

SUMMER 2020

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,

At Side by Side, we have walked with our youth through adversity for 125 years. Our youth and our communities today are challenged by two pandemics – one new, coronavirus, and one tragically centuries old, systemic racism in our country.

The impact of the COVID-19 outbreak has overwhelmed the youth and families that we serve – from struggles with remote learning to feelings of isolation and anguish during shelter-in-place restrictions to coping with financial devastation due to loss of jobs.

Side by Side is as essential to our community’s well-being as medical staff are to our community’s health. Each of our programs has moved creatively to reach out to youth and their families during the shutdown. Now, as life is opening back up, we are developing plans for more “normal” therapeutic contact and re-opening the Hunt School while keeping our staff, students/clients, and families as safe as possible. It’s not easy. With changing guidelines and an unknown trajectory for the pandemic, it’s a bit like walking a tightrope in the fog, but we’re moving forward (see the facing page for details).

We are also painfully aware that the challenges confronted by the young people we serve are only exacerbated when they are youth of color, especially our Black youth. While our trauma-informed work is essential to helping our youth gain resilience and be able to advocate for themselves and their communities, it is also important to say clearly and publicly that we stand with them against the police brutality, systemic racism, and oppression that continue to marginalize communities of color.

We invite you to take a moment to view a powerful video made spontaneously by our Hunt School staff in the week after the killing of George Floyd, expressing their convictions (please note this may be triggering or cause discomfort): <https://bit.ly/BlackLivesMatterHuntSchool>.

Side by Side is taking steps internally to ensure we remove implicit biases from our policies, practices, and culture so that as an organization we do not perpetuate oppression in any way. We encourage everyone to join us in the important work required to create meaningful change within our local communities and within our country.

From the late 1800s to now, we have adapted to the times and stayed true to the youth that we serve. As an agency, Side by Side will continue to call out injustice, support our young people as they advocate for themselves and their communities, and provide the safe space for our youth and their families as they heal from the trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With my deep and ongoing thanks,

Mary Denton, CEO

Side by Side gratefully acknowledges the lead sponsors of our Bank of Marin Golf Tournament

and all the other companies and individuals who continued to support the event in its virtual incarnation June 19-22. Even after being driven online, the event raised over \$80,000 for Side by Side’s programs.



MARIN IJ • BON AIR – GREENBRAE • GHILOTTI BROS
MARTZ ACCOUNTANCY • J. PATRICK HUNT

THE CONTINUED IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SIDE BY SIDE'S PROGRAMS

Side by Side is continuing to do our part to minimize the spread of coronavirus while meeting the needs of our clients and their families. All administrative staff able to work remotely are still doing so and all non-essential in-person meetings continue to be suspended. At the program level, staff are cautiously resuming some in-person therapeutic sessions with clients as possible (described below), though maintaining rigorous safety protocols.

Community Counseling

Marin, Alameda, Sonoma, and Napa clients are still being served through phone and video sessions, but socially distant in-person visits are also being reintroduced on a more regular basis in the North Bay.

Irene M. Hunt School

Hunt School will be piloting onsite summer instruction for some students over the summer while following current Marin County health guidelines. Staff is developing a plan for what school life will look like in the fall in accordance with Marin County Office of Education guidelines. Therapeutic services are being offered via telehealth sessions complimented by remotely accessed video instruction, as well as in-person sessions for high-needs cases. Staff are actively supporting families and caregivers as well.

Our Space

Clients are being served primarily through phone and frequent group video sessions. The annual Queer Love Youth Pride cabaret performance was offered virtually on June 26.

Real Alternatives

Youth continue to be supported by their Clinical Case Managers and Youth Specialists via socially distant visits and outings (grocery store, bank, etc.), as well as phone/video sessions.

TAY Space

All full-service clients continue to be served via phone or in-person visits. The TAY Space drop-in center is closed during the shelter-in-place restrictions but staff are available onsite on a limited basis to meet youth needs. Youth should call the office at 415-870-9298 if they need food, support or housing.

