

# ESSENTIAL PARTNERS DONOR NEWSLETTER



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A QUARTERLY UPDATE FOR OUR ESSENTIAL PARTNERS | WINTER 2022

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## GENEROSITY IS THE HEART OF OUR WORK



**A NOTE FROM  
EP'S DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR,  
DAMIEN LALLY**

Season's greetings!

As an open source nonprofit, EP's mission is all about giving—giving people skills to sustain relationships of trust and belonging in their communities, giving free dialogue resources to communities in need, giving hope to those who know their differences can be their greatest assets.

**Generosity is the heart of our work, not just in terms of what EP gives others, but what our donor community gives back to advance and sustain our mission.**

Thank you for standing with us, and if you haven't already, please remember to [make your gift to EP's 2022 Annual Fund today.](#)

Happy and healthy holidays to all!



### FEATURED STORY

**EP-Trained Students in North Carolina Lead Gun Dialogue in the Wake of a Deadly Shooting**

### ALSO IN THIS NEWSLETTER

A Note About EP's 2022 Annual Fund

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Donor Voices: *What Inspires You To Give?*

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EP Welcomes Diverse New Board Members

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Documentary Film Update & Recent News



## FEATURED STORY

# EP-TRAINED STUDENTS LEAD GUN DIALOGUE IN THE WAKE OF A DEADLY SHOOTING

**BY NADIYA BROCK**

EP ASSOCIATE & PROGRAM MANAGER

I want to tell you a story about our partners at Ravenscroft School that begins with a tragic mass shooting and ends in hope.

On Thursday, October 13th, 2022, a fifteen year old boy shot and killed five people on the Neuse River Greenway in Raleigh, North Carolina. The park where the shooting took place is located 25 miles from Ravenscroft School, an independent K-12 school that I have had the privilege of working with since 2020.

The day after the shooting, school dialogue leaders reached out to me. Students wanted to hold a conversation in their school about the role of guns in their communities.

Many households in the Ravenscroft community contain a firearm. The students knew that this issue can be highly polarizing. But over the past two years, EP has supported

school-wide conversations and trained dozens of students as well as educators in the skills of dialogue.

In a moment of crisis, these students felt ready to lead those conversations. Many young people are ready to demand, debate, protest, and advocate. But these students had the skills and confidence to lead a community-wide conversation.

Drawing from the free [EP Guide to Dialogues on the Role of Guns](#) as a starting point, we designed a dialogue that met the specific needs of the moment and the school community. The students crafted a set of prompts that invited mutual understanding and deep personal reflection:

- *Share how the recent shooting has impacted your thinking about the issue of guns in the Triangle community. What's important for others to understand about what is at the heart of this issue for you?*
- *Where are the places where you feel conflicted or have questions about this issue? What are those tensions, and/or what questions do you have?*

On Wednesday, October 19th, less than one week after the shooting, the students convened their dialogue.

***"Last week, five people in our community lost their lives when a 15 year old boy began shooting on the Neuse River Greenway Trail," the student leader began.***

***"No matter where you stand on the role of guns in our lives, everyone can agree that this is a tragedy that no one wants to happen to any community. In order for our Ravenscroft community to build a foundation of deeper awareness and a more complex understanding with each other about this topic, this space is here today for students to talk with each other."***

#### REMARKS FROM STUDENT-LED DIALOGUE IN RALEIGH, NC

As ever, the purpose of the EP-style dialogue was not to persuade anyone. Students wanted to share their perspectives with courage and listen deeply in this moment of grief, in order to better understand themselves, each other, and the larger community—so that this dialogue might make more difficult conversations and decisions possible later.

Ravenscroft School first reached out to Essential Partners for help having conversations around the 2020 presidential election. They were concerned about the cohesion and resilience of their community in the face of fierce partisan polarization.

The dialogue that took place last October was, at the time of the 2020 election, an impossible dream.

Today, thanks to the work we have done together, these students are prepared to be the healing, connecting force for change that our world needs. I was able to support them because Essential Partners commits to our communities—thanks to generous donor support for our mission—as an integral part of our larger mission and theory of change. ■

#### RELATED RESOURCE



### ***EP Guide to Dialogues on the Role of Guns in American Life***

**DOWNLOAD FREE GUIDE**

This free guide—made possible by donors like you—served as the starting point for the student-led gun dialogue in this story. Its purpose is to help people have a conversation about guns that fosters trust, mutual understanding, more resilient relationships, and a stronger sense of belonging in their communities.

This resource is based on real conversations that have taken place among gun ownership and gun regulation advocates, as well as people who don't fit neatly into either of those labels. [READ MORE](#)



Credit: Buck Butler 2022

# A NOTE ABOUT EP'S 2022 ANNUAL FUND



**FROM DAMIEN LALLY**  
EP DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

For more than 33 years, Essential Partners has equipped tens of thousands of community-builders to strengthen relationships, deepen belonging, and renew hope in their communities.

**Every person empowered by our programs and free resources—and every community strengthened through our capacity-building collaborations—is a direct result of the generosity of donors like you.**

December is the most important month of EP's year in terms of donor fundraising. What happens between now and the New Year will decide the number of emergency response calls, coaching hours, guides, public events, and training scholarships we can provide over the coming year to the community partners who need help the most.

**We need every member of our donor community to support EP's 2022 Annual Fund—and there are only days left to act.**

**If you haven't already, please consider making a generous donation to EP's 2022 Annual Fund today.**

Thank you for your support!

**MAKE YOUR 2022 GIFT TODAY**



## THINKING BEYOND THIS YEAR?

### CONSIDER A BEQUEST OR LEGACY GIFT.

Bequests and legacy gifts—sometimes known as “planned gifts”—help sustain EP's crucial mission for future generations.

