



Birth Roots

# 2024 Annual Report

Rooted in Belonging  
& Reaching New  
Communities  
Across Maine



# Dear Friends and Supporters,

For more than 20 years, Birth Roots has pioneered what is possible when parents and caregivers experience meaningful social support during the foundational days, weeks, and months of new and early parenthood. By prioritizing families' non-clinical needs for both skill building and connection, Birth Roots programs generate the very thing humans need during perinatal transitions—belonging. We accomplish this through our specific facilitation model. This model is rooted in both individual and group reflection, bringing collective solutions and stability to a time of individualized overwhelm and uncertainty.

These two decades have not been without challenges but we want to recognize that through it all, we have received steadfast support from community members like you. Without your dedication and encouragement, we simply would not have gotten this far.

2024 was about implementing real transformation and accountability in everything that happens at Birth Roots. Despite the shaky ground all nonprofits continue to walk, we saw 566 families register for monthly Shared Identity Groups. This new programming launched in 2023 to more effectively acknowledge and encompass the distinct needs of groups and communities who haven't always seen themselves in our programs. To realize our vision of a world where families emerge from the early parent and childhood experience confident, adaptable, and resilient, we needed to address a persistent gap in our program delivery. With intention and care, we were determined to address the barriers and obstacles that too many parents encounter.

Today, our Shared Identity Group programming includes Queer Parents, Black Motherhood, One Parent Families by Design, Talking Dads, Parenting in Chaotic Times (Hold on Tight), Neurodiversity in Families, and Parenting Medically Complex Children.

In our 2024 annual report, we've included testimonials from the parents and caregivers who've had transformative experiences as a result of our energy, effort, and deepening understanding of what so many families are up against.

This past year was just the beginning of what we are reaching for as we launch the next 20 years of Birth Roots—and it makes all the difference having you alongside us.

Sincerely,



Kate McCarthy,  
Executive Director



Leah Deragon, Co-founder &  
Director of Mission & Impact

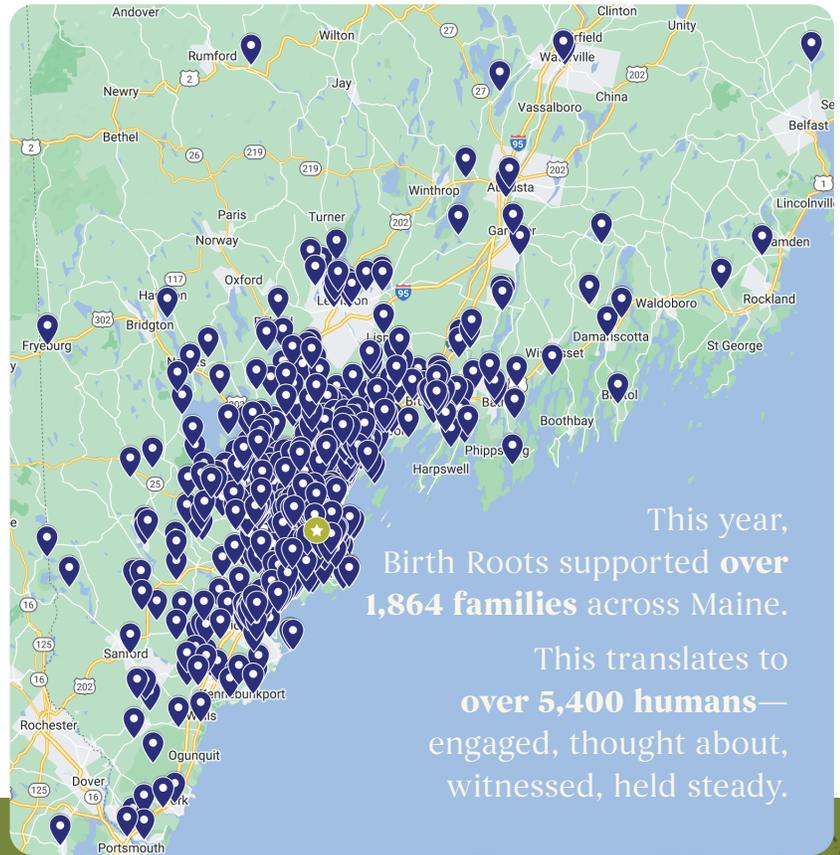
# 2024: Reaching more of Maine's families, forging more community partnerships!

