



2019
ANNUAL
REPORT



BLUE SKY BRIDGE

Child Abuse Intervention & Education

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A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

As Blue Sky Bridge quickly approaches its 25th anniversary in 2020, I am overwhelmed with extreme gratitude for all of the past and present support received from donors, friends, staff, board members, and partners. Our success as an organization today is built upon years of hard work and sacrifice from individuals who believe that our community's children deserve better.

In this report you will see the difference that your support continues to make for hundreds of brave children and their family members. You will see that an investment in Blue Sky Bridge creates real and positive change in Boulder County.

For almost five years, Blue Sky Bridge has been on an extreme growth trajectory in our budget, staffing, and programs. We don't have plans to slow down, but we are using 2019 to shore up some of our infrastructure and put in effect internal policies that will make us better and stronger. Growth is hard. Change within an organization is hard, and we're still working out some of the day-to-day kinks. I'm confident we will get there.

Despite all of the growth and all of the challenges that come with growth, the very heart and soul of who we are has not changed at all. At the end of the day, children's safety is still our number one priority. It is in the value of keeping kids first that we remain diligent and more united than ever before at every level of the organization. We also remain committed to making Blue Sky Bridge the best place to work. Our team loves what they do and consider it a joy to serve our community.

As we look to the future, my commitment is not only in helping to bolster our core/in-house programs, but also to expand our outreach and education surrounding the prevention of child sexual abuse. I want every person living in every corner of Boulder County to receive the education needed in order to recognize the signs, minimize the risks, and know how to react responsibly to an allegation of abuse. We have made enormous strides, but we still have a long way to go before we reach the tipping point. After all, it is our mission to end child abuse and to be here for every child and every family that needs our help.

I have said it before, but in my opinion, there really is nothing more important than helping our community's children to be safe.

Thank you for believing in our mission.

Gratefully,



Gina Maione Earles,
Executive Director



BLUE SKY BRIDGE FOSTERS SAFE COMMUNITIES, HEALING, AND JUSTICE TO END CHILD ABUSE.

THE ISSUE

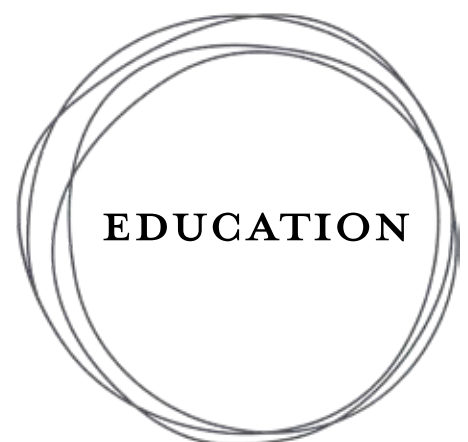
In the United States a person is sexually assaulted every 92 seconds, and every nine minutes, that person is a child.

Children who experience abuse are at greater risk for a variety of physical ailments and mental health concerns, and children rarely tell about their abuse.

But we believe there are solutions to this epidemic.

Over the past three decades, we have witnessed a national decline of almost 50% in the occurrence of child abuse. This decline can be attributed to the increase in resources and community awareness, as well as the coordinated efforts of nonprofits and organizations across the country working to support children and families and educate their local community on the issue.

OUR PROGRAMS



CHILD ADVOCACY PROGRAM

It used to be that a child would have to tell their story of abuse over and over to potentially more than a dozen school officials, police officers, doctors, attorneys and social workers.

Today, a child and their family is able to come to one place, our place.

By providing a centrally-located, child-focused facility and a coordinated response by all investigative agencies, we are proactive in our approach to helping families during child abuse investigations. We provide immediate intervention, forensic interviews, crisis intervention counseling, family support, and follow-up services to child victims and non-offending family members.

Forensic Interviews

A forensic interview is a neutral interview intended to solicit accurate information based on alleged events that have occurred, and is utilized to assess and determine the safety of a child. Research indicates interviewing children in a safe, neutral, and child/family friendly environment increases reliability and credibility in a child's statement. Ideally, it also provides each individual child the opportunity to tell their story in great depth one time.

