

# PENQUIS

ANNUAL REPORT  
FY 2023



**D**ear Community Members,

Our **mission** is to assist individuals and families in preventing, reducing, or eliminating poverty in their lives and, through partnerships, to engage the community in addressing economic and social needs.

Our **vision** is for a poverty-free Maine, where all people lead healthy lives full of opportunities to work and learn.

Our **goal** is for all Maine people to be safe, healthy, connected and financially secure.

Our **focus** is on increasing financial stability through programs and services that support housing stability, access to transportation, school readiness and healthy lives.

It was a difficult year for many as the high costs of basic needs strained household budgets and created housing insecurity. The state's severe housing shortage meant that housing often was either unavailable or unaffordable for those who needed it. Rising rental and housing costs, the end of emergency rental assistance, and long waiting lists for housing subsidies increased the risk of eviction and homelessness. Housing security has never been more in jeopardy.

If there is any "good" that has come from this housing crisis, it is the broad and sweeping acknowledgement of the urgency and severity of the problem and the funding committed to address it. Penquis received support to increase the supply of affordable housing, provide housing assistance to survivors of human trafficking, and support a partnership with MaineHousing and the University of Maine Advanced Structures and Composites Center to create the world's first 100 percent bio-based 3D-printed neighborhood, a project that will advance new methods of housing construction while providing housing to individuals experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. We are excited to implement these initiatives and grateful for the commitment and collaboration that make these solutions possible.

While the lack of housing is having a profound impact on our communities, it is not the only threat to the wellbeing of area residents. The opioid epidemic continues to devastate lives, though thankfully the number of deaths due to overdose has begun to decline. The rate of child maltreatment is high, as is the number of youth experiencing mental distress. Maine's older adult population, one of the highest in the nation, faces challenges with isolation, the high cost of living, transportation, and meeting health care needs.

Penquis fosters wellbeing through an array of programs and services that include youth programming, family support services, housing development, home interventions, energy benefits, and transportation assistance. We are proud to offer these critical services but recognize that much more needs to be done. We need to be bold in our goals and actions to truly make life in Maine the way it should be. We will continue to rise to the challenge and work alongside those who care as deeply as we do about Maine's future.



*Kara Hay*

Kara Hay  
President & CEO



*Mark Leonard*

Mark Leonard  
Board Chair



# F Y 2 0 2 3 H I G H L I G H T S

The US Department of Justice, Office of Victims of Crime, awarded Penquis \$615,066 to increase access to housing for survivors of human trafficking. The grant will enable Penquis, its subsidiary Rape Response Services, and collaborators Partners for Peace and CourageLIVES to provide survivors with housing navigation services and short-term housing assistance in Penobscot and Piscataquis counties.



Penquis received \$2.2 million in ARPA funding from Penobscot County to support a variety of housing needs. Funded projects include the acquisition and redevelopment of a property on Spring Street in Millinocket, the expansion of the Affordable Housing Made Easy program and the replacement of four single-family homes in Penobscot County.



Penquis President and CEO Kara Hay received the National Lyndon Baines Johnson Leadership Award at the National Community Action Partnership's 2023 Annual Convention. This award recognizes a Community Action practitioner who shows expertise in creating greater economic opportunity for children and families and is known and respected at the national, state, and local levels. Kara credits Penquis staff for making a difference in people's lives every day and believes together we can all do our part to make our communities healthier and stronger.



Penquis received \$3.3 million to support a project that may revolutionize housing construction methods while addressing the state's housing crisis. The project is a collaborative effort involving Penquis, the University of Maine's Advanced Structures and Composites Center, and MaineHousing. New materials and methods developed by UMaine will be used to create the nation's first 100 percent bio-based 3D-printed neighborhood that will provide housing for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness.



Penquis and Kennebec Valley Community Action Program received funding to improve transportation services across four counties. The funding is from the Federal Transit Administration and provided by the Maine Department of Transportation to expand transit options for residents with limited or no transportation options.



# O U R F O C U S

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## Financial Stability

Building financial stability through services that support housing stability, access to transportation, school readiness and healthy lives.

