



RESILIENCE

CENTERSTONE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

2013 | 2014



WE HEATED MORE THAN 9,000 HOMES
THROUGH OUR ENERGY ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM IN 2013.

All photos generously donated by Dean Forbes Photography
unless otherwise noted.

LETTER FROM

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND BOARD CHAIR

Fifty years ago, Centerstone was founded on the promise and vision of an equitable society for all. Since then, we've been living the intent of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty, working with residents and partners to create strong communities in Seattle.

Just like Seattle's communities, Centerstone has evolved and changed with the times. In recent years, we have renamed the organization, engaged in meaningful and powerful strategic planning, strengthened our board and our staff, and tailored our programs and services to meet the unique needs of the communities we serve. Since 2009, our pathway has mirrored the journey of many of our clients: We have grown from an agency in crisis to one that is stable and on a path to thriving.

Through these changes we have remained resilient—stronger than ever. And that's just how we see the amazing people we serve every day: people who tackle each day determined to create a better future for themselves and their families.

As part of Washington state's Community Action Partnership, Centerstone works alongside 29 other community based organizations in the state to provide programs and services that help people dramatically change their lives. The goal is to get people back on their feet and able to meet their basic needs. In 2012 alone, Community Action Agencies like ours collectively served more than 720,000 people in need.

In 2013–2014, Centerstone remained focused on meeting the most basic needs of King County residents, providing energy assistance, financial education, eviction prevention assistance and food bank services to more than 22,600 clients across the county.

Moving forward, we'll focus on:

- Diversifying our funding base to ensure no loss of programs and to enable us to expand the programs we do have
- Addressing community needs—as identified by the communities themselves
- Engaging community and other stakeholders in conversations to solve key issues
- Continuing to refine a suite of coordinated programs that work toward a common goal of self-sufficiency

We are grateful to have been able to serve the community for the last 50 years, and approach the next 50 with renewed excitement, energy and focus. Thank you for joining us on this journey—we hope you continue to walk with us in the years ahead.

Andrea Caupain Sanderson
Chief executive officer

Kevin Dawson
Board chair



STRONGER THAN EVER

FIFTY YEARS OF RESILIENCY

Long before federal legislation in 1964, our community united to address the problems of poverty at home. Nearly 50 years since our inception, Centerstone remains resilient and stronger than ever, a reflection of the growth and strength of the people, and the communities, we serve.

Staying strong hasn't been easy and, just like the communities we serve, we've faced many challenges through the years.

In 1964, when we were founded, the Central District neighborhood that we called home had a thriving and diverse population. In the mid 1970s, when the neighborhood population was 99 percent black, we continued to provide safety net services to those in need. In the first decade of our existence, our services primarily included homework help centers, parent outreach, employment counseling, arts programs for youth, Head Start and consumer education.

In the next decade, poor families would disproportionately suffer from rising gas and heating oil prices due to the oil embargo of 1973, the war on drugs that began in the 1980s and the rapid increase in home prices nationwide. The need for services to help people get back on their feet had never been greater and, with funding provided by Community Services Block Grant and other federal block grants, Centerstone (then CAMP) provided energy assistance, housing assistance, food bank services and employment training to thousands of community members each year.

IN 2013, 45% OF CENTERSTONE'S
CLIENTS WERE SENIOR
CITIZENS (AGE 60+).



With the rise of the technology sector, more wealth flowed into the region, but it wasn't evenly distributed. Our core community continued to struggle and, with President Bush's War on Drugs, we saw an increase in police harassment and confrontations. As the 21st century came into sight, the face of our community also began to change. As tech money gentrified old but desirable neighborhoods, long-standing residents in the Central District were forced to move south. High numbers of East African immigrants and refugees also began arriving, further changing the face and needs of the community.

At this challenging time for our community, Centerstone was also experiencing upheaval. Our top leadership cycled in and out of what seemed to be a revolving door and our board of directors was in transition. As a result, many of our major funders lost confidence and withdrew funding. Like many of those we served, we were in danger of losing everything.

But, again like our clients, we never gave up. Though we struggled in the early part of the decade, by the late 2000s we were on our way to becoming, once again, a stable organization. Buoyed by President Obama's Recovery Act, we engaged in earnest in a strategic planning process to redefine and reinvigorate the organization. During this four-year period we set a new direction for the organization, reconstituted our board of directors, strengthened senior management, engaged in community listening sessions and updated our brand. This time period also reflected a more strategic focus on key community needs, which included energy and housing assistance, food bank services, employment training and financial education and training.

In this our 50th year, Centerstone has emerged a strong and stable organization that continues to honor and serve not only those who live in the Central District, but all Seattleites who find themselves in need. Through energy, food and housing assistance, and financial education, we're committed to helping people with low incomes achieve stability—and live resiliently.

Evelyn and her daughter Angellynn



WORKING TOWARD A BETTER LIFE

EVELYN'S STORY

Evelyn is one of those people who fell through the cracks of America's "safety net." Laid off in 2013 after many years working in the accounting field, Evelyn struggled to find work to support herself and her 10-year-old daughter, Angellynn.

