

**MISSION**  
PARTNERS

# Working at the Intersections

2021 Social Impact Report



**WOMEN  
OWNED**



# A Letter From Our Founder

## Dear Friends,

As we release this social impact report—our fourth now since becoming a Certified B Corporation™—I find myself reflecting on the state of our collective health. The 2021 year carried many important storylines beginning with the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6th which marred the tone of the Presidential Inauguration just two weeks later with elevated threats to our democracy. Mass shootings in Atlanta and Boulder, CO elevated ongoing national conversations about racial inequities which were further fueled by a conviction in the murder of George Floyd. Through all of that and more, the single story that shaped our collective history remained COVID-19. With more than 6 million lives lost to COVID-19 globally, it continues to shape our shared experience. As I reflect on 2021, **at the intersections** of those many storylines, I find strength and optimism in the many ways we turned the challenges of these times into **opportunities for impact**.

Working in partnership with our colleagues, clients, partners, and community members every step of the way, **we used the power of communication to advance justice**. We led campaigns designed to eliminate mis- and dis-information in public health. We launched initiatives designed to shift philanthropic dollars to historically underfunded communities. We amplified issues that resulted in federal policy change in support of local news. And, we helped organizations reorient their brands to be authentically aligned with their missions.

Looking back on 2021, it's clear that **we did all we could, with all we had, to change and challenge the inherent power in communications, for good**. Together, we worked to make every step an intentional step toward our vision for an anti-racist future.

This year's report is intended to show you **how**. With updates on how we leveraged our small business as a force for good, stories of positive impact in partnership with our clients, and a preview of where we go from here, I hope this year's report reminds you that small can be big, too. And that **together, anything is possible**.

*Carrie Fox*

Carrie Fox (she/her)  
Founder and CEO  
Mission Partners, Benefit LLC.

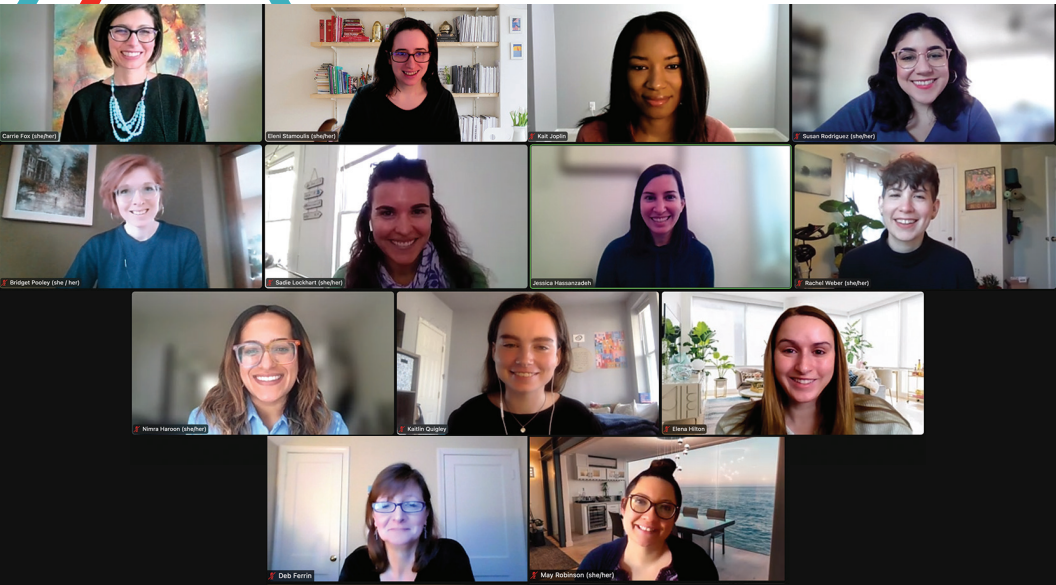


## About Mission Partners

At Mission Partners, we use the power of communication to advance social justice.

With decades of experience in social impact communications, and working at the unique **intersection of PR, policy, and philanthropy**, we work side-by-side with organizations, as trusted partners and colleagues, along their journeys to build more equitable and just systems and communities. We use a full range of strategic communications—messaging, marketing, issues management, and strategy building—to help advance our clients' visions for the future.

Since our founding, we've counseled hundreds of nonprofit organizations, foundations, and social impact organizations as well as the partners who fund and support their work, helping to ensure they are authentic in their words, equitable in their strategies, and intentional about their impact. We've helped organizations refine their strategies, increase their impact, and amplify their stories. We track and measure progress every step of the way. And we significantly invest our own dollars and time back into the clients we represent, because we know that everything we do to share and strengthen a powerful idea will move us toward a better world.