### Housing Stability

Increasing health, safety and stability through affordable housing access and availability



### Access to Transportation

Supporting health, independence and access to resources through safe, reliable transportation options



### School Readiness

Preparing children for school through quality early learning experiences in safe and nurturing environments



### Healthy Lives

Building stronger, healthier and more self-sufficient lives through services and supports that enhance well-being







OPENQUIS  
Charlotte White  
Services

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# BY THE NUMBERS

## Housing Stability

**25,146** individuals received COVID-19 rental relief assistance

**12** individuals participated in the Family Development Account matched savings program to increase assets

**243** households received financial coaching

**433** individuals attended a homebuyer education class

**35** families received pre-purchase counseling to prepare for home ownership

**10** individuals received home loans for purchase, refinance or repair

**114** families received foreclosure intervention counseling

**39** individuals received rental counseling

**3** individuals increased knowledge of business ownership

**8** entrepreneurs received loans to build their businesses

**361** housing units provided homes for families and older adults

**10,115** households received help heating their homes

**389** households received central heating improvements

**327** homes received heat pump assistance

**37** housing units were inspected for lead hazards

**1,581** households in an emergency or energy crisis received home heating assistance

**169** individuals received assistance for household expenses due to the COVID-19 pandemic

**64** homes received needed repairs

**690** individuals received tax preparation assistance

**31** homes were weatherized

**256** households received emergency heating fuel

**355** households received help with their electricity bills

**27** households received energy education to help reduce energy usage and manage energy bills

**1** household received a newly constructed, energy-efficient home

**159** households who were experiencing or at the risk of homelessness secured housing

**1,731** households received assistance with their energy bills



# A Place to Call Home



Penquis oversees a variety of housing developments throughout Penobscot, Waldo and Hancock counties in Maine. These developments include family and senior focused housing with varying amenities such as community rooms, tenant storage units and community gardens. The tenants have come to live in these developments for an array of reasons, but what they all share is a sense of comfort and peace in these spaces.

“Theresa,” who now lives in one of Penquis’ developments, is in her 70s and worked as an accountant while raising three children on her own. Prior to moving to Penquis housing, she lived in a different affordable housing development where she had to pay for expensive electrical heating to keep her apartment warm throughout the winter. During this time, her health problems worsened due to the lax enforcement of the non-smoking policy in her building that increased her exposure to cigarette smoke. Theresa knew she wanted to move into different housing to protect her health and also alleviate the high heating costs that took a toll on her budget. She viewed several buildings, but it was difficult to find a place that was within her budget. One of Theresa’s family members had noticed a sign for a Penquis housing development and shared the information with her. Soon after making the call, Theresa was approved for one of the apartments and has been living there since. With all utilities included, she is able to easily budget her monthly expenses without having to factor in spikes in bills in the colder months due to heating costs. Theresa describes the buildings as “nice and clean with beautiful colors” and is happy to see that the buildings’ policies are upheld so exposure to smoke is no longer a problem. Most importantly, Theresa shares that she feels “truly blessed” with her living space and says, “I love it here...it’s my home.”

Another tenant, “Marie,” who is in her 60s, also found her way to a Penquis housing development because her needs were not met in her previous home. After she had her second heart attack, her health restrictions made it so she could not walk up stairs, and her apartment at the time was on the second floor of the building. With no elevator available, Marie had to make the difficult decision to look elsewhere for housing. After hearing about Penquis housing, Marie talked with a social worker about how to apply, and she was soon approved for an apartment. Penquis also assisted with the move-in fees during the process. Marie says that, “I would not have been able to move in without the help...I would have probably been homeless.” Now that she has settled in her new home, she says that she is very thankful for the building’s accessibility, which includes an elevator and parking lots and walkways cleared of snow. Since Penquis housing accepts Section 8 vouchers, Marie’s rent is affordable, allowing her to put some money in her savings in case anything unexpected happens. In addition to the help from Penquis, Marie says that she enjoys the company of the other people who live in the building and that she loves “having this as my home.”

This community aspect of Penquis housing was evident last Thanksgiving when tenants from two of the developments and a Resident Services Coordinator came together to celebrate. Penquis provided the Thanksgiving staples such as turkey, potatoes and drinks, and tenants were invited to bring a side dish if they wished. The event was a huge success! The tenants decorated the room and the food was cooked on site, which filled the space with the meals’ savory smells. Once it was lunch time, tenants brought their own cooked sides to share and sat down to have a wonderful Thanksgiving meal. Smiles, conversations and laughter filled the room. The tenants expressed that they were thrilled to meet some of their neighbors and that the food and company were wonderful. New friendships were formed and excitement expressed for the next time a community gathering will be held!



# Access to Transportation

6,118 individuals were assisted with their transportation needs

4,571 bus passes and tickets were issued

99,308 taxi trips helped to meet transit needs

108 volunteer drivers traveled 3,044,934 miles transporting people to where they needed to go

10,344,511 miles were traveled to get people to their destinations

“Even though I hated giving up my car, Lynx has been such a blessing for my mother and me.”





