

SPRING 2019

SidebySideYouth.org



FORMERLY SUNNY HILLS SERVICES/BAYC

The mission of Side by Side is to walk with youth impacted by adversity toward a future with connection and meaning.



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LETTER FROM MARY

Dear friends,

As I write this, spring is here and the sun is shining after many months of rain.

It's not unlike the journeys of our youth, who come to us after dark times in their lives and we hope they find warmth and light in our programs. The majority of our clients are between the ages of 14 and 21, which means they have already experienced quite a bit before arriving to us, and they are working towards the transition to adulthood.

Recent research confirms what we are seeing in our clients and in fact shows young people are having a more difficult time than in the past, with an alarming increase in mental health issues for teens and young adults across the U.S (see more on page 3). Whether the increased depression and anxiety stems from social and digital media, the secondhand trauma of school shootings, or the many other disheartening factors facing this generation, clearly there is a critical need for increased counseling and support. It reminds us how imperative our work is in the lives of our clients.

We have a great example in Ben, a young person who has experienced tremendous growth and healing from past trauma while in our Real Alternatives program, and will transition out on his own this summer. You can read more about him and his provider, Jackie, on page 5.

This is also the time of year with plenty of opportunities to celebrate! We have our first Alameda County fundraiser, Shindig, in May, the Bank of Marin Golf Tournament in June, and Reach for the Stars gala in September – all of which benefit Side by Side. We hope to see you there!

With gratitude,

Mary Denton, CEO

AGENCY NEWS

Gold Seal of Approval – Again!

Last month, after a rigorous onsite survey, Side by Side received its recertification of The Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval for Behavioral Health Care, the premier symbol for quality, safety, and effectiveness for health organizations (Side by Side first received in 2016).

New Board Members

Side by Side is thrilled to welcome three new board members, who, along with their professional qualifications, bring personal experience with their own children overcoming adversity that has heightened their awareness of and passion for the services we provide.

- **Katheryn (Byrd) Baldwin** – Byrd has been a longtime supporter of Side by Side and her family has recently been given the opportunity to support and honor the journey of their young adult transgender daughter. Byrd is looking forward to dedicating her efforts towards Our Space and the many programs of Side by Side.
- **Deanna Brock** – Deanna, a lawyer, and her family have become increasingly involved with Side by Side since their youngest son started at the Irene M. Hunt School in 2017, and for the first time found a place where he felt safe and supported and able to learn coping skills and gain confidence.
- **Scott Nikas** – Scott, a CPA with a long accounting career, and his wife, Sandy Jacobs, have supported Side by Side since they learned about the agency over five years ago and understand firsthand many of the challenges facing our clients and families, as their son struggled with attention issues, emotional challenges, anxiety, and chemical dependency.



Program Updates

- **Irene M. Hunt School:** In response to a persistent waitlist that highlighted the need in our community for our school's unique offerings, we recently opened eight additional spots, expanding our total student capacity to 48.
- **Real Alternatives:** Earlier this year we released a report summarizing the results of a five-year longitudinal study on our transitional housing program for former foster youth. See an excerpt on the following page.
- **TAY Space:** In January, TAY Space led the youth portion of Marin County's homeless count. The biannual count relied on the mapping of our TAY Space clients, based on their own personal experiences as homeless youth. The results of the count will be released this fall.
- **YouThrive:** YouThrive is currently developing a summer curriculum to augment the fall and spring school semesters and allow for better continuity and prevent summer setbacks for the middle schoolers and high schoolers we serve in Marin and Sonoma counties.

ON OUR RADAR

Studies released in the last few months show an acute increase in mental health issues among American teens and young adults. Though inconclusive about direct causes or correlations, the alarming rates underscore the critical need for all young people to have better access to mental health care.

- **The Pew Research Center** issued results from a survey (2/20/19) that showed most American teenagers see depression and anxiety as major problems among their peers. The survey found that 70 percent of teenagers saw mental health as a big issue, and more concerning than bullying, drug addiction, and alcohol consumption. The responses about mental health issues were consistent across gender, race, and income lines.
- **A new study in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*** (3/14/19) showed that, between 2009 and 2017, rates of depression among kids ages 14 to 17 increased by more than 60%. The increases were nearly as steep among those ages 12 to 13 and 18 to 21. The study also found rates of suicidal thoughts, plans, and attempts all increased significantly among young people, and in some cases more than doubled, between 2008 and 2017.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: REAL ALTERNATIVES

Many Firsts

Established in 2003 as the **first** transitional housing program in Alameda County for youth in foster care, Real Alternatives helps prepare participating youth to live independently, providing free or subsidized rent in scattered-site housing to 18-24 year olds and onsite supervision in one fourplex apartment building for 16-17 year olds. In 2010, after California's Assembly Bill 12 was enacted to extend foster care from age 18 to 21, Real Alternatives was the **first** program in California to serve this new population of older, transition-age dependent youth.

