Resilience:
the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.
Dear Friends,

“Never let a good crisis go to waste,” counseled Winston Churchill. A year ago, few would have anticipated the world that lay ahead. The Boston HERC had to adapt quickly to face the unprecedented challenge of a global pandemic. Of course, Passport Coaches cannot meet with their Passport students in person until we can re-enter their school buildings. But our priority is to remain connected to our BPS first-generation Passport students in this season.

The same crisis that forced schools to close and sent Passport students home also served as a catalyst for the Boston HERC to create “a campus without walls” with Passport Coaches connecting with their students via a multi-tiered remote platform (via Zoom, emails, phone calls, and texts). This has allowed Coaches to connect deeply with their students – about their acceptance letters, financial award letters, scholarship applications, or just plain life in a frightening time. The crisis also served as a catalyst to provide, far earlier than we had envisioned, additional remote support services to our Passport Alumni. We are not through the crisis, but Passport students are resilient, as is the Boston HERC.

You make this work possible. It is possible with a team of persistent and dedicated staff and volunteers who deeply care for our students, but also with our philanthropic partners who have wasted no time in stepping up to the plate to offer emergency grants, strategize with us, and move program money to general operating funds to give us the flexibility we have needed to meet the needs of this time.

Thank you,

Sam Acevedo
Executive Director

---

**PROGRAM IMPACT**

**SY 2019-2020**

- **824** Passport to College High School Students
  - At nine high schools and one community-based program.

- **97%** of 217 Passport seniors graduated high school
- **81%** enrolled in post-secondary education
- **150+** alumni engaged in programming
- **9,700+** hours of workshops

- **LAUNCHED 4-WEEK [VIRTUAL] CAREER EXPLORATION CAMP FOR 9TH TO 12TH GRADERS**
- **77 STUDENTS JOINED A 10-WEEK WORKSHOP SERIES ON REMOTE LEARNING AND CAREER EXPLORATION**
JESSENIA PINEDA,  
*Passport Class of 2016 and current BHCC student, CNA*  

Jessenia has the heart of a caretaker. Since she was young, she acted as head of household for her large family. She took people to appointments and physically cared for people at home. Sometimes she missed school at Margarita Muñiz Academy as a result and struggled with grades. When her Passport Coach, Neisha Gonzalez, told her that she could go to college, she was motivated to improve her grades to go to nursing school. But Jessenia’s confidence took a hit in her first semester when her advisor told her the program would be too hard. She dropped out of college, bouncing around between retail jobs.

Over the years, Jessenia and Neisha stayed in touch. When Covid-19 hit, Jessenia lost her job and was pulling together donations to survive. With Neisha, she started imagining pursuing nursing again and mapped out a plan. Jessenia completed a CNA program and got a job on the frontlines of the pandemic as a CNA at Spaulding Hospital on the respiratory floor, often caring for patients dealing with the aftermath of Covid-19. She is taking classes at Bunker Hill to become an RN. She describes, “Other programs just drop you if you drop out of college. Passport was different, my Coach stayed with me after that.”

The joy in Jessenia’s voice is audible: “Now I really see the difference it makes to have a job that you love. For many years I was working retail, I didn’t want to go. Now I love getting up, getting my scrubs on. If they ask me to pick up extra hours or stay longer, I do it. I feel so good taking care of my patients and I am so motivated to help them get home as quickly as possible to be with their families.” She is also loving the flexibility that online classes give her. She can work at her own pace when she isn’t at work. Her work helps reimburse classes, and she has other colleagues who are also pursuing their nursing degrees who keep her motivated.

Jessenia’s hope is that her story will inspire others to keep striving towards their goals. Everyone’s journey looks different, but persistence pays off.

IRENE SANTOS,  
*Passport Class of 2020, Regis College Class of 2024*  

This past Fall, Irene started classes at Regis College over Zoom, connecting to a campus where she had never set foot. Irene describes, “Some classes were recorded lectures, I had to be independent and teach myself. Sometimes my Wi-Fi would act up too, and sometimes professors thought I was just sleeping in. I was just feeling really angry being home all the time.”

