

Rainbow Village received a \$17,819 General Grant from ECF in 2018 in partnership with Christ Episcopal Church (Norcross).



In its study “[Creating High Impact Nonprofits](#),” the Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society concluded the following:

Conventional wisdom says that scaling social innovation starts with strengthening internal management capabilities . . . real social change happens when organizations go outside their own walls and find creative ways to enlist the help of others.

By this measure (and many others) Rainbow Village is a wildly successful organization!

Founded in 1991 by Christ Episcopal Church in Norcross, Rainbow Village is a self-contained campus with a family service center and the capacity to house 30 families. In partnership with several other exceptional nonprofits, this shining star of an organization is breaking the cycle of homelessness, poverty, and domestic violence. They’ve guided over 1,000 homeless families toward self-sufficiency by providing housing, empowerment training, and family support that helps them regain and sustain permanent housing and stability.

Changing Lives

The impacts of Rainbow Village’s work are dramatic. Amy, a Rainbow Village alumnae and domestic violence survivor, describes her experience:

We were given a very small cozy cottage home to live in, complete with everything including a phone. At Rainbow Village, I made new friends. I met people who truly loved me, and did not want anything back in return, I learned how to budget, save, and to take care of my household of 3 boys, ages 15, 9, and 10 months at the time . . . I landed a great job with an advertising company and was able to build some savings. I left Rainbow Village feeling secure and in control of my life.

Rainbow Village’s programs are holistic and client-driven. Clients set their own goals in each of five core areas:

education and training, employment and career management, financial management, family stability, and well-being. Mentors and trainers help clients achieve these goals, one family at a time. For example, residents set and track goals such as earning a GED, getting job training, obtaining a permanent position, and learning financial management skills. Using the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix, clients can see and celebrate progress as it occurs.

Rainbow Village obtained a Dream Big Grant from TechBridge, a nonprofit using technology to transform community impact, to help develop a system for tracking client achievements and capturing stakeholder data. ECF's grant was used to meet a matching funds requirement, and the organization estimates that ECF's investment generates savings of over \$600,000 per year. Once again, Rainbow Village enlisted the help of several partners to implement a life-changing program for its clients.

A Socially-Distanced Village

The Reverend Melanie Connor, Rainbow Village Executive Director, remains committed to leveraging the expertise of others to most effectively serve homeless families.

Don't make yourself crazy trying to do it all. Others are serving with excellence, too. Put your efforts in what you do well and bring others alongside you. That's how we are a real village.

As client requests for mental health services at Rainbow Village have increased, reflecting the increased anxiety all people feel during the pandemic. Rainbow Village has entered into a partnership with Viewpoint Health to provide counseling on-site several days each week. When Gwinnett County schools went to virtual education, New Life Technologies provided 25 computers to Rainbow Village, who set up a digital learning center for children in its care.

Despite all its successful and transformative collaborative efforts, Melanie is sad that the staff, volunteers, and partners cannot come together physically as a family. In this time of social distancing, she says she "misses the socializing and the opportunity to give and receive much-needed hugs."



Mary-Kathryn Boler, CFRE (she/her) is a past Board Chair for the ECF Board of Directors and is a member of St. Peter and St. Paul Episcopal Church in Marietta. She has 30 years' experience in education and economic development program creation and funding. She also shares her development expertise with other nonprofits as a grant writing instructor at the Georgia Center for Nonprofits. [Learn more about the ECF Board of Directors.](#)

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