



In this issue:

Sustaining change—in youth development work, this is the brass ring we all grab for. Making changes is often the easy part; keeping them going is what really matters, and provides the greatest challenge. In this newsletter, we explore this theme, looking at it from the perspective both of our clients who have had their ups and downs with this process, and also of some individuals who have dedicated themselves to helping people on the streets create better lives. As you'll see on page 7 of this newsletter, our clients are doing an amazing job!

Determined and Resolved

Marissa, an ATC client for the past six years, is, by all estimations, a deeply determined woman. “For me, I think to myself ‘look, you’ve got to make a decision.’ So even if you mess up, you can make another one to make it better. But you got to make the decision, otherwise you’ll be in the same place forever. Period. If you want to always be on the fence, and think that you staying on the fence is going to help you, it’s not. Because really, you made a decision now to be on the fence.”

Marissa has taken this philosophy, combined it with incredible perseverance, and applied it to her life with great results. When we first met her, she was homeless and unemployed. Since then, she has moved from being a group leader at a holistic after-school program for youth to being in charge of the whole program. Previously, she had not envisioned this career path for herself. “I didn’t always think I was going to be an actual program coordinator, or even working with kids. I wanted to be a politician, but then I realized I had to sell out a little bit too much. I looked

at trying to find what other ways I could also help my political standpoint, but also make a difference in the world. That ended up getting me to after-school programs and working with kids. Because ultimately they’re the most impressionable, and half the time they’re not given the necessities that they require. And by the time they get older and they’re set in their ways, they can’t get the help that they need because they won’t receive it.”

She specifically remembers one particular day that her steely will was activated. “I stood there for like an hour saying I could do this, and I did. And ever since that day, I was just like ‘man you can do anything.’ I don’t know what clicked in my mind, but I was like, if you say you can do it, you can do it, and you *should* just do it. It doesn’t matter how bad it looks or how bleak it seems.” In the past, she said, “when I stumbled, I would stop. But now, I just keep going. Because usually right before you finish something happens, you stumble, like right before the finish line.”

Before Marissa became homeless, she was going to college and relying on her parents for everything. Then she went to jail, and it all changed. “My parents, they pulled the plug. I was homeless. I was only 21 at the time. My dad did call me back like three weeks later, said I could come home, but for what? Might as well go do it now. I mean I could have gone home, I could have, I just didn’t.”

“If you believe there is supposed to be some easy way, you’re just going to be disappointed all the time.”

— Marissa, ATC client for six years

Instead she found herself living on the streets, dealing drugs. “It’s an addictive lifestyle, you get accustomed to it. After a while you can’t leave it. That was something I was starting to see. I was like, well, I know this lifestyle, it’s fun, there’s no responsibilities to it. You have tons of camaraderie. You have no responsibilities and no one to answer to. There is no professionalism needed. But where are you going to go from there? It wasn’t hard to live that life when I was there. Now, if I were to go back down that way, then, hell yeah, it would be hard, because I would have to be downsizing. But in that sense, I was just kind of going from the bottom up. So it wasn’t necessarily hard, but it was something that could have ruined my life. Basically, if my friend would have never took me in and gave me a place to stay, things would have looked different.”

One of the biggest challenges that Marissa has faced in moving beyond the streets has been the felony on her record. “I had to get over that huge hump. I couldn’t get hired anywhere, and then when I did get hired and advanced, that was always a problem.”

Marissa sees the value in the struggles she has been through, and they have taught her resolve. “If you believe there is supposed to be some easy way you’re just going to be disappointed all the time. So, you might as well just have an agreement with yourself that life is hard and then work from there. Think of the positive that can come out of the stuff that’s been hard now. And, I don’t think it’s bad that life is hard because I think otherwise, it’d be kinda boring.”

Reflecting on the role that ATC has played in helping her reach and maintain her goals, she says, “Without y’all, a whole resource would be gone for me completely. Basically, you guys helped me, you are the reason why I was able to move.” She is one of the reasons that we all love coming to work. §





Letter from the Director

Rob Gitin

How people sustain change absolutely fascinates me. This is at the core of ATC; there is little reason for our organization to exist if the changes we help our clients make are only ephemeral. Of course, the exact combination of factors that enables each person to maintain and build on his or her success is unique, and in order for us to succeed, we must listen to each client as an individual. However, certain related themes come up time and time again at this job:

1) We must make our clients feel deeply and unconditionally cared for. While watching our documentary at our 10-Year Anniversary Event, I remember being struck by something that an amazing client named Margarita was saying. She was talking about the value of her relationship with one of our counselors, Ivan.

"He doesn't look at me as different. If I were to fall, he wouldn't judge me. Just knowing that I have that support, that he's there regardless. It just motivates me to feel like I am not going to fall, I am not going to go back to the streets, I can't lose. Failure is not an option to me."

For so many of our clients, when they took steps backwards in their lives, they were abandoned by those around them. When they finally encounter people who stick by them regardless of the decisions that they make and the problems they face, it can enable them to find a new reservoir of will, resolve and motivation. Feeling like someone values you, no matter what, can engender the strength to keep going during the toughest of times.

