

FALL 2019

SidebySideYouth.org



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,

It has been an incredibly busy summer on our San Anselmo campus! As announced in August and profiled in the Marin Independent Journal on August 21, our Irene M. Hunt School accelerated a planned enrollment expansion to accommodate displaced students from the now-closed Timothy Murphy School.

As of the first day of school on August 19, the back hallway in our main administration building now bustles with student activity and boasts two new classrooms for our 16 high school students. Overall, the Hunt School now has the capacity to serve up to 68 students and work with them as they learn to cope and move beyond their social, emotional and/or behavioral issues. Despite the financial and logistical challenges of expanding so quickly, we felt compelled to answer this critical community need, as some of the students from Timothy Murphy would have had no other place to turn for their therapeutic education.

We've also taken the slower summer months to think strategically about how best to enhance our services for to the benefit of the young people we serve and the organizations with whom we work. Our YouThrive and Community Counseling programs are now developing a partnership model for the schools that we serve in Sonoma County. Schools will be able to supplement their existing counseling services (at no additional cost to the district) with our trained staff. We can also provide a step-down option for YouThrive participants to continue their work on an individual basis after "graduating" from YouThrive group sessions.

Our *Reach for the Stars* Gala in September was the most successful event that we have had in recent years and welcomed over 275 guests for an incredibly fun and lively evening. We are so appreciative of the many supporters who sponsored tables and/or raised their paddle at the event, as well as for our energetic event committee!

As always, I find inspiration in the stories of the young people that we work with. Read more about Cheyenne's journey with TAY Space on page 5 and visit our website at [SidebySideYouth.org/videos](http://SidebySideYouth.org/videos) to watch the latest – and incredibly moving – video that documents the path of three amazing youth that we served last year.

With my deep and ongoing thanks,

Mary Denton, CEO

## AGENCY NEWS

### New Board Members

This September, Side by Side welcomed two new board members who have been key advocates for our programs.

- **Wendy Buscaglia** – Wendy learned of Side by Side through a friend of her daughter who had attended the ReStart Program. Wendy has a professional background in PR and social media. With a strong interest in youth programs, she has served on the Marin School for the Arts board, and is an advisor for the Sparkle Foundation.
- **Ricki Syufy** – A champion of Side by Side for over a decade, Ricki has a deep commitment to serving Marin's disadvantaged youth with mental health challenges. While working toward her MFT license, Ricki volunteered as a psychotherapist at the recently closed Timothy Murphy School for over three years. She also founded a local nonprofit, Project Home Sweet Home, that provided formerly homeless families with furniture and household items in an effort to transform empty apartments into welcoming homes.

### Staff Appointments

The partnerships that our staff form in the community are critical in

making sure that our clients' voices are represented at the table.

- **Adrian Maldonado (YouThrive Program Manager)** – was appointed to the board of the Latino Service Providers which focuses on health and social issues in Sonoma County by developing youth leaders and building awareness and connections to community services. Adrian's work with middle and high school students dovetails perfectly with LSP's youth internship program that strives to mitigate stigma around mental health.
- **Laura Taylor (TAY Space Program Director)** – was named to the Marin County Homeless Policy Steering Committee, a program that focuses on the needs of homeless individuals and families in Marin County. Laura's participation in local policy discussions will represent the needs of youth facing homelessness.

### Upcoming Side by Side Events

For details about the below events, visit:

[SidebySideYouth.org/community-events](https://SidebySideYouth.org/community-events)

**NOV 5**

Dine and Donate at Marche aux Fleurs in Ross

**NOV 14**

Stone Soup Luncheon volunteer recognition event

**MAY 7**

Shindig, a fundraiser for Side by Side's Alameda County programs

## TAY SPACE PARTICIPATES IN MARIN HOMELESS COUNT

Every two years at the end of January, Marin County – along with communities across the country – conducts a comprehensive count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals. The 2019 Point-in-Time Count was conducted with community volunteers working alongside currently or previously homeless guides.

