



In this issue:

We focus on our clients who are parents, how we try to meet their needs, and the services that exist for homeless families in San Francisco. When we looked at 128 of the clients that we work most closely with, we were shocked to discover that 74 of them have kids, and 64 of those are actively involved in parenting their children. We knew the number of parenting clients was high, but not 50%! People rarely think of homeless youth as being parents, so we hope this newsletter helps bring this issue to light.

Finding Space for Parenthood

In spite of the six thousand manuals on child raising in the bookstores, child raising is still a dark continent and no one really knows anything. You just need a lot of love and luck - and, of course, courage. -Bill Cosby, Fatherhood

According to the National Center on Family Homelessness, not since the Great Depression have there been as many homeless families in the United States. Many of our clients with children have shared with us that as homeless parents they must still contend with all the same issues that parents have, but with the additional unique stresses that come with unstable living.

Norma, who lives with her three-year old son on Treasure Island, enjoys the rewards of having a stable housing situation but remembers when that wasn't the case. "When you're not housed," she explains, "you're busy running around trying to get housing, trying to figure out what resources there are. It's much easier for my son to have a place where he can call home and he can be comfortable."

Bonding time

Having down time to be able to bond with your children, eating dinner together or watching a movie, is nearly impossible when you are homeless or unstably housed. John, who has three kids, didn't have the resources to enjoy his time with his children. "I had to worry about where I was going to rest my head," he says. "I didn't have a job and the rent in San Francisco's so high, I didn't have no way that I could make that type of money unless I got some kind of miracle job or a college education. I couldn't be around my kids too much because I didn't really have a place." The lack of affordable housing is a key factor in many families being out on the streets or having to shuffle from place to place.

Mike says of being unstably housed and a father of two that "it's impacted a lot because I don't

got a spot to tuck 'em in. If I had an official spot, they could come over every weekend and we could spend time and we could do parent stuff and they could learn from me." Not having a place to spend time with his kids has caused tension with his children's mother, as well, making it difficult for him to even be able to see them.

The stress of maintaining

Having to find and secure housing takes a particular toll on our clients who are single parents. The strain from having to watch their children 24/7 gets magnified by the demands of finding someone to look after their children so they can look for housing, go to a counseling session, an appointment or school. Norma feels the pressures of parenting her son alone. "I think that he needs a male role model," she says, "and a male figure in his life. When he gets older, it's gonna be kind of hard to tell him about certain things. It's totally doable; my mom was a single mother, but I think with a boy it's a lot different."

For Sade, who has a 9-month old son who lives with her mom, the main challenge of being homeless is not being able to be there for him. "It makes me look kind of bad," she explains, "but he's just a baby now, that's why I'm tryin' to do everything I need to do now, so when he grows up he'll see that I have everything together."

"I didn't expect that I was gonna be this happy being a mother, but I am."
— Chass

Chass and her newborn son enjoy a moment together.

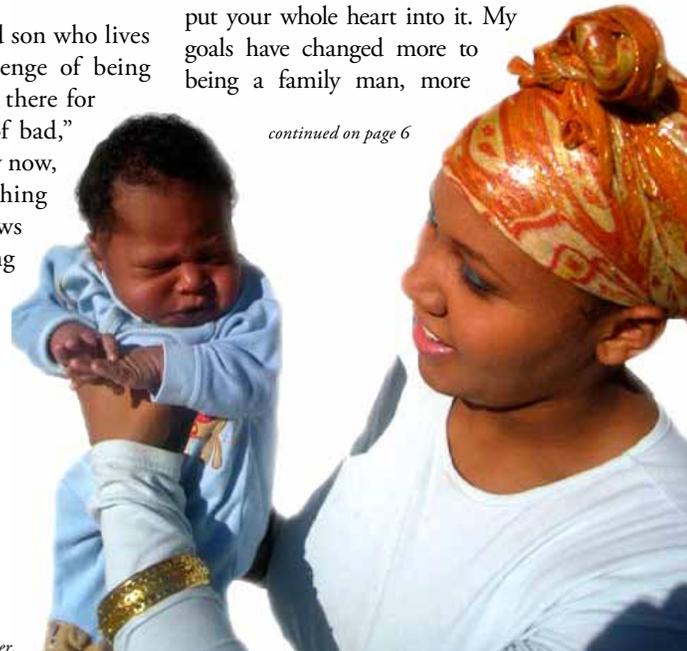
Evolving ambitions

Having a child provides motivation for many ATC clients, who feel that their ambitions or goals shifted when they had kids. Suddenly they had a reason to achieve things that for some of them may have seemed out of reach before, like getting off the streets, kicking a drug habit or attending school for the first time in years.

