristina Oliverio

“Kristina joined Boys and Girls Aid over three years ago and due to her commitment to the BGA mission and passion for helping youth, she was recently promoted to Program Director for BGA’s Juvenile Systems program, STEP (Stabilization, Transition, and Evaluation Program). As Program Director during a time of significant staff turnover and a challenging labor market, she has thrived in taking on multiple roles such as case management and has effectively balanced the duties required of her newly appointed leadership role.

Kristina is truly an employee who has shown great commitment, compassion, and reliability; working relentlessly towards BGA’s mission of improving the well-being of children, and her work is a daily example of our core commitments. Specifically, valuing others, investing in relationships, cultivating healthy environments, and being dedicated to innovation and continuous improvement.”

Drew Williamson

“Drew Williamson is the Director of Housing Services at Boys & Girls Aid. He has worked for BGA in shelter and housing services for 8 years. Throughout this tenure, Drew has consistently embodied the agency’s core values of ‘Invest in Relationships’ and ‘Authentically Value Others’ in numerous ways. Drew has a thoughtful and collaborative approach within BGA as well as with many community partners. When he identifies a need, he doesn’t just point it out—he strives to find a solution that meets that need. Drew truly embodies Trauma Informed Care in his work, and he was one of the first BGA staff members to apply this principle to work with older youth.

Drew is also astute in supporting and identifying educational needs of agency employees. When a program he oversees experiences a success, he shares this information with agency leadership in an effort to celebrate progress for clients and he does so in a manner that shines the spotlight on the direct service employees, never on himself. Drew is a true asset to not only BGA but also to the housing services network in the community.”

Karl Hirsch

“Six years ago, Karl Hirsch came to Boys & Girls Aid as an intern in the Foster Care Adoption Program. Karl was eager to learn clinical skills and program practices throughout his internship. When he completed his degree, he was hired as a Foster Care Adoption clinician. In this role, Karl has served adoptive families and youth from the foster care system in a flexible and passionate manner, advocating for a variety of client needs. Karl is constantly learning and pushing himself to further develop his knowledge and skill in working with adoptive families. His dedication to supporting families and the youth within them has resulted in consistent gratitude from adoptive parents. One adoptive parent shared that ‘Karl Hirsch is one of the most compassionate and supportive people I've worked with in any setting, and he has a real skill for talking with adolescents.’

In addition, Karl has stepped in to help various agency programs outside the realm of adoption. He became a certified foster parent for BGA’s Stabilization, Transition, and Evaluation Program and cared for a number of youth in his home. He has also stepped in to help various agency programs outside the realm of adoption including working as a youth care counselor at the BGA youth shelter when there was a need for additional help during the pandemic. He has shown an interest in all agency programs and client populations by meeting needs across the entire agency. His embodies the agency’s core values of ‘Invest in Relationships’ and ‘Continuously Improve.’”

Lesley Kartali

“Lesley is an office administrator at Maple Star, and one of the hardest working employees our team has ever had the pleasure of working with. The quality of Lesley’s work consistently goes above and beyond expectations, and he is always open to taking on new tasks and responsibilities. Lesley quietly works behind the scene making sure everything runs smoothly at Maple Star.

He works hard to ensure all employees have what they need to be successful in their positions and maintains professional communication with payors and other external stakeholders. He demonstrates our mission and values in all aspects of his work both internally and externally. Lesley is creative in his problem solving and always remains calm when issues arise. We are incredibly fortunate to have him, and we appreciate him every day.”

Fern Savannah

“Fern has been working with Boys & Girls Aid for 8 years. During this time, she has worked in three different programs with three distinctively different populations of youth—ranging in age from 12 to 24, identifying with every level of the gender spectrum, sharing multiple cultural and ethnic identities, and coming from a wide range of life circumstances. Fern has met every one of the hundreds of youth she has supported with the same level of passion and care. She completely embodies the core commitments of our agency, and she understands the importance of investing in healthy relationships and truly values the youth she supports by being present, approachable, and recognizing the uniqueness in everyone. The impact of this will be felt long after these youth leave Boys & Girls Aid.

On top of this, Fern is an amazing team member and coworker. Fern prides herself on being a leader in our field and is always suggesting new and innovative ways we can bring impactful change to systems and programs. Her impact has been felt throughout our agency for many years and I hope she knows just how valuable and respected she is.”

