



NEWSLETTER

Fall 2012: Disconnection

Connection, or lack thereof, has a profound impact on the lives of our clients. When they have no one they trust who believes in them, their sense of what the world has to offer can be severely limited. But when they feel connected, safe, and supported, all of a sudden, they begin to see possibilities for themselves that were previously hidden, and they pursue those options with vigor and enthusiasm. This newsletter explores the theme of disconnection, its effects on people's lives, and how it can be overcome.

The Cost of Disconnection

There are plenty of statistics out there about the numbers of disconnected youth. You can find the rates at which youth drop out of school, fall into the criminal justice system, have unsuccessful foster care placements, and so on. These numbers are part of the story, but they don't tell us much about what disconnection is, or why being connected really matters.



Alicia has plans for her life, and she's looking for help to get there

For the people going through it, disconnection is not about whether they achieve a set of outcomes, or follow a certain trajectory into independence. Disconnection is a feeling, a gnawing worry and insecurity. It limits their options and their perception of their options, and it is deeply personal.

It starts at home

Alicia, an ATC client for seven years, is palpably aware of her disconnection. "I feel depressed because I don't have anybody. It's hard to wake up every day and want to talk to somebody, but you can't." For her, as for many young people,

this is not a new feeling. It started with the first support network she should have had: her family. "I never had nobody, from my family on down. I've always felt by myself."

Matthew's mother was around when he was growing up, but she regularly worked long hours to support her family, and she was often away from home. Matthew, an ATC client for one year, often stayed with babysitters overnight while his mother worked a graveyard shift at the bar. "I remember," he recalls, "I was four years old, and I asked my babysitter, 'Can I go out and look for my mom?' It's 12 o'clock at night and they say, 'Yes.'" Early on, the people he was supposed to trust were not able to provide the regular care he needed.

Jay Jay, an ATC client for one year, gets his independence from his mother, who, despite being a 23-year-old single mother of three, completed a college degree. The self-sufficiency

began at home. Family is the support system you are given by default. If that system functions, you have a base for receiving healthy support. If it doesn't function, the question becomes: how do you develop one for yourself? If the people you are supposed to rely on from the beginning let you down, how do you begin to trust again?

With a little help from friends

Often, early disconnection compels young people to focus on themselves for support. In some ways, Jay Jay is happy to have limited backing from his family. "As much as I don't get that support," he says, "I'm also really happy I don't, because it teaches me to support myself and grow and become independent." But youth can only make it so far on their own, and eventually, they turn to those around them for help. Jay Jay tries to build supportive networks with the people he meets. "Most times I end up meeting people and making good friendships," he says, "and through the friendships there becomes benevolence."

"It's hard to wake up every day and want to talk to somebody, but you can't."

-Alicia, ATC Client for 7 Years

she instilled in him came in handy when she kicked him out of the house at 18 years old. "One night, I checked my email and it was like, 'You're moving on, it's the bag you got on your shoulders, kid.'"

For Alicia, Matthew, and Jay Jay, disconnection

For youth with unstable home situations, friends frequently become family. Maintaining connections, however, can be a challenge. Basic differences in lifestyles, priorities, and schedules can come between people, especially when the people involved experience daily

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Letter from the Director

Rob Gitin

We met Steven (name changed) on outreach about eight years ago. Since then, we've seen him around 250 times. Usually he has few words to say, but occasionally he opens up. We have told him many times that we would be psyched to meet with him one-to-one, but he rarely sets up a meeting, and when he does, he never shows. The only times we have ever been able to meet individually and talk with him are when one of our counselors happens to be on Market Street during the day with extra time on her hands, runs into him, and offers to buy him a burger right then and there. Then he sits down and talks with us about his life.

Disconnection is a common denominator for our clients, but for some it is more ingrained and pronounced than for others. Almost none of our youth have consistent, safe, unconditional relationships in their lives. Some of them, when given the opportunity to make this connection, quickly grab on to it, like a thirsty person offered a drink. These are kids whom we start meeting with soon after we first see them on the streets. Others need to see us 20, 40, or 60 times, and slowly open up to us, before they are ready to talk with us deeply about their lives. The majority of our clients fit into this category.

But there is a small percentage of our clients with whom, until now, we have struggled to make a meaningful connection. They are the most disconnected of our clients, not necessarily by virtue of having fewer existing connections, but because of the difficulty they experience in forming new ones. We see them on outreach again and again. We slowly get to know them. They recognize us, and feel at least somewhat comfortable with us, but it doesn't go any further. They don't meet with us individually, or if they do, it happens so infrequently that the relationship hits a low ceiling. They don't open up to us about their lives, their goals, and their challenges. Consequently, we are severely limited in the role we can play in helping them move forward.

The reasons that make it hard for them to connect are diverse and complex. They are afraid to let anyone in. They have lost hope that their lives can change, so why get to know these "helpers?" Their days are so chaotic that even if they do want to sit down and talk more, they can't make a meeting that is 4 hours in the future, let alone 24 hours away. They have severe mental health issues that make it hard to talk about things, or make it hard to remember or prioritize a meeting. They are fiercely, and I mean fiercely, independent, so much so that consciously taking the time to discuss their lives and receive help is a ridiculous and even offensive idea. They aren't thinking about anything more than how to survive the day, and everything else doesn't matter.