2) Both clients and staff must confront obstacles with a great deal of optimism. Many of our clients have experienced setback after setback in life, so, understandably, when an accomplishment is followed by something bad happening, they often have feelings of "here I go again." They assume that their recent gains in life will be lost, which often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. For our counselors, watching clients take a step backwards on a goal that they have struggled to achieve can be deflating. I remember being so upset a few years ago when a client got back together with an abusive boyfriend she had left behind six months earlier. She was lucky to survive. It is easy for all of us to lose hope. This is why I am repeatedly moved and impressed by our youth and our staff who are able to hold relentless optimism in the face of adversity. It is what propels our clients forward and keeps them striving for their goals.

3) Clients must find the ability to forgive themselves for the pain they have caused, both to themselves and to others. About seven years ago, I had a conversation with Nick, who had gotten off of the streets about a year earlier, and seemed to be doing a very good job at moving forward in his life. I asked him why he thought he was succeeding at doing this, while some of his peers were constantly falling back.

"When I was on the streets, I chose to inflict pain on myself, rather than on others. Most people on the streets inflict a lot of pain on those closest to them. For me, I would have had a hard time forgiving myself for that. But I can forgive myself for what I did to myself. I am not constantly pulled down by the weight of what I have done."

For Nick, self-harm was more forgivable than harming others. For some of our clients, it is the other way around. Inevitably, when people are trying to survive on the streets, harm is going to be done to someone. If our clients don't find a way to forgive themselves, the potential for this pain to sabotage their achievements will pose a constant threat to their new lives. Our clients need to find a way to do for themselves what Ivan did for Margarita: to not judge themselves, and to care about themselves deeply and unconditionally. Watching our youth develop this capacity is one of the true pleasures of working for ATC. It is essential that our youth form a caring community around themselves, but all the people in the world can't take the place of our clients learning to love themselves.

At The Crossroads is a project of Community Initiatives. If you would like a copy of one of our previous newsletters, send us an email, and we'll send it to you as long as we have some left (we have a limited supply).



Staff

Outreach Counselors

Naomi Irvine
Brenda Covarrubias
Kris Chance
Chelsea Martens

Director

Rob Gitin

Program Manager

Shawn Garety

Community Resource

Coordinator

Ivan Alomar

Community Resource

Organizer

Erica Morse

Campaign Coordinators

Andrea Chiem
Rachel Fletcher
Tim Patmont

Development

Coordinator

Sarah Brown

Outreach Volunteers

Kurt Manley
Angelo Santiago

Advisory Board

Members

Nadinne Cruz
Mary Gregory
Avner Lapovsky
Kevin McCracken
Lateefah Simon

At The Crossroads

333 Valencia Street
Suite 320
San Francisco, CA 94103
t. (415) 487-0691
f. (415) 487-0692
mail@atthecrossroads.org
www.atthecrossroads.org

Mission Statement

At The Crossroads reaches out to homeless youth and young adults at their point of need, and works with them to build healthy and fulfilling lives.

Core Values

- Prioritizing meeting the needs of our clients first
- Making services as accessible as possible
- Supporting empowerment
- Respecting individuality

What We Do: The Basics

- ▶ ATC walks the streets three nights a week in two areas of San Francisco: Downtown and the Mission. We hand out basic necessities like food, condoms, and socks, and slowly build counseling relationships.
- ▶ We work with young people whom others have given up on, who would not get help without us.
- ▶ We meet with clients 1-to-1. We listen to them talk about anything they want, with no agenda and no judgment. We help them figure out who they want to be, and how to become that person.
- ▶ We keep working with clients after they leave the streets. We continue to support them for as long as they want, helping them build outstanding lives, not just lives of subsistence.
- ▶ We work closely with other organizations, connecting our clients with services such as jobs, housing, education, health care, and mental health services.
- ▶ We support other programs in their efforts to work with homeless youth through dialogue, trainings, and technical assistance.
- ▶ We work with city government to improve the continuum of support for all young people on the streets in San Francisco.

Get Involved with At The Crossroads



Make a donation to ATC

You'll experience a sense of happiness and fulfillment that you've never known. You'll want to do it again and again. In all seriousness, the future of At The Crossroads depends on the generosity of individuals who believe in our work.

Make a credit card donation at www.atthecrossroads.org. Or make checks payable to: "At The Crossroads, a project of CI."

Watch our documentary

In Spring 2008, Monica Lam filmed a documentary that takes you into the world of our clients and our work. You can find it at www.atthecrossroads.org. It is 15 minutes long, and we promise you won't regret taking the time to watch it.

Volunteer

Individually

Do you have free time in the afternoon or evening? Come by our office and sort donated clothing, put away food, drive to the Food Bank and go shopping, or pitch in on a number of other tasks that keep us going. Interested? Email getinvolved@atthecrossroads.org.

Collect unused gift cards

Everyone has a gift certificate (or 20) that is sitting around the house, collecting dust. ATC can put them to good use by giving them to our clients or buying items we need. In case you didn't know, most gift certificates in California don't expire. One of our volunteers has already collected thousands of dollars in gift certificates for ATC! And to make it easy, we have an email template you can use to ask friends if they also have gift certificates to donate. Interested? Email getinvolved@atthecrossroads.org.

