

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 24, 2008

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Bay Area Youth Centers Announces Merger With Sunny Hills Services and Opening of New Program for Pregnant and Parenting Teens

Two Long-Standing Bay Area Youth Services Agencies Have Merged

Sunny Hills Services (SHS) and Bay Area Youth Centers (BAYC) have merged.

“Sunny Hills Services is excited to announce this merger. Partnering with BAYC allows us to expand our reach both geographically and programmatically. As the number of clients that we serve each year continues to grow exponentially, the addition of the BAYC services to our existing spectrum of care helps us meet the ever-changing needs of the vulnerable children and families we help,” explains Joseph M. Costa, Chief Executive Officer of Sunny Hills Services.

Josh Leonard, Executive Director of BAYC, says that “BAYC is confident that this merger will help us continue to provide the crucial, high-quality programs that we have always been known for while also allowing us to utilize the Sunny Hills infrastructure to help us grow and add new dimensions to those programs.”

“There is a critical and fast-growing need for services to support children and teens challenged with emotional, developmental, educational, and mental health issues. Organizations that serve this population must work to maintain the highest levels of quality and care while dealing with the realities of economic and budget pressures. The newly merged organization will be prepared to meet these economic challenges while continuing to grow in both the types of services offered and the number of children served,” continues Josh.

Increased program scope and size will give the merged organization a stronger voice on public policy and advocacy. The combined agency will also have increased geographic range and a broader spectrum of services. Treatment methodologies and best practices can be applied across various programs in multiple counties quickly and efficiently, raising the level of support and care for all of the children, teens and families being served.

BAYC will continue to operate its existing programs under its own name. BAYC will be structured as a division of SHS and will utilize the SHS administrative umbrella. Infrastructure support provided by SHS for BAYC will include Human Resources, Finance and Accounting, Fund Development and Communications. Josh Leonard will continue as Executive Director of BAYC, and will also serve as the primary SHS representative in the East Bay. Neither agency foresees a change in existing services or is planning a reduction of staff as part of this merger. Continued opportunities for growth and development of program initiatives are expected as the two agencies combine forces and competencies.

New Parenting Teens Program Opening in East Bay

Real Alternatives for Adolescents (RAFA), BAYC’s successful pre-emancipatory independent living program, is expanding and opening its doors to youth in foster care who have children or are currently pregnant. This is a severely underserved population with additional challenges above and beyond the traditional challenges of foster children; it is particularly important that these youth are given the opportunity to build the skills necessary for independence. The youth in the program and their children will be placed in an apartment with a roommate who will also be pregnant or have children; they will be given support, hands on training, and behavior modeling. In addition to the traditional RAFA services, these youth will be assisted with parenting skills, parent-child bonding techniques, stress reduction, creating safe and healthy living conditions and managing time and balancing life responsibilities.

To be eligible for the RAFA for Parenting Teens program you must be 16-18 years old, currently in foster care, 6-9 months pregnant or parenting a child/children and participating in Alameda County's Independent Living Skills Program. For more information about this program, please contact Rebecca Long at (510) 727-9401 x 139

BAYC Information www.bayareayouthcenters.org

BAYC was founded in 1974 and has been at the forefront in serving the needs of youth emancipating from of out-of-home care for the last fifteen years. BAYC emphasizes youth development, educational achievement, self-sufficiency, permanent relationships with adults, self awareness, and health within a milieu environment. Their continuum of care programs in Alameda County includes group homes, transitional housing, and mental health services.

SHS Information www.sunnyhillsservices.org

Since 1895, Sunny Hills Services has been helping build better and brighter futures for vulnerable children and their families. SHS provides educational, community based, transitional and mental health programs for youth from 5 to 21 years old. Located in San Anselmo, the agency has programs throughout Marin and Sonoma Counties that serve youth from throughout the Bay Area and Northern California.