YouThrive

YouThrive group sessions will be offered virtually throughout the summer. Starting in July, the virtual sessions will be paired with in-person "camp" style sessions at CrossFit Sav-Up in Petaluma twice a week. YouThrive is also piloting virtual parent support sessions over the summer. We are hopeful that when schools resume in the fall, we will be able to offer in-person group sessions for the students at their home campus.

SIDE BY SIDE'S RELIEF FUND MAKES A DIFFERENCE

It has been heartwarming to see the outpouring of support for our COVID-19 Relief Fund, which will offset lower than expected revenue from fundraising events and billing uncertainties due to necessary changes in our program services. In addition, 10% of individual contributions – as well as designated grants from Medtronic, Horizons Foundation, the Community Foundation Sonoma County, Five Bridges Foundation, and the West Davis & Bergard Foundation – went directly to Side by Side's clients and their families who are struggling with food insecurity, precarious housing, and internet connectivity.

To date, Side by Side has distributed over \$11,000 to clients, including \$2,500 in technology support and \$6,500 in grocery gifts cards and \$2,600 in housing support. One thankful client, upon receiving a \$50 Grocery Outlet gift card, burst into tears and pledged to light a candle in Side by Side's honor that evening.

We are also thankful for the donations of Personal Protective Equipment – Griffo Distillery in Petaluma donated hand sanitizer for our offices and two community members (Maria Delgado and former SBS board member Jacquie Spielberg, pictured to the right) have made over 700 cloth masks for our staff and clients.

We expect that the effects of the pandemic will ripple through our communities and impact our programs for months to come. Your continued support of the SBS Relief Fund will be most welcome. To donate online, please visit SidebySideYouth.org/donate.





1895
Founded as San Francisco Presbyterian

Orphanage & Farm when a young widow died, leaving behind three young children. The orphanage initially opened in a small rented house in San Rafael.



1898

Captain Robert Dollar, a philanthropist and global shipping/lumber magnate, donated the money to acquire 20 acres in San Anselmo. The new home was designed and completed on January 8, 1900 (though unfortunately burned down in 1920) and ultimately housed just over 100 boys and girls between the ages of 3 and 16.



1899

First Grape Festival, a beloved annual fundraiser that would continue for 105 years, supported first by community members and then the Guilds of Sunny Hills (in their heyday numbering 38 active guilds and 1,500 volunteers).



1920

Captain Robert Dollar donated an additional 42.6 acres of pastureland to enlarge the farm.

A 125 YEAR HISTORY OF

SIDE BY SIDE

2008

Merged with Bay Area Youth Centers in Alameda County, expanding services to include Real Alternatives and, in 2010, Our Space.



2007

After 100 years of serving Sonoma County youth, offices established in Santa Rosa and expanded services to include YouThrive.



2012

Irene M. Hunt School (formerly Marin Academic Center) dedicated.



2014

TAY Space opened in San Rafael.

2016

Earned The Joint Commission Gold Seal of Approval for Behavioral Health Care Accreditation. Re-accredited in 2019.



2018

Rebranded as Side by Side to better capture the essence of our relationship with the youth that we serve across a diverse array of programs.



1950

Bargain Box thrift shop founded by the Junior Auxiliary guild to support Sunny Hills.

1955

The expansion of foster care and government aid after WWII changed the needs for institutional care. In response, the Child Welfare League of America requested that Sunny Hills begin a program to provide highly-individualized care for troubled adolescents.



1965

Residential cottages for up to 40 adolescents and the administration buildings built on San Anselmo campus.

1930's

Became known informally as "Sunny Hills."

1995

Bank of Marin Golf Tournament established by J. Patrick Hunt (founder of Bank of Marin).



1967

Name legally changed to Sunny Hills Children's Services.



1999

Merged with Children's Garden of California, adding the Marin Academic Center to the agency's program offerings.