Particularly challenging to locate and count have been the transitional age youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in Marin. With traumatic backgrounds and a distrust of adults and authorities, this population is less likely to sleep in an adult shelter or out in the open for fear of victimization.

This year, Side by Side and TAY Space stepped in to lead Marin's homeless youth count, with TAY Space clients – including Cheyenne, a former client featured on the following page – calling on their own experience with homelessness to more accurately inform the mapping and procedures needed to find homeless young people in Marin.

"The Point -in-Time count is critical for us to see the changes year to year, to measure what's working and what's not," said

	2019	2017
Total Homeless	1,034	1,117
Homeless TAY Youth (18-24 years old)	99	109
Youth as % of Total	10%	11%
% of Youth Sheltered/Unsheltered	6% / 94%	11% / 89%

*\* The Point-in-Time Count is only expected to provide a benchmark, not an actual total. The estimated total homeless population in Marin County is assessed at three times the number in the above count.*

Carrie Sager, Senior Homelessness Program Coordinator with Marin County Department of Health and Human Services. "Side by Side/TAY Space has been instrumental in enabling us to count the young people in our county experiencing homelessness which ultimately allows us to improve and expand the services for them."

While the number of counted homeless (both as a whole and specifically TAY youth) has declined since 2017, the percentage of youth identified as unsheltered rose, underscoring the need to make sure their voices are included in future planning and policy decisions by the county.

The results of the count were released in August and full results can be found at [www.marinhs.org/point-time-count-marin](https://www.marinhs.org/point-time-count-marin).



A photograph of two young people sitting on a grassy field. On the left, a young man with long dark hair and a beard is sitting cross-legged, wearing a dark t-shirt and multiple necklaces. On the right, a young woman with short dark hair is lying on her stomach, wearing a purple hoodie and looking at a smartphone. A pair of red sneakers is on the grass near her. The background is a bright, sunlit grassy area.

## TAY SPACE PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

The transition from childhood into adulthood presents many challenges that are only exacerbated for young people with mental health diagnoses. It can be a lonely existence, but TAY Space offers something different. As one TAY Space parent recently commented, “TAY provided a place for my son to connect to other youth like him, which helped build his self-esteem, decreased his depression, and supported his transition to college.”

Located on B Street in downtown San Rafael, TAY Space is specifically designed to support youth ages 16-25 (transitional age youth, or TAY) who struggle with mental and/or emotional disorders including bipolar, schizophrenia, anxiety, and depression. Many of our clients also navigate poverty, homelessness, and histories of foster care, incarceration, hospitalization, abandonment, and/or abuse.

For 24 full-time clients, the multi-disciplinary team at TAY Space provides comprehensive case management that includes assessment, individualized treatment plans, links to needed supports and services, as well as coordinated individual therapy and psychiatric services. TAY Space also manages an apartment

for up to three qualifying clients in need of transitional housing.

Additionally, TAY Space is available to all transitional age youth on a drop-in basis, providing a safe place for young people to hang out, study, play games, and take advantage of group outings like hikes and cultural outings. Program Director Laura Taylor hopes that her program offers “a welcoming place for any youth to connect with others who might also be struggling with becoming an adult.”

On a drop-in basis, TAY Space offers job coaching, substance abuse recovery services, workshops on stress reduction and mindfulness, money management, and independent living skills. Help accessing resources related to education, housing, and employment is available as well. Twice a week the center also serves as a food distribution point for hungry youth and stocks an emergency closet stocked with toiletries, diapers, sanitary supplies, and basic clothing.

The goal of TAY Space is to help vulnerable, transitional age youth gain the foothold they need to thrive beyond their diagnoses and histories.