## Our Values

Mission Partners is built on the principles of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Those principles are embedded in every value we hold as a company.

- **We value people first.** We are more than what happens during our office hours. We are human first, and we strive to show a deep respect for every person inside and outside our company. We know that company culture matters, and we strive to create an environment in which our team can thrive as people and as professionals.
- **We value integrity and excellence.** We are honest, open, ethical, and fair. People trust us to adhere to our word, and we work hard to earn and maintain that trust. We always bring our best—to our work, our clients, and to each other.
- **We value courageous leadership.** We act with courage, challenge the status quo, and find new ways to drive impact and equity, grow our company and each other.
- **We value strategic thinking and thoughtful execution.** We are not just seasoned consultants; we are experienced doers and collaborators. We understand the value of thoughtful analysis, clear rationale, and contextual communications in moving from ideas to implementation.
- **We value continuous learning and growth.** We are a dynamic team, continuously learning, innovating, and improving. We seek first to understand and apply what we learn to evolve and improve our work.

## Public Benefit Statement

As a Certified B Corporation™, we pledge to foster a radically inclusive and richly regenerative economy. Our company voluntarily invests in meeting significantly higher standards of sustainability, governance, and giving back to the community in our daily operations. At Mission Partners, we believe business is a force for good and we are committed to providing an environment of mutual respect for all employees and partners. We believe the more inclusive we are, the better our work will be.

# Our Impact in 2021

*The vision of a just, equitable world is what drives us and our work.*

That's why in 2021 we made a commitment to invest and shift significant resources to Black- and women\*-led organizations. What started in 2020 as a \$50,000 pro bono commitment has expanded to multi-pronged and multi-million dollar community commitment that will carry us through 2025:

- **Collaborate:** The majority of our investment will be made via skills-based pro bono to our client base, leveraging our expertise to help non-profits grow and thrive. We will deliver more than \$1M in pro bono resources by 2025.
- **Invest:** Additionally, through direct investments, grants, sponsorships, vendor investments, and purchases,

we will honor our commitment to supporting Black- and women-led organizations. We will shift more than \$1M in financial capital to Black and women-led firms by 2025.

- **Grow:** We in the early planning stages of a cohort-style paid apprenticeship program that will open doors for more leaders in senior communications roles.

We acknowledge our privilege as a white, cisgender woman-owned company and B Corporation™, and believe our highest responsibility is to use our influence and capital to shift and disrupt white dominant norms and false, toxic narratives. Learn more and track our progress at [mission.partners/commitment](https://mission.partners/commitment).

*\*We belong to, support and celebrate a broad community spanning a spectrum of gender identities, including cisgender, transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people.*

Certified



Corporation

Why the B?

Nearly 5,000 businesses around the world hold the coveted Certified B Corporation™ designation—and we are proud to be among them. B Corporations are better for employees, the community, customers, and the environment. It's our collective and ongoing hard work that is driving transformational change across the business sectors we represent.

# 125.5

## Our B Corp Score

To certify as a B Corp, a company must achieve a minimum verified score of 80 points on the B Impact Assessment.



## Accountability + Action

Created three distinct working groups—focused on our business, our clients, and our world—to hold leadership accountable to the goals of our Race Equity Action Plan.



## Socially Responsible Investments

Made a values-driven shift in our retirement plan vendor, incorporating socially responsible investing options that align with our company and individual values.



## Salary Tiers

Publicized salary ranges for all open positions and shared salary tiers and pathways for growth with employees.



## Ethics + Transparency

Rolled out a Code of Ethics to supplement other workplace policies that ensure a transparent company culture.



## Expanded Health Care Eligibility

Expanded health care coverage to include part-time employees.



## Values-Aligned Vendors

Maintained commitment to at least 60% of significant suppliers are local and/or owned by women, individuals who identify as LGBTQ+, and people of color.



## Giving of Time + Talent

Granted \$133K+ in pro-bono to our clients and community partners, in addition to 2,070 volunteer hours of personal time.



## Added Paid Holidays

Added a Spring Break, Juneteenth, and Indigenous Peoples' Day as paid holidays.

# \$617K

## Shifting of Capital

Moved \$617K in capital to Black- and women-led organizations through sponsorships, investments, and intentional vendor transitions.