Even though they face challenges that make it harder to build new relationships, this doesn't mean it can't happen, and it doesn't mean that those relationships can't have the same profound, transformative effects on them that they do on other clients. It just means that these disconnected clients need a specific strategy and program model that reduces the obstacles, and makes it easier for them to connect. This is why At The Crossroads is incredibly excited to launch our new Street-Based One-to-One Counseling program, which you can read more about on the next page. We believe it will allow us to form deep, meaningful relationships with clients with whom we would otherwise fall short.

This new program is long overdue. The kids it will prioritize, young people like Steven, need and deserve more help than we are currently providing them. It has been frustrating, and at times heart-breaking, to see them struggling, and to not be able to offer them the right kind of help. It will be equally heartening to create new opportunities for these youth. These are the kids that ATC had in mind when we started 15 years ago, the ones who would otherwise fall through the cracks.

Electronic copies of previous newsletters are available to view at www.atthecrossroads.org/newsletters



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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 four nights a week in two areas of San Francisco: Downtown/Tenderloin 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 disconnected youth in San Francisco.



At The Crossroads lets me know that I am not alone, that I don't have to be by myself; I don't have to feel like I can't do anything.

-Marlon, ATC client

Announcing our new Street-Based One-to-One Counseling program!

The name is decidedly unwieldy, but we think the program itself is very cool! It will enable ATC to make a much bigger impact on the lives of our most disconnected clients. It's pretty simple to explain:

- ▶ Every month, ATC will draw up a list of 30-60 clients whom we have seen many times during nighttime street outreach, but with whom we have not been able to build deeper relationships. These are youth who have never met with us one-to-one, or have only done so on rare occasion.
- ▶ During the day, our most experienced counselors will walk the streets of the Downtown/Tenderloin & Mission neighborhoods, looking for these clients.
- ▶ When the counselor sees one of these clients, she will invite him to grab a bite.
- ▶ She'll take him out to lunch, and have an on-the-spot counseling meeting - no wait, no barriers, and no hoops to jump through.



We have learned over the years that when we are able to forge in-depth, long-term, unconditional counseling relationships with our clients, amazing things happen. This new program will enable us to build these relationships with the youth with whom we have the hardest time connecting. We will be accomplishing our mission in a new and improved way!



Matthew looks for support from friends and service providers

instability. Matthew is now connecting on a deeper level with some of his friends, but has experienced loss with others. “Everyone’s schedules clashed, and there was definitely a sense of a larger space growing between us. At the same time I felt like I really needed support from my friends, and it was really emotional.”

It is a tragic reality that, on the streets, life is far from certain. One by one, the people Alicia used to hang out with in the Mission District have passed away, even though she is only 26 years old. The loss of her friends is a pain she feels daily. “I think about them every day,” she said. “We supported each other through every situation in life. I thought we were all gonna grow up and look at each other’s accomplishments, but now I’m by myself.” For youth with little family, losing friends can be devastating, and can reinforce the feeling that all they have is themselves.

Getting into the spiral

When youth isolate themselves, disconnection becomes self-perpetuating. Negative experiences and losses leave youth with lingering fears, uncertainties, and anger, which can prevent them from connecting with sources of support that may be available to them. Alicia lost the people she trusted most. Now she finds it difficult to trust anyone. “People are fake,” she explains. “They say one thing, but they mean another. And I don’t have time for that.” Her mistrust has kept her from working with many supportive services that are available to homeless folks.

When Matthew first moved from the East Bay, he went through the phone book looking for services that could help him. He wants to get what support he can from services, but his own mental health has gotten in the way, and left him with lingering insecurities. “I have a hard time coping with certain kinds of emotions,” he explains. “That could be the difference between me wanting to come [to ATC] and pick up my food or not wanting to see anyone

else and staying in my room.” Participating in a program’s requirements depends on his mental state, and that can change from day to day. “It really comes down to, ‘What can I deal with today? What can I openly express and not see repercussions? It gets difficult.’”

Jay Jay stays away from certain service providers because their environments affect his self-image, and fill him with fear for his future. He recalls doing an intake questionnaire for General Assistance and having an anxiety attack. “She was asking me all these questions, and it was beating on my mentality and my own self support system and how I feel about myself,” he says. “You grow up and your parents say, ‘You don’t want to be that kid on the street,’ and now you’re sitting there and you’re in that environment, and you’re that person now.”

Rules rule

When Jay Jay accesses services, he needs to feel that the help he receives will not come at the cost of his sense of self-worth. “You walk into the situation and you ask yourself, ‘How much are they going to help, and what are they gonna ask from me?’” Intake procedures and rules, or simply being asked to go to an environment that’s outside of his comfort zone, all factor into Jay Jay’s openness to accessing a service provider.