# A Kind Lift



After marrying her high-school sweetheart, “Gerry” left her hometown of Brewer, Maine, and travelled the world as a Navy wife. For thirty-two years, Gerry and her sailor spouse, “Charles,” embarked on adventures all over the globe. The happy couple made the most of the postings, immersing themselves in each new locale and making shared memories every day. One thing that stayed consistent, despite the many different places they called home, was Gerry’s love for dancing, and so the couple could often be found on the local dance floor on Saturday nights.

Between ports of call they found the time to start a family. Two boys and a girl blessed their lives with happiness and purpose. With a successful career and a thriving family, Gerry and Charles were proud of the life they had built. They had enjoyed seeing the world, but when it was time to retire, they chose to return to where their love story began: Brewer, Maine. The couple left the last Navy post in Hawaii to move back to their hometown and enjoy the rewards of retired life.

While the couple was happy to be back in their hometown, retired life came with its own challenges. Gerry began experiencing a series of illnesses that affected her ability to walk. Charles supported her and drove her to her medical appointments. Unfortunately, Gerry’s husband experienced his own health problems and passed away suddenly, leaving Gerry heartbroken and alone. Facing this grievous loss and sudden changes, she began to feel uncertain about what her future held and how she would adjust.

Unable to drive herself to medical appointments, Gerry was in danger of going without needed medical care. Her doctor’s office told her about Lynx Mobility Services at Penquis, which helps people throughout Penobscot and Piscataquis counties meet a variety of transportation needs. With the help of Lynx Mobility Services and their volunteers, Gerry was able to not only keep medical appointments but also still take care of errands and go grocery shopping. The confidence that these services gave her helped her establish a new normalcy in her life. She began doing the things she loved again, such as reading, writing and making personalized Christmas ornaments.

Over time, Gerry's mobility deteriorated and Gerry’s daughter, “Darlene”, moved in, assisting her with learning how to use a walker, then eventually a wheelchair. Lynx Mobility Services was well prepared to accommodate Gerry, as it maintained a fleet of vans with hydraulic lifts for wheelchairs. Between Lynx Mobility Services and her daughter, Darlene, who escorted her, Gerry was able to retain her individuality and freedom.

Soon, Darlene started experiencing her own health concerns and could no longer drive due to her worsening eyesight. Because of her mother's need for assistance, Darlene knew that her own needs could be met by Lynx Mobility Services. She now uses the Lynx to visit her mother who has moved to a local nursing facility after surgery.

“Even though I hated giving up my car, Lynx has been such a blessing for my mother and me,” Darlene says. “Now I can still get groceries, and we don’t have to worry about the snow and icy roads when we have appointments.”

Lynx Mobility Services is proud to help people access needed services and to live independently. With this transportation assistance, Gerry and Darlene have been able to care for their health needs and remain active in a community that benefits from their involvement.

# School Readiness

**222** children received Head Start services

**148** children received Early Head Start services

**19** children received child care services

**82** providers received reimbursement for food expenses to lessen the cost of serving healthy meals

**441** family members benefited from parenting information and support

“Having other people help us invest in our kids, too, has been really valuable.”



**98 percent** of Penquis Pre-K children met or exceeded widely held expectations in all five domains of their assessments

**88 percent** of Penquis Early Head Start children met or exceeded widely held expectations in three domains, and 92 percent met or exceeded widely held expectations in the other two domains.

## The Five Domains

Approaches to Learning — Self-Regulation

Social and Emotional Development

Language and Literacy Development

Cognition, including Math and Science

Physical Development — Health



# A Support System



Mary, Sam and their three kids are the perfect example of a family who is thriving because they have built a strong support system. They have a solid base of friends and family, professional connections and a loving church community. An important part of their support system for the last five years has been Penquis' Maine Families program, which is a home-based service with a Family Visitor who provides information and support to families who are expecting or have a new baby.

As a parent who spends a great deal of time at home with her kids, Mary appreciates suggestions for age-appropriate developmental activities from their Family Visitor. She finds the support from the Family Visitor to be a relief and a source of new ideas, and enjoys having someone to talk to about the many stresses of parenting young children. Mary and Sam have found it is easier to ask their Family Visitor when they need parenting answers instead of wading into unpredictable search engines, which can be overwhelming, time-consuming and inaccurate. They have received evidence-based resources on many challenging topics, such as toilet training, nutrition, race, school readiness and sibling rivalry. These supportive strategies have helped their kids learn rules for kindness in the home, which furthers their success in making friends at school. Their Family Visitor has also helped with setting rules for fairness and teaching the children how to be gentle with one another, which are critical social skills for young children.