Email list

Sign up to receive emails twice a month about volunteer opportunities, organizational updates, and ways to get involved. Send an email to getinvolved@atthecrossroads.org, with the subject heading "Join the ATC email list."

Expand our network

Share our documentary

After you watch our documentary, if you like it, invite your friends over for lunch, cocktails or dinner to check it out. An ATC staff member can join you to discuss our work. It's a great way to introduce people to ATC. Email getinvolved@atthecrossroads.org and let us know.

Share our newsletter

Please let others who might be interested in ATC know about our work! If you want us to send people our newsletter, email us their names and addresses, and we'll send them copies. Email getinvolved@atthecrossroads.org.

Be creative

We're open to hearing your ideas for supporting ATC. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us through email (getinvolved@atthecrossroads.org) or phone (415-487-0691 x101).

The Power of Relationships:

Four veterans of the work share their wisdom

Most people who work with people on the streets tend to burn out fairly quickly. It is exciting work, but it can prove exhausting, frustrating, and depressing. It takes pretty amazing people to be able to sustain their commitment and passion for this work. We've asked four of these individuals to reflect on what it takes to help clients and participants sustain change, and what they, in turn, have done to sustain themselves.

How to best be of service

Mary Howe, who has been working with homeless youth for the past decade as Director of Homeless Youth Alliance, talks about the importance for her youth of having a strong network. "Community is a huge part of sustaining and fulfilling goals—if you have support from your community, your self-esteem and self-determination increase dramatically. If you don't have positive support and feedback, chances go down dramatically."

Something all the providers we talked to believe is that providing long term, consistent support to clients on their own terms is the key to being part of this healthy community. Underpinning all her work is a need to "remain in a state of openness," says Marykate Connor, Director of Caduceus Outreach Services, and a mental health provider for the past 30 years. There is huge variety in the way that people make changes, she suggests, and in order to continually meet them where they are, and how they are, flexibility is essential.

She sees her role as one of providing feedback and "not judging people's lives by our own expectations," which means, for her, leaving ideas of success and failure at the door.

"Success is defined by the person experiencing it," says Marykate. And providers need to look beyond the ups and downs and see the larger trajectory of change and growth formed in their clients' lives.

"Success is defined by the person experiencing it."

— Marykate Connor,
Caduceus Outreach Services

Oftentimes this means clients need to reach out and begin to create a new group of friends and connections, building a wider community of support for their new lives than just service providers. As Michelle Covert, Manager of Youth Programs for EHC LifeBuilders, puts it, youth need to begin to "replace the street family with others who are doing the things that they want to do. They need to create new social networks that are doing what they want to be doing." Service providers often provide the beginning of this network, and can remain part of the foundation for many years.

Michelle, who has worked with homeless youth for over 17 years, points out that a key ingredient to a successful program is that clients are shown that they are cared about by the organization as a whole. This is demonstrated, in her opinion, by the many people who give their time and energy, not just the counselors and providers, but the volunteers and donors, who give their time and money to ensure that the service continues. As an example of the importance of creating this caring environment, Michelle told us that recently she had a client who she had been working with for awhile tell her that he "feels love when I come here."

Keeping it going

A quality that all of these individuals share is the ability to empathize with and understand the myriad ways in which their clients struggle with making change in their life. They get excited to see the people they work with reach their goals, and they have struggled in their own ways with watching clients backslide and struggle.

When he thinks about what keeps him working on violence prevention and educational opportunities in the Black community, Jack Jacqua, cofounder of Omega Boys Club and a community activist for over 40 years, is quick to say, "there's nothing sustaining me but the hope that continues. You see lives change, you see the work that has successes to it, and you don't sit around too long and congratulate yourself, you just keep going. Nobody is free until everybody is free."

Michelle Covert enjoys the simplicity in her work, saying that the "best part of my day is when I am working with a youth on what they want or need." She finds beauty in the act of helping youth create a better tomorrow for themselves.

"There's nothing sustaining me but the hope that continues. You see lives change, you see the work that has successes to it, and you don't sit around too long and congratulate yourself, you just keep going. Nobody is free until everybody is free."

— Jack Jacqua, Omega Boys Club

The need to think big

Reforming the larger systems that affect people on the streets becomes an inevitable part of the job. "When I was coming into this work I was really focused on the individuals and their needs and was not aware or maybe uninterested in the bigger picture. Looking at the policies and systemic problems can be really frustrating," says Mary Howe.

For Marykate Connor, the ability to see her work in this larger context is an important piece. She works on creating systemic change and, as she puts it, "removing the stigma" of shame and judgment that is applied to people on the streets. This stigma, she says, keeps people in a cycle of poverty and often leaves them in an environment of hopelessness and apathy. "No one will get well if they are told they are worthless," she adds.

Service providers, says Marykate, need to radiate care and imbue a sense of worth. At Caduceus, for instance, they have made their physical environment a place of "reflected beauty" by having works of art and providing comfortable places for clients to hang out and take care of their needs.

What gets in the way?

"Money and having a reliable source of income," says Marykate, present the biggest obstacle to making change in the lives of clients living on the streets. Just as removing the stigma of poverty is important, so is actually helping people out of poverty, by offering them the means to move forward and get housing, food and a job.

