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Caminar’s LGBTQ Programs in Santa Clara County Report
Increased Demand and Usage Over Last 11 Months

Pride Month Report to the Community Shows Youth and Adult Programs Have Grown in Response to LGBTQ Community Needs and Political Climate

San Jose, CA - In its eighth year, the LGBTQ Youth Space has seen a 17 percent year-over-year increase in visits to the drop-in center. Founded in 2009, the Youth Space offers free peer support groups, professional counseling, creative expression programming, leadership development opportunities and assistance understanding rights and accessing local services, by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ) youth and young adults in Santa Clara County. In addition, the LGBTQ Wellness program is projecting a 10 percent increase in program usage by the end of June. Both programs are operated by Family & Children Services of Silicon Valley, a division of the nonprofit organization Caminar.

“This has been a very challenging year for LGBTQ communities, prompting more youth and adults to reach out for culturally relevant support,” says Cassie Blume, director of LGBTQ programs at Family & Children Services of Silicon Valley. “At our LGBTQ Youth Space and LGBTQ Wellness programs, we have worked to provide opportunities for people who are feeling vulnerable to regain their feelings of power. After the election, for example, we received many calls and visits from people fearing a rise in intolerance and policies that intend to erase and persecute our communities. We continue to respond and do our best to provide information, resources and advocacy alongside the communities we serve and represent.”

The LGBTQ Youth Space serves youth and young adults from 13 to 25 years old living throughout the county. From July 1, 2016, through May 31, 2017, the program’s drop-in center on South First Street in San Jose had 4,526 visits. The outreach team reached an additional 7,667 people through community-based education activities, such as speakers bureau presentations.
The LGBTQ Wellness program, the only program of its kind in the county, completed its second year of service this spring. By providing culturally relevant outreach and education, advocacy, and peer support, the program overcomes stigma associated with behavioral health conditions and increases community awareness of behavioral health topics and resources. Over the last 11 months, the LGBTQ Wellness program provided 175 peer support contacts and reached 762 individuals through outreach activities.

In addition to delivering ongoing direct services, the LGBTQ programs’ advocacy and leadership development accomplishments over the last 11 months included:

- Co-planning and speaking at both the Rally for Trans Youth at San Jose City Hall, called in response to the federal government’s decision to rescind guidance on Title IX protections for transgender students, and San Jose’s Equality March.
- Co-hosting the inaugural South Bay Youth Pride Festival with the youth organizing committee. The festival, held on May 13 in San Jose, convened more than 200 county youth. Planning will begin soon for the 2018 event.
- Being featured by the San Jose Sharks as part of the inaugural “Hockey Is for Everyone” awareness night on March 2.
- Representing LGBTQ communities on key community task forces, such as the CDC’s Epi-Aid Coordinating Committee (the investigation into youth suicides in the county), Intimate Partner Violence Blue Ribbon Task Force, and the Disproportionality Committee of the Child Abuse Council.

With grants from the Horizons Foundation and Farrington Historical Foundation, the LGBTQ Youth Space expanded programming this year for youth and young adults to explore diverse forms of creative self-expression, including zine-making, music and salsa and vogue dancing. In May, youth presented a performance night featuring a drag show, music and spoken word. Planning is underway for the fall show.

In January, Family & Children Services of Silicon Valley became a division of Caminar, a nonprofit organization headquartered in San Mateo that has been serving the San Francisco Bay Area since 1964. The combined organization has 122 years of experience and annually reaches more than 11,000 people in the Bay Area with counseling, prevention, and support services.

For more information and to access LGBTQ program services, please visit www.youthspace.org or www.fcservices.org or call 408.343.7940.
Interview opportunities available with Cassie Blume, director of LGBTQ Programs; Adrienne Keel, Outreach Coordinator, LGBTQ Youth Space; Anthony Montalvo, Coordinator, LGBTQ Wellness; and peer staff members.

About Caminar and the FCS division

Caminar helps to move people from crisis to independence through mental health case management, counseling, supported housing, medication clinics, residential programs, employment services and educational support in San Mateo, Santa Clara, San Francisco, Solano and Butte counties. Caminar provides community-based support services to enable clients to live and work independently in their community and achieve self-sufficiency.

Family & Children Services of Silicon Valley (FCS), a division of Caminar, has been strengthening families and changing lives in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties since 1948 through counseling, prevention, and supportive services, with an emphasis on communities that are under-served. The division offers mental health and substance use disorders treatment, case management, family violence and abuse prevention services, and youth development programs.

The LGBTQ Youth Space, founded in 2009, engages young people as leaders in program design and delivery. By receiving ongoing feedback and guidance from youth, the program helps to ensure activities, events, and policies remain responsive to youth interests and concerns. Beyond the drop-in center, the program team collaborates with schools and a host of youth-serving organizations countywide. When a young person comes to the Youth Space in crisis, the program team leverages its broad network of contacts among professionals who are knowledgeable about the needs of LGBTQ youth. Proactively, the team works year-round to build cultural competence among youth-serving organizations, such as homeless services providers, law enforcement and health professionals, through trainings and consultations.

The LGBTQ Wellness program, which serves individuals of all ages and their families, operates alongside seven additional Ethnic and Cultural Communities Advisory Committees funded by the County of Santa Clara Behavioral Health Services Department. In addition to providing direct services, the team also identifies and works to address systemic barriers that affect access to appropriate services.