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Bill Wilson Center News

COUNSELING • HOUSING • EDUCATION • ADVOCACY

Stop the Violence!

Building Better Schools—a step towards reducing violent acts and substance abuse in schools.

When two teenage boys walked into Columbine High School and began shooting, the problem of school violence was brought to the public's attention. A shocked nation was left wondering how such a tragedy could have happened. If people knew the truth about violence in schools, they would be even more surprised.

Media coverage of the Columbine tragedy failed to report the truth—that shootings in schools are rare. The reality is that bullying and harassment are what our youth are facing at school. Santa Clara County schools report battery as the number one violent act. This violence is often a result of student's prejudice, inability to express their feelings constructively and a lack of respect and concern for one another.

Santa Clara County students are also abusing drugs and alcohol. According to the Santa Clara County Public Health Department, more than half of middle school students have tried alcohol. About 14% of middle school students have smoked marijuana and 15% have sniffed or inhaled intoxicating substances. These percentages only increase as the students go through high school.

To help combat these figures, and the problem of violence in schools, Bill Wilson Center has adopted a new program - Building Better Schools. The program provides workshops to 6th, 7th and 8th graders at Burnett, Hoover and Steinbeck middle schools. What makes the program unique is the three-pronged, multi-year approach.

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Positive Changes to Bill Wilson Center's Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter

"You are worthless!" "I wish you were never born!" These are the words that Sonia could not stand to hear any longer. Sonia's parents were constantly putting her down and her father had started to hit her. At age 13, Sonia was kicked out of her home and sent to live with her uncle.

Sonia's situation went from bad to worse. Her uncle was constantly high on methamphetamines. He not only neglected her by not feeding her, he also molested her. After living with her uncle for a year, Sonia decided that the streets of San Jose would be a safer place to live.

Sonia managed to survive as a homeless teen for nearly two years.

She befriended another girl her age, Jasmine, that also lived on the streets, and together they struggled to stay alive. One warm night, as Sonia slept under a freeway overpass, her path in life took a positive turn.

Sonia was suddenly woken by a police officer who was responding to a call about a young girl who was loitering. The usual course of action was to take her to Juvenile Hall. Luckily the officer remembered the agency card he had recently been given by Bill Wilson Center, and brought her to our Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter.

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Bill Wilson Center Celebrates 30-year anniversary!

On October 16th Bill Wilson Center celebrated its 30-year anniversary! We were happy to see present and past volunteers, clients, donors, staff, and community friends join the party. Kids lined up to play in the bouncy house and the grown-ups wished they could join in.

The event included a memorial dedication to Bill Wilson, one of the founders of Bill Wilson Center (originally called Webster Center). A bust of Bill Wilson, along with a plaque commemorating the work he did for the community, has been placed in an alcove in the entry to Bill Wilson Center's main building. Vicki Dickerson, who was the first executive director of Bill Wilson Center; Gil Villagran, who remembered Bill Wilson as his boy scout troop leader; Bill's sons, Alex and

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Sparky's Letter



"No treatment, however kind or generous, will serve to make children contented in the Refuge after a certain period has elapsed. A wall is around them. Every moment they are under strict surveillance.... When from careless or purposed neglect, a boy has been suffered to remain longer in the House than the average time in such cases, he grows restless and unhappy—a state of feeling succeeded by that kind of sickness of the heart which comes from "hope deferred."

So wrote Elijah Devoe, former assistant superintendent at the New York House of Refuge in 1848 on the failure of institutional care for youth. 150 years later, we are still failing our children by placing them in institutions such as the Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall or Children's Shelter for too long. We have created a new generation of youth with "hope deferred."

How do we bring back hope? By supporting and strengthening families. By building on the assets and strengths of youth. By offering guidance and choices instead of punishment and absolute control. By listening when we really want to be doing the talking. By allowing kids to make mistakes and learn from them. By using institutional care only as a last resort when youth are a danger to themselves or others.

Bill Wilson Center staff recognizes that a home, with a family that cares, is better than any residential program we can ever develop. That no matter how good our services are, and how capable and caring our staff is, we are no substitute for a good home. So, our goal is to help families create good homes when problems and stress tear at the seams. Our goal is to reunite kids with their families and help keep them there.