Clients like Chass and Durrell are both frank that neither of them understood how hard being a parent would be. "Before I had kids," says Durrell, "I thought being a parent would be a breeze, I thought it was going to be like taking care of a puppy." Adds Chass, "I thought it was going to be fun, and exciting. And I also didn't expect that I was gonna be this happy being a mother, but I am."

They have seen not only their parenting expectations change, but also what they want for themselves. "You gotta pay a lot more attention," explains Durrell. "It's actually takin' care of a life that God blessed you with, so you actually gotta put your whole heart into it. My goals have changed more to being a family man, more

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Letter from the Director

Rob Gitin

For the past four years, I have been lucky enough to watch my sister (Deb) and brother-in-law (Ian) raise their two children, Micah and Nina (The coolest kids ever). They are amazing parents who give their kids unconditional love and support, are incredibly patient and kind, and take great pleasure in watching their children laugh and learn. Deb and Ian are both physically and mentally healthy. They have stable jobs and a nice home. They were married for a few years before having kids, and have a great relationship with each other. They have friends and family who love their children (especially Uncle Robby), and who help out whenever needed. They were raised in loving households that provided models of healthy parenting. And despite all of this, they sometimes find parenting exhausting, frustrating, tedious, or stressful.

After being closely exposed to how challenging it can be to raise children, even under near-ideal circumstances, I have a deeper appreciation for the strength and courage of ATC's parenting clients. They generally have few if any of my family's advantages. I am consistently amazed that they can maintain their sanity.

Our clients are sometimes forced to move around with their children and with all of their belongings on a weekly basis. They are usually raising their children as single parents. They live with the constant stress that they won't be able to feed, clothe, or house their children. They have little support from their families, and in some cases it is unsafe for their children to be around their families. Some of them are with their children 24/7, rarely if ever getting a break. It is enough to drive any parent crazy, let alone someone who has to constantly be concerned with their own survival.

Despite these circumstances, many of our clients are loving, safe, caring parents. **These clients are my heroes, and I really mean that.** I don't know how they find the strength to be patient, the energy to be present and attentive, and the will to persevere in the face of so many obstacles. Often it comes from a desire to provide their children a better opportunity than they had for themselves. Sometimes they are able to discover an innocence in watching their children safely learn and grow that they never got to experience in their own childhood, and it heals them in a way that nothing else ever could. It is a pleasure to witness these moments of simple joy in our clients.

I think back to 2004, when a client named Rebecca gave birth to her daughter Adrien. Rebecca was one of our closest clients, and someone I care a great deal about. A couple of years earlier, had she told me she was pregnant, I would have been terrified for the child. Rebecca went through an incredible transformation during that period, making changes that would allow her to be a safe parent. When I showed up at the hospital room to welcome Adrien into the world, Rebecca was sitting there holding her daughter with a calm, poised look, and it was truly joyous to see. Rebecca has found a whole new side of herself as a mom, and despite numerous serious health struggles, has done her best to provide a safe, loving home.

Rebecca is one of the many superhero parents at ATC. They don't wear capes, they are not famous, and they aren't faster than a speeding bullet, but Wonderwoman and Superman have nothing on them.

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



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

Get Involved with At The Crossroads



Make a donation to ATC

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

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

Watch our documentary

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

Volunteer

Individually

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

Collect unused gift cards

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

Email list

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

Expand our network

Share our documentary

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

Share our newsletter

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

Be creative

We're open to hearing your ideas for supporting ATC. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us through email (getinvolved@atthecrossroads.org) or phone (415-487-0691x 101).

Who else is helping homeless families?

ATC partners with other community organizations to help our clients with children access services and build the lives they want.



Homeless Prenatal Program— provides support for low income and homeless families, such as prenatal and parenting education, job and life skill building and housing assistance



Hamilton Family Center – the first shelter in San Francisco specifically designed for homeless families, Hamilton also offers housing and eviction prevention assistance



Compass Community Services – runs the centralized intake program for homeless families looking for shelter, and also offers additional support and housing services



Raphael House – an intensive housing program designed to take homeless families off the street and give them the life tools to stay off the street



San Francisco Unified School District's Homeless Education Placement of Students helps homeless students in the school district enroll, remain enrolled and succeed in school

From a Family Comes a New Lease on Life

All the struggles of being homeless are often compounded for homeless families, a fact seen thousands of times by the handful of organizations in the Bay Area designed specifically to serve these families.

