

Standing Up for Children and Families
Through Advocacy and Public Education



Letter From the Board Chair

2023 was a significant year for the Children's League of Massachusetts.

The lingering effects of the pandemic have presented new challenges for families in the Commonwealth requiring an increasingly collaborative and integrated response from our systems. The Children's League represents nearly 60 organizations from all corners of the Commonwealth who hold diverse perspectives on their role in an integrated network of support. This past year, we called on each of our Members to meet the dynamic needs of our community and collaboration will be the key to ensuring children and families receive the support they deserve as we forge ahead.

The League saw many successes over the past year, from legislative victories that reshaped public policy to organizing resources for community-based organizations to fulfill their missions more effectively to ongoing collaboration with our state partners. The work of the Children's League impacted hundreds of thousands of residents in Massachusetts this past year.

Our systems don't need fixing but rather healing. We collectively need to reckon with our role in creating the outcomes we are all working so hard to change and this requires honest reflection, humility in acknowledging what we don't know and a fierce commitment to learning so we can ensure every child in the Commonwealth has an equal opportunity to thrive.

As we look back on this past year, we should pause and acknowledge all that has been accomplished while holding the knowledge of all that is left to do.

Thank you for contributing to such important and necessary work.



In solidarity,

8

Shaheer Mustafa CLM Board Chair President & CEO, HopeWell

Letter From the Director

Every year at the Children's League of Massachusetts brings new issues, challenges, and opportunities to our Members and our team.

In January, we joined the Commonwealth in welcoming in a new Administration; we are thrilled that Governor Maura Healey and her team are continuing the legacy of state partnership with our Members, and a commitment to investing in services for vulnerable children and families.

As a League with diverse membership, CLM has a broad agenda. That's because the issues faced by children and families in crisis, and by the providers and state agencies that serve them, are complex and multi-faceted. We can't keep kids safe without addressing issues of poverty. We can't create new service models unless we have the funding to staff them. We can't return children to their families without diligent processes and supportive programming to ensure their safety and promote long-term stability. We can't let young adults exit state care without the full scope of support they need to find success in life. And we can't target services to the populations most in need without the data and reporting to pinpoint the injustices in our systems. Together we remain focused on addressing these issues through our administrative, legislative, and budget advocacy.

CLM's Members are the heart of our organization. Whether we are meeting with state leaders, bringing you together for Advocacy Day at the State House, or facilitating peer discussions on critical topics, we drive change by elevating, amplifying, and celebrating your services and hard work. As a League, we must collectively keep showing up again and again to ask for what we need and what our children and families deserve.

I'm incredibly proud to be championing this work, together with all of you. Thank you for your commitment and your partnership.

With gratitude,

Rachel Gwaltney
Executive Director

CLM maintains unwavering commitment to advancing funding, legislation, and policy initiatives that improve services and opportunities for children and families. Our League brings the voices and expertise of child- and family-serving providers and experts to the policy-making table.

Over the past year and together with our Members, we developed and advanced legislation on key issues, grew investments in critical state budget line items, and facilitated collaboration between providers and state agencies to spread best practices and tackle pressing challenges in the field.

Navigating Change: A Transitioning Administration

CLM shared our priorities with new Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey and Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll, highlighting three essential themes for the new Administration:

- Lead with child and family well-being and listen to family and youth voices.
- Take a systems-level, coordinated, and data-driven approach to delivering child and family services and combat systemic racism.
- Respect the state's partnership with community-based providers who deliver this work on behalf of the Commonwealth.



Working with Key Decision-Makers

CLM deeply values our ongoing partnership with the Administration, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and state agencies that serve children and families across the Commonwealth. These relationships have been critical for sustaining our momentum and driving positive change throughout the transition.

Read CLM's Transition Memo



Investing in Our Work: The State Budget

Our advocacy together with Members and partners brought about **significant budget increases in FY23** to many state agencies that serve children and families:

Children & Adolescent Mental Health Services

Increased by \$14,679,848

Congregate Care

Increased by **\$29,164,776**

Family Resource Centers

Increased by \$3,300,000

Services for Children & Families

Increased by \$18,624,177

Special Education Extraordinary Costs (Circuit Breaker)

Increased by \$67,197,745

Support & Stabilization

Increased by **\$2,690,562**

Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children

Increased by \$101,663,335

*Comparison of FY22 to FY23

View the Full Budget Breakdown.