## Matching Gifts + Charitable Donations

\$8K+ donated to nonprofits, including dollars donated through our charitable match program.

## WOMEN<sup>®</sup> OWNED<sup>®</sup> WBENC Certification

Secured certification as a woman-owned business.

# How Racism Harms Us All

with Natalie S. Burke

— MISSION —  
FORWARD  
WITH CARRIE FOX



## Mission Forward™

Though virtual meetings and events were still the norm in 2021, our community connections grew even stronger as we found meaningful ways to learn from one another and share our experiences.

### The Mission Forward Podcast

In 2021, we focused on growing our Mission Forward community, which we first launched in 2014 as an in-person speaker series, but in 2020 we transformed into a podcast of the same name.

Mission Forward is a free, accessible resource for communicators who wish to advance social justice through words, design, and policy. On each season of the podcast, we deliver practical insights while amplifying fresh voices and thought-provoking ideas along the way. Mission Forward serves as a resource for our community, made up of nonprofit leaders, top communicators, and mission-driven businesses.

Every episode provides insightful and actionable steps for organizations to use when implementing inclusive marketing, social impact communications, and justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion strategies. The podcast now has a new home at [missionforward.us](https://missionforward.us) where you can join the community, get early access to content, and be among the first to benefit from new offerings.

REBROADCAST

# The Reinvention of Private Higher Education

with Dr. Rob Kelly

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WITH CARRIE FOX



# REWRITING THE FUTURE OF A FREE & JUST PRESS

WITH MEDIA 2070'S ALICIA BELL

— MISSION —  
FORWARD  
SEASON THREE



EP 8



SEASON FOUR

# FOR COMMUNICATING LIFE

WITH BLUE ZONES AUTHOR  
DAN BUETTNER

— MISSION —  
FORWARD  
WITH CARRIE FOX



EP 10





## Recognition

Mission Partners was recognized as one of **Real Leaders' Top 150 Impact Companies of 2021**. Our small and mighty firm joined Tesla, Beyond Meat, Ben & Jerry's, Patagonia, and 145 other companies who are thinking beyond profits to build better business.

Mission Partners was also fortunate to receive the **Silver Stevie Award in the Best Women-Run Workplaces** category of the annual Stevie Awards for Women in Business. This award celebrates the thoughtful work of our team and our ability to not just survive the challenges of COVID-19, but to thrive. We believe communications has the power to change the world, and we are proud to have our work, our team, and our commitment recognized in this way.



## Adventures in Kindness

Mission Partners marked an exciting milestone in 2021 with the release of the 2nd edition of *Adventures in Kindness: 52 Adventures for Building a Better World*, written by Carrie Fox and her daughter, Sophia, and illustrated by her "sister-in-love," Nichole Wong Forti. *Adventures in Kindness*, published by Mission Partners Press, serves as a key tool for encouraging youth-led kindness activities, with lessons for infusing kindness into the classroom. Proceeds from the book are directed to the nonprofits featured within its pages.





## Our 2021 Impact in Action

At Mission Partners, we believe business is a force for good. We approach every client experience as an **opportunity for transformative impact**. In 2021, we partnered with 30 nonprofits, foundations, associations, coalitions, and responsible businesses, collectively representing more than 255,000 association members, 2,140 students, 1,200 foundations grantees, and 160,000 people whose lives are impacted by the organizations we served. Here's a brief look at our collective impact in 2021.



PARTNERSHIPS, PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT + COALITION MANAGEMENT

# Public Health Communications Collaborative

*At the Intersection of Public Health + Coalition Building:  
Collaborating on Lifesaving Messaging*

In 2020, the Public Health Communications Collaborative (PHCC) formed to provide communications support to local and state health departments, build trust in public health guidance, and keep communities healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic. In May 2021, Mission Partners stepped in to manage the daily communications and project management of the Collaborative.

Mission Partners began by setting up strong communications systems to address the rapidly changing pandemic. In addition to providing ongoing communications and graphic design support, the Mission Partners team facilitates coalition meetings and engages partners and develops messaging guidance on urgent public health issues. Mission Partners also plans and leads webinars on timely topics and builds the organization's content strategy for social media and email. Balancing

details with the bigger picture, the team handles both rapid responses and the long-term vision of building trust in public health.