“When you’re homeless, you don’t know where you’re going to sleep that night, you don’t know how you’re going to be able to get your kids to school, and you don’t know how you’re going to get yourself out of it,” described Martha Ryan, founder and director of the Homeless Prenatal Program. “So your stress is heightened, and through heightened stress as a parent, you often might take that out on your kid. And your kid does not need that.”

And yet, Ryan has also seen countless examples of how having a child can become the key to someone turning their life around.

“For many homeless families, to be able to deliver a healthy baby and to keep custody of that child is often the first success they have had in their lives,” said Ryan, who has come to see pregnancy as a window of opportunity. “They often don’t want their child to have the life experiences that they had. I remember a woman who had been severely abused as a child and then later on as an adult. She said it was the birth of her child that made her leave her batterer. She wanted her to be able to know what true love was.”

This struggle between the obstacles of being a homeless family and the added motivation this gives the family members to change their situation is what service providers who cater to homeless at-risk families find themselves negotiating every day.

“So many things are stacked against these families, and yet parents can’t help but hope for their child that life will be better for them,” described Lisa Dyas, the Event and Communications Manager at Compass Community Services, which offers a variety of family-oriented services including shelter, transitional housing and childcare. “So many of them believe that they can make things better. How can you not have hope for your child?”

There are an overwhelming number of families who are in need of services. At Homeless Prenatal, they have served 1,700 families since November 2008 – and at least 700 of those families were new to the program. At Compass Community Services, 300 to 400 children and their parents use their services every day.

“For the first time, we’re seeing those families who were barely scraping by, who had no savings to fall back on when they were evicted because their landlord foreclosed,” said Dyas at Compass. “We’re having to turn clients away, there’s just so much demand.”

Just as these services are feeling a rise in demand, they’re also feeling the pinch from decreased funding sources, particularly if they rely on support from city or federal funding. The San Francisco Unified School District which supports 1,623 homeless students as of January 2009, has seen its ability to do things like provide Fast Pass bus passes for parents to help bring their children to school be cut from their budget.

“Transportation can be very difficult,” said Tatum Wilson, the Coordinator of the school district’s Homeless Education Placement of Students. “Sometimes where parents are living, the child has to take several buses to get to school. Sometimes families move so frequently that they’re not able to leave a forwarding address. It’s hard to improve their attendance if we don’t know where they are.”

Yet for all that is stacked against homeless families, the programs that serve them are equally determined to help them improve their lives. In fact, just as the families themselves draw strength and determination to succeed through their desire to make a better life for their children, so the programs they turn to use the health and well-being of the children involved as a springboard for helping families.

“We work with families through the eyes of the child,” explained Ashley Walheim, the Program Coordinator at Raphael House, which provides 18 families with comprehensive housing, case management and child development services as they work to get on their feet. “If the kids are feeling okay, that reduces the stress of the parent and the whole family.”

The biggest stress on many homeless families is – perhaps not surprisingly – the lack of affordable housing. In a survey of homeless families conducted by Hamilton Family Center, which provides housing for homeless families. In this same survey, close to 45% of the respondents cited the inability to maintain rent payments as the main reason they became homeless.

The problem of the lack of affordable housing was brought up by all the organizations. Raphael House is well positioned to help families transition from their program into permanent

homes, yet all their preparation and hard work is stymied when they turn to places like Compass Community Services to help them and there's no such housing to be had.

"Families can have everything lined up, and if the housing just isn't there, sometimes their other plans also fall through," said Dyas, who pointed out that wait lists for Compass' shelters have more than doubled since this time last year.

Because of the large challenge with housing, places like Hamilton Family Center are focusing their services not only on meeting the needs of families who are already homeless, but also on providing more services to families who are poised to become homeless. At Compass, they are trying to increase their Eviction Prevention Program, in an effort to catch families before they fall.

This holistic approach not just to getting housing but maintaining the housing clients have is also something Martha Ryan came to appreciate through Homeless Prenatal.

"Very early on I realized that prenatal care alone was not enough," said Ryan, "that once the baby was born, that was when the real work began. We didn't want someone to have

to become homeless to get services from us. So a lot of the work we are doing today is around stability: providing parents with the tools that will help them move into stable lifestyles."

"For many homeless families, to be able to deliver a healthy baby is often the first success they have had in their lives."