A Win for the Workforce

In November of 2022, Governor Charlie Baker signed An Act relating to economic growth and relief for the Commonwealth, which included \$225 million in additional emergency relief funds targeted for human services provider rates (Chapter 257). These funds set a new floor for Chapter 257 rates at 53% of the Bureau of Labor Statistics standard, an important step in our collaborative advocacy to raise rates to a fair and equitable level.

Implementing Change: State Policy Wins

In FY23, we accomplished big wins for our League with the passage of three bills from our 2021-2022 legislative agenda:

- An Act Granting Equal Access to Original Birth Certificates to all Persons Born in Massachusetts
- ✓ An Act Relative to Expanding Access to Adoption
- ✓ An Act Establishing a Foster Parents Bill of Rights



Advancing Our Legislative Agenda: Key Priorities

We launched the new 2022-2023 legislative session with the introduction of two CLM-led bills:



An Act to Eliminate Disproportionality and Inequities for At-Risk Children, aimed at tackling systemic discrimination in child-serving state agencies across Massachusetts.

Learn About This Bill

Quick Facts on Disproportionality Affecting Children Within DCF

Open DCF Cases

Rates compared to white children:

Rates compared to white children:

• Hispanic/Latinx: 2.9x

Out-of-Home Placements

Hispanic/Latinx: 2.5x

Native American 2.1x

• Black: 2.4x

Black: 2.4x



Hispanic/Latinx: 2.3x Aging Out of Foster Care

Rates compared to white children:

Protective Intakes (51A) Screening

Rates compared to white children:

- Hispanic/Latinx: 1.2x
- Black: 1.5x
- Asian: 1.5x
- Native American: 2x
- Pacific Islander: 1.2x





An Act Clarifying Insurance Liability for Foster Care Providers, to address the threat of comprehensive foster care providers losing the ability to continue supporting children, families, and the system as a whole.

Actively Developing Our Agenda

CLM continues to endorse bills that tackle priorities including **juvenile justice**, **education**, **healthcare**, **and equity** for the vulnerable populations our providers serve.

Alongside our **Collaborative trade partners**, CLM ensures that the **human services workforce remains a top priority** with the new Administration and Legislature, as we

integrate the workforce's impact on service delivery, quality, and availability into our agenda across various fronts.

View Our State Legislative Agenda



Shaping Conversation: Integrating the Federal Agenda

In FY23, CLM advanced federal relationships and legislative advocacy on key federal issues, such as follows:

Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program

CLM advocated for the reauthorization of the MIECHV program by publishing a **blogpost** on the importance of this legislation, sharing messaging across social media platforms, and disseminating a **Public Education and Outreach Toolkit** with our Members. In a win, the resulting federal omnibus funding bill reauthorized the MIECHV program and increased funding through FY2027.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

CLM **urged** Massachusetts' federal delegation that a proposal for stricter work requirements would be harmful to children and families.

✓ Institutions for Mental Disease (IMD) Exclusion on Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs)

CLM supports federal advocacy for **legislation** that would provide a narrow exemption from the IMD exclusion to ensure children in foster care receiving care in QRTPs can also receive Medicaid coverage; CLM signed on to an **advocacy letter** and shared advocacy opportunities with Members.

✓ Separate Licensing Standards for Kinship Foster Homes

CLM and our Foster Care Task Force responded to the Administration on Children, Youth and Families' proposed rule on separate licensing standards for kinship foster homes. Collectively, our League began discussing the path forward for this rule in Massachusetts and the role of providers in kinship services.



Sue O'Callaghan, CLM Policy Director with U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren

Through our membership in the **Children's Welfare League of America** and the **National Organization of State Associations for Children**, we remain closely connected to advocacy opportunities and maintain vital relationships with experts, policymakers, and child welfare providers across the nation.

Keeping Up with the Supreme Court

✓ Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

CLM firmly stands with Native tribes and are committed to advocating for the rights of Native communities. After **strongly urging** the Supreme Court to uphold the constitutionality of ICWA, it was upheld in a momentous decision.

