

FALL 2021

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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On the cover: Program Director Denisse Mendoza with a Community Counseling North Bay client



LETTER FROM CHRISTINE

Dear Friends,

Having just finished my second full week as the new Chief Executive Officer for Side by Side, I have an even deeper appreciation of the complexity and depth of services that are offered by this agency.

In conversations with my new colleagues, I am often struck by Side by Side's dedication and resilience to service during the pandemic. Our programs are needed now more than ever before, and we have done nothing less than provide the highest level of service to those children and families most in need. My tenure as San Francisco Regional Director at Edgewood Center for Children and Families and over 20 years of clinical experience has given me a strong foundation to understand both the challenges and opportunities facing Side by Side. But it is the passion of the staff that already work here that will prove to be the "special sauce" that makes future possibilities a reality.

Even as I step into the future of Side by Side, our programs are always planning for "what's next" for our clients. Transitions are challenging for everyone...and for our clients, sometimes more so. I hope you'll enjoy learning a bit more on pages 5 and 6 about what's built into Side by Side's programs to help ensure our clients' future success and stability.

I am looking forward to getting to know you – our supporters and stakeholders – and feel privileged to assume the responsibilities that the Side by Side board of directors entrusted me with. On the facing page, you'll learn a little more about me and my background. I invite you to reach out to introduce yourself or find out more about one of our programs that may have sparked your interest. Drop me an email at cgarcia@sidebysideyouth.org!

With my deep gratitude,

Dr. Christine Isana Garcia, CEO

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INTRODUCING CHRISTINE ISANA GARCIA

Recently Side by Side's Chief Program Officer, Larry Woodland, interviewed Dr. Christine Isana Garcia over a community Zoom town hall about what brought her to our agency and what makes her tick. Following are excerpts from that conversation.

Larry Woodland: What drew you to Side by Side and excites you most about the agency?

Christine Garcia: Side by Side is an agency that is unparalleled in the menu of services it provides to today's youth and families. I am excited to join such a vibrant and committed team, and hope to work "side by side" with staff and clients, to bring healing during a time when it is most needed.

LW: Who inspired you most in your career path? And why did you make the transition from clinician to administrator?

CG: My family, namely my parents, have been the most influential to me throughout my career. When I hear "Dr. Garcia" I always look for my mom, who was a pediatrician! I grew up in upstate New York with community-focused parents who always welcomed people into our home who had just moved to this country or who needed some form of help or time to regroup. As a child, I would often go with my family to bring needed food, medical services, and support to migrant families and foster youth. They provided me my true "north star" in my professional path.

In my journey from clinician to administrator, I have realized the level of impact I would like to have on communities that are most vulnerable, and in many cases, underserved. I've learned how to combine my clinical skills with my administrative

and leadership capabilities to have an impact that helps these communities, as well as support those who work to provide service to them.

LW: Can you tell me a little about what cultural humility, equity, and inclusion mean to you and why those are so important in the context of the work that Side by Side does?

CG: Without a clear understanding and dedication in working towards cultural humility, equity, and inclusion regarding those we serve, as well as within our workforce, we inevitably will miss our mark in terms of providing effective service and healing to our communities.

LW: A 2020 JED Foundation national survey found 31% of U.S. parents said their child's mental or emotional health was worse than before the pandemic. That definitely sounds alarms bells for me as Side by Side's Chief Program Officer. How do you think Side by Side is positioned to respond to that challenge?

CG: Side by Side has a long history of providing state of the art programs. The services that SBS has provided during the pandemic to over 2,000 youth and their families, and the community response to that service, is a strong indicator of the strength of its response. I am sure that, moving forward, we will continue to be a leader in the provision of

needed service and support to youth who are in so much need. I look forward to increasing our reach, further deepening our already existing programs, as well as looking ahead to new opportunities on the horizon.

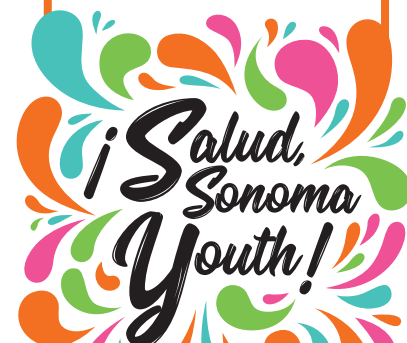
ABOUT DR. GARCIA

Dr. Garcia comes to Side by Side from Edgewood Center for Children and Families. At Edgewood, Dr. Garcia served as San Francisco Regional Director, managing a staff of nearly 200 and overseeing an \$18 million regional budget. Her visioning and strategic planning in that role included leadership in the areas of cultural humility, equity, and inclusion. A product of a bilingual, multiracial, immigrant family, Dr. Garcia brings a unique perspective to her work and the issues facing youth today.

