

SPRING/SUMMER 2023



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 (LtoR):
Former Board member and mentor,
Rich Walcoff, Madrone High School student,
Kevin DeLeone, former World Boxing
Champion, Paul Nave*



LETTER FROM CHRISTINE

Dear Friends,

As always, I hope this letter finds you and yours doing well. As I write, the spring rains continue to give us much-needed water while also creating havoc on our streets as we navigate downpours, wind, and the elements. Wherever this spring/summer newsletter finds you, I hope you find steady calm and abundance despite whatever storms may have passed your way.

We continue to do what we do best, walking side by side with our youth and families as they navigate old and new challenges in schools, homes, and their communities. We provide growth and resilience to face those challenges in different ways. It takes a village, and our programs have communities of peer mentors, advocates, clinicians, teachers, behavior specialists, and more. Remember that coach, teacher, or elder who made a difference in the decisions you've made in your life? In this issue, you'll read about the impact of Side by Side mentorship on our youth and how it provides supportive adult relationships to help our youth navigate beyond the obstacles they face.

I'm also happy to bring you our Irene M. Hunt School Capital Campaign news. We met our goal. As of this writing, we have renovated the gym and are planning for classroom construction this summer. Thank you for walking with us to improve and expand our school to serve more youth and families.

While we continue our work, the needs of youth and families in Alameda, Marin, Napa, and Sonoma counties persist. It is ever humbling to know that as we work to serve as many as we can, there are still more youth right behind the clients we welcome through our doors. They need us—and you—now more than ever. As we all navigate the environmental elements, thank you for keeping us in mind through your donations of time, gifts, and support.

I look forward to the changing of the seasons. Summer brings us our upcoming **Bank of Marin Golf Tournament on June 26, 2023**, at the Meadow Club in Fairfax, CA. I hope to see you on the putting green!

Warmly,

Christine Isana Garcia, Psy.D

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(LtoR): Kevin DeLeone spars with Paul Nave

MENTORING HELPS US LIVE OUR MODEL

After discussing the benefits of mentorship earlier this year with Alison Zampino, the San Rafael High School Dean of Students, our YouThrive program manager, Vernon Pope-Banks, leapt into action.

Just a few short weeks later, the YouThrive mentoring program was up and running with a pilot program at Madrone and San Rafael high schools, both in San Rafael. "Youth will gravitate towards people who are listening," says North Bay Regional Director Denisse Mendoza. "Why do youth gravitate towards gangs, drugs, and other risky behaviors? Because they are trying to fill a need. Mentorship can fill that need in a positive way."

Mentoring was starting to happen organically in YouThrive groups at the high school level. "Youth would reach out to us for advice when they needed 1:1 support for various challenges in their lives," says Mendoza. "So we knew that formalizing a mentorship program would be an excellent way to provide youth with more consistent support."

According to Pope-Banks, a core benefit of mentorship is that, unlike therapy, mentors can be themselves and share their past experiences that might benefit the youth they are mentoring. "They can say: 'I've been through something similar, and here is what I did.' With mentoring, we get to teach with our soul."

Zampino has always seen a huge value in mentoring. A former school counselor, Zampino says that students greatly benefit from having a positive relationship with adults on campus. "There is such a value in having an adult just be present, and to provide a place to connect and talk."

“Why do youth gravitate towards gangs, drugs, and other risky behaviors? Because they are trying to fill a need. Mentorship can fill that need in a positive way.”

– **Denisse Mendoza**, North Bay Regional Director





Former Side by Side Board member Rich Walcoff is having “the time of his life” as a YouThrive mentor. After serving his term on the Board, Walcoff was looking for a more hands-on role. “I raised two sons and I want to give back and make a difference,” he says. “I am supercharged about these experiences. It’s one of the most meaningful things I’m doing.”

Walcoff says that he just “kicks it” with the youth he mentors and talks about what’s going on during their week. “The more we talk, the more we connect, the more comfortable and open the kids get. I try to listen, encourage, and direct.” Walcoff talks with youth about topics such as peer pressure, hanging out with the right people who are affirming, and making good decisions. “I always encourage the youth I’m mentoring to do now what they can, so that they don’t have regrets later.”

Youth also come to Walcoff for help with specific challenges they are facing.

One youth was working a job he did not enjoy, and said he wanted to get involved with fixing cars. Walcoff suggested finding a mechanic and asking for an apprenticeship. Another youth wanted to play winter baseball but didn’t have the funds. “I suggested that he talk to the coach to offer his services and work off his tuition. This allowed him to show leadership while earning his way to being part of the team.” With another youth who is into martial arts, Walcoff discusses nutrition, the benefits of exercise, being committed to yourself, and staying on course. “I share stories about professional athletes that I knew when I was sportscaster who got rid of people in their lives who had a negative influence. These kids don’t have a fatherly role model in their lives. It’s such an incredible honor to be able to plant seeds of encouragement in their lives.”

