



**Birth Roots**

**20 Annual  
25 Report**

Building a Culture of Care.  
Changing the Landscape  
of Early Parenthood.



# Dear Friends and Supporters,

For 22 years, we've been observing and listening deeply to new and expectant parents. This practice of listening and observing the people we support helped to shape our values as an organization, and more than two decades later, this practice remains a pillar of Birth Roots.

When we think about what it means to create a *culture of care*, we know the first step is to set aside ego and agenda and to really *listen*. When successful, the culture of care creates trust, and with trust, we're able to center *belonging*. When we center belonging, our programs, partnerships, and daily work better reflect the world around us—the communities, spaces, and resources we share with others.

We're incredibly proud of what we accomplished in 2025. Our close observations and our continued listening led to an expansion of Newborn Buds and the launch of our new Preparing Series. And as we grew our programs, we also grew our inner resources—investing in staff and facilitator training, strengthening our internal systems, and nurturing relationships with community partners. We know that the support we offer families is only as strong as the care, reflection, and growth we commit to within our own organization.

We also made time for celebration. We celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Pollinator Parade and the return of our beloved photo booth event where families can gather and connect over the work we do together.

Of course, no year is without big changes. After three years, we said goodbye to Nina Emlen, our talented operations manager, and after a months-long recruitment process in the fall, welcomed Sabrina Caramando. Sabrina brings a background as a nurse practitioner specializing in breast oncology and a passion for expanding how we care for each other within our communities.

In these pages, we expand on our continued growth, our stronger connections, and share how our 22-year evolution as a non-clinical perinatal organization in Cumberland County is laying the foundation for generating confidence in parents and caregivers across the entire state of Maine!

Thank you for being part of our story and for helping us continue to build a *culture of care*.

Sincerely,



Kate McCarthy,  
Executive Director



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

# 2025: Core Programming Evolution & Expansion

The bustling Birth Roots of today seemed like a distant dream when we started with just one childbirth education class each month! We never lost sight of our vision, which is why today we continue to expand our reach across Maine, **supporting more than 1,800 families annually**, and reaching as many as 11 counties in recent years. We often see new and expectant parents willing to travel hours to participate in our programs. Participants report that our unique programming allows them to spend more meaningful time together with other families over a series of classes – an experience they can't find anywhere else.

When parents and families are provided with high quality time together, relationships grow stronger and participants report increased feelings of confidence, connection, and readiness. There was a time when busy families sought a more abbreviated or accelerated way to prepare for childbirth and postpartum. Today, families are placing a higher value on prenatal education, opportunities to connect with fellow parents, and overall, build their sense of belonging to a community as they embark on the path of parenthood.

In April, we reformatted three prenatal classes to a Preparing Series. This new series in the form of a bundle was designed in response to participant evaluation data that showed new and expectant parents are yearning for a more cohort-based connection.



Alyssa Soucy Photography

*For the partners of birthing people: this course genuinely helped me to understand and embrace my role during the birth, how I can best support my partner through labor, the stages of a birth, the possible scenarios and interventions that might arise, and so much more. Lisa is patient and knowledgeable, and the four week curriculum gives the complex material an opportunity to sink in from week to week.”—2025 Birth Class Participant*



*The shift to the Preparing Series helped us to look more closely at **total contact hours** for families. For example, families who enrolled in the Childbirth Ed Series (12 hours), Preparing Series (9 hours), and the Buds Series (6 hours), received nearly 30 hours of support across the transition to parenthood. As we continue to evolve our use of evaluation data, we will explore the impact of contact hours on short-term outcomes.*

# Expanding Access is Our North Star

## Shared Identity Groups

Birth Roots now offers the following **Shared Identity Groups** for Maine parents:

Our Shared Identity Groups took root in 2024, and in 2025, this expansion beyond our core programming continued. What began as three Shared Identity Groups quickly grew to five, and now seven by the end of 2025, with an eighth set to launch in May of 2026!