We want you to know how much was accomplished in 2024.

What began 20 years ago as a small, community-centered effort based in Portland, has **grown into a statewide movement**, reaching more families than ever before.

Thanks to deepening cross-sector partnerships, as a result of first-hand and word-of-mouth trust in our model, families from York to Waldo counties engaged our programs and community supported parenting model.

We saw a **155% increase** in families accessing our **sliding scale and equitable pricing options**, ensuring that cost is never a barrier to our offerings. This reflects not only broader outreach but also stronger awareness of Birth Roots as a safe and welcoming resource.



*The sliding scale and equitable pricing options at Birth Roots have expanded who walks through these doors, and when we expand, everyone benefits. When we lead and operate with equity and empathy, no one gets left behind.*

—Evi Woodlinn, Board of Directors, Birth Roots

In 2024, we also celebrated continued partnership with the Quimby Family Foundation and the Maine Community Foundation. New grant funding from the Frances Hollis Brain Foundation Fund and Portside's 1% Back to Maine Fund empowered us to expand programming, and invest in reaching more people beyond southern Maine. These partnerships also helped us to retain more facilitators and deliver on our mission to *create a culture of support for parents throughout the critical window of early childhood development.*

Whether families found us through friends, social media, their provider, or simply seeing our signage on Vannah Avenue, each new participant is an opportunity for us to learn and grow.

*2024 was the year that the synergy of our Sliding Scale, Trauma-Informed Facilitation, and Shared Identity Group feedback pointed our ship in a more thoughtful, intentional direction—toward a reproductive justice and equity orientation that will prevent Birth Roots from becoming a place of exclusion for some and perpetuated advantage for others.*

# Shared Identity Groups Take Root!

Birth Roots was finally able to see the Shared Identity Groups **come alive** in 2024.

**566 families registered for these monthly Shared Identity Groups**—new programming that we piloted in 2023 in the hopes of expanding our vision to include groups and communities we had yet to meaningfully serve.

Est. 2024	Queer Parents	Est. 2025
Black Motherhood	One Parent Families by Design	Parents of Medically Complex Children
Neurodiversity in Families	Talking Dads	Hold On Tight

*Today, we are proud to host SEVEN (and growing) Shared Identity Groups*

*Being surrounded by so many Queer people that are like my wife and I is amazing and so comforting. I cried the first time we attended because I was so overwhelmed with gratitude; knowing we were being seen and accepted and celebrated. We're incredibly lucky to live in a space that has a place like Birth Roots.*

—Queer Parents Group participant

*This journey has completely shifted my lens of self, my spouse, and my child in a way that leads us closer to living a centered and meaningful life. This group understands what it is like to move through the world in a way and by a set of rules that differs from those around us. It makes me feel like I am not alone and to celebrate all kinds of nervous systems. I cannot thank you enough for creating this community...Having this available is life changing.*

—Neurodiversity in Families Group participant

The Shared Identity program has been in such high demand that its FY2025 annual costs (\$52,641) are now on par with our core Postnatal (\$51,857) and Toddler (\$55,160) programs. The difference, however, is that approximately 67% of core program costs are offset by fee-for-service revenue, whereas, our free Shared Identity Groups generate no revenue.

To off-set a small portion of the costs, we implemented an optional \$5 drop-in fee for Shared Identity Groups in early 2025. We estimate that these drop-in fees will cover approximately \$1,500 of our costs in FY2025, covering a very small portion of the \$52k total program cost.