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Zampino says, “It’s been a great start and we look forward to expanding and growing the program! I appreciate YouThrive’s flexibility in growing the program with us, working with

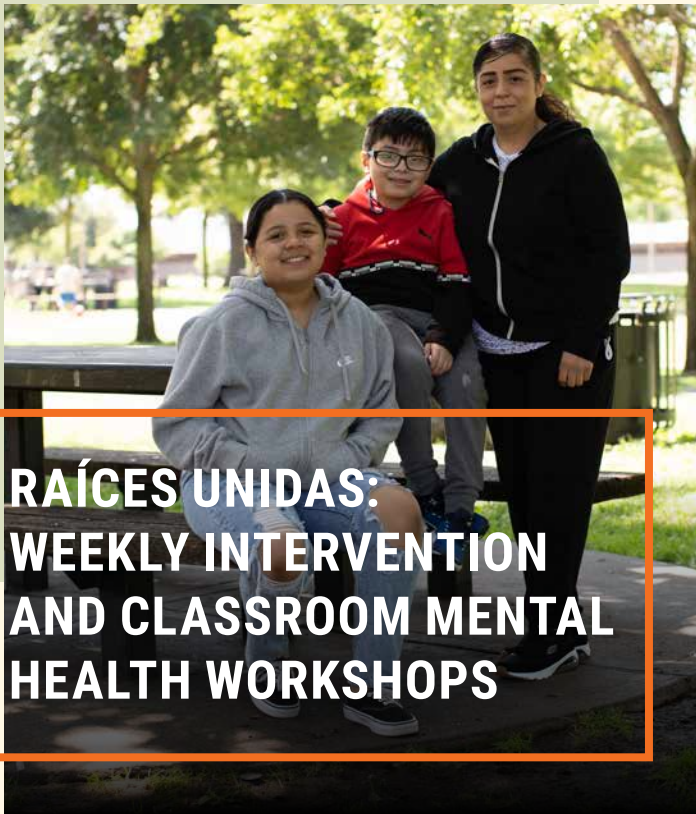
us on our needs, and running with it. Adding additional mentors will mean more flexibility to work with students’ schedules.”

One of Walcoff’s mentees, Kevin, got to spar with former world boxing champ Paul Nave at the Marin City Boxing Club through Walcoff’s connection to Nave. “My experience with the program has been wonderful,” says Kevin, a senior at Madrone High School. “It’s amazing that such a program exists. I am grateful to meet Rich. Every encounter I have with him is always a good conversation. I feel nobody really gets an opportunity to relate to such great people. It’s incredible.” YouThrive and school staff are encouraged that youth keep coming back week after week. That alone speaks to the impact the mentorship is having,” says Zampino.

To continually improve the program, mentors have regular conversations with YouThrive staff to provide feedback, discuss program strengths and weaknesses, and talk about youth who might benefit from extra support.

Side by Side is looking to increase to 5 mentors for the 2023-24 school year so that we can eventually run individual as well as group mentor services. **We encourage anyone with a passion for working with youth, someone who is sensitive to the challenges facing young people, and not afraid to have real conversations with them to contact us to learn more about becoming a mentor.**

For now, the focus is in the San Rafael area. No mentorship experience is necessary, but all mentors will have to go through a thorough background check to work with youth. New mentors will receive training to assist youth with topics such as life skills and life choices, family dynamics and family issues, peer relationships, education, and employment. “But it’s also about someone’s lived experience,” says Mendoza. “The focus is always on uplifting the youth.” Bilingual folks are strongly encouraged to apply. Time commitment is 4 to 8 hours a week. For more information, contact Vernon Pope-Banks at vpope@sidebysideyouth.org.



RAÍCES UNIDAS: WEEKLY INTERVENTION AND CLASSROOM MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOPS

Side by Side's **Raíces Unidas** for Latinx immigrant youth and their families is an initiative of Side by Side's YouThrive (formerly) and Community Counseling North Bay programs, providing bilingual groups and workshops for K-12 Latinx youth and parents as well as one-on-one therapeutic services.

In 2021-2022, the initiative provided weekly intervention and classroom mental health workshops for 349 youth, and parent support workshops and community events for 220 parents. At year-end, 86% of youth in classroom workshops reported feeling better informed about mental health resources available to them, and there was a 62% reduction of mental or behavioral health challenges among youth participating in intervention groups. Thirty-one youth were served by the individual counseling services.

Among participating parents, 79% felt better connected to their community and one another. "Parents really want and enjoy the interactive programming," says bilingual Program Manager for Community Counseling North Bay Beatriz Behrens. "They want basic, tangible skills – something concrete that they can take back to their homes." One favorite workshop was about nonverbal cues, where parents learned about communication with their teens, where it can break down, and how to improve communication both with their teens and with the schools. "Because we understand the linguistic and cultural differences, we can communicate in a way that they feel heard, and in a way that they could take feedback back to their kids or back to the schools," says Behrens.

