



Sunny Hills
SERVICESSM

Better and Brighter Futures

Winter 2016



Don't Stop Believing

Former Irene M. Hunt School student deals himself a "better-hand"

By the age of six, Trevor felt the odds were not in his favor. He lived with his mother, but due to her drug abuse, he was forced to feed, clothe and care for himself, and sometimes his mother. In his younger years, Trevor witnessed things no child should see, such as watching his mother inject illegal drugs. These traumatic experiences resulted in severe behavior issues for Trevor, so in first grade, he was moved to The Irene M. Hunt School of Marin, a non-public K-12 day school that specializes in educating children and youth who struggle with acute social and emotional issues. He remained there for 10 years. *Continued on page 3 »*



CEO MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

For the past 121 years, Sunny Hills Services has been a haven of support and compassion for children and youth who have been severely impacted by trauma. Today, thousands of local young people need help to overcome challenges that may be beyond anything their families have experienced – youth turning to drugs, alcohol and other extreme behaviors that are used out of an urgent need to cope with the effects of trauma.

Sunny Hills Services practices “Trauma Informed Care.” Our programs do not blame a youth for extreme behaviors. Instead, through deeply compassionate caregiving, our clinicians strive to release him or her from the throes of self-destructive behaviors – both physical and emotional, and help them develop behaviors that will be productive, nurture relationships and help them heal.

Through our collaboration with our county partners and other providers, we know what needs are not being met. Among the most urgent needs is that of teenage alcohol and drug abuse treatment, especially community-based programs available to low-income clients. Increased substance abuse among teenagers greatly concerns public health officials and civic leaders nationwide, as this abuse often leads to negative behaviors that affect home, school and the community.

A great many of the youth served by Sunny Hills have substance abuse issues, or struggle with addiction. For this reason, we are partnering with the County of Marin and other community providers to ensure that a full range of services are available for youth suffering from substance abuse, including early intervention, outpatient and residential treatment. Look for more news in the coming months as this programming develops.

Our exceptional staff is deeply committed to doing the intensive work it takes to create better and brighter futures for youth who need extra help in overcoming alcohol and substance abuse. They are prepared to guide the youth in making profound changes in their lives and draw from their innate resilience to succeed.

It takes a village of support to make a difference in the lives of troubled children and youth, and we appreciate your being a part of that village.

Thank you for your support,

Mary Denton, CEO

MEET TODAY'S SUNNY HILLS SERVICES

Sunny Hills serves children and youth that have endured more disruption, neglect or abuse in their young lives than most of us could ever imagine. They may have behavioral problems, struggle with mental health issues or be homeless. When it comes to helping youth, our staff of outstanding professionals is tenacious – they provide treatment options that support young people in healing from past and present trauma as they learn new beliefs and behaviors and develop the resilience and coping skills to live a better life. We empower children, youth and their families to overcome life's challenges so they can learn to thrive.

As an organization that focuses on behavioral health, our services address each youth's individual needs and strengths, in a range of appropriate settings, including schools, community organizations and homes. Our goal is the emotional, social and functional well-being of our clients.



INTENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT

We recognize that youth should have a say in their own lives, and we partner with them, and their families when possible, in planning and carrying out their treatment and services.



SPECIAL EDUCATION

School-age children (ages 5-17) who can't function in a traditional public school due to their behavior issues attend our Irene M. Hunt School, where they receive an education while their needs are professionally and compassionately addressed.



SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Youth who are aging out of the foster care system or have been in the juvenile justice system learn daily living and social skills, while also receiving behavioral treatment and other support in meeting their academic, work and relationship goals, as they prepare for adulthood and greater independence.



YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

We provide early prevention and intervention programs in schools and in the community, allowing youth to develop coping skills and resilience needed to avoid self-destructive decisions and behaviors, including gang involvement.

In 2016, our 122nd year, we served close to 1400 children and youth, in addition to hundreds of family members or caregivers across Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa and Sonoma counties.

» For detailed information on our programs and services, visit www.sunnyhillsservices.org



SUNNY HILLS SIGHTINGS

We love being active in the communities we serve – meeting locals and reminding them that Sunny Hills is a source of help and hope to thousands of children and youth in need. If you see us in your neighborhood, please stop by and say hello!



