

Hanna Center

THE HAWK 

WINTER NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2024



Hanna Center

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS IN SONOMA



WE CARE. WE TREAT. WE HELP.

A MESSAGE

CAMERON SAFARLOO, CEO

We warmly welcome you to the first Hanna Center quarterly newsletter of our 75th anniversary year.

This year marks a big milestone for Hanna Center – 2024 is our 75th year in Sonoma Valley, and we have so much to celebrate and be thankful for. Throughout the year, we'll be celebrating our values, our wonderful Sonoma community, and sharing stories from many people – past and present – whose lives have been changed by Hanna. We are so grateful for our supporters, who have made the past 75 years possible. Stay tuned for exciting news about celebratory events planned to commemorate this historic milestone and how you can celebrate with us. I hope you enjoy the stories of impact and updates on these pages; as always, we welcome your feedback.

Until next time,



Cameron Safarloo, CEO



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Noeli Cardenas Zamora, *Clinical Director, Mental Health Hub at Hanna*



Hanna Institute Updates

Hanna Institute trainer Jila Malek-Salehi and Curriculum & Training Manager Rayna Friendly were invited to speak at Head Start California's Health Institute, a conference focused on Head Start educators' and providers' health and well-being. Jila and Rayna shared perspectives on the complex trauma that children and teachers bring into the learning space. Many of us are not able to recognize or articulate the layers of stress and anxiety that we carry, and this is even more acute for our very young children.

The Institute has partnered with Head Start California to develop our first asynchronous course. This five-part course introduces the concepts and tools of Trauma-Informed Care framed for early childhood education. We are thrilled to launch in January 2024, after a year of planning and building. The platform will be integrated into many client relationships moving forward, giving us a channel to continue providing value and support after training has ended.



Hanna Recreation Partners with Stack to Bring Basketball to North Bay Youth

In a new partnership with Hanna Center's Recreation Program, Sonoma-based Stack Basketball is bringing the sport to local youth year-round, which began with the launch of a new Single-Day Elite Camp at Hanna Center in October. The youth came from the targeted communities of Petaluma, Sonoma, and Napa, creating new friendships, competition opportunities, and bonds among the neighboring North Bay middle-school populations and their friends and families.

"We are very excited about this partnership with the Stack Basketball program," said Joe Petersen, Hanna Recreation Manager. "We firmly believe that providing consistent and high-quality programs for our community will have a positive and lasting impact. Stack Basketball is dedicated to this endeavor, and we are thrilled to be a part of this program's growth and success and to serve these athletes."



The St. Anne's residential cottage staff celebrated Christmas with a special holiday meal for the residents.

The Community Mental Health Hub

Empowering Individuals with Mental Health Services



At a time when the need for mental health services is at an all-time high, the Hub at Hanna is changing lives and offering the promise of a brighter future for all in our community. Mental health programs have evolved significantly over the years, embracing a bilingual and culturally sensitive approach that goes beyond traditional therapy.

At the Hub, the focus is on meeting individuals of all ages where they are and facing mental health challenges together. Our clinicians offer encouragement, therapeutic clinical care, and the opportunity to experience improved well-being.



John's Transformative Journey with the Hub

John is a remarkable individual who has conquered his anxiety and become an inspiring

example of how counseling can change lives. John's journey with the Hub began when his anxiety started taking over every aspect of his life. Its grip began to tighten and control how he moved through each day, and it felt insurmountable at times. But with the unwavering support and guidance of his dedicated clinician at the Hub, John embarked on a path to personal growth and healing.

With a trauma-informed approach, the Hub offers a safe haven for youth, adults, and families to engage in therapeutic services.

John explains in his own words:

"I am writing to express my appreciation for the mental health services that I have received at the Hub. I have struggled with anxiety and feelings of unworthiness for years but was able to manage until about six months ago when I was faced with unexpected new challenges; this disorder was now controlling every aspect of my life.

I'd heard about the Hub at Hanna, offering mental health services. Other than my current academic guidance counselor in high school, I'd never sought one-on-one help before. I felt this was a crucial crossroads in my life, so I called and was immediately connected with Candice, a clinician at the Hub. That encounter was the first day of my journey back to well-being, a feeling of inner peace that I hadn't had in years.

