

ONE WOMAN BREAKS THE CYCLE and CREATES A NEW LIFE
“Mental health and sobriety have reacquainted me with the real me.”

Even if you haven't had all of the advantages that you might have hoped for, this doesn't mean that you won't have the opportunity to create some. An opportunity can have the potential to become an advantage when you choose to seize it.

And Kerinda is someone who has done just that. She embraced a gift of opportunity and created an advantage for herself and her children.

The Need for Something More

Growing up, Kerinda remembers her family fondly as great people, but she also recalls that they were plagued by drug and alcohol related issues and that her mother dealt with a pervasive sadness. Regretfully, by the age of 18, she had lost her mother, father, and brother.

Amidst so much grief and exposure to addiction, Kerinda resorted to substance abuse herself. She started using alcohol and marijuana at only 13 or 14 years old and was abusing them regularly by the age of 15. Her addiction gradually turned to methamphetamine and continued in various forms throughout her adulthood.



Kerinda

But this was not the only issue that she had to confront. She was also tormented so badly by agoraphobia that she could hardly leave the house. She remembers shopping at 24-hour stores in the middle of the night so that she could avoid contact with others.

In the midst of all of this, Kerinda was raising three sons, but drug and alcohol issues and marital problems eventually led to Child Protective Services having to visit her home three times. On the final occasion, she recalls getting the message that she either had to get it right this time or she could risk losing custody of her kids.

Kerinda finally realized that it was time for her to get some help. This is what led her to Community Solutions about four years ago. She came for the sake of her family but has remained for the sake of herself.

An Opportunity to Change

Kerinda began receiving services through Community Solutions' Mental Health Program. She came to realize that the root of the many problems that she was confronting was not substance abuse but, rather, mental health issues. The addiction that she had lived with throughout the years had been primarily the result of her attempts to self-medicate because she wasn't getting the help that she really needed.

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The mission of Community Solutions is to create opportunities for positive change by promoting and supporting the full potential of individuals, the strengths of families, and the well being of our community.



Possibility.



Erin O'Brien
President/CEO

How much poorer would we be today without the contributions of...

Abraham Lincoln, Virginia Woolf, Eugene O'Neill, Ludwig van Beethoven, Leo Tolstoy, John Keats, Tennessee Williams, Vincent Van Gogh, Isaac Newton, Ernest Hemmingway, Sylvia Plath, Michelangelo, Winston Churchill, Vivien Leigh, Jack Kerouac, and Buzz Aldrin?

Personally, I believe that we would be much poorer. And you might be surprised by what all of these amazing people have in common: They all lived with serious mental illness, as do countless others. And that is the secret that lies behind stigma. Individuals who live with serious mental illness are not 'them'. They are 'us'. They are 'ours'.

When individuals who are facing such challenges don't receive the support that they need, it is not just their loss; it is everyone's. They need the same compassionate, professional, effective treatment that you would want for yourself or your loved one if they were suffering from such an illness.

And with the right kind of support and treatment, recovery is not only possible, it is reality. At Community Solutions, a number of our staff members are former clients of mental health programs. They are successfully working as peer and family partners because they know about healing in ways that others can't. They have lived the recovery experience and are now able to offer guidance, perspective, and hope to others.

By supporting treatment and stamping out the stigma associated with mental illness, real change can take place, both in our society and in people's lives. Your support turns that possibility into a reality.

Erin O'Brien

A New Life

(continued)

Through our program, Kerinda started seeing a psychiatrist regularly and received the support of ongoing case management services, which have helped her maintain the proper medication regimen to achieve stability. She started attending support groups with other individuals who were facing similar challenges. Community Solutions' umbrella of support even helped her overcome her agoraphobia.

"There is not enough I can say about Community Solutions," Kerinda says. "They saved me. The patience, the understanding, the non-judgment, the willingness to believe in me until I believed in myself... Community Solutions has done that for me."

When the Present Becomes a Gift

Today, Kerinda has been clean and sober for three years, and she and her fiancé have a healthy and respectful relationship. She even went back to school, received her GED, spoke at her commencement, and recently graduated with a diploma in medical assisting with a 4.0 GPA. She now finds joy in the fact that she knows people and isn't alone anymore.

Kerinda has also gained a very healthy perspective about her mental health challenges.

"I live with it but not behind it," she says. "My reality today is that I make sane decisions. I need to be able to reach out for myself and that is what I do."

But most importantly, Kerinda has embraced the opportunity to rediscover herself and has broken the cycle of addiction, giving her children the advantage of a healthy example.

"Mental health and sobriety have reacquainted me with the real me."

And as we have come to know at Community Solutions, it is within the 'real' you that you'll find the greatest possibilities.

**"Our greatest glory is not in never failing,
but in rising up every time we fail."**

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Giving Back When and How You Can:

A Donor's Commitment and Compassion Create Real Change



Linda Estill

Linda Estill is a freelance event planner and florist extraordinaire, who owns a Gilroy-based business, *Feelin' Festive*, and has even published a book, *Flowers Made Simple*. But as if her professional savvy isn't remarkable enough, we have come to know that she also possesses a generous and compassionate nature.

"I feel everyone should give back in some way, shape, or form," Linda says. "I feel we are put here to serve others."

And Linda lives as an example of this; she has given throughout the years in support of the many needs of Community Solutions' clients, based on her desire and capacity.

Her support of Community Solutions' services has ranged from in-kind donations of clothing to regular monetary contributions. She has even lent us her expertise and resources by making centerpieces for a Hearts of Gilroy fundraising event and graciously offering the future use of her home to host one of our *Be Our Guest* gatherings.

Her commitment comes from a personal philosophy that very closely aligns with Community Solutions' mission.

