



**Social
Impact
Center**

Roxbury Presbyterian Church

Making a Difference

YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KRYSTAL PEGRAM

Dear Friends and Partners,

As we transition to autumn, we reflect, with gratitude, on your partnership with us and ask that you join us as we **harvest hope and healing**.

This year has been one of significant challenges, profound loss, and immense need for many communities across the Commonwealth. Many service organizations have grappled with soaring demands and diminishing resources. Yet in the face of such adversity The Social Impact Center has remained steadfast and even more dedicated to the mission of spreading the message that hope cannot be destroyed, healing is available for everyone, and that we all deserve joy!

We have been going deeper this year, sowing seeds of hope and healing by abiding with individuals, youth, and families, and meeting their needs. We are honored to share some of those powerful testimonies. We invite you to travel along one young man's journey of healing. Learn how *Can We Talk...[®]* is finding space and purpose on college campuses. Read about mothers who are deepening their healing connections through more in-person gatherings. Hear how youth are discovering the power of abiding and transforming into peer leaders. Discover how broader communities are experiencing expressive arts and the power it has to uplift, connect, and heal. Dive deeper with mental health practitioners and trauma survivors as they deepen their understanding of collective healing through our trauma education courses.

Gifts from caring individuals like you are more important – and impactful – than ever. We are able to remain steadfast in our mission as a direct result of your ongoing support even as we face some of the greatest challenges and rising adversity. The harvest of hope gleaned through the stories shared herein are directly attributable to your support.

Our deepest gratitude for the part each of you play in trauma healing.



FEATURE IMPACT

One young man's journey of healing and hope

THE YOUNG MEN'S GROUP is more than just a program. It was a place where young Black men can learn, be supported, and develop the tools needed to navigate life's challenges and build successful futures.

As a young man, I faced challenges and experiences that could have easily shaped my future in a negative way. Like many young people, I needed guidance, positive role models, and people who believed in me.

One of my most impactful experiences with the Young Men's Group was traveling to Montgomery, Alabama, where we visited the Legacy

Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. Learning about slavery, racial injustice, and the resilience of those who came before us gave me a deeper understanding of our history and reminded me that understanding where we come from helps us better understand where we're going. More recently, we traveled to Washington, D.C., where we visited the National Museum of African American History and Culture and toured Howard University. Those experiences expanded my perspective and showed me what is possible when young people are exposed to education, history, and opportunity.

The Young Men's Program also embraced a trauma-informed approach. Instead of asking, "What's wrong with you?" it encouraged us to ask, "What happened to you?" That mindset helped us heal, grow, and become leaders. Today, I serve as a Housing Coordinator with the Boston Public Health Commission. I am also a homeowner, a father, and someone committed to serving my community.

I stand as one example of what can happen when a community invests in its young people. Thank you for supporting programs like the Young Men's Group and for believing in the next generation. — *Kynly Cazeau*



Harmony and Healing

How expressive arts uplift, connect, and heal.

A TWO-DAY CULTURAL convening in June 2026, Harmony & Healing gathered hundreds from MA, RI, NY, and beyond for a radiant arts celebration that positioned the performing and healing arts as essential infrastructure for community wellness, racial equity, and collective transformation. In collaboration with We Move in Color Collaborative, spiritual leaders, public health visionaries, artists, educators, and culture bearers created an immersive gathering at The Strand Theatre where stories became medicine, art became public health, and community became the healing modality.

The first night's panel discussion touched on hard realities of trauma, including trauma arising from racial and/or gender inequities, both individually and communally. This segued into a raw yet deeply moving and healing Can We Talk... session with the audience. The second day shifted into a full-sensory experience through an electrifying blend of dance, music, poetry/storytelling, and visual art.

As one attendee said, "I was in awe...so much gratitude!"



Youth and Trauma Healing

CWT model for college campuses; transformative youth programs

WHEN A PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY at Howard University discovered the overwhelming positive impact of the CWT program near the university, the novel idea to expand the CWT model to serve mental health needs of college students was born.

