Dear Acknowledge Family,

Thank you! As we embark on our 24th year, it is with deep appreciation that we present our Annual Report for 2016-2017.

With your help, we were able to reach new records and expand our life-changing services to children, teens, teachers and entire school communities. In fact, we doubled the amount of students and educators we served. Throughout this report, you’ll see our program highlights and growth.

We are honored that our Resilience Consultation Program was nominated by the El Camino Healthcare District for a “Celebration of Leaders” award for the quality of our programs. Additionally, with the launch of our Collaborative Counseling Program’s new partnership with the Redwood City Boys and Girls Club and with the financial support of the Sequoia Healthcare District, we created new models for after-school care for underserved, at-risk youth.

The generous financial contributions from our amazing community, along with your confidence in our programs, have helped us make a definite difference, both now and in the future. Your involvement demonstrates what we can accomplish when we come together on behalf of values that we all hold dear.

Throughout the years, we have continued to uphold the ideals embodied by our founder, Cleo Eulau. Cleo’s legacy remains our biggest inspiration. Her excellent standards and her love of learning, inquiry and teaching are guideposts for us as we chart the course for the years ahead.

Thank you for your trust, your support and your kindness. We are grateful to partner with you to strengthen our community together.

With gratitude,

Steve Hope
Board President

Susan Williams-Clark
Executive Director
The number of educators we worked with has doubled since last year. Services provided to educators include:

- 111 social emotional consultations
- 12 professional development sessions on topics related to social emotional learning
- Teacher resilience groups for educators at 3 schools
- Leadership resilience groups for administrators at 6 schools

90% of educators working with Acknowledge Alliance staff reported an increase in positive educator/student relationships.

Over 93% of educators working with Acknowledge Alliance staff reported using strength-based strategies to engage and reach their students monthly or more.

The Acknowledge Alliance staff are an integral support system for our teachers, students, school staff, and administration. Having the appropriate people in place to help support the social-emotional growth of students, along with crisis management for acute or chronic mental health situations, helps make sure that academics can be more of my focus in the classroom. It reassures me that I have resources to help my students have their needs met. From a personal perspective, I know that I can seek out someone who is there to support me in a social-emotional way. This helps me be confident that I can continue to do my sometimes difficult job without burning out.

―Teacher

This group provided me with a time to reflect and connect with my colleagues and greatly helped me to navigate and survive the first two years of teaching.

―Teacher resilience group participant

Social emotional learning (SEL) lessons, also known as “Project Resilience,” were delivered to 2,106 3rd to 7th grade students in 76 classrooms.

The 7th grade SEL curriculum was launched in the 2016-2017 school year. This program has expanded to reach more than twice the number of students since last year. Moreover, there has been a seven-fold increase in students served in the past 3 years!

When asked which SEL topics were the most useful, the top two categories that elementary and middle school students reported were friendship and mindfulness, followed by problem solving and character strengths.

The DeVereaux Students Strengths Assessment is a comprehensive evaluation tool that measures students’ overall social emotional competence. Across our schools, teacher-reported scores on eight social emotional outcomes showed improvements from before the lessons led by our mental health professionals to after.

In the past, I might have gone to complain to a teacher about a grade, but now I am able to be okay with the grade I have. I can look at my mistakes and work on those, so I can do better next time. —Student, Project Resilience

93% of students served reported that counseling helped them learn how to talk about their feelings.

93% of students served reported that counseling helped them to make better choices about their actions.

Acknowledgement Alliance therapists provided individual and group counseling services to 156 K-8 students at 5 schools. The most common reasons for counseling referral were attitude/behavior, followed by social skills and academic struggles.

In the Helmar Stick, we learned to work in unison, like a team.