"I believe that everybody deserves a chance to have a better life," Linda explains, "and Community Solutions offers that chance to such a varied group of people in need of help."

Linda has been especially drawn to support Community Solutions because of our shelter and supportive services for victims of domestic violence, our daily living skills assistance for foster care youth, and our intervention services for at-risk teens. She intuitively understands the value of meeting needs early on before they create even more drastic and lasting consequences in people's lives.

Yet it has also been a rewarding experience for her; she claims, "It makes me feel good to give too."

She has enjoyed "seeing the results of [her] donations" when hearing, first-hand, the success story of one of our domestic violence program's former clients. She also liked "seeing the programs in action" while taking a tour through La Casa del Puente, Community Solutions' transitional residential treatment facility for individuals living with mental illness.

Just as importantly, Linda has felt the value of knowing that her contributions are making an ongoing and real difference.

"I trust that my money is going where it is intended to go," Linda says. "I appreciate the way that Community Solutions acknowledges and appreciates their donors."

Through her loyal efforts, Linda has found a concrete and sustainable way of giving that allows her to create a lasting impact. Because of Linda and others like her, gifts of opportunity are changing local lives.

And as Linda puts it, "What better place to start making the world better than right in your own community?"

We would like to extend a most sincere thank you to Linda and all of Community Solutions' donors for your compassionate hearts and your generosity, which creates so much hope and greater well being for others.

You Can Help: A Wish List of Very Welcome Items



All too often, we learn of hardships in our clients' lives, hardships that we could do something about if the resources are there.

It might be that a parent has just been laid-off from their job and could use assistance purchasing food, or a personal emergency has left an individual without adequate clothing and toiletries, or a family is struggling to the point that they can't afford basic school supplies for their children. And sometimes, we have clients who could really benefit from something as simple as the gift of a special outing to lift their spirits after experiencing trauma.

If you would like to help meet the needs and raise the spirits of others who are having a difficult time, you might consider contributing to our wish list for our clients. Items on this list that we always welcome include: grocery gift cards, department store gift cards, and gas cards. We also welcome restaurant, movie, and other entertainment certificates that might bring a bit of joy to a struggling family or individual's life. Your gifts can help make a real difference in the lives of others.

If you would like to make a donation or learn about other ways that you can help, please contact Lisa DeSilva at (408) 776-6212 or lisad@communitysolutions.org.

So Many of You Brought so Much Happiness Over the Holidays

Thanks to the support of so many generous businesses and individuals who adopted families or made other significant contributions to the success of our 2009 Holiday Giving Program, over 100 local families experienced a bit more comfort and joy last December!

Each year, our Holiday Giving Program coordinates the adoption of some of the neediest families amongst Community Solutions' clients. The program typically provides gifts, much needed household and personal items, and food assistance. During a season when these families might have had to go without, it is a way for the community to bring some hope and cheer back into their lives.

The Holiday Giving Program is run by a team of remarkable volunteers. They are already in the process of planning for the coming season and always looking for extra support. If you are interested in joining the volunteer committee or learning about other ways that you can help, please contact Paige Day at (408) 776-6232 or paiged@communitysolutions.org.

Thank you to all of the amazing donors and volunteers who made the holiday season extra special for families in need!



The Garcia Pass It On Foundation's Charity Bowling Event Scores a Winning Touchdown for Our Solutions To Violence Program

On February 26th, Community Solutions' Solutions to Violence Program was the grateful beneficiary of the Garcia Pass It On Foundation's Charity Bowling Event. Hosted by the local NFL quarterback himself, Jeff Garcia, and his lovely wife, Carmella, the event was an astounding success.

There were over 180 individuals, including over 130 bowlers, in attendance to join in the activities and support our services for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Jeff Garcia was joined by his special guests, former San Francisco 49ers' cornerback and four-time Super Bowl champion Eric Wright and current Oakland Raiders' quarterback Bruce Gradkowski. The event included a bowling tournament, silent and live auction, mingling and photo opportunities, and loads of fun!

"We are so grateful that the Garcia Pass It On Foundation could team up with Community Solutions and lend a helping hand to fighting a very serious problem, domestic violence," says Jeff Garcia. "We support Community Solutions in their quest to help those in need, and we were thankful that we could find a way to give back and support their cause."

The Garcia family, the Garcia Pass It On Foundation, and all of the evening's attendees truly did find a way to give back to those in need. The event raised \$7,500 in support of our Solutions to Violence Program, which will help provide such critical assistance as emergency shelter, crisis intervention, counseling, and legal advocacy. This is the kind of contribution that will help change lives.

Photos courtesy of
Lora Schraft,
Staff Photographer, The Gilroy Dispatch

We would like to congratulate the tournaments winning individual bowler, Dave Ellis, and winning team, the C. Garcia Transportation Group, including Cep Garcia, Jorge Alvarez, Ramiro Canta, John Ceballos, Jess Sanchez, and Rocky Vasquez.



Community Solutions' board and staff would like to express our deepest gratitude to Jeff and Carmella Garcia and their family, the Garcia Pass It On Foundation, and all of the evening's attendees for their support of our services and the well being of our clients.



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YOUR DONATION WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!!

Call 408-776-6212 for more information.
www.communitysolutions.org



**“Each of us, whether we have anything to do with children or not,
is directly affected by how they are treated.”**

(Anonymous)



April is Child Abuse Prevention Month and Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Each year, Community Solutions provides support, comfort, and counseling to several hundred survivors of child abuse and sexual assault. Additionally, prevention and awareness programs are provided to over 2,000 children, teens, and adults in our community.

The donation you make today will help us heal the wounds of many.