— Martha Ryan, Homeless Prenatal Program

The need for these tools has led Ryan and her staff to expand the number of programs that are available in Homeless Prenatal's spacious offices to include such important links in a homeless family's life as access to drug treatment programs, a health and wellness center, and classes on financial literacy. At Raphael House, they have been working to expand their aftercare program, where families who are no longer living at the house can still stay connected to the program and the people they met.

"Every year we have a July 4th party at Golden Gate Park," said Walheim at Raphael House. "There are families who haven't lived here for 20 years who always come back for that, just to let us know how they're doing and to be a part of the community."

"There are so many families we've known for years and years and years," said Dyas at Compass. "The fact that we've known them so long, that makes a big difference."

And in those years of knowing people, and years of providing services to the thousands of homeless children and families who come through their doors, it can be the little things that add up to the larger importance of their work.

"People are really grateful when they receive a Fast Pass or a backpack or a uniform, or even just follow up with a phone call on something I can assist on," said Wilson at San Francisco Unified School District. "That helps me realize I am making a difference, even if it is just one day at a time."§

Helping youth get off the streets, and keeping them off

For the first time ever, San Francisco has created an emergency housing fund specifically for 16-24 year olds who are at risk of homelessness or are trying to exit homelessness. It is the outgrowth of one of the recommendations of the Transitional Youth Task Force, which met between 2006 and 2008 to create citywide policies to address the needs of disconnected 16-24 year olds. ATC played a leadership role on the Task Force, and has continued to be heavily involved in implementing its recommendations.

Throughout the two years the Task Force met, service providers and young people alike kept mentioning three consistent topics: housing, housing, and, you guessed it, housing. As a result, it was established as a largely unmet need, and a top priority for the city to address.

The Task Force recommended a multi-faceted approach to address this population's housing needs. One of the recommendations was to create 400 new units of housing for this age group by 2012; the Mayor's Office of



Housing is currently working towards this goal. We are excited to be involved in the implementation process over the next couple of years.

Another recommendation was the need to create an emergency housing fund. For young people on the streets or in unstable housing, one of the obstacles that prevents them from getting into stable housing is the initial deposit required for apartments. Additionally, young people who have made it off of the streets often do not have strong social networks that can help out in a time of need. Consequently, when these youth

get behind on rent, get laid off from a job, or face other financial circumstances that threaten their housing, they don't have people to turn to for short term assistance, and often become homeless again.

In order to address these problems, the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) created an emergency housing fund for this age group. ATC helped advocate for and design this fund. In the past few months, it has helped sixteen ATC clients get off the streets, or prevented them from returning to the streets. It has made a significant impact in the lives of young people who really need and deserve the help.

We applaud DCYF for creating this fund, and hope that it will survive the myriad service cuts that San Francisco has to make. It is a relatively small amount of money that makes a huge difference. ATC and our clients are grateful for the city's commitment to helping homeless youth move beyond the streets.§

taking care of business and paying bills, instead of going out there playing around and going to clubs.”

John echoes this same desire to make a life for his kids that he can feel proud of. “I was just thinking for myself and I was living for myself. But once I had kids, I couldn’t just be so careless. I mean I grew up in a struggle, I didn’t have the best education. I’m like ‘What do I have to lose but my life?’ so I might as well cause havoc. But then once I had kids, now I have a lot to lose.”

Breaking apart

The vast majority of homeless families are headed by women, and domestic violence is another key factor in family homelessness. Dominique, a young mother of two, found that having to leave an abusive relationship created additional challenges, but she was motivated by



to
to

not wanting her children be exposed to the violence. “When it’s

your partner, and you know your kids are seeing that, that’s hard.” Many of these families lack social support or resources, and must find a shelter that will accommodate them. This can cause additional stresses, as it can be uncomfortable and chaotic for many families to live under one roof with different

“I was just thinking for myself and I was living for myself. But once I had kids, I couldn’t just be so careless.”

— John, father of three

parenting styles.

But for Dominique, being homeless and having kids hasn’t changed her desires for the future. “I still wanna be a nurse in my future. It’s just not about me no more, it’s about my kids. I have another life to look after, two

other lives. It just makes me stronger.”

Because of her experiences being a single homeless mom, Dominique was recently given an exciting opportunity to work for an organization helping homeless families transition. “It’s actually what I’m getting, that’s what I’ll be doing,” she says proudly.

“I’ll be helping other people, *and* I have personal experience.” For her, the tasks of parenting and setting new goals have had concrete outcomes.