For youth with mental health challenges, the rules that come along with many service providers’ programs are already daunting. If policies are not communicated clearly and transparently, they can be prohibitive. Matthew lost his housing at a youth services nonprofit after four months. “I was definitely in distress,” he says. “You can’t just give someone a place to stay for four months and say, ‘OK, you should have taken care of this your first month,’ when no one told you the rules, the rights, the regulations.”

Alicia feels that the rules and regulations governing many organizations’ work are often enforced at the expense of the client’s individual needs. Describing a domestic violence services program she used, she says, “I didn’t feel like I got any support from them. They believed in what they believed in. That’s all they cared about. They were not open to listening to someone that was actually in that situation.” Alicia was unwilling to accept the model that many service providers use when talking about domestic violence. It did not fit her personal experience. The program’s insistence that she adopt their model aggravated her. When she tried to tell them as much, they told her, “You don’t like it, there’s the door.”

Needing to be understood

Without understanding where each individual is coming from, conflicts often arise that result in kids getting kicked out of or leaving services, perpetuating their disconnection. Because of this, listening to young people’s lived experiences is probably the single most important factor in making a lasting connection.

Jay Jay got his first job at 14-and-a-half years old. Now, he reflects, “Working was never as hard as being unemployed and homeless and trying to survive every day. The days are like 48-hour days.” When faced with intake procedures that sometimes take weeks, it seems to him that “they’re really not looking at the individual and saying, ‘OK, this person is sleeping on the streets and they need help today, they need a place to stay today.’”

“You don’t want to be that kid on the street, and now you’re sitting there and you’re in that environment. You’re that person now.”

-Jay Jay, ATC Client for 1 Year

For many people like Alicia, having someone genuinely listen to them is a key part of building trust, without which there is no basis for support. When Alicia talks about her ideal support, she wants “someone to listen to me. To honestly listen to me and not judge me. To not be fake.” Only after a comfortable foundation has been established is she open to other, more concrete, services that may be offered to her.

Staff members showing genuine concern and compassion is often a litmus test for young people. Jay Jay, Alicia, and Matthew all commented on their feeling that, as Matthew put it, “there are a lot of people out there who just do their job for the paycheck.” If a young person feels that the person or organization they’re interacting with is more focused on their own interests than on those of their clients, it undercuts any chance at a connection. Without initially establishing trust, helping youth move forward on other outcomes becomes quite difficult.

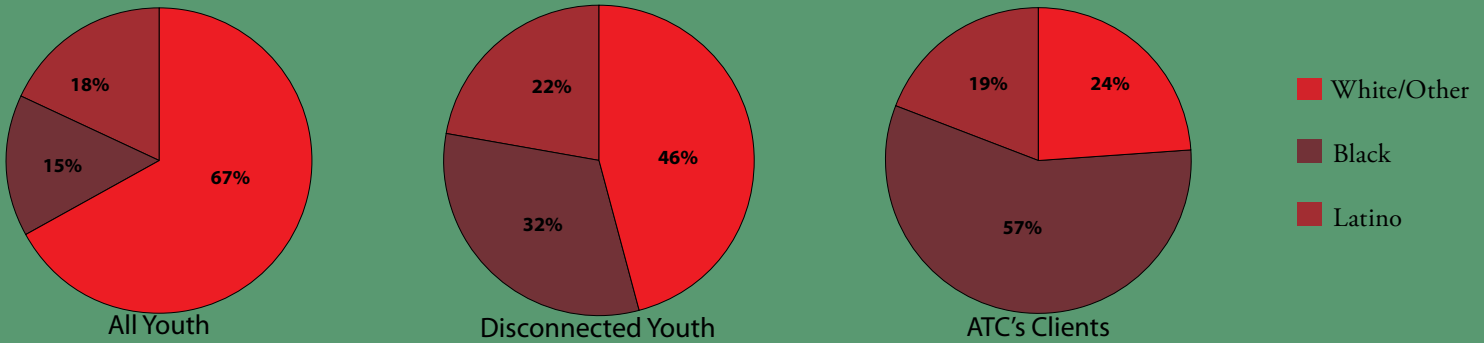
Looking forward

For young people who have been disconnected from an early age, rebuilding trusting relationships is the first step to moving forward. Alicia used to be in and out of jail every week. Now, she's been out for the last two years. Part of her process of regaining stability was being able to work through some of her pent-up feelings. Without trusting supporters, she hadn't had an outlet to do so, and her anger got released in ways that affected her life. "Once I started processing it," she

explains, "I realized that I was just really upset, and I was taking it out on everybody else."

Now Alicia has plans for her future. "I'm gonna get a job, I'm gonna do something different," she says. "I'm amazing. [Saying that] is something me and Shawn (her primary ATC counselor) do. She used to say it all the time. Now I understand why she says it. Because with any situation in my life I can pull my way through it."§

The Connection Between Race and Support



According to the White House Council for Community Solutions, disconnected youth in the U.S. are disproportionately people of color. ATC's clients reflect this even more starkly. These numbers tell us that much more work needs to be done to address race and cultural competence in our schools, workforce, and other institutions, in order to give all youth an equal chance to thrive.