Queer Parents	Neurodiversity in Families	Talking Dads	Parents of Medically Complex Children	<b>Coming May 2026</b>
Black Motherhood	One Parent Families by Design	Hold On Tight		Pregnancy & Infant Loss

## Come As You Are

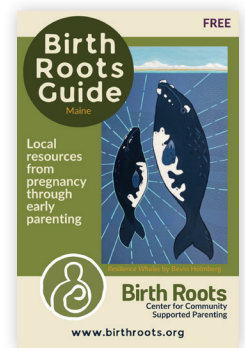
What remains true even after more than two decades is that **one size does not fit all at Birth Roots**. Some families begin their process early by enrolling in the Pregnancy Class and participate in every Birth Roots class, supporting each of the distinct transitions from pregnancy to birth to newborn to toddler, while other families pop in for a single class or group or event—which might better suit their bandwidth or learning style. Just as there is not a static or prescribed way to be pregnant, give birth, or raise a child, there is not a prescribed way to be involved with Birth Roots.



## Published 18th Edition Resource Guide

Birth Roots is deeply committed to elevating and amplifying supportive perinatal resources in Maine. Research shows that access to providers like counselors, pelvic floor therapists, and doulas improve health and well-being outcomes in families, and yet, awareness of these options is often dependent on one's prenatal care provider, cultural background, and/or family belief systems.

In 2006, we began producing free resource guides that detail more than 125 perinatal providers and family supports in southern Maine. *In 2025, we printed our 18th Birth Roots Guide and 3,500 copies are currently being distributed across Cumberland County.*



# Trainings and Organizational Growth

Our commitment to internal growth as an organization remained a priority in 2025.

## Facilitator Training

Our year began with facilitators completing an 8-week training with Resilient Birth on trauma-informed care in the non-clinical setting.

A few months later, we invested further in our facilitators to ensure continuity and alignment of facilitation practices across our Core Curriculum and Shared Identity Group leaders. Eleven facilitators and two staff members had the opportunity to learn directly from Birth Roots founders Leah Deragon and Emily Murray, who pioneered and refined the organization's signature facilitation approach over the course of two decades.

## Community Supported Parenting Initiative

Undoubtedly our most exciting news is that the 8-hour curriculum Birth Roots facilitators received in 2025 will serve as the template and training standard for our emerging statewide **Community Supported Parenting (CSP) Initiative!** The CSP Initiative seeks to fill a gap in the current perinatal landscape by providing a non-clinical framework that promotes early relational health, reduces perinatal isolation, and strengthens community capacity across the state. This facilitation curriculum maintains fidelity at scale as we begin consulting with perinatal initiatives across Maine looking to grow or expand prenatal and postnatal skills and community-building opportunities.

## Organizational Design & Growth

We launched an in-depth process of paradigm-shifting work with **Nico Chin of Up With Community**. This initiative has taken us through a year-long process of strategic design thinking, including, “new awareness, analysis, action and accountability to build the habits and practices of power sharing in our operations, strategies, and relationships.” This project and collaboration has been some of the most important internal work Birth Roots has taken on to date and we are excited to begin the next phase of Board Evolution Strategies and values-based organizational culture-building.

## “It’s Never Too Late to Heal”

In Spring 2025, we convened three perinatal mental health specialists to help us explore the process of healing from birth and early postpartum traumas, even many years after the fact. *The recording can be found on the Birth Roots Youtube page.*

## It’s Never Too Late To Heal

{ Three Perspectives on Healing from a Difficult Entry Into Parenthood }

Tuesday, March 11 at 6:00PM | Birth Roots' Treetop Classroom



Felicity Colangelo



Jenna Daly



Monika Munezero



**Birth Roots**  
20th Anniversary Event

## Kindred article feature

In August of 2025, co-founder Leah Deragon was invited to be a guest contributor for the summer edition of Kindred Magazine. *This piece was an opportunity to showcase the “Facilitation to Flocks” transformation that happens in the context of a perinatal cohort.*

*Our Executive Director Kate McCarthy was accepted into the Maine Association of Nonprofits’ 2025-26 Leadership Institute cohort for a year of opportunities to strengthen strategic planning and systems thinking, as well as team management and ongoing professional development. This cohort includes 23 nonprofit leaders from across all 16 counties in Maine.*

# 2025 Goals, Collaborations & Finances

Over the next three years, we are committed to two mutually reinforcing priorities:

(1) Deliver the high impact, high value perinatal programming Birth Roots is known for at 16 Vannah Avenue in Portland. Create the conditions for the kind of relationship and social support that stabilizes new and expectant families to take root, as well as for families occupying a specific lived experience; and

(2) Lead a **statewide** effort to strengthen non-clinical support for new and expectant parents. Grounded in our **Community Supported Parenting (CSP)** framework, we aim to improve early relational health, reduce perinatal isolation and poor mental health outcomes, and strengthen community capacity across Maine.