Many ATC clients say unequivocally that the most worthwhile thing about being a parent is the relationship that they have with their children, regardless of all the obstacles and challenges. Just being able to see their children grow and experience the world on their own terms is reward enough for the many sacrifices that each of them make. Nothing could be more straightforward for Beth when she thinks about her future and the rewards of being a mom to her three-year-old daughter. “I actually want to do something with my life instead of, you know, being homeless and doing drugs. And the most rewarding thing

Parenting Through the Eyes of Youth

Being single, being a father

“I planned on being a parent like two years before I even had a baby,” says Ruff, an ATC client for the past two years who is currently seeking full custody of his two children. “I wanted kids ever since I was like eighteen, nineteen years old. But I wasn’t ready for them.” Growing up in a “house full of kids,” Ruff felt drawn to fatherhood. “I always wanted to do family type stuff; I like family events instead of being out there trying to get in trouble.”

Being a dad has been a catalyst to get him motivated to make changes in his life. “It makes me have to go out there and do stuff now instead of just *wanting* to go out there and do it. Because now I have two people that rely on me and if I don’t do it, then what’s gonna happen to them?”

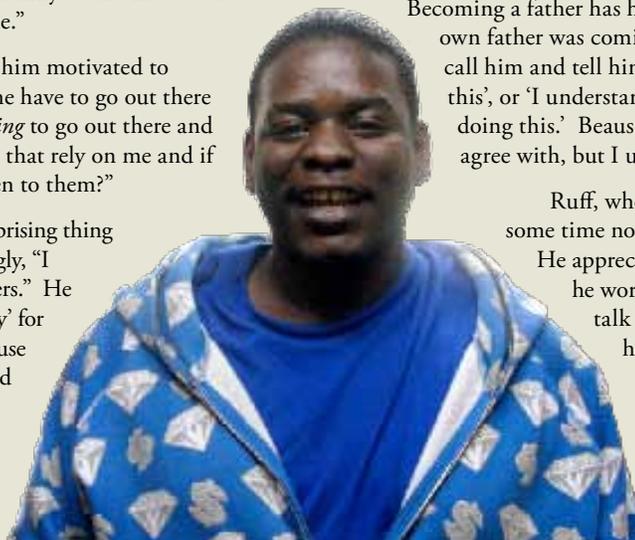
When we asked him what the most surprising thing about being a parent is, he said laughingly, “I would say what come out of them diapers.” He added, “When your kid call you ‘Daddy’ for the first time, that was a surprise. Because that was both of my kids’ first words and I was there to hear both of them. A lot of people I know don’t even know who their dad is, so it’s good to know that I got kids and my kids know who I am.”

Ruff plans to be a big influence in his children’s life, similar to the kind his father was in his. “He was always there for me, no matter what. He fought to get custody of us, me and my brothers, when I was like fourteen years old. He was there for everything we did; took us fishin’ and all the stuff I do with my kids, he did with us.”

Becoming a father has helped him understand better where his own father was coming from. “As soon as I had kids, I gotta call him and tell him ‘Oh man, I don’t know how you did this’, or ‘I understand why you did that’ or ‘Thank you for doing this.’ Beause there was a lot of stuff I didn’t too much agree with, but I understand a lot now.”

Ruff, who has had stable housing and a job for some time now, accesses services at ATC every week.

He appreciates the positive attitude of the counselors he works with. “Everybody here is friendly, they talk to you when you need somebody to talk to, help you out like when you up and down, it’s like you always want to be positive, so I like it.” §



Ruff and his winning smile.

Special child, special needs

Christina struggles to care adequately for her child, Mylasia, who is mildly autistic, while at the same time balancing her own needs as she herself suffers from epilepsy. They both currently live with her boyfriend's parents. "It makes it so I can't have rules set, and especially being developmentally challenged the way she is, it's really important to have everything stable as far as 'We do this at this time, we do this at that time.' I used to be able to have dinner already cooked or halfway prepared before I picked her up from school. And it's just so hard because by the time we get home I'm so tired that I can't stand up."



Christina and her daughter Mylasia enjoy snacks and playtime at the ATC offices.

"I wish there were instruction books on how to deal with the aggression and the anger. She has such severe anger issues. But there's no book that tells you your kid is going to be like this, here's how you deal with it. Being the way that she is, there isn't much support."

But for her the joys of parenting have "...awakened my life so much. It's really hard, but it's definitely worth it." The rewards for her feel tangible because, "if I'm sad or something she knows and she'll come over and give me a smile. She's a very empathetic child. Sometimes I don't know how she turned out the way that she is. It's a miracle." §

"That's the bigger issue of having a disability, it's twenty times harder to get anywhere with any service. I'm afraid to go see the places sometimes because people don't know and don't understand."

