



NEWSLETTER

Spring 2012: Transitions

Transitions are at the core of ATC's work. Look at our mission statement: "We reach out to homeless youth and young adults at their point of need, and work with them to build healthy and fulfilling lives." Seemingly simple words, they bring up complex and powerful questions. How do you help people navigate all the transitions that go into building healthy and fulfilling lives? How do you help them move on from the painful transitions they've experienced in the past, and find the hope that they can experience positive, life-transforming changes in the future? We delve into these important topics in this newsletter.



Cuba is building the life he wants, one day at a time

ATC's Clients Discuss Transition

Mike started stealing when he was six years old. He stole from stores, not people, and he stole because he had to. He grew up in Olympia, Washington, the child of a 16-year-old single mother. For this newsletter, he writes us from Solano State Prison. "When my brother was two," he writes, "I remember many times that I had gone to neighbors' houses, or stolen from stores to get food, diapers, and toys for us." His writing is sincere and thoughtful, in a way that inspires trust.

Ruby left her mother's house when she was 13 years old, seeking refuge from a tumultuous home life. She landed in transitional youth shelters, eventually moving in with a family friend over forty miles from home. She has experienced transitions that have been both challenging and joyful. Throughout all of these, she has no doubt been aided by her sharp mind; she is one of the most reflective young people you will ever meet.

Erica was kicked out of her mother's house when she was 14. By then, she was already living the "street life," and had grown to see herself as a disappointment. "I hung out on the streets, I went with the wrong crowd, I fought. I was just a negative person." When she talks about her past, it stands in stark contrast to who we see today, lovingly caring for her four-year-old daughter.

Cuba talks about the rampages he went on when he was younger. "I'd go crazy," he says, "I'd just flip out. I set a whole building on fire. Or I'd bust out all the windows of somebody's house or something." He will tell you about his fights in the group home, and about his experience in jail. He will also tell you about a steak he cooked last night, seasoned with jalapeño juice and pepper. He will tell you that every Sunday he deep cleans his apartment, and about the latest book he's reading. He will tell you all of this between bites of Starburst fruit twists.

Transition is a constant. Who people are now can be completely different than who they were in the past. Two basic questions form the framework for talking about transitions, and define people's lives: Where are they coming from? And where are they going? How ATC's clients navigate the transitions from who they have been to who they want to be is the key to building the lives they want and deserve.

The abuse took its toll on Mike's mother, as did the pressure of raising two young sons. Mike writes that his 20-year-old mother "withdrew into depression, and locked herself in her bedroom for days at a time." Mike was left to fend for himself and his brother. With extremely limited guidance, he became a self-described "feral child." At night, he would steal bicycles and ride them around. One night when he was seven years old, he was found by the police. He was taken to the station, where he stayed until he was picked up by a woman he had never met: his foster mother.

Big changes in the home can lead children to assume more adult roles, and can accelerate certain transitions to a frenetic pace. Young people are often unprepared for these changes. Ruby's father died when she was nine years old. After this, her mother's mental illness, which had previously flared up sporadically, "ran rampant." As a result,

"You come from the muck and the mire, and you can't see that brightness at the end of it. Then somehow you end up there and you look back and it's like, 'wow.'"

-Ruby, ATC Client

Where They're Coming From

Many of ATC's clients have experienced nearly non-stop transitions in their lives, beginning at an early age. Often, childhood was a period of profound instability. Mike's mother was 16 years old when he was born. As far as he remembers, his father was never around. Before Mike was four years old, his mother began a relationship with the man who would father his half-brother. He was also the man who would inflict serious abuse on Mike and his mother.



After many years, Ruby is learning to take care of herself

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Letter from the Director

Rob Gitin

"I just got my first set of dishes!" For many people, this would not be cause for celebration. But for Joyce (name changed), it meant the world to her. When she called to tell me this, we had been working together for about six years, and she had just moved into her first stable living situation. Joyce had been homeless for ten years, starting at the age of 15. She had spent years eating fast food when she was lucky, or eating out of trash cans when she wasn't. Almost everything important to her had been lost or stolen over the years; nothing in her life was permanent. So I understood the significance of the dishes.