Continued from front cover»

The intense rage and deep sadness Trevor felt about how progressively harder his life had become took its toll. He acted-out continuously, raging at school and with anyone near him. An aunt took him into her home, but Child Protective Services intervened, and by age 15, he was placed in a group foster home.

Trevor was miserable in foster care, so his behavior and attitude worsened. He still attended the Hunt School, but he frequently slept through class and treated the staff terribly.

“Around this time, I moved back in with my mom (who continued to use drugs) and became friends with a young neighbor, so we spent a lot of time at his house,” recalls Trevor. “I got to know his dad, Chris, and before long my friend was bugging his dad to become my foster family. They went through the legal steps, and eventually I became their “Non-Related Extended Family Member.”

For the first time in his 16 years, Trevor had a stable home, with sit-down meals, chores, discipline, and a true sense of connection and belonging.

“When my home life became stable, something in me changed. I got curious about what life would’ve been like if I’d have been dealt a ‘better-hand’ and gone to a regular high school, played football, and just been able to be a regular kid. I decided that if things were ever going to change, I needed to change first. I had to stop taking advantage of the system by sleeping at school and messing up. I needed to believe in myself and do things differently.”

With the help of Eric Fischer, his Sunny Hills teacher, Trevor put his newfound determination to work. He paid attention in class, studied hard, and often stayed after

school for tutoring. When he expressed his wish to try-out for the football team at his new high school, the Hunt School staff spent hours throwing the ball, setting up plays, and helping Trevor get into shape.

He passed the required California High School Exit exam and enrolled in Novato High School. He faced the challenges of a public-school head-on, with tenacity and bravery, and graduated in 2015 with all A’s & B’s. He did so while playing on the varsity football team, which he made as a walk-on though having never formally played the game.

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.....

Since graduating, Trevor has worked at the Harvest Market in Novato. He owns a car, pays his bills, and lives with his long-time girlfriend. He shares the dreams of many 19 year olds. He’d like a career and hopes to attend trade school or find an apprenticeship where he can learn to be a skilled electrician. Someday he’d like to get married and have children.

“I hope that when I have kids, they’ll have the kind of home-life I didn’t have. They’ll get to go to college. And hopefully, if they’re really lucky, they’ll find places like Sunny Hills and people like Mr. Fischer, who never for a moment stopped believing in me,” says Trevor.

WHITE HOUSE AGAIN RECOGNIZES SOKHOM MAO AS “CHAMPION OF CHANGE” FOR FOSTER YOUTH

President Obama created Champions of Change, a program that celebrates ordinary people who do extraordinary things in their communities across the country; to share their accomplishments so that others will follow their lead.

In May 2015 Sokhom Mao, Sunny Hills’ Community Engagement Officer, and former Sunny Hills client, was honored at the White House as a Champion of Change for his “courage, resilience, and contributions and his commitment to furthering his education.”

On Monday December 5th, Sokhom returned to the White House for a celebration of all those who were recognized as Champions of Change during the Obama administration. All of us at Sunny Hills couldn’t be prouder of Sokhom, who demonstrates and personifies the agency’s commitment to providing current and former foster youth with programs and services that lead to greater opportunities and more successful lives.





Sunny Hills Services
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The mission of Sunny Hills Services is to help vulnerable children, youth and their families use their strengths to develop healthy relationships and fulfilling lives.

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Sunny Hills earned the
Joint Commission's
Gold Seal of Approval
for Behavioral Health

MARK YOUR 2017 CALENDAR AND JOIN US!

JANUARY 19

Screening of *Spotlight*, 2016 Oscar winner for Best Picture, with commentary by *Spotlight*'s producer and SHS Board Member, Blye Pagon Faust. At the Rafael Theater in San Rafael

JANUARY 23

A Night at the Market, at Swan's Market in Oakland

MARCH 24

Sam's Sparkler, at Sam's Anchor Café in Tiburon

JUNE 19

Bank Of Marin Golf Tournament, at Meadow Club in Fairfax

OCTOBER 7

Reach for the Stars Gala, location to be announced

*More info at www.sunnyhillsservices.org/Events

CREATIVE WAYS TO GIVE

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LEGACY GIVING:

Remember Sunny Hills in your estate planning. Contact us at [415.457.3200](tel:415.457.3200) x114

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Mollie Stones, United Markets, Woodlands Market