

SPRING 2022



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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- Editor** Noelle R. Moss
- Writers** Jennifer Golbus, Noelle R. Moss
- Photographer** Paige Green
- Designer** And Them

On the cover: TAY Space Clinician Carla Mello and TAY Space Peer Advocate Alyssa Martinez with clients in the new TAY Space offices.



LETTER FROM CHRISTINE

Dear Friends,

Despite the challenges presented around the holidays, our teams soldiered through the recent COVID surge with resilience. I am happy to report that despite COVID touching some of our staff, we are healthy in the month of April and looking forward to the coming months.

As winter moves steadfastly into the bloom of spring, the possibilities that the outdoors bring to our youth in our different Side by Side programs is exciting. Our youth and staff are looking forward to increased outdoor activities and engagement including the much-anticipated return to incentive trips for our YouThrive program this summer. I am also delighted to announce that our TAY Space program has found a new home in downtown San Rafael on Fifth Avenue—please join us for our open house at the new TAY Space offices in May!

This issue of our newsletter focuses on trauma and trauma-informed work. Embedded within all of our services is a deep understanding of how the traumas that our youth experienced (or are experiencing) impact their behavioral and emotional challenges. Our staff recognize the unique way that trauma may play a part in their clients' struggles and, as you'll read, adapt their approach accordingly. Their trauma-informed work ensures that those experiences can be addressed in such a way that resilience and growth are possible. COVID created a tsunami of mental health needs in youth, in part due to various traumas that they may have experienced during the pandemic, so this approach is even more critical now.

I hope you have fared well through the months of winter and are moving well into spring. We have many events coming up (see the facing page for details) and I hope we might see you at some of them! It would be great to connect with you...not via zoom, not via phone...but, as our youth often say, IRL (in real life)!

Warmly,

Christine Isana Garcia, Psy.D.

Side by Side
300 Sunny Hills Drive, Bldg. 5
San Anselmo, CA 94960
Tel: 415-457-3200
Fax: 415-456-4679

SidebySideYouth.org
Facebook: sidebysideyouth
Instagram: sidebysideyouth
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AGENCY UPDATES

SIDE BY SIDE IS DEEPENING ITS MARIN COUNTY IMPACT –

expanding in San Rafael and newly offering early intervention services in Marin City. Thanks to a newly signed MOU with San Rafael City Schools District, YouThrive early intervention workshops and/or individual counseling services and bilingual parent support workshops are being offered more broadly. Individual counseling services for Bahia Vista Elementary in San Rafael and YouThrive programming for San Rafael High School has already begun. Services at Martin Luther King, Jr High School in Marin City started in February 2022.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE

Spurred by the societal and racial reckoning in 2020 that was sparked by the police murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless others, as well as the adoption of a new strategic plan in 2021, Side by Side's new Staff Diversity Council has been hard at work to implement real changes to the recruitment and workplace culture at the agency.

As council co-chair and Hunt School Supervisor and Education Behavior Specialist, Ken Taylor commented "After my 16 years with the agency, seeing Side by Side come together in this effort has been inspiring." Ken's fellow co-chair and Real Alternatives Clinical Case Manager, Tikerea Tate agreed, "Hearing others' experiences and ideas has helped all of us gain more knowledge of the agency as a whole, rather than just our individual programs, and feel closer to our colleagues." Side by Side's HR Director Tiffany Vigil admired how the committee council is taking the time to have meaningful dialogue, identify needs, and then developing thoughtful initiatives while also becoming local advocates for

YOUTHRIVE'S CALL TO COURAGE WORKSHOPS for students of color are now being offered at Santa Rosa Junior College as well as College of Marin. Workshop topics include Identity & Culture, Social Justice Solidarity; Navigating Emotions and Relationships; Power of Vulnerability; Understanding Institutional Racism, Biases and Stereotypes; and Mental Health and Substance Use First Aid.

SIDE BY SIDE'S NORTH BAY PROGRAMS ARE PARTNERING WITH CORAZÓN HEALDSBURG

through a \$50,000 City of Healdsburg Community Response Grant to provide workshops, drop-in groups, and family sessions designed to address the mental health needs of Latinx families who have been devastated by COVID and its disproportionate impact on their community.

DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) at the various Side by Side campuses.