These dishes meant that she had a place to store them. They meant that she had a stove to cook real food on. They meant that she had enough money to buy dishes. They meant that she had money that didn't need to be spent on food or shelter. They meant that she had a place to invite friends over to for dinner. They meant that she trusted this new place wouldn't go away, and that it made sense to invest in something permanent. They meant that she had a home.

And so we celebrated. She came by the office, and got a box full of food that she could eat off her new dishes. We talked about how far she had come- how for so many years, the idea of stability and health was almost a pipe-dream, although she never completely lost hope. We discussed how hard she had worked to get into this apartment, how many hoops she had jumped through before she was approved. These included an 18-month waitlist, two separate 20-page housing applications, and being asked a variety of extremely personal questions by strangers. We joked around about the crazy situations that she had found herself in while homeless, laughing at scary, bizarre, or overwhelming moments that she was able to find levity in. And, most importantly, we talked about how amazing she was for all that she had accomplished, and how great it was that she had purchased her first set of dishes.

Many people identify their closest friends by thinking about who they can count on during their hardest moments. Of equal importance is who you can count on on to celebrate your accomplishments with you and take real joy in what you have achieved. Some accomplishments are easy for others to share in. When you have a baby, get married, buy a house, or get a job, these are things that everyone knows are a big deal, and it is easy for people to rejoice. But sometimes the things that mean the most to us are only known by a few people, and it means the world when they recognize the importance, and make you feel special.

Our clients have had traumatic, abrupt, terrifying transitions throughout their lives. They went through most of these alone, exacerbating the inherent difficulty in them. When they finally get to experience positive life changes, we make sure they have someone to cheer them on who cares about them, has seen them through their ups and downs, and understands the magnitude of their accomplishments. And who will buy them some silverware to go with their new dishes, as we got to do for Joyce.



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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



It's just so purty

Earlier this year, **West Eleven (west11.com)**, a local advertising, marketing, and strategy firm, decided to take on ATC as a pro-bono client, offering to redo our website. To say that we are pleased with their work is a serious understatement. Not only have they done a fantastic job on the site, but they have also been a pleasure to work with, treating ATC with the same dedication, creativity, and professionalism that they would a paying client.

Take a moment and check out the new site at www.atthecrossroads.org. Keep checking back over the coming months, as we will be adding content and features. However, we're so excited, we couldn't wait one minute longer to tell you about it.

Thank you so much to **Gregg Boot**, West Eleven's amazing Chief Creative Officer, for leading this project, and to **Channa Bannis**, ATC's awesome board member, for connecting ATC with West Eleven.

Homepage for the fantastic new ATC website, created by West Eleven

ATC Counselors in Transition



Kris, Brenda, and Naomi. They're silly, but they're dedicated

Take a moment to think about your role models, mentors, and teachers; the people who helped you build your life. You probably felt their impact most during periods of dramatic change. They hopefully supported you unconditionally, and helped you think through important plans. These are the people that our clients have rarely ever had in their lives. Naomi, ATC counselor for five years, explains: "If you didn't learn coping skills or how to take care of yourself, if you didn't have healthy models, or if you didn't have a good support system, it's harder to make transitions. Most of the time [ATC's clients] don't have any of those things." ATC's counselors try to fill this void.

Supporting Counselors

ATC focuses on healthy transitions in every aspect of its work, including its counselor training and supervision. The three counselors featured here worked at ATC a collective 13 years. Their experiences illustrate the power of strong support in cultivating growth. Brenda started working with ATC right out of college. After having volunteered in a peer-counseling context, learning to operate within ATC's rigorous boundaries was a challenge. Naomi began as an outreach volunteer for one year before joining the staff. For her, outreach and counseling felt both natural and challenging at the same time. Kris came to ATC from her job at a residential program. This previous work was highly directive. While ATC's unconditional, empowerment-based model felt intuitive, it was an adjustment.

For Kris, ATC's culture of support helped her grow and gain comfort. "I think there's a lot of safety here in this organization," she says. "There's a lot of allowing people to just be who they are, and giving room for people to grow and learn." Having time and space to adjust is essential. "Over time," says Kris, "starting a new job is like moving into a new place. You slowly unpack and get settled in."