A photograph of the interior of the TAY Space Holiday Store. In the background, a Christmas tree is decorated with lights and ornaments. To the left, several Christmas stockings hang on the wall. In the center, the word 'TAY' is displayed in large, colorful, hand-drawn letters. In the foreground, there are various holiday-themed items, including candles, jewelry, and gift boxes. A person is partially visible in the background, sitting at a table.

## TAY SPACE HOLIDAY STORE

Every year, TAY Space throws open its doors in mid-December for an annual Holiday Store extravaganza. Staff collect new or gently used household items like candles, jewelry, décor pieces, picture frames, games, and books and create a mini-store where the TAY Space clients and other homeless youth can shop (for FREE) for gifts for their family and friends.

For young people with high anxiety and limited resources, gift giving can make the holidays even more stressful. TAY Space takes the worry out of the experience and adds fun, wrapping help, and a few desserts to sweeten the experience.

To contribute items for the TAY Space Holiday store, please contact Laura Taylor at [ltaylor@sidebysideyouth.org](mailto:ltaylor@sidebysideyouth.org). Items should be dropped off at 615 B Street in San Rafael by 12/6.



## CLIENT & PROVIDER PROFILE

### Cheyenne & Laura, TAY Space

When Side by Side opened TAY Space in early 2015, with Laura as program director, Cheyenne was one of the very first full-service clients. By the time Cheyenne arrived at TAY Space, she had cycled through many programs and services, including group homes, emergency shelters, and psychiatric hospitals. Today, Cheyenne has her own apartment and steady employment, and enjoys writing poetry in her free time.

Here are some excerpts from our conversation:

**Side by Side:** Cheyenne, can you describe your state of mind when you first arrived at TAY Space?

**Cheyenne:** Oh, I was a mess! A mess. I was enraged, I was hurt. I was everywhere but where I wanted to be. I wasn't happy, I wasn't at peace. Trust was tough for me because I've had a lot of people come into my world and say one thing, do another; do one thing, say another. And either way, I still get dropped, I still get hurt, I still get put in a position that I don't like being put in. And my mom wasn't someone I could go to, she wasn't someone that I could talk to or trust. She was the main person that dropped me, broke my heart, picked my hopes up and dropped them again. It was like one thing after the next and I didn't know when I was gonna catch a break.

**SBS:** What did you find at TAY Space and with Laura?

**Cheyenne:** It wasn't easy at first. After talking with Laura, going to her and breaking down multiple, multiple times, she has been there. And I am grateful. She's been a mother bird in my dimension that I can talk to, I can count on. I wholeheartedly trust this woman with whatever I'm about to tell her. Because she hears me, doesn't judge me or look at me different, or make me feel different. Though the color of my skin is different from hers, she doesn't make me feel like I have to be somebody else. Laura's been holding my hand and never let go.

**SBS:** Laura, what were your first impressions of Cheyenne?

**Laura:** Gosh, well, she made my heart hurt a little, because she was so brave. She had had a really rough couple of months, she was about to be homeless, and didn't really have family support around, but she also had such a light to her. And I have seen her on some of her worst days, but this light in her – it never dims. It's always there. Because when Cheyenne is with you, she is with you. And when she is in the building, she is in the building. And when she is walking down the street, she is walking down that street – with her headphones on, dancing. Not once have I heard her say anything negative about anyone, even those that have hurt her. She always can see the good and the positive. Sometimes with people, especially people that have been wounded, it turns into anger. With Cheyenne, she has this inner strength, this light, and ability to see the good and hold on to hope.

**SBS:** What has the journey been like over the last four years?

**Laura:** Some of the things we've talked about have been really tough, really hard. We've cried a lot in my office.

**Cheyenne:** Especially the parent piece, that's where it hurts most. Because they didn't know how to love me, and I've been raising myself for the past 11 years. I'm 24 years old now.

**Laura:** It's remarkable. I'm in awe of her constantly. I just got an email with a video of Cheyenne speaking to an advisory counsel... You can't even imagine how many things she's involved in. She's an advocate, advisor, in a mentoring program, she speaks in the community, all in addition to her job. And she is the youngest person I've ever heard of to get her own Section 8 housing. It is very hard to do, even for adults. And she got it at age 21 and has kept it for 3 years.