"At its heart, ICWA is a clear mandate to preserve kinship and cultural connections, which we should value in all child welfare cases. When a child is removed from their home, they also risk losing their links to their extended family and heritage. We should make every effort to preserve, protect, and nurture these essential parts of a person's identity."

✓ Dobbs v. Jackson Decision

Together with our Adoption task Force CLM **reflected** on the impacts of the Supreme Court's detrimental decision in Dobbs v. Jackson, overturning Roe v. Wade's health protections for women. We called on policymakers, leaders, advocates, and the public to remain vigilant and responsive to the decision's impact on the overstressed child welfare sector to proactively manage the potential influx of children in need of foster care or adoption plans.



High Acuity Youth: Elevating a Critical Issue

This year, CLM surveyed our Members and released a report on "high acuity" adolescents living in congregate care within the child welfare system.

Through our Members' data and stories, we reported on **what we mean by "high acuity,"** the **impact** of these behaviors, and **solutions** to improve our ability to meet the needs of these youth while also maintaining safe and healing environments.

The Solution?

CLM outlined **six key recommendations** for DCF, partner agencies, and other organizations to swiftly adopt in order to better serve vulnerable youth in congregate care and better support provider staff who work directly with these youth:

- 1. Commit to partner relationship-building
- 2. Improve transparency, completeness, and collaboration between DCF and providers
- Foster opportunities for local system-building that bring together all child-serving agencies and providers
- 4. Stand up more robust and secure care settings that meet the needs of higher intensity youth
- Stand up more options, supports, and resources for older youth who are getting ready to age out of DCF
- Continue investing in solutions that reduce child removal and reliance on congregate care



WHERE DO WE BELONG?

Profiles of "High Acuity" Adolescents in Congregate Care and The System's Struggle to Meet Their Needs



Task Forces & Coalitions

Empowering Progress & Driving Successful Outcomes

Consisting of Members and partner advocates, CLM Task Forces and Coalitions **advance priorities through targeted legislative advocacy**, achieving big policy wins across the State. Further, Task Forces and Coalitions **foster collaborative discussions** with DCF and key players in the sector to creatively improve upon problems and spread best practices.

Highlights from each group include:



Adoption Task Force

Successfully advocated to pass the expanded access to adoption bill and the bill granting access to original birth certificates to all born in Massachusetts.



Family Preservation Coalition

Built consensus on the staffing crisis and system gaps, and gathered workforce rates testimonials and stories, which informed CLM's legislative advocacy.



Family Resource Center (FRC) Task Force

Documented and elevated to Administration leaders the ongoing challenges faced by FRC's as currently contracted and funded.



Foster Care Task Force

Researched and introduced the Foster Care Liability Insurance bill to address provider liability insurance issues; successfully advocated for the passage of the Foster Parents' Bill of Rights.



Transition-Aged Youth Coalition

Shared legislative expertise, administrative and budget advocacy strategies, and provider initiatives; became a core partner in the **Bay Cash initiative** (cash payment pilot for young people experiencing homelessness in Greater Boston).

Joining Forces: Uniting for a Common Purpose

CLM's Foster Care and Adoption Task Forces collaborated to foster productive discussions with DCF on how to innovatively use data to enhance foster and adoptive family recruitment. Further, they shared concerns and solutions regarding the new DCF Family Resource Policy.

State House Advocacy Day

Strength in Numbers: Advancing Our League's Mission

On May 3rd, 2023, CLM's Advocacy Day brought 80 attendees together at the State House to celebrate the importance of our legislative work and make our voices heard.

Advocacy Day attendees delivered information on CLM's policy agenda to *every single* legislator's office and held informative, relationship-building conversations with legislators and staff. **Our feet-on-the-ground advocates helped move CLM's legislative agenda forward.**



Rachel Gwaltney, CLM Executive Director

During the speaking program, **CLM** and our legislative champions reflected on the critical issues facing the child welfare sector, families, and providers, and the hard work we must continue to do together. Thank you to Senator Robyn Kennedy, Senator Susan Moran, and Representative Jack P. Lewis for sharing insights.

