



www.billwilsoncenter.org

Summer 2004

# Bill Wilson Center News

COUNSELING • HOUSING • EDUCATION • ADVOCACY

## Sparky's Letter



It would be an understatement to say that we are experiencing many changes at Bill Wilson Center. Our new mantra is "Change is Good."

Contact Cares, a helpline that provides listening, crisis intervention, and information and referral, has merged with Bill Wilson Center. This merger has been in process for several months and became official as of July 1. We anticipate a brief transition period while we integrate the services into Bill Wilson Center. Volunteers answer the phone lines—and we need more volunteers. We have a training scheduled for August, call us at 408-850-6138 for more information or check our website.

The 24/7 Line will also join Bill Wilson Center as part of the Contact Cares program. This program has been a part of the Lucile Salter Packard Children's Hospital with Contact volunteers answering this line dedicated to the needs of youth. With changes at the hospital and Contact, the entire program will now become a part of Bill Wilson Center.

We are also in negotiations to bring The Centre for Living with Dying into

Bill Wilson Center. If all goes as planned, that organization will be part of BWC by August. Our services provided by our Counseling Center and The Centre services will complement each other—providing people experiencing grief and loss a total continuum of support and caring.

We are very pleased to have these services be a part of the support provided to the community by Bill Wilson Center. These agencies and their programs have filled a community need for many years and we are proud to be able to help them continue their work as programs of Bill Wilson Center.

There is no question that smaller agencies are finding it harder to maintain their services as funding has become more limited. Many agencies are exploring mergers, consolidating services—or just closing their doors. These mergers have certainly complicated things for us here at Bill Wilson Center. While we anticipate a brief period of controlled chaos, we know that the inclusion of the services provided by Contact and The Centre will enhance our ability to support the community.

Repeat after me: **Change is good.**

*Sparky Harlan*

## Bill Wilson Center Receives Community Youth Development Award

Bill Wilson Center was the proud recipient of the Western States Youth Services Network, 2004 Community Youth Development Award. The agency was acknowledged for involving youth in the leadership and development of its programs.

Selene Rojas, a graduate of Bill Wilson Center's youth-run Peer Education Training Program accepted the award at a formal dinner in Sacramento.

"The dinner was so elegant and it was fun to dress up," said Selene. "The person who presented the award said such great things about the work Bill Wilson Center does with youth. I was also able to talk about the Peer Education Training Program which was cool."

Formed by some of the first agencies funded by the federal government to provide services to runaway youth, the Western States Youth Services network is a membership organization with over 70 members in Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada and the Outer Pacific Territories, including youth service providers, coalitions and networks of agencies at the state and local level, individual adults and young people.

Bill Wilson Center is dedicated to youth development. The participation of youth helps us to develop, implement, evaluate, and continually refine our services in a way that ensures the continued relevance and successful support to help youth make changes in their lives. After all, we can't force someone to change—we can only offer the opportunity, the resources, and the support.

# School Counselors

## Play Vital Role in our Youth's Success

Tanya was doing poorly in school. Her grades were poor and she never participated in class. Tanya tested well on her aptitude tests, so her school counselor knew there must be something else. Tanya was referred to a Bill Wilson Center counselor who is on campus through the School Outreach Counseling Program.

"At first she was scared to speak with me," said Tanya's counselor. "But as she began to trust me and talk about her feelings, it became clear she was suffering from depression."

It turned out that Tanya had lost both her parents, and now moved every few weeks to live with different family members. She was not in a supportive environment, had low self-esteem, a fear of adults, and poor social skills. After working with her counselor, Tanya slowly began to open up as she learned to trust adults. She was able to vent her frustrations and talk about her feelings in a supportive and caring environment.

When a child is dealing with personal issues, their ability to perform academically is jeopardized. Too often a school's counseling program is either ill equipped or burdened with too many cases to be able to give a student the attention they need. Bill Wilson Center's School Outreach Counseling Program supports both schools and their students by providing comprehensive counseling services provided by trained counselors.