Students illustrated what they learned from valuable social emotional learning lessons in Thank You cards at the end of the school year.
**Collaborative Counseling Program**

The percentage of students (ages 13-18) served by school:

- Woodside: 18%
- Gateway: 19%
- Redwood: 11%
- Menlo-Atherton: 8%
- Sequoia: 22%
- Hillcrest: 6%
- Carmel: 16%
- Hillwood: 18%

1,540 hours of counseling to 148 high school students (1,225 hours of individual counseling and 285 hours of group counseling)

The students we support through our Collaborative Counseling Program are a small underserved population who are at extremely high risk for failure, but whom, with care and therapeutic attention, can thrive. These students are facing extreme adversities as victims of pervasive domestic and community violence, coerced gang involvement, poverty, racism, families torn apart and undiagnosed learning and mental health issues. Our program is unique in its 360 degree approach. To help prevent expulsion, Acknowledge Alliance therapists work with high school students who are at risk of being expelled. For youth who are attending San Mateo County Court and Community Schools as a result of being expelled or incarcerated, our staff provides individual and group therapy. As students from the Court and Community schools transition back to one of the five high schools in the Sequoia Union High School District, we continue to follow and support them with counseling services until they graduate.

Lea’s Success Story

Lea and her counselor met at least once a week for over a year. Lea opened up about her experience of growing up with both parents being incarcerated. They worked on unfolding layers of unanswered questions, self-doubt, feelings of abandonment, and the pull of the streets that kept trying to call her back. Through therapy, Lea has explored the depths of her wounds and is learning how to heal. She now questions her unhealthy patterns and poor decision-making; she’s reflective and allows herself to be vulnerable; she looks beyond the present and plans for a brighter future. She is aware of the challenges and the continuous struggle between what is the norm and what she wants for herself – two very different things.

Fourteen-year-old Lea* spent her freshman year running around with the wrong crowd and missing school. That came to an abrupt stop when she was detained and placed in juvenile hall during the summer. Upon her release, she was put on probation and was removed from the home of her maternal grandparents who raised her. Although she had no recollection of her father, she was placed with him instead.

Living with her father meant moving and starting school in a new home and city in the fall of 2016. School staff were worried that Lea was “angry” and would “blow up.” The school administrator believed Lea could benefit from weekly counseling. At the time Lea met her Acknowledge Alliance counselor, she was juggling many big changes while attending an academically rigorous school with students she did not see as peers. She was disappointed, heartbroken and lonely.

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Now 16 years old, Lea serves as an example to her peers that it is possible to turn your life around. She has become an asset to her school, earning the love and respect of teachers, administrators, and her peers. In addition to being a good student, she was released from probation early. She is the cofounder of a student-led club that helps students like her – many still on probation – transition to high school and to their communities in general. In Lea’s words, “I want to help kids see that they can get out of probation...that probation officers, teachers, principals, and counselors want to help them succeed. Many times, we do not see it that way.”

* Student’s name has been changed to protect confidentiality.

96% of students reported that their counselor listened to them without judgment and was someone they could trust.

93% of students stayed in high school and worked towards graduation, whereas without our services, only 23% were reaching graduation.

I finally had someone hear me out without judging me all the time. It has helped me a lot with my problems. It helped me let out all my anger and thoughts in a safe place.

~15-year-old student

Data collected this year demonstrate other outcomes including improvement in:

- Overall functioning
- Problem solving abilities
- Sense of hopefulness in the future
- Self-esteem
- Empathy
- Attendance
- Academic performance

My student used to have significant attendance issues. While this is still an ongoing battle, my student has committed to make up this missed class time and assignments after school. She attends the homework center every day after school and is starting to recover her credits. Six months ago, she would not have taken the initiative nor would she have the motivation to spend this time completing work after school. My student’s positive communication has also improved. She used to say very little and never communicated with teachers or peers. Now, she is able to talk to teachers, advocate for herself more, and ask more questions. Additionally, she has found a small peer group.

~Teacher
“Personal growth, as part of professional growth, is not always smooth or easy. The more we know, the more intelligently we can think about what’s going on within ourselves, the more we can contribute.”

—Cleo Eulau, Founder