

FALL 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,

As I write this letter to you from my home office, we are now six months into an unprecedented pandemic that has changed to the core how we live our lives and serve our young people. As the weeks blended one into the other, we've come to grips with this new reality, and the reality that Side by Side's clients would need our very essential services even more than they did before.

If wearing masks and keeping distant from one another weren't enough, our youth now face the compounding traumas of police brutality, civil and political unrest, wildfires and smoky air. Still, we walk side by side with our youth, and trust that you will be beside us.

A long-held value of Side by Side is to honor and embrace the tremendous diversity of our clients and employees. This issue of our newsletter focuses on some of the work that we do that stems from that value—please read about the remarkable staff and work happening at the Hunt School, YouThrive and Our Space programs on pages 4-6.

The tragic death of George Floyd in late May and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement also precipitated a deeper agency-wide examination into whether our current policies, practices, culture, and actions are really enough. Enough to understand and face the internal biases that we all bring to work with us every day. Enough to create a truly safe space for all our staff and clients to be their most authentic selves. Enough to make sure we do not perpetuate oppressive practices. Enough to be a strong force for positive change for social justice in our community and our country.

We have made the commitment to do the challenging work ahead of us so we can feel that we are doing enough. Our leadership team is starting the process with facilitated introspection and learning to challenge our assumptions and beliefs. From there, our work will roll into our strategic planning process already underway in order build a more inclusive, diverse, and equitable organization.

We are all engaged in this struggle – through the pandemic and the uncertainties and injustice in our country – and we need to work together to minimize its impact on the youth that Side by Side serves. Join us...

With my deep gratitude,

Mary Denton, CEO

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Side by Side

SIDE BY SIDE'S PROGRAMS IN A PANDEMIC AUTUMN

All of our programs are continuing to meet the needs of our clients and their families – with some adding new services or engagement efforts. In-person therapeutic sessions with clients are being conducted when possible (described below), though staff maintain rigorous safety protocols and follow social distancing guidelines.

Community Counseling

Clients in Marin, Sonoma, Alameda and Napa are being served through a mix of phone, video, and in-person sessions. Community Counseling clinicians in the North Bay are also partnering with YouThrive to provide services to YT clients and their families, including a new program for Latinx immigrant youth in Healdsburg.

Irene M. Hunt School

Hunt School reintegrated select students into small classroom cohorts at the beginning of September (following current State and Marin County health guidelines), while continuing to support the rest of its students with individualized remote learning. When not delivered in person, therapeutic services are being offered via telehealth sessions complemented by remotely accessed video instruction. Staff are also actively supporting families and caregivers.

Our Space

Clients continue to be served through individual phone and group Zoom sessions. Our Space continues to support homeless LGBTQIA+ youth through housing and food assistance as well. Virtual professional development trainings are available (see article on page 6).

Real Alternatives

Youth are being supported via socially distant visits and outings (grocery store, bank, etc.), as well as phone and video case management sessions. Bi-monthly community meetings for all RA youth are also being held.

TAY Space

All full-service clients continue to be served via phone or in-person visits. TAY Space continues to be closed for drop-ins but staff are available onsite on a limited basis to meet youth needs including assistance with food and housing. In place of the daily drop-in sessions, online Zoom gatherings are being offered.

YouThrive

With Sonoma and Marin schools both in remote learning mode, YouThrive group sessions started virtually as well on Sept. 14. Bilingual parent support sessions piloted over the summer will continue, as will twice-weekly in-person workout sessions for Petaluma youth at CrossFit Sav-Up. San Rafael and Petaluma clients will be able to access individual counseling sessions through Side by Side's Community Counseling program for additional support. YouThrive will also offer a 6-week workshop in conjunction with College of Marin (see article on page 5).

AGENCY NEWS



New Board Member: Rich Walcoff

Rich Walcoff joined the SBS board in July after serving as Side by Side's Bank of Marin Golf Tournament emcee for years and volunteering with the YouThrive early intervention program beginning in 2019. A

Petaluma resident and member of the Bay Area Radio Hall of Fame, Rich's career in broadcast journalism included over 30 years at KGO Radio, 20+ years as the 49ers Pre/Post Game host, a weekly SF Examiner sports column, and morning anchor on ABC-7 TV sports.