She managed with unemployment benefits for a few months while she applied for new employment, but she quickly learned that without a degree, employers were unwilling to take a chance on her. After a multitude of rejections, Evelyn decided to go back to school to complete her degree in accounting.

Though she knew there would be short-term financial challenges while she worked toward her degree, she was confident that the opportunities afforded by higher education would be worth the struggle. Initially, she was able to cover the cost of food and the rent for a small home in southeast Seattle. But, increasingly, she and her daughter struggled to keep their heads above water. As the bills kept mounting, Evelyn's utility bill fell to the bottom of her long list of obligations.

Faced with a shut-off notice from her utility provider, Evelyn sought assistance from Centerstone to cover the \$500 bill. Using funds from Centerstone's Bridge the Gap program, Evelyn paid the bill and kept on the lights.

With the crisis averted, Evelyn was able to continue to focus on earning her degree, which she firmly believes is the pathway to a better and more stable life for her and her daughter.



CENTERSTONE DISTRIBUTED 40,342 BAGS
OF FOOD TO 5,036 HOUSEHOLDS IN 2013.



THE PATH AHEAD

FUTURE PATHWAYS

Pivoting on our core values, Centerstone has six strategic areas to keep us grounded in our community roots while we create future pathways that promote opportunity and innovation. These strategies will guide us toward sustainability and growth while we fight poverty at the grassroots and policy levels.

1. HUMILITY IN SERVICE

Throughout our history, we have succeeded in building the trust and preserving the dignity of those we serve. This has powered our resiliency, and we will forge new relationships with like-minded communities and organizations with service models that reflect humility and respect. We will apply this same approach as we develop and sustain public-private partnerships with local donors and businesses. Our leadership will create demonstrable value for all stakeholders to carry forward this service-centric approach.

2. COMPASSION THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

Too often, the poor have no voice. As we provide services to meet their basic needs, we have found lasting success when we empower our clients to advocate for themselves and others. We will partner with our clients to help them find a better path, make informed decisions, and pursue opportunities and resources. As we engage them in this process, we will offer community listening sessions to give residents a chance to voice their ideas and concerns.



3. **COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY**
Centerstone’s thought leadership in researching trends and data is a growing area of expertise and a strategic way to be accountable to the community’s needs. We believe that only when we truly look at the core issues facing those struggling in our community will we positively impact change. We will develop and commission studies that leverage our capabilities with grassroots-level data gathering and storytelling to broaden awareness of today’s critical issues and trends.

4. **COLLABORATION OF PROGRAMS**
Our flagship program, Energy Assistance, offers a well of deep knowledge, a high volume of clients, and a streamlined infrastructure that has been refined over many years. We have used this program as a springboard for new, collaborative initiatives, such as our annual Bridge the Gap campaign to better address the needs of the people we serve. We will continue to develop a suite of support services that leverages our existing strengths and resources and expands into growing areas of need, such as home repair and weatherization services.



5. **SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODEL**
As public funds have been cut and the competition for private funding has increased, we have intensified our efforts to develop a sustainable source of funds from diverse groups. The social need and demand for our services is more important today than ever, and ensuring the organization’s viability for the next 50 years is paramount. We will explore new approaches, such as fee-based programs or lines of business, that can generate future revenue.
6. **INCLUSIVITY OF NEEDS**
The demographics of the people who use Centerstone services are shifting to the working poor, elders on fixed incomes, and immigrants and refugees. We will continue to meet people where they are, offering services that are inclusive of both temporary and long-term adversity. Our diverse staff will offer the added benefit of multilingual communication and multicultural training to be inclusive of people from all races and backgrounds.

- OUR STRATEGY SCREEN**
To help Centerstone grow effectively, we will ensure all new initiatives and opportunities align with our strategy screen to stay true to the core mission of our organization by:
- Leveraging our strengths and expertise
 - Coordinating and aligning a suite of new and established programs
 - Reinforcing the strength of our brand and communication tools
 - Building on our financial stability
 - Creating demonstrable value for donors and other stakeholders

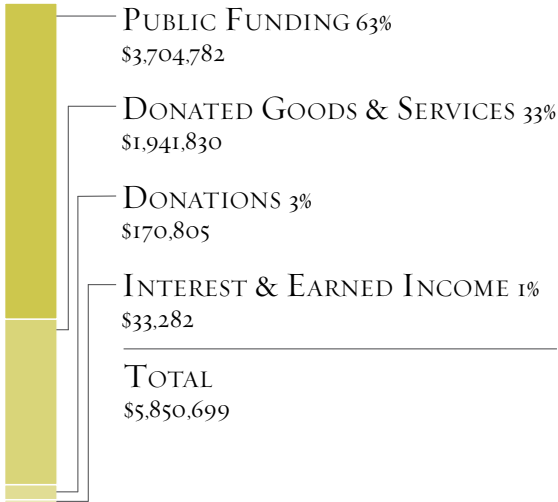
- OUR BIG QUESTIONS**
Centerstone’s big questions are areas we will continue to prioritize in our ongoing self-assessment and strategic thinking process:
- How do we diversify programs and funding in a sustainable manner?
 - How do we move permanently from a stable organization to a thriving organization?
 - How do we best align the priorities of the community with the resources of our organization?