It is not always an easy road. Kids come to us broken, resentful, and angry, and see us as just another institution with a wall around them. Our job is to help them see beyond the wall to a home. Whether that home is the one they came from or a new foster home, we want them out of here also. Our Bill Wilson House is not a replacement for a home. It is a temporary place where kids can learn from each other and counselors about making changes in their lives that can make staying home easier. It is a place where parents also learn what changes they need to make to improve their families.

We believe that every child should be raised in a home, not in an institution. That is why we provide an array of counseling and prevention services aimed at keeping kids safe and families intact. When families breakdown or are no longer safe for children, then we support finding alternative extended families or foster homes. We will continue to be active in our community to reform the juvenile justice system so that kids are not locked up needlessly or for too long of time where they lose hope. We will also support efforts to change the County Children's Shelter for abused and neglected children so that it is only a 24-hour assessment center and not a long-term placement. It is time for Silicon Valley to catch up with enlightened communities across the nation and put its children back into the community and the homes where they can regain hope and start building a future.

How can you help? Join us by speaking out against the institutionalization of kids. Join us by mentoring a youth who has never had a positive role model in his/her life. Join us by becoming a foster parent for a teenager.

Sparky Harlan

Yan Can Throw a Party! And raise money for Bill Wilson Center

The Grand Opening of celebrity chef Martin Yan's new restaurant, **Yan Can Fresh Asian Cooking** in the new Rivermark shopping center in Santa Clara, was a huge success!



The party included a buffet reception featuring Martin's Pan-Asian favorites. Martin Yan was there to sign his award-winning cookbook, pose for photos, and meet his fans. In his friendly way, Martin managed to find a minute to speak with almost everyone in attendance. A special thank you to Martin Yan for his generous support of Bill Wilson Center—and to the 200 attendees who helped us sample all the terrific food!

Welcome Sharon!



Bill Wilson Center is pleased to announce the addition of a new member of the Board of Directors, Sharon Bray.

Ms. Sharon Bray, Regional Managing Principal of the Silicon Valley region of

Right Management Consultants brings with her over 25 years of experience in educational development, management training, and organizational and career management consulting. She has held leadership positions in both private and non-profit sectors.

"I was touched very deeply by my experience volunteering at Bill Wilson Center's Quetzal House," said Ms. Bray. "I jumped at the opportunity to join the Board and I am eager to contribute to the ongoing growth and development of the agency, and to act as a spokesperson and advocate for Bill Wilson Center in the community."

"The addition of Sharon is a significant step towards strengthening our Board of Directors," said Sparky Harlan, Executive Director for Bill Wilson Center. "Sharon's professional experience and personal dedication to Bill Wilson Center are tremendous assets."

After several years working as a teacher and school psychologist, Dr. Bray began her work in career and management development. An active community member, she has served on several Boards of Directors. A graduate of San Jose State and Mt. St. Vincent universities, Dr. Bray holds a Doctorate in Applied Psychology from the University of Toronto.

Ms. Bray is the mother of two daughters, ages 31 and 32, and currently lives with her husband in Menlo Park. In her spare time, Ms. Bray enjoys writing fiction and memoir and leads a creative writing workshop for breast cancer survivors. Ms. Bray is currently working on a book about the healing power of writing, which is due to be published in 2004.



Sparky Harlan, Bill Wilson Center Executive Director, Receives Nonprofit Leadership Award

Bill Wilson Center's Executive Director, Sparky Harlan, was named one of four honorary finalists for the 3rd Annual Center for Excellence in Nonprofits (CEN), Excellence in Nonprofit Leadership Award. The award was created to recognize and reward exemplary non-profit leaders in Silicon Valley who have made an extraordinary positive impact on the quality of life in their communities.

During Sparky Harlan's 20-year tenure with Bill Wilson Center, she has expanded the agency's reach dramatically by being responsive to the needs of the community. Bill Wilson Center has a reputation for expertise in working with high-risk youth, and Sparky has become a recognized and well-respected advocate in this regard.

Congratulations to Sparky for her recognition as a valuable leader in the community and as an individual dedicated to the improvement of the lives of at-risk youth.

Century 21 Champion Golf Tournament



A special thank you goes to Century 21 Champion Real Estate for their second successful golf tournament for the benefit of Bill Wilson Center. This year they raised \$4,000 in support of our services for youth and families!