One key factor in my success has been the development of coping skills for anxiety.

These skills have allowed me to manage my disorder effectively and have been instrumental in my overall progress in working through a trauma experience from many years ago that I suppressed and never dealt with. I began to understand how that impacted my life and caused me to develop tendencies toward worry and apprehension.

I'm happy to share that I plan on entering Stanford University in the fall. I had experienced massive feelings of unworthiness and doubt since the day I was accepted, unsure if I could make it or even try. The therapy has taught me to think different thoughts. Now, I choose my thoughts carefully!


In summary, I have made significant progress in my mental health journey and have overcome a disorder that indeed threatened to derail my life. I have learned to prioritize my mental health and will not hesitate to seek out support in the future if needed. On behalf of myself, my family, and close friends, thank you for making all the difference in my life."

John's moving journey showcases the remarkable transformation that's possible with the right support. At the Hub, breaking free from the grip of mental health challenges and helping individuals overcome a spectrum of mental and behavioral health issues is at the core of our mission.

We understand that mental health is not just about healing; it's about thriving.

The Hub's Mental Health Services

With a trauma-informed approach, the Hub offers a safe haven for youth, adults, and families to engage in therapeutic services. The Hub is committed to connecting individuals to bilingual and culturally sensitive mental health services, offering a wide range of trauma-informed preventative and outpatient services to individuals of all ages and backgrounds, including individual, family, group and couple therapy.

The Hub also acts as the heart of a partnership with 17 other local non-profits working together to address the unmet mental health needs of Sonoma Valley residents, especially those affected by trauma and adversity. 

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH HUB STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Noeli Cardenas Zamora

Clinical Director,
Community Mental Health
Hub at Hanna

Noeli Cardenas Zamora is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist with many years of clinical experience providing treatment to children and adults in various sectors of the mental health community in both Southern and Northern California. As a licensed clinical supervisor, she has overseen the administration of treatment programs that facilitate clinical services for at-risk children, families, and adults. Noeli is a bilingual/bicultural provider with specialized training in the areas of trauma, grief and loss, behavioral analysis, intimate partner relations and Latinx women. Noeli has been an invited speaker in the areas of clinical treatment of children, professional development, and overcoming barriers to mental health recovery. She is a distinguished graduate of Pepperdine University where she received specialized training in the areas of assessment and treatment of Latinx clients. She was also appointed as an adjunct faculty member at Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology.



**A Day in the Life of Hanna
Residential Staff Member**

Anthony Garcia

COORDINATOR FOR THE ALVERNO HOUSE

Hanna's Residential Program plays a large role in the trauma-informed care and character development of our youth, responsible for all aspects of their days and nights outside of school hours. Structure, accountability, and building community are core components of the program, as is creating pathways for a brighter future through strong role modeling.

Anthony Garcia has been with Hanna for more than six years, starting as a youth counselor, and now working as the supervisor at one of the residential homes on campus. In his role, he gets the most satisfaction when he is successful in opening up a student's eyes to consider something new. "Introducing a different hobby, sport or even another way of thinking about something can light them up," he says. "It's still a thrill for me – seeing their eyes open up in response to something they've never seen or done before."

The youth are up at 7 a.m. and each of them has a job to complete in the house before getting ready for school. They then head down to the dining hall, say morning grace together, and then get in line for breakfast. Some residents work in the kitchen, either serving or cleaning up after meals, for an hourly wage. Phones are locked up at the house during the school day until they have completed their chores.



"If they're not pulling A's or B's," says Anthony, "They need to finish their homework before they get their phones. It can be challenging, as all they want to do right after school is get on their phones."

On Mondays and Wednesdays, they all participate in an after-school activity together. It could be board games, basketball, taking a walk around campus, or something more personal, like journaling. "I've even tried meditation and stretching," says Anthony. "Not a big hit."

Anthony is also responsible for the youth counselors, who rotate shifts in the residences so at least two are always present, 24/7, 365 days a year. "The boys know that we are always available for them, so if they get sick in the middle of the night, we're there, just like a parent, to make sure they're safe."

The student's backgrounds are all different – some come from middle-income homes, with a mom and dad, while others may come from the urban core, and not have both parents, or any family at all. Some have experienced the incarceration of a parent, mental illness challenges, poverty, abuse, and more. The commonality across the board is that they've all experienced some sort of trauma. "Some of the personalities conflict," says Anthony, "but for the most part, it's a really strong community."

