



# S.T.E.P.S., Inc

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



## Welcome to S.T.E.P.S., Inc.

### Mission Statement

Empowering girls and uplifting communities by providing young women the tools necessary to build lives of integrity and self-sufficiency through positive choice.

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PRESIDENT

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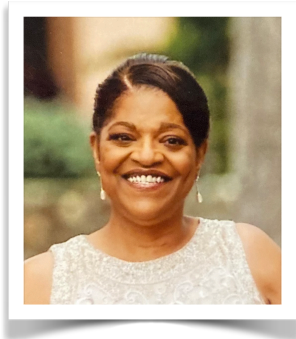
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FINANCIALS &  
SUPPORTERS

## MESSAGE FROM...

### Founder & President

#### Beatrice Jennette



Dear All:

S.T.E.P.S. had a wonderful, although sometimes challenging year. In addition to serving Groton, New London and Norwich young women, we have

been given the opportunity to serve Plainfield students as well. Going into our 15<sup>th</sup> year, S.T.E.P.S., thanks to all of you, plans to expand its reach and capabilities to serve our young women and our communities even more.

S.T.E.P.S. responded to the needs of our community by modifying and expanding our main programming on self-esteem, self-efficacy and leadership by adding 3 additional programs that help us to positively affect the lives of our students. S.T.E.P.S. also expanded programming to include a college/career enrichment curriculum with a STEM/STEAM focus in addition to trauma-informed programming, mental health work and basic needs supports.

We made crucial changes in the way we communicated with our young women and the services we provided since COVID. We reached our girls through virtual means (as well as in-person) and supported basic and emergent needs for our students and their families. We also focused programming efforts to address the anxiety, depression and loneliness the young women were experiencing due to the changes in their lives since the pandemic. S.T.E.P.S. continues to be aware of and diligently responsive to the ever-changing needs of our community.

S.T.E.P.S. could not have done so much without the ongoing support of many. We have been the recipient of generous donations for our empowerment and leadership programs from an anonymous corporate donor and have the continued support of the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut and many other local funders.

We also received a grant from the Connecticut State Department of Education for \$150,000 to hold a Summer Leadership College/Career Enrichment Program. We provided this 4-week summer program for 16 to 19-year-old girls in southeastern Connecticut. We collaborated with the National Council of Negro Women and Soroptimist CT Shoreline. Students spent time on 7 college campuses located in Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, participated in 36 workshops that focused on STEM/STEAM activities, leadership, overall health and wellness, self-defense, life skills and self-care such as yoga, dance, meditation and art therapy.

S.T.E.P.S. welcomed Wendy Ladd as our Assistant Director. This is a much-needed new position that oversees the business, fundraising and sustainability of the organization. Wendy's background and reach expands way beyond our local region and she works tirelessly to increase our resources to support the outreach and operational goals of the organization.

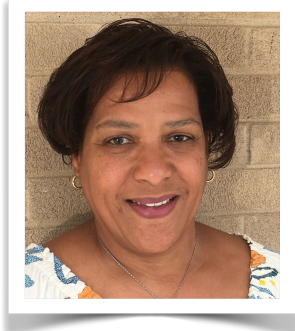
A "heartfelt" thank you to S.T.E.P.S.' staff, Board members, funders, volunteers and the young women in our programs. You all provide something unique and essential to our success. YOU are the lifeblood of S.T.E.P.S.! Thank you!

Gratefully yours,

Beatrice L. Jennette

## MESSAGE FROM... Founding Member & Board Chair

Vivian Harrison



It is a great honor and responsibility to chair the Board of Directors of S.T.E.P.S. I thank each and every one of our Board members for their continued contributions and commitment in guiding S.T.E.P.S.

throughout this past year. I feel confident in saying that S.T.E.P.S. was very engaged in empowering young women and uplifting communities.

In 2020/2021, the pandemic changed the world in many ways for our families, friends, neighbors, communities, first responders and essential workers.

Everyone faced challenges and uncertainties. The current pandemic has been a hardship on all of us. We have seen how fragile our lives are and witnessed the insecurity of our business community. We continue to model and observe good governance as we shape our Board with the right people to assist in our strategic work.

Not only did we have challenges like most organizations, we also had new opportunities. The work we do in our schools is meaningful and continues to impact and change the lives of children.