Mary and Sam's two oldest children are currently in school, and the youngest child will be enrolled in preschool once he is three years old. To help prepare their children for school, the parents have enjoyed learning from their Family Visitor about the milestones their children can reach at different ages and how learning can be fostered at home. The developmental activities that the family engages in during their Family Visitor's home visits and the books provided by Maine Families have also been beneficial for school preparation. These activities have helped Mary and Sam instill a love of learning in their children, which is something that is important to them.

Mary and Sam knew that receiving help from Maine Families would allow them to provide the best possible support to their children. "Having other people help us invest in our kids, too, has been really valuable," says Mary. She describes her appreciation for how the Family Visitor shares a love for the children they work with and how the children look forward to the visits.

Mary enthusiastically recommends Penquis programs to her friends and has been surprised at how many resources are available for families in their community. In addition to Maine Families, the family has taken part in other Penquis programs and events such as CPR training, a community yard sale, home safety training and a dinner distribution. The services the family has received confirmed they do not need to invent new parenting styles or do everything on their own; there are lots of resources that enable them to spend quality time with their kids.

When Mary was asked who she thought would benefit from Penquis services, she replied, "Anybody!" She shared she couldn't think of anyone who wouldn't benefit, especially parents, and couldn't imagine saying no to free resources. Mary and Sam are grateful for that support and hope that sharing their experience with the program will help others to take advantage of this resource, which they say has positively impacted their entire family.

# Healthy Lives

**20** families with a COVID-19 diagnosis or close contact received support to isolate or quarantine

**46** adults age 55+ volunteered in their communities

**83** individuals received daily support to live independently

**13** individuals received assistance with family law matters and **31** received legal representation

**187** youth received services to improve wellbeing and increase leadership skills

**760** community members received education from Rape Response Services to improve safety

**99** families received children's advocacy services in cases of suspected child sexual abuse

**190** men learned about the dynamics of power and control to decrease relationship violence

**440** individuals were assisted to access mental health services and other community resources

**47** children with a mental health diagnosis or intellectual disability received services to improve behavior and functioning

**91** youth received life skills to support better financial literacy and healthy decision-making

**15** youth received restorative justice services to repair the harm caused

**5** youth experiencing homelessness received support to obtain housing and resources

**240** families with children in DHHS custody received supportive visitation services

**10** adults with a cognitive or developmental disability acquired long-term residential living arrangements

**28** individuals with disabilities received community integration support

**30** individuals with an acquired brain injury, developmental disability or behavioral health diagnosis received residential services

**2** adults with developmental disabilities received life skill services

**398** individuals received behavioral health treatment plans

**142** individuals received comprehensive case management services

**20** women in recovery and their children were housed and supported

**1,280** families were strengthened with parental education and support

**1,280** parents and professionals received education and training to support healthy children and families

**1,076** children received backpacks and school supplies to start the new school year

**1,031** coats were distributed to keep people warm

**219** families received diapers and wipes

**6,535** families enjoyed a Thanksgiving meal

**1,225** children received holiday gifts

**196** families received support to explore educational and employment options

**27** families at risk of homelessness received support to improve housing stability

**51** individuals in Knox County received support for basic needs

**310** individuals received Goodwill gift cards for clothing needs

**88** families experiencing homelessness received case management support

**183** individuals received assistance with support and referrals

**477** survivors received advocacy and support from Rape Response Services

**52** youth affected by someone else's opioid use took part in activity groups and were provided resources and support

**1** individual seeking COVID-19 vaccine was provided information and resources



# A New Purpose

When a local junior high school became aware that the number of students who were being impacted by substance misuse had been increasing, the school reached out to Penquis' Substance Affected Youth program (SAY). The SAY program, which serves youth who have been affected by someone else's opioid use, worked with the school to begin facilitating In-School Support (ISS). The goal was to offer restorative practices to address unwanted behaviors while simultaneously identifying substance-affected youth who needed additional support.



One of the first students referred to ISS was “Heidi,” a 13-year-old who had been caught vaping cannabis in the school’s restroom. The SAY team spoke to Heidi using trauma-informed practices to understand the decision making that led her to using marijuana. Heidi discussed how she had recently found her father deceased in their home from an opioid overdose. Additionally, her mother was incarcerated for substance-related offenses. Fortunately, Heidi’s grandparents were able to provide her with a loving home, but the transition of moving in with them combined with the loss of her father and her mother’s continued behavior had significant effects on her mental health and decision making. She shared that she had engaged in multiple risk-taking behaviors, including vaping nicotine and cannabis.