While ATC's counselors have a strong support system in their work, most of their clients do not have this at all. Over the years, Kris, Brenda, and Naomi have used the support they have received to provide the same to the young people they work with.

Supporting Young People

Consistency is key. Because ATC counselors work with the same

youth for years, they are able to reflect back to the clients the positive changes they have seen, empowering youth to gain confidence. As Brenda explains, "We're able to hold those things; for example that two or three years ago you told me you couldn't do this, and now, I'm able to tell you that you just did it. It's really cool to be able to reflect on that with clients." This is crucial, since many times people are not even aware of the changes they make. "I don't even think that a lot of people, let alone young people we work with, understand the changes they go through all the time," says Kris. When positive changes pass by unacknowledged, they become missed learning opportunities. Celebrating when clients accomplish goals helps them clarify the strengths and tools they have, making it easier to use them in the future.

At the same time, many of ATC's clients have not had the space to process difficult changes in their lives. For these youth, talking about painful experiences and emotions is quite challenging. "It's never been allowed," explains Naomi, "so you never know you deserve it."

ATC counselors frequently hear young people say that their friend, cousin, aunt, and so on, recently died, but that it's "OK." This unexpressed grief can grow to be overwhelming, to the point where it is much easier to ignore than to address. When someone says they're "OK," Kris tries to open the door for more conversation. Sometimes, she hears people say, "Honestly, if I tell you right now, I'm going to lose my mind. I can't talk about it, because if I do, I'll fall apart."

Living on the streets makes processing emotions an even greater challenge. When your first priority is survival, taking the time to reflect is a luxury. Still, giving clients the space to feel sadness and pain is a first step to moving beyond it. Brenda is sure to emphasize this, letting people know that "it's OK to feel and be upset, and it's OK to take the space for yourself and go through it."

Through major transitions, having any support system is essential, but the nature of that support makes a big difference. ATC's model stresses that listening is more powerful than giving advice. When empowering young people to take control of their own transitions, this is downright essential. Kris explains that "when you start to put the responsibility on the other person you give them permission. Once you start to become the observer in somebody's life, they can



Naomi and Brenda get ready for outreach

take control, and you're there sharing it and seeing it. I think they really appreciate that."

ATC's unconditional support, through both good outcomes and setbacks, is incredibly important for young people. It also makes witnessing positive transitions a very rewarding experience for counselors. "We are able to be there with them through thick and thin," says Brenda. "We get to share that experience too, and have the privilege to share the joy that comes with an accomplishment."

"I had a very basic idea of what to look forward to... But over the years it got so beautiful, just really amazing."

-Kris, ATC Counselor

Kris relates an experience she's had with one of her clients. "When I first started meeting with her she was living in a SRO. She was lonely, isolated, and not really paying attention to her needs or emotions. Over the years, I've seen her go into permanent housing and then transition into paying her own rent. She went from being isolated to having positive relationships, and trying to find her own social community of like people who are also off the streets." While these external benchmarks are important, Kris is equally impressed with the change that has occurred in this young woman's thinking. "Her thought process was once, 'I want to make all these changes, and they have to be done right now.' But now, she recognizes that this is a lifelong process, it is going to be something to do every day. It's really cool to see that change." These newfound tools can last a lifetime. Rather than the changes themselves, it is clients' developing the skills and confidence to make long-term transitions on their own that is truly rewarding for ATC counselors to witness.

The Things They Take With Them

When Kris came to ATC, she didn't know how it would affect her. "I had a very basic idea of what to look forward to," she says. "Like, 'oh,

I'm going to sit there and listen and be supportive and that will be my job.' But then as I went on, over the years, it just got so beautiful, just really amazing."

This work holds a mirror up to its practitioners. When Kris came on, Naomi and Brenda both told her, "if you don't know yourself and if you aren't comfortable with who you are, this is going to be a really hard job for you." Now she reflects, "I was 23, 24, and I thought I knew myself. Now I'm 27 and I'm like, 'wow, I really know myself.'" Connecting with people every day teaches you about yourself.

These connections are what define this work, and make it so special. "There is never going to be a job like this ever again in my whole life," says Kris. "We get to know amazing, amazing people- the people we work with and the youth we meet, all the long-term relationships we build." These experiences are something that all three counselors will carry forward into their future work.