In many cases, the inability to imagine a different life for oneself becomes a hindrance to moving forward. As Michelle Covert puts it, “street life becomes their way of life. And this mentality doesn’t change easily, even if they have outer stability.” Just as clients often need to leave their street families, they must also move beyond the mindset that can keep them in an environment that they are trying to leave behind.

Falling back

Getting drawn back into behaviors they had hoped to permanently change can be devastating for clients, and it is essential for providers to provide perspective when this happens.

“Backsliding or returning back to previous behaviors is for the majority of folks part of the process of creating change,” says Mary Howe. “Many times youth have more shame around this

and might avoid us when they begin to repeat behaviors they worked so hard to move beyond.”

“For some,” says Michelle Covert, “you think that the cycle will never end.”

“It’s on them,” says Jack Jacqua. “I’ve been to hundreds of funerals. I can’t take it too personal. We can only give you the love and give you the information when we’re in front of you. Now it’s up to you to take it and go with it.”

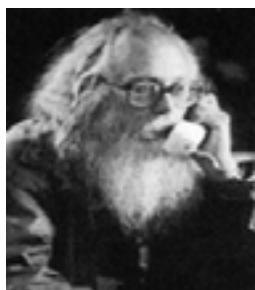
Mary Howe echoes the need to step back from getting too involved in the back and forth of clients’ lives. “It doesn’t have to do with me,” she says. “At the same time, while not taking their backsliding as personal, it’s also important to not get caught up in the successes either.” But she still enjoys these moments, finding the accomplishments of her participants “inspiring.”

Giving back

Giving support, regardless of the choices a client is making, is the core of the work that Jack Jacqua does. As he says, “This is a game of numbers—you can’t bask in one person because that person has to face tomorrow. I mean success is success. And now they gotta go out and touch somebody else.” For Jack, who cofounded Omega Boys Club, which has the core organizational value of “the more you know, the more you owe,” engendering clients with a need to give back is a vital part of his work.

Part of how Jack sustains himself is by motivating others to take up the struggle alongside him. The four individuals profiled in this article provide ATC with inspiring models of how much change one person can make. §

Learn more about the ‘Fearless Foursome’



Jack Jacqua, Co-Founder, Omega Boys Club

Mentors/role models: All powerful community organizers and those who have a passion for what they do.
Favorite comfort food: Spaghetti.
Favorite place to unwind: Athletic events, small and large.
If you were a superhero, which one

would you be: I just want to be me.

Nickname: Omega or Pops.

Favorite quote: “Eagles fly with eagles, tweety birds fly with tweety birds. Which one are you?”



Mary Howe, Director, Homeless Youth Alliance

Mentors/role models: I have had amazing colleagues. When starting HYA, my main supports were my dear friend Peter Morse and ATC’s Rob Gitin.
Favorite comfort food: Chocolate.
Favorite place to unwind: At home, alone.
Last place you took a vacation: Bali 3 years ago, but I am going to India in January.

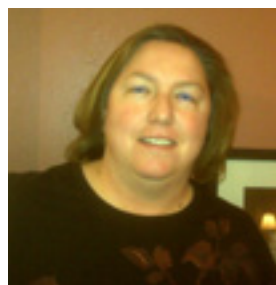
If you were a superhero, which one would you be: I don’t know much about superheroes, but I would love to fly.

Nickname: Lil’ Mary or Mary Sunshine.



Marykate Connor, Director, Caduceus Outreach Services

Mentors/role models: Sheila Spaulding, Carl Jung, Marie Louise von Franz.
Favorite comfort food: It changes a lot, but currently it is Trader Joe’s Black Cherry Non-gelatin ‘Jello.’
Favorite place to unwind: At home in the kitchen at the window with a cat.
Last place you took a vacation: Don’t remember.
If you were a superhero, which one would you be: Queen Concierges of Crazy.
Nickname: Miss Mousecita.



Michelle Covert, Manager of Youth Programs, EHC Lifebuilders

Mentor/role model: Ed Thrift.
Favorite comfort food: Beer, Mexican food.
Favorite place to unwind: My living room with Guitar Hero.
Last place you took a vacation: Williamsburg, Virginia; my partner is a history buff.
If you were a superhero, which one would you be: Wonder Woman.
Nickname: Shelley.
Favorite quotes: Regarding youth work – “It’s a race against time, but you can’t run.” “Show your love by what you serve.”

"Making It Last": ATC clients talk about sustaining change in their lives

While it is wonderful to see our clients achieve the goals they have set, it is even more gratifying to watch them sustain and build upon them. Because we work with our youth for as long as they want (in some cases over 10 years!), we can truly prioritize helping them to maintain their accomplishments, and to strive for greater heights. For this newsletter, we talked with several of our long-term clients about the topic of sustaining change, and certain goal themes came up again and again: securing housing, getting off drugs, going to school and getting a job.

The road to housing

Every single client interviewed for this newsletter discussed the immense challenge of getting into and keeping good housing. Alicia, an ATC client for five years, was out of jail for more than a year before she found stable housing. "I've run into so many obstacles since I've been out of jail," she said. "I have been homeless. I've even had my probation officer tell me I was headed back to jail."

