



Spring Newsletter

**Bennington County's
Parent Child Center**

April 2026



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Sunrise's Mission

Sunrise works in partnership with individuals, families, and community members to provide a variety of supports and services. These services promote the growth and development of individuals and families through encouragement of strengths, expansion of opportunities, and support in times of stress.



A Letter From a Learning Together Program Student

The Learning Together Program is an alternative high school program for parenting, pregnant teens, and young adults. It makes it easier to graduate and get your diploma while being a young parent.

Being a young parent can be hard and can take a toll on your mental health in many ways, and schooling can sometimes only add to that! That's where Sunrise comes in; their Learning Together Program shows you that it is possible to graduate while being a young parent. LTP offers many benefits for you and your child beyond your education. They provide you with leadership roles, helping hands, and support in many different ways while you face challenges outside of school. It's not just a school, but it's a place where you feel seen and heard.



This school has had an impact on my life in many ways, and I am so grateful for that. Recently, my class and I have started a fundraiser for our senior field trip! We are using the skills we learned throughout the year to raise money for this field trip. We took a sewing elective in the fall, and now we are able to sew things, like loveys, rattles, pillows, bags, and more.



Being a senior taught me how to take on a leadership role and allowed me to talk to local businesses to help fundraise by selling our products at their store. I am forever grateful for the things this school has shown me and the people who taught me to believe in myself. Sunrise isn't just a school, but it's a foundation for a successful life. – *Katelyn, a current LTP student*



Week of the Young Child: April 13 -17, 2026

Sunrise's ECE program celebrated this wonderful week that brings attention to family engagement and the importance of child development. We enjoyed Music Monday by listening to guitar music while singing and dancing with our friends. On Tasty Tuesday, we enjoyed making fruit salad with our parents and friends and eating it with pancakes – yum! For Work Together Wednesday, we painted rocks with the Sunrise staff, board, and the ECE families. These rocks will be used for a Community Scavenger Hunt event at the beginning of June. On Family Friday, some of us joined families at a Sunrise playgroup in the morning, then, in the evening, we had a Family Dance Party where we enjoyed music and fun with families.



Raven & Firefly



We are celebrating the great accomplishment of one of our Learning Together Program graduates. Amy first came to Sunrise in 2006. She was pregnant with her first child, and she struggled with attending school due to pregnancy complications. Unfortunately, her son, Aiden, was born with a condition that was incompatible with life, and his time with us ended shortly after birth. Amy persevered through her loss and now has 4 beautiful children, ages 10 to 18 years old. Amy graduated with her high school diploma through Sunrise's Learning Together Program. She continues to reside in Bennington County and engage with Sunrise's programming as it is a place where she finds comfort, support and resources when needed.

Amy is a newly published author. Her book, *Raven & Firefly*, was published on January 20th of this year. Amy began writing this book in 2024. She worked hard to edit, format, design, and finally self-publish her book. She faced many hurdles along the way, but she was determined to bring her work of art to fruition and share it with the world. Amy is currently working on her second book which is scheduled to drop in Fall 2026.

Sunrise will host a public meet the author and book signing event in late May/early June. Visit our website or Facebook page for more information as we get closer to the event.

About the book:

Raven & Firefly, the first book in a five-part series, is a dark historical urban fantasy novel about a woman accused of witchcraft in 1694 who is transported to a post-apocalyptic future. There, she discovers powerful magic tied to a prophecy and must navigate a broken world—and a slow-burn romance. The book is available to purchase on Amazon and on Kindle Unlimited.



Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Bennington County

We are proud to share that over 825 children across Bennington County, from birth to age five, are enrolled in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, receiving high-quality, age-appropriate books delivered to their mailbox each month at no cost to families – helping build home libraries and inspire a love of reading from the very start. This winter, we connected with new families at Winterfest and Baby Café, and we were excited to keep the momentum going this spring with our annual Dolly Parton Imagination Library Dance in April, featuring live music from The Prescription and raffle prizes. It was a fun night for a great cause!

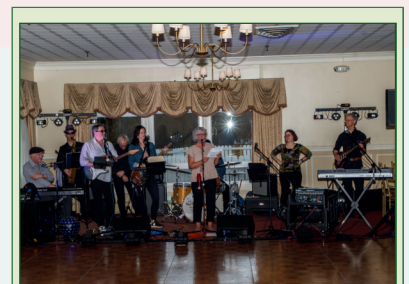


Photo credit: Danny Zaffarano

Families at the Center

Our Families at the Center program has seen exciting growth and transformation this winter, and our 2026 programming is already in full swing. The year began with opportunities for connection and learning, including visits with the Bennington Police Department, a housing navigation panel, and a conversation on adult education with The Tutorial Center.