Bill Wilson Center counselors are located at the middle and high schools in Santa Clara Unified School District. Counselors work with students in individual counseling sessions that may last for one session or continue depending on the student's situation. When appropriate, students' family members are also referred for family counseling services.

The School Outreach Counseling Program also offers counseling services specifically targeted to the Vietnamese community. The focus is on reducing the incidence of child abuse by providing intervention and treatment to Vietnamese youth and their families.

"Physical discipline is a traditional Vietnamese value," states Michelle Nguyen, counselor for the School Outreach Counseling Program. "I teach the students that physical abuse is not okay and what they should do if they are experiencing violence at home."

Ms. Nguyen provides support to middle and high school Vietnamese students by providing both individual counseling as well as 12-week group sessions. In the group sessions Ms. Nguyen talks with her students about a variety of issues including gang prevention, sexual education, substance abuse and peer pressure.

"I feel that Vietnamese students benefit from the groups, not just from

the lessons they learn, but from the connections they make," says Ms. Nguyen. "Some of my students have just arrived from Vietnam and are in a new school and new culture. They are not sure where they belong. I encourage the students who are naturalized to connect with these new students so they know they have a support network."

The School Outreach Counseling Program provides much needed support to schools and their students, especially in these uncertain economic times. According to the California Association of School Counselors, California's school counseling programs are being hit hard by the state budget shortfall. California's ratio of students per counselor is already ranked last in the nation.

After working with her counselor during the school year, Tanya's performance slowly began to improve. Her grades began to reflect her true abilities and she was more vocal in class. She made more friends at school which increased her support network and her confidence.

"Although Tanya's family situation is still unstable, she has a strong support system at school to carry her through," says Tanya's counselor. "She is no longer depressed and has blossomed into a strong student and a confident teenager."



## David White

### Roberto Navarro Community Service Award Winner

David Navarro Award winner David White, left, with nominator Debbie Pell, right.

**David White** is the winner of this year's Roberto Navarro award. David was presented with a framed print and a \$500 scholarship that he plans to spend on his education.

Debbie Pell, Director of Residential Services at Bill Wilson Center, nominated David: "David White is an exceptional young man, who despite a childhood characterized with loss, trauma and adversity, has risen to a level of success that few youth in his situation can accomplish.

"David was a resident of the Bill Wilson House on three occasions. He was in need of housing and emergency shelter from an intolerable home situation. David was behind in school credits and had little support. During David's placement at Bill Wilson Center, David became a leader and positive role model in the House. He confronted many of his issues and became stronger in his resolve to prevail over a situation that he could change.

"David attended Bill Wilson Center's Peer Education Training Program and used his skills with the new residents that came into the House. He was always kind, considerate and compassionate towards others. David would observe a youth in crisis and would intervene with them to diffuse their anger and allow them to express whatever frustration or emotion they were feeling. David has an exceptional way about him that the other youth would respond to and then he would help them come to some resolution. David was especially good with the younger residents of the house and took on the role of their "big brother."

"In the community, David was noted for a friendship he formed with a young man his own age who had social deficits. The mother of this other child was very grateful for David's attention to her son as her son had few friends and lacked the social skills to develop healthy relationships.

"David has set goals for himself, which he has successfully met. He now lives with a foster family and has worked hard this past year to catch up on his high school credits. David attended 12 hours of school a day including college courses and achieved over a 3.0 grade point average. He intends to go to college. David has been an active participant in the Bill Wilson Center Independent Living Program and is transferring the skills he has learned to his everyday life."

"David is a young man who will continue to give back to others."

*In 1989, Roberto Navarro, Associate Director of Bill Wilson Center, died suddenly at the age of 36 years old. He advocated on behalf of youth and families, especially those most in need, and left behind a legacy of improved services for homeless youth. To honor his work, Bill Wilson Center created the Roberto Navarro Community Service Award. This award is given each year to a youth who best exemplifies the spirit and dedication of Roberto Navarro by demonstrating a commitment to improving people's lives in Santa Clara County.*

## New Year's Day Fire at Our Drop-In Center

On New Year's Day a fire destroyed Bill Wilson Center's Drop-In Center for homeless youth. The Drop-In Center was an oasis in the streets of downtown San Jose. Housed in a Victorian house, the Center served as a place for homeless youth to hang out, get hot meals, and access vital services aimed at getting these youth off the streets for good.