CLM Executive Director Rachel Gwaltney
highlighted the impactful work of our providers,
CLM's report on the challenge of "high acuity"
youth, and the great needs currently faced by
vulnerable children across the Commonwealth.

Read CLM's Post-Event Press Release



"The solutions to our challenges exist in our communities; it's the work that our providers are doing, it's the work that our communities are doing, and it's on us to ... lift up [and invest in] those solutions."

State Senator Robyn Kennedy
 First Worcester District

State House Advocacy Day

Thank you to all of our Member organizations who attended, advocated, and represented our League at the event!





Through the sharing of photos and experiences from Advocacy Day across social media channels, **the League gained immense visibility as a collective**, which ensures more decision-makers hear, understand, and support our mission of **uplifting children and families across the state**.







View More Photos From Advocacy Day

The News Room

Making Headlines: CLM Bridges the Information Gap

As experts in the field who serve as a conduit between providers of service and the legislature, state agency decision-makers, and the Governor, CLM continues to be a go-to organization for news outlets in Massachusetts on issues related to child and family services.

Here is a sampling of our news mentions from renowned outlets including the Boston Globe, State House News Service, and more - click the images to get redirected to the full story. For additional stories on CLM, our Members, and our issue areas, head to the **News Archive** on our website.

The Boston Blobe

We need to shine light on systemic challenges in all communities

Bill Seeks Data To Define Disparities In Children's

Services

Data Seen As Critical To Corrective Actions

By Alison Kuznitz akuznitz@statehousenews.com May 3, 2023



ien. Robyn Kennedy, co-chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persors with Disabilities, voiced children's League of Massachuseetts lobbying event Wednesday at the State House. State foster parents get bill of rights: New law expands training, resources for parents





Public Education

Empowering Our Members: Tools for Advocacy Success

At the League, education plays a crucial role in advancing advocacy efforts by raising awareness, providing Members with the tools and resources to be successful advocates, mobilizing sector partners, and informing the legislature on key issues. As a result, CLM fosters informed engagement within the community and across social platforms.

A key priority for CLM is **bridging the gap** between our Members and the policy-making world, and informing our League through training, tools, and campaigns.



Training Webinars

To prepare for State House Advocacy Day, CLM hosted **three advocacy training courses** on the legislative and budget process. These trainings informed organizational leadership, policy teams, and direct service staff alike on how they can influence policy and the budget as an individual and as an organization.



Member Newsletters, Bulletins, and Action Alerts

- Newsletters provide bi-weekly overviews on the state's child welfare sector including policy, research, funding, new initiatives, and guidance, as well as timely notices of new opportunities.
- Bulletins provide time-sensitive updates on shifting child welfare policies and deadlines, CLM events, and important announcements.
- Action Alerts notify Members about our League's advocacy agenda and immediate ways to take action to advance our legislation and budget priorities.



Public Education and Outreach Toolkits

CLM provides content, messaging, and resources to support our Members in conducting their own advocacy to elevate visibility and understanding of specific bills or issues at the state and federal level.



Fact Sheets and Blog Posts

CLM publishes fact sheets and blog posts on priority legislative agenda items and issues to educate members, legislators, and partners on the importance of specific issues and/or their passage within the legislature.

Online Presence

Amplifying Member Voices: Spreading the Word about Child & Family Services

CLM sets the standard for effective and impactful digital engagement through targeted communications efforts across social media platforms, engaging website uploads on relevant content, and regular communications through our Member email listserv.

Our League Consists of Informed and Engaged Members

- 1,700+ email subscribers email open rate is 11% higher than industry average
- 19K+ website views over the past year

Steady Growth Across Social Platforms

- 4,2650+ social media followers/likes across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn
- CLM's overall following across platforms increased by 10% over the past year
- Over the past year,
 - Website engagement rate increased by 16%
 - LinkedIn following increased by 95%
 - Instagram following increased by 40%
 - Facebook profile visits increased by 29%





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in childrens-league



DECEMBER 14, 2022

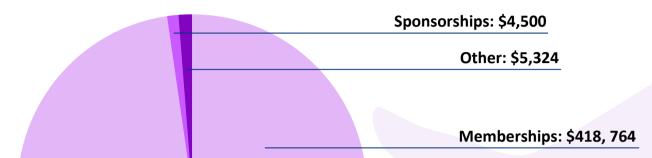
Home Visiting Programs: A Lifeline of Support for New and Expecting Families

For many, pregnancy can be a joyous experience even amidst the undeniable stress that comes with starting a family. New parents who are lucky enough to be surrounded by friends and family receive support to navigate the unfamiliarity that comes with giving birth and raising a child. For others, preg...