"We always conduct outreach to clients in their own language," says North Bay Regional Director, Denisse Mendoza. "We have four bilingual clinicians, as well as three other Spanish-speaking staff on the team, and work to provide linguistic and culturally appropriate trauma-informed care. Thanks to a grant from Community Foundation Sonoma County, we are going to be able to invest in clinical training for bilingual as well as non-bilingual clinicians and staff. The training will teach our staff how to better bring the client's language into the therapy room to give space for a client to express themselves in their native language."

"We have four bilingual clinicians, as well as three other Spanish-speaking staff on the team,

– **Denisse Mendoza**, North Bay Regional Director

Excitingly, the grant also allowed for training Side by Side's North Bay clinicians in the highly effective EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) therapy modality which has been shown to significantly help with symptoms related to post-traumatic stress disorder and other forms of trauma. Given the high proportion of mental health distress currently being seen in the Latinx community, we are thrilled to be able to offer this new treatment option.

Being able to understand and be understood is paramount. Breaking down barriers to that understanding – and thus provide better outreach and treatment – is what gives Side by Side clients the support they need to heal and thrive.

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EVENTS & PARTNERSHIPS



SIDE BY SIDE OUR SPACE PARTNERSHIP WITH CAFILM PRIDE IS A CELEBRATION OF LGBTQIA+ CREATIVITY IN CINEMA

As we celebrate Pride Month this June, we celebrate LGBTQIA+ people and culture. A time to reflect on the great strides we've made as a community and to take inventory of the challenges we continue to face. As varied and vibrant as the community is, so are their stories put to film.

CAFILM is presenting its first-ever Pride series of films, conversations, including a family-friendly collection of short films at the Smith Rafael Film Center in San Rafael. Check out the series June 9 - 11.

Explore the program + get tickets!
bit.ly/3MxdQZ9

BINGO IS BACK, BABY!

The Glenwood Guild's 26th Annual BINGO Dinner was on Saturday, April 29 and as luck would have it, it was held at the exciting Club Restaurant at McInnis Park in northern San Rafael.

BINGO-goers tried their luck at the game of chance and won fabulous raffle prizes. However, the biggest winner of the night had to be Side by Side as all the night's proceeds went to the Irene M. Hunt School. Thank you, Glenwood Guild!



Gil Keirle, Board president, Dale Satake, and CEO, Dr. Christine Garcia

SIDE BY SIDE WELCOMES TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Side by Side is delighted to welcome two new members, Bernadette Miller and Ina Miller to our Board of Directors.

BERNADETTE MILLER

Bernadette is a long-time resident of San Rafael, and is passionate about helping youth achieve educational, social, and psychosocial success. With her husband, she has raised two boys to young men in San Rafael, working closely with public schools to ensure their unique needs were met. Bernadette served on the Glenwood Elementary School PTA Board and currently volunteers at San Quentin State Prison. Bernadette's professional career includes influential roles at Nissan, Levi's, Gap, Autodesk, and Clorox. As a consumer insights leader, she helped organizations gain a greater understanding of their consumers' needs. Bernadette is an empowering and empathic leader who has developed and mentored many individuals as well as both functional and cross-functional teams.



INA MILLER

For more than 18 years, Ina has led an Executive Search firm, placing operational management, client service, and business development executives across a diversity of growth sectors including Endowment, Non-Profit, Higher Education, Asset Management, Private Equity, Fin-Tech, and Multi-Family Office. Prior to entering Executive Search, Ina held leadership roles with finance and asset management firms. She subsequently moved to senior operating roles with technology firms, including the founding COO/CFO with Pixion, an early provider of web-conferencing solutions. Ina's unique background allows her to integrate a deep financial markets knowledge and network with an emerging markets discipline. Ina has been a passionate fundraiser and Board member for a number of non-profits dedicated to inclusivity, accessible education, and health services. She served on the Board of Planned Parenthood Northern California, the Financial Women's Association, the San Diego Foundation Scholarship Committee, the President of the Board of the Comstock Corporation, the San Francisco Jewish Federation, the Global Grant Committee, and the Business Leadership Council. Ina also serves as a mentor for minority-owned businesses for the Pacific Community Venture organization.



Bernadette and Ina will join the current Board members, Dale Satake, President, Howard Schomer, Vice President, Tim Myers, Treasurer, Ryan Stone, Secretary, Danielle Adams, Deanna Brock, Barbara Carbone, Jennifer Gotti, Vamsey Palagummi, Darwin Pangilinan, and Joy Phoenix. Welcome, and thank you for your commitment.



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