Margot Hessling, Century 21 Champion Owner, and Cyndi Garbers, Sales Associate, were the organizers of the tournament that was held in September at Cinnabar Hills Golf Course. Funds were raised through putting contests, raffles, and a terrific auction.

Call Margo Hessling at Century 21 Champion (408-445-4124) to get on the mailing list for next year's tournament—or to chat about your real estate needs!

Lorenzo Canlas, a Volunteer's Story

As a volunteer for Bill Wilson Center's Independent Living Skills Program, I have had the opportunity to develop strong bonds with the youth in the program. The first real connection I made was when I gave two youth a ride home from a financial aid workshop at a local community college. We started talking about books. I was surprised how interested they were in reading and writing. One of the youth mentioned his interest in a performance poet named Saul Williams, so we decided to stop by a bookstore to see what kind of poetry selection they had. We ended up picking up a couple books, which gave me the opportunity at subsequent workshops to discuss the youth's reactions to the writing.

Another experience I enjoyed as a volunteer was playing a board game called the Cashflow Game. The game is intended to teach youth about budgeting and finance. Each player maintains a budget listing the sources of income, expenses, assets and liabilities. Several youth picked up the game very quickly and helped the other youth manage their finances. I was happy that they learned something while enjoying the experience.

What I enjoy most about Bill Wilson Center's Volunteer Program is that volunteers have the opportunity to have an impact on the organization. We are encouraged to lend our ideas and unique talents and take a leadership role. For example, I had some ideas about using a board game to teach youth about budgeting and finance, and I was encouraged to write the board game manufacturer to obtain some teaching

materials to the program. I was also given the responsibility to manage a relationship with several boys' group homes. Working with these homes has given me better insight into the foster care system. Before I started volunteering at Bill Wilson Center, I was anxious that I might not be able to relate to the troubled youth in the program because I grew up in a stable home. The advice of Bill Wilson Center's staff helped me overcome my fears. They assured me that what was most important was that I was willing to get to know the youth and lend consistency to their lives. It took some time to develop a relationship with the youth, but in the end it has been a meaningful and rewarding experience.

— Lorenzo Canlas



Bill Wilson Center Celebrates!

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Ken and some of their family members; and Sparky Harlan all joined together to honor Bill.

Following the dedication, the winner of the Roberto Navarro award, David White, was announced. David was given a framed print and a \$500 scholarship that he plans to spend on his education. The next newsletter will include more about David's story.

Patricia Mahan, Mayor of Santa Clara, presented a plaque honoring Bill Wilson Center's 30-years of service to the community. Recognition from the County Board of Supervisors, and the State Senate were also displayed.

Join us again for our 35th!

Wilson family joins Sparky Harlan (center) and Gil Villagran (far right) and Vicki Dickerson (second from the right) at memorial dedication to Bill Wilson, one of the founders of Bill Wilson Center.



Two Teens Elected to Bill Wilson Center Board of Directors

Bill Wilson Center places a tremendous amount of importance on youth development. The newest addition to Bill Wilson Center's Board of directors demonstrates this commitment.

Tiyasha De Pinto, age 18, and Ian Carter, age 16, are Bill Wilson Center's newest board members. Together, they will represent a youth perspective that will enhance the board's decision-making.



"I am looking forward to contributing my voice and past experiences to guide the decisions of the board," said Tiyasha De Pinto. "I think it is so great that Bill Wilson Center values a youth's opinion as much as an adult's."

According to Ian Carter, "I think that an organization that serves a large amount of youth should have youth deeply involved. I hope that a youth perspective will help the Board, and Bill Wilson Center, identify youth needs and wants."

"The addition of youth members to our Board is a symbol of Bill Wilson Center's commitment to youth development and meeting the needs of the youth we serve," said Sparky Harlan, Executive Director for Bill Wilson Center.

Tiyasha is a freshman at De Anza College and plans to get her Masters and PhD in Psychology and eventually counsel others. Ian is a sophomore at Homestead High School and is involved in several organizations including the Santa Clara County Youth Task Force, Safe Place, and the California Student Coalition.

Both Ian and Tiyasha are members of Bill Wilson Center's Peer Education Youth Planning Committee, which is comprised of youth who plan program curriculum and structure for Bill Wilson Center's Peer Education Program.

"In past years, a team of staff members planned the Peer Education Training, rather than involving youth," explains Michelle Jurjavic, Peer Education coordinator. "Last year five youth ventured into uncharted territory by planning the logistics of the training, recruiting youth from area high schools and developing a vision for future trainings."