In December, Naomi transitioned out of ATC and moved back to her native Southern California. There, she will be pursuing her Master's in Speech Pathology. Brenda moved on in February to pursue her dream of becoming an Occupational Therapist. Kris will be leaving her position in August to commit herself full-time to her Master's in Counseling Psychology. For all three, transitioning out of ATC has been a bittersweet experience.

They have had to say goodbye to young people who have already experienced so much change in their lives. Yet, by being open and honest about their own transitions, they hope to show that even when there is loss, there can still be positivity. "Even though they have heard a lot of 'goodbyes' in their lives," Kris explains, "you're giving them an honorable closure. You're giving them a gift of time, and a gift of modeling what it can be like to see a relationship transition in a healthy way." ATC's clients have been both understanding and supportive. "Everyone has been so positive," says Kris. "They've been saying things like, 'well, I'm so happy for you, that's a good thing.' It's been like permission to leave."

The learning goes both ways. While these ATC counselors have aimed to help young people build the lives they want, they also had the opportunity to do the same for themselves. These three counselors left a legacy at the organization, and they will carry ATC wherever they go next. "I'm really happy to have learned all I have learned, and be taking it with me," says Naomi. "I'm really, really grateful for this experience." We're grateful for the three of them as well. §

Kris, Brenda, and Naomi by the Numbers

2,300

Young people they have worked with

6,700

1-to-1 counseling meetings with clients

2

Total number of ATC music videos made

0

The number of other people like them



Kris sings the National Anthem at an SF Giants game to raise money for ATC

Ruby's world changed completely. "I became [my mother's] sole caretaker and provider," she tells me. "At a really young age, I learned how to pay bills. I was driving at a really young age. I wasn't supposed to be driving, but I would have to take [my mother] around."



Mike (with Brenda Covarrubias), will be released next year

Although she did not see it at the time, she now realizes that this period marked the end of her childhood. There was no time to reflect, and no space to think how best to manage what was happening. "It was like that feeling of moving on adrenaline," she says. "I didn't have time to think, 'I'm losing my childhood.' I just knew everything was transitioning, everything was changing."

Seemingly unrelated events can conspire to alter the paths of young peoples' lives. Erica's transition to the streets was sparked by her family's move from one part of the Mission District to another. Growing up in a "family-oriented neighborhood," she would take mud baths in the backyard and play football in the street. "I had a childhood," she says, "and a good one for the most part."

Her father struggled with addiction and her parents fought a lot. Eventually, her mother threw her father out. Erica was devastated, but had no outlet. "I was such a daddy's girl," she reflects. "It was like the one person who really loved me left. I was sad and angry, and I didn't show it." She was nine years old, and she was learning to hold her feelings inside. When she was 13, the family moved. She would wait at 16th and Mission for the bus to school, where she was surrounded by the culture and lifestyle of the streets. "It was scary, but intriguing," she reflects. Eventually, she was drawn into that lifestyle. "The streets called me," she says, "and I went running."

During transitions, it is not always what happens to people that matters, but how they feel about it. These feelings can become more powerful if they remain bottled up. When young people do not learn to cope

emotionally, it makes adapting to changes quite challenging. As a child, there were many things that Cuba did not understand. His mother had relationships with women. He did not understand why his schoolmates would tease him, saying, "why you got two mommies?" and "why you ain't got no dad?" He felt bullied and hurt. What's worse, he felt like he didn't get the answers he wanted. "It seemed like all my questions that I needed answers for were dismissed," he explains.

A growing anger led him to group homes. Surrounded by other angry youth and very strict rules, his struggles deepened. He pushed his complex feelings deeper inside, and learned to pretend. "You had to laugh everything off and play it cool," he explains, "but in all actuality it was never cool. At the end of the day, you act like you get it, but you really don't get it." His mother took her own life when he was 15. His pain and self-blame drove him to act out even more. He found himself in jail, and his life got put on hold. "When I was in jail, I felt like I was stagnant," he says. But Cuba had plans, and with some luck and guidance, he left jail with renewed optimism that things could change again, this time for the better.