New SBS Finance Director: Benjamin Edoukou

Ben Edoukou comes to Side by Side with a deep background in finance that include stints at Airbus and Bosch, Controller at Aspire Public Schools and Chief Financial Officer at Global Children's

Rights. He holds an MBA from ESCE, a business school in Paris, and a MA from University of Poitiers, also in France, and speaks seven languages which include French, English, and five African languages. In his free time, Ben enjoys playing soccer, running, cooking, and discovering new wineries.

YouThrive in the News

YouThrive's partnership with Petaluma's CrossFit Sav-Up gym was restarted in July to help our clients stay engaged and provide a healthy outlet for pent-up energy and need for social interactions. Read the story in the Aug 6 issue of the Argus Courier at bit.ly/YouThriveAndCrossFit.



Alongside a national outpouring of support for the Black Lives Matter movement sparked by the May 2020 murder of George Floyd, Side by Side's Irene M. Hunt School spontaneously produced a powerful video honoring victims of police brutality and took a public stand for social justice (note this video may be upsetting for some, bit.ly/BlackLivesMatterHuntSchool). That video became a jumping off point to make changes in the overall curriculum that deeply incorporated issues of social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

According to Anne-Marie Jess, Hunt's new assistant director of academic programming, the school adopted "Curriculum Through Windows and Mirrors" – a concept that creates opportunities ("mirrors") for students to see themselves reflected in their teachers' lesson plans and provides windows into the lives of others. In addition, staff are focused on identifying anti-racist and culturally responsive curricular choices.

Teachers Chloe Lechuga and Caitlin O'Callaghan are joining forces this year to co-teach Hunt's high school students. A formidable team, Lechuga and O'Callaghan find creative ways to inspire their students and widen their perspective, no matter what subject area they are teaching.

O'Callaghan enthusiastically suggests that topics of equity and inclusion even find a home in math and science. For example, students from urban communities may have difficulty relating to standard environmental science course material about processes that affect our planet. "There are underlying systems in place that often prevent urban, marginalized youth of color from access to outdoor experiences," O'Callaghan explains. "This can create a gap in understanding as well as a sense of isolation and misrepresentation. My goal is to use examples in the classroom that my students can relate to so that all feel included and represented."

Lechuga began the year by asking her students to select a cause that means something to them, such as poverty, Black Lives Matter, mental health, or nonprofits in the sports community. They researched and reported on what they might do throughout the year to support their chosen cause. She also plans to integrate lessons about indigenous tribes in the Bay Area into their US History unit, so students can better understand the land that they live on.

Upper Elementary teacher Erica Clay has a passion and drive to incorporate topics of cultural awareness into her classroom this year as well. As the lead initiator of the Black Lives Matter video, she is proud of how enlightened and insightful the staff-wide effort has become. "What students learn now, they will take with them throughout their lives," she says. "The opportunity to reach students and be a part of the change is a gift." Clay plans to incorporate racially diverse scientists and historians into her lesson plans this year. "If I can teach my students a little bit about the life of a Hispanic scientist, or an African American historian, I'm hoping I can shift students' perspectives and inspire them to think about these topics through a lens of equity and inclusion," she says.

Literature that deals with diverse experiences and social justice issues such as *A Long Walk to Water* about the lost boys of Sudan and *The Hate U Give*, a novel portraying the experiences of a black high school student attending a predominantly white high school, will be woven into the curriculum, with students collectively reading the same book and discussing it as a group in class. The Hunt School will also bring in guest speakers on various topics. For example, an expert might share the rich culture that is central to martial arts practice, and the meaning behind what many view simply as a form of self-defense.

Hunt School director Jolene Yee promises, "We are at the beginning of an ongoing endeavor to re-develop our course curriculum across all grade levels to incorporate these vitally important issues." Lechuga adds, "We are learning too. In teaching youth, we are also educating ourselves." She adds that she is inspired by both her colleagues at the Hunt School and Side by Side's leadership "who are exhibiting the traits we're looking for from our students: engagement and passion."