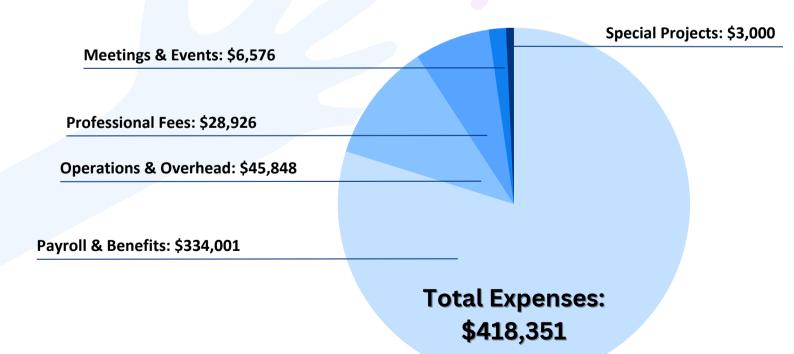


Finances

Our League's Total Revenue & Expenses for FY23



Total Revenue: \$428,588



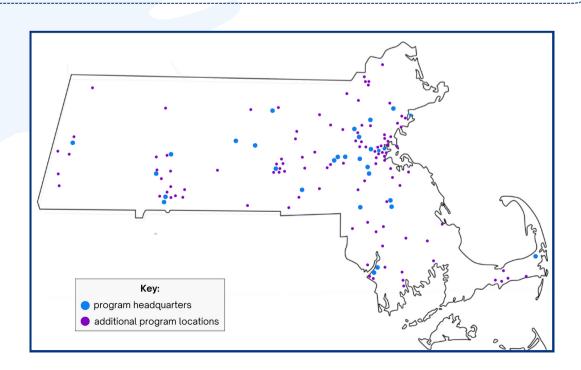
Our Members

The Heart of Our League

Our Members are **drivers of change and committed** service providers, educators, researchers, and passionate advocates for child and family well-being. Together, we leverage our expertise to identify and dismantle structural barriers to child safety and well-being.

18 Degrees • Ascentria Care Alliance • Bay State Community Services • Bethany Christian Services • Boys Town New England • Brandon School & Residential Treatment Center • Bridges Homeward • Center for Human Development • Centerboard • Child & Family Services • Children's Services of Roxbury • Citizens for Juvenile Justice • Communities for People • Community Connections of Brockton • Community Providers of Adolescent Services (COMPASS) • Cotting School • Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health • Fall River Deaconess Home • Family & Community Resources • Family Continuity • Family Nurturing Center • Friends of Children • Gándara Center • Heading Home • Helix Human Services • Hillcrest Educational Centers • The Home for Little Wanderers • HopeWell • Justice Resource Institute • Kennedy-Donovan Center • The Key Program • Latham Centers • LUK, Inc. • Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) • Massachusetts Alliance for Foster Families (MAFF) • Massachusetts Children's Alliance • Massachusetts Law Reform Institute • Massachusetts MENTOR • More Than Words • Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (MSPCC) • New England Community Services • NFI Massachusetts, Inc. • North Suffolk Mental Health Association • Old Colony YMCA • Open Sky Community Services • Plummer Youth Promise • RFK Community Alliance • Rise Above Foundation • Roxbury Youthworks • St. Ann's Home and School • Saint Vincent's Services • Stetson School • Stevens Treatment Programs • Treehouse Foundation • UMASS Medical School Division of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry • Wayside Youth and Family Support Network • YOU, Inc. • Youth Villages

CLM's Reach Across the State



External Partners & Workgroups

Fostering Member Engagement in State Initiatives

Alongside external policy partners, coalitions, and task forces, CLM brings Member voices and perspectives to meetings that influence the larger conversation surrounding child and family well-being.