The challenge for many of the students is 'breaking habits that were very normal for them' prior to coming to Hanna. "The boys may have been exposed to family members regularly using substances in the home, or their dad or uncle was in a gang, so they are used to a lifestyle that comes with gang activity," he says. "They may think they'll follow in those footsteps, but I'll always point out other paths for them to consider. What about college, or a career in a trade that Mr. Snowden (Hanna's vocational woodshop teacher) is teaching you? Many have never considered the positive paths that are open to them."

"It's like riding a rollercoaster," Anthony says. "We enjoy that feeling of stress for a moment. But imagine being on that rollercoaster every day of your life, living with the constant feeling of going up and down, your heart racing. The trauma associated with that stress can break a person down. These aren't 'bad kids' – they've just lived through bad experiences."

At any given afternoon at 4 p.m., someone could walk in and see the students and youth counselors sitting together quietly and watching TV. "To the untrained eye," Anthony says, "not much is going on. But something much deeper is happening. These kids may be used to a chaotic household or having an intoxicated male always around. I'm a sober,

"The same kids who were the biggest handful when they came in are in tears at graduation, saying they're so grateful that no one gave up on them."



calm man and my presence provides a sense of safety. Recreating this scene and being consistent – eventually, they'll slowly shift away from that pattern and create the ability to manage their own feelings."

Anthony can recall more of the 'challenging' youth – those who came in, 'running a ruckus, using foul language, and failing school.' Sometimes it will take years of working with a student to get them to start walking another path. "The same kids who were the biggest handful when they came in, at graduation, they're in tears, saying they're so grateful that no one gave up on them."

When the students come back in a few years as alumni, that is when the transformation, or 'fruits of their labor,' is the most obvious for staff. "They're happy and thankful," he says. "Time away provides them more perspective on the impact Hanna has had on their lives, and how they might have turned out, had they not been here."

Recently, Anthony had a particularly meaningful conversation with a student, between sets during weightlifting. "He said, 'hey man,' you really helped me.' I said, 'Thanks, but we're not done yet. We've got more work to do.' He laughed and said, 'Yeah, we do.' I can never really see my work; but sometimes, I can feel it." #

Finding Independence - Foster Youth in Transition



Connor's Story

Connor, a self-described "redneck from Mendocino County," is a recent participant in Hanna Center's new residential Transitional Age Youth (TAY) Program, which launched in April of 2023. Connor graduated high school early in March of 2023 and was living in a group home when his social worker referred him to the program.

Despite numerous moves during his childhood and being bounced among various schools and residential programs, Connor made straight A's in his junior year. "I would have done the same my senior year," he says, "but I lost my motivation to do really well."

The residential program that Connor is enrolled in at Hanna is for individuals aged 18-21 who have chosen to extend their placement in foster care as non-minor dependents. The program is centered around an Independent Living Plan that includes career guidance, opportunities to further their education, and medical and mental health services.

At 18, Connor has experienced much adversity in his life, starting from a very early age. His biological father didn't know he even existed until he was two years old; his dad then went through a lengthy court battle to win custody of his son. The two were very close; Connor became his dad's drinking buddy at age nine, and they often played dangerous games, "dodging death, just for fun, like getting drunk and playing cornhole with firecrackers."

Before his father won custody at age four, Connor lived at home with his mom,

three younger brothers, and his mom's boyfriend. The boyfriend molested Connor and his two-year old brother. Today, he's in jail for child pornography. At the age of ten, Connor's father died by suicide.

An extremely intelligent young man, Connor grapples with self-motivation. His dream is to own and operate an arcade. He enjoys studying the games to analyze how they work, especially enjoying the 'Claw Machine' and other crane-related machines. "I'm not essentially good at other prize redemption games," he says, "but I know how they work."

The TAY Program staff will be helping Connor enroll at Santa Rosa Junior College next semester to begin working towards his goal of earning a BA in business. In the meantime, the team is also helping Connor secure a part-time job and possibly work with the Department of Rehabilitation.

