Future Focus
THE BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF THE PENINSULA PUT LOW-INCOME TEENS ON THE PATH TO COLLEGE.

Portola Valley resident Tony Lautmann graduated from Stanford and worked in commercial real estate, but he was always interested in improving college readiness for low-income youth in Silicon Valley. When Lautmann found a program model that leverages teens’ social groups to yield a 91% college graduation rate, he decided to bring the model to the Peninsula. Unlike many college access programs aimed only at high-achieving students, this program accepts all interested students.

Simultaneously, Lautmann had been a mentor for several years at the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula (BGCP). “I really liked BGCP,” he relates. “They have the infrastructure and great people. So I went to them and said, ‘Here’s a cost-effective program with great results and I’d love to do it with you.’” One year later, Future Grads was launched. Future Grads is different from most college access programs in that it works with high school students as they prepare for college but also supports them through college. This is especially important with low-income students whose college dropout rate is over 75 percent. “The students who drop out are plenty capable, but they face many hurdles,” notes Future Grads Director Esmeralda Ortiz. “Many of them don’t have a financial plan or aren’t prepared for the rigors of the college environment. They often doubt their abilities or feel they don’t belong.”

Future Grads aims to address those and other challenges by supporting students for eight years, from 10th grade through college graduation. Built upon partnerships with Woodside High School, Sequoia High School, and East Palo Alto Academy, the program was launched at a weeklong Summer Academy at Menlo College, with 60 10th-grade students now participating. Monthly lunchtime meetings are held at the schools, with principals joining to provide their support. Parents are involved from the beginning in sessions that help them understand the financial aid process, often their biggest anxiety. The program’s high school component is based around goal setting, community service, leadership, and the “crew model” that builds up a strong cadre of friends with similar goals—a key to success. Once students graduate, BGCP’s College Team will deploy their counseling and support systems to ensure they are successful through college. BGCP expects the program will grow to serve 1,000 youth each year.

Lautmann is leading the campaign to raise the annual program cost of $87,000 from the community to achieve the desired graduation metrics. Contributions are raised class by class, so donors see the impact of their dollars as students continue through college.

Sandra Gutierrez is a Future Grads student. A sophomore at Woodside, Sandra loved the Summer Academy. After she came with her mother to the parent meeting on financial aid, her mother—always nervous about the cost of college—said to her: “Okay, now we can go to college!” The discussions on the value of a college education made Sandra realize how much her life options would be limited without a college degree. “That,” she said, “was my aha moment!”

For more information about Future Grads, contact smendy@bgcp.org.

100 Points to Honor 100 Years
As a salute to Carmel-By-The-Sea’s Centennial Celebration (1916 – 2016), PlumpJack Group is offering a limited 100 point/100 year “sip and stay” package from October 1st – December 31st (based on availability) at its newest bespoke property, The Hideaway, located just blocks from the beach and steps from downtown. In honor of the village’s 100th year, The Hideaway package includes a bottle of the limited 100 point Robert Parker 2013 PlumpJack Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon award-winning wine (previously reserved for wine club members only), as well as a complimentary tasting for two at PlumpJack Winery in Oakville. Given the limited quantities of the 2013 PlumpJack Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon—predicted to be the next cult Napa Valley Cab—this might be the perfect time to try out the recently redesigned boutique hotel and wish Carmel a Happy Birthday! Note: A five-day booking window is required for hotel reservations, and the winery tasting is redeemable anytime during 2016/2017. To book the “sip and stay” package, call the hotel at 831.625.5222.