Dear friends,

2019 provided many moments for gratitude and reflection, as we set out to respond to the rapidly changing civics education landscape in Massachusetts.

Through our classroom, field trip, and after school programs, Discovering Justice put thousands of young people at the center of the critical decisions that have shaped, and are shaping, history. Guided by teachers and community volunteers, students gained the opportunity to participate in democracy and extend civic learning into their own neighborhoods and communities. We are proud of this effort, but recognize that there is still work to be done.

Despite policy changes that were meant to signal a new chapter for civics education in Massachusetts, resources for teachers and school districts have not kept pace, creating significant gaps in capacity. Through conversations with teachers, school district administrators, and others in the education sector, we’ve learned that the barriers to implementing effective civic learning programs in the classroom are great. What teachers need are civics resources that are flexible, culturally responsive, and inclusive of all students.

At Discovering Justice, we recognize the potential to provide a model for enriching civics education. Driven by these conversations, our focus today is on improvement and innovation. We are examining opportunities to make our programs more relevant and engaging to a diverse community of students, and piloting new strategies for reaching a greater number of teachers at a time when our resources are most urgently needed. We are determined to emerge a more responsive, agile organization that is even better prepared to meet the vastly diverse needs of school communities across Massachusetts.

In the final pages of this report are the names of the individuals and organizations that made such an exceptional 2019 possible. On behalf of our staff and Board, I want to extend our deepest thanks for your continued support and dedication to this work.

With gratitude,

Tony Jordan  
Board Chair
Discovering Justice is empowering a rising generation of leaders through an innovative civics curriculum which utilizes courtrooms as classrooms and classrooms as civic spaces—encouraging agency, empathy, and voice in K-8 students across Massachusetts.

Our civics curriculum and experiential programs put young people at the center of the critical decisions that have shaped, and are shaping, history. Guided by teachers and community volunteers, students have the opportunity to participate in our democracy and extend civic learning into their own neighborhoods and communities.

Our approach is rooted in the founding vision of the Moakley U.S. Courthouse, which was designed as a vibrant center for civic education and community activity. In the 20 years since the Moakley was built, Discovering Justice has extended this model of open, transparent government to courtrooms and classrooms throughout the state, offering experiential programs at all three of Massachusetts’ Federal Courthouses and working with students and teachers in more than 19 school districts.
We provided our in-school civics and social studies curriculum to 110 new teachers in Attleboro, Boston, Lawrence, Salem, Weston, and Worcester, reaching 2,932 new students.

Volunteers dedicated 4,095 hours leading tours, working with students during our field trip and after school programs, and helping to make our gala memorable for our guests.

1,645 members of the public came to the Moakley Courthouse for tours. 10% were international visitors.

3,131 K-8 students participated in field trips at District Courthouses in Boston, Worcester, and Springfield. An additional 147 students observed naturalization ceremonies in Worcester and Springfield.

349 students from Boston, Brookline, Lawrence, Lowell, New Bedford, Somerville, Springfield, and Worcester participated in our Mock Trial and Stand Up for Your Rights after school programs.
It is important to make sure that everyone in my community feels included. I am determined to become a strong leader and know that it is my responsibility to stand up when I see injustice.

—Sapna | GRADE 4, THE ELIOT K-8 INNOVATION SCHOOL

Sapna Malhotra received a standing ovation and was thrust into DJ stardom after delivering an incredible introduction of Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley and Conan Harris at Discovering Justice’s 2019 Annual Gala. Currently a fourth-grade student at the Eliot K-8 Innovation School, Sapna is already realizing the power of her voice and actions, and is determined to be a good leader and speak up for what she knows is right.

What I appreciate most about Discovering Justice is how it allows kids from any background to gain exposure to civics, better their skills, and think more critically. Discovering Justice meets students where they’re at and helps lift them up, and I think that’s an invaluable experience. We need more programs like this.

—Jamal | ALUMNUS, CAMP HARBOR VIEW

Jamal Grant always knew he was good at arguing, but it wasn’t until he participated in Stand Up For Your Rights in 2009 that a volunteer attorney told him he should consider becoming a lawyer. Though he’s gone on to become an Aerospace & Mechanical Systems Engineer, Jamal credits Discovering Justice with helping him develop the critical thinking and analytical skills that have led him to succeed. Additionally, Discovering Justice exposed Jamal to the lack of diversity in certain professional fields, which inspired him to establish the NET Mentoring Group, a Boston-based nonprofit focused on closing the STEM achievement and opportunity gap by supporting young women and minorities.
Volunteering always brings joy to my day and renews my enthusiasm for our court system. I think it’s a great way to open the doors of the Courthouse to the community, and bring the Bill of Rights to life for our young citizens.

—Jane Peachy | ASSISTANT FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER, FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER OFFICE

Jane Peachy has been volunteering with Discovering Justice for about eight years, participating in Discovering Bill of Rights and Children Discovering Justice field trips at the Courthouse. After graduating law school in 2004, she worked for the Committee for Public Services, Massachusetts’ public defender agency, and then went on to join the Federal Public Defender Office as an Assistant Federal Public Defender in 2011. As a federal public defender, Jane has represented indigent citizens facing all kinds of federal criminal charges.

The sense of self-worth and empowerment that these programs encourage is invaluable, and really central to positive youth development. It’s incredible to see these beyond precocious kids step up, have voice, and become invested in what they’re doing, and develop self-respect on top of it all.

—Judge Jay Blitzman (ret.) | MASSACHUSETTS JUVENILE COURT

Before he took the bench in 1996, the Honorable Jay D. Blitzman was a public defender with a passion for youth advocacy. The founder and first director of the Youth Advocacy Project, Judge Blitzman went on to continue his mission of helping families and children by becoming a juvenile court judge. He was named the first justice in Middlesex County in 2008, and has presided over Discovering Justice’s Mock Trial and Stand Up For Your Rights programs since their introduction in Lowell.
On Thursday, May 16th, Vertex had their final practice with middle school students from Boston Latin Academy in preparation for An Evening to Stand Up For Your Rights.

Guided by Executive Vice President & Chief Legal and Administrative Officer and DJ Trustee Michael Parini and Vertex’s team of volunteer attorneys, students put the finishing touches on their arguments and practiced delivering them with confidence and conviction. All of their hard work paid off at the culminating event as the students successfully argued their case in front of an appellate panel. 19 Vertex employees dedicated their time to this 11-week program, guiding our students through the process and serving as invaluable coaches and mentors.

With Vertex’s support as a Presenting Sponsor at our 2019 annual gala, we raised more than $500,000 in support of our classroom and after school programs. We’re grateful to partner with firms that are committed to our vision of empowering the next generation of civic leaders, and look forward to forging additional meaningful community connections in the years to come.
FY19 Financials

Total Revenues for July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019

- In-kind Contributions: $666,330
- Foundation: $556,000
- Law Firms & Corporations: $295,008
- Individuals: $205,913
- Investment Income: $40,382
- Program Revenue: $10,685

Total: $1,774,318
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