Heidi was not alone. During the remainder of the school year, 64 students were referred to ISS and approximately 75 percent of the students referred for behavioral issues were also affected by someone else's substance misuse. The SAY team used trainings to address and discuss goal setting, substance use, and topics to aid decision making, all while promoting resiliency through mindfulness activities. The team also organized SAY Activity Groups, which are support groups where affected youths can discuss their feelings with peers who had similar experiences. Heidi soon became one of the leaders of a SAY Activity Group and began focusing her energy on helping others. She and her peers wanted to offer craft and recreational events in a local park to help elementary-aged students who were likewise affected by someone’s substance misuse, so the SAY team helped her organize weekly gatherings that were well attended throughout the summer.

Just six months after being referred to the SAY Program, Heidi stood before several hundred people as part of a youth panel at the fifth annual Governor’s Opioid Response Summit and shared her experience. She told the crowd, “Before meeting [the SAY Team], I was in a very dark place. I was vaping and smoking weed every day. I was basically giving up on life. But now I know that I am not alone. I have stopped smoking and vaping.” Since this summit, Heidi has continued to take part in other events to raise community awareness of how the opioid epidemic is affecting Maine’s youth. She is active with the Youth Caucus of the Maine Recovery Advocacy Project, is working to organize a SAY Activity Group at her new high-school, and is a frequent volunteer whenever the SAY Program organizes activities for younger kids.

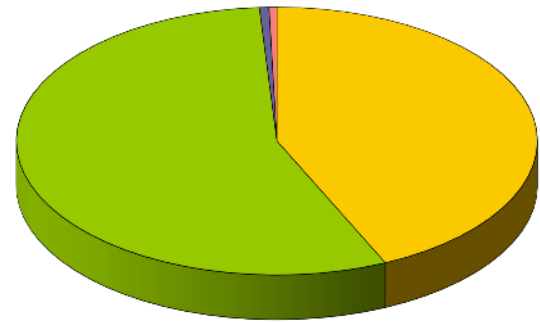
Heidi is among the first success stories of the SAY Program, and we cannot wait to see what she accomplishes! However, the work continues as there are now over 60 students actively participating in SAY Activity Groups at the original location with new sites in the early stages of starting up. In one of the emerging sites, 11 of the 30 students in attendance stated they had a family member who had passed away from a substance-related death. We hope that one day the SAY Program will no longer be needed. For now, we will continue to provide youth with the opportunity to heal, build resiliency, and, like Heidi, find new purpose.

# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

## CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED SEPTEMBER 30, 2023

### SUPPORT & REVENUE

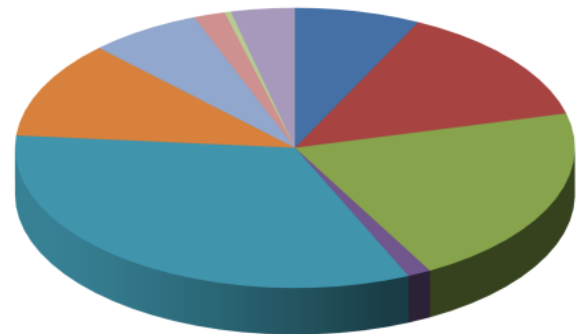
Federal & State Grants	\$	32,780,286
Program Income & Fees		42,333,490
Other Revenue		447,712
In-Kind Contributions		366,726
	\$	<u>75,928,214</u>



- Federal & State Grants
- Program Income & Fees
- Other Revenue
- In-Kind Contributions

### EXPENDITURES

Family Enrichment	\$	5,518,350
Child Development		10,459,423
Housing Services		15,910,680
Housing Development		1,028,471
Transportation Services		25,093,888
Charlotte White Support Services		8,527,462
Other Services		4,932,495
Board Designated		1,377,522
Fundraising		276,544
Management & General		<u>2,803,379</u>
	\$	<u>75,928,214</u>



- Family Enrichment
- Child Development
- Housing Services
- Housing Development
- Transportation Services
- Charlotte White Support Services
- Other Services
- Board Designated
- Fundraising
- Management & General



# G O V E R N A N C E

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Joseph Leonard

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Laura Mellits

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## Steering Committees

*Advisors to the Board of Directors*

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Knox County Steering Committee

Penobscot County Steering Committee

Piscataquis County Steering Committee

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Chief Financial Officer

Heidi LeBlanc

Chief Operating Officer

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Janeen Feero

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# PENQUIS

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