After seeing what we can accomplish when we pull together, it's impossible to be anything but confident and optimistic about our future. We are pleased that S.T.E.P.S. is in a great position fiscally. It is well positioned to ensure short-and long-term financial sustainability. As an organization, our future is bright.

Today's young women are tomorrow's workforce, customers, colleagues, neighbors, parents, etc. We need them to be prepared to be contributors to our society and good citizens.

We know the generosity of all our donors and the community we serve will continue to fuel our mission in the years to come.

Stay safe and well.

Vivian Harrison



## QUICK FACTS

- In 2020, STEPS turned our interactive, weekly afterschool program into a meaningful, effective online virtual program.



## Board of Directors

**Beatrice Jennette**  
Founder and President

**Vivian Harrison**  
Founding Member, Board Chair

**Deborah Evans**  
Treasurer, M.B.A., C.P.A.

**Laura Quashnie**  
Secretary, M.A. Education

**Jessica Bessette-Kavanagh**  
Board Member, B.A. Education

**Gay Clarkson**  
Board Member, B.A. Art History  
M.S. Art Education

**Kathleen Flynn**  
Board Member, Esq.

**Leslie Hawley**  
Board Member, Ph.D., M.B.A.

**Ornet Hines**  
Board Member, M.B.A.

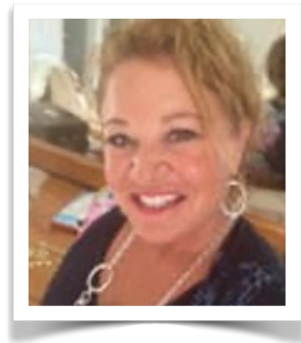


## QUICK FACTS

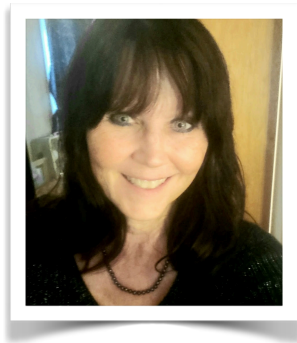
- STEPS supports the young women with basic and emergency needs, resources and referrals throughout the pandemic as individualized needs emerged.



## Meet Wendy Ladd and Gayle Rowe



Wendy



Gayle

Please meet two of our amazing staff members here at S.T.E.P.S.

Wendy Ladd is our Assistant Director and Gayle Rowe is our Program Coordinator. Both women are key to the success of our organization.

### What brought you to S.T.E.P.S. and why did you join us?

**Wendy:** I have always wanted to work in the nonprofit world; I wanted to truly be of service, but my background is in retail business. I attended an eWomen Networking event in October 2020 and S.T.E.P.S. had just received a grant from our foundation. As Bea was telling us about all the wonderful things that S.T.E.P.S. was doing, she said “and I need help,” and I heard her! I messaged her that evening and now I am a part of this incredible organization and so grateful for it!

**Gayle:** I learned about an opening through a friend of S.T.E.P.S. who was a former co-worker and could not have been more excited about the opportunity. My life’s work has been making life better for children and families.

### What changes in our students have you observed because of their participation in the program?

**Wendy:** I saw so many changes in the young women’s confidence during our Summer Enrichment Program. For example, there was a young woman who participated in all four weeks. She is on the autism spectrum and when she first joined us, she kept to herself during lessons and during meals. The staff made sure to include her, gently bringing her into the group when she would allow. By the 4<sup>th</sup> week, at the closing ceremonies, she was sitting with and high-fiving the other young women. I couldn’t believe it!

**Gayle:** I have seen young women become more confident and get better grades. They received support while going through events young women should never have to experience and they also made new friends through S.T.E.P.S.

## What do you find most rewarding about your job?

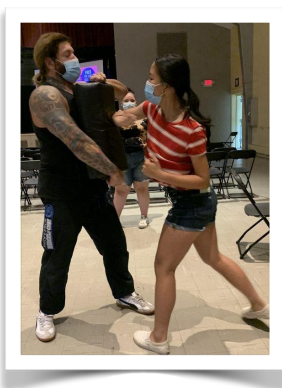
**Wendy:** I find the most rewarding aspect of this position is the women I get to work with. Beatrice Jennette is such an inspirational and humble role model. I am very blessed to be in a position to learn from her. The Board members are also so diverse and knowledgeable. I love working with a team of great women whose hearts direct their every move when it comes to S.T.E.P.S.