*Keep up with our progress by joining our mailing list and following us on social media.*

## Collaborations & Treetop Partners



Greater Portland Health  
MultiLingual Childbirth Ed Class

Pollinator Parade



Doula  
Networking &  
Education



Boot Camp for  
New Dads



Family  
Photobooth

Alyssa Soucy  
Photography

Childbirth Ed  
for French, Spanish,  
and Portuguese speakers



Holding Space for  
Pregnancy Loss  
offered by



Hypnobirthing  
classes  
offered by



Pollinator Parade  
credit: Lindsay Murphy

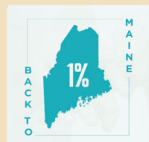
## Program Year Sponsors

- Advisors Living Real Estate
- Bangor Savings Bank
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- Heather Shields Maine
- InterMed
- Island Treasure Toys
- Lincoln & Main
- Lindsay Murphy Photography
- Maine Doulas
- Portland Nannies
- Riverstone Wellness
- Scarborough Dental Associates
- Six Branches Family Acupuncture
- The Erin Oldham Team at Portside Real Estate Group

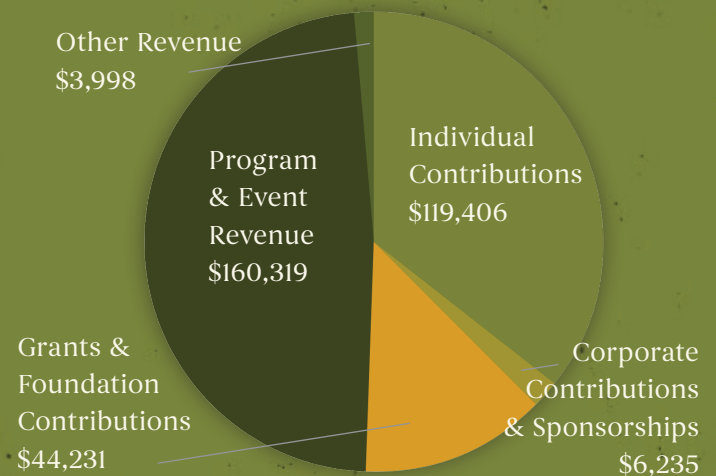


## Donor Spotlight

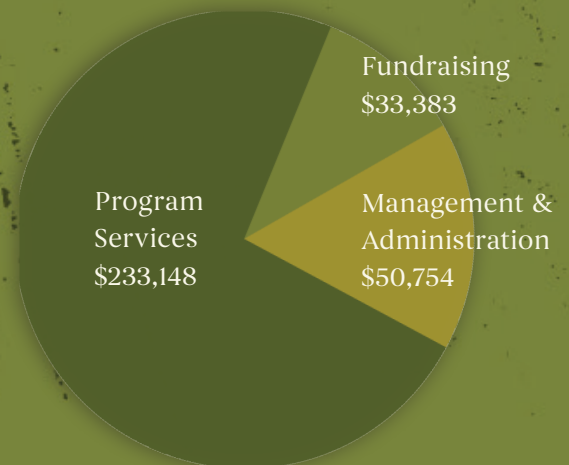
In 2025, we had four grant proposals funded. **The Rines Thompson Fund** and an **anonymous Donor Advised Fund at the Maine Community Foundation** supported Birth Roots with general operating grants. **The Quimby Family** provided generous support of our Baby Roots Nature Camp program. Additionally, **Portside Real Estate 1% for Maine** funded the expansion of our perinatal programming and Shared Identity groups.



## Finances



**Total Revenue: \$334,189**



**Total Expenses: \$317,285**

## 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

Sabrina Caramando,  
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/Shannon Mackey/Brigid Black  
(Queer Parents)

Astride Jeannot  
(Black Motherhood)

Bethie Fowler/Elise Grace  
(Medically-complex Children)

Leah Deragon/Julian Gallo/Bethie Fowler  
(Neurodiversity in Families & Hold on Tight)

Ayla Zeimer/Lauren Persky/Hannah Hussey  
(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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