Working with the Collaborative, Mission Partners has raised the profile of the organization among the public health community. Since beginning our work together, the Collaborative hosted its largest webinar to-date with over 2,000 registrants. Additionally, the Collaborative developed an educational toolkit for national distribution and continues to show month-over-month growth in web traffic and engagement. Now over two years into the pandemic, Mission Partners is supporting the Collaborative to develop its 2022 strategy. The strategy will focus on how the Collaborative can evolve from a COVID-19-era project to a long-term effort invested in strengthening public health communications.

*“Mission Partners has helped bring PHCC to new heights. The team is creative, proactive, and strategic, and their focus on gathering and applying impact analytics, along with their contributions to the project’s message and materials development process and outreach strategies have been key to our success.”*

**RHEA K. FARBERMAN, APR**

*Director of Strategic Communications & Policy Research, Trust for America's Health  
Project Team Leader, Public Health Communications Collaborative*



STRATEGIC PLANNING + VISIONING



# East Coast Greenway Alliance

## At the Intersection of Environment + Justice: A Strategic Plan to Seize the Moment

At its best, a greenway provides communities with safe opportunities for connection, wellness, and joy. East Coast Greenway Alliance, the champion behind the formation of the East Coast Greenway route from Maine to Florida, knows these benefits well. In 2021, East Coast Greenway Alliance was at a pivotal moment, with newfound political supporters of greenways, increased greenway usage due to COVID-19 indoor activity restrictions, and more frequent public conversations around environmental justice. To seize the moment, East Coast Greenway Alliance engaged Mission Partners to guide the organization through the development of a new five-year strategic plan.

Mission Partners engaged the board and staff throughout the full process, keeping power dynamics top of mind, with facilitated planning sessions and research to

help inform strategic direction. Mission Partners then worked with East Coast Greenway Alliance to develop the designed strategic plan that could be shared externally. The East Coast Greenway Alliance board and staff knew justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) needed to be a focal point of the plan, from working alongside communities along the greenway to forming values-aligned partnerships. The Mission Partners team helped ensure JEDI was thought of through every priority, tactic, and goal.

With the new strategic plan in place, East Coast Greenway Alliance had a record-setting year in 2021, securing \$550 million in public investment, obtaining 660 miles of new route signage, increasing reach from news coverage by 220%, and welcoming eight new staff members and a new co-chair to its Board of Trustees.

*“The Mission Partners team members are passionate, intelligent, friendly facilitators who care about making sure the strategic planning process goes smoothly.”*

**NILES BARNES**

*Deputy Director, East Coast Greenway Alliance*





Photo courtesy of East Coast Greenway Alliance

PR, CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENT + ACTIVATION

The logo for JustFund features a stylized red and black arrow pointing right, followed by the word "JustFund" in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

## At the Intersection of Philanthropy + Campaigns: A New Approach to Grantmaking

JustFund was launched in 2017, with a new take on philanthropic grantmaking: fueling the movement for social and racial equity, rather than reinforcing a broken system that's inequitable, slow, and complicated. As the only nonprofit grantmaking platform developed by funders and organizers of color, JustFund challenges existing systems that prevent grantmakers from moving dollars to those leading social change. In early 2021, JustFund was ready to start a movement to upend traditional philanthropy and push for a "reset" across the field.

This messaging is featured on an updated website and social media channels, a new funder pitch deck and infographics, and a newsletter series. Key messages are also shared in the context of thought leadership via blogs, videos, and speaking opportunities.

Mission Partners then supported JustFund in the launch of their \$100 Million Moved campaign to announce a major funding milestone that amplified the work of over 4,000 organizations in traditionally underfunded communities. The official announcement and #ResetPhilanthropy campaign garnered over 410,000 impressions across digital and social platforms. Mission Partners also helped JustFund achieve a newsletter open rate that's 15% above the nonprofit industry average. JustFund is positioned to continue moving millions in the years ahead—both to grow their organizational impact and help remove barriers to equitable grantmaking.

*"Mission Partners helped develop every stage of our communication strategy, taking time to think and ideate with us, and truly listen to our dreams. They managed our project flawlessly through implementation, ensuring we had everything we needed to take the next steps toward growth. Thanks to Mission Partners, we have beautifully designed assets that support engagement across our customer support journey and clear actions to take at each step.*

**IARA PENG**

Founder & CEO, JustFund

A decorative graphic in the bottom left corner consisting of overlapping red and teal geometric shapes, resembling a stylized 'J' or a series of connected lines.