Community Leaders Share Their Insights

There is a community of people who are committed to building more effective support structures for disconnected youth. Two of them are José-Luis Mejía, Young Adult Engagement Coordinator at SF4TAY, and Michael Wald, who has done a bit of everything.

José-Luis and SF4TAY define disconnected youth as "young people that are disconnected from social support systems, whether it's education, the workforce, or adults or other providers that can help them meet their needs." According to Michael, this type of disconnection has both psychological and material impacts. "It leads to not only a lot of personal anxiety, pain, and difficulties during the youth transition period, but it generally leads to, in the long-term, being marginally connected with the workforce and therefore being in long-term poverty." Disconnection makes it harder for youth to reach life goals, from stable housing to healthy family lives, and affects people's futures for years to come.



José-Luis Mejía
Young Adult Engagement
Coordinator, SF4TAY

José-Luis was once a disconnected youth himself. Now, at SF4TAY, he is a youth engagement strategist, qualitative researcher, and advocate. He is also in leadership positions with Conscious Youth Media Crew and the Youth Leadership Institute.

Michael explains that "between 10 and 15 percent of all young people are disconnected for a period of time between 16 and 24." This number, not surprisingly, gets much worse for youth of color. For San Francisco, in particular, José-Luis points out that "[The percentage of disconnected youth] is our population of color, our black and brown youth, specifically."

What makes it difficult

What keeps young people from connecting? For one thing, they generally have more pressing concerns. When youth are preoccupied with caring for themselves and their families, long-term plans drop in priority. "I could care less if people told me about a tutor or this program or that program if it wasn't going to get me paid and help me support my mom and sister," José-Luis explains, discussing the period of his life when he had to hustle on the streets. Michael adds that, "You've got to wait and believe that what you're doing is going to pay off. That's very hard for disconnected youth."

In particular, homeless youth don't have the space to prioritize anything other than survival. "Living on the streets," Michael says, "living from couch-to-couch or place-to-place is so exhausting that it makes it harder to do any of the activities to reconnect." When you need to spend your time finding your next meal or a place to sleep, a GED is irrelevant.

Many youth doubt their own abilities to connect effectively, which keeps them from successfully navigating support. When thinking about the factors that keep youth away from service providers, Michael points to "a

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combination of fear and lack of a sense that they really are capable of belonging and connecting.”

Often, these fears and doubts are reinforced by traumas in the community and at home. When homes are filled with instability and isolation, it can be difficult for youth to maintain connections, even with effective support programs. Even if they have a good experience with service providers, explains José-Luis, “they have to return to that place where trauma is going to keep going on.” When much of youth’s daily lives are surrounded by trauma, it can be very hard to maintain the perspective that they have options to change their futures.

“The most important thing is for [youth] to find at least one person who... provides ongoing information, glue, encouragement, backing, and support.”
-Michael Wald

For young people of color, these traumas are often embedded in the community. A collective traumatic past has been passed down from generation to generation, and can perpetuate high levels of disconnection. “There’s a lot of built-up emotion in our communities that people aren’t equipped to deal with, or don’t know how to deal with, or don’t even know where it comes from,” says José-Luis. He also observes, “If our young people are dealing with racism or classism, and if our schools are not equipping them with the tools to deal with those things, then young people that don’t experience racism and classism are always going to do better.”

Sometimes when young people disengage from family and school, they look for other communities to integrate with. They often turn to other young people who are also disconnected. “[Being homeless] puts you into a system of people who may have skills for living on the streets, but don’t have skills or knowledge for connecting to more establishment kinds of systems,” Michael explains. Until an alternative arises, survival

skills become habits, and reinforce ways of life that keep young people disconnected.

What makes it easier

For youth to reconnect, they need someone who can demonstrate that change is possible, and who can be with them as they make those changes. “The most important thing,” says Michael, “is for them to find at least one person who becomes a support system and provides ongoing information, glue, encouragement, backing, and support for them to reconnect with the education or workforce training systems.” Given the obstacles that disconnected youth face, finding this support system is quite hard. For those who care about these youth and want to provide that support, understanding each young person’s individual background and needs is primary to moving forward. You can’t create a generic road map for a highly personal journey.

Young people look for “unconditional regard,” according to José-Luis, which means showing complete support and acceptance of a person regardless of what that person says or does. To young people, unconditional regard is shown through genuine care and concern for their well-being, which is not connected to any particular outcomes or ways of life the young person may have. “When young people feel that from somebody,” says José-Luis, “you’ve got them.”

According to Michael, most service providers focus on hard outcomes - job training, tutoring, food and housing - and don’t focus on forming genuine connections with young people first. “Because of caseloads,” he explains, “because of preferences, because of distrust, because of a whole lot of factors, they’re not likely to become the kind of emotional support person.” While the services being provided are invaluable, many programs struggle with the most disconnected youth because they do not create a trusting environment first. As a result, there is a tremendous opportunity for growth.

Building a brighter future

José-Luis feels lucky to work in San Francisco, where there are a lot of people who are genuinely concerned about disconnected youth. “As much as there are gaps,” he reflects, “I feel very blessed to be in a community that’s filled with people who really do care.”