Karlee Brandini

“Karlee, our Youth and Family Services Director, manages Maple Star’s TFC program and foster care—which is not an easy program to manage. Karlee works tirelessly to overcome and address challenges concerning foster parent recruitment, certification, retention and placements all while also reviewing and responding to all BRS referrals. Karlee’s focus and determination to grow and expand our foster care services has not faltered. Karlee is able to think outside the box when reviewing referrals to find appropriate placements for youth. She is dedicated to the youth and families we serve and is a true asset to Maple Star.”

Mary Laws

“Mary Laws started working with Oregon Community Programs (OCP) as a foster parent in 1989. Mary deepened her work with OCP as a parent advocate running multiple parenting groups as well as facilitating skills training for youth. Mary then advanced her work, to what was then a pilot program, now referred to as Treatment Foster Care Oregon, assisting with foster parent training and eventually became a Program Manager. Mary continues to work as a Program Manager with OCP while also training and supporting the implementation of the Treatment Foster Care Oregon model worldwide.

Mary has been a foundational component of the development and success of Treatment Foster Care Oregon. In the last 24 years with OCP Mary has fostered approximately 70 youth! Mary continues to bring energy and exuberance into the work she does. The impact that Mary has made on youth, families, and future families, is immeasurable. She not only deserves to be recognized for her extraordinary commitment to youth and families, but she also deserves a lifetime achievement award.”

Olaoluwa Bakare

“Olaoluwa has gone above and beyond to support the Youth Villages team and the clients in our program to make sure they receive the level of services they needed to be successful. For the past three months, multiple members of Olaoluwa’s team were out of the office unexpectedly for illness, medical needs, or family emergencies, for multiple days at a time, and without pause, Olaoluwa quickly stepped in to cover sessions with clients that would have otherwise been rescheduled. She truly sees the needs of clients and works tirelessly to ensure that their needs are met quickly and that there is no gap in services on top of her other responsibilities as a clinical supervisor.”

Yvette (Michele) Stupey

“Yvette is dedicated and committed to Youth Villages’ Mission and Values, especially when it comes to putting kids needs first and doing what she says she’ll do. Yvette’s ‘get to business’ attitude keeps her focused and on-task, and she utilizes whatever resources are within reach (internal or external) to meet all needs of youth on her caseload. Yvette is also precise in her adherence to evidence based models, and persistent in her documentation efforts. In being so detail oriented, Yvette provides outstanding care and support to families, and she personally sees to it that nothing is ever missed!”

Larissa Harper

“Larissa has been with Youth Villages for almost three years and does consistent, high quality work - even when no one is watching. Larissa has been consistently placed in a variety of challenging situations with her families, and she always responds with creativity and effective problem solving. Her communication creates a productive and caring team environment, which ultimately keeps youth safe and engaged. Larissa always follows through and keeps safety at the top of her priority list.”

Sarah Lachica-Varney

“Sarah stepped into an interim supervisor position with our Salem office to support the team there, despite her living in Portland. She was flexible, and traveled regularly to our Salem office to ensure consistent leadership and guidance in support of that team's intensive in-home work.

Sarah has now been leading the Salem team for 7 months and has brought a calming presence and boosted morale in a way that not only retained the staff in her office, but also has grown the team by three additional clinicians! Through Sarah's consistency, reassurance, and leadership, the team has been able to accelerate their own clinical development. The team is becoming a cohesive unit and is thriving thanks to Sarah's dedication and creativity!”

Kevin Shimomaeda

“Kevin has been with Jackson Street for over 5 years, starting as a direct care worker in our emergency and transitional shelter for minors. Kevin is the definition of ‘meeting youth where they are at;’ something he does with a consistent presence, patience, and with love—regardless of the words or actions being thrown his way. Kevin was one of the first employees to form a team of staff to improve the services provided to our young adults in transitional housing, acting as the first Aftercare Case Manager for 18–24-year-olds. He worked with those exiting the program to sustain their independence in our community and improving overall engagement in services.

Today Kevin holds the position of Next Steps Program Manager, supervising a team of 3 Case Managers/Skills Coaches and ensuring safety and self-sufficiency for up to 15 young adults at a time. Kevin’s work has made possible the progress towards Jackson Street’s goals for continued growth of our Next Steps program. He has been intentional in integrating youth voices into the program and finding opportunities for residents to have agency and choice. One of Kevin's biggest accomplishments has been bringing activities into Next Steps, reminding our young adults that—while learning to be independent is important—so is having fun.”