Family Support

Child abuse can impact the whole family, which is why our Family Support Program offers support to caregivers during and after the forensic interview. Our goal is to ensure that the adult(s) caring for the child are receiving the information and tools they need in order to move forward and help the child and family heal.

Medical

Through a partnership with Boulder Community Health, children coming to Blue Sky Bridge are now able to receive an on-site medical examination. The purpose of the examination is to assess whether the child may need further medical attention, to provide an opportunity to collect evidence if possible, and to promote healing and safety.

Of the children interviewed in 2018, 78% were related to allegations of child sexual abuse and 72% identified as female.

In addition, 52% of children were between the ages of 9 and 15 years.

"My child came to Blue Sky Bridge to share their story in a forensic interview. It was the one place to talk, and the story stayed safe there. After the interview, my child was relieved. There was a noticeable shift after sharing the details, and they only had to do it one time, at one place, and that place was Blue Sky Bridge."

THE THERAPY

Early intervention of mental health services is crucial to the healing process and the long-term health of child victims of abuse. Treatment is designed to reduce negative emotional and behavioral responses and Post Traumatic Stress symptoms after a traumatic incident.

Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) is an evidence-based, short-term treatment model for children and youth impacted by trauma. TF-CBT includes parents or caregivers for portions of the therapy. Research shows that TF-CBT successfully resolves a broad array of emotional and behavioral difficulties associated with single, multiple, and complex trauma experiences.

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is an approved treatment for PTSD. The client and therapist discuss a traumatic memory, then use bilateral stimulation to remove the blocks that impede the brain's own capacity to heal itself. The goal is to reduce the client's distress to a point where the memory and reminders associated with it don't cause a physical or emotional reaction.

100% of therapy clients who graduated from the program demonstrated reduced trauma symptoms.

"I can't thank you enough for your support and appreciate all you do. My daughter has thrived working with you and I have no doubt the care, support and tools you've given her will carry her far in life."

- Parent of a Blue Sky Bridge therapy client

MEET OUR THERAPISTS

Robin Friesen-Holwell, MS, LMFT and **Allison Breed, MSW, LCSW** are nationally certified TF-CBT (Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) therapists and trained in EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy). They provide therapy services to children, teens, and caregivers impacted by traumatic experiences.



EDUCATION

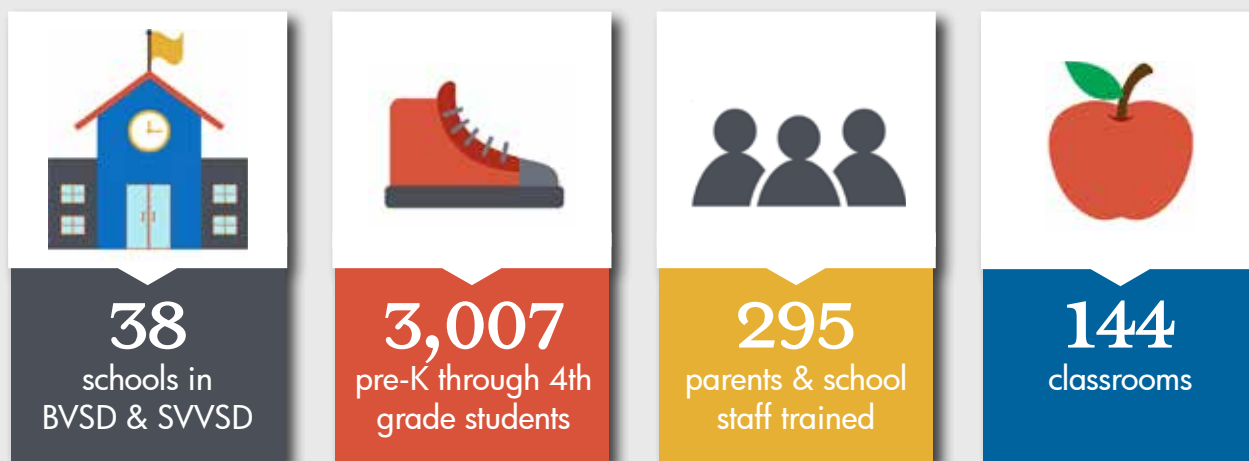
Blue Sky Bridge believes that education is a tool for preventing child abuse. We are committed to helping children learn how to keep their bodies safe and helping adults learn how to prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse.