We have finite resources, and have to make difficult, thoughtful choices. The government plays a unique role in driving these decisions. To Michael, “The most important aspect for policy makers and for government is how to

allocate what are always limited resources to be most effective, and how to monitor what’s actually occurring with those resources.”

Getting disconnected young people involved in policy discussions is a crucial component of increased effectiveness. In his work, José-Luis does exactly that. “We’re bringing the voice of the people whom [policy makers’] decisions are going to affect to [them], and pushing for their lived experiences, their real needs, to shape those decisions.”

Since most policymakers don’t share the lived experiences of disconnected youth, directly involving young people’s voices is vital. José-Luis sees nonprofits as having a unique role in doing this. “It’s our duty, as the people that have personally experienced these things, or as the people that are directly working with these populations, to get involved in policy work.”



Michael Wald
Professor Emeritus at Stanford University

Michael is a national leader in the field of disconnected youth. He wrote the seminal book on this topic, *Connected by 25*. He served as Deputy General Counsel for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services during the Clinton administration, and was Executive Director of the San Francisco Department of Human Services.

Prevention is a key part of the equation. According to Michael, “Ideally one prevents disconnection by much better working with kids that are beginning to fall behind in school systems initially and by strongly working with kids in the foster care system.”

By taking a culturally competent and proactive approach to preventing disconnection, while also using client input to better serve the needs of each disconnected youth, we can work toward an environment that allows everyone to build the lives they want. As José-Luis says, “We’re concerned about getting more services because the line is so long, and yes, we should get more services so that we can serve that whole line, but shouldn’t we also be working to reduce that line?”§

ATC's Resident Experts Weigh in

Shawn Garety, ATC's Program Manager, and Ivan Alomar, Community Resource Coordinator, have worked with disconnected youth for a collective 30 years. Shawn has seen firsthand many of the effects of disconnection. "Anger is a big one, and frustration," she says, "and most people's experiences reinforce their need to be self-reliant."

"There's a lot of lost hope, a lot of lost self-esteem, and little belief in a better future," says Ivan. "You just settle for what isn't normal being normal." The lack of healthy people in their lives makes our clients distrustful of others and resistant to accepting support, which in turn makes them feel like no one can help them improve their situations.

When youth are able to find a good source of support, and people who truly care, it can change their lives. Shawn explains, "When there's space, or when the resources are really geared to provide support, it can start a chain reaction. People start to feel good, and they keep feeling better, and from there they are able to change things around."

It's about trust

Disconnection starts with the family. Ivan points out, "A lot of stable youth have family, and have support systems that are going to continue to provide housing regardless of the decisions that young person is making." This foundation is especially critical during adolescence, when young people make choices that are often based more on experimentation than on foresight.

Very few of ATC's youth have the benefit of understanding, supportive families. "A lot of folks who we work with maintain some sort of relationship with family," says Shawn, "but I wouldn't say that most folks we work with actually have the support of their families." The relationships are often fraught with abuse and discord, and don't provide youth a sense of safety or consistency.

Among peers, as well, there is a distinction between having friends and having support.

"People will be around a huge group all the time and will tell you individually how alone they feel."

-Shawn Garety

While many young people on the streets are around groups of people all the time, these relationships are not always built on trust. Shawn explains, "People will be around a huge group all the time and will tell you individually how alone they feel."

Great expectations

When young people's personal support networks are not meeting their needs, they can turn to service providers. Often, however, when disconnected youth turn to these sources of support, they encounter other people's expectations that don't necessarily correlate to their own visions for their lives. "They're accessing services," says Shawn, "but they're not getting their needs met, they're getting what the agency or organization thinks they need."



Ivan Alomar, Community Resource Coordinator

Expectations are not always communicated clearly, youth aren't informed of all of their options, and navigating the program becomes an added source of stress for these young people. Moreover, they often don't receive personalized attention from the agency to help them understand the opportunities. As Ivan explains, "They don't know how to get all of the services an organization provides. There should be somebody there who's working to build relationships, who can inform the clients of the opportunities available and support them."

The combination of generalized expectations, highly particular rules, and a lack of transparency pushes many young people away from services.

Service providers are often set up in ways that remind young people of systems, such as schools, that have disappointed them from a young age. "If the systems that they've grown up in have failed and failed and failed," says Ivan, "the fact that they don't want to access other programs that are going to put more rules and hurdles in front of them, making it seem like they're going to fail anyway, it makes sense."

Service shuffling

Each time young people are turned away from services, or have to move on because of time-limits at the service provider, it repeats patterns from their youth, when they constantly transitioned from school to school, and home to home. This "service shuffle," in which youth move from service provider to service provider, looking for support, heightens their sense of instability and disconnection. Shawn explains, "Each time youth are turned away from a service, it reinforces the idea that no one is really going to be there for them, and so they feel more frustrated and isolated than before."