Melanie Kelly

“Melanie Kelly, LCSW started at The Next Door 23 years ago as an intern and now serves as Director of Programs for our Treatment Services and Youth Services’ departments. Without Melanie, our Klahre House BRS program would have closed long ago. Melanie exemplifies partnership and has made sure that we surmount obstacles by never losing site of whom we’re working for—the children. She brings the perfect combination of expertise, patience, empathy, and dogged determination to her role at The Next Door. This has never been more apparent than over the last few years during COVID, when our programs have finally gotten the recognition they deserve by the state and our local CCO, and we were able to start a community-based Behavioral Health program for local children and families.

Melanie is one of the most experienced providers for children and adults exhibiting sexually aggressive behavior in Oregon. Our community in the Mid-Columbia Gorge region is richer and safer because of Melanie. She has helped thousands of people throughout her career and is richly deserving of our collective gratitude.”

Erin Granath

“Our Community Services Director here at Maple Star, Erin, has implemented and piloted new and innovative services to multiple communities. She has overseen the development and implementation of Respond and Support Network Services in Multnomah and Washington Counties and Client Specific Caregiver Support services in Marion, Polk, Yamhill, Lane, and Linn Counties. This has required a great deal of patience, flexibility, problem solving, creativity, training, and strong leadership.

Both of these pilots have shown to be very impactful in maintaining stability for children in their placements. One of Erin’s strengths as a leader is not just sitting back and directing her staff. Erin has directly responded to families in crisis, worked with families and children through difficult behaviors and put supports in place to help the family long term.”

Anna Bontrager

“Anna has been with Jackson Street for over 5 years, starting as a direct care worker in our emergency and transitional shelter for minors—quickly engrossing herself in this work, forming beautiful and meaningful connections with each youth served. Anna was able to help continue and grow a pilot position to provide outreach services to youth in DHS care, helping them maintain in their communities in an effort to avoid placement hopping. Although she holds a management position that doesn't allow for as much direct service work Anna continues these long-lasting relationships with some of our most vulnerable youth.

As our Outreach Program Manager, Anna has worked to expand outreach support in our communities for youth who identify as LGBTQIA, provide little-to-no-barrier access to basic needs for youth experiencing homelessness, and she has supported the organization's goals to triple our outreach program in the region. Although Anna has experienced a lot of hard days supervising employees, she continues to show up with the same light and passion she carried the first day we met her. Thank you for doing this work with us and most of all with the youth.”

Salvador Maciel

“Salvador has dedicated himself to Jackson Street for nearly 10 years, initially hired as an outreach worker to help the Linn County community prepare for the opening of a second emergency and transitional shelter—literally building a bridge from the street, eliminating access barriers for youth in need of safety. He quickly moved into our Aftercare Case Manager position, working with Linn County youth who were exiting shelter, helping them further stabilize and continue their goal work to improve their life circumstances.

We recognized that Salvador was a leader amongst his peers and in the community, coaching came very easily to him—it was only natural that he moved into a supervisory role and took on the oversight of our two emergency and transitional shelters for minors. Salvador prides himself in creative solutions and giving each youth multiple opportunities to be successful, he has a unique ability to built rapport with **all** parents/guardians and is one of the best education advocates we’ve had the pleasure of working with. Salvador developed our process for family reunification, which immediately improved our safe exits and brought the TOPSoccer program to our community improving engagement opportunities for youth with any disability. Salvador has mentored countless workers to be their best self, personally modeling to show up every day, keeping the youth at the center of whatever work you are doing.”

Brandi Haws

“Brandi has worked at Connections365 for 16 years. In that time, she has been (and continues to be) a key manager for the organization. Early on in her career, Brandi ran the Oregon Youth Authority Therapeutic Foster Care programs. She eventually became the Program Director for all Behavioral Rehabilitation Services, which also includes two OYA residential programs and Therapeutic Foster Care for Oregon Department of Human Services. Our agency is fortunate and grateful to have such an incredible employee and person doing this work. Brandi is one of the pillars of our organization and we would not be able to provide the same level of services to our youth without her leadership.”