Building Healthy, Stable Families

January 2022

Food
Education
Freedom
Legacy

Birch Community Services
A Letter From Our Executive Director

After 29 years of involvement at BCS, it’s invigorating to realize I still have so much to learn! Each week I have the privilege of meeting with the Leadership Team as we ask ourselves, “How can BCS be better?” In 2021, we addressed this question head-on, beginning the year with a deep dive into the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) to gain traction in the growth and operations of Birch Community Services.

Focusing on our vision, **Building Healthy, Stable Families**, Dino Biaggi (Financial Literacy Manager), Valerie Rippey (Community Development Manager), Andrew Rowlett (Operations Manager) and I revisited, reevaluated, and revised many of the processes and policies that keep BCS running smoothly. We have fine-tuned our volunteer requirement, addressed the greater need for financial literacy support, promoted community, transitioned to electronic forms, streamlined the intake process, and navigated effective space limitations, just to name a few!

The weekly team meetings have been quite spirited at times as we encourage each other to think outside the box. These are the decisions that directly affect the 600+ participating families, and that challenge gets me up in the morning with enthusiasm.

My intake interviews begin with an expectation of meeting incredible people who are eager to change their lives. I encounter families from a wide variety of backgrounds, whether a recently widowed single mom, newlyweds with a first child on the way, or a family preparing for their children to graduate from high school. BCS provides a safe landing place for families to fill the gap between just barely making ends meet and flourishing.

We find joy in knowing the results of hard work have shown we CAN be better, and as the staff and board continue to seek wisdom, we look forward to more robust educational services, fluid operations and communications, and healthier, more stable families.

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**Birch Cultural Values**

**Our Guiding Principles**

- **Respect & Integrity**: We model a culture of honesty, grace, and dependability.
- **Safety**: We empower responsibility to take a knowledgeable, deliberate, and mindful approach to a holistically safe environment.
- **Teachable**: We promote combining self-awareness, ambition, curiosity, and guidance in the strive towards growth through success and challenges.
- **Relationship Focused**: We create value for others in a supportive community that fosters inclusiveness, true belonging, and acceptance.
- **Gratitude**: We express appreciation for the opportunities provided and the benefit of our community.
- **Solution Oriented**: We encourage a community that works humbly and collaboratively to provide creative strategies to problem solving.
- **Celebration**: We pause to reflect on successes and setbacks, and rejoice in our collective growth.
When Sara and her family started at Birch Community Services at the end of 2017, she wasn’t sure how she was going to pay the (then) $70/month service fee. Her friend told her, “it’s going to panic you, but make it happen.”

Sara and Ray were always on the threshold of qualifying for food stamps. Ray works in construction, and Sara recalls they would “thrive in the summer, starve in the winter.” She became a cosmetologist to help where he left off, but with the birth of a special needs child in 2017, Sara had to take a longer maternity leave than expected, in order to attend appointments at Doernbecher Children’s Hospital up to five times each week.

“We didn’t have any money,” Sara said. “At 16, I was taught to get a credit card with as high of a limit you can find, and max it out as fast as you can.” That resulted in poor decisions and major money problems. “Having been a single mom for five years, I know what it’s like to go to a food pantry while my kids are in school. I know what it’s like to clean someone else’s bathroom so my kids can go to soccer.”

Now, as a couple, Sara and Ray feel that they are making progress. “For us, COVID has been a blessing in disguise. Ray was offered an amazing job opportunity, that would greatly change our life, Sara says. “We went from wondering which bill to pay to having every single bill set on auto-pay. That’s still amazing to me.”

“I didn’t know about emergency funds, I didn’t know about budgeting. Now, with Ray’s promotion, we can put into motion all that we have learned in the re$tart course. With less stress about money, Ray was able to go back to school and complete a nationally accredited certification, which took his career to the next level. “I think about money completely differently. The old me would have said, ‘Oh! I have $300 in my account. I’m going to go blow it.’ Now, I have a whole new mindset.”