From that idea, the SIC invited a group of college and university educators, researchers and counselors from Massachusetts, Washington DC, and California in July to brainstorm new iterations of the Can We Talk...® model for higher education communities. From their discussion, several common concerns and needs were brought to light, followed by novel ideas for how the CWT model can address the mental health needs of students:

- The need for mental health services far exceeds available on-campus services
- The stigma of mental health needs to change
- There's a surge in reports of feeling isolated among students
- Students need to have a voice and input into mental health supports

Why college campuses? Today's students face unique emotional and psychological pressures: surveys show that over 60% of college students meet the criteria for at least one mental health problem. Suicide remains the second leading cause of death among college students and in a recent Gallup poll, thousands of students around the country said they have considered dropping out. Too, the surge of campus-based gun violence has only exacerbated rates of mental illness and prevalent drug and alcohol abuse.

We look forward to sharing further developments in this expanded outreach.

IN JUNE, Youth Ambassadors Jayana Haygood and Jenayah Rose, and Young Men's Group alumni Armani White and Kynly Cazeau, shared their personal reflections with a group of friends new to the Social Impact Center. Each demonstrated grace, courage, hope, and power when sharing their personal journeys along with the experiences and insights they discovered through the programs.



Mothers inspire Community, Connection, and Care

IN JULY, THE MOTHER'S GROUP gathered in person to bond over food, flower arranging, and fellowship. The evening was thoughtfully planned to be affirming and calming for those navigating the loss of their child through the gentle practice of connecting to oneself and others. Fifteen mothers settled in to enjoy a meal together, taking time to then create keepsakes by choosing among an array of flowers and decorative adornments to personally arrange in a vase. There was even a beautifully draped backdrop for photos to memorialize the occasion. Mothers were encouraged to enhance the healing practice by writing affirmations and composing letters to oneself to be read months or years down the road as a reminder and an affirmation of their healing journey.

★ ★ ★ **COMING UP** ★ ★ ★

★ On September 26, 2026, the Paulist Center Boston will bestow the **2025 Isaac Hecker Award for Social Justice to Colleen Sharka**, co-founder of *Can We Talk...*® and Director of Replication and Trauma Education, during its 5:00 pm Mass. “At a moment of deep polarization and daily violence in our communities, Colleen’s work offers a model for healing that is spiritually rooted, clinically sound, and empowering. Isaac Hecker was committed to faith in action — Colleen Sharka lives that same commitment today.” More information can be found at the Paulist Center Boston Bulletin.

★ In addition to hosting monthly program staff meetings that include trauma-healing centered education, we will offer **Understanding Collective Trauma**, a 6-week course for the community at-large beginning **September 30**. “*Trauma, the emotional and physical reaction to a deeply distressing or disturbing experience, is at an epidemic level in this country. The result: rage, violence, feeling on high alert, deep sadness, or even total emotional shutdown. Whether experiencing it ourselves or witnessing it, the ability to understand trauma can improve our own physical and mental health as well as inform our interaction with others. This course is taken directly from the curriculum of Can We Talk...® Community Sharing on Trauma and Healing. Its founders, Rev. Liz Walker and licensed mental health clinician Colleen Sharka, will focus on the connection between individual and collective trauma.*” For more information, contact Colleen Sharka at colleensharka@rpcsic.org.

★ Plan to join us on **October 20, 2026, 6:00 pm** at The Dewitt Center, 122 Dewitt Dr., Roxbury (Madison Park Village) for our **Social Impact Evening: Intergenerational Conversation Addressing Mental Health Stigma**. This free roundtable discussion, hosted by Rev. Dr. Raymond Hammond and led by Rev. Liz Walker, will include a panel of experts and SIC program participants. The event is a conversation to educate our community, build more recognition for the Social Impact Center, as well as steward financial support for our programs. For event details and to RSVP, contact Kathleen Brittan kbrittan@rpcsic.org or 617-618-8352.

★ **You Deserve Joy! Harvesting, Healing, and Hope**, a free family-friendly event, will take place at The Bruce C. Bolling Building, 2300 Washington St, Roxbury on **November 5, 2026, 5:00 – 7:30 pm**. For more details, go to <https://rpcsocialimpactctr.org/news/>



“This is where I find my journey of healing.”

Become a Partner in Healing

All programs of the Social Impact Center are funded entirely through philanthropic contributions. Your tax-deductible gift provides real-time support for adults, children, and families navigating trauma and grief.

For more information contact Kathleen Brittan,
kbrittan@rpcsic.org or 617-618-8352

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