School Program

Our school program utilizes a three-tiered holistic approach that includes a presentation with tips and resources for parents, training for school personnel, and developmentally age appropriate presentations for kindergarten and 3rd grade students. The 3rd grade class presentations consist of four thirty-minute lessons with an emphasis on touching rules and body safety rules, the difference between secrets and surprises, identifying trusted adults, and the “No, Go, Tell” plan.

The goals of the program are to increase students’ knowledge on body safety, teach strategies for prevention, instruct on how to report abuse if it has occurred, and encourage open dialogue between children and the adults in their lives on issues related to sexual development and abuse.

2018–2019 ACADEMIC YEAR



Adult Education

We offer a range of trainings for parents, teachers, and the community. Two of our featured trainings are Stewards of Children® & Nurturing Healthy Sexual Development.

Stewards of Children® is the only nationally available program scientifically proven to increase knowledge, improve attitudes, and change child-protective behaviors. Developed by Darkness to Light, the training features survivors of child sexual abuse as well as experts in the field explaining the five steps to protect children.

Nurturing Healthy Sexual Development (NHSD) creates the foundation for prevention by helping adults understand sexual development at each age (from common to concerning), how to have open conversations with children about sexuality, and how to react when kids engage in sexual behaviors.

HIGHLIGHTS

New Therapy Modality

In 2019 our therapy program added a new modality, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). The American Psychological Association* has approved EMDR as a treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): These unprocessed memories are understood to contain the emotions, thoughts, beliefs and physical sensations that occurred at the time of the event. When the memories are triggered these stored disturbing elements are experienced and cause the symptoms of PTSD and/or other disorders.

Unlike other treatments that focus on directly altering the emotions, thoughts and responses resulting from traumatic experiences, EMDR therapy focuses directly on the memory, and is intended to change the way that the memory is stored in the brain, thus reducing and eliminating the problematic symptoms.

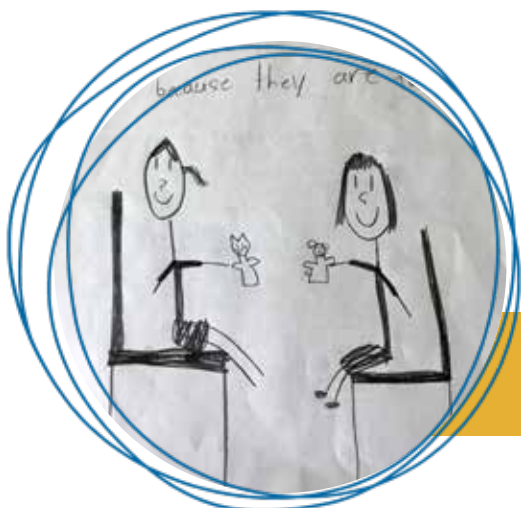
Kinder Program

The 2018-19 academic year saw the launch of our kindergarten program. The kinder program is delivered over four consecutive weeks during 15 minute presentations. The lessons lay the foundation for our third grade body safety program by covering the following key concepts in a developmentally appropriate way:

- Body autonomy
- Safe & Unsafe touch
- Private parts
- Trusted adults

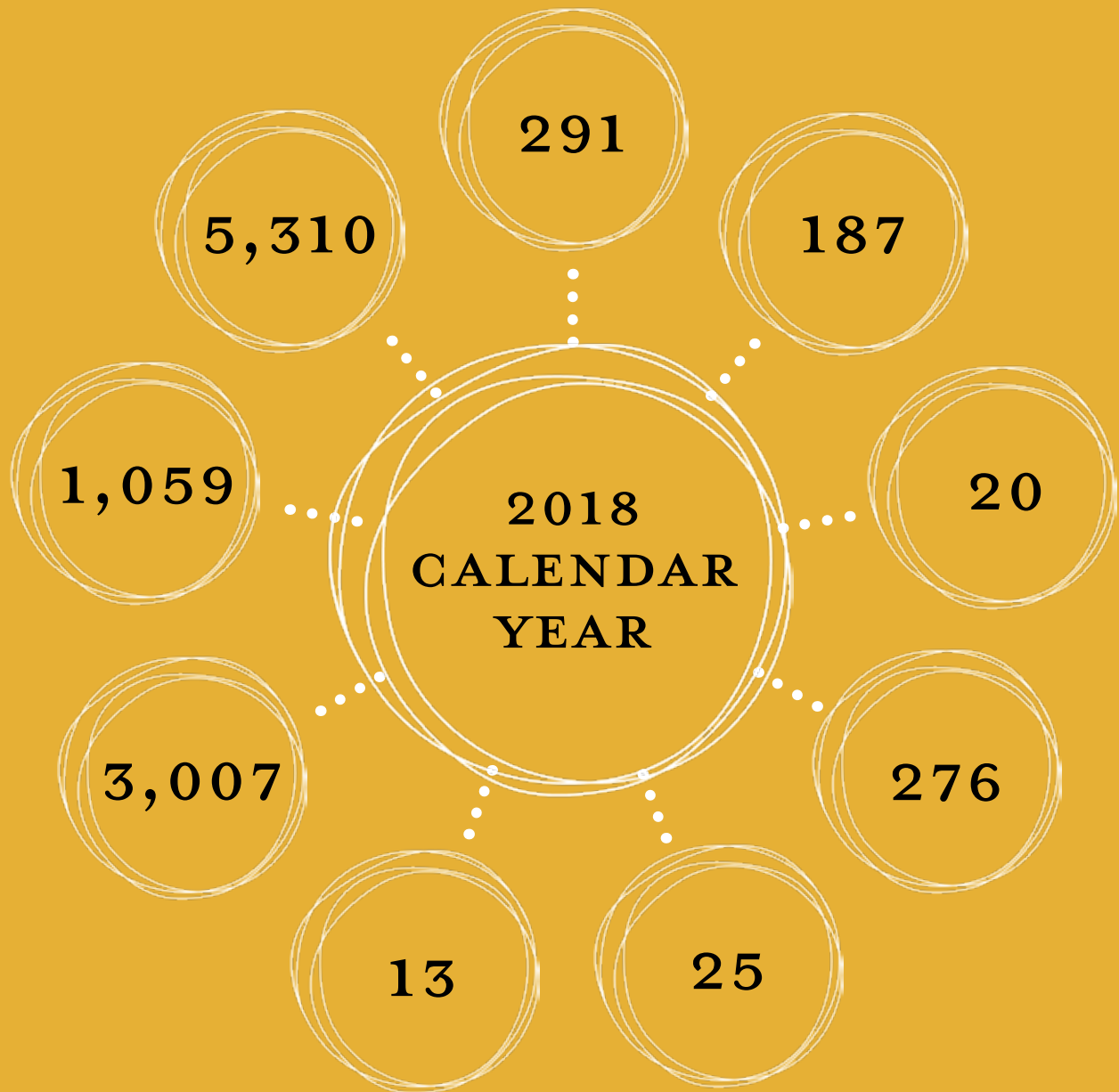
The curriculum uses simple language, puppets for role play, books, videos and worksheets to reinforce learning objectives. We're excited to offer delivery of our kindergarten curriculum in English or Spanish.

100% of schools participating in our school based education program demonstrate improvement in understanding of key body safety concepts identified as best practice in child sexual abuse prevention.



"My 5 year-old participated in the kinder program at his school – thank you, Blue Sky Bridge! You helped us to start the conversation early, and now my son has the language he needs to help him stay safe."