Where They're Going

Knowing where you are, and where you want to end up, is essential to successful transitions. Cuba knows what he wants to change, and he is highly motivated. He is working again, and has his own house. Coming from jail and homelessness, he is reveling in the freedom that comes with his own space. "I love just being able to be that free, to be able to walk around my house and do what I want to do." He is figuring out what he can change to move in the direction he wants. Changing old habits is a challenge, and requires discipline. "It's very hard," he reflects. "At the end of the day you just gotta hold yourself accountable."

Cuba often felt like he was going through transitions alone, misunderstood. "I didn't trust nobody," he says. "Everybody was against me." Developing trust and learning to accept support play a huge role in making healthy transitions. Now he is trying to build new relationships, which has involved working through his past, and thinking about the impact he has had on his family. "Everything I went through [with my mother's death], it was two times harder on [my brother and sister], because of my reactions."

For Cuba, building healthier relationships involves overcoming his anger at his mother, whom he feels gave up on him. He hopes this will allow him to open up to his family. "My biggest goal in life is to forgive [my mother] for everything," he tells me. "[If I do that] I could move on with my life and be the big brother [I want to be]." For him, and for many others, the effects of major life changes reverberate for years. Now that he has time and space to work through his feelings, he can move out of the past into the life he wants.

Materially, the past ten years of Mike's life have been stable, because he is in prison, "where nothing changes." Even so, his years incarcerated have been a time of internal change. Dealing with the violent crime he committed triggered overwhelming feelings of guilt. Making it harder was the fact that he had to face these feelings alone. Prison had separated him from the people he cared about. "I thought my life was over at that point," he writes. "I lost the one girlfriend that probably

Changes in Your Brain After



Believe it or not, your brain keeps developing well after your 18th birthday.

Changes in the brain affect our transitions from childhood to adulthood. Chemical changes put the pleasure centers of the brain on overdrive. This period of experimentation, they gain greater independence from those whom they trust, and what behaviors they are comfortable with.

As we navigate transitions, we use certain parts of the brain that get "pruned" down, until we are left with patterns that are essential during emerging adulthood, and build the foundation for features of this period. In the "Emerging Adulthood" period, which lasts from 18 or even 21 to 25, but at closer to 30 years old.

ever really loved me, and who may have been the only person I've loved. And I knew I had to do this by myself."

With a few notable exceptions (primarily, when he decided to go "on the road"), Mike feels his transitions have been negative. Still, he has noticed one positive change during his time in prison. He has cultivated his ability to think analytically, and to put his thoughts on paper. "I flourished writing letters," he says. "I started realizing how critical a thinker I am." He is thinking about the future, especially about his release next year. It is an exciting and scary prospect. "The scary part involves me being homeless with no resources other than ATC. I have no idea where I will lay my head that first night of my release."

Mike feels better prepared to handle transition than in the past. He feels his hardships have made him wiser. He understands the need to access support, and that he'll need help to make a successful transition. When he steps out of the prison walls, he will be leaving a different person

than he was eleven years earlier.

Adolescent and young adult years are filled with transition. People learn both to care for themselves and to use their social networks to build the lives they want. For those who need to take care of others, focusing on their own needs and navigating transitions becomes harder. Now 22, Ruby has taken care of others since she was nine. Finally, she is learning to do the same for herself, in part out of necessity.

Ruby has sickle cell anemia, a blood condition that results in chronic pain and debilitating episodes that lead to hospitalization. Although she's had it since birth, she still struggles with the reality of her disease. "It's really hard," she explains, "to have someone look you in the face and tell you you're going to hurt for the rest of your life." She has slowly realized that she needs to care for herself. "I used to be really focused on taking care of everyone else. I'm starting to focus on taking care of myself, which is a really good thing and I haven't done it in a really long time."

Many transitions are both shared and solitary experiences. More often than not, major transitions affect multiple people. In the end, though, each person experiences these changes in unique ways. As Ruby points out, "You do it with anyone who's around you... Anyone you live with, anyone that's in your life. But there's also something you take away solely by yourself."

