Blackbird House Offers Respite and Healing

“They helped me get out of a dark place in my head,” Diane said. “Now I feel 10x better. I couldn’t ask for a better place.”

In December, we opened Blackbird House, the first peer-run overnight respite program for adults in Santa Clara County. This pioneering model offers a safe and inviting refuge, where adults coping with serious mental health conditions can rest, connect with wellness resources, and avert psychiatric hospitalization and crisis care.

While staying at the house, guests have access to 24-hour support from trained staff members with lived experience of mental health challenges. Guests may take part in a growing menu of wellness-promoting activities, such as mindfulness exercises, music appreciation, arts and crafts, tai chi, yoga, and guided meditation. As needed, guests also receive assistance to connect with mental health care and other community resources.

And the model is working for guests like Diane, who came to Blackbird House fearing she would soon find herself in a psychiatric emergency unit. Instead, Diane found that a few days to take stock of the causes behind her mental health crisis, talk with the peers on staff, and focus on her wellness allowed her to move out of the crisis state. She returned home feeling stable and ready to resume her commitments.

“Thank you so very much for helping lift the weight off my chest and clearing my head.”

– Beth, a recent Blackbird House guest

The welcoming, cozy style of Blackbird House was made possible thanks to Sandy Verma of Juxtapose Designs, who lent her interior design talents to create a home for our guests.

Thank You!

Donate online at www.caminar.org/donate

Or, contact our Development Department at development@caminar.org or 650.513.1509.
An Update from Our CEO

Dear friends,

As we head into fall, a season of change, I am happy to share with you exciting news of progress and change here at Caminar and our Family & Children Services of Silicon Valley division.

I am pleased to share that in June, Lauren Grey was promoted to Executive Director of the FCS division. Lauren, who joined FCS in 2016, is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and Registered Art Therapist. She has extensive experience providing mental health services for youth affected by trauma, including on school campuses. As director of FCS’s mental health programs, she guided the development and growth of high quality services for children, teens, adults, and older adults, as well as specialty programs offering culturally competent care for children and adults who are Deaf and for LGBTQ communities. Lauren also was integral to the design and launch of FCS’s newest program, Blackbird House. I am confident that FCS’s portfolio of programs for youth, adults, and their families will continue to thrive under Lauren’s leadership.

This month, together with members of our Board, our executive team, and an outside expert, we are launching a thorough strategic planning process. Through this initiative, we will conduct an assessment of the need for comprehensive mental health, substance use, job training, and supportive services in our community and chart a path forward. As you likely are aware, the Bay Area and communities nationwide are seeing a growing epidemic of substance use and mental health disorders among young adults. I imagine us responding to this pressing need by focusing on root causes, understanding the contributing factors, and intervening early to reduce suffering and prevent more serious problems in adulthood.

I look forward to updating you as this planning unfolds and as we develop additional capability and services to further establish Caminar and our FCS division as a leader in improving the mental health and well-being of our community.

I hope to see you at our 9th Annual In Concert with Caminar gala on Saturday, October 19. Under the leadership of co-chairs Linda Leao and Carole Middleton, we are planning a fabulous evening of live music at SFJAZZ with delectable food catered by Taste. Please join us! Tickets and more information are available at www.caminar.org/events.

Thank you for your ongoing support. Should you have any questions about the work you help make possible, we look forward to hearing from you.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Mark Cloutier, MPP, MPH
Chief Executive Officer

In Memoriam

This summer, a treasured member of our Caminar family passed away. Barbara Ellis Jones, who was a dedicated member of our Board of Directors and Circle of Support Committee, cared deeply about ensuring people who were underserved had access to quality behavioral health care, educational opportunities, and help to heal from gender-based violence. Caminar, our Family & Children Services of Silicon Valley division, and the community at large are the better for Barbara’s brilliance and generosity. She is missed greatly.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the friends and family who honored Barbara’s legacy with a donation.

Blackbird House
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For more information about the program, please call 408.292.2777 or visit www.fcservices.org. The program is free of charge for adults who have full Medi-Cal or no health coverage.
Your Support Helps Teens on the Path to Wellness

Two brothers were referred to the Teen Families and Schools Together (FAST) Program being held at their high school because they were struggling socially, academically, and emotionally.

Our Program Manager, a mental health professional, learned that the brothers had witnessed their father’s murder a year ago. They had received no counseling or support since that event.

One brother, “Edgar,” is shy, with a tendency to hide behind his long hair. His demeanor and behavior when he joined the program was reclusive; he preferred to eat alone and hardly spoke with any of the other teens. Week by week, he slowly progressed from holding minimal conversations to interacting with the other students. On the last day of the multi-family program, the Program Manager managed to engage Edgar in a full conversation (about cars). At the end, he said, “Thank you for speaking with me.”

The second brother, “Alvin,” dealt with the trauma and loss in his own way. He was outgoing from the start, playing and joking around with his fellow students and teen partners.

Both brothers felt anger toward their mother, who they blamed for not attending to their emotions after the murder and seeming to pretend the murder had not occurred. By learning about trauma, they gained compassion for their mother’s coping strategy and gained skills and support to talk as a family about their feelings and experiences following their father’s death.

By the end of two and a half months, the brothers’ animosity toward their mother had decreased greatly, and they were talking and engaging with each other. They also were doing better in school, participating in more pro-social activities, and presenting improved mental wellness.

Edgar and Alvin continue to receive support through the FAST Program’s aftercare services. As they heal and practice new wellness tools, they now have friends and adults in their lives, including their mom, to whom they can turn for help or encouragement, or to listen to a memory of a father greatly missed.

Our Teen FAST Program uses a science-based model to engage youth with elevated risk factors for gang involvement, school drop-out, substance use, and delinquency in programming that builds on strengths, instills confidence, and strengthens positive peer networks. Youth and their families receive services for at least two years.

Thank you for helping to make support available for teens like Edgar and Alvin. By reaching teens with effective care as early as possible, young people have the opportunity to heal from trauma and move toward greater resilience and wellness.
9th Annual
In Concert with Caminar
Join us for an evening of fabulous live music at SFJAZZ with delectable food catered by Taste.

Saturday, October 19, 2019
5:30 - 9:30 pm
SFJAZZ Center
San Francisco

Information and tickets:
www.caminar.org/events
650.513.1509

Featuring
singer, songwriter, and protégé of the legendary Quincy Jones

SHELÉA

Event proceeds benefit Caminar’s life-changing mental health care, which is driven by compassion and science. Through our understanding of root causes and the generosity of our donors, we transform the lives of 20,000 youth and adults in the Bay Area each year with prevention, treatment, and recovery services.

“ You saved me. I came out of the haze at last. ”
– A grateful client who came to us with a debilitating mental health condition

Together, we are supporting and empowering individuals and families to move toward resilience, wellness, and independence.

Our divisions

www.caminar.org

If you wish to be removed from our mailing list, please email us at development@caminar.org or call us at 650.513.1509.