I used to think ‘Oh gosh. Water is due on the 19th, but we get paid on the 20th. Am I going to borrow from my parents? Go to payday loans?’ Now, we have every bill we possibly can have on auto-pay. We’re where we are today by the grace of God.

**Accomplishments**

- **Have an emergency fund with 1.5 months of expenses saved**
- **Have a savings account exclusively for Christmas – and paid cash for all large Christmas expenses in SEPTEMBER**
- **Sara was able to stay home after the shutdown to focus on the growth and medical needs of their special needs child**
- **Purchased a NEW washer and dryer with a DEBIT CARD**
- **Able to buy children a few NEW outfits for school this year**
- **Paid off over $31,000 of credit card and personal debt**
- **No longer owes parents or other family members money**
- **Able to purchase a car with better gas mileage to accommodate driving long distances to medical appointments 2-5 days a week for their special needs four-year-old**
2021 Summary: A Time to be Grateful
November 2020 – October 2021

Fiscal Responsibility
98.9% Program Benefits
1.1% Operational Costs
61% Internal Revenue Streams
39% Donations

Volunteering
Value of $787,000 of labor from:
1,441 Volunteers
27,577 Volunteer hours

Food Distributed
13 million lbs of donations
1,250 lbs from our Teaching Garden

Education
8 Zoom courses
355 Class participants
701 One-on-one meetings

People Served
871 families served with food and financial education
70 other nonprofit agencies
20,000 individuals served through nonprofit agencies

re$art Impact
Before
After
Our family has a clear picture of our finances.
61%
96%
Our family lives on a written budget.
37%
83%
Our family’s finances reflect our values and goals.
31%
91%

Participant
Financial Progress
$1.2 million increase in savings
$3.3 million of debt paid off

BCS Financials
REVENUES, GAINS, AND OTHER SUPPORT:
Contributions: $674,109
In Kind Donations: $18,885,350
Membership Service Fees: $659,259
Recycling Income: $23,370
Other Income: $13,829
Total Revenue: $20,255,917

EXPENSES:
Products Distributed: $18,885,350
Program Expenses: $928,968
Operational Expenses: $221,631
Total Expenses: $20,035,949

To access audited financial statements and historical 990s, please visit bcsi.org/donate or CharityNavigator.org.
What Makes Birch Different?

Our mission is to build a financially stable community by providing education, food, and nurturing accountability.

1. Our Theory of Change

Birch Community Services is founded on a belief that true charity comes from empowering each individual to restore his or her capacity to be self-sufficient. Through our monthly service fee and volunteering, our model eliminates the potential shame of receiving.

2. Environmentally Sustainable

Every day, food is discarded from grocery stores and distributors across Portland. BCS is the vital connection diverting products that would otherwise go to landfills to the pantries of people who can use them.

3. Financially Sustainable

Our families’ monthly service fee accounts for 61% of our operating expenses, and their volunteer hours equate to twenty full-time employees. These contributions allow BCS to sustain itself with a much smaller proportion of external support than most nonprofit organizations.
Commitment to Improvement: BCS Triples Cooler Space

"In this unprecedented time, I'm even more grateful for Birch because it's like this rock that, as a provider in my family, has allowed me to maintain a sense of joy and normalcy."

-BCS Participant

The COVID-19 pandemic has touched every person and business in the world. For Birch, one of the unexpected consequences was an increase in product donations. With supply chains gone haywire, and with restaurants and stores placing and canceling orders, Birch has been the recipient of many generous healthy, perishable donations presenting a wonderful challenge - how to keep all this amazing food cold and fresh.

In May, Cornerstone Church selected BCS as the recipient of a $50,000 gift. Additionally, Christian Search, (Birch’s first employee) now owns Coffey Refrigeration and donated well over $50,000 of labor to complete the project. With panel donations from Teeny Foods and electrical labor donated by ABS Electric, our new cooler has been functioning since the summer and we have continued to be blessed with a bounty of fresh, perishable food.

"Take good counsel and accept correction, that's the way to live wisely and well."