Homeless youths' lives often feel out of control, and isolation makes it even more difficult to gain stability. Having an outside perspective can be essential to regaining a sense of control. "Their situations often feel impossible," says Shawn. "People need to be able to talk about everything that's going on and have someone to say, 'Let's stop the spiral,' and then to actually support the person in making the next step." This requires having people who have known them for a long time, who understand their history, and who can patiently help them move forward.

Meeting people where they're at

When disconnected youth make a meaningful connection with support services, it can be transformative. For Shawn, connecting starts with "trying to really take on the perspective of the people you are working with, and trying to figure out how you can do things or talk about things so that you're speaking the same language." People who hope to work with the most disconnected youth need to listen to each young person's experience. Everyone has a different perspective, and learning to work with each individual in a way that suits him or her is a constant challenge.

Largely, this starts with having the right people doing the work. Youth will continue to work with programs because they like the people who work there. If they don't connect

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on a personal level, they're not likely to stick around. "If you don't have good people doing the work," says Ivan, "that's one of the primary ways in which you're going to turn off young people."

Consistency is also crucial. Disconnected young people are slow to trust, and it often takes time to develop relationships. ATC experiences that regularly on outreach. "Out on the streets, everyone has a hustle, everyone has their own way in which they're getting one over on someone else, and so a lot of times people are really skeptical," explains Shawn. Generally, only after seeing ATC's counselors many, many times can a young person overcome their skepticism and begin to build trust.

Family matters

For most disconnected youth, their struggles started with their families. Because of this, trying to rebuild relationships with family (be it blood family, or the people who took the place of biological family) in a healthier way can be a part of making big changes in their futures. Ivan explains, "Reconnecting with family can be the next step in taking themselves to where they want to be. In a lot of ways it's a process of dealing with their pasts." For many youth with challenging or traumatic histories, this is sometimes about simply making peace.

Reconnection with family is often not an easy process. "There could be old wounds," says Ivan. "There could be people throwing old things back in their faces, and there is going to be disbelief." They are often faced with a difficult situation, in which they want to have a relationship with their family, even though those people may have really hurt them in the past, and still may not be completely safe.

Youth need to be ready to deal with the intense emotions that are bound to come up. Part of being able to navigate this is having a strong knowledge of yourself. "They need to have inner confidence in who they are now, what they want to do, and what they've already accomplished," says Ivan. In many ways, preparing to reconnect allows youth to reflect on and to appreciate the changes they have made, and feel more secure in their plans for the future.



Shawn Garety, Program Manager

Whether a young person's reconnection with family is smooth or turbulent, it is often an important part of moving forward. "When I see a kid who's making successful transitions out of his specific situation, out of homelessness and other things, the connection to family, or the important people that they consider family, can be an important part of that equation."

Although forming trusting bonds with the most disconnected youth is difficult, it is essential to helping them re-engage with their goals. You have to know someone very well to help them figure out their own path to building a life with happiness, connection, and fulfillment. As Ivan says, "you need to start with the relationship."§

Join Us in Thanking This Year's Awesome ATC Fundraisers!

I Think I Can Campaign Participants

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| S A Archer | Jeff Gillis |
| Sam Ball & Ann Hughes | Rob Gitin |
| Channa Bannis | Joey Hess |
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| Dave Barnard | Aron Klein |
| Branwyn Bigglestone | Becky Knoll |
| Zena Caputo | Andrew McClelland |
| Kristina Chance | Jason Menayan |
| Lynn Charles | Michael Nguyen |
| Val Cizek | Michael Osorio |
| Le Dao | Bonnie Puckett |
| Mark Dwight | S Ravynheart |
| Shae Faverty | Amber Rehling |
| Philena Franc | Antoinette Siu |
| Jonina Friedman | Amanda Stein |
| Tamara Galanter | Syd Wayman |
| Janice Gligiuto | Liz Wei |

Summer SunDay Hike Participants

- | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Cora Albrecht | Brian Davidson | Doug Karpa | Crystal Pham |
| Stephanie Allen | Troy Dayton | Megan Kelly-Sweeney | Jessi Prue |
| Marianna Aue | Dina De Veer | Katie Kuhl | Wendy Quezada |
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| Shwetika Baijal | Alex Eckert | Liza Kunz | Jacquelyn Reyes |
| Channa Bannis | Lisa and Laurel Etling | Chrissy Lacy | Jody Richardson |
| Lesley Benedict | Socolow | Lenka Leon | Hannah Roeyer |
| Lisa Benham | Glenn Fernandes | Betty Lim | Sarah Russo |
| Kirk Benttinen | Carol Ferri | Kelly Lones | Kirsten Schneider |
| Vicky Brodsky | Chelsie Fish | Steve Lones | Owen Schoppe |
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| Tiffany Bryant | Ryan Francis | Alex Miley | Kendra Shanley |
| Christine Buchheit | Jenny Gallaher | Ian Miley | Lauren Sir |
| Kim Burton Laurance | Debita Garcia | Nicholas Miley | Dani & Irene Siroscopy |
| Kathy Cabassa | Alison Gemmell | Charles Miller | Aerin Sizelove |
| Sarah Cabassa | Daniel Gibson | Michael Miller | Roxanne Somboonsiri |
| Courtney Casabat | Laura Gigliello | Jon Mitchell | Chris Templin |
| Emily Chan | Max Hayashi | Leila Monroe | Jean Templin |
| Lindsay Chew | Yvonne Herron | Max Montgomery | Nitya Velu |
| Whitney Clarke | Christina Hsieh | Amy Morikami | Kai We |
| Shanna Connor | Tzu-Hsin Huang | Lucy Nagle | Yvonne Weidmann |
| Elsa Contreras | Rebecca Huval | Yumi Nam | Quan Wells |
| Dan Couch | Jenn, Kevin, Nathaniel, & Nicholson | Emmy Negrin | Karen Wessenberg |
| Laura Crahan | Brenda Jin | Maciej Paluch | Jamie Williams |
| Joanna Cyprys | Nicole Jones | Dominic Perrone | Jeff Wishner |
| Margo Daniels | Jennifer Jurivich | Nada Perrone | Nicole Wong |
| Martine Darwish | | Frank Petkovich | |