**SBS:** Cheyenne, how do you think Laura would describe you?

**Cheyenne:** I think she would say that I've blossomed. I was a bud when I came to her but I have blossomed into a young woman who, though I've gone through hell and high water, is able to stand on her own two feet with a conscious mind of where I want to go, who I want to be, what I want to do...and how my core values – love, compassion, joy, and equanimity – how I use them every day. Where love is being shown to me, I show love back.

**SBS:** How do you feel today?

**Cheyenne:** Today, I feel strong. I don't always feel like I have it all together, but Laura reminds me, "You're only 24, love, you don't have to have it all together."

**Laura:** The switch that I see is the confidence. I don't see the scared, little girl in front of me anymore. She was so young. She didn't trust herself then, and now she does.

**SBS:** Cheyenne, in the future, where do you see yourself?

**Cheyenne:** Not to push it, but I was thinking Assistant Director of a nonprofit organization.

**Laura:** Assistant? I think you mean Director! You are a leader. Everybody looks up to you for how you speak up and share your story. You are changing the face of how we look at young adults in Marin County: you give all of those youth a voice. You are such a role model for so many youth, lighting the way for youth who are scared and feel like they don't have a voice. And you know what that used to feel like. So, just imagine if you had someone like you.





## Cynthia Cornell

A relatively recent addition to the Side by Side family, Cynthia Cornell has been a fierce advocate for the rights of young people, especially those most marginalized. We sat down with her over coffee to learn more about her commitment to those youth and her support of Side by Side's TAY Space program.

**Side by Side:** You have been supporting our organization for several years now, how did you first learn about Side by Side?

**Cynthia:** Before the name change to Side by Side, and before I knew about Sunny Hills Services, I read an article in the Pacific Sun in the summer of 2013 that mentioned the Transitional Age Youth Program (TAY). The article contained a story about a homeless youth who was also struggling with mental health issues. After several months living on the street, this youth had heard about the Marin TAY program and

was given a bed in a youth-based transitional housing program. As part of the TAY program he also received help with job interviewing, job searching, and learned independent living skills, including learning to budget his money, so he could eventually become self sufficient. At some point after reading about this youth's positive experience with the TAY program, I did some research online and learned about Sunny Hills Services, now called Side by Side.

**SBS:** What aspects of Side by Side's work resonates the most with you?

**Cynthia:** I appreciate the full spectrum of services Side by Side offers at risk children, youth, and their families in the Bay Area communities they serve. And in particular, I appreciate how Side by Side offers services for transitional age youth, age 16-25, who may have aged out of other community based services, such as the foster care system or probation. I am happy Side by Side fills this gap.

**SBS:** TAY Space – as we've noted earlier in the newsletter – serves a very specific subset of Marin's young people. Why do you feel like this group in particular needs our attention?

**Cynthia:** I know the TAY program offers many needed services to at-risk youth age 16-25, and has one leased 2 bedroom apartment in Marin to provide some transitional housing. My sense is Marin TAY needs additional transitional housing for youth who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Young people in this age range are particularly vulnerable when living on the street, so I feel additional housing is needed, not only for their safety, but to help prevent these youth from becoming part of the chronically homeless.

**SBS:** You have toured TAY Space and spent some time with Laura, the program director, what struck you most about the program and its services?

**Cynthia:** When I toured TAY Space, I was impressed with how warm and welcoming the staff was. The staff seemed to genuinely care about the youth they were serving. And the youth I met, even if briefly, seemed to appreciate the staff and seemed to feel comfortable in the TAY Space.

**SBS:** What are your hopes for TAY Space and Side by Side in the future?

**Cynthia:** My hope is Side by Side and TAY will find a way to acquire additional transitional housing space for vulnerable at-risk youth.