Proverbs 19:20

Board of Directors

Alex Krider (President)
Avier Wealth Advisors

Egbert Kunrath (Vice President)
Kunrath & Willard Insurance Services (Retired)

Aaron Aigner (Treasurer)
Aigner & Co., Accountant

Leann Rowlett (Secretary)
Portland Christian Schools

Mark Childs (Past President)
Capacity Commercial Group

Leadership Team

Andrew Rowlett
Operations Manager

Valerie Rippey
Community Development Manager

Suzanne Birch
Executive Director

Dino Biaggi
Financial Literacy Manager

Greg Cervetto
Grayrose Marketing Group

Chris McKillop
Rogers Machinery

Angela Small
Past BCS Participant

Alexander Spalding
Daniel House

Rick Teeny
Teeny Foods (Retired)

Warehouse staff Jason Baker and Matthew Contreras show off the cooler expansion, which has been possible thanks to Cornerstone Church, Coffey Refrigeration, Teeny Foods, ABS Electric, and countless others who have given their time and resources.

For more information, go to bcsi.org/leadership
**Stewarding Time, Talent, and Treasure**

*After more than a decade, the Small family continues to show their dedication to BCS*

**Warehouse**

Every Monday, you’ll see at least three members of the Small family volunteering at the warehouse.

**Outreach**

The Smalls have distributed hundreds of brochures to churches and community centers to help spread the word about Birch Community Services.

**Fundraising**

The Small family was integral to the 2021 auction. Zachary Small is a skilled woodworker and donated seven beautiful cutting boards and four strawberry planter boxes. Angela and Allie also organized over 10 baskets from local businesses. They’ve already begun planning for 2022!

**Advising**

Angela has served as a voting board member since 2019. As a former participant and active volunteer, she offers an essential perspective.

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**A Heart for Serving**

*In 2010, Angela and Jesse Small began participating at Birch Community Services. Now, Angela serves on the BCS board and continues to volunteer weekly with her three teenage children.*

When Angela and Jesse found BCS, they were struggling to make ends meet. Jesse was a truck driver, earning a modest income, and Angela was staying at home with their children. Joining Birch brought instant financial relief to a stressful situation.

Volunteering quickly became a favorite pastime for Angela. “I love volunteering, and how we get to give back and be part of this for others. It’s amazing! If I’m having a stressful week, I look forward to my time at Birch even more. It’s when I get to reset and focus on serving alongside others. That time is sacred.”

In 2019, Angela joined the Birch Board of Directors and gives an essential perspective on life as a program participant. While she and her family are no longer participants, they know what life is like for those living on lower incomes. Angela and 2-3 of her teenage children still volunteer 4+ hours every Monday. Allie Small (18) says, “If we get in trouble at home, our mom actually threatens that we CAN’T volunteer at Birch, so we really try to behave!”

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**Sound like fun?**

Visit bcsi.org/volunteer to learn how you can be involved!
Alumni Report: Anthony Messano

Anthony was part of Birch Community Services from 2014-2016, living paycheck to paycheck as an audio engineer and stay-at-home dad. BCS helped Anthony take control of his finances, and now he works in the Wealth Management & Investment Services Department at OnPoint Community Credit Union.

In addition to eliminating our grocery bill, BCS provided a real sense of community. I was among really friendly, positive people who were in a similar situation as I was. Volunteering was always a highlight.

The Re$Start finance class was also a catalyst for my career change. I remember Dino Biaggi saying, “Currency is like a current; you can direct the flow.” Five years later, and I still remember it! Birch really changed my life. I never thought I would be a financial advisor, but here I am, at OnPoint Community Credit Union and have passed the Series 7 and Series 66 investment exams.

If I could give advice to those considering joining the program, I would say, “I know how they’re feeling, but there’s no reason to feel ashamed. This is doable! Step 1: Show Up.”

In Kind Donor of the Year

Even if you haven’t heard of KeHE, we’d bet you know their food! KeHE is the specialty food and household products distributor for New Seasons, Zupan’s, Sprouts, and high-end products at Albertsons and Safeway. We’re incredibly grateful KeHE has donated millions of pounds of products over the past five years.

In 1952, Art Kehe began a legacy of giving back to the community to bless others. To this day, KeHE continues to give back 10% of their net profits to help people in need.