**Establishing a simple bequest in your will can be as easy as sharing this instruction with your attorney or financial planner:**

**“I bequeath \$\_\_ or \_\_% of my estate to Essential Partners, EIN 22-3432160.”**

If you've already established a bequest or legacy gift for EP, or would like to discuss doing so, please contact Damien Lally:



[damien@whatisessential.org](mailto:damien@whatisessential.org)



(617) 923-1216 ext. 23

# WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO GIVE?

## EP DONORS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

### CAROLE KASPER

#### EP DONOR FOR MORE THAN 25 YEARS

Carole has been a steadfast EP donor, collaborator, and supporter for more than 25 years. She sat down with us to discuss what inspires her to give. "There are very challenging, very intense issues the world over," she said, "and EP has not shied away from engaging in those conversations. **There has been a boldness to this organization's mission, and that has earned my respect.**"

WATCH CAROLE'S VIDEO HERE:



## WHAT OTHER DONORS ARE SAYING:

“

Although several entities are now offering dialogue workshops and consultancies, none is more focused, courageous, and effective than Essential Partners. **I believe so strongly in the importance of what EP is doing that I make an automatic contribution to their work every month.**

JOHN S.

”

“

I donate monthly because I'm excited about changing conversations so we can go forward together, with mutual respect, to create a healthier society. **I put my money on our ability to rise up and create the world we want to live in.** I am grateful for the work EP does to empower and inform us.

JUDY D.

”

“

I'm super grateful to have found you all at Essential Partners. **Your work is very unique, powerful, and meaningful.** Your integrity to the welfare of so many communities is inspiring—your skills and attention to each community and their needs makes each community feel heard and uniquely tailored to.

JANELE N.

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“

Essential Partners is a leader in engaging people in important topics and promoting civil discourse. Thank you!

CATHI K.

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“

I appreciate EP's work with students, like my daughter Kate, who has learned and grown so much from her involvement with dialogue.

HEIDI S.

”



# EP WELCOMES NEW BOARD LEADERSHIP

EP is proud to announce that five new leaders have joined our Board of Directors in 2022. They represent diverse professional backgrounds, ideological views, and identities—reflecting the diverse communities EP serves. Join us in celebrating and welcoming them!



## KARA BOYLE | BOARD MEMBER

Kara is CEO and Board Member of Oxshott Capital Partners, a Manhattan-based boutique investment banking and advisory firm. [READ MORE](#)



## DARWENSI CLARK | BOARD SECRETARY

Darwensi is an operations specialist with nearly two decades of experience in nonprofit leadership, including roles with StoryCorps and the ACLU. [READ MORE](#)



## NISHA MONGIA | BOARD MEMBER

Nisha is the executive dean of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study based at Harvard University, and is a specialist in labor and employment law. [READ MORE](#)



## REV. BRANDEN S. POLK, MSW | BOARD MEMBER

Branden is CEO and Founder of Arrowhead Advising, LLC, as well as an innovator, social reformer, public speaker, writer, therapist, and creative artist. [READ MORE](#)



## MOLLY ZUKER | BOARD MEMBER

Molly is a trained EP facilitator, a mediator, and an independent nonprofit consultant specializing in cultivating cultures of inclusivity and belonging at scale. [READ MORE](#)

## NEW BOARD CHAIR ELECTED

EP is grateful to our outgoing Board Chair, **Christine Spadafor**, for her years of exemplary service and commitment to our mission. Christine stepped down this fall after leading EP through our bold new 3-year strategic vision and plan. [Brendan Abel](#), a Board Member since 2019, has since been elected our new Board Chair—congratulations, Brendan!



**CHRISTINE SPADAFOR**  
FMR. BOARD CHAIR



**BRENDAN ABEL**  
BOARD CHAIR

## "THE ABORTION TALKS" DOCUMENTARY FILM UPDATE

This Fall, a pair of independent filmmakers released a new documentary series about the powerful abortion dialogues EP's co-founder, Laura R. Chasin, and her colleague Susan Podziba facilitated between Boston's pro-choice and pro-life leaders during the early years of the Public Conversations Project, which is now known as Essential Partners.



[The Abortion Talks](#), produced and directed by independent filmmakers Josh Sabey and Sarah Perkins, made its debut over a series of in-person screenings in New York City and in the Greater Boston Area this past fall. More than a hundred people turned out for the Boston-area screening in October, which took place in Watertown—the location of the original dialogues in the mid-1990s.

The film tells the story of the tragic Brookline abortion clinic shootings in 1994, the aftermath for the community, and the powerful dialogues that took place between six women on all sides of the abortion debate over the course of five years.

[Click here to watch the trailer](#), and stay tuned for more screenings in 2023!

## RECENT NEWS

### EP ADDRESS CHANGE:

EP is transitioning to being a fully remote organization in order to be more efficient, more nimble, and more flexible in the future. We will continue to offer a mix of remote, hybrid, and in-person programming, and certain workshops may be scheduled in-person on a case-by-case basis. While we no longer have a physical office space as of November 2022, we can be reached at our new official address below—stay in touch!

**Essential Partners**

**PO Box 400175, Cambridge, MA 02140**

### FY2021-22 ANNUAL REPORT:

We recently released our brand-new FY2022 Annual Report, outlining the extraordinary impact our organization has had for thousands of people in communities all across the U.S. over the past year alone. If you haven't already done so, we encourage you to [read the full report here](#). Among other things, it details how donors like you have advanced the impact, accessibility, and sustainability of EP's work.

**Thank you for your support!**

**THANKS FOR READING—AND FOR SUPPORTING OUR MISSION.**

Have a wonderful holiday season, and a happy New Year. We'll see you in 2023!