**Gayle:** There are so many rewarding parts to my job that it's hard to find just one - young women seeing new opportunities open up to them, meeting new people, discovering self-acceptance, learning new skills - but I guess to word it as one most rewarding thing, I would have to say the young women's joy and smiles.

## What do you wish every young woman understood about herself?

**Wendy:** I wish that every young woman had the confidence to know that she is not defined by her circumstances and that she has everything she needs within herself to create a life that she loves. Abundance is our natural state of being and having the confidence to always be moving forward, no matter what, is the key to success. I wish they all knew that, and that's what S.T.E.P.S. teaches!

**Gayle:** My wish for each young woman is for her to understand that within herself there is beauty and confidence, not just enough to believe in herself, but enough that she can share it and help uplift those who need it, and she can shine brightly throughout the world.



## QUICK FACTS

- Currently, S.T.E.P.S. is in the following schools: New London High School, Robert E. Fitch High School, Norwich Free Academy, Science and Technology Magnet High School of Southeastern Connecticut, Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School, Kelly STEAM Magnet Middle School and Groton Middle School.

## COMMUNITY RECOGNITION

Beatrice Jennette was the recipient of the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Jacqueline B. Nixon Community Service Award for giving back to the Groton community selflessly, sincerely, willingly and with great pride.



## QUICK FACTS

- STEPS provides monthly webinars with career women on STEM/STEAM topics.



## SUMMER LEADERSHIP COLLEGE/CAREER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

S.T.E.P.S. was selected by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) as a recipient of the Summer Enrichment Innovation Grant and was awarded \$150,000 for our Summer Enrichment College/Career Program that was held July 12 - August 6, 2021. The CSDE chose S.T.E.P.S. because of our commitment to ensuring that all children have access to high-quality summer enrichment opportunities.

S.T.E.P.S. was joined by Soroptimist CT Shoreline, The New London County Section of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) and Girls on the Run to serve a diverse group of young women ages 16-19 in southeastern CT. In addition, S.T.E.P.S. would like to thank the mayors of Norwich and New London, and especially Mayor Keith Hedrick and the City of Groton for sponsoring us.

This grant allowed S.T.E.P.S. to offer an intensive four-week summer program that focused on STEM/STEAM careers, mental health activities, field trips and visiting and touring seven colleges in New England. There was no cost to participants and the program included transportation, snacks, and a nutritious meal each day. The program was held at Mitchell College, University of Connecticut Avery Point, Three Rivers Community College, and the Groton Municipal Building. All COVID-19 protocols were followed.

Activities included STEM/STEAM projects exploring various careers that young women may not have otherwise considered. Ninety-five percent of the presenters were female and every workshop was hands-on.

For example, students learned about the Principles of Lean Manufacturing (presented through a Legos activity), made electrical morse code bracelets with an engineer, built breathing machines, learned how to build a website, studied marine mammal health with Mystic Aquarium research scientists and even flew a drone.

Career experts were brought in to teach the young women interviewing skills, how to set up LinkedIn accounts, personal budgeting, the importance of collaboration, and how to write a college essay. Community experts presented topics on mental health and wellness. They created vision boards through art and had fun. Participants also practiced self-defense with two martial artists, studied the mind-body connection through meditation and chakra work, and enjoyed dancing and yoga.

The seven college visits and tours rounded out the program. S.T.E.P.S. visited Northeastern University in Boston, MA, the University of Rhode Island in Kingston, RI, Mitchell College in New London, University of Connecticut Avery Point Campus in Groton, University of Connecticut in Storrs, Eastern Connecticut State University in Willimantic and Three Rivers Community College in Norwich. Field trips included a trolley tour of the Newport Mansions in Rhode Island and a visit to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The program concluded with a fun and educational day at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum with a tour, pottery class and food.