Before coming to Edgewood, Dr. Garcia was Clinical Director at both the Masonic Center for Youth and Families in San Francisco and UCSF's Young Adult and Family Center. She also worked at Princeton University's Counseling and Psychological Services where she provided clinical service, taught post-doctoral fellows, and served on committees focused on service to underserved students. As a clinical psychologist for more than 20 years, Dr. Garcia specialized in the issues of trauma, eating disorders, equity and diversity issues, and chronic mental illness in youth and families. Her clinical and teaching experience includes extensive work with survivors of sexual trauma, including foster youth, military veterans, and individuals and families with intergenerational histories of abuse. Dr. Garcia holds a B.A. in English from Vassar College and a Doctorate in Psychology from Rutgers University.

To learn more about Dr. Garcia's background, you can read the full announcement on our website at SidebySideYouth.org/news/garcia.

SAVE THE DATE



Thursday March 10 2022

Benefitting At-Risk Sonoma Youth

6:00-8:00pm
@ Griffo Distillery
1320 Scott Street, Ste A
Petaluma

Join us for craft cocktails,
wood-fired paella, live
good time music and
support Side by Side's
Sonoma County
programs.

For more information, visit:
[SidebySideYouth.org/
salud_sonoma_youth](https://SidebySideYouth.org/salud_sonoma_youth)
events@sidebysideyouth.org
or 415-457-3200 ext. 118



WHAT COMES NEXT?

"We see young people for only a short part of their trajectory. So it's critical that we address how we can foster continued success, and ensure that our clients continue to advocate for themselves, take care of themselves, and have their needs met after they leave us."

– Larry Woodland, Side by Side's Chief Program Officer

Side by Side's Theory of Change states that we believe that early intervention and intensive, holistic services help vulnerable youth on pathways to achieve emotional, social, and functional wellbeing. We walk these pathways with youth while they are in services at Side by Side, but how do our programs prepare them for continued success after their time with us comes to an end?

Our **Community Counseling** program provides mental health services to youth throughout the Bay Area. "We work with our clients to develop coping skills and various strategies to help them attain stability and a sense of personal agency," says Director of Community Services: Sonoma/Napa/Marin Denisse Mendoza. "In a sense, we are always working toward helping them achieve continued success after they leave our care." Periodic assessments allow therapists to review progress, and session frequency is slowly decreased leading up to the discharge date. "Upon discharge, we review with clients what they've learned and how far they've come, as well as warning signs that might signal they need to return to therapy for maintenance." One high school student was referred because he was on probation. His self-sabotaging behaviors were getting in the way of his goal to graduate. After he was discharged, he used his skills to catch up on his school credits in time to graduate with his class and is now attending UC Davis.

For clients transitioning to a new therapist, a strategy called "Goodbye, Hello" helps clients thoughtfully move through what can

be a difficult transition. The client and therapist each take turns saying goodbye and reviewing what they learned together. The client then says "hello" to the new therapist, introducing themselves and what they want to work on. "Many of these youth have not had good closure with providers, so we model a healthy system for that transition," says Mendoza.

Side by Side's **Real Alternatives** transitional housing program helps current and former foster and probation youth set goals and build skills to prepare them for independent life. "We are focused on 'what's next' from day one," says East Bay Clinical Director Jessica Johnson.

Because many Real Alternatives youth have experienced extreme trauma, they need to learn how to regulate their emotions in addition to learning tactical skills. "For example, if they get negative feedback from their supervisor at work, they may quit in reaction," Johnson explains. "So, we work with them on how to process that. If we are doing interview training, we talk about how to manage anxiety if they get triggered during the interview. We believe this focus helps our clients succeed after they leave us." Referrals to Community Counseling are encouraged, with many Real Alternatives youth continuing or beginning their counseling journey after discharge from the housing program.

One youth who initially struggled to complete high school decided to leave Real Alternatives early as he felt he had the skills he needed to succeed. He finished his high school diploma and got an apartment with his girlfriend while working two jobs.