Spinning Spokes for Homeless Folks Participants

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Lizzy Fallows | Noel Kopp |
| Neil Gehani | Jonathan Steele |

Annual Fund Donors, May - November 2012

Because of the plethora of amazing ATC donors, we are only able to acknowledge those who have contributed since our last newsletter. To see all of our 2012 Annual Fund donors, go to: www.atthecrossroads.org/contributors

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*Donations made in honor of the following:

- Mateo Burch
- Mark Dwight
- Timothy Getz & Genevieve L'Heureux
- Rob Gitin
- Mary Gregory
- Shelby & Raymond Rosenberg
- Jon Sege

FOUNDATIONS

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Anonymous Foundation, \$25,000

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Commonwealth Restaurant, \$7,430

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Mom's The Word, \$1,000

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memory of another.

Our donors are extremely important

to us. If you notice omissions or errors,

please email jons@atthecrossroads.org

I Think I Can Campaign, Summer SunDay Hike, and Spinning Spokes for Homeless Folks Cycling Event Donors

We wish there were enough space to acknowledge everyone who donated to the 2012 I Think I Can Campaign, Summer SunDay Hike, or Spinning Spokes for Homeless Folks Cycling Event, but there are too many - 1,293 - to list. A good problem to have! Find their names immortalized at:

atthecrossroads.org/contributors

THANK YOU!

Welcome to Our New Outreach Counselor!



Irina Alexander

From Washington, DC, **Irina** is the newest addition to the ATC family. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Criminology & Criminal Justice, but we're 95% sure she's not an undercover cop. Her previous experience includes a cushy internship doing outreach to sex workers on the streets of DC until 6 AM. Her empathetic nature and positive vibes have helped our clients connect with her right off the bat. Her coworkers have grown pretty fond of her, too. When she's not at ATC, she's either planning her costume for next year's Burning Man or participating in group meditations (they're not as relaxing as they sound). She loves yoga and unicorns, and, even better, unicorns doing yoga. We don't know why it took her so long to move to California. She was born to live here.

And to Our New Board Members!



Kathryn Corro

We first met **Kathryn** through her involvement in The Echoing Green Foundation's Social Investment Council; EG was ATC's initial funder. We could sing Kathryn's praises for days, but we'd much rather talk about her adorable new baby Sierra! Sure, we could talk about her being the founder of ZangZing, a group photo sharing website, or how she was a principal at Rockpoint Group before that. We could mention that her dad is a world-class storyteller. We could mention that the next time we see her without a smile on the face will be the first time, or that she oozes compassion and integrity. Or we could discuss her love of the outdoors. Okay, so I guess it's hard for us not to tell you what we like about her. But, seriously, her baby girl is adorable.



Nada Perrone

We first met **Nada** at Board Match, and we quickly learned that she is nothing if not well prepared. She clearly had done her homework on ATC, and every time we talked with her afterwards, she had an impressive list of questions. She's a sharp one. She is the manager of research and analytics in the fundraising arm of the Gladstone Institutes, a biomedical research organization in San Francisco. She's worked in fundraising for many years, and we will be gravely disappointed in her if she raises anything less than a billion dollars for ATC. She aspires to run the Boston Marathon (having run many half-marathons), and is working to conquer her fear of heights by, among other things, climbing the Patagonia glaciers. She loves coffee, but it doesn't really seem like she needs caffeine, does it?



Jessi Prue

Jessi met us at Board Match, and it was clear after about two seconds of talking with her that she is a fairly impressive person. She's one of those people who does a million things and makes it look easy. She provides consulting services to funders and nonprofits throughout the United States as an associate with the Nonprofit Finance Fund, and is excited to lend ATC her financial expertise. She recently completed her first Ironman Triathlon, and afterwards went salsa dancing until 4 AM. The second part of that statement is a lie, but the first is true. She aims to do a marathon on all seven continents, and only has four to go. She has already helped us whip our financial reporting and controls into shape. We look forward to her helping ATC before taking on world domination.

Announcing Our New Advisory Board Members!