When Bill Wilson Center was looking for youth to serve on its Board of Directors, Ian and Tiyasha were perfect candidates. Their demonstrated leadership coupled with their commitment to the community more than guarantees their success as board members.



One Couple's Bird Raises Money for Bill Wilson Center

named Faraday. No, he is not a wild parrot, but the beloved pet of Doug Lynner and Collette McNeil.

Take a walk through downtown Los Gatos on any given day and chances are you will catch a glimpse of a famous local attraction—a beautiful talking parrot

Faraday requires exercise and sunlight, so Doug and Collette take him on daily walks through downtown Los Gatos. When people see Faraday the reaction is overwhelming.

"People will pull over to the side of the road and jump out so their kids can see him," says Doug Lynner. "They usually have a lot of questions. Some even ask if they can take pictures." Which is why Doug and Collette created a website about Faraday:

http://www.cafeshops.com/a_birds_story. The website provides answers to frequently asked questions, and also sells Faraday products, which include t-shirts,

kids clothes, lunch boxes, stickers and other fun items. The merchandise includes a picture of Faraday, with one of his favorite words, such as "Hello," or "Tickle."

Doug and Collette are generously donating 33% of proceeds from Faraday merchandise sales to Bill Wilson Center!

"With cutbacks happening across the board, we want to support an organization that is benefiting local youth," says Doug. "Bill Wilson Center is a worthy and appropriate cause for what Faraday represents."

Positive Changes.... ..continued from page 1

Bill Wilson Center's Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter has recently set a goal to increase police awareness about the services that Bill Wilson Center offers. Instead of bringing a youth who has committed a minor infraction to juvenile hall, police are encouraged to bring them to Bill Wilson Center. If police don't know where to bring a youth, they are told to bring them to Bill Wilson Center where trained professionals can determine the best placements for these youth.

"In order to educate police about available services, a Bill Wilson Center representative attends unit meetings," explained Debbie Pell, Director of Residential Service. "Our representative talks about the agency's programs and passes out an agency card containing Bill Wilson Center's address and phone number where someone is available to respond 24-hours a day."

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Stop the Violence...continued from page 1

Beginning in 6th grade, students start the program by focusing on building skills that will help them avoid violent situations. By developing confidence in themselves, students are more equipped to deal with conflict. Funded by the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, students attend workshops twice a week that encourage individual development through discussions, games and role-plays. They work on issues such as identifying conflicts, problem solving, and anger management.

"One of our role-plays has students act out the difference between assertive and aggressive behavior," says Trimaine Eley, Health Educator. "We teach them to use the appropriate behavior when facing a variety of situations."

In 7th grade, the focus shifts to drug and alcohol prevention. The workshops now focus on developing refusal skills and personal self-management skills. Funded by the Santa Clara County Department of Alcohol and Drug Services, the program incorporates the youths' parents, resulting in an increased success rate. Parents participate in the project with their children through fun homework assignments. One assignment, for example, instructs the student to make a family tree and talk about each relative's attitude toward alcohol. This gives parents the opportunity to talk about alcohol with their children.

At the end of each semester, the 7th grade students participate in a school project. The project reinforces the importance of maintaining a drug-free school and teaches the value of community involvement. By developing strong social skills, leadership skills, and a sense of community students will have the tools to resist using drugs and not give in to negative peer pressure.

"As a society we are forcing our kids to grow up fast," says Trimaine. "It is important that we equip our youth with skills to deal with the struggles they face. Our program provides answers to youth's questions, that even parents and teachers have a difficult time addressing."

The 8th grade Violence Prevention Program, funded by the Santa Clara County Department of Public Health, reinforces skills that were developed in the 6th grade program. The workshops continue to develop violence prevention skills such as effective communication, understanding different perspectives, and collaborative problem solving. Through discussion, games, role-plays, and other activities, students develop vital violence prevention skills.

"For our session on emotions, students are asked to bring in a song that reflects a particular emotion," explains Trimaine. "Copies of the lyrics are passed out to the class, so that the students can discuss their meaning."

Empowering youth is the heart of the Building Better Schools program. Skill development is vital for these 11- to 14-year-old students who are facing some tough issues. The goal is that the over 2,000 youth who go through the program will be better equipped to deal with the pressures they face on a daily basis and that transition into high school will be easier.