Real Alternatives provides a safe environment for participants to take responsibility for their lives in as many areas as possible and develop goals for their future, all while having a safety net. Supported by our staff, youth learn to budget and pay bills, shop for groceries and cook, live with a roommate, resolve conflict, pursue an education, and pursue and maintain employment. All Real Alternatives clients have a case management team, access to mental health services, and are also supported in building and/or repairing relationships, learning new coping skills, and managing any mental health symptoms that may get in their way.

REAL ALTERNATIVES: LONGITUDINAL STUDY

In 2013, Side by Side embarked on a five-year longitudinal study of Real Alternatives, funded by the Albert and Elaine Borchard Foundation. The study quantified the impact of Real Alternatives' transitional housing and wraparound services to foster, former foster, and probation youth ages 16-24 in Hayward, California. It is one of only three known studies of its kind.

Modeled on the Midwest Study of former foster youth, the Real Alternatives study tracked outcomes for housing security/homelessness, educational attainment, employment and wages, parenting, sexual exploitation, and incarceration. Fifty-seven out of 180 former clients who left the program between 2007 and 2016 were surveyed over five years (2013-2018).

Results

Results of the study were positive when compared to the Midwest Study, particularly in employment, where former Real Alternatives

Unique Staffing Model

In order to provide young people with the most effective care, Real Alternatives developed a unique staffing model that pairs a clinical case manager with a youth specialist. The two staff share a caseload of 9-13 clients, which allows them consistent coverage.

The Bay Area Housing Challenge

The Bay Area housing market makes it challenging for youth of all backgrounds to transition into adulthood and live independently, and all the more so for foster and formerly incarcerated youth. The lack of affordable, quality housing has also made it challenging for Real Alternatives to own the properties we manage. Ownership provides us greater financial stability, and allows us to resolve issues and provide maintenance more efficiently. We currently own one building with four units, just a fraction of our transitional housing.

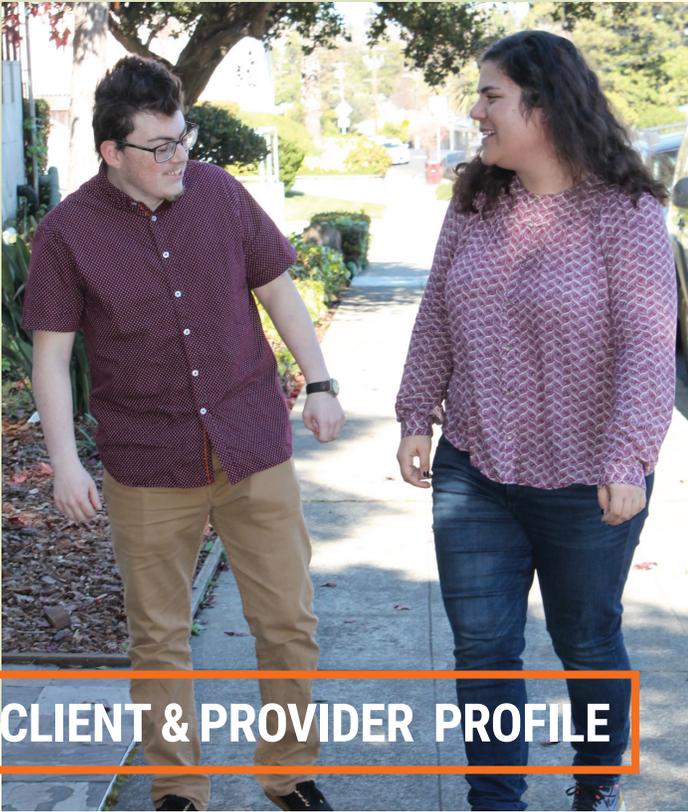
Side by Side gratefully thanks the following funders who support the Real Alternatives program.

Albert & Elaine Borchard Foundation
Bernard E. & Alba Witkin Charitable Foundation
Eucalyptus Foundation
Five Bridges Foundation
Wells Fargo Bank
West Davis & Bergard Foundation

clients were not only employed at a significantly higher rate, they earned a living wage relevant to cost of living in Alameda County. Real Alternatives clients have high rates of current stable housing which is important as some of the youth had exited the program as long as eight years earlier. Additionally, their likelihood of becoming a parent was half what the Midwest study population demonstrated and 92% had a high school diploma or higher, which is much higher than all studies of former foster youth reviewed by the Midwest Study.