PR, CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENT + ACTIVATION

## Prism

### At the Intersection of Journalism + Strategy: Reaching the Right Audience

In early 2021, Prism was about a year off the ground as a groundbreaking new independent, nonprofit newsroom, developed by and for people of color. However, their actual engaged audience was not aligned with their envisioned audience. Prism needed to pivot to promote and tell their story in a way that would resonate with the folks for whom they primarily exist.

Mission Partners facilitated a full-day leadership team retreat and design thinking day, in partnership with our colleagues at Smoketown Strategy, that helped the team see their work and impact in new ways. In that session, we uncovered and then explored at depth that an early partnership was driving a misaligned audience. And while the numbers of readers were impressive, Prism's content just wasn't getting in front of the right folks. We also found there was a lack of shared understanding for Prism's goals, and that internal communications could

be strengthened, which could in turn strengthen their public voice.

Following that session, Mission Partners supported Prism in building a year-long communications strategy, which included an update of all Prism messaging, research with the target audience set, and reaching out to those readers through surveys and group conversations. Those efforts led to strong early returns: engaged subscribers have increased, unique visitors to the site have doubled, and Prism met its year-end fundraising goals. With Prism now in a place for growth, we supported the team to launch a new membership program, initiate an ads campaign to increase brand awareness, and identify and apply for a series of opportunities to amplify Prism's model and leaders. At every step, Prism's internal team is fully aligned on the priorities that will engage and expand reach among target readers, partners, and funders.

*“Working alongside Mission Partners has been transformative for Prism. With their support and expertise, we were able to refine and focus our brand and strategy at a critical moment of our early development as a newsroom, and Prism has continued to thrive thanks in large part to this partnership.”*

**ASHTON LATTIMORE**  
Editor-In-Chief, Prism



**THIS IS  
OUR HOME  
TOO**

[iwillbelieve.org](http://iwillbelieve.org)

MESSAGE + BRAND DEVELOPMENT

## East Boston Social Centers

### At the Intersection of Service + Community Relationships: Introducing an Updated Brand

At East Boston Social Centers, generations of committed community members have been fostering community, belonging, and joy in East Boston for over a century. Founded in 1918 to welcome and support immigrant families, East Boston Social Centers still proudly embrace families at every step. Their core services and programs support the diverse community of East Boston, but their brand no longer reflected the organization's vibrancy, and their words left people unsure of the organization's role in the community.

Mission Partners was engaged to guide the organization through a brand refresh, driven by conversations with community members, resulting in a comprehensive brand book and communications strategy to support the rollout of the refreshed brand. In November 2021, East Boston Social Centers shared its updated

visual brand, a refreshed website and new messaging that more effectively communicates its value to partners and its mission, vision, and approach to community building.

Our charge was to develop a clear strategy to support the brand announcement and build momentum. But it was more than a brand announcement—it was a launching pad for a stronger, more inclusive organization. As a result, staff have built consistency around how they talk about their work and there has been a more intentional focus on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI). To help facilitate the JEDI work, a Director of Community Joy will be joining the team. East Boston Social Centers now has the tools to communicate the joy of the organization with their community.

*“Mission Partners led with a very inclusive process that allowed us to involve diverse voices in the decision-making and get community buy-in for our marketing. As an added bonus, Mission Partners was a great resource for implementing the brand with in-house support and connected us with other vendors to bring it to life.”*

**JUSTIN PASQUARIELLO**

Executive Director, East Boston Social Centers



TRAINING + FACILITATION

## Clinical Scholars

### *At the Intersection of Media + Message: Communicating Clearly About Public Health*

In 2021, as public health officials across the country were on the frontlines of messaging and managing a global pandemic, Mission Partners was engaged to lead a focused media and message training for Clinical Scholars, a national leadership program for experienced health care providers supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The 60 participants in the session included pharmacists, physical therapists, dentists, social workers, nurses, physicians, and many others involved with public health. Through mentoring, networking, and an intensive leadership curriculum centered on equity, they deepen their influence and impact as leaders with the power to transform their workplaces and communities. When the group gathered in the spring of 2021, all Scholars had one

clear need in common: how to manage a range of difficult questions when there are not always clear answers. Carrie Fox led the team through a half-day training that detailed the basics of working with the media, the use of tools like a message map and bridging, and how to center equity through communications. As one participant shared: “Carrie’s advice was practical and timely. She laid out the message rooted in practice vs. bogged in theories...I can start using these tools today.”

In the months after the session, participants are still consistently using the tools introduced that day, and their confidence in engaging with the media has grown. While becoming an expert spokesperson takes time, the session helped the scholars deliver their messages to the media at a time when it was needed most.