— Christina



Barbara and Elliot beam for the camera.



Eli hams it up.



Beth and Taylor hanging out in the prep room.



Norma and her son, Eli, pick out supplies.

Families on the edge

One in four Bay Area families can't afford the basics of housing, food, health care and childcare without some form of public assistance.

In San Francisco, 2,700 people are members of homeless families, representing 40% of the homeless population. This includes:

- 582 beds (usually full) at the five emergency family and transitional shelters
- 1560 family members, including 760 children (40% are under five years old) in single-room occupancy (SRO) hotels

Children who are homeless are at higher risk for serious and chronic health problems, developmental delays, mental health problems, academic failures, behavioral problems, hunger and poor nutrition.

Homelessness is a barrier to reunification for some families. At least 30% of children in foster care could return home if their parents were housed.

Barriers to housing

- The federal standard of housing affordability states that a household should not pay more than 30% of household income for housing expenses (including utilities).
- Average market rate for a two bedroom apartment is over \$1,700 a month in San Francisco.
- The average income for the poorest fifth of San Francisco households is just \$10,019 a year.
- A parent of two making \$10 an hour full-time earns approximately \$1,495 per month after taxes. Most landlords require earning triple the amount of rent.
- Calworks grant (assistance for families in need) is currently \$723 for a family of three.
- Applicants for Section 8 federal housing typically spend five to eight years on a waiting list.

Doing everything possible to fatten up our youth

Every week, about 100 youth come to ATC and pick out a full food box with items of their choice. For the past couple of months, clients who come in on Wednesdays have been getting a special treat, thanks to **Food Runners**. Food Runners is a local nonprofit dedicated to alleviating hunger and reducing waste by picking up leftover food from restaurants, grocery stores, and other places, and delivering it to nonprofits. On Wednesdays, they drop off pizza, soups, dips, and a variety of other ready-to-go foods. Our clients are absolutely loving it! To learn more about Food Runners, go to foodrunners.org.



Preventing our office from descending into chaos

For the past few months, eight awesome individuals have volunteered their time on a weekly basis to keep our office running by putting away food, restocking our supply bins, doing copious amounts of data entry, writing thank you notes, doing chores, and anything else that our staff throws at them. They are consistent, tireless, flexible, enthusiastic, fairly cool and somewhat sexy to boot. **Renee Etcheverry** and **Julie Cochrane** started coming in regularly last fall, and were joined in March by **Heidi Larson**, **Arnold Posada**, **Lesley Regalado**, **Anthony Wong**, **Laura DePalatis**, and **Katie Knarr**. They take time out of their busy schedules every week to pitch in, and we are deeply grateful for their involvement.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Lesley works her magic on the prep room cabinets; Laura rocks the postage machine; Julie gets down to business helping us with the massive job of switching over our donor database; Arnold shows off his wicked computer skills; Heidi and her can-do attitude; Anthony, AKA- the Prep Room Tetris Master!; Katie puts her fancy sock rollin' skills to good use; Renee takes a much deserved break from working on the Campaign.

On her way to fame and fortune...

After five years of working with At The Crossroads, **Molly Rhodes**, our beloved Development Manager, has decided to move on to grayer, er, we mean greener pastures. She will be leaving ATC to move to London with her brand-new husband, Jamie, to follow her dual dreams of being a playwright and an accountant.

In March 2004, Molly became ATC's first-ever development associate. During her interviews, she seemed highly intelligent, poised, and fairly normal. Boy, were we wrong. Only on that last item. Molly quickly established herself as the quirkiest person to ever earn a paycheck from ATC. How was she quirky? Let us count the ways: ability to break into song and dance at a moment's notice; love of ridiculous accents; her desk becoming a home for wayward mutant stuffed animals; incredible performance in ATC's dance video. But her unique personality isn't the only reason she'll be missed. Molly played a huge role in raising millions of dollars for ATC with her fantastic writing skills, outstanding ability to organize our development activities, and her superb job on these newsletters (in fact, if you want to let her know how you felt about the past 10 newsletters, email her at mollyr@atthecrossroads.org before July 31!). She also has had as much insight into our work with our clients as any person who has ever worked at ATC, counselors included. To say we will miss her does not do her justice. To say that we love her does.