Transitions shape the person one becomes. Ruby has acquired an incredible tenacity and an ability to face change. Some of the most difficult changes in her life have led to positive outcomes. "You come from the muck and the mire and the most horrible times where you think you're just going to die, and you can't see that brightness at the end of it and you think it's never going to come. Then somehow you end up there, and you look back, and it's like, 'wow'."

Sometimes new relationships inspire major life transitions. Erica's daughter, Gabriela, was born on Christmas Day, two months premature. Erica's mother came to visit her, and told her something that lit a bulb in her brain: "Everything you do, think, breathe, any action you do, you have to think, how is this going to affect Gabriela?" Becoming a mother was the catalyst for Erica's most dramatic change. "The biggest transition," she explains, "is when I had to stop thinking of me and being greedy, and when I had to start caring."



"All I see is good transitions. I see nothing but good."

-Erica, ATC Client

And Erica does care. Her daughter has cerebral palsy and asthma, and each month attends numerous appointments for her health. Erica has changed her entire life to care for her daughter, and the reasons are very personal. Four years ago, while Erica was in the hospital giving birth, her father was upstairs, having heart surgery. She saw him once, for the first time in years, as she stepped out of the hospital for lunch. On New Year's Eve, six days after Gabriela's birth, her father passed away. The loss affected Erica deeply. Her daughter is both a link to her past and a source of hope for the future. "I look at my daughter and I see him, and sometimes I get emotional. She looks dead on like my father." Through her daughter, Erica is able to take some of the trauma from her father's loss, and transform it into a positive future.

Learning to navigate transitions is about more than managing time or logistics. It is about developing the emotional strength and support networks to make it through them. A few years ago, Erica felt that all of her transitions had been negative. Now, she sees that as the result of her mindset. "I didn't want to be in my own skin. I couldn't sit with myself. I [would] start the poor me, woe is me, and my head [would start] aching." She has since learned to reach out for support, and to talk through some of her feelings so that she can leave them behind. Erica has experienced many hard moments, but is grateful for the strength they've given her. Now, she is looking forward to the future. "All I see is good transitions," she says. "I see nothing but good."

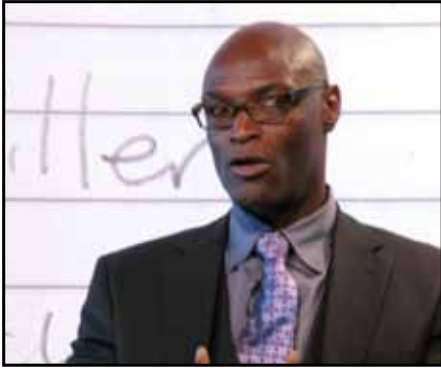
Affect Changes in Your Life



childhood to adulthood. During adolescence, the brain, the parts that make us feel good, sometimes young people for risk-taking. Through experience, and learn from experience what they value, comfortable with.

our brains and not others. The parts we don't use and habits that we take into adulthood. The term adolescence, when young people build on what long-term ways of thinking. Support networks building these is one of the key developmental model, full adulthood is often not reached at

Services Helping with Transitions



No Violence Alliance

Addresses needs of violent offenders in SF

Gerald Miller,
Program Director

What makes transition from incarceration difficult?

Once caught up in a cycle of incarceration, it can be very difficult to envision other options. “A lot of our clients have been in and out of trouble most of their lives, and come from families that have been in and out of trouble. It’s difficult to get people to the point where they see that there’s a way out,” says Gerald.

Transitioning from incarceration is a process of “moving from one world to another,” where there are completely different expectations and ways of behaving. “You have to figure out even simple things,” Gerald explains, “like getting on a bus to go across town.” Add to that the challenge of finding employment with a criminal record, and it’s

not surprising that many people get stuck in the revolving door of incarceration.

What are keys to success?

Timing and support. Trying to navigate post-incarceration life alone is overwhelming. “It’s almost impossible to do it by yourself,” Gerald says. “A lot of it is timing; when you are ready to do something, and having somebody who knows how to help you.”

With support, people can figure out how to take small accomplishments and turn them into building blocks for larger goals. Achieving goals one at a time makes the transition more manageable, and builds confidence. “Once people make little steps, they have a tendency to say ‘oh, OK, that worked, now I can take a bigger step.’”