Yet Alicia continued to advocate strongly for herself. "I just went to the Sheriff's department and told them the situation. 'Today is my last day at the shelter. Help me.' And he was like, 'Alicia, we gonna give you a chance, but only because you got a job. And you already doing something.'"

Alicia had earned this opportunity by her commitment to finding and retaining a job. "Today, I'm so glad where my life is at," said Alicia. "I might not be in *my* house or in my own apartment, but I'm somewhere safe. I got food. I got shoes. I got clothes. I got a bed. I got a shower. I have a TV, it might not be my own TV, but I can still go down there and watch movies."

Kicking the habit

83% improved their social network focused on finding stable housing. Yet she has realized that to reach this goal, she has to face one of her main obstacles, her drug use. Until she got pregnant, Bonnie says that she found it hard to maintain her desire to get off drugs. While she is now clean, she knows that it will be a constant challenge to

maintain sobriety. "I wanna say with 110% conviction that I will never do dope again ever, ever, ever, because I don't want to be one of those kind of parents that do it. I know that that's not the kind of person that I want to be, and as long as I stay sober, I can see that and I can help follow it."

For people like Mark (Havoc), who has been working with ATC for the past three years, a key to his success at staying clean has been staying open with the people in his life who support him. "I need to communicate openly and honestly with them. I need to be able to say, 'ya know what, I screwed up this week and took my paycheck and spent \$50 of it on crack.' I need to be honest about making mistakes. And that's very hard for me."

For Mark, keeping sober has been a challenging goal to maintain. "I didn't just decide one day that I'd be sober and that was it; it's an everyday thing. And even today I can't tell you what's gonna happen tomorrow." He reflects that perhaps some of the reason this has been harder to maintain is a fear of success. "I've failed so much in my life that I'm so used to failing. So, whenever things start to look good, I have this way of messing it up. That's what I do."

Schoolhouse rocks

For some clients, getting housing and getting clean are stepping stones to another goal, returning to school. School is often a means to an end, helping them get better jobs that bring more stability to their lives.

For the past year, Dean, an ATC client for the past two years, has been attending City College, working towards his Certificate in Automotive Technology. What makes this particularly impressive is that Dean and his girlfriend, Bonnie, are living in a shelter. For the past decade, he had been thinking about going to

93% have improved their social network

couldn't go to school, but I didn't have a stable spot to live." Then he secured housing and started school. Midway through the semester, his housing fell through and he had to crash on his friend's couch, yet he still managed to finish the semester and pass his classes.

"It doesn't really matter where I'm at," says Dean, "because my mind is focused on



"I didn't just decide one day to be sober and that was it; it's an everyday thing."

— Mark

school. I just make a way. Because if I really want to be depressed and all that, it's easy. All I have to do is just give up. I can't give up. I don't know the meaning of the word."

Bonnie also feels that reaching her goals has helped boost her self-confidence. She is now clear that she'd like to go to art school. She is enjoying her newfound sense of purpose. "I never really had a reason before to sustain my goals, I want a nice home that's mine. I want to be clean, and I want to have a little family."

Getting a J-O-B

For most youth, working comes after finding Alicia, that wasn't the sing came through having a job, specifically, an internship with the Summer Youth Empowerment Program earlier this year. "I needed a job and I thought if I tried, out of 400 people, I might get a call back. I was one of the lucky ones."

Her internship at a daycare center eventually turned into a full-time job. "I feel like I'm

making an honest living – I’m not out there hustling,” says Alicia. “I’m not quite used to it. I’m tired. So now, I really appreciate more all the things my grandma gives me because now I know what she’s been saying, ‘You just went off and bought drugs with my money, and I work so hard.’ Now I understand because I’m out there working hard for my money.”

Mark, who now works as a peer outreach worker for drug users, is amazed at how far he feels he has come. “I have business cards. It’s crazy to me. Four years ago, I was looking for needles so I could get off. I never thought I’d be able to make these changes. I thought I was doomed to a life of despair and intravenous drug use for the rest of my life.” He adds, “It’s been a big deal, it’s changed the way I feel about myself. It’s hard to do and it’s scary and it’s anxiety ridden. But I do it.”

It’s nice. I got my room and it smells good.”

Having overcome the challenges of getting off drugs and working towards securing permanent housing, Bonnie also has a lot to celebrate. “It feels so good to be able to actually do the things that I’ve always wanted to do. People want to help you out more if you’re willing to help yourself. And I never really took the chance to help myself, you know? I was expecting everyone else to do it.”

Mark has discovered that the structures of his daily life play a vital role in his ability to sustain his accomplishments. “I am doing the same thing day in and day out. The same way if you smoke crack day in and day out it’s hard to take a day off. I come to ATC every Thursday. I see my therapist every Tuesday night. Wednesday nights I can’t get messed up because Thursdays I gotta be at UFO. So, the tradition of having the same thing every week really really helped me personally keep my shit together.”

Having people in his life who know where he has been, and how hard he has fought to get to where he is, helps Mark stay motivated. His strong support system celebrates with him whenever he takes steps forward. “It also feels good when people notice it too. It’s not like I am going, ‘hey look at me, I’m not drowning anymore.’ But people definitely see it and say something about it.”