Hunt School teachers, Caitlin O'Callaghan, Chloe Lechuga, and Erica Clay

A SOCIALLY AWARE READING LIST

Side by Side is partnering with Book Passage in Corte Madera to provide the following books to our students during the winter and spring months. If you are interested in supporting the Hunt School's curriculum enhancement, please consider purchasing a book (or two! – we'll need 15 copies of each title) for our classrooms.

- *The Proudest Blue*, by Ibtihaj Muhammad
- *The Undefeated*, by Kwame Alexander
- *What Lane?*, by Torrey Maldonado

Books may be ordered from Book Passage online at bookpassage.com or by contacting the store at 415-927-0960. Mention Side by Side when ordering and a percentage of each book sold will also be donated to our agency.



College Of Marin's Stormy Miller and YouThrive's Adrian Maldonado

**THANK
YOU
NATO!**

CALL TO COURAGE: YOUTHRIVE PARTNERS WITH COLLEGE OF MARIN

Side by Side is proud to announce a new partnership between YouThrive and College of Marin, bringing Call to Courage, a powerful six-week workshop designed to help students of color gain deeper self-awareness and better understand how they fit into the world around them.

College of Marin (COM) has been providing equitable education opportunities to a diverse community of students for 96 years. According to Stormy Miller, Director of Student Accessibility and Psychological Services at College of Marin, "We sought a community partner to help create a space for students of color to come together and discuss the complex issues of race, equity, and inclusion, and how these issues affect their mental health." Miller says that although they initiated conversations with Side by Side months before the recent resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, "What's happening in the world right now creates an even greater need for us to understand how our students of color engage and how we might shift our approach to better meet their needs."

YouThrive program director Adrian Maldonado has been creating and leading powerful workshops for years, focusing on mindset and coping skills to help youth stay on a positive path. Although YouThrive's core workshops are tailored for youth at the precipice of troubling behavior, Maldonado also has a deep passion for social justice issues and is thrilled to be working with COM's slightly older student demographic. Through a series of conversations, Maldonado and Side by Side Director of Clinical Practice Larry Woodland worked with COM to customize a series of workshops specifically designed to meet the college's goals.

The result is Call to Courage, a six-week pilot series intended for students of color to gain a deeper understanding of how race, class, and health may show up and affect one's own life, community, and educational experiences. According to Maldonado, Call to Courage will be a structured opportunity for students to reflect within themselves and then go back out to their families and the greater community and society with a deeper understanding of how they wish to engage. Miller concurs, "Adrian is creating a safe and brave space for students to really share what is going on in our world. Our hope is that the series will also help us to create an equity-centered approach to mental health."

In the first week, students will explore the alignment between their core values, attitudes, and decisions, then reflect on sources of power, mechanisms of privilege, cultural beliefs, and perspectives. In the following weeks, they will explore topics such as vulnerability, navigating emotions and relationships, and learning to recognize and reduce actions that support oppression and injustice. Students will also learn to better support social justice causes they care about.

According to Miller, the student body is seeking opportunities for community and she is confident the program will extend into the future. "We would not be able to fully do this work without a strong organization like Side by Side," said Miller.

Maldonado's goal for the workshop is for students to gain more self-awareness about their identity and their cultural beliefs, an increase in compassion and empathy for others, and some basic techniques to handle social stressors. "We need to understand ourselves, what we feel, how we react and our unconscious biases," says Maldonado. "Until we gain an understanding of these things, we go through life reacting instead of proactively creating the experiences we want and encouraging the change we wish to see."

Last year, a generous grant from the Northern California/Nevada chapter of the National Association of Theater Owners put Chromebooks into the hands of every Irene M. Hunt School student and staff member – and made our ability to pivot to remote learning and therapeutic telehealth services infinitely easier in an incredibly challenging time.