Most significantly, the study demonstrates the critical role of supportive transitional housing and related services in helping a former foster youth grow beyond their difficult pasts to become stable, productive adults. The Real Alternatives transitional housing program, in combination with offered wraparound services, gives participating youth a clear advantage in making their way in the world.

For the executive summary of the report, visit:
SidebySideYouth.org/real_alternatives_report



Side by Side with Jackie and Ben, Real Alternatives

Jackie has been with Side by Side for six years and currently works as a clinical case manager with Real Alternatives. She began working with Ben when he arrived in fall 2017, at age 19, after serving time in juvenile hall. Ben will transition out of Real Alternatives this July, when he turns 21.

With Jackie

Side by Side: What were your first impressions of Ben?

Jackie: In our initial assessment – and there are a lot of tough questions in the assessment – Ben was really open and honest and authentic about what was going on for him and his past. He had a lot of insight and reflection. I knew he was at a space where he could start the work of forgiving himself and moving on from there. He attended every session, every community meeting. He bought into the program right away and wanted to be there and wanted to make it work.

SBS: What have you learned from Ben?

Jackie: That you can never define someone by their past – you can only look at how they bounce back, and their resilience. Ben's resilience has been really inspiring. He used to be very shy, very anxious about things like navigating the bus – he would call me in a panic asking where the bus was and if I could pick him up. But I never get calls like that anymore. Now he takes the bus and BART every day, to Laney College and to his job. And he got a job so quickly and on his own – and has since been promoted. I think his

having stable housing and consistent people checking in on him played a big part in him succeeding in these ways.

SBS: What do you see for Ben in the future?

Jackie: Ben will turn 21 in July, which means he'll need to transition out of the program. We've talked about the anxiety that comes with that. But Ben is ready – he's got this. I have all the confidence that his future outside of here will be amazing. And he'll come back and tell us about the movie he's directing, something he's very interested in, or maybe he'll be a scholar – he's a straight A student and writes amazing papers. I see Ben as someone who is going to flourish in whatever he does. Of course there will be bumps in the road, but he knows how to handle them and knows how to ask for support. He has more savings than any young person I've ever worked with.

With Ben

SBS: Ben, how did you first arrive at Real Alternatives?

Ben: I arrived on September 21, 2017 – I remember the exact date – after a year and a half in juvenile hall. They didn't have a place to transition me, so I was being held past my 18th birthday. I was really excited to be released, but really nervous too, to start my new life and be independent. It was weird the first night, it was my first time being alone.

SBS: Jackie was assigned right away as your clinician. What did you find in Jackie?

Ben: Jackie offered support, advice, and guidance. She helped me with independent living skills, education, getting my checking account, and savings. Also things like getting my driving permit – which I just got – and she's helped to push me out of my comfort zone, helping me find peers and social connections.

SBS: How do you think Jackie sees you?

Ben: Just that I'm a resilient, kind, honest kid, who's been through a lot and is able to overcome obstacles and challenges and just pave his way through society.

SBS: How do you see yourself?

Ben: Kind, honest, the way Jackie sees me. Able to bring myself up when I'm feeling down. And be honest with myself. A smart and caring person who is able to do good things in life.

SBS: Did you feel that way a few years ago, before arriving at Real Alternatives?

Ben: No, no, not at all.

SBS: What do you see for yourself in the future?

Ben: I see myself being successful as a film writer, or film director. And able to help others too with my influence and guidance. I want to pay it forward, to help other people as Jackie has helped me.

SBS: How are you feeling about transitioning out of the program?

Ben: I'm feeling pretty nervous, but also excited. I'm looking at four-year colleges with film programs, maybe out of state. It's a new chapter.



FUNDER PROFILE

Bernard E. and Alba Witkin Foundation

The Bernard E. & Alba Witkin Foundation has been supporting Real Alternatives since 2012 when a board member brought the program to the attention of the foundation’s Executive Director Ken Kuchman for funding consideration. Ken reached out to Real Alternatives and the foundation has been an important funder ever since. Inspired by founder Alba Witkin and her passion for children’s causes in the East Bay, Ken believes Real Alternatives’ work serving foster youth with histories of trauma and isolation makes an important contribution to the East Bay community.

Without competent services, “foster kids have some of the most depressing statistics you can look at,” Ken says. “The Witkin board wants to do what they can to help foster kids 18-24 become more equipped to face the world, particularly in the area where the program operates—one of the most economically challenged in the Bay Area.”