For Dean, going to school, working on getting housing, staying clean and preparing to be a new father keep him pretty busy, and

The taste of success

The small things that many of us take for granted, like being able to have a bank account and a savings account, can be huge accomplishments for the ATC’s youth. “I make sure that each check, I put \$100 in my savings account,” says Alicia. “I just buy little stuff I need. I bought some candles; I light them when I come home or come out of the shower and just relax for a minute and read.

“I feel like I am making an honest living. I am not out there hustling.”

— Alicia



Keep up the good work

The young people of ATC do an amazing job of sustaining their accomplishments

In 2007, ATC surveyed clients whom we had been in counseling relationships with for one year or longer to find out what kind of progress they had made in a few key areas. We thought it would be interesting to look at where these clients are now, and how they are doing. Here’s what we found:

2007	2009
74% achieved stable housing	95% have achieved stable housing
76% improved their legal income	87% have improved their legal income
67% were working, in school, or both	74% are working, in school, or both

ATC’s model was designed specifically to help people make changes, and to sustain and build upon them. While we have known anecdotally for many years that our philosophy and methods are working well, it was cool to see the numbers tell this story. And to be honest, we were a bit shocked to see just how many of our youth are moving forward in their lives. We are inspired by our clients’ accomplishments, and their ability to make lasting changes!

striving toward these goals has helped him on a deeper level. “It’s changed the way I feel about myself. I feel better cause I made it through school for a year on my own.”

Obstacles on the path

Making the changes is hard enough, but sustaining change—keeping your job, staying with your decision to quit drugs, etc.—can feel quite daunting for our clients. Having to kick a drug habit can be especially difficult, given that it usually means having to make a whole new group of friends. “Drug use was the number one problem in sustaining our goals,” reports Bonnie. “We were using speed big-time for a lot of years. Number two was we were choosing bad company. I wasn’t hanging out with the right kind of people, people who didn’t really have the same kind of goals as I did.”

Many youth whom ATC work with find it difficult to keep the jobs that they get, because they simply don’t make enough money to pay their bills and the high cost



“I am glad to be able to have went through the trials I did because now I have a better understanding and appreciation for the good things to come.”

— Marlon

“It’s changed the way I feel about myself. I feel better cause I made it through school for a year on my own.”

— Dean

“Drug use was the number one problem in sustaining our goals. You get side-tracked, you know?”

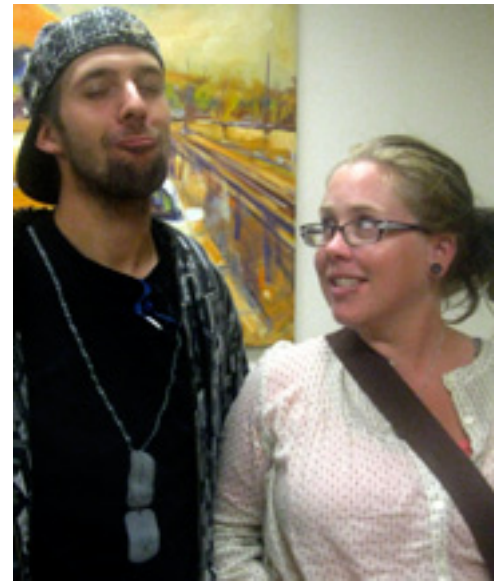
— Bonnie

of rent in the Bay Area. Having a felony can also make it tough to secure a job, which is unfortunate, because having a job can play an important role in staying out of jail. This was definitely true in Alicia’s situation, though it took her a while to get there. “I wasn’t ready before,” she said. “I would get discouraged because no one would call me back. That’s when I’d just go back to hustling because that’s what I knew how to do best. But that young act is played out. I’ve got two kids and another one on the way. I’m about to be 24. I don’t got time to be sitting around and playing. I need to get my life together.”

Keeping your smile on

When Marlon, an ATC client for four years, thinks about the challenges he has faced in his life, he knows that they have helped shape who he is today, and allowed him to appreciate the changes he has made. “I’m glad to be able to have went through the trials I’ve experienced, because now I have a better understanding and appreciation for the good things to come.” Whenever we see Marlon on the street, or he shows up for an appointment, we know we are going to be greeted with a huge smile. For him, maintaining a good attitude and positive energy, even in the face of adversity, is key to accomplishing his goals.

Marlon echoes a lot of other clients when he talks about the importance of not just reaching out for something new, but maintaining what he already has. “A lot of old habits would hold me back. But that’s just



basically the brain challenge, because now I got my friends and I have good support, you know, so I just have to use that the right way.”

Without this support system or his positive attitude, pursuing his goals would be impossible. “I wouldn’t have the drive, because there are a lot of things that discourage me, whether it happens to be drugs or just streets or just whatever. I think I have a good mind state. I’ve been able to endure a lot, and I think that’s helped me to stay on track. A lot of people my age really don’t have a lot of choices.”