This year, despite its own challenges with movie theaters across the U.S. being shuttered, NATO has maintains its commitment to Side by Side. Both Our Space and YouThrive support vulnerable youth at critical points in their lives, whether it be struggles in school or navigating a complex world of gender identities and sexual orientation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only increased the isolation felt by clients from both programs and exacerbated their challenges. As Milt Moritz, President and CEO of the Northern California/Nevada chapter commented, "For many years the Association has given back in the communities where our theaters operate with a special focus on those organizations that benefit children. We saw immediately that our funding would be put to use for the benefit of many at Side by Side."

Thank you, NATO, for supporting Our Space and YouThrive this year!

OUR SPACE HELPS OUR COMMUNITY BETTER SUPPORT LGBTQIA+ YOUTH

In addition to the common challenges (family stress, school challenges, and teenage angst) faced by all youth, queer and trans youth often have significantly higher rates of harassment, abuse, poverty, homelessness, depression and suicidality than their straight and cisgender peers. Yet the very systems and organizations that LGBTQIA+ youth lean on for support can sometimes unintentionally cause more harm when professionals don't understand the unique needs of these young people.

Our Space's professional development workshops offer a solution. For over 10 years, Side by Side's Our Space program has been a safe space for Alameda County's LGBTQIA+ youth. In addition to a community center, gender-affirming clothing closet, and food pantry, Our Space offers community-based mental health services, case management, and peer support groups. As an extension of these services, Our Space's professional trainings help ensure that educators, healthcare professionals, and child welfare officials become the best possible advocates for their queer and trans clients.

Delving much deeper than simply reviewing the definitions for sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression (SOGIE), Our Space trainings help participants to better understand the unique struggles of queer and trans youth and address common questions. Participants often want to know the proper way to address someone if they are unsure of their gender identity, or how to support youth when they encounter someone with a belief system that it's "wrong" to be queer or trans. "Our goal is to empower workshop participants to have honest and supportive conversations with the young people they serve," says Our Space program manager Diego Basdeo-Fitzgerald.



State policies that protect youth from discrimination are addressed in the workshops as well. Participants are often surprised to learn that misgendering is considered harassment or abuse. According to Basdeo-Fitzgerald, "It's important that the adults interacting with and advocating for these vulnerable youth understand the laws that can be used to help protect young people against abuse in schools, in home environments, and in the foster care system."

"Beyond being responsive, friendly, and engaging. Our Space trainers consistently meet the needs of their class. Time and time again I have observed them answer questions in a way that encouraged participants to think, self-reflect, and participate in further meaningful discussion."

- Bonnie Mencher, Alameda County Child Welfare Office

Workshops also address the intersection of gender-based discrimination, racism, and classism. "It's important to understand these experiences within the context of social and structural biases and factors that may exacerbate the experience of a trans youth," explains Basdeo-Fitzgerald. For example, according to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, transgender people of color are more likely to encounter discrimination by healthcare providers due to a combination of racism and homophobia.

Perhaps the most vital aspect of the training is addressing the emotional needs of LGBTQIA+ youth. Basdeo-Fitzgerald explains, "We help participants understand the unique and very real additional challenges that queer and trans young people experience by bringing their voices into the conversation.

Through these professional trainings, we hope to help organizations that serve queer and trans youth gain a deeper understanding of how to best show up for our youth."

If you are interested in learning more about bringing a training to your organization, please contact Basdeo-Fitzgerald at dfitzgerald@sidebysideyouth.org.

A SOGIE Glossary

SOGIE Standing for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and (Gender) Expression, SOGIE refers to characteristics common to all human beings (not just those who are LGBTQIA+) because everyone has a sexual orientation and a gender identity.

Gender Expression Refers to how one expresses his or her sense of self. Our gender expression is influenced by our assigned sex, our sexual

orientation, and/or gender identity, and it may or may not reflect a society's expectations. Gender identity and gender expression can be the same, similar, or completely different.

Gender Identity Refers to one's inner sense of self of being a girl/woman, boy/man, other genders, all, or neither. Our gender identity is not determined by our assigned sex at birth. While the common assumption is that our assigned sex and our

gender identity are the same (male = boy/man, female = girl/woman), sex and gender are two distinct categories. Sex is the body or container, while gender is the content that fills the container.