ATC created an Advisory Board for people who are really excited about helping ATC grow and bring in new resources, but who don't have tons of time. We are thrilled to welcome our first two members, **Jon Merriman** and **Kevin McCracken**! Jon has been supporting ATC for the past couple of years by having his company, Merriman Capital, serve as the lead sponsor for our Summer SunDay hike. In just a few months, he has already brought in numerous new supporters. He is incredibly enthusiastic about our work and our youth! Kevin, who was on ATC's founding Board of Directors, has been involved since our earliest days. His company, Social Imprints, has been a generous in-kind donor, and Kevin has had just about everyone he knows become involved with our organization. Kevin is an ATC zealot and connoisseur of the highest order.

Special Happenings in 2012



GQ recognizes our E.D. (for his substance, not his style)

In October, **GQ** recognized Rob Gitin, ATC's Executive Director and co-founder, with a prestigious Leader Award, presented at their annual Gentlemen's Ball! This award, generously sponsored by **Movado**, honors men striving for the betterment of society, and came with a \$6,000 donation to At The Crossroads.

While we think Rob wholeheartedly deserves recognition for his 15 years of dedicated leadership, we were more than mildly amused that it came from GQ. And no, we don't mean Gardener's Quarterly; we mean the one and only Gentlemen's Quarterly! Rob is not necessarily known for his eye for fashion, to say the least. Though we must admit, we were shocked to see how well he cleaned up! His salesman at Bloomingdale's worked miracles. Apparently, Kelly Ripa, Michael Strahan, and Ted Danson thought he fit in nicely.

If you see Rob, don't ask him about his new famous friends, unless you have two hours of time to kill. Still, you should run, not walk, to your local newsstand and see Rob striking a pose in the November issue of GQ magazine. A special thank you to **JJ Ramberg** for nominating Rob for this award, and for being so enthusiastic about ATC. It is really nice to see the great work of Rob and At The Crossroads being recognized by a magazine known for both its substance and its style.

Genentech
A Member of the Roche Group

Genentech proves there is never too much of a good thing

ATC has been big fans of **Genentech** for a while, given their amazing support over the past three years, in the form of grants and employee volunteers. But this year, their impact on ATC is fairly ridiculous. It started with their Genentech Gives Back week, when they introduced us to hundreds of Genentechies at an employee expo, volunteered more than 100 hours of time to help us get out our mailing, and donated a few grand to boot. They then picked ATC as the sole U.S. recipient of their fantastically-named Bay To Beakers employee fundraising walk, resulting in \$25,000 raised. And, apparently, that wasn't quite enough, so they gave ATC a \$20,000 grant. They also match employee donations, and our longest-term office volunteer, **Laura Depalatis**, is a Genentechie. Like we said, their support is ridiculous. In the best kind of way.

Allianz 
Foundation for North America

BLACKROCK[®]

Allianz & BlackRock pave the way for ATC's new program

Two new major corporate donors provided half of the money ATC needs to launch our new program for our most disconnected youth. Through the efforts of Advisory Board member **Kevin McCracken** and donor **Janet Ruiz**, we were connected with the **Allianz Foundation for North America**, one of the few foundations that expressly focuses on homeless youth. They recently gave ATC a \$50,000 grant. A couple months later, one of our favorite donors/volunteers/Campaigners/hikers/people, **Lisa Etling**, put a great deal of time and energy into preparing a grant application for ATC with her employer, **BlackRock**. In August, they awarded ATC a \$15,000 grant, and BlackRock is excited to get their employees involved in ATC as volunteers and donors. We are so grateful to these two companies for making an investment in young people on the streets of San Francisco.



I Think I Can

Got New Year's resolutions?

Maybe you want to read more
Or eat more spinach
Or run a marathon

Need motivation?

Give your friends and family
the chance to support you.

We can help.

Set a goal.
Make it happen.

Make 2013 your year.

Feel good raising money for homeless youth.

Sign up now:
campaign.atthecrossroads.org



Summer SunDay | 2012

On August 19th over **120 participants** trekked up Mt. Tam, cheered on by **35 volunteers**. They enjoyed food from **over 30** Bay Area farms, markets, & restaurants, and raised **over \$40,000** for homeless youth in San Francisco!

Thanks so much to everyone who took part!

We want to extend a huge thank you to all of our **extremely generous in-kind donors**, without whom we couldn't put on this event. This list should give some idea of the picnic our hikers enjoyed. Jealous? Join us next year!

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Andante Dairy | Haight Street Market | Safeway |
| Anna's Daughters' Rye Bread | Hamada Farms | Social Imprints |
| Anthony's Cookies | Happy Girl Kitchen Co. | Sports Basement |
| Bella Viva Orchards | Ike's Place | Sukhi's Gourmet Indian Foods |
| Bi-Rite Market | Jelly Belly | Sweet Things |
| Bryan's Market | K & J Orchards | Sweet treats to eat |
| Canyon Market | Marqué Press | Trader Joe's |
| Clif Bar & Company | Mission Minis | Whole Foods Market |
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Special thanks to our lead sponsor: **Merriman Capital**