2006

105th and final Grape Festival held at Larkspur Landing (the festival skipped a year during WWII).



1989

The Bargain Box moved to a permanent home on Irwin Street in San Rafael in 1989. James R. Sylla School opened on the Sunny Hills campus to provide special education to the adolescent residents.

2020

Virtual services launched across agency to contend with COVID-19 pandemic and innovative outreach tactics including online FIFA soccer tournaments and art contests started to keep youth engaged.



TODAY

Side by Side serves more than 2,500 youth and their families in six programs across Marin, Alameda, Sonoma, and Napa counties. Looking to the future (however murky it is at the moment), Side by Side envisions continuing to include telehealth as an option in our service delivery model and potential program expansions as funding and community need makes possible.

SIDE BY SIDE CLIENTS – WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Jessica Mi, Real Alternatives

Jessica Mi lived in our supportive minor housing complex during her senior year in high school. A few months after coming to Real Alternatives, Jessica found out that she received a full scholarship to Stanford.

Jessica credits Side by Side with her smooth transition to college. "If it hadn't been for Side by Side, I would not have been as prepared for Stanford. I learned how to budget and live with a roommate at Real Alternatives – which made me feel more confident about dorm living."

Jessica's belief that "environmental issues will shape our future" led to an Earth Systems major, with a possible economics minor. Last summer, Jessica reconnected with her Chinese-American heritage by traveling to China with Stanford's Global Studies internship program. Last fall, Jessica also helped fellow students to learn about the foster care system and child welfare with a series of outings (including to our Alameda County office).

"I am grateful to Side by Side because they empowered me as a young person by trusting me and allowing me to be independent."

Linda Christensen, grandmother of Hunt School student

After attending the Sunny Hills Grape Festival as a little girl, then volunteering with the Glenwood Guild in the 1980s, Linda Christensen was reunited with Side by Side years later when her grandson Jordan became a student at the Irene M. Hunt School.

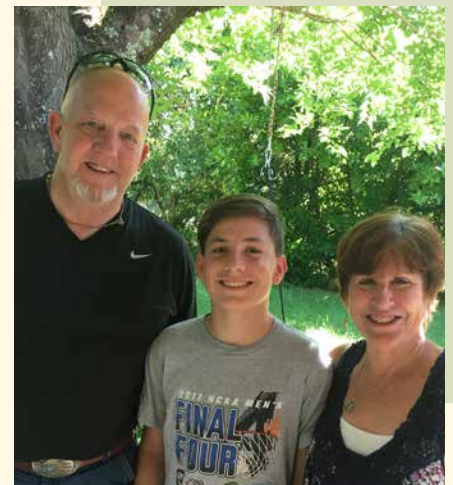
Jordan is on the autism spectrum and has ADHD. Although he is "a brilliant and sweet kid," he was failing in the public school system and acting out. "By the time Jordan was in second grade, we knew we needed to find a better fit," says Linda.

Hunt School became a safe haven for Jordan. He learned impulse control, how to deal with frustrations, and how to listen and interact with other people. The biggest gift was friendship. "Before Hunt, Jordan had trouble making friends," says Linda. "But at Hunt, he wasn't seen as different. He was just Jordan. Now that he is back in public school, he fits in and feels 'normal.'"

Hunt gave that to him."

"I am grateful to Side by Side because they helped Jordan to find his voice."

"Volunteering for the Guild all those years ago definitely came full circle!" exclaims Linda. Linda is still an involved Glenwood Guild volunteer. Jordan graduated from Sinaloa Middle School in June and will be attending San Marin High School in the fall.



Jessica Reynoso, Our Space

From the first time she came to Our Space at the age of 14, Jessica says it felt like home – a home where she also realized that she was transgender. "I think that deep down I always knew I was a girl, but I never had a safe space to explore that possibility. Our Space provided me with the safety to explore who I am."

Six years later, Jessica hardly ever misses a weekly group. Now that she is no longer a client, she enjoys mentoring the younger youth, who gravitate toward her motherly vibe. "I try to help out as much as I can," she says.