Help along the way

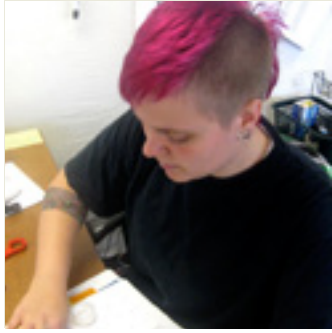
Bonnie also elaborated on the importance of finding healthy support systems. “People who are living the life. And I’m going to have to say, places like ATC, Connecting Point, and Homeless Prenatal, they’re the ones that help keep us focused. We’re the only ones that are in this right now. We only have each other, but going to these places and getting positive reinforcement just helps so much.”

Marlon speaks fondly of the support of ATC, and the other people in his life. “They let me know that I’m not alone, that I don’t have to be by myself, I don’t have to feel like I can’t do anything.”

“Probably what I’ll remember 50 years from now won’t be the soda that I got at At The Crossroads, says Mark. “It’ll be the relationships I had with [Reza] and other people.” We’re honored to be part of these clients’ lives, even if they don’t properly value our soda. §

At The Crossroads says 'Hello'

In August, the ATC ranks swelled with the addition of four Americorps VISTA positions and one new outreach counselor. Here's a little about the motley crew that we are excited to welcome on board:

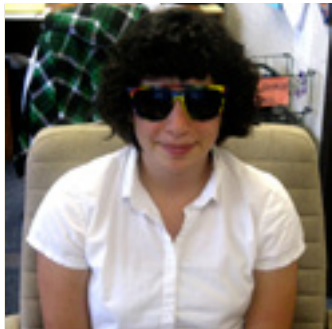


A shout-out goes to **Chelsea Martens**, our newest outreach counselor. Chelsea has quickly become a valuable member of our direct service staff. Her quiet, assured demeanor lends itself well to our chaotic and cheerful office environment. Hailing originally from Ohio, and having convinced many of her friends to move here in the process, she loves the Bay Area for the food, the beaches, and in her own words, "no snow." At Antioch, she got her Bachelor's Degree in Cultural Studies, which she says means that she "couldn't decide on a major." While she finds it challenging not to own a car, she's hopeful that the extra exercise will help her stay fit, as she partakes in all the great vegan fare and fake meats offered in the Bay Area! She is excited to work for At The Crossroads and is impressed with the client-centered way ATC does its work. We are just as excited to have her with us.

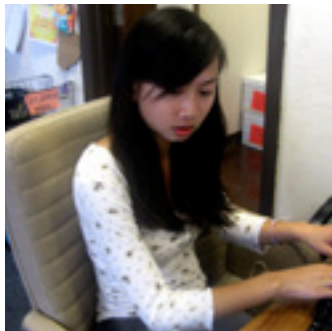


Erica Morse, one of our four new VISTAs, comes to ATC from the cow pastures of Woodstock, Connecticut, where her father is a dairy farmer. Having attended the U of Connecticut for a degree in Psychology/Human Development and Criminal Justice, she decided about nine months ago that if she were to move anywhere in the US, it would be to San Francisco. In her role at ATC as the Community Resource Organizer, she will work to help our clients find services and resources that can help them move forward in their lives. It has quickly become apparent to us that this chick is no ordinary dairymaid. Between her obsession with what she calls "five-year-old food" (i.e., cut-up franks and Kraft dinner) and the fact that she has saved all the notes she passed between herself and her friends in high school, this woman screams either quirky, or sociopath. The jury is still out. What is clear, though, is that her incredible drive, organizational skills, and work ethic will benefit ATC and our clients immensely.

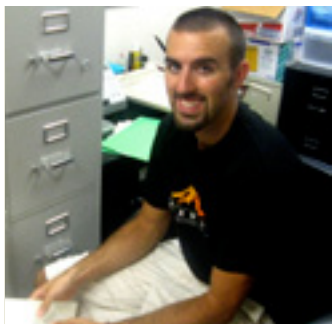
2010 I Think I Can Campaign Coordinators



As our other VISTA from Connecticut, **Rachel Fletcher**, brings her unique energy to ATC. One thing she wanted to make sure we knew about her right off the bat was that she "likes to keep her toes clean." We're not sure what this means, but we're sure it will come in handy this year. In true Warhol style (you know, the whole 15 minutes of fame thing), she is having one of her short stories made into an animated movie, about a girl who grows a beak. We get the sense we might be in the presence of the next Walt Disney. Rachel comes to ATC via Boston University, where she was studying Journalism and Women's studies. She loves to ride her bike and practice modern dance. She occasionally flashes subversive looks and doesn't tell us what she is thinking. We can't wait to see how she busts a move in the next ATC music video and how she brings her writing skills and creative wit to the PR and marketing for the Campaign.



A Bay Area native, **Andrea Chiem** admits to loving spending time with her parents and her two younger siblings. Her siblings, she says, "are funny and have big hearts," and her parents are "not super old," which means they are fun to hang out with. Her glowing endorsement of them is probably a good thing, since she still lives at home. Andrea studied Biology and pre-med at UC Berkeley and came home from spending the summer brushing up on her Mandarin in China, to start at ATC. Don't be fooled by her slightly demure nature; she can prove her toughness with stories of eating fried scorpions in China. In her off time, she likes to make schedules for her friends and family, being what she calls "detail-oriented." We'll let you decide what that is a euphemism for. We're thrilled she is putting these talents to use in her role with ATC. After her time helping to run the best I Think I Can Campaign events ever, she will pursue her dream of becoming a doctor, hopefully focusing on pediatrics.