In April, Families at the Center welcomed Krystle Niemela from the Vermont Department of Health for a presentation on smoking cessation and the risks of second- and third-hand smoke, an area that Sunrise has strengthened through enhanced service coordination and staff training. Families also participated in a "Swap Station," offering supportive alternatives such as gum, hard candies, fidget tools, and exercise bands. This meeting also marked an exciting transition to a new location at the Turning Point Center of Bennington, offering expanded space and new opportunities for connection.



Families also came together at the beginning of the year to co-create new Family Agreements, establishing a shared code of conduct and identifying three priority goals they will work toward throughout the year. As part of this commitment, families will meet quarterly with the FAC Facilitator to strengthen relationships and build social capital, participate in three volunteer opportunities across 2026, including an Earth Day project, and invite their Navigators to engage more regularly in meetings. We are especially proud to share that Families at the Center will also be represented nationally this June at the O'Neill Foundation Summit in Baltimore presenting on our Bennington County group and the ways Families at the Center has built connections and social capital between caregivers and social systems.

Sunrise Advisory Council

Being a part of Sunrise Advisory Council has been a journey of personal growth for me. It's given me a platform to develop real leadership and sharpen my social communication skills. It's more than just a meeting once a month. It lets us provide input and feedback on programs and services to strengthen families and build stronger community relations in Bennington County. Sunrise has always been a place of support, and serving on the Council allows me to give back. By volunteering and collaborating with other parents/caregivers, we build relationships/friendships along the way. It's more than just a leadership role to me. I carry the work we do here home to my son because I want him to grow up in a community that is inclusive and supportive. Parents are the best leaders we have because we are the ones invested in the future. – Jennifer Peters, current chairperson of Sunrise Advisory Council



Dear Sunrise Community,

With the arrival of spring after a long, snowy winter, we are grateful to witness the blooming of flowers, the return of birdsong, and the rushing rivers as snow melts from the mountains. This season of renewal reflects the energy and growth we are experiencing at Sunrise.

We are excited to share that renovations of our new property at 127 Union Street—the Manes House—are well underway. As the space takes shape, so does our vision for expanding programs and deepening our impact. One of my personal goals has been to better understand the gaps in perinatal health services across our community. We've been working closely with local and state partners to identify these needs and shape meaningful responses. Stay tuned for more updates.

The Manes House will also serve as a hub for enhanced family engagement and shared leadership opportunities. Members of our team recently participated in developing a parent/caregiver leadership framework with the Parent Child Center Network and Chapin Hall, and Sunrise is actively integrating these practices into all aspects of our work. Through these efforts, we aim to broaden understanding of our mission and move beyond the perception that we serve only high-risk families—we are here for all families.

Once renovations are complete, we look forward to welcoming you to an open house and sharing this space with the community.

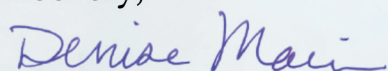
In the meantime, our programs continue to operate daily, providing high-quality support to families, thanks to our creative and dedicated staff. We are also fortunate to have an engaged Board of Directors, who generously contribute their time and leadership in support of our mission.

While we are energized by the progress at the Manes House, we also recognize that this has been a challenging year for grant funding. Many foundations are facing an overwhelming number of applications or are shifting their priorities.

If you share our vision for a stronger future for families throughout Bennington County, we invite you to consider making a donation to support the important work to be done at the Manes House.

Thank you for being part of the Sunrise community.

Sincerely,



Denise Main
Executive Director

Mail checks to 244 Union Street,
Bennington, VT 05201
or donate securely online at:
sunrisepcc.com/make-a-donation.php



Youth Development Program

On February 4th, following a local showing of the documentary film, *Gone Guys*, Youth Development Program participant Connor Allen, age 21, spoke on a panel and talked about his own lived experience in connection to the film. Connor was the only panel participant who was not a service provider in the field, and showed exemplary leadership and confidence as he shared his story. Connor received a well-deserved applause from the audience following his speech in serving on the panel.



On April 10th, five participants of the local Bennington Youth Development Program traveled to the statewide Youth Empowerment Summit and had the opportunity to first learn how to strategically share their stories and then meet with leaders among the Department for Children and Families to share their stories in a way to help create and advocate for change. At this event, youth were able to connect with other youth who also had lived experience of being in the system and had the opportunity to have their voice heard and valued. Youth also participated in a resource fair and an end of the day fun raffle with prizes.

Basket Bingo

On March 18th, we held our second annual Basket Bingo fundraiser at the Elks Lodge in Bennington. We had special games, raffles, and 50/50. It was a packed house and a fun-filled night!



Bennington Goes Blue

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. On April 8th, Sunrise staff participated in #BenningtonGoesBlue by wearing blue to raise awareness for child abuse prevention.