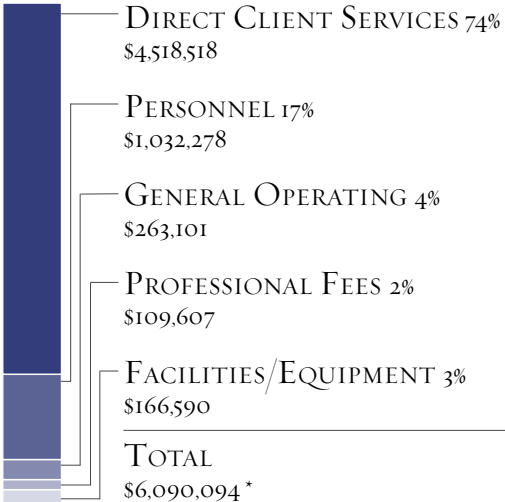
FINANCIAL SUMMARY

2013

REVENUE

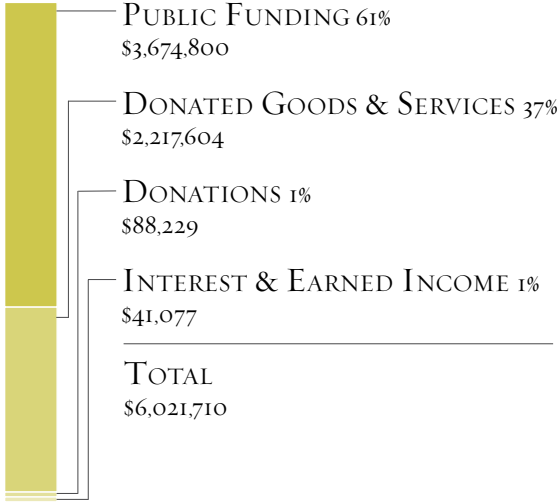


EXPENSES

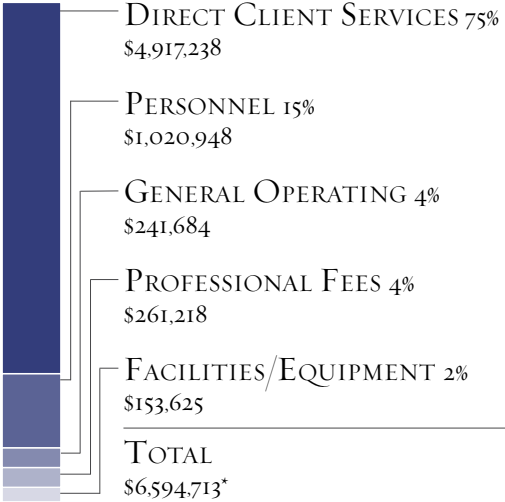


2014

REVENUE



EXPENSES



*Excess of Expenses over Revenue were covered by Agency's fund reserve.

CENTERSTONE

MISSION

Centerstone helps ensure all Seattle residents have the opportunity to meet their basic needs by providing safety net services and programs that educate, nourish, and create a thriving community of neighbors helping neighbors.

VISION

We envision all people in the Seattle area having access to tools, programs, and community that will help move them from generational and situational poverty to self-sufficiency—inspiring them to give back to their community.

PROGRAMS

Our programs help low-income Seattle families and individuals build better lives. We offer energy assistance so homes stay warm and have electricity, food bank services so people don't go hungry, and housing assistance so that people can stay in their homes.

ENERGY ASSISTANCE

Centerstone provides financial assistance to low-income Seattle residents for home-heating costs, including emergency aid to avoid the shut-off of electricity and heat, as well as general financial assistance to cover bills and pay for heating system repairs.

FOOD BANK

Our food bank provides food and non-grocery items for Seattle residents. Three days a week, the food bank offers fresh produce, meat, dairy items, bread, canned and nonperishable goods, and non-grocery items such as shampoo, toothpaste and paper towels. At times, formula and baby supplies may also be available.

HOUSING ASSISTANCE

Centerstone's housing assistance program provides emergency financial aid so that people who have fallen behind on their rent can avoid eviction and maintain stable housing.

FINANCIAL EDUCATION

Our financial education program introduces low-income families and individuals to banking, budgeting, and debt reduction techniques through workshop-based education and coaching.



REPORT: CREATING AN EQUITABLE FUTURE IN WASHINGTON STATE — BLACK WELL- BEING AND BEYOND

Centerstone, in partnership with the Commission on African American Affairs and the African American Leadership Forum, commissioned a report in 2014 to quantify and paint a picture of the black experience in Washington state. The report measures black well-being in five key areas—economic security, education, health, criminal justice, and civic engagement—and identifies systemic barriers faced by the black community and how those barriers affect the lives and futures of black children and families. Released in March 2014, the report highlights conditions in the black community and aims to generate a robust conversation about what an equitable future in Washington state looks like.

OUR HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
PREVENTED THE EVICTION OF 99 FAMILIES.



centerstone

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CENTER-STONE.ORG

Photo: "Cherry Street" by
Sea Turtle on Flickr.