One recently completed key initiative that emerged from those frank and honest conversations is the adoption of a list of DEI-focused interview questions to help make our recruitment process more equitable. The more that Side by Side's staff reflect the diversity of our clients, the easier it is for our youth to see themselves in their providers and imagine the possibilities in front of them. Sample questions (that readers might even use at their own businesses or places of employment!) include:

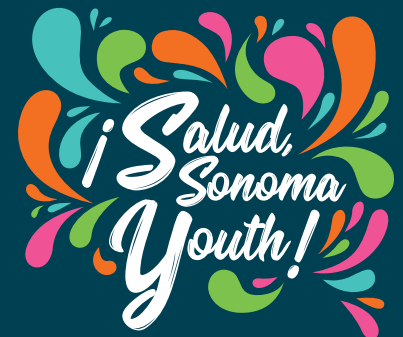
- *Describe how your career has been enhanced by exposure to diverse people, places, or experiences. Please provide a specific example.*
- *Tell me about a time when you have taken steps to ensure that everyone (in your class, on your team, in your organization) felt included. Describe the situation, the actions you took, and the outcome.*
- *What do you see as the most complex aspect of working with diverse clientele? What steps have you taken to meet this challenge?*

SAVE THE DATE

MARIN VALENTINE'S BALL
Friday, April 29, 2022
5:30 – 11:00pm
Peacock Gap Golf Club,
San Rafael

Step on out for a fabulous dinner, entertainment, and dance the night away to the music of Wonder Bread 5. This year's Ball honors California State Senator Mike McGuire for his enthusiastic and longstanding support of Marin's nonprofits.

Tickets at <https://nbcc.ejoinme.org/2022mvb>



Thursday, May 19, 2022
6:00 - 8:00pm
Griffo Distillery,
1320 Scott Street, Ste A,
Petaluma

Join us for craft cocktails, wood-fired paella and live good time music and support our early intervention and counseling services in Sonoma County.

Tickets at www.sidebysideyouth.org/salud-sonoma-youth

TAY SPACE OPEN HOUSE
Wednesday, May 25, 2022
4:00 – 6:00pm
801 5th Avenue, San Rafael

See our new space and learn about the case management and psychiatric services TAY Space offers 16-25 year old youth in Marin. Bring a can of food for our emergency food pantry! RSVP to nmoss@sidebysideyouth.org



LEADING WITH MINDFULNESS AND COMPASSION: TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

Irene M. Hunt School students on the San Anselmo campus

Trauma-informed care is an approach that leads with mindfulness, compassion, and clarity regarding boundaries and expectations to create a stable base that helps calm traumatized nervous systems as well as avoid unintentionally triggering a trauma or stress response. Because many of the youth we serve at Side by Side have experienced significant trauma, we employ a trauma-informed care approach in all that we do.

"Everything we do is important, including how we do intakes and the environment we provide."

– **Larry Woodland**, Side by Side Chief Program Officer

An organization-wide trauma-informed approach begins with systems, says Side by Side Chief Program Officer Larry Woodland. "Everything we do is important, including how we do intakes and the environment we provide. If the lighting doesn't feel safe or the door is locked, it can trigger a stress response. We could also

unintentionally re-traumatize our clients if we don't ask questions in the right way. For example, 'Why did you do that?' feels like an accusation and a judgment, whereas, 'Tell me what happened to you? How are you holding up?' is an invitation to share their story."

All Side by Side staff are trained to know what the fight, flight, or freeze responses look like so they can identify if a client has been triggered. "What might appear to an untrained person as yelling, posturing, or aggressive/rude behavior is often a response to triggered trauma," says Woodland. "Meeting those behaviors with compassion and mindfulness allow staff to give space for the

"Sometimes, the youth we support learn survival strategies in their family and community that can be great for getting through crisis but a barrier to thriving."

– Aman Basdeo Fitzgerald, Our Space Program Manager

client's reactivity while also maintaining safety for all. It is a more caring – and more effective – approach."

Trauma is often accompanied by unpredictability and not knowing what to expect, so providing consistency is vital. "Besides consistency, clear communication, tone of voice, and clarity on expectations are all central to a trauma-informed approach," says **Hunt School** director Jolene Yee. Hunt School also uses restorative justice instead of punishment and helps youth process undesirable behaviors without shame or judgment. At **Real Alternatives**, because clients there frequently grow up in foster care without an expectation of privacy, maintenance staff are trained to enter youth apartments in a trauma-informed manner by knocking first and announcing themselves before entering.

Because trauma can impact the whole family system, Side by Side staff often work to educate the youth's family or community. "We teach them about their loved ones' behaviors, and also help them see how their own behaviors might be contributing," says Side by Side's CEO Christine Isana Garcia.

Isana Garcia adds that because there can also be vicarious trauma for staff, "we make sure our 1:1 clinicians and other staff members who support youth with lived trauma have support, time to process, debriefs, and a collaborative approach within the agency's decision-making process." This care and concern for staff ultimately strengthens both the agency and the therapeutic process. We see the whole person – both clients and staff – and are with them side by side wherever the journey might lead.