Tim Patmont recently joined ATC, coming to us from a more north-westerly direction, the "other" rainy city, Seattle (actually Bainbridge Island). Tim attended University of Washington (UDub), studying Business, and would like to attend graduate school in either Public Admin or Health Care Admin after his stint with ATC. He loves living in the Presidio, enjoying the many running trails and the beautiful views. Tim is a bundle of energy, and we don't even think he takes amphetamines. He has already wowed us with his culinary skills and we can't wait to see what comes of his desire to get an ATC sports team together. I suppose we're also pretty excited to see what he accomplishes as he reaches out to engage San Francisco residents in our Campaign.

Annual Donors 2009 (so far!)

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OTHER IN-KIND DONORS

Condom Distribution

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DISCOUNTED GOODS PROVIDERS

San Francisco Food

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DURING 2009, DONATIONS

WERE MADE:

Volunteer hours

matched through the

Gap Foundation Money

for Time Program:

Allison MacQueen

Felder

Donation matched

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& Co's Employee

Community

Involvement Program:

Sanjiv & Joey Chawla

Diwali Group (via

Sanjiv Chawla)

Mychelle Turner

Making our clients look like a million bucks

Soft Skin, Silky Hair and Clean Bodies. These are three things that will not be in short supply at ATC for the next year or so. Why, you ask? Because Hunter Amenities recently donated 6,000 beautiful soaps, shampoos and lotions to At The Crossroads (and Wide Range Transportation Services provided free shipping!). We have been handing them out on outreach and in 1-to-1 meetings for the past couple of months, and they are a huge hit. Katie Morris and Jason McCarthy, two of our great volunteers, heard that we were running low on hygiene items, and contacted Jason's brother Jeremy, who works for Starwood Hotels and Resorts. Jeremy, who has a relationship with Hunter Amenities, contacted them, and the rest is extremely hygienic history. We are so grateful for this generous donation!



How sweet it is! Healthy baked goods for a cause.



It's no secret that people generally appreciate a good baked treat. Now with the help of Baking for Good, we can harness the power of baked goods to help our youth. Here's how it works: check out <http://bakingforgood.com/causes/nonprofit/at-the-crossroads>, buy some of their fabulous cookies, and 15% of your purchase can go to At The Crossroads. How sweet is that? And, as if that wasn't good enough, they use local, organic ingredients to make their delectable goodies. Find a reason not to buy something, we dare you.

Volunteers=ATC Bliss

In 2009, more than 250 people contributed 2000 hours of their time to At The Crossroads. 2000 is also the approximate number of counseling meetings we will have with our clients this year. When volunteers give an hour of their time, this frees up an hour of time for staff members to meet with clients, to help them figure out who they want to be, and how to get there. Basically, what this means is that we would not have a program without our volunteers. If you are one of the people who made candy packs, put away food, folded clothing, scrubbed floors, stuffed or addressed envelopes, made birthday cards, or packed food boxes, then you made our work with our youth possible. We are so grateful to each and every one of you!



ATC Around the World

Phil Chan, a former ATC staff member who helped make the I Think I Can Campaign a tremendous success in 2008, shows off his ATC pride in a Rwandan tin mine. Phil left ATC to go to med school, and is currently traveling around the world helping out populations in need. While he is gone, we are happy that he has not forgotten his ATC roots.

Wanna show off your world love, ATC-style? Send us a picture wearing an ATC t-shirt in a distant place, and we may put you in our next newsletter! Admittedly, it may be quite the challenge to top Mr. Chan.

Hop on Board the 2010 **I Think I Can** Campaign!

Our New Year's Prediction:

2010 will be an amazing year - for you *and* for ATC's clients!

Why?

Read this part aloud:

"I Think I Can, I Think I Can, **I THINK I CAN!**"

Now join our campaign!

We're on a roll

The 80 participants in our 2009 campaign have raised \$76,968 (so far) from 1,295 donations. This has paid for us to reach 800 young people on the streets of San Francisco and help them build outstanding lives.

What people are saying:



"It helped me get my BLOG going!
It was motivating."
—Tracy Wright Corvo



"It helped me achieve my goal by
pumping me up with all of the
love and support. I felt I had to go
beyond my goals." —Jeff Bostic



"I decided to join the campaign for two
reasons: 1) Knowing what incredible
things ATC does, I could not wait to get
involved!; 2) Knowing that I was going
to reap personal benefits was icing on the
cake!" —Liz Wei



Top 5 Reasons to join the 2010 Campaign:

- 1) It is as easy or as hard as you want it to be.
- 2) You have a New Year's resolution you want to keep, something you want to give up for Lent, or some goal that matters to you.
- 3) No goal? We don't judge, and we don't care! All you need is the desire to help raise support and awareness for homeless youth, and the willingness to tell your friends about ATC.
- 4) It doesn't matter if your friends are rich or poor. Seriously, the Campaign works for all. It is the magical, recession-proof **LITTLE ENGINE FOR GOOD**.
- 5) You deserve to do something good for yourself, and our clients deserve all of us to care about them.

**Sign up now at campaign.atthecrossroads.org
More to come in December**