"We are helping Connor with independent living skills, like cooking, household budgeting, maintaining a personal and hygienic living environment, applying for jobs and enrolling in classes, scheduling medical appointments, etc.," says Peter Tripp, Transitional Housing Program Coordinator.

Living quarters for both programs are supervised and safe, providing a supportive environment for youth who are ready for more self-sufficiency and independence. Participants can enter directly from a family-based foster care setting, probation, or congregate care. *Learn more at hannacenter.org.*



Academy Partners with SRJC to Promote Career Trades Programs

Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC) and Hanna Academy enjoy a successful partnership that has paved the way for countless Hanna students to enter higher education upon successfully graduating high school. The Career Technical Education (CTE) Program at the Academy has been designed to feature desirable career tracks that would best prepare secondary students to make a smooth transition into higher education, with basic skills that align and complement similar Career Education and certificate trade programs at SRJC.

Luis is a 2023 Hanna graduate who took his love of animals and the skills he learned in the CTE Agriculture program and enrolled in SRJC's Veterinary Technician program last fall. Another grad from last year took the welding skills that he honed at Hanna as part of the Construction Trades curriculum and transitioned into SRJC's Welding Technology Certification program. Confident of his abilities, making the move into higher ed "seem like a good idea."

The partnership continues to evolve as SRJC is extending participation to qualified Academy students in *Second Chances*, which is both a student club and a Student Services Program that provides support and resources for formerly incarcerated students of all ages. The program offers dual enrollment as well as academic, career, and personal counseling, to make the prospect of higher education a reality for all these students.

"Students with special needs benefit from feeling successful in any area," says Chrissy Brady, Director of Special Education at Hanna Academy. "To be able to feel that success within the CTE program is hugely important to their self-confidence and provides a feeling of accomplishment that all students deserve."



Skills for Their Future

Construction Trades

Second Quarter 2023 Project: Building a Functional Bathroom

"We're probably the only high school that is teaching these skills with a to scale model; one that the students can work on and learn from, using their hands. We are teaching real-world skills with real-world tools, going standard as much as possible. They're learning basic carpentry, wiring and plumbing.

What we needed was a model that we could actually work with. The structure was built so they could do work that could only be done below the floor to get the experience of having to crawl in tight areas to do necessary work, like drilling holes to install sewer line vents. We provide the correct tools to do all these functions; basically what they would expect to find on a professional job site. All of our tools and our equipment are legit; the gauges, pipes, connectors. This is basically an apprenticeship program because it's the real thing.

The students can read a book or watch a video, but it's not the hands-on, get dirty, mess-up and have-to fix-it, truly valuable experience. They need to live through failures and problems, and learn how to successfully approach them. I didn't want this to be a 'perfect model.' I built in 'mistakes' that they are going to have to learn how to fix. Problem-solving is an important part of this training."



Mike Snowden

CTE CONSTRUCTION/TRADES INSTRUCTOR



For students who chose the construction CTE, there was an increase in confidence from 2.3 to 4.0 (out of 5.0) in their ability to read and understand construction technical directions or blueprints. This cognitive leap was statistically significant – meaning that the increase in confidence was caused by the class they took.



Harvesting with the Agriculture/Health CTE Program



Hanna Academy students participating in the Agriculture/Health Career Technical Education (CTE) program harvested cabernet sauvignon grapes from 141 vines on campus last fall. The students care for the vineyard year-round, checking the drip system, pruning, and all steps leading to harvesting the grapes at optimum brix level. The grapes are made into grape juice and the skins are added to the large compost pile in the garden, which helps fill the planter boxes.

The students prepped the boxes for the fall crops, which included broccoli, cauliflower, kale, radishes, and other leafy greens. The fruit trees – pears, apples, peaches, and plums – were newly irrigated in 2022. “We harvested apples and pears this year,” said Elizabeth Bjorkland, CTE Agriculture/Health and class instructor. “I think the peaches and plums will catch up next year.”



In the woodshop, students collaborated to build a mobile chicken coop, which can easily be moved from spot to spot, allowing them to graze wherever the grass needs mowing! Fertile eggs are being incubated; the new chicks will help populate the new coop. Fresh chicken eggs are shared with fortunate staff, but currently, the one dozen gathered over a week tends to go quickly. We’re hoping the new coop will result in more fresh eggs!