Sexual Orientation Refers to romantic and/or sexual attraction to men, women, both, or neither.

Misgender Intentionally or unintentionally referring to a person or using language to describe a person that doesn't align with their affirmed gender.



CLIENT PROFILE

Side by Side's TAY Space helps vulnerable, transitional age youth (TAY) ages 16-25 who struggle with mental and/or emotional disorders gain the foothold they need to thrive with individualized therapy, housing resources, job coaching, and case management. When we

initially met Trey, he had severe symptoms of depression and PTSD due to a history of abuse, neglect, and homelessness. Through working with his TAY Space clinician, Trey has developed self-confidence and coping skills. He has learned how to advocate for himself and express his feelings, and how to set and achieve goals. Most importantly, Trey no longer allows his mental health symptoms and past experiences define him.

Side by Side: How has TAY Space made a difference for you?

Trey: When I first joined the program two years ago, I was contemplating suicide and reached out for help. TAY Space has helped me create a stable platform for myself and has provided me tools for coping with my challenges. Meeting the goals I set for myself is so fulfilling. I have confidence and hope now that I never had before. Staying in the TAY Space apartment for the last year has also enabled me to meet my goals of beginning college, saving up for moving out, and even traveling to Japan, a longtime dream!

SBS: How has the pandemic impacted you and your goals?

Trey: When the pandemic first started, I stopped going to work because I was so nervous about the virus. But working with Carla, my clinician, helped me deal with that anxiety. I communicated with my boss about my concerns and came up with a plan to take some time off and return to work when things got better. I did that and now I'm moving to Denver! I plan to finish school there -- studying 3D design work with a goal of building a small business designing and printing 3D models. I'll also continue my Japanese studies which is another passion of mine.



GIVE A HOLIDAY GIFT TO A SIDE BY SIDE YOUTH



As the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to ripple through our communities and into our holiday season, we hope to have your additional support for our Holiday Wishes program. Many of our clients and their families have been hit hard by the pandemic and the fires and holiday gifts will put an additional strain on the family budget. Side by Side endeavors to brighten our young people's holiday season by ensuring that each has a present to unwrap.

Want to make a holiday wish come true? 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!

Book Passage

51 Tamal Vista Blvd, Corte Madera

In-store purchase or visit their online Giving

Tree: bookpassage.com/giving-tree

Available 10/16 – 12/13

Marin Country Mart

Holiday Tree at the Trading Post

2003 Larkspur Landing Circle, Larkspur

Available 12/3 – 12/24

Zocalo Coffeehouse

645 Bancroft Avenue, San Leandro

Available 11/15 – 12/13

Sonoma County Secret Santa

Visit secretsantanow.org to

see a list of participating businesses

or "Adopt a Heart" online.

Available 11/1 - 12/24

Amazon Wishlist

bit.ly/AmazonRealAlternatives

Supports SBS's Real Alternatives program

Available 11/11 - 12/11

We are grateful to Temple Beth Sholom in San Leandro, Kids Bike Lane, and Mill Valley Middle School for privately supporting our holiday giving program.

Learn more at SidebySideYouth.org/holiday-giving or contact Patty Lufrano at plufrano@sidebysideyouth.org or 707-888-1809.

**Please return the gifts by 12/13 to ensure that we can get them to our clients in time.*



300 Sunny Hills Drive, Bldg. 5
San Anselmo, CA 94960

Return Service Requested

POSTAGE
PAID



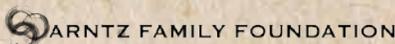
Reach for the Stars

THANK YOU!

We may not have gathered in person, but our community still came together again for the Bay Area's young people. Reach for the Stars was an enormous success, raising close to \$135K in support of Side by Side's young people. We are so grateful to our generous sponsors, virtual dinner guests, donors, and online auction participants.



RICKI & RAY SYUFY



Deanna Brock & Daniel Freeman • Mary Denton & Monte Deignan • Shannon & Taggart Matthiesen

Neurobehavioral Clinic & Counseling Center • One Toyota of Oakland • Howard Schomer & Kimberly Rochat