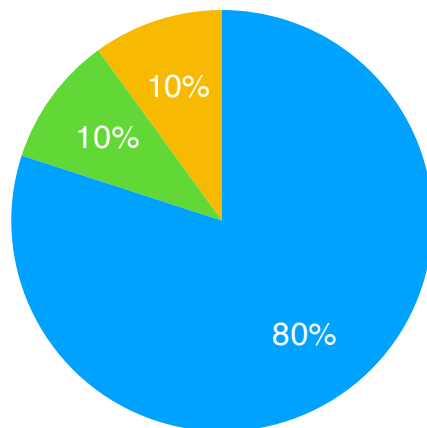
## **A message from Milan Patel, UConn student and intern for the Summer Leadership College/Career Enrichment Program**

“S.T.E.P.S. has been one of the most enriching, meaningful and enjoyable professional experiences. I am so glad that I not only got to take part in activities with the students, but also share my own wisdom, connections and paths to success with the young women. I can easily say that the students I have gotten to work with are role models that should be admired by their peers. I would also like to thank the staff of S.T.E.P.S. for bringing their passion to work and helping bring the same passion out of me towards my work. It is very rare to find a team so deeply committed to their mission, yet so harmonious and respectful in practice. It would be my pleasure to work with this team again.”



## 2020-2021 FINANCIALS

### 2020-2021 Revenues

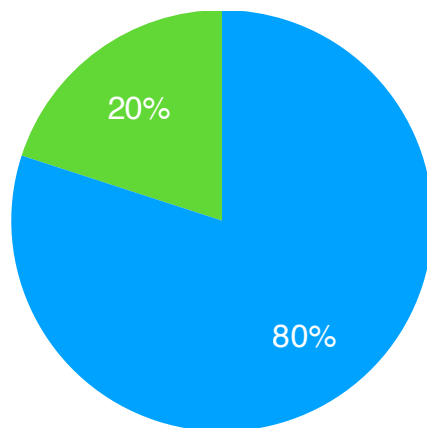


Donations: \$27,025.73    Other: \$26,660.21

Foundations: \$211,000.00

Total: \$264,685.94

### 2020-2021 Expenses



Administration: \$37,655.85

Programs: \$150,696.06

Total: \$188,351.91



## 2020-2021 FINANCIALS

Fiscal year 2020-2021 was particularly challenging for S.T.E.P.S. Because of COVID-19, schools were operating in a hybrid model and outside groups were not allowed in the schools, which meant S.T.E.P.S. was not able to provide our program in person. S.T.E.P.S. had to perform our program virtually.

In fiscal year 2020-2021, S.T.E.P.S. received a \$150,000 grant from the State of Connecticut Department of Education to provide a Summer Enrichment Program to students aged 16-19 in southeastern CT. Of the \$150,000, S.T.E.P.S. drew down \$135,000 to conduct the program.

As a result, S.T.E.P.S.' gross income increased by 118%. From normal operations gross income increased by 6%. This was driven entirely by donations.

Expenses for fiscal year 2020-2021, as a result of the State grant, increased by 109%. Without the State grant, expenses increased by 31%. This was driven by increased expenses needed to operate in the hybrid learning model. Additional costs were incurred for Zoom meetings and supplies.

You have helped us empower young women and uplift communities through your generosity.

We look forward to your continued support in 2021-2022.

## QUICK FACTS

- STEPS will continue to partner with other organizations, as we have seen the positive effects when we all work together.

## GRANTORS AND DONORS – WE APPRECIATE YOU

### *INSPIRE*

\$50,000 +

State of Connecticut, Department of Education

### *ELEVATE*

\$10,000 +

Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut  
Nordson Corporation / Foundation

### *EMPOWER*

\$5,000 +

Anonymous Charitable Trust  
Boys & Girls Club of New London  
City of New London (CDBG)  
Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation  
eWomen Foundation  
Frank Loomis Palmer Fund  
Olga Sipolin Children's Fund  
Southeastern Connecticut Non-Profit Capacity Building Collaborative  
The Site Affairs Team, Pfizer Connecticut Labs

### *EDUCATE*

\$1,000 +

Berkshire Foundation  
Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut  
Chelsea Groton Foundation  
City of Groton  
Craig & Roberta Trost  
Elizabeth Raymond Ambler Trust  
George A. & Grace L. Long Foundation  
Groton Utilities / 2020 Jacqueline B. Nixon Community Service Award  
Henry E. Niles Foundation, Inc.  
Leslie Hawley  
Mystic Congregational Church / Jody Capen Memorial Outreach Fund  
The Dime Bank Foundation, Inc.  
Torrence Jennette