Over the years, Witkin has provided Real Alternatives with \$80,000 in support that has contributed to safe housing, supportive programs like life-skills and job-skills training, as well as education support for youth who have had none of the benefits of stable childhoods. Witkin’s commitment has provided critical resources that fill the ever-widening gap between the state’s \$600-a-month stipend for housing and the skyrocketing East Bay rents. Filling this gap enables Real Alternatives to focus on delivering services that help foster and former foster youth develop the resilience to rewrite their futures.

Bernard and Alba established the Bernard E. & Alba Witkin Charitable Trust in 1982 with funding from the royalties of Bernie’s legal writings and publications. Today as a foundation, it supports approximately 100 non-profit organizations working in education, affordable housing, food for the needy, gender and refugee studies, and mental health services.

Side by Side is deeply grateful for The Witkin Foundation’s generous and important commitment to our Real Alternatives youth.



Join Side by Side as we celebrate Alameda County youth

THURSDAY, MAY 9, 2019 | 6:00-8:00PM
Starline Social Club, Oakland

Valet parking provided and Marin shuttle available

Spoken word performances
Hosted craft cocktails ~ Chef-curated hors d’oeuvres
Silent Auction showcasing the best of Alameda County

\$50/person
Tickets available at SidebySideYouth.org/shindig

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Corporate partners play a crucial role in supporting our work. Demonstrate your commitment to our community’s most vulnerable young people by supporting Side by Side’s programs and events.

In recognition of your generosity, Side by Side offers numerous benefits, including:

- Logo and/or name recognition on media ad buys and print/online marketing materials associated with the event or program being sponsored
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- Annual recognition in Side by Side’s Annual Report (circ. 5,500)

Learn more at SidebySideYouth.org/corporate_sponsorship or contact Noelle Moss at 415-457-3200 ext 114 or nmoss@sidebysideyouth.org



DONOR PROFILE

J. Patrick Hunt

J. Patrick Hunt has been a champion of Side by Side for decades, serving as a board member from 1989 to 1997 – including Board President from 1994 to 1996 – and, with his late wife Irene, leading the funding for the renovation for what became the Irene M. Hunt School. As a co-founder of Bank of Marin, Pat was also instrumental in the bank's sponsorship of Side by Side's annual golf tournament, which this year celebrates its 25th anniversary.

Side by Side: Tell me about your first introduction to Side by Side?

Pat: My first introduction was through my wife Irene and her affiliations with the guild – the Greenbrae Acorns – and her volunteer work with the Bargain Box and the Grape Festival. Sometime after I had sold my business in 1986, Irene recommended me for the board – and sure enough, I went on to serve on the board for nine years.

SBS: What prompted you to help create the Bank of Marin Golf Tournament?

Pat: In 1994, while I was on the board, we were looking for different ways to raise funds for the agency and discussed the possibility of creating our own golf tournament. I approached Bob Griswald, then the Bank of Marin President, and he said that they would be more than glad to sponsor. The first tournament coincided with the 100th anniversary of Side by Side (then Sunny Hills). It's always been a fun event and it always sells out!

SBS: What aspect of Side by Side's work do you find the most meaningful?

Pat: The comprehensive focus on the needs of young people – whether emotionally, psychologically or addiction-related – is so important because it's all interrelated and I think that the agency's ability to address the whole picture rather than just one aspect of a client's life is critical. I also appreciate that Side by Side continues to adapt to reflect the circumstances and needs of our community.

SBS: What are your hopes for Side by Side's future?

Pat: The geographical expansion of Side by Side along with the broadening of services has been pivotal for the agency. The same issues exist in each of the areas and the comprehensive approach is vital. For the future, I think it's just a process of refining what Side by Side does and continuing to deliver high quality services to the young people that need them.

SBS: We rebranded about a year ago. What do you think about the name and what you're hearing about Side by Side now?

Pat: The name Sunny Hills was known to the older folks in Marin but wasn't as well known to the younger families and it didn't address what the organization did. So, making the change was courageous and I thought the selection of the name – Side by Side – was outstanding. And I think Side by Side is doing an exemplary job of making its services more widely known in the communities where it works.



25th Annual BANK OF MARIN Golf Tournament

MONDAY, JUNE 24, 2019

AT THE EXCLUSIVE MEADOW CLUB, FAIRFAX
BBQ lunch ~ 18 Holes of Golf ~ Fun Contests
Hosted Cocktails ~ Tasty Dinner

\$350/player or \$1,350/foursome
To register for the tournament or sponsor the event,
visit SidebySideYouth.org/golf_tournament

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**SATURDAY
 SEPTEMBER 21, 2019**

Southern-inspired food and spirits

Bluegrass music by
 Nobody from Nashville

A bohemian gathering at
 a private Dominican estate

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SidebySideYouth.org/reach_for_the_stars