Dear Acknowledge Family,

As we enter our 25th year of supporting youth, educators and school communities, we look back in joy and acknowledge all the countless ways your support has transcended into life-changing stories.

Although we have grown tremendously since 1994, we remain grounded in the philosophy of our founder, Cleo Eulau. She believed wholeheartedly that caring adults, like teachers and counselors, have the greatest capacity to make a lasting impact and help our youth become more resilient, even in the face of struggles. We carry this core belief forward every day through our work.

In this report, you will read about our Collaborative Counseling Program’s expansion to underserved adolescents, including formerly incarcerated youth. For many we served, it was the first time in their young lives that someone listened to them without judgment and provided a way to think about positive plans for the future. Eighty-nine percent of the students we reached stayed in school and are on track to graduate.

We are proud that our Resilience Consultation Program continues to reach new heights, which you will see reflected in this report. Last year alone, the program was offered in 22 education institutions in San Mateo and Santa Clara County, with an enhanced social emotional learning curriculum and top-notch guidance, support and coaching for educators. After seven years of working with one of our partner schools, we are honored that the school went from being ranked in the bottom 10% in California to being recognized as a California Distinguished School.

Through all of the successes, challenges, growth and inevitable changes, we have been grateful to count on people like you, who made it possible for us to reach so many in our community with transformational services.

Thank you for your trust, your support and your generosity. Your belief in us, and the social and emotional well-being of students, youth and educators, is making our community a better place each and every day. We look forward to what we will accomplish together in the next quarter of a century!

With Gratitude,

Steve Hope
Board President
Sharon Navarro
Executive Director
Resilience Consultation Program

Elementary Schools: Barron Park, Bishop, Blue Hills, Cherry Chase, Ellis, Fairwood Explorer, Hoover, Lakewood, Muir, Monta Loma, Murdock-Portal, Palo Verde, San Miguel

K-8 Schools: Beechwood, Selby Lane

Middle Schools: Columbia, Kennedy, Miller, Sunnyvale

Other educational organizations: Cupertino Union School District, Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP), Sunnyvale School District

463 Educators Served

To respond to the high rate of burnout and stress that educators face, Acknowledge Alliance supports teachers, principals and administrators through 11 resilience coaching, professional development and support groups. Acknowledge Alliance empowers school staff with the knowledge and skills they need to promote social and emotional well-being in the school environment. This is beneficial to the whole school, students and teachers alike.

3,340 Students Served through Project Resilience

Social emotional learning (SEL) lessons, also known as “Project Resilience,” were delivered to 3,340 3rd to 8th grade students in 128 classrooms.

The 8th grade SEL curriculum was launched in the 2017-2018 school year. This program has expanded to reach 1,234 more students since last year. Looking back, there has been a ten-fold increase in the past 4 years and our outreach continues to grow!

When asked which SEL topics were the most useful, the top two categories that elementary and middle school students reported were mindfulness and character strengths, followed by communication skills and coping with feelings.

The Devereux Students Strengths Assessment (DESSA-mini) is a comprehensive evaluation tool that measures students’ overall social-emotional competence. Across our schools, teachers reported scores on eight social emotional outcomes which showed improvements after the lessons led by our mental health professionals.

132 K-8 Students Received Counseling Services

Acknowledge Alliance staff and interns provided 132 K-8 students across 5 schools with:
- 2,409 individual counseling sessions
- 308 group counseling sessions
- 1,483 parent or staff consultations

When examining the reasons for counseling referral, the most common reasons were attitude/behavior (including anger, anxiety, anxiousness, depression, impulsivity, mood changes and self-esteem), followed by academic struggles and academic stress.

Communication skills helped me with group projects, and mindfulness helped me pay attention to what I'm doing in many situations where I get carried away.

~7th Grade Student, Project Resilience

The SEL facilitator was incredibly effective at handling “in-the-moment” situations! It wasn’t just about the lessons, it was the fact that they were modeling expected behavior (and teacher responses) that could then be referenced to later in the week!

~Teacher

97% of students served reported that counseling helped them learn how to talk about their feelings.

95% of students served reported that counseling helped them to make better choices about their actions.

I learned that I shouldn’t hurt myself because I have people who care about me.