A CASE IN POINT

Recently, two brothers were referred to **Community Counseling** from their **YouThrive** group for extra support when their mother tragically passed away due to complications from COVID-19.

"When I first met these boys, they were having a hard time with sleep, grief, and behavior at school," says Beatriz Behrens, Community Counseling Clinician. "In addition to the loss of their mother, they were experiencing temporary homelessness when the family lost their lease in the overwhelm that followed their mother's death."

Behrens says her main priority is holding a safe space for each of the boys. "There is no agenda," she says. Her trauma-informed approach involves allowing space and building trust. "I knew about

their trauma, but I did not push them to talk about it when we first met," she says. "Instead, I asked them to tell me about themselves, their hobbies, and interests. I focused on getting to know the human instead of the trauma."

After working together for a few months, the boys recently became interested in learning about the stages of grief so they could better understand what they are going through. "Both of them are still numb and in shock, but they are recovering," says Behrens. "They have both reported a decrease in anxiety and an increase in sleep."

Side by Side staff has also supported the family with case management efforts and financial support (made possible by a grant from the Julia L. Grant Fund at Community Foundation Sonoma County) to help pay for funeral costs and getting them back into a permanent living arrangement. We recently received this note from the boys' father: "We are going through so much. The biggest worry I have is how my sons are doing and I just want them to be ok and have someone to talk to about everything. Thank you so much for the help that you are providing to my family."



NEW OFFICES FOR TAY SPACE

Side by Side's TAY Space program in San Rafael offers wraparound mental health services for youth ages 16-25 (transitional age youth, or TAY) who struggle with mental health challenges. In addition – and importantly – TAY Space also offers a drop-in center for any Marin County youth to get connected to resources, access emergency food and toiletries, or just charge their phone. When an atmospheric storm raged through the North Bay in October 2021, TAY Space was flooded beyond repair and the drop-in center was forced to close.

But the TAY team didn't miss a beat. "The resiliency and adaptability we learned during COVID served us well," says Laura Taylor, TAY Space Program Director. "Staff immediately reached out to youth to coordinate excursions such as basketball in the park, outings to the movies, and trips to the grocery store," she says. "They just kept the connection going any way they could."

Taylor says the hardest population to serve during the transition was homeless youth. "Normally our homeless youth come to the drop-in center and we give them a hat or scarf, a meal, and a gift card. When we too became homeless, that ready connection was harder – but youth reached out to us by phone and we supported them as best as we could."

New offices at 810 5th Avenue in downtown San Rafael were located over the holidays and the center opened its doors on March 1. "Our new space is fabulous," Taylor exudes. "We are so excited. It's bigger with beautiful natural light, it's closer to the transit center, and – thanks to help from the team at Make It Home – we've been able to create a welcoming atmosphere where youth can build community and get their basic needs met."

Most youth who deal with mental health issues do not have jobs, so food is a huge focus. Having a safe space to relax is another one. "We make it fun," says Taylor. "We make it about books and music and laughing and dancing. We show them how to focus on right now instead of always trying to fix the future. And in that way, we add a brick to their foundation for the future each day."

A PARTNERSHIP WITH MAKE IT HOME

With all that the TAY Space staff do every day to keep their clients and the homeless youth that they serve supported, space planning and decorating the new offices was daunting. But a partnership with local nonprofit Make It Home made possible the transformation of an empty space into a welcoming one.

Through her volunteer work with foster youth, interior designer Carolyn Flannery was inspired to create Make It Home, a furniture bank with a mission to end the "furniture poverty" that so many foster youth encounter when they transition to their own homes but don't have the means to buy furniture and other essential items. "Successful transitions out of crisis require more than just a 'space,'" says Flannery's colleague Kendall Galli. "Our hope in curating a good vibe for the new TAY Space drop-in center was to create a place that can support the social, emotional, physical, and professional transitions that young people need to move beyond their histories and to thrive as adults." With that goal in mind, Galli and fellow Make It Home volunteer Jen Venne stepped in to help with ideas, décor, and furniture...to a fantastic result!

COME SEE FOR YOURSELF

Join us for TAY Space's open house on Wednesday, May 25 (see pg 3 for details).

LEAVING A LEGACY: LOIS DE BANZIE, ELISABETH LEVY AND DAVID HELLMAN

Side by Side gratefully recognizes the deep generosity of David Hellman, Elisabeth Levy, and Lois de Banzie and their foresight in remembering Side by Side in their estate plans.

Former SBS board member David Hellman's passing left a huge legacy of philanthropic and community involvement, including 28 years on the Marin County Board of Education and longtime involvement with United Way and the Rotary Club of Mission San Rafael. His background as a tax and estate planning attorney was invaluable to our organization over the years as supporters crafted their wills. David was a true pillar of the Marin community.