"I like the puppet shows because they are fun!"
- Student participant



291 Forensic interviews

187 Crisis Calls

20 Medical exams

276 Caregivers received family support

25 Children received TF-CBT and/or EMDR

13 Children graduated from therapy

3,007 pre-K through 4th grade students

received education through our school program

1,059 Adults received education

5,310 Individuals reached through community outreach

FORENSIC INTERVIEWING: AN ART & A SCIENCE

In March 2019, Katie Ashburner, Program Director and Forensic Interviewer, completed her 1,000th interview at Blue Sky Bridge. Katie has been working at Child Advocacy Centers since 2008 and joined Blue Sky Bridge in 2014. She found her way into the Child Advocacy Center/forensic interviewing world while working as a Victim Advocate in South Carolina, and watched over 500 interviews prior to conducting her own.

Every time a child allows her to interview them, she feels honored and privileged. "Children are so brave. I don't take for granted the trust that kids and their parents have for me. I have this one moment with them, and I put thought into every word that I say and every question that I ask."

From the outside, if one were to watch a forensic interview, it would appear easy. The child is sitting on the sofa talking, while the Interviewer listens and asks questions. The rooms are discreetly equipped with full audio and recording capabilities. The child knows that they are being recorded throughout the interview. Behind the scenes, the process is much more complex.

The Interviewer takes into consideration the child's age, cognitive development, and if there are any communication challenges. Questions are child-led; the child chooses what they will say and how they will say it. Interviewers follow their trained protocol, asking only one question at a time that is open-ended and non-leading. Questions typically move from general to more specific. Interviewers must remain neutral, and therefore, be empathetic but emotionally controlled (not expressing emotions of shock, curiosity, anger, or fear). In addition, the Interviewer must be prepared to deal with the unexpected at any time.

"The child is leading the conversation. It's all about them in the room and their needs."

Looking to the future, Katie desires to continue developing her skills as a Forensic Interviewer by attending as many trainings as possible and staying current on best-practices and current protocols. She is already working on developing interviewing skills for specialized categories such as pre-schoolers and various at-risk adult populations.

"I absolutely love my job, and I love doing it the best I possibly can."

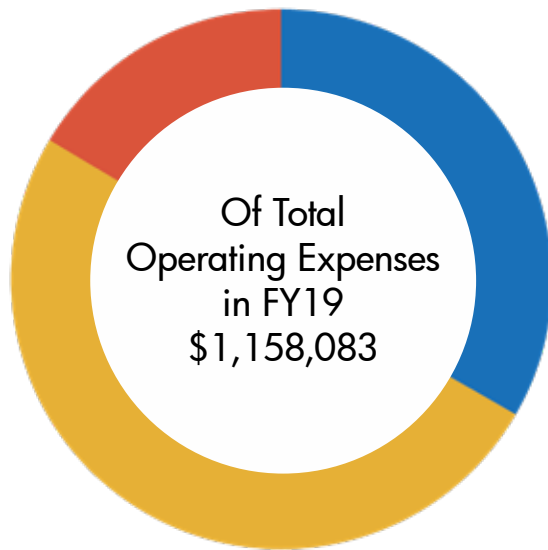
Katie Ashburner has her Bachelor's degree in psychology from Juniata College and her Master's degree in Social Work from the University of South Carolina.

Katie is trained in the Childfirst South Carolina Forensic Interview protocol, the National Children's Advocacy Center's protocol, and the Colorado Semi-Structured Narrative Process. She also participates as a trainer for the Colorado Children's Alliance Forensic Interview Semi-Structured Narrative Process.



FINANCIALS

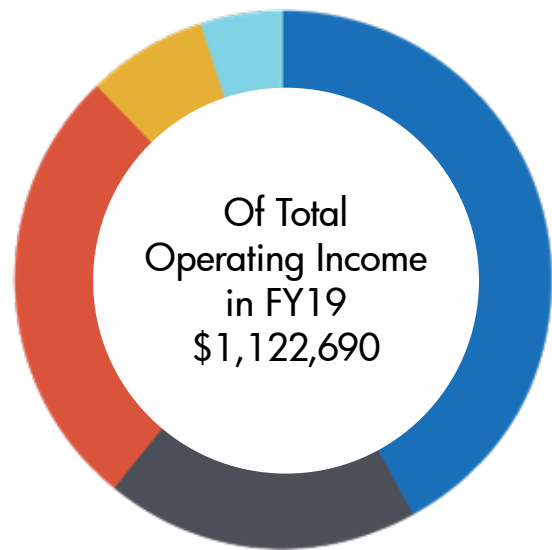
Fiscal Year 2019: April 1, 2018 - March 31, 2019