~3rd Grade Student

95% of educators working with Acknowledge Alliance staff reported an increased awareness of student social and emotional issues.

Over 94% of educators working with Acknowledge Alliance staff reported using strength-based strategies to engage and reach their students monthly or more.

“95% of educators working with Acknowledge Alliance staff reported an increased awareness of student social and emotional issues.”

“No learning can happen before you build relationships.”

During professional development, teachers shared some of their “Pearls of Wisdom.” They also gave themselves “High Fives” to appreciate positive moments.

97% 97% 96% 96% 94% 94% 94%

Focused on positive things students do rather than negative
Communicated high expectations to students
Connected personally with individual students
Talked supportively with students who are struggling
Recognized students’ strengths
Seen students’ difficult behaviors as attempts to cope with difficult situations
Found ways to help struggling students participate or contribute to class

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~3rd Grade Student
The Collaborative Counseling Program has a unique 360 degree approach in working with underserved adolescents who are at risk of failing out of the education system. These students face extreme adversities as victims of domestic and community violence, coerced gang involvement, poverty, racism, families torn apart and undiagnosed learning and mental health issues. Acknowledge Alliance therapists work with high-risk pre-expulsion students, and youth who have been expelled or incarcerated and are attending San Mateo County Court and Community Schools. When these students transition back to one of the five high schools in the Sequoia Union High School District, we continue to provide them counseling services and support until they graduate. This year, Acknowledge Alliance also began offering counseling services to out-of-school youth development organizations including Peninsula Bridge and the Boys and Girls Club Redwood City.

While at juvenile hall, seventeen-year-old Mario* was referred to counseling by Probation staff when he exhibited symptoms of depression. Prior to entry into Acknowledge Alliance’s Collaborative Counseling Program, Mario had been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and was on a specialized education plan, designed for students with physical or mental impairments.

In his initial counseling sessions with his Acknowledge Alliance therapist, Mario showed considerable anxiety surrounding his pending trial. He was in voluntary protective custody at juvenile hall and kept separate from all of the other adolescents on his unit. He completed all schoolwork in his cell, ate meals alone, and had virtually no contact with other youth. Mario also could not participate in the various programs offered at juvenile hall, such as exercise groups, yoga, and mind-body awareness. His mood ranged from overwhelmed with sadness to moments of optimism about his trial and future.

After three months of weekly therapy with our counselor, Mario exhibited tremendous positive changes in his behaviors and understanding of himself. He asked to be taken out of protective custody, and excelled in the general programming and classes. He enthusiastically participated in yoga, exercise groups, and maintained the highest GPA in juvenile hall. In his free time, Mario worked on educational packets to gain high school credits, journaled, and wrote poetry.

Through counseling sessions with his therapist, Mario learned that he could be seen and validated in a relationship. Mario expressed his belief that he could be himself, and he could show his “good” and “bad” qualities, and others would continue caring about him. With his counselor, Mario learned to talk about issues that he couldn’t talk about anywhere else - from his ambivalence about getting released from juvenile hall to the details of the gang violence perpetrated against him.

Mario also began to realize that he did not have to get rid of more complex or heavy parts of his identity to feel the other, more positive parts of himself. He started to think about himself in a more comprehensive way. He found that, like all of us, he holds both darkness and light, and that the things he has been through have been a part of what has built his strength, courage, and capacity for insight and inner exploration.

During one of his last counseling sessions, Mario shared a story called “The Golden Buddha”: once upon a time, when a group of monks tried to move a giant clay Buddha statue, one of them noticed a small crack in the clay and was surprised to discover that just beneath the cracked clay exterior, the statue was made of gold. Together, the monks chiseled the hardened clay away until the Buddha emanated a golden glow. “I sort of feel like that statue” Mario said, as he acknowledged that counseling allowed him to access his own golden interior.

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

Counseling is extremely helpful for me in just expressing my feelings to someone, and getting respectful and critical feedback that helps me better my decision making. I have also learned how to approach situations better.

~Student, Boys and Girls Club
Acknowledge Alliance makes connections. They promote a positive atmosphere around campus through their ability to connect to staff and students. They support students who need extra attention and provide strategies to navigate complex situations in their lives.

-Teacher