TAY Space offers a full range of case management and psychiatric support services for transitional age youth, or TAY, ages 16-25, who struggle with acute mental and/or emotional disorders. The biggest challenge for youth leaving TAY Space is the transition from many SBS staff members who hold space for them to managing their own care with the support of a single therapist.

To combat that loss of community, "We stay in touch with our graduates with phone calls, emails, and invitations, so they still feel part of TAY Space, and we do all we can to support them if they are struggling with basic needs such as housing, food, and transportation," says Laura Taylor, TAY Space Director. Individualized discharge plans cover practical areas such as



Real Alternatives Youth Specialist Ralph Hall with client



Community Services: Sonoma/Napa/Marin Program Director Denisse Mendoza with Community Counseling client

"Sutter is proud to support our community partner Side by Side as they continue to provide critical services to youth. The commitment to prepare youth for real world experiences is essential to each community they serve."

– **Andrea Garfia**, North Bay Coordinator for Community Health, Sutter Health

attaining Social Security Income, finding housing, completing community college applications, creating a resume, and applying for jobs. All youth also leave with key phone numbers, resources, and everything they need to keep themselves stable. But the open door invitation is key: many graduates come back to the drop-in center to check in and stay connected.

Our **YouThrive** program works with students referred by school administration, law enforcement, or parents for anti-social behavior, drug or alcohol use, and failing grades. The 10-week program is designed to equip young people with the mindset and coping skills to stay on a positive path and to live happy, productive lives. Program supervisor Vernon Pope-Banks says, "We work on the skills that will serve them throughout life and help them stay on a positive path." These skills include self-awareness, anger management, personal development, coping skills, self-advocacy, and social/emotional wellness. "Eventually, these skills will stick, and the youth will become self-reliant."

At the **Irene M. Hunt School**, which combines individualized education plans with emotional and behavioral supports, a student's entire journey is about getting them ready to leave. Transition goals and plans are crafted for each student when the time comes. "We talk with their parents and their new school administration and teachers to ensure everyone is on board," says school director Jolene Yee. "We also review any potential pitfalls."

For Hunt high school students, college and career readiness are front-and-center themes, with a focus on mock job applications, interviewing, and other skills they will carry with them into college and beyond.

One former student had only homeless youth as friends when he began his Hunt School journey. Now he has graduated high school, is holding down a stable job, bought a car, and is living in an apartment with his girlfriend.

The Hunt School values relationships built with students and their families, a fact exemplified by how often staff continue to provide support post-discharge. "Sometimes a parent calls for guidance because a student is struggling, or because they need help connecting with the new school administration," Yee says. "One student came back and asked for support around how to get into junior college and another was having a mental health crisis and needed help connecting to services. Staff have been invited to former students' graduations from their mainstream schools and always show up to support the youth in their successes."

With all of our programs, preparing youth for life after Side by Side is what it's all about. Larry Woodland says, "We are not meant to be in their lives long-term. We are meant to be with them for a short time, to help them along the way so they can move on and be successful in life."



CLIENT & PROVIDER PROFILE

Matt joined TAY Space officially in March 2020. He'd been homeless, using drugs for six years, but had been sober for three months when he arrived at our drop-in center the preceding January. But he already had ties to Side by Side. TAY Space Clinical Director Erica Antonio actually met and worked with Matt when he was 16 and living at a residential group home for foster youth.

With Matt

SBS: What brought you to Side By Side?

Matt: Me and Erica have a long history. I bumped into her when I was in my addiction and she told me she worked at TAY Space now and said, 'I feel like you want to come over to talk.' Erica played a big part in the beginning by bringing me here. At that time, I didn't have no one to talk to, so it was just me and my thoughts. I just come in here and talk or vent. That really helps.

SBS: What advice do you have for someone who might be looking at this program and wondering if it might be a fit for them?

Matt: I run a sober living house in San Rafael, and I've recommended this program to a couple of my guys because it has helped me to become the person I am today. It is so important for them to be able to express what they are feeling. Whenever I come to TAY Space, there are always activities going on. You don't feel singled out and it's great energy every time I come in here. My dream job in the future is being part of something to help someone else who never had it easy. I just like the feeling of being able to give back to other people..

With Erica

SBS: How did it feel to run into Matt after six years?

Erica: Sometimes, when you work with youth, you don't know how things will turn out. But, seeing him again after so many years, I was glad that enough trust had been established before so that he felt comfortable asking for support now.

SBS: Advocacy plays an important role in TAY Space. How comfortable is Matt with that?