But Irene is proud to be someone who never gives up. She is the youngest sibling in her family and the first to go to college. “I want to change the trajectory of what is possible,” she explains. Irene chose nursing because her parents have struggled with diabetes since she was young, and she often served as the family translator at medical appointments. She says, “sometimes neither my mom or I knew what to do and we’d go to the emergency room. With more knowledge, I know I could help her more, and also help a lot more people, especially because I speak two languages.”

Even virtually, she has found ways to succeed. She visited professors during virtual office hours for help, and she often calls up her Passport Coach Robert, who she describes as a mentor, when she needs to talk through a challenge. Irene says Passport has played a role for her that no one else fills. She didn’t have help from her guidance counselor and no one in her family was familiar with the college process. She adds, “Boston HERC is just really supportive too. You delivered groceries at times when my family was really struggling financially this year. It means a lot.”

Irene finished her first semester with all A’s and one B+ and feels much more confident. We have no doubt that she is going to help more people through her career than she can yet imagine.
AUDITED FINANCIALS

FY 2020

REVENUE AND SUPPORT: $793,875.00
EXPENSES: $646,292.00
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS: $147,583.00

*Foundation grants raised in FY19 earmarked for FY20

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR PHILANTHROPIST PARTNERS AND VOLUNTEERS!

INSTITUTIONAL DONORS:

Amelia Peabody Foundation
Barr Foundation
Boston After School and Beyond
Boston Public Health Commission
Boston Public Schools
Cabot Family Charitable Fund
Chirag Foundation
City of Boston
City of Boston’s Office of Workforce Development
Congregation Lion of Judah
Cummings Foundation

Debbie Johnston Charitable Fund
Dividend Investment Club
Erna and Bob Place Fund
Emmanuel Gospel Center
Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation
Hestia Fund
Image Del Fund
Liberty Mutual Foundation
Lloyd G. Balfour Foundation, Bank of America, N.A., Trustee
MassMutual Foundation

Michael T. Sherman Foundation
Oasis Systems
Partners Health Care
Social Innovation Forum
State Street Foundation
Symphony Church
Tech Goes Home
The Boston Foundation
The Philanthropy Connection
Tufts Health Plan
Wellington Management Foundation

INDIVIDUAL DONORS AND VOLUNTEERS:

Alberic Alcindor
Dazlee and Delsuin Alvareado
Alvarez Family
Mariette Ayana
Ron Baker
Evelyn Barajas
Jeffrey Bass
Aixa Beauchamp
Peg and Bill Bonnice
Shelly Berg
Robert and Nancy Bradley
Richard Chang
Kim Comart
Brian Corcoran
Jabvon Dockery
Diaz Family
Janet Franklin
Carolee Howell

Victoria Jordan
Jennifer and Dano Juknanovich
Susan Krieger
Eliza Lewis
Juan Lofera
Pastors Roberto and Mercedes Miranda
Omar Maldonado
Elba and Clemente Marcillo
Antonya Marinova
Bernice McField Avila
Tammy and Pat McLeod
Joanne McNally
Danielle Mendola
Adriane Musgrave
Jimmy Nguyen
Jean and John Peteet
Ben Pierce
Mike and Madeleine Prendergast

Stephanie Rincon
Monica Roberts
Regina and Jua Robinson
Fanny Rodriguez
Dave and Betsy Ryder
Carolina and Manny Samudio Ortega
Wilson Santos
Ramon Sanchez
Katherine Spahr
Diane Suda
Olivia Taylor
Jonatan and Tricia Toledo
Deborah Washington
Al Williams
Kit Williams and Neil Diver
Reyn and Ruth Wong
Dave Zagunis and Annie Rodriguez

SCHOOL PARTNERS:

Boston Community Leadership Academy
Brighton High School
Charlestown High School
Dearborn STEM Academy

East Boston High School
English High School
Jeremiah E. Burke High School

Josiah Quincy Upper School
Margarita Muniz Academy
New Mission High School

For 21 years, the Boston Higher Education Resource Center (HERC), and its signature Passport to College Program, has equipped first-generation youth to obtain a higher education, break the cycle of poverty, and become agents of change in their communities. The program is Latino-led and culturally-sensitive, and dedicated to first-generation, low-income youth who are attending under-resourced, non-exam Boston Public High Schools.