...and with large shoes to fill

We welcome **Sarah Brown**, the newest addition to the staff. She joins us as our new Development Coordinator from a background that focused largely on nonprofit financial management and operations, with a smattering of development and design work thrown in. A Canadian by birth, she hails from eastern shores, but comes to San Francisco via Missoula, Montana, where she lived for the past eight years. When she is not obsessively checking her email or learning to roller skate in the hopes of one day becoming a bona fide derby girl, she can be found studying, practicing and teaching at the San Francisco Buddhist Center. She brings the calming influence and maturity of a Buddhist, sprinkled with a small dose of poorly concealed neuroticism. And she's got cool tattoos and likes to wear ridiculous outfits when she goes out to party. So we dig her.



Holistic Support for Young Parents

More than half of ATC's counseling clients are parents. That means when we meet with our clients, give them a food box, or help them access other services, we are either directly or indirectly affecting the lives of the numerous children who rely on our clients for support and care. By helping our clients find housing, employment and other resources, our counselors work to break multi-generational cycles of poverty and homelessness.

In his four years at ATC, Ivan, our Community Resource Coordinator, has worked with many clients who have become parents, and it has been rewarding for him to see a shift in how these clients think about their goals. "I've definitely seen a lot of our clients change their focus from the everyday survival focus. They go from 'What am I gonna do tonight?' to thinking more long term for themselves."

Having children becomes a motivating influence for many ATC clients. Shawn, who has been working with clients for the past five years, remembers one young woman from a few years ago who was using heroin and sleeping on the streets with her boyfriend. "When she found out she was pregnant she decided to take the steps necessary to stop using and find a way off the streets," she explains. "She did it with great perseverance and has now been drug free for four years." For this client, becoming a parent helped her step into a life she could feel more proud of.

While many clients find a way to change harmful habits when they have kids, they may still grapple with these when parenting, making services and support more crucial. "That seems like everything," says Naomi, an ATC counselor since March 2007, "that no matter what, you're still going to have your day-to-day ups and downs and really be the exact same person." The difference she has witnessed is now clients have a reason to seek

support and more actively engage in creating the conditions for success in their lives.

When any of our clients are able to accomplish a goal they have set, there is a shared sense of joy from our counselors. This is definitely the case when watching our clients be great parents. "They are still so thoughtful in how they treat their child, and so nurturing," says Ivan. "And when you talk to them on a one-to-one basis, the world has beat them up, and yet they have the strength to have that kind of relationship with their child. It's amazing."

For ATC counselors, it can also be frustrating to watch clients make decisions that negatively impact themselves and their children. This can seem to challenge the core ATC notion of how we work with clients, meeting youth where they are and putting our own agendas aside. "I see clients and sometimes, I think, 'hmmm, I would do things differently'," says Kris, a

"I've definitely seen a lot of our clients change their focus from the everyday survival focus. They go from 'What am I gonna do tonight?' to thinking more long term for themselves."

— Ivan, ATC staff for four years

counselor with ATC for the last eight months. "But parenting can look different for different children and different families, so there is no one set belief system that I have about being a parent, with the exception of the absolutes like: Don't hurt yourself and others."

ATC clients often lack the social support network or resources for childcare, so many clients bring their children along to one-to-one meetings with ATC's counselors. While some clients choose to talk about their parenting difficulties or successes, many of our clients who are single parents choose to focus solely on themselves. For at least one hour a week they are able to share the responsibility of parenting



Kris and her client Dominique in the prep room at ATC.

and turn their focus on what they are needing. These meetings can also provide a framework in which counselors help clients identify goals that relate to parenting or accessing services for their children, as well as themselves.

"Often supporting your client also means supporting their children's needs," explains Shawn. When it comes to the one-to-one meetings, she feels that sometimes the attempt to balance the attention she gives to the clients versus their children can create a great opportunity to "find creative ways to support our clients in being or becoming the best parents that they can be."

She clarifies, "At ATC we give our clients space to decide who they are and what kind of parents they want to be. We are respectful of cultural differences, the realities that our clients face to take care of themselves and their family. The impact we have can make the difference in a client being able to parent the best way that is possible for them."

As a father of two, Ivan knows the ups and downs of parenting. He sees the immediate importance in having ATC provide "the nuts and bolts of keeping our clients and their children fed and clothed," and feels that the care and listening our counselors provide is priceless. "It's really hard to be a parent," he says, "it's a 24/7 job. And to not have any space to talk about the frustrations, to talk about the decisions and sacrifices you are making, is hard. But to have someone encourage you and tell you that what you are doing is great, that is invaluable." We couldn't agree more. §



Tiarra and her son Matthea, having a laugh at the ATC office.