- Access Massachusetts
- BAY CASH
- · Children's Health Access Coalition
- Children's Mental Health Campaign
- Citizens for Juvenile Justice Coalition
- Coalition for Special Education Funding
- Common Start Coalition
- The Collaborative

- KIDS COUNT Massachusetts Advisory Council
- Language Access for All Coalition
- Lift Our Kids Coalition
- Massachusetts Coalition to End Child Marriage
- Mass Parentage Act Coalition
- MetroWest Human Services Advocacy Coalition
- National Organization of State Associations for Children

CLM also raises Member voices and perspectives to the following state commissions and workgroups:

- Child Sexual Prevention Abuse Task Force
- Childhood Trauma Task Force
- Children's Behavioral Health Advisory Council
- DCF Data Work Group
- DCF 51A workgroup

- Education Stability Steering Committee
- Families and Children Requiring Assistance Advisory Board
- Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board (JJPAD)
- Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth
- Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Commission



Government Partners

Thank you to our government partners for your collaboration and commitment to advancing policies and fiscal budgets that prioritize the well-being of children and families, while also considering the needs of our workforce.

Governor Maura Healey & Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll
Former Governor Charlie Baker & Former Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito
The Massachusetts State Senate
The Massachusetts House of Representatives
The Executive Office of Health and Human Services

State Agencies:

The Office of the Child Advocate • The Department of Children and Families • The Department of Youth Services • The Department of Mental Health • The Department of Early and Secondary Education • The Department of Early Education and Care • The Department of Transitional Aid Assistance • The Department of Public Health

Your partnership has been instrumental to achieving positive outcomes for the Children's League of Massachusetts and the communities we serve.

Sponsors & Supporters

Thank you to our sponsors & supporters!

Your support has played a crucial role in helping our League achieve our goals as an organization and make a positive difference in the lives of children, youth, and families across Massachusetts.







Learn About CLM's Business Sponsorship Program





The CLM Board

Shaheer Mustafa

Board Chair, President & CEO, HopeWell

Daurice Cox

Board Vice Chair, President & CEO, Bay State Community Services

Michael Ames

Board Treasurer, President & CEO, RFK Community Alliance

Beth Barto

Board Clerk, CEO, LUK, Inc.

Mia Alvarado

Executive Director, Roxbury Youthworks, Inc.

Kari Beserra

Executive Vice President, Justice Resource Institute

Bob Gittens

Executive Director, Bridges Homeward

Eric Masi

President & CEO, Wayside Youth and Family Support Network

Mary McGeown

Executive Director, Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

Lois Nesci

CEO, Gandara Center

Anne Sampaio

CEO, Child and Family Services, Inc.

Stephanie Steed *

President and CEO, 18 Degrees

Matthew Stone

Executive Director, Youth Villages (MA and NH)

Lesli Suggs

President & CEO, The Home for Little Wanderers

Lydia Todd *

Executive Director, NFI Massachusetts

*Newly joined our board in FY23

Board Transitions: This year, CLM said farewell to two of our long-time Board Members who have given so much of their time and dedication to helping guide CLM over many years

- Mary McGeown, Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, with our congratulations on her appointment as Undersecretary of Human Services by the Maura Healey Administration
- Anne Sampaio, LICSW, Child and Family Services, Inc. with our best wishes for her retirement

The CLM Team

The CLM Team consists of dedicated professionals who possess collective experience working in non-profit organizations, the public policy sector, government relations, and the child welfare space.



Rachel Gwaltney
Executive Director



Sue O'Callaghan, Esq.Director of Public Policy



Tasmiah Ahmad
Communications and Public
Policy Specialist

Team Transitions:

This year, CLM welcomed two new staff members to our team

- Director of Public Policy, Sue O'Callaghan, Esq.
- Communications and Public Policy Specialist, Tasmiah Ahmad

In June, we said goodbye to Shayna Parker,

Operations and Public Policy Specialist, with our
thanks for her five years of service to CLM.



L to R: Rachel Gwaltney, Shayna Parker, Sue O'Callaghan, Tasmiah Ahmad





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