*It will take increased community investment to generate the revenue necessary to sustain this critical program supporting underrepresented families in Maine.*



Talking Dads

# Deepening Our Commitment to Impactful Facilitation

Birth Roots facilitation model sets us apart in the non-clinical perinatal space.

As our programs continue to evolve and grow, so too must our emotionally intelligent infrastructure for guiding, supporting, and empowering the communities we serve. In the past year, we made strategic investments in facilitation training and internal reflection that have already begun to reshape the way we work and the way we design our programs.

## New Trainings for Non-Clinical Perinatal Providers

One of our most significant strides this year was the launch of an 8-week Trauma-Informed facilitation training designed specifically for non-clinical perinatal providers. This curriculum supports providers in cultivating trauma-informed, culturally responsive facilitation practices.

In partnership with Resilient Birth, this training brought fresh perspectives and deep expertise from the field. Additionally, this work included a comprehensive review of our entire perinatal curricula to identify opportunities for more robust trauma-informed practices in our classrooms.

## Evolving and Expanding Our Board

In 2024, we led a board recruitment process to fill term-limited board seat vacancies and evolve our board to meet the needs of our next chapter at Birth Roots. Thanks to an impressive 25 applications received, we brought on five dynamic individuals with deep experience in development, strategic planning, budget and finance, and equity work.

*Our investment in evolving our facilitation practices and ensuring our curriculum is trauma-informed is a signal of what's to come at Birth Roots. We are committed to becoming better facilitators, which for us means—more responsive listeners and co-creators alongside the families we serve.*



Staff & Facilitator Training with Resilient Birth

*The 8-week training with Resilient Birth gave our staff and facilitators the common language we needed as we bring a trauma-informed lens to every facet of our work at Birth Roots.*

*—Emily Murray,  
Birth Roots Co-Founder  
& Facilitator*



# Inspiration & Connection Through Impactful Partnerships

Birth Roots started as a partnership and will continue to grow because of our roots in our broader Maine community.



Our collaborations in 2024 were a highlight of what we can accomplish together and your *support is essential to making these partnerships happen.*

Our **Treetop** space provided opportunities to collaborate with **Maine Boys to Men** and **Sad Dads Club**.

Hosted and recorded two panel discussions for the community. First, **Local Perinatal Nonprofits:** *Maine Boys to Men, Sad Dads Club, Maine State Breastfeeding Coalition and Community Doulas*, and then a panel on **Policy & Legislative Care of Perinatal Families** with *Maine Doula Coalition, Woodlinn Law, and The Postpartum Project*.

We hosted two family-oriented events with favorite nonprofit partners, **The Pollinator Parade** with *Maine Audubon*, and **Little Monsters Ball** with *Ketcha Outdoors*.



Pollinator Parade, credit: Lindsay Murphy



Perinatal Non Profit Panel



## Donor Spotlight

Maine Community Foundation and the Quimby Family Foundation were among our top supporters in 2024. Without their engagement, the following would not have been possible this past year:

- Extending access to the sliding scale for families attending toddler programming
- Addressing climate change impacts to our Outdoor Classroom for Baby Roots Nature Camp
- Supporting the transition of Shared Identity Groups from pilot to expansion

*Birth Roots is a crucial organization that fills gaps in our community for new and expectant parents...We are proud to support Birth Roots as it broadens the populations it serves to help those most in need of parenting support.*

*-Katie Howard,  
Community Partner,  
Maine Community Foundation*



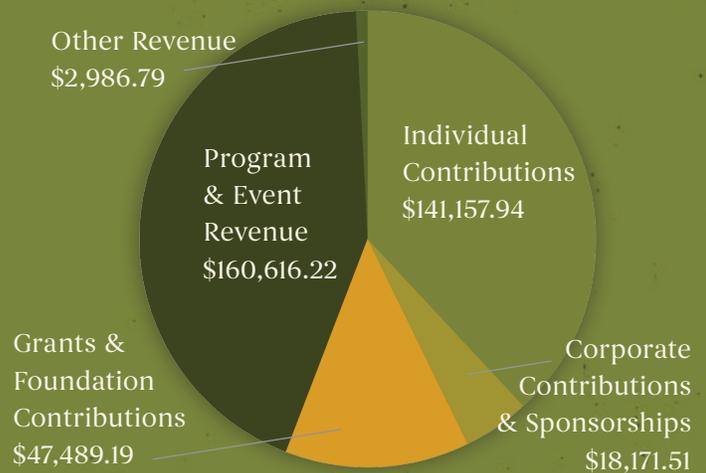
# Looking Ahead... There's so much more we can do together!