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In honor of Rena Ivy's birthday:

Charlie & Sandi Brown

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2009 I Think I Can Campaign Donors

Sadly, we don't have the space to individually recognize the 1,240 individuals who continue to make the campaign such a success with their generosity (but they are recognized on our website). What we can do is say a huge, collective Thank You! In donating more than \$74,000, you will help improve the lives of hundreds of our youth. Your money will pay for over 1,000 food boxes, 140 ID cards, 10,000 pairs of socks, 300 birthday gifts, and 1,000 meals for our clients. Wait, we still have enough left over for 50 nights of street outreach and 1,000 counseling meetings for our clients. And enough to help 60 of our clients get into housing. Not too shabby. And all because of our campaign participants and donors.

I Think I Can say thank you!

Many people are responsible for making the I Think I Can Campaign happen, and we want to highlight a few of them who are completely indispensable. We have heard so many rave reviews about the website, and we happen to agree wholeheartedly. **Kristina Batiste**, **Anna Bonner Mieritz**, and **Max McGuire** volunteered their time and expertise and collaborated to create this masterpiece. Their tireless and innovative work was incredible (I think Max could have gone into early retirement if he had charged us).

Vic Su of **STG Graphics** did an amazing job designing the invitation, and **Dave Landeck** of **Graphic Productions** procured free printing for it from **Infinity Press** and **Moquin Press**. **LuLu** gave us a nice discount for our Launch Party, and **Andalu** did the same for our Thank You Party for participants; the food was scrumptious at both restaurants! And a number of places donated prizes and gifts for our participants: **JetBlue Airlines**, **Southwest Airlines**, **Therapy**, **Resmex Group Restaurants**, **Allstar Organics**, **Petaluma Farms**, **Miette**, **Affi's Marin Gourmet**, **Della Fattoria**, **G.L. Alfieri Farms**, **Andante Dairy**, **Benefit Cosmetics**, **Safeway**, **Magnolia Pub & Brewery**, **Saintsbury**, and **Peet's Coffee**.

And a special thank you to our Campaign Coordinator, **Katie Kornberg**. Working for peanuts (Literally. She is addicted to legumes, and we took advantage of this.), Katie did an unbelievable job of planning the memorable launch and thank you events, and was a constant source of motivation (nagging?) that kept the participants moving forward on the campaign. Her special mix of cheeriness and dogged persistence made the participants feel supported, and more than a little scared. Katie, you worked it out!



The Incredible 2009 I Think I Can Campaign

This Winter, At The Crossroads asked the question:

Can you try to accomplish a personal goal, and raise money for homeless youth?

78 amazing people answered I THINK I CAN.

And those participants asked their friends, family and colleagues to sponsor them by donating to At The Crossroads.

And 1,240 times, people said I THINK I CAN and contributed to At The Crossroads.

And \$74,022 has been generously donated!

And there is only one thing At The Crossroads can say to all of these people who decided to get involved and make a difference in the lives of homeless youth:

THANK YOU!!!



78 participants inspired us with their goals:



Some lasted for a day:

The San Francisco Skate Club raised \$2,207 from 51 people by holding a skate-a-thon in Golden Gate Park

Poster for the Skate-a-thon

Some lasted for a month:

Rebecca Weill raised \$1,200 from 23 people by swearing off sugar for 30 days



Rebecca says goodbye to sugar

Some will last for a year:

Dan Walsh has raised \$1,730 (and counting) from 43 people by pledging to rock climb 600 pitches by February 2010



Dan climbs El Capitan



Michael (on the right) after finishing his race

Some were about improving the body:

Michael Heuga raised \$2,081 from 34 people by running the Santa Cruz Half Marathon

Some were about holistic improvement:

Jen Blackman raised \$2,131 from 83 people (83!) by becoming less of a Hot Mess (going to class, getting sleep, etc.)



Jen's life coach/study assistant, Little White Dog



Some were about improving the mind:

Bayliss Camp raised \$1,000 from 23 people by reading all seven novels of Proust's "Remembrance of Things Past"

Some were about community improvement:

Allison MacQueen Felder raised \$1,055 from 23 people by performing an act of kindness/community service every day for 60 days



Allison performs an act of service

But wait, the story continues! Some people are still continuing their campaigns, and others have pledged to begin this summer. Have any goals you want to accomplish this summer or fall? It's not too late to join the 2009 campaign. Go to the website, sign up, and help us reach and surpass our goal of \$75,000!

There's still time for you to say I THINK I CAN!

www.atthecrossroads.org/campaign