The fire was discovered by a homeless youth who was drawn by the smoke coming from the building. "I thought the center was having a barbecue," explained the young man. "As I got closer to the building I could see it was on fire."

As he tried to put the fire out with a garden hose, a neighbor who had also noticed the flames ran to the nearest fire station to notify the fire department. Despite these efforts, the blaze gutted the lower floor of the building, where the Drop-In Center was located.

The offices for Drop-In Center staff and for our Transitional Housing Program, as well as meeting and counseling rooms, were located on the two upper floors and were heavily damaged by smoke. Also located on the second floor were lockers used by the youth to store their belongings, clothing, toiletries, and the computer center for the youth.

"The day after the fire, I was outside of the burned-out building and kids kept coming by because they'd heard about the fire and wanted to see—to really know," said Judy Whittier, Director of Community Resources. "The reaction was universal—disbelief and disappointment. They have come to consider the Drop-In Center as their home—most have no other. They had been let down again."

"Fortunately the Drop-In Center was closed at the time, so nobody was hurt," said Sparky Harlan, Bill Wilson Center's Executive Director. "The hardest part was having to turn youth away who came looking for a meal. I promised them we would be serving meals on Monday."



With the help of the community, the Drop-In Center was open and serving hot meals in a nearby building on Monday.

The youth who come to the Drop-In Center are homeless, and have no families that they can turn to—their families are dysfunctional, many of their parents have substance abuse problems and are, at best, negligent. They have amazing survival skills and are incredibly resilient. At Bill Wilson's Drop-In Center these youth can get immediate help, and receive more intense services to help them get off the streets where they are likely to be victimized.

"Our youth were sad, shocked and angry," said Christine McNulty, Drop-In Center Coordinator. "They were afraid that we would not reopen." And Christine was afraid that she would lose some kids. These youth trust that the Drop-In Center will be there for them. "The first two weeks after the fire were bumpy," said Christine. "We did everything in our power to get back up and running. We got the word out that the Drop-In Center was open for business. Fortunately, the Drop-In Center was filled with our usual group of youth in a matter of days." The youth who visit the Drop-In Center have developed a deeper trust, knowing that even something like a fire will not stop Bill Wilson Center from being there to support them.

## With a Little Help from Our Friends

The saying goes, "when one door closes, another opens." As Bill Wilson Center staff struggled with questions about how to reopen the Drop-In Center as soon as possible after the fire, donations began pouring in from the community.



"I read an article about the fire in the San Jose Mercury News the day after the fire," said Carol Sowolla, owner of Napkin Ring Catering Company. Carol was the first person to contact Bill Wilson Center offering to feed the nearly 50 homeless youth who visit the Center daily.

"I just had to help. I feed large groups of people everyday. Feeding a group of hungry kids is a piece of cake." The next day, Carol delivered hot Italian food with fresh bread donated by Saratoga Village Bakery. The youth who were there that day said it was one of the best meals they ever had.

Not only did support come in from individual members of the community, but other nonprofit organizations and foundations also stepped forward to help.



The Lucile Salter Packard Children's Hospital's Teen Health Van is available for homeless youth in downtown San Jose twice a month, and provides youth primary medical services including gynecological care, immunizations, HIV and STD testing, and basic medication. Immediately after the

fire, Candace Roney, Executive Director of Community Services, called with an offer of financial help. "We wanted to help an organization that is united with us in serving children and teens. Bill Wilson Center is one of our community partners," said Ms. Roney.

webMethods Foundation was another source of support to Bill Wilson Center. The Foundation invests in highly innovative community based organizations and nonprofit entrepreneurs that work to strengthen communities, encourage families, and motivate individuals to achieve their personal best.

"We had given a grant in December, but following the fire, made an additional donation to help the Drop-in Center recover from the fire. We also provided meals for a week," said Suzanne Alberga from webMethods Foundation. "A few months before the fire we did a site visit as a team and were impressed by the work being done by the center. The visit opened our eyes to the issues that homeless youth deal with."