2024 was a pivotal year for us.

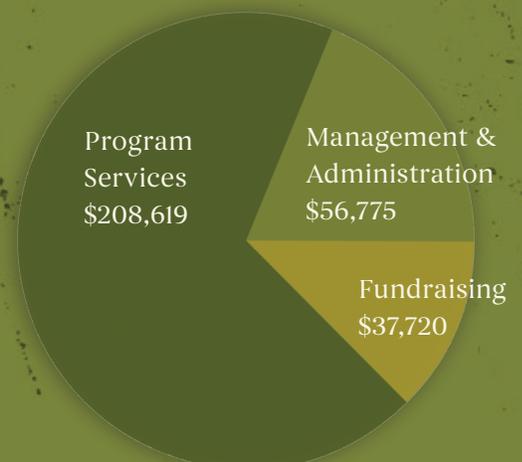
We started to lay the groundwork for what we're excited to call *Birth Roots 2.0*. Already in 2025, we've kicked off the discovery phase of this work. With two decades of programming behind us, we're looking ahead to a future that includes more training and equity work for staff and board members, prototyping new programs, and introducing more meaningful community events in direct response to what families are telling us they need.

## What can you expect to see from us in the coming months?

- **Partnerships** to bring our Community Supported Parenting model to new communities.
- **Collaboration** with Nico Chin with *Up With Community* to better understand how Birth Roots looks at class, race, and power dynamics in our work.
- **Building** our 2.0 prototype group or population so that Birth Roots offerings continue to expand beyond southern Maine.
- **Launching** our new Shared Identity Group for parents and caregivers of Medically Complex Children.
- **Expansion** of our Preparing Series, a new prenatal offering that combines flock-forming facilitation with skill-building for new parents.
- **Introducing** seasonal pop-ups for Shared Identity Groups seeking community-building for their children.



**Total Revenue: \$370,421.65**



**Total Expenses: \$303,114.00**



## Board of Directors

Julia Edwards and Will Lee,  
Board Co-chairs

Scott Mazuzan, Treasurer

Evi Woodlinn, Secretary

Eliza Warren Giberson

Fiona Gordon

Amanda Hatfield

Astride Jeannot

Miriam Markowitz

Elly Pepper

Emma Raynes

Aleks Strub

## Staff

Kate McCarthy,  
Executive Director

Leah Deragon,  
Co-founder & Director of Mission & Impact

Abby Pitts,  
Program Director

Nina Emlen,  
Operations Manager

## Facilitators

### *Prenatal & Postnatal*

Leah Deragon

Nina Emlen

Lisa Kourakos

Abby Pitts

Jessica Ruscetta

Maeve Shea

### *Toddler*

Tucker Daniels

Leah Deragon

Emily Murray

Morgan Starkweather

### *Shared Identity Groups*

Mark Priceman

(Talking Dads)

Ophelia Hu Kinney and Shannon Mackey  
(Queer Parents)

Astride Jeannot and Topaz Smith  
(Black Motherhood)

Bethie Fowler and Elise Grace  
(Medically-complex Children)

Leah Deragon  
(Neurodiversity in Families & Hold on Tight)

Ayla Zeimer  
(One Parent Families By Design)

**Thank you for your  
ongoing support.**

**With your help, we  
continue to stay rooted in  
belonging and devoted to  
reaching new communities  
across Maine.**

**Stay connected with  
Birth Roots.**



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**Birth Roots**

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