Building Better Schools is a step towards reducing violent acts and substance abuse in San Jose schools. Although an innovative program, the concept is long-standing. Help kids develop self-esteem and show them how to handle conflict, and they will succeed.



Positive Changes....
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Re-defining the role of a primary Residential Counselor is another new change to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter. Each Residential Counselor is responsible for knowing everything about the youth assigned to them. They build a strong relationship base and ensure that the youth are reaching their personal goals. The Residential Counselor follows up with a youth's family and monitors their social skills while the youth is living at the shelter.

"Our Residential Counselors play key roles in the lives of our youth here," says Debbie Pell. "They emphasize building on a youth's strengths, and through that process develop solid, trusting relationships. Their efforts are what make this program so successful."

Sonia's Case Manger, connected her with health services where she was given a complete physical. Next, Sonia was enrolled in school to make up for the two years of schooling she missed while living on the streets. "Because reuniting Sonia with her family was not possible, I worked with the legal system so that she was declared a legal ward of the court," explained her case manager, Mauro Garcia. "That declaration enabled me to get her placed in a foster care home."

Sonia now lives with her new foster family and is working on getting her high school diploma. She is interested in computers and wants to attend college to study computer science. Sonia still comes to Bill Wilson Center for after-care services and maintains her relationship with Mauro. She also calls Bill Wilson Center to talk to Jasmine, her friend she met on the streets. Jasmine is now at Bill Wilson Center's Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter and working towards finding a permanent residence.

- Wish List - We need your help!

If you'd like to donate any item on this list, please give Jeanne-Ann Pine a call at 408-850-6155. Items should be new or nearly new. Please call first, as sometimes we just don't have room to accept donations!

Books, tickets to events, computers (Pentium IV or higher), printers, board games, videos, games (Playstation, Nintendo and X-Box), art supplies, playing cards, ping-pong paddles & balls, basketballs, handballs, stereo system with CD player, and a karaoke machine.

Toiletries (deodorant, soap, shampoo, conditioner, hand cream, hair gel, toothbrushes, toothpaste, mouthwash, shaving cream, razors, nail clippers), sewing kits, water bottles, backpacks, tents, blankets, sleeping bags, tarps, items to cook with, tools (especially bike repair kits), watches, flashlights, batteries, nonperishable food, bus/light rail passes, certificates for haircuts, supermarket gift certificates, and fast food gift certificates—just about any gift certificate can be used in some way. Also twin size comforters and sheet sets, bath towels, washcloths, and prepared meals to be served at the Drop-In Center.

Shoes, T-shirts, sweatshirts, sweaters, jeans, waterproof jackets, warm jackets, umbrellas, gloves, baseball caps, wool beanies, thermal underwear, tights, stockings, shoelaces, and ponchos. Men's pants and button down shirts, and women's skirts and blouses for job interviews. Youth also need new underwear and new socks. (Please keep in mind that clothing is for teens and young adults.)

For the Infants and Toddlers of Teen Parents: Disposable diapers, toys, baby equipment (high chairs, playpens, car seats), crib sheets, blankets, towels.

For Youth Who Are Moving into Housing: Tables, chairs, kitchen equipment (dishes, pots and pans, glasses, utensils), linens, lamps, beds.

Volunteer Information

If you are interested in contributing your time, partner with Bill Wilson Center. The following are examples of volunteer opportunities:

Independent Living Skills Program Facilitator/Mentor:

Work with foster youth to develop independent living skills to prepare youth for when they age out of the system.

Street Youth Advocate: Work in our Drop-In Center for street youth by helping out with food preparation, linking youth with available resources and building positive bonds. Weekday shifts and Saturday afternoons needed.

***Administrative Support:** Morning hours. Must be familiar with Microsoft Word, Access and/or Excel.

Mentors for THP: Work with older youth as a mentor in our Transitional Housing Program.

** These opportunities require only the orientation and not the training.*

How do I become a Bill Wilson Center Volunteer?

1. Call our Volunteer Coordinator at 408-850-6156 to find out the date of the next volunteer orientation.
2. Attend volunteer orientation.
3. Complete a volunteer application, including finger print check
4. Participate in volunteer training.
5. Select a volunteer assignment and join us.



Bill Wilson Center

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