34% Education & Outreach

50% Forensic Interviewing, Family Support, & Medical

16% Trauma-focused Therapy

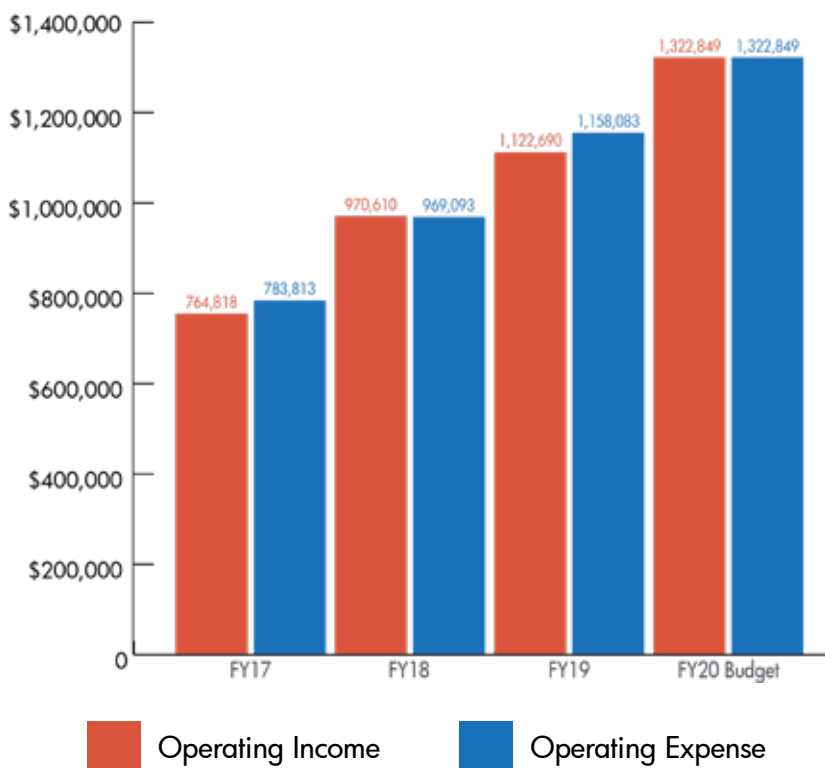


42% Government **27%** Individuals

19% Events **7%** Foundations

5% Other

Income vs expense



Statement of Financial Position as of 3/31/19

Current Assets	\$807,581
Fixed Assets	\$1,960,618
Endowment	\$187,825
Total Assets	\$2,956,024
Current Liabilities	\$62,348
Restricted Net Assets	\$438,489
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$2,455,187
Total Liabilities and Equity	\$2,956,024

STAFF

(as of 3/31/19)

Gina Maione Earles | Executive Director
Michelle Amato, LSW | Family Support Advocate
Katie Ashburner, MSW | Program Director, Forensic Interviewer
Allison Breed, MSW, LCSW | Therapist
Gretchen Fair, LCSW | Therapist, Bilingual Education Associate
Robin Friesen-Holwell, MS, LMFT | Program Director, Therapist
Amanda Fuentes, MA | Forensic Interviewer
Claudia Gilbert | Bilingual Education Associate
Faith Motter, MSW | Director of Development and Communication
Erik Padilla, MA | Bilingual Family Support Advocate, MDT Coordinator
Melissa Santorelli | Development & Communications Associate
Jeff Stewart | Operations Coordinator
Trish Wood | Education Coordinator

Lauren Brillante | Accountant
Karen Daly | Consultant
Debbie Stewart | Grant Writer

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