*“The tools Carrie presented are so critical to fighting the good fight. I feel more prepared than I thought would even be possible after a 3-hour session.”*

**CLINICAL SCHOLARS PARTICIPANT**



## From Mission to Impact: A Commitment to Race Equity

In July 2020, Mission Partners published a Race Equity Action Plan—a collection of our commitments and actions to advance racial equity within our business, our client work, and our world. Guided by feedback sourced in our quarterly employee surveys, in 2021 we amended the format of the Equity Accountability Team to create three distinct working groups focused on our business, our clients, and our world. Each group is led by a member of the leadership team and meets regularly to collaborate on team-guided projects, with ultimate accountability for progress held at the leadership level. These important changes—guided by a team desire for more interest-aligned, collaborative projects—allow space for small group discussion and provide a more consistent way of holding the leadership team accountable to measure progress against stated goals.

Specific progress made in 2021 includes:

- **Published an internal Editorial Guide to help eliminate subjectivity and bias across deliverables.** Members of our client team leverage this guide to ensure asset-based language is utilized on all client and company deliverables. This reframing of language is critical to effectively communicating about individuals as whole people, and framing diversity of thought, culture, and lived experience as assets, rather than deficits.
- **Considering time, treasure, and talent in support of advancing race equity.** We hosted our second annual day of service and learning, and added Juneteenth as a company holiday. And we far exceeded our goal of \$50,000 in pro bono communications support for Black-led organizations, leading the firm to commit to a more ambitious multi-million goal by 2025. Learn more at [missionpartners/commitment](https://missionpartners.com/commitment).
- **A revamped employee incentive program to more closely align with Mission Partners' core values.** We did away with gift cards for monolithic companies like Amazon and American Express, and shifted our incentive program to support fellow B Corps™, Black- and women-owned businesses, and local businesses in the DC region, upholding our commitment that every dollar spent by Mission Partners can be values-aligned.







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At Mission Partners, we believe deeply in building better business. We appreciate knowing that the B Corp community is willing to have brave conversations about what the future of business can be, rather than what the history of business has been.

**CARRIE FOX**

*Founder and CEO*

*Mission Partners, Benefit LLC*

## The People of Mission Partners

In 2021, as ongoing social distancing pulled our communities even further apart, the Mission Partners team focused on creating simple, fun ways to come together. We provided creative opportunities for our team to gather virtually, and to engage with our respective communities authentically.

We knew that employees in every sector were experiencing burnout in 2021, so Mission Partners doubled down on our efforts to take care of our employees and create necessary space for rest and mental health. We added additional wellness days so that team members could step away from work obligations and recharge, and we offered the option to restructure work hours to allow team members to provide care and education support for children. Additionally, we increased our flex policy for employees,

including the choice to change their work classification from full time to part time, as needed.

Over the course of the year, we came together to participate in an authentic Italian cooking class, enjoyed coffee connects to catch up with each other, and relaxed during a group yoga and meditation session. Our team also found ways to get involved in each of our local communities, through teaching, volunteering time and treasure, and sitting on nonprofit boards.

Without a doubt, 2021 proved that Mission Partners' greatest strength continues to be our talented, dedicated, and thoughtful team.

### CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

**Sadie Lockhart** volunteering with Feeding Tampa Bay.

**Bridget Pooley** with other members of the Minnesota B Local Chapter.

**Carrie Fox**, her daughters, and neighbors write letters to Childrens' National Staff.

**Nimra Haroon** at Georgetown University's Center for Social Impact Communications speaking about her experiences in the program.

**Eleni Stamoulis** showing off the movie boxes Mission Partners sent to staff in celebration of Black History Month, courtesy of our creative partners at ABCD & Company.

**Susanne Pirone** and her family volunteering at the Capital Area Food Bank in Washington, DC.

**Jessica Hassanzadeh** at a virtual meeting of the Young Professionals Board for Girls on the Run.





“

Being a B Corp and learning to fully live into our values means being willing to go there—wherever our employees, our communities, and our planet requires—and to see those actions through, fully. It means wholeheartedly promoting courageous leadership within our company—not because those words sound interesting, but because inherently we know that doing so will in fact build a better, more sustainable, and a more just version of our business.

**CARRIE FOX**

*Founder and CEO*

*Mission Partners, Benefit LLC*

**MISSION**  
PARTNERS



**WOMEN**  
OWNED