Elisabeth Levy was a steadfast supporter of Side by Side for more than 30 years. With her background in nursing, her passion for children's wellbeing and wish to help those who struggle was a constant throughout her whole life, sparking her support of the now-closed



CLIENT & PROVIDER PROFILE: TAY SPACE

Serra was referred to TAY Space by her therapist in 2020. She was adopted at a young age after enduring trauma and neglect and was struggling with anger and depression. SBS Clinician Carla Mello welcomed Serra with a smile and unconditional support, which has made all the difference in the world.

WITH SERRA

SBS: What do you get out of being a TAY Space client?

Serra: Everyone at TAY Space is really welcoming and I have people checking in on me almost daily to see if I need anything. I've never known what it feels like to have someone be there for me when I need them. Carla is really supportive, and I take that into my other relationships and try to be patient with them like Carla is with me. She has been teaching me new skills like breathing and mindfulness exercises. I'm also learning how to walk away from stressful situations that can cause me anxiety.

Children's Village in Santa Rosa and delivery of wheelchairs to disabled children in Africa, as well as her commitment to Side by Side.

With film credits including roles in *Annie*, *Addams Family Values*, *Sister Act* and *Tootsie*, Side by Side was honored to host Lois de Banzie on a 2015 visit to the Hunt School that later prompted her to remember Side by Side in her will. As her nephew John de Banzie shared, "Lois was a forward-thinking, bold, and independent woman. She worked as a copy editor and then pursued a career as an actress. Lois encouraged her nephews and nieces to broaden their horizons, take chances, and pursue new experiences. We like to think that by her support for Side by Side, she is continuing in that vein, encouraging young people facing challenges and adversity to find their own paths to happiness and success."

David, Elisabeth, and Lois' legacies will be felt in perpetuity as their generosity will fund critical program needs.

SBS: What has been most challenging about this year?

Serra: My biggest challenge has been finding a stable job. Many either can't give me enough hours or they don't pay enough, so it's been hard to keep a steady job throughout the pandemic. With Carla's help, I keep trying. Overall, I'm really proud that I have conquered a lot of my issues such as my anger and my depression. While it's been difficult, thanks to TAY Space and Carla, I am able to manage these challenges better.

SBS: What are your dreams for the future?

Serra: I want to graduate from college. I just started taking psychology and Spanish at College of Marin and I love it! Two years ago, I felt overwhelmed by school and thought I would never be able to graduate. Now I think I can do it.

WITH CARLA

SBS: What were your first impressions of Serra?

Carla: When we initially met, Serra looked scared and seemed very vulnerable. At first, due to her anxiety and past trauma, Serra feared opening up. She had never experienced what a healthy, trusting relationship feels like. A lot of our clients cannot be their true selves when they first come to us – it's like they are blindfolded from all of their trauma. Gradually she worked through her fears and started to open up and trust me. That shifted our relationship and opened up doors for her. She has learned to advocate for herself, to tell others if she is uncomfortable, and to be more assertive with what she wants.

SBS: How has TAY Space helped Serra reach her goals?

Carla: When I first met Serra, she lacked confidence. A few short years later, she has achieved so many of her goals! First, she left her abusive relationship and moved into her own safe, secure housing. Next, she tackled her goal of graduating from college. Serra is also currently working on being assertive, practicing self-care, creating healthy boundaries in her relationships, and building a network of friends. The amount of change and growth she has undergone really impresses me.

SBS: What have you learned from Serra?

Carla: That no matter what you go through in life, you can turn things around. She taught me the power of simply showing up for somebody. All I did was develop trust with her and provide consistency. She did the rest.



LEGACY GIFTS

– those made through estate planning and bequests – are crucial to securing the future of Side by Side and our ability stand together with the Bay Area's marginalized young people as they realize their potential.

If you've already included Side by Side in your will, please let us know so that we can acknowledge your generosity.

To learn more about adding Side by Side to your estate plan through bequests, IRAs, life insurance, or real estate: visit www.sidebysideyouth.org/legacy or contact Noelle Moss at (415) 457-3200 ext. 114 or nmoss@sidebysideyouth.org.



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

Return Service Requested

POSTAGE
PAID



ONLINE AUCTION TO BE OFFERED JUNE 24 - 27

BANK OF MARIN Golf Tournament

MONDAY, JUNE 27, 2022

at the exclusive MARIN COUNTRY CLUB, NOVATO

Hole-in-One Contest Sponsored by One Toyota of Oakland



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Founder: J. Patrick Hunt



\$375/PLAYER OR \$1,400/FOURSOME

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WE'RE ALSO LOOKING FOR EVENT VOLUNTEERS! Contact Tamika Williams-Clark at twilliamsclark@sidebysideyouth.org to learn more.