“We are committed to helping the people we serve, moving them from dependence to dignity through purposeful outreach opportunities,” Kate Barnhold, Director of KeHe Cares Operations stated. “Birch is an organization looking to bless and empower families while cultivating dignity and accountability, and we align with those important values.”

Thanks to KeHE, BCS participants have a number of high-end brand name products to choose from, such as Almond Breeze almond milk.
At BCS, our vision is to build healthy, stable families. Since he was hired in 2015, Dino Biaggi has been Birch’s Financial Literacy Manager. His goal has always been to help families repurpose their grocery budget to best reach their family goals and transition from the program. In 2021, he had over 700 one-on-one meetings and taught seven Re$tart classes and one Paying for College Without Debt class. Even at this rate, it was difficult for one person to keep up with the demand. In 2020, Beka Dorr was hired as the Financial Literacy Assistant to help manage virtual classes, scheduling, and follow up meetings.

In July of 2021, the WHH Foundation embraced our dream to expand the Financial Literacy Department to increase the number of classes and double the number of one-on-one meetings with families. The Foundation pledged to support $35,000 of this expansion if we could secure matching donations. By August, we had received pledges from generous donors and are now thrilled to announce Tina Birch as our newest Financial Literacy Counselor, hired November 1, 2021.

As her last name suggests, Tina is intimately familiar with the heartbeat of Birch Community Services. (She is Barry and Suzanne Birch’s niece.) Tina cares deeply about people, holds a BS in Home Economics and an MBA from Oregon State, was a Vice President of a medium-sized company (Crafts Americana), and has been a deacon at her church. She is excited to form relationships with families and help them make financial progress through their time at Birch.

As the late founder, Barry Birch, always said, “Birch is 90% about people and 10% about food.”
Thank You to Our Generous Community of Donors:
Addressing the root cause of financial hardship
November 2020 - October 2021

Thank you to our donors for helping us serve those in need.
How You Can Help

When you give to Birch Community Services, you join a team creating a financially stable community by providing education, food, and nurturing accountability. With 98.9% of costs going straight to benefit participants, every dollar has an impact.

PRAY
For Our Families
For Our Staff
For Our Leadership
For Our Community
For Our Future

JOIN US
Sign up for our emails at bit.ly/birchnewsletter

Follow Us
• Facebook
• Instagram
• YouTube
• LinkedIn

Save The Dates:
Feb 26 - Virtual Auction
Sept 24 - 30th Anniversary Open House

Choose Birch for Rewards With Your Accounts:
• Amazon Smile
• PayPal
• Fred Meyer Community Rewards

DONATE
Cash or check
Return the enclosed envelope

Credit Card
bcsi.org/donate
Transaction fees covered when donating online through:
• Facebook
• PayPal Giving Fund

Stock
Avoid capital gains taxes
Ask your financial institution about
• Directly donating stock
• Creating a donor advised giving fund
• Directly giving your RMD from a 401K if you are 70 ½ or older

In Kind
Give items directly like toiletries, shelf-stable items, or items for our auction

Monthly
Continue Your Impact Throughout the Year

BIRCH’S WISH LIST
• Funding General Operations (~$30/month/family)
• Funding Financial Education (~$50/family/year)
• Fuel for Our Trucks (~$500/week/truck)
• Black Gold Soil for Teaching Garden (~$800)
• New Electric Pallet Jack (~$5,000)
• Paint and New Flooring for the Front Office (~$5,000)
• Walk-In Freezer Renovation (~$20,000)

I could not thank you enough for the difference Birch has made in our family. And there are hundreds of families just like ours. It’s amazing.

— Tim B.

Give With Confidence

Birch Community Services - 2021 Newsletter
SAVE THE DATE!
Saturday, February 26
Virtual Auction
virtualauction.bid/birch

When my husband and I joined Birch in 2017, we had $15 in our savings account and $40,000 of debt. This year, we are debt-free and have $10,000 in our emergency savings account. Our next step is saving for a house down payment!

— Shari, BCS Participant