After the fire, Bill Wilson Center received over 200 calls from the community offering their support. Without this support Bill Wilson Center would not have been able to reopen as quickly. Our thanks to everyone in the community who reached out to help.

## We need your help!

### How You Can Help

#### Donations

Donations will help us with all that we need. For your convenience a donation envelope is included in the newsletter. You may also donate by credit card by calling (408) 243-0222. Donations may also be submitted online at [www.billwilsoncenter.org/donors](http://www.billwilsoncenter.org/donors)

#### Do You Have Items to Donate?

Due to the generosity of the community, we have received a tremendous amount of donations. **Please review our Wish List to see what we still need.**

### - Wish List -

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, board games, videos, games (Playstation, Nintendo and X-Box), art supplies, playing cards, ping-pong paddles and 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, watches, flashlights, batteries, nonperishable food, bus 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.

#### 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.

# Century 21 Champion's Annual Golf Tournament and Auction



Join Century 21 Champion at their annual golf tournament held at Cinnabar Hills Golf Course, one of the most beautiful courses in the Bay Area. The tournament will take place on October 5th.

During the awards dinner an auction will be held with all proceeds going to support Bill Wilson Center programs. The tournament is an exciting opportunity you do not want to miss. If you are interested in participating or need more information please contact Century 21 Champion at (408) 445-4332.

Century 21 Champion and Bill Wilson Center are seeking donations for the auction.

If you have an item to donate please call (408) 445-4432.



## SHOP TO SUPPORT BILL WILSON CENTER!

Come SHOP and support Bill Wilson Center Friday, September 24th or Saturday September 25th at Macy's Valley Fair or Macy's Union Square.

Purchase a \$10 ticket NOW from Bill Wilson Center and receive 10–20% off all regular priced, sale, and clearance merchandise all day throughout the store as well as samplings from event sponsors, the chance to win a \$1,000 shopping spree and much more! Bill Wilson Center receives 100% of the proceeds!

**Get tickets now!** Here's how:

Visit Bill Wilson Center and purchase tickets from the front desk. Bill Wilson Center is located at 3490 The Alameda, Santa Clara, 95050.

Or, send a check to Bill Wilson Center. Please indicate the number of tickets and an address to mail the tickets to. Send checks to: Bill Wilson Center, Attn: Macy's Passport, 3490 The Alameda, Santa Clara, CA 95050.

Or, contact Amy Purdum at (408) 850-6156 or email [apurdum@bwcmail.org](mailto:apurdum@bwcmail.org) to make special arrangements for ticket transactions, or charge your purchase by phone!



## Bill Wilson Center Announces New Addition to Board of Directors

Bill Wilson Center is pleased to announce the addition of a new member to the Board of Directors, Bonnie George. Bonnie is an Executive Administrator at Synopsys. Bonnie's past work life includes running a skateboard shop.

Bonnie has been on the Synopsys Corporate Giving Committee and the Emergency Response Team for the past nine years. She volunteers at Sciencepalooza! and the Synopsys Championship science fairs. She is secretary to the board of the Synopsys Outreach Foundation and volunteers for other organizations through Synopsys, such as R.A.F.T., Junior Achievement, and the Mentor Program at Slater school in Mountain View. In 2001 she was honored with Synopsys' first Community Service Award. Bonnie is a board member of CONTACT Cares, a crisis line agency. Bonnie is also a Child Advocate.

"Bonnie brings years of community service to the table," states Sparky Harlan, Executive Director for Bill Wilson Center. "She will be a valuable asset to our board."

## Peer Education Training Program Receives Project Cornerstone Award



"I think it is so cool that I will be able to help people at my school," said a recent graduate of Bill Wilson Center's Peer Education Training. "I also feel like I learned a lot of things that have helped me become a better person."

It is this outcome that Bill Wilson Center's Peer Education Training Program strives for, and also the reason why the program was recently honored with the Community Values Youth Award from Project Cornerstone.