## GIVE A HOLIDAY GIFT TO A SIDE BY SIDE YOUTH

Holidays can be a stressful time for all of us, and especially for the young people that Side by Side serves. Many of our clients are from low-income families where gifts are a significant strain on the family budget or they are former foster youth living on their own limited resources. Side by Side hopes to brighten our young people's holiday season by ensuring that each has a present to unwrap.

Want to help by purchasing a gift? The following businesses have generously offered to showcase our clients' holiday wish lists – stop in during the indicated time frames to pick up a tag and fulfill one or more wishes!



## MODERN TECH FOR THE HUNT SCHOOL

*"Side by Side and the Hunt School have demonstrated a long-term commitment to young people impacted by adversity and have successfully improved their lives as well as the Northern California communities in which they operate. NATO always seeks to give back to the communities in which we entertain by supporting the health, education, and welfare of young people."*

Raymond Syufy  
Chairman, National Association of Theatre Owners of  
California/Nevada

Irene M. Hunt School students have tremendous potential, but struggle with educational and personal challenges that widen their learning gaps. We employ many different strategies that open opportunities for them to engage and achieve success. Over the years, we've found that technology has been an effective bridge over gaps in academics and the arts. It facilitates a level of individualization for our students that addresses strengths, challenges, interests, and motivations.

But state-of-the-art technology is expensive, and given that most of our budget goes to highly trained staff, we've been unable to keep up. The expansion of the Hunt School over the summer from 48 to 68 students stretched our resources even further.

Fortunately, this past May we received a very generous grant from the National Association of Theater Owners of California/Nevada (NATO) to upgrade our technology and provide every student with the resources needed to individualize and deepen learning.

A supplemental grant from Marin Charitable in August allowed us to extend these upgrades to our twenty new students as well.

With these grants,

- teachers can deliver more effective, personalized lessons to students, while allowing them to learn at their own pace and ability level;
- students will become technologically skilled and literate and better prepared to transition back to public school and eventually a modern workplace;
- students will be able to do more complex and creative work with the now easily accessible digital and online tools.

Elevating the school's technology deepens each student's ability to explore subject matter, solve problems, learn the academic skills they need, and reinforce their self-confidence and self-esteem. Most importantly, it provides greater opportunity for our students to more easily transition not just back to a public school, but toward a successful and confident adulthood.

### Book Passage

**51 Tamal Vista Blvd, Corte Madera**

Available 11/15 – 12/15

### Marin Country Mart

**2257 Larkspur Landing Circle, Larkspur**

Available 12/5 – 12/24

Tree Lighting Ceremony 12/5 at 5pm

### Zocalo Coffeehouse

**645 Bancroft Avenue, San Leandro**

Available 11/15 – 12/15

Additionally, Side by Side clients will be represented in the Sonoma County Secret Santa program. Visit [secretsantanow.org](http://secretsantanow.org) to see a list of participating Sonoma County businesses or "Adopt a Heart" online 11/1 – 12/24.

Also, clients from our Real Alternatives transitional housing program have their own Amazon Wishlist – search for "SideBySide" in the Find a List section of Amazon. Available 11/11 – 12/11.

We are grateful to Temple Beth Shalom in San Leandro and Kids Bike Lane for privately supporting our holiday giving program.

Learn more at [SidebySideYouth.org/holidaygiving](http://SidebySideYouth.org/holidaygiving) or contact Patty Lufano at 415-457-3200 ext. 179 or [plufano@sidebysideyouth.org](mailto:plufano@sidebysideyouth.org).

\*Please return the gifts by 12/15 to ensure that we can get them to our clients in time.



300 Sunny Hills Drive, Bldg. 5  
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**Formerly Sunny Hills Services**

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## THANK YOU!

Reach for the Stars was an enormous success, raising close to \$250k in support of Side by Side's young people.  
We are so grateful to our generous guests and sponsors.

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