Hanna Alumni Updates



In a recent survey of 60 alumni, **nearly 80 percent are interested in learning about ways to get involved or give back to Hanna Center through the Hanna Alumni Association.**



Hanna alumni **Ricardo** (Class of 2019 - third from right with sunglasses) and **Nathan** (Class of 2020 – second from right) graduated in December from the Fire Academy at Santa Rosa Junior College. Both young men were residents at Hanna for years, Ricardo since the 8th grade. When he arrived, Ricardo was very shy and lacked confidence and direction in his life. Today, he is standing upright and tall, full of enthusiasm and passion for his chosen profession. At the graduation ceremony, he commented, “If it was not for all of you at Hanna, I probably wouldn’t be here. I am so grateful.”



Gabe, a Hanna alum, is a para-educator working with autistic K-2nd graders at Babcock Elementary in Sacramento. Gabe is also a registered behavioral technician (RBT). He loves his job and the work he does in the classroom with his students.

In a recent survey of 70 alumni, **68 percent reported having pursued and attained higher education since leaving Hanna.**



Partnerships in the Community



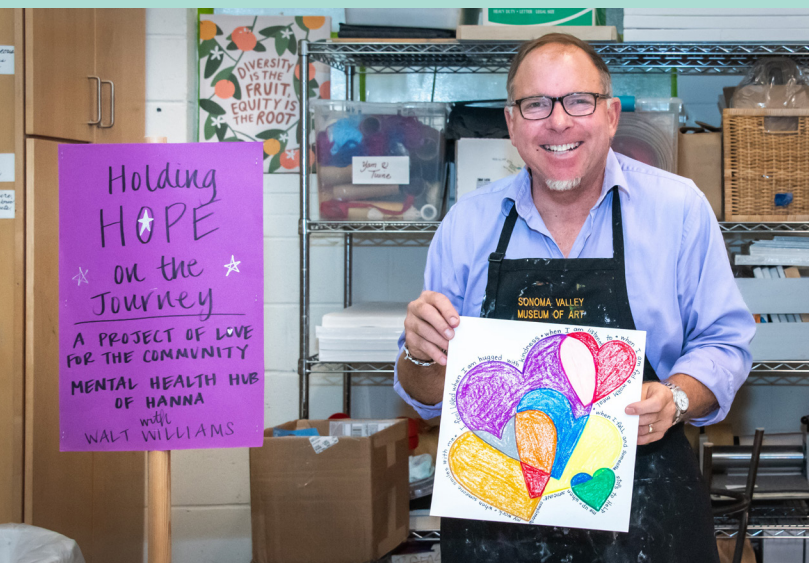
Hanna Center and Transcendence Theatre Company Partner for Second Holiday Season

Hanna Center was proud to partner with Transcendence Theatre Company (TTC) to present Broadway Holiday, a celebration with favorite Transcendence artists. A portion of each ticket sold was donated back to Hanna to help continue our mission of transforming the lives of youth, families and communities impacted by trauma and adversity through resilience, connection and spiritual wellness.

"We know that theater holds the power to benefit both actors and audiences alike," said Cameron Safarloo, CEO, Hanna Center. "It can educate about mental illness, challenge stereotypes, diminish stigma, alleviate isolation, and inspire hope – all of which we support through our many programs, year-round."

The Hub Offers Survivors of Suicide Remembrance and Healing Event

The Hub hosted a remembrance and healing conversation in honor of International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day in November. It was a beautiful evening, with participants gaining a new understanding of their grief and gaining strength through connections with other community members impacted by suicide. Thank you to our partners in the Sonoma County Department of Health Services Behavioral Health Division for helping to make this event possible.



The Sonoma Valley Museum of Art celebrated their partnership with Hanna Center with a "Holding Hope on the Journey" art project at their November event.



Hanna Center

Celebrating 75 Years in Sonoma

WE INVITE YOU TO SAVE THE DATE FOR
A SPARKLING EVENING CELEBRATING OUR
75TH ANNIVERSARY IN SONOMA VALLEY.

Join us on **April 20, 2024**, for an intimate
al fresco dinner on our beautiful patio.

Together, we'll raise funds to provide transformative
programs to Hanna youth and our community.

We can't wait to toast 75 years with you this spring.

To learn more and RSVP, visit hannacenter.org/gala

Hanna Center

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