Second Chance

Supports formerly incarcerated youth at City College of San Francisco

Charles Moore,
Outreach Developer

What makes transition back into education difficult?

“You think about the individual that didn’t finish high school,” says Charles, “and here you are now years later, and now you’re talking about going to college. Just the thought of that from an academic perspective is overwhelming.”

People’s personal lives also have major impacts on their academic success. Immediate needs such as family problems, homelessness, and economic hardship become higher priorities. People coming into Charles’ office often say something like, “I got some stuff going on outside- personal stuff- and man, I don’t want to let [academics] go, but I can’t deal with this. I show up and

my mind is not here.” Instability can render educational goals almost irrelevant.

What are keys to success?

People cannot balance these competing demands alone. Charles sees a student’s ability to talk about personal issues as a major key to academic success. “What they can do to navigate through this situation is to come and share it.”

Discussing personal obstacles can be a challenging skill to develop. People are naturally private about many issues. They need to ask themselves, “In what way is it safe for me to [reach out]? How far can I go to share where I’m at so that folks can understand what my need is and better help me to meet that need?”



Conard House

Helping people self-manage mental illness

Seth Katzman,
Director of Supportive Housing and
Community Services

What are some of the challenges of mental illness?

Many people on the streets have Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disease, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or Major Depression. The latter two can be both causes and results of homelessness. While people sometimes find themselves on the streets because of their depression or PTSD, these conditions can also develop from or be exacerbated by street experiences. Seth explains, “You can’t manage depression when you’re on the streets, and everything there tends to reinforce your depression. PTSD happens in vets or because of abuse, and you can also get it from living on the streets.”

Mental illness often goes hand-in-hand with drug use. Seth explains that “a lot of people use licit and illicit drugs to manage their symptoms. Drugs and alcohol will have helped them keep

figuratively warm while on the streets.” Mental illness further complicates the process of managing drug use.

What are keys to success?

Because experiences on the street can cause or worsen mental illness, housing is key. “One of the ways to alleviate the symptoms of mental illness,” explains Seth, “is to get stable housing.”

Learning to manage mental illness is an educational process that incorporates many different changes, from housing to managing a budget. With consistent support, people develop skills and techniques to self-manage their conditions. In addition, honing life skills such as employment readiness and money management helps eliminate some of the stresses that intensify symptoms in the first place.

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OTHER GROUP DONORS

I Think I Can Campaign 2012

Thanks to our amazing participants!



We are so grateful to the 25 awesome I Think I Can Campaign participants who have raised more than \$42,000 so far! They rock our world with their creativity and dedication. We'll tell you more about one of them.

Mark Dwight, the founder of Rickshaw Bagworks, turned his annual 525-mile bike ride from San Francisco to LA to attend the TED conference into his Campaign for the third time. But Mark made sure it would be anything but stale by setting the ambitious goal of raising \$10,000. With the help of incredible videos and pictures documenting every peddle along the way, Mark raised \$15,376, a new ITIC record! He's pictured here with his Rickshaw coworkers on the first morning of his amazing ride!

You can start a Campaign anytime in 2012! Sign up now at campaign.atthecrossroads.org

Thanks to our ever-incredible in-kind donors! As many of you know, ATC had to cancel the launch party for the 2012 Campaign, due to the closure of the host restaurant. We still want to acknowledge the many generous businesses that donated to the silent auction and raffle for this event.

7x7

Andalu

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Feeling the Love From Our Community

There is nothing better than knowing that the community believes in our clients and values our work. It keeps the staff at ATC motivated and energized like the bunnies we are. A couple of recent examples made us particularly happy.



A few years ago, the **San Francisco Friends School** became our neighbor, moving into the old Levi's building a block away. They are a K-8 independent school serving more than 400 students in the Mission neighborhood of San Francisco. We see the huge smiles on the faces of their happy students every day. Every year, their Parents' Association selects one organization to be the recipient of a generous holiday donation, and at the end of 2011, they picked At The Crossroads. As if that weren't enough, they've organized drives for hygiene items and clothing for our clients. How's that for being a good neighbor!



