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SidebySideYouth.org



Side by Side Accelerates Expansion of Irene M. Hunt School in San Anselmo to Accommodate Displaced Students in Foster Care

San Anselmo, Calif. (August 8, 2019) – [Side by Side](http://SidebySideYouth.org) (formerly Sunny Hills Services), a San Anselmo-based nonprofit that serves vulnerable youth and their families in four Bay Area counties, today announced the expansion of its Irene M. Hunt School in San Anselmo by adding spots for up to 20 students, following the closure of Timothy Murphy School in San Rafael. The majority of the students coming from Timothy Murphy School are part of the foster care system as residents of St. Vincent's School for Boys in San Rafael, and were referred to St. Vincent's by in-patient psychiatric facilities and county agencies throughout Northern California.

The Irene M. Hunt School is the only non-public school in Marin County that serves students with behavioral and mental health challenges. Several of the in-coming students from Timothy Murphy School may have been removed from St. Vincent's where they reside, if it were not for the Irene M. Hunt School expansion. "The Irene M. Hunt School is an incredibly vibrant and collaborative school community," said Jolene Yee, director at Irene M. Hunt School. "We're excited to welcome the new students and help them meet their educational needs so that they can thrive academically and socially."

The Irene M. Hunt School, which serves students with a wide range of behavioral and emotional challenges, is adding two classrooms in order to ensure the new students from Timothy Murphy School – who have histories of abuse, neglect and/or trauma – are able to get the therapeutic education they require. The addition of the new students significantly increases the scope of the school's curricular, behavioral and mental health services and increases the number of low-income students from 55% to 60-65%.

The planned Irene M. Hunt School expansion was the result of a continued need report from the Marin County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) office and was accelerated by the closure of Timothy Murphy School. According to Jonathan Lenz, director of the Marin County SELPA, the expansion of the Irene M. Hunt campus will work to enhance the continuum of special education services in Marin County. "At a time of significant need, we are fortunate to have a proven provider step-up to offer services designed to support students with significant social, emotional, and behavioral needs," he explained.

Development and Community Impact

As with most Side by Side programs, the Irene M. Hunt School uses a youth development approach which is individualized to reflect each student's strengths, challenges, dreams and potential. The overarching goal of the school is to return students to their neighborhood mainstream public school settings, equipped with the skills to thrive socially and academically.

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) establish student-specific goals that are measured by personalized indicators, such as decrease in aggressive and/or avoidance behaviors; development of problem solving and conflict-resolution skills, anger management and self-control; increase and

improvement of verbal communication; identification and development of skills and talents; improvement of interpersonal relationships; increase in self-confidence, self-esteem and self-image; increase in academic performance. With small class sizes separated for elementary, middle school, and high school, teachers and classroom aides are able to give each student the emotionally, developmentally and academically appropriate attention they require.

About the Irene M. Hunt School

The Irene M. Hunt School is a nonpublic day school that provides students in grades K through 12 with an individualized therapeutic education tailored to their specific needs. The school serves students with social, emotional, and/or behavioral challenges too acute for them to function in traditional school settings. While the majority of students come from Marin, the school's exemplary reputation also draws students from Sonoma, Contra Costa, and San Francisco counties.

In 2018, the Irene M. Hunt School accommodated 40 students in four multi-grade classrooms, and this past spring, the school increased its enrollment to 48 students in response to a persistent waiting list. With this latest addition, the school now serves 68 students at the San Anselmo campus. Classes for the new academic year begin on August 19.

MEDIA, PLEASE NOTE: For more information or to request an interview with a Side by Side or Irene M. Hunt School representative, please contact Noelle R. Moss at nmoss@sidebysideyouth.org or (415) 457-3200 ext. 114.

ABOUT SIDE BY SIDE

At Side by Side we walk with young people impacted by adversity on their unique journeys to heal from trauma, restore resilience, and embrace their own potential. We provide critical and comprehensive services that honor the young person's unique needs and strengths to prevent the escalation of dangerous conditions and behaviors and set them on a positive path. When they feel seen for who they are today, we believe our youth can move with confidence toward a future with meaning and connection. Since our founding in 1895 as an orphanage – and through many years as Sunny Hills Services – Side by Side has been at the forefront of best practices in child welfare. Today, Side by Side operates in four counties – Marin, Alameda, Sonoma, and Napa – across the Bay Area, each year reaching nearly 2,000 youth ages 5-26 and family members with critical services related to behavioral and mental health, early intervention in schools, LGBTQ support, transitional housing, and special education. Learn more at www.sidebysideyouth.org.

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