Jessica is studying botany and etymology and is open to whatever the future might hold. Meanwhile she recently got a job at Amazon as a packager and is thriving.

"I am grateful to Side by Side because they love people for who they are. This was my childhood. This was my home. This was the place where somebody would love me at the end of the day."



Carleton MacDonald, Sunny Hills Residential Program

In 1960, at the age of ten, Carleton MacDonald came to live at what was then Sunny Hills. His mother had passed away and his other family members were unable to care for him.

"It was quite a change," he remembers. "Two months before arriving, I was living with my mother and attending a San Francisco Catholic school. And then, after a difficult transition, I was living in a house with 11 other boys and attending public school." Carleton remembers exploring San Anselmo as well as the grassy hills behind the buildings and farm, which at the time still supplied milk and eggs to the facility. He remembers field trips to Mt. Lassen, the Russian River, and Drake's Beach.

"I also remember the kind house parents," Carleton says. "I don't remember being unhappy at all." The bonds forged at Sunny Hills were strong. Carleton maintained contact with one of the house parents, Mary Cowley, who attended his wedding in Berkeley in 1980.

After graduating from Drake High School and UC Berkeley, and enjoying a successful career with Amtrak, Carleton is now happily retired in Maple Valley, Washington. After losing his spouse to illness, Carleton was reunited through Facebook with a childhood friend who also attended Isabel Cook Elementary School in San Anselmo. "We are still together, both retired, and both very happy."

"I am grateful to Sunny Hills for caring for me at a very difficult time in my life. And I am grateful to Side by Side for continuing the tradition of serving young people at risk or in trouble."



Augstin Pizano, Community Counseling (East Bay)

When Augstin Pizano transitioned out of foster care at age 18, he needed a place to go. "My two older brothers were clients of Real Alternatives and Side by Side helped me out even though I wasn't their client at the time," Augstin explains. Now 21, Augstin is a part of Side by Side's Community Counseling program. "My current housing arrangement is only available until I'm 23 and I realized I was feeling a lot of stress around what's next." Augstin says that his Side by Side therapist helps him learn different techniques to cope with stress, including setting a happiness level for the week. "He helps me focus on what I can do throughout the week to increase my happiness/enjoyment. It really helps!"

When Augstin is not busy as co-founder and center coordinator for HYPE (Helping Young People Elevate), a new youth center in San Francisco, he is busy finishing his EMT license and volunteering as a first aid provider at local protests against police brutality.

"I am grateful to Side by Side for the support and dedication of my therapist to help me understand what I can do for myself to make things better."



Ashley Kerney, Sunny Hills Residential Program; mother of current Community Counseling client (North Bay)

Years ago Ashley Kerney found a home at Sunny Hills when she was 14, after several difficult foster care placements. "I was pretty troubled," remembers Ashley. "But it was at Sunny Hills when I first learned to trust and started getting better."

After leaving Sunny Hills and graduating from a transitional program in Sebastopol, Ashley gave birth to her son Wyatt, now nine. "While a very sweet kid deep down," Wyatt has severe issues with emotional regulation, anger, and violent outbursts. This year, Wyatt received a referral to Side by Side's Community Counseling program.

Working with Side by Side has been nothing short of transformational for both Wyatt and Ashley. After only four months in the program, Wyatt has experienced an 80% improvement in his behaviors and crisis situations ended a month into the program. "I wish we could stay with this program forever," says Ashley.

At first, Ashley did not realize that Wyatt's Side by Side was the same agency that helped her with her own turnaround so many years ago. "I was happy to hear that 'Sunny Hills' was still around and still helping people!" she says.

Wyatt recently re-integrated into public school in Napa and will be attending fourth grade at West Park Elementary School in the Fall.

"I'm grateful to Side by Side because of how much they are helping Wyatt. I truly cannot describe what a positive change it has made in our lives."





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Reach for the Stars

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