For the past six years, ATC has been partnering with **One Brick**, one of the most amazing organizations in San Francisco (and the entire country!). They organize and host "commitment free," one-off volunteer events for nonprofit agencies, finding the volunteers and coordinating the events. They literally bring people to your front door, ready to get their hands dirty and help out. In April, they threw their first-ever benefit happy hour for one of their nonprofit partners, and we were truly honored that they picked us. It was a wonderful event that raised more than \$2,000 to support our work. We feel very lucky to have One Brick in our world.

Drumroll Please... Presenting our First-Ever Associate Director!



Tori Talavera

To misquote Michael Corleone, “Just when she thought she was out, we pulled her back in.” **Tori Talavera** joined ATC in 2004 as an outreach counselor, and worked with ATC for the next three years, first as a counselor and then as Program Manager. In 2007, she made the ill-fated decision to leave At The Crossroads. She was plagued by the worst mistake of her life for the next four years. But, fortunately for Tori and ATC, she is back as our first-ever Associate Director! When she’s not busy eating rabbit food, roller-skating, or loving on her cats, she can be found hard at work at her desk, whipping our organization into shape. We are incredibly lucky to have her back, and we will do our best to never let her leave again.

Welcome to our New Outreach Counselors!



Joey Hess

When he got the call inviting him to join our staff, **Joey Hess** was at the Grand Canyon. According to him, getting a voicemail from Shawn that day was more memorable than the sunrise over the North Rim. We’re pretty sure he’s just flattering us, though. Joey graduated from Drew University with a degree in psychology, and he has the beard to prove it. Coming from North Carolina, he has a natural attraction to anything down-home and/or countrified, which, of course, drew him immediately to ATC. Besides combing San Francisco’s streets for fried chicken and jambalaya, Joey enjoys reenacting scenes from Game of Thrones and watching B-list movies. He’s a nerd, but he’s our kind of nerd, and we’ll keep him.



Anna Fai

Anna (pronounced banananana) **Fai** was born and raised in the Bay Area. Her die-hard Giants/Oregon State fanaticism led her to dye her hair orange and black during the baseball season throughout her undergraduate years. Since then, she’s calmed down a bit. Nowadays she enjoys crabbing and living a “drama-free” lifestyle (yeah, right). Anna comes to ATC with seven years of experience working with youth, and has already brought her own unique style to her work here. Don’t let her seemingly quiet nature fool you; she’s just waiting for the perfect moment to drop her fantastic sense of humor on your head. We know there’s a lot she doesn’t tell us about herself, but we’re OK with that. We’ll figure it out someday.



Timbuk2 Never Ceases to Amaze Us

If you are a long-term reader of ATC’s newsletter, you have heard us sing the praises of **Timbuk2**, a San Francisco-based messenger bag company. For the past 13 years, they have improved the lives of thousands of homeless youth with the 4,500 bags they have donated to our clients (you can learn more about their bag recycling program at timbuk2.com). But apparently, that wasn’t enough, and they felt the need to show ATC some love in a new way. At two recent trade shows, they encouraged conference-goers to “Break up with their bags,” donate to At The Crossroads, and get a new Timbuk2 bag in return. They raised \$5,000 for At The Crossroads, and got 250 bags donated for our clients! Please don’t ever break up with us, Timbuk2. We love you too much.



Summer SunDay 2012: Hike Mt. Tam, Raise Money for Homeless Youth

If you live in the Bay Area, you have access to some of the best hiking in the world. ATC has made it very easy for you to enjoy it! Join us for the Third Annual Summer SunDay Hike, and get your friends & family to sponsor your hike. We've mapped out a great route for all ages (see the young hikers above), with well-stocked rest stops and a gourmet picnic at the end. Come with nothing but a smile; we'll take care of the rest. You will have an amazing time. We promise. Sign up now.

Mt. Tam
Sunday, August 19

summersunday.atthecrossroads.org

**Ride.
Raise Money.
Brag.
Repeat.**



Join us this September to rack up as many miles as you can, while raising important funds for At The Crossroads.

**Spinning
Spokes
for
Homeless
Folks**

Part of a bike club, shop, or cycle group? Want to organize a team? Let us know.

Learn more and sign up at
campaign.atthecrossroads.org/spinningspokes