Project Cornerstone is a countywide collaborative that promotes the importance of 41 "developmental assets." Adapted from the 40 developmental assets identified by the Search Institute of Minneapolis, these 41 developmental assets have been proven to have a connection with healthy youth development. According to Project Cornerstone, "...there is a direct relationship between increasing the number of assets and decreasing the incidence of high risk behaviors such as violence and drug and alcohol abuse."

The Peer Education Training Program takes place two times a year. High school age youth who attend mainstream public schools, alternative schools, private schools, or are referred by probation or social services agencies, spend five Saturdays receiving training.

Each Saturday is filled with workshops that address a variety of subjects including cultural diversity, active listening, self-esteem, sexuality issues, suicide prevention, eating disorders, conflict resolution, and dealing with grief and loss. The workshops include group exercises, discussion, presentations, team-building games, and role-plays. Graduates of the program are invited back to participate in the Peer Education Planning Committee, where members plan the logistics, develop the curriculum and teach many of the workshops.

Overall, the Peer Education Training Program helps youth become healthy, caring and responsible adults and empowers them to become leaders among their peers and their community. We are honored to be recognized by Project Cornerstone as an agency that is committed to ensuring that youth have the assets they need to become healthy and self-sufficient adults.

If you or someone you know is interested in participating in the Peer Education Training Program, please go to our website at [www.billwilsoncenter.org](http://www.billwilsoncenter.org) and click on Peer Education Training.

## After the Fire



Before the embers had even cooled, the first question for Bill Wilson Center staff was: "How soon can we reopen?" The Drop-In Center's connection with youth needed to be maintained. Our teens needed to be reassured that the Drop-In Center is still here for them—only the building is gone.

"We started serving meals on the Monday following the fire, and we have been open during our regular hours ever since," explained Christine McNulty, Coordinator for the Drop-In Center.

Due to an increase in the number of homeless youth using the Drop-In Center, a plan had already been underway to move the Center to a larger building nearby. The larger building now serves as the Drop-In

Center and continues to provide meals and services to an average of 50 youth each day.

"We had planned to move into the new building after we completed some renovations," explains Ken Koach, Director of Administration. "After the fire, we accelerated our pace so that we could move as soon as possible."

The Drop-In Center began using the half-renovated lower floor immediately, and six weeks later, the renovation of the whole building was complete. Space for the Drop-In Center staff and Bill Wilson Center's Transitional Housing Program are on the upper floors. The entire building was refurbished with new carpet and fresh paint, and

then filled with office furniture generously donated by Cadence Design Systems.

A large painted mural had been a feature of the old Drop-In Center, and the staff has plans to work with the youth to create a new mural. "The new building is gorgeous and much larger," said Christine. "We are eager to make the place our own. The old Drop-In Center was filled with personal touches that youth and staff added over the years. Everything was destroyed in the fire, so we are starting over."

"We are excited about the new changes," said Christine. "However, our focus is on getting settled and providing the best services we can. We want our clients to know that we will always be here for them."

# Volunteer Information

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

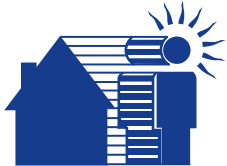
**Contact Cares Volunteer:** Contact Cares volunteers are needed to staff 24-hour crisis lines. Telephones are staffed 24-hours by trained volunteers prepared to offer support in times of crisis, stability in times of confusion, empathy in times of pain, and referrals in time of need.

**Safe Place Community Outreach Coach:** Provide coaching, mentoring and encouragement for a youth-led service and leadership program that informs children and youth about Project Safe Place.

Bill Wilson Center is actively recruiting volunteers. New volunteer training dates have been posted on our website. For more information please go to [www.billwilsoncenter.org](http://www.billwilsoncenter.org) and click on our volunteer page.

## How do I become a Bill Wilson Center Volunteer?

1. Call our Volunteer Coordinator at 408-850-6138 to find out the date of the next volunteer orientation.
2. Attend volunteer orientation.
3. Complete a volunteer application, including finger print check and a personal interview
4. Participate in volunteer training.
5. Select a volunteer assignment and join us.



### Bill Wilson Center

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**Website:** [www.billwilsoncenter.org](http://www.billwilsoncenter.org)  
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