Erica: For as long as I've known him, Matt has had no problem asking for what he needs. Sometimes he doesn't know exactly what he needs and that is where we come in with problem solving. But once we figure it out, Matt is working on it the very next day. We spend so much time with youth teaching them how to speak up and advocate for themselves. Matt just innately has that strength. His willingness to "do whatever it takes to get his life back" has resulted in his positive engagement with intensive case management services/therapy, probation, recovery coaching and a 12-step program.

SBS: How would you describe Matt?

Erica: Matt is amazingly resilient and optimistic and leads with a helpful and kind heart. He is a conscientious hard worker with a full-time job now. Since joining TAY Space, he has maintained residence at an SLE (impactful living environment) where he became assistant house manager. He obtained his driver's license, bought a car, completed the expectations of probation, and is finishing up with parenting classes. His probation officer nominated him to take part in the "Wall of Change," an award honoring his achievements. I'm proud of him.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

Side by Side was fortunate to premier three short films at our September Gala that tell the moving and impactful story of our work with our clients in three of our programs: the Irene M. Hunt School, our Real Alternatives transitional housing program, and our Community Counseling North Bay program. If you haven't yet seen the videos, please take a few moments to enjoy them. All three can be found on our Vimeo channel at [Vimeo.com/sidebysideyouth](https://vimeo.com/sidebysideyouth).





DONOR PROFILE: RICKI AND RAY SYUFY

Ricki and Ray Syufy are longtime benefactors to Side by Side and we were delighted to have Ricki join the SBS board in September 2019. Ricki currently chairs SBS's Governance committee and led the recent CEO Executive Search process. We sat down with her to find out more about her commitment to our agency.

SBS: Tell me about your introduction to our agency...what brought you to Side by Side?

Ricki: In 2010, after a long history of making small donations to a wide variety of nonprofits each year, I decided that I wanted to be more focused, intentional, and impactful in my philanthropy. My husband, Ray, and I discussed it and clarified our philanthropic mission – to support

programs geared toward juvenile behavioral and mental health in the Bay Area. We felt that no one was doing a better job of that than Side by Side, and a lasting relationship was built.

SBS: What do you find most inspiring about Side by Side's work with young people?

RS: I wholeheartedly believe that youth are resilient and – with early intervention – can build skills and develop tools to support emotional, social, and functional well-being. Side by Side's Theory of Change mirrors this philosophy and is woven into all aspects of the agency's services. It's that Theory of Change that makes their work so impactful.

SBS: You recently earned a Master's degree in Counseling Psychology and worked as a psychotherapist at Timothy Murphy School (a now-closed non-public school serving a population similar to SBS's Irene M. Hunt School). What led you to that work?

RS: I raised three challenging boys and often mentored their friends. They all faced struggles growing up, but we were fortunate enough to have the resources necessary to address them. When I became aware of Timothy Murphy, I learned that the school was specifically for boys with emotional disturbance. I thought to myself, "Who is advocating for these boys? Who is in their corner? Challenging boys are my comfort zone, I could do that!" I just needed the right credentials, so I went back to school to become a therapist. It was the hardest, yet most rewarding job, and I loved every minute of it.

SBS: You led Side by Side's executive search process for our new CEO. Any words of wisdom for the new CEO?

RS: As a board member, I am very much looking forward to working with Christine. I'm not sure how much wisdom I have to impart, but I am excited to hear her thoughts and ideas about the future of Side by Side. I already know that she has tremendous passion for our mission and I can't wait to see where she takes us.



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 support for our Holiday Wishes program. Many of our clients and their families have been hit hard by the pandemic and the associated economic ramifications – 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!

Amazon Wishlist

Supports SBS's
Real Alternatives
transitional housing program
bit.ly/AmazonRealAlternatives
Available 11/11 – 12/13

Book Passage

51 Tamal Vista Blvd,
Corte Madera
Available in-store 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

Sonoma County Secret Santa

Visit secretsantanow.org
to see a list of participating
Sonoma County businesses or
"Adopt a Heart" online
Available 11/1 – 12/24

Zocalo Coffeehouse

645 Bancroft Avenue,
San Leandro
Available 11/26 – 12/13

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/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



SIDE BY SIDE



**COLLECTIVELY WE REACHED FOR THE STARS
THIS YEAR AND RAISED OVER \$240,000!**

**MANY THANKS TO OUR GUESTS, SPONSORS
AND DONORS FOR SUPPORTING THE EVENT!**



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